CHINESE EROTIC ART

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28 color plates

103 black-and-white illustrations

By

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Love is no less important in China than elsewhere, and this book presents the art of love as described by Chinese writers. An abundant erotic literature proves that the Chinese were masters in this, the first of the arts, the art of the "alcove" or "bed-chamber," as it is described by Chinese encyclopedists. In the East and Far East this art constitutes supreme joy, pleasure without remorse; those who practice it are only seeking paradise on earth.

The first chapter, "Science, Magic and the Mystery of the Body: Notes on Taoism and Sexuality," is the work of KRISTOFER SCHIPPER. This sinologist spent several months in temples in southern Formosa doing research on ancient Taoist ritual.

CHANG FU-JUI chose and translated the Chinese poems linking the different essays. The scabrous subject of sadism is handled with knowledge and subtlety by JACQUES PIMPANEAU.

FRANKLIN CHOW adapted Li Yü's novel *The T'sui Y'a Pavilion.*

MICHEL BEURDELEY, author of *Chinese Trade Porcelain* and *The Chinese Collector Through the Centuries*, has combined these elements into a whole and contributed the Preface and the chapters entitled "Cut Sleeves," "Love for the Perfumed Companion," and "Foot Fetishism." He is also responsible for the illustrations, which comprise paintings by the great masters and rare prints taken from novels published in the Ming dynasty. Also included are several gouaches—some rather naïve—from scrolls and albums of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The publishers hold the opinion that this delicate subject is handled here with a real concern for knowledge. All documents are reproduced *in toto* without hypocrisy or censure.

Printed in Hong Kong

CHINESE EROTIC ART

Translated from the French by Diana Imber

ISBN 0-89009-631-7
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This work is the result of friendly collaboration. The first chapter, 'Science, Magic and the Mystique of the Body : Notes on Taoism and Sexuality' is by Kristofer Schipper, a sinologist, born in Holland, but attached to the French School of Oriental Studies and at present in Formosa. He has spent several months in the southern part of the island studying ancient Taoist rites at first hand.

The Chinese poems scattered throughout the book have been chosen by Chang Fu-jui, professor at the Sorbonne, and gratitude is due to him for the time he has devoted to the work.

M. Pimpaneau, professor at the School of Oriental Languages, has discussed with knowledge and tact, the delicate subject of sadism, not touched upon by the late sinologist and Ambassador, Van Gulik, in his study *Sexual Life in Ancient China*.

Michel Beurdeley, an expert on Far Eastern art and author of the books, *Porcelain of the East India Companies* and *The Chinese Collector through the Ages*, has skilfully welded the sections into a whole. He is responsible for the preface and for three chapters, 'Cut Sleeves,' 'Love for the Perfumed Companion,' 'Foot Fetishism' and for the selection of the illustrations.

The passages from *Chin P'ing Mei* (The Golden Lotus) are from the English translation from the Chinese original made by Clement Egerton and are reproduced by permission of the publishers, Messrs. George Routledge & Sons Ltd, London. The passages from *Ju Pu T'uan* by Li Yü (Before Midnight Scholar) are from the translation by Richard Martin, and are here reproduced by permission of Messrs. André Deutsch, London.

PREFACE

Drinking when we are not thirsty and making love at all seasons, madam: that is all there is to distinguish us from the other animals.

Beaumarchais' *Figaro*

'The physical side is not the only good thing about love,' wrote Buffon, for these pleasures (wrongly called of the flesh) are those which demand most imagination and refinement. It is not enough to await nature's promptings : Venus will only be persuaded to unlatch her girdle by subtlety and skill . . . and it is because man cannot bear his desire to be cut short that he invented Eros and his games. In China, as elsewhere, love is no mere trifle. An abundant literature of eroticism proves that the Chinese were masters in the finest art of all—that of the alcove or bedchamber—to use the expression of Chinese historians.

'The act of love,' wrote Leonardo da Vinci, 'is so ugly that the human race would die out if people could see themselves'. But in the East and the Far East, it is supreme joy; pleasure without remorse; and those who practise it are only seeking paradise on earth. The Merciful One has created no more lovely sight than a pair of lovers in bed.

Using all resources of the Chinese language, which is particularly subtle and suggestive, poets and writers of the Celestial Kingdom turn themselves into willing *voyeurs* to describe the delights of love. Unselfconscious gaiety mingles with a touching lyricism. Some passages of the famous *Chin P'ing Mei* can be compared to the *Contes drolatiques* of Balzac. But the delicacy, the brilliant imagery of some Chinese poems recall the sonnets of Ronsard or Clément Marot. In the western world, lovers of the picturesque are enchanted by the literary clichés and banal metaphors so overworked by Chinese scholars : 'A face as sweet as a peach flower'; 'Eyebrows as delicately arched as the sickle of the new moon'; 'The pair of mandarin ducks'; not forgetting the 'Stalk of Jade' and the 'Golden Lily'. Such were the Chinese stories which delighted Judith Gauthier and Goumilev, authors of the two famous literary pastiches *The Flute of Jade* and *The Porcelain Pavilion*. Nevertheless, some of these expressions have a venerable past, such as *Yün Yü* (Clouds and Rain), used as the title of this work. This Chinese euphemism for 'making love' appears in the preface to the ode *Kao T'ang Fu,* written by the great poet Sung Yu about A.D. 300. 'Once upon a time one of the first emperors of China was walking at Kao T'ang. Feeling tired he stopped for a rest. A young woman appeared in his dream and said: "I am the fairy of the Enchanted Mountain (Wu Shan), and the mistress of the terrace of Kao T'ang. When I learned that you were visiting the district I determined to keep you company on your pillow and bed-mat." Responding to her wishes, the king lent the fairy his favours. The fairy bade him farewell with these words: "I live in the south of Wu Shan. At dawn I am the morning cloud and every evening I can be found below the southern terrace". The next day and the following days the king went to the chosen spot.' Thus ends this charming fairy

tale for adults, and since that day Chinese lovers speak of the 'Clouds and Rain' and meet on the Enchanted Mountain.

Our aim in this work is to study the art of love in China as described by Chinese authors and particularly those of the late Ming period. The illustrations are from paintings by great masters such as T'ang Yin and Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century), and the prints are taken from novels of the Ming dynasty.

We have also found several eighteenth and nineteenth century albums or scrolls, some rather naïve, representing intimate or gallant scenes. Works of this kind were put in the trousseau of a young married couple and served to initiate the bride or new concubine into the arts of love. Novels often allude to these paintings, the works of artists who loved the Bohemian life, wine, the company of young actors, and the pleasures of tea-houses and 'flower gardens.' Unfortunately the erotic paintings of Chao Mêng-fu (1254–1322), mentioned in the *Ju Pu T'uan*, and the celebrated scroll of Ch'iu Ying, representing the Ten Glories (positions), have not survived.

Many of these erotic books and albums are to be found in Japan where they were imported early in the seventeenth century, for at that time the Japanese censor only controlled military works and those on Christianity. But it is extremely difficult to consult them. Obviously they are not to be found in China today and are exceptionally rare in the West. During the eighteenth century under the Ch'ing dynasty a wave of prudishness swept away immense numbers of illustrated books and paintings. Hence an edict by Ch'ien-lung, dated 1781, ordered that everything 'with any suggestion of incest, or deviating in the slightest from orthodox austerity' was to be removed from his collection. The emperor explained that 'although the songs of the classical period of literature seem suggestive, and there are allusions to women and sweet-smelling plants, the homage is not addressed to a beautiful young maiden but to the noble character of the man of property'. Such transposition of historic antecedents recalls the suggestion that the *Song of Songs* is an allegory of the Love of God for His Chosen People.

The authoritarian and puritanical reign of Ch'ien-lung weighed heavily on the old Chinese society, but customs did not change. Henceforward the free expression of love could only be heard in secret, but that should not come as a surprise, for sexual freedom is always high on the proscribed list. M. B.

SCIENCE, MAGIC AND MYSTIQUE OF THE BODY

Notes on Taoism and Sexuality

Taoism is the true religion of China. It represents the autochthonous in the creeds and in the practice of religious doctrines as opposed to foreign influences from India, Asia Minor and Europe.

Taoist practices are founded on two cosmological conceptions common to the whole of China : the *Tao* (Way), the unique principle that regulates the complementary forces; these are *Yin* (female principle, shadow, moon, etc.) and *Yang* (male principle, light, sun, etc.). Everything in nature participates in this dualism. The destiny of every creature is determined by it: day is followed by night, light has its shadow, life leads to death, and so on. To overcome the contrary pull of the two principles and to harmonize them into the absolute and eternal unity of the Way is the aim and practice of the millions of adherents of the Taoist religion. The great French sinologist, Marcel Granet, has shown that these concepts were not simply metaphysical speculations. In Ancient China the union of *Yin* and *Yang* was personified by dances and games of nubile young men and women. These assemblies took place in Spring in the gardens of the communal Holy Places. They were sexual rites : alliances formed in Spring led to marriage in Autumn, after the harvest. The songs interspersed with these dances and tournaments are among the most ancient literary texts preserved in China. Even today these sexual rites are still held in certain parts of South China and South East Asia. Sometimes the same ancient songs have been handed down by an oral tradition.

This demonstrates the fundamental nature of certain practices and concepts related to our subject. Sexuality, far from being relegated to a clandestine and apocryphal sphere, is found to be the pivot of ideas and activities. The same is true of religion : there are very few Taoist works that do not mention in one form or another the union of *Yin* and *Yang*.

This basic theme is translated in many ways, for the union of antithetical elements can come about as well by mystic as alchemical or spiritualist methods. Although the *Tao* is immutable, the ways of seeking it are many and heterogenous. And behind it all there are always physiological practices and techniques, which are most characteristic of Taoism and are the foundation of the search for immortality. These bodily techniques include sexual practices. The oldest manuals on Taoist sexual methods date from the Han period (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). Yet despite their long history, these practices are not well known in China outside Taoist circles. They are known even less in the West. Since the Middle Ages puritanical Confucianism and Buddhist asceticism have successfully maintained a conspiracy of silence on the subject of sexual techniques and customs. With the opening of China by the Europeans the situation was exacerbated by prudery. Nevertheless Taoism held to its belief that continuous sexual practice was a primary

Extracting Vitality from the Female Principle. Engraving to the Hsing-ming-kuei-chih, *Handbook of Internal Alchemy. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

Sexual Union of Yin *and* Yang. *Engraving to the* Hsing-ming-kuei-chih, *Handbook of Internal Alchemy. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

requirement in the search for longevity and hence immortality. In the words of Ko-hung, patriarch and Taoist philosopher of the fourth century, 'No one will achieve longevity who is ignorant of *The Arts of the Bedchamber*'.

These precepts comprise fairly elementary techniques, mostly questions of hygiene and sexual medicine, aiming to counteract the harmful effects of irregularity on health. In other words, not to harm oneself through sexual activity. The object is to promote the happy union of *Yin* and *Yang*. But true Taoism did not stop there. On the contrary, it sought to transcend the fatal duality, to enable mankind to escape the laws of existence and to this end experimented with esoteric and heterodox sexual practices. Cosmologically speaking, the principles of the universe are inherent in the macro- and microcosm. *Yin* and *Yang*, like other elements of the universe, are all present in the microcosm of the human body, which the Taoists set far above all other things. To preserve it involves attaining perfect harmony between the body and nature (the macrocosm). This principal condition inspires the practices of *The Arts of the Bedchamber*. Man can not live without woman, nor can the sky be separate from the earth, that is the doctrine of the early manuals. The union is a spontaneous act (*tzŭ-jan*) and spontaneity is an important part of Taoist philosophy. It can be summed up, so to speak, in the exclamation made by one of the Yellow Emperor's favourite concubines when she learned his methods: 'Not to struggle against one's natural desires and so to attain longevity, what joy!'

Abstinence as much as excess leads to the death of the body. The sexual act is necessary, but also dangerous. Hence one must know the appropriate techniques. However, knowledge of the body is only a pre-condition, a first step towards the maintenance of a high degree of physical fitness. The aim is to escape, to transcend the material world and, to that end, to replace the body by a heavenly and

取坎填離圖

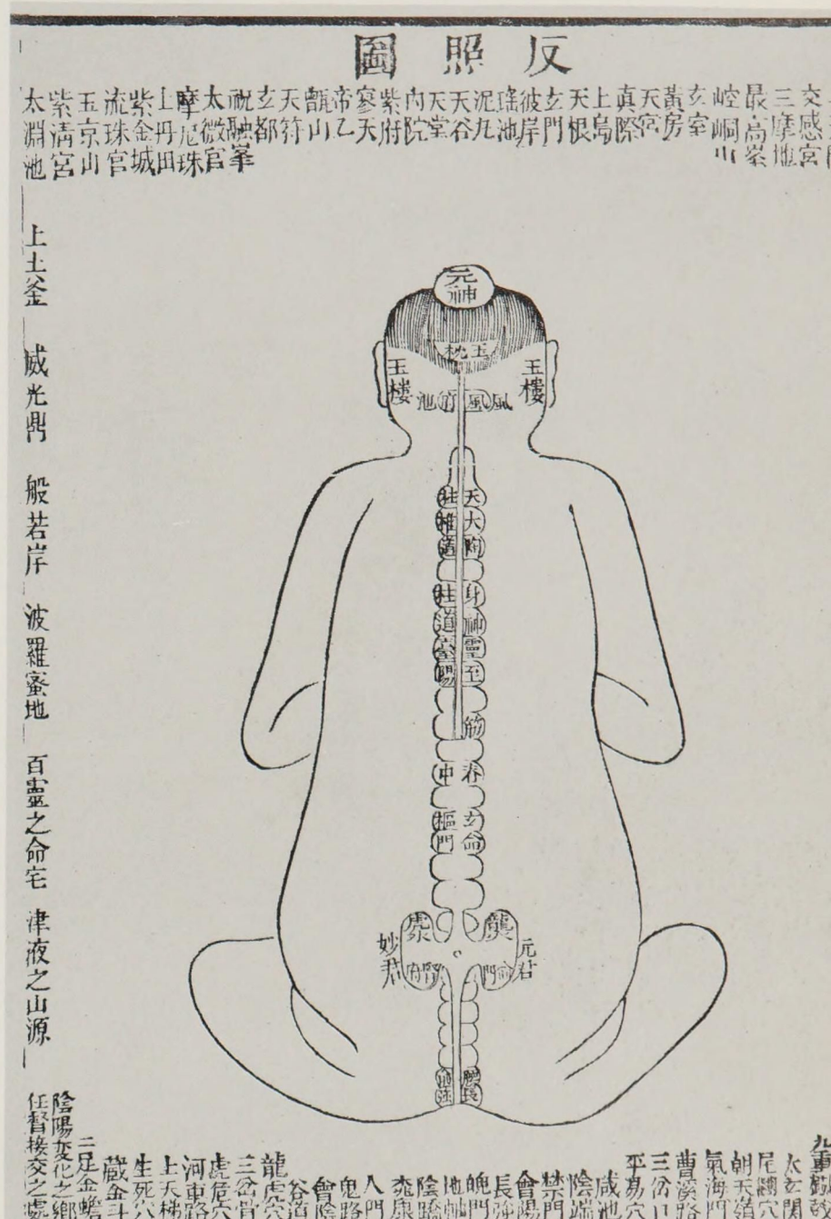
取出坎中畫補離還復乾
純陽命本固靈砂性珠圓
克念全天理離塵合上禪
採鉛知下手三疊舞胎仙

陽丹結在陰海中猶如坎裏一爻雄
擒來離內溫溫養此卽神仙顛倒功

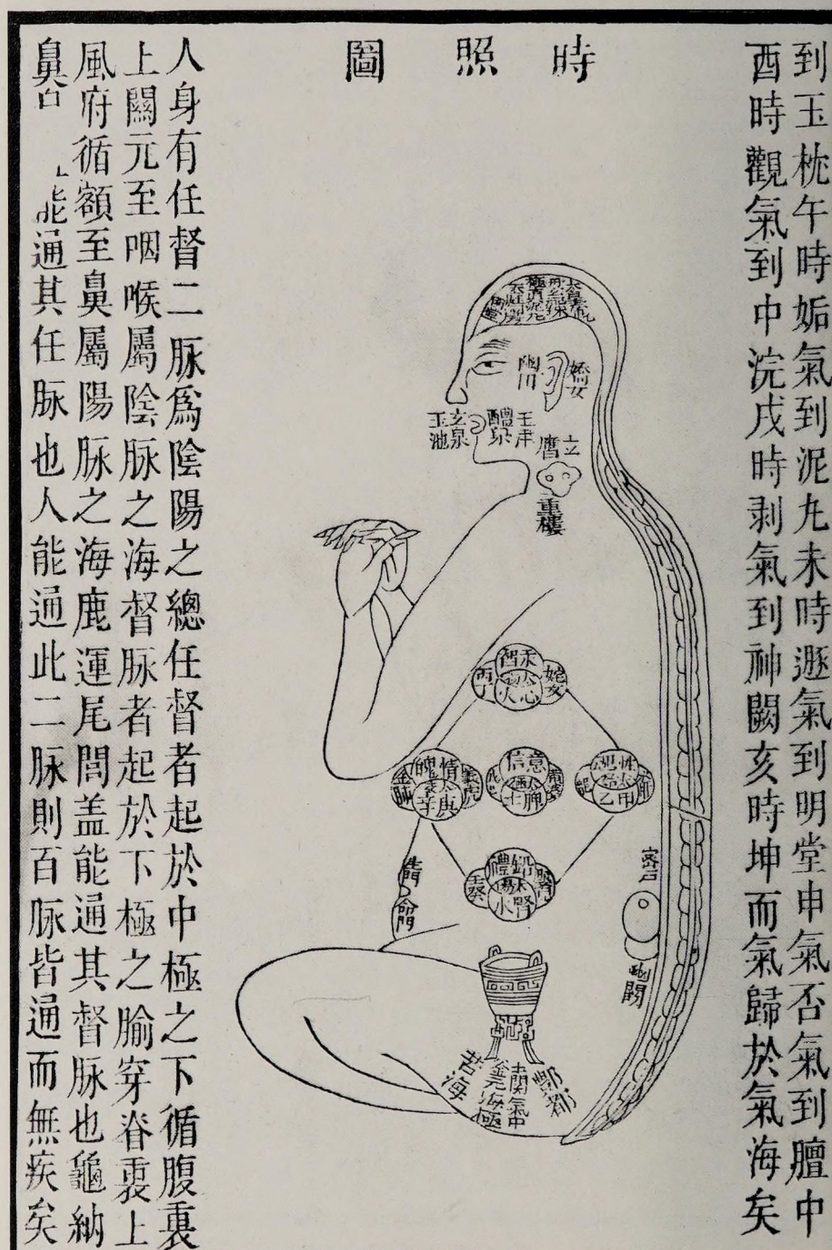
The Taoist Sage rises to Heaven in Broad Daylight. Engraving to the Hsing-ming-kuei-chih, *Handbook of Internal Alchemy. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

immortal substance, which is nothing less than the pure *Yang*. So the object is to cultivate the *Yang* element in contrast to the *Yin*, which is of an earthly nature. Instead of accepting destiny without question one must nourish one's own vital principles by adding to them those of others. Behind the apparent pleasure of the bed lies the implacable war between the sexes; the man lacking in prudence, who falls into the pursuit of lewdness, is allowing his vital forces to escape and to be gathered up by his adversary. Men and women join battle with equal force, each having specific advantages. The body being a microcosm, *Yin* and *Yang* are found distributed among the different organs, without distinction of sex. Clearly the *Yang* element is more abundant in the male. But the female, finding herself in a passive position in relation to the male, has the advantage of possessing that sweet power which, in Taoist theory, finishes by gaining the upper hand.

Procedures for nourishing *Yang* at the expense of *Yin* through sexual union are based on what is known as 'internal alchemy'. This is a physiological magic; it is also black magic. Heresy has partly repudiated these practices on moral grounds; it is an unworthy act to exploit the ignorance of virgin girls in order to extract the sap of their youth. As for the woman who feeds on a man's vital force, she becomes a vampire in popular thought : she is a vixen or ghoul who, behind the mask of female beauty, seduces men and steals their essence. Another reason why these practices have been rejected as erroneous is their evident inefficiency. Like alchemy, medicine, gymnastics and other physical activities, these practices, despite their traditional prestige, could not withstand the emancipation of Chinese thought (for which Buddhism was in no small way responsible). After the Middle Ages most of these processes were raised to the spiritual plane, either as part of the liturgy or of the mental discipline of meditation. Man was created in the universal image, and since the body is a world in itself, why not try to perfect the union of



Anatomical Chart of the Body. Engraving to the Hsing-ming-kuei-chih, *Handbook of Internal Alchemy. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*



Anatomical Chart of the Body. Engraving to the Hsing-ming-kuei-chih, *Handbook of Internal Alchemy. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

Transmutation of the Elixir. Engraving to the Hsing-ming-kuei-chih, *Handbook of Internal Alchemy. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

Ts'ung. *Jade. Female ritual receptacle, mounted in an alchemical vase. 17th century. Nicolas Landau collection, Paris.* ▸

Wine-jar in the shape of a Shou *character, the symbol of longevity. Green and yellow enamel on biscuit. K'ang-hsi period (1662-1722). Yves Mallié collection, Paris.*

antithetical forces within the body itself ? Why look elsewhere for the salvation present in one's own body ? This profoundly Taoist reasoning is at the base of practices which can be described in a general way as ecstatic meditation of an erotic nature. The importance ascribed to these practices since that time is evident, if one glances through the hundreds of books of Taoist poetry inspired by them. Composed in allegorical terms, sometimes obscure and unintelligible to the uninitiated, these poems are scarcely known at all outside Taoist circles.

1. The Science of the Body

The manuals on *The Arts of the Bedchamber* claim to date from classical antiquity, but, in fact, they came much later, and we should now date them as towards the beginning of the Christian era. The Han empire witnessed the flowering of the sciences and protosciences of China : medicine, pharmacy, mathematics and so on. *The Arts of the Bedchamber* arise from treatises on sexual hygiene, and take their place between medicine proper and the pseudo-scientific Taoist practices, which aimed to prolong life and attain immortality. The bibliographical chapter of *The History of Han* (the first catalogue of Chinese books) lists eight works on these techniques—nearly all attributed to emperors of antiquity or their ministers. These writings have completely disappeared and only fragments remain. They are common sense recipes expressed in a naïve, often crude way. The object is to obtain the greatest mutual pleasure and for the longest time, this being a guarantee of longevity. The character *Shuang-hsi*, a symbol of desire in popular art, well translates this state of mind. It is an ideogram formed of the two characters *hsi* placed together in such a way as to invoke the *Shou*, character of longevity. Two characters for joy coupled together equal longevity. The ideogram is written in red whenever there is a

marriage and reflects the idea of *The Arts of the Bedchamber* : to make love is a solemn thing, a joyful necessity. One of the early manuals runs :

'The Yellow Emperor (a mythical emperor from the dawn of Chinese civilization) asked the Lady Bright (*Su-niu*, the goddess who guards the secrets of longevity): "If I chose to do without sexual relationships for a long time what effect would it have ?" The Lady Bright answered: "Very bad. Heaven and Earth have alternating movements and *Yin* and *Yang* overflow and act one upon the other. Man must imitate them and follow the order of nature. If you refuse to copulate your vital forces will stagnate and *Yin* and *Yang* will be frustrated." How then should one restore it ? . . . "If your Stalk of Jade (penis) is not used, sex dies . . . that is why it must be regularly exercized." ' (*Su-niu-ching*.) Sex is indispensable to man but he must also know how to conduct himself, for ignorance of the principles is dangerous.

The Yellow Emperor asked the Lady Bright: 'My vital forces are not in harmony, I am melancholy and fearful. What should I do ?' The Lady Bright replied: "All human decrepitude arises from the evil caused by relationships between *Yin* and *Yang*. The woman who scores over a man is like water (*Yin* element) extinguishing the fire (*Yang* element). But if you know how to proceed, love becomes a crucible wherein the essences mingle and are nourishing. Therefore you must learn the methods of *Yin* and *Yang* to know all the delights. Ignore them and you will soon die; your pleasures will lead to disaster; do not forget." ' (*Su-niu-ching*).

Legend relates that once there lived a great master of the sexual arts, a sage called P'eng-tsu. His knowledge enabled him to live to an advanced age. Popular tradition has it that he died when over eight hundred years old and became one of the assistants to the God of Longevity. He was supposed to have had nineteen wives and nine hundred concubines, for his philosophy held nothing to be worse than possessing only one woman :

Natural stone shaped like a mountain, inspiration for Taoist ecstatic excursions. J. M. Beurdeley collection, Paris.

Union of Yin *and* Yang *in a* hu-lu, *symbol of the enclosed world of paradise. Engraving from the novel* Su Wo P'ien *(The Moon Lady). Published about 1610. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.*

'The Yellow Emperor had twelve hundred women and became immortal. The ordinary man has only one and ruins his life. To know or not to know, all the difference is there!' Through the intercession of a favourite the Yellow Emperor interrogates P'eng-tsu, who replies : 'It is possible to prolong life by absorbing drugs, but if one ignores sexual methods, drugs are useless. Male and female are complementary, as Heaven and Earth, and sex between them is a harmonious Way (*Tao*). That is why they are eternal (allusion to the *Tao-tê-ching VII*). Hence human beings if they observe the ways of union between *Yin* and *Yang* will obtain the secret of immortality.' Then the favourite asked: 'What is the method ?' P'eng-tsu replied: 'It is very simple. The essential thing is to couple with a large number of young women, but with only a single emission. That makes the body light and free from disease'.

To augment the number of sexual unions and to make the pleasure last are the main objects of *The Arts of the Bedchamber*. P'eng-tsu explains the efficacy of his method :

The favourite asked : 'The orgasm is considered to be the highest pitch of sexual pleasure. Now you say one must avoid an emission. Where then is the pleasure ?' P'eng-tsu replied: 'When the quintessence (the sperm) is emitted the body feels tired, the ears buzz, the eyelids close, the throat is dry, one's limbs are relaxed; although one's pleasure is intense for a moment, in the end it is a pleasure no longer. But if one makes love without an emission, one has abundant strength, the body is relaxed and all the senses are alert. The calmer you are the greater the delight. One can never have enough : how can that not be called a pleasure ?'

The Yellow Emperor asked : 'Is it good to practice sexual union with restraint ?' The Lady Bright replied : 'When a healthy man meets an attractive woman, they should be of good humour and be both in a suitable frame of mind : one should begin gently, penetrating only a little and moving slowly, with-

drawing and entering again. The aim is to satisfy the woman while the man retains his vigour without fatigue. There is no other way'.

The Yellow Emperor asked the Lady Mystery (companion to the Lady Bright, and the purveyor of even darker secrets) : 'Now that I have listened to the sexual methods of the Lady Bright I know how to proceed. I would like to submit to you what I have learned to complete the method'.

The Lady Mystery replied : 'The evolution of Heaven and Earth can only continue by the interaction of *Yin* and *Yang*. *Yang* is worn down by *Yin*, and *Yin* grows through the influence of *Yang*. Now one, now the other (allusion to *I-ching*), these forces are mutually dependent. That is the reason when a man's member grows hard a woman is moved and spreads her legs. The two forces exchange their essence and the liquid fruits flow between them.

'Delight is the result of perfect harmony between *Yin* and *Yang*. The best results are obtained thus : When you want to make love first lay the woman flat on her back. She must bend her legs and the man enters between. He kisses the woman on the mouth and softly plays with her tongue. Then taking his Jade Stalk in his hand he knocks at the door, left, right and on all sides. After a while he gently enters, when the Jade Stalk is firm and large it reaches for an inch and a half; if small and weak only an inch. He should not move, but after a moment withdraw gently and enter again. This will drive away all disease. Do not ejaculate at random. When the Jade Stalk enters the Precious Doorway it straightway becomes warm. That incites the woman to move her body and to thrust her hips towards the man. Only then should one thrust deeper. In that way male and female maladies will all be dispelled.

'Penetrate between the Lute Strings (*Labia minora*), but not deeply. When one has reached three and half inches, close the mouth and go deeper : once, twice, thrice, four times, five, six, seven, eight, nine, then deeper still to the Fairy Cave (the neck of the uterus), and then move from side to side. Mouth to mouth, breathing the other's breath. Nine times nine, that is the best method and the way it should be done.'

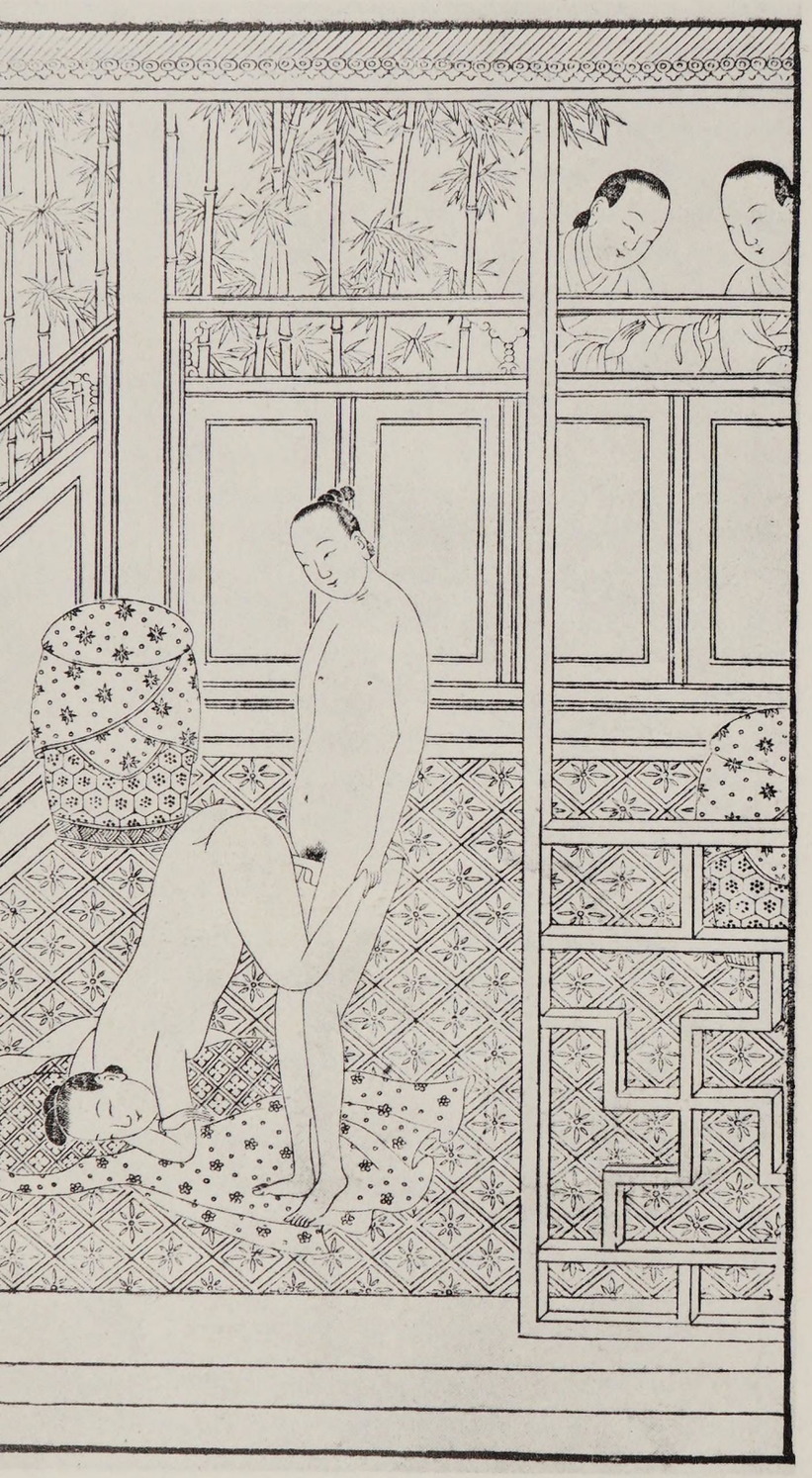
'Nine times weakly, and once to great depth' is still one of the most widespread of erotic practices. The remarkable thing about all this is that affection between man and woman is not even mentioned. To make love is, above all, as the Lady Innocent says to the Yellow Emperor, 'an excellent gymnastic exercise', which enlivens the humours of the body and dispels illness. There is no thought for the other at all.

On the other hand, *The Arts of the Bedchamber* discusses the idea of the battle of the sexes which plays an important part in Taoist practice proper. The Lady Bright : 'When coupling you should consider your opponent (*ti-jên*) as a cheap clay pot, whereas you are a precious piece. When you feel the seeds near, then withdraw. Sleeping with a woman is like riding a galloping horse with rotten reins, like walking on the edge of a deep precipice spiked with swords and being frightened of falling. Spare your seeds, to lengthen your life'.

There are precise rules about the frequency of emissions. A well-grown boy of fourteen may have two daily. A weakling of the same age, only one. As age increases the number diminishes. For a healthy man the rule is : twenty years, twice a day; thirty years, once a day; forty years, once every three days; fifty years, once every five days; sixty years, once every ten days; seventy years, once every month. There are also other embargos to be observed in connection with the calendar, the weather and one's physical condition.

Far from being a source of embarrassment these different rules have a sedative effect especially where anxiety most easily arises. And anxiety, like every agitation of the mind, is very bad for health. A well-regulated sexual life brings happiness, and no one, not even the very old, should abstain completely.

The favourite asked P'eng-tsu : 'Should a man of



Su Wo initiates Young Wu San-ssû into Delights. Engraving from the novel Su Wo P'ien *(The Moon Lady). Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.*

sixty withhold his seed and remain alone or not?' P'eng-tsu replied: 'No, the man should not be without a woman, because if so he becomes agitated; then his mind tires and that in turn brings a diminution of life. If the mind is well-balanced one does not worry any more. But such perfection is only found in one in ten thousand. It is difficult to retain the seed by force. It will be followed by haemorrhage, urinary troubles and an attack of the disease called demonic fornication (*succubat*)'. P'eng-tsu expounds elsewhere on this question.

'"Demonic fornication" happens when there is no union between *Yin* and *Yang*, and a man is assailed by great desire. Then demons, in the guise of humans, make you copulate. And this traffic is far more exciting than with ordinary mortals: in the end it becomes a shameful passion which one tries to hide because one dare not admit it, though at the same time enjoying it. Finally it kills you and you die alone without anyone else knowing. This is the cure: the man must sleep with a woman continuously —day and night—without an emission. Do not stop for a moment. In this way even serious cases are cured within seven days. If the man grows tired, he should simply insert his member very deeply and be still. That too is a good method. If you cannot cure it you will die after a few years.'

The Arts of the Bedchamber can effect a real cure for many kinds of ailments. Here are some of the more usual:

'To cure intestinal trouble: the woman should lie on her side and cross her legs. The man places himself across her and enters from behind. He repeats nine movements four times. When that is done he must stop. It harmonises the breathing, and in women cures vaginal trouble. Do this four times a day for twenty days and the cure will be effected.'

'To improve circulation: lay the woman on her side. Bend her knee and spread her left thigh. The man leans over from behind, resting on his two arms,

One of a series of four paintings on a caul or oiled paper. It may originally have been part of a lantern hanging in a 'Flower Garden'. Late Yüan period (1280–1367). Charles Ratton collection, Paris.

Another in the same series. Dubosc collection, Paris.

Another in the same series. Charles Ratton collection, Paris.

Another in the same series. Dubosc collection, Paris.

and penetrates six times in series of nine. Then he must stop. That is very good for the circulation and cures women of frigidity. Do this six times a day for twenty days and the cure will be certain.'

'General tonic : the woman must lie on her back and bend her legs firmly over her stomach. The man lies beside her and attacks strongly, nine times nine movements. When the number is complete he stops. That makes the bones hard and dispels unpleasant vaginal smell. Do this nine times a day, and at the end of the nine days you will be cured.'

'For constipation : the man lies on his back with the woman seated astride him resting on her arms. She threads the Jade Stalk and both move. When the woman reaches her moment of joy they must stop. The man must not ejaculate. Do this nine times a day. At the end of ten days there will be a cure.'

2. *The Magic of the Body and Heterodox Practices*

Man is made in the image of the universe. His body is made up of diverse elements, some pure and subtle, of a celestial nature, the others crude and heavy, earthy in character. In the body the subtlest element is the transcendent spirit *Shen*, a word translated by the missionaries as god. The crude part however is found in the quintessence, *ch'ing*, a word which in the present texts often has the meaning of seminal or vaginal fluid. The art of cultivating life consists in trying to produce in oneself the germ of immortality by the combination of material and spiritual essences. That is what is called Internal Alchemy, the search for an immortal substance, not by drugs or ordinary alchemical means, but by distilling the humours produced in the bodily organs. Internal Alchemy demands a number of physiological practices; first and foremost respiratory exercises, then gymnastics, diet and sexual union. None of these exercises is useful alone, and each is closely linked with all the others.

One important aspect is the need to preserve all one's vital essences. The mind's strength must not be dissipated by idle thoughts arising from disordered desires, or wasted by the uncontrolled enjoyment of sex. 'Do not harass the mind or agitate the essence', said Chuang-tzu, a Taoist philosopher of the third century before Christ. This quietist attitude is one of the most important aspects of Non-action, *wu-wei*, the great theme of the Taoist text *Tao-tê-ching*. It is from this book that the Taoists take their fundamental sexual teaching. In chapter fifty-five, Lao-tzu compares the adept with a new-born child. The child acts without premeditation and does not wear itself out. Perhaps we may be permitted to quote here Wieger's translation which, although it is not absolutely literal, well expresses the sense of the chapter.

'He who has perfect virtue (without lewdness or anger) is like a small baby . . . the bones of a child are weak, his tendons are soft, but he grasps things strongly (as his spirit and his body hold strongly together). He has no knowledge of the creative act and therefore conserves his seminal fluid intact. He wails softly all day and his throat does not become sore, so perfect is his sense of peace. Peace endures; he who understands that is enlightened. Whereas any orgasm, especially lust and choler, wear one out. Hence virility (which man abuses) is followed by decrepitude . . .'

The theme of the new-born child is found again and again in Taoism. It is the image of the Way itself. It represents also the immortal being within us and must be begotten and nourished by internal alchemical techniques. To this end the vital forces should not only be preserved but increased so as to overcome the cycle of decrepitude and death.

Sexual practice has two simultaneous objectives : first it must nourish *Yang* to the detriment of *Yin*, so as to increase vitality; secondly, one must treasure and increase the quintessence (sperm) in order to transmute it by means of internal chemistry into spirit, *Shen*, capable of transcending matter. This

transformation is called 'returning the sperm', *huang-ch'ing*, by analogy with the expression 'returning the cinnabar', *huang-tan*, an essential alchemical formula in the preparation of the Elixir of Life.

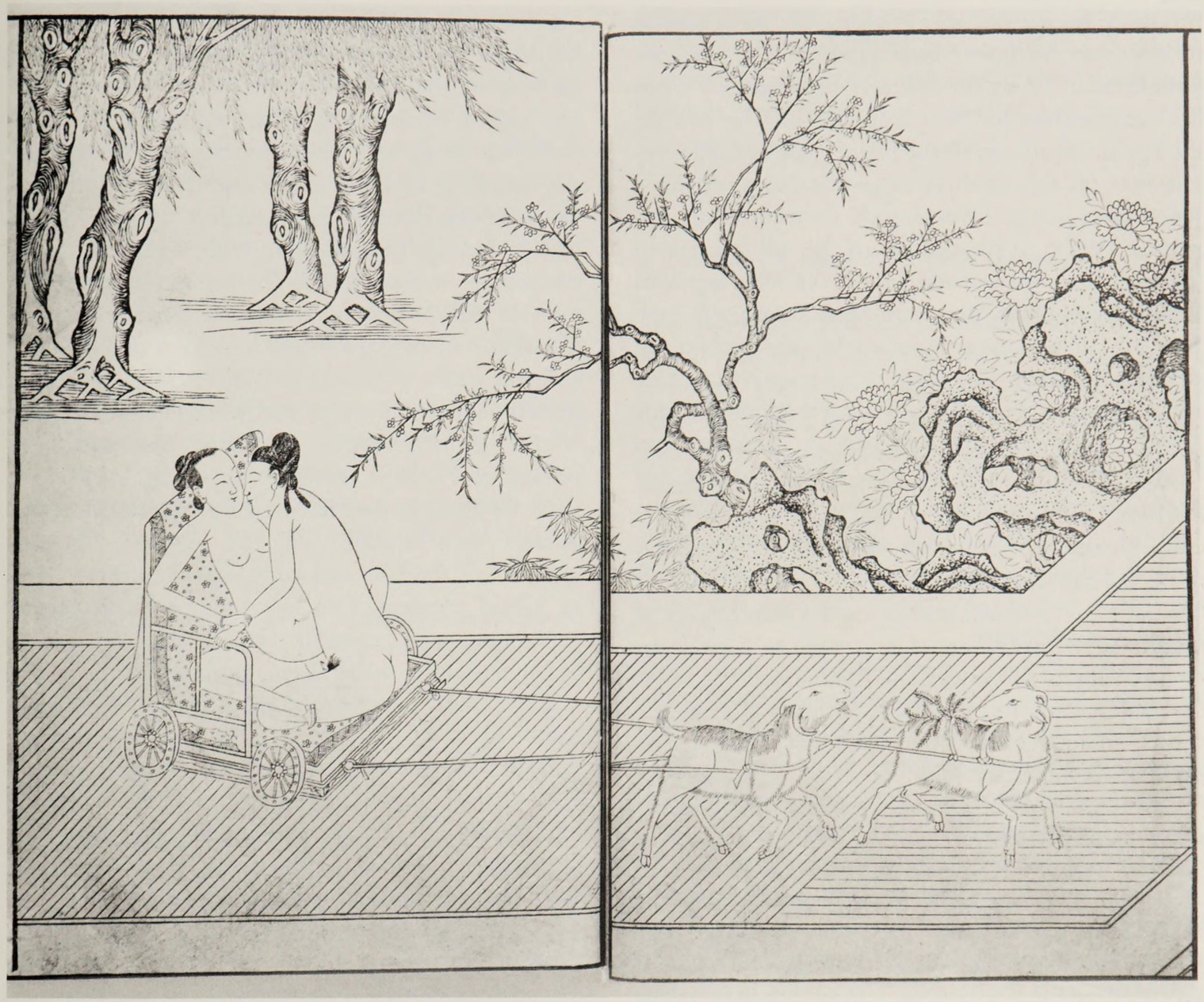
At first sight the Taoist practices seem to be in some ways a continuation of *The Arts of the Bedchamber*. Here, as in the former book, great stress is laid on the necessity to refrain from ejaculation and it forbids all unnatural acts. 'To return the sperm' demands control. It is now a question of a painful exercise and not a reciprocal and happy harmony. The priest Liu Ching rules : 'One must simply couple, with no special positions, and not emit . . . enter when your member is weak and when it becomes big withdraw. Pause for a moment between the different insertions. When one can make love in this way several dozen times a day, then one's life is spontaneously lengthened. The more women the better. The degree of excellence depends on changing women at least ten times'. The necessity of variety is confirmed by all authors : 'If one always sleeps with the same woman her vital forces grow weaker and weaker till she can no longer do a man much good. She simply extracts his force, and that makes him grow thin.'

The choice of women is equally important : 'A young woman should be taken when her breasts are not completely formed, but well-developed. She must have fine hair, small, quiet eyes, an oily skin and harmonious voice; her bones and joints should be delicate and be hidden by the flesh, the sexual parts and the armpits should be hairless but if they are not the hair should be fine'. Those to be avoided 'have rough hair, and a dirty face, rusty throat, pointed teeth, a loud voice, large mouth, long nose, and troubled eyes. Those with moustaches or beards, long pointed bones and yellow hair, or thin with long pubic hair . . .' The list is long, but the most important thing is age. 'If a man wants to get the very best he must take an uninitiated girl. He must sleep always with young girls : when you do that your skin becomes youthful like that of a girl. But they must not be too young either; the ideal is between fifteen and eighteen. Whatever happens, not above thirty; if she has had a baby it is a waste of time'.

It is essential that women do not know the procedure, for if men can enhance life by stealing the quintessence of a woman, the opposite is also true. Master Chung-huo says : 'Not only the male can enhance his life. So can woman. Hsi-wang-mu (The Queen Mother of the West), a goddess of antiquity, found the *Tao* (the Way) by feeding her feminine principle. As for women who know the methods, it is enough for a man to sleep once with such a person, he will fall ill with exhaustion. Such women have a radiant skin and have no need of cosmetics . . . Hsi wang-mu had no husband and she loved to sleep with young boys. But the common people must never learn why the Queen Mother did such things . . .'

The fear that the Queen Mother would have many followers is doubtless one reason why the texts are so silent about female methods. They simply say that one should not move or stir too much, lest the female quintessence be used up too quickly. And if a woman is present at the coupling of the male with another woman, she must be sure not to give way to jealousy because that would certainly produce harmful sexual desire. Women who practise this cult should abstain from eating cereals. This ban is widespread in Taoism of the Middle Ages because it was thought that the *Yin* element throve on cereals, hence the necessity to avoid it. A woman who has followed this régime and then draws the vital essence from a man can fast for nine days without becoming thin.

The masculine procedures are more carefully described. *The Book of the Immortals* says : 'This is the method of returning the sperm in order to strengthen the brain (the mind): when coupling, at the moment when the sperm becomes violently agitated and seeks to emerge, grasp the member quickly in the index and second fingers of the left hand, between the scrotum and the anus. Squeeze hard, at the same time



Su Wo rides round his Garden. Engraving from the novel Su Wo P'ien *(The Moon Lady). Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.*

breathing deeply out and grinding the teeth several dozen times (to help concentration). Do not hold your breath. By this action the sperm cannot get out but returns from the Jade Stalk and climbs through the spinal column up to the brain. Aspirant Immortals pass on this method to each other swearing a blood oath not to divulge such a secret lightly, on pain of death : in the process of the union between *Yin* and *Yang*, the seminal fluid is the most precious thing. If you know how to preserve it you will keep your life. You must take the vital force from women to fortify yourself. To attain this, first penetrate nine times gently, once deeply. Put your mouth against that of your opponent. When she breathes out breathe softly in, and by your thought direct this breath to your loins where it will fortify your sex. Do this three times. Then again nine times gently and once deeply, and so on till you have repeated it nine times, so that the cycle of *Yang* (nine is the male number) is completed.'

This is only one example of all the methods of extracting the breath and essential female force. The remarkable thing is its absolute selfishness. The woman is without exception considered to be an enemy. Sexual union does not lead to creation by the other. The semen must be withheld to fortify one's own body, and to create in it the immortal embryo. At all periods these practices have been considered unorthodox by the greater number of Taoists. They are continually denounced in the works of the great patriarchs under the heading 'Deviations, perversions and aberrant doctrines'. The first reason is probably moral : vampire-like exploitation of ignorant people is immoral. The second is their manifest inefficiency. And yet even today there are Taoists who specialize in this kind of thing. In a recent treatise on Taoist practices, Sun Ching-yang, a doctor, writes : 'When I was practising on the continent (he is writing in Hong Kong), to perfect my skill in diagnosis I studied in detail the Taoist books of all schools, without prejudice against the deviationist or unorthodox practices. Then, in 1935, I met a master of sexual technique. I visited him till August 1937, when, because of the Sino-Japanese war, he fled to the province of Ssu-ch'uan. This master had an extraordinarily advanced sexual technique. Usually he slept with eight women in one night, and his prowess was such that provided he could find enough women, he was capable of copulating with several dozen in one night. In the practice of these techniques many esoteric expressions are used : the woman is called 'Cauldron' or perhaps 'Tiger' (emblem of the West, a region which is specifically *Yin*) or 'Metal' (element corresponding equally to the West), or 'K'an' (one of the eight divinitary trigrams, describing the summit of *Yin* from which springs *Yang*.

As for designations reserved for oneself, there are phrases such as 'the Self,' or perhaps 'Dragon' (emblem of the East and complement to the Tiger), or 'Wood' (element of the East and opposite to Metal) or 'Li' (trigram *Yang*, antithesis of K'an). The breath of the woman is called 'Lead,' and the breath of the male 'Mercury' (alchemical principles). The man's member is called 'the Sword.' The first thing one has to learn is 'to forge the sword in the burning furnace'. For success one must know how to forge the sword into ecstasy. If one attains this stage one is capable of two things : the first is that the member can become large and erect, or shrink and lie down at will. It is called the male sword and the female sword. With many other witnesses, I saw a demonstration with my own eyes. Secondly if a young girl in a neighbouring room were to turn her mind to erotic thoughts, his masculine member would leap up in a single movement, and as soon as she thought of other things it would become small again. This kind of thing often happened in hotels, theatres or other places where the master went, and I realized that they were exceptional qualities. Then, after eight years he returned from Ssu-ch'uan. At forty-five he had grey hair and streaks of white in his moustache, and the top of his head was a little bald. When he spoke he had no

voice and he could never recover it. Despite his extraordinary capacities and the excellence of his sexual technique, his chest and his hair were in an even worse state than those of an ordinary man. Many people who do not practise the Taoist methods do not have grey hair even at sixty or seventy years. And as for losing the voice completely, that is really rare. Whence then this degeneration ? It is because whenever the member stands erect, even if, as in his case, there is no ejaculation, the primordial quintessence is partly lost. This daily loss caused the man to become old before his time. But if such a man ages so rapidly, then those who, without his talents, set themselves to follow the methods of the *Yin* and the *Yang*, must soon be dead. I have seen many examples of people who gave themselves up to such methods and the result was bad without exception.'

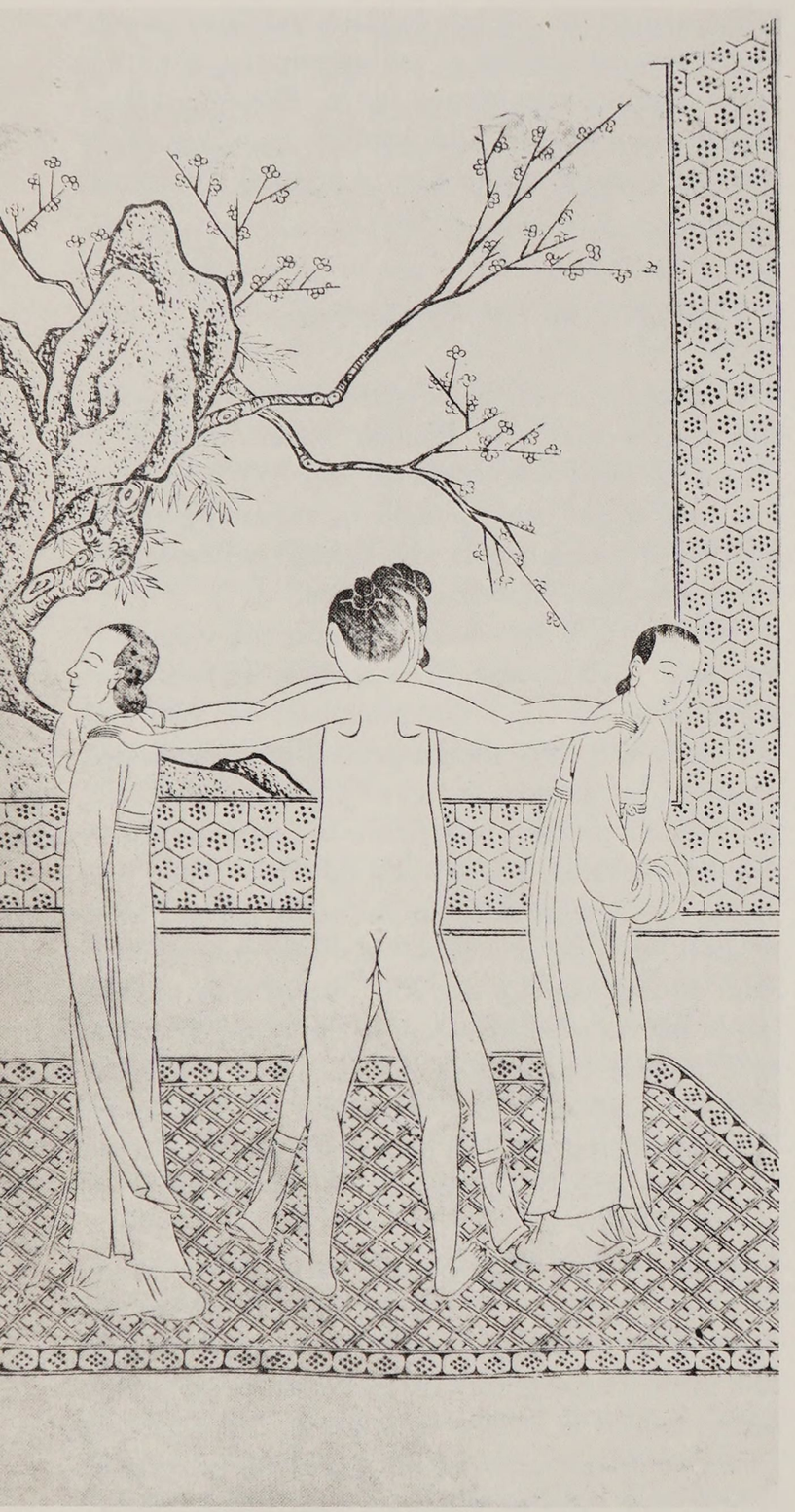
Such direct methods being found to be insufficient, the Taoists started to look elsewhere. Since the Sung, the most famous school of unorthodox practices was that of the Master of the Three Peaks. Several books attributed to this sect still exist. They are certainly late, and are transcribed in esoteric terms similar to those already quoted, which makes the translation awkward. One of the practices of this sect was to couple young men with young women; the secretions thus gathered were subsequently swallowed by the adept. The books which criticize these practices name several other morbid habits : there are those who eat their own sperm, proclaiming that it is a return to the Great Origin; those who masturbate and shut the outlet so that the seed will rise to the brain; and those who distil urine saying it is gold; those who gather the menstrual flow, calling it cinnabar; those who absorb the placenta, and call it the primordial clothing and so forth. These morbid practices speak for themselves and have never been widely accepted. They are only deviations from the great theme : the union of *Yin* and *Yang*, the alchemical transmutation of cinnabar, the embryo of immortality, and so on. These fundamental ideas despite all the misunderstandings and unorthodoxies remain at the centre of research and study. Once freed from hopeless empiricism and material practices, such theories were to nourish a great mystical movement.

3. The Magic of the Body, Orgiastic Ritual

The unorthodox practices described above have gained a certain notoriety. Popular stories often tell of tyrannical lords who gathered together harems so that they might gain strength by exploiting young girls, or of young heroes who succeed in beating the vampire-women at their own game.

However, it is as well to remember that Taoism is not only a movement of individual seekers after immortality who have the means and the leisure to devote themselves to these expensive and complicated practices, but is also, and even primarily, a religion which embraces the whole people of China and which through its ritual, temples and doctrine confers salvation on innumerable faithful souls. The Taoist religion, in as far as it is an organized system, dates from the first years of our era. But its rites, organization and doctrine are based for the most part on the customs and beliefs of antiquity. It is a popular religion transformed and organized. Hence the ancient feasts have nearly all been absorbed and adapted to the new religion of salvation. Sexual pleasures are no exception.

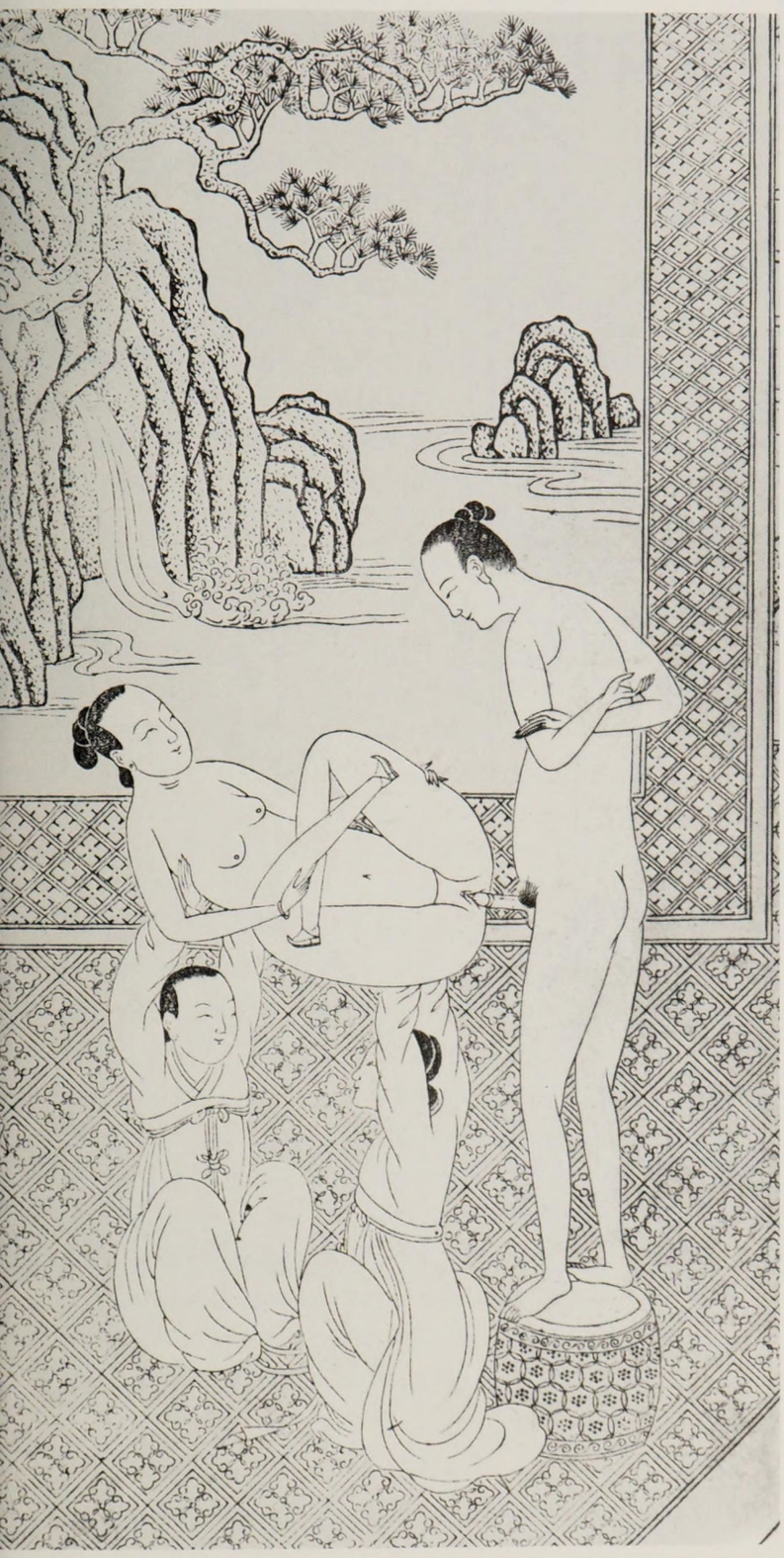
We know very little about popular Taoism in the first few centuries. This religion of the masses was new and revolutionary. It not only advocated salvation in the beyond, but also had ideas about earthly society which it wanted to improve. It organized collective rituals, when adepts confessed their sins in public, and expiated them by flagellation. Other rituals, and those which concern us here, were sexual ceremonies ordained in minute detail. All this provoked violent criticism from the civil servants,



Wu San-ssû, the Bamboo near the Altar. Engraving from the novel Su Wo P'ien *(The Moon Lady). Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.*

scholars and later the Buddhists. The sexual feasts of the Taoists, said one of their Buddhist critics, are nothing but orgies, 'where men and women copulate freely, just like animals'. Another, a convert to Taoism, gives the following description of the ritual, at which only the initiates were present. 'When I was twenty years old I liked the Taoist practices . . . First one was taught of "the Union of Boys and Girls" from the *Yellow Book*. The four eyes, the four nostrils, the two mouths, the two tongues and the four hands are joined so as to oppose *Yin* and *Yang* to one another . . . Husbands are told to exchange their wives : they put sensual pleasure above everything. The fathers and elder brothers stand before them and have lost the capacity of blushing . . . There are things which cannot be described in detail' (Trans. Henri Maspero). Of course such ceremonies have long since disappeared. Even at the time when this description was written they were shrouded in mystery. In the fifth and sixth centuries, reaction appeared, even from within the Taoist movement itself. Reformers changed the religion into an image of Buddhism and organized the priests in monastic communities. After that date the liturgy was changed and all the ancient feasts vanished. It is by mere chance that the Taoist Canon of the Ming, the only one still preserved, contains fragments of the liturgy of the *Yellow Book* quoted above. The text is entitled *Ceremony of the Yellow Book for Passing over to the Other Side.*

This *Yellow Book* was a talismanic text which revealed the secret structure of the universe, a kind of *mandala*. The whole ceremony was organized round the ideas of this cosmic plan. The participants had to be past their Taoist initiation and to be older than eighteen. It took place in a 'Pure Chamber,' a closed cell intended for meditation and the secret cults of the Taoist holy places. The object of the ceremony was to 'obtain life' by remission of sins, by the suppression of the name of the adept in the Register of the Dead in Heaven, and to encourage large families. The

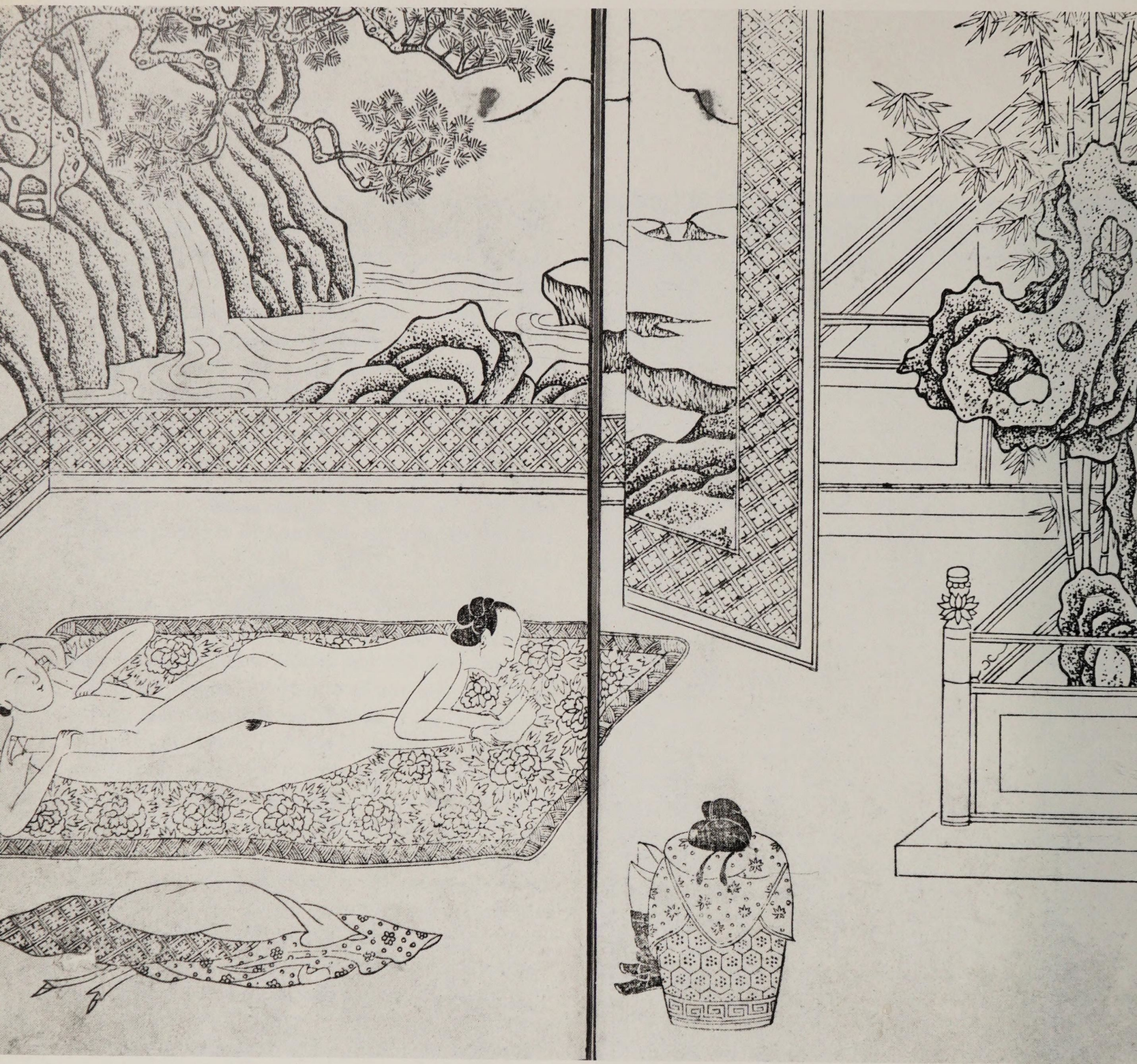


The Jade Stalk knocks at the Door. Engraving from the novel Su Wo P'ien *(The Moon Lady). Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.*

term 'pass to the other side' means that after the union of *Yin* and *Yang* one crosses the river of existence and can set foot in the immortal lands. This expression is still used of marriages today.

The ceremony began with a long preparation. The participants had to purify themselves by a retreat of several days before entering the 'Pure Chamber'. The séance was held under the direction of a master who presided over the whole long rite. It began with an invocation to the divine Taoist patriarchs, to whom the ceremony was announced and whose assistance was sought. Several mental exercises followed to prepare the mind and to evoke the cosmic divinities.

Then the couples stood up, face to face, and took hands, intertwining their fingers, the man's index between the index and middle finger of the woman. By prayer and meditation they evoked the divine messengers who carried the announcement of the ceremony to heaven. Then they concentrated on the gods of the body, the spirits of the season, and the day and hour when the ceremony took place, and the priest pronounced a long invocation. This done the couples separated, and each one singly meditated upon the erotic gestures and attitudes prescribed. Every new phase was followed by an invocation and a prayer. Finally the master ordered the faithful to undress and to let fall their hair. Couple by couple they began a long, slow dance. At first standing, then seated and finally lying down, men and women executed a large number of complicated movements which are minutely described. Every position, every gesture had its symbolic meaning and its own orientation. Every step the man takes is imitated by the woman, as in a mirror. If the man lifts his left arm or leg she raises her right arm or leg and so on. Slowly they go through the different phases corresponding to the different stations fixed in the 'Pure Chamber', executing a cosmic dance, clinging close to one another so as to oppose exactly the different parts of the body. Little by little the movements



Su Wo and Wu San-ssû practise the Arts of the Bedchamber. Engraving from the novel Su Wo P'ien *(The Moon Lady). Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.*

accelerate : 'I want to shake Heaven and Earth' the prayer runs. The couples, lying down, still hold each other by the hand. They roll one on top of the other, touching each one on the head, the breast and the sex. Each movement is accompanied by breathing exercises. Then it is the man's turn to carry out a series of movements called 'to guide oneself by the hand'. He places his left hand beside her left breast and caresses her body three times downwards towards the leg, saying at the same time, 'The Supreme Being of the Left'. He does the same on the right side, saying 'The Mysterious Old Man of the Right'. Then, with his left hand he caresses the body from the throat to the sex, saying : 'Oh Supreme Being.' Then he repeats the movement with the right hand. The right hand then touches her sex three times. He places his hand on the Door of Life (the *genitalia*) and opens the Golden Portal (the *vulva*). With the right hand he holds the Jade Flute (the penis) and lays it on the Door of Life. With the left hand he touches her head while with the right he caresses the Door of Life in a downward movement and from left to right, saying : 'Water flows towards the east (male side), the clouds return to the west (female side), *Yin* nourishes the forces of *Yang*, how subtle is this mysterious essence! This liquid will rise to the Magisterial Gate (the brain).' Then the man pronounces the following prayer : 'The Holy Boy holds the way; the Daughter of Jade opens the door to him; join our essence, may *Yin* give up to me her vital force.' The woman then also prays : 'From *Yin* and *Yang* comes creation, the ten thousand beings are born in quantity. The Heaven (male) covers and the Earth (female) supports. I would fill my body with your strength.'

4. The Mystique of the Body, the Divine Marriage

More than a hundred years after the fall of the Han we encounter for the first time a great movement declaring that the texts and traditional manuals on the subject of longevity should be understood not in a literal sense, but figuratively and symbolically. 'The drugs which confer immortality are to be found in your heart' is a precept of one book and characteristic of the new ideas. This movement, as far as we know, was started by a sect in Central China at the end of the fourth century. It was a spiritualist sect, the first of a kind which is widespread today.

At the meetings of this school of Mao-Shan, the gods used automatic writing, or appeared in visions in the séances. Some of the records of the revelations have been preserved. Among other things, they describe how Yang-hsi, the chief medium of the sect, had an important vision one autumn night in the year 365. On that occasion he received the visit of an important goddess, the Lady Tzu-wei, who introduced to Yang-hsi one of the young ladies of her court. Here is Yang-hsi's description of the woman.

'She was wearing a brocade tunic of a transparent red and green, with sparkling embroidery. Round her waist was an emerald coloured belt to which small green and yellow bells were attached, each one different. On the left side a jade pendant hung down like those here on earth, but smaller. All her clothes shone brilliantly so that they lit the room, just like a piece of mica shining in the sun. Her lavish hair, beautifully arranged over her temples was too pretty to be described. She wore a chignon on the top of her head while the rest of her hair fell to below her waist. She was wearing golden rings and bracelets of pearls. Two servants attended her, one dressed in red and carrying at her waist a small box for her seal and a brocade bag in her hand. These girls seemed to be about seventeen or eighteen. They were wearing beautiful jewels. The young goddess, like her servants, had a radiant face, luminous as jade, and she emanated a fragrant perfume like an exotic incense'.

The goddesses took their places. The great goddess introduces the newcomer. She is called 'Divine Concubine.' The Lady Tzu-wei then asks Yang-hsi

The Fairy Yü Niu, Daughter of Jade. Painting by Ch'ien Hsüan (1235–90). British Museum, London.

whether he has ever seen such a beautiful person before, and when he respectfully replies that the heavenly beings are so great and refined that there is nothing to compare them with, the Lady bursts out laughing and says : 'And how do you find her then ?' Yang-hsi is covered with confusion and does not know how to respond.

Then the goddesses share with the human the marvellous fruit they have brought, and during this banquet they spend their time composing poems. Immediately afterwards the young goddess asks Yang-hsi for his birth date. To the Chinese reader everything is now clear. The intention of Lady Tzu-wei is to give the hand of her young companion in marriage to Yang-hsi. This is indeed what takes place the next morning. As soon as the union is concluded between the mortal man and the fairy, attended by many divinities descended from heaven for the occasion, she takes Yang-hsi's hand and says to him : 'Together we will mount the quadriga and traverse the Jade heaven . . . and we shall gather the rosy fruit in the divine orchard'.

Yang-hsi's marriage with a goddess is more than a spiritualist event. For the Taoists in his sect, this union marks the accession of Yang-hsi to the ranks of the divine Immortals, and the moment of his salvation. This hierogamy opens paradise to the mortal spouse. The union of *Yin* and *Yang* overcomes the separation between heaven and earth. The story of Yang-hsi is only one example of many other similar ones. The Mao-Shan sect recognizes a large number of patriarchs, more or less historical personages. It invented, obviously with the aid of the mediums, a great number of legends on this subject. The banquet and the divine marriage are always the central elements of the story.

The Mao-Shan sect had considerable success and became one of the important movements of Taoism during the following centuries. Its influence was felt everywhere and originated widespread legends. Thus these charming fairy stories inspired a whole literary *genre* of chivalrous stories, their central subject was always the encounter of a young mortal with one or several fairies. This style was very popular in the T'ang dynasty and produced certain works of an erotic character. The influence of Mao-Shan is also encountered in the theatre and in poetry. The famous story of the Emperor Ming-huang and his favourite, Yang Kuei-fei (who was originally a Taoist priestess), is much coloured by it.

It would lead us too far to follow this evolution in detail, as it goes beyond true Taoism. Our interest here is to see how the collections of lore are translated into religious practice. Once again documents are rare which is not surprising in the circumstances. The Taoist canon has a very small section entitled : *Secret formulae of the Book of the Goddess of the Shining Chamber, which comes from the sect of Mao-Shan.* Its terminology is very obscure but fortunately there is an early commentary which explains many of the difficulties. The text opens with an exhortation to the reader not to divulge the contents to non-initiates. This is followed by a description of the Method of the Secret Goddess :

'First (by means of meditation) fix the sun or the moon (sun for day, moon for night) and remember that the adept is in an entirely closed chamber; let the rays enter through your mouth . . . you will see a young girl. She is seated in a reverential attitude, her hands joined . . . she is beautiful, her skin shines like jade. On her head she wears a flower decoration of fragrant purple flowers (*fu-jung*). She is wearing a sleeveless jacket of red brocade, a wide cinnabar-coloured skirt with a green belt (the clothes of a married woman). She stood just before my mouth and kneeling said : 'I am your beloved, Daughter of Jade of the cinnabar clouds, of the supreme mystery of the ultimate mysteries. I am called *Ch'an-hsüan* (the entwined embrace) and my pet name is Secret Fairy.' Then she opened her mouth and exhaled a scarlet breath (*Yang* colour). This breath touched my mouth and I breathed it in. Still breathing I

The Immortal, Lu T'ung-p'in, riding a Chimera. Porcelain of the Ch'ien-lung period (1736–96). Private collection, Paris.

contemplated the girl. We continued thus for nine times ten . . . and by thought I guided that breath into my body right to the Door of Destiny (sex).'

Here then, transposed onto the plane of ecstatic meditation, is the whole of the Taoist erotic procedure, a technique of the mind which lies at the base of one of the great religious and literary movements of China.

5. *The Libido of the Monks*

It was really after the sixth century that the Taoist communities began to organize themselves in monasteries on the lines of the Buddhists. Thenceforward the Taoist movement was entirely in the hands of monks. It was only in isolated country districts that a married secular clergy was able to exist. Often, however, this monastic organization seems to have been a practical solution, an adaptation to the demands of the time in religious matters.

Marriage was forbidden as were all forms of lewdness, but sexual union occupied far too important a place in the philosophy to be condemned. The historical texts speak openly of monks who frequented the brothels. However, since the orgasm was considered to be harmful, normal sexual relations were out of the question. So in the great provincial cities there were courtesans who specialized in the Taoist erotic techniques. But it must be said at once that they must have attracted mainly a clientele of amateurs and not men of true religion. For, after the end of the T'ang dynasty, a religious discipline grew up which was to dominate all the others and which gave up all material practices. This technique was based on sexual union, but this only took place inside the body of the adept, in the solitude of the Meditation Chamber.

This new procedure is based on the ancient texts which are now interpreted afresh. The human body, according to this theory of internal alchemy, has two poles, the heart, and the loins and sexual parts. The heart corresponds to fire and *Yang*, the loins to water and *Yin*. There was nothing new here. But the monks believed that the heart is not merely *Yang*, it marks the summit of *Yang*, that is the moment when, the cycle having reached its height, it begins its decline and the apogee of *Yang* changes into the rising

Sleeping Hermit. Leaf of an album painted on silk. Sung style (960–1279) Bahr collection. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Yin; it is the growing *Yin*, in the midst of *Yang* diminishing. The heart is not therefore *Yang*, but is essentially *Yin*, and the spirit of the heart is consequently represented by a young girl. Similarly the lower parts are the seat of increasing *Yang* in the midst of *Yin*, and this theory is personified by making it the dwelling of a divine male child. The rest is clear : the hierogamy, the union on which salvation and immortality depend, consists in marrying the girl of the heart with the young man in the loins. This allegory is pushed even further by imagining, an inch and a half below the navel, the seat of the Go-Between

(without whose aid no marriage can take place in China) called the Good Wife Yellow (element of earth). She has the task of bringing lovers together. The little boy has to rise to the residence of the girl, the heart, called the Red Residence, as it is the nuptial chamber. From this union will be born an embryonic immortal who, as he grows, replaces gradually the mortal frame.

Thus we come to the Sung period. Like Zen *(ch'an)* Buddhism of the period, Taoism had become incomprehensible from the complicated serious texts. The new mystique was interpreted by poems and anecdotes. The most famous and interesting person of this time is Lu T'ung-p'in. All the modern schools are based on his teaching. Many anecdotes spring from this semi-historical saint. He is described variously as a young literary man, a mad beggar, as a licentious young man patronizing the houses of joy, and as a merry fellow earning his living as a barber. He is an eccentric widely found in modern folklore. Many poems are attributed to him, and he is the hero of several books and plays. But the Taoist books have their own traditions about Lu T'ung-p'in, and while they describe him as a joyful person they transmit in anecdotes about him all the teachings of the Sage.

'At Lo-yang there is a courtesan called Yang Liu. She was reputed to be the most beautiful person in the whole town. A Taoist monk used to go to the house. He often gave her beautiful presents, but he never slept with her. One night when she was drunk she tried to seduce him. The monk said to her: "The increasing *Yin* and *Yang* in my body couple together. They make love like man and woman, and I am already pregnant; I shall soon give birth to a child : how could I then still make love with you ? And what is more, permit me to tell you that to make love internally is infinitely more pleasurable than externally."' With these words, the monk, none other than Lu T'ung-p'in, disappeared.

This is the early ideal of the Perfect State, the perfection of vital forces seen again here on the spiritual plane and pushed to its ultimate conclusion. The Taoist frees himself from dependence of any kind; alimentary, physical and now sexual. He has no need of others, for he himself, can beget children. Without any form of attachment, he is entirely free.

The allegory used by this mystical speculation tries to disconcert and shock us so as to make a deeper impression. This is an aspect found mainly in Taoist poetry :

'The White Lady is just sixteen, she admires the Jade tint of her body;
But she sighs as she watches the days passing with No sign of the Go-Between.
She is alone morning and evening;
She spends her nights alone.
Her father and mother do not understand and tease her By speaking of Chang the Third, or Li the Fourth.
And although they often talk of it, nothing happens.
But one day the Good Woman Yellow appears
Knocking at the door;
She comes to speak of the young Golden Lord,
How charming he is and well set-up.
So the two horoscopes are placed before
Old Master Wang.
Master Wang decides that it would make a good Marriage.
Everything is perfect he said, nothing wrong;
They are made for one another, as the sky the earth.
Fate predisposes a happy marriage for them.
Today their children fill the kingdom.
But at that time it needed the efforts of the Good Woman Yellow;
Otherwise how could *Yin* and *Yang* have been United ?'

All of this is only allegory and yet it is not an infantile game. The fantasies arising from meditation equal reality. It is a characteristic trait of all thought, and also of all the art of China. The scrolls, for example, which were originally painted by the Taoists allow the spectator to follow a mystic journey through a dream country, constructed according to

Punishment of Brigands and the Covetous. Popular religious painting. Kristofer Schipper collection.

Punishment of a Lascivious Woman. Popular religious painting. Kristofer Schipper collection.

the rules of the universe, and yet far more perfect than a real landscape. To visit the whole world without leaving one's room is a Taoist ideal of all times, and is also the foundation of all mystic phantasmagoria. A Taoist poet explains it as follows :

'Little Girl, Little Boy are only images.
The Good Woman Yellow, too, is only fantasy :
Climb the mountains, over cliffs, what a run around.
Within the walls of a room one can grasp all things.'

The delights of erotic meditation (adepts have their staff erect) are such that all other techniques are rejected right away. The poet just quoted says further :

'External practices try to transform everything by Action.
Internal alchemy is motionless; it broods,
Till the time comes.
The legless boy climbs the stairs
And refuses all deviation :
Some people follow the absurd doctrine of abuse,
Which teaches an alchemical method of witholding
The seed while debauching women.
They call that the Elixir of Life.
It is enough to make the Immortals in heaven
Die of laughter.'

Condemnation of external practices is often also extended to the female sex. The search for sublime love while retaining full control of oneself is allied to a sadistic misogyny in ordinary relationships. Popular illustrations of the Taoist hell are examples of this : a pretty little woman is bludgeoned by a mocking demon; she is supposed to be an adulteress. Elsewhere women are bound, cut in pieces and so on. Stripped of all responsibility, their feet bound, living in enclosed gynaecea and excommunicated from the Taoist hierarchy, they become nothing more than the personification of sex, abominable and perfidious creatures. A poem attributed to Lü Yen explains it very clearly :

'Beautiful is this maiden; her tender form gives
Promise of sweet womanhood,
But a two-edged sword lurks between her thighs,
Whereby destruction comes to foolish men.
No head falls to that sword : its work is done in secret,
Yet it drains the very marrow from men's bones.'

These are famous verses in China. Even more famous is the maxim of Lu T'ung-p'in, quoted at the beginning of the long erotic Ming novel, the *Chin P'ing Mei :*

'The door through which I was born
Is also the Gate of death'.

However, it would be wrong to lay these morbid and sadistic tendencies entirely at the door of modern Taoism. One must do justice to the mysticism of the monks by recognizing the intrinsic value of their system. All the verbosity and elaborate allegory conceals a profound and beautiful aim : to achieve harmony over the deep schism in man recognized by all civilizations—the opposition between spiritual and sexual love, the human division into different parts, above and below the belt.

The internal mystical marriage aims to lift sex above the level of the body, to realize the perfect union between matter and spirit. It is a philosophy of life, of the primordial force, which promises freedom through love.

K. S.

POEMS OF ANTIQUITY

Detail of a painting on silk entitled 'Editing the Classics'. Sung copy (960–1279) of a 6th-century original. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Painting in Chinese ink, signed Chao Shih-p'ung, 6th year of Ch'ung Chen (1634). Charles Ratton collection, Paris.

LIFT YOUR ROBE

If you love me and think only of me,
Lift your robe and ford the river Chen
To come and find me.
If you never think of me,
Are there not other men?
O most foolish of young men.
If you love me and think of me,
Lift your robe and ford the Wei.
If you never think of me,
Is it possible that there are no others?
O most foolish young fool!

Che-king (11th–6th B.C.)

POEMS OF THE HAN AND THE WEI

Green grows the grass beside the river,
The willows are bushy in the garden.
How charming and elegant is the fair radiance leaning
From the tall pavilion window.
Ravishing is her delicate pink skin
Look how she displays her fine white hands.
She was a dancing and singing girl in the bawdy-house,
But now she is the wife of a fickle man.
He wanders abroad and does not return.
A lonely bed is hard to bear.

Anonymous of the Han period
(206 B.C.–A.D. 220)

AFFIRMATION OF LOVE

As I come out of the Eastern gate and walk without aim
I happen to meet you.
I dream of living with you in a quiet place,
Of sharing your bed and serving you.
We have no secret trysting place beneath the mulberry tree,
Just two passers-by who fall in love.
I love your beautiful face,
And mine appeals to you.

How shall I express my fidelity?
I would love to give you a pair of golden bracelets.

How shall I express my eagerness?
With a pair of silver rings.

How shall I tell my love?
With a pair of shining pearl earrings.

How shall I express my sincerity?
With a perfumed bag behind the elbow.

How shall I express my willingness?
With a pair of bracelets.

How shall we bind our love?
With a carved belt of fine jade.

How shall we link our hearts?
With a pair of needles threaded on white cotton.

How shall we join our harmonious temper?
With a golden pin carved with figures.

How shall we console our separations?
By a gold-headed pin.

How to express our joy?
By a white silk skirt with three stripes.

How to express sorrow?
With a pair of white silk slips.

Where shall we meet?
On the east side of the mountain.

It is late, and still you have not come.
The east wind blows through my waistcoat;
I gaze into the distance, but cannot see you
My tears flow, so I stand up and wonder what to do.

Anonymous of the Wei period (220–264)

Young Women saying Farewell on a Terrace. Painting by Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City. ▸

Engraving from the novel Su Wo P'ien *(The Moon Lady). Published about 1610. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.*

SONGS TO THE MELODY OF 'TZU-YEH'

Last night I did not arrange my hair ;
My fine silken locks cover my shoulders.
They fall and curve over my lover's knees,
What part of my body is not charming?

Anonymous

When my 'joy' is sad, I too am afflicted,
When my lover smiles, I am happy.
Like a plant with a single leaf
But different roots.

Anonymous

I give my love a robe of green silk,
He gives me a jade hook.
My lover wants to grasp my heart with the crook.
With the robe I will envelop him.

Anonymous

In the woods spring flowers bloom ;
The birds sing sweetly.
The Spring wind belongs to lovers ;
It pierces my silken vest.

Anonymous

Detail from a painting by Chao Mêng-fu (1254-1322). British Museum, London.

When the sun sets I leave my house,
And I gaze upon you from afar.
I love your silken hair and beautiful face ;
A delicate perfume follows in your tread.

Anonymous

My scent comes from my purse,
I would never dare claim to be attractive.
Not disdaining human longing
Heaven ordained that we should meet.

Anonymous

Take pleasure in youth while yet you may
It quickly fades and old age waits.
If you think it is not so,
Look at the grass seared by the hoar-frost.

Anonymous

Autumn winds blow through the window
Lifting and billowing the silk curtains:
I raise my head to the brilliant moon
Confiding my thoughts to her beams:
May she transport them swifty to my lover far away !

Anonymous

(Poems of the Northern and Southern dynasties : 420–589)

ODE TO WINE

The Emperor Hsüan-tsung gives an Audience to Li T'ai-po. Ming period (1368–1644). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Wine of the grape ;
Golden goblets ;
A fifteen year old maiden of Wu comes riding on a pretty Pony.
She has painted black eyelids, and red satin shoes.
When she talks she stammers, but her songs are like honey.
At the great feast she slides into my arms.
What shall I do with you behind the hibiscus-red curtains ?

Li T'ai Po (701–762)

IN THE STYLE OF 'THE JADE TERRACE'

Last night the girdle of my skirt came loose unaided ;
The little red spider with long legs has gone this morning.
I must not forget my powders and creams ;
Probably my husband will come home.

Ch'üan Tê-yü (759–818)

THE MICA SCREEN

Through the mica screen beside his bed she appears
Unusually charming,
In the city of the Phoenix (the Capital) winter is ending,
The short night of spring is dangerous ;
Stupidly she has married an important official
Who wears the insignia of the golden tortoise ;
He is not attracted by her perfumed coverlet,
And gets up early to attend morning audiences at court.

Li Shang Yin (812–858)

SONG WRITTEN TO THE SOUTH OF THE BLUE RIVER

I am married to a merchant of the Great Lake,
His return is delayed day by day.
If I had known that the tides were regular
I would have married a sailor.

Li Yi (749–829)

Young Lady with a Servant and Parrot. Painting by Wang Chiu Cheng (9th century). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

DREAMING ON THE SOUTH OF THE BLUE RIVER

Now I am dressed and I lean
All alone against the window of the pavilion
Looking out over the river ;
Hundreds of sails go past,
But they do not bring my beloved.
The setting sun caresses, while the waters flow
Everlastingly away ;
When I see the white cranes on the islet
My heart is sad.

Wen T'ing-yün (812–870)

TO THE MELODY OF 'WASHING BESIDE A STREAM'

When we meet we must not talk of things
Which will make us weep.
After we have enjoyed our wine
Let us seek voluptuous joy once more.
Behind the phoenix screen we will share our golden couch
And the pillow embroidered with ducks.
Among all the scents of musk and orchid I find your sweet
Breath ;
In the rich silken tent I gaze on your delicate flesh,
And do you still complain that I am not ardent ?

Ou-yang Ch'iung (896–971)

Young Lady in a Pavilion by a Lake. Painting by Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). British Museum, London.

TO THE MELODY OF 'BARBARIAN BODHISATTVAS'

The flowers gleam in the light of the misty moon,
It is a good night for meeting one's lover ;
She walks barefoot softly
Over the scented moss,
Holding her gold brocade shoes in her hand.
Her lover waits at the end of the painted chamber ;
She leans against him quivering with joy.
Since it is so difficult for me to come out to meet you,
I will allow you to caress me as you will, my love.

Emperor Li Yü (937–978)

TO THE MELODY OF 'THE WATER CLOCK RINGING THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT'

The jade incense-burner exhales its perfume,
Red candles melt in tears,
Lighting the painted quarters of the women ;
I am sad when I think of autumn.
Black eyebrows fade, and misty hair flies in disorder,
The night is long ; coverlet and pillow are cold.
It rains till midnight on the stinkwood trees,
I would never have believed the pain of separation.
Every falling leaf crashes in my ears,
Sound upon sound,
The drops fall on the empty stairs till dawn breaks.

Wen T'ing-yün (812–870)

Young Beauty. Painting on silk by Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

THE STORY OF TS'UI YING-YING

The Letter. Unsigned painting of the 18th century. Musée Guimet, Paris.

There are certain works which have haunted the imagination of men over the centuries. Nearly all Europeans, for instance, are in some way influenced by the legend of Tristan and Isolde. In China the sentiment of love finds its most typical expression in the history of Ch'ang Sheng and Ying-ying, which was first written by the T'ang scholar, Yüan Ch'en (778–831).

Previously there had been only two types of love story : the first had as its heroine a witch who attracted a prince by her charms and led him to destruction. Thus the story of the beautiful Ta Chi who enticed the last Shang emperor to the worst kind of debauchery. He had constructed a lake of wine on the Deer Terrace and every kind of nude figure was hung from the trees which grew on the bank. This woman's greatest pleasure was to cause prisoners to be tied to a bronze column which would be made red-hot inside by fire, and then contemplate their suffering in company with her royal lover. Out of love for the beautiful Hsi-shih, sent by the kingdom of Yüeh, the king of Wu lost his throne and his life. This archetypal mistress who led a monarch and his dynasty to doom has her other side in the faithful wife and mother. Irregular love and violent passion were always considered by the Confucianists as a social calamity and the source of all evil, a conception so widespread that the popular description of a pretty girl was that her beauty was enough to overthrow cities and states.

The second type of story had as its theme the meeting between a fairy immortal and a scholar. In a society where intense passing desire was difficult to satisfy this theme became the *leitmotiv* of novels and stories. Often this fairy woman, appearing out of the unknown to visit the hero in his seclusion, is a fox, a sheep or the ghost of a woman of former times. She comes to breathe the vital essence of man and to feed on him.

Thus old Taoist ideas combined with Confucian morals. Outside marriage, an institution entirely ruled by the family, passion—or simply a passing meeting between a man and a woman—was considered as a magic, dangerous, even terrible experience. Stripped of her charm the woman appears as a frightful being, a decomposed skeleton from the grave, or an ancient serpent living in a cave. A simple amorous adventure became a union with horror, and it required a magician's exorcism to deliver the captive from this strange and illusory aberration.

This fundamental fear of woman is also found in the novel by Yüan Ch'en (778–831), almost certainly autobiographical and entitled *The Story of Ying-ying* or *The Meeting with a Transcendental Beauty*. The story, only five pages long, takes place about A.D. 800. Ch'ang, the hero, was a handsome man with a sweet temperament; he had learned how to control his internal fires, but more from timidity than strength of character. He never let himself go even among friends, and at twenty-five he still had not known a woman. To those who expressed surprise he explained that being a lover of beauty he had not yet found a woman who attained his ideal. But this response produced nothing but laughter and sarcasm.

One day Ch'ang went to P'u-chou in the province of Shansi. He stayed at a Buddhist temple several miles from the town. A widowed lady called Madam Ts'ui, to whom he was related through his mother, happened to be staying there.

Suddenly a mutiny broke out in the district. Now, Madam Ts'ui was very anxious about the property she was carrying, and Ch'ang, who knew one of the commanders of a military post nearby, arranged to have the temple guarded till the rebellion was over. In gratitude the lady invited him to a banquet and told her son and daughter to bow to the gentleman who had saved them. The daughter, Ying-ying, began by refusing, then finally allowed herself to be presented. But she arrived in the reception room dressed in her everyday clothes and without ornaments. Yet Ch'ang was captivated by her beauty, however, the looks he cast towards the young girl

Young Lady with a Fan. Painting by Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

seemed to produce nothing but dislike, and all his attempts to talk to her were in vain.

Sometimes Ch'ang would meet the servant-girl, Hung-niang, and one day he confided in her the passion he felt towards Ying-ying. Hung-niang ran away when she heard this, but the next day she approached him and advised him to ask to marry Ying-ying since he was related to her on the female side [it is the custom in China for a young man to choose his bride from his mother's family]. Ch'ang retorted that it would be necessary to have recourse to a go-between, and to perform a number of rites and wait for many months. Already, he said, the time separating dawn from night seemed interminable; he walked aimlessly, even forgetting to eat.

Hung-niang told him that her mistress was too virtuous to give in. But she suggested that a love poem might help, for she had a great love of poetry. Ch'ang then sent her a poem, to which Ying-ying replied thus:

'I wait for the moon to rise in the western parlour,
I welcome the breeze with my door ajar;
The shadow of a flower stirs and brushes the wall;
For a moment I thought it the shadow of a lover.'

Once night had fallen Ch'ang climbed up into the apricot tree and slipped into Ying-ying's pavilion. He woke the servant and asked her to go and find her mistress and soon she appeared. Ch'ang was overwhelmed, but Ying-ying, looking severe, reproached him, saying that he should not have sent such a wicked message through a low maid-servant. She added that there was no point in saving her from the licentious mutineers in order to subject her to his own base desires.

'How could I repel your advances?' she said. I would gladly have hidden your letter, but it would have been immoral to keep such proof of a dishonourable proposition. I could have shown it to my mother, but that would have been a poor reward for all that you have done for us. I was afraid to

Young Lady waiting for her Lover. Painting attributed to T'ang Yin (1470–1524). British Museum, London.

confide a refusal to a servant who might have changed it, and I was afraid that I might not be able to make myself understood in a letter. So I sent you these trivial verses to make sure you would come. I have no reason to be ashamed of an irregularity, because it was done simply to preserve my chastity.' Ch'ang was stupefied and returned home in despair.

Several days later he was woken in the middle of the night by Hung-niang: the servant brought a pillow and bedclothes and announced her mistress's arrival. At dawn Hung-niang came to fetch the girl, who had spent the night—a night of love—without saying a word. Ch'ang thought it was all a dream, but when it grew light he saw her powder, and the scent of perfume lingered on his clothes; but the tears on his pillow would have convinced him.

Another poem was needed before Ying-ying would allow him to come to her at night in the western pavilion where she lived. He, however, was anxious about his reputation and wondered what her mother would think of him, but the girl answered: 'I know she will not oppose me, so why should we not be married?'

Subtle Pleasures of a Young Lord's Gynaeceum. From a series of paintings found in the Palace at Peking, attributed to Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Van Gulik collection, Paris.

Thereupon Ch'ang decided to go to the capital for a while. When he came back she avoided him and pretended indifference. When he had to leave once more for his official examinations, she replied to his goodbye as follows :

'Those who have been debauched at the beginning are finally abandoned. This is the natural order of things. I am not reproaching you. You have seduced me and now you are leaving, you surely understand that. As for the oaths of union till death, they have passed also. So why are you so sad to leave ? But I see you are downcast and I have nothing to console you. You used to say that I played the lute well. Formerly I was ashamed to play for you and I could never satisfy your desire; today I will submit if you will.' Ying-ying could not even finish her melody and fled in tears into her mother's chamber.

Ch'ang failed his examinations and had to stay in the capital. He wrote to Ying-ying, who replied: 'You say that in the capital you succeeded in your career, that is good news. My only regret is that you will never come back. But that is destiny and I know it must be accepted.' She described her loneliness and boredom and realized that the memory of her charms weighed little against the exciting life of the capital. Besides, even if he remained faithful to her, she was not worthy of such a sacrifice. When she had given herself to him she had imagined that their nights of love would go on forever. Now she could not love again, and the shame of having given herself made marriage impossible. She enclosed in her letter a childhood jade ring for him to hang on his belt as a memory of their love.

Ch'ang showed this letter to his friends, and several of them reproached him for trying to break off their relationship. But he replied that beauty is ephemeral and that he did not want to be like the princes who had been ruined by women and become objects of ridicule.

A few years later Ying-ying married someone else and Ch'ang also found a wife. One day as he was

passing through the town where she lived, Ch'ang went to call on her, saying that he was her cousin. But Ying-ying refused to receive him and just sent him this poem :

'Since I have grown so lean, my face has lost its Beauty.
I have tossed and turned so many times that I am too Tired to leave my bed.
It is not that I mind the others seeing how ugly I Have grown;
It is you who have caused me to lose my beauty,
Yet it is you I am ashamed should see me.'

To which he replied :

'You cannot claim to be abandoned now,
For you have a husband.
Why not turn the feelings of the past
Towards the one who is present ?'

They never saw each other again and many of his contemporaries praised Chang for his skill in extricating himself from the entanglement.

The story of Ch'ang Sheng and Ying-ying quickly became famous. Many Sung poems make allusion to it, notably Su Shih (1036–1101) and Chao Ling-che (1075–1135), who recounted the whole story in a series of twelve songs : *Ballad on the Melody of the Butterfly who Loves Flowers like Ch'ang*. Chao Ling-che first expresses in this poem the popular feeling that Ch'ang should not have boasted of having abandoned his mistress.

In his introduction Chao Ling-che says that this story was much favoured by actors and raconteurs. It is easy to believe. The work of a man-of-letters, describing one of the happy events in his life, it reflects primarily the feelings of the class of literary officials, sole guardians in China of the classical culture. Popularized by the Sung poets, it became well known as a story and a ballad. The theatre borrowed the theme, adapting it to suit the popular ideas of love. In folklore love stories are all very similar : love against odds; opposition of the parents; removal by a powerful rival; separation by war. The achievement was fidelity in the face of all difficulties. The ending was not the same as it is in the West's 'They were married and lived happily ever after' [after which nothing can happen], but 'Finally they were united'. In China, the pleasure of the conquest is replaced by the depth of the attachment. Admiration is aroused not by victory over honour, nor the fear of hell, [for the Chinese have never thought that morality or religion were of much importance when confronted by great passion] but by the permanence of desire despite years and separation. Love is measured by its duration; the ideal is to remain united till old age. The sentiment of love is inconceivable without a certain perseverance. Thus, for Ch'ang Sheng and Ying-ying to become popular heroes the story had to follow these lines so that the public could believe in it. Only then did intrigues take on the features of popular stories endlessly repeated at the level of the people and become models of sentimental education.

This transformation was undertaken by a certain Tung who lived in the twelfth century under the Ch'in (1165–1234), a foreign dynasty that occupied the whole of the north of China. This writer decided on a popular *genre*: the ballad of several modes. This was a recitative written to different melodies and sung with a musical accompaniment (flute in the south, zither in the north). These sung passages were interspersed with recitals of prose. Called *The Ballad of the West* this song comprises less than two hundred pages in Chinese.

During the Mongol dynasty (1280–1367) Wang Shih-fu was to adapt this ballad to the latest fashionable style, the theatre of the North. The recital in the third person became a drama in five parts, each with four notes, alternating with dialogues in prose, and sung parts written on melodies with an irregular metre. This version for the theatre was handed down to posterity. But when the ballad by Tung was rediscovered only a few years ago it was realized that Wang Shih-fu was a plagiarist, that the parts to be

'The Nine Odes'. Detail of a painting attributed to Chang Tun-li, of the Sung period. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

sung were imitations of Tung, if not word for word copies. But a résumé of the tragedy shows that the original story of Ch'ang Sheng has taken on a completely different meaning.

Ch'ang Sheng, passing through P'u-chou, one day noticed a young girl in a temple. On the pretext that the hostel was noisy, he asked the high priest if he could stay in an annexe of the holy place so as to study better. In the evening he sang a song to Ying-ying, who replied from afar. But she was surprised by her servant, Hung-niang, and did not dare afterwards to give in to this temptation. One day, when Ch'ang was gossiping with the priest, Hung-niang, sent by her mistress, the Lady Ts'ui, came to ask for a service to be sung for Ying-ying's father. Ch'ang seized the opportunity to suggest that this ritual should take place at the same time as the prayers being said for the repose of his ancestors. He offered to contribute to the costs and thus had an excuse to attend the service and to see Ying-ying again. But she scarcely dared to throw him a glance as they left the room.

At that moment news arrived that Sun, the Flying Tiger and mutineer, was attacking the monastery. He demanded that Ying-ying be handed over to him. The distracted mother promised Ying-ying in marriage to any man who could save her, meanwhile begging a respite of three days from the brigand, on the grounds that her family was in mourning. Ch'ang suggested that he call for help from one of his friends, the General of the White Horse, who was in command of a neighbouring district. The cook was charged with the task of breaking through the line of the besiegers, and under cover of darkness to carry the letter to the general. He arrived in time and the Flying Tiger was killed.

The mother gave a banquet in honour of Ch'ang Sheng, but instead of presenting Ying-ying as a fiancée, she went back on her word and asked the two young people to look upon each other as brother and sister. She explained that in the lifetime of her husband Ying-ying had been promised to his nephew. Ying-ying was desperate :

'My face like a piece of jade will pass into loneliness,
Like the flower of the pear.
While the cherry red of my lips will grow pale.
Happiness, I told myself, is hard to keep till one is old,
But who would have believed that I should be sent
To the women's quarters in my youth.
My whole future has been withdrawn like a brocade
Dress.'

Hung-niang was moved by the sorrow of the lovers.

'One gives himself up to sleep without taste for
History or the classics;
The other, so downcast by her sadness, no longer
Picks up needle and thread;
One plays on his zither melodies describing the
Bitterness of separation,
The other composes a heart-rending poem on a
Decorated leaf.'

Thus, the secret thoughts are expressed by the brush, the chagrin of the heart by the singing strings, and thus the unison between the two is made real.

Ch'ang Sheng was about to go when Hung-niang held him back and carried a message asking for a rendezvous with Ying-ying who replied with the poem already quoted in Yüan Ch'en's novel. This was a rebuff and Ch'ang Sheng fell ill with sorrow. Alarmed, Ying-ying came to visit him with her mother, and rejoined him secretly at night. Ch'ang Sheng then sings one of the finest erotic passages in the whole play. It is a classic of the *genre*.

'You stammer with shame and do not dare raise your
Head;
You are happy to lay
Your head on the pillow.
Gold hairpins fall from your abundant hair,
And its disarray makes you look more beautiful than
Ever.
I undo the buttons of your dress and untie your belt;
The smell of musk pervades the dark room.
Why do you turn away, temptress,

Subtle Pleasures of a Young Lord's Gynaeceum. From a series of paintings, found in the Palace at Peking, attributed to Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Van Gulik collection, Paris.

And lower your eyes ?
I hold the perfumed warmth of this body against mine;
Spring is come, flowers are brilliantly coloured.
Your supple body stirs beneath my rhythm;
The flower bud is half open;
The drops of my dew make your peony bloom.
A single libation numbs my sense;
I am the fish struggling in the river;
The butterfly gathering the scent of tender shoots,
You half draw back to come closer to me;
Surprise and love struggle within me;
I kiss your scarlet mouth and scented cheeks;
I hold you to my heart and to my belly,
You whose purity I have sullied.'

Ying-ying's mother, learning of her daughter's ill-conduct, blamed Hung-niang, who was forced to tell her the truth. But the servant added tartly: 'If Ying-ying became the mistress of Ch'ang, it is her mother's fault for breaking her word. Would it not be better to marry the pair rather than cause a scandal ?' The mother agreed on condition that Ch'ang go to the capital to pass his examinations. Ying-ying was in despair at the separation.

'How I detest this delay in the fulfilment of my wishes!
How sad I am at such a speedy departure.
The long willow branches cannot bind the feet of his Mount;
Forest trees, hold back the sunset!
May his horse be slow and my carriage quick to follow.
At the sound of his going my gold bracelets seem too Big;
Before this house of goodbyes my jade flesh shrinks.'

And Ch'ang, that night alone in an inn, dreams of his lover.

Dramatic fever is diminished in the second act, so much so that it has been claimed to have been written by a different author.

Ch'ang succeeded in his examinations, but fell ill. Ch'eng-heng, the importunate nephew, took advantage of the situation to rush to the temple and said that Ch'ang had married the daughter of a high official,

Subtle Pleasures of a Young Lord's Gynaeceum. From a series of paintings found in the Palace at Peking, attributed to Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Van Gulik collection, Paris.

and he thus obtained the hand of Ying-ying for himself. When Ch'ang returned it was too late. The two lovers fled with the help of the holy father and sought refuge with the General White. Ch'eng-heng hastened after them, and accused Ch'ang of having kidnapped another man's wife. But the general discovered the calumny : Ch'eng-heng committed suicide and the two lovers were reunited.

The adaptation of the story to the theatre justifies certain developments. But in fact the author had modified the story according to the ideas of his period. In the novel Ch'ang was afraid that his adventure would develop into a permanent liaison and boasted of having taken advantage of the daughter of a minister. In the theatre he becomes a lover entirely devoted to his mistress. The abandonment of Ying-ying to a passion she knew to be ephemeral is changed into the banal history of a young girl who wants to marry the young man she loves and not the suitor chosen by her mother.

If the two versions are compared, one gets the impression that the play is more alien to the western mind. The dramatic action involves the feelings of a couple who have to face threats and obstacles from the outside world, who must persevere against the opposition of the girl's mother, and the appearance of an opponent. The theatrical convention makes clear to us that we are here concerned with a civilization where marriages were entirely regulated by the parents, where individual privacy was unknown and where everyone always knew what was going on. Meetings between men and women were rare and difficult. For lovers to brave both the family and public opinion needed courage and determination. The reticence, the sentimental complications of the heroes of western theatre, not to mention our sense of guilt and pretence of platonic love, would have seemed ridiculous to the Chinese of former centuries. For them love and faithfulness are unquestioned; they are part of the natural order of things and do not depend on human nature.

The poetical expression may sometimes seem artificial or precious, but these shortcomings may be attributed to the difficulties of translation. How could a western person remain indifferent to erotic happenings in a room next to the one in which the father's corpse is lying? We are in the presence of an outrageous act which only poetic licence can overcome. The officials were not taken in and the play was condemned as immoral and dangerous. Young people were forbidden to read it and all modern adaptations were censored. The lovers in the play lived by proxy an adventure for which many longed. This poetry, compared by an unorthodox scholar to the poems of Ch'ü Yüan and Tu Fu, fascinated the reader as a snake holds a rabbit, and he became inspired by bold desire. In this case, literature transcends words and intrigue; the images only serve to make the impossible seem tolerable, and the only remaining compliment is the homage of virtue to the power of poetry, an official report prohibiting the play: 'In all the troubles erotic passion stands out; law cannot overlook it nor reason tolerate it. . . . If you want to protect your family from shame get rid of this pernicious book.' J. P.

SUNG AND YÜAN POEMS

TO THE MELODY OF 'THE SOUTHERN COUNTRY'

This girl is beautiful ;
Dark red lips, lightly powdered cheeks.
We met in the flower garden, but she was afraid
Others would see and ran quickly away,
Dropping her embroidered slippers.
But she returns, barefoot ;
The gold phoenix pin holding her cloud of hair is slipping.
We walk along smiling and she leans against me ;
I pick her up in my arms,
Then for a long time, tender and innocent, she rests her head
On my heart.

Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–1072)

TO THE MELODY OF 'THE FLOWERING PLUM BRANCH'

The scent of the lotus fades, the mat grows cool ;
Slowly I loosen my silken robe
And board the boat alone.
Who, far away, sends a message through the clouds ?
The wild geese return flying in formation ;
Moonlight floods the western chamber ;
Flowers fade and rivers flow ;
We dream of love
In far distant places.
The pain of love will never go ;
As it recedes from my forehead
It gathers and twists in my heart.

Li Ch'ing-chao (1084–1147)

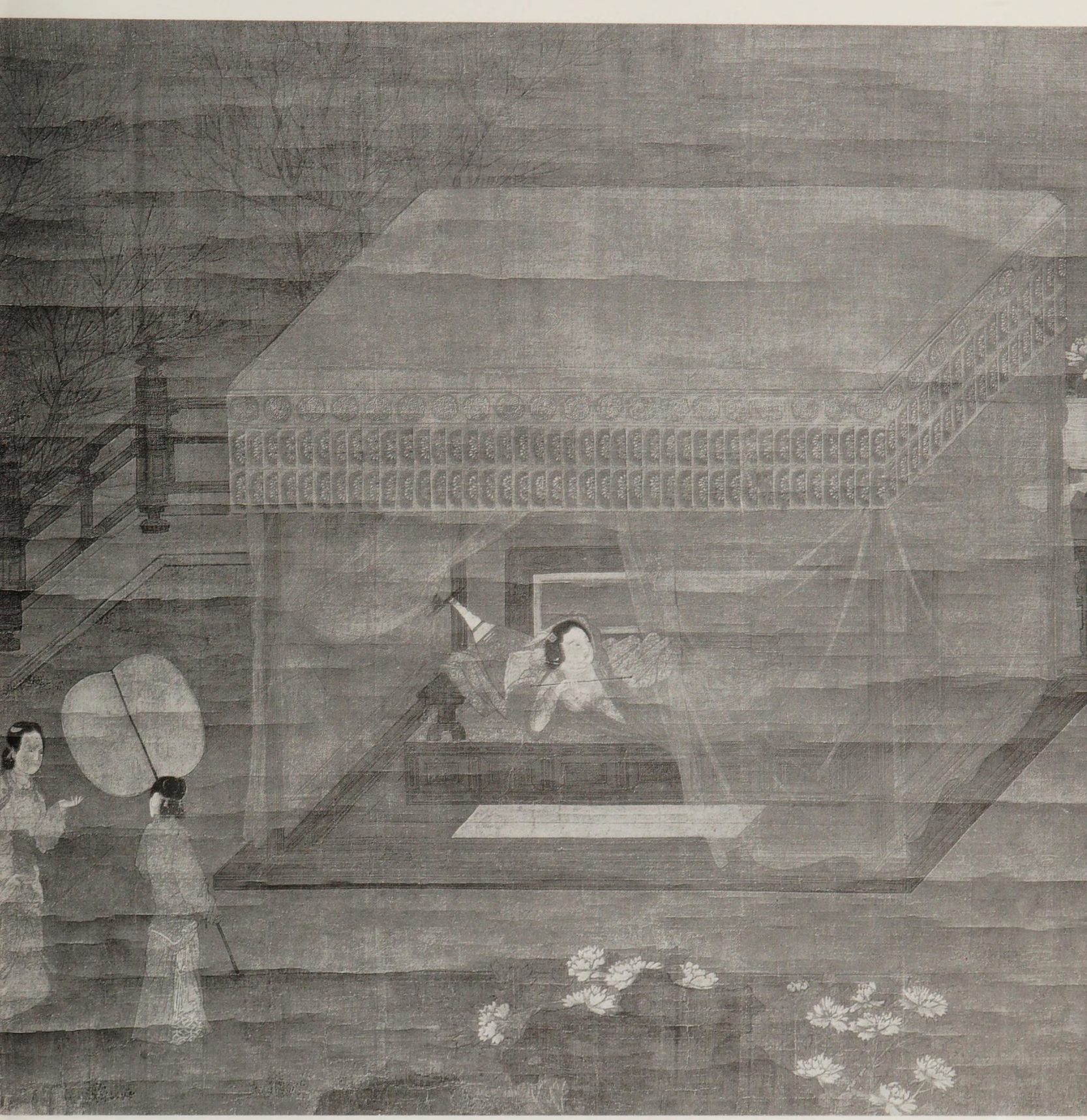
Subtle Pleasures of a Young Lord's Gynaeceum. From a series of paintings found in the Palace at Peking, attributed to Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Van Gulik collection, Paris.

TO THE MELODY OF 'THE RETURN OF A FORMER LOVER'

I have changed the scented pillow,
Its cloud embroidery had been half worn away
Because I had turned and turned it again
After the autumn nights
When it soaked up my tears.
I changed the scented pillow
Waiting for you to come to bed,
I changed the kingfisher eiderdown
And when I look at the teal-embroidered coverlet
I am ashamed.
When we were together we used to call it
The coverlet of Joy in Reunion.
Now it covers me alone and has become
The cover for my sorrows.
I spread out the kingfisher bedspread as I wait for you to come.
I have put away the brocade mattresses because
I am afraid to see them placed one above the other in vain.
I would like someone as pure as white jade to sleep on them,
Not someone unhappy.
I have piled up the brocade mattresses and wait for you.

Empress Hsiao Kuan-yin (circa 1055)

Beauty in her Bed. Painting by Ch'ien Hsüan (1235–90). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Flute Player. Painting of the early 17th century. Charles Ratton collection, Paris.

TO THE MELODY OF 'THE YOUNG MAN'S JOURNEY'

Shining like the knife made at Ping
Which gleams like water:
Clean as the salt from Wu, whiter
Than snow,
Your dainty fingers peel fresh oranges.
Your silken tent has been warmed;
The mist wreathes above the incense-burner.
Opposite to one another we play on the flute with thirteen Reeds.
Softly you ask
Whom will you sleep with tonight?
The third watch (midnight) has sounded on the city wall;
Ice and snow lie thick and white. Your horse will fall.

Chou Pang-yên (1056–1121)

WHAT I AM THINKING

Since we parted I think only of you;
Time and again I have watched the lotus buds open.
Limpid and shallow autumn waters keep us apart,
Just as though each were sitting below the rim of the sky.
I want to wade through the rivers, but I cannot
Because mist and fog are too thick.
Sweet-smelling herbs grow on the verdant islands,
But what use to pluck asarum and ligularia flowers?
Blue birds hover among the clouds.
When will your brocade scroll come?

Ying-ying with her Lover Ch'ang Sheng and the Servant. Painting on silk of the K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

In the Garden on a Rocky Seat. Painting on silk from an album of the K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

On the Embroidered Couch. Painting on silk from an album of the K'ang-hsi period (1662-1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

The Obedient Servant caresses her Mistress's Tiny Feet. Painting on silk from an album of the K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

Amorous Games of Hsi-mên, hero of the Chin P'ing Mei. *After the original paintings illustrating the novel. Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

It is vain for you to harden your heart to stone.
I fear only that my beauty will fade,
For one cannot count on that.
So naturally I am sad.
It would be better for us to change into a pair of kingfishers
And to fly away for ever above the orchids and begonias.

Chao Mêng-fu (1254–1322)

LOVE POEM

Outside the gauze window everything is quiet
No one is about.
Kneeling by my bed, my lover is importunate,
I grumble at his unpleasing person, yet I turn towards him.
Although I may sound cross
It seems I half refuse and perhaps half accept him.

Kuan Han-ch'ing (circa 1246)

SECRET JOY

The moon hangs above the flowers climbing over the painted
Balcony ;
The banquet is at an end, songs and flutes fade.
The pretty serving-girl, Perfumed Plum Blossom, walks
Towards me
And whispers in my ear
'The old woman is reeling in the back parlour, dead drunk.'

Hsiu T'e-k'o (end of 13th century)

POEM

Leaning against each other we gaze out of the window
Decorated with painted clouds,
Then you hold me in your arms and I embrace you.
Singing we lay our heads on the round pillow.
We listen and count the watches as they sound ;
For we are afraid lest the fourth watch should be past.
The fourth watch has come and gone
But our passion is not stilled.
And the night passes as fast as a shuttle.
Oh Heaven, would it be too difficult to fit in an extra watch ?

Kuan Yün-shih (1286–1324)

THE EROTIC NOVEL IN CHINA

Every civilization seems to leave its mark on the most fundamental, most natural human activities, even where one would expect some uniformity in mankind. Everyone has to eat and yet, of all the many dishes with the same ingredients, a Chinese meal could never be confused with a western one. It is the same with love.

Some will always believe that the Chinese must have invented different erotic pleasures and different techniques. In fact a Chinese erotic treatise is similar to the *Kama Sûtra*, which can teach nothing to those who have read Aretino. No Chinese could lay claim to the gold louis Madame de Saint-Ange left with her lawyer for the benefit of any man who could discover a really new refinement. In this respect, fundamentals are more or less the same. However, the sentiment of love in China differs more from that of the West than, for instance, our modern feelings from the attitude of classical Greece. Below the belt men are much the same when passion is aroused.

Eroticism has managed to gain a place in the romantic novel, intended to be read secretly at home, allowing the fevered imagination to embark on a wide sea. Censorship was strict and punishment severe for those who published or sold, bought or lent erotic books. Most have been burned. However, at the end of the Ming dynasty in the late 16th to 17th century this type of book gained recognition and for a short period profited from a favourable climate, before the Manchus finally killed it.

Chinese erotic novels can be divided into three categories. Of the first type the best example of its kind is the *Chin P'ing Mei*. This is a *roman de mœurs,* and erotic passages included realistic descriptions. Clearly very few people were like the rich merchant Hsi-mên who could afford to keep many courtesans, live a luxurious life with a good many concubines, and to bribe both officials and go-betweens. But the interesting thing is that eroticism here remains credible. In as far as it is realistic to say : 'If I were as rich as Hsi-mên', it is a realistic story; only the means and the leisure are necessary to gain enough women to satisfy one's needs.

The second type of story is well represented by the *Ju Pu T'uan*. It is a joke. One must not be put off by its Buddhist title, nor by moralizing passages on cause and effect. Just as Restif de la Bretonne claimed to be writing for the edification of the people, so Chinese novelists declared that these salacious stòries were the best way of demonstrating that every action brings its harvest, recompense or punishment. The major scenes, for instance the surgical operation, or the scene where the poor hero tries to satisfy a whole group of ladies who have laid bets on him, should not be taken seriously. If it is absolutely necessary to find a moral it would probably be 'It is later than you think', or 'He who goes hunting will lose his wife'. No Chinese reader would envy any one of the hero's gifts. The author was not aiming at credibility, but trying to make a comic story out of a man running after a number of women.

The third category combines eroticism with horror. Only one work exists, but given the rarity of surviving novels of this period, one cannot conclude that it was an exception. One book will suffice as an example to demonstrate that Chinese civilization was not unaware that eroticism can feed on the worst degradation. Van Gulik, the greatest specialist in sexual life in China, denies the existence of perversions and insists that Chinese eroticism is healthy, a surprising judgment since one does not have to look far to discover that the West has no monopoly of wickedness, nor Sade of cruelty. J. P.

The Chin P'ing Mei

The *Chin P'ing Mei* is a sixteenth-century novel, the hero of which is a rich merchant called Hsi-mên Ch'ing. The story is supposed to have taken place in the twelfth century but is in fact a record of the manners of the late Ming period.

The novel may be considered from three different angles : first as a work of literature. There is only one complete translation, into English under the title of *The Golden Lotus*, by Clement Egerton, whose work is quoted here. The romantic technique borrowed from popular story-tellers enabled this large fresco, freed from all the former restrictions, to be written. In former times stories of traditional customs were always short; only historical stories—detached events linked together—could possibly have been called a novel. The *Chin P'ing Mei* is the best example of these.

The novel is undoubtedly one of the best documentary sources of the customs and habits of the period. A dictionary of Chinese civilization could easily be compiled from this work, for there is a great deal of valuable information about furniture, clothes and cooking, as well as the amusements and commercial practices of that period in China's history.

Finally, for the western reader, the most striking thing is probably the erotic aspect, and some Chinese critics have suggested that the erotic passages do not fit well into the novel and may have been added. If they were isolated, such passages would constitute a small anthology of Chinese eroticism.

To understand them it is enough to know that the hero, Hsi-mên Ch'ing, is a rake. Married to the Lady Moon, whom he neglects, he has no less than five official concubines, the favourite undoubtedly being the fifth, 'Golden Lotus,' whose face, 'soft as peach-blossom', hides a fiery temperament. Many serving-women move around the house : Plum Blossom, Welcome Spring, Jade Flute, but even this harem was not enough for Hsi-mên. He still sought adventure, with a Lady Wang. Also he was a pillar of the brothel, where Porphyry received him with joy.

He died at thirty-three, leaving behind a house of disorder and dissension, his many wives ending up as he did, in debauchery and disgrace.

Legend relates that the *Chin P'ing Mei* was written with the intention of getting rid of a Minister. The writer is said to have put poison on the corner at the foot of every page. In his eagerness to read the erotic passages the Minister would surely lick his finger so as to turn the pages more quickly and would be dead before the story was finished. This legend at least had the merit of showing that China, as well as the West, made some pretensions to morality, with the difference that the morals of the Celestial Empire are often coloured with politics.

One thing emerges from this book, that the ancient Taoist erotic techniques have been freed from their magic or metaphysical context and that their object—the attainment of immortality—has been forgotten.

Hsi-mên entertains his Guests. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei, *discovered about 1930 in the former Palace of the Manchu at Shen-yang. Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

They are now only applied as a means to pleasure. It is the story of desire, satisfied but always renewed, like the phoenix from the ashes. The Buddhist ideal of the extinction of all desire is denied by the living, and only death from excess can interrupt these repeated scenes by supplying a note of convention to the erotic theme.

Mme G. B.

Extracts from the *Chin P'ing Mei*

Before it was fully light the temple attendants came with their sacred books and instruments. They set up a lectern and hung their pictures all round, and old woman Wang in the kitchen helped the cooks to prepare vegetarian food. Hsi-mên Ch'ing spent the whole day there. Soon the monks arrived, tinkling their bells and beating their drums. They read their sacred books and intoned their exorcisms.

Golden Lotus would perform none of the due purifications. She slept with Hsi-mên Ch'ing till the sun was high in the heavens, and she would not have risen then, had not the monks come to invite her to burn incense, sign the documents, and make her reverence to Buddha. Finally she dressed herself in white and went to worship Buddha.

As soon as the monks saw her, their Buddhist hearts were troubled and their Buddhist natures stimulated to a furious degree, so that their passions ran away with them, and they were in such a state that they did not know what they were doing.

'The precentor lost his wits and, as he read the sacred Books
Knew not if they were upside down.
The holy priests went mad and read their prayers
By no means sure what line they read.
The thurifer upset the vases, and the acolyte seized The incense boat
Thinking it was his candle.
The lector should have read 'The Mighty Empire of Sung'
But called it 'T'ang' instead.
The exorcist, who should have chanted 'Master Wu' Cried 'Mistress Wu.'
The old monk's heart so wildly beat
He missed the drum and struck the young monk's Hand.
The young monk's mind was so distraught
He used the drumstick on the old monk's head.
Long patient years of novicehood were all undone

Hsi-mên with his Sick Concubine. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei, *discovered about 1930 in the former Palace of the Manchu at Shen-yang. Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

And had ten thousand saints come down to earth
It would have been no better.'

Golden Lotus burned incense before the image of Buddha, signed the papers, and made a reverence. Then she went back to her room and began again to play with Hsi-mên Ch'ing. She never even dreamed of abstaining from wine or any kind of food.

'If there should be anything that requires attention,' Hsi-mên said to old woman Wang, 'you attend to it, and don't let anybody come to disturb the lady.'

'You young people enjoy yourselves,' the old woman said, laughing. 'If there is anything to be done for these shaven-headed fellows, I'll do it.'

Now that the monks had seen how beautiful Wu Ta's widow was, they could not put her out of their minds. When they came back again from their temple after the evening meal, Golden Lotus was still drinking and making merry with Hsi-mên Ch'ing. There was only a wooden partition between her room and the temporary chapel. One of the monks had come back before the others and was washing his hands in a basin outside the window of her room when he heard soft whisperings and gentle murmurings which left him in little doubt about what was going on. He stopped washing his hands and stood still to listen. He heard Golden Lotus say, 'Sweetheart, how long will you continue ? The monks will be back soon and they may hear us. Do let me go. We must finish'.

'Don't be in a hurry,' Hsi-mên's voice said. 'I should like to "set the cover on fire" just once more'. It never occurred to them that there was a monk listening to every word they said.

Then all the monks came back, and they began to make music and intone their orisons. One told another, till there was none who did not know that Wu Ta's widow was entertaining her lover in the house. They waved their arms and feet wildly without the slightest idea of what they were doing. Thus were the Buddhist services performed, and thus, this

The Kiss. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei, *discovered about 1930 in the former Palace of the Manchu at Shen-yang. Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

House of a Rich Merchant. From the paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

Winter's Night. Golden Lotus plays on the p'i-p'a. *From the original paintings illustrating the* Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

night, they sped Wu Ta's spirit on its lonely journey.

Golden Lotus took off her mourning-robes, dressed herself beautifully, and came to stand with Hsi-mên Ch'ing behind the lattice. They watched the monks preparing to burn the tablet and old woman Wang carrying water and fire. At last the tablet and the Buddhist pictures were completely consumed.

Thievish shaven-heads peered with cold eyes through the lattice. A man and a woman standing shoulder to shoulder could vaguely be seen. This brought to their minds the remembrance of what had happened before, and they struck their instruments discordantly. An old monk's hat was blown off by the wind and his bluish bald pate appeared. He did not pick up his hat, but went on thumping his instrument and roaring with laughter. Old woman Wang called, 'Reverend Fathers, you have finished your service. Why do you beat your instruments any longer ?'

'We haven't set fire to the cover of a paper stove yet', one of the monks cried. Hsi-mên Ch'ing heard this, and told the old woman to give them their fee and send them packing, but the old monk insisted that they must see the lady first and thank her.

'Please tell them that is quite unnecessary', Golden Lotus said, but the monks answered with one voice, 'Do let us go'. Then, roaring with laughter, they all went off.

It was the twentieth day of the seventh month, and the weather was very sultry. Golden Lotus could not sleep, the noisy buzzing of mosquitoes in the net annoyed her. Without putting on any clothes, she got up and lighted a candle to find a mosquito. When she found it she put it in the flame. Then she looked round. Hsi-mên Ch'ing was fast asleep. She shook him, but he would not wake. His weapon, with the clasp still upon it, seemed limp and heavy. The sight of it set her naughty mind in a whirl. She put down the candlestick and fondled it with her exquisite hands. After doing this for a short time, she bent her head and kissed it. Hsi-mên woke and stormed at her. 'You funny little strumpet. Your darling is sleepy, and you are a terrible nuisance.' But he got up. Sitting on the bed, he told her to go on with what she was doing. He watched her, and found the sight particularly attractive. Here is a poem about the mosquito :

Ladies out Riding. A Brigand takes Flight. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

'I love that dainty body, its wondrous lightness,
The beauty and softness of that tender waist.
Music and song go where it goes.
When evening comes, before the crimson doors are Shut
It steals within and seeks the silken net,
Settles so lovingly on the fragrant flesh
And lightly falls upon the jade-like form.
Where those lips touch, there stays a rosy flush.
It sings a hundred songs in people's ears,
Allowing none to sleep though it be midnight.'

Golden Lotus continued for a long time, then Hsi-mên Ch'ing thought of a new plan. He called Plum Blossom to heat some wine and come and stand beside the bed to hold the wine-jar. He set the candlestick beside the bed and told Golden Lotus to go down on all fours before him. When he saw her like this, he was quickly excited again, and gave himself once more to the delights of love, drinking wine as he did so.

'What a naughty fellow you are,' Golden Lotus cried. 'Where did you learn to carry on like this ? A fine thing, to let the maid stand by and watch us in such unseemly circumstances.'

'The Lady of the Vase and I used to do it,' Hsi-mên said. 'She always told Welcome Spring to stand beside us and hold the wine-jar. I think it is most amusing.'

It was late when Hsi-mên Ch'ing set out for home. When he reached there, the boys opened the gate. He dismounted and, walking over the snow, found the door to the back court partly open. Everything seemed quiet and, thinking that this was strange, he stood there quietly, hidden by the screen. As he waited, listening, Tiny Jade came from the room and set a table in the passage.

Since the Moon Lady had ceased to speak to her husband, she had abstained from rich food three times a month, and, every day that had a seven in it, paid worship to her star and burned incense. This she did, imploring Heaven to change her husband's heart. Hsi-mên Ch'ing himself knew nothing of this. The maid set out the table, and, in a little while, the Moon Lady in her most beautiful dress came out and burned incense in the middle of the court. Then she bowed low towards the Heavens and prayed : 'I am she who married Hsi-mên Ch'ing. My husband loves

Golden Lotus and her Lover in the Garden. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

light women, and, though he is now of middle age, he has no son to carry on his name. He has six wives, but all are childless and there will be none to worship at our tomb. Day and night, my heart is heavy within me because I have no son to lean upon. Here then I swear : I will pray every night to the Three Great Lights of Heaven. I beseech you to save my husband. Make him amend his ways. Cause him to forsake things that are vain and turn with all his heart to the things of his own household. Let one of us six women, I care not which, soon bear a son that so our future may be secure. This is my only prayer.'

'Secretly she went forth into the sweet night,
The courtyard was filled with fragrant mist
And a strange light illumined the snow,
There she prayed to Heaven,
And paced in loneliness through the long night.'

When he heard the Moon Lady's prayer Hsi-mên's heart was touched by shame. 'Truly', he said to himself, 'I have not appreciated her as I should. She loves me and is a true wife.' He could hold back no longer. He came from behind the screen and took her in his arms.

The Moon Lady had not expected that he would come home while the snow was so heavy. She was startled and opened the door of her room, but her husband held her closely. 'Sister', he said to her, 'though I should die, I could never realize too well the goodness of your heart. You love me, and I have wronged you. I have made your heart cold. Now I am sorry'.

'The snow is so thick it has made you mistake the door,' the Moon Lady said. 'This is not your room and I am not a respectable woman. What have you and I to do with one another ? I have no wish to see you. Why should you come and bother me ? Though I live for a thousand years I never wish to see your face again.'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing carried her into her room. In the lamplight she looked even more beautiful. She was wearing a scarlet coat and a soft yellow skirt. There was a dainty ornament in her hair. He could not help loving her.

'I have been a fool for a long time', he said. 'I have not taken your good advice and I have misinterpreted your intentions. I have been like those who did not recognise the jade of the Ch'ing mountain and thought it but a piece of common stone. Now I know that you are indeed a lady. You must forgive me.'

'I am not she whom your heart desires,' the Moon Lady said. 'I do not know what you are talking

Lovers' Meeting in the Emerald Pavilion. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

about. What good advice have I ever given you? If you insist on staying here, please do not speak to me. Indeed I find your presence most distasteful. Kindly remove yourself at once, or I shall be compelled to call the maid to drive you out'.

'To-day,' Hsi-mên said, 'I have had my fill of anger. That is why I came home though the snow was so heavy. I should like to tell you what the trouble was about.'

'Trouble or no trouble,' the Moon Lady said, 'I have no desire to hear you. I do not live for you. Pray go and tell the person who does.'

Finding that the Moon Lady would not condescend even to look at him, Hsi-mên Ch'ing knelt down, like a little boy, crying, 'Sister! Sister!' all the time. The Moon Lady would have nothing to do with him. 'You are an utterly shameless fellow. I shall call the maid,' she cried. But when Tiny Jade came in, Hsi-mên Ch'ing stood up and began to think of a plan for getting rid of her.

'It is snowing,' he said; 'hadn't you better bring the table from the courtyard?'

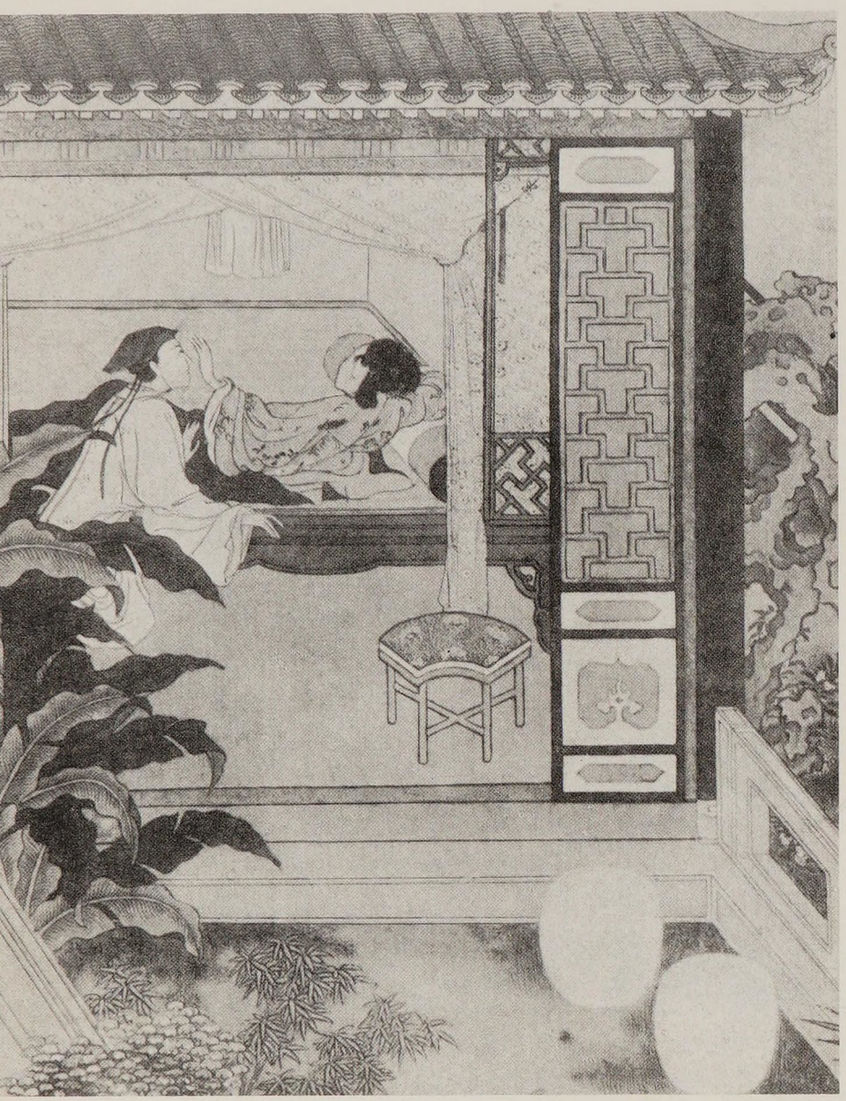
'I have already done so,' Tiny Jade told him.

The Moon Lady could not help laughing. 'You worthless rascal,' she said. 'Now you're trying to play tricks with my maid.' Tiny Jade disappeared and Hsi-mên Ch'ing again knelt down. 'If it were not for common humanity,' the Moon Lady said at last, 'I would have nothing to do with you, not for a hundred years.'

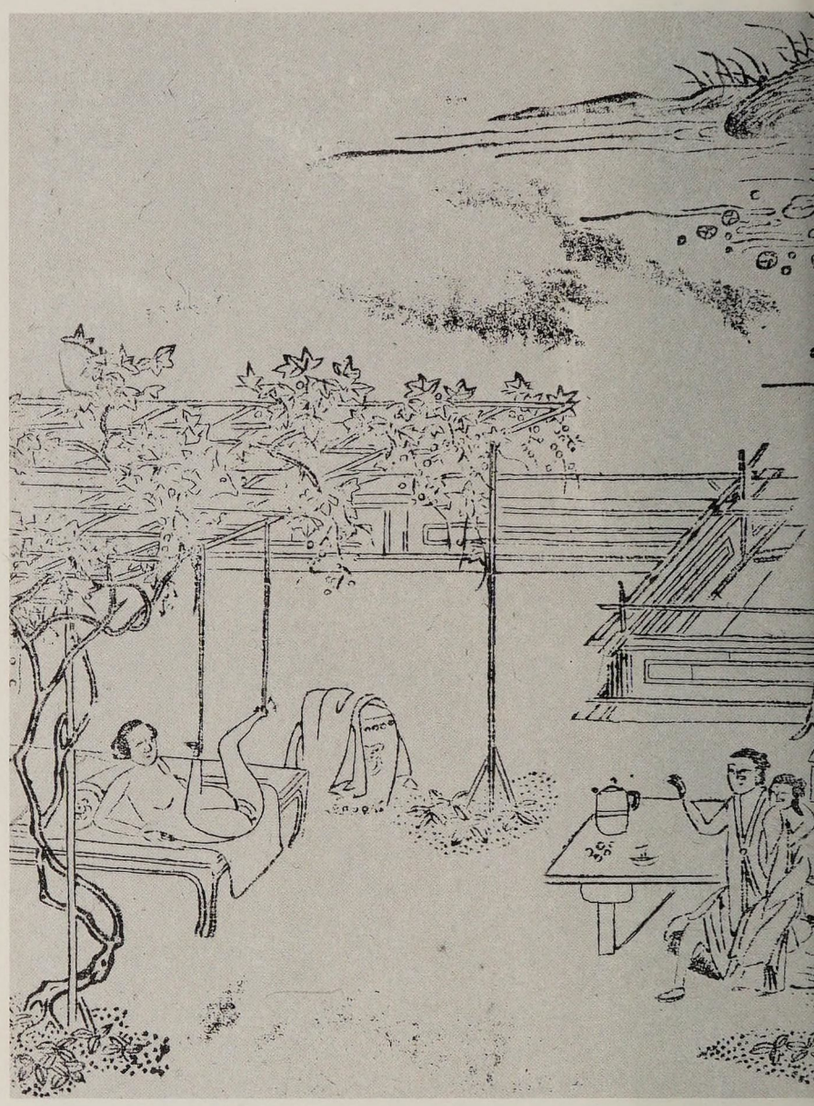
Hsi-mên rose, found a seat for himself, and ordered Flute of Jade to bring some tea. Then he told his wife what had happened that afternoon in the bawdy-house. 'I have taken an oath never to go there again,' he said.

'I don't care whether you go or not,' the Moon Lady retorted. 'You have poured out gold and silver like water to get that girl, and the moment you stay away, she sets out to find another lover. And with women of that sort you can never be sure of their hearts, even if you can make sure of their bodies. You

Golden Lotus welcomes her Unfaithful Husband. She repels him while ardently desiring him. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*



Game of Darts. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*



can't put a seal on her, and seal her up.'

'You are quite right,' Hsi-mên said. He sent the maid away, and began to undress, imploring the Moon Lady to be gracious to him.

'To-day,' she said, 'I have allowed you to sit on my bed. That is enough. I am surprised you dare ask for any more. I shall certainly never allow it.'

'Look at this fellow,' Hsi-mên said, making his intentions still more obvious. 'He's another who is angry and won't speak. He opens his eye, but not a word has he to say for himself.'

'You dirty rascal!' the Moon Lady cried. 'Do you think I would look at you, even with my eyes half shut ?'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing was not in a mood to bandy words. He set her white legs over his shoulders, and had his way. Their delight in each other was like that of the butterfly, as it sips the nectar from the blossom. Beauty and love were theirs in the fullest measure. Fragrance as of orchid and musk seemed to pass from

The Swing. Painting on silk. 18th century. Roger Peyrefitte collection, Paris.

Rest in the Forest. 18th century. Roger Peyrefitte collection, Paris.

Amorous scene in a 'Flower Garden.' Fragments of a silk scroll after Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Louis Bataille collection, Paris.

The Attack from the Rear, or 'The Leaping White Tiger'. Painting on silk from an album of the K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

one to the other. Hsi-mên Ch'ing, in the seventh heaven of delight, murmured, 'Darling,' and the Moon Lady answered him in a soft, low voice. Soon they were sleeping, their faces close pressed together . . .

It was the beginning of the sixth month. The weather was very hot and at noon the fiery sun was like a blazing umbrella in a cloudless sky. Hsi-mên Ch'ing did not go out. He stayed at home with his hair undone and his clothes unbuttoned, trying to keep cool.

(He went to the garden where he met the Lady of the Vase.)

Through the light silk skirt, Hsi-mên could see her crimson trousers; the sun's rays made them so transparent that he could clearly distinguish the cool flesh beneath them. The sight aroused his passion, and finding that they were alone, he stopped dressing his hair, and carried the Lady of the Vase to a long summer couch. He pulled aside her skirt, took down the crimson trousers, and played with her the game which is called 'Carrying fire over the mountains.' They played for a long time without his bringing matters to a conclusion, and their pleasure was like that of a love bird and his mate.

Golden Lotus did not go to the inner court. She went as far as the corner gate and then decided to give Tower of Jade's flower to Plum Blossom. She went back on tiptoe to the Kingfisher Hall. There, she stood listening outside the window, and, for quite a long time, could hear the lovers amusing themselves.

'My darling,' she heard Hsi-mên Ch'ing say to the Lady of the Vase, 'above all else I love your little white bottom. I shall do my very utmost to give you pleasure to-day.'

After a pause, she heard the Lady of the Vase say softly, 'My dearest, you must be gentle with me, for I am really not too well. The other day you were rough with me, and my belly hurt so much that only during the last day or two has it begun to feel better.'

'You are not well?' Hsi-mên cried. 'What do you mean?'

'I will not keep it from you any longer,' the Lady of the Vase told him. 'For a month now, I have been cherishing a little one within me. Please treat me with some indulgence.'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing was delighted beyond all measure. 'Why, my precious one,' he said, 'why didn't you tell me before? If that is how things are, I will bring this game to an end at once.' His happiness reached its culmination and his joy was complete. He set both hands upon her legs, and the evidence of his delight was overwhelming. The woman beneath him raised herself to welcome it.

(The Lady of the Vase left the garden. Hsi-mên noticed that Golden Lotus was trying to escape, but caught her by the hand.)

'So you would run away from me, little oily mouth,' he cried. 'I shall not let you go.' He pulled so hard that she almost fell.

'We will drink a little wine together,' Hsi-mên said, 'and play "Flying Arrows" beneath the T'ai Hu rock.'

'We can play quite well in the summer-house,' Golden Lotus said. She saw how freshly the pomegranate flowers were blooming after the rain, and laughingly plucked one and set it in her hair. 'I am an old lady, wearing on my brow a "starving-for-three-days" flower.'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing seized her tiny feet. 'You little villain,' he cried, 'if I weren't afraid of somebody seeing us, I'd make you die of delight.'

'Don't get so excited, you naughty fellow,' Golden Lotus said. 'Let me put down this guitar.' She laid the instrument beside a flower-bed. 'My son,' she said, 'you have only just finished amusing yourself with the Sixth Lady. Why should you come and plague me now?'

'You are still talking nonsense,' Hsi-mên said, 'I never touched her.'

'My boy,' Golden Lotus said, 'you may try as hard as you like, but you will never succeed in deceiving

The Stolen Kiss. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

the God who watches over Hearth and Home. What is the use of trying to hoodwink an experienced old woman like me ? When I went to the inner court to take that flower, the pair of you wasted no time.'

'Oh, do not talk such rubbish,' Hsi-mên cried. He set her down among the flowers, and kissed her lips. She slipped her tongue into his mouth . . .

(They walked side by side towards the summer-house, where Hsi-mên Ch'ing had some refreshments served.)

. . . Then the wine went to Golden Lotus's head. The peaches began to bloom upon her cheeks, and her eyes lost their shyness. Hsi-mên Ch'ing thought he would like to drink the love-potion known as the wine of the five fragrances, and told Plum Blossom to go and fetch it.

'Little oily mouth,' Golden Lotus said, 'you can do something for me too. In my room you will find a summer mat and a pillow. Bring them here. I feel very sleepy and I think I shall lie down . . .'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing rose, and took off his jade-coloured light gown. He hung it on the trellis, and went to wash his hands by the peony arbour. When he came back, Golden Lotus had already prepared the mat and its cushions inside the arbour of the vines, and had undressed till not a thread of silk remained upon her body. She lay flat on her back, a pair of crimson shoes still upon her feet, fanning herself with a white silk fan to gain some relief from the heat.

When Hsi-mên Ch'ing saw her, his wanton heart was quickly stirred, for the wine had not been without its effect upon him. He took off his clothes, and sat down on a stool, letting his toes play around the treasure of this beautiful flower.

Tum ex illa indicia voluptatis exierunt, ut sucus e cochlea quae viam candidam et sinuosam facit. Detraxit Hsi-mên soleas coccina ornatas, taeniisque quae pedes ligabant solutis ad cancellos ita vinciebat ut draco aureus ungues monstrans videretur. Porta feminea reclusa est, et custode vigilante vallis purpureus patebat.

Hsi-mên Ch'ing lay down and, taking his weapon in his hands, prepared to storm the breach, resting one hand upon the pillow, and proceeding to the attack as he had played 'Feathers through the Arch' when at the Flying Arrow game. He strove with all his strength, till from the scene of combat a mist arose, spiralling, like an eel rising from the mud.

Golden Lotus beneath him never ceased to murmur, 'Darling, my darling.' Then, as he was just about to reap the fruits of victory, Plum Blossom came suddenly with the wine for which Hsi-mên had asked. But when she saw them she put down the jar of wine, and fled to the top of the artificial mound, and there went into the arbour which was called the Land of Clouds. She rested her elbows on the chess-table, and amused herself setting out the chessmen. Hsi-mên Ch'ing lifted his head and looked at her; then he beckoned her to come down, but she refused. 'If you don't come down, I will make you,' he cried. He left Golden Lotus and ran up the stone steps to the arbour. Plum Blossom fled down a tiny path to the right, through the grottos, till she reached a point half-way, where among the hanging foliage and flowers she tried to hide. Hsi-mên Ch'ing caught her there, and took her in his arms. 'I've got you at last, little oily mouth,' he cried. Then he carried her like a feather to the Arbour of the Vines.

'Have a cup of wine,' he said, laughing, setting her on his knee, and they drank together mouth to mouth. Suddenly Plum Blossom saw that her mistress's feet were tied to the trellis.

'I don't know how you could do such a thing,' she said. 'It is the middle of the day, and if anybody should come in, what would they think of such goings on ?'

'Isn't the corner gate shut ?' Hsi-mên asked.

'Yes,' Plum Blossom said, 'I shut it when I came in.'

'Now,' Hsi-mên said, 'watch me. I'm going to play Flying Arrows with a living target. The game is called "Striking the Silver Swan with a Golden Ball." Watch! If I hit the mark at the first shot, I shall treat myself to a cup of wine.' He took a plum

from the iced bowl, and cast it ad portam femineam. Ter iecit, ter ad intimum florem pervenit. Unum prunum adhaesit, sed neque movit ille nec opus inceptum perfecit, dum mulieris cor languidum labore, ut liquebat, vexatur. Her starry eyes were half closed, and her body fell back limply upon the mat. 'You are indeed a roguish enemy,' she murmured. 'You will be the death of me.' Her voice trembled.

Hsi-mên paid no attention to her, but told Plum Blossom to fan him, while he refreshed himself with wine. Then he lay down in an easy chair, and went to sleep... Hsi-mên Ch'ing slept for an hour or so, and when he opened his eyes, Golden Lotus's white legs were still hanging from the trellis. Plum Blossom had gone. Again his passion was aroused...

Then he helped the woman to sit up, and at last her starry eyes began to gleam again, and she showed signs of life once more. In a caressing voice she said, 'Darling, why did you treat me so cruelly today? You nearly killed me. You mustn't do this again. It is simply not fun. My head and eyes swim so that I hardly know where I am.'

The sun was already setting. Hsi-mên hastily helped her into her clothes.

When Porphyry knew that Hsi-mên was coming, she swept out her room, burned fragrant incense, set clean hangings round the bed, and prepared some special tea. Old woman Fêng came first, with a basket full of fresh vegetables and fruits. She went into the kitchen to prepare them. Porphyry washed her hands, cleaned her nails and prepared some food. In the sitting-room, she scrubbed and cleaned the tables and chairs till they shone.

It was afternoon when Hsi-mên Ch'ing came, dressed in his civilian clothes, and wearing shades upon his eyes. Hsi-mên Ch'ing and the woman sat for a while, and at last she invited him to go and see her own room. The windows and doors were papered; there were a long bed and a few chests. On the wall were four pieces of tapestry which depicted Ch'ang Sheng meeting with Ying-ying, and bees and flowers. There were tables and tea-tables, large mirrors and small, boxes and pewter, all set out in their proper places. A stick of incense was burning. In the place of honour was a chair, in which Hsi-mên Ch'ing sat down, while the woman again prepared some tea with walnuts and offered it to him... After making sure that there was no one about, Hsi-mên threw his arms around her, kissed her and caressed her tongue with his own. She took the jade sceptre into her hand. Their passions were stirred into flame. They drank no more, but saw to the fastenings upon the door. Then both took off their clothes, and the woman prepared the coverlets upon the bed. It was the hour before sunset. The wine had set Hsi-mên Ch'ing on fire. He took the silver clasp from its case, and put it in position, while the woman fondly touched him with her slender hands. The woman looked and saw his splendid organ; indeed the veins were purple and swollen, the flesh solid and hard. She sat on his knees; they threw their arms round each other's necks, and kissed again. Then she raised one of her legs, and, with her hand, helped that sword to find its scabbard. For a while, they jousted together. Hsi-mên Ch'ing allowed his hands to wander over the woman's body. It was very soft but firm. The hair was fine and delicate. Then he told the woman to lie down on the bed and, placing her legs on either side of his body, fell savagely upon her.

'The god of battle now holds sway over the green-
Clad bed.
The coverlets, with silk-embroidered love birds, feel
The press of strife.
Heroes display their prowess on the coral pillows,
Striving for victory within the silken curtains.
The hero dashes madly to the fray, plunges his spear
With fury home.
The heroine's heart beats wildly. She yawns and
Gapes and fain would all devour him.
Then up he brings his pair of culverins, and lets them
Loose upon the enemy skulking in the trousers.

The Kidnapping. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

The other raises her shield to meet the mad attack of
The great general stationed beneath the navel.
One plays the golden cockerel, standing on single leg,
Raising the other high, to show his mettle
The other, like a stripped tree, with roots that spread
In all directions, thrusts forth to meet the foe.
When they have fought a while, the shining eyes are
Dimmed,
A single movement makes them squirm and quiver.
Though their limbs tremble, they still fight on,
Clashing a hundred times, they cannot break away.
Then, letting loose the dam, the captain of the scanty
Hair would drown his enemy in the flood.
The general in black armour feigns to make a thrust,
But turns aside and seeks to fly.
The warden of the navel is unhorsed, thrown down
And ground to dust in but a moment.
Lord "warm and tight" now plays the fool, tumbling
He falls to the far depths of the abyss.
The heavy mail is broken into pieces, like faded
Blossoms when the storm breaks on them,
The silken cap gives way beneath the strain, like
Fallen leaves before the raging winds
And Marshal "sulphurous", his crest awry, can find
No place to flee.
Prince "Silver Armour" holds his ground, and swears
He'll stand till death.
The skies are hidden by a sad, dark cloud
The warriors roll stricken on the field.'

Porphyria unum ludum super omnia amabat. Coniuncta viro amatoriis modis, voluit ut ille florem in postico carperet, ipsa florem intimum temptaret. Hoc modo satiata in illam oblivionem venit quam amantes cupiunt, et ludo ita studebat ut triginta diebus Han Tao-kuo in prima porta vix ter voluptatem caperet. Praeterea labris sceptrum eburneum titillabat totamque noctem fovebat, semper desiderans : si dominus languit, labra vires praebuerunt.

Nothing could have given Hsi-mên Ch'ing greater pleasure. All that day they played, till the watchman gave his first warning. Then he went home . . .

His head was like a leopard's and his eyes were round. His colour was that of purple liver, and upon his head he wore a cock's crest. His tattered robe was flesh-coloured; his shaggy beard all matted together. By all seeming he might have been a veritable Lohan, a fiery-tempered dragon. He was lying upon the bench of contemplation, his head bowed and his shoulders hunched upon his chest. The stream of matter from his nostrils looked like chop-sticks of jade.

Hsi-mên Ch'ing thought that this must certainly be a wonder-working monk, so unusual was his appearance. 'I will arouse him,' he said to himself, 'and question him.' Then, in a loud voice, he said to the holy man : 'Where do you come from ? Where is your monastery ?' There was no answer. He repeated his questions, but still there was no reply. He asked a third time, and now the monk came down from the bench of contemplation, stretched himself, put forth a hand and straightened his body, and opened one eye. He made a slight inclination of the head to Hsi-mên Ch'ing and said in a hoarse voice :

'Why do you ask me these questions ? I am only a poor monk. My name is everywhere the same. I come from a foreign land, from the deep pine forests of India, from the temple of the Frozen Mansions. I roam about the world, dispensing remedies to give ease to men. What would you say to me ?'

'Since you have remedies to give ease to men,' Hsi-mên Ch'ing said, 'I should be glad to have something that would inspire me with new ardour. Have you any such medicine ?'

'I have,' the Indian Monk said.

'I should like to ask you to come to my house,' Hsi-mên Ch'ing said. 'Will you come ?'

'I will come. I will come.'

'If you are willing,' Hsi-mên Ch'ing said, 'let us start at once.'

(Hsi-mên brought the monk to his home and after he had enjoyed an enormous meal, he gave Hsi-mên the drug, and said:)

Face to Face. Painting on silk from an album of the K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

'I have one medicine made by Lao Chün, to whom the Goddess Mother gave the secret. None are able to secure this medicine but those of whom I think well. You have been kind to me and I will give you a few pills.' He took a gourd from his long bag and emptied about a hundred pills. 'Take one on each occasion,' he said, 'but no more. Take it with a drop of spirits.' He opened the other gourd and took from it some red powder about two ch'iens' weight. 'Every time you use it,' said the monk, 'take two grains and no more. Should you feel a burning sensation, take your weapon in your hand and stroke your thighs a hundred times or so. Then all will be well. Be judicious in your use of these remedies and give none to anyone else.'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing took the medicines in both hands.

'Tell me,' he said, 'what is the merit of this medicine ?'
'Shaped like an egg,
Yellow like a duck,
In three successive processes Lao Chün prepared it
At the bidding of the Jade Goddess.
To him who glances at it heedlessly
It seems like earth or dung
But, when its merits are known, its worth is more
Than jewels.
No gold will buy it
And jade is valueless compared with it.
Though you are girt with gold and robed in purple,
Though you are dressed in sable
And ride upon the plumpest chargers,
Though you uphold the pillars of the state
Take but a speck of this, set it upon you, then
Rush like a whirlwind to the bridal chamber
There you will find Spring always young,
All will be bright and gay.
There will be no ruins on the jade mountain
And the moonbeams will shine bright upon your
Window.

The first engagement will leave you full of vigour,
The second, even stronger than before.
Though twelve exquisite beauties, all arrayed in
Scarlet, wait your onset,
You may enjoy each one, according to your fancy
And, all night through, erect your spear will stand.
Soon, new strength will be given to limbs and belly,
It will refresh the testicles, invigorate the penis.
In a hundred days, hair and beard will be black once
More
In a thousand days, your body will know its power.
Your teeth will be strong, your eyes more bright,
Your manhood stiffened. Then at the first planting
The seed will germinate.
I fear that this may seem beyond belief.
Pray try the medicine on the cat.
After three days he'll burn with fire,
Four days will see him quite beyond control
And, if a white cat, he will soon be black,
Then cease to piss and shit, and so will die.
Though in the summer you may sleep exposed
And in the winter plunge yourself in water
Yet, if you cannot keep your bowels free
Your hair you'll surely lose.
Each time, take but a grain or so.
Your weapon will be merciless.
Ten women in one night will be as one to you,
You'll feel no slackening of vital power.
The old woman will knit her brows,
The young one's strength will hardly stay the course.
When you are sated, and would give up the fight
Swallow a mouthful of cold water. Then withdraw
Your weapon;
You will not be harmed.
In pleasure and enjoyment you will spend your nights,
The joys of Spring will fill the orchid chamber.
I make this gift only to those
Who worthily appreciate its qualities.
Take it, I pray, and may your manly vigour flourish
Evermore.'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing listened. When the old monk had done, he asked for the recipe. 'When I send for a doctor,' he said, 'I insist upon having a good one, and, when I have medicine, I like to know what it's made of. When I have finished it, and can't get any more from you, it will be most awkward. I don't mind how much you ask, you shall have it.' He said to Tai An : 'Go to the back and bring thirty taels of white gold.' He offered the gold to the monk and again asked for the recipe. The monk laughed.

'I am a poor monk,' he said, 'and I roam all over the world. Gold is valueless to me. Keep your money.' He rose and prepared to go away.

Hsi-mên Ch'ing saw that he would not get the recipe from the old man. He said : 'If you will not take my gold, let me offer you a roll of cloth, fifteen feet long, to make a habit for yourself.' He bade a servant bring a roll and presented it to the Indian Monk with both hands. The monk thanked him and

Amorous Games of Hsi-mên and Lady Amphora. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

made a reverence. Before he went away, he cautioned Hsi-mên Ch'ing, telling him not to take more than the proper dose. Then he picked up his long bag and his staff, went out of the door, and mysteriously disappeared.

(Hsi-mên Ch'ing now had the medicine the monk had given him and he desired nothing better than to try its effects. Porphyry's invitation came at the right moment.)

Hsi-mên Ch'ing took a pill with the spirit, undressed himself and sat down on the side of the bed. Then he opened the case in which he kept his instruments. Primum in penis radicem fibulam argenteam posuit, et anulum sulfureum super eam fixit. Tum aliquantulum pulveris rubri e cistella argentea cepit, haud amplius quam quod praescriptum erat, et intra oculum equinum inseruit; extemplo valuit medicamentum. Penis stetit rectus mirum quam terribilis; intumuit caput et cyclops late patuit; nervi transversi visu erant faciles; livido erat colore iecori similis, septem fere digitos longus, et solito multum crassior! Hsi-mên Ch'ing was highly pleased: he decided that the medicine was a very fine thing. Mulier super genibus viri nuda sedens penem manibus cepit and said: 'So this is why you wished to drink spirits. You wished to make him like this.' She asked Hsi-mên where he had obtained the medicine, and he told her about the Indian Monk.

She laid herself upon the bed, with two pillows under her. Penem suum ad opus promovere voluit, sed caput ita intumuit ut longum esset tempus antequam res succederet; atque etiam tum per breve spatium pervenit. Tandem mulieri suci amoris fluebant et via facilior esse incipit. Iter facit, sed vix trans caput, mentula. Tum vinum, quod vir potaverat, auxilio venit; penis leviter primo detractus ad altum demersus est et voluptatem vix enarrandam dedit. Mulier quoque ad summas delicias pervenit; in lecto iacebat quasi se movere nequiret, et voce flebili loquebatur: 'O vir carissime, tua mentula mirabilis mortem mihi adferet.' Mox iterum susurrabat: 'Mea vita, mea voluptas, nonne vis in postico fructum amoris capere?' Obvertit ille mulierem in ventrem et penem rursus promovet. Tam violentus erat impetus ut crepitus magnus fieret. 'Urge, urge, meae deliciae,' clamavit Porphyria; 'noli dubitare. Si vis, lucernam adfer et voluptas maior erit.' Cum lucerna propior admota esset, infra iacens crura late extendit. Separat Hsi-mên et prorsus irruit, dum mulier ultro femora obviam tollit et medium flosculum suum tremule susurrans manu titillat.

Hsi-mên Ch'ing could not find words to express his admiration. He gathered her in his arms, and lifted her skirts that he might see her dainty feet. She was wearing shoes of ravenblack silk, no broader than his two fingers. His heart was overflowing with delight. Mouth to mouth they drank together, and smiled. Golden Lotus asked how old he was. 'I am twenty-seven. I was born on the twenty-eighth day of the seventh month.' Then she said, 'How many ladies are there in your household?' and he said, 'Besides the mistress of my house, there are three or four, but with none of them am I really satisfied.' Again she asked, 'How many sons have you?' and he answered, 'I have no sons, only one little girl who is shortly to be married.' Then it was his turn to ask her questions.

He took from his sleeve a box, gilded on the outside and silver within. There were fragrant tea-leaves in it and some small sweetmeats. Placing some of them on his tongue, he passed them to her mouth. They embraced and hugged one another; their cries and kissings made noise enough, but old woman Wang went in and out, carrying dishes and warming the wine, and paid not the slightest attention to them. They played their amorous games without any interference from her. Soon they had drunk as much as they desired, and a fit of passion swept over them. Hsi-mên Ch'ing's desire could no longer be restrained; he disclosed the treasure which sprang from his loins, and made the woman touch it with her delicate fingers. From his youth upwards he had constantly played with the maidens who live in places of ill-fame, and he was already wearing the silver clasp which had been washed with magic herbs. Upstanding, it was, and flushed with pride, the black hair strong and bristling. A mighty warrior in very truth.

'A warrior of stature not to be despised,
At times a hero and at times a coward.
Who, when for battle disinclined,
As though in drink sprawls to the east and west.
But, when for combat he is ready,
Like a mad monk he plunges back and forth
And to the place from which he came returns.
Such is his duty.
His home is in the loins, beneath the navel.
Heaven has given him two sons
To go wherever he goes
And, when he meets an enemy worthy of his steel,
He will attack, and then attack again.'

Then Golden Lotus took off her clothes. Hsi-mên Ch'ing fondled the fragrant blossom. No down concealed it; it had all the fragrance and tenderness of fresh-made pastry, the softness and the appearance of a new-made pie. It was a thing so exquisite that all the world would have desired it.

'Tender and clinging, with lips like lotus petals
Yielding and gentle, worthy to be loved.
When it is happy, it puts forth its tongue
And welcomes with a smile.
When it is weary, it is content
To stay where Nature put it
At home in Trouser Village
Among the scanty herbage.
But, when it meets a handsome gallant
It strives with him and says no word.'

After that day, Golden Lotus came regularly to the old woman's house to sport with Hsi-mên Ch'ing. Love bound them together as it were with glue; their minds and hearts were united as if with gum . . .

'Ah, my son,' Golden Lotus said, 'you could not wait for your mother to come, but went to bed first. I have been drinking in the inner court. Cassia was singing there, and I have had several large cups of wine. I had to find my way here alone in the dark, one foot in the air and the other on the ground. Really, I don't know how I got here.' She asked Plum Blossom for some tea. When the maid brought

Nocturnal Walk in the Snow on the 15th day of the 1st month. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

it, Golden Lotus drank it and made a sign to her. Plum Blossom understood and went to heat some water for her. The woman washed herself with sandal-wood water and alum and took off her head-dress so that her hair was held by a single golden pin. She stood before the mirror, reddened her lips and put some fragrant tea into her mouth. Then she came back and Plum Blossom brought her sleeping shoes. The maid went away and made fast the door behind her.

The woman took the lamp and set it beside the bed. Then she pulled down the curtains, took off her scarlet trousers, and stripped her jade body. Hsi-mên Ch'ing was sitting on the bed, the silver clasp in position upon a fierce-looking weapon. Golden Lotus was startled when she looked at it. It was too great for one hand to grasp, full-blooded and heavy. She stared at Hsi-mên Ch'ing and said : 'I know what you've been doing. You've been taking some of that monk's medicine to make it like that. Then you think you'll come here to show what a mighty fellow you are. Fresh wine and fresh meat for others. I have to content myself with the defeated champion. I can serve the meanest of your purposes. Then you pretend to be fair to me. Why, the other day, when I was not in my room, you came and ran off with the instruments to the Sixth Lady's room and carried on your games there. And she pretends to be one of those pure, pious people. You wretched little creature, you can be twisted round anybody's finger. When I think about it I swear I won't have anything to do with you for a hundred days.'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing laughed. 'Come here, you little strumpet,' he said, 'et vide si labra tua facient ut iste deturgescat : si poteris, talentum argenti tibi dabo.'

'Me tui pudet, o scelerate,' inquit mulier : 'quo modo deturgescet tibi qui istam potionem biberis ?' Attamen in lecto recumbit et penem inter labra rubra ponit. 'Tam immanis est,' inquit, 'ut os meum laedat.' Deinde sugebat et caput mentulae lingua sua titillabat, cutem exterum lingebat et inter labra sursum deorsum volvebat. Sed quanquam genis gigantem palpabat et mille modis amoris ludebat istud nil nisi longius et crassius fiebat. Aspexit mulierem Hsi-mên. Intra aulaea serica corpus venustum effulsit. Digitis levibus illa monstrum villosum cepit, intra labra inseruit, totum devoravit, ex ore marcidum expulit.

Beside them lay a long-haired white cat. Watching the movement of this hairy thing, the cat crouched ready to spring. Hsi-mên had a gold speckled fan in his hand and with it he teased the cat. Golden Lotus seized the fan and struck a hard blow at the cat. It ran quickly away. She looked up at Hsi-mên Ch'ing and said : 'You terrible fellow. You are amusing yourself with me, and that isn't enough for you, you must play with the cat. Suppose it claws me. What then ? Do you think I shall go on playing this game ?'

'You funny little whore,' Hsi-mên said, 'you would talk anybody to death.'

'Why don't you ask the Lady of the Vase to play these games with you ?' Golden Lotus went on. 'You ask me every time you come here. What that medicine you have been taking may be I don't know; etsi totum diem suxero, nil omnino proficiam.'

Hsi-mên took from his sleeve a little silver box and from it picked out with a tooth-pick some of the reddish ointment. He put it upon the horse's mouth. In lecto recubans curavit ut mulier super ipsum veheretur. 'Sine ut me prius disponam,' inquit illa; 'quod cum fecerim, fortasse intrare poteris.' Sed caput mentulae tam latum esset ut diu utrinque esset laborandum antequam pars exigua tandem intravit. Mulier super virum vecta huc illuc se movebat nec potuit dolorem dissimulare. 'Mea vita,' clamat, 'tantopere istud me laedit ut non diutius ferre possim'; et manu sollicita se tractans invenit penem vix dimidium intravisse. Sputum ex ore colligens interiorem cunni partem madefecit ut via facilior esset. Tum ultro citroque movebatur et mentula pedetemptim tota in vulvam intravit.

'Darling,' the woman said, 'the medicine you always used to take gave me a tremendous feeling of burning inside, but this makes me feel a coldness that reaches even to my heart. My whole body seems numb. I shall certainly die at your hands to-day.'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing laughed. 'I will tell you a story,' he said. 'I heard it from Brother Ying. Once upon a time a man died and went down to the infernal regions. The King of Hades put an ass's skin upon his body and told him that in his next life he must be a donkey. But the record-keeper looked in his books and found that the man still had thirty years to live. They sent him back to earth. His wife perceived that, except for his weapon, his body was as it had been before, but he had still the donkey's weapon. "I will go back to Hell and change it," he said to his wife. "No, my dear," said the wife. "They might not let you come back again. I will put up with it somehow."'

Golden Lotus struck him with the fan. 'Beggar Ying's wife is able to put up with a donkey's weapon,' she said. 'That is obvious. You are a foul-mouthed thing and I ought to hit you harder.'

They went on with their work, but Hsi-mên Ch'ing did not give forth. He closed his eyes and made the woman move. Salit ista, se promovet, sonitum terribilem edit. Deinde locum mutaverunt. Vir crura mulieris tenebat, et penem summa vi urgebat. Valde laborabat despiciens, sed ipse parum sentiebat, altera modo non liquescebat. Loco rursus mutato mulier collum brachiis amplexa in virum se iniecit, in os linguam inseruit, penem totum intra cepit. Tum leniter susurrabat—'deliciae meae, aut finem facies aut moriar.' Mox languit; lingua quasi gelu frigida fuit; e muliere suci amoris fundebantur. Hsi-mên sensit calidum esse cunnum; iecur ipsius ferbuit et supra modum gaudebat. Suci quasi flumen ita effluxerunt ut mulier mappa detergeret. Tum amplexus et mutua basia dederunt, sed penis rigidus manebat. Unam horam dormiverunt, sed post somnum nondum satiata mulier supra virum se sustulit atque iterum lusit. Suci rursus effluxerunt et tandem lassari incepit. Hsi-mên Ch'ing was undaunted. He could only marvel at the medicine which the Indian Monk had given him. Then they heard the cock crow. It was just before dawn.

'Si non detumuerit, redi ad me hac nocte, et labra mea facient ut deturgeat.'

'You can never do so,' Hsi-mên said, 'there is only one thing that will.'

Golden Lotus asked what that was, but he said: 'This is not a thing to be told to other ears. Wait till to-night and I will tell you then.'

(Hsi-mên spent the whole day and far into the night drinking with friends.)

Golden Lotus had taken off her head-dress, prepared the bed and washed her queynt with perfumed water. She was waiting for Hsi-mên Ch'ing to come. When he came, he was drunk. She quickly undressed him; Plum Blossom brought him tea and he went to bed. Golden Lotus, quite naked, sat on the side of the bed and bent over to tie the ribbons of her shoes to her white ankles. The shoes were low-heeled and scarlet. The sight aroused Hsi-mên's passion, and his handle stood up sharply. He asked her for the love instruments and she brought them out from beneath the bed and gave them to him. He put on two silver clasps, and then threw his arm round her. 'To-day,' he said, 'I want to play with the flower in the back court. Will you let me?'

'You shameless fellow,' the woman said, 'you have played that game often enough with Shu T'ung. Why need you ask me? If that is what you want, go to the slave.'

Hsi-mên Ch'ing laughed. 'Little oily mouth,' he said, 'if you will let me do this, I shall want the boy no more. Don't you understand that I am particularly fond of this kind of play. I will only put it there for a little while.'

Thus urged, the woman said: 'I don't believe you can do it. Your thing is too big. But take the ring from its head and I will try.'

Daughter of the Snow sold to a Procurer. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

Hsi-mên Ch'ing took off the sulphur ring and left only the clasps at the root. Iussit mulierem in lectum vadere, manibus et pedibus se tollere, nates alte levare. Sputum in pene posuit et sensim se promovit. Sed caput mentulae superbum et truculentum modo breve spatium intrare voluit. Mulier supercilia contrahit et mappam mordet. 'Deliciae meae,' inquit, 'cave ne nimis celeriter intres; posticum enim non est ianuae simile. Te sentio intus quasi igne comburor.'

'Never mind,' Hsi-mên said, 'to-morrow you shall have a dress of fine embroidery.'

'I have clothes like that already,' Golden Lotus said. 'What I want is a dress like that of Cassia, a lined skirt of gold and silver with jade-coloured ribbons and fur. It is very beautiful and everybody but me has such a skirt. I don't know how much it will cost, but please buy me one.'

'Don't worry,' Hsi-mên said, 'I will buy one for you.' He plunged violently forward.

The woman turned her head and looked at him. 'Darling,' she said, 'it is painful enough. Why are you so violent ? Won't you let yourself go now ?'

But Hsi-mên Ch'ing would not. Crura tenuit, dum penem sursum deorsum vadentem aspicit, et clamat 'Indulge mihi, scortulum, et delicias tuas me appella; tum me totum capies.'

The woman closed her eyes and said something like the whisper of a bird. She gently shook her willow-like waist and thrust her sweet body forward to meet his. The sound was so soft that no words can describe it. After a time, Hsi-mên felt that the essence of his manhood was ready. Crura compressit et sonitu tam terribili se promovit ut mulier diceret se nihil amplius pati posse. Cum tempus adveniret illam contra se retraxit, in sinum ultimum invasit, summa voluptate fructus. Vix in mulierem se profudit, mulier virum totum recepit, et in lecto commixti iacebant.

Hsi-mên Ch'ing's legs were still painful. Recordatus est se aliquantum medicamenti diuturni habere a medico olim datum quod mixtum lacte humano bibendum erat. He went to the Lady of the Vase's

The Visit of the Doctor. From the original paintings illustrating the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

room and asked Heart's Delight to give him some of hers. Heart's Delight was dressed in her holiday clothes. She at once gave him some milk and gave him what he needed for the medicine. Hsi-mên sat by the fire and told Welcome Spring to bring him something to eat. Welcome Spring did so, then went to play chess with Plum Blossom. She knew that Heart's Delight would give him any water or tea he might want. When the maid had gone, Hsi-mên lay down on the bed, bracas detraxit, extulit penem quem iussit mulierem in ore capere dum ipse vino fruitur. 'Suge istum mihi bene,' inquit, 'et pictam stolam tibi dabo quam die festo induas.'

'Sane,' respondit mulier, 'etiam atque etiam sugere volo.'

'My child,' Hsi-mên Ch'ing said, 'I should like to burn some incense on your body.'

'Do what you like,' the woman said.

Hsi-mên Ch'ing made fast the door, tum stolam et bracas detraxit. In lecto mulier iacebat et Hsi-mên a sinu tres murrae particulas vino madefactas cepit quas ex illo tempore habuerat cum domina Lin sibi placuisset. Vestem mulieris detraxit et murrae aliam particulam supra pectus, aliam supra ventrem, aliam supra cunnum posuit. Tum omnes simul incendit. In cunnum penem posuit, capite demisso inspexit, ferox se promovit; denique speculum cepit ut melius inspiceret nec longum tempus erat, antequam murra prope ad mulieris cutem incensa est; illa supercilia torsit, dentes summo dolore clausit, tandem voce tremente dixit : 'Fac finem; nil amplius pati possum.'

'Chang IV, you strumpet, whose woman are you ?' Hsi-mên Ch'ing cried.

'I am yours.'

'Say that you once belonged to Hsiung Wang, but now you belong to me.'

'This strumpet once was Hsiung Wang's wife, but now she belongs to this darling.'

'Do I know how to deal with a woman ?'

'Yes, my darling, you know well how to treat a woman's queynt.'

So they talked, in a manner which we cannot describe. Penis tam longus, tam crassus erat ut cunnum totum impleret. Sursum deorsum progressus nunc cor floris rubrum fecit psittaci linguae instar, nunc nigrum vespertilionis alae simile. Gratum erat et mirabile visu. Crura tenuit, corpora iuxta comprimebantur, penis alte ad ipsum radicem iniit. Mulieris oculi patebant et ex illa suci amatorii fluxerunt. Hsi-mên ad summam voluptatem pervenit et semen suum quasi rivus effluxit.

After he had burned her in this way, he opened the cupboard and gave her a silk embroidered cape . . .

When they had drunk wine enough, and there was nobody in the room, Hsi-mên Ch'ing took the ribbon from his sleeve, in penem posuit et oras circum corpus fixit. Deinde medicamentum vino mixtum bibit. Porphyria penem palpabatur et cito superbus surrexit. Exstabant venae et frustum iecoris purpurei videbatur. Taenia serica multo plus quam fibula valuit. Hsi-mên Ch'ing super genua sua mulierem sustulit et in cunnum penem urgebat. They drank wine, each from the other's mouth, and their tongues played together.

In the evening, old woman Fêng made some pies with pork and radishes for them. Porphyry ate some with him and, when the maid had cleared away, they went to the bed. They pulled aside the silken curtains and took off their clothes. The woman knew that Hsi-mên Ch'ing liked to do things in the light and she set the lamp on a small table near the bed. Then she made fast the door and went to wash her queynt. When she came back she took off her trousers and went to bed. They lay down together and put their arms round one another. Hsi-mên Ch'ing was still thinking of Captain Ho's wife and his passion blazed like fire. Penis erat valde durus. Iussit mulierem manibus cruribusque levari equi instar et se in postici florem promovit. Hoc sescenties fecit dum fundamentum mulieris magno cum fragore plaudit. Illa manibus demissis cum floris corde conludit, and called him endearing names unceasingly.

Still Hsi-mên was not content. He sat up, put on a white short coat and set a pillow beneath him. Then he bade the woman turn over and tied her feet with two ribbons to the bed-posts. He began by playing the game of the golden dragon stretching its claws, and nunc huc, nunc illuc se urgebat, alias alte descendens, alias parvum iter faciens. He was afraid she might catch cold and wrapped a red silk coat about her body. He brought the light nearer and bent his head to watch the movements. Quoties penem extulit, toties ad ipsum capulam reposuit; et idem sescenties fecerunt. The woman, her voice trembling, called him every endearing word she could think of. Mox se totum retraxit et aliquantum pulveris rubri in summo pene posuit. Quem cum rursus urgebat cunnus mulieris adeo titillabatur ut vix pati posset. Illa supra se tollens precabatur ut altius descenderet; sed vir consulto ad foramen adlusit cor floris molliter tangens nec voluit altius progredi. E muliere quasi ex helice limus effluxerunt suci amatorii. Sub lucerna Hsi-mên candida crura utrimque circa corpus suum sublata aspexit. Ipso tremente crura quoque tremere vidit, et visu etiam ferocior erat.

'Do you love me, you strumpet?' he asked her.

'I have been thinking about you all the time,' she said. 'I can only hope that you will be like the pine tree and the cypress, evergreen. Do not weary of me and give me up. If you should do that, it would kill me. I dare not tell this to anyone else, and nobody knows it. And I shall not tell that turtle of mine. He is away and he has money. He has other women and need not bother about me.'

'My child,' Hsi-mên said, 'if you will give yourself entirely to me, I will find another wife for him when he comes back and then you can belong to me always.'

They went on for a very long time. Then Hsi-mên unloosed the ribbons which tied her feet, and they went to sleep together. About the third night-watch he got up, put on his clothes, and washed his

Penetrating the Cords of the Lute. Painting on silk from an album of the K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

Lovers reading an Erotic Book. Painting on silk from an album of the K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

White porcelain goblet decorated in famille verte *enamels. K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.*

Lovers like a Pair of Mandarin Ducks. Painting on silk from an album of the K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722). C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

hands. Porphyry opened the door and bade the maid bring them wine and food. They drank again. After more than ten cups of wine, Hsi-mên began to feel tipsy and asked for tea to rinse his mouth. He took a paper from his sleeve and gave it to Porphyry. 'Take this to clerk Kan, and ask him for a dress,' he said. 'You can choose your own pattern and design.' She thanked him, and he went away. Wang Ching carried a lantern and Tai An and Ch'in T'ung led his horse, one on either side.

It was the third night-watch. Dark clouds covered the sky, and the light of the moon could hardly pierce them. The street was deserted; only the barking of dogs could be heard in the distance. Hsi-mên Ch'ing went westwards. Suddenly, as he came near the stone bridge, a whirlwind swept before his horse. It was like a dark form advancing from the bridge to attack him. His horse was startled and reared. Hsi-mên shuddered. He whipped his horse. It shook its mane. Tai An and Ch'in T'ung clung to the bridle with all their strength, but they could not hold it, and the horse galloped wildly till it came to Hsi-mên's gateway. Then it stopped. Wang Ching, with the lantern, was left far behind. When Hsi-mên Ch'ing dismounted, his legs were almost useless, and servants came out to help him in. He went to Golden Lotus's room.

Golden Lotus had come back from the inner court, but she had not gone to bed. She was lying upon her bed, dressed, waiting for Hsi-mên Ch'ing. When he came, she got up at once. She took his clothes and saw that he was drunk, but she asked no questions. Hsi-mên put his hands on her shoulders and drew her towards him.

'You little strumpet!' he murmured, 'your darling is drunk. Get the bed ready: I want to go to sleep.'

She helped him to bed, and, as soon as he was on it, he began to snore like thunder. She could do nothing to wake him, so she took off her clothes and went to bed too. She played delicately with his weapon, but it was as limp as cotton-wool and had not the slightest spirit. She tossed about on the bed, consumed with passionate desire, almost beside herself. Mentulam compressit, sursum deorsum movit, capite suo demisso suxit; it was in vain. This made her wild beyond description. She shook him for a long time and at last he awoke. She asked him where his medicine was. Hsi-mên, still very drunk, cursed her.

'You little strumpet!' he cried, 'what do you want that for? You would like me to play with you, I suppose, but to-day your darling is far too tired for anything of that sort. The medicine is in the little gold box in my sleeve. Give it to me. You will be in luck if you are clever enough to make my prick stand up.'

Golden Lotus looked for the little gold box and, when she found it, opened it. There were only three or four pills left. She took a wine-pot and poured out two cups of wine. She took one pill herself, leaving three. Then she made the terrible mistake of giving him all three. She was afraid anything less would have no effect. Hsi-mên shut his eyes and swallowed them. Before he could have drunk a cup of tea, the medicine began to take effect. Golden Lotus tied the silken ribbon for him and his staff stood up. He was still asleep. She mounted upon his body, in summo pene pulverem posuit et in suum cunnum inseruit; nec mora in ipsum cor floris penetravit. Her body seemed to melt away with delight. Then, with her two hands grasping his legs, she moved up and down about two hundred times. Primo propter siccitatem difficile erat, sed mox suci amatorii effluentes cunnum lubricabant. Hsi-mên Ch'ing let her do everything she wished, but himself was perfectly inert. She could bear it no longer. She put her tongue into his mouth. She held his neck and shook it. In penem se torquebat, qui totus intra cunnum fuit, duo tantum testes extra manent. Manu sua penem tractavit et mirum quam bonus videbatur. Suci effundebantur et brevi tempore quinque mappas consumpserat. Etiam tum Hsi-mên perseveravit, quanquam caput

mentulae intumuerat et calidior fervido carbone fuit. Tanta erat constrictio ut rogaret mulierem redimiculum auferre; sed penis rigidus manebat et sugere iussit. Se flexit illa et labris rubris caput mentulae huc illuc movens suxit. Subito semen album effunditur, quasi argentum vivum, quod in ore cepit nec potuit satis celeriter sorbere. Primo sane semen erat, mox cruor fiebat sine intermissione fluens. Hsi-mên Ch'ing had fainted and his limbs were stiff outstretched.

Golden Lotus was frightened. She hastily gave him some red dates. Semen secutus est sanguis, sanguinem gelidus aer. Golden Lotus was terrified. She threw her arms round him and cried : 'Darling, how do you feel ?'

It was some time before Hsi-mên came to himself. He said : 'My head and eyes spin. I wonder what is the matter.'

'What makes you yield so much to-day ?' Golden Lotus said. 'You must have taken too much medicine.' . . .

Readers, there is a limit to our energy, but none to our desires. A man who sets no bounds to his passion cannot live more than a short time. Hsi-mên had given himself to the enjoyment of women and he did not realise that he was like a lantern whose oil is exhausted and whose light is failing. Now his seed was used up, there was nothing in store for him but death.

Hsi-mên drank the prescribed medicine but his penis remained hard as a rod. Throughout the night the woman, not realising the harm she was doing, fell upon him and played the game of the reversed candle. He fainted away several times.

The Moon Lady still hoped that Hsi-mên might get better, but Heaven had destined him for no more than thirty-three years of life. In the fifth night-watch on the twenty-first day of the first month, the fever consumed him. He panted like an ox and so continued for a long time. At dawn he breathed his last.

'The mandarin ducks, with necks entwined, sport
Upon the water.
The phoenix and his mate, their heads close pressed
Together, fly among the blossoms.
Joyful and tireless, the tree puts forth twin branches,
The girdle, tied in a lovers' knot, is full of sweetness.
He, the red-lipped one, thirsts for a close embrace,
She, of the powdered cheeks, awaits it eagerly.
The silken hose are raised on high
And two new moons appear above his shoulders.
The golden hair-pins fall
And on the pillow rests a bank of lowering clouds.
They swear eternal oaths by ocean and by mountain
Seeking a thousand new delights.
The clouds are bashful and the rain is shy,
They play ten thousand naughty tricks.
"Ch'ia Ch'ia," the oriole cries.
Each sucks the nectar from the other's lips.
The cherry lips breathe lightly, lightly.
In those willowy hips the passion beats,
The mocking eyes are bright like stars,
Tiny drops of sweat are like a hundred fragrant pearls,
The sweet, full breasts tremble,
The dew, like a gentle stream, reaches the heart of the Peony,
They taste the joys of love in perfect harmony,
For stolen joys, in truth, are ever the most sweet.'

The Ju Pu T'uan

Li Yü (1611–80) appears to have been one of the more eclectic scholars of the seventeenth century. He was born at Kiang-su and abandoned his political career after the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1644. He devoted himself to the theatre and formed his own company, with which he had great success all over China, apart from the South-West. A modern author, he broke away from the traditional and conventional theatre. Between each tour he tried his hand at all kinds of things in an attempt to resolve the financial difficulties which beset him. In 1647, he settled at Hangchow and took the name 'Fisherman of the Lake'. Ten years later he was at Nankin, in the centre of China, where he started a publishing firm, which was also a bookshop. While there he put together his 'Mustard Seed Garden'.

The mustard seed was a symbol of smallness, and the idea of the garden derives from the Buddhist saying that Mount Sumeru is contained within a mustard seed. His garden was a miniature world in the oriental tradition. Li Yü arranged the stones, designed a maze and constructed an embankment. While at Nankin, he published several novels and plays which made him famous; some of them were written by other authors, such as *The Zither* by Ts'ao Yin, and although it is not certain whether he actually collaborated on the *Mustard Seed Garden*, he at least wrote the preface. He died sick and poor in Hangchow.

The only novel attributed to him entirely is the *Ju Pu T'uan* (literally, the Mat of the Carnal Prayer).

The story is simple : a 'connoisseur', Wei, obsessed by his insignificant little 'tool', has a surgical graft from the penis of a dog . . . But the parts quoted here show the hero before he has sunk to such expedients. He is still a young married man, trying to initiate his wife into the games of 'Clouds and Rain'.

Extract from Ju Pu T'uan

Her husband gave her the nickname 'Little Saint', since if he allowed his language to become even mildly daring or frivolous, she blushed and took flight. He liked to take his pleasure in the daytime, for it seemed to him that it was very much increased by the possibility of looking at certain secret parts of the body. On several occasions he attempted, in the morning or afternoon, to insert a bold hand beneath her clothing and to strip off her undermost coverings. She resisted vigorously and screamed as though threatened with rape. At night, to be sure, she permitted his embraces, but quite apathetically as though merely doing her duty. He had to stick to the stodgy ancestral method, and any attempt at more modern, more refined variations met with fierce opposition. When he attempted the 'fetching fire

Couple looking at Erotic Pictures. Leaf from an album of the 19th century. Private collection, Paris.

behind the hill' position, she said it was an offence against decorum to turn one's back on one's husband. When he tried the 'making candles by dipping the wick in tallow' position, she said it was reversing the normal conjugal relationship. It took all his powers of persuasion even to make her prop up her thighs on his shoulders. When their pleasure approached a climax, not the tiniest little cry, not the slightest moan of happiness was to be heard from her. Even when he smothered her in tender little cries of 'My heart, my liver,' or 'My life, my everything', she took no more interest than if she had been deaf and dumb. It was enough to drive him to despair. He began to make fun of her and to call her his 'little saint'.

'I must find some way of moulding her to my way of thinking.' The next day he went to a bookseller to buy a marvellously illustrated volume entitled *Ch'un-t'ang*, 'The Vernal Palace'. It was a celebrated book on the art of love, written by no less a man that the Grand Secretary, Chao Tzu-ang. It included thirty-six pictures, clearly and artfully illustrating the thirty-six different 'positions' of vernal dalliance, of which the poets of the T'ang period had sung. He brought the book home with him and handed it to the 'Little Saint'. As they leafed through page after page, he whispered to her :

'You see that I haven't been asking you to join in any monkey business of my own invention. These are all accepted forms of married love, practised by our venerable ancestors. The text and pictures prove it.'

Unsuspectingly, Noble Scent took the volume and opened it. When she turned to the second page and read the big bold heading : *Han-kung yi-chao*, 'traditional portraits from the imperial palace of the Han dynasty' (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), she thought to herself :

'There were many noble and virtuous beauties at the court of the ancient Han rulers—the book must contain portraits of them. Very well, let us see what

Anamorphosis of a Couple on a Stool. Painting on silk. 17th century. Michel Beurdeley collection, Paris.

Anamorphosis of a Couple on a Stool reflected in a metal cylinder. Michel Beurdeley collection, Paris.

the venerable ladies looked like.' And she turned another page. In the midst of an artificial rock garden a man and woman in rosy nakedness, most intimately intertwined. Blushing crimson for shame and indignation, she cried out :

'Foo! How disgusting! Where did you ever get such a thing ? Why, it sullies and befouls the atmosphere of my chaste bedchamber.'

Quickly she summoned a servant girl to burn it. But he restrained her.

'You can't do that. The book is an ancient treasure, worth at least a hundred silver pieces. I borrowed it from a friend. If you wish to pay him a hundred silver pieces in damages, very well, burn it. I shall keep it for my pleasure for a day or two.'

'But why do you have to read such a thing, that offends against all human morality and order ?'

'If it were as offensive and immoral as all that, a famous painter would hardly have lent himself to illustrating it, and a collector would hardly have been willing to buy the book at such a price. Since the world was created, there has been nothing more natural and reasonable than the activities described in this book. That is why a master of the word joined forces with a master of colour to create an illustrated literary work which glorifies the art of the bedchamber. It is sold in bookshops and kept in the archives of the Han-lin Academy, so that future generations may draw knowledge and profit from it. Without such books love between the sexes would gradually lose all charm and ardour so that husband would desert wife and wife deceive husband. The art of fathering children would die out, and dull indifference set in, which would lead to the extinction of the human species. I borrowed this album today, not just to look at it myself but so that you might be aware of its principles, whereby you may the better conceive and give birth to children. Or do you really think that a young couple like us should espouse the ascetic ways of your *ling-tsun*, your "venerable lord", and condemn our youthful marriage to barrenness ? Are you aware of my good

intentions now? Was there anything to be indignant about?'

Noble Scent said:

'I cannot quite believe that what the book represents is really compatible with morality and reason. If that were so, why did our forebears who created our social order not teach us to carry on openly, in broad daylight, before the eyes of strangers? Why do people do it like thieves in the night, shut away in their bedchambers? Doesn't that prove that the whole thing must be wrong and forbidden?'

The Before Midnight Scholar replied with a hearty laugh.

'It's no good blaming you for talking like that, since it's all the fault of your honourable father for shutting you up at home without the companionship of more experienced girls who might have told you a thing or two about romantic matters. Why, you've grown up like a hermit without the slightest knowledge of the world. Of course married couples conduct their business by day as well as night; everyone does. Just think for a moment; if it had never been done in the daylight with others looking on, how would an artist have found out about all the different positions shown in this book? How could he have depicted all these forms and variations of loving union so vividly that one look at his pictures is enough to put us into a fine state of excitement?'

'Yes, but what about my parents? Why didn't they do it in the daytime?'

'I beg your pardon. How do you know they didn't?'

'Why, I would surely have caught them at it. I am sixteen, after all, and all these years I never noticed a thing. Why, I never even heard a sound to suggest that . . .'

Again the Before Midnight Scholar had to laugh aloud:

'Ah, what a dear little silly you are! Such parental occupations are not intended for the eyes and ears of a child! But one of the maids is sure to have heard or seen a little something from time to time. Of course your parents would never have done anything within your sight or hearing; very wisely they did it behind closed doors, for fear that if a little girl like you were to notice anything, her mental health might be upset by all sorts of premature thoughts and daydreams.'

After a moment of silent reflection, Noble Scent said as though to herself:

'That's true. I remember that they occasionally withdrew to their bedchamber in the daytime and bolted the door after them—can that be what they were doing? It's possible. But in broad daylight! To see each other stark naked! How can it be? They must have felt so ashamed.'

'It is ten times more pleasant to make love during the day than at night. The particular attraction lies in each being able to behold the other's nakedness, for such a sight increases the desire. Only two sorts of couple should not make love by day, but the rest without exception should not fail to do so.'

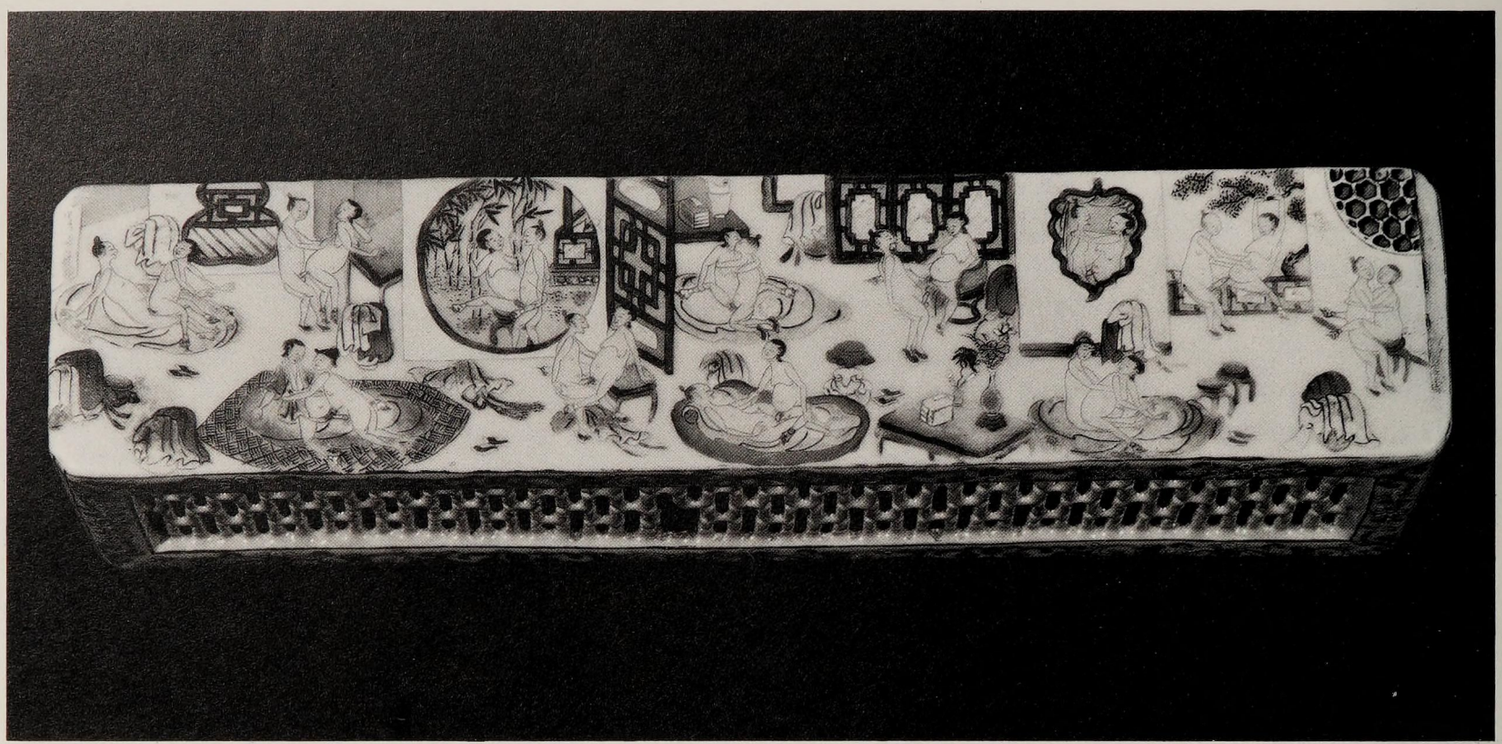
'What are the two exceptions?'

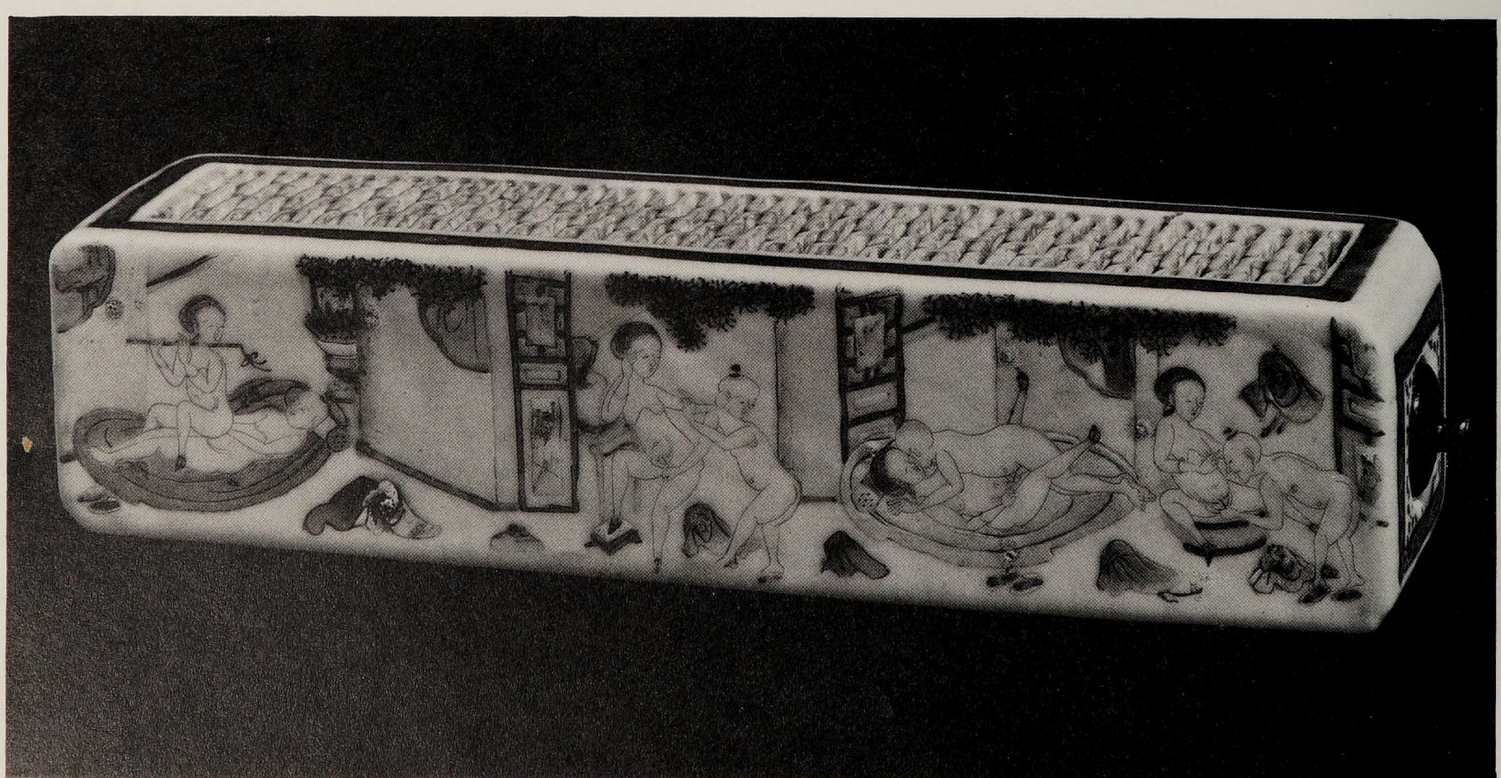
'Either he is ugly and she is beautiful, or she is ugly and he is handsome: in those two cases dealings by daylight are not advisable.'

'Why?'

'Dealings between the sexes give full enjoyment only when both parties feel drawn to one another body and soul, as though by a primordial force, and long for physical union with every fibre of their being. Let us suppose that she is beautiful, that with her full, soft forms and her delicate, luminous, smooth skin she resembles a well-polished jewel. Drawing her close to him, her lover will strip off layer after layer of her garments, and the more he sees of her, the more his desire will increase; his member will stiffen of its own free will and stand up big and hard and strong. But then suppose that she looks toward her partner and discovers ugly features, misshapen limbs, coarse, hairy skin, in short a veritable goblin. He may have been almost acceptable as long as he had clothes on, but now he lies there before her in all his

Two perfume burners decorated in famille rose *enamels with erotic scenes. Late Ch'ien-lung period (1736–1796). Lucien Thenlot and Michel Beurdeley collection, Paris.*





ugliness. And the greater the contrast between his fiendish aspect and the soft radiant beauty of her own body, the more horrified and repelled will she be. Even if she was fully prepared for physical union, must her desire not turn instantly to nothing ? And he in turn, must not his javelin, which only a moment before was standing up so proud and big and strong, shrink to the most dwarfish size at the sight of her obvious revulsion and distaste ? In short, there can be no joyous battle of love between a pair so unequally matched. If they should attempt it just the same, the end is sure to be a lamentable fiasco. Better let them do battle at night when they cannot see each other plainly. That is one exception.

The other is the reverse : he is handsome, she is ugly. The situation is exactly the same, no reason to waste words on it.

And now we come to our own case : here it is equal to equal, radiant skin to radiant skin, well-formed youth to well-formed youth. And now I ask you : Have we any need to take refuge in night and darkness, to crawl under the covers and hide from one another ? Should we not do better to show ourselves to one another in broad daylight and delight in the sight of our bodies in all their natural beauty ? If you don't believe me, let us make a try. Let us just try it once in the daytime.'

By now Noble Scent was half convinced. Despite the modest 'no' of her lips, she was almost willing. A slight flush came to her cheeks, revealing her mounting excitement and anticipation of things to come. This did not escape him, and in secret he thought : 'She is gradually becoming interested. No doubt about it, she would like to play. But her senses have barely begun to awaken. Her hunger and thirst for love are very new to her. If I start in too brusquely, she is very likely to suffer the fate of the glutton who gobbles up everything in sight without taking time to bite or chew. She would get little enjoyment from such indigestible fare. I'd better bide my time and let her dangle a while.'

He moved up a comfortable armchair and sat down. Drawing her to him by the sleeve, he made her sit on his lap. Then he took the picture book and leafed through it page by page and picture by picture.

Unlike other books of a similar kind, the book was so arranged that the front of each leaf bore a picture and the back the text that went with it. The text was in two sections. The first briefly explained the position represented; the second gave a critical estimate of the picture from the standpoint of its artistic value.

Before starting, the Before Midnight Scholar advised his pupil to examine each picture carefully for its spirit and meaning, for then it would provide an excellent model and example for future use. Then he read to her, sentence for sentence.

'Picture No. 1. The butterfly flutters about, searching for flowery scents.'

Accompanying text : 'She sits waiting with parted legs on a rock by the shore of a garden pond. He, first carefully feeling out the terrain, takes pains to insert his nephrite proboscis into the depths of her calyx.

Because the battle has only begun and the region of bliss is still far off, both still show a relatively normal expression, their eyes are wide open.'

'Picture No. 2 shows the queen bee making honey.'

Accompanying text : 'She lies on her back, cushioned in pillows, her parted legs raised as though hanging in mid-air, her hands pressed against "the fruit", guiding his nephrite proboscis to the entrance of her calyx, helping it to find the right path and not to stray. At this moment her face shows an expression of hunger and thirst, while his features reveal the most intense excitement, with which the viewer becomes infected. All this is brought out by the artist with remarkable subtlety.'

'Picture No. 3. The little bird that had gone astray finds its way back to its nest in the thicket.'

Accompanying text : 'She lies slightly to one side, dug into the thicket of cushions, one leg stretched high, and clutches his thigh with both hands as though his obedient vassal had finally found its way to the right place, to her most sensitive spot, and she feared it might go off and get lost again. This accounts for the shadow of anxiety on her otherwise happy face. Both parties are in full swing, quite preoccupied by the spasmodic thrill of the "flying brush" and the "dancing ink." '

'Picture No. 4. The hungry steed gallops to the feed crib.'

Accompanying text : 'She, flat on her back, presses his body to her breast with both hands. Her feet propped up on his shoulders, he has sunk his yak whisk into her calyx to the hilt. Both of them are approaching ecstasy. The way in which the artist pictures their physical and mental state at this moment, their eyes veiled beneath half-closed lids, their tongues enlaced, reveals the master of the brush.'

'Picture No. 5. The dragons are weary of battle.'

Accompanying text : 'Her head rests sideways on the pillow; she has let her arms droop; her limbs feel weak like a silken strand. The man rests his head on the side of her neck, his whole body, too, relaxed like a silken strand. The ecstasy is gone. The "aromatic soul" has fled, the beautiful dream has passed the peak and evaporated into nothingness. The barest thread of life is discernible. Without it one might think the two of them were dead, two lovers in one coffin and one grave. The picture brings home to us the sublimity of bliss savoured to the very end.'

Up to this point Noble Scent had obediently studied the pictures and patiently listened to the commentary. But as he turned another page and began to show her Picture No. 6, she pushed the book away in visible agitation and stood up.

'Enough!' she cried. 'What's the good of all these pictures ? They are just upsetting. You look at them by yourself. I'm going to bed.'

'Just a little patience, we'll run through the rest quickly. The best is still to come. Then we'll both go to bed.'

'As if there weren't time enough tomorrow for looking at books. Why do we have to finish reading it today ?'

He embraced her and closed her mouth with a kiss. And as he kissed her, he noticed something new. They had been married for a whole month. In all that time, she had held the gates of her teeth closed tight when he kissed her. His tongue had never succeeded in forcing or wriggling its way through the solid fence. Until today he had never made contact with her tongue; he hadn't so much as an idea what it was like. But now when he pressed his lips to hers—what a wonderful surprise!—the tip of his tongue encountered the tip of her tongue. For the first time she had opened up the gate.

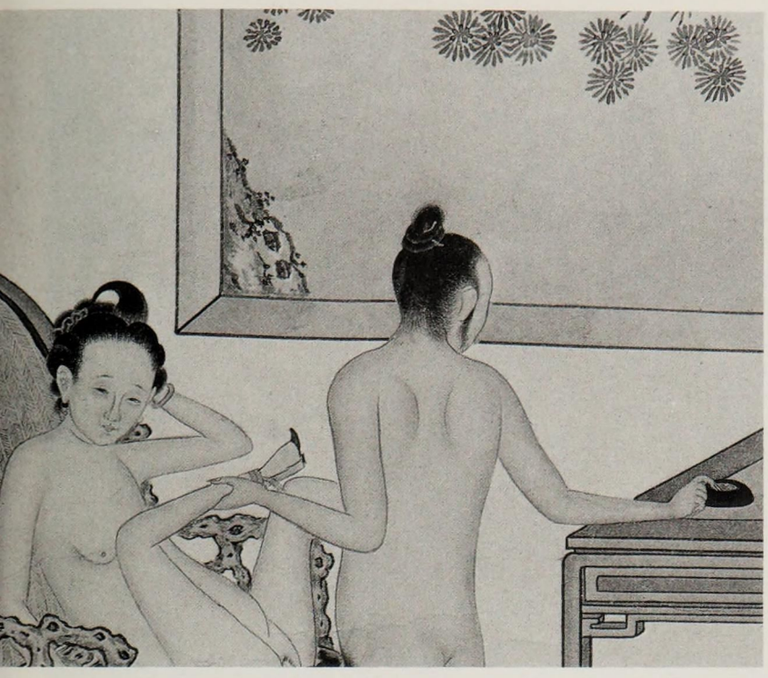
'My heart, my liver!' he sighed with delight. 'At last! And now—why bother moving to the bed ? This chair will do the trick, it will take the place of the rock by the pond, and we shall imitate the lovers in Picture No. 1. What do you say ?'

Noble Scent with affected indignation :

'Impossible. It's not a fit occupation for human beings . . .'

'There you are perfectly right. It is an occupation and pastime more fit for the gods. Come, let us play at being gods.' So saying, he stretched out his hand and began to fiddle with the knot of her sash. And despite her grimace of disapproval, she co-operated, letting him draw her close and permitting him to strip off her undermost covering. Aha, he thought, just looking at those pictures has sprinkled her little meadow with the dew of desire. He undid himself, set her down in the chair and opened her legs. Cautiously he guided his bellwether through the gates of her pleasure house, and then began to remove the rest of her clothes.

Preparation for the Entry of the Jade Stalk through the Strings of the Lute. 18th-century painting. J. M. Beurdeley collection, Paris.



Erotic scene on a miniature chamber-pot of the late Ch'ien-lung period (1736–96). Private collection, Hong Kong.

Why only now ?, you will ask. Why did he begin at the bottom ? Let me explain : this Before Midnight Scholar was an experienced old hand. He said to himself that if he tried to remove her upper garments first, she would feel ashamed and intimidated, her resistance would make things unnecessarily difficult. That is why he daringly aimed his first offensive at her most sensitive spot, figuring that once she surrendered there she would easily surrender on all other fronts. Herein his strategy was that of the commander who defeats an enemy army by capturing its General first. And the truth is that she now quite willingly let him undress her from head to foot—no, not quite—with the exception of a single article of apparel which he himself tactfully spared : her little silk stockings.

After their three-inch long (or short) 'golden lilies' have been bound up, our women customarily draw stockings over the bandages. Only then do their toes and ankles feel at ease. Otherwise their feet, like flowers without leaves, are unlovely to behold.

Now he too cast off his last coverings and flung himself into the fray with uplifted spear. Already his bellwether was in her pleasure house. Groping its way to left and right, as in Picture 1 of the erotic book, slipping and sliding, it sought its way to the 'flower heart'. She helped him in his search by propping up her hands on the arms of the chair and, in tune with his movements, lithely twisting and bending her middle parts toward him. Thus they carried on for a time, exactly in accordance with Picture No. 2 of their textbook.

Suddenly, way down deep, she had a strange feeling of a kind that was utterly new to her; it did not hurt, no, it was more like a sensation of itching or tickling, almost unendurable and yet very, very pleasant.

'Stop,' she cried, 'like that, it's wonderful, please don't move to right or left.'

Thoroughly experienced in these matters, he realized that he had touched her most intimate spot, her flowerheart. Considerately acceding to her wishes,

Small porcelain snuff bottle decorated in sapphire blue and white. K'ang-hsi period (1662-1722). C.T.Loo collection, Paris.

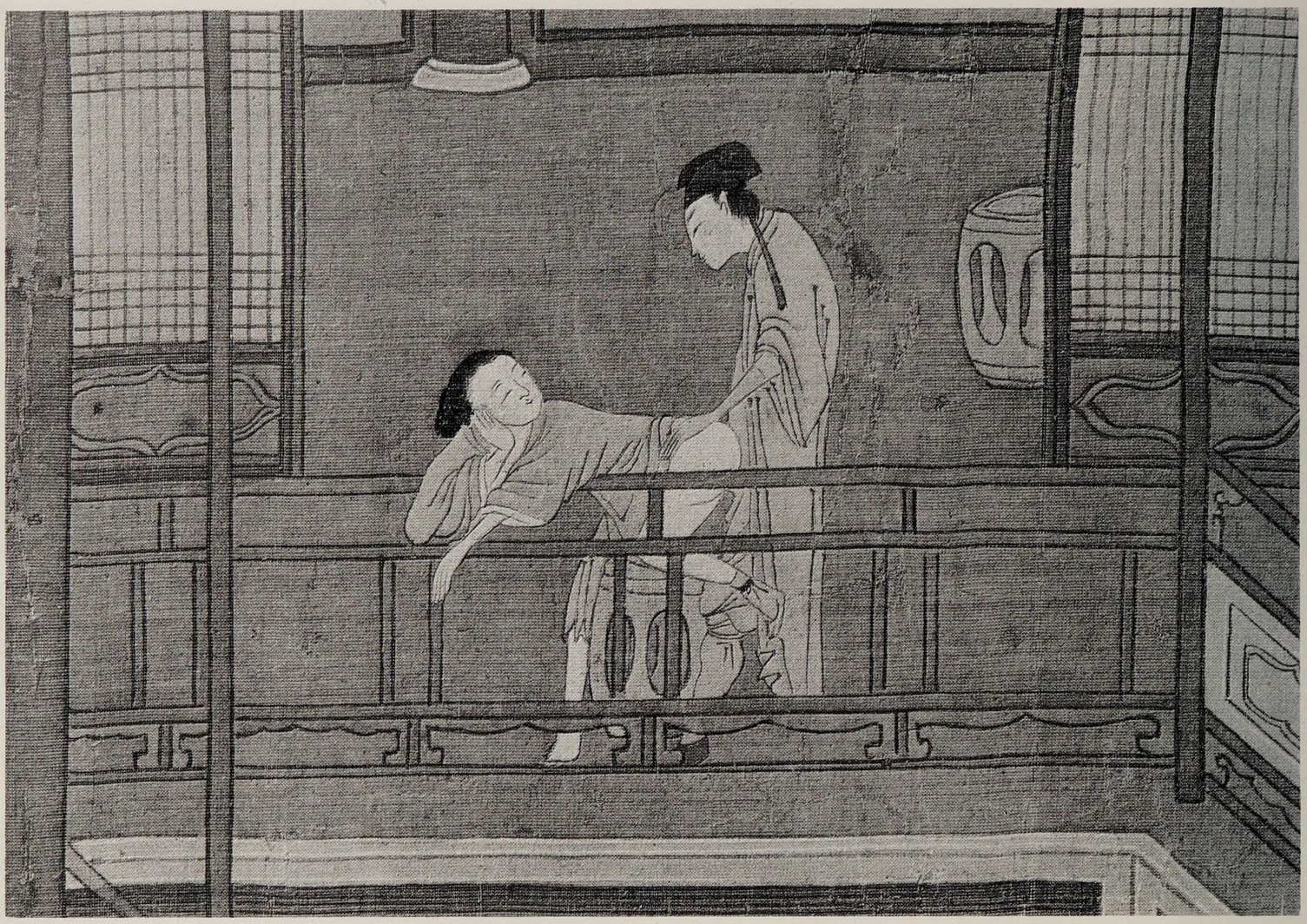
Small bowl of white porcelain decorated with sapphire blue. K'ang-hsi period (1662-1722). C.T.Loo collection, Paris.

Amorous Games in a 'Flower Garden.' Detail of a painting on silk after Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Louis Bataille collection, Paris.

he attacked the spot with all his might, without straying from his course; now thrusting hard, now stroking. The intruder made himself thoroughly at home on her property, and she was overcome by an irresistible desire to punish him for his insolence. Choking would be a fair punishment she thought.

Removing her hands from the arms of the chair, she let his back slip down and dug her hands into his buttocks. This enabled her to press closer to him, an operation in which he helped by clasping her slender waist in his hands and holding her as tightly as he could. Thanks to the intimate conjunction thus achieved—they were now exactly in the position illustrated in Picture No. 2—she held his stiff, thick bellwether firmly enough to start slowly strangling it.

Amorous Games in a 'Flower Garden.' Detail of a painting on silk after Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Louis Bataille collection, Paris.



While sparing no effort and answering pressure with pressure, he saw that her eyes were clouding over and the stately edifice of her hair was becoming undone.

'*Hsin-kan*, my heart, my liver,' he panted. 'You seem to be on the verge—but it is very uncomfortable in this chair; shall we not continue on the bed?'

This suggestion did not appeal to her. She had the rascally intruder just where she wanted him: just a little longer, and she would choke the life out of him. At this last stage, she was quite unwilling to be cheated of her pleasure. If they were to move to the bed now, he would slip away from her. No, this was no time for interruptions! She shook her head resolutely. Then closing her eyes as though she were already half asleep, she said—this was her pretext—that she was much too tired to move.

The Obliging Servant. Gouache-painting. Early 19th century. François Duhau de Bérenx collection, Paris.

He decided on a compromise : leaving her position unchanged, he placed his hands beneath her seat in such a way that she could not slip down, bade her throw her arms round his neck. Pressing his mouth to hers, he lifted her up carefully and carrying her thus, like the horseman who gazes on flowers as he rides, he conveyed her to the bedroom where they went on with the game.

Suddenly she let out a scream : 'Dearest, ah! ah! ah! . . .'

She pressed closer and closer to him and the sounds that issued from her mouth were like the moans and groans of one dying. It was clear to him that she was on the threshold. And he too at the same time! With his last strength he pressed his nephrite proboscis into the sanctum of her flower-temple. Then for a

time they lay enlaced as though in a deathlike sleep. She was first to stir; she heaved a deep sigh and said :

'Did you notice ? I was dead just now.'

'Of course I noticed. But we don't call it "death." We call it "giving off an extract." '

'What do you mean by "giving off an extract ?" '

'Both in man and woman a subtle essence of all the bodily humours is at all times secreted. At the peak of amorous pleasure one of the body's vessels overflows and gives off some of this extract. Just before the flow, the whole body, skin and flesh and bones, falls into a deep, unconscious sleep. Our physical state before, during, and after the flow is called *tiu* "a giving off of extract." It is depicted in Picture No. 5.'

'Then I was not dead ?'

'Of course not. You gave off an extract.'

'If that is so, I hope I may do it day after day and night after night.'

He burst into a resounding laugh.

'Well, was I not right to recommend the picture book as an adviser ? Is it not priceless ?'

'Yes, indeed. A priceless treasure. We must consult it over and over again. A pity that the friend you borrowed it from will want it back again.'

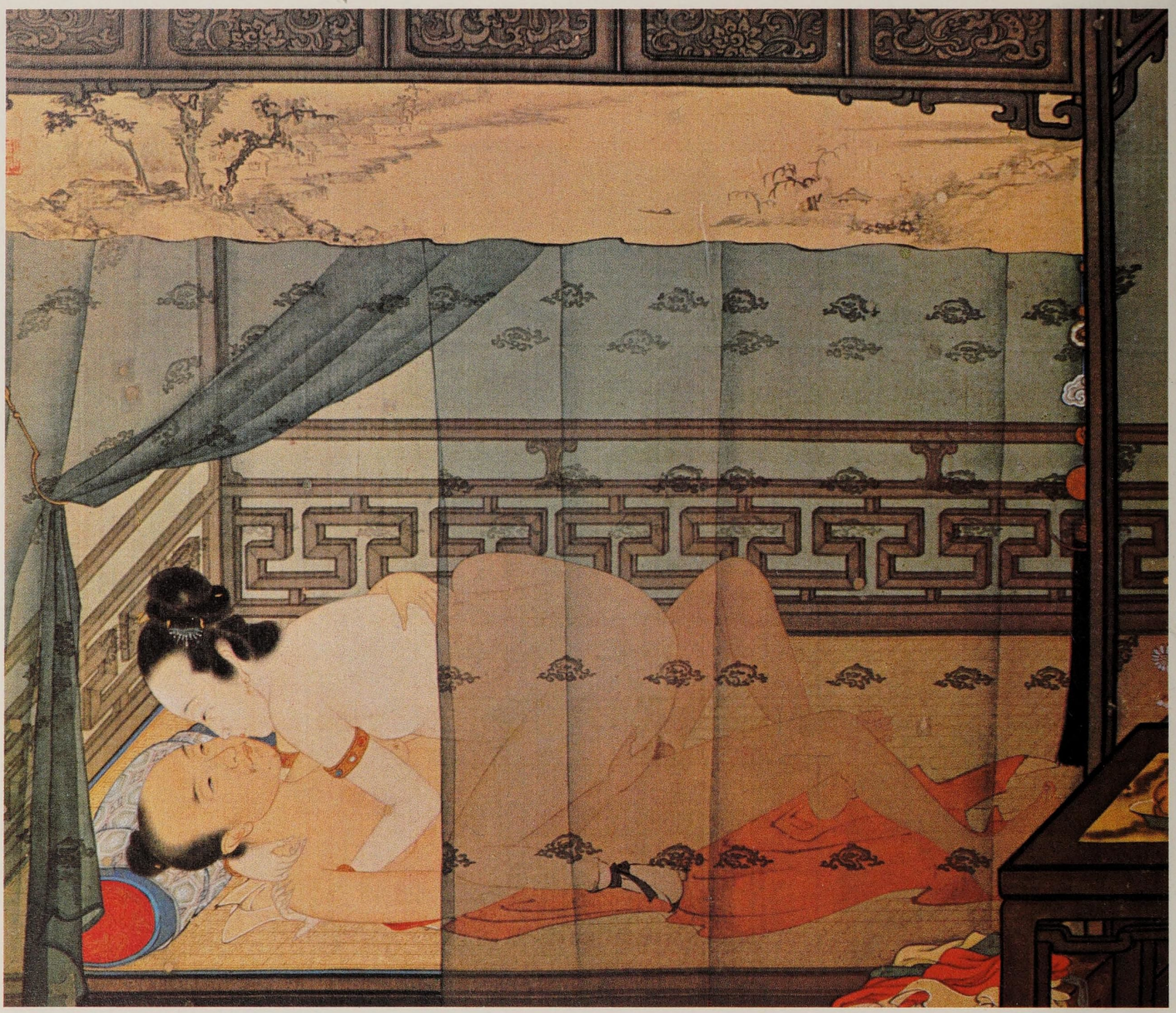
'Don't you worry about that. It was I myself who bought it. The whole story about the friend was just made up.'

'Oh, that is good news.'

From then on the two of them were one heart and one soul. Noble Scent became an assiduous reader of *The Vernal Palace* and from that day on she could not praise it too highly.

With glistening pupils she gazes at her shameless lover
And the flower of her calyx closes its petals.
His perfumed tongue beats against her closed teeth
And forces a way between her lips.
Voluptuous moaning hides her deep passion,
The satin skin of her breasts glistens with beads of sweat.
Four eyes wide open, look unto look,
Two hearts a glowing brazier.
(Poem written to the melody of *Yü-lo ch'uen*, quoted in the *Ju Pu T'uan.*)

Anamorphosis of a Couple on a Seat. Painting on silk. 17th century. Charles Ratton collection, Paris.



Amorous Wrestling. Ch'ien-lung period (1736–96). François Duhau de Bérenx collection, Paris.

Love scene in a 'Flower Garden.' Fragment of a silk scroll after Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Louis Bataille collection, Paris.

Painting on silk from the late 17th century. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.

THE PLEASURES OF SUBMISSION

Yü Kuei Hung, a novel of Abjection

The novel *Yü Kuei Hung* was published at the end of the Ming dynasty, and its distribution was undoubtedly limited, as very few people knew of its existence. The title consists of three characters forming the names of the principal personages : Yü, or Liu Yü-huan, one of the women of the brothel; Kuei, Li Kuei-chen, the heroine; Hung, Hung-yü, her servant. The idea was taken from the *Chin P'ing Mei*. For his *nom de plume* the author took the name Luo P'ing-cheng of Tung-lu in the province of Shantung, and in fact the style of the book is partly reminiscent of the dialect of Shantung. But he must have lived for a long time at Peking to have acquired his knowledge of the typical Peking dialect, and of the low brothels and people who frequented them. The preface, signed by a person describing himself as 'an old man with white eyebrows', indicates that Luo P'ing-cheng may have written several works : *A History of Licentiousness in the Buddhist Forest; Separation and Reunion in the Midst of Wartime Fires;* and *Maxims of the Immortal Isle*. He may also have adapted the *Chin P'ing Mei* to be sung as a ballad to zither *(t'an-tzu)* accompaniment. None of these works has survived, and if they were ever printed, there is no mention of them elsewhere.

From its first few pages this book could be taken for a historical novel. The eunuch, Wei Cheng-hsien, is a historical personage and it is he who condemns the father of the heroine, an honest and devoted member of the Civil Service. Therefore all the misfortunes that follow should be laid at his door. His wickedness knew no bounds, and with what was left of his sex he managed to satisfy the women of the Imperial House and to deceive the emperor. During the Ming dynasty there was in fact a rivalry between the literary civil servants, recruited by competitive examinations, and the eunuchs who served in the Palace household. The Censorship, Secretariat, and local administrative posts were occupied by scholars. But every important decision was made by the emperor, and, once the official audiences were over, he retreated to the interior reserved for his concubines, where the eunuchs held sway. Therefore these people were in daily contact with the emperor. They made themselves indispensable by flattering his tastes, and they controlled all the archives of matters pertaining to the throne. Their influence was ruinous: they surrounded the emperor with delights to succeed in their intrigues. It must, however, be remembered that although the eunuchs enjoyed great power, they were not allowed to write history : that was the privileged monopoly of scholars, who therefore avenged themselves by accusing their enemies of every crime.

Yü Kuei Hung was undoubtedly written by one of these scholars trying to vilify the eunuchs and to prove at the same time, that the novel was erotic only the better to defile a despicable enemy. It was a convenient excuse, and one much used at the time. Also in this novel we encounter another important section of Chinese society : the Bands of Brothers. These were worthless people who worked in groups to exploit any situation. White Wolf formed with nine companions a Band of Ten. They always did their dirty work together and passed their time in brothels or tea-houses, each one contributing his own

Scene of Debauchery in a Brothel. 19th-century painting. British Museum, London.

particular skill. For example, Hu, the second brother, laid the plans; White Wolf used his strength to inspire fear. It is not necessary to enlarge on the advantages of such a group.

In fact, in a society where Oriental despotism reigned, the unprotected individual had no influence. He was not recognized as part of the social system. Only the family or the village counted. Parallel with these organizations recognized by the state, were other associations which had the advantage of avoiding

Punishment of a Criminal Minister and his Wife. Popular religious painting. Kristofer Schipper collection.

official institutions and which were at the same time able to protect the individual. Obviously they varied enormously : associations of sworn brotherhood; groups of people in a city or the capital, all from a distant province; professional guilds and so on. There were even poetry clubs, tatooing and secret societies which mixed religion with a political aim. There were many examples similar to Freemasonry, English clubs, Jewish clubs, the Mafia even. In this case the Ten Brothers were actively engaged in procuring, and the action took place in cheap brothels.

In the Ming dynasty a new phenomenon arose : the poor had been forgotten. Poverty made shame ridiculous, and girls willingly showed themselves nude in public. The poor people had not the means to go to houses where refined courtesans played chess, composed poems and sang to the guitar. This discrimination explains the Ming fashion of cheap brothels, the existence of which is confirmed by this and other novels. They were usually situated in dilapidated houses, where for a few pennies prostitutes were to be had between bare walls in the open. Later they were better organized and gathered in small lanes and back streets. Chinese houses traditionally open on interior courts, and the outside walls have no windows. Holes pierced through these walls at eye-level allowed the passer-by to see the inside of a room where naked women were seated on straw in

Punishment of Adulterers. Popular religious painting. Kristofer Schipper collection.

lascivious poses intended to excite potential clients, who could enter by a side door, where they handed over their money to a guardian seated at a table. Then they went to the girl they had chosen and made her do whatever they pleased. Thus they added to the spectacle enjoyed by the watchers outside who, overcome with excitement, joined the queue.

Anyone who stayed too long was thrown out. A girl, who was unoccupied, called those who were waiting for a girl with too many suitors. Sometimes the evening was so busy that the girls ate their supper while still satisfying their clients; no time must be wasted, because profits depended on large numbers. The guardian wielded a club which kept order and which ensured that the prostitutes were available when needed. A woman ruled over the whole house and was assisted by a group of men—such as the Band of Ten Brothers—whose duty it was to recruit girls and protect the houses. The fact that a young man of good family, such as the son of Minister Chin, could be attracted by such a filthy hovel demonstrates that the Chinese were not unaware of the taste for horror and realized that economic necessity was not the only motive for this degraded debauchery.

This aspect of the *Yü Kuei Hung* is only a sideline; the moral is elsewhere, in the drama of a pure young

Punishment of a Slanderous Woman. Popular religious painting. Kristofer Schipper collection.

girl forced to sacrifice herself to the worst degradations.

The plot is fairly simple and the action takes place in Peking at the end of the Ming dynasty; a scholar, Kuei Chung-hsien, ruined, castrates himself in order to find a position at court. He gains the favours of the nurse of the Emperor Hsi-tsung (1621–28), who takes him on as a personal servant. He quickly becomes an imperial favourite and his power is so great that no other official can rival his influence. A scholar called Li Shih-nien, from Su-chou, who held an important post in the capital, tries to denounce the wicked eunuch. He has a daughter, Kuei-chen, who is beautiful and very well educated. Although she is sixteen she is not yet betrothed because her parents cannot bring themselves to part with her. Hung-yü, her servant, two years older, is no less pretty and intelligent. Before carrying out his plan, Li Shih-nien talks to his wife, who reminds him of the necessity of sacrificing oneself for the state. Together they write to the maternal uncle of their daughter, living at Hu-chou, to come and take her away in case any evil befall them. But the bearer of the message is drowned while crossing the Yellow River.

Li Shih-nien sends his denunciation which is intercepted by the eunuch who has him thrown into prison and executed. When she learns this, his wife commits suicide by breaking her head against a pillar. All the possessions of the family are confiscated, and the myrmidons charged with this task, force the daughter of the house to undress on the pretext of taking her clothes. A servant who tries to prevent them is killed. Seizing this opportunity, Kuei-chen and her servant escape.

The two girls wander in the streets with no money, and when night falls they hide in a doorway. The next day, being very hungry, Hung-yü suggests they try begging. But Kuei-chen is against it : her beautiful clothes are not suitable for a beggar. It would look very odd. She decides instead to give one of her gold hair-pins to Hung-yü, so that she can sell it.

Coming out of the shop where she has sold the pin, the servant is attacked and robbed. She cries for help, and an accomplice knocks her down. That quarter of Peking had an evil reputation, and no one intervenes to help the poor girl. A merchant, who is a little more understanding, allows her to come into his shop. When she recovers she realizes that her young mistress has disappeared. She herself is persuaded to take refuge in a temple for Taoist women.

Punishment for the Crime of Setting Fire to an Ants' Nest. Popular religious painting. Kristofer Schipper collection.

The writer here interrupts his story to give us a description of the person known as White Wolf. He is the son of a landed proprietor who knew neither how to read nor write, and who spent all his time wrestling and fighting. After the death of his father he quickly dissipated his possessions and became a hooligan, known as the White Wolf. With nine other like-minded thugs he formed a band and then married a widow called Chang of the Small Feet, who kept a brothel.

As a girl Lady Chang had already been dissolute : she would stand in the doorway showing her tiny feet to attract clients. One of these, a salt merchant called Chang, had been so taken with her that he married her. He got tuberculosis, and his wife had to return to her original profession to keep the household going. She was so full of lust that on evenings when there were few clients she exhausted the last forces of her dying husband. As a widow she was expelled from the district for bad conduct and had to move.

A Tartar Soldier and a Prostitute. Unsigned 19th-century painting. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.

The Punishment. From the original illustrations to the Chin P'ing Mei. *Van Gulik collection, Paris.*

Fat and old, she became a brothel keeper and married White Wolf, whom she was able to satisfy owing to her acquired sexual skills.

One day the Band of Ten met in a tea-house. They seized a young homosexual, who was amusing an old gentleman, had their will of him and then began to discuss business, which was not very good because the cheap brothels were all competing with Chang Small Feet. White Wolf who lived on its earnings was poor. He confessed as much to his friends, who advised him to open the worst kind of brothel, like the others which did so well. But it was necessary to find girls. Chao, the third brother, knew a woman from Shantung who had two daughters. They were famine refugees living in the capital. The mother was thirty-two, her eldest daughter eleven, while the other was only an unweaned babe. Another recruit might be found in Liu Yü-huan, the daughter of a scholar who, having failed his examinations, had come to Peking to try his luck. He had just died and Liu was reduced to begging. Since she had been well educated, it would be necessary to get her by force. As we shall see, this plan was soon put into action.

After this digression we can return to Kuei-chen. What had happened to her while she was waiting in the street for her servant who was selling the pin? She had met a former servant of her father who had been dismissed by him, and who was now a member of the Band of Ten. The young girl tells him her troubles, and he suggests that she should come with him, whistling for one of his accomplices to take her in a sedan chair. He says he will wait for her servant which, of course, he does not. In fact, Kuei is taken to the house of Chang Small Feet, where she is beaten into subjection and set to work.

First of all her virginity is sold, then she joins her companions in misfortune and is subjected to the unending queue of clients demanding all kinds of degraded practices. The résumé at the end of the book describes a woman in this same brothel who allowed incense to be burned on her belly

(this perversion also appears in the *Chin P'ing Mei*). Another is a coprophagist. White Wolf finally dies and is punished for his crimes. The eunuch Wei Cheng-hsien is denounced by Minister Chin. But the son of this man, overcome by amorous desire, is unable to resist the brothel, where he falls in love with Kuei-chen, the girl who had been subjected to the worst kind of degradation without losing her pure heart. He marries her, and she finds her old servant among the family of Minister Chin.

If one believes that sodomy, *fellatio*, coprophagia, strokes of the whip and the bastinado are only variations of pleasure, as long as pleasure is not linked with suffering, then Chinese eroticism must not be taken for sadism. But in this case, as in Sade's novel, the Gordian knot of the story lies in the submission of a woman.

For Kuei-chen is indeed similar to Justine. The blows are justified by her physical resistance and then she is so deeply debased that her refusal is pointless. Her virginity is first sold to a night-soil scavenger and then she is handed over to the mercies of the Band of Ten. But it is not enough to sacrifice her to the pleasure of others. To break her completely she must be given, for almost nothing, to the rabble. Fear of the club will make her submit. Her clients are numerous. If they see a neighbour using her mouth, then she must do the same for them. Her initial repugnance only causes laughter and increased desire. If the novel were seeking another title it could be 'The Will to Submit'. People in the end become objects, there is no further point in refusal. She submits completely to everyone's demands. The storyteller has well understood wherein lies the thread of the story. More intelligent than many of his critics, he has grasped the nature of sadism : it is the pleasure of submission rather than enjoyment of suffering.

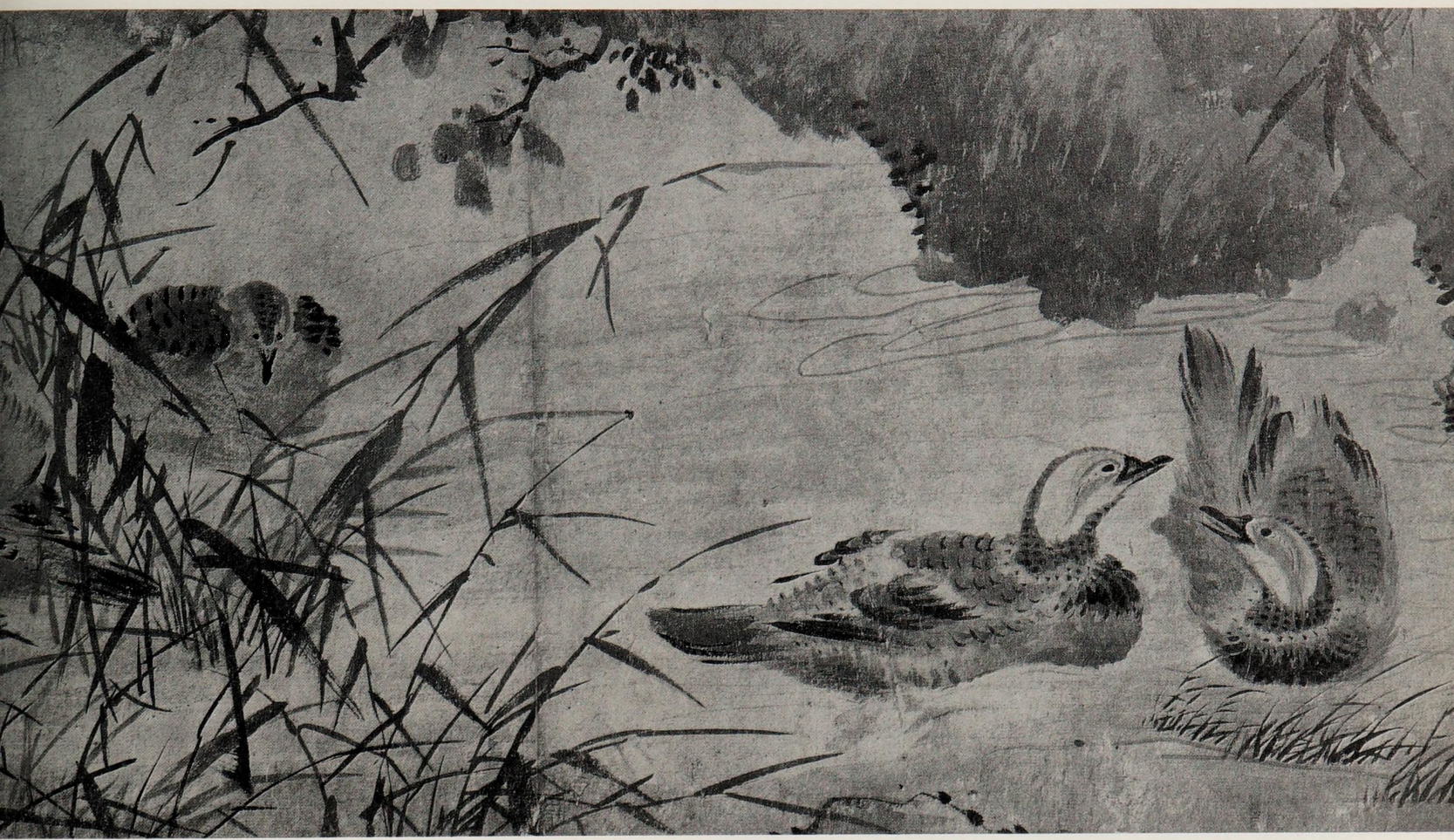
The heroine, however, was supposed in this case to keep the purity of her mind until the end, so that the pleasure of submission remained intact. The author has realized that one can enjoy this destitution which is as physical as it is spiritual. Another character in the book finishes by enjoying his slavery : the daughter of the scholar who dies in poverty. It is reminiscent of *Sanctuary* by Faulkner, when the brothel-keeper starts by breaking her virginity to show what it is worth. In the end, when Kuei-chen is too busy, it is she who will call the client to come to her mat to show him that her mouth can give ease to an aching body. But since it was a question of submission, it had to be taken further : she had to eat excreta. Once accustomed to this perversion, the only solution is to kill her, not to save her morality which is already debased, but because she can contribute nothing more to the story of submission. The horrible fascination is only present when it is necessary to break the woman completely : otherwise it becomes as uninteresting as the most healthy of pleasures.

Such a theme could only have appeared in China at a period when power was declining, when society was rich enough to permit such wild licence. But is that to say that Chinese scholars, who wrote erotic novels, lived at the level of their imaginations ? It is difficult to be certain in a field where documents are so rare and difficult to see. Obviously there must have been brothels. But this novel gives an impression of Chinese scholars inhibited and enclosed in the yoke of rigid decency. Is not this erotic literature the only outlet for a fevered imagination, a heightened desire ? Imprisoned within the walls of a large Confucian family, living in an autocratic empire, the Chinese scholar reminds one of the famous prisoner in the Bastille. He knew exactly what he wanted, and was able to express it by an imaginary world, but, one may ask, was he not perhaps a little too well-versed in the nature of desire ? Is not the price of such clairvoyance frustration ? Is literature the only bastion against madness ? Perhaps writing was a form of onanism of the mind, the helpless cry of a man engulfed by stifling ritual.

J. P.

MING POEMS

Teal on a Pond. Chinese ink on paper attributed to Shen Chou (1427–1509). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



SPRING FEELINGS

I am lonely and fear the advent of spring.
Peach buds turn red and the willow is green along
The branch.
I am angry with the east wind because it does not dissipate
My sadness.

Swallows form twittering pairs ;
Orioles fly in twos ;
All the birds tease one another, murmuring words of love
They are happier than I.

Anonymous

NIGHT

Now the rain has stopped and the blue of the night grows
Clear in
A limpid, cloudless sky. A brilliant moon
Spreads its silvery light.
Autumn begins to shroud the lonely mountain.
Its cold breath creeps beneath the door.
The wind whistles under the shade of the trees
And dew glistens on the bamboo forest.
Even the stupid grasshoppers begin to feel old
And mourn thinly the lost days of summer.
Lost in thought I sit here alone
And think of my beloved ; we said goodbye
On a misty path on the brink of heaven.

Hsü Chi (circa 1398)

A PRESENT OF WATERMELON SEEDS

Watermelon seeds are not rare ;
I wrap them in a handkerchief
To offer to my love.
I have licked each seed with the end of my tongue ;
It is a small present but full of love.
One needs only a little of something good.
I sent you good wishes again and again ;
Do not forget me, my love.

Anonymous

Painting on paper of the Ming period (1368–1644). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Young Woman lying on a Banana Leaf. Painting by T'ang Yin (1470–1524). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

TO THE MELODY OF 'THE HEAP OF SILK'

It is the first watch and my tears are flowing ;
My heart is despondent.
Leaning on a screen I rest my cheek dumbly on my hand.
I was waiting for my beloved
But he has not come.
I am afraid he has forgotten me
And feel suspicious
That he may have gone to the Street of Flowers.
Perhaps he is with another woman
And has abandoned me.

At the third watch I fall asleep ;
Then my lover comes in a dream.
We share our pillow and blanket ;
Laughing and happy we taste the pleasures of love.
The wind blows and dawn begins to break ;
Bells ring from below the roofs ;
I wake with a start from my unfinished dream.
My heart is despondent,
For the bed is deserted ;
I am still alone.

Anonymous

INSCRIPTION ON A PAINTING OF A SMILING YOUNG WOMAN HOLDING A FLOWER

When night has gone the crab-apple flowers are bathed in dew ;
Some of the flowers seem coquettish and frivolous,
As if they meant to whisper to men and seduce them.
A beautiful woman rises in the morning and leaves her
Quarters.
She plucks a flower and compares it with her face in the
Mirror.
Then she asks her lover: 'Which is the more beautiful, I or
The flower ?'
He replies: 'You are not so beautiful as the flower.'
When she hears this, the woman
Flies into a pretty temper.
'How can a dead flower be better than a living person ?'
Jealously she bruises and twists the blossom and throws it
At her lover.
'Take it then, for your companion tonight.'

T'ang-yin (1470–1524)

TO THE MELODY OF 'BRANCHES OF THE SOUTH'

My love, my dear fool !
Let us find some yellow clay and fashion two figures,
One you,
One me.
They will be very much alike
And will be modelled lying on a bed.
Then we will break them
And work them up again with water.
We will make one like you
And one like me.
Part of me will be in you,
Part of you in me.

Anonymous

Part of a Fan. Painting by Tao Hua Yüan (1644–1711) from the Ch'ing period. British Museum, London.

Portrait of a Young Lady. Ch'ien-lung period (1736–96). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

WITH ALL MY HEART

All the stars in the sky cannot rival the moon's brilliance ;
How could a flight of crows compare with a simple phoenix ?
How can a husband's beauty be as great as that of a lover ?
I do not claim that he is the only handsome man in the world,
But he charms me.
My body keeps my husband company,
But in my heart I am with my love.

Anonymous

TO THE MELODY OF 'HANGING BRANCHES'

Heaven and Earth will be reversed ;
East will be West
Before we part.
You cannot leave me,
Nor I abandon you ;
Inseparable even after death, we shall be ghost lovers.
Your shoulders bear the marks of teeth.
Tell me, now, who has bitten you ?
I shall not scold or be wild with jealousy ;
It is just that I do not want to keep asking.
Your flesh is bruised ;
My heart is sad ;
What kind of woman is this
That she can be so cruel.

Anonymous

Young Horseman. Painting by Ch'ien Hsüan (1235–90). British Museum, London.

CUT SLEEVES

The title may seem odd but the reason will soon be apparent.

Chinese civilization was refined and subtle and therefore required the use of metaphors in descriptions of love-making. We have already seen that to make love was called 'playing the game of the clouds and the rain'; Socratic love was described as 'upside down rain', or 'the clouds are upside down'. All this is fairly clear, once one has grasped the ways of the Chinese imagination. To understand 'Cut Sleeves', we must know the following story. The Emperor Ai Ti (6 B.C.–A.D. 2) dearly loved a handsome young boy called Tung. One day the emperor was lying on his bed with his favourite beside him, asleep on the sleeve of his robe. Forced to get up to attend to his imperial duties, Ai Ti preferred to cut the sleeve in two rather than disturb the sleeping boy. He appeared thus at the audience. Hence 'cut sleeves' came to mean homosexuals.

The story proves that homosexuality was practised at Imperial level as well as in all the ordinary classes of Chinese society. Less than a hundred years ago, in 1889, Dr. Matignon wrote: 'Public opinion remains completely indifferent to this type of distraction, paying no attention to it at all, except to say that, since it seems to please the dominant partner and the other is willing, no harm is done.' That is the judgment of a doctor who allows himself to list facts without really understanding the substance of the affair at all.

The Babylonian period (2700–538 B.C.) and the legendary hero Gilgamesh and his companion Enkidu present the earliest records of homosexuality, but there are proofs of homosexual practices among the Hittites, the Gauls, the Germans and the Incas. It spread with the Arabs from the Ganges to Guadalquivir. In classical Greece the greatest philosophers praised the love of boys. Plato used it as a point of departure on his quest for beauty and inspiration, and turned it into a weapon against tyranny!

Roman patricians fully appreciated the Ephebes. Julius Caesar, symbol of conquering Rome, has also been called 'The Queen of Bithynia' — 'Wife of every man, husband to every wife.' And Hadrian and Antinous have furnished material for a literary legend.

It seems that homosexuality is inherent in all civilizations where segregation of the sexes is practised. War, or rather army life, imposes this relationship between man and man, and it is almost an element of military cohesion from Alexander the Great to Lawrence of Arabia, by way of Julius Caesar, the Grand Condé, William of Orange, Charles XII of Sweden, Frederick of Prussia and Junot. The list of great homo- and bi-sexual leaders is very long. Louvois, although himself little inclined to such things, once defended them before Louis XV : 'For when they had to go to war, the officers were really glad to leave their women and to go on a campaign with their boy lovers.'

Thus, throughout history many societies have raised no objection to homosexual practices. Then whence comes the condemnation ? It appears among the Jews of the Old Testament, a reaction against the heathen and out of fear of breaking the demographic law: 'Increase and multiply'. This explains the interdiction devised later by the law-givers and subsequently adopted by the Christians. Homosexuality developed into a kind of phobia among both Jews and Christians, and it was used by the church to justify its persecutions of heretics.

China, like the whole of the Far East, ignored this aspect, and homosexuality, tolerated in principle, was practised in daily life. All classes of society in China, however great their appreciation of the charms of women, were nonetheless aware of the grace of young boys. They preferred the little 'darlings' to be of very tender age, physically attractive, and often intelligent as well. A poetic soul in a beautiful body with delicate, unbearded skin; this was a scholar's dream. These 'particular friendships,' it must be admitted, occasionally led to the most frenzied orgies.

The 'Sidelights on History' based on the intimacy between princes, has retained many of its scandalous aspects. The emperor had a favourite boy called Teng-t'ung. One day this boy was discovered near the throne in an indecent position. Indignantly the prime minister sent for him : 'You, little T'ung, you dared to desecrate the Throne Room. Such impudence can only be erased by death.' He ordered the boy to be executed at once. Fortunately someone told the emperor, who intervened.

These little boys participated in all the distractions of the emperor: feasting, cock- or dog-fighting, kite-flying and so on. Their faces were painted and they wore cowrie shell belts and tall hats decorated with feathers. At least that was how the historian of the Shih-chi described them.

A great poet called Hsi-kang (223–242) scandalized his contemporaries by his extravagance. He would be seen in the country in licentious orgies with his friends or at feasts to which he had derisively invited pigs to keep them all company. Wang-shih, another scholar, pressed between his pale hands a feather duster with a jade handle 'so that he might help to remove the dust from this disgusting world'.

One must, however, not underestimate the difficulties and tragedies arising from pederasty. Hsi-kang was decapitated, although many students pleaded for mercy, but the judgment was more an account of his excesses than a general condemnation of the practice. In theatrical circles he enjoyed great favour.

Originally there were no actresses in China and troupes of actors were always men. During the Ming period an imperial decree forbade all officers to go to the houses of the singing girls. So Mandarins and scholars invited to their banquets young actors who danced and sang like women. Female roles were taken by young actors called *t'an*, chosen because their appearance most nearly approached that of a woman. This custom continued till quite recently, for in 1958 I saw the famous Mei Lan Fang play the role of Yang Kuei-fei in the scene where the Precious Concubine bids her royal lover farewell. Although he was long past the age of a young girl the illusion was perfect.

In a small book called *Eroticism in China* there is a strange but relevant story. Pederasty, according to Dr. Wu Shan Sheng, was usual in the male theatre. It actually was a major factor in the progress of actors. Custom demanded that the master deflowered his young disciples, following a peculiar method. In the actors' classes the pupils sat on benches, the least experienced at the bottom of the class. Round wooden pegs, growing progressively larger as they approached the master, lay on the benches. The pupil, therefore, progressed little by little, as did his art. At every stage he submitted to being penetrated by a bigger peg.

Works describing the lives of actors existed even in the T'ang dynasty, but full length novels did not appear till the Ch'ing period. One of the most famous, the *P'in-hua-pao-chien* (Precious Mirror for Gazing at Flowers), describes the customs of actors and people who were their friends at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

This novel has no less than sixty episodes, and it was published for the first time in 1856. The author, Ch'en Sen-shou, surnamed Shao-i, came from Che-kiang. He lived at Peking in the reign of Tao-kuang (1821–50), and in his novel tells all about his experiences among the actors. Constructed on the lines of love stories rather than *genre* novels, the work is notable for the fact that all the characters are men. The way their tender relationships reflect all the sentiments of lovers is entirely unprecedented in this kind of literature. All the characters in the *P'in-hua-pao-chien* were real people, which adds interest to the descriptions. We quote here a passage from the *Ju Pu T'uan*, in which the hero, Wei Yang-chêng, is saying goodbye to his young servant, companion in adventure and pleasure. He has decided to give up the pleasures of boys, and to have a graft from a dog so as to satisfy his female lovers.

Effeminate Young Man. Attributed to Ch'ien Hsüan (1235–90). Private collection, Japan.

We also present a colourful version of a rather salacious novel by the same author, recounting the habits of antiquaries. Naturally all 'resemblance to real persons is purely coincidental' since the story dates from the late Ming period.

M. B.

The 'Book Chest' finds his Master
(Extract from the Ju Pu T'uan)

When the scholar had taken his leave of the miraculous physician he returned to his lodgings, where he slept alone. It was then that he began to ponder over his future prospects in love-making with a touched up and renovated organ. At the thought of this he became extremely excited, and once in this state of mind he was compelled to summon one of his young attendants to get into the bed and play the woman's part for the time being, so that his lustful ardour could be assuaged.

He had two attendants, one called Shu-t'ung (Book Chest) and the other Chien-shao (Scabbard). The younger, a bright young lad of sixteen, knew something of the written language; it was he who took care of his master's books and manuscripts; our scholar regarded him as a kind of living book chest, hence the nickname. The elder servant was eighteen years of age; one of his duties was to take care of a double-edged cavalry sword, to protect it from rust like a scabbard, and accordingly he was nicknamed Chien-shao, 'Scabbard'. They were handsome, attractive lads, and might have been taken for girls. Scabbard was not coquettish enough for his master's liking, though he would play with him from time to time. The younger was artful and sly as a fox. He had learned to raise his 'rear audience chamber' just like a woman, in such a way as to welcome his master. He was also able to emit cries of pleasure and moans of bliss. This explains why his master was so fond of him and why the honour of this evening's invitation fell to him rather than to the older boy.

They both enjoyed themselves greatly, and when they were finished Book Chest asked :

'*Hsiang-kung*, young gentleman, for a long time now you have been interested only in women and neglected us entirely. May I ask why tonight you are suddenly paying your arrears ?'

'I am not making love, but taking my leave.'

'Taking your leave ? Are you planning to discharge me from your service and sell me to another master ?'

'How could I afford to part with you. The words "take my leave" do not mean that I am going away, but that my organ is saying farewell to your "rear chamber." '

So saying he explained in detail about his plans for having his organ renovated.

'If this is so, then after your operation your organ will be ten times as big. It will be fine for stealing pleasure with women, but I should think it would be unlikely that my rear chamber could receive it.'

'Quite,' said the scholar.

'One day you will have so many women you won't know what to do with them. Could you, please,' the lad pleaded, 'pass one on to me from time to time ? It could be a lady's maid—fine ladies always have maids, don't they ? When you go to see the lady, could you take me along ? I should be so glad to get a taste of a woman. Then it would not be for nothing that I had served so gallant a cavalier, so eminent a master, at the wind-and-moon game.'

'If that is all you wish! No general who is worth his salt allows his troops to go hungry while he himself is stuffing his belly full. Very well then, I shall sleep with the lady and you may take your pleasure with the maid. And not just once, you will have the pleasure dozens—what am I saying!—why, hundreds of times.'

Book Chest was glad to hear this and spurred by joyful anticipation, redoubled his efforts to make the farewell reception as warm and pleasant as possible for his master's ambassador.

The Ts'ui Ya Pavilion

'The adolescent does not wish to sell the flower from his garden : but there are people who want to buy what is not for sale.'

In the Ming period during the reign of Chia Ching there dwelt in Peking two scholars, Chin and Lou. They had been at school together and soon after they were twenty they decided to give up their studies and start together in business. Another partner seemed desirable and Ch'ün, a boyhood friend, joined them. This young man was handsome and well educated with the face and slim figure of a god. He could well vie with the most beautiful women of his day.

They acquired a pavilion beside the river which they divided into three shops : one sold books; the other flowers and antiquities and the third incense sticks. It was called the Ts'ui Ya Pavilion.

Our three merchants, who were all well-mannered men, ran their business on very strict lines. They agreed that they would never buy goods cheaply that had a fake or doubtful provenance and would never sell too expensively or too cheaply, nor to customers of doubtful mien.

Their reputation gradually spread from modest beginnings to the court, and whenever they received, visits from important officials, Chin and Lou stood up respectfully, whereas Ch'ün was privileged to remain seated. This seems very odd and contrary to the strict laws of precedence in China.

The real reason and the only true one, was as follows: Ch'ün was young and handsome. Anyone who saw him was immediately assailed by the desire to place him on their knees, so that they could talk intimately together. Who could have allowed him to stand and ignore his presence ?

The son of Prime Minister Yen was living at Peking at that time, and his relationship to important officials gave him great power. One day, in his office, surrounded by attendants, the conversation turned to

Painting by Chou-yü. Ming period (1368–1644). Musée Guimet, Paris.

antiquities and books, and it was generally agreed that the Ts'ui Ya Pavilion was first class. Not only the goods, but a certain young antiquary whom they declared to be marvellous.

'Indeed,' one of the company said, 'nothing could be more ravishing; he is cool as ice, and smooth as jade. Just to sit opposite him is enough . . . He alone is worth all your incense, rare books and precious antiques. Why look further ?'

'Oh, Oh,' said Yen, 'I did not know that there was such a fine creature in town.'

'Words need to be proved,' said another. 'If we are interested why do we not go to the shop to find out if it is true ?'

'Done,' said Yen. 'We will go after the audience.'

His companions were only too happy to prove that they were not lying and despatched a messenger to the pavilion to say that Yen was on the way.

'Master Yen has expressed a desire to come and see some of your pieces. You would do well,' ran the message, 'to be ready in advance, for he is no ordinary client. Be respectful towards him, offer him tea which must be good, and the man who hands it must take great care of his appearance. And if he just says "good", consider yourselves complimented, for Yen's family is very powerful, and much thought of at court. It is not only a question of profit for you. If you are ever seeking a position, Master Yen would be a powerful ally.'

Chin and Lou were troubled. An order to prepare tea was normal, but 'why,' they said, 'should we be told to be careful of our appearance ?' It seems that Yen is coming to look not only at objects, but at someone. May these subordinates be cursed! They must have arranged it so that Yen has to come here. No doubt they want 'to borrow the flower to make sacrifice to Buddha.' This old man is cunning and has a reputation of being capable of anything.

They thought it over a while and then asked Ch'ün to take a decision himself. 'It is simple', said Ch'ün. 'I shall sneak out just before he arrives and you will tell him that I have just gone. These officials love a joke, perhaps it is all a game. Do you think they are really serious ?'

The moment came. Yen entered with a group of bodyguards. Impatiently he waited in the salon, but something told him that Ch'ün was not there. Someone might have leaked the news ? Tea was passed, but what a disappointment! Instead of the wonderful Ch'ün, a horrible hunchback appeared. Yen's apprehensions were justified. However, he kept his temper and nothing in his manner disclosed his disappointment. He chose several pieces and after they had been wrapped up, sent them home with his guard.

Chin and Lou were not unaware that important officials did not behave as ordinary men. They are always ready to buy, but slow in paying. Every time they approached Yen for their money, they got the same reply : 'The master has it in hand.' Five days later, the same. Every three or four days they went to the house in turn. No money, not even a cup of tea was forthcoming. The reply became curt : 'We are aware of it.' Nothing more. How were they to get out of this predicament ?

They thought it over. Surely it was worth spending a small sum to get a large one ? That would be a kind of investment. When it comes to selling pills, they have to be gilded. Perhaps a good tip was the thing ? Everyone has to make some profit in business. With this thought, they slipped some cash into the hands of the steward, asking him to make sure the message was heard. They even went so far as to promise a percentage on the sum recovered. Aware of their anxiety the steward told them the truth without hesitation :

'I am afraid none of you will get his money back, for the master had heard of the charms of one of your partners, and has not been able to meet him yet. The money is a bait. If your partner merely deigns to appear, you will get what is owed to you immediately. You are, I presume, both intelligent men. If you lose your key and persist in forcing the lock with

a piece of metal, what will happen if you break the lock ?'

'No, indeed,' our two Chinese cried out indignantly. 'Beauty is rarer and much more precious than money. We prefer to lose our goods.'

The steward began to laugh. 'May I ask one question ? You are undoubtedly not in need of money. But do you want to keep your shop open ? If so, remember this old saying : "A poor man does not quarrel with a rich one, nor does the labourer argue with his master." If you give up all claim to your money it will be obvious that you despise my master, and he is not the man to accept that kind of insult. If he were intending to sleep with your wife, I would not blame you for risking your life to stop him. But this is only a friend. Bring him along and allow our master to look him over. It's just the same as antiques, books or paintings : slight damage does not affect the value. I really wonder why you are so keen on losing your money, and getting into trouble as well. Even if you should resign yourselves to a loss of that kind, you would not be left in peace for all that. I advise you to do nothing of the kind.'

Ch'ün, fearful at first of meeting Yen, finally gave in to his partners.

When Yen saw Ch'ün he gazed at him from head to foot, enraptured, and agreed that he was indeed the most handsome boy in Peking. He was very happy.

'You are a man of education,' he said, 'and I am glad. But why did you refuse to meet me before, when you had already met all the other officials ?'

'I meant no ill,' replied Ch'ün. 'Why should I avoid you ?'

'I have heard it said,' Yen went on, 'that you have a fine talent for arranging flowers. As for antiques, we know that is your profession. I am therefore not in doubt about your knowledge. I need a companion in my studies. Would you accept the position of bosom friend ? It would make me so happy.'

'My parents are old,' said Ch'ün, 'and my family is poor. I have to earn my living to look after them. Really I do not see how I could accept such a position.'

Yen appeared surprised. 'I was told that you were a bachelor and without parents. Why do you try to trick me ? Admit now that you are well set-up, with your two colleagues and do not want to leave them. That is why you are refusing to come to me. Do you not think that an important official like me is worth two merchants ? And that I, just as well as they, could make use of you ?'

'You are mistaken,' said Ch'ün, 'both are good colleagues and friends. There is nothing else between us.'

Yen listened but without conviction. He thought that Ch'ün, whom he scarcely knew, had no right to leave his friends for him. So he requested him to stay for three consecutive nights.

Everyone knew of Yen's taste for boys, and no handsome young man had ever escaped him—even inferior people of ordinary class. Yen always handled every case differently. He was experienced and could quickly distinguish bad from good. He saw that Ch'ün's body was smooth as oil, his skin white as snow, exactly like a young virgin. During those three nights he tried every trick he knew, ardour, sweet cajolery, kindness and money, to persuade Ch'ün. But the boy was no novice and his heart, as hard as steel, would listen to no argument—not even the lighted firework Yen held in his mouth.

On the fourth day Yen had to let him go.

Yen then began to hate Ch'ün so much that he began to plot : 'I am an influential man. A woman worth a thousand gold pieces, or of unique beauty, would not say no. Who does this Ch'ün think he is then, so solitary and poor ? I only wanted to caress him and he stands there before me cold, unswerving. I must think of a way to get over his resistance and have him for myself. The only difficulty is, what would happen if my wives and concubines were to see him, such a beautiful young man in the house ? They would surely be tempted to make unflattering comparisons

Two Actors 'Upside-down Clouds'. 18th-century painting. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.

between him and me, or even to be unfaithful ? My plan must be cunning enough to ensure all the advantages and avoid the difficulties. It is the only way to arrange things for good.'

In Peking there lived a eunuch called Sha, who was a friend of the Yen family. One day Yen went to visit him and found him arranging his antique collection. 'Alas,' groaned Sha, 'I am no good for anything any more. Collecting ought to be a pleasure, but look, it is nothing now but a toil for me. By the way Mr Yen, isn't it true that you know a young man who loves antiques, whom you could lend me to help with all this ?'

Suddenly everything fell into place. Yen, cunning fellow that he was, had thought of a plan : why should not Sha ask Ch'ün to come and . . .

'The boy's sex is already awakened,' said Yen, 'he is only interested in women. If only he could be like you, castrated . . . for I intend to allow him only to be penetrated.'

'What is so difficult about that ?' asked Sha. 'I can easily find a reason for him to come and visit me. Obviously it would be too simple if he straightway accepted the castration, but if not I will simply put a potion in his wine, and a small cut will finish the matter. When he returns home he will have no other choice but to notice that he has been turned into a eunuch.'

The next day, Sha sent for Ch'ün on the pretext that his plants needed his attention. Since Ch'ün knew that Sha was a great collector how could he suspect that such a plot was being hatched against him ? He was only too glad to give pleasure and thought that with a eunuch he would be perfectly safe. The evening passed off agreeably between the pleasures of drinking and of talking. C'hün had no idea that the wine contained a sleeping-draught.

'Come on, hurry up, young man,' called Sha sneeringly to the young man hidden behind the fish pool, who ran up, stripped off Ch'ün's trousers, and quickly made a cut, throwing the thing down on the ground for the dog.

Ch'ün slept for a long time and awoke to half-consciousness. He felt himself, realizing that something was missing. At once he saw what had happened and wept bitterly from the fourth watch till dawn. Two pages came in and congratulated him . . .

'From now on,' they said, 'you belong to the Imperial Household. Who will be able to give you orders henceforward ? No one will dare to make a fool of you.' F. C.

LOVE FOR THE PERFUMED COMPANION

Segregation of the sexes, especially after the Ming period, naturally favoured amorous affairs between women : tender love in the *gynaeceum* between servants and concubines; carnal love between the powdered young creatures of the Flower Courts (the brothels); particular friendships in the temple between nuns and novices.

In the novel called *The Dream of the Red Chamber,* the hero, Pao Yü, surprises one of his young friends, Sad Springtime, with the pretty young nun Miao Yü playing chess together, with sighs and pretty little cries. The two girls, their clothes in disarray, push the pawns with their fingertips. They are thrown into confusion by the arrival of Pao Yü, who is delighted at such a charming sight. Miao Yü was later to be kidnapped by fierce brigands; they at least would know how to calm her ardour. It is a fact that in Chinese novels Buddhist nuns are often accused of the worst kind of sins, and are often depicted as veritable female devils, greedy and depraved.

No less charming is the story told in the *Ko-lien-ua-ying* (Flower Shadows on a Window Blind) usually known as *Women behind a Veil* and adapted by Franz Kuhn.

Two childhood friends, 'Coral Tree' and 'Scented Jewel', teach one another how to kiss, the play of tongue on tongue and other arts. Having listened to murmurings of love in a nearby room, they go to their bedroom and slip, all pink and naked, into bed. 'Let us do like the others over there,' said Coral Tree passionately to her friend. 'Let us play at being father and mother.' Henceforward they abandoned themselves to love play, from time to time reversing their roles.

The classic of lesbianism is the *Lien-Hsiang-pan* (Love for the Perfumed Companion), a work by Li Yü, who is often called by his surname, Li-wung. A young married woman loves a poetess friend. After numerous events the *ménage à trois* settles down in perfect harmony.

More tragic is the story 'The Tale of a Fugitive Life' in the *Memoirs of a Poor Scholar* by Shen-fu. The author relates how Yün, the wife of the scholar, falls in love with a young prostitute, still a virgin, called Han-yüan (Candid Garden), whom her husband has met in a club. Yün encourages him to take Han-yüan as a concubine. She exchanges a bracelet of jade with her, the sign of an indissoluble union. The husband, delighted, but surprised at his wife's insistence, asks : 'Do you intend to rewrite here the *Lien-Hsiang-pan* by Li-wung ?' 'Certainly,' she replies.

Unfortunately he has not enough money to take the young Han-yüan as a second wife, and she is given to an important person. Yün, who is nevertheless a loving wife, is so upset that she dies.

In the Imperial *gynaeceum*, which in some periods contained more than a thousand pretty women, it was unavoidable that many of the women, 'isolated from the phoenix', should look for the pleasures of love among themselves. It was the same in noble families. There was no question of looking for adventure, for a well-born woman remained enclosed in the house and adulterers were severely punished. A special instrument was less dangerous. The late Ambassador Van Gulik in his book *Sexual Life in Ancient China* supplies original source material :

The author Ming T'ao Tsung-i, who lived in 1360, in a work entitled *I Hsin-fang* discusses *olisbos* and other instruments. He describes the plant which was used for this purpose: 'in the pastures of the Tartars wild horses copulated with dragons. The drops of semen fertilised the earth and soon afterwards small points grew from the ground like the teeth of a comb, with a network of veins making them resemble a male member. Hot-blooded peasant women, it was said, inserted this plant into the vagina, where in contact with the *yin* it became larger and thicker.

In the *Chin P'ing Mei*, some of which has already been quoted, the women use another object, a kind

A Court Lady going to Bed. Painting attributed to Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). British Museum, London.

of brass vase. Inside is the semen of a mythical bird, the *P'êng*, a native of Burma, whence the name Burmese bell for this female accessory. Once in place, a soft sound came from it. It is interesting to note that these strange instruments were always foreign : Tartary, Burma. But have we not the equivalent in the 'Redingote anglaise' of which Casanova speaks in his *Memoirs*, which, in Rome, was called *guanti di Parigi ?*

Women also used small bags stuffed with dried black mushrooms which swelled if they were soaked for long enough. These instruments were fastened to the belt if it was necessary to satisfy another woman, or to the heel for solitary pleasure. The leg was bent and stretched in the manner seen in plate 179. Some initiates even gave it a name, for instance the voluptuous widow Hu-chen of the *Ju Pu T'uan*, who called this substitute Mr Corn.

Finally, M. Pimpaneau explains that the *Ch'ing Lou Chi*, a treatise about the houses of the courtesans, deals with associations of women living together. They practised a caricature of marriage where a young man was disguised as a woman and carried in a chair like the newly wed, with a red veil before his eyes. But the woman who awaited him was a real woman. In Canton at the beginning of this century such associations still existed; they were practised in absolute secrecy under penalty of death.

Perhaps the 'Perfumed Companion' justified Shakespeare's derision : 'Women and young boys are all cattle of the same kind.'

M. B.

Extract from the Lien-Hsiang-pan Love for the Perfumed Companion by Li Yü (1611-80)

Mrs. Fan is walking with the Mother Superior in the garden of a Buddhist convent. To her surprise the wind brings with it not only the perfume of flowers but that of musk. This seems strange for such an austere place. But behind the window curtains she catches sight of a lovely girl; it is Miss Ts'ao, a child of barely fifteen who is on a journey to the capital with her father. Mrs. Fan asks to be introduced to the girl and, under the ironic gaze of the Mother Superior, the two talk together in the garden. Mrs. Fan's elegance and beauty and her skill as a poet make a deep impression on Miss Ts'ao. They soon fall in love and ask the Mother Superior to arrange another meeting. A ceremony is to be held in the temple on the first day of the month at the tenth hour. Miss Ts'ao receives permission from her father to go and pray for her dead mother, so the two friends meet again with the concurrence of the Mother Superior, whose heart was as merciful as that of the Buddha. 'They are like the bow and its string, and should not be separated.'

So Miss Ts'ao and Mrs. Fan, accompanied by their servants, meet in the temple.

Mrs. Fan: When we are reborn shall we be two sisters or two brothers? Would it not be better to be man and wife? We could share the same bed and afterwards the same tomb and we would be joined, like two butterflies, flitting hither and thither.

Miss Ts'ao: Let us make a vow to the Buddha to love each other always. But would it not be difficult to be reborn as man and wife? If you enjoyed the immense privilege of being reincarnated as a boy, I would love to be your wife and I should not care about the disadvantage of remaining a woman. All I would wish is that your vivid charm would not fade. Look, the Buddha smiles at us and yet I am worried.

Mrs. Fan: Why?

Miss Ts'ao: I think too much of the future.

Mrs. Fan: Light the candle. We will make a vow of eternal love.

First servant: An old saying runs: 'The man who wants to become a dragon will be a dragon; he who wants to be a tiger will be a tiger.' One of you must dress as a man.

Mrs. Fan: How could we do that?

First servant: Over to the left there is Master Fan's library, where you'll find man's clothes; you can take the Buddha as your witness.

Mrs. Fan: That servant is a bright one.

Second servant: We have noone here competent to carry out the marriage ceremony.

First servant: I often attended marriages in my family and can officiate.

Second servant: My young lady will be the husband.

First servant: No, my mistress must play that part. *(They argue.)*

Let us see which looks best in the clothes.

(Miss Ts'ao tries them on first.)

First servant: The hat comes down to her eyebrows and the dress trails on the ground.

Use of the mien-lung. *Page from a paper album. 19th century. Roger Peyrefitte collection, Paris.*

Greyhounds. 19th-century painting. Kristofer Schipper collection.

(Mrs. Fan then tries on the clothes.)

First servant: Look how well they fit!

Mrs. Fan: What a marvellous marriage. I am older than you, and I am your husband . . . Although I am not a man, the beauty of your face overpowers me and I am afraid of what I may do. Desire intoxicates me and I can see your young heart opening like an apricot flower in the spring sunshine.

Miss Ts'ao (aside): She would pass for a prince in those clothes. I am living in a fairy-tale . . . I could die like this with a singing heart! *(Aloud.)* You are older than I am and experienced. It is therefore right that you should be the husband. I am a young and virtuous girl and I do not think the marriage rites should be treated frivolously; they can only be undergone once in a lifetime. I could never be married to

another, I could never leave you. What shall we do ?

Mrs. Fan: I have a plan but I dare not disclose it to you.

Miss Ts'ao: We should not hide anything from each other.

Mrs. Fan: I am afraid you might refuse.

Miss Ts'ao: 'The scholar is loyal to his patron, the girl makes herself pretty for her lover.' I would die for anyone I loved and who loved me, why should I not be obedient to you ?

Mrs. Fan: Why don't you marry my husband, Mr Fan ? Between us, there would be no difference between wife and concubine, and we should be always together. We could all three live in delightful intimacy. What do you say ?

Miss Ts'ao (aside) : We would lie in the same bed and dream the same dreams and in the morning we would dress our hair side by side.

She sings :

'Two flowers are reflected in the mirror;
In the darkness of the women's quarters we walk
Hand in hand
Exchanging fond words
Like tender lovers.'

Mrs. Fan: Perhaps you are upset by the idea of being only a concubine ? I would willingly change places with you if only you would agree.

Miss Ts'ao (aside) : I must think. On the face of things I am marrying Mr Liu; in fact it is Mr Yüan. Her husband must be an exceptional person, but is he handsome ? Never mind, this cannot be the first time. But when I fall in love I do everything that is asked of me. *(Aloud)* I love you, my lady, and I do not mind being only a concubine.

Mrs. Fan: But will your father agree ?

Miss Ts'ao: Tell him you are to be the concubine and I the wife. I promise to cede you first place in the bedchamber.

Mrs. Fan: Let us go and make a vow to the Buddha.

Miss Ts'ao (before the Buddha) : Lord Buddha, we Ts'ao Yü-hua and Ts'ui Ch'ien-yün love each other. I will give my body to Mr Fan, her husband. If we break this oath may I die before my sixteenth birthday.

Mrs. Fan: If Ts'ao-Yü-hua takes Mr Fan as her husband, I Ts'ui Ch'ien-yün undertake to treat her as his wife and not as a concubine. If I should break this oath may I die before my eighteenth birthday. *(They sing.)*

'Noone can lie before the Buddha.
The one who breaks her promise will be unhappy.
We are in love and inseparable,
We shall be male and female phoenix in turn.
Behind the curtain decorated with mandarin ducks
We will love, locked in each other's arms.'

First servant: Ladies, please light your incense candles. *(She turns to the second servant)* Since they are man and wife what is to prevent us from doing likewise ?

Second servant: Why not indeed ? But I want to be the husband.

First servant: There is an old saying : 'A beautiful woman can always sleep beside an ugly husband.' You are beautiful and I am plain, therefore I must be the husband.

Second servant: If one has a child one must hope it will be ugly. To be handsome is not always an advantage. *(They sing.)*

'Since it is ordained, let us be amorous and gay;
Let us raise our hips in the battle of flowers.
But there will be no flowering shoot
Just two women pressing close
While the flowers open as they draw near.'

Chinese markets are very well supplied, to judge by this gouache from a 19th-century paper album. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.

Trio. 19th-century painting. Roger Peyrefitte collection, Paris.

CH'ING POEMS

Geese, symbol of fidelity. Painting on silk after Lin Liang, Ming period (1368–1644). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

HAPPINESS AT NIGHT

I am full of joy tonight,
But tomorrow's parting casts its shadow.
We are as loving as a pair of teal;
Then suddenly I hear the third watch sound;
The gauze window glitters in the moonlight.
The shadow draws nearer.
Would I could bind the moon with my hands
Close by the window.

Anonymous

TO THE MELODY OF 'GOOD FOR NOTHING'

I want to write a love letter, but I do not know the characters;
And to ask someone else to do it would embarrass me.
I do not know what to do, so I will draw some circles to
Express my feelings.
My lover will know what they mean:
The single circle is for me, the double for you.
One circle after another describes my suffering.

Anonymous

POEM

She has taken off her shoes and lets down her hair,
And sits upon the double mat.
As we whisper sweet words of love,
Night falls and we cling together.
Why press me with goblets of wine,
I am drunk
With the perfume of your orchid breath.

Fan Chêng-hsiang
(beginning of the 20th century)

DAYBREAK IN THE EAST

In the East it is light ;
My beloved is asleep again.
Oh, Heavens ! what shall I do ?
I take him in my arms and shake him softly ;
'Wake up ! I am afraid my parents will come
And my life will be endangered.
Hurry, dress quickly ;
No one must see you.
Turn over and I will lick away the powder and rouge from
Your lips.'

Anonymous

YÜEH SONG

I am thinking of my beloved ;
Why can we not flirt and fall in love ?
All I ever see are the flowers blown down by the wind
Or the wind awakening buds along the branch.

Anonymous

SONG OF THE SSU-CH'UAN MOUNTAINEERS

A lilac tree grows on a mountain top ;
A girl pulls down a branch to see whether her lover is coming.
Her mother calls: What are you looking at ?
Just to see if the lilac blossom is out.

Anonymous

Actors in a Corridor. Early 18th-century painting. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.

Three-sided Games. Painting of the late 18th century. François Duhau de Bérenx collection, Paris.

In the Arbour. Early 19th-century painting. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.

Pleasure in Stroking a Companion's 'Golden Lotus'. 19th-century painting. Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.

THE DESERTED GYNAECEUM

In the silent and scented women's quarters
She spends the lonely night within her silken tent ;
A soft wind stirs the blind.
She thinks to see her lover's face appear behind the door
And asks the servant, Autumn Perfume,
To see who it is.
But the girl replies: 'Noone.'
Then the lovely woman frowns,
Disappointed and sad, despite herself.
Sorrowful boredom overwhelms her,
She gazes stupefied at the scented chimonanthus
Biting her nails.

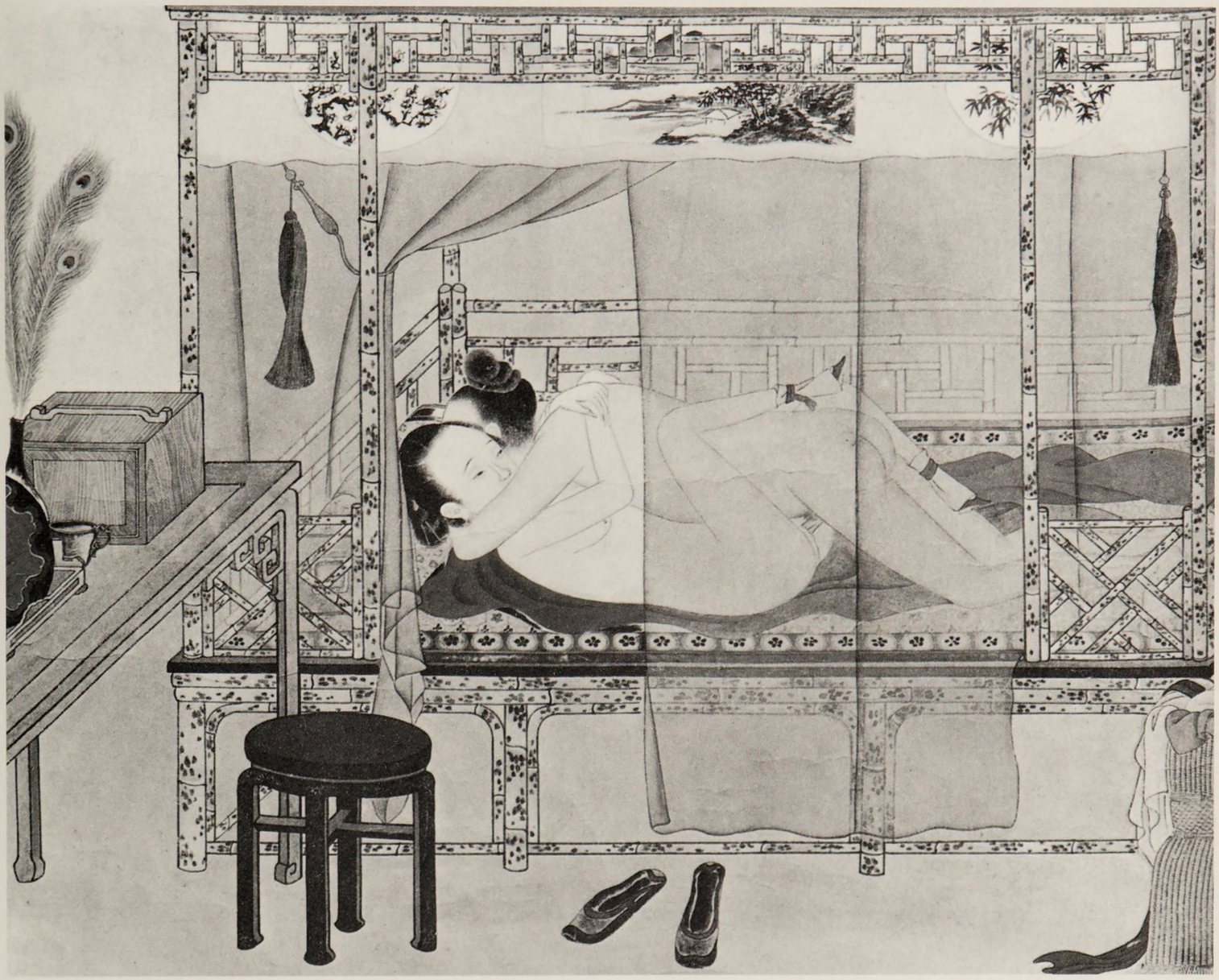
Anonymous

THE MOMENT OF PARTING

When we have to part she is too sad
To utter a word.
Hesitant, she stands silent with her
Back to the lamplight.
For a long time she hangs her head
Not daring to look up, while tears fall on her silken gown.

Huang Ching-jên (1749–1783)

Young Lady with Bare Breast, in passe-partout. Chia-ch'ing period (1796–1821). Michel Beurdeley collection, Paris.



On the Bamboo Bed. Page from an 18th-century album. J. M. Beurdeley collection, Paris.

FOOT FETISHISM

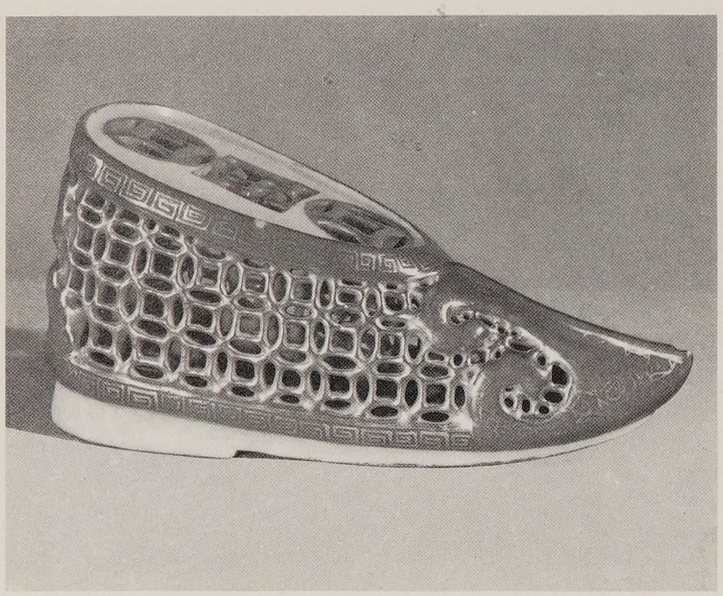
The practice of 'The Golden Lotus' (bandaging the feet) is one of the oldest of Chinese traditions, so old in fact that it is impossible to be precise about its origin. It is impossible to check the versions mentioned by various scholars and historians, and they are all highly improbable. In fact, the first reference to this practice occurs in a twelfth-century text. The narrator, Shang Pang-shih, claims that it dates from the end of the T'ang dynasty, a turbulent period. Li Yü, a prince and poet who ruled over southern China from 961 to 975, had a favourite concubine called Precious Beauty, who was famous for her slim figure and talent for dancing. One day the emperor gave her a huge golden lotus six feet high decorated with pearls. Then he asked her to bind her feet with silk so that they were like crescent moons, and made her dance within the calyx of the lotus. It was wonderful to watch her graceful silhouette twisting and turning like a soft cloud, on the tips of her curved feet. Henceforward all the dancers attached to the Imperial Palace bound their feet and covered them with pretty cloth. Even the Sung court, austere as it was, did not repudiate this fashion of the courtesans. Li Tsung's (1225–64) concubines preferred a style of bandaging called 'Saddling up quickly' (at that period polo was very much à la mode with court ladies). The poet Su Tung-p'o (1036–1101) also alludes to the charm of small, bound feet :

'She dances in a perfumed cloud with tiny lotus feet,
Sad sometimes, but gracious and light
She dances like the wind and leaves no trace . . .
See in the hollow of my hand
Marvels of smallness.'

The fashion soon spread from the Imperial *gynaeceum* to the nobility. Paradoxically, it was accepted at first as a proof of feminine morality in that very puritan era. Men, it seems, encouraged this cruel fashion, for clearly it kept the women at home. Thus the risk of extramarital affairs—permitted of course for men—was removed.

Silk boots, embroidered and made to fit bandaged feet. Coloured engraving from Ancient and Modern Costume *by Dr Jules Ferrario, 1827.*

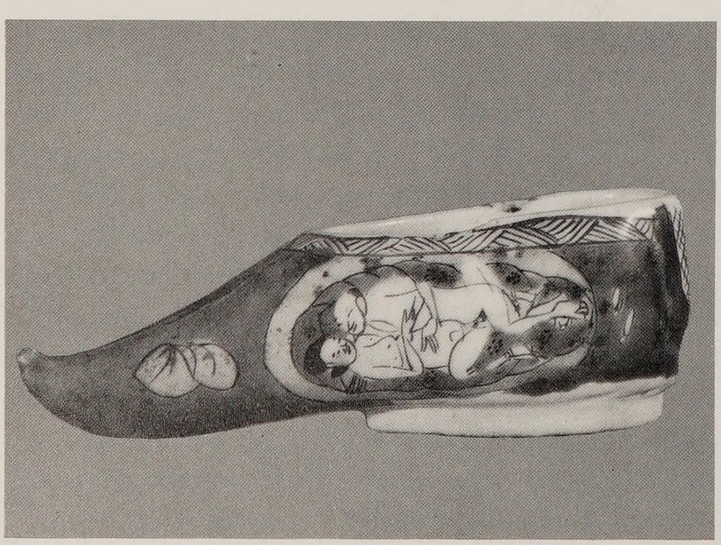
After the Yüan period bound feet became an aristocratic privilege. It is possible that the Chinese developed this practice, which was a criterion of social position, as part of the campaign to counteract by their refined sensibility the barbarism of the Mongol conquerors. For binding the feet was never a joke, but a family and religious ritual. The first operation on the very young child (about six years old) took place on the twenty-fourth day of the eighth month, the birth date of a deity called 'Divinity of the Small Feet'. Mothers were careful to place on the altar of Kuan-yin two small embroidered shoes, like a gift of heaven from the incense-burner. For friends and relatives it was a time for exchange of congratulations. Everyone went into ecstasies over the shape



Miniature shoes of the K'ang-hsi period (1662-1722). Enamel on biscuit. Symbol of married harmony, they were frequently given as wedding presents. Formerly in the C. T. Loo collection, Paris.

of the little foot . . . but there was no compassion for the suffering which had to be endured, especially at the beginning, and which lasted sometimes a year.

Dr Howard E. Levy has published an interesting essay entitled *Chinese Footbinding*. In this chapter, we draw on his works, for it is rare to find such a detailed source of information in a western language, and he cites freely from the work of a scholar, called Fang Hsün, who lived three or four hundred years ago. This Doctor of the Perfumed Lotus (thus his chosen style) analyzes with the enthusiasm of an entomologist the aesthetic criteria relating to 'Small Feet' and describes certain 'games to play' connected with the practice. We shall return to that later. Fang Hsün enumerates fifty-eight varieties of human lily : 'Lotus Petal', 'New Moon', 'Gracious Salutation', 'Bamboo Shoot', and many other names, each more euphemistic than the last, but evoking the principal styles. Roundness, sweetness and delicacy are the three most important qualities demanded by connoisseurs. Sight and touch allow roundness and sweetness to be appreciated; but the delicacy is bound to spiritual concepts no less sensual.



Apart from its form and texture a foot is valued highly if it is :
Placed in a man's hand.
Perched on a wing.
Hidden beneath a cover.
Thrown into silhouette by a lamp.
Shaded behind a screen or bamboo hedge.
Seen as a simple imprint in fresh snow.

More than any other thing Chinese women feared criticism made without their knowledge about their feet, should they not conform to established criteria. The greatest humiliation was if a young husband expressed disapproval on his wedding night. The young woman would never dare to show her face in public again. Insults such as 'Demon with large feet', 'Goose foot' and so on, would be poured on the head of the hapless girl. What man in his senses would marry such a girl: 'Her figure is alright, but her huge feet are ridiculous.'

Fang Hsün also says that the Human Lotus is superior to the flower, the more beautiful of the two, for the former knows human speech, perseveres in suffering and flowers at all seasons. Does not the woman with bound feet show her lotus buds at every step ?

Finally and this is the essential, the foot is a pretext for endless play between lovers. A small foot appearing below a skirt doubles a woman's charm and exalts her femininity. In bed, slipping out from under the blankets, it increases a man's ardour. What voluptuousness to be kicked by a woman in pretended anger, or to touch the foot surreptitiously and to rub it with one's palm! These are the delights of amorous lovers, to which the sexual scent brings an extra spice—'the scent of the odorous bed', as Fang Hsün notes.

To the initiate or aesthete the sight of a woman washing her feet is so charged with poetry that it is like the sudden blossoming of flowers in a garden. It is also very pleasant to watch her fastening on her shoes, cleaning them, trying them on, undoing the laces, or playing with a balloon with the tips of her foot under the flowering trees.

Ugliness in a woman is largely outweighed by smallness of feet. For a prostitute it is an essential; one would have to be idiotic to visit a courtesan with large feet. Fang Hsün also says that one should be careful with women from Suchow and Yangchow. Prostitutes at sixteen, they earn a good living in Peking and the towns of the north. Then they return home when they are twenty and settle down to married life. The women of Suchow were famous for the beauty of their faces, those of Yangchow for the smallness of their little bound feet. 'Face of Suchow, feet of Yangchow': this old saying was coined to describe a woman who was too beautiful to be faithful.

Fang Hsün also recalls the many 'drinking games' and the pretty role played by women's shoes. During a banquet, for instance, prostitutes stimulated the drinkers with a strange exercise; a small shoe was passed round and admired by all, who compared it with a mythical raft. One of the prostitutes—the youngest and most beautiful usually—unloosed her shoes. In one was placed a cup, the other was put in the bottom of a bowl. The game was to throw different seeds, haricot beans or lotus seeds, by catapulting them between the thumb, index and third finger. The clumsy, unsuccessful ones were forced to drink a number of cups of wine from the other shoe.

Another game was played on a surface like a draught board; the finest ones were of sandalwood or bamboo, more humble ones of paper. On this board a woman had to move a small slipper, used like a pawn. The dice represented the ancient kingdoms of the south, Wu and Yuëh, who fought for many years to gain control of China. The players, divided into two camps, had to drink every time they lost a move. However, the number of drinks never exceeded a dozen.

The term 'Golden Lotus' was reserved for the smallest foot, 7.5 centimetres (3 inches) at the most.

Subtle Pleasures of a Young Lord's Gynaeceum. From a series of paintings found in the Palace at Peking, attributed to Ch'iu Ying (early 16th century). Van Gulik collection, Paris.

If it was 10 centimetres (4 inches) it could only be a 'Silver Lotus'. The 'Iron Lotus' is scarcely worthy of mention. This designation in comparison with precious metals was used both for courtesans and prostitutes. The names 'Golden Phoenix', 'Treasure of Jade,' 'Golden Pearl', and so on, implied a whole range of beauty and talent.

The prostitutes never willingly took off their bandages. Even undressed, they kept on their slippers, as can be seen in many of the illustrations to this work. Any excuse could be used : cold or the complexity of undoing them. And this disguised the real reason : the games with the feet increased sexual desire, which seemed only an extension of fatigue to the girl whose daily work it was.

The lyricism of some lovers of the foot almost reaches delirium. Does not the small foot contain the beauty of the whole body ? White and polished as the skin, arched like eyebrows, pointed like pretty fingers, round as the breasts, small as the mouth, red (with shoes) as the mouth, and as mysterious as sex. 'When I love a woman', one fanatic wrote, 'I want to swallow her completely, but only her small foot will go into my mouth.'

For a well-bred young girl the loss of a shoe was a mortal insult. Women in villages who sometimes helped at popular entertainments were always careful to sew their shoes to their stockings. But malicious men who wanted to get their own way had more than one trick up their sleeve. One girl who had been caught was forced to take poison by her mother and to die rather than to submit to such insults. Another, daughter of a widow, and already well known for her beauty and her skill in embroidering pretty little shoes, one evening found herself in the company of friends at a village fête. Overcome with cold, it was only at the very end of the spectacle that she realized she had lost a shoe. Not breathing a word, she crept home and slipped into bed beside her sleeping mother. In the middle of the night an object was thrown against the paper window, fell through, and woke the sleepers. It was the lost shoe, returned in a condition which made the poor girl weep with shame, but her mother comforted her, indifferent to the gossip which the incident immediately aroused in the neighbourhood. Such stories illustrate the sexual perversions which lay at the root of these odd customs in China.

The story of the monk Ti Ming, who lived in a temple near the Pearl river, reveals another aspect of this attraction. Ti Ming had sexual relations with a young friend who amused him one day by telling him of the pleasures that were to be enjoyed with women with small feet—adding that such women were sweeter and more understanding with men than the Buddha himself. Curious, Ti Ming invited a young woman to the temple, grabbed her foot, and immediately realized how attractive was its warmth and unique sweetness. He was fascinated by the scent of this foot. The lovers did not rise before noon, and the next day Ti Ming had a special room built in the interior of the temple and decorated prettily. Now a new life began for him, devoted entirely to his passion. He drank aphrodisiacs to enable him to enjoy relations with seven or eight women every night.

To be able to caress the little foot took away his fatigue and prepared him for the next encounter : It was the best aphrodisiac, he declared. He made love at all times of day and at all seasons. In his spare time he wrote descriptions of his experiments in his diary, which must have been fascinating, for he knew many women and sometimes had as many as ten in his bed all wearing different coloured slippers. On his deathbed he confided to his concubine : 'The physical attraction of a small foot can never be compared with its emotional appeal.' These were his last words.

Hsün, who inherited the writings of Ti Ming, used them to instruct prostitutes in the many techniques connected with foot fetishism. He ran a course which lasted three months, after which the practical

training was begun. Several years later these pupils had all become the favourites of rich and powerful men.

The custom of binding the feet was sometimes linked, in the male mind, with the idea of punishment, such as the whip or thumb-screw. A stepmother or aunt would adjust the bandage more tightly than a mother. In a house every woman had to undo and remake her bandages herself twice daily. The master of concubines or the first wife inspected them and those who were lax were beaten with the bandages too lightly bound. A rich young man, when he was annoyed, would beat his concubines on the feet till the blood ran. There was no limit to sadistic impulses in the home. Sometimes the smell of feet was substituted for salts to revive an invalid. Cases of epilepsy have been cured, it is said, by one application of a naked foot to the face.

Most men became crazy over this special perfume. 'Every night,' one foot-lover writes 'I smell with pleasure her foot, burying my nose in its heart. It is a smell like no other. How I regret that I cannot swallow this little white nut whole. But I can place it in my mouth and bite it a little. The use of the tongue is secondary.'

Ku Hung-ming, a Chinese writer and intellectual, one of the leaders of the post-revolutionary period, declared that it would be impossible to abolish the custom. His first movement when meeting a woman was to look at her feet. One of his remarks has been reported in the Shanghai press : 'The smaller the woman's foot, the more marvellous are the folds of her vaginal skin. This is the reason why, in the Ta-t'ung—where bandaging is much practised—the women marry very young. In other places they try to attain these folds by other means, but the best method is bandaging of the feet.'

A German writer and a Frenchman, Dr. Matignon, in fact were of the opinion that the deformation of the foot encouraged development of the thighs and the mound of Venus, thus increasing masculine

Supreme voluptuousness — to bite the shoe of the beloved. Painting from a 19th-century album. Kristofer Schipper collection.

pleasure. Many drawings and prints show Chinese men caressing the foot of their lover with the same pleasure that is shown by a European fondling the breast of his young mistress. 'You Europeans,' the fanatics say, 'cannot imagine how exquisitely exciting that caress may be.'

At the beginning of this century the custom of binding the feet was still very much alive, despite many edicts discouraging or making illegal the practice. While the Manchus published laws against bandaging the foot, eager partisans supported the ancient tradition. 'Hair-dressing, eyebrow-plucking, bound breasts were violations of the natural order brought in by foreigners. If China had still been the greatest nation in the world foreign women would have adopted her customs.' It was not eradicated without difficulty. A compromise was agreed upon whereby the custom disappeared gradually without causing great social disruption.

Suddenly old-fashioned women with small feet saw themselves abandoned. The logical result was the discontinuation of the practice. M. B.

POEMS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

KISSES BY POST

It is not that I could not tear her letter with my fingers,
Nor cut it with scissors ;
Slowly and carefully I lift the violet flap of the envelope
Because I know there is hidden underneath
A secret kiss from my beloved.
Carefully I undo the pink writing-paper
She so solemnly folded.
And word by word, line by line,
I read her serious letter.
Not because I love the fine lines of the seal
Do I slowly and gently remove the green stamp.
It is because I know that the back of the stamp
Hides a kiss from my beloved.

Liu Ta-pai (1880–1952)

LOVE SONG

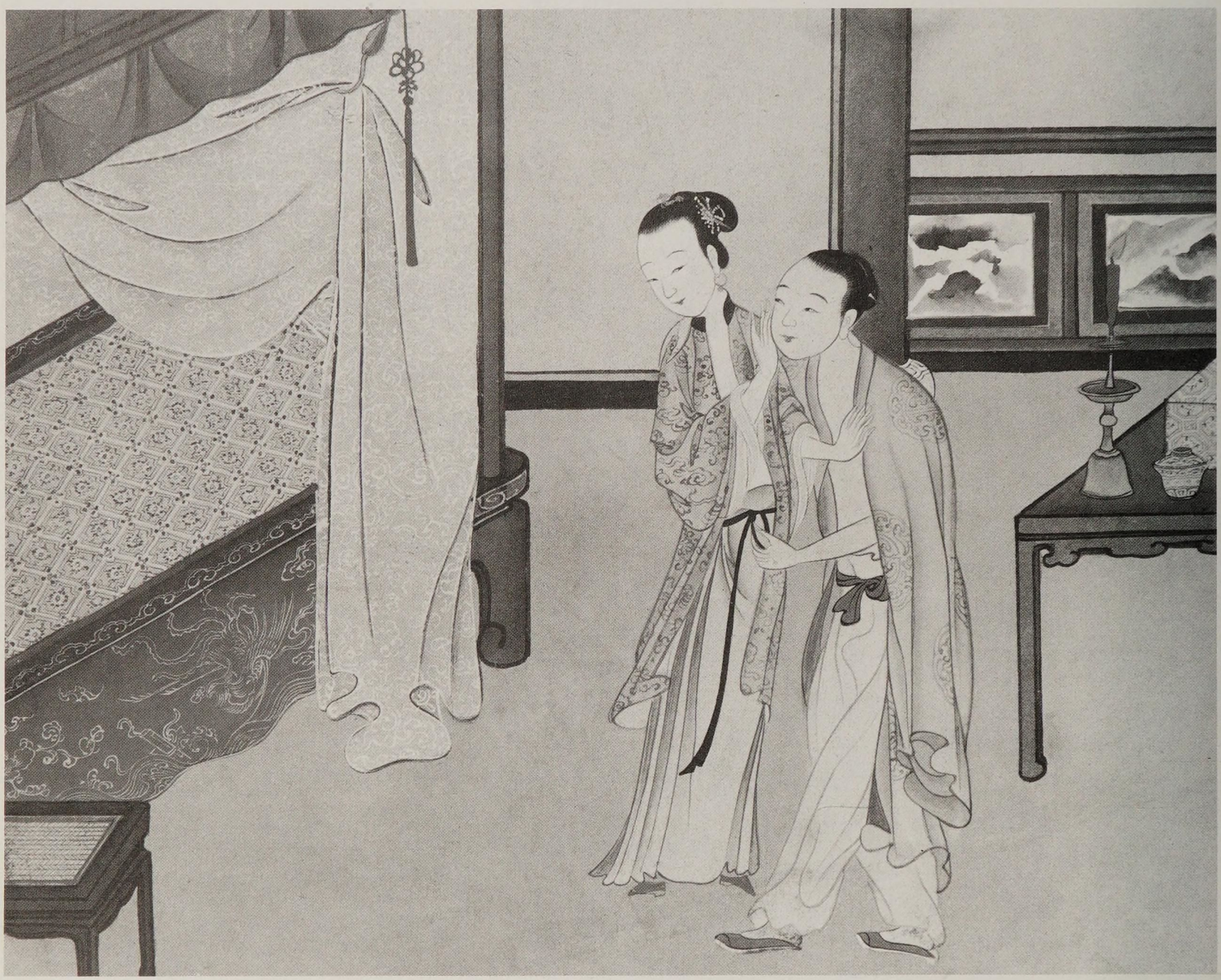
My beloved lives in one village while my house is in another ;
The mountains are high, the rivers deep and the roads long.
Perhaps one day the mountains and streams will be changed
And the two villages become one.
Flying birds do not fear heights
Whilst we are not afraid of knives.
Let us live side by side and die together ;
Then we shall be a pair of flying birds.

Anonymous

The 'Golden Lotus' held in the Palm of the Hand. Painting from the Ch'ien-lung period (1736–96). Library of the University of Indiana, Indiana.

The Lover delights in the Sight of her Tiny Feet. From a 19th-century album. Kristofer Schipper collection.

Young Woman holding a Flower Bud in her Hand. Oil-painting. 19th century. François Duhau de Bérenx collection, Paris.



19th-century painting. Private collection, Paris.

18th-century painting. J. M. Beurdeley collection, Paris.

WAITING TILL TWILIGHT

I wait for you till twilight ;
My unquiet heart burns for you.
At last you come:
The brocade coverlet is warm and scented ;
I draw you into my room: we slip beneath the silk cover.
The moment comes, dew falls, and the flower opens
In all kinds of tenderness and love.
The rain disperses and the clouds vanish as the battle of Love subsides.
My lover really admired my delicate Golden Lotus.

Anonymous

MY LOVER

My lover admires my slim waist ;
I love his gallant courtesy.
At our first encounter he was gentle and caressing.
Purposely I allowed my silken dress to reveal
The white curves of my breast.
You love me and I you, tenderly and sweet.
Hand in hand,
Shoulder to shoulder
We step towards the silk-curtained ivory bed.

Anonymous

THINGS I LIKE

My pleasure lies in red silk curtains ;
I love the ivory bed.
My pleasure is to place your tiny feet on my shoulders ;
I love to see the soles of red embroidered shoes pointing to Heaven.
My pleasure is your small mouth, red like a cherry ;
I love your lilac-scented breath.
My pleasure is to see your big eyes burning with love, your Mind far away.
I love to hear your moans of joy ;
My pleasure is to assuage our mutual passion.
I loved the secret exchanges of our first meeting. How Seductive you were !
Now you allow your true nature to be seen,
Your poise, intelligence, tenderness and elegance are without Peer.
What really makes me happy is the way your big eyes Pretend to be ashamed.

Anonymous

POEM

My mouth replaces a gold cup of sparkling wine ;
Drink your fill.
My hands are like a jade belt clasped to your waist.
A golden needle pierces and impales the water-lily ;
White dew falls into the heart of the peony.

Anonymous

Cats. 19th-century painting. Private collection, Paris.

Among the Reeds. Album from the late 19th century. Private collection, Hong Kong.

JOY OF A SNOWFLAKE

If I were a snowflake turning in the air
I would surely know whither I was bound.
I would sail, sail, sail
Over the earth on my way.
I would not lose myself in the dark valley
Nor would I stray to the foot of the sad mountain
Or wander in the street of disappointment.
Glide, glide, glide,
Look, I know where I am going.
I would fly gaily through the air,
For well I know that graceful, lovely place.
I will wait till she comes to walk in the garden ;
Float, float, float,
Her body exhales the smooth perfume of the red prunus.
Then will I profit from my agile body,
And skilfully wet her dress.
I will cling to her tender round bosom ;
And melt, melt, melt,
I will melt on her tender rounded breasts.

Hsü Chih-mo (1895–1931)

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Acknowledgments

We acknowledge with thanks the help given in finding illustrations and particularly to the following:

Mme Guignard, Conservateur du Département des Manuscrits Orientaux at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris;
Mme Pierre Emmanuel-Loo;
Mme van Gulik;
Jean Adhémar, Conservateur en Chef du Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris;
Doctor K. Gebhard, Director of the Institute for Sex Research in the University of Indiana;
the Trustees of the British Museum, London;
the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston;
the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington;
the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York;
The Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City;
and the Musée Guimet, Paris.

Our thanks are also due to:

Louis Bataille, Jean-Michel Beurdeley, Edward Chow, Jean-Pierre Dubosc, François Duhau de Bérenx, Nicolas Landau, Sammy Lee, Gérard Lévy, Philippe Nicolier, Charles Ratton, Lucien Thenlot, and Roger Peyrefitte who so willingly showed us his collection.

Photographs in colour are by:

Hans Hinz, Basle;
Routhier, Paris;
F. Duhau de Bérenx, Bangkok;
Studio Josse, Arcueil;
the Photographic Department of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,
of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington;
and of the Library of the University of Indiana.

Black and white photographs are from:

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M. van Gulik, Kristofer Schipper;
the Photographic Departments of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris;
of the Library of the University of Indiana;
of the Library of the British Museum, London;
of the Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York;
of the Library of the Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City;
of the Library of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston;
of the Library of the Musée Guimet, Paris.

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ISBN 0-89009-631-7

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