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Visions for the Masses: Chinese Shadow Plays from Shaanxi
and Shanxi (review)

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Asian Theatre Journal, Volume 23, Number 1, Spring 2006, pp. 215-217 (Review)



Published by University of Hawai'i Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/atj.2006.0004>

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and its author, but does not include a bibliography. For further reading, readers will have to turn to Fong's *The Other Shore*, which comes with useful appendices of selected criticism and major productions of Gao's plays. *Snow in August* contains eight color plates of the production in Taiwan (2002) and a number of black and white reproductions of Gao's paintings inspired by Zen Buddhism. These illustrations help readers envision Gao's ideas of staging and visualization.

The introduction connects the biographies of the hero and the playwright. Huineng, the subject of the play, was an unorthodox Zen Buddhist master and the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism. Gao is an unorthodox intellectual and playwright. Fong observes that both Huineng and Gao are exiles and outsiders to the established orders. The play adapts Beijing opera performing idioms. Huineng, an illiterate Chinese Zen Buddhist master, is the quintessential representation of intellectual freedom and spontaneous Truth. Gao's creative impulse has, likewise, led him to a long search for freedom. The introduction provides outlines and critical analysis of each act.

Gao's ideal theater, as represented by *Snow in August*'s premier in Taiwan, was not well received. It would have been helpful if the introduction addressed the reception of *Snow in August* and its controversial use of Beijing opera style. A balanced representation of the promise and problems of *Snow in August* would save the unsuspecting and nonspecialist readers from missing an interesting part of the history of a complex and provocative play. Nonetheless, this compact translation of a single play with a brief introduction is both portable and useful.

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VISIONS FOR THE MASSES: CHINESE SHADOW PLAYS FROM SHAANXI AND SHANXI. By Fan Pen Li Chen. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2004. 284 pp. Paper \$24.00.

Many years ago, I was presented with a small collection of translucent Chinese shadow figures. Contemplating the detail of one especially magnificent scenic piece, a scholar's study, I became fascinated by its intricate carving and rich, saturated colors, still vibrant after many, many years. As my interest in Chinese shadow puppets grew, I became frustrated by my inability to locate scripts in translation. Those that I first encountered were short sketches or excerpted scenes, presented with minimal commentary or notation. Most anthologies are now out of print, with the exception of Sven Broman's *Chinese Shadow Theatre Libretti* (Bangkok: White Orchid, 1994), which is beautifully illustrated with color photographs of figures, set pieces, and reproductions of the original Chinese pages. But it is intended for a general audience, with a brief introduction and only sporadic footnotes. Fan Pen Li Chen's translation

of the *Temple of Guanyin* (originally published in *Asian Theatre Journal* 16.1 and reprinted in this book) clarified for me the complexity of Chinese shadow play texts.

Visions for the Masses, the first scholarly anthology of Chinese shadow scripts in English translation, increases our understanding of shadow puppet texts exponentially and gives specific insight into areas that have not been represented in earlier English translations. While the title may evoke associations with the People's Republic Marxist ideology, the plays themselves actually reflect the earlier popular culture of rural China. Chinese shadow theatre had become very sophisticated by the time of the Song dynasty (960–1280), and the Shaanxi traditions were especially popular during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). The plays in this volume, varying in artistic merit and intellectual depth, come from the Shaanxi and Shanxi regions in central China (along the middle stretch of the Yellow River and bordering Inner Mongolia), which still offered over ten different styles of shadow traditions in the 1980s. These included the *wanwanqiang* (the most famous genre, performed in the film *To Live* [Zhang 1994]), *laoqiang*, *xianbanqiang*, *agongqiang*, and *qinqiang* (p. 7). As the handful of English-language translations that exist are primarily from the Beijing form of shadow theatre, this anthology is unique. The prolific Li Fanggui (who died in 1810, under threat of arrest for perceived “subversion” in his plays) wrote the two most literary plays in this volume. Others were transcribed by scholars or players from performances of anonymous works. Chen draws upon sources such as scholar Ding Jilong (who recorded several *shaoxi* plays from an oral recitation of an aged performer in 1998) and the Shanxi capitol city of Taiyuan's Research Institute of Drama collection of 135 plays, transcribed in the 1950s by the local Ministry of Culture in Lūliang (221).

Chen, a professor of Chinese literature at the State University of New York, Albany, not only provides the translations, but also draws upon her encyclopedic knowledge of Chinese cultural history and literary arts to contextualize the characters and actions of these plays. She clarifies the often-obscure references and underlines the thematic content for the benefit of the reader. The book's excellent and authoritative introduction provides a concise, yet comprehensive description of the Chinese shadow theatre and also lists existing translations. Chen undertook much of the fieldwork for this collection between 1996 and 1998, searching out and copying scripts, conferring with scholars, digging through archives, interviewing performers and craftspeople, photographing collections of figures, and documenting performances from both sides of the screen through both still photographs (some of which are included in the book) and video. She lists scholars, performers, family members, and acquaintances in China, Taiwan, and the United States who provided insight. Some of her informants have since passed away, poignantly underscoring the timeliness of her research. She also drew upon the collection of 1,600 shadow figures and many hand-copied scripts owned by her and her sister. Chen's work is engaged scholarship of the highest level.

Brief, informative prefaces to individual plays help us to appreciate

them. Terminology and character and place names are provided both in Chinese characters and romanized, a great boon for scholars wishing to identify correct sources of nomenclature. When necessary, Chen corrects a word or character reference in the hand-copied play scripts, explaining her rationale in the footnotes. The seven plays contain themes drawn from domestic farce (*Henpecked Zhang San* and the delightfully titled *Rotten-Kid Dong Sells His Ma*), literary romance (*The White Jade Hairpin*), and crowd-pleasing military adventure (*Yang Long Draws the Bow*).

Most scripts are direct translations of a single text, although Chen created a composite of two scripts and a performance transcription in order to produce *The Temple of Guanyin*. This play itself has an interesting history: it began as a secular tale of a woman warrior to which religious elements were introduced so as to make it appropriate for performances on the birthday of Guanyin, the goddess of mercy.

A subtitled video of *The Temple of Guanyin*, also available through Chen (fanchen@albany.edu), may be used in combination with the book and is an especially useful teaching tool. It is fortunate that this footage exists; at the time of the performance, the piece had not been offered in over thirty years (p. 223), and the owner of the puppets was not optimistic that he would have another sponsor for this particularly religious play in the foreseeable future.

Visions for the Masses represents groundbreaking work in the field of Chinese puppet play translation. The work's tremendous importance comes from the current state of traditional Chinese shadow puppet performances, which have largely vanished from metropolitan areas and are in danger of disappearing altogether. Chen's second book, focusing on the role of the woman warrior in Chinese shadow plays and documenting additional research, has been accepted for publication and will complement the present volume. I look forward to Fan Pen Li Chen's continuing contributions to our understanding of Chinese puppet performance.

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YELLOWFACE: CREATING THE CHINESE IN AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE, 1850s–1920s. By Krystyn R. Moon. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005. 224 pp. 25 illus. Paper \$23.95.

Krystyn R. Moon's compact study, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s–1920s*, is a recent addition to an expanding body of work that examines the emergence, popularization, and lamentable persistence of Asian stereotypes in American performing and literary arts. In this reworking of her doctoral thesis in history from Johns Hopkins University, Moon follows the leads of Elaine Kim's groundbreaking *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings in Their Social Context* (1984), James Moy's *Marginal Sights: Staging the Chinese in America* (1994), Josephine Lee's *Per-*