

Blockseminar: "Reading Pleasures"

Prof. Paola Zamperini, Amherst College

In this course we will explore the world of Ming and Qing erotic fiction. By reading and discussing together works such as Ruyijun zhuan, The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction, and Chipozhi zhuan, The Tale of an Infatuated Woman, we will analyze the culture of desire and sexuality in both Classical and vernacular fiction in late imperial times. We will focus on language, metaphors, narrative and imagery that appear in these sources, in order to think about the representation and circulation of pleasure, masculinity, and femininity. We also discuss the intersections of the erotic with other important themes in the late imperial literary canon, such as virtue, filial piety, and enlightenment.

Required texts:

Here below are the sources that we will read in their entirety and in excerpts. Prior knowledge of late imperial Chinese culture and literature is very helpful, but it is not a requirement. In this sense, those among you who can read the sources in the original are strongly encouraged to do so, but the course is open to everyone interested in the topics covered by the seminar. It is completely acceptable for you to read German translations of the sources we will discuss, but please note that all in-class discussion will refer to the English translations indicated below.

- Chipozhi zhuan, The Tale of an Infatuated Woman (English translation by Wu Cuncun in Renditions, No. 58, pp. 47-97);
- Huaying Jinzhen, Variegated Positions of the Flowery Battle, Chinese original and English translation, from Van Gulik, trans., Vol. I and II of Erotic Color Prints of the Ming Period (Brill reprint)
- Jin Ping Mei, The Plum in the Golden Vase (English translation by David T. Roy, Chapters 1-60; by Clement Egerton, Chapters 61-100)
- Mudan Ting, Peony Pavilion (English translation by Cyril Birch)
- Ruyijun zhuan, The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction (English translation by Charles Stone in The Fountainhead of Chinese Erotica);
- Xixiangji, The Story of the Western Wing (English translation by Wilt Idema and Stephen H. West);
- Xiutayeshi, The Embroidered Couch (English translation by Lenny Hu);
- Li Yu, Roupuyan, The Carnal Prayer Mat (English translation by Patrick Hanan)
- Zhang Ailing, Se jie, Lust Caution (English translation by Julia Lovell);

Movies:

- Sex and Zen, 1991, HK, directed by Michael Mak, 99 mins.
- Lust Caution, 2007, directed by Ang Lee, 157 min (non-edited version)

Syllabus

3/13 Introduction to the course

14-17 Genre, Gender, and the Language of Sex in Ming and Qing Erotic Fiction.

Readings:

Xixiangji, The Story of the Western Wing, Play IV, Act 1; Mudan Ting, Peony Pavilion, Scene 10; Jin Ping Mei, Chapters 2, 3, 4; Cao Xueqin, Honglou meng, Chapter 5

3/14-16

Watch the movie Lust caution, by Ang Lee, which will be discussed on 3/18, in the last session of the day

3/16 Ming Sextopias: A Man's World?

10-12 Well-endowed Men...

Readings:

Ruyijun zhuan, The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction

13-15 And the Foolish Women who Love Them.

Readings:

Chipozi zhuan, The Tale of an Infatuated Woman

15-17 (Xi)men's Harem: The Jin Ping Mei.

Readings:

JPM, Chapters 10, 11, 12, 27, 28; Ding Naifei, Obscene Things, Chapter 3, "A Cure for Melancholy: Yuan Hongdao (1558-1610) and Qifa (Seven Stimuli)"

3/17 Pleasuring Cultures

10.00-12.00 Aphrodisiacs, Sexual Excess, and their Consequences.

Readings:

JPM, Chapters 49, 50, 79; Cao Xueqin, Honglou meng, Chapter 12

13-15 Spring Pictures and Their Place in Chinese Novels

Readings:

Van Gulik, trans., Huaying Jinzhen, Variegated Positions of the Flowery Battle, Chinese original and English translation, from Vol. I and II of "Erotic color prints of the Ming period" (images & explication); Li Yu, The Carnal Prayer Mat, Chapter 3.

15-17.00 Sex and Zen (movie)

3/18 Ming Erotic Discourse in Chinese Culture, Past and Present.

10-12 Enlightening Sex. The Carnal Prayer Mat, in Word and Image.

Readings:

Li Yu, Roupутuan, The Carnal Prayer Mat, in its entirety.

13-15 Kinky Sex: The Embroidered Couch.

Readings:

Xiutayeshi, The Embroidered Couch, in its entirety.

15-17 Modern Sex: Jin Ping Mei's Legacy and Beyond.

Readings:

Zhang Ailing, Sejie (available in English through Anchor Books 2007); "Who's not going to Jin Ping Mei park, and why?"

http://www.danwei.org/tourism/lets_not_go_to_jin_ping_mei_pa.php;

Pain Jinlian cosplay <http://asianbeautypic.blogspot.com/2007/09/pan-jinlian->

[cosplay.html](#)