



JIN PING MEI CH. 6-10

LEGAL TUSSLES

FAMILY SQUABBLES

BANQUETS & THEIR AFTERMATH

PATTERNS OF REPETITION

- The novel generally breaks down into 10-chapter segments, each of which follows multiple patterns of repetition both within these “decades” and across the entire book
- Typically, a decade introduces new sexual conquests by Hsimen Ching, which result either in marriages (e.g., Pan Chinlien & Meng Yulou) or less formal or temporary liaisons with servants or prostitutes (e.g., P’ang Ch’un-mei & Li Kui-chieh)
- Images of heat and cold punctuate these adventures: Hsimen’s insatiable sexual appetite & roving eye play out in steamy scenes of sexual abandon, but also consign nearly all of his women to chilly neglect at least some of the time—P’an Chin-lien being the most prominent
- The resolution of the complications that arise from these misdeeds also typically involves some legal, political, or medical intervention, which impedes the workings of karmic retribution, time and again, until the chickens finally come home to roost at the end of the novel

TS'AI CHING (1047-1126) & YANG CHIEN (D. 1121)

- Yang and Ts'ai's coverup of Hsi-men's wrongdoing (in Ch. 10) is the first of many instances of his bribing court officials (esp. Ts'ai) in order to evade justice, to curry favor, or even to gain appointment to official positions (after Chapter 35)
- Yang Chien is related by marriage to Ch'en Ching-chi, Hsi-men Ch'ing's son-in-law who moves into the household in Ch. 17 after Yang is arrested at the capital
- Yang, an actual historical figure like Ts'ai Ching, is the first of a series of eunuchs who are allied and/or friendly with Hsi-men in a nexus of corruption that includes many imperial relatives (*huangqin* or *guoqi*), & extends from the capital city outward

FAMILY SQUABBLES

- Widow remarriage was discouraged among the educated and privileged of Ming-Qing society; those who remained faithful to their dead husbands (even those who had never consummated the marriage) were honored as “chaste”
- Merchant families were less constrained by these strictures—but not entirely exempt, since many merchants aspired to and even achieved literati status
- In any disputes that arose over property, paternal clan members were favored over “distaff” relatives (of a different surname), hence Chang the Fourth’s disadvantage in his fight with Auntie Yang

MENG YÜ-LOU

- The commentator Zhang Zhupo describes Ch. 7 as a “resting” chapter that slows down the momentum of the resolution of the P’an+Hsi-men affair; by starting Ch. 7 with Auntie Hsueh, the author implies continuity through similarities of Hsueh with Dame Wang (“shameless even in a thunderstorm!”)
- Yü-lou’s wealth complements Chin-lien’s beauty: Hsi-men is “shameless” for craving Yü-lou’s wealth, and “perfidious” for lusting after Chin-lien’s body
- Yü-lou becomes Chin-lien’s most trusted confidante, because she is never a rival for Hsi-men’s attention; her easygoing temperament contrasts with the other wives, who tend to bicker over sex, money, servants, real estate...

CELEBRATORY BANQUETS

The Hibiscus Pavilion banquet both celebrates the resolution to the Wu the Elder case, but most importantly, it introduces the topics of the next 10 chapters, esp.:

- The antics of the “Ten Sworn Brothers”, among them Hua Tzu-hsu
- Hua’s wife, Li P’ing-erh: her name is included in Chin **P’ing** Mei

Revelry typically leads to debauchery: in the order of the “four vices” (*jiu se cai qi*), sexuality (*se*) follows on the heels of drink (*jiu*)

“Money” (*cai*) is also entangled with sex (as in silver/golden hairpins); get-togethers of the wives/relatives not infrequently end in arguments and bursts of “anger” (*qi*)

BACK TO THE WATER MARGIN

- Li P'ing-erh turns out to be the former concubine of Liang Shih-chien, the son-in-law of Ts'ai Ching and prefect of Ta-ming-fu
- In the *Water Margin*, Liang's wife is described as a feisty and vindictive woman, but not as a jealous wife who kills & buries her rivals in the garden
- This slight twist on the earlier tale foreshadows P'ing-erh's story: her own garden is appropriated and converted into an expanded and very opulent garden by Hsi-men; it becomes the central locus of the novel, where many of the sexual scandals and other misdeeds of family members take place

HAIRPINS (ZANZI) 簪子







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