ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES, *11*, 2002, 2, 185–204

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.

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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),[1] 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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* This paper was delivered at the international conference "Emotions and the Analysis of Historical Sources in China", November 5-10, 2001, Cortona, Italy, organized by Professor Paolo Santangelo, Oriental Institute, Naples. This is its full version.

[1] 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)[2] 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.[3] Feelings and *Gefühle* play an important role in English and German literary criticism and together with other concepts, such as sympathy, sensibilty, 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.[4]

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."[5]

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."[6] 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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[2] 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.

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

[4] Loc. cit.

[5] 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.

[6] 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.[7]

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."[8]

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 nineteeth 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."[9] 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..."[10] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, probably "the most ambitious and the most philosophical of English critics",[11] went even

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

[8] Liu, James J.Y., *Chinese Theories of Literature*. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press 1975, p. 79.

[9] 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.

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

[11] 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.)..."[12] Johann Wolfgang Goethe went too far, when he wrote in *Faust*: "Gefühl ist alles."[13] 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.[14]

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

Even the name of God seems to be hazy in the eyes and ears of the romantic poet. This is etremely 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 nineteeenth 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.[16] The anti-rationalist attitude had a far reaching effect. In dichotonomy 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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[12] Ibid., p. 53.

[13] Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, *Faust. Eine Tragödie. Erster Teil.* Leipzig, Reclam 1974, p. 116.

[14] *Faust. Part One.* Trans. by Philip Wayne. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books 1986, p. 153.

[15] *Faust. Erster Teil*, p. 116.

[16] 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,[17] 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.[18]

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[19] and in pre-Romantic and Romantic Europe;[20] 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."[21] 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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[17] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1976.

[18] Ibid., p. 62.

[19] 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.

[20] M.H. Abrams, op. cit., pp. 31-35.

[21] 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.).[22] His philosophy of a "few desires"[23] 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 Romanticisn (or Romanticisms, if you like) of European provenience. Elsewhere I tried to elucidate this phenomenon specific also for other Chinese literary trends.[24] 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".[25] This is just fitting for Yu Dafu's works of fiction.[26]

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 underestanding 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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[22] 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.

[23] Loc. cit.

[24] Gálik, Marián, "European Literary Trends and Their Metamorhoses." In: *Proceedings of the XIIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association. Space and Boundaries.* Vol. 3. Munich, Iudicium Verlag 1990, pp. 373-378.

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

[26] 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."[27]

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."[28] 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."[29] 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.[30]

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.[31] 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*)[32] 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.[33] "Looking and touching phobia"

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[27] Kermode, Frank, "Foreword to the 1970 Impression." In: Praz, M., op. cit., p. v.

[28] Praz, M., op. cit., p. 317.

[29] Ibid., p. 316.

[30] Ibid., pp. 400-401.

[31] In: Xiang Peiliang, *Shenmen xiju* [26] *Melancholic Plays*. Shanghai, Guanghua shuju 1927, pp. 44-77.

[32] 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.

[33] 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, Fujen 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 pychic 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.[34]

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.[35] She only asked him to go to their common father and tell him about his inner intention.[36] 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 differemt parts of Tamar's dressed body, following thus more or less closely Shulamite's depictions,[37] 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. Absolom, Tamar's older brother, prepared a revenge and later killed her seducer.[38]

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,[39] he came to an idea to use this kind of modern psy-

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

[35] *II Samuel, 13,* 1-19.

[36] 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.

[37] Xiang Peiliang, *Amnon*, pp. 73-76.

[38] *II Samuel*, *13*, 28-29.

[39] 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.

3

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.[40] 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.[41] 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*,[42] and its closing scene was translated into Chinese,[43] 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].[44] 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.[45]

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[40] 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.

[41] *Bibliografia delle Opere Italiane tradotte in Cinese (1911-1992)*. Peking, Shehui kexue wenxian chubansshe 1992, p. 62.

[42] The translation was published in *A Supplement to Morning Post*, 122 amd 123, 1925 and later reprinted in *Xu Zhimo quanji* [42] *The Complete Works of Xu Zhimo*. Vol. 2. Nanning, Guangxi minzu chaubanshe 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.

[43] *The Complete Works of Xu Zhimo*. Vol. 4, pp. 289-290.

[44] Shanghai, Xinyue shudian 1928.

[45] 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.[46] 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 conspicous 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,"[47] she says to him. In her sixteen years she has preserved a *jie xin* [54] pure heart.[48] 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 sprouting red rose! Your *meiying* (56) (beautiful image) is within my heart."[49]

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[46] Here I use the reprint of 1792 edition of *Hongloumeng* [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.

[47] Bai Wei, *Visiting Qingwen*, p. 60.

[48] Loc. cit.

[49] Ibid., p. 69.

Qingwen knows that these words are only a manifestation of *yiyin* [57] lust of the mind,[50] that he is best in licking up the rouge from the lips of young damsels[51] 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 agressive and to act as a *man* [58] barbarian, she asks him not to make a *mai chun chunfu* [59] a whore out of her.[52]

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.

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Deviant love and even more violence or cruelty is most conspicous in *Da Ji* [60],[53] 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.[54] 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."[55] 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. [56]

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

[51] This was a usual means of Baoyu's sexual enjoyment.

[52] Bai Wei, *Visiting Qingwen*, pp. 74-75.

[53] 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.

[54] *Shalemei* [65] *Salome*. Shanghai, Guanghua shuju, August 1927.

[55] 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.

[56] 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.[57] 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[58] 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 disembovel Bi Gan."[59] 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.[60]

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 1450-165O), the author of which is not known. Liu Ts'un-yan, the foremost expert on this novel, doubts whether it was Xu Zhonglin [86].[61]

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.[62] Da Ji does not protest. She would even regard it as a honour to be gulped by him once as a piece of meat.

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[57] 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.

[58] 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.

[59] Cf. "Yin benji [80] Basic Annals of the Yin Dynasty". In: Sima Qian, *Shiji*, ce [81] 1, juan [82] 3. Taibei, 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.

[60] *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.

[61] 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.

[62] 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.[63] 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.[64]

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 permeats 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 riped the abdomens of pregnant women, he cut through the leg-bones of innocent victims.[65]

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*)[66] 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 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 executioneers cut off their legs in order to see the difference. For him she

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[63] 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 Cuktural 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.

[64] 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.

[65] *The Chinese Classics* by James Legge. Vol. 3. Taipei reprint, n.y, pp. 285-295.

[66] Hong Kong, Weixing Yinwusuo 1960.

was a seer comparable to Bi Gan who was alredy dead in the novel, but still living in the play. Zhou Xin wanted to know how is it in the bellies of pregnant women. She was ready to prophetize, 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.[67] 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.[68]

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 chunqiu* [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.).[69] 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.[70] 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",[71] then how could the highest authorities on the Mainland, who killed more than ten million of people, retain their political power for long?[72]

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.[73] It is also the climax of the atrocities together with Bi Gan's condemnation and his death.

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[67] *Fengshen yanyi.* Vol. 2. Taipei, Guiguan tushu 2000, p. 802.

[68] Xu Baoyan, *Da Ji,* pp. 23-24 and 59-60.

[69] Wei Juxian, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

[70] Ibid., p. 39 and *Chan-kuo ts'e.* Trans. by J.I. Crump. Sec. ed. revised. San Francisco, Chinese Materials Center 1979, p. 566.

[71] Wei Juxian, op. cit., p. 39.

[72] Ibid., p. 40.

[73] *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 executioneers, 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.[74]

5

In Su Xuelin's [106] (1899-1999) drama in three acts entitled *Jiunaluo de yanjing* [107] *Kunāla's Eyes,*[75] 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 stepmother."[76] 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.).[77] 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.[78] 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 executioneers to chop his flesh piece by piece *(yong dao suiduo)* [111] and sent his cooked meat to his father to eat.[79]

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 legende de l'empereur Açoka (Açoka-avadāna) dans les textes indiens et chinois*, by Jean Przyluski[80] and maybe even the *Introduction à l'histoire du buddhisme indien*, by Eugène Burnouf.[81]

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[74] Xu Baoyan, *Da Ji*, pp. 119-126.

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

[76] Liu Ts'un-yan, op. cit., p. 41.

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

[78] *Fengshen yanyi*, p. 159.

[79] Ibid., pp. 164-165.

[80] Paris, Paul Geuthner 1923.

[81] Paris, Maisonneuve 1876.

[82] 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*,[82] to help her to seduce Kunāla, a young man with beautiful eyes, the beloved son of Aśoka and Crown Prince of the Mauryan kingdom. Tisyarakśitā (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 yong man, she put her target very high. Probably only Fausta, the step-mother of Crispus, son of Constantine the Great,[83] or Empress Wu Zetian [115] (684-705 A.D.) of the Tang dynasty much later could compete with her.[84]

If the words of seduction are not numerous in the *Aśokavadāna,* forming only one quatrain, Tisyarakśitā in Su Xuelin's play tries to depict her love to Kunāla and his male beauty in nearly three whole pages.[85] 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 conspicous, 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."*[86]

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

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

[84] 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.

[85] Cf. *Ayuwang zhuan* [116] *The Biography of the King Aśoka.* In: *Da zangjing* [117] *Great Buddhist Canon.* 50th ce, No. 2042. N.p., Zhongguo Fojiaoguan 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.

[86] 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.

[87] Su Xuelin, *Kunāla's Eyes,* pp. 866-867.

[88] 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 supressing 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,[89] 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.[90]

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*,[91] and describes another "shameless harlot", the principal heroine of the novel *Jin Ping Mei* [122] *Jin Ping Mei*[92] and one of the few woman characters in the novel *Water Margin*.[93] 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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[89] Ibid. p. 881.

[90] Ibid., pp. 881-883.

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

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

[93] 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 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.[94]

The wave of Aestheticism and Decadence of the 1920s and 1930s had an impact on othervise 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 embarasses 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."[95]

After saying these words, Golden Lotus opens wide her arms and tries to embrace Wu Song looking passionately at him. Wu Song is embarassed: "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.[96]

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[94] Ibid., p. 19. The ritualistic murder is delineated in the Chapter 25 of the novel.

[95] 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.

[96] 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,[97] 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."[98] 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 contemporay 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.[99] 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,[100] to satirize and admonish (*feng jian*) [133] in the second,[101] as bad phenomena or personalities, or to shock human beings, to persuade them to follow the Way and its principles.

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

[98] Ibid., p. 189.

[99] Ibid., p. 197.

[100] 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.

[101] 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.

1. 李清照 2. 嗜好情欲 3. 情 4. 性情 5. 李夢陽 6. 李攀龍 7. 朱熹 8. 王陽明 9. 李贄 10. 道理聞見 11. 心 12. 真 13. 假 14. 郭紹虞 15. 中國文學批評史 16. 景 17. 鏡 18. 何心隱 19. 司空圖 20. 道 21. 無欲 22. 周敦頤 23. 郁達夫 24. 向培良 25. 暗嫩 26. 深閨的戲劇 27. 人類的藝術 28. 白薇 29. 黃彰 30. 黃鵬 31. 黃素如 32. 訪雯 33. 沈雁冰 34. 茅盾 35. 意大利現代第一文學家鄧南遮 36. 東方雜誌 37. 小說月報 38. 魏如晦 39. 現代名劇精華 40. 張聞天 41. 晨報副刊 42. 徐志摩全集 43. 徐志摩 44. 陸小曼 45. 卞昆岡 46. 死城 47. 賈寶玉 48. 晴雯 49. 曹雪芹 50. 紅樓夢 51. 胡適 52. 大觀園 53. 怡紅院 54. 潔心 55. 魅惑 56. 美影 57. 意淫 58. 蟹 59. 賣春婦 60. 灺己 61. 徐葆炎 62. 解志熙 63. "青春，美，惡魔，藝術... - 唯美-頹廢主義影響下的中國戲劇 64. 中國現代文學研究叢刊 65. 莎樂美 66. 金屋書店 67. 邵洵美 68. 慘 69. 殍 70. 明清研究 71. 傾國傾城 72. 詩經 73. 書經 74. 紂辛 75. 帝辛 76. 比干 77. 司馬遷 78. 史記 79. 聖人 80. 殷本紀 81. 冊 82. 卷 83. 列女傳 84. 劉向 85. 封神演義 86. 許仲林 87. 吞 88. 西游記 89. 水滸傳 90. 衛聚賢 91. 封神榜故事探源 92. 斬脛 93. 剖孕 94. 韓非子 95. 呂氏春秋 96. 呂不韋 97. 秦始皇帝 98. 春秋繁露 99. 東仲舒 100. 淮南子 101. 劉安 102. 宋康王 103. 干部 104. 武王 105. 剭盆 106. 蘇雪林 107. 鳩那羅的眼睛 108. 文學 109. 伯邑考 110. 文王 111. 用刀砰剁 112. 大自在天 113. 淨容 114. 真金鑿 115. 武則天 116. 阿育王傳 117. 大藏經 118. 無恥的淫婦 119. 歐陽予倩 120. 潘金蓮 121. 新月月刊 122. 金瓶梅 123. 西門慶 124. 武大 125. 武松 126. 葛聰敏 127. 歐陽予倩代表作 128. 孰 129. 萬歷 130. 神宗 131. 湯顯祖 132. 褒貶 133. 諷諫

ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES, *11*, 2002, 2, 205–219

THE FEMALE BODY IN THE POETRY OF TANG DYNASTY COURTESANS

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The aim of this article is to use the poetry written by Tang dynasty courtesans as an example to show the different aesthetic approach to body and soul in medieval Chinese culture as well as to point out the special characteristics of the poetry written by these women.

The Tang dynasty period (618– 907), sometimes called the golden time of Chinese culture is mostly connected with an unbelievable cultural boom of the genre of poetry, mainly its three new subtypes of *shi* [1][1] referred to collectively as *jinti shi* [2], or modern style poetry. Its most outstanding figures like Li Bai [4] (701-762), Du Fu [5] (712-770) or Bai Juyi [6] (772 – 846) are well known and admired not just by Chinese and East Asian literati in Korea and Japan, but with the beginning of the 20th century through numerous translations into European languages also by Western readers.

The majority of these poets often frequented the *qinglou* [7] or "pleasure quarters" or poetically called *Qinlou Chuguan* [8] "towers of Qin and pavilions of Chu" and were not at all ashamed of it as it was one of the things a man of world had to do. A close analogy with this phenomenon could be easily found in the Renaissance cities of Italy with their famous *cortigiana onesta* such as Veronica Franco of Venice (1546-?),[2] who was also an acknowledged woman

[1] "During the Eastern Han there arose a new form of poetry called by the old name *shi*. Shi poems are characterised by lines of fixed length and by rhyme at the end of the even numbered lines. The lines are usually of five and seven syllables, with caesura after the second syllable of five or the fourth syllable of seven. In Tang dynasty, technically stricter form of *shi* was developed. These are collectively referred to as *jinti shi* [2] (modern-style poetry), by contrast the looser and older forms came to be called *gu(ti) shi* [3] (ancient style poetry)." IDEMA, Wilt and HAFT, Lloyd: *A Guide to Chinese Literature*. Michigan. Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan 1996, p. 124.

[2] Veronica Franco (1546 -?) was born in Venice. When quite young she married a doctor, but soon after that she launched her career as an "honest courtesan". She frequented the famous

writer, and many others. In the Tang dynasty's highly cosmopolitan city of Chang'an [9] and in other well-known cities like Luoyang [10], Yangzhou [11] or Chengdu [12], which tried to imitate the glamorous capital, daily intercourse with courtesans was considered as inevitable part of higher social life not just for poets, but also for high officials, rich merchants, young scholars preparing for their *jinshi* [13] examinations and all the powerful men of that time, sometimes also including the emperor. The high class prostitution of courtesans as well as the ordinary one was therefore highly institutionalized and very well organised into tax-paying trade-associations, with their inmates being registered and divided into ranks according to their skills[3]. The courtesan's quarters were above all sought for three reasons: firstly for their beautiful surroundings with exquisite pavilions, fountains and gardens and of course the best food and drinks served at the numerous feasts and banquets, which were, by the way, the main source of income for their owners. Secondly, in such a sophisticated milieu, where education was highly valued and versifying was a natural part of social intercourse this was the place where man could be surrounded not just by material and physical beauty but could let himself be entertained by witty couplets made by accomplished courtesans skilled in music and dancing. And the third and last reason was probably that courtesans did not just sell their bodies and entertain their guests for money, but were able to *jieqing* [15] "give vent to their emotions"[4] and it is said that some of them were very *chiqing* [16], which means of "unreasoning passion".[5] In a society, where women had almost no voice to speak up freely of their sorrows and joys, and having traditionally their place in the inner quarters of the house, submitting to the traditional Confucian ethical code of *lijiao* [17], with *sancong side* [18],[6] the three obediences and four virtues being two of its strongest pillars, it were only the courtesans and also the Taoist and Buddhist nuns *nüguan* [19],[7] who could be considered, although in quite a different way than we understand it now, free.

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salon of Domenico Vernier in Venice, was friend of writers and artists like Tintoretto, and even received Henry III of France at her home. Around 1580 she seems to have abandoned her worldly activities in order to devote herself to pious works and, to found a hospice for fallen women. *The Penguin Book of Women Poets.* Ed. by Cosman, C., Keefe, J., Weaver, K. London, Penguin Group 1988, p.116.

[3] For more detailed information about the life of Tang dynasty courtesans see Van GULICK, R.H.: *Sexual Life in Ancient China.* Leiden. E.J.Brill 1974, or ZHANG GONGCHANG: *Jinü yu wenxue* [14] (*Prostitutes and Literature*). Taipei. Changchunjie shufang 1964.

[4] ZHANG GONGCHANG: op.cit., p. 25.

[5] Ibid.

[6] *Sancong* [18]: obedience to father before marriage, to husband after marriage, and to son after husband's death. *Side* [18]: morality, proper speech, modest manner and diligent work.

[7] "At this time, many Buddhist and Taoist nunneries had a doubtful reputation. They were a haven of refuge not only for pious girls, but also for widows and divorced women who had no family to return to, and at the same time for loose women who wished to lead a free life, without registering officially as prostitutes." Van GULICK, R.H.: op.cit., p. 175.

In the Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry *Quan Tangshi* [20][8] compiled during the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911), we can find a separate chapter (*juan* [21]) No. 802 with a very brief title *Jinü* [22] "Courtesans" that contains names of twenty courtesans and their respective poems.[9] We know very little about the lives of these women, because the information given is very sketchy. The majority of the poems are occasional verse as they were intended for a specific audience of friends, clients and lovers and their artistic quality can be in no way compared to that produced by their male counterparts. As a rule, few of them exceed the boundaries of conventional lyrical themes like bidding farewells to friends, lamentations about the passing of time, loneliness and abandonment etc., all the stuff that we could brandmark as feelings or emotions. There are only two poems which are filled with regret if not protest concerning their inferior position in the society, one attributed to Yu Xuanji (844 – 868) (will be considered later) under the title *You Chongzhenguan nanlou du xin ji di timing chu* [23] "On a visit to Ch'ung Chen Taoist Temple I See in the South Hall the list of Successful Candidates in the Imperial Examinations"

Cloud capped peaks fill the eyes
In the Spring sunshine.
Their names are written in beautiful characters
And posted in order of merit.
How I hate this silk dress
That conceals a poet.
I lift my head and read their names
In powerless envy.[10]

The other one is ascribed to Xu Yueying [24] (9th – 10th century) and is a frank confession of a courtesan who is aware of her status and cannot fully accept the heavy burden it brings with it. The poem bears the title *Xuhuai* [25] "Talking of the Cherished" and goes as follows:

For loosing "three obediences"[11] *I shed tears again and again,*
There is no way for me to find place in human relations.
Although I daily enjoy music and singing,
I envy those with simple hairpins and their plain dress.[12]

Also the authenticity of the authorship of some of the poems is sometimes doubted assuming "that their contribution was mostly confined to inventing one

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[8] *Quan Tangshi* [20] (*The Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry*). Beijing. Guoji wenhua chubanshe 1994, pp. 2564 – 2566.

[9] Except for this specific chapter, there are also other chapters in *The Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry* containing poems written by women, namely chapters No. 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801 and 803, 804, 805.

[10] *The Orchid Boat – Women Poets of China*, Transl. and Ed. by Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung. Caledo, McGraw-Hill Book Company 1972, p. 19.

[11] *Sancong*: see footnote no. 5.

[12] *The Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry*, ibid., juan 803, p. 2566.

clever phrase or one original idea, which an obliging admirer then worked out in a poem".[13]

The next two chapters (No. 803,804) are wholly reserved for the two Tang's most famous women poets Xue Tao [26] (768 – ca. 832)[14] and Yu Xuanji [34][15]. The last fascicle No. 805 contains sixteen poems composed by the *nüguan* Li Ye [40] (8th century)[16] and two other Taoist nuns. What we are going to search for is the idea or image of body that could be found in some of those poems.

It the context of Chinese culture, human body was understood and expressed by the use of completely different means and in a very different context than the Western[17] body. To make a short intrusion into this problematic we need to set up some criteria for understanding the idea of body. For the basic criterion I allowed myself to take up the division of the general horizon of the Western understanding of body according to Vanek, which means **the inner** and **the outer**: "The inner horizon is the interaction between body and not-body, relationship between body on one side and both the psychic (individual experiencing) and spiritual dimension (the share in the objective cultural values) on the other side: Does this dimension show itself bodily and if so how".[18] The outer body horizons are his coexistence with the environment, as a relationship between

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[13] Van GULICK , R.H.: op.cit, p. 171.

[14] As there are so many stories and clichés about these two courtesans, I decided to limit the information considering their lifes to what is stated in *Quan Tangshi*: "Xue Tao, also called Hongdu [27]. Originally coming from a respectable family from the city of Chang'an, followed her father – an official, settled down in Shu [28] (today's Sichuan [29] province), gradually registered in the pleasure quarters. She was distinguished at composing intelligent poems, her style was that of a retired official. When Wei Gao [30] (a high military general) was posted in Shu, he ordered her to wait upon him and compose poems. She became to be called nü jiaoshu [31] "The Female Collator of the Books". She was coming in and going out of the office of the commanding general, successively of eleven garrisons. With her poems she received recognition by everybody. Towards the end of her life she retired from the public and went to live to Huanhuaxi [32] ("Washing flowers brook", not far from Chengdu), where she became a Taoist nun. She was fond of manufacturing a special kind of writing paper (songhua xiaojian [33]) . With time it became to be called "Xue Tao's writing paper"." *The Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry,* ibid., juan 803, p. 2567.

[15] "Yu Xuanji, also called Youwei [35] (another name: Huilan), a daughter from a family from the city of Chang'an. Liked to read books, had imaginative power and creativeness. A minor official named Li Yi [36] took her for a concubine. When their love declined she subsequently became a Taoist nun in a place called Xianyiguan [37]. Afterwards, because of beating to death her maid Lu Qiao [38], she was executed (by Tao Wenzhang [39]?)." *The Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry,* ibid., juan 804, pp. 2570.

[16] Li Ye, also called Jilan [42], a Taoist nun, coming from Wuxing [43]. *The Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry*, ibid., juan 805, p. 2573.

[17] Under the general term "the West" I mean the cultural region which draws its origin from Greek and Judeo-Christian cultural heritage and tradition.

[18] VANEK, J.:*Estetika myslenia a tela.* Bratislava. Iris 1999, p. 70.

carnality and materiality, the relationship between one's own and somebody else's body and historical horizon in its two forms: ontogenetic, man's personal history, which could be applied just to a concrete individual and socio-historical, which tells us that each culture has its own specific way of viewing what is aesthetic or ideal and what is not.

In order to look at the body, whether in Western or in Chinese culture, through the "glasses of aesthetics" we have to classify these terms into accessible philosophical categories. I found the best characteristics of the inner horizon, that means the relationship between body and not-body (psychic and spiritual), in an article called "The Meaning of the Body in Classical Chinese Thought" by Roger T. Ames where he states: "A *dualism* exists in *ex nihilo* doctrines because a fundamentally indeterminate, unconditioned power is posited as determining the essential meaning and order of the world. It is a "dualism" because of the radical separation between the transcendent and nondependent creative source, and the determinate and dependent object of its creation. The creative source does not require reference to its creature for explanation. This dualism, in many various forms, has been a prevailing force in the development of Western-style cosmogonies, and has been a veritable Pandora's box in the elaborated pattern of dualism that have framed Western metaphysical speculations: supernatural/natural, reality/appearance, being/becoming, knowledge/opinion, self/other, subject/object, substance/attribute, mind/matter, form/matter, agent/act, animate/ananimate, birth/death, creatio ex nihilo/destructio in nihilum, etc. *Polarism*, on the other hand, has been a major principle of explanation in the initial formulation and evolution of classical Chinese metaphysics. By "polarism" I am referring to a symbiosis: the unity of two organismic processes, which require each other as a necessary condition for being what they are."[19] This dichotomic, "dualistic" division indicates that in the Western world body and not-body were not perceived as two sides of the same coin. These two aspects could harmonize with each other, as it was in Classical Greece in what we understand under the term "*kalokagatia*" – search for spiritual and physical perfection. Stemming from the Greek cultural background is also the phenomenon of "nude", a form but not a subject of art, which arose around the 5th – 4th century BC.[20] Fulfilling one of aspects could create a bridge for reaching the other, as it was by Plato, where the pleasure taken from a beautiful body was the lowest stage of philosophical instinct, or they could be very antagonistic and stand one against the other as in medieval Christian society where everything concerning the body was considered sinful and impermanent. If we sum up all

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[19] AMES, T. R.: *The Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Thought.* In: International Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. XXIV, New York, 1984, pp. 40-41.

[20] "...It is an art form invented by the Greeks in the 5th century B.C., just as opera is an art form invented in the 17th century Italy. The conclusion is certainly too abrupt, but it has the merit of emphasising that nude is not the subject of art, but a form of art." Clark, K.: *The Nude, A Study of Ideal Art.* London. Penguin Books 1985, p. 3.

these facts, we may claim that although to some extent depending on the historical period, the body was perceived in the West as an object similar to a vessel, which was "storing" something transcendental. It is clear that this shift of the body perceived as an object enabled the perception of the body as an object for observation and from this point it was only a short step to look at the body as an object for aesthetic judgement. On the contrary, "In the polar metaphysics of classical Chinese tradition, the correlative relationship between the psychical and the somatic militated against the emergence of mind/body problem. It was not that the Chinese thinkers were able to "reconcile" this dichotomy; rather, it did not arise."[21]

When the outer horizon is concerned, particularly its aspect of cohabitation with the environment, the body, like everything important in China, had a mainly social function. Within this realm the man defined him (her) self on the basis of people he (she) was surrounded by and not alone from him (her) self as an individual and in opposition to them, and he (she) perceived his (her) body in a very similar way. Despite the indefatigable efforts to achieve the immortality and extensive obsession with health and body care, as a result of the influences of Taoist religion and its alchemistic tradition this was more seen as an social obligation and logical culmination on the way to selfcultivation in order to reach the ideal of *junzi* [44] "the man of virtue".[22] More than mere physicalness that is "object", which was understood as a natural and organic part of this world, the Chinese were more concerned with the relations between these "objects". An inseparable part of the interaction between the body and its environment as well as the point where the psychic and physical characteristics meet in harmony is the body's motion. This stress on the interaction between body and its environment, on the dynamic process of "happening", where the body is and has to be a part of the context, enabled the Chinese to create a dynamic harmony, where one was to such an extent part of the other, that they became interchangeable. As a result, in poetic description such an approach to the reality led to a prevailing use of metonymy rather than metaphor, with all its different types of synecdoche. Rather than to substitute things according to their resemblance, in order to create a new world, the Tang dynasty poets preferred to choose equivalents for expressing their images. As Pauline Yu states "Almost all Chinese images, therefore, function not as metaphors, in which the relationship is presumed to be *contrived* in some way, but as illustrations or embodi-

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[21] AMES,T. R.: *The Meaning of Body in Classical Chinese Thought*. Ibid., p. 44.

[22] "...that he (Confucius, Z.K.) called the ideal type of man, whom they were to strive to become, by the term *chün tzu*. Literally this means "ruler's son", that is, a relative of a ruler, and therefore a member of the nobility. In this sense it is contrasted with *hsiao jen*, "little man", plebeian...Usually, when he speaks of the term *chün tzu*, he is referring to a man who has those qualities that an aristocrat ought ideally to posses, a man of true (rather then merely hereditary) nobility." CREEL, H.G.: *Confucius – The Man and the Myth*. London. Routledge and Kegan Palul Ltd 1951, pp. 86 - 87.

ments – whether of their semantic category or of an intellectual or affective meaning implicit in them."[23] Clearly, it is the difference between the need to imitate and even perfect on one side, expressed through the nude and subsequently the metaphoric language, and metonymy as the means to melt and depict the world, on the other.[24] But to return to the image of the body let us have a look at a poem composed by courtesan Chang Hao [45] (9th century)[25] under the title *Zeng Lu furen* [46] "Dedicated to Lady Lu"

Beautiful women, you take care of your looks,
In fear that one by one the beauty and fragrance of flowers will fade.
By dusk you leave the engraved hall,
And descend the stairs to admire the full moon.
Admiring the moon you keep thinking,
The passers by, how could they know?
Returning back you sink onto the jade pillow,
The beginning of awakening, tears stain your face.[26]

One might question where is the body we are searching for? The answer is, we have to concentrate more on the subtle hints read between the lines than on the body itself. One of these hints is the gradual vanishing of physical beauty, where the beauty of the courtesan does not have to be described in detail, because we **know** that she is beautiful from the beginning. The whole poem is written on the topoi "verlassene Frau" and verse by verse exploits the slow degeneration of the body emphasised by the passing of time in a moonlit night. The woman poet does not protest against this process. She just feels a certain kind of melancholy, which culminates in the understanding that that is the way life goes. It is quite understandable that among the poems written by courtesans there are quite a few expressing either the feeling of nostalgia or having the

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[23] YU, Pauline: *Metaphor and Chinese Poetry*. In: Chinese Literature, Essays, Articles, Reviews, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1981. Wisconsin. Coda Press 1981, p. 209.

[24] We are so used to the artistic or other portrayals of human body in our daily lives that we hardly realise the significance of them. As Sir Arthur Clark observes: "It is widely supposed that the naked human body is in itself an object upon which the eye dwells with pleasure and which we are glad to see depicted. But anyone who has frequented art schools and seen the shapeless, pitiful model...will know that this is an illusion. The body is not one of those subjects which can be made into art by direct transcription-like a tiger or a snowy landscape. Often in looking at the natural and animal world we joyfully identify ourselves with what we see and from this happy union create a work of art. This is the process which students of aesthetics call empathy, and it is at the opposite pole of creative activity to the state of mind which has produced the nude. A mass of naked figures does not move us to empathy, but to disillusion and dismay. We do not wish to imitate; we wish to perfect." CLARK, A.: op. cit., pp. 3-4.

[25] *The Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry* juan no. 802 only states that Chang Hao was a prostitute. There are two poems attributed to her there.

[26] *The Complete Anthology of Tang Poetry,* ibid., juan 802, p. 2564. If not otherwise stated, the translations are my own.

carpe diem attitude as it is in Yu Xuanji's poem *Zeng linnü* [47] "Dedicated to the Neighbour's Girl"

Afraid of sun, you cover your face with gauze sleeves,
With spring melancholy, reluctant to rise to do your make up.
It's easy to attain things of no value,
but it's hard to find a man with true feelings.
On the pillow, you secretly shed tears,
Among the flowers, you hide your broken heart.
Though if you can pry about Song Yu,[27]
Why hate Wang Chang? [28]

Another good example is the poem written by Du Qiuniang [53] (10th century?) under the title *Jin lü yi* [54] "Robe with Gold Threads"

I advise you, do not cherish gold-thread robes,
I advise you, rather cherish the days of youth.
One can only break the blossoming flowers,
Do not wait for empty branches with no flowers to break. [29]

There is also another difference in perceiving the human body in Chinese culture and that is the absence of God, who created people "in his image" and he created them naked. Not just this fact but also the philosophy based on two opposite complementary principles *yin* [55] and *yang* [56] were important for the formation of the outer horizon. Quite differently to people in the West, the Chinese felt themselves to be an inseparable part of the nature. Therefore, for poets, nature was the primary source for inspiration and they also borrowed heavily from it when portraying parts of human body and not surprisingly a woman's face for the first time. The poem under the title *Shuoren* [57] "Duke's Bride" is to be found in what has been the model for subsequent Chinese poets and literati, in *Shijing* [58] (11th - 6th century BC) The Book of Songs, part *Weifeng* [59] "Songs Collected in Wei":[30]

Like lard congealed her skin is tender,
Her fingers like soft blades of reed;
Like larva white her neck is slender,
Her teeth like rows of melon-seed.
Her forehead like a dragonfly's
Her arched brows curved like bow.

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[27] Song Yu [48] (3th century B.C.): a famous poet who was allegedly very good looking.

Wang Chang [49]: an official, who was supposed to be very handsome, often showed off in front of courtesans.

[28] *Gunüzi aiqingshi xuan* [50] (*Selected Love Poems by Women of Antiquity*), edited by Xu Zhenbang [51]. Beijing. Danzhong wenyi chubanshe [52] 1998, p. 104.

[29] Ibid., p. 95.

[30] The women described is probably the daughter of the Lord Qi [60] called Zhuang Jiang [61], who married Lord Wei [62] in 757 B.C.

Ah! Dark on white her speaking eyes,
Her cheeks with smiles and dimples glow. [31]

The majority of the allusions and similes set in *Shijing* were after and after repeated and modified in almost all later poems describing the beauty of a female body and underwent just minor changes, adding some adverbs concerning the woman's face, hair, hands, fingers and waist. In Western literary tradition it was the Biblical *Song of Song*s, which played a similar model role for presentation of a beautiful female body. But the approach and aesthetic tradition, drawing its origins from the literature of Near Eastern and Egyptian images was, as we will see, rather distinct from that of the Chinese:

1 Behold, thou *art* fair, my love; behold, thou *art* fair; thou *hast* dove's eyes within thy locks: thy hair *is* as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

2 Thy teeth *are* like a flock *of sheep that are even* shorn, which came up from washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none *is* barren among them.

3 Thy lips *are* like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech *is* comely: thy temples *are* like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

4 Thy neck *is* like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

5 Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies...(Ch. 4; 1-5)[32]

or another example:

4 Thy neck *is* a tower of ivory; thine eyes *like* fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim:

thy nose *is* as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

5 Thine head upon thee *is* like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple...(Ch. 7; 4,5)[33]

The tenor of both poems is beauty's face, but the *Song of Songs* also includes one part of female body, which would be an unthinkable or unnecessary subject of description for the anonymous author of *Shuoren*, namely breasts. On the contrary, the *Song of Songs*, stemming from or being influenced by bridal songs incorporates them naturally into the poem, although with a simile that is not quite understandable for us today. To sum it all up "the similes in the *Song of Songs* are different, more personal, symbolic in another way, graphic and sublime".[34] Thanks to the God-like love, because the girl described as Shulamite had her long forgotten models in the goddesses Inanna or Astarte, she has to be admonished and admired to detail in far richer similes, her body being the map of the beloved and fertile land she incorporates.

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[31] *An Unexpurgated Translation of Book of Songs*, translated, versified and annotated by Xu Yuanzhong. Beijing. Panda Books 1994, p. 77.

[32] *The Holy Bible*. James King Version. University Press, Oxford.

[33] Ibid.

[34] GÁLIK, M: *The Song of Songs (Šir Hašširim) and the Book of Songs (Shijing): An Attempt in Comparative Analysis*. In: Asian and African Studies (n.s.) 6/1997, 1, p. 58.

As I already argued, the human body itself was not so important that Chinese poets would develop a need to put it on a pedestal and describe it in detail. They preferred to highlight the pose, emotional state and moral qualities as in Song Yu's [63] poem *Shennü fu* [64] "Fu on the Fairy"

Her posture is high and commanding,
How beautiful is her speech!
Appearance full of grace and elegant robe,
Soft grain's jade face. *
Sagacious through her shining eyes. (*)
Simply beautiful and good to look at.
Eyebrows graceful as cicadas wings, *
Red lips like that of cinnabar, *
Her character and qualities are well balanced,
As if relaxed, leisurous is her body.
Both gentle and tender at peace,
And whirling and dancing among people.[35]

In the poet's eyes, posture, speech, sagaciousness, balanced qualities etc. are attributes that depict an aesthetically beautiful picture of a women more pregnantly than her red lips and white face. What the poet is presenting to the audience is not merely some poetic portrayal of her outer appearance, but his aim is to convey a general impression from her personality. Her spotless looks obviously complement this picture and not vice versa and this claim is also supported by the fact that not even full four verses marked with * out of the total of twelve touch the description of the body itself in a direct manner.

There is only one exception I would like to draw attention to, namely the five poems composed by a courtesan from Chang'an's Pingkang [68] pleasure quarters called Zhao Luanluan [69] (8th century?) which can also be found in the same *Jinü juan* No. 802 of *Quan Tangshi*. If the body wasn't a subject worth detailed attention for male poets, it must have been for the courtesans, for reasons we do not have to further explain and that are quite obvious. Each of the five poems deals with different parts of female body according to its title: hair, eyebrows, mouth, fingers and that very part almost never mentioned in "high" literature – breasts. Although short and simple in style, these five poems are quite revolutionary, for it was the first time, as far as we know, in the history of Chinese poetry a women poet gave us a straight forward yet poetic description of a female body. Moreover, all five poems are distinct for their lyricism, because apart from giving us a sheer poetic description they are also an expression of author's personal feelings.

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[35] SONG YU: *Shennü fu*. In: Chen Hongshuo [65]: Lun gudian shifu zhong de nuxing xingti miaoxie [66] (Describing the Female Body in Classical Chinese Poetry). In: Jianghan luntan [67] (Jianghan Forum) 1995, No. 10, p. 79.

In an attempt to translate all five poems I tried to be as faithful to the original as far as the linguistic, grammatical and structural differences between the two languages allowed it.[36]

Cloudlike Hair
Disordered and chaotic perfumed clouds, damp not yet dry,
(Black as) crow's neck (light as) cicada's wing, smooth glossy cooling.
On one side obliquely stuck in a gold phoenix (hairpin),
Makeup finished, so the Lord smiling looks (at me).
Willow Eyebrows
Curved and bent willow leaves, worried yet playful,
Deep deep in flower mirror, where they reflect, they crease.
5Lovely and charming, (they) do not care about the black shell pigment,
Spring hills painted in their own spirit.
Sandalwood Mouth
(Lips) holding the cup and moving softly, small cherries,
(While) speaking a light jasmine fragrance floats.
As before the lips of Fan Su,[37]
Rows of melon seeds and sweet smelling pomegranate.
Delicate Fingers

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[36] In *The Orchid Boat – Women Poets of China* Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung translated all five poems as follows:

Cloud Hairdress
My disordered perfumed clouds are still damp,
Iridescent as a blackbird's throat feathers,
Glossy as a cicada's wing.
I pin a gold phoenix by my ear.
After I have adorned myself,
My man smiles at me.

Red Sandalwood Mouth
Small cherries sip delicately
At the edge of the wine cup.
Beautiful speech floats on jasmine perfume
Like the mouth of the singer Fan Su
The concubine of Po Chu-yi,
The teeth are like white melon seeds,

And the lips like pomegranate blossoms.
Creamy Breasts
Fragrant with powder, moist with perspiration,
They are the pegs of a jade inlaid harp.
Aroused by spring, they are soft as cream
Under the fertilising mist.
After my bath my perfumed lover
Holds them and plays with them
And they are cool as peonies and purple grapes.

Slender Fingers
They are always hidden in emerald
Slender, delicate, soft jade,
Fresh peeled spring onions –
Sleeves of perfumed silk,
Yesterday on the lute strings
All their nails were painted scarlet.

Willow Eyebrows
Sorrows play at the edge of these willow leaf curves.
They are often reflected, deep, deep.
In my water blossom inlaid mirror.
I am too pretty to bother with an eyebrow pencil.
Spring hills paint themselves
With their own personality.

[37] Fan Su [70] was the name of the concubine of the poet Bai Juyi.

Small and delicate soft jade, peeled spring onions,
Always in emerald green scented gauze sleeves.
Yesterday (they've got) exhausted (while) playing on pipa,[38]
Clearly distinguished fingernails painted in scarlet.
Soft Breasts
Scented (with) powder damp with sweat, pegs of lute with jasper mountings,
Tempted by spring melt (like) cream, greased with silky rain.
After the rain [39] *my sweet lover holds (them) and plays (with them)*
Splendid and soaked with coolness, purple grapes.

As far as the form of the five poems is concerned, they belong to the so-called quatrains *jueju* [74], short poems of four lines, each containing seven characters per line.

Looking at the inner structure of the poems, as a rule, the first two lines open with a description, thus introducing the subject to the reader. To explain how and in which way the poems are composed and also because their basic structure is rather similar, let us now analyse the first poem called *Yunhuan* [75] "Cloudlike Hair". The opening line of this poem starts with doubling the character *rao* [76] to *raorao* [77], which means "disordered, confused, chaotic", (similarly *wanwan* [78] "curved, croocked, winding" for eyebrows or *xianxian* [78] "fine, delicate, long and slender" for fingers) to emphasize the attribute of the subject and continues with a conventional poetic equivalent used for hair *xiangyun* [79] "perfumed clouds" (*liumei* [80] "willowy eyebrows", *huxikeke* [81] "rows of seeds in a melon" for teeth, *chuncong* [82] "spring onions" for fingers, or an original equivalent *yaoqinzhen* [83] "the pegs of a lute with jasper mountings" standing for breasts: this equivalent is very exceptional, probably never used in this connection before, but also very natural at the same time, as courtesans used to play string instruments to entertain their guests). The first and the second line also tells us more about the subject's condition: *shi wei gan* [84] "damp not yet dry" (*chou bian xi* [85] "worried yet playful" again for eyebrows, or *han shi* [86] "damp with sweat" while describing the breasts) and adds some attributes to make the picture complete. At the same time, the second line continues to unfold the description, again with established equivalents like *yaling* [87] "crow's neck" for black colour or *chanyi* [88] "cicada's wing" for a thing that is light, also a type of head-dress (the first couplet is usually parallel). It is the third line that brings the change, because in this line we can observe the shift from the general and rather disinterested level of the image to a more personal level (everybody's hair can be described as "Disordered and chaotic perfumed clouds, damp not dry, (Black as) crow's neck (light as) cicada's wing, smooth glossy cooling", but it is only **her hair** that has "On one side obliquely stuck in a gold phoenix (hairpin)"). The poem culminates in the

[38] pipa [71] was a plucked string instrument with fretted fingerboard.

[39] yu [72]: maybe yunyu [73]: an allusion standing for sexual intercourse.

fourth line, where the background as well as the actual scene is revealed "Make-up finished, so the Lord smiling looks (at me)". Furthermore, the last line loosely links up with the first one, because now it is clear, why the hair of the lady is damp and disordered (she was washing it and doing her make up), yet the last line is left for further imagination.

It appears, that the most sensuous and also the most daring out of the five poems is, quite understandably, the last one, called *Suru* [89] "Creamy Breasts" (*su* [90] meaning "creamy, cheesy, flaky, crisp"). Although quite unusual for a subject, this poem captures an eternally beautiful image of a young woman fresh after her bath after having made love so perfectly like a picture of a bathing nude, so common in Western painting.

The reason why we cannot find more similar poems is that the compilers of *Quan Tangshi* probably did not consider them appropriate or suitable and deliberately left them unnoticed. On the other hand, precisely the fact that they were incorporated in this prestigious book might indicate that they were perceived, with regard to their style, content or any other aspect, as being of some value. Despite all the poems submit, as I already mentioned, to already established allusions and equivalents, like *liumei* [80] "willowy eyebrows", *chanyi* [88] "cicada's wings", *huxikeke* [81] "rows of seeds in a melon" or *xiao chuncong* [91] "peeled spring onions" etc. they objectify the body, for Chinese poetics, in a very unusual way. But it is also true that the description is hardly static, on the contrary, it is the movement and dynamic happening of the objects that support the imagination and bring them to life. At the same time it is possible, though with some caution, to assert that thanks to their similes, easily comprehensible also to modern readers, they are surprisingly similar to poems written by contemporary female poets. It is supposed that allied poems were quite common in the period when the institution of the courtesan was flourishing and probably served as a kind of advertisement addressed to the possible clients. That sufficiently explains their daring sensual and erotic undertone and the easy playful style they are written in.

Zhao Luanluan's poems also cannot be mistaken for the so-called *yongwu* [92] or "singing of objects" poems, which are poems written on objects from the natural world like cicadas, bamboo, pines and so on, which hide moral meanings and have their origin in traditional Confucian allegories clearly because all five poems are free of any moral hints.[40] What the courtesan does do in her poems do is that she isolates hair, fingers, mouth, eyebrows and breasts, focusing thus on the parts considered to be the most desirable and erotic, and places them deliberately in front of the eyes of the reader and voyeur at the same time. But one can also recognise the subtle narcissistic undertone, because she admires herself as much as she wants to be admired and it is only when be-

[40] Yongwu poems from the Six Dynasties Liuchao [93] (3rd – 6th century BC) are also an exception to this rule.

ing beautiful in her own eyes that she can be beautiful in the eyes of her admirer. The second person, the possible lover, who is present only in two out of the five poems, is assigned a supporting role in the background, for the only subject of the poems is the women herself and the joy perceived when contemplating her own body. Unfortunately, the tradition of writing the "yongnü" [94] poems, which started so promisingly with the poetry of the *poétesses maudites*[41] of the Tang dynasty, did not find any worthy followers in the context of future Chinese literary development. It was probably due to the changes in cultural climate connected with the rise of Neo-Confucianism back to power, which took the voice away from women, their bodies being either entirely concealed or transferred into pure erotic or even pornographic objects depicted and seen through the eyes of men.

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The need to describe, depict, portray or somehow catch the image of a human body has a long tradition in human history. One reason why the body is so important is that it is simply us we are trying to understand and seize in a form that would survive us. Maybe it is also the outcome of physical desire, mixed with what we call love, inseparable from life itself. These two drives are immanent to every human culture but when it comes to their artistic expression the differences are quite big. The Chinese culture in which the border between the psychic and physical was not so transparent as in the Western culture, particularly in poetry, developed different ways of looking at a beautiful human person, male or female, and expressing the aesthetic feeling experienced from it. As both aspects were rather interchangeable, it became more natural to skip the body and pay the attention more to feelings or moral qualities when trying to depict a person worth desiring. But since there was a different starting point resulting from the special social status in the Chinese mediaeval society which the courtesans enjoyed during the Tang dynasty, we are lucky to find a women poet who was able to perceive and express the inner as well as the outer horizon of her body in quite an unconventional way, when compared to the traditional aesthetic models. So in the end, when we look at those few poems which have come down to the posterity we can claim that women poets like Zhao Luanluan were able to embody both the subject and the object of desire and therefore they also proved to be worthy of it.

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[41] GÁLIK, M : *On the Literature Written by Chinese Women Prior to 1917.* In: Asian and African Studies XV, Bratislava. 1979, p. 73.

1. 詩 2. 近體詩 3. 古體詩 4. 李白 5. 杜甫 6. 白居易 7. 青樓 8. 秦樓楚館 9. 長安 10. 洛陽 11. 揚州 12. 成都 13. 進士 14. 妓女與文學 15. 解情 16. 痴情 17. 禮教 18. 三從四德 19. 女冠 20. 全唐詩 21. 卷 22. 妓女 23. 游崇眞觀南樓睹新及第題名處 24. 徐月英 25. 敘懷 26. 薛濤 27. 洪度 28. 屬 29. 四川 30. 韋皐 31. 女校書 32. 浣花溪 33. 松花小箋 34. 魚玄機 35. 幼微 36. 李億 37. 咸宜觀 38. 綠翹 39. 逃溫璋 40. 李冶 42. 季蘭 43. 吳興 44. 君子 45. 常浩 46. 贈盧夫人 47. 贈鄰女 48. 宋玉 49. 王昌 50. 古女子愛情詩選 51. 徐振邦 52. 大衆文藝出版社 53. 杜秋娘 54. 金 衣 55. 陰 56. 陽 57. 碩人 58. 詩經 59. 衛風 60. 齊 61. 奚姜 62. 衛 63. 宋玉 64. 神女賦 65. 陳宏碩 66. 論古典詩賦中的女性形體描寫 67. 江漢論壇 68. 平康 69. 趙鸞鸞 70]. 樊素 71. 琵琶 72. 雨 73. 雲雨 74. 絕句 75. 雲鬢 76. 擾 77. 擾擾 78. 彎彎 78. 纖纖 79. 香雲 80. 柳眉 81. 瓠犀顆顆 82. 春蔥 83. 瑤琴軫 84. 濕未干 85. 愁邊戲 86. 汗濕 87. 鴉領 88. 蟬翼 89. 酥乳 90. 酥 91. 削春蔥 92. 詠物 93. 六朝 94. 詠女

雲鬢
擾擾香雲濕未干
鴉領蟬翼膩光寒
側邊斜插金鳳
狀罷夫君帶笑看

柳眉
彎彎柳葉愁邊戲
湛湛菱花照處頻
嫵媚不煩螺子黛
春山盡出自精神

檀口
銜杯微動櫻桃顆
咳唾輕飄茉莉香
曾見白家樊素口
瓠犀顆顆綴榴芳

纖指
纖纖軟玉削春蔥
長在香羅翠袖中
昨日琵琶弦索上
分明滿甲染猩紅

酥乳
粉香汗濕瑤琴軫
春逗酥融綿雨膏
雨罷檀郎捫弄出
靈華涼沁紫葡萄