Bodyscapes: Writing Bodies in Late Imperial Fiction  
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Note: This course was offered as a graduate seminar at University of California, Berkeley in Fall 2002. The class met once a week for three hours.

It is often said that in late Imperial Chinese culture the body was invisible, and it is undeniable that, when one looks at Chinese paintings produced either during the Ming or the Qing dynasty, our eyes usually do not meet with the rosy abundance of a rubenesque beauty. But absence, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Indeed, if one looks, for example, at works such as the meirenhua, the beautiful woman pictures, that became popular from the Ming dynasty onward, we realize that the body is all there, perhaps not immediately apparent to those not trained in the visual language of late imperial China, but quite visible for those born and raised in that culture.

In the same way, we find that late imperial Chinese vernacular literature is home to a whole array of bodies, which are in turn exposed, hidden, commodified, liberated, desired, and repressed. This course undertakes an investigation of the language and of the imagery used to represent both the female and the male body in the context of Ming and Qing vernacular fiction. How were bodies defined by the state, by law, and by established social practices such as footbinding and coming-of-age rituals? What were the spaces assigned to specific bodily practices? How does the work of contemporary Chinese and Western scholars help us literally flesh out a social, legal and medical body to contrast with its literary and artistic representations? In order to answer these and other related questions, we will engage in close readings of the primary sources, ranging in genre from romance narratives to martial adventures, from pornography to historical narratives. We will discuss how different registers of language (i.e. literary, vernacular, poetic, prose, romantic, bawdy), allowed and/or inhibited specific representations of the body, by reading a wide selection of writings and by comparing them to the vernacular sources which constitute the focus of the course. In a second moment, our textual readings of images and texts will be paired with relevant theoretical pieces, Chinese and Western, as well as at traditional and late imperial legal, medical and social definitions of "body" and at the intellectual, visual and erotic experience produced around these definitions.

Requirements:

1) Students are required to have completed the reading assignments before coming to class- including both the primary texts and the required secondary readings. Attendance and class participation are essential. Participation involves presence, preparation of readings, and contributions towards classroom discussion.

2) One presentation, one research paper, and two book-reviews.
a) Each student will be responsible for one presentation, on one of the texts to be discussed during the course of the semester. The presenter will be expected to present the main points of that session’s readings, as well as to raise a set of pertinent questions for discussion.

b) The final paper (minimum fifteen pages) can be on any topic covered during the course. A paper outline is due November 6th. The outline must include paper title, main thesis, and preliminary. The paper is due on December 16th by 5 pm, in the instructor’s office. There will be no extension on the final paper.

c) The book reviews (minimum five pages, maximum fifteen pages) can be written about any of the secondary sources for the course.

The final grade will be based on the following criteria: paper, 40%; presentation, 15%; book reviews, 15%; attendance and participation, 30%. All written work for this course must be double spaced and printed on a word processor. Written work that is not printed on a word processor or typed will not be accepted.

Office Hours:

You are welcome to come to office hours. This is important time to discuss privately and more extensively the texts we are studying, the ideas we are exploring, or anything else related to the seminar. You are also encouraged to talk with the instructor about difficulties they may experience with course related material and to make suggestions, so that we can all benefit from each other’s insights and comments.

Primary sources

All the primary sources are on 1-day reserve at the East Asian Library. Any edition is fine, though it is preferable to read and prepare the one on reserve.

Haishanghua 海上花
He dian 何典
Honglou meng 紅樓夢
Hualiushenqingzhuanchan 花柳深情傳
Jinpingmei 金瓶梅
Lu Mudan 綠牡丹
Pingyao zhuanchan 平妖傳
Rouputuan 肉蒲團
Shidiantou 石點頭
Xin shanghai 新上海
Xingshi yinyuan zhuan 醒世姻緣傳
Xiyou bu 西遊補
Yuguihong 玉閨紅
Secondary sources

A) Works related to China and Asia


Huntington, Rania, "Foxes and Sex in Late Imperial Chinese Narrative"(in Nannu, spring 2000).

Hu, Ying, Tales of Translation. Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918, Stanford University Press, 2000

Huntington, R., Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative (forthcoming, East Asia Monograph series, Harvard University Press.)


Tian Ju-k’ang, Male Anxiety and Female Chastity A Comparative Study of Chinese Ethical Values in Ming-Ch’ing Times (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988).


B) General reference works


**Schedule and Reading Assignments:**

Additional readings will be provided during the course of the semester, and will be available a week before class in the East Asian Library.

**Week 1**

8/28 Introduction to the course

The Philosopher, the Monk and the Body

Readings:


**Week 2**

9/3       Yuguihong       玉閨紅

Suggested secondary readings:


**Week 3**

9/10      Shidiantou       石點頭

Suggested secondary readings:


**Week 4**

9/17      Pingyao zhan       平妖傳

Suggested secondary readings:

Huntington, Rania, "Foxes and Sex in Late Imperial Chinese Narrative"(in Nannu, spring 2000).
Huntington, R., Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative (forthcoming, East Asia Monograph series, Harvard University Press.)

Week 5

9/24 Selections from Xingshi yinyuan zhuan 醒世姻緣傳

Secondary sources:


Week 6

10/1 Xiyou bu 西遊補

Suggested reading:


Week 7

10/8 Selections from Jinpingmei 金瓶梅

Suggested secondary readings:


**Week 8**

10/15 Rouputuan 肉蒲團

Secondary readings:

Li Yu 李漁閒情偶寄, 李漁全集 108-137.

Suggested secondary readings:


**Week 9**

10/22 Selections from Honglou meng 紅樓夢

Suggested secondary readings:


**Week 10**

10/29 He dian 何典

Suggested secondary readings:


Week 11

11/5 Lu Mudan 綠牡丹

Secondary readings:


Week 12

11/12 Xin Shanghai 新上海
Hualiushenqingzhuan 花柳深情傳

Secondary readings:


Week 13

11/19 Haishanghua 海上花

Assignment:

screening of the movie Haishanghua 海上花

Secondary readings:

Suggested secondary readings:


**Week 14**

11/26    The Body in the Law.

Discussion with invited speaker Professor Janet Theiss.

Readings:


Theiss, Janet, Dealing with Disgrace. The Negotiation of Female Virtue in Eighteenth-century China, manuscript submitted for publication, University of California Press.

**Week 15**

12/3    Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Engendering of the Medical Body

Discussion with invited speaker Professor Charlotte Furth.

Readings:


Furth, C., “From birth to birth: the growing body in Chinese medicine”.


12/16 Research paper due by five PM. NO EXTENSIONS

The Philosopher, the Monk and the Body

Readings:

