Salma Mohseni Ardehali

In Iran and in Shia Islam, and in the mourning ceremonies of Ashura, some performative/theatrical rituals have developed. One of the most common and prominent of these is the procession. These processions are classified as mass mourning rituals. However, since the process of "performing" has a relatively specific beginning, middle, and end and a predetermined ritual, and more importantly, a large number of people who watch or accompany these processions, in this article we consider such processions to be a kind of ritual "performance" that has highly figurative theatrical elements. These elements (objects and figures) are expressive objects due to the reference to the story of the Battle of Karbala, which can tell a story just by being carried by procession members. These figurative objects can be classified semiotically into iconic, index, and symbolic figures. And from the point of view of performing arts and studying the theatrical nature of the objects in the procession, they can be divided into three categories: human representations (corpses, motifs of Panjeh), animal representations (lion, deer, peacock, lapwing, dragon, pigeon, etc.), and the representation of the object itself (flag, tent, feather, Alam, Kotal, Alaamat and Nakhl). This study explores the extent of performability and theatricality of these objects and figures, as well as the various expressive and animistic modes at the heart of their performance and narrative structure.

***Salma Mohseni Ardehali** is an Iranian puppet artist, puppet scholar, and university lecturer. She studied puppetry and animation at university. She has worked as a puppeteer since 2001 and is active in writing, translation, and research around puppetry and related interdisciplinary fields. She teaches the basics and history of puppetry, puppet directing and manipulation for puppeteers at the university level. Her research interests focus on contemporary puppetry (of Iran) and related interdisciplinary areas. She has been an UNIMA-Iran board member and councilor since 2009. She is a member of Iran ASSITEJ and the Association of Iranian Puppeteers. She is a current member of UNIMA's Executive Committee and is chair of the Cooperation Commission (2021 to the present).*

A little girl of about six years old is in an old house, her mother's childhood home. It is noon on Ashura, the annual ceremony of Ashura, celebrated on the tenth of the Muharram, and the little girl and her mother are on their way to see the procession. Cries of mourning resound. Everyone has come to watch, and the sidewalks are crowded. The procession arrives, leading with the flags, heavy metal alaamat/banners, followed by men in black, carrying chains with which they lash themselves to the rhythmic beat of drums.

Words of lamentation carry on the wind…

*"Tomorrow at noon his body will be under the hooves of horses."**[1]***

*The procession continues, carrying a coffin covered with a bloody white cloth decorated with doves. It appears to the young girl as if someone (a martyr?) is under the white cloth. Only his military boots are visible, and she grows frightened. A bloodied white horse with an arrow embedded in his body**[2]**, passes the crowd of mourners.*

"Who is the martyr?" the girl asks her mother. It is the time of the Iran-Iraq war [1980-1988], and the word "martyr" has meaning for her.

"It is Shabih—a simulation—of Imam Hussein," her mother explains.

Introduction

The objects I present in this scene are woven into Iranian social life, yet are also wrapped in an aura of fear, sanctity, and taboo. They have fascinated me since childhood. In this study I would like to explore the theatricality of these objects, noting the expressive and uncanny way they produce emotion via the processional performance, communicating its narrative intent which is recognizable immediately to those versed in the symbology of Shiism.

In Shiite Islam of Iran, annual ceremonies of Ashura—celebrated on the tenth of the Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar—include processional mass-mourning rituals, a "performance" that has important figurative and theatrical elements. The parade commemorates the deaths of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad and son of Ali ibn Abi Talib, along with his martyred followers at Karbala.[3] Objects and figures carried in the procession tell the story of the Battle of Karbala (AH 61/CE 680). These figures can be divided into three categories:

1) human representations (corpses and the protective hand images known as *panjeh*)

2) animal representations (such as lion, deer, peacock, hoopoe bird, dragon, and pigeon); and
3) objects that represent themselves—including flags (*alam*); large and heavy metal banners with multiple blades, iconography, and sometimes topped with feathers (*alaamat*); and tents (*kheymeh*), etc.

In investigating the performative power of these objects, which both frightened and delighted me as a child, I will discuss 1) procession as a mode of performance; 2) performing objects as iconic and semiotic signifiers in ritual processions, 3) the types of objects used in the Muharram processions, and 4) argue that these objects on parade are able to "tell" a story on their own, evoking powerful emotions from viewers versed in their meaning and significance.

Procession as Artistic Performance

Religious processions for the purpose of mourning or burial have had a strong presence in human culture since earliest times, especially in the Middle East. Such parades often share structural similarities. People gather for a specific purpose, at a specific time and place; they move from one point to another and perform specific actions, including chanting, praying, giving offerings, singing, performing coordinated bodily movements, and carrying sacred objects.

Many researchers consider rituals elegizing the burial of Dionysus in ancient Greece (showing the death and resurrection of the spirit of life) to be the roots of tragic theatre (Brockett, 1996: 60). Dionysus himself is often compared with the pan-Middle Eastern prototype of the suffering god. The story of the martyred Siavash, an early Persian Prince who was unjustly slaughtered by his father, is a Persian model of the suffering hero; Siavash became linked with Persian rites of mourning, fertility, and resurrection. Mythologists attribute the origins of Persian religious processions (mourning for Hussein bin Ali and his seventy-two companions who all lived in the seventh century) to pre-Islamic processions, recitations, and laments for the dying and resurrected Siavash. Siavash processions were associated with *Nowruz*,the Spring eqinox festival, but came to be adapted in the Islamic period to mourning rites for Hussein. Hence, carrying a palanquin bearing the figure of the martyr Hussein and the *ta'ziyeh*,the Iranian ritual dramatic art that recounts mythical and historical stories and religious events (especially Hussein's death in the Battle of Karbala),[4] have grown from the Siavashan ceremony, "Soog-e Siavash, a tradition of mourning that has existed in Bukhara in Central Asia from ancient times until at least the 13th century" (Yarshater in Chelkowski, 1979: 121).

Processions, whether they are rain- or sun-seeking rituals, Spring rites, such as Iran's *kose-gardi*[5], or religious processions, such as the mourning processions of Muharram, have clear performance characteristics. Richard Schechner believes "several basic qualities are shared by these activities: 1) a special ordering of time (event time, symbolic time, set time); 2) a special value attached to objects; 3) non productivity in terms of goods; 4) rules (special places, non-ordinary places, etc.)" (Schechner, 2003: 8). Muharram processions fit Schechner's criteria, as they include moving in a certain direction and performing specific actions, such as beating the chest. People actively participate in such group actions as flagellation, and others come to watch. The spectators fall into two categories: pure observers and the observer-participants who make up the procession.

Performance with a Purpose

Thus, the morning processions of Muharram are performances with a specific purpose. It involves the rhythmic and coordinated movements of the mourning—chest-beaters/chain-lashers, musicians playing drums and horns, bearers of flags and banners—and utilizes objects as special tools. The watching eyes of the spectators join with the mourner participants. All are looking for beauty, glory, harmony, release of sorrow, and expression at its highest level. All easily distinguish mourning that is authentic from what is inauthentic.

In his article, "*Ta'ziyeh*: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre of Iran (1979)," Peter Chelkowski mentions that numerous accounts recorded by European political envoys, missionaries, traders, and travellers reference people dressed in colorful clothes who walked or rode on horses and camels to reenact the sad events of Karbala. The living images of the martyrs, with torn limbs and severed heads, were carried on the carts. There are many similarities between this group of Muharram processions and the European medieval theatre (*tableaux vivants*), but with one essential difference: during the Muharram ceremony, the audience remains stationary and the "tableau" (the stage) moves, while in the said theatre the "tableau" was stationary and the audience moved (Chelkowski, 1979: 10). Willem Floor, in his book, *History of Iranian Theatre*, considers these live tableaux to be the "constructive parts" of various types of mourning shows that later developed into *ta'ziyeh* performances (Floor, 2017: 142).

Figure 1. Muharram Processions. Processioners carrying Alaamat. (Photo: M. Ali Asadi) *See images of Muharram Processions. Processioners carrying Alaamat*

The Uncanny and Magical Qualities of Ritual Objects

Objects have always played an important role in ritual ceremonies around the globe. As Henryk Jurkowski notes, statues, puppets, masks, and sacred objects can sometimes have a magical power as if they come from a world that people can only connect to in rituals (Jurkowski, 2014: 42). Jurkowski found performing objects featured in two types of ceremonies: fertility rituals and funeral/mourning rituals (43). His analysis applies to Iran, where rain and sun rituals were performed with dolls and puppets, and in Spring fertility rituals, which featured disguised human performers and quasi-puppets (see Azimpour 2010, 2012; Gharibpour 2012).[6]

Frank Proschan defines performing objects as "material representations of people, animals, and entities that are created, displayed, or manipulated in a narrative or dramatic performance" (1983: 4)—objects used to tell a story or represent an idea (Bell,

2008: 2). In a ritual/religious performance, objects (usually considered sacred, endowed with special powers in the minds of the performers and the audience) are either considered to be alive themselves, or are given life during the performance. From a rationalist point of view, they are “uncanny,” “strangely familiar,” mysterious and somehow magical. In 1906, Ernst Jentsch addressed this issue from a psychological framework in “On the Psychology of the Uncanny,” while Freud (1919) expanded on Jentsch’s idea in his essay, “The Uncanny.” Jentsch suggests there is “doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate – and more precisely, when this doubt only makes itself felt obscurely in one’s consciousness” (quoted from Jentsch, Collins and Jervis 2008: 221). This feeling of the uncanny occurs particularly when dealing with wax figures, corpses (especially human), skulls, skeletons, severed heads, and the like: one believes that they have a hidden life within them. Other objects that appear to be inanimate objects but suddenly begin to move, such as puppets, are considered uncanny.

This uncanny feeling can help explain an audience’s reactions in object and puppet performances. And it is this feeling that I and others experience as spectators and/or participants in Muharram processions. These old, sacred, and symbolic objects paraded at Muharram tend towards the uncanny, expressing a sense of the mysterious and the supernatural.

Objects in religious/ritual processions are part of a semiotic system—signs for understanding, and expression. When people see these objects moving in procession, they fully understand their message and context, and thus can decide whether to join the processsion or to simply observe. For an Iranian Muslim, the objects seen at Muharram are signs of mourning for the martyrdom of Hussein bin Ali and his companions. These objects “on the one hand show this special form of representation and on the other hand show the attention of Shi’ite culture and art to certain objects” (Mohseni and Heydary in Orenstein and Cusack, 2024: 178).

The mourning processions of Muharram have expected components that appear in a particular order. Flags and banners are in front and indicate the names of the people of the Battle of Karbala and their martyrdom. Icons of Imam Hossein and Abul Fazal, his standard bearer in the Battle of Karbala, are carried in front.

Another component of the procession consists of objects with symbolic and indexical references (Chandler, 2007: 36, 37), usually considered sacred objects. Because they are moved and manipulated during the procession, they are performing objects that create a narrative.

Sacred Objects Activated in the Muharram Processions

Here I will discuss the objects (figurative and non-figurative) used in Muharram processions, which in Iran come from the heart of Shiism, even if rooted in pre-Islamic Iranian practices. Because of the direct, indirect, and symbolic references to the Battle of Karbala, during which the third Imam died, these objects are considered highly expressive.

Among the most important symbolic objects in the Muharram mourning processions are *alam*, *kotal*, *alaamat*,and *nakhl*.

***Alam* (banner or flag):** Since ancient times in Persia, the *alam* has been paraded by the ranks of the military during wars. As the victims of wars are mourned, the *alam*s are presented first, symbolizing that despite the death of the one soldier, other soldiers are there to take up the standard. In Muharram processions *alam*s of mourning are “long or short cloth flags of different colors, black, green, red, etc., which are moved in front of or at a distance between the groups of mourners, who beat their chests or beat their shoulders with chains” (Baghi, 2021). The handles of the flags are made of different types of wood, and the color of each flag is symbolic. The green flag is attributed to Abulfazl al-Abbas, the half-brother of Hussein who died at Karbala trying to bring water from the Euphrates to the besieged women and children of the Prophet’s family. The black flag is associated with Imam Hussein or his mother Fatima Zahra, the Prophet’s

daughter. Sometimes the *panjeh* is used to represent the hands of Abulfazl al-Abbas, which were chopped off by his enemies when he was seeking water. Metal blades (said to represent the sword of Imam Ali, called Zulficar) may be added to the flags.

Moving the *alam* is known as *alamgardani* ("to take around the flag"). There are different traditions for making *alam*s in different parts of Iran. People have so much respect for the *alam* that when they make it, "It is as if they give it life, because after making the *alam*, whenever they reach it, they visit it and never turn their backs on it, and when two groups of processers meet, the *alam* greet each other. In the afternoon of Ashura, after the death of Imam Hussein is enacted, they kill *alam*s, or as they say, they 'murder' them" (Barabadi, quoted in Baghi, 2021, 39-38). In the ceremony of collecting *alam*s in northern Iran, they strip *alam*s naked like those killed in Karbala and consider them holy (Barabadi, quoted in Baghi, 2021, 39-38). The root of this treatment of *alam*s can be found in animism—the idea of a soul as the mysterious power that exists in all things in the world, in objects as well as humans. Freud believes, "The analysis of cases of the uncanny has led us back to the old, animistic conception of the universe, which was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with human spirits" (2003: 174).

Figure 2. Alam (Flag). (Photo: Atef Salehi) *See Photos of Alam (Flag)*

Figure 3. Kotal (Pole). (Photo: *Photos of Kotal*)

***Kotal*:** Another symbolic object widely used in the mourning rituals of Ashura is the *kotal*.This long pole (up to 6 metres in length) decorated with green, black, and red cloth is used by Shiites in Iran as a symbol of mourning. The metal *panjeh* can also be seen at the top of many *kotal* poles as a symbol of the severed hand of Abbas.

***Alaamat*:** While it is a matter of debate whether the cruciform shape of the *alaamat* is a result of the Safavids' relationship with the West or whether it came from the early Mithraic culture of ancient Iran, there is no doubt that the symbol is an evolved form of the *alam* and the blade. These heavy iron or brass objects are decorated with symbols, many displaying animal shapes such as rooster, peacock, deer, lion, dove, hoopoe bird, and camel, while others are adorned with plant forms such as the cedar tree. Others take the shapes of mythological and legendary creatures, such as the dragon or *burqa* (flying horse with human head who carried the Prophet on his Night Flight from Mecca to Jerusalem). Some *alaamat* are decorated with various materials, including cashmere shawls, feathers, and lanterns. In general, the *alaamat*s are carried in procession by strong men, and there are usually alternate bearers who relieve the main carrier when he becomes too tired. The multiple *alaamat* banners alone, with their metal blades (usually an odd number) and feather decorations, create the effect of an army advancing, thus representing the story of Karbala wherein armies were on the march. When two groups of banner-bearing mourners from different groups meet, they bow their *alaamat* respectfully toward the other party, greeting each other with their *alaamat*. Sometimes the *alaamat*smay turn from their intended direction to face and welcome the approaching group.

Like the more conventionally dramatic *ta'ziyeh*,in which individual actors take on the role of Imam Hussien while others play out the action in scenes, the mourning procession is a repetition of the sufferings of the heroes of the Battle of Karbala, albeit more abstractly presented. The objects serve as a kind of storyteller, performing the mourning. In addition to the animal representations and the symbolic flags and banners, we are also confronted with more realistic objects (e.g. cradles and coffins) and figurative human representations (*panjeh*,corpses, severed heads, an infant). From a

semiotic point of view, these are indexical objects directly linked to the figures' subjects (Hussein, his infant son). These figures or body parts are carried on the shoulders of the processionists. Thus, the familiar story and the mysterious objects combine to evoke in participants a sense of the uncanny, awe, respect, admiration, with a simultaneous familiarity and strangeness.

Figure 4. A Nakhl (Palm) is being prepared for the ceremony. (Photo: Mahmoud Yousefi) *Source: mapgard.com*

Nakhl* (palm tree): *Nakhl has both symbolic and indexical aspects. The *nakhl* is a representation of the coffin of Hussein. This giant, elaborately decorated wooden structure does not look like a normal coffin, but is a manifestation of the martyr's casket. The *nakhl* has a cypress, treelike shape, and, given its name, may have previously been made from palm wood. The bearing of the coffin can be considered an allegorical performance. "The construction of allegorical coffins of martyrs and the ritual of carrying them in mourning processions has a long history in Iranian culture, dating

back to the ceremony commemorating the death of Siavash (Siavashan) [and the sufferings of Mithra].” The coffins used in processions “have different shapes, and these symbolic or allegorical coffins are sometimes made similar to grave boxes, shrines, domes and courts” (Bolukbashi, 2004, 41-42). The palm has a large wooden space in the shape of a rectangular cube with a double-sloped or flat roof, the front and back of which are usually made in the shape of a cypress tree with a reticulated surface and curved sides. The palm is stored in the *takyeh* (a building where Shia Muslims gather to mourn Hussein’s death) or in a mosque.

Nakhl bastan (decorating the *nakhl*) begins as Ashura approaches. The frame is adorned with black and green cashmere or other cloth, mirrorwork, feathers, lanterns, swords, and daggers. On the day of Ashura it is carried around the city with special rituals (*nakhl-gardani* or palm-carrying ritual). *Nakhl-gardani* can be considered an allegorical performance of the immortality of the martyr.

Though found in many regions of Iran, the *nakhl* is most associated with the geographical-cultural desert areas and some cities of Central Iran, Yazd, Tehran and Khuzestan provinces (Bolukbashi, 2004: 41-42, 44-45). Some of these *nakhl* structures are very old. Those of Amirchakhmaq in Yazd and of Taft are about 400 years old. In ancient Iranian and Shia culture, the ritual ceremony of carrying a coffin perpetuates the myth of rebirth and immortality of the soul. At the same time, however, it creates a strange anxiety about our relationship with death. This is an anxiety I recall experiencing as a young girl.

Imagine the same little girl in the same house, her mother’s childhood home. The girl goes down to the basement, a magical place where her mother went to relax as a child. There are mats for taking an afternoon summer nap by a little pond (howz) with vases of geraniums around it. But now it is a dark storage place for old things.

In this dirt-covered abandoned space, the girl discovers a room of flags, cashmere cloths—the mourning tools of Muharram rites. The metal banners, chains and tools of

self- flagellation.... Something about these cloth and metal objects, decorated with the strange animal shapes and once used in the procession, make the entire room feel different. Fear combined with the sweetness of memory bring to the girl's mind the sounds of chains striking flesh, and again she hears, like a whisper in her ear...

"Tomorrow at noon his body will be under the hooves of horses."

There is a wooden cradle with a baby in white and green swaddling clothes. The baby represents Ali Asghar, Hussein's six-month-old son, who was dying of thirst as Hussein begged his enemies for water. But instead of helping, Hurmala sent a three-headed arrow flying into the little child's throat. How frightened the girl is on seeing the doll! Shouldn't this child be alive? Could this be a real dead baby? The girl comes closer and sees for herself that the figure is completely made of cloth. But a feeling tells her that this is something strange, not an ordinary doll...

Figure 6. Carrying Coffin and Palanquin in Muharram processions. (Photo: Amirhosein Khorgooi) *Source: ana.ir/fa/news*

Sacred Objects as Perfect Objects

Before the Safavid era (pre-1500 CE), it was more common to use artificial bodies with animal blood as symbols of martyrs' bodies, and objects gradually (perhaps due to religious prohibitions) grew more symbolic over time. Writing in 1912, Majid Rezvani recounted that,

> On the day of Ashura, the figures of the martyrs of Karbala are carried on a float; figures stuffed with straw, painted with red liquid paints, with spears embedded in their bodies. The role of these figures is sometimes played by live actors dressed in battle costumes […] Horses are also brought to the center of the group, and some white doves with bloodstains are placed on their saddles [doves were said to have dipped themselves in Hussein's blood when they saw him dead]. Sometimes a horse is brought to the center and the Imam sits on it with his head cut off. To make this scene realistic, a sword is cut in half, and each half is mounted on either side of a ring that the performer wears around his neck. A white and bloody turban is placed on the actor's head. In this way they achieve the expected effect. (Rezvani, 2014 [1912])

After studying such descriptions, Jurkowski considered them similar to the rituals of Dionysus or medieval Christian passion plays (Jurkowski, 2014: 51-52). Today, it seems that the figures and performances have moved to more symbolic and abstracted representations.

An attitude of subduing the uncanniness of such ritual objects may be the attitude of a modern man, who finds the primitive roots of puppetry—animism, irrationalism—too terrible and difficult, and so moves away from realistic portrayals.

What do these objects mean outside of the context of ritual performance? Antique, sacred, and symbolic objects are to modern humans “non-functional and merely decorative.” According to Baudrillard, these mythological objects are “perfect objects.” From his point of view, the sacred object (as if containing the soul of the dead) functions,

> As symbol of the inscription of value in a closed circle and in a perfect time, mythological objects constitute a discourse no longer addressed to others but solely to oneself… such objects carry human beings back beyond time to their childhood – or perhaps even farther still, back to a pre-birth reality where pure subjectivity was free to conflate itself metaphorically with its surroundings, so that those surroundings became simply the perfect discourse directed by human beings to themselves. (Baudrillard, 1996: 80)

These sacred objects, which function within the framework of a ritual performance, are independent, expressive, and complete in a time other than the time of the performance. They continually narrate and impact. These objects are independent, fixed, self-contained, and sometimes incomprehensible. They tell their own story in mystery and isolation. They continue to narrate even when sitting silently in the basement of my mother’s childhood home.

Figure 6. Carrying Coffin and Palanquin in Muharram processions

Conclusion

This article attempts to answer my questions about objects used in ritual performances of mourning in Shia culture. As I considered these religious performances within the framework of artistic performance, I asked myself: Are these processions a kind of artistic performance? Can the objects used in these processions be described as performing objects? How can we justify our sense of the uncanny in relation to ritual and

sacred objects? The events and objects are so familiar and yet so frightening. They represent the uncanny for spectators and participants in the Muharram mourning rituals.

We can classify and analyze these ritual objects within different spectrums: self-expressive objects that are either alive and considered alive (such as a four-hundred-year old *nakhl*,the structure covered by precious fabrics during Muharram,leaning against an old retaining wall in Yazd) or animated (*alam* or *alaamat* bowing to another *alaamat* in greeting). We can see animal and imaginary representations (dragons, hoopoes, lions) and seemingly inanimate corpses that have narrative and self-expressiveness to tell their story. But simultaneously, we know that such objects go beyond mere performance. Placed in Baudrillard's object value system, these objects are timeless. They are self-sufficient and express themselves without human presence. And, in my opinion, being timeless, self-expressive, and independent increases the audience's sense of the uncanny, because the representation posed by an object in the absence of a human as a performer increases the sense of fear.

Although I accept Henryk Jurkowski's view that puppets emerged from the rituals of death and burial, and fertility and procreation, I do not consider Muharram processions and their related objects as the source for the emergence of a specific type of puppetry in Iran. The tendency to give life to objects and to be represented by objects seems to have been more acceptable in the Shia culture that combined with pre-Islamic Iranian culture. The purpose is to give life to an inanimate object, which is also the essence of puppet theatre. With this argument, I would like to mention the essence of object performance in an ancient religious ceremony. According to John Bell, it is a response to the long-standing human desire to play with and manipulate the material world (Bell, in Posner, Orenstein and Bell 2015: 43), to escape this world, and to communicate transcendental concepts.

Notes

[1] Imam Hussein was trampled by the hooves of Aawajiyya stallions after being killed by the Umayyid Shemer.

[2] Representing Imam Hossein's horse

[3] Hussein ibn Ali, the third Shia imam, was killed, alongside most of his male relatives, by the Umayyad army in the Battle of Karbala on the tenth of Muharram 61AH. This event is very important in the history of Islam. As a symbol of the Shia-Sunni confrontation, it became the main part of Shia religious knowledge.

[4] *Ta'zīye* (or *ta'azyeh*, *ta'ziyeh*, or *shabih*), continues to be performed in places with a significant Shia population: Iran, Iraq, Southern Lebanon, Bahrain, India, Pakistan, and even Jamaica. However, the most elaborate performances of *ta'ziyeh* continue to be performed in Iran.

[5] In ancient times, the Iranian people used to show the metaphorical death of winter and the arrival of the warm spring at Nowruz with a special show known as *kose barnishin* or *kose gardi*.

[6] The best source (in Farsi) is "Iranian Ritual and Traditional Puppets and Puppet Shows Dictionary" by Poupak Azimpour (2010). Some of Azimpour's research is summarized in English in Nikouei and Naserabadi (2016). Azimpour's 2012 article in *Puppetry International* is in English. See also her entries in *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, including https://wepa.unima.org/en/teke/, https://wepa.unima.org/en/wooden-horse-dance/, https://wepa.unima.org/en/khom-bazi/). Also see the *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts* entry, "Iran," by Behrooz Gharibpour (2012), https://wepa.unima.org/en/iran/.

References

Azimpour, Poupak. 2010. *Farhang-e Aroosak-ha va Namayesh-haye Aroosaki-e Aeeni va Sonati-e Iran* [Iranian Ritual and Traditional Puppets and Puppet Shows Dictionary]. (In Farsi). Tehran: Namayesh Publications.

———. 2012. "The Appearance of the Goddess of Water and the God of Rain as Forms of Iranian Theatrical Puppetry Rain Rites," *Puppetry International* (Spring) 8-13, 38. [See also Iranian entries in *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*.https://wepa.unima.org/en/iran].

Baghi, E. 2020. *Alaamat*. The Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia (CGIE) website: https://www.cgie.org.ir/fa/article/258447/, accessed December 23, 2023.

———. 2021. *Alam and Alam-gardani*. The Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia (CGIE) website: https://www.cgie.org.ir/fa/article/258453/, accessed December 23, 2023.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1996. *The System of Objects*. Translated by James Benedict. London; New York: Verso.

Beardsley, M.C. 1983. "An Aesthetic Definition of Art." In H. Curtler (ed.). *What is Art?* New York: Haven, 15-29.

Bell, John. 2008. *American Puppet Modernism: Essays on the Material World in Performance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bolukbashi, Ali. 2004. *Nakhl-gardani*. Tehran: Cultural Research Office.

Brockett, Oscar [and Franklin Hildy]. 1996. *History of the Theatre*. (Farsi version). Translated by Hooshang Azadivar. Second edition. Tehran: Morvarid Publication.

Chandler, Daniel. 2007. *Semiotics: The Basics*. London: Routledge.

Chelkowski, Peter J, ed. 1979. *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran.* New York: New York University Press.

Collins, Jo, and John Jervis, eds. 2008. *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Davies, David. 2011. *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*.New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

Dickie, George. 1974. *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Floor, Willem. 2017. *The History of Theater in Iran*. (Farsi version). Translated by Amir Najafi and the group of translators. First edition. Tehran: Afraz Publication.

Freud, Sigmund. 2003. *The Uncanny*. London: Penguin Books.

Ghaemi, Farzad. 2014. "The Analysis of the Ritualistic Structure of the Siāvash Myth Based on the MythologicalLiterary Criticism : A Comparative Study of 'Siāvash-Siāvashān' and 'Tragedy-Dionysus'." *Literary Criticism* 25, 153-184. Tehran: Tarbiat Modares University Press.

Gharibpour, Behrooz. 2012. "Iran." In *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, https://wepa.unima.org/en/iran/.

Jentsch, Ernst. 1997 [1906]. "On the psychology of the uncanny." *Angelaki*, *2*(1), 7-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/09697259708571910.

Jurkowski, Henryk. 2014. *Cultural Functions of the Puppet*. (In Farsi). Translated by Zohreh Behrouzinia. Tehran: Qatreh Publishing.

https://anthropologyandculture.com/%d8%b5%d9%81-%d9%85%d8%b0%d9%87%d8%a8%db%8c-1-%d8%af%d8%b3%d8%aa%d9%87/, accessed December 23, 2023.

https://anthropologyandculture.com/%d8%aa%d8%a7%d8%b1%db%8c%d8%ae%da%86%d9%87%e2%80%8c%db%8c-%d9%86%d9%85%d8%a7%db%8c%d8%b4-%d9%85%d8%b0%d9%87%d8%a8%db%8c/, accessed December 23, 2023.

Nikouei, A., and M.S. Masirabad. 2016. "Study of the Importance of Contemporary Iranian Traditional Handmade Dolls and Puppets." *Wacana Seni Journal of Arts Discourse*, 15: 27-61. http://dx.doi.org/10.21315/ws2016.15.2, accessed May 30, 2024.

Orenstein, Claudia, and Tim Cusack, eds. 2024. *Puppet and Spirit: Ritual, Religion, and Performing Objects*. New York: Routledge.

Posner, Dassia N., Claudia Orenstein, and John Bell, eds. 2015. *Puppetry and Material Performance*. New York: Routledge.

Proschan, Frank. 1983. "The Semiotic Study of Puppets, Masks and Performing Objects." *Semiotica* 47(1-4): 3-44. Amsterdam, Berlin, New York: Mouton Publishers.

Rezvani, Medjid. 1962/1912. *Le Théâtre et la danse en Iran* [Dance and Theatre in Iran]. Paris: Masonneuve et La Rose.

Schechner, Richard. 2003. *Performance Theory*. London: Routledge.

———. 1995. *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*. New York: Routledge.