Debate

Bernard Arps, Helen Creese, Matthew Isaac Cohen and Kathy Foley

Bernard Arps


*Tall Tree, nest of the wind* is an extraordinary, rich volume in which Ben Arps develops and explicates a new field of study: a philology of performance. The principal purpose of this book is to demonstrate what a philological manner of investigation can offer to the study of performance (p. 27). Arps’s study, however, is no mere defence of philological practices but instead, in presenting and illuminating a ‘reformed philology’, points towards a revisioning of philological methodology as a whole.

Both philology and wayang are concerned fundamentally with interpretation and contextualization. From this basic premise, the book’s core descriptive and analytical focus is brought to bear on performance through the lens of five key characteristics of philological method that consider both written and performance texts to be artefactual (that is, they are not just material but also made), interpretable, intertextual, contextual, and historical. These interconnected domains of enquiry help to explain why a single historical performance of a shadow-play, in this case a performance by Ki Anom Soeroto of the wayang shadow-play *Dewa Ruci* in Amsterdam in 1987, has the form it does, and why modes of philological enquiry enable a deeper, more extensive understanding of its noetic and affective dimensions.

At first glance, Arps’s choice to present his study of a specific historical wayang performance as an artefact, wrapped up in the mantle of philology’s foundational form—the text edition—seems somewhat idiosyncratic. This is particularly the case because the philological format has far-reaching effects since it transmutes and monumentalizes the performance and creates a philological object for careful study and reflection (pp. 8–9). In moving beyond the transient materiality of the performance event, the philological approach thus creates a textual artefact for readers that transcends the experience of its original live audience. Arps’s philological treatment of performance as an edition, with its introduction, translation, transcript, illustrations, and explana-
tory commentary, therefore becomes a way to study historical performance in all its fullness.

Yet, the 1987 *Dewa Ruci* performance in Amsterdam was ‘not particularly exceptional’ (p. 19). Why, then, is it deserving of so much scholarly, and, especially, philological, attention? There are a number of reasons. The *Dewa Ruci* is ‘an emblematic play in an emblematic genre’ (p. 6). Bratasena’s quest for enlightenment embodies Javanese multistranded and multilayered ‘Buddhic’ religiosity. Such intricate philosophical and mystical exegesis is not for the faint-hearted. One of the singular achievements of this book is in opening up such a rich vein of understanding about the ways in which this religiosity continues to appeal to the traditionally inclined in predominantly Islamic Indonesia. Like wayang itself, Arps’s philological project on ‘narrative worldmaking’ becomes ‘indexical’ by pointing to, and calling up, innumerable intertextual historical and contextual associations from ‘wayang’s storehouse of knowledge about the past for the present’ (p. 61).

The very fine translation is the key entry point to ‘the form and craftsmanship’ (p. 7) of the historical performance. It is possible to read this book simply for the delight of its story and language. But unlike traditional textual philology, the philology of performance also requires the representation of ‘non-textual modalities’. The result is the inclusion in the edition of explicit information on music and musical atmosphere, on settings and action, and on illustrations that bring the play to life. The story and characters, already familiar to me from classical Javanese poetic traditions, are enhanced by the performative elements of this edition.

Access to metatextual information and detail is provided by the extensive annotations which clarify particular instances of language, music, and puppetry. The annotations provide access to the performance process, to the interpretation of the *dalang* (puppeteer), and, especially, to the wayang traditions and stories on which the performance is built. The annotations do more than point out the metaphorical and allegorical elements that a reader (or an audience member) would never notice. They also explicate borrowings from, and responses to, performance practices and to Javanese textual traditions more broadly. Allusions, often comic or risqué, to the social and political context of the original 1987 performance, including to the development and social policies of the New Order period and to the presence and experiences of the performers themselves in Amsterdam, are woven into the performance and are equally deserving of explication for twenty-first-century readers.

Extensive annotations of this kind both help and hinder the reader. Some may even consider these annotations, which run to 136 finely printed pages, to
be excessive. But wayang itself is ‘pervasively explanatory’ (p. 42), and philology’s own ‘peculiar explanatoriness’ (p. 41) proves to be an effective means of generating understandings and insights. Nevertheless, although I did not need to be persuaded of their value, and it would clearly have been impractical to use footnotes, I soon stopped turning regularly to the annotations during my reading of the text so as not to interrupt the story—though I did return to them at the end of my reading. In the process of back-referencing the text I re-read (and enjoyed) many sections of the script. The book’s strong but flexible binding facilitates this kind of toing and froing, but at times it was hard not to wish for an electronic version in order to explore ideas and half-remembered impressions that are not included in the index but would be enabled by even a simple keyword search. Even more effective for such a big (in every sense of the word) book would be an interactive digital format (see for example the recent NUS PhD thesis on *wayang kontemporer* by Miguel Escobar (2015), which incorporates glosses, videos, and texts). While a digital format may be a step too far for a project so long in the making, I would certainly have welcomed the opportunity to listen to the recordings of the 1987 performance that ‘serve as companions to the edition’ (p. vii) and are cross-referenced in the transcript and annotations but no longer appear to be available or accessible beyond a small number of specialist library collections worldwide. It is unfortunate that a reissue of the 1987 recording was not able to be negotiated and incorporated into this project. Perhaps it is not too late?

By any measure, *Tall tree, nest of the wind* is a complex and challenging read, but one that will be rewarded by multiple re-readings. It is a book to dip in and out of, and philologists and performance studies experts alike will readily find their own way along its rich and diverse paths. I came to this book primarily as a textual philologist but learned much about performance. Although philology aims primarily ‘to make sense of texts’ (Pollock 2009) and the ‘relations between texts’ (Turner 2014), it has become marginalized in the post-colonial, academic world and has been the target of indignant and sometimes misconstrued critique. Arps’s careful explanation and validation of the value and virtue of philological methodologies is balm to a philologist’s soul. He demonstrates persuasively that, although a philological approach may presume greater knowledge of a text (or performance) on the part of the philologist than on that of the original author (or performer), or of a contemporary native speaker, such a stance, which carries ‘the advantage of hindsight and broader learning’ (p. 49), may indeed be warranted. Textual expertise can reveal a greater range of meanings than those of participants by drawing philological attention to matters that were not present or expressly
evoked during the event. As it draws its readers into Bratasena's quest to find ‘the whence and whither of being’, *Tall tree, nest of the wind* is a case in point.

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References


As a form of traditional theatre, *wayang kulit* is a continuously changing art. Structures and patterns are received from the past; new ideas and impulses are introduced; local conditions are recognized; and plays are created, modelling others to come. The performance documented in Bernard Arps’s pioneering work of performance philology is the canonical shadow puppet play *Dewa Ruci*, as performed by Ki Anom Soeroto at a Dutch international puppet festival in 1987. It represents the apogee of the Surakarta courtly style. Though still taught in courses and conservatoires, its classical norms are today often more honoured in breach than in practice. Changes in this tradition were ongoing even back in the cautious 1980s. In his copious and erudite annotations, Arps mentions the inclusion of so-called rural-style mood songs (*sulukan pedesaan*), slower singing tempos, narrative introductions to scenes emphasizing novelistic descriptions of settings over poetic descriptions of characters, Javanizations of Indonesian phrases, indirect references to Indonesian state ideology, the employment of a script writer, and various other signs of modernization. But these modifications are subtle, and within tradition’s constraints. Arps suggests that Ki Anom’s studied classicism in Amsterdam might have been enhanced due to the need he felt as an ethnic nationalist to represent a peak of Indonesian culture. Modern musical instruments like electric guitars or synthesizers are eschewed. There is no filmic prologue nor flashbacks, no dialogues with female vocalists, no frame-breaking antics. The
paket or ‘classical rules’ (p. 54) established by the early twentieth century are heeded.

What, then, is the value of revisiting an overtly classicist performance from three decades past? One reason is that Anom remains a highly respected dalang in contemporary Java, and while his performance style has evolved since the 1980s, there is much continuity with this performance, which took place at the peak of his national popularity. Another is that elite wayang experts, including those helming the national associations, still hold Anom in the highest regard; they regularly listen to his audiocassette recordings from the 1980s (transferred typically to MP3), thus scrupulously reinforcing the paket Anom espoused. A third point is that by scrutinizing an exemplary performance of an oft-performed play from this well-documented wayang tradition, Arps is able to compare it with related performances and play texts in the same courtly tradition going back nearly two centuries, including other Dewa Ruci enactments by Anom himself. This allows the tracing of continuities and change in wayang practice to a remarkable extent.

The edition provides important answers for why Javanese wayang kulit, and particularly the courtly style of Surakarta, is such an important cultural performance and how it encapsulates Javanese culture in ‘discrete performances’ to be exhibited to visitors and to the Javanese themselves (Singer quoted in Arps 2016:3). Laid bare is the verbal artistry of the dalang: the enormous range of textual sources quoted and paraphrased in performance; the different registers of Javanese spoken; and the dalang’s control of archaic vocabulary, contrasting speech styles and etiquette, and rhetorical figures. Careful notation of music, the percussive effects the dalang adds using a wooden mallet and metal plates to underline dialogue and cue music, and puppet movement and blocking (through both descriptions and video stills) enables an understanding of the interplay of music, sound, and movement with verbal discourse. We witness how layers of history accrete—the ancient Buddhic practices embodied by the sage Abiyasa, including ‘auguring, performing calendrical divination, prescribing protective magic’ (p. 88); the ceremonial protocols and regalia of courtly life in colonial Java; enunciations of Islamic beliefs, Javanism, and the state ideology of Pancasila associated with the New Order. Dewa Ruci is considered to be a ‘senior’ (p. 24) or ‘weighty’ (p. 23) play. It involves an exposition of key tenets of Javanese mysticism. Bratasena’s journey is itself an allegory for the trials and tribulations of the mystic, and his meeting with his inner god, the diminutive Dewa Ruci or resplendent god, emblematizes the unity of microcosm and macrocosm. Plays of this sort exhibit what Arps calls ‘religiosity’, and show that even a blunt and ill-mannered warrior like Bratasena prioritizes spiritual over material values. Wayang’s ethical compass was perhaps especially important as...
a counterbalance to the rampant capitalism, individualism, and increasingly conspicuous consumption of the New Order.

Less clear from this edition is how this exhibition of Javanese values was received by the Amsterdam audience and how the performance fitted into the larger Dutch puppet scene. Arps notes that the most prominent audience reaction was from the gamelan group itself—musicians quick to laugh at every allusion to conditions of the tour and their experiences of Amsterdam: per diems, baguettes, canals, undercooked rice, breakfast, the red light district. Only rarely does Anom address members of the audience, nor does he make obvious concessions to Dutch tastes. Arps likens the performance to ‘studio recordings of wayang’ (p. 22), in which dalang and musicians perform primarily for each other, and only secondarily for an imagined listening public. Anom does mention in passing Jos Janssen (the Dutch gamelan musician and sound technician who recorded the performance) and alludes to practising dalang in the Netherlands (Rien Baartmans and Arps himself). But there are no obvious references to the venue, sponsors, the international puppet festival, or other performances at the festival, which I take as indicative of the group’s insularity from the puppet world. Indeed, until Indonesia finally joined the unesco-affiliated international puppetry organization Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA, International Union of Puppetry) in 2009, it was often claimed that wayang was categorically different from any other sort of puppet theatre in the world, referred to somewhat pejoratively in Indonesian as ‘doll theatre’ (teater boneka). Although other dalang of Anom’s generation, most notably the Sundanese dalang Asep Sunandar Sunarya, benefited from exchanges with the international puppet world, Anom was typical in his isolation. Circumstances are different today for younger Indonesian dalang such as I Made Sidia and Catur Kuncoro, who actively seek collaborative opportunities.

That is not to imply that Anom was inward-looking and isolated in the Indonesian context. Far from it. As an active promoter of Golkar, a titled court dalang, a hajji, a visiting professor at Surakarta’s conservatoire, an office holder in a number of puppet organizations, and the convenor of a long-running monthly performance series (Rebo Legen) bringing together puppeteers from around Java, Anom was and remains one of the most linked-up and worldly of Indonesian puppeteers. As Arps notes, he was a voracious reader of newspapers and magazines, which allowed, in his own words, for his performances to be ‘up to date’ (p. 52). Indeed, in many ways, Anom’s performance is remarkably ‘up to date’ with the Indonesia of 1987, as well as resonating with centuries of Javanese history. One of the great accomplishments of this edition is the way it patiently demonstrates wayang’s ‘indexical’ nature—the way it ‘point[s] to and call[s] up...
[...] history and context’ (p. 56). This, as Arps rightly emphasizes, is one of the great pleasures of wayang. We are hailed to identify sources for uncited quotations, trace oblique references and allusions, and think through the meanings of allegories and symbols. By taking us through a single performance at the slowed-down pace afforded by presenting transcription and translation alongside detailed annotations providing the keys to wayang’s dense field of reference, we can appreciate to an unprecedented degree the relationship between wayang performance and the world.

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In his Tall tree, nest of the wind Bernard Arps takes us to the next level in the translation of Javanese wayang kulit purwa, sharing knowledge from a trained dalang and offering a philological perspective of an important lakon (play). Dewa Ruci is to Javanese wayang what Chushingura is to Japanese kabuki; or Lear to Renaissance drama. The performance chosen is unusual, a 1987 presentation in the Netherlands rather than in Java, but, of course, this allowed a fuller documentation, given the more orderly indoor audience for Ki Anom Suroto, a contemporary superstar dalang. In producing this edition, Arps takes his place in the evolution of translations of wayang texts into English from the Netherlands, a central site for studies of Javanese wayang and literature since the nineteenth century. He adds music, movement, and visuals with links to online recordings, going beyond other works (including the relatively performance-oriented one by Brandon [1993], and inviting comparison to the recent work of Kitsie Emerson on/with Purbo Asmoro [2013]) that documents alternative versions of the same lakon with texts and DVDs. Arps innovatively registers vocal levels, hammer raps, and breath pauses in the text. My comments will not focus on the translation with notes, which I commend for its mining of the extensive literature, for comparing this iteration with versions performed by other dalang, and for sharing the scholarship of many others. Instead, I query from my outsider position—trained in Sundanese wayang golek, which, for Javanese, is usually considered a rustic ‘spin off’. I probe three points: 1) secrecy, 2) Central Javanism, and 3) philology.

1) I wonder how Arps positions this work in relation to secrecy, which is an important component of the tradition? My teachers were loath to share definitive meanings. Interpretation is not to be in plain sight (though the clues are everywhere). Arps notes that part of the attraction of these works is their
ambiguity and availability to individual interpretation (p. 47). Arps sets himself up as an expert reader rejecting the idea that the native speaker necessarily knows more than the philologist (p. 49). He is right, but he is also driven by the model of Western scholarship: explication and clarification—a model that may be at odds with the intent. Reading the notes, we feel we master the lakon, but can it be actually grasped—except by the performers who, like Arps, have wandered inside the lakon?

2) Central Javanism is of course what the project is about. Most literature on wayang has been generated by, and is about, the palace traditions of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, which were finely developed by the elite of the colonial and post-colonial eras—this tradition gives Dewa Ruci much of its aura. But many important aspects of wayang seem to come from the North Coast, where earlier indigenous elements, Hindu-Buddhism, and Islam fused (consider a standard opening narration which Arps agrees [p. 450] describes a North Coast geography), a region that may show older roots and may have experienced slower change. For example, North Coast or Sundanese explications might link the four directions/colours (which Bima/Bratasena experiences when he enters the body of his spiritual guide/teacher, that ‘mini-me’ Dewa Ruci) with dulur papat (four spirit siblings of the self), which Arps mentions only briefly (Bima’s four half-brothers and sons of Bayu [p. 550] or the Kurawa’s birth [p. 453]). As I read this lakon, I wondered whether, if one looked from further outside the Solo-Yogya circle [which he does mostly briefly], the notes about wider implications might morph toward lower-class ideas. The idea of a spirit type sibling who is doubled with an important character repeats: Dewa Ruci’s relation to Bima parallels Narada’s to Bhatara Guru [Shiva], Umar Maya’s to Amir Hamzah, and god clown Semar’s to Arjuna. Do these odd spirit guides relate to the older Indo-Malay conception of the afterbirth as the prime sibling who protects or tests? Likewise, while we learn of Central Java’s wanda (manifestation at a particular moment as in youth, meditation, et cetera), the iconography of Bima puppets in further areas (Cirebon and Sunda, for instance) has the naga he defeats in this lakon as his necklace, and of course it is placed approximately where the naga on the kayon (tree-of-life) loops the tree trunk. Many versions of the kayon—with its mountain-water [sea?] dichotomy, two raksasa/demons at the bottom [Rukmuka, Rukmakala?], naga on the tree [tall tree, nest of the wind?], and lotus at the top [water of life?]—map Bima’s journey, even as the kayon gives a tantric map of the body [microcosmos] and ideologically includes the four colours, elements, siblings, and the many other ideas usually explicated by Dewa Ruci. Is the story just a quick trip around and up the kayon? The elite of the Central Javanese palaces have deepened this wayang story, but more rustic materials might not enter into it. Arps offers Dewa Ruci as a civilizational
rosetta stone, but this version, as he admittedly notes, is heavily mediated by class and Central Java and parts of rural society may be thereby neglected.

3) Philology: Arps is aware of the assault that philology underwent in the mid-twentieth century. First devised as a method of delivering the definitive versions of important sacred texts (that is, the Bible), by the early twentieth century it was meant to be a rigorous method to ascertain accurate editions/readings of historically important works. Arps is aware of the onslaught of theory, cultural studies, and performance studies, which sought to deconstruct the Western humanities in the post-World War II era and questioned the excessive focus on words. Deconstructions saw Indonesian philological practice linked with colonialism and orientalism: philology and European ‘experts’ were seen as tools of colonial rule. In this work Arps tries to recuperate (without that baggage) the older tradition, which in Leiden had a rich history. Taking tools from performance studies, he expands philology beyond text and gives performance its due recognition. He acknowledges where theosophists may have altered interpretations and how modern Indonesian politics intrudes. With his detail we almost feel we are getting the point-by-point description, as if someone were sharing Richard Burbadge’s playing Lear with the bard’s text (plus notes on other stagings and cultural references)—a time capsule some future dalang might find and replicate.

The introduction argues this is an example of what might/should be done for other performance genres to create a definitive text, yet I wonder how many people can use all this information. The tradition does not care how many raps or breath pauses occurred, should the reader? In a moment when disciplines (such as folklore, literary studies, and perhaps even Javanese literature) are struggling in many university programmes, how many academics have the time and patience to create a work based on such a detailed model, or to follow Christiaan Hooykaas’s divergent philological choice (the multiple versions of the Balinese Dharma pawayangga in his Kama and Kala). In the American academy, at least, we teach our classes of three hundred undergraduates and try to pump out articles at an acceptable pace; the slow and methodical practice of philology may only be available to the few at institutions with extraordinary resources and a history of Javanese studies. We wonder if, in the current academic environment, Javanese studies of this level will long persist in Leiden and throughout the Netherlands? We hope so.

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References


As I write this, the world—and this is hardly an exaggeration—is debating an American president's inaugural address. Innumerable commentaries on Facebook, the Internet, and in all manner of mass media discuss the remarkable brevity of Donald J. Trump's speech: its pithy and punchy diction; how it was unlike previous presidents' inaugural speeches or similar to the speaker's improvised campaign speeches; how it had certain disconcerting historical resonances; and the degree of accuracy of its representation of political and economic facts. Addressing the design, meaning, sources and inspirations, precursors, and contextual connections of the address, all this commentary evinces a philological sensibility—even if the majority of commentators are probably unaware of the philological nature of their interests and analyses. The meanings attributed to a textual artefact like the speech delivered by President Trump on 20 January 2017 are historically and contextually informed. The historicity and contextuality of those meanings are not directly apparent, however; they must be ascertained and are disputable. The philological sensibility delights in this search for sense and in the tensions involved. Professional philologists, most prominently Pollock (2009, 2016), have been advocating the intellectual urgency of their discipline for some time. Trump's speech and its reception once again illustrate the validity of their case. Treating material creations—artefacts—as the central point of attention in a dynamic web that extends beyond those artefacts themselves in social space and that has a significant prior history, philology is indispensable for making critical sense of acute issues. This philological work is consequential. Based on their understanding of the address, governments are bracing for impact, international NGOs and businesses are reconsidering their strategies, new communities form, and people gear up for action.

As a philological study of a Javanese shadow-play performance, *Tall tree, nest of the wind* joins the philologists’ cause, and while they highlight various facets in line with their specializations and interests, my reviewers turn out to
be sympathetic as well. Helen Creese observes, for instance, how Tall tree, nest of the wind notes and explains the ‘[a]llusions, often comic or risqué, to the social and political context of the original 1987 performance, including to the development and social policies of the New Order period and to the presence and experiences of the performers themselves in Amsterdam’. Kathy Foley alludes to the same, while Matthew Cohen concludes in general terms that Tall tree, nest of the wind helps to ‘appreciate […] the relationship between wayang performance and the world’. The philological sensibility is not unique to texts, then, and the scholarly discipline of philology should not restrict itself to texts either. This, ultimately, is what Tall tree, nest of the wind aims to demonstrate. Creese, Cohen, and Foley also question, head-on or by way of smaller, specific concerns, certain theoretical assumptions, practical choices, and academic ramifications of my approach. I will address four things they problematize: the raison d’être of philology and especially the philology of performance; the use of a Central Javanese court-style wayang play to illustrate it; the format and contents of the edition; and a philologist’s lack of time.

The Purpose of Philology

Above anything else, philology is a mode of understanding, and potentially a rich one. A philological edition, often coupled with a translation, is a form of analysis, of study. Creating a definitive text—which is identified by Foley as the original aim of textual philology and also attributed to Tall tree, nest of the wind—is no longer considered its primary purpose. Another edition of the performance of Dewa Ruci, the celebrated play recounting the mythic hero Bima’s quest for purity, by the famous Central Javanese puppeteer Ki Anom Soeroto in Amsterdam, November 1987, could easily have taken up other aspects for treatment or would have transcribed, translated, or explained them differently.

Foley characterizes my account of this performance as ‘a time capsule some future dalang might find and replicate’. Indeed the edition is already being used as a source of inspiration by puppeteers. But besides for them, philologists, and students of performance, it may also have value for anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, or students of religion, especially as—in my view, at least—philology should ultimately be concerned with the cultural affordances of the artefacts it examines. Philology is a way of understanding artefacts, but its interest does not stop there. It wants to know how artefacts help to make worlds.
A Test Case in the Philology of Performance

Philology is applicable to all performance, in all its aspects. It may be enlightening, for instance, to systematically ask philological questions about the artefactuality, compositionality, apprehensibility, contextuality, and historicity of features of Trump’s performance other than the words he pronounced. These include his facial expressions and gestures; the dynamics of his voice; the writers and coaches behind the text and its delivery; the location and *mise-en-scène* of the speech; Trump’s outfit and those of the others on stage; the way the event was shot, edited, and televised; the pauses and audible responses; what preceded and followed the address proper; and so on. But as it happens *Tall tree, nest of the wind* makes its theoretical and methodological claims by means of a Javanese wayang performance.

This is not entirely accidental. Wayang is the Shakespeare of Indonesian studies. Both are ascribed poetic genius, and what England and global academia imagine as individual textual originality is continually created in Java, Bali, and the Malay world in living social performance. More importantly here, as a canonical and relatively crowded field of enquiry, wayang studies are fertile ground for discussion and the development of insightful new approaches. Just to mention a few authors from the last half-century: Brandon, Anderson, Becker, Clara van Groenendael, Keeler, Sears, Mrázek, Umar Kayam, Aris Wahyudi, Emerson, and two of the reviewers have altered our perceptions of the genre.

Most of this has been about classical, Central Javanese, and indeed Solonese *wayang kulit*. I am well aware that ‘Central Javanism’ (the term used by Foley) and more specifically ‘Soloism’, as well as classicism (Cohen), have been tendencies in Javanese studies from the colonial era until today, and this book (though not all my work) continues on this academic path. For this there are good reasons. One, as just noted, is the scholarly fertility of a well-populated field. The availability of documentation is another. Classical Solonese wayang style is considered canonical all over Java. This tradition, unlike all other regional and institutional styles, allows the play of *Dewa Ruci* to be traced over two centuries, from the earliest known short scenario dictated by a court puppeteer in 1817/18 (Arps forthcoming), through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, up to the present. Thus the fullest possible attention can be given to an important one among the five dimensions of the philological mindset—historicity—in *Tall tree, nest of the wind*’s annotations. Circumstances permitting, it will also enable historical and social tracing of variety versus stability in the performance of *Dewa Ruci* in the future publications that, I hope, will emerge from the same long-term project on the narrative of Bima’s quest for purity.
Why, then, revisit ‘an overtly classicist performance from three decades past’? In response to his question Cohen immediately proposes, alongside two arguments grounded in the present, this welcome survival of materials over an extended period. In addition I should mention that, partly for its classicism, Ki Anom’s performance illuminates a momentous epoch in Indonesia’s past. (Cohen himself, incidentally, excels in this kind of historical contextualization. He practises it in this very review.) Of course, historical insights are occasioned here by concrete elements of the focal artefact and presented, in philological fashion, in the accompanying annotations, not in a thematically or chronologically organized historical exposition.

How to Create Editions

Creese expresses a desire for an interactive digital format. This presents itself as an evident format for editions of performance and in fact it would have been feasible for the wayang that is studied in Tall tree, nest of the wind, since audio and video recordings of the entire seven-hour performance exist. As the primary format of publication I have insisted on a printed book nonetheless, because of the ease of skimming, reading, and leafing back and forth that a book offers, as well as its two-page field of vision. A Google Books version of most of Tall tree, nest of the wind is available online, facilitating the searching for words that Creese also desires. As noted in the book, the audio recording is freely accessible on the World Wide Web.

Creese, Cohen, and Foley also raise questions about the edition’s analysis. A major issue is the amount of detail. Foley asks sharply, “The tradition does not care how many raps or breath pauses occurred, should the reader?” In response, let me indeed consider the raps that the puppeteer may make with a wooden mallet on the puppet chest between utterances, hair-splitting as this particular feature seems to be. In the first place, the tradition is of great importance to the philologist but it does not exhaust what is relevant; as Creese points out, I have tried to argue in Tall tree, nest of the wind that, with hindsight or wider contextual knowledge, other matters than the participants’ understandings may turn out to have explanatory value as well. An excellent example is Foley’s exegesis of the kayon as a synoptic icon of Bima’s quest (or vice versa; see below). I did not recognize this before, perhaps because I remained close to commentary in Solonese puppeteers’ circles, where this correspondence is not recognized. But it should be obvious that another field of interest allows one to see this as highly noteworthy.

Secondly, therefore, not all minutiae of a performance and edition are relevant to all spectators or readers, nor do they have to be. The precise number
of raps between a puppeteer’s utterances or the number of bullets (●) between their written representations in an edition is probably of no interest whatsoever to the great majority of people that encounter them in either modality. But these raps and their patterning do have a sense that is emotive or even symbolic. No raps or bullets, one, a few, or a dozen of them, played quickly or slowly, softly or loudly, feel very different, while a sequence of evenly timed (or spaced) raps symbolizes something other than ••• (the pattern onomatopoeically named dherodhog). This feeling belongs to the story-world created by the puppeteer which the edition aims to represent. Steady rapping helps to create a tense atmosphere, while dherodhog signals a transition to something new, such as a change of topic, a shift to another speaker, or a gamelan piece. These small matters are details, certainly, but are they just as well left out?

Creese suggests that 136 densely printed pages of annotation may be excessive. This raises the thorny question of when enough is enough in annotation. To an extent, the boundaries are set by what data the philologist is able to access. This may be quite limited to begin with. Within the limits set by sheer availability, other criteria must apply. In interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking, where the same issue was debated decades ago, the foremost heuristic has been ‘the “contextualization cues” that signal which features of the settings are used by interactants in producing interpretive frameworks’ (Bauman and Briggs 1990:68). These are key in the philological study of performance too, but must be expanded here with what can be called ‘historicization’ cues, which give temporal depth to those interpretive frameworks. Even so, as noted, things may become relevant only later, while of course participants can have highly varied backgrounds, competencies, and interests, and some participants have more authority than others.

Foley notes that her teachers of Sundanese wayang golek ‘were loath to share definitive meanings’. While I have not noticed the same secrecy among Solonese puppeteers, the true meaning of materials considered weighty is a beloved topic of controversy and debate (as noted repeatedly in Tall tree, nest of the wind). The widespread esotericism in Javanese interpretations of culturally significant signs, including narrative elements of wayang, the symbolism of puppets and performance equipment, and the abstract structure of a performance in terms of scenes, does not hamper philology, let alone invalidate it. Quite the contrary, it poses problems that philologists delight in and thrive on. While classical philology may have tried to get rid of it, its contemporary incarnation takes esotericism seriously as an approach to meaning.

When I follow ‘the model of Western scholarship: explication and clarification’, Foley asks, is this not ‘at odds with the intent’? I have tried to demonstrate
in *Tall tree, nest of the wind* that this model, at least in its philological guise, is quite in harmony with the Solonese wayang tradition, not only with regard to language but also music and puppetry; this applies both within the performance and in the critical discourse surrounding it. Of course Foley is spot on in raising the issue of a possible discrepancy between semantic and hermeneutic traditions, in this case between a philology that observes wayang from the outside, the philology of a critical local audience, and the philology that is internal to wayang performance itself. A good ‘world philology’ (Pollock, Elman, and Chang 2015) rises above the differences, expanding its purview to encompass all traditions. Ultimately, asks Foley, can the play be ‘grasped’ from without the performance tradition? Whether it can be fully comprehended by anyone at all, puppeteers included, I doubt; it can be studied, however, and the philology of performance—including edition and translation—is a way of attempting to do this profitably.

Foley’s discussion of the interpretation of Bima’s journey from North Coast and Sundanese (and, laudably, lower-class and rural) perspectives, as well as more general and abstract Indo-Malay ideologies, including her fascinating and thought-provoking reading of Bima’s quest as a narrativization of the Javanese and Sundanese classical *kayon*’s imagery—or perhaps vice versa: the *kayon* as a synoptic visual representation of Bima’s quest—raises the question of how close to its participants’ semantic and hermeneutic practices a philology of performance might choose to remain. The answer, of course, is that this will vary with the questions asked of the performatic artefact. For *Tall tree, nest of the wind* I chose to put in the spotlight this particular performance in its ostensible regional and institutional traditions (those of its Javanese performers and audience members much more than the traditions of its Dutch audience, as Cohen rightly notes), as well as Ki Anom Soeroto’s personal oeuvre.

**Whose Philology is This?**

Philological editions of multimodal performances take a considerable amount of time to compose. The difficulty does not lie in counting raps on the puppet chest (which is easy enough), but in making sense of puppet tableaux and movement, music, as well as language. This requires extensive interpretive skills and contextual and historical expertise. Who, in twenty-first-century academia, is granted the leisure of doing the kind of painstaking research that was invested in *Tall tree, nest of the wind*? To dispel any illusions: this book was completed under circumstances of outright institutional hostility towards the slow scholarship it represents, and in Leiden Javanese studies as a univer-
sity subject was scrapped almost a decade ago. Perhaps, then, ‘the slow and methodical practice of philology’ (Foley) can be exercised under adverse conditions. And in some places conditions may be favourable. Given that it is conceived as a contribution to world philology and aligned with the new Area Studies that takes local scholarly traditions seriously (Arps 2016), studying the philology of performance may be quite feasible in a country like Indonesia, which sets great store by performance as well as textual philology. The continuing presence of the latter in Indonesian universities is due to a combination of at least three factors. Colonial-era philological theory, mediated by the nationalistic celebration of past textual achievements, continues to be valued. The hands-on, practical nature of textual philology has academic and practical value in Indonesia as manuscripts continue to be used and even produced in some parts, while they are also cherished as heritage and traded. Third is the traditional prominence of a philological sensibility in Indonesian artistic cultures and the religious sphere. All three factors are easily extended to performance. Meanwhile, the critical rethinking of philology with which *Tall tree, nest of the wind* is aligned is a planetary affair, driven from the USA (Pollock, McGann, Turner) and Germany (the Zukunftsp hilologie programme and its publications). Folklore and the ethnography of performance, closely related disciplines, continue to have a presence (albeit small) in the USA as well and have their academic and political roots especially in Germany and Britain (Bau man and Briggs 2003). At the same time their aspirations are likewise worldwide.

Thinking and feeling philologically is thinking and feeling beyond the here and now. It is fascinating and important; this work should be done.

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_References_


