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The Art of the Bedchamber and *Jin Ping Mei*

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Abstract

The ‘art of the bedchamber’ texts occupy a key place in pre-modern Chinese sexual culture, sharing that place with an even larger body of texts of later origin, the sexually explicit novels and stories of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, and *Jin Ping Mei* (The plum in the golden vase) in particular. The two genres – the texts of the bedchamber arts and Ming and Qing erotic fiction – have key commonalities, especially in the governing theme that not only must a man please a woman in sex, but that she is sexually formidable, and that he must be masterful in order to please her. Both genres center on the man’s relations with multiple women. But they differ because what appears as the art of sex in Ming and Qing fiction drastically reinvents the contents and spirit of the classic art of the bedchamber, which promotes sex as the harmonizing of *yin* and *yang* for the sake of nourishing health and longevity. Sex is measured and temperate, neither rushed nor violent. The art of sex in Ming and Qing fiction instead focuses on ways in which characters make themselves sexually powerful, usually by means of drugs and/or the use of special techniques, including those that absorb vital essences from their partners. Besides detailing these points, the article will analyze specific traces of the art of the bedchamber in *Jin Ping Mei*, such as the practices of kissing and absorbing saliva, the adoption of positions of intercourse, and the use of sexual devices, chemicals, and aphrodisiacs.

Key words

art of the bedchamber – *Jin Ping Mei* – Ming and Qing erotic fiction

Introduction: the Art of the Bedchamber, *Jin Ping Mei*, and Ming and Qing Fiction

'Art of the bedchamber' texts consist of instructional manuals for men on how to master sex with women. The earliest works of this genre originate in the Mawangdui 馬王堆 tombs of the third century BCE, while the more recent versions date to the Ming-Qing era (1368-1911) including illustrated albums.¹ The 'art of the bedchamber' genre occupies a key place in pre-modern Chinese sexual culture which it shares with an even larger body of texts of later origin, the sexually explicit novels and stories of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and in particular, the famous novel *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (The plum in the golden vase). Although the two genres have key commonalities, nevertheless they vastly differ in theme and content. What appears as the art of the bedchamber in Ming and Qing fiction drastically reinvents the spirit and emphasis of the classic, traditional art of the bedchamber that appears between the early Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) and the Ming. By "classic" I refer to the series of bedchamber texts from the Mawangdui tombs, from the Six Dynasties (220-589) and the Tang dynasty (618-907) that were preserved in Japan in the *Yixin fang* 醫心方 (Formulas from the heart of medicine), and Ming texts such as the sixteenth-century *Sunü miaolun* 素女妙論 (Wondrous discourse of the plain woman), which, as late as it is, is highly consistent with the earlier texts, and which I will frequently cite.² In this literature, the main purpose of sex is to harmonize *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 for the sake of nourishing health and longevity. Sex is measured and temperate, neither rushed nor violent.³ As it appears in Ming and Qing fiction, the art of sex instead focuses on ways in which characters make themselves sexually powerful, usually by means of drugs and/or by mastering occult

1 Versions of 'art of the bedchamber' texts extend to modern times. See, for example, Jolan Chang, *The Tao of Love and Sex: The Ancient Chinese Way to Ecstasy* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977); and Wang Qiang, *Les secrets de la puissance sexuelle: plaisir, vigueur et longévité sexuels grâce à la médecine traditionnelle chinoise* (Paris: Dervy, 1994).

2 See Li Ling and Keith McMahon, "The Contents and Terminology of the Mawangdui Texts on the Arts of the Bedchamber," *Early China*, 17 (1992): 145-85; and Li Ling 李零, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 中國方術概觀 (A comprehensive survey of Chinese occult arts) (Beijing: Renmin Zhongguo chubanshe, 1993), 3-45 (Mawangdui texts), 100-143 (*Yixin fang*, or Ishimpō, texts preserved in Japan by Tamba Yasuyori 丹波康賴), and 190-203 (text of *Sunü miaolun*). Other Ming works appear in Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 204-19. For translations of Mawangdui texts, see Donald Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui Medical Manuscripts* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998).

3 As in the sense that no man should "strain his *yang qi* with excess vigor without letting up" (*qiang yang piao han wu xiuxi* 強陽慄悍無休息) or "act wildly and with utter abandon" (*kuangwang renyi* 狂妄任意). See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 199 and 201 (from *Sunü miaolun*).

techniques. Like many of their counterparts in other works, the characters of *Jin Ping Mei* practice sex in any but the controlled and attentive manner of the art of the bedchamber. Instead, they indulge their passions and desires with as little restraint as possible.⁴

The differences between the classic art of the bedchamber and the novel are not surprising, the most basic and obvious difference lying at the level of genre. The classic art of the bedchamber appears in instructional texts that promote sex not so much as an act of pleasure, but of “physical cultivation.” The movements of sex echo the exercises of *daoyin* 導引, “guiding and pulling,” the similarly ancient practices versions of which can still be seen in the form of today’s *qi* 氣 exercises, or *qigong* 氣功 (sometimes called Chinese yoga).⁵ In other words, compared to pleasure, the equally if not more important object is physical and spiritual well-being. When carried out properly, sex is fundamentally healthy. It both strengthens and harmonizes the body, with climax commonly taking place for the woman as expressed by the single word *kuai* 快, meaning joy, delight, and satisfaction, but ideally – that is, for optimum health – less often for the man. For him, ejaculation (*xie* 瀉) is but a “temporary pleasure” (*zankuai* 暫快), too much of which leads to illness, even death.⁶ In some passages, the act of sex is purely for the sake of healing dysfunction, as in the regime that has the man repeat a thrusting routine a number of times a day for a recommended period, after which the malady should be cured. Maladies include weakness of *jing* 精 “essence” and irregularity of menses.⁷ In general, the

4 My references to *Jin Ping Mei* will be from *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jin Ping Mei* 新刻繡像批評金瓶梅 (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1990), the Chongzhen 崇禎 edition. I will refer to this version unless variants in the *cihua* edition warrant otherwise, for which I will use: Lanling xiaoxiao sheng 蘭陵笑笑生, *Jin Ping Mei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話 (Taipei: Liren shuju 里仁書局, 1996), abbreviated as *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, Liren edition.

5 See Donald Harper, “The Sexual Arts of Ancient China as Described in a Manuscript of the Second Century B.C.,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987): 539-593, and refer to page 581 “physical cultivation”; Douglas Wile, *The Art of the Bedchamber: The Chinese Sexual Yoga Classics, Including Women’s Solo Mediation Texts* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992); Vivienne Lo, *How to Do the Gibbon Walk: A Translation of the Pulling Book (ca 186 B.C.)* (Cambridge: Needham Research Institute, 2014); and Livia Kohn, *Chinese Healing Exercises: The Tradition of Daoyin* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), “healing exercise” being her translation of *daoyin*.

6 On *zankuai*, see Rudolf Pfister, “Gendering Sexual Pleasures in Early and Medieval China,” *Asian Medicine* 7 (2012): 34-64, and especially page 52. According to one of the bedchamber texts, if in his twenties, he should only “ejaculate once in thirty days” (*sanshi ri er yixie* 三十日而一泄), at thirty finally graduating to “once in five days” (*wu ri er yixie* 五日而一泄). See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 118, 199, 201, citing *Yufang mijue* 玉房秘訣 (Secrets of the jade chamber); *xie* 泄 is interchangeable with *xie* 瀉 and *Sunü miaolun*.

7 In the regime called the “eight benefits” (*ba yi* 八益), the man thrusts a specific number of times and, after finishing the count, stops, then repeats the routine a specific number of times

art of the bedchamber helps solve problems and promotes successful, harmonious sex; social contradictions are absent; lust and passion are not part of the picture. The focus is on the aesthetics and techniques of sex, treating intercourse as a healing art (like *daoyin* exercises) and, as also seen in the Indian *Kamasutra*, discouraging any tendency to turn it into a rash, unchecked act.⁸

No such behavior appears in *Jin Ping Mei*. Sex can be beautiful and sublime, but it is also rough, raw, and ferocious, and takes place in a context that pays enormous attention to the complexities of social life both within and beyond the activities of the bedchamber. Vulgar and grotesque imagery is common, whether it is a matter of sensual pleasure, a sexual part of the body, or an obscene joke. The novel is about characters who meet but should not meet, people who cheat and deceive each other, argue and fight, plot against rivals and innocent victims, and in the end die of excess. Women, and Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮 in particular, use sex opportunistically to bargain for gifts, favors, and other types of advancement. Ximen Qing 西門慶 resorts to a mysterious aphrodisiac that gives him superhuman power and finally causes his death. For him, having sex inevitably means having too much sex and suffering because of it, though the novel portrays him and other characters experiencing plenty of pleasure along the way.

But as different as the classic art of the bedchamber and the novel are, both generically and thematically, some broad but key commonalities exist that make worthwhile situating the two kinds of texts into dialogue. First, two qualifications need to be made. One is the fact that I am taking the classic art of the bedchamber as a generic whole and comparing it with the practice of sex in the anonymously-authored novel, *Jin Ping Mei*, written sometime in the latter half of the sixteenth century. But in fact the art of the bedchamber includes a range of texts and practices over a long span of time, with varying tones and emphases. Ming and Qing fiction use the term “art of the bedchamber,” *fangzhong shu* 房中術, or near equivalents, in ways that are hardly recognizable if we consider the classic texts. Nevertheless, the classic texts from Han to Ming make up a consistent tradition in that they share a basic, joint purpose, which is to treat sexual intercourse as a body of knowledge, by which I mean a body of justifiable knowledge, that is, as a subject that is worth treating in serious, respectable fashion. In other words, texts of the art of the bedchamber hold in common their treatment of sexual intercourse as a topic that is valid in itself,

a day for a recommended period. See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 116, from *Yufang mijue*.

8 See Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, trans., *Vatsyayana Mallanaga: Kamasutra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). The translators refer to the *Kamasutra*'s tendency to civilize and tame the act, shielding it “from the ferocity of unchecked desire” (xl-xli).

parallel in validity to subjects such as ritual propriety, moral conduct, or the art of war. They create an entire discourse about sexual intercourse that, as Charlotte Furth says, lends “spiritual dignity to the sex act” and that comes with a common, core set of principles, concepts, terms, and concerns, along with which they teach a set of technical practices, as expressed in the word *shu* 術, which amount to a curriculum of methods for the exercise of sexual intercourse.⁹

Most importantly, treating sex this way means that sex is not simply a lustful, sensual act, carried out blindly and mindlessly. To repeat Donald Harper’s words, intercourse in the art of the bedchamber is “for the sake of physical cultivation rather than as a consequence of passion.” What these words leave unsaid and understated is the role and definition of pleasure. The Mawangdui text *He yin yang* 合陰陽 (Joining *yin* and *yang*) at one point refers to bodies experiencing “ecstatic excitation” (*leyang* 樂養 [癢]), but immediately follows with “[a]lthough desirous, do not act” (*sui yu wu wei* 雖欲勿為).¹⁰ This is a good example of how the body of knowledge known as the art of the bedchamber treats pleasure: as something to know and control. As Rudolf Pfister observes, the man engages in “controlled action” and remains in a state of intermediate, prolonged stimulation.¹¹ If pleasure turns into “lust” (*se* 色), then it is harmful. At the extreme of such practices, pleasure plays no role at all, as in the branch of the art of the bedchamber consisting of the sexual initiation rites of the sixth-century Celestial Master Daoism.¹² In this case, intercourse is a ritualized procedure that results in salvational transformation. It is accompanied by incantation and visualization that produce saved beings who will survive the coming cataclysm.

9 See Charlotte Furth, “Rethinking van Gulik: Sexuality and Reproduction in Traditional Chinese Medicine,” in Christina K. Gilmartin, Gail Hershatler, Lisa Rofel, and Tyrene White, eds., *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 125-46, and see page 127; and Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 144-55, 147, 150.

10 See Harper, “The Sexual Arts of Ancient China,” 581 (“physical cultivation”); Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, 415; and Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 37.

11 See Pfister, “Gendering Sexual Pleasures,” 52-53, 59.

12 Celestial Masters Daoism was a religious movement that sought “primordial undifferentiated oneness.” See Gil Raz, “The Way of the Yellow and the Red: Re-examining the Sexual Initiation Rite of Celestial Master Daoism,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China*, 10.1(2008): 86-120, and see page 86; Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu xukao* 中國方術續考 (Further research on Chinese occult arts) (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2000), 368-86; and Paul Goldin, *The Culture of Sex in Ancient China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 118-19.

In dismissing excess, moreover, the art of the bedchamber plays a role as a promoter of sex as a morally defined act. A passage in the *Yufang mijue* correlates the behavior of the adept penis with five values originally referring to moral behavior and having nothing to do with sex. The “jade stalk” (*yujing* 玉莖) of the virtuous adept should embody the “five constants” (*wu chang* 五常), namely, benevolence, justice, propriety, trustworthiness, and wisdom (*ren* 仁, *yi* 義, *li* 禮, *xin* 信, *zhi* 智). Above all, “it is disciplined and self-controlled; and it contains within itself the utmost virtue” (*zhi jie zishou, nei huai zhide* 執節自守，內懷至德).¹³ The overlap of sexual and moral conduct affirms the notion that one can be as virtuous, correct, and pure in the act of sex as in the act of performing a sacred ritual, upholding justice, or carrying out an act of benevolence.

My other point is that it does not even matter whether the *Jin Ping Mei* author read a work such as *Sunü miaolun*. The art of the bedchamber in general travelled in various forms, including what passed haphazardly and including objects in the form of sexual tools such as the silver clasp and dildos, the latter of which appeared in various forms for both male and female use from the Han dynasty to the Ming and Qing, including their occurrence in *Jin Ping Mei*, and were widely available for purchase at the time the novel was written.¹⁴ Elaborate and expensive illustrated albums existed in the Ming that showed positions of intercourse, which appear three times in *Jin Ping Mei*, though the novel reveals no details about their contents. Although key bedchamber texts seem to have disappeared around the Tang dynasty (which found their way to Japan by the tenth century in the *Yixin fang*), versions of their contents appeared elsewhere in both written and oral form, including the *Sunü miaolun*. In short, it is enough to assume an intermittent influence on *Jin Ping Mei* of the art of the bedchamber and the related field of *daoyin* exercises and nourishing life (as will be discussed shortly). The novel is, so to speak, free to take what it wants, whether it does so faithfully, twistedly, haphazardly, or whether it reinvents or creates its own art of sex.

Nevertheless, *Jin Ping Mei* does share fundamental commonalities with the classic art of the bedchamber, which can be reduced to four points. First is the governing theme that not only must the man please the woman in sex, but that he must be masterful and well-prepared in order to please her. The bedchamber texts share this basic theme, which explicitly contrasts the man’s

13 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 109.

14 For a brief history of dildos, see Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu kao* 中國方術考 (Beijing: Renmin Zhongguo chubanshe, 1993), 409-24; and a more updated version of this article in Li Ling, *Wanbian* 萬變 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2017), 405-25 (see below for further discussion).

fragility with the woman's potency. The novel takes the woman's capacity for pleasure for granted and creates a man who is already expert, but who always relies on tools and drugs in order to succeed in sex. A corollary to the theme of the woman's sexual capacity is that intercourse with her takes time and attention. According to the art of the bedchamber, sex must begin with mutual understanding. The partners must have sex with appropriate timing, neither too hasty nor too slow. The man must attune himself to the woman's state of mind and body, and respond accordingly. In general, he observes the woman and responds to her; she, on the other hand, acts spontaneously, her delight ensured by his attentive efforts. He regulates his breath and movements and, above all, he controls himself. He should remain in an "intermediate state" of pleasure, in which he prolongs sensation while always desiring more. In other words, he does not enjoy pleasure to the fullest, for if he did, that would mean ejaculating, but then he would no longer be able to enjoy, nor could he continue to stimulate the woman.¹⁵ In the novel, although Ximen Qing does not regulate his movements in the manner of the art of the bedchamber, he achieves the state of prolonged stimulation both for himself and the woman and, as the man does in the art of the bedchamber, avoids ejaculating too soon or only for his own pleasure. Sex takes place preceded by and interwoven with moments of diversion, whether in the form of conversation, eating, drinking, or playing games; the partners use sex tools and drugs to extend their pleasure and excitement.

Second, both the ancient art of the bedchamber and *Jin Ping Mei* share the underlying premise that the sexual act is a contest and field of struggle.¹⁶ This premise is an extension of the first commonality and is apparent in the art of the bedchamber's warning to the man about the woman's formidability. The *Yufang zhiyao* 玉房指要 (Essentials of the jade chamber) refers to the woman as "enemy" and tells the man that "when encountering the enemy, he should view her as if she were no more than tile or stone, but himself as if gold or jade" (*yu di, dang shi di ru washi, zi shi ru jinyu*, 御敵，當視敵如瓦石，自視如金玉).¹⁷ At stake is whether or not the man can win, that is, stay erect and lead the woman to sexual delight. Or will he fail miserably even after resorting to aphrodisiacs and sex tools, as does the doctor whom Li Ping'er 李瓶兒 briefly marries in *Jin Ping Mei*? Poetic passages describing sex as mock battle appear

15 See Pfister, "Gendering Sexual Pleasures in Early and Medieval China," 52-53, 59. On the man's fragility, see 44-45, 56.

16 Consider the words of Wendy Doniger, *Redeeming the Kamasutra* (London: Oxford University Press, 2016), who writes that an "agonistic view of sex is the essence" of the *Kamasutra* (66).

17 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 102.

in *Jin Ping Mei*, in which man and woman fight metaphorically as if to defeat and kill each other. Both end satisfied and well spent. Sex as battle is also a matter of what makes up the core of *Jin Ping Mei*'s narrative in terms of the alliances and enmities between wives and concubines and the women's attempts both during and after sex to win favors from Ximen Qing. Struggles such as these do not appear in the art of the bedchamber.

Third, both the novel and the art of the bedchamber center around the man's relations with multiple women. In addition to his wife, concubines, and maids, Ximen Qing also seeks other men's wives, courtesans, and occasional male lovers. The art of the bedchamber is vaguer, instead emphasizing the idea that the sexually masterful man not only can, but should have sex with multiple partners. The *Yufang zhiyao* says that he should emulate the ancient Yellow Emperor (Huangdi 黃帝), "who rode 1200 women and from that was able to attain immortality" (*Huangdi yu qian'er bai nü er deng xian*, 黃帝御千二百女而登仙). The *Yufang mijue* 玉房秘訣 (Secrets of the jade chamber) puts it this way: "If a man wants to follow the way of nourishing life, gathering *qi*, and circulating *yin* and *yang*, he cannot do it with just one woman. He must take three, nine, eleven, the more the better!" also adding, "it is best if he alternates between many women; the benefits will thereby increase. Taking ten or more women in one night will yield the best results."¹⁸ In all cases, he can only do such things if he has trained himself to protect his vital energies, while also drawing nourishment from the woman. It is easy to imagine the emphasis on sex with multiple women as a form of compensation for the man's initial fragility and his tendency to lose vital energy during sex – though no text precisely articulates such a message.¹⁹

The fourth commonality may seem too obvious, but I think still worth articulating, the openness in describing sex, that is, the lengthy, explicit, and dedicated description of naked bodies, genitals, and sexual acts, for which both have an extensively developed vocabulary, though the vocabulary rarely overlaps. The novel includes both refined and vulgar extremes. The bedchamber texts strictly adhere to the level of the elegant and refined, preferring veiled, euphemistic terms, and always avoiding the vulgar. For addressing such topics, both have experienced rejection by mainstream orthodox culture, though both in their own ways appeal to the orthodox voice for self-justification.

18 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 102, *Yu xing yinyang qu qi yangsheng zhi dao, bu keyi yi nü wei zhi, dei san ruo jiu ruo shiyi, duo duo yi shan* 欲行陰陽取氣養生之道，不可以一女為之，得三若九若十一，多多益善；and 104, *shu shu yi nü ze yi duo, yixi yi shiren yishang you jia* 數數易女則益多，一夕易十人以上尤佳。

19 On taking nourishment, see Pfister, "Gendering Sexual Pleasures in Early and Medieval China," 55-56; and Goldin, *The Culture of Sex*, 47.

The art of the bedchamber was for centuries a marginal, even suppressed tradition, passed on secretly, ignored, and lost. *Jin Ping Mei* was early on banned for obscenity and still suffers censorship, though it is considered one of the best Chinese novels ever written.

The commonalities and divergences between *Jin Ping Mei* and the classic art of the bedchamber need to be examined in a broader context, first with a brief look at how Ming and Qing fiction as a whole refers to and interprets the so-called “art of the bedchamber.” Second, we need an expanded description of the art of the bedchamber and its relation to the fields of the *daoyin* exercises and the science of “nourishing life” (*yangsheng* 養生). The key notion in the second consideration is the channeling and transfer of *qi* and *jing*, in particular, the idea that a man loses *jing* “essence” during ejaculation, which is basic to all literature about sex in China and inherent in the first two commonalities listed above.

Although the term “art of the bedchamber,” *fangzhong shu*, never appears in *Jin Ping Mei*, the expression or alternate forms of the term occurs in many other Ming and Qing works.²⁰ The Ming novel *Xiuta yeshi* 繡榻野史 (The history of the embroidered couch, ca. 1597), for example, which appeared not long after *Jin Ping Mei*, refers to the “methods by which Daoist immortals cultivate and nourish themselves through cinnabar refinement” (*xianjia xiuyang liandan de fa* 仙家修養煉丹的法), using common terminology from the practices of internal alchemy (*neidan* 內丹 or *liandan shu* 煉丹術).²¹ In this case as elsewhere, the methods consist not of exercise practices, but of an aphrodisiac that the man applies to the surface of his penis to make it “stay hard and firm all night without fail” (*changda jianying, tongxiao bu diedao* 長大堅硬，通宵不跌倒, 1.136-37). Another drug goes in the woman’s vagina to stimulate the flow of “yin essence” (*yingjing* 陰精), providing “indescribable pleasure” (*kuaille bukeshengyan* 快樂不可勝言, 1.136). The drugs come with instructions that the narrative reads out in detail.

20 On the art of the bedchamber in Ming and Qing fiction, see Pan Jianguo 潘建國, “Daojiao fangzhong wenhua yu Ming Qing xiaoshuo zhong de xing miao xie” 道教房中文化與明清小說中的性描寫, *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究, 3 (1997): 57-70; and Wan Jingchuan 萬晴川, “Lun fangzhong shu dui Ming Qing xiaoshuo de yingxiang” 論房中術對明清小說的影響, *Jinyang xuekan* 晉陽學刊 1 (2000): 70-73. Both studies agree on the primary focus in fiction on the use of terminology from inner alchemy, including the art of absorption (*caizhan* 採戰).

21 See Ka F. Wong, “The Anatomy of Eroticism: Reimagining Sex and Sexuality in the Late Ming Novel *Xiuta Yeshe*,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China* 9 (2007): 284-329; and Anonymous, *Xiuta yeshe*, in Chen Qinghao 陳慶浩 and Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 eds., *Siwuxie huibao* 思無邪匯寶 (The collectanea of correct thoughts) (Taipei: Taiwan daying baikē, 1995), vol.2, 205.

Other works refer to actual exercises that characters use to stir the flow of *qi* and enhance sexual performance. A story in the late Ming collection *Sengni niehai* 僧尼孽海 (Monks and nuns in a sea of sin) tells of monk specialists who gain the favor of a Yuan 元 emperor by teaching him the “art of circulating *qi*” (*yun qi shu* 運氣術). The story is unique in that, using the term *fangzhong shu*, it directly cites the *Sunü miaolun*’s nine sexual positions, which the monk persuades the emperor to use with women recruited into the palace. This is a rare case of nearly verbatim lifting from a text of the classic art of the bedchamber, though the story reduces the length of the passage in *Sunü miaolun* by almost half, and changes some of the wording.²²

The Qing novel *Zhulin yeshi* 株林野史 (The scandalous story of the Zhulin Grove) refers to the bedchamber arts in terms of Daoist internal alchemy (*neidan* or *liandan shu*), likewise using the term “methods of the battle of absorption” (*caizhan zhi fa* 採戰之法). A man with such skills can “go all night without ejaculating” (*yiye ye buxie* 一夜也不洩); he “can mount ten women in one night” (*yiye neng yu shiniü* 一夜能御十女).²³ Although these contents appear in the art of the bedchamber, when the latter uses battle metaphor, it is not to encourage the kind of aggression that takes place in *Zhulin yeshi*, in which a man tries mercilessly to tantalize a woman. She decides that he is being “cheeky” (*taoqi* 淘氣), “churns up her *qi*” (*yun qi qi lai* 運起氣來), and drains him of energy. When he desperately tries to pull himself out, she “clamps herself so firmly” on his penis that he cannot move (*yijiaqiande, ting jieshi* 一夾箝的, 挺結實, 7.48). Whereas the *Sengni niehai* story merely refers to the act of “circulating” or “churning *qi*,” this is an instance of the practice of actual exercise methods, which the woman has mastered and applies aggressively.²⁴

In contrast, the early or mid-Qing novel *Xinghua tian* 杏花天 (Heaven of apricot flowers) tells of a physical practice to be used by the man. First, it refers

22 See Tang Bohu 唐伯虎, *Sengni niehai*, in Chen Qinghao and Wang Qiugui, eds., *Siwuxie huibao* (Taipei: Taiwan daying baike, 1995), vol. 24, 7.81-82 (slight variation in name of position eight). For this reference, I am indebted to Xue Yingjie 薛英傑, “Wenren shenfen yu tazhe xiangxiang: wan Ming he Qingchu de ‘yinseng’ gushi” 文人身份與他者想象：晚明和清初的‘淫僧’故事 (Literati Identity and the Imagined ‘Other’: Erotic Stories of Buddhist Monks in Late Ming and Early Qing China), (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Hong Kong, 2017), 114.

23 It also refers to the art of the bedchamber as “the bedchamber arts of Pengzu” (*Pengzu fang zhi shu* 彭祖房之術) or, more simply, “methods and arts” (*fashu* 法術). See Chidao ren 痴道人, *Zhulin yeshi*, in Chen Qinghao and Wang Qiugui, eds., *Siwuxie huibao* (Taipei: Taiwan daying baike, 1994), vol.20, 2.10, 8.54, 13.95, 14.103, and 16.116.

24 Reference to “circulating *qi*” also occurs, for example, in the Ming novel, *Yinglie zhuan* 英烈傳 (The story of heroes and martyrs) (Hong Kong: Xuelin youxian gongsi, 1978), 1.6 *fangzhong yun qi zhi shu* 房中運氣之術 (the bedchamber art of circulating *qi*).

to a “bedchamber art” (*fangshu* 房術) consisting of a pill to increase stamina, allowing a man to “last all night without slack” (*tongxiao budai* 通宵不怠).²⁵ Later a Daoist teaches the protagonist a “method of riding women” (*yu nü zhi fa* 御女之法) called the “*bijia* exercise” (*bijia gongfu* 比甲功夫, 2.65-66), which is a form of “absorbing and supplementing” (*caibu* 採補) that helps “solidify essence” (*gu jing* 固精), that is, halt emission. (2.67-68). The exercise involves “circulating *qi*” (*yun qi* 運氣) in such a way that the man can make his penis move on its own and act like mouth that can “bite and nibble” (*ken yao* 啃咬) at the woman’s “flower heart” (*huaxin* 花心, 2.68, 4.82-83).²⁶

Such traces represent a reduction and re-orienting of the classic texts, which now deserve a more thorough rendition in order to better understand the nature of that reduction, especially in terms of the art of the bedchamber’s own construction of the drama of sex between man and woman. The bedchamber texts strive for thorough awareness of the sexual body, both the man’s own and the woman’s. They treat each stage of intercourse in detail, with elucidation of the parts of the woman’s body, including the structure of the vagina from shallow to deep, the signs and stages of the woman’s arousal, techniques and styles of thrusting, ways to anticipate and ensure the woman’s happiness, and the nature and behavior of the penis. They advise about harms and excesses to avoid, methods to improve health and longevity, and cures for dysfunction.

Yet the classic art of the bedchamber constructs a drama of its own, even if not in the generic way of fiction. In other words, although the art of the bedchamber does not classify as fictional narrative, it tells a story that, like *Jin Ping Mei*, begins with grand statements and addresses key problems. But unlike the novel, it projects a positive conclusion in its ultimate message that the man can master sex with women, that man and woman can have harmonious, healthful sex, and that families can thereby reproduce themselves.

The first grand statement is to pronounce the cosmic importance of sex, through which man and woman align themselves with each other and the universe outside. In texts of the *Yixin fang*, this is followed by the warning about the man’s innate ineptitude. He must train himself to master knowledge and

25 See Tianfang daoren 天放道人, *Xinghua tian*, in Chen Qinghao and Wang Qiugui, eds., *Siwuxie huibao* (Taipei: Taiwan daying baike, 1995), vol.17, 2.56.

26 The image of the penis moving like a mouth appears prominently in the eighteenth-century novel *Guwangyan* 姑妄言 (Preposterous words). See Cao Qujing 曹去晶, *Guwangyan*, in Chen Qinghao and Wang Qiugui, eds., *Siwuxie huibao* (Taipei: Taiwan daying baike, 1997), vols. 36-45, 17.2031; and Keith McMahon, “The Pornographic Doctrine of a Loyalist Ming Novel: Social Decline and Sexual Disorder in *Guwangyan*,” in Howard Chiang, ed., *Power and Pleasure: Writing the History of Sexuality in China* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2018), 50-75.

skill, from the first moments to the last. To impress upon him the gravity of these truths, one text compares the sexual superiority of women to the ability of water to put out fire (*you shui zhi mie huo*, 猶水之滅火); another compares the man's sex with a woman to riding a horse with a rotten rein (*yu nü dang ru xiუსuo yu benma*, 御女當如朽索御奔馬).²⁷ Yet a third text uses the word “attack” (*gongji* 攻擊) to refer to the man preparing for intercourse. He is like a “fierce general breaking through a battle formation” (*mengjiang zhi pozhen*, 猛將之破陣). The woman is his “enemy” (*diren* 敵人), as mentioned above, against whom the methods learned from the art of the bedchamber will ensure that he “succeeds in every battle” (*baizhan bu dai ye*, 百戰不殆也), using the famous line from the third chapter of Sunzi's *Art of War*.²⁸ Finally, what is victory? It is a combination of being able to give the woman sexual joy while also being able to “withdraw while alive,” that is, still erect, and not to “return dead” (*shengfan* 生返 versus *sihuan* 死還).²⁹ Key here is the notion just mentioned about the art of the bedchamber's promise that the man can master the woman in sex, where mastery above all means that he will perform in such a way that the woman will experience pleasure and be satisfied. By its generic nature, in other words, the art of the bedchamber constructs just such a sexual situation, that is, its teachings, if followed, promise such an outcome. The same basic logic applies in fictional accounts such as *Jin Ping Mei's*, that is, that the woman will necessarily experience arousal and pleasure. But there is a difference. In the novel Ximen Qing regularly ejaculates and, to Pan Jinlian's frustration, can be found soft and expended after sex with other women (for example, after he has been with Li Ping'er 李瓶兒, 13.168). As for the woman, though she experiences heights of pleasure and regularly reaches orgasm, she is difficult to satisfy in other regards.

The warnings about women's sexual formidability relate to the well-known concept in the art of the bedchamber referred to above, which Ming and Qing fiction also assumes though does not necessarily articulate, namely, that a man may lose *jing* essence during the act of sex. Though it can refer to semen, *jing* more generally refers to vital essence as stored in the urogenital system, which is something that both man and woman possess. A man loses it through ejaculation, thus the importance of treasuring both *qi* and *jing* and as much as possible preventing their loss by withholding ejaculation when having sex. He can, if he chooses, adopt the practice of directing essence up the back to the brain,

27 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 101, 102, from *Yufang mijue* and *Yufang zhiyao*.

28 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 108 (“attack”), 115 (general), both from *Dongxuanzi* 洞玄子 (Master of the dark cave), 121, 123 (“enemy,” line from *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法, both in *Yufang mijue*).

29 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 108, from *Dongxuanzi*.

in technical terms known as “returning *jing* to nourish the brain” (*huan jing bu nao* 還精補腦). Such a practice allows the man not only to prevent loss to the system, but also to conserve and enhance *qi* and *jing* through the act of sex. The woman too should treasure her vital energies, especially as taught in texts devoted to solo women practitioners.³⁰

The saving and redirecting of *jing* returns us to the point that the art of the bedchamber must be seen as part of a larger body of knowledge and practice about techniques of health and longevity that falls under the rubric of “nourishing life” (*yang sheng*). The art of the bedchamber, in other words, should be viewed as one form of such practices among others, even though the art of the bedchamber has not always been accepted or incorporated as such. Basic to all such practices is the notion that *jing* and *qi* can be channeled and directed in both healthy and unhealthy ways, which result in healthy or unhealthy forms of transformation. As taught in the art of the bedchamber, sexual intercourse elevates the circulation of *qi* and floods the entire body with its healthy flow.³¹ Further, *jing* and *qi* can transfer from one person to another, thus the notion of the man not only limiting the loss of essence, but also absorbing it from the woman. In return for his care and attentiveness to the woman, he receives a reward in the form of the transfer of essence from her to him. In other words, the fragile man ultimately receives a gift of nourishment from the woman. Other fictional works reflect such notions, but not *Jin Ping Mei*, although at one point the word *daoyin* appears when Ximen Qing receives a so-called *daoyin* massage from his barber, which makes “his entire body feel relaxed and at peace” (*nong de hunshen tongtai*, 弄的渾身通泰, 52.677). The author need provide no explanation. Readers would know that the barber is “guiding and pulling” *qi* around Ximen Qing’s body for the sake of his better health.

The sense of “classic” (or “classical”) that I have used to label the bedchamber texts parallels the sense of the classic texts of medical literature as practiced by the medical men called *taiyi* 太醫 (“master physician”) or *yiguan* 醫官 (“medical official”) in *Jin Ping Mei*. Classic in this shared sense contrasts with a range of beliefs and practices that proponents of these texts would consider unorthodox, including the use of the monk’s aphrodisiac or Old Woman Liu’s (Liu Pozi 劉婆子) performance of spirit possession during Ximen Qing’s final illness. The science of the literate, classic practitioners informs many of the

30 On female solo-practice, see Elena Valussi, “Men and Women in He Longxiang’s *Nüdan hebian*,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China* 10.2 (2008): 242-78; and Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber*, 192-219.

31 See Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 147 (sex as healthy), 150 (art of the bedchamber and physical exercise, breathing, diet, and medicine); and Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber*, 6-7, 10-12, and 41-42.

descriptions of illness in the novel, illnesses that mainly have to do with sexual and reproductive matters.³² One of the doctors (He 何) twice refers to Ximen Qing's swelling and blockage during his final illness using the term *biandu* 便毒 (79.1149-50), a common medical expression in the Ming for "poison in the region of relief." Another doctor (Ren 任) characterizes Ximen Qing's illness as a case of "yang collapse" (*tuo yang* 脫陽, 79.1147-48), another common medical term among others used to diagnose the acuteness of his illness. In the medical thought of the time, the cause of such illnesses was generally ascribed to sexual excess, which was a major focus of concern in the late Ming and which was characterized as something that led to disease through depletion.³³ Although the *Jin Ping Mei* author was conversant with classic Chinese medicine, he was not so conversant – or chose not to be – with the classic art of the bedchamber. Nevertheless, the concept of sexual excess and its moral and physical effects, which are common to both the medical tradition and that of the art of the bedchamber, do inform the description and logic of Ximen Qing's death.

Traces of the Art of the Bedchamber in *Jin Ping Mei*

Besides the commonalities listed above, more specific traces of the contents of the classic art of the bedchamber appear in, first, *Jin Ping Mei*'s references to positions of intercourse, though the names are different, and, second, in references to the use of sexual devices, chemicals, and aphrodisiacs, which by the time of the novel are more widespread, varied, and potent than in pre-Ming times. I will save these two more obvious areas for later and begin with elements that have a more minimal presence, but deserve attention nevertheless,

32 See Christopher Cullen, "Patients and Healers in Late Imperial China: Evidence from the JINPINGMEI," *History of Science* 31.2 (1993): 99-150, and especially, 103; 109-115. The two medical men cited momentarily are among what Cullen calls the "literate healers" (108-109). *Yiguan* is the title given to Doctor Ren 任, as in the title of Chapter 54. The ritual that Old Woman Liu performs is called *tiao shen* 跳神 (79.1151); see Cullen, "Patients and Healers," 108.

33 On *biandu*, see Andrew Schonebaum, *Novel Medicine: Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 122-25, 129-130 (that *biandu* possibly stands for syphilis). For both *bian du* and *tuo yang*, see Xu Yuanzhen 徐元貞, *Zhongyi cishi* 中醫詞釋 (Henan: Henan kexue jishu chubanshe, 1985), 522, 633 (under *hengxuan* 橫痃); and David Roy, trans., *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei*, five volumes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993-2013), 4.79.647-48, 650. *Tuo* refers to acute depletion or collapse. Note, as Schonebaum writes, that Ximen Qing's illness is not simply a case of excess, but includes elements of moral retribution and what in medical thought was ascribed to "contagion" (*Novel Medicine*, 122-29).

such as the structure of the female genitals, the art of thrusting, and the practices of kissing and absorbing saliva. In the art of the bedchamber, including the *Sunü miaolun*, the vagina has as many as eight levels of depth beyond the clitoris, called “red pearl” (*chizhu* 赤朱), or “red ball” (*hongqiu* 紅毬), the levels having names such as “zither strings” (*qinxian* 琴弦), at one inch, and “uneven teeth” (*maichi* 麥齒), at two, where “inch” is *cun* 寸 and corresponds to about a finger’s breadth.³⁴ An important piece of knowledge transmitted in the art of the bedchamber is that thrusting beyond a particular point, “grain seed” (*gushi* 穀實), at five inches, is too deep and therefore harmful – harm for the woman occurring at a shallower depth than for the man. Harmony takes place best between zither strings and uneven teeth. Shallow thrusts allow *qi* to accumulate, but if thrusts go too deep, the *qi* disperses and the five organs suffer harm.³⁵

Jin Ping Mei is oblivious of such knowledge. Some of the technical terms for parts of the vagina appear in the story in *Sengni niehai* mentioned above, namely, *qinxian*, *gushi*, *maichi*, and “baby rat” (*yingshu* 嬰鼠), which the Ming *Sunü miaolun* lists.³⁶ Strangely, the term “zither strings” (*qinxian*) appears in *Jin Ping Mei*, but refers to a part of the penis (74.1025-26); the author may have heard it somewhere, but misapplied it. No other such terms appear in the novel, which refers to the interior of the vagina as “flower heart” (*huaxin* 花心, 27.355, as in *Xinghua tian* above) or “vagina chamber” (cervix) (*pinwu* 牝屋), which I will mention shortly.³⁷ The art of the bedchamber, *Jin Ping Mei*, and other novels share the expression for “thrust” (*chousong* 抽送, that is, “pull out,” *chou*, and “send in,” *song*). All refer to deep versus shallow, *shen* 深 and *qian* 淺, but the art of the bedchamber describes specific techniques of thrusting, including numbered sequences such as “nine shallow and one deep” (*jiu qian yi shen* 九淺一深) and the varying effects of different thrusting methods. In *Jin Ping Mei* and other works, a man in general thrusts vigorously without any attempt to apply a particular method or sequence; he simply thrusts hundreds and thousands of times (as in *Xiuta yeshi*’s 10,000; 2.202). Some works of fiction do in fact mention “nine shallow and one deep” or other combinations, but without detailed explanation or rationale.³⁸

34 See Li and McMahon, “Contents and Terminology,” 164.

35 See Li and McMahon, “Contents and Terminology,” 165-66, from *Yufang mijue* and *Sunü miaolun*; and Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 195-96 (*Sunü miaolun*).

36 The latter seems to be a collapsing of *yingnü* 嬰女, “baby girl,” and *choushu* 臭鼠, “stinking rat.” See occurrence of these terms in *Sengni niehai*, 50 (*qinxian*), 81-82 (*qinxian* and others).

37 Yao Lingxi 姚靈犀 identifies *huaxin* as the womb, but it more likely simply represents a space deep inside, a vague zone of the “heart” or “center” of the vagina. See Yao Lingxi, *Pingwai zhiyan* 瓶外卮言 (Tianjin: Tianjinshi guji shudian, 1989 [originally 1940]), 174.

38 Pan Jianguo mentions *Yiqing zhen* 怡情陣 (Battle of joyful love), *Zaihua chuan* 載花船

Nevertheless, *Jin Ping Mei* distantly reflects the knowledge of the structure of the vagina in one scene that describes Ximen Qing achieving utmost pleasure while entering the deepest spot inside Pan Jinlian. The novel copies part of this passage from the earlier novel, *Ruyi jun zhuan* 如意君傳 (The lord of perfect satisfaction), which describes the man going “all the way to the cervix” (*pinwu* 牝屋), or the “vagina chamber,” which the narrator defines in a brief aside, explaining that it is a woman’s deepest spot and that getting there gives a man utmost pleasure. As David Roy translates:

His organ penetrated all the way to her cervix. The cervix is the innermost recess of the vaginal chamber and contains a fleshy growth like the budding pistil of a flower. When the head of his penis penetrates to this point, the man will feel a melting sensation the pleasure of which is indescribable.

那話攏進去了，直抵牝屋之上。牝屋者，乃婦人牝中深極處，有屋如含苞花蕊，到此處，男子莖首，覺翕然暢美不可言 (underscored characters are from *Ruyi jun zhuan*).³⁹

Ximen Qing’s move hurts Pan Jinlian, who suddenly jerks upwards causing the “sulfur-dipped ring” to break inside her (more on the ring below), after which she goes limp and feels “dizzy, as if no longer knowing where she is” (*toumu sensenran, mo zhi suo zhi*, 頭目森森然，莫知所之, 27.357).⁴⁰ The informative aside about the nature of the *pinwu* is unique in *Jin Ping Mei*, which suddenly takes on an explanatory tone like an instructional manual, though the term *pinwu* does not appear in the art of the bedchamber. But via *Ruyi jun zhuan*, the author suddenly departs from a narrative mode to impart expert information, reflecting a supposed knowledge of the structure of the vagina and hazily indicating the fact that it is harmful to the woman for the man to go too deep. It transmits such knowledge in a casual, confidential manner, as if to impart a secret about the woman’s body to the curious reader.

(Boat of flowers), *Chundeng mishi* 春燈秘史 (Secret history of the spring lantern), *Xinghua tian*, and *Taowu xianping* 橈杓閑評 (An account of the beast). See Pan, “Daojiao fangzhong wenhua,” 67.

39 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 27.357; and Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 2.27.148 (his translation with modification; hereafter I refer to the translation by author, volume, and page number only). Chapter 52 similarly refers to a deep and marvelous spot, in Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 3.52.676. See Anonymous, *Ruyi jun zhuan*, in Chen Qinghao, and Wang Qiugui, eds., *Siwuxie huibao* (Taipei: Taiwan daying baike, 1995), vol.24, 42.

40 These words also come from *Ruyi jun zhuan*, 45 (Empress Wu 武 speaking of herself).

The act of kissing offers another example of possible sharing with the art of the bedchamber, which may be more convincing than the last. The first scene of sex between Ximen Qing and Pan Jinlian describes her “mouth flowing with sweet spittle, as she smiles and proffers the tip of her tongue” (*jinjin tiantuo, xiao tu shejian* 津津甜唾, 笑吐舌尖). Another scene describes Ximen Qing and Song Huilian 宋蕙蓮 “falling together, kissing, and frenching with their tongues” (*liangge jiu qin zui za she zuo yichu* 兩個就親嘴啞舌做一處).⁴¹ Finally, in the first passionate scene between Chen Jingji 陳敬濟 and Pan Jinlian after Ximen Qing’s death,

they kiss each other deeply and longingly, in a way such that: The sweet rouge fills his mouth,/ as he vainly swallows her fragrant juices;/ Her sweet spittle transfuses his heart,/as it drenches his lungs and liver.

兩個啞了一回正是: 得多少脂香滿口涎空嚙, 甜唾融心溢肺肝.⁴²

A reader new to *Jin Ping Mei* might think kissing a common prelude to intercourse, though swallowing saliva may seem strange, unless one knows about its long tradition in *daoyin* practices, and though it is dangerous to assume from modern custom that kissing is universal or consistent in nature and practice. Nevertheless, kissing is a common part of scenes of sexual description in *Jin Ping Mei*, where it shares features with the tradition of the art of the bedchamber, however indirect the link may be. Kissing in that tradition can be divided into two aspects, first the practice and act itself of kissing and sucking from each other’s mouths, and second, the swallowing of saliva during lovemaking and the belief in the healthful benefits of doing so. Both aspects stretch back to the Mawangdui manuscripts and appear continuously throughout the tradition.

Swallowing one’s own saliva has long been part of *daoyin* exercises and longevity techniques that do not involve the art of the bedchamber.⁴³ A late Ming

41 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 4.57, my translation; Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase* 1.4.85 (“sweet spittle”); *Jin Ping Mei*, 23.294-95, my translation; and Roy 2.23.29 (“falling together”).

42 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 80.1165; *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, Liren edition 80.2504; and Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 4.80.675, modifying his translation, especially in emphasizing the sense of *kong* 空 to mean that they “vainly” kissed, unable to consummate intercourse otherwise. The Chongzhen edition has *yong* 顯 (solemn, large) instead of the Liren *cihua* edition’s *rong* 融 (melt, blend, fuse), which I prefer. I benefited in the interpretation of this passage from the help of Professor Wu Cuncun of Hong Kong University.

43 See the Mawangdui text *Shiwen* 十問 (Ten questions) in Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gai-guan*, 31; and Donald Harper, “The Sexual Arts of Ancient China,” 550-552, and 586, and his interpretation of “blue-gem spring” as the “reservoir of saliva under the tongue as well as

text, for example, writes: “Saliva abounds at tip of the tongue, and if frequently swallowed into the cinnabar field, gives pleasure and dispels stagnation. A hundred days of practice will help retain youth forever” (*jinye pin sheng zai sheduan, xunchang sou yan ru dantian, yu zhong changmei wu ningzhi, bairi gongling ke zhu yan*, 浸液頻生在舌端, 尋常嗽嚥入丹田, 於中暢美無凝滯, 百日功靈可注顏).⁴⁴ The Tang dynasty text *Dongxuanzi* 洞玄子 (The master of the dark cave) describes the act of kissing as follows: “The man takes her lower lip into his mouth, the woman takes his upper lip; they suck on each other for a while and drink each other’s saliva. They gently bite each other’s tongues, or lightly nibble each other’s lips” (*nan han nü xiachun, nü han nan shangchun, yishi xiangshun, ru qi jinye. Huo huan nie qi she, huo wei ze qi chun*, 男含女下唇, 女含男上唇, 一時相吮, 茹其津液. 或緩嚙其舌, 或微齧其唇).⁴⁵ A line in the Six Dynasties *Sunü jing* 素女經 (Classic of the plain woman) has the man “kissing her mouth and sucking her tongue” (*xian qi kou, shun qi she* 銜其口, 吮其舌).⁴⁶ These two passages most resemble the one in which Ximen Qing and Song Huilian kiss, which like many others in the novel simply describe the act of kissing.

But the two other passages from *Jin Ping Mei*, especially the one about Chen Jingji and Pan Jinlian, sound distantly like the art of the bedchamber’s reference to the stimulating, healthful effects of kissing and swallowing saliva. The *Yufang zhiyao* says:

During intercourse, one should drink generously of her tongue’s secretions and saliva, which will bring a flash of openness to the stomach, as if one took a dose of herbal concoction. All thirst will immediately vanish, the blocked *qi* will descend, while the skin will feel refreshed and enriched, and one will look like a virgin maiden.

當交接時, 多含舌液及唾, 使人胃中豁然, 如服湯藥, 消渴立愈, 逆氣便下, 皮膚悅澤, 姿如處女。

the saliva stored there.” See also Harper’s *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, 128, 394, note 3 (translation of *Shiwen* 十問); and Kohn, *Chinese Healing Exercises*, 88, 141, 143.

44 See Chen Hsiu-fen 陳秀芬, “Visual Representation and Oral Transmission of *Yangsheng* Techniques in Ming China,” *Asian Medicine* 7 (2012): 128-63, 158, n. 41, citing the work by Gao Lian 高濂 referred to further below, the *Zunsheng bajian* (遵生八箋), which contains a well-known set of verses called *Xiaoyaozi daoyin jue* (逍遙子導引訣 Master Xiaoyao’s *daoyin* verses), from which this quote comes.

45 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 106.

46 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 108; and Wile, *The Art of the Bedchamber*, 87.

These words follow a quote from the Daoist master, Red Pine (Chisongzi 赤松子), which refers to the connection between the secretions of the mouth and the internal organs, as echoed in the late Ming passage just quoted. Red Pine says, “The secretions of the Five Viscera are concentrated at the tongue” (*wuzang zhi ye, yao zai yu she* 五臟之液, 要在於舌), using the term *yujiang* 玉漿, “jade sauce,” to refer to saliva.⁴⁷ The *Sunü miaolun* writes that kissing allows the man:

to absorb her *yin jing* and replenish his *yang qi*, draw in the *qi* of her nostrils in order to fill his spine marrow. In swallowing her saliva he will nourish the cinnabar field [*dantian* 丹田, more on this below], thereby making the hot *qi* penetrate to the *niwan* 泥丸 point and spread through the four limbs. The overflow will benefit the *qi* and the blood, maintain the youth of the face, and prevent aging.

吸陰精而補陽氣，引鼻氣以填脊髓，含津液以養丹田，令泥丸熱氣透徹，貫通四支，溢益氣血，駐顏不老。⁴⁸

Besides “saliva” (*tuo* 唾), the only words that the novel shares with the art of the bedchamber are *yi* 溢, meaning excess or overflow, and *shun* 吮, meaning suck. Nevertheless, the reference to “sweet spittle” and the fact that it “transfuses his heart/as it drenches his lungs and liver” distantly echoes the contents of the art of the bedchamber. Given the long and consistent tradition of the invigorating effects of the fluids of the mouth upon the internal organs, whether swallowing one’s own or one’s partner’s, it is not difficult to imagine this knowledge becoming part of the received concept of kissing – though it would be going too far to say that Chen Jingji and Pan Jinlian are practicing the art of the bedchamber in the spirit of the passages quoted above. For one thing, the compound expression *feigan* 肺肝, “lungs and liver,” does not resonate with the language of the art of the bedchamber, which uses *wuzang* to refer to “the five internal organs [viscera].” *Feigan* instead usually refers to the inner self or true feelings, not the actual organs of lungs and liver.

47 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 105; in Wile, *The Art of the Bedchamber*, 101.

48 The *niwan*, “mud pellet,” is a point inside the head behind and between the eyes. See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 203, citing *Sunü miaolun*; Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber*, 41-42, and using his translation with slight modification, 133; and Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu kao*, 398 (*niwan*).

Positions of Intercourse

An unmistakable connection between *Jin Ping Mei* and the classic bedchamber texts lies in the reference to positions of intercourse, which have been present since earliest times and which appear throughout Ming and Qing fiction. They exemplify playfulness in the act of sex, the art of the bedchamber not being only about mastering techniques and improving health. To modern readers, the positions might appear as something that lovers would rigidly or programmatically follow. But the positions also suggest that the partners may spend a lengthy period of time enjoying themselves in varieties of postures and movements, as do the characters in *Jin Ping Mei*. In other words, instead of losing themselves in passionate frenzy, they coordinate with each other in playfully choosing positions and adopting their forms. In *Jin Ping Mei*, Ximen Qing shows Pan Jinlian an erotic album that Li Ping'er gave him, which illustrates twenty-four positions that he and Pan imitate that night, though the novel supplies no description of any of the moves. Knowing that he and Li Ping'er have already performed the positions, Pan Jinlian is eager to match if not outdo her rival. Later Chen Jingji and Pan Jinlian use the same album, Pan Jinlian adding a move that she did not use with Ximen Qing by asking the maid Chunmei 春梅 to help push Chen from behind in case he gets tired. They are following the model of erotic albums that likewise employ a third person.⁴⁹

The positions and their names are highly consistent from the earliest texts of the art of the bedchamber to the *Sunü miaolun* in the Ming. But the names change when they appear in *Jin Ping Mei* and, with few exceptions, other works of Ming and Qing fiction. Three positions are broadly consistent, even if their names are not, no matter which source: 1) the man entering from the rear, 2) the woman lying on her back with the man facing her and holding up her legs as he enters, and 3) the woman in the superior position. The ones in the art of the bedchamber are like the moves of *daoyin* exercises in using the names of insects and animals. An example of the first position is the art of the bedchamber's "attached cicada," in which the woman lies on her stomach as the man enters from behind (called *chan fu* 蟬附 in the Mawangdui and *Yixin fang* texts and *chan fu shi* 蟬附勢 in the Ming *Sunü miaolun*, where *shi* is the word for position). In variations of the position, the woman can also be on all fours as the man enters from behind (called "the tiger's play," *hu you* 虎遊, in the Mawangdui and *Yixin fang* texts, and "the tiger's stance," *hu bu shi* 虎步勢, in *Sunü miaolun*); or she can be straddling the man and facing his feet (called "the rabbit fleeing," *tu wu* 兔驚, in the Mawangdui and *Yixin fang* texts, and "the

49 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 83.1201. A third reference to erotic albums and the twenty-four positions occurs when Ximen Qing is with Lin Taitai (78.1116).

rabbit licking,” *tu shun shi* 兔吮勢, in *Sunü miaolun*). In *Jin Ping Mei* and other works, the position of the man in the rear is called “taking fire from the other side of the mountain” (*ge shan qu huo* 隔山取火), in this case as in the others below abandoning the use of insect or animal names.

For the second position, the Mawangdui texts have the “monkey pounces” or the “monkey latches on” (*yuan ju* 猿據), which has other variants with different names, depending on how the man holds her legs and feet. For example, in Ming erotic albums he can be supporting himself on his knees and wrists while his abdomen rests against the back of her uplifted thighs, as in *Jin Ping Mei*, where it is called “rowing the boat at night” (*diao ye xing chuan* 掉夜行船). Or he can have her sitting in a chair and taking her legs over his shoulders or around his waist, which can be found in both the albums and *Jin Ping Mei*. The third position is called the “sucking fish” (*yu cuo* 魚嘍) in the art of the bedchamber, which has the woman on top, the man lying on his back with the woman facing him and straddled across his body (as if the woman were sucking in food).⁵⁰ Called by other names, the position varies in that, for example, the woman can be facing the man’s feet. For the second and third positions, *Jin Ping Mei* describes Ximen Qing and Pan Jinlian in a long session of love-making in which they periodically change from one to the other, as described in an accompanying poem: “now she is on top dousing the red candle, in the next instant they switch to rowing the boat at night” (*cai qu dao jiao hong lazhu, huan you diao ye xing chuan* 纔去倒澆紅蠟燭, 忽然又掉夜行船).⁵¹ “Dousing the red candle,” with the woman on top, occurs three times in *Jin Ping Mei*, “rowing the boat at night,” once. Though *Jin Ping Mei* does not describe the latter position in detail, we can base our understanding of it on an illustration in a Ming

50 See Li and McMahon, “The Contents and Terminology,” 170, from Mawangdui, comparing with later texts, *Sunü miaolun* in particular; Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 193-94; and Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber*, 124-26. The *Sunü miaolun* has the “monkey’s attack” (*yuan bo shi* 猿搏勢), with the woman sitting on the man. The position called the “dragon flies” (*long fei shi* 龍飛勢) more resembles the general stance of the woman on her back with her legs up in the “monkey pounces” of the earlier texts. In addition, *Sunü miaolun* has the “phoenix soars” (*feng xiang shi* 鳳翔勢), in which the woman lies face up raising her thighs with her hands as the man enters. *Sunü miaolun*’s “fishes nibbling” (*yu sha shi* 魚啜勢; Wile’s translation) has two women and a man having intercourse.

51 My translation; see Roy, 1.6.124; *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, Liren edition, 6.148. The Chongzhen edition has: “now she is on top dousing the red candle, then suddenly he is stealing fire from the other side of the wall” (*fangcai zhenshang jiao hongzhu, hu you toulai huo ge qiang* 方才枕上澆紅燭, 忽又偷來火隔牆, 6.81).

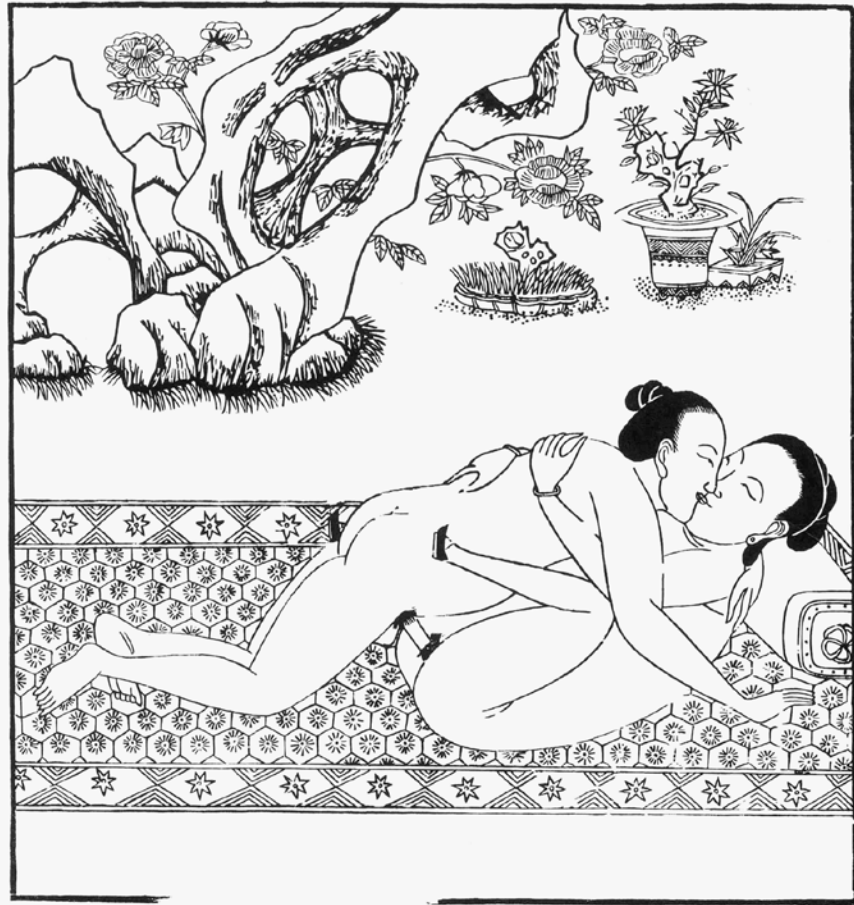


FIGURE 1 “Rowing the Boat at Night,” in the collection of erotic illustrations *Huaying jinshen* 花營錦陣 (Variegated positions of the flower battle), from Robert van Gulik, *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), volume 2, 231; reproduced with permission.

album that Robert van Gulik reproduces in *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period*, where it goes by the same name.⁵²

Other positions that the novel names but that do not appear in the art of the bedchamber occur in the notorious scene at the grape arbor, which is another

⁵² On “rowing the boat at night,” see Roy’s identification based on van Gulik, in Roy, 1.6.491, note 24, and for an illustration, Robert van Gulik, *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period: With an Essay on Chinese Sexual Life from the Han to the Ch’ing Dynasty, B.C.206-A.D. 1644*, two volumes (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), vol. 2, 231.

example of the generic divergence between fiction and the texts of the art of the bedchamber. The latter use minimal wording to refer to arousing and tantalizing the woman, describing her “desperately pleading for mercy” (*qiu si qiu sheng* 求死求生).⁵³ The actual playing out of such a scene is left to the work of the imagination, which the authors of *Jin Ping Mei* and other stories gladly carry out, as in this case. Ximen Qing has Pan Jinlian lie on her back with her legs parted and each foot suspended on a rope tied to an arbor post above. She “looks just like ‘A Golden Dragon Extending Its Claws’” (*ru jinlong tan zhua xiangsi* 如金龍探爪相似), after which Ximen Qing “assumes the position of ‘Inserting the Arrow Upside Down’” (*maile ge dao ru linghua* 賣了個倒入翎花), where the word for “assume” (or “deploy,” *maile* 賣了) comes from the language of adopting a position in martial arts. He deliberately teases and titillates her for a long while, continuing after waking from a nap, when he tells her that he is “going to perform the position of the ‘old monk chiming the bell’” (*wo yao shua ge lao heshang zhuang zhong* 我要耍個老和尚撞鐘), after which he penetrates into the “vagina room,” causing her sharp pain, as referred to above.⁵⁴ Other novels and stories describe sexual positions more fully, in some cases giving a greater variety of names than I have listed.⁵⁵ But regardless of the variations in nomenclature and generic tone, the “assumption of positions” marks a departure from blind frenzy. Stimulation is broken down and extended, just as the art of the bedchamber teaches.

Drugs and Devices

The other most obvious overlap with the art of the bedchamber involves the use of sexual devices, chemicals, and aphrodisiacs, which appear every time

53 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 108, from *Dongxuanzi*.

54 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 27.355; I use Roy’s translations of these terms, 2.27.144. The same position appears in a scene with Wang Liu’er, *Jin Ping Mei*, 79.1140, and Roy, 4.79.634. For the quotes after the nap, see *Jin Ping Mei*, 27.357 (my translation), and Roy, 2.27.148. What the old monk chiming a bell precisely means is not clear to me (see another position using similar words in the next footnote).

55 See, for example, *Rouputuan* 肉蒲團 (Carnal prayer mat), Chapter 3. A story in the collection *Bie you xiang* 別有香 (A distinct flavor) portrays a monk-master of bedchamber methods who performs a set of positions, including one called “the foreign monk plays the cymbals” (*fanseng xi nao* 番僧戲鑊), in which he holds the woman up as he inserts himself. See Taoyuan zuihua zhuren 桃源醉花主人, *Bie you xiang*, in Chen Qinghao and Wang Qiugui, eds., *Siwuxie huibao* (Taipei: Taiwan daying baike, 1994), vol.8, 4.38-40. *Su’e pian* 素娥篇 (The text of Su’e, not a novel) gives forty-three positions, with illustrations. See Ye Huasheng 蕪華生, *Su’e pian*, in Chen Qinghao and Wang Qiugui, eds., *Yanqing xiaoshuo zhenben* 艷情小說珍本 (Rare editions of erotic fiction) (Taipei: Taiwan daying baike, 1997).

Ximen Qing has sex.⁵⁶ In ancient sources, a man or woman resorted to drugs and tools when suffering from a sexual disorder. Men in particular resorted to them when physically unfit, underendowed, or suffering from old age. By the Ming, as mentioned above, the drugs had become highly consumerized and their stimulant properties the main focus. They were stronger and more varied and appeared in both cheap and costly forms available to all levels of society, from emperors and officials to urban commoners. Some were made from rare and precious materials, including human ingredients and animals such as seal, otter, and gecko, the latter of which a character in *Xiuta yeshi* consumes.⁵⁷ The sixteenth-century book on nourishing life, Gao Lian's 高廉 *Zun sheng ba jian* 遵生八箋 (Eight discourses on respect for life), notes the wide use of drugs and devices, which often caused harm to their consumers.⁵⁸ He mentions drugs taken by mouth; fragrances, pills, powders, pastes and other solutions put in the ears, nose, navel, or rubbed on the penis, placed in it, or put in the vagina; devices tied to the base of the penis, placed in the anus, or worn around the abdomen, among others, many of which appear in *Jin Ping Mei*, though none with the same names.⁵⁹

The novel's greater emphasis on such things than in the art of the bedchamber reflects the novel's greater emphasis on sex as both literal and metaphorical battle, in which frequent sex with multiple women requires more than the normal man's capacity. Ximen Qing needs gadgets to impress his partners and ensure that he performs well, though the tools are also for the sake of variety and entertainment, in this light conforming to the notion of the art of the bedchamber of prolonging the sexual act. Ximen Qing, the rich merchant and owner of a wholesale medicine shop, is a likely sort to indulge in what the marketplace has to offer in sexual paraphernalia. Again, as noted above, the

56 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu kao*, 421-34.

57 See Su Yufen 蘇玉芬, *Mingdai chun Yao yanjiu* 明代春藥研究 (Aphrodisiacs in the Ming dynasty) (MA thesis, National Chengchi University, 2011), 26-34 (gecko, 30-31), 49; on the appearance of drugs and devices in fiction, see 53-66, 79-83. Along with erotic albums, they could be found on sale near brothels (52-54); for references to injuries suffered because of them, see 54, 84-97. Thanks to Chen Hsiu-fen for leading me to this source. In *Xiuta yeshi*, see 4.284 (gecko pill).

58 On harms, see also Su Yufen, *Mingdai chun Yao yanjiu*, 84-97.

59 Gao Lian, *Zun sheng ba jian* (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1992), 859-61. Gao published this book in 1591 at his own cost, thus its high quality compared to other such texts of the late Ming that were printed to meet market demand. See Chen Hsiu-fen, "Visual Representation and Oral Transmission," 159. Thanks to Donald Harper for alerting me to this book, part of which is translated by John Dudgeon in William R. Berk, ed., *Chinese Healing Arts: Internal Kung-Fu* (Burbank: Unique Publications, 1986).

novel's readers can be presumed to know about such things, if not themselves to purchase and use them.

Ximen Qing constantly relies on both drugs and devices. From the first scene of sex to nearly the last, he “wears at the base of his member a clasp made of silver and saturated with drugs” (*genxia you daizhe yin dajiu, yao zhucheng de tuozi* 根下又帶着銀打就，藥煮成的托子, 4.60-61). The clasp is a tool that supposedly extends the length and thickness of his organ, though what kind of drug it is saturated with is unclear. More tools appear in the scene at the grape arbor, where he takes out his clasp and sulfur-dipped ring (*liuhuang quan* 硫黃圈), dallies for a while, after which he “picks a dab of an ointment called ‘Amorous Cries of Boudoir Beauties’ and smears it in the opening of his frog’s mouth” (*nianle xie guiyuan shengjiao, tu zai wakou nei* 捻了些閨艷聲嬌，塗在蛙口內), which, as with substances in other stories mentioned above, makes his penis grow strong and firm. With Wang Liu'er 王六兒 a few chapters later, in addition to his clasp, he takes out his “lovers’ sheath, a sulfur-dipped ring, a drug-dipped white satin band, a pendant jade ring, a navel aphrodisiac plaster,” and finally his “Burmese bell” (*xiangsi tao, liuhuang quan, yao zhu de bailing daizi, xuanyu huan, fengqi gao, mianling* 相思套, 硫黃圈, 藥煮的白綾帶子, 懸玉環, 封臍膏, 勉鈴), which constitute nearly the full range of the sexual tools that appear in the novel.⁶⁰ The use of such chemicals and devices spans the entire tradition of the art of the bedchamber, beginning in the Mawangdui manuscripts, which refer to a liquid used to wipe on the penis to strengthen it and increase its size, medicine put in the opening of the penis, cloth dipped in medicine to excite desire, chemicals for tightening the vagina, and supplements and aphrodisiacs taken by mouth.⁶¹ Later texts of the art of the

60 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 27.356-57, 38.494; and *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, Liren edition, 27.1025 (Roy's translations of “pendant jade ring,” “navel aphrodisiac plaster,” and the ointment; Roy, 2.38.388). For sulfur dipped ring and ointment, see also *Hailing yishi* 海陵佚史 (Lost stories of King Hailing); see Roy, 2.27.146-48, and 2.27.509, note 68 (similar translation for powder with slightly different name, *zhanshengjiao* 顫聲嬌, 4.77.570). Yao Lingxi says that the navel plaster is for “solidifying the *jing* essence,” *Pingwai zhiyan*, 194 (clasp, 123). Navel creams already appear in the Song and can be found in Ming almanacs; Su Yufen, *Mingdai chunyao yanjiu*, 40-41.

61 See note 57 above and Li and McMahon, “Contents and Terminology,” 151-153, 160-61. The text referring to a cloth in *Yangsheng fang* 養生方 (Recipes for nourishing life) writes: “rub the jade whip with it [the medicine-dipped cloth], and the horse [the vagina] will then be startled” (*zhi jin, cao yi shun* (...) *yu ce* (ce) 治巾, 操以循 (插 *xun* 3) 玉筴 (策), *ma yin jing yi* 馬因驚矣, as translated by Harper). See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 10; and Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, 341-42. See also *Zaliao fang* 雜療方 (Recipes for miscellaneous cures) under “inside augmentation,” *neijia* 內加, about rubbing the body with a medicine-dipped cloth (Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 20; and Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, 363-65).

bedchamber expand upon these, as for instance in the use of sulfur, which in the *Dongxuanzi* combines with other ingredients to “cure slackness and coldness of the woman’s private parts and drastically shrink it” (*liao furen yin kuan leng ji xiao* 療婦人陰寬冷急小).⁶²

The novel provides no detail about the lovers’ sheath, pendant jade ring, or sulfur-dipped ring, except in the case of the sulfur-dipped ring when it snaps inside Pan Jinlian and makes her faint as if dead.⁶³ Yao Lingxi 姚靈犀 in the 1930s, Robert van Gulik during the 1950s and early 1960s, Li Ling 李零 in the 1990s and 2000s, and others have tried to identify these and others. According to Yao, the *xiangsi tao*, “lovers’ sheath,” goes over the penis, stimulates the woman, and also keeps “poison out and sperm in,” the latter purpose of which, however, would not have been a goal in Ximen Qing’s case. Li Ling has studied excavated dildos from the Han and Song (960-1279) dynasties and compared them with objects found in Ming and Qing fiction.⁶⁴ He suggests that the *xiangsi tao* is made of the flesh of cow or pig bladder that goes over the penis, a type of dildo that differs from ones made of metal or porcelain and hollow in the middle for fitting over the penis, with holes at the base through which they can be tied around the waist (or in one model tied to a woman’s foot for her own use).⁶⁵ Other varieties exist, including one Ximen Qing is shown using below, but in general they divide into soft and hard, hollow and solid, and those for use by men or by women (including double dildos).⁶⁶

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- 62 Wile’s translation, slightly modified, *Art of the Bedchamber*, 113. See Li and McMahon, “Contents and Terminology,” 153, 161-62 (tightening of vagina, in *Zhaliao fang* called *yue yue* 約); Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 138 (sulfur), from *Yufang zhiyao* and *Dongxuanzi*.
- 63 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 27.357; the sulfur-dipped ring also appears in 52.676.
- 64 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu kao*, 409-24; and a more updated version of this article in Li Ling, *Wanbian*, 405-25 (see also below).
- 65 See *Zhulin yeshi*, 7.47, in which a man fits a *xiaoyang quan* 銷陽圈 (ring for spent yang) over himself, after which he takes out an aphrodisiac pill, then another type of dildo, called a *Guangdong bang* 廣東膀 (Cantonese shoulder), to give to one woman to play with while he is with another. To the one he gives it to, he tells her to steep the object in hot water, which will make it stiffen, then tie it to her foot with the red string at the top of it, and use it to play with.
- 66 If Yao is correct, the sulfur-dipped ring is likewise a sheath that goes around the penis, in its case having a surface that feels smooth for entering and rough for pulling out. Gao Lian’s book on nourishing life just mentioned refers to a sulfur-dipped band or hoop (*gu zhan* 箍), which may or may not be the same. As for the jade-pendant ring, van Gulik equates it with the silver clasp in form and use. See Gao Lian, *Zun sheng ba jian*, 860 (hoop); Li Ling, *Wan bian*, 415-21, from the chapter “Jiaomao kao: kaogu faxian yu Ming Qing xiaoshuo de bijiao yanjiu” 角帽考：考古發現與明清小說的比較研究 (A study of the horn hat: comparing archaeological finds with contents of Ming and Qing fiction); Yao Lingxi, *Pingwai zhiyan*, 143, 154 (Burmese bell, not as helpful a description as van Gulik’s

The Burmese bell (*mianling* 緬鈴 or 勉鈴, also *mianziling* 勉子鈴) plays a slightly greater role in the novel than the objects just mentioned, having appeared sometime in the Ming as a device inserted into the vagina for stimulation. It appears in numerous fictional works. Said to be about the size of a longan (a lychee-like fruit, slightly smaller), it is made of concentric layers of thin metal sheets of gold or copper, connected by an opening in each layer except for the outer one, and each layer filled with mercury. When warmed up or shaken, it vibrates and makes a slight sound. The first time it appears in *Jin Ping Mei*, it falls out of Ximen Qing's sleeve, making a "tinkling sound" (*hualang yisheng* 滑浪一聲), and feeling "heavy to the touch when Jinlian picks it up and holds it in her hand" (*na zai shou nei chendiandiande* 拿在手內沉甸甸的). "What in the world is this?," she asks; "and how come it makes half my arm feel numb?" (*shi shenme dongxi'er? Zen de ba ren banbian gebo dou male* 是甚麼東西兒? 怎的把人半邊胳膊都麻了). Ximen Qing tells her it is from Burma and that one puts it in the "stove" (*lu* 爐) before intercourse, "stove" or "crucible" being an alchemical term for vagina (16.199). The scholar Wu Xiaoling 吳曉鈴 assumes that Ximen Qing got it from Li Ping'er, who in turn got it from her husband's eunuch uncle, who once served in the imperial palace, from which he obtained it and other treasures, including the erotic album.⁶⁷ When the Burmese bell appears in other novels, *Xiuta yeshi*, for example, it is stored in an exquisite round box; the narrative describes the bell's seven-layered structure (2.146, 3.253). In *Xinghua tian*, while the man is with one wife, he uses bells to satisfy each of his other eleven wives at the same time (13.254-55).

The silver clasp and white satin band have an overlapping story of their own, the clasp favored by Ximen Qing and the band favored by the two women, Pan Jinlian and Wang Liu'er. He never discusses the clasp or tells why he uses it, but insists on using it even when women prefer that he not. In Chapter 52, Ximen Qing wears two clasps and a sulfur ring, saying that he wants to do the "flower in the rear courtyard" (*houtinghua* 後庭花), or anal intercourse. Jinlian

below), and 193-94; and Robert van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 281.

67 I base my description on Pan Jianguo, "Mianling xinkao" 勉鈴新考, in *Wenxian* 文獻 1 (1996): 265-69. See also Robert van Gulik, *Erotic Colour Prints*, vol. 1, 146-48; van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, 165-66; David Roy's note, 1.521, note 6; and Wu Xiaoling 吳曉鈴, "Jin Ping Mei 'mianling' shi" 金瓶梅勉鈴釋, in *Wenxian* 文獻 4 (1990): 62-63. Van Gulik also cites Richard F. Burton's claim that nineteenth-century soldiers plundering the palace in Beijing found numerous such balls, "made of thin silver with a loose pellet of brass inside somewhat like a grelot [a small spherical bell]" (*Sexual Life in Ancient China*, footnote on 166). One has to be cautious in accepting this report, but the possibility that such objects existed in the palace is not out of the question (and possibly still exist but are unreported).



FIGURE 2 "Shooting the Chicken." A man using a clasp and a band, in the collection of erotic illustrations, *Yuanyang mipu* 鴛鴦秘譜 (Secret handbook of devoted lovers), from Robert van Gulik, *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), volume 1, Plate XIII; reproduced with permission.

has him remove the sulfur ring, which would cause her pain, she says, but he leaves one of the silver clasps on. She feels pain, but in a case of deal-making that commonly accompanies sex in the novel she gets him to agree to give her a present that she longs for. In Chapter 72, in this case hoping for deep penetration because she wants to get pregnant, she insists that the clasp not only "knocks against her and hurts" (*ge de ren teng* 格的人疼), but will not let him all the way in. She proposes a new method, a white satin band (*bailing daizi* 白綾帶子), which she will make for him (72.1003). In Chapter 75, Ximen Qing puts a clasp on in preparation for sex with Meng Yulou 孟玉樓, who wants him to "take it off immediately" (*hai bu chenzao chuxialai li* 還不趁早除下來哩),

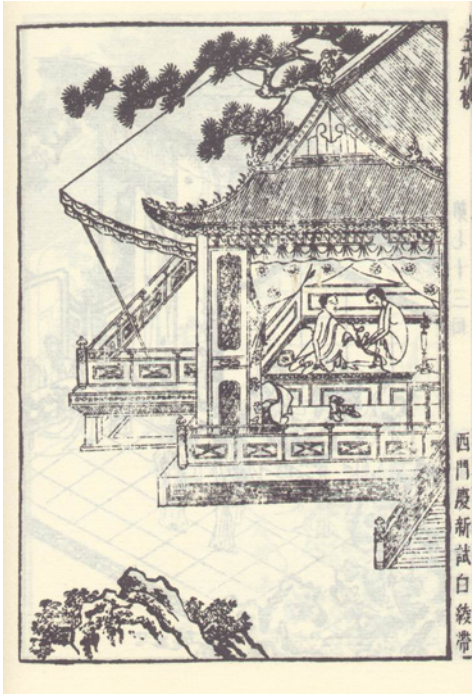


FIGURE 3

“Ximen Qing tries the new white satin band.” Illustration from Xiaoxiao sheng 笑笑生, *Gaohetang piping diyi qishu Jin Ping Mei* 皋鶴堂批評第一奇書金瓶梅, Chapter 73. National Diet Library <<http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/>>

wondering why he must wear it. He refuses to do so and starts thrusting vigorously until Meng Yulou tells him to slow down because she has been unwell lately (75.1053). To her the clasp is a piece of nonsense.

Van Gulik describes an illustration of a silk band in a Ming erotic album. First there is a “flat ring, apparently made of green jade [thus perhaps an illustration of the pendant jade ring], which fits about the base of the member in erection. Below, attached to this ring, are two silk loops. They pass round the scrotum and then run between the man’s buttocks; drawn tight, they are wound around his waist and tied on his back,” evidently, van Gulik continues, to keep the penis erect.⁶⁸ These descriptions provide a picture of something like what appears in the novel, as can be seen in the Chongzhen 崇禎 illustration in Chapter 73. When Ximen Qing arrives, she “ties the band to the base of his chowry handle” (*zha zai zhubing genxia* 扎在塵柄根下), with “the two ribbons attached to it securely behind his back” (*xi zai yaojian, shuande jinjin de*

68 See van Gulik, *Erotic Colour Prints*, vol.1, 145-46. For a brief reference to a silk band, see also Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 208, 213; and Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber*, 139 (from the text *Xiu zhen yanyi* 修真演義 [Exposition of cultivating the true essence]). An illustration of a strap attached to a clasp appears in van Gulik’s *Erotic Colour Prints*, vol.1, Plate XIII which shows an old man with a young woman.

繫在腰間，拴的緊緊的)，the effect of which is to make his member “stretch farther than usual, to over seven inches” (*bi xunchang geng shu qicun youyu* 比尋常更舒七寸有餘). Then she gets on top and puts him inside, exclaiming that the band is better than the clasp, allowing him to go deeper, which gives Ximen Qing a “melting sensation the pleasure of which is indescribable” (*xin-zhong jue xixiran changmei bukeyan* 心中覺翕翕然暢美不可言).⁶⁹ Pleasing Ximen Qing in order to win his heart is only one of Pan Jinlian’s goals, the other even more important one at this moment being her attempt to get pregnant. Nun Xue 薛 has just brought her the fertility potion and a charm that will guarantee a male baby.

The description of the band that Wang Liu’er makes for him and the scene that follows contain a small detail that easily slips the reader’s attention. Wang’s band is finer than Pan Jinlian’s. Since Wang has a less secure hold on him and needs to please him more, her goal is to keep him coming to her house and, through their affair, support her and her husband for as long as possible. The detail appears after he ties the band to himself using a circlet made of her hair (this being part of what makes Wang’s band fancier). He then places a sheath over the tip of his penis, called a *jingdong renshi* (景東人事), which Roy translates as “Yunnanese tickler,” another kind of dildo. As the passage describes, he takes the circlet of hair, “wraps it around the base of his turtle, then ties around his waist the two brocade straps that are attached to the circlet; and caps his turtle head with a ‘Yunnanese tickler’” (*tao zai guishenxia, lianggen jindai’er, zha zai yaojian, guitou you daizhe jingdong renshi* 套在龜身下，兩根錦帶兒，扎在腰間，龜頭又帶着景東人事). Nothing tells the reader what the “tickler” looks like, how big it is, or how it attaches. Does it, for example, have holes in it to string straps through, as with other dildos? *Jingdong* refers to a part of Yunnan Province, *renshi* being a term for sex (literally, “the human affair”). Yunnan, like Burma, connotes an exotic place, as in the term for yet another kind of dildo, the *Guangdong renshi* 廣東人事, the “Cantonese tickler,” Guangdong being exotic because it is a port for trade with foreign lands.

But the *jingdong renshi* only appears in passing because immediately at this point Ximen Qing takes the monk’s aphrodisiac pill, after which Wang Liu’er manipulates his penis and makes it swell so that it becomes “purple like the color of liver” (*se ruo zigan* 色若紫肝). The focus thus turns to the monstrosity

69 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 73.1011 and 1023; and *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, Liren edition, 73.2231. “Two ribbons attached to it securely from behind his back” are from Roy, 4.73.416, 417 (illustration), 418. See also his note on the substance in 3.51.568, note 27. Pan Jinlian adds an aphrodisiac powder to the inside of her silk band, called the “Quavery Voices of Amorous Beauties” (Roy, 4.73.385, *zhanshengjiao*), for stemming vaginal secretions (also used with Ben Siniang 奔四娘, 77.1103).

of his penis, *se ruo zigan* being the same four characters used in Chapter 49 to describe the penis-like head of the monk who supplies Ximen Qing with the aphrodisiac. Leaving the dildo yet further behind, the next sentence turns to Wang Liu'er's strap, which proves to be better than both the silver clasp and white satin band. Ximen Qing and Wang continue for hours, "passing wine to each other's mouths, kissing, playing, and eating until lamp lighting time" (*liangge yi di yi kou yin jiu, za shetou wanxiao, chi zhi zhangdeng* 兩個一遞一口飲酒, 啞舌頭頑笑, 吃至掌燈).⁷⁰ The reader can only imagine how Ximen Qing now and at other times uses various types of dildos to help stimulate the woman and /or seal himself from excess stimulation, though neither the narrative nor the commentators specifically address the technical use of these objects. What is the *jingdong renshi* made of, metal, ivory, tree gum, or animal flesh, the materials known to be used in other types of dildos? Is it open at the tip, leaving his glans exposed, so that its purple color is visible? What does it mean that dildos are part of Ximen Qing's repertoire of tools? Whatever the case may be, Ximen Qing, the sexual connoisseur that he is, has an impressive collection of sexual tools, the exact use of each of which is perhaps irrelevant to the author except to signal Ximen Qing's continual reliance on them.

The Monk and the Aphrodisiac

None of the tools and drugs which Ximen Qing uses can compare to the aphrodisiac that he acquires from the "foreign monk" (*huseng* 胡僧) at the halfway point of the novel. It is a fantasy drug with fantasy effects, made in the laboratory of Laozi 老子 from a recipe transmitted by Xiwangmu 西王母. Nevertheless, there is some reality in it, as can be inferred from the wide availability of such drugs in the period of the novel. We can speculate that the illness from which Ximen Qing dies suggests the presence of poisons that were part of aphrodisiacs used throughout Chinese history, including mercury, arsenic, and lead. Ming sources warned about the ill effects of aphrodisiacs, from which even the emperor suffered. According to one report, the Longqing 隆慶 emperor (r. 1567-72) experienced a case of priapism, undoubtedly due to drugs, that prevented him from presiding at court.⁷¹ Ximen Qing's pills affect him the same way. In the words of the *Sunü miaolun*, some drugs only cause "the true *yang* to dry up and be exhausted" (*zhenyang he ke* 真陽涸渴). Instead of

70 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 49.635, and 79.1140 (using Roy's translation of Yunnanese tickler, which does not appear in the Chongzhen edition); see *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, Liren edition, 79.2511; and Roy, 4.79.633-35. See also Yao Lingxi, *Pingwai zhiyan*, 160; and Li Ling, *Wanbian*, 413-14 on *jingdong renshi* (including materials dildos were made of, 405-25).

71 See Shen Defu 沈德符, *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 21.547.

depending on such things for improving performance, the text continues, it is better to save one's energy by "spending a night alone" (*du su yixiao* 獨宿一宵).⁷² Still, the monk's aphrodisiac at first launches Ximen Qing to a radically new level of sexual power. Both it and the "pink cream" (*fenhong gao* 粉紅膏) that he also gets from the monk, which goes in the opening of the penis, have immediately powerful effects that he experiences time after time.⁷³

The monk represents a character type seen throughout Ming and Qing fiction, who is a master and transmitter of sexual practices that are typically predatory in nature. His common set of features are that he is "dark" (*hei* 黑), "foreign" (*hu* 胡, or *fan* 番, 梵), and from the west, in *Jin Ping Mei*, "India" (*tianzhu guo* 天竺國). In *Jin Ping Mei*, he is a comic-allegorical figure and object of satire, "having descended into the mundane world from Cold Shivers Temple, beneath Navel Waist Peak, at Dense Sperm Forest" (*misonglin qiyaofeng Hantingsi xialaide* 密松林齊腰峰寒庭寺下來的). The author portrays him as looking like an engorged penis, the skin of his head "purple like the color of liver" (*se ruo zigan*), and on his body wearing a "long flesh-colored gown" (*chuan yiling rouhong zhiduo* 穿一領肉紅直裰). When Ximen Qing first sees him, "a flow of jade-white mucous trickles out of his nose" (*bikou zhong liuxia yujin lai* 鼻口中流下玉筋來), which in this case is a farcical sign of concentrated energy, not poor hygiene, as if *jing*-essence were flowing from his penis-like head. He has extraordinary power, as shown in the fact that he covers the distance from the temple to Ximen Qing's home in no time, arriving with not a drop of sweat, while Dai'an 玳安 arrives separately and much later, sweating profusely and out of breath.⁷⁴ When characters such as the monk appear elsewhere in Ming and Qing fiction, they kidnap and rape women whom they force to serve them. In the early nineteenth-century novel *Shenlou zhi* 蜃樓志 (Mirage), for example, the monk Mola 摩刺 becomes involved in a rebellion against the state. Although *Jin Ping Mei* does not present any of these situations (besides the possession of the drug), the monk's appearance, the references to Laozi and Xiwangmu, and the centuries of lore about foreign monks, Tantrism, and

72 See Gao Lian, *Zun sheng bajian*, 860, and Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiquan*, 200.

73 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 3.49.638-39; and Roy, 3.49.200-201. For the cream, see 50.645 and again 51.665.

74 See *Jin Ping Mei*, 49.635-38; *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, Liren edition, 49.1345; and Roy, 3.49.193, 195 (flesh-colored gown, jade-white mucous, and the monk's place of origin, the latter slightly modified, from Roy). On the figure of the *huseng* 胡僧 (foreign monk), see Xue Yingjie, "Wenren shenfen yu tazhe xiangxiang," Chapter 5, 108-21, from which I draw the common features and references to other fiction. For other examples of such monks, see *Yinglie zhuan*, 1.6, and *Sengni niehai*, 7.81-85.

sexual alchemy, combine to suggest such a picture. He is an alien, diabolic presence.⁷⁵

Besides the monk and the behavior he can be presumed to represent, the next nearest trace of influence is a one-time reference to the cinnabar field (*dantian*), one of the key centers of energy storage and circulation in the Daoist body. It would be known to all practitioners of physical and spiritual *daoyin* exercises. Located in the lower abdomen, it is a place to which the individual can direct his or her concentration and experience a sense of centeredness as vital energy rises to the head, then sinks down and pervades the entire body. In the sexual arts, the practitioner absorbs vital essence from his or her partner to the cinnabar field and from there up the spine to the *niwan* point in the brain. The Ming text, *Xiu zhen yanyi* 修真演義 (Exposition of cultivating the true essence), for example, speaks of the so-called “three peaks” (*sanfeng* 三峰), from which the man may gather “medicine” (*yao* 藥) from the woman to replenish and strengthen himself via the corresponding three cinnabar fields. The upper peak is in the mouth, from which the man absorbs “the *jing* of saliva” (*tuo zhi jing* 唾之精). The middle peak issues “medicine” from between the breasts, while the lower peak does so from the secretions of the vagina.⁷⁶

No clear reference to the art of absorption or anything like the three peaks occurs in *Jin Ping Mei*. Ximen Qing never pretends to know about any of the techniques of “drinking” (*he* 喝), “eating” (*shi* 食), or “inhaling” (*xi* 吸) “medicine” through the mouth or penis. In the scene in which the cinnabar field appears, he has just swallowed the new aphrodisiac, after which he remains “unmoved” (*youru wu wu* 猶如無物) while he arouses Pan Jinlian to a “height of passion” (*qingji* 情極), “his word plunging deeply into her vagina, intently grinding back and forth” (*na hua zhi di pinzhong, zhi gu rou cuo* 那話直抵牝中, 只顧揉搓). She pleads with him, saying, “I am finished, Dada, you have fucked me to death” (*qin dada, bale, Wu'er ri si le* 親達達, 罷了, 五兒合死了). “Her tongue becomes cold, and she gives way to a climax, after which Ximen Qing feels a heat from her vagina that penetrates to his cinnabar field, which gives him a feeling of utter, indescribable bliss” (*shejian bingleng, xieqi yidu, Ximen Qing jue pinzhong yigu reqi zhi tou dantian, xinzhong xixiran, meikuai bukeyan*

75 The “Tantric, obscene, and orgiastic” monk commonly stands against a chaste and dignified China; see Vincent Durand-Dastès, “Rencontres hérétiques dans les monastères de Kaifeng: le Bouddhisme tantrique vu par le roman en langue vulgaire des Ming et des Qing,” in Vincent Durand-Dastès, ed., *Empreintes du tantrisme en Chine et en Asie Orientale: imaginaires, rituals, influences* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 27-62, 44.

76 See Livia Kohn, *Chinese Healing Exercises*, 15; Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu kao*, 354-55 (*neidan*); and on *dantian* and *Xiu zhen yanyi*, see Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber*, 37-38, and 140-41; and Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 215.

舌尖冰冷，泄訖一度，西門慶覺軀中一股熱氣直透丹田，心中翕翕然，美快不可言，51.666).⁷⁷ Compare this passage with the one noted above in the *Sunü miaolun*: “In swallowing her saliva he will nourish the cinnabar field, thereby making the hot *qi* penetrate to the *niwan* point and spread through the four limbs.” Since the secretions of the vagina constitute medicine that comes from the lower peak, the words in this passage conceivably reflect the flow of essence from her lower “peak” to his cinnabar field.

As I have said, the art of absorbing and directing *qi* and *jing* had long existed by the time the novel was written, the three peaks appearing in other Ming and Qing works.⁷⁸ But it is also the case that the use of the term *dantian* here might be little more than a rhetorical flourish, an instance of using a rarefied, specialized term to enhance the picture of Ximen Qing’s ecstasy. He experiences a similar flow of heat as found in the *Sunü miaolun*, though the emphasis in *Jin Ping Mei* is on pleasure instead of physical and spiritual health. It is as if the pill gives him the ability not only to attain the state of control necessary to please the woman, but also to cause essence to flow to his cinnabar field for him, without the need for the training and effort required in the techniques of channeling and absorbing.

Conclusion: Describing Pleasure

By way of conclusion, we may finally again ask: who is Ximen Qing in light of the art of the bedchamber? As I have said, the art of the bedchamber and *Jin Ping Mei* belong to two incompatible genres with different impulses. One is about achieving perfect control over the self in sex, turning sexual intercourse into a guided exercise whose goal is harmony and health and which belongs to a continuum of practices which, if fully undertaken, result in physical and spiritual transformation. The other shows people for whom sex involves extremes

77 Also see *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, Liren edition, 51.1407; and Roy, 3.51.239-40 (borrowing his words “gave way”). The wording in the Chongzhen edition, *Wu'er risile* 五兒合死了 is better than in the *cihua* edition, which is *Wu'er de sile* 五兒的死了. The words for “unmoved” and the words they are preceded by could be translated as: “though he was plunged in the act and saw it before his eyes, yet he felt nothing at all” (*Sui shen jie mu shi, youru wu wu* 雖身接目視，猶如無物).

78 See Pan Jianguo, “Daojiao fangzhong wenhua,” 65, and reference to *Zaihua chuan, Feijian ji* 飛劍記 (Story of the flying sword), and *Yiqing zhen*. For the latter, a Qing novel, see Jiangxi yeren 江西野人, *Yiqing zhen*, in Chen Qinghao and Wang Qiugui, eds., *Siwuxie huibao* (Taipei: Taiwan daying baike, 1995), vol. 22, 3.40-43 (three peaks and passage from *Xiu zhen yanyi*). The expression for “nine shallow and one deep” occurs in *Yiqing zhen*, 2.23.

of pleasure and pain, who rely on tools and drugs, and for whom intercourse is always complicated by jealousy and self-interest.

The difference between the two also lies in their treatment of pleasure, which the novel describes in a contradictory way that it never resolves. *Jin Ping Mei* persistently portrays the experience of sexual pleasure, especially in its poetic passages. Ximen Qing enjoys time after time with his partners, not to mention hours of entertainment – music and other performance, playing games, and eating – with wives, courtesans, servants, and friends. Then just as persistently, the author takes away from such scenes by injecting the chaotic and conflicting elements that I have referred to as the complexities of social life, which take place both within and beyond the activity of the bedchamber. His moments of pleasure give way to what the novel portrays as the situation of a person who does not deserve or qualify for such pleasure. He is the local merchant-boss, who gains power because of his influence and money, the spending of which he expects can even buy the favor of the gods, as he once brags to Wu Yueniang 吳月娘 (57.746-47). He exudes “the air of the marketplace” (*shijing qi* 市井氣, 60.794), with his shallow taste and love of flashy clothing, furniture, and sexual gadgets, and loves to show off his upstart prowess and wealth. The men and women around him try as much as possible to gain what they can from him, that is, to eat off his plate, both literally and figuratively.⁷⁹ They are his subjects, including his wives and other lovers, sworn brothers, and servants, who are ready to switch masters once he is no longer there. His use of the monk’s aphrodisiac quintessentially summarizes his character and *modus vivendi*. Just as the drug represents a fraudulent appropriation of power, so do Ximen Qing’s sexual and commercial activities, which generate the same kind of behavior in the people who surround him.

The art of the bedchamber uses far fewer words to describe pleasure, mostly, as I have said, locating it in the woman. The man experiences a measured form of pleasure, in which he feels a sense of lightness and well-being, but not the intense form of pleasure that the novel describes.⁸⁰ The bedchamber texts would accuse him of being an aberrant practitioner of the art of the bedchamber, who ignores its key principle that enjoying sexual pleasure means learning how to control and guide it. He also ignores the fact that the art of the bedchamber is just one branch of a repertoire of practices intended for physical and spiritual well-being. In using the monk’s drug, he resembles the figures in fiction and popular lore who take short cuts to immortality, such as Monkey in

79 I have borrowed and summarized this theme from Ding Naifei, *Obscene Things: Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

80 See Pfister, “Gendering Sexual Pleasures in Early and Medieval China,” 45, 52-53.

Xiyou ji 西游記 (Journey to the west) when he erases his name from the registry of life and death or when he steals immortality pills from Laozi or peaches from Queen Mother of the West. In the didactic framework of *Jin Ping Mei* and *Xiyou ji*, such behavior amounts to the fraudulent appropriation of power.

As different as the novel and the art of the bedchamber are, they share, as I have said, a small world in that each believes in talking explicitly about the pleasures and acts of sex. Both evoke moments of mutual understanding and satisfaction between sexual partners, as in *Sunü miaolun* when it says: "When man and woman meet in mutual delight, there is no need for words. They already know what each other wants" (*nannü hao qiú, weifa yanyu, er zhi qi qing* 男女好逑 . 未發言語 , 而知其情).⁸¹ *Jin Ping Mei* portrays similar moments of mutual harmony, especially in its poetry. But in contrast to the novel, the language of the art of the bedchamber is as denuded as possible of sensationalism and excitement, as naked as the bodies it describes may be. It excludes references to bizarre excess, which its and *Jin Ping Mei's* readers would have known about from famous legendary and historical cases. The art of the bedchamber addresses the problem of excess by creating an entire discourse about non-excessive sex, one that affirms the act by treating it as a legitimate body of knowledge, as I have said, with a carefully articulated set of principles, terms, and concerns. Such a body of knowledge argues for the positive effects of sexual pleasure, though also anticipating the dangers and imbalances that can occur.

As for *Jin Ping Mei*, I leave for another study a more complete account of its descriptions of sexual pleasure. Suffice for now to say that it goes for noise and excitement, combines the elegant and the obscene, and luxuriates in the lurid and explicit. It fears nothing that can be said about sex. Other Ming and Qing novels follow the same path, though some exceptions occur that affirm sexual pleasure as something that can be experienced without the danger of excess.⁸² Its greatest contrast with the art of the bedchamber is its insistence upon the tumultuous relations of the polygamous family. If the woman is at times a welcoming sexual companion in *Jin Ping Mei*, she is also a defiant, cunning, and resistant one. Even with the constant resort to wits, not to mention tools, drugs, and money, no matter how skilled a man is in sex, he cannot come close to mastering her.

81 See Li Ling, *Zhongguo fangshu gaiguan*, 202.

82 For example, some sixteenth-century erotic novellas and the mid-Qing *Shenlou zhi*. For the former, see Richard Wang, *Ming Erotic Novellas, Genre, Consumption, and Religiosity in Cultural Practice* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011), 146-47, referring to *Sanmiao zhuan* 三妙傳 (Story of the three beauties) and *Tianyuan qiyou* 天緣奇遇 (Heavenly destinies).

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