

## DEVIANT LOVE AND VIOLENCE IN MODERN CHINESE DECADENT DRAMA\*

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The aim of this study is to analyse and appreciate five Chinese decadent plays of the 1920s and 1930s concerned with deviant love and violence, to show the old Chinese attitude to these *topoi*, the relationships with the traditional Chinese and Indian literatures, as well as with the modern European Decadence of Oscar Wilde and Gabriele D'Annunzio.

### 1

The typological affinities (alongside with the genetic-contact relations) form an inseparable part of modern comparative literary studies. If we discuss the problem of feelings as the *topoi* of this conference, we may say that in the modern times during a relatively long process in China (about three centuries) and a shorter one in Europe, more concretely in England and Germany (about one century) in the realm of emotional researches and their elaborations in the works of literary or artistic creation, systemo-structural entities were formed with basic elements which were to some extent similar. I do not want to begin in the beginning, since it would be too a comprehensive theme for an essay to be read at a conference. In one case I tried to do that starting with the mythic times and ending with Li Qingzhao [1] (1084-1151),<sup>1</sup> but here I would like to mention at least some introductory words to my paper, covering the Ming and Qing times, a favourite field of the organizer of this conference, Paolo Santangelo and his circle.

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<sup>1</sup> Gálik, Marián, "Melancholy in Europe and in China: Some Observations of a Student of the Interliterary Process", *Asian and African Studies* (n.s.) (Bratislava), 5, 1, 1996, pp. 50-69.

In Chinese literary criticism (and in art criticism it was similar)<sup>2</sup> of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, we encounter concepts such as *shihao qingyu* [2] taste, feelings and yearnings, *qing* [3] felings, *xing qing* [4] nature and feelings.<sup>3</sup> Feelings and *Gefühle* play an important role in English and German literary criticism and together with other concepts, such as sympathy, sensibility, passion, etc., constitute the central axis of criticism from the *Collection of Letters and Essays* by James Arbuckle (1722), through Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774) up to John Keats who died in 1821.<sup>4</sup>

In China the stress on the feelings represented at least partly a reaction against the antiquated tendencies of the group of the poets going in the wake of Li Mengyang [5] (1472-1529) and Li Panglong [6] (1514-1570), and also partly against the rationalist philosophy of Zhu Xi [7] (1130-1200) and his followers. In England and in Europe generally, it was a reaction against the neoclassical ideas of literary critics like Alexander Pope or Samuel Johnson, as well as against the rationalist philosophy of the Cartesian kind predominating then in contemporary France.

According to Zhu Xi, who had a considerable influence in the whole Far East: "The nature is tranquil while feelings are active, and the mind involves both tranquility and activity. Whether these refer to its substance or its function depends on one's point of view. While it is in the state of tranquility, the principle of activity is always present."<sup>5</sup>

This always present control of the mind intervened primarily where there was a question of "bad desires". Later the philosopher Wang Yangming [8] (1472-1527) explained the ideal of equilibrium between reason and feelings when he referred to the well-known saying by Confucius: "To be able to follow one's heart desires without transgressing moral principles merely means that one's mind has reached full maturity."<sup>6</sup> If we know that Confucius said something like that after he reached the age of seventy, when often the life ends and the desires (including those regarded as bad by Confucians or Buddhists) begin to die down, this maxim was not regarded as proper in the new social and political atmosphere in China of the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century.

The first apostle of the new belief in the role of the feelings (including the desires) in human life – eminent Confucian heretic and independent scholar Li

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<sup>2</sup> Li, Zehou, *Der Weg der Schönen. Wesen und Geschichte der chinesischen Kultur und Ästhetik*. Ed. by Karl-Heinz Pohl and Gudrun Wacker. Freiburg, Herder 1992, pp. 346-391.

<sup>3</sup> Gálik, Marián, "The Concept of Feeling in Chinese, English and German Literary Criticism", *Neohelicon* (Budapest), X, 1, 1983, p. 123.

<sup>4</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124. Quoted according to *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Trans. and Comp. by Wing-tsit Chan. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1963, p. 629.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 675 and Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics*, Vols. 1-2. Taipei 1969, p. 147.

Zhi [9] (1527-1602) – committed suicide by slashing his throat. According to him *dao li wen jian* [10] moral principles and received opinions are an obstacle to the creation of valuable literature. *Xin* [11] mind/heart is understood as a mirror of reality that should be portrayed in literature, and more generally in the art and culture on condition that it be *zhen* [12] and not *jia* [13] false reflection. “Moral principles and received opinions” occupy the mind/hearts of students and creators of literature through the uncritical study of books.<sup>7</sup>

According to Li Zhi: “Those who can truly write never intended to produce literature in the first place. In the bosom [of a true writer], there are so many indescribable, strange things, in his throat there are so many things he wants to utter yet dare not, in his mouth there are often so many words he wants to say but has nowhere to say – when these have been stored up to the limit and accumulated for so long that they can no longer be checked, then, one day when he sees a *jing* [16] scene that arouses his *qing* [3] emotions, when one touches his eye draws a sigh from him, he will ‘grab someone else’s winecup to pour over his own grievances,’ give vent to his feelings of injustice, and lament the ill fates of a thousand years.”<sup>8</sup>

Neither the socio-political nor philosophical conditions were prepared in traditional China for the gigantic changes that took place in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century (that is during the advent of Romanticism) in the mode of looking at the human mind and its capacities. For David Hume: “What is commonly, and in popular sense, called reason, is nothing but a general and a calm passion which takes a comprehensive and distant view of its object,” and “what we call *strength of mind*” is only “the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent.”<sup>9</sup> The romantic stress of British, mostly Scottish theoreticians, on intuitivism, brought the attention to feelings, sentiments and even to violent passions. According to William Wordsworth’s “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*”, “poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquility gradually disappears, and emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced...”<sup>10</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, probably “the most ambitious and the most philosophical of English critics”,<sup>11</sup> went even

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted according to Guo Shaoyu [14], *Zhongguo wenxue piping shi* [15] *A History of Chinese Literary Criticism*. Peking 1955, p. 350.

<sup>8</sup> Liu, James J.Y., *Chinese Theories of Literature*. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press 1975, p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted according to Bate, Walter Jackson, *From Classic to Romantic. Premises of Taste in Eighteenth Century England*. New York, Harper & Row, Publishers 1961, p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted according to Hoffman, Daniel G. and Hynes, Samuel (eds.), *English Romantic Criticism. Romantic and Victorian*. London, Peter Owen 1966, pp. 30-31.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

further when claiming that the images (whether literary or that of art), though faithfully copied from nature, "become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by *predominant passion; or by associated thought or images awakened by that passion* (underlined by me, M.G.)..."<sup>12</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe went too far, when he wrote in *Faust*: "Gefühl ist alles."<sup>13</sup> In the translation by Philip Wayne we read in the dialogue between Faust and Margarete about the phenomena around and above us:

*Is not life teeming  
Around the head and heart of you,  
Weaving eternal mysteries  
Seen and unseen, even at your side?  
Oh, let them feel your heart, your generous heart,  
And, when you lose your being in that bliss,  
Give it what name you will -  
Your joy, love, heart, your God.  
For me I have no name  
To give it: feeling's surely all.  
Names are but noise and smoke.  
Obscuring heavenly light.*<sup>14</sup>

The last two lines in the original German text read as follows: "Name ist Schall und Rauch,/ Umnebelnd Himmelglut."<sup>15</sup>

Even the name of God seems to be hazy in the eyes and ears of the romantic poet. This is extremely provocative and seems even to be blasphemous. But young Faust seems to be enthralled by the new post-classical frenzy. The Western world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was not totally immune to seventeenth century teaching of John Locke: "nihil est in intellectu, quod not ante fuerit in sensu." His teaching of the so-called secondary qualities of human sensory experience where emphasis was laid on the subjective aspect of cognition rather than on its objective impact made an especially great impact on his contemporaries and later generations. Even Immanuel Kant followed his ideas. European Romanticists repudiated the rational considerations typical for Neo-classicists and for the earlier Cartesian alternative.<sup>16</sup> The anti-rationalist attitude had a far reaching effect. In dichotomy to reason, emphasis was laid on passions, the classic ideal of a fully developed man (*vir illustris*) gave way to the individualism of Romanticists pursuing often the one-sided *le culte du moi*.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, *Faust. Eine Tragödie. Erster Teil*. Leipzig, Reclam 1974, p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> *Faust. Part One*. Trans. by Philip Wayne. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books 1986, p. 153.

<sup>15</sup> *Faust. Erster Teil*, p. 116.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* from the year 1690 and Walter Jackson Bate, op. cit., p. 129.

Instead of a depiction of nature under which was understood that innate Original, or universal Idea, which the Creator has fixed in the minds of every reasonable creature,<sup>17</sup> the requirement was to delineate reality with the aid of imagination to which no limits were given, for it was the product of the most subjective and most individualist authors who had appeared until then in history.

The human mind, which, during the entire course of history going back more than two millenia, has always been more or less a mirror of reality, whether objective or subjective, became at the time of the romantic protest a demiurge, a projector, a lighthouse of a new world created by the romantic imagination. One such world is depicted in a Wordsworth poem:

*I had a world about me; 'twas my own,  
I made it; for it only live'd to me.  
And to the God who look'd into my mind.*<sup>18</sup>

Nothing like that could have been possible in Europe before the eighteenth century under the universal sway of the classical aesthetic ideal that insisted on the existence of something objective outside a writer's or an artist's mind. A classical or neoclassical author from Homer onwards was always more interested in objective reality than his own subjective world.

Neither was anything similar possible in traditional China. The mirror (*jing*) [17] was the metaphor of the mind both in traditional China<sup>19</sup> and in pre-Romantic and Romantic Europe;<sup>20</sup> but while other metaphors negating this mirroring aspect and pointing to a creative, active component of human genius in the domain of literature and art came to prevail in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, much in China, if one cannot say all, ran in the old ruts. With some exceptions, like Li Zhi or He Xinyin [18] (1517-1579), nobody dared or succeeded in throwing doubt on the teachings of ancient sages and philosophers in relation to Heaven, Earth and human beings. According to Sikong Tu [19] (837-908), a late Tang literary critic, the most thing important was: "Transcend beyond objective forms; / Attain the center of the circle."<sup>21</sup> The center of the circle was a metaphor standing for the *Dao* [20] the Way, the principal concept of Chinese philosophy and the most important element of literature, for according to Chinese critics, literature was a special vehicle for this Way.

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<sup>17</sup> M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1976.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> Yue Daiyun, "Metaphor and Mirror in Western and Chinese Poetics". In: *Proceedings of the XIIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association. The Force of Vision 3*. Tokyo, University of Tokyo Press 1995, pp. 416-423.

<sup>20</sup> M.H. Abrams, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-35.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. M.A. Robertson, "... To Convey What Is Precious: Ssu-k'ung T'u's Poetics and the Er-shih ssu Shih P'in." In: Buxbaum, D.C. and Mote, F.W. (eds.), *Transition and Permanence. Chinese History and Culture*. Hong Kong 1972, p. 143, Alexeev, V.M., *Kitaiskaia literatura (Chinese Literature)*. Moscow, Nauka 1978, p. 172 and Wong, Yoon Wah, *Sikong Tu Shi pin: Translation with an Introduction*. Singapore, National University of Singapore 1994, p. 17.

In China there was no stress on original genius and imagination was not sufficiently pointed out. He Xinyin made an attack on the concept of desirelessness (*wu yu*) [21] of the philosopher Zhou Dunyi [22] (1017-1073) and he called for return to relishing “fish and bear’s paws” as preferred a dish by Mencius (371-289 B.C.).<sup>22</sup> His philosophy of a “few desires”<sup>23</sup> could hardly be a comparable to and be so highly evaluated as the demands of the European philosophers and writers of Romantic generation.

I personally doubt whether really sthenic, that is strong feelings could be reproduced and creatively elaborated in traditional Chinese philosophy, literature or art. But I have nothing against the musings of the Chinese experts in this field who had a different opinion.

## 2

As to the twentieth century after the May Fourth Movement the Chinese scene is different and different are also the literary and artistic presentations of the feelings of modern Chinese men and women. In the time of European Neo-Romanticism and vanguard movements, China became acquainted with the whole set of various literary and artistic currents and trends usually of mixed character. The so-called Chinese Romanticism of the first half of the 1920s is different from the Romanticism (or Romanticisms, if you like) of European provenience. Elsewhere I tried to elucidate this phenomenon specific also for other Chinese literary trends.<sup>24</sup> For modern Chinese literary trends, especially the symbolic charge is generally typical. With Yu Dafu [23] (1896-1945) Romanticism very soon transcends into its more modern stage, called the Decadent Movement by Mario Praz, who sees one of its most characteristic traits in “erotic sensibility”.<sup>25</sup> This is just fitting for Yu Dafu’s works of fiction.<sup>26</sup>

We mention here Mario Praz’s monumental work, which in the words of Frank Kermode, is a classic and “not merely a classic of academic literary history”, but a classic “in a sense which places it among such books as have, in the depth of their insights, power to alter a reader’s understanding of the history of his society, and perhaps of his own history. It is rare for a work of literary schol-

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<sup>22</sup> de Bary, Wm. Th., “Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought.” In: *Self and Society in Ming Thought*. New York and London: Columbia University Press 1970, p. 182.

<sup>23</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Gálík, Marián, “European Literary Trends and Their Metamorphoses.” In: *Proceedings of the XIIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association. Space and Boundaries*. Vol. 3. Munich, Iudicium Verlag 1990, pp. 373-378.

<sup>25</sup> Praz, Mario, *The Romantic Agony*. Trans. by Angus Davidson. 2nd ed. Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press 1970, p. xv.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. my views in *The Genesis of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism (1917-1930)*, Bratislava – London, Veda – Curzon Press 1980, pp. 108-112.

arship to achieve so much; and the few which have comparable scope and order fall short in curiosity, vigour, and wit."<sup>27</sup>

The conscientious reader of Praz's book and a historian of modern Chinese Decadent drama will find it strange that two playwrights, mostly criticized by Praz, had the deepest impact in China: Oscar Wilde and Gabriele D'Annunzio. In relation to *Salome* by the first, Praz wrote the following: "The Salomes of Flaubert, of Moreau, Laforgue, and Mallarmé are known only to students of literature and connoisseurs, but the Salome of the genial comedian Wilde is known to all the world."<sup>28</sup> And not even one page before he wrote: "Yet, as generally happens with specious second-hand works, it was precisely Wilde's Salome which became popular."<sup>29</sup> Praz's attitude to D'Annunzio is not better, although he regards him as the "most monumental figure of the Decadent Movement." He was born in "Italia barbara", the "remota e inculta". D'Annunzio is a barbarian, Decadent, but he is lacking in humanity.<sup>30</sup>

It was at first Wilde's *Salome* which was translated and later creatively followed and processed for Chinese needs. This has not been studied as yet in a satisfactory manner. Here I shall devote myself to some dramas of the 1920s and 1930s in China, although there are certainly some which would need more attention.

Xiang Peiliang's [24] (1901-1965) *Annen* [25] *Amnon* is, in my view, one of the most interesting.<sup>31</sup> I hope that I brought together enough material to prove that Xiang or, better to say, his literary hero, both in fiction and drama, suffered from "looking and touching phobia" (*furor videndi et tangendi*)<sup>32</sup> This one-act-play was probably the best example in modern Chinese for applying the methods of depicting the human naked body taken over directly from the biblical *Song of Songs*, although he read and admired Wilde's *Salome*, and to a great extent he wrote his drama under Wilde's impact.<sup>33</sup> "Looking and touching phobia"

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<sup>27</sup> Kermodé, Frank, "Foreword to the 1970 Impression." In: Praz, M., op. cit., p. v.

<sup>28</sup> Praz, M., op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 400-401.

<sup>31</sup> In: Xiang Peiliang, *Shenmen xiju* [26] *Melancholic Plays*. Shanghai, Guanghai shuju 1927, pp. 44-77.

<sup>32</sup> More detailed information, see in my paper: "Temptation of the Princess: Xiang Peiliang's Decadent Version of Biblical Amnon and Tamar", originally read at the international symposium: *Fin de siècle* (Decadence): Austrian and Chinese Paradigms in Literature (1890s-1930s), University of Vienna, June 9, 1999 and to be published in Gálik, Marián, *The Bible and China: Influence, Translation and Parallel Studies*. Ed. by Roman Malek. Sankt Augustin, Institut Monumenta Serica 2003.

<sup>33</sup> More on this aspect, see my paper to be read at the Second international workshop on the Bible and China: The Bible and Chinese Culture, Taipei, Fugen Catholic University, January 5-8, 2002, entitled "The Echoes of Biblical Shulamite and Wilde's *Salome* in Three Modern Chinese Plays". To be published later in The Monumenta Serica Series.

was only a part of Xiang's or his hero's inner psychic equipment. From the beginning of his theatrical career as a theoretician, playwright and a director, he stressed the power of sister-brother (in the case of his *Amnon* half-sister and half-brother) mutual sexual attraction.<sup>34</sup>

Amnon, the oldest son of King David (ca. 1000-ca. 975 B.C.), fell in love with his half-sister Tamar. Having in mind Freudian teaching about the above mentioned double phobia and the common understanding of incest as sexual intercourse or some kind of cohabitation between consanguinous persons in the same family, we may claim that if we are not sure whether Amnon committed incest in his relation to Tamar, in the case of Xiang Peiliang's work, it was only the looking and touching *Angst*, that was a source of the trouble.

Biblical Amnon had an attractive half-sister who was "fair". He was vexed and unhappy, because he was afraid that she would not be enthusiastic because of his problematic love to her. He did not believe that she will be ready to marry him, even if it was allowed among the Hebrews, but only with the consent of girl's father or her older brother. Tamar was informed about Amnon's desire and was quite willing to be his wife and the future queen of Israel and Judah.<sup>35</sup> She only asked him to go to their common father and tell him about his inner intention.<sup>36</sup> For the impatient crown prince it was an unbearable burden and he decided to act.

With Xiang Peiliang's Amnon it was different. At first he recited a litany highlighting the beauty of different parts of Tamar's dressed body, following thus more or less closely Shulamite's depictions,<sup>37</sup> then he decided to look at and probably to touch her most intimate parts. He forced her to lie on the floor (which was certainly a part of the rape), but he did not proceed further since the *furor videndi et tangendi* was stronger than his wish to make love to her.

Biblical Amnon repudiated his step-sister and very probably he never met her again. Under Hebrew law this was regarded as a rape and qualified as a heavy offence against the family of the girl. Absalom, Tamar's older brother, prepared a revenge and later killed her seducer.<sup>38</sup>

Xiang Peiliang's Amnon is a case in the study of deviant psychology. Maybe that on the basis of his own personal observances and the study of Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis' writings,<sup>39</sup> he came to an idea to use this kind of modern psy-

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<sup>34</sup> Xiang Peiliang, *Renlei de yishu* [27] *The Art of Humankind*. N.p., Yuti shudian 1930, pp. 98-100.

<sup>35</sup> *II Samuel*, 13, 1-19.

<sup>36</sup> This was necessary for marriage according to the Hebrew customs and the law. See Propp, William .H., "Kinship in 2 Samuel 13". *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 55, 1993, pp. 41-42.

<sup>37</sup> Xiang Peiliang, *Amnon*, pp. 73-76.

<sup>38</sup> *II Samuel*, 13, 28-29.

<sup>39</sup> See my study under note No. 32

chopathological knowledge to process the biblical *Stoff* in a different and modern way and to enrich modern Chinese dramatic creation. Xiang's *Amnon* shows the new, up to that time, never discovered side of decadent love.

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There is no violence in Xiang Peiliang's *Amnon*, except for a short moment, when *Amnon* forces Tamar to change her position from vertical to horizontal. Probably we may qualify as violence also the act of throwing her out of his house through his bodyguards. There is more violence in the drama by a friend of Xiang Peiliang – Bai Wei [28] (1894-1987), whose original names were Huang Zhang [29] and Huang Peng [30], whose alternative name was Huang Suru [31]. The play I have at mind in this moment is entitled *Fang Wen* [32] *Visiting Qingwen* from the year 1926. Although as far as I know, Bai Wei never mentioned D'Annunzio as his favourite writer, he was already known in China at the time of writing *Visiting Qingwen*, and even compared in greatness to Dante.<sup>40</sup> Zhang Wentian [40] (1900-1977), the important promoter of European Decadence in China, an admirer of Jesus Christ and Oscar Wilde, later a member of the CC CCP, translated and published *La Gioconda* in 1924, and it was reprinted three times more up to the year 1940.<sup>41</sup> In July 1925, a part of D'Annunzio's drama *La Città morta* (*The Dead City*) appeared in *Chenbao fukan* [41] *A Supplement to the Morning Post*,<sup>42</sup> and its closing scene was translated into Chinese,<sup>43</sup> both the work of the poet Xu Zhimo [43] (1898-1931). We find the traces of these two famous dramas by D'Annunzio in Xu Zhimo's and Lu Xiaoman's [44] (1902-1965) play *Bian Kungang* [45].<sup>44</sup> Some time later in January and February 1927 *The Dead City* in the English translation by G. Mantelini was rendered into Chinese by Xiang Peiliang.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Shen Yanbing [33] (Mao Dun) [34], "Yidali diyi wenxuejia Dengnanzhe" [35] "Great Contemporary Writer Gabriele D'Annunzio", *Dongfang zazhi* [36] *The Eastern Miscellany*, 17, 19, Oct. 10, 1920, p. 62. Bai Wei's *Visiting Qingwen* was originally published in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* [37] *Short Story Monthly*, 17, 7, 1926, pp. 1-15. I used here the text reprinted in Wei Ruhui.

[38] (ed.), *Xiandai mingju jinghua* [39] *Most Famous Modern Chinese Plays*. Shanghai, Chaofeng chubanshe 1947, pp. 53-80.

<sup>41</sup> *Bibliografia delle Opere Italiane tradotte in Cinese (1911-1992)*. Peking, Shehui kexue wenxian chubansshe 1992, p. 62.

<sup>42</sup> The translation was published in *A Supplement to Morning Post*, 122 and 123, 1925 and later reprinted in *Xu Zhimo quanji* [42] *The Complete Works of Xu Zhimo*. Vol. 2. Nanning, Guangxi minzu chubanshe 1991, pp. 570-579. For further information see Findeisen, R.D., "Two Aviators: Gabriele D'Annunzio and Xu Zhimo". In: Lee, Mabel and Meng Hua (eds.), *Cultural Dialogue and Misreading*. Sydney, Wild Peony 1997, pp. 77-81.

<sup>43</sup> *The Complete Works of Xu Zhimo*. Vol. 4, pp. 289-290.

<sup>44</sup> Shanghai, Xinyue shudian 1928.

<sup>45</sup> Xiang Peiliang (trans.), *Si cheng* [46] *The Dead City*. Shanghai. Taidong shuju 1929.

In this probably most dramatic play by D'Annunzio's the archeologist Leonardo does not want his beloved sister Bianca Maria to be "defiled" by any man, not even by his best friend. When he sees that his colleague Alesandro has fallen in love with her, he takes his sister to the fountain of Perseus, situated near the ruins of ancient Mycenae, and kills her in the pure water flowing out of the spring. Here, as we see, even more morbid sister-brother incest is involved than in Xiang Peiliang's play.

Bai Wei's *Visiting Qingwen* elaborates the story of Jia Baoyu [47] and his waiting maid Qingwen [48] from the Chapter 77 of Cao Xueqin's [49] (ca 1715-1763) great novel.<sup>46</sup> Qingwen, one of the most sympathetic female characters in the novel, is brutally expelled from the pavilions of Daguanyuan [52] (Grand View Garden) into a poor cottage, where she dies after a short but fatal illness. Being fired out in high temperature from Yihongyuan [53] Happy Red Pavilion of Baoyu, she has to live in the dirty house of her cousin. He was a timorous but cruel man, whereas his wife was a lively and attractive woman who, since her husband was impotent, used to walk thorough the streets to attract the attention of men.

*Visiting Qingwen* starts with the monologue of poor girl who lays on the lacerated straw linen and calls in a vain for a cup of tea. She muses over the coffin, the grave, the casket that forever will bury the beautiful and lovely things she entered during her short life. She yearns for Baoyu, her quasi-brother, who will accompany her to her death, just as Leonardo has done for Bianca Maria. Baoyu did not come to bring about her death like Leonardo. His idea was to help her in the first difficulties. It was probably the *genius loci*, different from the Happy Red Pavilion, and namely the spirit of European Decadence, which caused the modern Baoyu to behave in another way than in the novel. A certain kind of alcolagnia is conspicuous from the first glance: in the first moments of the meeting he asks Qingwen to show him the wounds on her naked body after the brutal beating by her cousin. Chaste Qingwen does not allow him to look under her blouse. "It is not my duty,"<sup>47</sup> she says to him. In her sixteen years she has preserved a *jie xin* [54] pure heart.<sup>48</sup> She yearns very much after the last meeting with her Baoyu.

In *Visiting Qingwen*, just as in *Amnon*, the main male character is the speaker for decadent love. He addresses to her the words full of admiration:

"Your eyes are like *meihuo* [55] tempting sea. Your purple lips are like sproputing red rose! Your *meiyung* (56) (beautiful image) is within my heart."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Here I use the reprint of 1792 edition of *Honglouloumeng* [50] *A Dream of the Red Chamber*, ed. by Hu Shi [51] (1892-1961), which was probably identical with, or very similar to that used by Bai Wei, esp. Vol. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Bai Wei, *Visiting Qingwen*, p. 60.

<sup>48</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Qingwen knows that these words are only a manifestation of *yiyin* [57] lust of the mind,<sup>50</sup> that he is best in licking up the rouge from the lips of young damsels<sup>51</sup> and hardly capable of the heterosexual love which is her aim. Even if she likes him dearly, she does not allow him to kiss her lips. When he tries to be more aggressive and to act as a *man* [58] barbarian, she asks him not to make a *mai chun chunfu* [59] a whore out of her.<sup>52</sup>

Like Amnon from Xiang Peiliang's play, Baoyu from Bai Wei's work did not achieve his objectives. Both sadistic lust from looking on the emaciated and beaten body of Qingwen and cheap licking of the lips of the attractive girl, were denied to a young boy, who was not worthy of her love, although he was an object of her inner desires.

Baoyu left Qingwen's room after he was asked to sexually indulge on the body of Qingwen's sister-in-law, who entered the room where they mutually communicated. Qingwen died immediately, alone and lonely.

4

Deviant love and even more violence or cruelty is most conspicuous in *Da Ji* [60],<sup>53</sup> the play in three acts by Xu Baoyan [61], a playwright whose life is almost completely unknown to these days. He was one of the translators of Wilde's *Salome* into Chinese.<sup>54</sup> Two years later in 1929 *Da Ji* appeared in the *Jin wu shudian* [66] La Maison d'or, publishing house devoted to decadent literature founded and led by Shao Xunmei [67] (1906-1968).

I agree with Paolo Santangelo that *can* [68] cruelty or *ning* [69] ferocity are not real emotions, but they are connected with them and they express the "modes of behaviour."<sup>55</sup> Being often executed in an extremely brutish manner, they were treated in completely different way than the emotions. Emotions should be tempered according to the Confucian and Buddhist ethical code, but violence and cruelty was tolerated, and even sanctioned.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. *A Dream of the Red Mansions*. Trans. by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang. Vol. 2. Peking, Foreign Languages Press 1978, p. 672.

<sup>51</sup> This was a usual means of Baoyu's sexual enjoyment.

<sup>52</sup> Bai Wei, *Visiting Qingwen*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>53</sup> I found only a few words about him in the valuable essay by Jie Zhixi [62], "'Qingchun, mei, emo, yishu...' – weimei-tuifeizhuyi yingxiang xiade Zhongguo xiandai xiju" [63] "'Youth, Beauty, Satan, Art...' – Modern Chinese Drama Under the Impact of Aesthetic Decadence". *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* [64] *Modern Chinese Literature Studies*, 1, 2000, pp. 42-43.

<sup>54</sup> *Shalemei* [65] *Salome*. Shanghai, Guanghai shuju, August 1927.

<sup>55</sup> Santangelo, Paolo, "A Research on Emotions and States of Mind in Late Imperial China. Preliminary Results". *Ming Qing yanjiu* [70] *Ming and Qing Studies*, 1995, p. 166.

<sup>56</sup> Lewis, Mark Edward, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*. Albany, State University of New York 1990.

Da Ji was one of those women usually connected with the last bad rulers of different dynasties, who in Chinese history were condemned for *qing guo qing cheng* [71] overthrowing the states and the cities.<sup>57</sup> She was mentioned in *Shujing* [73] *The Book of Documents* and characterized as a hen crowing in the morning and bringing disaster into the family of the ruler and his country. After the first and chief wife of Yin dynasty Zhou Xin [74], or Di Xin [75] (reigned ca. 1086-1045 B.C.) was forced to commit suicide, he has decided to take the exceptionally beautiful and cruel Da Ji as Queen. Her role in the play is similar to that of Herodias in Salome's biblical story, although she is much more inventive and active in inciting Zhou Xin in his violent deeds and in the methods of torture. John the Baptist has more than one partner in Xu Baoyan's play, although the most prominent and most similar is Zhou Xin's royal uncle<sup>58</sup> Bi Gan [76] connected with the famous saying coming from Sima Qian's [77] (ca. 145-86 B.C.), who, in his *Shi ji* [78] *Historical Records* quotes allegedly two sentences by Zhou Xin related to Bi Gan who was also his Prime Minister: "I heard that a *shengren* [79] sage had seven orifices in his heart. Let us disembowel Bi Gan."<sup>59</sup> In *Lie nü zhuan* [83] *Biographies of Eminent Women* by Liu Xiang [84] (77-6 B.C.) these words are said by Da Ji, as a manifestation of a later, even more Confucianist attitude to women.<sup>60</sup>

Close reading of Xu Baoyan's drama shows that when writing his work, apart from Wilde's *Salome*, he certainly used *Fengshen yanyi* [85] *The Investiture of the Gods*, a hundred-chapter Chinese novel from the time of the Ming dynasty (written between 1450-1650), the author of which is not known. Liu Ts'un-yan, the foremost expert on this novel, doubts whether it was Xu Zhonglin [86].<sup>61</sup>

Zhou Xin's love is to a great extent egoistic and we may characterize it as even cannibalistic, although only in a symbolic way. After admiring her eyes, lips and breasts he expresses his desire to have and enjoy the whole body of Da Ji. He would like even to devour (*tun*) [87] so that his sexual desires would be fully satisfied.<sup>62</sup> Da Ji does not protest. She would even regard it as a honour to be gulped by him once as a piece of meat.

<sup>57</sup> See *Shijing* [72] *Book of Songs*, Nr. 264 in *The Book of Odes. Chinese text, Transcription and Translation* by Bernhard Karlgren. Stockholm, The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 1950, p. 237.

<sup>58</sup> Those somehow connected with the royal lineage were usually addressed as royal uncles. They were not necessarily near relatives connected with the father of the King.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. "Yin benji [80] Basic Annals of the Yin Dynasty". In: Sima Qian, *Shiji*, ce [81] 1, juan [82] 3. Taipei, SBBY 1969, p. 10 A and *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*. Traduits et annotés by Édouard Chavannes. Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve 1967, p. 206.

<sup>60</sup> *The Position of Woman in Early China. According to Lieh nü zhuan "The Biographies of Chinese Women"*, by Albert Richard O' Hara, S.J. (Taipei reprint 1978), p. 188.

<sup>61</sup> Liu Ts'un-yan, *Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Novels. Vol. I. The Authorship of the Feng shen yen i*. Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz Verlag 1962, pp. 1-5.

<sup>62</sup> Xu Baoyan, *Da Ji*, pp. 3-6.

To eat human flesh was quite ordinary for ancient China and it was also practiced also in modern times.<sup>63</sup> Not in this play, but in the *Investiture of the Gods*, Chapter 27, we see Da Ji eating the soup out of Bi Gan's heart. For a modern play such a scene would be morbid. For a medieval Chinese novel the gourmet feast, where the different parts of human body, consisting especially of the heart or brain, were nothing extraordinary.<sup>64</sup>

Most typical for Xu Baoyan's play is a succession of deeds of violence executed in a very wilful and well thought-out manner. Lust and violence ooze through all the dramatic action. Sadist pleasure from torture and pain permeates the whole play. Zhou Xin eagerly waits for the new ideas of Da Ji inventing intricate forms of "punishment" for those who are not obedient and submissive and even for completely innocent people. Lust is a highest demand. There is no difference between that coming from the genital organs or from psychopathological aberrations, or from the wily methods of torture. Some of them were already mentioned in the *Book of Documents*: Zhou Xin, and according to later Confucian writings, with the help of Da Ji, burned and roasted the loyal and good, he ripped the abdomens of pregnant women, he cut through the leg-bones of innocent victims.<sup>65</sup>

Chinese scholar Wei Juxian [90] in his very solid monograph entitled *Feng shen pang gushi tanyuan* [91] *Searching for the Sources of the Investiture of the Gods*<sup>66</sup> collected much materials on the basis of which *The Investiture of the Gods* was written.

Two of these tortures were just mentioned and they were called: *zhuo jing* [92] cutting the legs and *ku yun* [93] cutting open the bellies of pregnant women. Both these atrocities are depicted both in Xu Baoyan's play and in Chapter 89 of the *Investiture of the Gods*. Zhou Xin and Da Ji observed two men, one old and one young, crossing the freezing water near the palace. The old man ignored the cold and ran swiftly, the young man was slow and was obviously afraid of the water. Zhou Xin was curious about the cause of this behaviour. His charming and "omniscient" spouse said that it was because the old man was born with rich bone marrow and the young man with poor bone marrow. King let his executioners cut off their legs in order to see the difference. For him she

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Chong, Key Ray, *Cannibalism in China*. Wakefield, New Hampshire, Longwood Academic 1900 and its very detailed review by Raimund Th. Kolb, "Kannibalismus im vormodernen China". *Monumenta Serica*, 44, 1996, pp. 393-403. For the period of the Cultural Revolution, see Martin-Liao, Tienchi, "Underground Reportages: China's Exile Writer Zheng Yi". In: Marián Gálik (ed.), *Chinese Literature and European Context*. Bratislava, Institute of Oriental and African Studies 1994, pp. 225-232.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. the cases of cannibalism in the novels *Xiyouji* [88] *Journey to the West* and *Shuihuzhuan* [89] *Water Margin* in the analysis by C.T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel. A Critical Introduction*. New York and London, Columbia University Press 1968, pp. 103, 145 and 152-153.

<sup>65</sup> *The Chinese Classics* by James Legge. Vol. 3. Taipei reprint, n.y, pp. 285-295.

<sup>66</sup> Hong Kong, Weixing Yinwusuo 1960.

was a seer comparable to Bi Gan who was already dead in the novel, but still living in the play. Zhou Xin wanted to know how it is in the bellies of pregnant women. She was ready to prophesize, although they knew that the women and their foetuses would die. When the bodyguards brought to palace three pregnant women, Zhou Xin asked about the contents of their bellies. Da Ji said that the first two had the boys and the third one a girl. After opening their bellies, Zhou Xin saw that she was true. Da Ji became for him talented as a goddess and more clear-seeing than the royal diviners.<sup>67</sup> In the play the diviners are not mentioned, but Da Ji indirectly asks from Zhou Xin the heart of Bi Gan as a reward for providing him with sadistic pleasure.<sup>68</sup>

Wei Juxian gives us many references in different books where the second form of violence is mentioned. After the *Book of Documents* we find it in *Han Feizi* [94] *Han Feizu*, *Lüshi chungiu* [95] *Lord Lü's Spring and Autumn*, written by philosophers working under the patronage of Lü Buwei [96] (banished 237 B.C.), Prime Minister of Qin Shihuangdi [97] First Emperor of the Qin dynasty, then in *Chunqiu fanlu* [98] *Deep Significance of the Spring and Autumn Annals* by Dong Zhongshu [99] (ca. 175-105 B.C.) and *Huai Nanzi* [100] *Huai Nanzi*, attributed to the Prince Liu An [101] (died 122 B.C.).<sup>69</sup> As to the first form, Wei Juxian mentions Song Kangwang [102] King, or better to say, Prince Kang of Song (337-336 B.C.) of the time of the Warring States, as one who has done it too, although the text is allegedly not very clear.<sup>70</sup> It is interesting to learn that in this case Wei Juxian makes an advocate for Zhou Xin. He says that he killed or mutilated only "five people", because all others were his *ganbu* [103] officials. It was, of course, bad since such experiments could not be done on the living human beings. If Liu An wrote, that because of Bi Gan and of the two who lost their legs, "ten thousand people rebelled",<sup>71</sup> then how could the highest authorities on the Mainland, who killed more than ten million of people, retain their political power for long?<sup>72</sup>

Out of the "ten crimes" adjudicated to Zhou Xin before his death in front of Wu wang [104] King Wu (r. 1049/45-43 B.C.), the sixth one called *chai pen* [105] serpent pit where the "guilty", for instance seventy two palace maids, who had been attending the former Queen, predecessor of Da Ji, were pushed down and bitten to death by snakes, is depicted in more detail in Xu Baoyan's play than the others.<sup>73</sup> It is also the climax of the atrocities together with Bi Gan's condemnation and his death.

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<sup>67</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*. Vol. 2. Taipei, Guiguan tushu 2000, p. 802.

<sup>68</sup> Xu Baoyan, *Da Ji*, pp. 23-24 and 59-60.

<sup>69</sup> Wei Juxian, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39 and *Chan-kuo ts'ue*. Trans. by J.I. Crump. Sec. ed. revised. San Francisco, Chinese Materials Center 1979, p. 566.

<sup>71</sup> Wei Juxian, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, Chapter 17 and Xu Baoyan, *Da Ji*, pp. 42-43.

At the end of the last third act we see scenes of dubious love and cruelty, when the three executioners, the fierce warriors of King Wu, are not able to decapitate Da Ji, since all of them fell in love with her at first glance, or loved her secretly for a long time in their lives.<sup>74</sup>

5

In Su Xuelin's [106] (1899-1999) drama in three acts entitled *Jiunaluo de yanjing* [107] *Kunāla's Eyes*,<sup>75</sup> we find a balance between the description of deviant love and violence. Liu Ts'un-yan mentioned that the author of the *Investiture of the Gods* "might have been inspired by the story of Kunāla and his step-mother."<sup>76</sup> It is possible since before the Ming dynasty three versions of this story from *Aśokavadāna* appeared in Chinese translations before the end of the Wei dynasty in 556 A.D.).<sup>77</sup> This seduction story is delineated in Chapter 19 of the novel. Here we meet Da Ji and Bo Yikao [109], brother of King Wu and a son of Wen wang [110] King Wen (r. 1099-1050 B.C.). Bo Yikao was good at playing the zither and had a handsome appearance together with refined manners. Da Ji was not interested either in his playing or teaching, but in his sexual power, since she thought that he could satisfy her much more than her old guy.<sup>78</sup> She did not succeed in persuading Bo Yikao to allow her to sit on his lap, to hold her hand and to guide it across the strings (alluding probably to playing with her private parts). At the end she decided to kill him using the terrible method of torture: she let the executioners to chop his flesh piece by piece (*yong dao suiduo*) [111] and sent his cooked meat to his father to eat.<sup>79</sup>

Judging from Su Xuelin's minute notes to the text of the play we may be quite sure that she knew well all three Chinese translations of *Aśokavadāna* and much of the Sanskrit literature concerned with this problem and studies available in China of the 1930s. During her stay in France between 1921-1925, she very probably read the scholarly monograph *La légende de l'empereur Açoka (Açoka-avadāna) dans les textes indiens et chinois*, by Jean Przyluski<sup>80</sup> and maybe even the *Introduction à l'histoire du buddhisme indien*, by Eugène Burnouf.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Xu Baoyan, *Da Ji*, pp. 119-126.

<sup>75</sup> *Wenxue* [108] *Literature*, 5, 5, Nov. 1935, pp. 862-883.

<sup>76</sup> Liu Ts'un-yan, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>77</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*. Ed. by G.P. Malalasekera. Vol. 2, Fasc. 1. N.p., Government of Ceylon, 1966, pp. 198-200.

<sup>78</sup> *Fengshen yanyi*, p. 159.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>80</sup> Paris, Paul Geuthner 1923.

<sup>81</sup> Paris, Maisonneuve 1876.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Campbell, Joseph, *The Masks of God. Oriental Mythology*. New York, Penguin Books 1976, pp. 168-169 and *Kunāla's Eyes*, pp. 862-863 and 866.

At the beginning of the play the young and charming, but randy wife of pious, old and ugly King Aśoka, prays in the garden of his gorgeous palace in the capital of Pātaliputra in front of Maheśvara (*Dazi zaitian* [112] in Chinese), the god with eight arms, three eyes and erect *lingam*,<sup>82</sup> to help her to seduce Kunāla, a young man with beautiful eyes, the beloved son of Aśoka and Crown Prince of the Mauryan kingdom. Tisyarakṣitā (Jingrong [113] in Chinese) is her name and Kunāla is her step-son. One evening, being excited by the statue of phallic god, much wine she consumed at the party and exquisite tones of Kunāla's music, as Da Ji some hundred years before, she tried to win the soul and body of a convinced Buddhist, filial son and faithful husband of Kāncanamāla (Zhen Jinman [114] in Chinese), because of her golden hair. It was something indeed. Having probably in mind to become a Queen of the next King, a seducer and lover of the handsome and at the same highly moral young man, she put her target very high. Probably only Fausta, the step-mother of Crispus, son of Constantine the Great,<sup>83</sup> or Empress Wu Zetian [115] (684-705 A.D.) of the Tang dynasty much later could compete with her.<sup>84</sup>

If the words of seduction are not numerous in the *Aśokavadāna*, forming only one quatrain, Tisyarakṣitā in Su Xuelin's play tries to depict her love to Kunāla and his male beauty in nearly three whole pages.<sup>85</sup> In all three plays analysed so far, only the female beauty was the aim of admiration. All three authors were following the lead of the biblical *Song of Songs*, directly or through the mediation of Wilde's *Salome*. Here in Su Xuelin's piece, both are conspicuous, and even its motto comes from Salome's declaration of her deviant love:

*"Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth,  
Well! I kiss it now."*<sup>86</sup>

Tisyarakṣitā asks much more from Kunāla than Salome from St. John the Baptist. As a believer and admirer of the "god of genitals",<sup>87</sup> she yearns after being embraced with his purple-golden arms, to melt and fuse with his body including everything connected with this act.<sup>88</sup> The chaste Kunāla who in contrast to his step-moth-

<sup>83</sup> Sénart, Emile, "Un Rois de l'Inde au III<sup>e</sup> Siècle avant notre Ère". *Revue des deux Mondes*, 92, 1889, pp. 107.

<sup>84</sup> van Gulik, R.H., *Sexual Life in Ancient China. A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and Society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.* Leiden, E.J. Brill 1974, pp. 168 and 190-191.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *Ayuwang zhuan* [116] *The Biography of the King Aśoka*. In: *Da zangjing* [117] *Great Buddhist Canon*. 50th ce, No. 2042. N.p., Zhongguo Fojaoguan 1957, p. 108 and its translation in J. Przyluski, op. cit., p. 283, or the rendition of Sanskrit original in John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka. A Study and Translation of the Aśokavadāna*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1983, p. 270 and *Kunāla's Eyes*, pp. 864-867.

<sup>86</sup> Wilde, Oscar, *Salome. A Tragedy in One Act: Translated from the French of Oscar Wilde by Lord Alfred Douglas: Pictured by Aubrey Beardsley*. New York, Dover Publications, INC. N.y. p. 64.

<sup>87</sup> Su Xuelin, *Kunāla's Eyes*, pp. 866-867.

<sup>88</sup> Loc.cit.

er is a believer in the Mahāyānist teaching of the emptiness, or voidness (*śūnyatā*) and impermanence (*anitya*) of the phenomena, in the suffering (*dukha*) of human beings, repeatedly fends off her advances and leaves her sexually not satisfied. She swears that if she cannot win his love, she will have his eyes instead.

Later after helping King Aśoka to cure his otherwise incurable illness, Aśoka promises to give her everything with the exception of his own head and Kunāla's eyes. She asks to be a ruler of the Mauryan kingdom for seven days. Aśoka agrees. In secret she gives an order to pluck Kunāla's eyes. Kunāla was at the time the commander-in-chief of the armies in the town of Takṣaśila suppressing a rebellion there. The order issued under the name of his father is carried out. Blind and dishonoured Kunāla earns for his own and Kāncanamālā's living by singing and playing the *vinā* through the whole country. Once, when performing his art near the royal palace, Aśoka recognizes his voice and music, but not his face and body. After Tiṣyarakṣitā's confession, he orders the torture and death of the "wuchi de yinfu" [118] shameless harlot,<sup>89</sup> and most beloved spouse, at that very moment. She should be disemboweled and her heart looked at, as in the case of Bi Gan. Kunāla begs for a reprieve. This was not granted but changed to burning alive. She came from hell and should be sent back there in an adequate manner! Tiṣyarakṣitā did not wait for her executioners. She used a moment of King's inattention and stabbed herself to death in front of Maheśvara's statue. The cruel and pious Dharma-king regretted that she left for hell without any great pains.<sup>90</sup>

6

The last drama of deviant love and violence to be analysed in this contribution came from the pen of one of the fathers of modern Chinese drama – Ouyang Yuqian [119] (1889-1962). It is entitled *Pan Jinlian* [120] *Golden Lotus*,<sup>91</sup> and describes another "shameless harlot", the principal heroine of the novel *Jin Ping Mei* [122] *Jin Ping Mei*<sup>92</sup> and one of the few woman characters in the novel *Water Margin*.<sup>93</sup> As a *femme fatale* and *la belle dame sans merci* passionately fornicated in the first novel with the main hero Ximen Qing [123]. She was a vampire woman who helped to kill her dwarf and probably impotent husband Wu Da [124] and was butchered by Wu Da's brother Wu Song [125], a man of giant stature, for whom killing was a profession, passion, and who killed guilty

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. 881.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp. 881-883.

<sup>91</sup> *Xinyue yuekan* [121] *Crescent Moon Monthly*, 1, 4, June 1928. In the same year it was published as a book in *Xin dongfang shudian*.

<sup>92</sup> Among the English readers it is known in the translation by Clement Egerton: *The Golden Lotus*. 4 vols. London, Routledge 1939.

<sup>93</sup> See the excellent treatment of women characters in the *Water Margin* by Irene Eber, "Weakness and Power". In: Gerstlacher, Anna *et alii* (eds.), *Woman and Literature in China*. Bochum, Studienverlag Dr.N. Brockmeyer 1985, pp. 3-28.

and innocent with the same bravado, complete disinterestedness and without any pricks of conscience.

In the *Water Margin* Golden Lotus dies in a ritualistic way. Wu Song forces her to confess her crime while she kneels in front of the altar set up for his dead brother. Wu Song offers paper money to the spirit of the poor Wu Da, embowels her heart, liver and intestines. Then he cuts off her head.<sup>94</sup>

The wave of Aestheticism and Decadence of the 1920s and 1930s had an impact on otherwise romantic and more conservative Ouyang Yuqian. In this play not much is changed in the character of both protagonists, but still something. Golden Lotus becomes in his play a speaker of the decadent view on love. That would be completely impossible in the old Chinese versions of both novels. When in the fourth and most interesting scene of the play, Wu Song says to Golden Lotus that she should die because she helped to murder his brother, Golden Lotus answers that all people should die, but she embarrasses him by claiming that to die under the hand of the man she is in love with, must be a quite pleasant experience. And immediately she asks him: "Brother – is it my head you want or my heart?" Wu Song answers: "I want to cut out your heart." "Ah, you want my heart," she says: "Ah, you want my heart. I've already given you my heart. It was here but you didn't take it. Come and see – (She tears open her clothing) inside this snow white breast is a very red, very warm, very true heart. Take it!" Wu Song does not want to hear her declaration of love. He wants to avenge his brother's murder. He throws down a cloth bundle containing the bloody head of her former lover Ximen Qing. "Better that you go with him," remarks Wu Song." The last words of Golden Lotus are as follows: "Brother, you just said that I'd better go with Ximen Qing. Those words really hurt me. I can't be together with you in this life; in my next life I'll be reborn as an ox and flay my hide to make boots for you. I'll be reborn as a silkworm to make clothes for you. Even if you kill me, I will still love you."<sup>95</sup>

After saying these words, Golden Lotus opens wide her arms and tries to embrace Wu Song looking passionately at him. Wu Song is embarrassed: "You love me? I...I..." he stutters and stabs her dead with one stroke.

Confession of love here is different than it was in old Chinese literature. The act of violence is just the same, but in traditional Chinese works, especially in the works of fiction, the manifestation of violence was much more heterogenous.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 19. The ritualistic murder is delineated in the Chapter 25 of the novel.

<sup>95</sup> Ouyang Yuqian, *P'an Chin-lien*. Trans. by Catherine Swatek. In: Gunn, Edward M. (ed.), *Twentieth Century Chinese Drama. An Anthology*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1983, pp. 73-74. Original Chinese text see in Ge Zongmin [126] (ed.): *Ouyang Yuqian daibiaozuo* [127] *The Representative Works by Ouyang Yuqian*. Peking, Huaxia chubanshe 1999, p. 61.

<sup>96</sup> See the analyses of violence, vengeance and atrocities in C.T. Hsia, op. cit.

Five works of modern Chinese drama of decadent orientation show us a different kind of love not present in the Chinese literature of earlier times. It is a passionate love of extremely neurotic even psychopathological personalities that, even if they existed during the flow of the preceding millennia, due to the self-restrained (*zhi*) [128] character of Chinese ethics, psychology and literature,<sup>97</sup> they could never be manifested. This "limiting principle" was the nearly all-inclusive and covered wide realms of Chinese social consciousness. "It should not be forgotten," I wrote more than twenty years ago, and I still stick to it, "that Chinese men of letters were never, not even during periods of a relatively relaxed regimes (as was, for instance, Wanli [129] reign of Shenzong [130] Emperor in the years 1573-1620, M.G.) quite free of the straight-jacket of the limiting principle that was applied in every field of activity. None could get beyond the frontiers of what the Sage of antiquity (Confucius is meant, M.G.) permitted."<sup>98</sup> The case of Li Zhi (even during the most liberal Wanli period) was a *caveat*. The "emotional Renaissance" in Ming China had its philosophical, social and also literary causes. It should, however, be emphasized here that despite this "emotional Renaissance", represented mostly by the dramatic works of Tang Xianzu [131] (1550-1616) and love in dreams, and critical interest in feelings, these feelings or emotions were never sufficiently intensive and comparable to those in contemporary and especially later Europe. A man or a woman of strong passion, an extravagant or complex personality, deeply tragic, forceful temperaments could not be of interest to traditional Chinese axiology for they could be a danger to the establishment. Strong passions had to be repressed or held within the proper boundaries (for example, love in wedlock or consummated in dreams, or even in the grave), and tragic or dramatic situations had only a very questionable place in the literature of a lyric, although axiologically very valuable, character.<sup>99</sup> Very sthenic feelings were, of course, present in social life, but hardly possible in literature. This was at the disposal for the expression of asthenic feelings. They were socially and ethically safe.

It was different with the depiction or delineation of violence, cruelty and similar behaviour. These were always permissible in Chinese historiography and in literature. Mostly to praise and blame (*bao bian*) [132] in the first,<sup>100</sup> to satirize and admonish (*feng jian*) [133] in the second,<sup>101</sup> as bad phenomena or personalities, or to shock human beings, to persuade them to follow the Way and its principles.

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<sup>97</sup> Gálik, Marián, "The Concept of Creative Personality in Traditional Chinese Literary Criticism". *Oriens Extremus*, 27, 2, 1980. pp. 197-198.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>100</sup> Viatkin, R.V., "O traditsiyakh v kitaiskoi istoriografii" ("On the Traditions in Chinese Historiography"). In: *Rol traditsii v istorii i kulture Kitaya* (*The Role of Traditions in Chinese History and Culture*). Moscow, Nauka 1972, p. 186.

<sup>101</sup> Liu, James J.Y., *The Art of Chinese Poetry*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press 1962, p. 67

The methods of violence and cruelty in modern Chinese drama, as we have demonstrated here, are never so drastic and manifold as in the traditional Chinese historiography and literature.

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