Jan Mrázek, *Wayang & Its Doubles: Javanese Puppet Theatre, Television, and the Internet*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2019, xiv + 349 pp. ISBN: 9789814722957, price: 49.00 SGD (paperback).

For over two centuries the Javanese puppet theatre, *wayang kulit*, has fascinated scholars the world over. So much has been written and said about the various forms of *wayang* that one wonders what else there is to add to this immense body of knowledge. Jan Mrázek found a new topic and a unique conceptualization for his newest book in which he explores “the marriage of *wayang* and television” (p. 10). The “marriage” is a metaphor referring to the complex, sometimes paradoxical relationship between *wayang* and television which threads through the book. The closeness of the two mediums suggests the possibility of a perfect marriage but actually it is one “full of conflict” due to unbridgeable differences. Television claims to show “authentic” *wayang* but what is shown in reality is a representation, a reimagining, an imitation of *wayang*, or a “double”. Even though *wayang* and television may seem very much alike, they are simultaneously very much unlike. The heydays of Indonesian (roughly 1995–2005), the first major television company that started to regularly broadcast *wayang* on national television, are the main prism of the book through which Mrázek explores the epistemological relationship between television and *wayang*.

The love-hate relationship is discussed on the basis of a great number of interviews with people working in the *wayang* world, such as *dalang* (master puppeteers), sponsors, spectators, composers, and academics, but also in the television industry like producers and owners of national and local television companies that broadcast *wayang*. To this, the author adds his own experience of watching *wayang*. The multiplicity of these voices and experiences are set in conversation between a string of philosophers: Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida, Samuel Weber, and James Siegel. These philosophers guide and shape the epistemological reflections on *wayang* and television while acknowledging that each of the voices presented in the book stem from different ways of being and therefore from different world-views. The conversations that emerge from this are framed in an imagined coffee shop setting, much in the manner of Mrázek’s introduction to his earlier work *Puppet Theatre in Contemporary Indonesia* (2002). *Wayang & Its Doubles* is set up as if we are sitting in a coffee shop listening to the various perspectives about this metaphorical marriage between television and *wayang*.

This approach affords epistemological reflections drenched in wit that guide us on a journey of thought about how *wayang* and televised imaginings and phantasies of *wayang* are part and parcel of the world we live in today. In

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Chapter 1 we gain an understanding of how *wayang* and television have increasingly come to resemble each other. *Wayang* has developed to become more suitable for television, and television has become more like *wayang*, adjusting ways of filming appropriate for broadcasting *wayang*. The relationship between the two was predestined, as *wayang* has always flirted with other television-related technologies—such as electricity, radio, light, sound—and media like radio, audio- and video-recording. Mrázek subsequently looks at the pull and push factors between television and *wayang*. The characteristics of television and *wayang* seem to be a perfect match, yet in practice both worlds seem hard to unite. What is deemed “authentic” and “characteristic” of *wayang* does not necessarily come across in televised versions of *wayang*. Moreover, the interests and knowledge of both worlds are too far apart to establish a successful marriage. What works in real life performances might not work at all on television. The third chapter explores how space, time, and movement influence the experience of watching *wayang*. Attending and watching *wayang* in real life is a completely different experience than watching on television in the comfort of your home. Watching *wayang* is something one does not exclusively do through watching and listening, but it is first and foremost a bodily sensation. Being present at a *wayang* show touches on all bodily senses from embarking on the journey to the performance place, smelling food vendors, watching other spectators, the musicians and singers, eating and drinking, napping, and sensing the change of atmosphere and time as the night goes on. How the audience chooses between watching *wayang* at home with just a click on the remote control, or attending a *wayang* show in real life depends on a negotiation of how the spectator chooses for the body to relate to space, time, and movement. Acknowledging that the relationship between *wayang* and television is complicated, chapter four discusses a number of alternative attempts between 1997 and 2005 that try to move away from the Indonesian model to build another, better relationship between television and *wayang*. These initiatives reconfirm that marrying television and *wayang* remains a challenge. The last chapter looks at local, private television stations, as well as *wayang* and the internet. Local television stations might be more embedded in the world of *wayang*, which makes collaborations easier and smoother. The newest experiences of watching *wayang* on online platforms that enable the livestreaming of shows is a dream come true that was unattainable for televised *wayang*. Watching *wayang* online is similar yet dissimilar to watching *wayang* on television. Livestreaming comes with the ability to chat with other spectators in live chatrooms, which mitigates some of the elements one misses when watching *wayang* on television. It provides space to chat and joke with other spectators. Yet old problems continue to exist, as we have to acknowledge that television

and the internet are *wayang*'s imitations or doubles: they are not *wayang*, but imagined representations of itself that never fully represent *wayang*.

Reflecting on the issue of representation Mrázek writes "like and unlike television producers, [scholars] represent *wayang*—record it, frame it, zoom in on details that they deem interesting and managing its image and, in the process their own" (p. 9). While philosophical contemplations are nuanced, recontextualized, and situated in Javanese localities, the frames of knowledge and thinkers in the book originate from Europe and America—all of whom are men, in a similar manner that *wayang* is still very much a man's world. Since the start of *wayang* scholarship, such modernist frames of European and American male thinkers have been used to gain an understanding of *wayang*. These frames of representation are closely connected to the specific historical situation that television grew out of, which the author recognizes and acknowledges. It is a particular worldview tied to the notion of "modernity", which stands for "modern-global culture" (Chapter 1), a view shared by many interviewees throughout the book. Modernist frames though run the danger of obscuring decolonial and intersectional perspectives of *wayang*. A decolonial approach would mean an attempt to detach from structures of modernity and coloniality—two sides of the same coin—to (re)establish old and new ways of thinking, languages, ways of life and being in the world which rhetorics of modernity do not allow for. *Wayang & Its Doubles* is without a doubt a brilliant book and this review can only suggest the depth and richness of Mrázek's study. It is a wonderful and witty read, a valuable addition to the body of scholarly knowledge of *wayang*, and a must-read for anyone interested in *wayang*. At the same time it makes one wonder when decolonial, intersectional frames of representation will arrive for *wayang*.

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