



JIN PING MEI, CHAPTERS 11-15

Li P'ing-erh
Eunuchs & Imperial Kinsmen
Gardens

Admiral Zheng He 鄭和 (1371-1435)



Wang Zhen 王振 (?-1449)



A Marriage Fate to Awaken the World
(ca. 1640-60)



Liu Jin 劉瑾 (1451-1510)



Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 (1568-1627)



魏忠賢斥奸書 (1627) (Preface to a novel about Wei Zhongxian)

奸已磔矣，斥之云何？蓋奸生於貪，名利之薰心構之，貪生於習，父師之訓課成之。古來課業，所讀聖賢書，所行聖賢事，故奸亦罕出。今人則童習時，便誘之以黃金車馬美女萬鐘種神富貴，泛此貪欲之心漸入腸肺，那得不見速化功名之地，便捱身進入顏厚腰折而甘作奸狀哉！茲者，奸所由斥，自有聖主賢臣。奸之斥有書，具在爰書章奏，則奸誠磔矣。斥之云何？亦唯朝廟之詞，必莊必簡。莊則僅俗所不能解；簡則村鄙所不能暢。且四海蒙其毒矣。未必悉其奸寰宇；快其敗矣。未必詳其斥。因役研墨作白舍人詩焉，豈以佐白簡之未逮。夫亦為諫疏之鼓吹，文人墨士知必奉為一代信書，即村姑稚童，目中識丁與不識丁者，出口入耳，罔不知斥奸有成局，則因而或以奸懲創其子弟，因而或子弟之自懲創其奸。是書之所名斥者，正未必有遜於詩云子曰之訓也。故不敢附之謂記、謂傳、謂志，而表之以書，亦謂斥奸在書，聊以異於稗官野說云耳。

An Imperial Kinsman's 國戚 Residence:
李園 Li Yuan (暢春園 Changchunyuan)



Shi Chong 石崇 (249-300) Gold Gulley Garden 金谷園
(Qiu Ying 仇英, 1494-1552)



Longevity Hairpins 壽字簪 (excavated from Wanli Emperor's tomb)



Wealth—Sex

財色

- Li P'ing-erh has amassed a collection of jewelry from her first husband Privy Councilor Liang Shih-chieh (Ts'ai Ching's son-in-law), then from Eunuch Director Hua
- “Hua Tzu-hsu” could be translated as “Spending Down to Zero”: he expends both his money and his vitality in the Quarter, neglecting to safeguard his patrimony
- The links between money and sexual desire are made most forcefully in the demimonde: none of its denizens is at all shy about their mercenary motives
- Hua Tzu-hsu's “sweetheart” in the Quarter, Wu Yin-erh, literally means “no [silver] money”
- The “ten friends” have no compunction stealing items from Kuei-chieh as they leave, including even the pins out of her hair as the party breaks up

Foreshadowing (fubi 伏筆) Incremental Repetition (fan 犯)

- Hsi-men Ch'ing's affair with P'ing-erh lays the groundwork for his subsequent nearly simultaneous aggrandizement in the sexual, economic, & political realms
- Chou Hsiu, a military official, is mentioned (p. 240) in the same breath as Chin-lien's maid Ch'un-mei: they will eventually marry after the deaths of her master & mistress
- Chin-lien takes Hsi-men Ch'ing to task for his philandering, cutting him down to size so that he shrinks "like a dwarf" (p. 269): P'ing-erh will soon marry a diminutive doctor whom she repeatedly curses as a "three-inch mulberry" like Elder Wu
- After purchasing Hua Tzu-hsu's home, Hsi-men Ch'ing has it demolished to make room for an expansion of his garden (which is completed just as P'ing-erh enters the household as his sixth wife in Ch. 20) (p. 295)
- The page boys serve both female & male masters sexually: Ch'in-t'ung is the first in a succession of such characters who complement/vie with female servants

“Crafty Writing” 文情狡猾

Commentary of Zhang Zhupo

- “In preparation for Li P’ing-erh, the author first inserts Li Kuei-chieh, to cast a spotlight on Hsi-men Ch’ing’s voracious and inexhaustible sexual appetite”
- “Writing, like people, comes in pairs” (Ch’un-mei and Chin-lien)
- “P’ing-erh’s seduction of Hsi-men should be read aside Chin-lien’s of same, but P’ing-erh wins him with her [feigned] silliness and simplicity...We see her lust not directly, but through the eyes of her maid Ying-ch’un, and through Chin-lien as she peruses the imperial pornography scroll”
- “Yue-niang is like a needle wrapped in a cotton ball, ‘soft but very evil’. This is evident from how she willingly joins in the transfer of P’ing-erh’s chests over the wall and into her own quarters.”