The sample VCD begins with a brief documentary introduction of Yangzhou's culture and history in Chinese, and ties the area to the storytelling art, as regionalism is an essential factor in this performance tradition. After the introduction to the city, the VCD presents each master with his name and story title. The stories are performed in the Yangzhou dialect with sporadic use of standard Chinese, making the stories difficult to understand for non-speakers of the local dialect. However, the visible stylistic differences between the four masters of the Yangzhou storytelling schools keep the audience enticed and intrigued. The segments of the storytelling performances grant the readers the aural and visual experiences of the Yangzhou storytelling performance. One regretful aspect of the VCD is that it would have been more in-line with the book's title if selected scenes of the four masters' tellings of their life stories, as well as the masters' interactions with their students (in both formal and private settings) were included in order to provide a richer illustration of the on-and-off stage lives of the storytellers. Nevertheless, the sample VCD recordings of the storytelling performances bring new possibilities in studying and representing oral traditions in today's modern technological times.

The Four Masters of Chinese Storytelling is a multi-dimensional book that introduces the living Yangzhou storytelling tradition, offering a rare opportunity to hear directly from the performers and share in their knowledge. The book also serves as a catalogue to the full VCD collections of the masters' performances in their full repertoires, which are available at the aforementioned libraries and institutions. In addition to the study of Yangzhou storytelling, Børdahl brings forth to the table issues such as preservation of living tradition and its ramifications, authenticity, dynamics of tradition, and the role of technology in the study of contemporary oral traditions. Presenting a dynamic oral performance tradition in a written format is a dilemma all students of oral tradition must face. Børdahl and her co-authors attempt to resolve this problem through the use of direct and clear language, with numerous illustrations and an instructive and entertaining VCD. *Four Masters of Chinese Storytelling* offers a compelling and rich illustration of the Yangzhou storytelling tradition, and will appeal to specialists and non-specialists alike. However, it would probably be best viewed as part of a broader mosaic of Børdahl's (and her various co-authors') previous works on the subject —each work representing a piece, each a step forward in gaining a deeper understanding of the Yangzhou performance tradition.

NOTE

1. The full VCD collections are archived in the Library of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing; Fu Ssu-nien Library in Taipei; Danish Folklore Archives in Copenhagen; and in the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C.

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FAN PEN LI CHEN. *Visions for the Masses, Chinese Shadow Plays from Shaanxi and Shanxi*. Cornell East Asia Series No. 121. Ithaca, N.Y.: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2004. xvi + 268 pages. Plates, bibliography (in European languages and in Chinese). Paper US$24.00; ISBN 1-885445-21-0.

Fan Chen's book offers a view of the world of Chinese shadow figures and the stories they enact, a tradition dating from at least the Song dynasty (960–1280). The forward by

Professor David Johnson of the University of California at Berkeley describes this book as "a valuable introduction to the history and current state of shadow theater in China." It certainly is that, in addition to providing English translations of several playscripts that are performed today.

The author's research in China on three separate trips from 1996–1998 took her to several remote villages where shadow plays may still be seen. This research resulted in the accumulation of many "shadow figures" (that is, flat leather puppets or 'figures'), many playscripts, a collection of videotaped performances, the production of the present book, *Visions for the Masses*, that focuses on the texts of several playscripts and a forthcoming volume entitled *The Chinese Shadow Theatre and Popular Religion and Women Warriors*. This theatrical tradition, variously referred to as "shadow play," "shadow show," or "shadow theater" (*yingxi* 影戲), is described as an operatic form that uses a small orchestra (comprising five to seven musicians, although we are not informed of all the instruments they play) and one or more puppeteers and assistants who carry out all oral aspects as well as the manipulation of the shadow figures during a show.

A lengthy introduction provides a basic summary of the shadow play tradition in China and prepares the reader for the English translation of seven playscripts, which makes up the major part of this book. The introduction gives us a vast amount of information about the Chinese shadow play tradition including a brief literature review of playscripts in translation, some basic facts about the construction of shadow figures (with references and addresses to obtain works by other writers on the making of shadow figures), the main types of shadow plays in China, some technical aspects of shadow puppetry (such as staging and manipulation), the status of musicians in a troupe, and the role of shadow play performances in Chinese culture. We are also informed about the cost of production and the typical length of performances in both rural and urban settings, as well as some details about the main surviving types and the two most sophisticated of the traditional styles, that is, the Leting (樂亭; Luanzhou) shadows of Hebei province and the *wanwanqiang* (碗碗腔) shadows (named after the *wan* 碗, a bell-shaped inverted brass bowl that is struck as an instrument in the orchestra) of Shaanxi.

A section of the Introduction subtitled "The Search for a Dying Art" is devoted to a discussion about the various troupes and the styles of shadow theater that the author encountered in Shaanxi and elsewhere, with copious notes on the surviving troupes as well as the general state of Chinese shadow plays, troupes and puppeteers in the late twentieth century. As the subtitle indicates, the Chinese shadow play is seriously on the wane, declining from a viable tradition in the 1920s to a banned tradition during the Cultural Revolution followed by a small revival in the 1980s and another decline in the 1990s. The old puppet masters are dying out, young people today prefer television rather than the traditional arts and whole sets of shadow figures are being sold in tourist shops (we see and hear about similar conditions in other developing countries in Asia and Southeast Asia).

The commentary on the famous eighteenth/nineteenth century scholar and playwright Li Fanggui (李芳桂) informs us that he was a failure as a civil servant but excelled as a playwright who was eventually accused of inciting civil unrest through performances of his shadow plays during the White Lotus rebellion. Of Li Fanggui's ten known plays in the *wanwanqiang* tradition, two are given here in English translation, *The White Jade Hairpin* (*baiyudian* 白玉鈿) and *The Jade Swallow Hairpin* (*yuyanchai* 玉燕釵). As these plays demonstrate, the plots are complex. The plays overall are highly refined and, as the author tells us, they are "reminiscent of literary *chuanqi* (傳奇) opera," featuring talented scholars and beautiful maidens.

The playscripts in this volume also include two less refined plays by anonymous authors, entitled *The Coral Pagoda* (*shanhuta* 珊瑚塔) and *Yang Long Draws The Bow* (*yanglong kaigong* 楊龍開弓). Both of these stories depict the classic power struggles between military and civil factions, and the stories usually take the side of the generals and rebels who defy the establishment prime ministers and high-ranking government officials.

Another famous story included in this collection is *The Temple of Guanyin* (*guanyintang* 觀音堂), also known as *Twice Pacifying the North Sea* (*erzheng beihai* 二征北海). While this play is possibly of local origin from Shanxi and is orally transmitted, it is unique in its focus on women warriors. The translation by the author was originally published in the *Asian Theatre Journal* (Chen 1999, 60–106) and is reprinted in this volume with permission. The commentary about this play in the Introduction includes information on obtaining a copy of a videotaped performance (an email address is provided).

While plays generally take about three to four hours of performance to complete, there are also shorter "playlets" or comical skits that are performed after midnight (*houbanyexi* 後半夜戲) when the children and women have gone home for the night. These are episodes based on daily life events, the shortest being around fifteen minutes or so in length and performed by a secondary puppeteer or by a musician in the troupe. They are transmitted orally among puppeteers and differ from the usual plays in that the clown character is allowed to sing and play a substantial role in the story. Two of these comical skits, entitled *Henpecked Zhang San* (*zangsan paqi* 張三怕妻) and *Rotten-kid Dong Sells His Ma* (*donglanzi maima* 董爛子賣媽), are transcribed in this book. These farcical stories are often ribald in nature and appeal to the common people, especially the adult male population.

Each playscript in this book is prefaced by extensive commentary and copious footnotes that explain the key elements in the play and their relation to other theatrical plays as well as to Chinese culture and literature. This background information helps to set the stage for the playscript that follows. Beginning with a list of the characters in the play, the playscripts are easily readable with the inclusion of stage directions that help the reader visualize the actions at hand.

Throughout the text, the names of people and places are immediately followed by the traditional Chinese characters for each and, likewise, theatrical terminology and stylistic types are given in English and then immediately followed by a pinyin Romanization, which is then followed by the Chinese characters for the terms. While both primary field sources and published sources are clearly cited in footnotes, explanatory footnotes also abound throughout the text and provide a wealth of information in themselves. A comprehensive bibliography in English and in Chinese completes the volume.

This book is an excellent introduction to the world of Chinese shadow play for the uninitiated as well as for those who are involved in traditions of shadow puppetry found in other parts of the world. Fan Chen's related article "Shadow Theaters of the World" (2003) is a discussion on the origins of shadow theater that offers a broad context in which to place the world of Chinese shadows. In addition, her forthcoming work on the Chinese shadow play, noted earlier, fills in the details on this subject regarding the history of Chinese shadow plays, the role of religion, the portrayal of women warriors and selected plays that relate to these topics.

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Giskin, Howard and Bettye S. Walsh, Editors. *An Introduction to Chinese Culture through the Family*. SUNY Series in Asian Studies Development. New York: State University of New York Press, 2001. xii + 237 pages. Figures, selected annotated readings, index. Hardcover US$71.50; ISBN 0-7914-5047-3. Paper US$23.95; ISBN 0-7914-5048-1.

This edited volume is an introduction to Chinese culture through the notion of the family. It covers the topics of Chinese philosophy, literature, language development, arts, films, architecture, and the gender situation in mainland China. These topics are discussed in an informative and comprehensive manner, giving beginners sufficient materials to begin to understand Chinese culture in relation to the family. There is also a useful glossary at the end of each chapter, explaining key terms and concepts.

The first two chapters are on Chinese language and philosophy. Cope-Kasten's chapter discusses in detail that the main concerns of Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism, are of how people should live and how they could live harmoniously. He maintains that in China the family itself has provided the primary model for understanding this practical philosophy. The five basic social relationships of the Chinese, that is, ruler-ruled, father-son, husband-wife, brother-brother, and friend-friend, are indeed the Confucian conception of social order that has prevailed among all of the institutions of Chinese society for over two thousand years. Teaching and learning relationships, such as the teacher-student relationship, religious relationships, and even political relationships are all modelled after the core familial relationships, particularly the father-son dyad. Cope-Kasten further introduces the binary concepts of *yin-yang* and the *qian-kun* of the *Book of Changes*, explaining how the familial relationships lend metaphysical support from such concepts.

Pickle's chapter on the Chinese language also explains that the Chinese "ancient tongue and the language system incorporate and express the *yinyang* mentality," which corresponds to the Chinese relational conception of the self. This conception of self has, of course, pervaded family, social, and political networks. Pickle's analysis of the Chinese language reminds us of Ong's work on orality and literacy. Ong argued that the oral culture of illiterates can scarcely lead them to develop the idea of individuality; what they can articulate is a relational self alone (Ong 1982). Perhaps if Pickle's work can be integrated with Ong's analysis, this would provide us a more profound understanding of the persistence of the kinship network in Chinese society.

As the Confucian notion of family is patriarchal in nature, women had suffered relentless oppression for the past thousand years. In the chapter on women and gender, Gallagher analyses the sufferings of women in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political factors, pointing out that this situation was not challenged until the emergence of the socialist revolution. The transformation of the status of women during the Mao era,