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Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music  
and Performance, 1850s-1920s (review)

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Asian Theatre Journal, Volume 23, Number 1, Spring 2006, pp. 217-220 (Review)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/atj.2006.0011>



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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-*

*forming Asian America: Race and Ethnicity on the Contemporary Stage* (1998), Dave Williams' *Misreading the Chinese Character: Images of the Chinese in Euroamerican Drama to 1925* (2000), Robert G. Lee's *Orientalists: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (2000), and John Kuo Wei Tchen's *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776–1882* (2001), to cite a number of worthy precedents.

America's film industry popularized images of Chinese arch-villains, Confucius-quoting nebbishes, dagger-nailed "Dragon Ladies," and sexually available "Lotus Blossoms." Such troubling images have even appeared in contemporary rap music—Bloodhound Gang's odious *Yellow Fever* (2000) is a case in point. As Moy and Tchen demonstrated, these images did not spontaneously appear with moving pictures in the early twentieth century, but descended from images deeply rooted in American popular culture. Moon sets the record straight by identifying the roles American theatre artists and musicians played in creating what would become enduring, ugly images of Chinese.

*Yellowface* is divided into six chronologically organized chapters in which Moon investigates the initial stirrings, consolidation, and popularization of images of Chinese people. She starts with fundamental assumptions held by Western Europeans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, that "nasal, guttural, groaning and hideous" Chinese singing was akin to the "caterwauling [of a] tom cat" (p. 13) (a popularly accepted attitude held by no less an authority than the French composer Hector Berlioz [p. 64]). Moon travels through nineteenth-century sheet music, stage spectacles, and minstrelsy to twentieth-century Tin Pan Alley and ultimately the Broadway musical to demonstrate the how performances of Chinese roles were eventually assumed by the theatre-going public to be of "real" and therefore "true" Chinese characters.

Concomitant with the nearly universal Western distaste for legitimate Chinese music was the establishment of Chinese as mysterious, exotic, and "othered" in American "oriental" extravaganzas. Revived repeatedly throughout the nineteenth century wherever theatre companies and circuses toured, such images of the Chinese were reinforced to the delight and wonder of thousands of Caucasian Americans. Marketing Chinese exoticism was a cash cow for the producers, writers, and performers who promoted these shows. Though the Chinese were initially an object of fascination, the anti-Chinese anxiety that swept the United States in the aftermath of the Gold Rush caused a shift. Now performing artists propagandizing the Chinese portrayed them not as desirable exotics but as fundamentally and unconditionally inassimilable aliens. Songwriters, minstrel performers, and vaudevillians spoke pidgin English and feminized Asian males to highlight the inability of Chinese to become "real Americans." The work of Bret Harte, Harrigan and Hart, and C. T. Parsloe is already known to students of this period, and Moon introduces to the reader an expanded cast of artists who made careers of "yellowface": John "Chinee" Leach, Ackland Von Boyle, and a whole raft of minstrel performers. Indeed, Moon's discussion of the marginalization of Chinese by

other immigrant populations, especially the Irish and African Americans—who portrayed Chinese stereotypes in order to identify themselves as “more” American than the Asian immigrants—is an insightful consideration of themes of shifting racial and ethnic loyalties.

Two chapters devoted to Chinese immigrant performers and Chinese American vaudevillians represent Moon at her strongest. Here she describes the earliest Asian and Asian American performers, pioneers forced to perform “yellowface-style” (and, in some cases, to don yellowface makeup) onstage or be confined to performing only at Asian traditional festivals. In recounting the stories of a generation of courageous Asian American performers who, despite the odds, set out to prove that they could sing, tell jokes, and hoof it with the best of black and white thespians, the reader meets Lee Tung Foo, Rose Eleanor Jue, the Chung Hwa Comedy Four, and Yen and Chan. Though these are not the familiar names of film stars Anna May Wong, who found favor with American audiences as the “dragon lady,” and Sessue Hayakawa, who portrayed conniving males, their stories make for some of the most exciting writing in the book. Moon has done well to recognize these performers whose careers suffered unfairly for no other reason than that they were of Asian descent.

Transforming one’s doctoral thesis into a published scholarly work is a widely practiced academic endeavor, but it is here that *Yellowface* falls short. As regards style and organization, the book adheres to a graduate school format wherein each chapter is divided into a number of subsections. At the end of each, as well as at the end of each chapter, Moon reiterates, in condensed form but very often *verbatim*, the contents of the preceding section, in order to remind the reader that she is coming to the end of a unit. Readers who simply want a general sense of what happened can cut to the chase by limiting their reading to these plentiful reiterated paragraphs. And though students falling behind in assigned readings might consider this a boon, serious scholars will find the constant repetition dull.

Moon fails to overcome the challenge of writing outside her academic area. When discussing historical events and personages and identifying cross-cultural and intercultural influences, Moon is in her element. She is on far more shaky ground, however, when she must address specifically theatrical or musical concepts. Her discussion of theatrical realism derives from, according to her own endnotes, the most introductory texts available, and in her discussions of music, she resorts to ineffective generalizations and wholesale reproductions of sheet music in the text. Even a reader who can read music will get lost in the sheet music without some magnified inserts to call attention to the specific measures and notes to which Moon refers. Rendering discursively that which is intended to be interpreted aurally is no mean feat. Still, for a discussion to be useful to musicians and nonmusicians alike, short of including a CD with the text, some visual mode of rendering information must be found. (Readers would do well to consult musicologist’s Charles Hiroshi Garrett’s outstanding article “Chinatown, Whose Chinatown? Defining America’s Borders with Musical Orientalism” in *Journal of American Musicological Society*

57: 1 (2004): 119–173, a must read for anyone interested in the “musical vocabulary of race,” as Moon terms it.)

The book concludes with two appendices: one listing American pop tunes circa 1800–1929 that feature Chinese references and one listing musical revues and plays with Chinese themes. Unfortunately, the first is listed chronologically, and the second is listed alphabetically, which makes comparison difficult, and the second omits a notable number of relevant scripts.

Despite its shortcomings *Yellowface* is a useful and accessible study for students and teachers, and at \$23.95 a reasonable buy. Musicologists and theatre historians will also find *Yellowface* to be an interesting incentive to investigate further an area of American performance history that continues to affect popular stereotypes of the Chinese in the United States.

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**RASA: PERFORMING THE DIVINE IN INDIA.** By Susan L. Schwartz. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. 160 pp. 32 illus. Cloth \$59.50; paper \$22.50.

The purpose of the book is to introduce readers to the basic concepts of India’s cultural tradition and the aesthetic principle of *rasa*. To do this Susan Schwartz has focused on the tradition of classical dance in India. This book is clear and accessible for the introductory reader, It gives an understanding of the Indian student-teacher relationship and *rasa*’s application in dance, and shows how art is part of the contemporary Indian diaspora. To make the material accessible to beginners, words in original Sanskrit and other Indian languages are rarely used. Several important verses with reference to the dance and *rasa* are also quoted. The first preface on transliteration, which explains some of the common ways of writing the words, irrespective of the actual pronunciation, will help the reader if he/she encounters these terms in the context of an Indian dance or music performance.

In chapter 1, the author fittingly uses the term *Sanathana Dharma* (the eternal order of the universe) to refer to the religion now known as Hinduism and states that the religion of India has infused every aspect of its performing arts, so religious ideas can be studied through close examination of performance. The *guru-shishya parampara* (teacher-student relationship), where the disciple lives with the *guru* or master and the arts are imbibed through an oral tradition is described. This tradition internalizes the learning experience for the student, making it an active process that also paves the way for the performance goal of *rasa* to be achieved. This tradition of study is described with relation to the different styles of classical dance later in the book. Schwartz states in this introductory chapter, “Where taste, sound, image, movement, rhythm and transformation meet, therefore the experience of *rasa* is possible.” (p. 5) The objective of the book is thus clearly stated by Schwartz,