

Catherine Diamond

## Human See, Human Do: Simianification, Cross-species, Cross-cultural, Body Transformation

Simianification is the practice of humans inhabiting the simian body on stage. Because Asians have lived with monkeys and apes, several Asian theatre traditions have long legacies of representing monkeys on stage. In Europe and North America, where non-human primates did not exist, they are not a familiar feature in performance until nineteenth-century music hall and circus and twentieth-century film and television. In some recent performances in Asia dancers and actors have expanded their understanding of monkey roles by incorporating scientific discoveries, modern movement techniques, and global pop culture. On the British and American stage, actors experiment to 'impersonate' the humanized ape bodily and mentally, without the aid of the disguises and prosthetics usual in film. These performers 'embody' the philosophical inquiry of what it means to 'be monkey' by inhabiting a monkey's body while still performing 'art' for a human audience. Catherine Diamond, a Contributing Editor to *NTQ*, is a professor of theatre and environmental literature at Soochow University, Taiwan. She is also the director of the Kinnari Ecological Theatre Project in Southeast Asia.

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THE MONKEYS, alone and in pairs, spread out and begin to enter the house compounds. . . . They act very comically, often pausing to scratch their bodies . . . they climb the coconut or fruit trees . . . The monkeys may even rob the houses by taking small amounts of food and beverage from the kitchen. The householders pay homage for the monkeys' visits, usually by giving them some little token in the form of small change or Chinese coins. But in return, the villagers try to grab some loose fur from the monkeys to use as protection from evil spirits.<sup>1</sup>

The above passage could be describing the rampage of real macaques that reside in the Balinese forests, but instead it refers to the monkey dancers in the Barong Kedingkling, a ritual precursor of Wayang Wong, the Balinese dance-drama of the *Ramayana*. It also indicates the close and complex relationship these people have with monkeys that are a constant animal presence: forest neighbours, sacred nuisances, messengers of the gods, imperfect mimics, and marginalized quasi-human surrogates.

Like all Southeast Asian cultures that perform versions of the Hindu *Ramayana*

epic, the Balinese differentiate between the monkey kings such as Sugriwa and Anoman – simian deities who stand upright, don sacred masks, and possess superhuman strength and cunning – and ordinary 'small monkeys' who crouch on the ground, scamper, and follow.<sup>2</sup> While anonymous small monkeys feature in daily life, the individualized monkey kings are the popular favourites in classical tales and their theatrical renditions. Hanuman, the white monkey, is the most likeable fellow in narrative. His disruptive antics are balanced by his virtues, his loyalty to Rama in his battle against demons in India:

Hanuman's *bhakti* (adoring devotion) is expressed in passionate and thrilling terms; however, it is referred to only a third as many times as is that of Bharat (a half-brother to Rama) and Sita (Rama's wife), and much less frequently than that of the devoted half-brother Laksman. These three are the leading exemplars of *bhakti* to Rama, according to Tulsi Das. Nevertheless, they are not quoted nor sung about among the masses . . . only Hanuman receives such attention. Unlike them, Hanuman has a firmly fixed folkloric position, even apart from his role in the *Ramayana*.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, in China, Sun Wukong, the Chinese monkey king, dominates *Xiyouji* (*Journey to the West*, 1596), a narrative about a pilgrimage through mythical lands to India to bring Buddhist scriptures to China. Sun Wukong, who accompanies a monk in order to obtain immortality, is frequently punished for upsetting authority and the status quo, but he, like Hanuman, is *the* popular character in the tale. The episodes featuring him wreaking havoc in heaven, demolishing supernatural demons, and taunting Daoist immortals are the most often performed, so that in the West the story is often known simply as *Monkey*.

Both Hanuman and Sun Wukong also transcend the fate of fable animals reduced to few dominant traits and simplistic allegories, despite being burdened with metaphorical meanings. In their respective narratives, they are divine beings with supernatural powers and complex constraints and desires, though still subaltern intermediaries for the coldly moralistic Prince Rama and the bland Monk Tripitaka.

The paradox is that these two *simian* heroes are the most popular because they are the most *human*. Their humour, rebelliousness, freedom, bravery, and antic disposition express the subconscious yearnings of the ordinary person caught in a web of familial and social relationships.

The world of the monkeys turns into a projection of the human hero's unconscious, allowing him to act more freely there than in the conscious sphere of human society. The animal shadow plot opens up possibilities that no mere doubling by means of another human subplot could.<sup>4</sup>

### Monkey in the West: Always Suspect

Unlike in Asia, where people often live in close proximity to monkeys, no native simian species exists on either the European or North American continents.<sup>5</sup> In the West, historically, monkeys and apes have not had such cultural importance or agency because people did not encounter them directly in daily life until they ventured into foreign lands. While explorers and colonists reported their initial confrontations, in Europe itself

interactions between monkeys and humans always occurred in artificial circumstances, on human-determined grounds – the laboratory, zoo, circus, music hall, and in private homes as pets. Europeans did not encounter the animals on the monkey's own turf but only when it was separated from its native environment, the very context that informs its being. Once removed, it was an object upon which any notion of human interest could be imposed. Europeans were discomfited by their species' similarities; as Montaigne observed, of all animals the apes, 'those that most resemble us', were 'the ugliest and meanest of the whole herd'.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than deify apes, the Church moved quickly to demonize them as the devil incarnate – one who 'apes' God – though in 1735 Carl Linnaeus's taxonomy began to further unravel essential physical differences when he categorized humans with monkeys as *Anthropomorpha*: 'Neither in the face nor in the feet, nor upright the gait, nor in any other aspect in his external structure does man differ from the apes.'<sup>7</sup>

The similarity was not lost on colonists who encountered apes in India and Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> Sir Stamford Raffles in 1820s Singapore possessed a pair of orangutans. The male

was very tame and wore trousers, a coat, and a hat. . . . He looked like a small child as left to himself he walked about the place. . . . His behaviour was almost like that of a human being, save only he lacked the power of speech. . . . After four or five months . . . the female died one night. From that time onwards . . . the male behaved like a man stricken with grief. The food given to him he left where it was, not touching a morsel. After six or seven days thus he also died.<sup>9</sup>

While monkeys and apes fascinated some of the more biologically inclined – Richard Burton in India dined with forty monkeys in order to learn their language – Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) only deepened public anxiety about the nature of our affiliations with them and gave rise to an interest in finding the intermediary species, or 'missing link'. As Boria Sax points out:

What bothered people was the idea of an ape for a grandfather, an animal that long had had a repu-

tation as amoral and contemptible. The ape was rather an unromantic animal. Fables tended to stigmatize apes for trying to imitate human beings, while legends sometimes made them degenerate people. Apes had a reputation for lacking dignity and morality.<sup>10</sup>

Although serving as surrogates for human flesh and brains in science experiments, only when well-publicized post-Second World War demonstrations of their deeper affinity with human social behaviour and their ability to learn human speech, and the ensuing television comedies featuring them as akin to children, did apes begin to receive more sympathetic attention. Postwar anthropological research on the great apes *in situ* in Africa – initially done to discover the origins of man – romanticized them (and their female observers) in the public imagination, and raised the animals to the new status of a ‘noble savage’.

Instead of being ‘humanity demeaned’, they became the repository of *homo sapien*’s ‘natural self’ that had been lost in the morass of technological decadence at the very time when the apes themselves were threatened with extinction. The great apes are the ‘new primitive’ – beings of honest unfettered emotion and action – as well as poster children for man’s inhumanity to non-humanity.

### Ape as Noble Savage

Unlike in Asia, representation of monkeys on the Western stage was rare prior to the nineteenth century, while the apes themselves, dressed and trained as entertainers, were common in the music hall and vaudeville. Actors or dancers in the Western theatre rarely undertook to represent the monkey as a character, though the entry of British *chinoiserie* performance in the seventeenth century gave occasion for a ‘monkey ballet’.<sup>11</sup> In the late nineteenth century, reinterpretation of Shakespeare’s Caliban introduced him as a figure of evolutionary ambiguity, as Christine Dymkowski explains:

interest in Darwinism in the late nineteenth century affected theatrical representations of Caliban. He began to be regarded as a missing link, as not simply a beast, but a man *manqué*.

Beerbohm Tree exemplified this portrayal in his 1904 production, where his Caliban looked like a monster but exhibited human yearnings.<sup>12</sup>

Erika Rundle describes an 1891 production in which Frank Benson as Caliban scrambled up stage trees, hung upside down from branches, and gibbered, behaviour he evidently gleaned from the ‘hours watching monkeys and baboons in the Zoo, in order to get the movements and postures in keeping with his makeup’.<sup>13</sup> However, it was the new medium of film that gave rise to simian stars and their human ‘impersonators’. Chimpanzees and gorillas became iconic figures in films, from Tarzan’s Cheetah (1918) to King Kong (1933).

However, to ‘impersonate’ apes, actors depended upon extravagant costuming, such as that in *Planet of the Apes* (1968) rather than studies in behaviour and movement to effect the body transformation. In 1976, stage versions of the film appeared in Britain, but

because the masks made their voices sound muffled, the voices of the ape characters, along with dramatic soundtrack music, were all pre-recorded. . . . The actors playing the apes then mimed, while those playing the humans had to speak ‘live’ between the excerpts, requiring a tightly rehearsed routine amongst the eight actors. The play also included elements of pantomime; when Urko [the ape] fought Galen [the man], children were invited to cheer and yell their support for Galen. The characters would then venture into the auditorium, the fugitives running through the audience followed by the apes.<sup>14</sup>

Steve Baker contends that ‘In a postmodern age marked by a deeply felt loss of faith in our ability to represent the real, that is perhaps how the animal is now most productively and imaginatively thought in art – as a thing actively to be performed, rather than passively represented.’<sup>15</sup>

An alternative to representing the monkey is to become it, bodily, to access the monkey mind not as metaphor for human unruliness but as an organ of understanding in a body that relates to its environment and condition of life in a way that has become alien to the contemporary urban human. To inhabit the animal body is not mimicry, but a neo-animism – to become one with its spirit

through movement. Such an attempt takes on a new imperative in the Anthropocene when humans live with not only the knowledge of their own personal mortality but also the extinction of species. Inhabiting the animal, especially wild animal, body is a creative approach to re-inhabit the natural world before it disappears.

### Being Monkey in Performance

In the twenty-first century, several productions of dance and drama have redrawn the dimensions and significance of the monkey, combining myth and science as well as Asian and Western concepts. Embracing the quotidian intimacy of a god and neighbour, the fear and suspicion of the animal exotic, and our genetic cousinhood, these productions explore monkeys' superhuman agility and emotional and intellectual depth, as well as exposing the dismal oppression to which humans have subjected them. They demonstrate new attempts by the human performer to inhabit the monkey body, not merely to amuse with either skill or mockery but to sense it as a new means of understanding the species from the inside.

Amrita Performing Arts, a dance organization in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, has been exploring the potential of the monkey as a source for new dance for almost a decade. Many of its male dancers were trained as children to be monkey dancers in the classical dance tradition based on *Reamker* (Khmer *Ramayana*). The training, however, is rigidly stylized, and the troupe's first experiments began to break down these formalities to discover the inner strengths that could be utilized by contemporary dancers.

*Revitalizing Monkeys and Giants* (2006), a collaboration between the Cambodian dancers and Thai choreographer Pichet Klunchun, initiated the process of contemporizing monkey movement. *Parahuman* (2012), with Indonesian choreographer Eko Supriyanto, furthered the exploration with a contemporary eco-political interpretation of myth and monkey, making use of both the common Darwinian ancestry and suggesting a connection between endangered apes and

trafficked people. *Khmeropédies III: Source/Primate* (2013), also an intercultural collaboration, relinquishes even more of the cultural constraints and pushes the human dancer to penetrate further into the monkey body. Cambodian/French choreographer Emmanuèle Phuon, assisted by physical anthropologist Eric Sargis, utilized the movement and behaviour of a variety of ape species to achieve what – from a human's limited understanding – could be the closest approximation to the ape's perspective of its relationship to humanity.

Approaching 'monkey' from a very different perspective was *Monkey: Journey to the West* (2007/2013) a circus 'popera' created by Chinese New York-based director Chen Shizheng in collaboration with English composer Damon Albarn and graphic artist Jamie Hewlett, both contributors to the virtual band Gorillaz. Chen, who trained in *jingju* at an early age and adapted several Chinese classical plays for the Western stage, professed childhood affection for Wu Chengen's tale, *Xiyouji*, yet he used a comic book version on which to base his acrobatic spectacle. His is not the serious exploration of the real monkey, but a freeing of the mythological monkey from its rigid stylization. Chen's cross-cultural adaptation features the *jingju* monkey adapted for contemporary Western audiences and varies significantly from the traditional renditions still popular in the Chinese-speaking world.

In contrast to Chen's cartoon monkey is Kathryn Hunter's performance of Red Peter in *Kafka's Monkey* (2009), Colin Teevan's adaptation of the Kafka short story, *A Report to an Academy* (1917). Like Amrita's monkey dancers, she physically replicates the monkey body using scientific observation, but unlike the Cambodian performers who only hoot and howl, her Red Peter speaks forcibly on behalf of his kind. Kafka's piece is frequently delivered in the German theatre, but Hunter's version is qualitatively different in her exacting 'simianification', her inhabiting the male ape body to a degree not previously attempted. Her virtuoso performance however, raises the question whether such physicality reinforces or distracts from



Above: Buster Keaton as a performing monkey in the silent movie *The Playhouse* (1921). Right: Kathryn Hunter as Red Peter in *Kafka's Monkey* at the Young Vic (2009). Photo courtesy of HOME and Tristram Kenton.



Red Peter's damning rebuke to humanity.

These five productions take very different stances on the human–simian relationship but all focus on body transformation to identify with the non-human primate. As simianized performers, they inhabit not the usual liminal stage existence between actor and character, but a further imaginative stretch of cross-species representation, on the flexible cusp between civilized and wild. Moreover, the human performers seek to embody the ape not in parody for amusement or amazement – as Buster Keaton did in his virtuoso *The Playhouse* (1921) – but to use the body and its movement to understand what it means *to be monkey* in a new context of kinship – whether that is shifting from tradition to modernity, or from one culture to another.

### The Laboratory of Monkey Dance

Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and China all have specific established training for human dancers to perform monkey roles. Not only has the training led to a codified form but, more importantly, the trainees begin so young that they retain a muscle memory of movement even as they move into foreign (i.e. modern) movements as well as other narratives and non-narrative performance. Contemporary experiments to extend

not only the specificity of monkey locomotion and behaviour but to further identify with what science has revealed about monkeys are being conducted to build upon the traditional foundations.

Amrita undertook this course of development in part because many of its male dancers trained in the monkey role at the Royal University of Fine Arts for the all-male version of the *Reamker* epic. The masked dance-drama style of *lakhaon khaol* includes both monkey generals (*Neay sva khen*) such as Hanuman, and more anonymous monkey soldiers (*Pouk khen sva*), and focuses on battle scenes between monkeys and demons.<sup>16</sup> Amrita experimented with both types of monkeys to expand the movement vocabulary, find modern expressions of monkey existence, and provide the young dancers with more tools and territory to create rather than continue to 'apishly' mimic what they had been taught. The 2006 workshop and performance *Revitalizing Monkeys and Giants* was the first attempt to give them confidence to move beyond the purely preservationist mode that had dominated the arts in the post-Khmer Rouge era without arousing the ire of their teachers.

Led by Thai composer Sinnapa Sarasas and dance soloist Pichet Klunchun – both trained in traditional Thai forms but also experienced in contemporary cross-cultural

performance – the project was also intended to foster good working relations between Thai and Khmer *Ramayana* performers, as the two traditions have been at loggerheads over whose version is the more ancient and authentic. They focused on a single scene, ‘Weyreap’s Battle’, in which the giant Weyreap abducts Rama and takes him under the sea where he is guarded by his adopted son, the half monkey/half fish Machanub. Hanuman goes to rescue Rama and fights this unusual hybrid, who turns out to be his own son from a union with a mermaid. Discovering his true parentage, the disconsolate Machanub leaves the battlefield in order not to dishonour either of his two fathers.

The first step was to abandon the elaborate costumes and masks, and change the musical structures that anchored the stylized dance. In order ‘to reveal the powerful physicality of the human form, sound and motion’,<sup>17</sup> the dancers dressed in fitted black T-shirts and loose cotton pants, but as they could no longer rely on costume and mask to help them define their role, they had to find new body expressiveness. Because masked dancers do not speak and the *Reamker* narrative is voiced by singers, the quandary of a ‘talking monkey’ was not an issue.

The young dancers were initially unable to improvise.<sup>18</sup> The dance-drama is taught and executed as a form of refined craft, not as a vehicle for individual expression. To break away from the dictated stylizations was as difficult for them as to imagine the psychology of the monkey. Pornrat Damrhung, one of the organizers, explained:

In our classical arts, I see what is conventional as that which our traditional artists are familiar with and about which we do not have to think twice to perform. An artist is being conventional by automatically responding to a certain piece of music or an onstage situation based on his or her long training and without attending to onstage interactions or internal movements.<sup>19</sup>

She contends that the reprising of a role in this manner does not challenge the performer intellectually or emotionally, and encourages laziness. The dancers were challenged to expand their notion of ‘monkeyness’, as well

as to develop their own interpretations of the Machanub character and predicament.

The show, however, began with a single *sva pol*, the anonymous ‘small monkey’ scampering onstage to examine the musicians’ instruments. He looks directly at the audience, showing his awareness of it, and then turns to scratch, briefly distracted, as if to establish his animal unselfconsciousness. He rises on to two feet only to survey his surroundings and then returns to all fours. He gnaws on the drums and then on a drum stick, exhibiting the animal tendency to use taste to inform him about the environment. He uses the stick to strike the drum and beat the floor, and then flees at the sound of the musicians’ approach.

His monkey was not cute, nor intended to be humorous – no one laughed. He was not pretending to be a monkey imitating human behaviour; his own sense of curiosity, tentativeness, surprise, and fear was not exaggerated and seemed ‘naturalistically’ lodged in his body despite his very unnatural situation on stage where his actions were being minutely scrutinized by human spectators.

The Machanub performance itself retained a narrative the dancers were familiar with, but the music and its cues were changed. Their stylized movements transitioned into a more individualized performance, though still with little abstraction. Three dancers enacted each of the two opponents, Hanuman and Machanub. When the three pairs engage in battle, the monkeys keep a lower stance, their wrists bent into a ‘paw’ with the fingers articulated in a jeeb, the iconic Khmer hand position of thumb and forefinger pinched together with the other digits splayed backwards.

Originally, the father and son are unable to overcome each other, but in this version Hanuman appears to defeat Machanub, who lies lifeless on the ground until rising, transformed into his split identity of half-monkey, half-fish, the two wrestling inside his body. Each dancer demonstrates unhappiness and confusion in very literal ways – writhing, bending from the waist and clinging to their heads – along with traditional fish and monkey movements.



Pichet Klunchun's *Revitalizing Monkeys and Giants* (2006). Photos courtesy of Amrita Performing Arts and James Wasserman.



Their exposed faces and bodies made the dancers vulnerable to an audience gaze; however, because they were accustomed to working with a mask, their bodies rather than their faces were expressive. Even without masks, Cambodian performers tend not

to be too facially expressive, but in this case it helped to prevent comical exaggeration, and instead emphasized the silent suffering of the animal while the singer mournfully sang his dilemma. This first attempt began the process of stripping away accrued layers of

culture from the simian and human bodies, first exposing them and then melding them together, even though the dancers retained the traditional cartwheels, somersaults, and jeeb hand position. Rather than following the old masters' custom of observing real monkeys, these monkeys were asked to plumb their own emotions to infuse the monkey form with new interiority. They indicated their transformations by pseudo-deaths, falling to floor and arising as a new Machanub, enlightened but unsettled by his revealed identity.

### Not Yet Out of the Cave

In Amrita's second experiment, *Parahuman* (2012), the dancers leave the mythical realms of monkey/mermaid hybrids to enter human evolutionary time as well as to reflect more directly on the present. The Javanese choreographer Eko Supriyanto, who had already experimented with Hanuman's character, now utilized four Cambodian monkey dancers, but also included two female dancers (who never train as monkeys).<sup>20</sup> He wanted to juxtapose the dignity of primate life against the sordidness of humanity to address the region's human trafficking and animal poaching – targeting in particular the plight of orangutans on Borneo, where their forests are being cut to make way for oil palm plantations. Being inspired by the hairless wrinkled humanoid female suckling her offspring in *The Young Family*, the sculpture by Patricia Piccinini, Supriyanto explored the human–ape intersection on a primitive level in the early days of evolution so that the social critique he intended was somewhat awkwardly interposed.

The dance was set on a dimly lit stage suggesting a cave, with alternating sparse pools of intense light and side lights casting long shadows and profiling the performers. Sardono remarks on the importance of caves:

There are many caves in Indonesia which were used as sites for ancient man to dance, some of which have ancient drawings on the walls. In Makasar and also Irian, we can imagine this from the findings of bones and hunting tools belonging to *homo soloensis* or *pithecanthropus erectus*, who

lived one million five hundred thousand years ago in the Solo river, now the centre of Java culture. . . . When I saw a performance of Kecak dance in Bali for the first time, it was clear that the appearance of the palms and fingers of Kecak were like an expression of ancient times drawn on the walls of these caves.<sup>21</sup>

### An 'Incomplete Inbetween'

Set in this murky antedeluvian cavern where the lives of *homo erectus* and apes were hardly differentiated, the dancers embody an incomplete inbetween. They wore black stretch shorts with their torsos wrapped in strips of black cloth dangling to resemble either cave men wearing animal skins or molting monkeys. What came to mind was neither human imitating monkey nor re-inventing a connection between the two, but an early stage of human evolution, such as the hominid *homo floresiensis* that had been discovered in Liang Bua cave on the island of Flores in 2003 and referred to in local folklore as *ebu gogo*, a legendary wildman. Contributing to the 'missing link' legacy of the Indonesian archipelago, the small subspecies became internationally known as 'the hobbit' and was in the news again in 2012 when a scientist was told by the Tolkien estate that he could not use the word 'hobbit' to refer to it.

Gregory Forth defines the wildman as 'a hairy bipedal creatures of generally human form typically leading cultureless existence in desolate places far from human settlements. . . . The creatures are described as more humanlike than known apes and their existence remains unrecognized by science. They are not primitive tribal people, nor feral humans – other social outcasts.'<sup>22</sup> As the *homo floresiensis* is thought to have still existed 12,000 years ago, the dance conjures up the age when primitive humans roamed the world, the era of the 'missing link' that connected humans to other primates in not only size and behaviour but also mental conceptualization. Occasionally a dancer looks up into the light or out at the audience, and one imagines a glimmer in the eyes, as if the creature has an intimation of the future, of possessing a comprehension it does not yet have, or as Sharon Wilkinson puts it, 'It was



From Eko Supriyanto's *Parahuman* (2012). Above: the 'almost comprehending gaze'. Below: the stiff-legged 'missing link'. Photos courtesy of Amrita Performing Arts and Law Kian Yan.



like being at the dawn of human consciousness when the great apes evolve and grief enters the world.<sup>23</sup>

The piece begins with a mixture of culture and nature; the female dancer in a square

patch of light performs *kbach boran*, the Khmer female classical dance with the articulated arched fingers, while the man next to her sings an accompaniment and slowly bends to assume a monkey position on all

fours. He slinks into the surrounding darkness until he halts at the mouth of the cave. Another male monkey dancer emerges with a female dancer clinging to his underbelly like a baby to its mother. The 'baby' suddenly collapses on the floor, dead. The male 'mother' tries to nudge life back into it, springs about in frustration and grief, and finally drags it away.<sup>24</sup>

Javanese classical dance, unlike the rigid forms of Khmer dance, is full of subtle transitions and transformations between genders, deities, humans, hybrids, and animals, and the shifts are made with only the slightest gesture or musical cue to indicate change. Without the formal signals it was difficult to catch the transitions and know what was being transformed into what, though usually a blackout and a different soundtrack indicated a new kind of embodiment taking place.

Although Cambodian and Javanese dance share a tradition in presenting the *Ramayana*, one did not see much development of the monkey movement except as a 'collage of quotations'. Bits of monkey scratches and gestures, walking on all fours and the hands drooping at the wrist to resemble paws and the cartwheels and somersaults of the stylized the *Reamker* monkey were retained. However, neither the men, nor – more understandably, the women – moved with convincing animal grace, instead adopting a stiff-legged gait, suggesting simians struggling to walk upright, or *homo erectus* uncomfortably bound to all fours. Their 'hind' legs remained straight as though they suffered tight hamstrings, thrusting their butts high rather than tucked under to allow them to crouch and scamper low. Their bodies were stuck in the middle of an incomplete transformation, an ungainly hybrid like Piccinini's uncanny *The Young Family*.

As in *Revitalizing Monkeys and Giants*, the dancers assumed disconcertingly impassive faces. The eyes register the surroundings, but give no further response to indicate anything of what the performer, or the character, is thinking or feeling. The removed mask has been replaced by another, a frontier of animal inscrutability, a wall between species' understanding as well as the borderline bet-

ween animal incomprehension and human structures of understanding, such as when the male 'mother' stares into the light above him after the death of the baby as if he/she is asking the deity 'Why my child?'

At the end, one of the female dancers emerges from a dog kennel glowing with red light carrying a plate in her mouth. She walks to the edge of the stage on all fours and then drops the plate, her face a study of a human perfecting animal incomprehension, the expression of how Heidegger defined the animal as being 'poor in the world', or even 'deprived of the world', knowing and interacting only with its immediate environment but having no concept of the *being of being*.<sup>25</sup> The strange look suggested a creature on the cusp of comprehension. Evolution comprises not merely the physical acts of standing upright, developing symbolic language, and using tools, but a conceptual awareness. When did the first *homo floresiensis* imagine its potential to be a being in the world?

### Simian Culture or Simian Nature?

'Do monkeys dance?' asked a spectator in the Q and A session after a performance of *Khmeropédie III: Source/Primate* at the Singapore Art Museum. It was apparent that the piece had stirred new questions about the relationship between non-humans and the creation of art, echoing an earlier query by Church doctors – do humans 'ape' God's creation when they make art? Does a dance about monkeys or with humans assuming the role of monkeys require that monkeys can appreciate or create something called 'dance' themselves? Are monkeys capable of creating rhythmic patterned movement for aesthetic pleasure, and would humans be able to recognize it as such if they did?

The fascination and yet condemnation of the ape for what the animal might be perceiving when it 'apes' the behaviour – not of other animals, but only that of humans – has especially challenged notions of what humans do when they act. The query reached a paradoxical climax in 2008 when the American Academy of Motion Pictures failed to recognize a simian performer as a



Simian locomotion from the entire cast of Emmanuèle Phuon's *Khmeropédie III: Source/Primate* (2013). Photo courtesy of Anders Jiras.

true actor. As Helen Gilbert writes, in rejecting a case of an orangutan actor, the film industry draws 'a line of distinction' 'between animal *characters* that aren't capable of speaking parts and human *actors* whose personal interpretation in character portrayal creates nuance and audience engagement' (original emphasis).<sup>26</sup>

Gilbert suggests that acting itself is being treated as a marker of species distinction in that it requires not only self-consciousness, which chimpanzees have demonstrated, but also the conscious adoption of another self, and this belief that other animals cannot act a role besides themselves, despite training, remains a sticking point for the animal actor.

### Between Mimicry and Modern Dance

The presupposition of acting is that one has a 'self' so that one can pretend to be someone/something not that self, but dance does not require such pretence and can be a series of movements made either in response to music or rhythm or as an interior emotion that has no other function but aesthetic

pleasure. *Source/Primate* does not answer the question of whether monkeys dance, but it does touch upon simian aesthetics more than the previous two works.

Using seven monkey dancers, Emmanuèle Phuon furthered the process of stripping away, and deprived the dancers of the traditional narratives, stylized gestures, and familiar monkey roles, requiring them to descend deeper into the forest where there are no monkey generals or soldiers or missing link wildmen, only individual monkeys in their own communities, more or less innocent of human intervention and interpretation.

This production went quite a distance to push the dancer into an all-animal realm so as to let the animal 'be' while creating patterns recognizable as dance for a human audience:

The notion of letting the animal's otherness be has links to those postmodern conceptions of the animal that try to avoid forcibly rendering it meaningful in human terms, thus reducing its otherness to sameness, and its wonder to familiarity.<sup>27</sup>

Phuon's monkey dancers tread a thin line between outright mimicry gleaned from



Khiev Sovannarith demonstrating the grace of the crouching monkey in Emmanuèle Phuon's *Khmeropédie III: Source/Primate* (2013). Photo courtesy of Anders Jiras.

videos of apes in the forest and abstract modern dance. The performers wait upright at the edge of the stage, visible to the audience, before assuming monkey bodies and leaping into the monkey territory of the stage, in a literal descent. Admiring their ability, Phuon remarks,

For the stance of the monkey, the legs are bent. It's terribly hard; I don't think any one of us could last five minutes. And they, from an early age on, work on that for six hours a day building up strength to sustain the bent legs and the torso that's a little bit leaning forward.<sup>28</sup>

Phuon had the dancers not only follow the practice of earlier masters in observing monkeys at the Tamao refuge, but also added internet sources to include monkeys and apes outside the region. Phuon enlisted the help of Eric Sargis, a physical anthropologist who studies biodynamics from primate skeletons, to assist her in assembling a whole range of primate locomotion and behaviour from macaques, gibbons, bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans.

Stripped of an overarching narrative, or even controlling idea, the dance is a collage

of eight scenarios directly informed by prior relationships between humans and monkeys. It examines 'monkey-hood' from traditional culture-scape to contemporary science-scape, always testing the distinctions that humans impose to distinguish themselves. The complete piece weaves all the views together aesthetically through the animal grace animating the bodies of the monkey dancers. Their precise details indicate the thought that went into replicating the observable idiosyncrasies of primate behaviour.

The dancers wear cotton singlets and shorts, clothing that appropriately non-distracting, so that one can see and concentrate on the body without any artful intervention. This neutralizes rather than disguises their humanity and allows the transformation into monkey to occur from within. In the opening, two 'naturalistic' monkeys flank a stylized monkey of the Khmer classical dance, co-ordinating their moves with his; though not exactly the same, they also 'perform' dance. The trio do not merely contrast the natural moves that the masters would have copied from the real animals to produce their refined versions, but also the monkey in the

centre is a monkey general, like Hanuman, who as a deity dances upright and rarely descends to the floor, while the other two resemble the small monkeys who can assume more realistic postures.

In the second part, all the dancers traverse the empty stage displaying various forms of monkey locomotion. The nonstop traversing establishes the monkey territory in which no humans interfere or are even present. Compared to the awkward, stiff-legged gait in *Parahuman*, the dancers in *Source/Primate* are gloriously supple, skimming across the floor with seemingly effortless grace; their bent limbs are coiled with energy that sends them bounding into the air without straightening:

For much of the time, their torsos lean down from their pelvises, and – though nothing draws attention to their technique – the control and fluency of both spine and thigh is exceptional.<sup>29</sup>

Aside from the variations of travelling on all fours, they also scurry bi-pedally like the lithe gibbons and siamangs living in the jungle canopy, holding their arms aloft or to their sides as if brachiating, swinging from branches. All the movement is loose-limbed, the arms swinging freely. Occasionally a monkey bounds on top of another, perhaps the initial inspiration for the acrobatic move in *lakhaon khaol* to show victory, but here there was no meaning or posing, and they would spring lightly apart.

While the white film actors in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014) required arm extensions to adjust the proportions of their longer legs and allow them to move on all fours, the Cambodian dancers have shorter legs and also the muscle training to keep them bent. This made their arms seem appropriately longer, and allowed them to keep their torsos parallel to the floor. And when the traditional movements were developed they were abstracted into modern dance, except for the odd cartwheel. Notably absent was the jeeb or any finger articulation that suggested Khmer dance.

Pure movement sections are interspersed with scenarios portraying chimpanzee and bonobo social dynamics, the hierarchies and inter-'personal' relationships that govern



Demonstrating gentle monkey play in Emmanuèle Phuon's *Khmeropédie III: Source/Primate* (2013). Photo courtesy of Anders Jiras.

their communities. An alpha male grabs hold of a cloth and, slapping it on the ground, intimidates the others. Two monkeys wrestle, playfully exploring each others' bodies as one rubs the buttock of the other who softly pushes him away with his foot on his face. Without any tension from self-consciousness, the dancers are utterly at ease with their own bodies and each others', so that all physical encounter is gentle, operating within a communal monkey body with its tangle of limbs.

### The Presence of Death

A video of a chimpanzee community relating to a dead nine-year-old had provided Phuon with her initial impetus to make the piece and much of this video is replicated in the penultimate scene. The monkeys discover the body one by one, each one scrutinizing it with individualized curiosity – fingering its eyes, fingers, nose, manipulating a limb to elicit a reaction, turning it over, dragging it,

using its hand to scratch its head, caressing a foot and sniffing the torso.

The presence of unknown and sudden death is powerful, as mysterious to the apes as to us watching. One of the few remaining claims for human distinctiveness is our living with the knowledge of our own death and how it affects the way we live and view life. The monkeys' reaction to the lifeless body clearly indicates that they wonder what has happened to their companion, but without confirming that that knowledge transfers to understanding their own mortal condition.

Their curiosity, confusion, and subdued acquiescence that only scientists – fearing to be accused of obscuring their objectivity – would hesitate to call 'mourning' is more nuanced than Joseph Meeker's idea of animals accepting life's cruelties by practising a 'comedy of survival', and instead suggests animal intimations of permanent loss.<sup>30</sup> They each have idiosyncratic responses, some angry, some frustrated, impatient, morose, curious, some reacting with stronger expressions of grief than others. The scenario concludes with them all clustering around the body the way the entire chimp community did in the video, but then they freeze – a simian *piéta* – and finally desert it.

Alone on stage, the 'dead' body begins to twitch, the movement giving way to violent contractions as if being electrocuted – reminiscent of both cruel experiments on monkeys and the creation of Frankenstein's monster. The body thrusts upward but is held to the ground at varying points of contact until it wrenches free and stands upright, still trembling and faltering. Another dancer places a white monkey mask over its head – of an anonymous monkey, not traditional. He tries to shake it off as if resisting its restriction, and then gradually accepts it. The dance completes a counterclockwise revolution from the initial dialogue between the natural monkey and its classical representative to the final resurrection of the dead monkey to a simian avatar – not a clone, but a new cultural fusion that is nonetheless born of violence to the creature.

Although the dancers' embodiment occasionally borders on mime, their calm

seriousness and concentration appears completely unself-conscious and devoid of any comic residue, despite the audience voyeuristically observing them 'becoming monkey'. The dancers' teachers who saw the performance in Phnom Penh responded positively to the piece because it did not reinterpret the *Reamker* narrative but emulated the masters' techniques of observing real monkeys carefully. The dancers were gratified that they were seen to be extending the tradition, not breaking it, and the response from young Cambodians was equally encouraging as they found it surprisingly modern.<sup>31</sup>

This was perhaps the first time that monkey dancers were stripped of all cultural accretions of mask, costume, stylization, narrative, ritualization, and comedy, and replaced with scientific emulation. Only in a culture where the human body is trained from childhood to assume monkey postures could such a complete transformation of individual and group occur. It challenges us to reformulate our modes of identification and psychological distance precisely because of the dancers' penetration into simian territory, leaving behind the world of metaphor, human affinities, and anthropomorphic interpretation.

When the natural monkey is finally reincarnated into a cultural monkey, we are left to wonder whether nature and culture are mutually exclusive, and whether one of them needs to die in order to become the other. The process also suggests one of deification, the apotheosis of the monkey represented by the sanctity of the mask.

### **Wreaking Havoc on the Western Stage**

The monkey figure on the Chinese stage is not masked but characterized by special face paint, varying according to Sun Wukong's roles in the narrative, as well as the differences in the regional opera genres. Unlike the Amrita experiments with *Reamker* monkeys, no Chinese performer or choreographer has undertaken the same complete stripping away of theatrical, cultural, and religious accretions accumulated in the character of Sun Wukong, who was initially

conceived of as more humanized in his yearning for humanity and immortality.

There are no monkeys in Chinese plays except for Sun Wukong and therefore, like Hanuman, he is not a representative monkey, but a specialized character not separable from his narrative. The small monkeys that accompany Sun Wukong are more highly skilled in acrobatics than their Southeast Asian counterparts, who are primarily dancers. The Chinese monkey performers develop their physical virtuosity and visual aspects of the performance rather than plumb psychology or emotion. Although over thirty plays have been written based on the novel, they are rarely performed today. Chen Shizheng wrote his circus opera *Monkey* from nine of the novel's chapters, basically the same eight scenarios that continue to be popular set pieces for actors on the Chinese stage.

Within the *jingju* (Beijing Opera) tradition, two schools of monkey performance developed: *nan pai*, or the southern school, that featured an acrobatic show-off style, and the *bei pai*, or northern school, that focused on a more human-like representation and realistic mimicking of monkey movements. Most performers now combine the two. While the small monkeys specialize in acrobatic flips, scampering on the ground, clichéd scratching and twitching, the Monkey King must be a consummate actor as well. The character is defined as mischievous and loveable, but those who perform the role are always adopting new ways to expand and enliven it.

Zhang Yuqiao, a veteran performer in Taiwan who trained as a *wu chou*, the martial comic role that includes the Monkey King, has been performing Sun Wukong for thirty years. Though he is still hesitant to alter it radically, he, like others, constantly changes the details, adding new acrobatic moves and novelty bits of stage business. After seeing kabuki, he gave his Monkey King a fan to play with in a performance in Japan. He also confirms that training still requires observation of live monkeys. After a visit to the zoo, his teacher forced him to hold a monkey pose and not move until he could feel the monkey from the inside.<sup>32</sup>

Sun Wukong treads a fine line between being a monkey that yearns to be human, and a human that yearns for a monkey's freedom:

Stories of such heroes are needed to help work off people's resentment toward real authorities not easily defied. And nowhere has this need been greater than in China, with its tendency toward overblown bureaucracy and its strict ethical training of obedience to 'superiors'. . . . By making the rebel an animal, the Chinese can laugh at his antics without guilt, while subconsciously admiring his defiance of the powers that be. After all, no one expects a monkey to know better – especially one with no parents!<sup>33</sup>

However, Sun Wukong has less independent agency than a real monkey if he is perceived as an extension of human unconsciousness. His hypermobility, aggression, and ambition are less physical manifestations of monkey being than the restless state of mind of humans – known as the Buddhist 'monkey mind' – that enlightenment subdues at the end of the journey. People can enjoy his anarchic antics precisely because they know the Buddha will contain them in the end and the status quo be restored.

### The Temple of Monkey Disciples

The undiminished popularity of Sun Wukong's disruptive adventures inspired research into their real-life precedents. Meir Shahar connects Wu's novel to earlier stories about Lingyin Si, a temple where monks reared monkey disciples: 'One, first written down in the Tang dynasty, involves the obscure founder of the monastery, Huili (330 AD), that has both a supernatural monkey protagonist and involves a journey to India similar to *Xiyouji*.<sup>34</sup>

Many visitors to the monastery wrote poems about the monkeys – that were in fact gibbons: 'It walks erect, is tailless, and is endowed with superior intelligence.' The gibbon's monogamous family life, his solitary habits, and above all his beautiful mournful singing led generations of Chinese poets to use him as a symbol of the *junzi*, the gentleman.<sup>35</sup> The poets also wrote of the animals stealing oranges from the monks'

table, their mischievous behaviour resembling one of the most popular stage scenarios, 'Wreaking Havoc in Heaven' (*Danao tiangong*). Deborah Klens-Bigman writes of her first encounter with Sun Wukong in the 1970s:

One of the scenes was the 'peach banquet' from the Monkey King. A lone performer . . . literally destroyed a long table set for a banquet of [Taoist] Immortals. Maybe it's my imagination, but I remember the fruit as being real, and the actor being covered with it, as he gleefully ate, drank and trashed the place settings. The audience . . . had a wildly good time, with the enthusiasm of a great number of *inner children* taking vicarious part in the ultimate cosmic food fight (*my italics*).<sup>36</sup>

There is quite a stretch between the 'gentleman' gibbons and Sun Wukong's malicious revenge at not having been invited to the party, but it is this comparison with a child that frequently defines the role, making him a different sort of incomplete human than the Wildman or the Monkey God Hanuman (who never expresses any desire to be human) or the actual wild animal. Despite its Buddhist allegory and satire of Daoism, for many Chinese readers the novel is a children's adventure story and the performed scenarios an opportunity to enjoy the actor's consummate physical agility – especially of Sun Wukong wielding his magic weapon represented by a baton.

For his spectacle, Chen Shizheng not only composed his script from a comic-book version of the story, his two British collaborators, composer Damon Albarn and graphic animator Jamie Hewlett, recalled their own childhood relationship with *Monkey* from a 1970s Japanese anime version that was broadcast in Britain; thus, whether represented by live performers or animated figures, they were cartoon characters. Chen invited his British collaborators to China, but there is little indication that they spent time observing real monkeys. Nor do any of the performers that took on the role from 2007 to 2013 assert that this was a necessary preparation, for indeed it had probably been part of their initial training for the *wu chou* role

Instead, Chen asked his Monkey Kings to relax their rigid stylized movement, not to evolve it into abstract modern dance, but

toward a pop star swagger. In the show, Sun Wukong wears a modified or modernized costume, a yellow tracksuit (red in the Manchester premiere) rather than the yellow pyjama-like costume he traditionally dons, in which his body is completely covered from cap to slippers. The monkey's face-paint design is also simplified and, more significantly, he wears fangs that he frequently bares. He grabs his crotch, strides across the stage, noshes on fruit, tossing the peels, and mocks the other characters when he is not challenging them to a joust. This is not the cute nose-wiggling *ke ai* 'loveable' monkey of the Chinese stage, but a *Clockwork Orange* version, a monkey with attitude, a vicious streak such as observed of macaques and chimps in captivity.

### A Monkey with Attitude

Although the Monkey King is often portrayed as a prankster, Chen saw him as

a fighter who could be vicious and ill-tempered. That meant helping the actors understand the character's motivations and mind-set – something they had never done before when they played Monkey in more traditional Peking opera productions.<sup>37</sup>

As with the Amrita dancers in *Revitalizing Monkeys and Giants*, Chen requested the Sun Wukong performers to find and project internal motivations rather than relying on surface conventions. Instead of probing deeply or applying any scientific realism, they replaced one set of conventions with another, creating a bad boy adolescent:

Chen was faced with finding performers flexible enough to shed aspects of their Chinese opera training, including the emphasis on emulating the styles of past great performances. After one run-through . . . he gathered the main actors and delivered a short lecture in which he urged them to make their performances more natural.<sup>38</sup>

While Chinese directors like to use performers trained in traditional opera because they are well disciplined and have excellent physical technique, they rarely undertake to 'retrain' them for more realistic charac-



*The Monkey Kings*, Taiyuan Puppet Theatre, Taipei, and Joe Louis Puppets, Bangkok (2013). Above: Zhang Yuqiao as Sun Wukong with Hanuman as they meet their puppet avatars. Below: Hanuman dancer meets his puppet image. Photos courtesy of Taiyuan Puppet Theatre Company.



terizations. Instead, they tell them to 'relax' the rigidity of their training – a request that goes counter to everything the performer has practised till then. Li Li, twenty-five, who played Tripitaka the monk, said that her Peking Opera training had not taught her how to embrace the kind of acting that Chen sought. In Peking opera, 'I'm copying what the previous generation has left for us,' she said. 'The way I'm judged is by the standard set by previous performers. This time, the previous generation didn't help me.' The work 'took me out of my comfort zone,' and 'the director created a new language'.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the performers did not merely see Chen's interpretation as a new approach, but as a distinctly *Western* adaptation, especially for the role of Sun Wukong; 'The Chinese Monkey is very cute, even when he's angry,' said Wang Lu, one of the actors for the role. 'This one has Western characteristics. He's naughty. He's a bad child. It took me a while to adjust.'<sup>40</sup>

Some critics noted the difference; 'Chen has laboured to create a less cute, more flawed simian than the puckish sprite of Chinese opera and folklore – and this tracksuited bad boy is certainly a rogue, perhaps even a sociopath. But not, in my opinion, a terribly deep one.'<sup>41</sup> Aside from some cliché monkey twitches and scratches, and the mastering of *wu chou* technique and monkey *gungfu*, the actors playing Sun Wukong most resemble the physical embodiment of the young men in the Hewlett animation, *Gorillaz*, the virtual band as, if one of them had landed on this twenty-first-century *chinoiserie* stage.

The production emphasizes a non-stop three-dimensional physicality that leaves little time or space for more profound contemplation of the oddity of a monkey representing a human's search for spiritual understanding. Chen wrote spare dialogue in order to focus on movement combined with visual spectacle, contending that in the West opera is mostly concerned with the singing – music driven, with the voice creating the character – whereas Chinese opera also utilizes a physical language. 'What is lacking in our computer life is physicality. We don't need to move any more. When you see people

with superhuman body ability, you always go "Wow".'<sup>42</sup>

### Animation and Stage Technology

Chen combines Cirque du Soleil high-flying spectacle with Chinese opera singing and new fusion music to make his retelling of the story movement-, picture-, and action-driven. But as the circus performers' had never played character, they tend to blend with the overall fantastical environment. Chen augments human rather than simian physicality, with Hewlett's animations and stage technology.

The monkeys' movements and those of the other mythical characters, are extended by harnesses. As the small monkeys flip-flop across the stage floor, one bound takes them spinning into the air, resembling not so much monkey movement as the aerial fights common to *gungfu* films; thus live bodies seamlessly integrate with the animation. Bodies hoisted in harnesses are common enough in large commercial and musical productions, but Chen uses them to particularly good effect to support the characters' superhuman powers in a mythical world.

But operating within the field of so much technical cleverness, the human bodies also become somewhat mechanical; the perfected balancing, spinning, and intricate contortions take the body away from the natural and into the hyperartificial. With the splicing of animated transitions and exquisitely trained automaton-like acrobats providing a vividly fluid set, the only consistent figure is that of the Monkey King, whose rebellious antics accentuate his alive status. Nonetheless, the superhuman display threatens to prevent the spectator from identifying with him, or as Alfred Hickling notes:

Ultimately Monkey is a cartoon opera in the same way that *Gorillaz* is a cartoon band, which makes it difficult to empathize with the characters on an emotional level. And though Fei Yang, in the title role, is an astonishing acrobat and penetrating singer, these superhuman abilities only serve to make him seem even more alien and remote.<sup>43</sup>

However, one of the staging features that gives the small monkeys literally more

latitude are the vertical poles they nimbly climb. This vertical dimension is missing in the Southeast Asian productions of the *Ramayana* and it is a strange omission given that the monkeys and apes are tree dwellers. Since traditional Asian performance relies on costume, music, and stylized dance rather than set design to aesthetically remove stage action from reality, the stages are traditionally bare, and even the modern addition of multi-level sets rarely gives the *Ramayana* monkeys room to develop their moves vertically. Only in the scene with the monkeys bounding on stage, clambering up the poles and tumbling down, their tails wagging wildly as they casually flip-flop, is the mood indicative of young monkeys at play, though without any expression of an individual's multiple relationships evinced among real monkeys.

Whether stylized for Western or Chinese performance, Sun Wukong is a mythical monkey and Chen's spectacle provided him with abundant technological ways of demonstrating the full scope of his super powers. However, it is supposed to be a story of a search for enlightenment, as the *zen koan*-like subtitles suggest, and this conforms to the spiritual exoticism associated with Asia, since it is not expressing the religious aspirations of the people watching it when they belong to a mostly Judaeo-Christian culture.

Chen's *Monkey* is also contextualized by the long history of British *chinoiserie* pantomime, of which *Aladdin*, despite the Middle Eastern moniker, is set in a fantasy Peking. Chen is more concerned with making a cross-cultural spectacle, adapting the Chinese tale to make it accessible to Western audiences, than in exploring the existential question of monkey's position *vis-à-vis* humanity. His modernity is in the visual remake of the story, the performers embodying not only cultural *gestes* from Chinese opera and acrobatics, but also the characterizations in Hewlett's animated rock band, Gorillaz.<sup>44</sup>

Though the Sun Wukong has become a familiar figure in Western popular culture, not only from Chen's circus opera and

previous cartoons, but more recently in computer games, he retains his Chinese origins. And while monkeys entered mainstream Western consciousness from colonial incursions into Africa and Asia from the seventeenth century on, they were not of such widespread interest until Darwin put forth his theories of evolution, and apes became major attractions in nineteenth-century colonial expositions and zoos.

### Embodying the Ape's Curse

Kafka's Red Peter in 'A Report to an Academy' embodies the deracinated ape, the enslaved animal, abducted from its home, put on display, and forced to perform a parody of itself on stage. There is no relief from its indictment of human cruelty and no redemption from its misery. Red Peter is the dark doppelganger of Hanuman and Sun Wukong, the ape that would not be human but is forced to become something like.

Like the Asian monkey kings, this chimpanzee is a speaking ape, but uses human speech to curse humanity – which aligns him most significantly with Caliban – and to try to express the dilemma of his liminal existence between species – as do all monkey performers.<sup>45</sup> *Kafka's Monkey*, the verse drama by Colin Teevan, performed by Kathryn Hunter, combines the chimpanzee's vocal indictment with a contorted simian physical verisimilitude as the actress performs a marginalized creature – performing ape and ersatz human, neither one nor the other: 'From the moment Ms. Hunter lopes on to the stage, every muscle works to convey a creature trapped between two states of being.'<sup>46</sup> She performs not an ape, but the overlay of ape-ness on the human body to depict a creature monstrously unnatural.

The character reveals the profound crisis of a wild creature domesticated against its will and still conscious of belonging to no world but the pedestrian fantasy of the music-hall stage, that, for the duration, is transformed into a lecture hall, that in turn is performed in a theatre and so makes the audience the de facto 'esteemed members of the academy' the guilty parties he addresses.

Kafka's piece is often read allegorically, the ape representing the ambivalent position of the pre-war German-speaking Jew, and the creators of this production also claimed it could suggest the status of present-day immigrants; yet Kafka's story has been stripped of such metaphor by John Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, in which the protagonist Elizabeth Costello views Red Peter as the spokesperson par excellence for nonhuman beings alone. Kafka's piece is frequently performed unaltered on the German stage and this legacy of concept-dominated theatre is brought to the production through its German director Walter Meierjohann, but Hunter, giving the most complete physical rendering of Red Peter's simian origins, overrides the metaphorical.

Yet because there is no tradition in the West of the monkey dancer, one is acutely aware of her conscious effort and virtuosity. She performs a performing ape in the context of a culture that predominantly sees the ape as performer. And – given the twenty-first century's awareness of the animal's imminent extinction – it is now also the romanticized Other in the African jungles from where Red Peter was captured.

Hunter's was a singular stage actor's triumph, a portrayal of an ape without the aid of make-up or costuming, whose most important feature is his alienation from his self, represented by the poor disguising of his ape-body in ill-fitting fancy dress. That an actress assumed the role of a male chimpanzee also emphasizes the androgynous nature of the animal even though he mentions that he keeps a female chimpanzee companion.<sup>47</sup> Red Peter's liminal identity not only gives lie to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' contention that the ape is unable to act, but his performance could be ironically addressing *that* Academy.

Moreover, after a trip to the Edinburgh Zoo, Hunter noted the chimpanzees looked 'utterly lonely and miserable. They weren't cute, they were quite tough.'<sup>48</sup> Such an observation is also ironic given that the fate of the zoo animal is the very existence Red Peter seeks to avoid in favour of the one other alternative offered him, the music hall.

### In Search of Hunter's Red Peter

In preparation for the role, Hunter also worked with the Royal Academy's movement director, Ilan Reichel, whose process was not unlike that of Emmanuèle Phuong and her scientific informant, Sargis:

I'm not interested in superficial imitation. I want to discover the essence of the animal, and then the quality of the performance will be much more profound. We also explore the bone structure of the animal. . . . Once we have mastered these fundamental elements we then look at simple activities such as standing up; the way the chimp pushes itself against gravity, against the earth; then how they move; their co-ordination; and what kind of skin or fur they have. Eventually, when we have a whole range of the basic things, we can do exercises, imagining the animal in its natural environment. Finally, we will explore using things that humans use. . . . To move away from just being a photographic imitation of an animal, actors must transpose themselves, move away from just being an animal and discover a humanized version of that animal.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the grandiose claim to 'discover the animal's essence', Reichel's approach seems strategically sound; but most apes are social animals and much of their 'essence' is shown only in communal relationships. Though the solitary Red Peters cannot relate to others of his kind, Hunter breaks through the fourth wall to approach members of the audience, offering a banana, or pretending to pick a nit from a head or body. This latter bit of stage business is a cliché feature in Asian performance. Monkey actor/dancers groom each other on stage, and Hanuman often delights by bounding into the audience to attempt to groom a spectator but even this gesture plays differently in the West and Asia, where, in rural areas, people do sit and groom each other's hair, searching for nits.

Reichel goes further in claiming the actor can attain a psychological understanding of the animal by inhabiting its body:

The person on stage is actually a chimp, a chimp with amazing human characteristics, but fundamentally a chimp. . . . In order to create a live creature on stage you need to discover its physicality in as much detail as possible. It's also very important to look at the animal's senses. . . . With a chimp it's their eyes, but they're very tactile

and use the sense of touch a lot. Animals also have a self-image of how they interact with the world. Their sense of their own strength, status, and power instantly changes the language of the body. . . . One of the characteristics of chimps and gorillas is that they can reflect on what is happening, they see something and consider it before acting upon it. Usually animals react by instincts, but chimps and gorillas process the information before doing anything about it. This relates to the dynamic of movement.<sup>50</sup>

Hunter adds, 'Finding the chimp physically is a challenge. . . . We have done this by working on the animal's different rhythms, and by exploring the creature's structure, both inside and out. I'm interested in the combination of strength and flexibility, and calmness and violence which chimps have.'<sup>51</sup>

The abrupt shifts in rhythm aided Hunter's resemblance. She bends her knees and thrusts her chest forward, giving the effect of elongating her arms. On the bare set, she scrambles up a laddered wall and dangles limply. She grasps a bottle and gestures with an ape's hand. She squats, lopes bowlegged, knuckles to the ground, but her face, undisguised by make-up, mask, or cultural opacity, is overly expressive, as if the words were insufficient to express the chimp's proud anguish. She breaks into a music-hall soft-shoe routine and flips her hat with more artful intent than the Amrita dancer who tilts into a cartwheel of the formal dance. Is it the character demonstrating his skill, or the actress showing off hers? Unlike the stylized *geste* of Hanuman's jeeb or Sun Wukong's twirling baton, Red Peter's contact with human art has not deified but demeaned him.

#### A 'Process of Negative Mimesis'

Meierjohann asserted: 'Kathryn's greatest achievement is that she actually developed a monkey's psychology by which she performs the text',<sup>52</sup> while she herself contends: 'You have to do it as much in depth, if not more, as if you're playing *Streetcar's* Blanche.'<sup>53</sup> That is, she does not perform 'monkey' but a specific simian character, like Hanuman or Sun Wukong, and because Kafka's (Teevan's) text so forcefully presents Red Peter's psychology, Hunter and her

colleagues strove to find the appropriate embodiment to match this character.

Their assumptions about the success of this approach upon a humanized ape reveal the practical application of the question philosophers have wrestled with: to what extent can we understand the non-human mind via the body? Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello cites philosopher Thomas Nagel, who writes why attempts to understand the animal consciousness inevitably fail:

Merely to imagine what it is like to live as a bat does – to imagine spending our nights flying around catching insects in our mouths, navigating by sound instead of sight, and our days hanging upside down – is not good enough, because all that tells us is what it would be like to *behave* like a bat. Whereas what we really aspire to know is what it is like to *be* a bat; and that we can never accomplish because our minds are inadequate to the task – our minds are not bats' minds.<sup>54</sup>

While scientists severely criticized Nagel's reasoning for imputing the limits of science, Costello rejects it from an emotive standpoint. 'To be a living bat is to be full of being; being fully a bat is like being fully human, which is also to be full of being. . . . To be full of being is to live as a body-soul. One name for the experience of full being is *joy*.'<sup>55</sup> Moreover, she insists, 'there are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination'<sup>56</sup> by which we can share a place with anything that partakes in life.

Her definition, however, is negatively embodied by Red Peter, whose life is joyless. Martin Puchner suggests that Kafka's Red Peter 'is not a sympathetic rendering of the ape, but a negative mimesis in which literature remains deliberately at one remove from the animal and only represents the violent process of anthropomorphization itself'.<sup>57</sup> Puchner contends that humans cannot reach an understanding of animals merely by giving voice and agency to them, but need to aim through the dividing line between them towards a process of negative mimesis that inverts the perspective of representation and demonstrates

the extent to which the very distinction between humans and animals is the product of projection

and representation. Negative mimesis thus names a critique of anthropocentrism as it occurs in the sphere of theatre and performance, initiating a displacement or decentering of the human.<sup>58</sup>

Red Peter certainly embodies the failure of anthropomorphizing; but is that an inevitable and ultimate divide that must be accepted or can it be resisted?

Costello suggests the poetic imagination can comprehend the animal Other through the body rather than the mind, exemplified in Ted Hughes's poems about a caged jaguar:

Hughes is feeling his way towards a different kind of being-in-the-world, one which is not entirely foreign to us. . . . In these poems we know the jaguar not from the way he seems but from the way he moves. The body is as the body moves, or as the currents of life move within it. The poems ask us to imagine our way into that way of moving, to inhabit that body.<sup>59</sup>

Costello favours poetry over philosophy because 'it does not try to find an idea in the animal, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with him'.<sup>60</sup> She seems to agree with Puchner, but only as far as the philosophical mind imposes itself rather than understanding through a 'body-to-body' connection. The art of acting, even more than that of poetry, does not merely 'record' engagement, it imprints it, because it requires the physical application of the whole being – body, soul, and mind – in the production of the imagined. The body must be trained to imagine as well as the mind.

Hunter does not mimic the ape, but the incomplete being between ape and human, a portrayal of the grotesque distortion of negative mimesis, appropriate for the being Red Peter has become and the body he inhabits. This makes her precision and detail of ape movement painfully awkward, without any of the animal grace of the Amrita dancers.

Unlike the early twentieth-century performances by apes and their 'impersonators', Hunter's performance does not demean the ape: its character is already of one demeaned – the embodiment of Kafka's neurotic insight. In the twenty-first century, Kafka's

alienation and chimpanzee's victimization are both commonplace – the ape is abused, humans are responsible, the world we live in is Kafkaesque. Though these are no longer novel views, Hunter manages to embody all three and applies them not only to the captured ape of early twentieth-century colonialism but also to the threatened animal of the Anthropocene.

### **Cross-Cultural Body Consciousness**

Writing about Japanese post-war primatology, Donna Haraway comments that it did not depend upon the West's 'complex search for the primitive, authentic, and lost self, sought in the baroque dialectic between the wildly free and subordinated other'. Instead she notes a different sort of animal hierarchy, potentially applicable to a human performer:

Japanese monkeys might be viewed as actors in a Kabuki drama or a Noh performance. Their stylized social gestures and intricate rule-ordered lives are like dramatic masks that necessarily both conceal and reveal complex cultural meanings about what it means to be simultaneously social, indigenous, and individual for Japanese observers. Seeking the truth of nature underneath the thin, often obscuring layer of culture, the Westerner tends to see in our primate kin a deeper shared animal nature. In contrast, perhaps, Japanese primate observers have seen simian masks expressing the essential double-sidedness of the relations of individual and society and of knower and known. It is not a 'truer' nature behind the mask that is sought within a Japanese cultural frame; nature is not the bare face behind the mask of culture. Instead, the figure of the Japanese dramatic mask alludes to a powerful abstract stylization of the specific social intricacies and profoundly individual qualities that pattern primate life. . . . Masks cannot be stripped away to reveal the truth; rather the mask is a figure of the two-sidedness of the structure of life, person, and society.<sup>61</sup>

All the performances engage in some kind of stripping away – of culture, of pretence, of artifice – but also vary in what they reveal about artful masking of the relation between human and simian. Haraway's interpretation goes some way to explaining the impassive mask-like faces of the Cambodian dancers once their masks are removed.

Monkeyness is not the revealed interior; it is the constant state of doubleness.

Sun Wukong's story must end after he attains enlightenment; a subdued self-controlled figure is no longer the Monkey King. His existence is based in his doubleness: his pleasure in being who he is and his desire to become other. Red Peter's expressions of contempt and anguish speak not only of the beast but of the human empathy for it, but his dilemma is a Western either/or of existence – the impossibility of accepting double-sided nature. Compared with the understated grace and unselfconscious intimacy of the Cambodian dancers, Hunter's movements are nearly contortionist, their very *unnaturalness* appropriate for the grotesque life Red Peter lives, his despair at his alienation from both people and simians in his unique limbo.

Primatologists have shown that apes have both a conscious sense of individual identity as well as 'self-awareness', the ability to recognize their outer appearance as indicative of self in a mirror, but they do not seem to have the same *self-consciousness* in having a self *separate* from their bodies that produces shame and modesty, requiring clothes, segregation of the sexes, and privacy. Though apes possess survival taboos concerning disgust and fairness, they do not appear to be burdened with their physicality, especially its sexuality, that humans often feel, indeed so intensely, that they experience embarrassment just witnessing the primates' lack of inhibitions.

This difference has a profound impact on the human imitation of simians on stage that requires a performative quality to be observed. How does a mind–body-divided human perform the simian mind–body unity? The *Source/Primate* dancers' assumption of monkey roles and bodies suggested a lack of this biblical self-consciousness when they playfully touched each other with relaxed intimacy. They were not making statements about their 'monkeyness' nor did they have any metaphorical significance beyond the representation of themselves.

By retaining the vitality, popularity, and spiritual relevance of the *Ramayana* and

*Journey to the West* with their monkey protagonists, the Asian stage also retains its own viability as a space for transformation that Sue Ellen Case argues has been lost in the development of Western theatre:

Had acting been understood as ritualistic and transformative, it might have found consonance with different traditions in the world and different cosmologies. It might have remained embedded in ritual, music, and dance and dedicated to transformation. Instead the church-sanctioned form of representation was designed to displace transformative rites and discourses. . . . Transformation would be an effect of spectatorship rather than a performative action.<sup>62</sup>

### The Transformation Potential

Many Asian live and puppet performances featuring beast-human-god interrelations have expanded their transformation potential to incorporate the modern, such as in contemporary scientifically coded interrelations between human and simian bodies. The Amrita performances intertwine mythical literary transformations with bodily ones, easily eliding male and female, culture and nature, traditional and modern, human and non-human, yet also often emphasizing the pain and incompleteness of transformation. Phuon's piece would not have been so successful if the dancers had not first experienced the stripping away of conventions in *Revitalizing Monkeys and Giants*, or the more apelike inter-relationships in *Parahuman*.

*Journey to the West* is the story of Sun Wukong's spiritual transformation, yet Chen's *Monkey* actors jettison much of their stylization to open up to contemporary Western animation and musical spectacular, a globalized fusion that Ashley Thorpe sees as appropriately representative of post-modern vacuity.<sup>63</sup> Red Peter relates the history of his unwilling transformation, with the assumption that the audience must bear some guilt, yet all the spectators admire Hunter's bodily transformation.

In becoming monkey, Asian traditional performers have an advantage in their training; they establish muscle memory; the crouching position and locomotion close to the ground become second nature. They are

disadvantaged by convention that automatically converts an animal expression into a prettified gesture, and natural movement into stylized dance. However, underlying their training is the understanding that they are effecting a transformation. The monkeys in the Amrita productions are becoming the site of new body interactions for the traditional monkey dancer and contemporary re-evaluation of our commonality with simians.

An obstacle, however, remained in the minds of some Asian spectators who found the sight of humans becoming monkey uncomfortable in a global context, given Europeans' historical tendency to associate non-European performers with monkeys, as in John Ruskin's opinion of some Japanese jugglers visiting London in 1861: 'Documenting a resemblance between the Oriental acrobats and "the action and power of the monkey, even to the prehensile power in the foot"', he speculates that this might indicate hierarchical difference in race.<sup>64</sup>

Performer virtuosity played a key role in depicting both the character and narrative of Red Peter and Sun Wukong and therefore securely lodged their presentations in the cultural, while the Amrita dancers portrayed a multifaceted generic monkey and strove for a more collective representation with no individual demonstrating special technical prowess. The Amrita performers subordinated their egos and their skill to explore the new dimensions of role. The naturalness with which they assumed monkey in *Source/Primate*, and the lack of self-consciousness and shame which is so strongly embedded in Asian social interactions, are perhaps what disturbed some audience members. The very agility and simian semblance that was so praised by Western critics in Hunter's performance created discomfort among some audience members viewing Phuon's work in Singapore.

In a Q and A session after *Source/Primate*, a spectator asked if the performers felt demeaned by this representation. She framed her question in the light of the exaggerated artifice of Western ballet being the quintessence of civilized dance. The ballet dancer stands rigidly upright and defies gravity

with jumps and leaps, while the monkey crouches on all fours and stays low to the ground. The monkey dancer Phon Sopheap answered an emphatic, 'No!' This is what he had been trained for. His ancient lineage was one of pride, and if his teachers respected this kind of modernization, he was gratified.

A Thai observer also felt uncomfortable with the exclusive depiction of humans as apes without a human cultural frame, and expressed a symptom of Asian 'cultural cringe'. As one who had been educated in the West, he was sensitive to Western perceptions of Asians as imitators of Western modernity and of Asian modern arts as derivative. He felt this monkey dance was demeaning not merely to the dancers but to himself, saying that Westerners 'already see us as monkeys with cellphones'.

Phuon rejected any such implications: 'I don't believe monkeys are lower than us.' She also faced criticism for being a 'foreign' choreographer (though she grew up in Cambodia), imposing and limiting the dancers to 'monkeydom', but this too she denied for the piece was in the context of the *Khmeropédies*, the previous two parts of which had explored the female classical dance.

Clearly the exclusive representation of monkeys in *Source/Primate* touched a raw nerve. Embodying monkeyness outside any narrative and unexaggeratedly affecting the monkey's lack of shame moved *Source/Primate* beyond *Monkey's* cultural fusion and the logocentric negative mimesis of *Kafka's Monkey* to a more complete imagining of the animal Other. Yet unlike other postmodern subjects, the animal cannot resist or respond to these acts of 'simianification'. At one point, *Kafka's* Red Peter sarcastically notes:

In variety theatres I have often watched, before my turn came on, a couple of acrobats performing on trapezes high in the roof. They swung themselves, they rocked to and fro, they sprang into the air, they floated into each other's arms, one hung by the hair from the teeth of the other. 'And that too is human freedom,' I thought, 'self-controlled movement.' What a mockery of holy Mother Nature! Were the apes to see such a spectacle, no theatre walls could stand the shock of their laughter.<sup>65</sup>

Red Peter's dismissive observation tempts one to the wonder what would he think of Amrita's modern monkey dancers or the acrobats in Chen's *Monkey*, or even Hunter's dutiful depiction of himself.

## Notes and References:

The author would like to thank the Interweaving Performance Cultures at Freie Universität and the National Science Council of Taiwan for their assistance for this project.

1. I Made Bandem, *Wayang Wong* (Yogyakarta: Bali Mangsi Press, 2001), p. 15.
2. I use 'ape', 'monkey', and 'simian' interchangeably unless reference to a specific species is required.
3. Leonard Wolcott, 'Hanuman: the Power-Dispensing Monkey in North Indian Folk Religion', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXVII, No. 4 (August 1978), p. 655. Though enduring hordes of aggressive monkeys, Indian devotees donate to the building of huge Hanuman statues, the most recent, built in 2015, being 176 feet tall.
4. Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, ed., 'Introduction', *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 9.
5. Spider monkeys live in southern Mexico and Central America, but in neither the US or Canada. The Barbary macaques living on the Rock of Gibraltar are originally from Algeria and Morocco and are the only non-human primates in Europe. They are also unique in that they lack a tail and so are sometimes referred to as 'Barbary apes'.
6. Montaigne, quoted in Marion Copeland, *Apes of the Imagination: a Bibliography* <[www.h-net.org/~nilas/bibs/ape.html](http://www.h-net.org/~nilas/bibs/ape.html)>.
7. Londa L. Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), p. 80.
8. Robert Cribb, Helen Gilbert, and Helen Tiffin give a thorough account of colonial European encounters with orangutans and other apes in *Wild Man of Borneo: a Cultural History of the Orangutan* (University of Hawaii Press, 2014).
9. Sarah Whitney Wolmack, 'The 'Most Correct Creature': Colonial Man, Colonial Beast, and Colonial Culture', *Forum on Contemporary Art and Society* 6, 2007, p. 87.
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12. Christine Dymkowski, ed., *The Tempest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 41.
13. Erika Rundle, 'Caliban's Legacy', *The Drama Review*, LI, No. 1 (2007), p. 54.
14. <[http://planetoftheapes.wikia.com/wiki/Planet\\_of\\_the\\_Apes\\_UK\\_Stage\\_Show](http://planetoftheapes.wikia.com/wiki/Planet_of_the_Apes_UK_Stage_Show)>.
15. Steve Baker, 'Sloughing the Human', in *Zoontologies: the Question of the Animal*, ed. Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 159.
16. A third type of monkey called Battambang monkey from that province combines the characteristics of the other two.
17. Pornrat Damrhung, 'Revitalizing Monkeys and Giants: a Collaborative Contemporary Dance-Drama Project with Thai and Cambodian Classical Artists', Programme, National Museum of Singapore, 2–31 December 2006, p. 9.
18. With the exception of Phon Sopheap, whose solo piece *A Monkey's Mask* (2006) predates the 'Revitalizing' project. He worked on all three later productions.
19. Damrhung, p. 21.
20. Supriyanto studied with Sardono W. Kusumo, not only a famous choreographer, but also the most famous Indonesian interpreter of Hanuman. His *Hanuman, Tarzan, Pithecanthropus Erectus* is the most thorough and informative account of a dancer assuming a monkey role (Jakarta: Ku/bu/ku, 2004). <<http://traumwerk.stanford.edu/archaeology-performance/sardono.html>>.
21. Sardono, 2001. Kecak, that includes a chorus of rhythmically chanting men, is often referred to as 'monkey dance' by foreigners <<http://traumwerk.stanford.edu/archaeology-performance/sardono.html>>.
22. Gregory Forth, *Images of the Wildman in Southeast Asia: an Anthropological Perspective* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 3.
23. Sharon Wilkinson, 'A Viewer's Thank You Note for Para-Human Production', 28 January 2012 <<https://amritaperformingarts.wordpress.com/2012/01/28/>>.
24. Mother monkeys have been known to drag their dead babies for days, unwilling to part with them.
25. Martin Heidigger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 192–200.
26. Helen Gilbert, 'A Line of Distinction: Orangutan Farces and Questions of Interpretation', *Kunapipi*, XXXIV, No. 2 (2012), p. 153 <<http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol34/iss2/18>>.
27. Steve Baker, p. 160.
28. Michelle Vachon and Kuch Naren, 'Monkeying Around a Classical Role with a Contemporary Twist', *Cambodia Daily*, 20–21 August 2011.
29. Alastair Macaulay, 'It's Monkey See, Do and Dance', *New York Times*, 29 April 2013 <[www.nytimes.com/2013/04/30/arts/dance/khmeropedies-iii-and-amrita-performing-arts-at-the-guggenheim.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/30/arts/dance/khmeropedies-iii-and-amrita-performing-arts-at-the-guggenheim.html)>.
30. 'The comic way. . . is the path of reconciliation. . . Comedy sees many aspects simultaneously, and seeks for a strategy that will resolve problems with a minimum of pain and confrontation.' See Joseph Meeker, *Comedy of Survival* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), p.14–15.
31. Emmanuèle Phuon, personal interview, Phnom Penh, 27 January 2015.
32. Zhang Yuqiao, personal interview, Taipei, 12 March 2015.
33. Aaron Shepard, *The Monkey King: a Superhero Tale of China*, Skyhook Press: 2008 <[www.aaronshp.com/extras/MonkeyKing\\_note2.html](http://www.aaronshp.com/extras/MonkeyKing_note2.html)>. For most Chinese readers, *Xiyouji* is a children's adventure story, but aside from its allegorical critique of Chinese spiritual ideologies, *Xiyouji*'s central character has been associated with China's political rebels. Shan Wang relates that 'At first, Mao compared himself favourably to the mischievous Sun Wukong, wreaking havoc in "Heaven", overturning the Chinese bourgeoisie. But by the same

metaphor, Mao had also plucked away the country's "stabilizing pillar" with his disastrous Great Leap Forward. By the start of the Cultural Revolution, Mao's China could be seen as "Heaven", Mao himself is its stuffy Jade Emperor, and the disenfranchised groups living under his regime, the monkeys.' See 'Havoc in Mao's Heaven' 10 June 2014. <[http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup\\_publicity/2014/06/shan-wang-on-yiching-wu-cultural-revolution-at-the-margins.html](http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2014/06/shan-wang-on-yiching-wu-cultural-revolution-at-the-margins.html)>.

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35. Shahar, p. 201. *Junzi* literally translates as 'man of integrity.'

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39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.* It is likely that the actors were willing to try because they would not be seen by a Chinese opera audience but by Western audiences ignorant of the Monkey's stage performance legacy.

41. Scott Brown, 'Pop Goes the Buddha in *Monkey: Journey to the West*', *New York Magazine*, 22 July 2013. The allegorical picaresque nature of *Xiyouji*, and indeed, of much traditional Chinese popular fiction, is not conducive to psychological depth. The allegorical meaning is laid over the action rather than integrated in individual psyches.

42. Vera Haller, 'Spoleto Festival USA: Monkeys and Others', 25 May 2008. Chen Shi-Zheng, interview on video <<http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/05/page/2/>>.

43. Alfred Hickling, '*Monkey: Journey to the West*', *Guardian*, 30 June 2007 <[www.theguardian.com/music/2007/jun/30/classicalmusicandopera1](http://www.theguardian.com/music/2007/jun/30/classicalmusicandopera1)>.

44. A curious feature of Hewlett's animations is that all the Chinese characters have slanted eyes, a stereotype not yet challenged, and especially curious when virtually all Asian anime characters, made in Asia, are strikingly round- and wide-eyed.

45. While many Western philosophers distinguish between humans and animals in the former's ability to

create speech and symbolic language, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney notes that Japanese traditionally mark the difference in human's capacity to read. See 'Monkey Performances: a Multiple Structure of Meaning and Reflexivity in Japanese Culture', *Text, Play, and Story*, ed. Edward M. Bruner (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1984), p. 287.

46. Maddy Costa, '*Kafka's Monkey*: Review', *Guardian*, 31 May 2011 <[www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/may/31/kafka-monkey-young-vic-review](http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/may/31/kafka-monkey-young-vic-review)>.

47. Donna Haraway observes that it was only after women anthropologists came to dominate Western primatology that the importance of the female roles in simian communities was established. See *Primate Visions* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 290–3.

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49. Ilan Reichel, 'Interview with Ilan Reichel, Movement Director', *Young Vic Resource Pack*, 2009, p. 29.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

51. 'Interview with Kathryn Hunter', *Young Vic Resource Pack*, p. 27.

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53. *Ibid.*

54. Thomas Nagel, 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?', *The Philosophical Review*, LXXXIII, No. 4 (Oct. 1974), p. 435–50, quoted in J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 76.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 77–8.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

57. Martin Puchner, 'Performing the Open: Actors, Animals, Philosophers', *The Drama Review*, LI, No. 1 (Spring 2007), p. 21.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Coetzee, p. 95–6.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

61. Haraway, p. 245–6.

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65. Franz Kafka, 'A Report to an Academy', trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, in *The Kafka Project* <[www.kafka.org/index.php?aid=161](http://www.kafka.org/index.php?aid=161)>.