H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Haiping Yan, ed. *Theater and Society: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Drama.* Armonk, N.Y. and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998. xlvi + 328 pp. $62.95 (cloth); $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7656-0307-4.

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Published on H-PCAACA (October, 1998)

The Republic of China has recently undergone profound and complex transformations. These changes, along with the current intensification of global relationships, make it all the more important–and at the same time all the more difficult–for Westerners to understand the people and society of China.

This anthology addresses that need by offering translations of four plays and a filmscript from the mid-1980s. These are supplemented by the editor's "Introduction," which sketches the politico-economic and socio-cultural background of these works, plus the controversies that swirled around them. There are also footnotes throughout to explain linguistic and historical references for the general reader.

Bus Stop is like a mixture of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, since the bus never comes, and Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*, since those waiting for the bus irritate one another. Nonetheless, the subject matter of the discussion makes it clear that this one-act play is set in post-Mao China.

WM is in four acts, ranging from 1976 to 1984. It provides insight into Chinese collectives from the perspectives of seven people who have come from varied social and ideological backgrounds. The play explores how changes in Chinese society impact upon individuals and their relationships.

Pan Jinlian: The History of a Fallen Woman retells an ancient story as a musical drama with a prelude, four parts, and epilogue. Some characters are from the ancient story, but historical and fictional characters are added. Setting Pan Jinlian in a variety of contexts makes the statement that men have oppressed women throughout history and around the globe.

Sangshuping Chronicles, a three-act play with prelude and epilogue, reveals the lack of contact between the ideology of the Chinese cultural revolution and the lives of the people in the villages. But it attributes the woes of the nation not to uncaring bureaucrats, but to the poverty of the villagers and to the lack of education which could free them from constrictive traditional values.

Old Well is a script for a film which received awards in both national and international competitions. Old Well is a village, but the suggestion of water is not misleading because this is a village which has an abundance of rocks and dry wells. The quest for water is both a symbol of the people's deprivation and an allegory of their determination.

This anthology is especially valuable for those in Asian studies, and also for those whose primary interest is theater arts, since there are some very creative techniques in these works. These works of art can also be recommended to the reader who wants to become better acquainted with the Chinese–or for that matter, with him or herself.

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Citation: Harold Hatt. Review of Yan, Haiping, ed., *Theater and Society: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Drama.* H-PCAACA, H-Net Reviews. October, 1998.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=2378

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