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## Editor's Note

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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As the title of Pirandello's play claimed, "So it is (if you think so)." But the authors of this issue of *ATJ* point out that it is useful to test received wisdom. The articles give insight into Japanese *kabuki*, contemporary Thai performance, and Tibetan *lhamo* folk opera. While thematically diverse, the articles share common features. They remind us that even the most conservative of genres is malleable to the changing politics of the producers. They show that the West sometimes serves as an ideological whipping boy in conflicts about societal directions. The articles all show that received versions of history can profitably be questioned.

Though this issue does not include a play, it does not lack drama. James Brandon's article on *kabuki* censorship by the American Occupation in the wake of World War II covers old ground, but shows that by going into the archives a researcher can resurrect a completely different history about an event. While acknowledging the importance of Fabion Bowers in the Occupation censors' office, Brandon presents the startling conclusion that other theatre censors were as significant in "saving" *kabuki*, and preceded Bowers in releasing plays. The Japanese producers, and not just philistine Americans, may have been calling the shots in this period where what had been a living theatre became an aestheticized artifact.

Who would have thought that in rummaging through old office files one could come up with evidence that subverts accepted "facts"? For those who know something about *kabuki*, this is a page-turner. Brandon gives us the who, what, when, and where. Rather than fully addressing the why, he presents his case, vindicating some previously vilified American censors and leaving the reader to play the jury.

Catherine Diamond's article on Thailand's Mae Naak and other unruly heroines gives insight into contemporary Thai theatre and at the same time interrogates wider patterns of female representation in Asian theatre. Her material is specific to Thailand as she probes the duality implicit in traditional female representation. However, her find-

ing should also have resonance for scholars working in other areas. The Javanese Lara Kidul (goddess of the South Sea), Chinese White Snake, Japanese Dojoji, and all the snake ladies that inhabit traditional and modern theatre have comparable features. She invites readers to consider popular tales and classical myth in a feminist perspective as she traces the conflicted heritage and the current interpretations in Thailand.

Syed Jamil Ahmed discusses both contemporary *lhamo* of the Tibetan diaspora and the form in the People's Republic of China. He argues that the diaporic community uses an old Buddhist *jataka* tale of a prince who gives up everything and lives in exile in a demon kingdom to signify the fate of the Dalai Lama. At the same time he shows that groups in the PRC are manipulating the *lhamo* repertoire to validate their rule. Ahmed historicizes our understanding of the art and sets current presentations in the context of the political strategies of the cultural producers. In *lhamo* we are seeing artists going to the past to influence the future as they perform in a contested political context.

The final work, Kevin Wetmore's bibliography of Japanese scripts in English, serves as a resource for Asian Theatre researchers and educators. His insightful introduction gives an overview of the field.

I thank each of these talented authors for sharing the work.

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