

Fall 2021 Literature Course
Sponsored by the *Society for Asian Art*
***Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅: The Rivalry Intensifies**

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Text: *The Plum in the Golden Vase, or Chin P'ing Mei*, Vol. 2: *The Rivals*. Translated by David Roy. Princeton University Press, 2001. ISBN 9780691126197.

As we saw in the storms that erupted in Chapters 13-20, in this second quintile of the novel, the life of the Ximen family compound continues to be punctuated by episodes of jealous rivalry among the main characters. But after Li P'ing-erh is brought over the threshold, Ximen Qing adds no further members to his harem, at least in officially sanctioned matrimony. Nevertheless, far from remaining content with his six wives, in these sections Ximen Qing engages in fleeting sexual trysts with servants and other minor characters, sowing the seeds of current and future conflict. Just when this debauchery seems unsustainable, or his multiple misdeeds threaten legal consequences, Ximen Qing not only escapes unscathed but even discovers new outlets for his seemingly inexhaustible energy. Cuisine, music, couture, horticulture, and especially jewelry and other accessories—we will further explore the material richness of *fin-de-siècle* Ming society portrayed in this magnificent novel. While I will be referring to the David Roy translation, participants are welcome to read the other complete translation of *Jin Ping Mei*, Clement Egerton's *The Golden Lotus*, 1939. At least some of this version is available for free online at: <https://freelibrary.overdrive.com/media/900522>. Unlike the first 20 chapters, Chapters 21-40 of Egerton's version are relatively close to the text that Roy used for his translation (the so-called *Jin Ping Mei cibua*).

Schedule of Readings

Sep 13

Chapters 21-5

Optional Reading: Ming Dong Gu, "The Poetics of Weaving in *Jin Ping Mei*"

Sep 27

Chapters 26-30

Optional Reading: Sarah Dauncey, "Bonding, Benevolence, Barter, and Bribery"

Oct 11

Chapters 31-35

Optional Reading: David Rolston, "Late-Ming Music in *Jin Ping Mei*" (esp. pp. 16-48)

Oct 25

Chapters 36-40

Optional Reading: Sophie Volpp, "The Gift of a Python Robe"

Selected Bibliography

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