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SEX, VIOLENCE, AND HAND PUPPETS: HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF THE *PUNCH AND JUDY* PERFORMANCE TRADITION

A Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

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James Robert Davis

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This Study by James Robert Davis

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Degree of Master of Arts

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Hello, Baby.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER 1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND METHODOLGY 1

CHAPTER 2. SURVEY OF LITERATURE..4

CHAPTER 3. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF *PUNCH AND JUDY* 22

CHAPTER 4. STRUCTURE: INHERENT LIMITATIONS OF THE PUPPET THEATRE...45

CHAPTER 5. STRUCTURE: THE *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* AND PLOTS OF *PUNCH AND JUDY*...49

CHAPTER 6. SEMIOTICS AND AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO THE VIOLENT AND PROFANE IN PUNCH AND JUDY..70

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION...80

BIBLIOGRAPHY 85

CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The scene is common: two roughly manipulated hand puppets share a small, portable stage. The figures, a man and a woman, are grotesque. The man has a fin-like hump on his back, an enormous hooked nose, and a maniacal grin. The woman sports bulbous eyes, a washerwoman's mob cap, and an equally deranged smile. The woman is furiously admonishing the man for throwing their baby out a window to its death. Suddenly, the man picks up a club and begins to viciously beat the woman. This is a comedy.

Since the 17th century this pair of characters, Punch the murderous husband, and Judy, his shrewish wife, have graced puppet stages throughout the world. Along with an ever-evolving *dramatis personae*, Punch and Judy can be considered some of the most successful theatrical characters in history. This can be attributed to the pair's ancient roots, their ubiquity in the puppet theatre for more than three centuries, and their incessant popularity among the general public. The story of *Punch and Judy* has been called the "only perfect drama in the world . . . [It is an] elegant arrangement of popular entertainments . . . [The story] is 'ancient' and 'unchanging' yet young, joyous and fresh" (Leach 58).

Traditionally, the puppet theatre has been considered a theatre of the people, accessible to all socio-economic groups (Speaight Punch 16). This

accessibility was one of the elements that spawned the creation of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition. The *Punch and Judy* performance tradition, which is the ultimate focus of this study, is defined as a performance by a single person, using glove style hand puppets, and a booth style stage with a proscenium, which was generally portable. The text of the performance centers on the episodic adventures of the character Punch, a hook-nosed hunchback with a propensity toward violence. Judy, Punch's wife, is also featured in these performances, however; her role is generally secondary to that of her husband. *Punch and Judy* performances featured other characters as well, many of whom are figures of authority and generally met a violent end at the hands of Punch.

Punch and Judy are characters who exist only within the boundaries of the puppet theatre, in performances where characters are portrayed by inanimate figures. Nonetheless, the history of the puppet theatre, and particularly that of *Punch and Judy*, is closely related to the history of more widely accepted, actor-based theatre, where characters are portrayed by human beings. While the two traditions share many common elements--such as the importance of characterization, direction, and design--the essential difference between actor-theatre and puppetry is the manner in which the performance is presented.

The approach of this study is threefold: first, a linear history of the development of *Punch and Judy* will be presented; secondly, both the internal and external elements that affect the structure of *Punch and Judy* will be explored; and finally, the power of the puppet theatre that allows the

transformation of profane material into that which is considered acceptable will be examined. The exploration of these areas makes possible a more complete vision of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition. Furthermore, through a synthesis of the information from these three distinct elements, the ultimate objective of this study can be achieved: an explanation of how these components promoted the development of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition.

Before the outset of the study itself, a review of the literature used to create this work is appropriate. The following survey will provide insight into the development of this study, as well as delineate the literary context from which this study evolved.

CHAPTER TWO

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

The literature explored for this work comes from a variety of areas of scholarship, however, all of the texts ultimately focused on the three individual areas dealt with in the study, history, structure, and audience response. The initial area explored for this work was the history of the puppet theatre, specifically regarding the development of the *Punch and Judy* tradition. The history of puppetry and actor-theatre are often inextricably tangled, therefore, much of the literature in this area focuses on traditional theatre history. Also, in an effort to create a more thorough context for the history and development of *Punch and Judy*, a number of works covering social and political history were examined. Ultimately, the goal of this component of the study was to ascertain a clear, linear account of the evolution of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition.

Bil Baird's *The Art of the Puppet* (1965) is generally regarded as the foremost text in the study of puppetry. In it, Baird offered an historical survey of puppetry's roots, starting with historical references to what are believed to be the earliest known puppets and examples of the first puppeteer in recorded history. Baird then traced the roots of puppetry form its earliest examples to its growth in various cultures. In tracking puppetry's growth, examples were given of the variety of puppetry performance styles around the world. *The Art of the Puppet*

used historical and ethnographic information to present its data regarding the international history and development of a variety of puppetry performance traditions. *The Art of the Puppet* provided detailed information regarding a number of cultures and puppetry traditions.

Speaight's *The History of the English Puppet Theatre* (1990) provided an extensive historical survey of the development of the puppet theatre in England. Speaight also offered a critical history of the development of *Punch and Judy*, beginning with its roots in the Dorian Mime of the Roman theatre, continuing through *Commedia dell'Arte* and the clown characters of the Victorian theatre. Speaight provided detailed examples of the staging and scripts of a variety of *Punch and Judy* performances [Note: In the body of the paper, Speaight's *The History of the English Puppet Theatre* will be cited as Speaight History].

Malkin's *Puppets: The Power of Wonder* (1995) provided examples of a number of theories regarding puppet theatre. *Puppets: The Power of Wonder* was a critical overview of a variety of traditions, one of which was the puppet theatre's ability to deal with the performance of the "profane." In discussing the puppet theatre's treatment of the profane, Malkin wrote, "[The satirical and profane] are not just the naughty, the overtly sexual, the scatalogical or purposefully offensive. It is, however, much deeper than that. 'Good' profanity turns piety on its head and in doing so, forces us to reconsider and possibly reevaluate our cultural norms" (32). *Puppets: The Power of Wonder* explored a variety of schools of thought regarding the performance of puppetry [Note: In the

body of the paper, Malkin's *Puppets: The Power of Wonder* will be cited as Malkin Power].

The Turkish Theatre (1933) by Martinovich provided an historical context regarding the development of the *Haial zill* performance tradition. It discussed the influence of Orthodox Islam on the establishment of a number of performance conventions in *Haial zill*, including its traditional shadow theatre performance. *The Turkish Theatre* provided a detailed historical survey regarding the development of the *Karagoz* and *Hajivat* characters, among others. Martinovich also discussed the subject matter of *Haial zill* performance and the audience reactions to it.

Arnott's *Plays Without People: Puppetry and Serious Drama* (1964) addressed audience perceptions of the performance of material not developed specifically for the puppet theatre. Arnott discussed his experience in presenting classical scripts with marionettes, and the audience reaction to the performances. *Plays Without People* offered a survey of contrasting perceptions of material dependent upon the manner in which it is performed.

Hartnoll's *The Theatre: A Concise History* (1985), contributed an historic overview of traditional, actor based theatre. It provided insight into the development of the *Punch and Judy* tradition, starting with Greek and Roman comedy, and continuing through *Commedia dell'Arte*. *The Theatre: A Concise History* also provided information regarding puppet theatre traditions in other European countries.

On The Art of the Theatre (1911) by Edward Gordon Craig illustrated some of the earliest critical thought regarding the role of the puppet in theatre. Craig's arguments regarding the puppet theatre created a basis for all other theorists that followed. This work laid a critical groundwork for the interpretation of the theoretical material dealt with in this study.

Humor and Comedy in Puppetry: A Celebration in Popular Culture (1987), edited by Dina and Joel Sherzer, is a collection of essays regarding the comic in puppet theatre. "Introduction," by Sherzer and Sherzer, provided a brief overview of a variety of numerous international traditions in puppet theatre.

Proschan's "The Cocreation of the Comic in Puppetry" discussed the roots of semiotic reading of the puppet theatre, beginning with Bogatyrev and the Prague Linguistic Circle. The essay then applied Bogatyrev's theories regarding the role of the audience in creating comedy to a 1980 *Punch and Judy* performance. This work provided an introduction to the application of semiotic theory to the puppet theatre.

Sherzer and Sherzer's "Verbal Humor in the Puppet Theatre" discussed recurring verbal tropes in international puppet theatre traditions. The tropes were analyzed in regard to any parallels that may have existed in geographically disparate performance traditions. This article provided information on structural similarities that exist in varying puppet theatre styles.

DeBoer's "Functions of the Comic Attendants (*Panasar*) in a Balinese Shadow Play" discussed the specific role of attendant characters in the Balinese

shadow puppet theatre. The influence of Hinduism on the characters was discussed, as well as recurring comic tropes in the performance texts. Ultimately, De Boer argued the importance of the attendant characters to the story arc of the performances.

Antonio Pasqualino's "Humor and Puppets: an Italian Perspective" discussed comic conventions used in the Italian puppet theatre from a structural perspective. This article also provided a brief history of the work of Otakar Zich and Petr Bogatyrev regarding folk puppetry. Finally, Pasqualino discussed the active role of the audience in the creation of humor in the puppet theatre.

The essays contained in *Humor and Comedy in Puppetry: A Celebration in Popular Culture* provided a variety of insights into the types of humor found in the puppet theatre internationally, and a theoretical base which explained the development of numerous comic conventions.

The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy (1925) provided a transcription of a performance by a puppeteer named Piccini done in 1827. Transcribed by John Payne Collier and illustrated by George Cruikshank, this was the earliest documentation of a *Punch and Judy* performance. While the accuracy of Collier's work can be called into question, this text served as the basis for countless other *Punch and Judy* performances. *The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy* provided an important historical perspective on the development of the standard *Punch and Judy* performance text. William Bates' *George Cruikshank: The Artist, The Humorist, and the Man* (1972) also

discussed the documentation of Piccini's performance text. The work featured a number of the illustrations done for the original transcription.

The Language of the Puppet (1990), edited by Laurence Kominz and Mark Levenson, was a collection of essays regarding the role of the puppet in modern theatre. The first of these essays, "Masked Emotions" by George Latshaw, dealt with the role of the human performer versus the role of the puppet figure in theatre. Latshaw discussed the specific differences between performances that feature human actors and those that feature puppet figures. Anecdotal examples were presented, and the strengths and weaknesses of each style of performance was argued.

"The Appeal of the Puppet: God or Toy," by Steve Tillis, looked at theories behind the development of the puppet theatre. Tillis argued that the roots of the modern puppet theatre lie in the use of articulated idol figures in religious ceremony [Note: In the body of the paper, "The Appeal of the Puppet: God or Toy," by Steve Tillis will be cited as Tillis Appeal].

Henryk Jurkowski's "The Mode of Existence of Characters of the Puppet Stage" attempted to define what makes a puppet. Movement, articulation, and speech are all analyzed. Ultimately, Jurkowski argued that the essence of a puppet figure lies in the perception of the audience.

"The Appeal of Mr. Punch" by John Styles analyzed a variety of approaches to humor in a traditional performance of *Punch and Judy.* Styles also reported on a study done in England that surveyed children regarding their

perception of humor in the puppet theatre. Styles discussed the humor in *Punch and Judy* from a structural perspective. "The Appeal of Mr. Punch" was a vital component to the research for this study.

The Language of the Puppet provided a cross-section of research regarding the puppet theatre. The essays dealt with puppetry from practical, historical, and theoretical standpoints.

The Last Days of Mr. Punch (1971) by D. H. Myers provided an historic overview of the development of *Punch and Judy* in England. Using a first person narrative, this work dealt with the evolution of the characters that would make up the dramatis personae of *Punch and Judy. The Last Days of Mr. Punch* also provided two *Punch and Judy* performance texts, both of which borrowed heavily form the Collier/Piccini text of *The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy.* These scripts were indicative of the evolution of the standard *Punch and Judy* text.

The Punch and Judy Show: History, Tradition and Meaning (1985) by Leach provided an in-depth analysis of the development of *Punch and Judy.* Initially, Leach surveyed the historical development of *Punch and Judy,* beginning with the tradition's roots in Italian *Commedia dell'Arte.* Leach then discussed the role of *Punch and Judy* in society. Punch was contrasted with other anti-heroic characters, and the exalted social status of these characters was discussed. Leach ultimately argued that the character Punch plays an important role, related to ritual and tradition, in society.

Leach's conviction was echoed in Anderson's *The Heroes of the Puppet Stage* (1923). Anderson provided a brief history of the development of *Punch and Judy* and addressed the role that the performance tradition played in society. Anderson also presented a concise *dramatis personae* for a standard *Punch and Judy* performance, as well as a performance text, written in narrative style.

F. Scott Regan and Bradford Clark's "Punch and Judy" from *Fools and Jesters in Literature, Art and History: A Bio-Bibliographic Sourcebook* (1998) provided a succinct overview of the history and social development of *Punch and Judy*. The article discussed *Punch and Judy's* development from *Commedia dell'Arte* through the late twentieth century. Regan and Clark argued that the character of Punch was a "man-of-the-people" because of his actions against his oppressors, and that because of this, Punch's murderous behavior is accepted. Regan and Clark theorized that Punch's acts of violence were understood by the audience as not being personal attacks against individual characters, but as attacks against the hegemony of oppression that members of a society endure.

Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor, Vol. 3* (1967) provided a first hand account of the life of the underclass during the Victorian era in England. Specifically, Mayhew documented a *Punch and Judy* performance by an itinerant puppeteer. The text of the performance was based heavily on the Collier/Piccini text featured in *The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy*. By documenting this performance, Mayhew provided information on a characteristic *Punch and Judy* performance of this time.

The Puppet Theater in America: A History 1524-1948 (1969) by Paul McPharlin provided insight into the development of the *Punch and Judy* tradition in the United States. McPharlin argued that the European tradition of itinerant *Punch and Judy* performers continued in the United States, as far west as California during the gold rush, and behind both Union and Confederate lines during the Civil War. McPharlin argued that while *Punch and Judy* performances never achieved the ubiquity that they enjoyed in England, they were still fairly common in the United States.

Punch and Judy performances in the United States were further documented, albeit briefly, in Osborne's *Williamsburg in Colonial Times* (1935). This work discussed the lives of itinerant performers, including *Punch and Judy* puppeteers, in the colonial era.

Catriona Kelly's *Petruska: The Russian Carnival Puppet Theatre* (1990) presented an historic overview of the development of Russian folk puppetry, focusing on the Punch-like character Petruska. Kelly contended that Petruska is a derivation of Punch, due to their physical similarities, the common structures of their performances, and the similarities of their anti-social behavior.

Punch and Judy: A History (1970) by George Speaight is the foremost work on the history of *Punch and Judy.* Speaight argued that the roots of the development of the *Punch and Judy* tradition lie in the improvised comedy of the Greeks and Romans. Speaight then traced the spread of the Dorian and Atellan performance styles throughout Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire.

Speaight contended that Greek comedy influenced itinerant *Commedia dell'Arte* performers. This evolution continued until, Speaight argued, one of the most popular *Commedia* characters, Pulcinella, gradually developed into Punch. Speaight's theory presented a linear evolution for the character Punch and the performance tradition that was built around it. While gaps did exist in Speaight's research, specifically regarding the Dark Ages, Speaight's rationale for his theory are as complete as possible [Note: In the body of the paper, Speaight's *Punch and Judy: A History* will be cited as Speaight Punch].

In *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1970), the titular diarist wrote about his encounter with a puppet theatre performance in 1662 London. This is the earliest documentation of a *Punch and Judy* performance in England. Pepys' diary made a substantial contribution to the study of the history of *Punch and Judy* by virtue of the author's precise documentation of when and where the performance occurred. This event was further documented in Montague Summers' *The Playhouse of Pepys* (1964). Summers supported the claims made in Pepys' diary, and provided more information regarding the possible identity of the puppeteer encountered by Pepys.

Punch and Judy Playtexts (1978), edited by Anthony Adams and Robert Leach, was a collection of modern *Punch and Judy* scripts. This assortment of performance texts played a significant role in illustrating the parallel structures of each of the scripts. *Punch and Judy Playtexts* was also beneficial in analyzing

each script's similarities to and differences from the Collier/Piccini text that has influenced most major *Punch and Judy* scripts since its original publication.

Beacham's *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* (1992) and Duckworth's *The Nature of Roman Comedy: A Study in Popular Entertainment* (1952) both offered information regarding Greek and Roman comedy traditions. The information provided in these works allowed exploration into the farthest traceable roots of the *Punch and Judy* traditions. Specifically, both works offered descriptions of characters and performances that had numerous similarities to *Punch and Judy*. This work was supported by *Masks, Mimes and Miracles: Studies in the Popular Theatre* (1963) by Allardyce Nicoll. Nicoll presented numerous descriptions of characters originating in the Greek and Roman theatre, who later evolved into the stock characters of *Commedia dell'Arte*. These works supported the theory of *Punch and Judy's* linear evolution, based in the theatre of pre-Christian Greece.

Other works which provided insight into the theatrical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome include; Brockett's *History of the Theatre* (1987), Southern's *The Seven Ages of the Theatre* (1961), and Cheney's *The Theatre: Three Thousand Years of Drama, Acting and Stagecraft* (1972). These three texts offered supporting evidence of the roots of the evolution of *Punch and Judy*.

Rollins' "A Contribution to the History of the English Commonwealth Drama" (1921) provided a narrative chronicling the efforts of the Lord Mayor of London's attempt to ban the puppet theatre during the Commonwealth era. The

article illustrated the reactions of both the general populace as well as that of government officials to the puppet theatre during this era of English history. The narrative clearly indicated that the puppet theatre was a theatre "of the people" in Commonwealth England.

Batchelder's *Rod-Puppets and the Human Theatre* (1947) offered an overview of the contrasting conventions between actor based theatre and the puppet theatre. Batchelder also attempted to define puppetry as part of larger traditional theatrical context. By examining psychological audience response, Batchelder argued that a puppet figure could immerse itself more successfully in a role than a human actor.

Byrom's *Punch and Judy: Its Origin and Evolution* (1972) provided a history that generally paralleled that which was offered by Speaight. However, Byrom focused a great deal of attention on the evolution of the *Punch and Judy* tradition in the twentieth century. Byrom discussed at length the manner in which *Punch and Judy* performances were becoming acceptable to the general public. Byrom argued that through this acceptance, the *Punch and Judy* genre as a whole was losing its "edge." It was Byrom's contention that in order for *Punch and Judy* performances to remain true, they must somehow exist on the fringes of society.

Edwards' "Punch and Judy" (1999) provided information on a number of *Punch and Judy* practitioners working in England at the end of the twentieth century. Comings' "Punch and Judy Book Banned" (1999) was a news report

that an English elementary school had recently removed a children's book about *Punch and Judy* from its library shelves because of the book's violence and anti-social message. The article indicated that there was an outcry against the ban, and that the book was promptly returned.

Malkin's *Traditional and Folk Puppets* (1977) provided insight into the development of *Punch and Judy*, specifically following the fall of Rome. Malkin argued that itinerant puppeteers, performing texts based loosely on Greek and Roman comedy, were a vital component in the evolution of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition.

Dagan's *Emotions in Motion: Puppets and Masks from Black Africa* (1990) provided information on folk puppetry traditions in Africa. This work illustrated the structural similarities found in various puppet theatre traditions in Africa and Europe. These similarities were indicative of inherent elements of the puppet theatre.

Julie Taymor: Playing with Fire (1995) by Blumenthal and Taymor presented groundbreaking work taking place in the late twentieth century puppet theatre. The text also presented a theoretical context in which Taymor's work occurs, as well as theory on the puppet theatre's role in modern society. This provided an opportunity to contrast social theories regarding the puppet theatre of other eras to the theories of the late twentieth century.

The next area explored was textual structure of Punch and Judy, focusing specifically on comedy and satire. Traditionally, *Punch and Judy* performances

had satirical elements as components of the plot. Whether they were direct attacks--such as Hitler appearing in the Devil's role during World War II--or general attacks, Punch's violence against Judy read as an assault on the oppressive hegemony of marriage. Quite often, satire drove the action of the performance. Gaining a greater understanding of the mechanics and history of the art of satire allowed insight into a major element in the structure of *Punch and Judy.*

Fletcher's *Contemporary Political Satire: Narrative Strategies in the Post-Modern Context* (1987) and Rose's *Parody/Meta-Fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction* (1979) provided a number of definitions of subclasses of satire. Rose and Fletcher also offered brief histories of the origins of satire in their respective areas of scholarship--literature and politics. Rose addressed the 15th century German ban on puppetry. Both of these works provided a great deal of specific information in regards to their areas of focus.

Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook (1989) by James Roose-Evans discussed the uses of puppetry in twentieth century experimental theatre. The political work of Bread and Puppet Theatre was discussed extensively. This work illustrated a context in which the puppet theatre remains an effective medium for satire in the twentieth century.

Worcester's *The Art of Satire* (1940) offered a number of theories regarding the role of the satirist in the successful creation of a work of satire.

Worcester also presented numerous definitions of satire. *The Art of Satire* addressed audience perception of a successful work of satire and the elements that are necessary in making it effective.

Elliot's *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, and Art* (1960), offered an international history of notable satirists, specifically in non-western nations. This provided a unique perspective in regards to the inherent conventions of satire. Elliot also analyzed a number of major literary satires, such as Moliere's *The Misanthrope*. Ultimately, Elliot attempted to define the role of the satirist in society.

The final areas to be explored were semiotics and audience reception theory. The question of how a puppet figure can perform violent, profane, and sacrilegious actions and still be readily accepted by an audience is at the heart of this study. Semiotics and audience response theory were examined in order to gain a greater understanding of how the audience perceives a puppet figure in performance, and why this transformative phenomenon occurs.

Tillis' "The Actor Occluded: Puppet Theatre and Acting Theory" (1996) presented the belief that it is the actor/puppeteer who produces the signs perceived by the audience. This is despite the audience's belief that it is the puppet that actually has the signification situated upon it during performance. This argument was contrasted with phenomenon referred to as "visibility" in *Ta-ziyeh* Iranian religious drama. This contrast was used as an example of shifting signification during performance, and the audience's reaction to the change

[Note: In the body of the paper "The Actor Occluded: Puppet Theatre and Acting Theory", by Steve Tillis will be cited as Tillis Actor].

De Toro's *Theatre Semiotics: Text and Staging in Modern Theatre* (1995) explored a variety of theatrical conventions, and their relation to the semiotic nature of performance. De Toro discussed the role of the actor and director in the creation of dramatic text, as well as the impact of social context on the audience's perception of the dramatic text. The role of the Icon, a sub-class of sign, was explored, providing an insight into the role of the puppet theatre in de Toro's theories on the semiotics of theatre, specifically the discussion of the actor's function as a sign of a sign of an object.

Carlson's *Theatre Semiotics: Signs of Life* (1990) discussed the role of verisimilitude in the theatre, and its influence on the audience's perception. Carlson also dealt with the significance of character names on the reaction of the audience. Carlson explored the iconic identity of the actor, which allowed the extension of the theory presented to include the puppet theatre. Carlson's belief that the actor acts as an icon of the character presented can, theoretically, be applied to the puppet theatre as well, in that the puppet is also perceived as an icon.

Seebok's *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics* (1994) dealt mostly with the semiotics of literature, but it did offer an introduction to the terms used in other works. Seebok offered the theory that only living things and their inanimate extensions undergo semiosis, a concept that is directly applicable to the puppet

theatre. Seebok also explored the definition of the Icon, illustrating the conventions that must be followed for an object to develop an Iconic identity.

Eagleton's "Structuralism and Semiotics" (1983), offered a history of structuralism and semiotics, contrasting it with the New Criticism, another critical style with roots in formalism. Eagleton traced the roots of structuralism and semiotics, beginning with the Prague Linguistic Circle in the early twentieth century. Eagleton argued that the structuralism's ultimate worth was the manner in which it allows a critic to analyze any inherent structures found in a work while disregarding the work's "meaning." This argument applied itself to the puppet theatre in an engaging fashion; structuralism and semiotics allowed one to criticize the structure of a performance rather than the text.

Hawkes' "Russian Formalism: The Knight's Move" (1977) discussed the Russian Formalist concept of *Ostranenie*, or "making strange." Hawkes argued that the "making strange" of an object in a creative way allowed the audience to examine the object without prejudices. The basis for this argument was further explained in Hawkes' earlier article "Saussure" (1977), in which the theories of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure were described. Saussure's work in linguistics was described, particularly his belief that language is made up of two different elements: "langue," the abstract language, and "parole," the vocal sounds which represent the abstract language. Hawkes argued that this differentiation allows a closer examination of both components of language, and is the foundation for structuralist and semiotic thought.

Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art (1992) by Steve Tillis presented a theory of "double vision" regarding audience perception of puppet figures in performance. Tillis argued that the audience perceives puppet figures both as animate and inanimate objects simultaneously. Tillis claimed that it is the decoding of this "double vision" that creates the appeal of the puppet theatre [Note: In the body of the paper *Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art* by Steve Tillis will be cited as Tillis Aesthetics].

This body of work presented a variety of unique perspectives on the individual components of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition. Through a synthesis of the data contained in these works, a clearer understanding of the history and structure of *Punch and Judy* will be provided.

The first area to be addressed is the history and development of *Punch and Judy.* An examination of the theatrical ancestry of this performance tradition will greatly clarify the characters and actions of *Punch and Judy.*

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF *PUNCH AND JUDY*

In *The Art of the Puppet*, Bil Baird asserts that Punch and Judy are the most famous and successful dramatic team in the English speaking world (93). If the criteria for success include social impact, longevity, and distinguished roots, it would be difficult to argue against Baird's statement. While the *Punch and Judy* form with which we are familiar today is only a few hundred years old, its roots extend "back to the religious plays of medieval England, and to the improvised farces of the Italian comedians, and to the folk festivals of pagan Greece" (Speaight Punch 140). The purpose of this history is to present both a general history of the puppet theatre in Europe, as well as specific, related instances in traditional theatre. The examination of these two elements will provide an overview of the development of the performance styles and individual characters in the *Punch and Judy* tradition with which we are familiar. This will also make evident that traditional puppet theatre is part of an ongoing folk culture that dates back to the dawn of civilization (Sherzer and Sherzer Introduction 1).

While the history of puppet theatre performance predates written history, a few clues do exist as to its nature. Archeologists in Egypt discovered what is believed to be one of the earliest known puppet figures: a 20-inch tall piece of statuary in the shape of a fertility god. This artifact was considered a puppet

because it is believed that it was paraded in public during the Egyptian festival of the god Osiris. The figure also had a 20-inch articulated phallus, which was manipulated by strings (Speaight History 24). Despite the lack of evidence of an organized puppetry performance tradition in Egypt, this figure is believed to be one of the earliest examples of what could be considered a puppet figure.

Another possible prehistoric puppet figure is a three-inch monkey figure found in the ruins of the city of Harrappa on the Indus River in India. The terra cotta figure had holes running vertically through its hands and feet. By varying the tension of a string passed through these holes, manipulation would have been possible with the figure (Baird 35).

While both the monkey and the fertility god fit the standard definition of a puppet, it is doubtful that either was used for traditional theatrical performance purposes. The first documented performance of puppet theatre occurred in Athens, Greece, in the fifth century BC at the theatre of Dionysus. The performance by Potheinos created some uproar: “Athenaeus, fondly remembered by Greek scholars for his revealing recital of Greek manners and customs, remarks with some disgust that the Athenians have permitted Potheinos ‘the string puller’ to play at the theatre of Dionysus, where once the noble tragedies of Euripides were performed” (Baird 39).

While it is unknown what the text or style of the performance was, some clues do exist. Potheinos was referred to as a *neuropastos*, or “string puller,” so one could assume that his performance style featured marionettes of some kind

(Baird 39). Baird contends that the text of Potheinos' performance was probably based on Dorian mime, a folk entertainment that originated in the city of Dionysia in the fifth century BC (41). Dorian mime was a performance style featuring an improvised performance text generally based on cultural myths (Brockett 23-4). It was notable for its continued inclusion of "low" comedy, such as "ribald jests . . . vomitings and bedbugs and manure-heaps and worse" (Cheney 72). Dorian mime was also the initial appearance of numerous stock characters that would pervade the development of European theatre for over a thousand years. Therefore, Potheinos' performance at the Theatre of Dionysus was vital, since it was the first documented appearance of the Dorian mime stock characters presented in puppet form, an event that wouldn't occur regularly again until the development of the *Punch and Judy* tradition roughly fifteen hundred years later. If one adopts Baird's hypothesis that the text of Potheinos' performance was based on Dorian mime, it could be assumed that this event was the genesis for the understanding that the puppet theatre could serve as an appropriate vehicle for the performance of comic tropes that were traditionally associated with actor-theatre (Nicoll 37).

After the rise of the Roman empire, Dorian mime evolved into Atellan Farce, or *fabula Atellana*, a tradition which originated in the city of Atella, near Naples (Duckworth 10). Atellan farce featured short texts, generally 300 to 400 verses of improvised farcical situations, obscene and topical humor, and music and song (Duckworth 11). The first major appearance of the Atellan style of

performance occurred in approximately 364 BC at the *Circus Maximus* in Rome as part of the *Ludi Romani*, an Olympic-like sporting event and festival (Cheney 82). The playwright Plautus counted the comic and performance traditions of Atellan farce as influences on his work (Beacham 31).

Also evolving were the tradition's catalog of stock characters, including Bucco, a comic slave; Maccus, a "country bumpkin;" Pappus, a comic old man; and Dossennus, a "sharp tongued hunchback" (Speaight History 14). While obvious parallels exist between Dossennus and Punch, there is very little evidence of any specific relation between the two; however, the circumstantial evidence is undeniable (Speaight Punch 11). Duckworth writes that "[in] many respects the plays [of Atellan farce] in situation and characters were not unlike Punch and Judy shows" (12).

As Rome fell in fifth century AD, theatrical performers--puppeteers included--were driven out of whatever employment they enjoyed by the invading Goths, who "despised the soft Mediterranean culture and all its arts" (Speaight History 27). This created a culture of itinerant performers who traveled from "Court to Court and castle to castle" to support themselves (Speaight History 14). These performers not only kept alive the stock characters of Atellan farce, but also guaranteed the continued existence of theatre as a whole (Speaight Punch 9). One area where Atellan farce continued to thrive after the fall of Rome was Constantiople, where, it could be argued, the Atellan stock characters influenced the creation of the characters of the *Haial zill* shadow puppet theatre (Nicoll 214).

As Catholicism began to dominate the European culture of the day, the Church spoke out against the theatre. At the Council of Elvira in AD 300, it was decreed that performers would be denied membership in the Church; in 398, at the Council of Carthage, Pope Eusebius threatened to excommunicate any Catholic who missed church to attend a theatrical performance (Nicoll 136).

While there is no reliable historical documentation of puppeteers being among the itinerant performers who survived the fall of Rome and avoided entanglements with the church, some anecdotal evidence does exist. In AD 500, the Bishop of Alexandria refers to "little wooden figures . . . moved by some kind of remote control in the actions of dancing" (Speaight History 28).

Historical documents reveal little about the puppet theatre over the next 700 years, but, during the thirteenth century, both religious and secular puppetry were popular, and portable booth-style puppet stages began to appear in market places and church squares (Malkin Traditional 18). It was also at this time that the Abbot of Cluny "denounced puppets as smacking of idolatry" (Baird 65), an accusation that would remain with the performance tradition until the fourteenth century, when the Council of Tarragona denounced the puppet theatre (Nicoll 167).

In the eleventh century, the use of drama in Mass became widespread, generally to illustrate the Nativity or the Stations of the Cross. However, these simple liturgical dramas were quickly elaborated upon, creating what became the foundation for Mystery plays. These performances soon attempted to "present

the whole of the Scriptural story from the Creation of the World and the Fall of the Angels down to the Harrowing of Hell and the coming of the Antichrist" (Nicoll 177).

The expansion of religious drama eventually facilitated the absorption of the remaining vestiges of Atellan farce into the Mystery plays. Notably, one of the central characters in the religious dramas was a character symbolically named Vice. It is clear that Vice is an early precursor to Punch, as he was referred to as a "rogue and sinner . . . .a comical buffoon . . . quarrelsome, a braggart, and always getting into fights" (Speaight Punch 24). While these qualities are true of any number of dramatic characters, Speaight presents a dialogue between Vice and the devil that is undeniably similar to the Beadle trope that is standard in the traditional *Punch and Judy* text:

> Lucifer: All hail, O noble prince of hell!
> Vice: All my dame's cow's tails fell down the well.
> Lucifer: I will exalt thee above the clouds.
> Vice: I will salt thee and hang thee in shrouds.
> Lucifer: Thou art the enhancer of my renown.
> Vice: Thou art Hance, the hangman of Calais town.

Like Punch, Vice was often hanged, rode the devil like a horse, and was ultimately carried off to Hell (24-5). With the similarities in action, description, and language, the circumstantial evidence linking Vice to Punch is incontrovertible. This relationship provides a convincing association between Punch and the surviving stock characters of Atellan farce.

At this time, puppet theatre traditions were being absorbed into religious services all over Europe, most notably in France, England, and Poland (Baird 67). This met with mixed results; Baird writes:

> It's difficult to maintain the solemnity of a service if you're getting laughs. Little by little the comic characters and scenes injected to lighten the [services] became more and more outrageous . . . [shepherds] became rude comics and buffoons. Noah's wife became a shrew. New, ludicrous devils were invented to carry screaming sinners off into the fire. (67)

One of the most graphic representations of this phenomenon occurred in France in 1443 at the Mysteries of Dieppe, a religious festival given in honor of the Virgin Mary's Assumption (Batchelder 75). The cast of the performance included puppet figure representations of God, various angels, the Virgin Mary, and a clown type named Grimpe-sur-l'Ais (Malkin Traditional 18-9). The event is described in Batchelder:

> Priests and laymen took part along with figures animated by wires and springs . . . God . . . represented as an old man, sat on a throne placed against an azure background sprinkled with stars. Four life sized angels were suspended in the air beside him, beating their wings in time to the music of the organ . . . During the whole performance, a buffoon called Grimpe-sur-l'Ais darted here and there on the Tribune. He applauded when the Virgin ascended, and finally hid himself under the feet of God, with only his head showing. This character amused the people immensely, especially the children. (76)

Grimpe-sur-l'Ais certainly fits into the populist, anti-authoritarian model of Vice and Punch. While there may be no direct textual connection linking Grimpe-sur-l'Ais with Punch, the two possess a number of similar character elements, such as a lack of respect for authority and a propensity toward inappropriate behavior. Ultimately, by the fifteenth century, the Protestant Church banned

puppetry in its services. Another ban, this one from the Catholic Church, quickly followed (Speaight History 36).

While some artists chose to focus their work on the religious drama of the day, an itinerant community of performers still existed, especially among puppeteers. In twelfth to fourteenth century Europe, traveling puppeteers were known as *kobolds* or *tattermen*, usually performing with hand puppets (Malkin Traditional 18). One of these performers, Perrinet Sanson, performed throughout western Europe in the late fourteenth century with a company consisting of his wife, his children, a horse, a goat and a bear, as well as puppets. Speaight writes that Sanson's performance most likely consisted of "coarse songs, imitating bird cries, and showing tricks of learned dogs," as well as puppetry (History 28). Sanson and other traveling puppeteers of the day were most likely performing using booth-style stages. According to illustrations in a Flemish text dating from 1340, the traditional booth-style stage was being used for hand puppet performance (Hartnoll 33).

The first documented puppet theatre performance in England occurred in 1561. A listing in an accounting journal belonging to Lady Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, documents payments made to two puppeteers (Speaight History 54). While the text of their performance is absent, one can judge from the era in which it occurred that the puppeteers were probably itinerant performers, and that their performance text was not too distantly related to other itinerant performers working on the European continent.

As the fifteenth century progressed, the popularity of religious drama decreased. This created a vacuum in the population's desire for live performance that was soon filled by *Commedia dell'Arte* (Speaight History 16). *Commedia dell'Arte* was an Italian performance style based on improvisation around standard scenarios, called *lazzi*, using masked stock characters, or *zanni,* many of whom were similar to the characters that originated in the Dorian and Atellan traditions centuries before (Regan and Clark 363). Generally, *Commedia dell'Arte* performance troupes were itinerant, but on occasion they were attached to a court (Speaight Punch 10). Among the stock characters used in *Commedia dell'Arte* were the *Innamorati*, the young lovers; *Pantalone*, an old merchant from Venice; *Dottore*, a pompous lawyer from Bologna; *Capitano*, a vain, cowardly soldier; as well as numerous comic servants such as *Scapino* and *Burattino* (Speaight Punch 10-11). It was often the main function of these "rustic characters" to collect money from the audience (Byrom 3). However, of all the *Commedia dell'Arte zanni*, *Pulcinella*, a relatively minor character, had the most profound effect on the development of the *Punch and Judy* tradition.

The character *Pulcinella*, or "little chicken," first gained prominence in approximately 1600 with a portrayal by a performer named Silvio Fiorillo (McPharlin 116). The name "*Pulcinella*" was derived from the character's tendency to imitate a rooster when excited (Anderson 122). *Pulcinella* first appeared as an unsophisticated "[p]rimeval peasant," but grew more cunning as his popularity increased (Speaight History 17). Physically, the character wore the

traditional garb of a peasant with a white shirt belted loosely around his pants. *Pulcinella* also had a nose that was "slightly--but not ridiculously--hooked" (Speaight Punch 12). *Pulcinella* was referred to as a "glutton, a boaster, a rascal, and a lover of women [whose] folly was always mingled with a certain amount of shrewdness" (Nicoll 290).

Due to the improvisatory nature of the *Commedia dell'Arte lazzi*, the *Pulcinella* character was continually evolving, yet his intent was consistent: to satirically attack the existence of traditional power structures. Portrayed as a poor man, *Pulcinella* would satirize the rich (Pasqualino 20). Often seen as a henchman to an incompetent doctor, *Pulcinella* attacked the medical establishment (Speaight History 21). The character not only gained a reputation as an anti-authoritarian, but also due to Silvio Fiorillo's portrayal, developed a following among the public (Nicoll 291).

Pulcinella's satirical humor generally fell into four comic models. The first model, the Innocent, created humor through playing with sounds and words, and disregarding their literal meaning. This would often be accomplished through the use of puns. In the comic Sexual model, *Pulcinella* displayed ambiguous sexual behavior, represented himself as a penis, and discussed bodily functions. The Aggressive model was carried out through unrestrained violence, degrading, caricaturing, and killing while facing no consequences. The final model, the Cynical, satirized personages and institutions of status that commanded authority and respect (Pasqualino 20-1).

In 1673, the *Pulcinella* character was first introduced in England, an action that would have a profound influence on the development of Punch (Speaight History 17). Scholars agree that Punch is a derivation from the *Pulcinella* character introduced by Italian *Commedia dell'Arte* troupes performing in England (Speaight Punch 131).

The introduction of a comic anti-authoritarian hero into the English puppet theatre occurred at an opportune moment. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, puppet theatres, both itinerant and permanent, were popular attractions throughout England (Speaight Punch 33). The clown characters were also enjoying popularity on the Elizabethan stage. These characters, usually servants or rustics, were ubiquitous on the Elizabethan stage, and are best exemplified in Shakespeare's Dogberry and Bottom (Speaight History 47-8). The popularity of seventeenth century clown performers continued to increase, both in the traditional theatre as well as with itinerant companies, until the English Civil War.

Led by Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan members of Parliament, the Commonwealth government issued the first Law of Suppression on September 2, 1642. This law called for a prohibition on all public performances to "avert the wrath of God" (Rollins 270-1). The punishment called for in the Law of Suppression was severe: "any player discovered in the exercise of his vocation was to be whipped" (Speaight Punch 38). Despite this risk, the ban on performances was actively challenged, which often led to soldiers raiding

theatres, placing the performers under arrest (Rollins 277). Ironically, this ban did not include puppet theatre, so during the 18-year reign of the Commonwealth, "the only theatre in England was puppet theater. Live actors petitioned, theater owners complained. [Characters in the puppet theatre] raged, more depraved than ever. The [Puritans] couldn't be bothered" (Baird 71).

This was a watershed for the puppet theatre in England; the Puritans' perception of the puppet theatre as harmless enough to ignore provided performers with an opportunity to lampoon the current ruling class. For example, soon after his death, the actions of John Warner, Lord Mayor of London were portrayed in puppet theatre performances. On August 23, 1647, Warner, inspired by the Law of Suppression, attempted to physically remove puppet theatre performers from Bartholomew Fair. Warner's actions were documented in an anonymous folk ballad called *The Dagonizing of Bartholomew Square*, which includes the couplet: "Ill have no puppet-playes, quoth he/The harmelesse mirth displeaseth me" (Rollins 281). Warner died less than a year after his ban on puppet performances, and soon after a broadsheet appeared titled "An Elegy on The Timely Death of John Warner, Late Lord Maior." It read:

> Here lies Lord Major (sic) under this Stone
> That last Bartholomew-faire, no Puppets would owne,
> But next Bartholomew-faire, who liveth to see
> Shall view my Lord Mayor, a Puppet to bee. (Rollins 283)

Puppeteers returned to Bartholomew Fair, and Warner quickly appeared as a character in the very performances that he had attempted to ban. In the action of

these performances, the Lord Mayor character was carried off to Hell by the Devil (Baird 71).

The anecdote concerning Lord Mayor Warner illustrates two points. First, that the puppet theatre had established itself as a medium for the delivery of social satire; and, that a devil character existed in the seventeenth century English puppet theatre. Ultimately, Charles II returned to the throne in 1660, bringing about the end of the Commonwealth government, and its prohibition on public performance. The repeal of the ban created an atmosphere conducive to the co-mingling of a number of elements, such as the puppet theatre's satirical texts, the existence of a Devil character, the introduction of *Pulcinella* and other *Commedia dell'Arte* stock characters to England, and the itinerant puppet theatre's use of hand puppet figures and booth-style stages. This circumstance provided the necessary components for the creation of *Punch and Judy.*

According to his celebrated diary, on May 9, 1662, after spending the afternoon in an alehouse, Samuel Pepys wandered into Covent Garden and "[t]hence to see a puppet play that is within the rayles there, which is the best that I ever saw, and great resort of gallants" (Pepys 80). The show, performed by puppeteer Pietro Gimonde of Bologna, Italy (Byrom 5) that had impressed Pepys featured an "amusing . . . hook-nosed clown known as Polichinella" (Speaight Punch 40). Pepys continued to enjoy the puppet theatre, claiming that a performance he attended in 1667 provided "three times more sport [than a production of] *The Surprisal* at the Theatre Royal" (Summers 113). Over time,

the name of the main anti-authoritarian figure of the English puppet theatre evolved, starting as Polichinella, an obvious derivation of *Pulcinella.* Also known as Polichinelli, Pollcinella, Punchinanella, and Punchinello, by 1668 the character was simply called Punch (Speaight History 73).

For the next three decades Punch evolved from an imitation of a *Commedia dell'Arte zanni* into a character with its own circumstances and conventions. In 1701, Punch and Judy made cameo appearances in Martin Powell's puppet theatre production of *The Creation of the World.* The performance, which depicted the biblical story of creation, featured a heated discussion between Punch and Noah concerning the weather, and Punch and Judy jigging up the ramp onto the ark (Byrom 6). It was during this time that Punch performers began to enjoy a growing popularity. In 1710, the English royal court of Queen Anne presented a Punch performance for four Iroquois Indian chiefs visiting from America (Anderson 91). That same year, a letter appeared in *The Spectator*, quoted in Baird, from a minister complaining that puppet theatre performances featuring Punch near his church were drawing people away from his services (100).

It was also during this time that Punch's supporting cast of characters began to become standardized. Punch's shrewish wife, previously known as Joan, became Judy in the 1720s (Leach 24). By the early eighteenth century, the typical performance consisted of four characters: Punch, Judy, the devil, and either the Doctor or the Constable. Speaight writes that "[g]radually upon this

foundation a regular order of incidents grew up and new characters appeared; gradually an accepted 'drama' was adopted by all the showmen" (Punch 78).

The action of *Punch and Judy* was not only a result of its characters, but was also colored by the social and economic climate of the day. Leach writes:

> *Punch and Judy* with its wife-murder, its hanging and its devil, was molded during the vast upheavals between 1760 and 1820. Essentially, what happened was that the old culture, which depended on custom and communiality, was disturbed and then destroyed in the breakup of the old economic system. In its place there sprouted, awkwardly and haphazardly, what may legitimately be called a working class culture. *Punch and Judy* was born as part of that. (30)

Part of *Punch and Judy's* roots in the culture of the working class was the motivation to lampoon the upper class. In 1807, a member of Parliament, Sir Francis Burdett, appeared as a character in a London *Punch and Judy* performance. Known for his womanizing and carousing in real life, the Burdett character seduced Judy, and in doing so, won Punch's vote (Leach 44). Correspondingly, according to illustrations of the day depicting *Punch and Judy* performances, adult audience members consistently outnumbered children. This, combined with the appearance of topical characters such as Burdett or Admiral Nelson, can lead one to assume that a great deal of the humor in the *Punch and Judy* texts was geared toward adults (Leach 33).

Another element of Punch's anti-authoritarian stance was his liberal use of puns. Like *Pulcinella*'s Innocent comic model, Punch often demonstrated a dynamic use of language that disregarded the meaning of words and played with their sounds. This use of puns identified Punch as a "common man," as Leach

writes, "[I]f correct usage [of language] is a means of oppression, the pun is a bid for liberty" (26).

As the 1820s progressed, the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition enjoyed a uniquely accessible popularity. While other styles of performance were restricted to conventional theatre spaces, such as the *Ombres Chinoises*, the traditional Chinese shadow puppetry that was also popular in England at the time, *Punch and Judy* remained steadfastly populist (Speaight History 142). *Punch and Judy* performances were common sights throughout England, both on London street corners and in rural fairgrounds (Leach 48). This popularity resulted in the first literary attempt to document the *Punch and Judy* phenomena.

In 1827, publisher Septimus Prowett commissioned writer John Payne Collier and illustrator George Cruikshank to notate a *Punch and Judy* performance in order to produce a "definitive text" (Speaight Punch 80). Collier and Cruikshank recorded a performance by an Italian puppeteer named Piccini, who had "perambulated [around London] for the last forty or fifty years (Bates 43). As Piccini performed, Collier took notes on the dialogue as Cruikshank stopped the action of the show in order to sketch Piccini's figures. Cruikshank did 24 separate sketches to illustrate the performance (Bates 43). The illustrations were dubbed "fine examples of this great artist's work . . . they have captured in a rare and delightful manner the quality of 'woodeness' in the figures . . .these figures really do look like puppets, and really do strike the attitudes that are natural to glove puppets" (Speaight Punch 80).

While Cruikshank's illustrations were considered accurate representations of Piccini's performance, there was some debate over the accuracy of Collier's text. Speaight writes that Collier's *Punch and Judy* text had a "slightly literary flavour and seems too wordy for the conditions of a single street performance" (Punch 81). While it is unknown whether Collier did, in fact, take certain literary liberties with the text of Piccini's performance, a great amount of circumstantial evidence exists that would indicate that he may have. It was later revealed that Collier had been imprisoned at one point for unethical behavior when employed as a journalist. Subsequently, Collier published a folio of Shakespeare's plays with "contemporary annotations;" however, it was later disclosed that these annotations were bogus and had "been inked in over rubbed-out pencillings" (Leach 14). While this does not indicate that Collier actually did augment Piccini's text, Speaight writes, "[t]here is, I think, no doubt that with *Punch and Judy* Collier first experimented with the forgery of literary evidence . . . he saw how easy it was, and an intoxicating sense of power and importance swept over him; he turned to his . . . work as a *creative* artist" (82).

Despite whatever ethical quandaries may have existed with Collier's text, it was published in 1828. Later that year, a second edition was released with new information "discovered" by Collier. Ultimately *The Tragical Comedy or the Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy* was reprinted seven more times over the next 50 years in England (Speaight Punch 80). Also, due to the lack of international copyright laws, an identical text was published in the United States

in 1828 under the title *Punch and Judy, A Whimsically Queer, Tragically Operatical Comedi.* The author was listed as Rev. J. Humbug'em.

Regarding the themes of the Piccini and Collier text, McPharlin writes:

> The Collier plot bears a relation to medieval morality plays and, indeed, American gangster movies of the 1930's. In a fit of temper Punch commits a murder that he must cover by a succession of further killings; finally he is confronted by the Devil . . . Film producers would not dare to let a gangster go unpunished. Puppeteers faced this delicate situation boldly . . . they knew Punch should be sent to Hell. But with insight worthy of a later day, they knew that an audience identified with Punch, not his victims, and had a glorious time helping him whack. It would have thrown cold water on the audience after this to have a "proper" ending and show that the audience had been in the wrong. (126)

McPharlin brings up two important points. First, the argument that puppeteers were aware of the structural need for Punch to emerge triumphant. According to McPharlin, performers realized Punch's role as an "everyman," which absolved him of his responsibility as a murderer. Punch's defeat of the Devil is the choice that is the most active, and would provide the audience with the most satisfaction; Punch conquering the Devil is inevitable.

McPharlin's second point is that the plot of *Punch and Judy* is an archetype. The structure of *Punch and Judy* that is echoed in both medieval morality plays and American gangster movies is a universal theme that is as old as storytelling itself. This is indicative of *Punch and Judy*'s roots in an oral storytelling tradition, which may ultimately indicate that the elusive "source" of the text in non-existent. There is a possibility, due to the oral storytelling roots, that there is no original "root" text for *Punch and Judy* (Leach 159).

The time following the publication of Collier and Cruikshank's script was significant period for the development of traditional *Punch and Judy* performances. As the 1830s progressed, *Punch and Judy* continued to appear regularly on urban street corners in London (Speaight Punch 79), as well as in fairgrounds in more rustic environs (Leach 64). It was also during this period that *Punch and Judy*'s *dramatis personae* began to come into its own. Hector the Horse, Judy's ghost, and the Negro all appeared in 1828 (Leach 51). These characters were followed in the next decade by Scaramouche, Joey, and the Baby among others (Mayhew 43). Correspondingly, during this period, according to Mayhew, a puppeteer named Pike introduced the first live Toby to the *Punch and Judy* stage (45).

While *Punch and Judy* is considered an English puppet theatre tradition, it has made numerous appearances internationally, under a variety of guises. The German version of Punch is *Hanswurst*, or literally translated, "Jack Sausage" (Anderson 295). *Hanswurst* is a "a falsetto-voiced, clumsy, infantile booby, perpetually infatuated" (Hartnoll 135). In the fifteenth century performances featuring Hanswurst were banned in Germany briefly due to their "immoral" nature (Rose 32). The Russian *Petruska* is "a very similar character (to Punch), and many of his existing scripts follow a plot pattern similar to that of Punch," including battles with the Devil and Hangman (Mayhew 367). *Petruska* remained popular in Russia until the revolution of 1917 (Speaight Punch 143). In the Egyptian puppet theatre, *Taif al Xiial* is an unruly character who speaks in

verse and greatly enjoys drink and the company of women (Anderson 146-8). France's *Guignol,* namesake of the *Grande Guignol* style of theatre, first appeared in Lyons. Like Punch, *Guignol* has a recurring cast of characters, including *Madelon*, his wife, and *Gnafron*, his sidekick (Speaight Punch 144). During the French Revolution, performances featuring *Guignol* being guillotined were regularly given near where prisoners were publicly executed "to appease the blood thirsty spectators" (Anderson 286).

While all other Punch-like characters were hand puppets, the Turkish version of Punch is a shadow puppet. *Karagoz*, which literally translated means "black-eyed," is the main character of the Turkish *Haial zill* shadow theatre (Martinovich 38). *Karagoz*, like Punch, is an anti-hero who "seems to be very naive, simple and crude . . . possesses great wit and cunning. He laughs and jokes at everybody . . . is often punished for [his behavior], but to no avail. [At the end of most stories, *Karagoz*] escapes from danger, and . . . makes a fool of everybody" (Martinovich 41).

Punch first appeared in the United States on December 12, 1738, in Williamsburg, VA according to the *Virginia Gazette*. At the time, Williamsburg was a popular stop for all sorts of itinerant performers and "strolling players," including acrobats, sword dancers, actors, as well as puppeteers (Osborne 119). In 1800, a puppeteer named Hoyt was performing in New England with "Captain Punch" (McPharlin 116). The Collier text arrived in the United States soon after its publication in 1828, the same year as *Punch and Judy*'s appearance in New

York City on September 4-9 at the Park theatre, performed by a puppeteer named Matthews (McPharlin 116-7). McPharlin writes that due to its portability, *Punch and Judy* had "crossed the continent and got to California about 1850; it played in all sorts of unlikely places, such as behind the battle lines on both sides of the Civil War" (155).

By the 1850s, *Punch and Judy* was performed regularly in the United States in public spaces, and established a presence in dime museums and circus sideshows (McPharlin 126). While *Punch and Judy* was never as popular in the United States as it was in England, by the end of the nineteenth century, performances were common on the beach at Coney Island. In 1895, Harry Houdini worked as a *Punch and Judy* puppeteer for Welch's Circus (McPharlin 131-3).

The 1850s were a transitional time for *Punch and Judy* performances in England. While Punch was considered an "aesthetic revolt against the smug stuffiness of Victorian culture" (Leach 91), performances were beginning to occur more frequently in private homes as entertainment for children's parties. This change forced performers to alter their material from the topical, political and scatalogical to something more appropriate for children (Byrom 20). Also, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, the English working week was standardized, and statutory holidays were introduced. This made urban public performances less economically feasible, so many *Punch and Judy* performers relocated to seaside resorts, where the newly emancipated English working class gathered

on weekends and holidays (Leach 97-99). As well as playing tourist resorts and beaches, some *Punch and Judy* puppeteers began performing in Music Halls and traditional theatres in the Victorian and Edwardian periods (Leach 104-5). This continued until the advent of motion pictures in the early twentieth century (McPharlin 139). This move, further complicated by twentieth century "motor traffic and town planning" spelled the end for urban performers; this also "tended to reduce the satirical or subversive elements" in *Punch and Judy* performances (Leach 126). The combination of the public's perception of *Punch and Judy* as children's entertainment, and the decentralization of metropolitan population bases, brought the era of Punch as an urban-based satirist effectively to a close.

Punch and Judy performances continued in England after the turn of the century, however, not with the ubiquity with which they had appeared decades earlier. While still popular, the arrival of radio, film, and television eventually eclipsed traditional *Punch and Judy* performances. *Punch and Judy* did still manage to maintain a place in the public's consciousness; during World War II, Punch was featured wearing an army uniform and a gasmask alongside Joey as an army cook and Hitler as the hangman, with cameos by Churchill, Stalin, and Mussolini.

As the twentieth century approaches its end, *Punch and Judy* traditions continue both in England and in the United States. In 1962, over 100 performers gathered in London's Covent Garden to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Pepys report of the first *Punch and Judy* performance in England (Edwards 1).

Despite this honor, the tradition still draws its share of controversy; in February of 1998, a public library in England pulled a book on *Punch and Judy* off its shelves citing “sickening violence” and potential for corruption (Comings 1). Ultimately, true to Punch’s populist roots, the book was replaced after great public outcry.

The *Punch and Judy* performance tradition has always been a lightning rod for controversy, beginning with its earliest roots, when Potheinos the Greek *neuropastos* was criticized for sullying the exalted Theatre of Dionysus, until the end of the twentieth century, when *Punch and Judy* was accused of corrupting children. However, Punch has survived over 2000 years of abuse and criticism; “Mr. Punch has not been carried down the centuries dependent on the approval of academics, pundits, commentators and leaders, he is ‘one of the people’ and has been truly kept alive by popular acclaim” (Edwards 1).

CHAPTER FOUR

STRUCTURE: INHERENT LIMITATIONS OF THE PUPPET THEATRE

In *The Art of the Puppet*, Bil Baird writes "Punch is . . . a hand puppet and that more than anything else has shaped his character . . . Long before he had his present form or name, some ancestor of Punch was fighting, beating, picking things up and throwing them, as only a hand puppet can do" (96). The argument presented by Baird, that the limitations of performing with hand puppets was instrumental in the development of the canon of *Punch and Judy* texts, carries with it a great deal of weight. It is difficult not to notice the similarities in numerous *Punch and Judy* texts: the episodic nature, the use of simple hand props, even the similar design of the figures. These can all be related to the inherent limitations of working with glove style hand puppets (Leach 162). There are numerous reasons why hand puppets are attractive to puppeteers: ease of construction and manipulation, ability to use props easily, and an immediacy in performance. Yet there are numerous limitations, such as figure size, ability to have no more than two characters on stage simultaneously, limited mobility/manipulation, and pacing difficulty when switching puppets. All of these positive and negative elements come into play when dealing with the structure of the *Punch and Judy* performance text.

One of the most obvious elements of a *Punch and Judy* text is its episodic nature. This is primarily due to the limitation of only being able to have two characters on stage at any given moment. Since the puppeteer has only two hands, and the Punch figure is already occupying one of them, there can only be one other figure onstage (McPharlin 143). Generally, Punch remains onstage for the entire action of the story in order to minimize any "dead time" where the stage would be empty. Speaight writes, "[t]o keep the action going, and avoid leaving the stage empty, it is useful for the chief character to remain in sight of the audience . . . while a succession of other characters is introduced" (Punch 77). Also, because of this convention, and due to the fact that the majority of people are right handed, Punch usually remains on stage right for most of the performance (McPharlin 143).

Design choices are also inherently limited with hand puppets. Due to their style of manipulation, hand puppets are always roughly the size and shape of a human hand, with little variation possible. Speaight writes that the "accepted English tradition of manipulation is for the first finger to be placed in the puppet's neck, and the second and thumb in the arms" (Punch 118). Traditionally, hand puppets such as the ones used in *Punch and Judy* productions are approximately 12 inches tall (Speaight Punch 117).

The violence in *Punch and Judy* can also be traced to the style of puppet used. Because of their design, hand puppets are "ideally suited for picking up and grasping objects, such as the baby or the hangman's gallows, and wielding

weapons, such as Punch's [stick]" (Mayhew 367). This ability to grasp, throw, and hit obviously impacted the development of Punch. These abilities allowed the characters to achieve their objectives in a physical, active way. Inarguably, a performance where the puppets wrestled and struck one another was more popular than one in which the movements of the figures are at times static, and verbal action is foregrounded, such as in the marionette theatre. Speaight writes that Punch hits the others with his stick "because glove puppets are good at handling little properties" (Punch 79). This explanation that "Punch beats the other characters because he can" is simple, however, it cannot be discounted concerning the development of traditional *Punch and Judy* texts.

Beyond the design of the figures, the traditional booth-style puppet stage has also had an impact on the development of *Punch and Judy*. Designed for maximum portability, the traditional Punch booth consists of, "a framework of wood covered by cloth curtains. At the bottom of the proscenium opening, which should be just above the head of the standing puppeteer, is a shelf that projects outward toward the audience" (McPharlin 142). The raised position of the puppet figures in a booth stage enhances audience sight lines for the performance and allows the figures to "dominate a crowd" in this elevated position (Southern 158). The shelf that "projects outward" is called the playboard, upon which props are placed and live Tobys sit. In addition, the playboard also acts as the stage floor. McPharlin continues; "on a row of hooks at a convenient height inside the booth the puppets are hung upside down . . . [the puppeteer] plunges his hand into the

hollow costume, wriggles his thumb into one arm and his second finger into the other, and brings the puppet up. Entrances and exits are always vertical" (143-3). The booth stage affords other benefits as well, such as a providing backdrop for the action and a storage space for props and puppets (Southern 160).

The limited entrances of the figures affects the structure of the show. Since Punch is generally always on stage, the convention of other characters "visiting" him is established. This also limits the amount of traveling that Punch can do, since he is generally restricted to the stage right area. Furthermore, since the figures must enter and exit from below, the ability to introduce flying characters is negated, due to the fact that it is physically impossible for a puppeteer to manipulate the flying figure.

It is obvious that hand puppet theatre suffers from a number of limitations. However, it is clear that, over time, Punch performers have explored these challenges and allowed them to affect the structure of the *Punch and Judy* script, as well as the characterizations of the puppet figures.

CHAPTER FIVE

STRUCTURE: THE *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* AND PLOTS OF *PUNCH AND JUDY*

Early in the 19th century, the typical *Punch and Judy* show had only four characters: Punch, Judy, the Devil, and either the Doctor or the Constable. However, as performers developed new comic bits over time, new characters were introduced into the accepted *Punch and Judy* canon (Speaight Punch 78). While it would be impossible to document every character that has appeared in the ever-changing *Punch and Judy* text, there are 11 that appear with enough regularity to be considered standard. Of these 11, it is Punch, Judy, the Hangman, and Devil that appear the most frequently (Leach 54). This is a brief *dramatis personae* of *Punch and Judy.*

Punch: Physically, Punch has a "large curved belly . . . a large hooked nose (and) a hunched back, often represented as merely a curved fin in the middle of his back. Almost inevitably, Punch's mouth is pulled back, exposing his white teeth in a wicked grin" (Regan 364). His chin is "turned up and his nose turned down" and he wears "his red and green coat and his red and yellow pointed hat" (Anderson 49). Punch's hooked nose is "the ornament to his face" (Myers 54), which Mayhew supposes is "red through drink. He'd look nothing if his nose were not deep scarlet. Punch used to drink hard one time" (51). Punch

is also the only hand puppet figure in the canon to consistently have legs attached to his body (Speaight Punch 117-8).

Punch is "the prince of puppets" (Leach 36), a "satirist and social critic" (Regan 365), "an original creative personality" (Speaight Punch 89), and "a charming villain" (Anderson 72). "Mr. Punch is never perturbed by pangs of conscience" (Batchelder 287), has "absolute egotism" (Leach 35), and is "cunning, and up to all kinds of antics . . . with good and bad morals attached" (Mayhew 50). He is also "bestial [with] no scruples whatever . . . exceedingly cruel" (Myers 4), and "has got . . . morals, but very few of them" (Mayhew 49). He also, according to the canon of *Punch and Judy* texts, is a spouse-, child-, and animal-abusing serial killer, whose only friend is a clown even more deranged than he is. If this is all that could be gathered regarding Punch's character, his historical popularity would certainly give one pause. Yet in *The Art of the Puppet*, Bil Baird writes that Punch is "rough, brutal and vindictive . . . vain lecherous and deceitful, yet he is one of the people, and that is why he remains popular" (103). The title of being "one of the people" allows Punch a great amount of freedom to rage against oppressors, either real or perceived. Also, Punch's violence is hardly random--it is only focused against those who frustrate him directly, starting with family (dog, wife, baby), then radiating outward to society and law (Doctor, Beadle, Hangman), and finally to God and his own mortality (Mayhew 368). It is also true that Punch never provokes confrontation; his action, as violent and inappropriate as it may be, is always a reaction to some

kind of outside irritant (Mayhew 366). This rage against hegemony explains some of Punch's popularity, despite his obviously malignant tendencies. Leach writes "Punch is certainly not a very moral personage; but then was there ever one more free of hypocrisy" (57)?

Judy: Judy was known as "Joan" prior to 1818. She is traditionally dressed in a Georgian Mob cap and is described as a "shrew" (Speaight Punch 85). She also has a "large nose and toothy grin, " which, according to his textual comments, Punch finds very attractive (Regan 365). Structurally, it is vital that Judy strikes Punch first. By doing this, Judy's "shrewish" character is established, as well as her conflict with Punch. This establishes Punch as sympathetic, allowing him to begin his violent spree (Speaight Punch 85). In 1823, Judy began to return from the grave to torment Punch in the form of a ghost. Judy's ghost appeared throughout the nineteenth century (Speaight Punch 85-6). Byrom argues that Judy's ghost represents Punch's conscience (20).

Baby: Much like Judy, the baby is as much a device to move the plot forward as it is a character. More a prop than a puppet, the baby is generally constructed of a bundle of fabric to give the appearance of a swaddled infant. Speaight speculates that the genesis of the baby's defenestration began when a puppeteer accidentally dropped the figure and received a positive response from the audience (Speaight Punch 86). While the origin of this bit remains a mystery,

considering the improvisatory text used by most *Punch and Judy* performers, this seems like a solid theory.

Toby the Dog: According to Leach, the name Toby has its roots in either the *Apocrypha*, where "Tobit" was Jehovah's prophet, or in an English slang term for buttocks (46). Toby was not always a puppet figure, but was often portrayed by an actual "learned dog." Toby's function was "to sit on the playboard, with a ruff around his neck, and to bite Punch's nose on the right cues; sometimes he was trained to smoke a pipe" (Speaight Punch 90). Toby did serve more than an ornamental or novelty function. The biting of Punch's nose was an essential element to the action of the show, as well as a traditional bit among *Punch and Judy* showmen. In 1773, Punch is referred to as riding "a fine Newfoundland dog" with a saddle on its back (Byrom 8). While live Tobys were popular until the early twentieth century, eventually, animal rights groups, both in England and the United States, began to crack down on their treatment, and, Toby reverted to puppet form (Leach 121).

Joey: Punch's "merry companion" is one of the few characters to occasionally survive *Punch and Judy's* action (Speaight Punch 90). Named after Joey Grimaldi, the celebrated eighteenth century English clown, Joey acts as Punch's foil (Myers 6-7). Best known for his "counting the bodies" bit, in which he plays with the corpses of the deceased characters, Joey refocuses the oppression on Punch; while Punch is an amoral murderer, Joey actually revels in frolicking among the dead. This "undermines [and] subverts [Punch's]

subversion with an asinine whimsy which Punch cannot control. This sets up a new series of contradictions within the show [which create] unexpected, and therefore exciting new depths" (Leach 74-5).

Doctor: The Doctor generally appears after Punch has undergone some trauma, such as encountering Judy's ghost or being thrown from Hector the Horse, after which Punch informs the audience that he is dead. The Doctor's traditional bit begins with asking Punch if he is dead, to which Punch responds, "Yes." The Doctor then produces his "physic," a stick, and he and Punch proceed to batter one another (Speaight Punch 87). Despite their similar names, it is unlikely that Punch's Doctor is related to *Commedia's Il Dotorre,* mainly because the latter character was, in fact, a lawyer. It is generally believed that the Doctor is a "direct satire on medical practitioners of the day" (Leach 57).

Beadle: Referred to as an "essential character" by Speaight, it is the function of the Beadle to apprehend Punch and deliver him to the Hangman, establishing their conflict (Punch 87). A typical nineteenth century Beadle character is described in Mayhew: "a severe, harsh man . . . [the figure is] dressed in the olden style-a brown coat with gold lace and cock'd hat . . . but Punch beats the Beadle, for every time [the Beadle] comes up, [Punch] knocks him down" (51).

Hangman: The Hangman is also called "Jack Ketch," the name of an actual executioner in nineteenth century England (Leach 53). Punch's bit with the Hangman is one of the best known and most essential in the canon.

Traditionally, Ketch asks Punch to place his head in the noose. Punch responds by placing his head above, below, and beside the noose. Frustrated, the hangman shows Punch how to do it, placing his own head in the noose, and Punch then hangs the Hangman (Speaight Punch 87-8).

Negro: The ostensibly African character first appeared around 1825 as a servant sent by an offstage master to quiet Punch. This character evolved into a "wild foreigner" with a vocabulary of one word--shallaballa (Speaight Punch 87). In one of the standard comic bits during this period, Punch would ask the Negro, "Why don't you speak English?" to which the Negro would reply "Because I can't" (Anderson 72). Approximately 20 years after his first appearance, the character changed once again, this time becoming "Jim Crow," with puppeteers hoping to exploit the popularity of minstrel entertainers in England at the time. This change was inspired by a tour of England by the performer Thomas Rice, "inventor of that singing and dancing darky" in the late 1830s (McPharlin 146). According to Leach, the Negro character was never meant as a commentary on slavery, but as an expression of "exoticism" in the *Punch and Judy* show (57).

Devil: Punch's ultimate adversary is generally regarded as a holdover from medieval morality plays. Occasionally appearing in disguise, such as a highwayman, or a Russian bear during the Crimean war, the Devil provided an "obvious place at which to end the play" (Speaight Punch 88-9). Originally, much like the Devil carried off Vice in the medieval morality plays, he also carried off Punch at the story's end. However, according to legend, in approximately 1790,

Piccini, the subject of Collier and Cruikshank's work, "was emboldened by rum" during a performance, and began the tradition of ending the story with Punch triumphant over the Devil (Myers 89). While this story is apocryphal at best, Punch's triumph over the Devil in the climax of the story became common in the late eighteenth century (Leach 27).

Crocodile: The crocodile first appeared in the 1860s, replacing the Devil as Punch's final adversary (Byrom 1). Ostensibly serving the same structural purpose as the Devil without the moral or social implications, the crocodile figure's gaping jaws provided an opportunity to swallow Punch whole, as opposed to carrying him off to Hell. In the 1970s, English puppeteer Dan Bishop replaced the crocodile with the shark from the film *Jaws* (Leach 145).

As mentioned earlier, a listing of every character beyond these to appear in a *Punch and Judy* text would be literally impossible due to the fluid nature of the performance text. The following is a summary of some of the more unique or unusual extra characters.

Mr. Jones/Scaramouche: Traditionally, Mr. Jones would argue with Punch over the ownership of Toby the Dog. As Jones, he was usually beaten by Punch; but as Scaramouche, his head was generally knocked off (Speaight Punch 91).

Puritan: The Puritan would interrupt the action of the performance and comment on its immorality. He was, of course, ultimately beaten by Punch (Regan 365).

Hector the Horse: According to Speaight in *Punch and Judy: A History,* Hector first appeared in approximately 1825, and his "only function was to enable Punch to gallop round the stage and get thrown off." Hector's appearances were infrequent, and one can speculate, because of the shape of his body, that Hector was a rod puppet instead of a traditional glove style hand puppet like the other figures (91).

Queer Man: Leach calls the Queer Man an "obscure character" whose only action was leaping around while shouting "I'm a jumping curie cure!" only to be beaten by Punch. The Queer Man first appeared in the early 1870s, and any subsequent appearances are limited at best (122).

Polly Peachum: Appearing only in the Piccini/Collier text, Polly is a "mute object of adoration" who appears very briefly (Speaight Punch 91-2). Polly is identified by Punch as his mistress, and because of this, does not fall victim to his violence (Myers 55). The name Polly Peachum is, of course, from the Beggar's Opera, which creates an interesting parallel between Punch and Macheath, both of whom escape hanging (Leach 55-6).

Celebrities: A great amount of *Punch and Judy*'s humor has its base in providing "local titillation" and inside references for audiences. With this in mind, twentieth century Punch showmen have often interjected easily identifiable celebrities into their performances. During World War II, it was not unusual to see Churchill, Stalin, and Hitler in English *Punch and Judy* performances (Speaight Punch 91). In 1980, puppeteer Guy Higgins substituted the J.R. Ewing

character from the television show *Dallas* for the Devil. Higgins claimed that J.R. "fulfilled the function of the devil, thereby increasing adult interest . . . making the character newly accessible" (Leach 139). A few years later, English puppeteer Rod Burnett introduced pop star Boy George into the *Punch and Judy* melieu (Leach 33).

Like the aforementioned characters, the action of *Punch and Judy* is of a very fluid nature. This is due to the improvisatory nature of the text as well as the variety of environments in which it was performed for an infinite number of diverse audiences. Therefore, a "typical" *Punch and Judy* performance text is impossible to locate. After centuries of improvisation based on topical humor, local titillation, and spontaneous ad-libs, the definitive *Punch and Judy* text is non-existent. Like the characters, attempting to present a complete catalog of every *Punch and Judy* text ever performed would be literally impossible.

What follows is a survey of nine *Punch and Judy* performance texts, which date from the early nineteenth century through the mid 1980s. The individual texts have been divided into "French scenes," which begin when a character enters, and end when the character exits. These scenes are presented on a grid in order to graphically illustrate character entrances and exits, as well as the overall episodic, linear structure of the stories. Generally speaking, the exit of most characters in these texts comes about through a violent act on the part of Punch.

The Maggs Family Text from the early nineteenth century has a number of unique elements. Punch kills Judy and the Baby together; the Beadle runs off to join the circus after his encounter with Punch; and the Plate Spinners and Boxers, both non-narrative specialty puppets, are featured prominently. Also, at the end of the story, Punch attempts to make a deal with the Devil for more time on Earth. The Devil then hangs Punch, adding a Faustian quality to the action of the text (Leach 163).

Maggs Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Punch	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Judy		X						
Baby		X						
Beadle			X					
Joey				X				
Jim Crow					X			
Plate Spinners And Boxers						X		
Judy's Ghost							X	
Devil								X

The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy is a transcription of a performance given by Piccini, an Italian puppeteer living in London, in 1827. It is the earliest documentation of a *Punch and Judy* performance text, as well as the plotline that has been historically the most imitated by other performers. While the accuracy of the transcription of the

dialogue has been called into question, the structure of Piccini's *Punch and Judy* is the prototype upon which many other performances were based.

Another of Piccini's contributions to the *Punch and Judy* canon is that, according to legend, he was the first puppeteer to allow Punch to beat the Devil at the climax of a performance (Myers 13). While the exact circumstances of this story may be apocryphal, Punch's triumph does establish the power of the character as a force for subversion (Tragical 13 – 45).

Piccini/Collier	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Punch	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Toby	X													
Scaramouche		X												
Judy			X											
Baby			X											
Judy				X										
Polly					X									
Singing Courtier						X								
Hector							X							
Doctor								X						
Servant/ Negro									X					
Blind Man										X				
Constable											X			
Officer (Beadle)												X		
Jack Ketch													X	
Devil														X

Two unusual elements in the Piccini text are the inclusion of Polly and the Singing Courtier. The character Polly is unique to Piccini; she is referred to as Punch's mistress, she is mute, and she appears only once, to dance and

celebrate with Punch after the murder of Judy. The Courtier is a specialty puppet, built with an extendable neck. This allowed the creation of a comic bit where the Courtier serenades the audience, extending his neck to reach a higher note (Tragical 25).

Robert Brough's 1854 *Punch and Judy* text follows Piccini's basic format with few changes. The most notable difference occurs during Punch's climactic confrontation with the Devil. In Brough's text, there is no violence between Punch and the Devil; instead, Punch convinces the Devil to take the Hangman off to the land of "Bobbety-Shooty" in his place (Leach 89).

Brough	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Punch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Judy	X									
Baby	X									
Beadle		X								
Distinguished Foreigner			X							
Judy's Ghost				X						
Doctor					X					
Joey						X				
Toby							X			
Mr. Jones								X		
Hangman									X	
Devil									X	X

"Professor" Mowbray was an English performer whose *Punch and Judy* was a featured seaside attraction on the pier at Great Yarmouth for over 50 years, beginning in the early 1880s (Leach 100). Mowbray's text is unlike the

linear “Piccini-like” structure of other *Punch and Judy* texts. Whereas Piccini's supporting cast made only one appearance with Punch and then exited, Mowbray's characters often made return appearances. This is especially true in this performance from 1887, where the Beadle appears, and is killed by Punch, three times.

Mowbray also features the Publican, a business owner who initially sends the Nigger, his servant, to stop the noisy disturbance created by Punch. Punch quickly dispatches both the Nigger and the Publican, which is indicative of Punch's lack of interest in the social class of his oppressors (Leach 101).

Mowbray	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Punch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Toby	X										
Judy		X									
Baby		X									
Beadle			X			X			X		
The Nigger				X							
The Publican					X						
Joey							X				X
Doctor								X			
Hangman										X	

The Story of Punch and Judy, a 1906 performance by “Professor” Smith features characters similar to those in Piccini's text, but is rather non-linear due to the multiple entrances of some of the characters. Smith's text is also notable due to its inclusion of both original characters as well as variations on the old. In

Smith's story, the hangman is named Marwood, like Jack Ketch, after a real executioner. The crocodile makes an appearance, however, not as a replacement for the Devil, who is supplanted by a Ghost character in this text (Byrom 49-56).

Smith	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Punch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Judy	X												
Policeman		X						X					
Clown			X				X		X				
Nigger				X									
Toby's Master					X								
Toby						X							
Crocodile										X			
Doctor											X		
Marwood												X	
Ghost													X

Sydney de Hempsey's *The Complete Punch and Judy Play* from 1942 features most of the traditional characters and action, with some variation. Instead of a violent initial encounter, Joey and Punch trade puns instead of beatings. Also, the Beadle plays the role of the executioner in this story, and it is he who ends up getting hanged and carried off by Punch and Joey at the story's conclusion. This version also features Toby's Master as an offstage voice, a singing Jim Crow, and an absent Devil. While the Devil's occasional stand in, the Ghost, does appear, he does not fulfill the same role structurally. In this case, the Ghost is a device to scare Punch to the point where he believes that he

requires medical attention, motivating the appearance of the Doctor (Byrom 58 – 61).

De Hempsey	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Punch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Toby	X								
Toby's Master	X								
Judy		X							
Baby		X							
Beadle			X					X	
Joey				X					X
Jim Crow					X				
Ghost						X			
Doctor							X		

Stan Quigley's *Punch and Judy* from 1950s England features a number of unique variations on the traditional *dramatis personae.* Quigley's version features boxing specialty puppets, but in this case they exist within the story arc of the text. During the Boxers' match, the pair presumably kill one another. Punch then appears and is immediately accused of the Boxers' murder. This is an interesting commentary on the traditional action, as Punch is accused of a crime of which he is innocent.

This version also features Joey's "body count" trope, where he attempts to confuse Punch by moving the corpses onstage while they are being counted (Leach 121); the Doctor transforming into Jack Ketch; and a climactic appearance of the Ghost, who sports "flashing electric eyes" (Leach 33).

Quigley	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Punch	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Toby	X										
Baby		X									
Judy		X	X								
Policeman				X							
Jim Crow					X						
Boxers						X					
Joey							X			X	
Crocodile								X			
Doctor/Jack Ketch									X		
Ghost											X

This anonymous English *Punch and Judy* script from the 1960s generally follows the Piccini model. This text features the Crocodile, and the Ghost instead of the Devil, but for the most part, this text adheres very closely to the standard model. The second entrance of the Clown is the only element of the plot that differs from the standard text (Edwards 1 – 3).

Anonymous-1960s	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Punch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Judy	X						
Baby	X						
Policeman		X					
Clown			X			X	
Crocodile				X			
Hangman					X		
Ghost							X

This anonymous *Punch and Judy* text from 1966 features one unusual character, the Chinaman. This character attempts to show Punch his "piggly wiggly," or pigtail, and is immediately beaten and dispatched. This text also features a linear structure where characters only appear once, and the Crocodile as Punch's final opponent (Byrom 65 – 8).

Anonymous-1966	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Punch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Judy		X					
Baby		X					
Chinaman			X				
Policeman				X			
Doctor					X		
Clown						X	
Crocodile							X

Joe Green's *Punch and Judy* text from the 1980s highlights a number of unusual characters and a non-traditional structure. Green features a number of animal characters, such as the traditional Crocodile and live Toby, as well as the "po-faced monkey," and a threatening spider (Leach 124). This *Punch and Judy* boasts a very non-traditional structure; Judy and the Baby do not enter until midway through the action, following the scenes with Punch, Toby and the other animals. Toby's interaction with the other characters is also unique, as he first appears as an ally to Punch by biting the monkey and running him off. However, Toby's character is quickly subverted when he bites Punch's nose and exits.

Another unique component of Green's text is the characterization of the Baby. While the Baby figure is a wrapped doll that is not manipulated, it is given vocal life by the puppeteer. This creates a comic bit as the Baby speaks with an incongruously low voice, as it informs Punch, "I want me mam," and "Get off me, you big, fat lump" (Leach 124).

Green	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Punch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Toby	X	X	X	X	X						
Spider		X									
Crocodile			X								
Po-Faced Monkey				X							
Scaramouche						X					
Judy							X				
Baby							X				
Policeman								X			
Hangman									X		
Ghost										X	
Joey											X

By examining these graphic illustrations of various *Punch and Judy* performance texts, three common elements appear. First is the linear, episodic structure that is most obvious in the Brough and Piccini texts. In this structure, Punch is joined onstage by one character at a time, in an episodic manner. Generally speaking, the secondary character makes only one appearance, and does not appear again. While some texts do reintroduce characters, such as the Mowbray's Beadle making three appearances and being killed each time, they are exceptions to the rule.

The reasoning behind the episodic, linear structure is two-fold. First, the performer is inherently limited when working with hand puppets. Since the performer only has two hands, the number of puppet figures onstage is severely limited. Secondly, an episodic story featuring Punch "dealing with" oppressive characters only once is a more active choice, and moves the story forward in a much more direct manner. Decisive victories over authority figures provide a much more pleasurable experience for the audience than if the oppressive characters kept returning in repeated attempts to tyrannize Punch. While Mowbray's text in which the Beadle makes three appearances seems to contradict this, the Beadle character is such a powerful symbol of Victorian life, killing him three times may provide even more audience satisfaction (Leach 102-3).

The second common element found in the texts is the consistency of the character of Punch. In the nine texts examined, Punch appears in 99 out of 101 French scenes. The two scenes where Punch is absent, in the Piccini and Quigley texts, feature appearances by specialty puppets performing tricks. Of these two scenes, the scene in Piccini exists outside of the narrative, while the scene in Quigley directly effects Punch, as he is accused of murdering the two specialty boxing puppets who have beaten each other unconscious.

In the scenes where Punch does appear, he is generally victorious in the confrontations that occur therein. Occasionally, in the pre-Piccini era, Punch was carried off at the end of the performance by the Devil, but generally speaking,

Punch is the survivor of each encounter. This consistency illustrates that the character of Punch is inarguably the focal point of the action of the *Punch and Judy* canon. No other secondary character appears in anywhere near as many scenes as Punch, and all of these characters fall victim, at on time or another, to Punch's violence. Therefore, due to his consistent victories in conflict with the other characters, as well as the sheer number of scenes in which he appears, the character of Punch is, without a doubt, the defining element of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition.

The third common element of the performance texts is their subversive nature. As mentioned above, Punch is consistently victorious in confrontations with potentially oppressive characters. By consistently presenting Punch as a "man of the people" overcoming figures of authority through direct, and often violent, means, the text of *Punch and Judy* is inherently subversive. The popularity of *Punch and Judy* may also be related to its inherent subversiveness; because of the manner with which authority is dealt, the character Punch is made a "friend of the people, a folk hero" (Styles 84). By representing the desires of the "common-folk" to free themselves of whatever social or economic oppression they suffered, Punch served as a societal safety valve (Speaight History 44).

Attempting to comprehensively catalog all of the characters and plotlines in the *Punch and Judy* canon is an impossibility; because of the extemporaneous style of the performances, texts and characters are fluid. However, specific *Punch and Judy* characters and texts are remarkably similar structurally. Aside

from Punch, virtually all of the characters are agents of oppression, whether overt, such as the Beadle or Hangman who demand a respect for the status quo, or covert, such as Judy and the Baby who desire Punch's domestication. The objectives of these individual characters force Punch to take action against them, and, in doing so, create the conflict of the story. The *Punch and Judy* texts all follow approximately the same episodic structure, whether out of necessity, as the puppeteer only has two hands, or because of the visceral thrill provided for the audience by Punch's repeated victories. These parallel character and plot elements are what define *Punch and Judy* as a performance tradition with a unique history and structure.

CHAPTER SIX

SEMIOTICS AND AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO THE VIOLENT AND PROFANE IN *PUNCH AND JUDY*

In the action of his canonical texts, the character Punch, a character who murders, among others, his wife and child, has been the most popular character in the puppet theatre for more than 250 years. Perceived on one level, Punch's actions are horrifying and evil, yet historically they have been discerned as nothing more than comic trifles. This begs the question: how can a character whose actions are so totally reprehensible be held in such high esteem?

This perception is not a circumstance that is specific to *Punch and Judy* either; "in South Africa, puppet shows pass on political messages, for instance criticisms of apartheid, that the muzzled press cannot print" (Dagan 14). Somehow the puppet theatre in general, and *Punch and Judy* in particular, have the ability to transform material that, by itself, may be considered profane or inappropriate into something that is generally recognized as acceptable. This transformative power lies at the heart of this study.

There are three elements that contribute to this transformative power: the character of Punch itself, an inherent humor in the puppet theatre, and a unique semiotic event that occurs during a puppet theatre performance. It is the

combination of these three elements that provides the puppet theatre with its ability to transform.

The character Punch is an archetype. Like Loki, the Norse god of mischief; the Celtic Cerunnos; and Pan, the Roman god of trickery, Punch is an anti-hero who enables "spectators to leap beyond the constrictions of the everyday" (Leach 74-5). Punch has always been perceived as a "man of the people," and that has allowed audiences to identify with him. In the introduction to *The Tragical Comedy or the Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch,* Grandgent writes "we admire [Punch as a] nonconformist conqueror . . . [Punch is] the fulfilment (sic) of our repressed desires" (9-10). This conception, that Punch provides a "conscious relief to social pressure . . . and institutionalized [oppression]," allows one to assume that identification with Punch permits an alleviation of social pressure upon the audience member (Leach 33). The social/institutional pressure being dealt with by Punch comes from three areas: family, state, and religion (Leach 45). Punch faces these three sources of oppression and frustration in a traditional performance. Familial pressure and the conflict of sexual freedom versus responsibility are addressed by Punch's defenestration of the baby and his confrontation with Judy. Pressure from the state and traditional figures of authority are personified by the Beadle, Hangman or any other governmental characters, such as a Constable (Leach 170-1). Finally, frustrations with religion and man's own mortality are confronted in Punch's encounter with the Devil. The fact that Punch is not only victorious in all of these

confrontations, but that he deals with each of them in a simple, swift and severe manner makes him a very appealing character. By easily dispatching these sites of oppression, Punch empowers the audience, and provides for them a satisfying vicarious experience. This is key in understanding his popularity.

In *Punch and Judy: A History*, Speaight writes about what could possibly be beneficial about witnessing a *Punch and Judy* performance:

> The man who laughs at Punch beating Judy is all the less likely to beat his own wife, and the child who laughs at Punch killing the constable is all the less likely to trouble the policeman around the corner. (93)

While one may question the amount of quantitative sociological data that Speaight has collected to verify this claim, one can presuppose that the author is speaking metaphorically, verifying the belief that a portion of Punch's popularity lies in his ability to empower an otherwise disenfranchised audience.

As far as clarifying the audience's acceptance of Punch's use of violence, Regan and Clark argue that Punch's vitriol is not directed at any specific group. While Punch does beat Judy to death, the audience is competent enough in the performance's conventions to distinguish that the violence has its base more in misanthropy than misogyny. Punch's violence against Judy is not hatred toward her specifically, but instead a revolt against the hegemony of marriage, adulthood and responsibility (365). It is Regan and Clark's contention that the impact of the violence is diffused through the audience's understanding of this particular convention.

In essence, what audiences find empowering about Punch is his freedom. Leach writes that Punch is "above all true to himself . . . [he is] an anarchist because he loves those who do not attempt to exert authority over him . . . while characters who try to bend him to conformity get the simple answer . . . they get hit on the head, they get killed" (146). This is most definitely an attractive ideal, and explains perhaps the most base elements of Punch's appeal.

The second element to be explored is the inherent humor in the puppet theatre. Gross writes, "the puppet seems to be insisting that he really is human by possessing knowledge that only a human involved in normal social relations could possess. The incongruity of this has a humorous effect" (121). Sherzer and Sherzer argue that the humor has a Freudian explanation; language and movement are unexpected from an inanimate object, and the humor comes from this juxtaposition (Verbal 40). The seemingly autonomous movement of the inanimate object creates a sense of irony. The figure "moves about, apparently of its own free will, but [the audience] knows that there is a power back of it" (Batchelder 299).

Russian semiotician Otakar Zich echoes the idea for incongruity as a basis for the inherent humor. Zich argued that the audience's perception of puppet figures is changed when the figures "demand that we take them as people, and this invariably amuses us" (Fletcher 34). Ultimately, the genesis of the inherent humor in the puppet theatre is the incongruity created when the real--inanimate figures made of wood and cloth--are juxtaposed with the fantastic--the

figures' functioning as autonomous lives. It is thi incongruity in the puppet theatre, that both the real and the imagined have equal plausibility, which creates the inherent humor (Batchelder 292). Sherzer and Sherzer write that it is "the disparity and intersection between . . . the human and the non-human which is at the heart of the humor of puppets" (Introduction 1).

The final element that contributes to the transformative power of the puppet theatre is a unique semiotic event that occurs during performance. In *Puppets: The Power of Wonder*, Malkin writes:

> The use of an object or puppet depersonalizes the performer. Audience members easily relate to the puppet as object, symbol or idea in a very direct way. They have little or no desire to find the human being behind or beneath or above it . . . The audience unconsciously severs its perceptions of the actor and responds to the puppet as pure theatrical abstraction. (45)

It is Malkin's "unconscious severance of perception" that allows this semiotic occurrence to take place.

Puppetry is an "impersonal theatre," and the puppet figure is "the complete mask--the mask from which the human actor has withdrawn" (Speaight History 11). This makes puppet theatre performance radically different from performance in actor-theatre. Whereas in actor-theatre performance there is a human locus, "in puppet performance, the puppet replaces the actor as the site of signification: it has a physical presence in front of the audience . . . it moves . . . and it speaks" (Tillis Actor 111). The movement of signification from the actor to the puppet is the first element in understanding the semiotic transformative event. Arnott writes, "what is unacceptable to . . . audiences, for one reason or

another, as part of live stage behavior can be rendered acceptable by utilizing a medium which itself is at one remove from reality" (145).

The "unconscious severance of perception" that Malkin writes about, and Annott's "one remov[al] from reality," both support the creation of a psychological distance between the audience and the performer. They provide a foundation for the semiotic element of the puppet theatre's transformative powers.

According to Formalist Petr Bogatyrev, "[a]ll theatrical manifestations are . . . signs of signs or signs of things," that is; everything that exists onstage represents something that exists in reality (De Toro 69). While Bogatyrev's theorem can be easily applied to actor-theatre, a problem occurs with its application to puppet theatre. If, as Bogatyrev claims, everything that appears on a stage is a "sign of a sign," is the puppeteer or the puppet figure the representamen? The "impersonal" aspect of puppetry, in which the signification moves from the performer to the puppet figure, further complicates this. While modern audiences are competent enough to realize that there is a puppeteer supplying animation to the figure, Tillis writes: "the audience can feel as much 'empathy' for the puppet as for the [actor], but does the audience ever completely 'cease to think of wood and wire'" (Appeal 12)?

It is Tillis' proposition that a puppet figure encourages a "double vision" of perception in an audience. Intellectually, the audience realizes that the object put before them is a figure made of wood and fabric, however, they actively imagine that the inanimate figure possesses life (Aesthetics 64). This is unlike an

actor or a piece of scenery, which encourages only a single vision. An actor is a living thing pretending to be a living thing, and a scenic piece is an inanimate object simulating a different inanimate object. Since the audience actively infuses life into the puppet figure through their imagination, this encourages the psychological separation of the puppet and the performer (Tillis Aesthetics 66).

This double vision is further enhanced by the fact that despite their level of skill, an actor is never able to completely submerge himself in his character- something that a puppet does naturally (Tillis Aesthetics 45). Jurkowski claims that this produces a tension based on the illusion versus the reality of the performance, an effect Jurkowski calls *verfremdung* (Jurkowski 23). First used by Betholt Brecht to describe theatrical alienation, *verfremdung* makes the audience aware that they are watching an illusory performance, not reality. Therefore the audience becomes aware that "the institutions and social formulae [of the performance] are not eternal and 'natural' but historical and man-made, and so capable of change through human action" (Hawkes Russian 63).

While Jurkowski's use of Brecht's *verfremdung* is satisfactory, the Russian Formalist theory of *ostranenie* is more accurate and appropriate when dealing with the puppet theatre. The purpose of *ostranenie*, which predates Brecht's *verfremdung*, is to make strange, and "counteract the process of habituation encouraged by routine everyday modes of perception . . . The aim of [art] is to . . . defamiliarize that which we are overly familiar, to 'creatively deform' the usual . . . The [artist] thus aims to disrupt 'stock responses,' and to generate a heightened

awareness: to restructure our ordinary perception of 'reality'" (Hawkes Russian 62).

When an object is "made strange" the standard relationship between the sign, in this case a puppet figure used in performance, and the thing to which the sign is referring, in this case a human, is distorted. This distortion creates an emotional distance between the sign/puppet and the referent/human (Eagleton 98). Ultimately, *ostranenie* calls for a "suspension of common sense," and a disregarding of stock responses (Hawkes Russian 62). If creative deformity does not take place, the audience would perceive the puppet figures as nothing more than bits of cloth and wood; but if *ostranenie* is successful, the figures are perceived as living things.

Ostranenie echoes Tillis' concept of "double vision," and the combination of these two concepts is vital in the explanation of the way in which the audience accepts puppets as objects having life, yet still acknowledges their intellectual perception of the figures as inanimate objects. Ultimately, it is the fusion of *ostranenie*/double vision and the movement of signification from the performer to the puppet figure that generates the psychological distance created in puppet theatre performances. This distance is necessary in appreciating and experiencing the puppet theatre (Carlson 77).

There are three elements at play in explaining *Punch and Judy*'s ability to transform the profane and violent into the acceptable: the character of Punch, the inherent humor of puppet figures, and the psychological distancing produced in

puppet theatre performances. Punch is the personification of the desires of the common man; he allows audiences to live vicariously through him as he rails against a variety of hegemonic systems. His role as a "spokesman for liberty" and representative of the people allow Punch a great deal of behavioral leeway (Baird 103). While his actions are inappropriate, to say the least, they accurately represent a quick, simple way of dealing with one's oppressors. This perception of Punch as an "everyman" redeems the character, and makes his behavior acceptable. The character of Punch is the first contributing element to the transformative power.

Humor is inherent in puppet figures; the simple act of an inanimate object simulating life creates a sense of irony, incongruity, and comedy (Proschan 31). The comic nature of the puppet figure is an essential component in the transformative power; Aristotle called the comic "an ugliness without pain" (Worcester 32). While *Punch and Judy* is certainly filled with "ugliness," it is the inherent humor of the puppet figures that removes the "pain" and makes the actions acceptable. The puppet figure's inherent humor is the second contributing factor to the transformative power.

Replacing an actor with a puppet figure is an event with numerous repercussions. The site of character signification changes from a human to an inanimate object, and a sense of psychological distance is established by having to disregard intellectual perception of the puppet figure (Tillis Actor 12). These

actions create a psychological distance which depersonalizes the action onstage. This distance is the third contributing element to the transformative power.

Eileen Blumenthal writes that the puppet theatre allows audiences to "bridge the uncrossable chasm between what's alive and what's not; what's sentient and what's not. [The puppet theatre] allow[s] us to physically inhabit a reality that's a reality of the imagination" (Malkin Power 18). It is the transformative power of the puppet theatre that plays an integral role in the creation of Blumenthal's "reality of the imagination." By allowing the puppet theatre to transform material and subject matter that may be considered profane, it is given the freedom to comment on and re-examine society. Malkin writes: "[s]ometimes we don't know what is important until it has been violated. Sometimes it is only through an uncomfortable or even horrifying act of profanity that we can find what's . . . important" (Power 18).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The history of *Punch and Judy* can be traced back over two thousand years to the theatre of ancient Greece, where comic stock characters became popular in bawdy comedies. These stock characters survived the fall of Rome and the dark ages only to resurface as the leading players in Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*, the most popular of which were, in turn, adapted to the puppet stage. There, the characters enjoyed tremendous popularity and created a performance tradition that still exits on the verge of the twenty-first century.

A number of outside elements influenced the evolution of the *Punch and Judy* tradition. First, the limitations that are inherent to the puppet theatre shaped the creation of texts and characters. Working with a convention that permitted only two active characters onstage simultaneously, *Punch and Judy* developed an episodic structure that colored the manner in which its plots were structured. Also, by working with hand puppets, characters were generally limited to a basic, hand-shaped, humanoid form. While some non-human characters do exist in the *Punch and Judy* canon, they are rare, and have generally been adapted into a physically human shape. These limitations of the puppet theatre were vital elements in the creation of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition.

The plots and characters of *Punch and Judy* were never too far removed from the stock characters and scenarios of Greek Dorian mime and Italian *Commedia dell'Arte*. This kept the stories simple, fast paced, and filled with easily recognizable characters--elements that appealed to a popular audience. As the tradition evolved, *Punch and Judy*'s subversive nature became more readily apparent, and performers realized that the more outrageous and satirical their shows became, more popular they were. This realization allowed *Punch and Judy* to evolve into the successful satirical medium that it became. The more violent and subversive Punch became, the more his popularity grew.

This simplistic tale of brutal violence is arguably the most successful theatrical performance style in history and has impacted the theatre of the twentieth century, affecting the work of artists such as Edward Gordon Craig (Craig IX), and V. E. Meyerhold (Roose-Evans). It is obvious that the cultural and aesthetic impact of *Punch and Judy* is far reaching.

Regarding the continued popularity of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition, Leach writes:

> "[*Punch and Judy* is] a mythic formulation of basic personal and social issues . . . Punch is a marginal figure . . .whose adventures take him beyond the structures of society so that crucial elements of that structure are highlighted. It exists in the continuous present—it is fruitless to ask how Punch and Judy got together in the first place . . . [Punch] exalts the weak at the expense of the mighty, and [by identifying with Punch] we ourselves become a living rebuke to well ordered society." (174)

The empowerment felt by the audience not only elucidates the popularity of the character Punch, but also explains the character's power as a satirist. For

satire to be effective, the satirist, in this case the character Punch, must appear amicable to the audience, yet generate hostility toward its target (Worcester 14). This is an area where the character Punch has been consistently successful. The accomplishment of the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition as an effective medium for satire is another element that explains its continued popularity.

Another component contributing to the continued success of *Punch and Judy* is the character of Punch. By solely examining performance texts for clues about the character of Punch, one would find a brutal murderer. However, by observing Punch in a larger social context, a truer image begins to appear. Punch's violent behavior is accepted because audiences are competent enough to realize that it is not directed at a specific individual, and that the killing has no relation to reality (Speaight Punch 79). This break with reality is appealing to audiences; Dagan writes that puppets exist because " humans need to overcome crisis through illusion; to make dreams into reality," things that *Punch and Judy* does very well (4).

This popularity is not without its risks; historically, the more *Punch and Judy* was embraced by mainstream society, the greater the risk was that Punch would lose his "outsider" status, thereby effectively emasculating the character. Byrom writes that conventional society accepting Punch would "destroy his significance completely . . . [Punch would become] no more amusing than an unruly child" (21). Therefore, it is vital for the *Punch and Judy* tradition to maintain its standing on the fringes of society and continue to feature satire, bite,

and violence, since without them, *Punch and Judy* becomes a simple, toothless entertainment for children; a "variety show" (Byrom 22).

While linking popularity to increased violence may be a disturbing concept in reality, in the puppet theatre rules are different. Because of their inherent humor and psychological distance from the audience, puppet figures are able to perform acts that are violent, profane, and scatalogical with little or no repercussion; puppets "break the rules even in worlds that have no rules" (Malkin Power 34). This ability, combined with the acceptance that the character Punch is an "everyman" who represents anyone who was ever oppressed, a convention that allowed the character a great amount of behavioral freedom, permitted audiences to accept the violent and profane in *Punch and Judy*. This is what lies at the heart of the transformative power of the puppet theatre, and its effect on the *Punch and Judy* performance tradition. This ability to transform the profane into the acceptable allowed the *Punch and Judy* tradition to grow in terms of textual material, character development and action, and acceptance by the public.

In the 1970s, puppeteer John Styles and English actor and comic Marty Feldman did a study on how children perceive humor. During the project, a group of early elementary school students were shown a live, traditional *Punch and Judy* show. Following the performance, Feldman interviewed a six-year-old girl about what she had seen.

> Feldman: I saw you laughing when Punch hit the Policeman. Did you think that was funny?
> Student: Oh yes!
> Feldman: Would you laugh if, on the way home, you saw a real man hitting a policeman?
> Student: Oh no.
> Feldman: Why not? You laughed when you saw it in the Punch and Judy show. You just said it was funny. It must be funnier if you saw it done properly.
> Student: No, it would be awful.
> Feldman: But why? You laughed just now.
> Student: I know I did, but they're just toys. (Styles 83-4)

Despite the impact and history of this performance tradition, Punch, Judy, and their ever-evolving *dramatis personae* are, in fact, just toys; this is what makes them vital. Like other forms of popular entertainment, *Punch and Judy* permits audiences to vicariously live out their fantasies. By providing an escape from reality, *Punch and Judy* allows society to become familiar with some of the dwellers of its fringe, as well as explore and embrace some of its more base urges.

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