



來看看浮士德博士對《玉蒲團之偷情寶鑑》的精闢見解。

## Notes on Sex and Zen

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### Background notes

Sex and Zen is rather loosely based on a real seventeenth-century classic of Chinese erotic literature, the ròupútúan 肉蒲团, the name of which is commonly rendered into English as The Carnal Prayer Mat (Li 1996).<sup>1</sup> It's author was Li Yü (1610-1680), who passed his first-level civil service examinations at the end of the Ming dynasty but whose bureaucratic career was derailed by the chaos of the dynastic transition to the Manchus. He was compelled to become a brilliantly inventive writer and theater impresario. Li was no necessary respecter of proprieties: in addition to Prayer Mat he also wrote a collection of works called Silent Operas that includes a love story between two men that parallels a heterosexual marriage, from courtship to widowhood. He also created a story which might be the only one in all of (pre-20th century, anyway) Chinese literature of a romantic love story between two women (resolved in the only way open to them by their both becoming wives to the same man).<sup>2</sup>

I only read Prayer Mat<sup>3</sup> about a month before recording this podcast, and I have to say I was very impressed by it as novel; at

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1 If you're foolish like me and put 肉蒲团 into Google Translate, it will come back as "meat futon."

2 For a good critical study of Li's contribution to Chinese literature as a whole, see Hanan 1988.

3 In a very smooth and idiomatic translation (See Li 1998) by Patrick Hanan (1927-2014). Professor Hanan was, until his retirement in 1997, the Victor S. Thomas Professor of Chinese Literature at Harvard University.

once erotic and yet also discursive and philosophical, rather like a Chinese version of Thérèse philosophe while at the same time very funny, Confederacy of Dunces-like funny. The novel even digresses into what in a later era might have been called metafiction, in that Li writes a brief "critique" at the end of every chapter discussing his own literary efforts in the pages preceeding.

The central concern of the novel is the operation of karmic retribution in earthly life, the characters who commit adultery (one of the worst things imaginable in a Confucian society in which family bonds are the most fundamental of all) must either repent or come to a bad end. Hanan expresses the view that it could not be otherwise: a novel that did not end in karmic retribution would just have been inconceivable in the cultural world for which Li was writing. (As a parallel, try to imagine how well Lolita might have been received if at the end Humbert Humbert somehow became the President of the United States.)

Prayer Mat opens with a touching opening lyric. In Patrick Hanan's translation:

Raven hair so quickly gray,  
Ruddy cheeks soon past.  
Man's unlike the ageless pine -  
His fame and fortune e'er in flux,  
Gone in the flower-destroying blast.  
How sad if youth is deprived of joy!  
(From the courts of love the old are cast.)  
So once you hear the siren song,  
Young masters,  
Rush to enjoy the flowers throng.

True paradise on earth,  
All things considered well,  
Is found in bedroom bliss.  
Unlike the realm of fame and glory,  
Here joy begins and troubles cease.  
Each day is spent in slippered ease, each night

In drunken slumber till the morning bell.  
So open your eyes, take this to heart,  
All the world's  
A vast erotic work of art.

Prayer Mat is obviously far more complex than Sex and Zen, but an understanding of it might help cover some of the gaps or weird coincidences in the movie. I wish I could say how knowledge of the novel might have affected the reception of the film. (If anyone who has grown up in such an environment has a view on this issue, I'd be very happy to hear from them.)

Film itself. In spite of its distinguished literary ancestry Sex and Zen is a bit of a critical orphan. Hammond and Wilkins (1996) do include a brief review (how could they not - it is part of the title of their book!). Bordwell (2000) mentions it briefly as an example of a disreputable trend to the creation of more and more sexploitation (and worse, specifically rape-themed movies) under Hong Kong's Category III.<sup>4</sup> It's puzzling, given the amount of talent involved in making this movie. Maybe some people are just snooty about soft-core pornography. Luckily for Grindbin listeners, I'm not.

Some general observations about Hong Kong film-making practice in the early 1990s are probably appropriate, these derived largely from Dannen and Long (1997) and Stokes and Hoover (1999). The industry churned out a very large amount of product. Most movies

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<sup>4</sup> The Grindbin cast covered the concept of "Category III" in Episode 104, Robotrix, but as it's a key concept I'll cover it again here. In the old days of Hong Kong cinema movies were covered by something like Hollywood' old Production Code: sex scenes were not allowed, nor was the depiction of crimes that went unpunished, etc. There was no concept of age restriction on movies; a film was either acceptable for everyone or no one. In a wave of public concern following the release of John Woo's A Better Tomorrow (1986), the Hong Kong authorities adopted a rating system consisting of Category I (suitable for all ages), Category IIA (not suitable for children), Category IIB (not suitable for children or young people), and Category III (for 18 and above only).



were made for what by Hollywood standards were tiny budgets (often in the low six figures in U.S. dollars), on tight shooting schedules numbered in a few days, and had very short exhibition runs, often less than a week. (The industry thus in a few respects resembles that of the 1930s U.S. exploitation film world which we discussed on my last appearance on the Grindbin, albeit without some of that strange world's more exotic exhibition practices.) I don't have a budget for Sex and Zen. Its theatrical gross in initial release appears to have been about HK\$18 million, or about US\$2.3 million - see Chow (2018). It's production values look reasonably good and its female lead Amy Yip Chi-Mei was at the time of its filming near the height of her stardom. It is possible that many elaborate costumes and sets we see in this movie were recycled among many different productions and thus could have been had for cheap (historical costume drama is a very large part of Chinese popular entertainment, both in movies and television).

The HK movie industry tends to be infested with triads - that is, Chinese gangsters that are part of organizations (supposedly) originally founded to resist Manchu rule in China (thus, interestingly, descending from the same time as Prayer Mat.) They were involved in financing a lot of movies (easy to do when production costs are so cheap!), and there are stories, hard to corroborate but probably not entirely lacking a basis in fact, of HK actors being kidnapped and actresses being raped by Triads for refusing to take part in particular Triad-financed productions. There is also a rumor to the effect that Triads managed to force Amy Yip into appearing completely naked on the set of Sex and Zen

(something that, as a matter of policy, she avoided doing during her career, never showing her nipples or pubic area, thus giving rise to the expression "Yip-tease" to describe her cinematic appearances). I personally doubt this - although the source was Yip herself, it's worth keeping in mind that show business publicity has been full of bullshit ever since Thespis first stepped out of the chorus, and this one sets off my detector. It is, however, established that in 1992 Yip, along with Jackie Chan and hundreds of other HK film people, led a protest march through the business district of HK to Police Headquarters, demanding that the police do something about triad interference in the industry. (The police established a special investigative unit for the purpose, but it was subsequently disbanded two years later without having made a major case). (See Dannen and Long 1997, 35).

### People

Amy Yip Chi-Mei, 葉子楣 (b. 1965), who plays the innocent and then not-so-innocent Yu Xiang becomes a Grindbin All-Star with the review of this movie, having been one of the leads in Robotrix (1991), featured as Grindbin episode #104 (link: <http://www.grindhousefilm.com/podcast/2018/5/6/104-robotrix-1991>) The guys covered her pretty well back then. She's famous for having unusually large breasts on a slender figure, but she's a better actress than one might guess, or at least, so I think. Her other film credits include Ghostly Vixen, Erotic Ghost Story, and Jail House Eros (all 1990). She appears to have retired from acting entirely by 1997, possibly disappointed at not being taken more seriously.

Lawrence Ng Kai-wah, 吳啟華, (b. 1964), who plays "Scholar Wei" has had a long career in Hong Kong film and television, beginning in 1986 in the television series The Feud of Two Brothers. He has appeared in many movies including the Category III A Chinese Torture Chamber Story (1994) and a lot of Chinese television in which he plays doctors. He has been twice nominated for the TVB Anniversary Award for best actor for playing the role of Dr. Paul Ching Chi Mei in the TV drama Healing Hands.

Elvis Tsui Kam-Kong, 徐錦江 (b. 1961), who plays Wang Qi (the spousally abusive Dyer) is a prolific Hong Kong actor with at least 152 film credits according to the Hong Kong film database (link <http://hkmdb.com> ) Tsui graduated from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts with a degree in arts. In 1982, Tsui went to Hong Kong to expand his career as an artist, photographer, model and nightclub singer. He has often appeared in martial arts and erotic films, often as a villain. He has been nominated twice a best supporting actor Hong Kong film award, in 1994 for All Men are Brothers: Blood of the Leopard and in 1997 for Viva Erotica.

Lo Lieh (born Wang Lap Tat, 王立達 in 1939 in what was then the Dutch East Indies), plays Master Burglar Sai Kunlun. He has 229 acting credits beginning in 1964, as well as 9 director and 3 producer credits. He is perhaps most famous for his role as Chao Chi-Hao in

the 1972 martial arts film The Five Fingers of Death (a.k.a. King Boxer). He died in 2002.

Kent "Fatty" Cheng Jak-si, 鄭則仕, (b. 1951) plays the quack surgeon Tian Can Zi. He has 135 acting, 9 directing, and 12 producing credits in Hong Kong, and has twice received the Hong Kong Film Award for best actor, once in 1985 for Why Me? and again in 1996 for The Log. (He also has two best actor and three best supporting actor nominations.)

Carrie Ng Ka-Lai/吴家丽 Wú Jiālì (b. 1963), who plays Madam Gu, is a prolific actress in both mainstream and Category III films in Hong Kong, including the Hong Kong cult classic Naked Killer (1992). She won the Golden Horse Award for Best Actress for 1993's The Remains of a Woman and a Best Supporting Actress Hong Kong Film Award in 2000 for The Kid. She has recently taken up directing with Angel Whispers (2015) and Knock Knock Who's There (2015).

Ayukawa Mari, 鮫川真理 plays Wang de tai-tai and dammit, I can find out next to nothing about her. Sex and Zen is her only HKMDB credit. IMDB is scarcely better, though it gives a birth year (1969) and lists a handful of what look like Japanese soft-core acting credits. How can this be? She practically carries the movie through the third act! If anyone can add to this, please write in. You will have my gratitude, and if you send me your postal address, I'll send you a souvenir Erotic Mad Science postcard as well.

Michael Mak Dong-Git 麥當傑 (b. 1958) is the director of Sex and Zen and about 17 other Hong Kong movies, the most famous of which is probably Butterfly and Sword a 2003 period action film that starred Michelle Yeoh and Tony Leung. He is the brother of producer Johnny Mak (producer of Sex and Zen). His other directing credits include Dragon Force (1982), Everlasting Love (1984) and Island of Greed (1997). (Taiwan is the island of greed, in case you were wondering.)



## Plot notes on the film

Note: The time codes and comments refer to a 2010 Blu-Ray issue of Sex and Zen, and the issue details can be found below in

"References." At various points references to and contrasts with Li Yu's novel (Li 1996) may be useful. In order not to make them a distraction from the film, I am relegating these to footnotes. For compactness I shall refer to the novel as the source text.

Time	Comments
00:00:00	Titles: Fortune Star logo, Golden Harvest, Johnny Mak Production Ltd., opening credits in English and Chinese.
00:01:40	Open on a book. "For 400 years, Yu Putuan (presumably a reference to the <u>ròupútúan</u> 肉蒲团, the source text) remains the best of the top 3 banned books with its depiction of carnal desires."
00:01:55	A scholar nicknamed Wei Yang Sheng (Lawrence Ng Kai-wah, 吳啟華, hereafter "Scholar Wei") <sup>5</sup> and his page go to visit the Sack Monk <sup>6</sup> (Lo Duen). (A subtitle suggests that the action is set during the Yuan dynasty, which would mean between 1271-1368). Scholar Wei is licentious. Scholar Wei and the Sack Monk get into an argument about the nature of carnal desires. Sack Monk warns of retribution for the indulgence of carnal desires. The scholar disagrees with a fairly sophisticated argument.
00:03:10	A wedding. Scholar Wei is being married to Yu Xiang) <sup>7</sup> (Amy Yip Chi-Mei, 葉子楣), Scholar Wei has a posse teasing the bride, much to her father, Master Iron Gate's, <sup>8</sup> displeasure. Master Iron Gate (Tien Fung, 田豐) explains to the Scholar Wei that he has no need to worry about his bride Yu Xiang, who has been well educated (meaning, socialized to be deeply ashamed of sex).
00:05:00	Wedding night encounter between Scholar Wei and Yu Xiang. Scholar Wei explains that sex is the best thing, while the Yu Xiang sees it as a shameful thing. (But she will perform her duty because "etiquette.") Yu Xiang has brought anesthetics and analgesics to the wedding night. She straps her feet up using red silk in an arrangement that looks more appropriate to a

5 Hanan in the source text gives him the name "Vesperus."

6 In the source text he is usually referred to by a religious name, "Lone Peak."

7 In the source text, "Jade Scent."

8 "Master Iron Door" in the source text, in which he gets his name from the fact that he is a man of such unbending rectitude that he is willing to admit hardly anyone to his house, even as a servant.

	gynecological exam than sex and bites down on some sort of white ball thing, the equivalent of "biting the bullet." Very awkward sex ensues, spied upon by Yu Xiang's younger siblings. Yu Xiang kicks the Scholar Wei off their wedding bed. The Scholar manages to injure himself in a very sensitive place and Yu Xiang swallows the bullet she was biting down on, requiring Scholar Wei to perform a Yuan dynasty version of the Heimlich maneuver on his new bride.
00:08:40	Scholar Wei presents Yu Xiang with a book of erotic illustrations, doubtless hoping to loosen her up a bit. As we see from subsequent scenes, this works.
00:09:20	More sex, this time not awkward. The possibilities for intercourse using various Yuan dynasty furniture and an outdoor swing are explored.
00:11:00	Scholar Wei and his page <sup>9</sup> out for a walk, encounters a man who is killing a fish in a river - using a giant club. The page manages to lure this man into a friendly encounter with liquor, and turns out to be Sai Kunlun, master burglar <sup>10</sup> (played by Lo Lieh. 羅烈). The three share a friendly riverside meal. Scholar Wei invites the Master Sai to assist in his program of seduction. Master Sai promptly departs, having skillfully picked Scholar Wei's pocket.
00:13:00	A servant arrives to tell the scholar he has found a target. Two young women - I believe named Rui Zhu (Isabella Chow Wang, 周弘) and Hua Chen, (Murakami Rena, 村上麗奈, also known as Tomoko Ino) making a sacrifice at a temple. After a pratfall, the Scholar offers one of them (Hua Chen?) a book of erotic engravings. This doesn't go all that well. She goes off and departs in a palanquin.
00:15:00	Rain. Night. Rui Zhu and Hua Chen are in an isolated pavilion. One is playing the flute. Torrid girl-on-girl sex scene, in which a very interesting use is found for the flute. Not a plausible sex toy, I think; kids, don't try this at home, though I must admit some of the long-angle camera angles here are pretty creative.
00:18:00	Scholar Wei at home. Master Sai has lowered Scholar Wei's money through a hole in his room ("plus 10%

<sup>9</sup> The page appears not to have a name in the movie. In the source text, Vesperus has several pages, the most frequently referred to of which has a name Hanan translates as "Satchel." Vesperus has oral and anal sex (strictly as a top) with his pages from time to time when women are unavailable, and from time to time Satchel is pressed into service to have sex with who are "too small" to have sex with Vesperus due to his enhanced penis size. Kindly refrain from jokes about "Satchel Paige."

<sup>10</sup> Often referred to as "the Knave" in the source text.

	interest"). <sup>11</sup> He then comes leaping in. (Master Sai is Spiderman of the Yuan Dyanasty.) Scholar Wei repeats his request for help with women (for pay). Master Sai warns scholar that it is risky to seduce other men's wives. Question: How long is your dick? How long can you last? ("Half a joss stick.") Master Sai directs Scholar Wei to a silk shop.
00:19:30	Scholar Wei and page climb roof of shop, see silk dyer Wang Qi <sup>12</sup> (Elvis Tsui Kam-Kong, 徐錦江) making a pig of himself and also spot his lovely wife whose name I can't find anywhere, so I'm going to refer to her as Wang de tai-tai (Ayukawa Mari) <sup>13</sup> . After a freak-out and some casual spousal abuse Dyer Wang drinks wine, strips off (revealing huge cock in silhouette). Chain play, as Dyer Wang makes Wang de tai-tai crawl across broken china and then fellate him while he drinks copious amounts of wine pouring out of a large jug. Aggressive bamboo table sex, then highly implausible hanging from a chain sex as they swing across the room. <sup>14</sup> This stuff seems right out of Hong Kong movie fight choreography. After they finish, return to the roof where Scholar Wei and Master Sai are watching. Master Sai points to burning joss sticks - the Dyer has lasted at least three.

11 I'm not sure what's going on with this un-bandit-like behavior on the part of Master Sai, but it might be a distant echo of a curious code of honor he has in the source text, the Five Abstentions from Theft, which Sai Kunlun scrupulously observes. The Five Abstentions are "I don't rob unlucky people, lucky people, people I know, people I've robbed once already, or people who take no precautions." See Li 1996, 63.

12 "Honest Quan" in the source text, a rather ironic name given his future activities.

13 In the source text she is called "Fragrance."

14 This scene (and possibly also Amy Yip Chi-Mei's bathing scene below) might seem exceptionally brutal to audiences used to American, French, Italian, or even Japanese soft-core movies, but seems to be par for the course for Hong Kong erotic cinema, much of which is far more brutal. See Sévéon 2008, 184: "Comme évoqué auparavant, la violence est un élément clef du cinéma hongkongais depuis un quarantaine d'années et il n'est donc guère suprenant que ce phénomène ait aussi enhavi les productions érotiques. Outre les viols, les tortures sexuelle sont particulièrement présentes, notamment dans les productions dans les costumes. Dans Escape from Brothel (Johnny Wang, 1992), une femme est obligée d'insérer une batte de baseball dans le vagin de son amie. Dans Retribution Sight Unseen, l'héroïne tente (doloreusement) de cacher une batterie de téléphone dans son sexe. Dans Twist (Danny Lee, 1995) des flics torturent sexuellement les suspects avec un tuyau d'arrosage et de la glace. Dans Dr. Lamb: The Untold Story et Diary of a Serial Killer, les femmes sont torturées, violées, puis tuées et découpées en morceaux (ou à nouveau violées). Mention spéciale à Red to Kill qui livre quelques-uns des viols plus brutaux jamais filmés... La violence est tellement ancrée, y compris dans la production érotique, qu'elle surgit parfois de nulle part des films tout ce qu'il y a de plus soft. Dans Hidden Desire (1991) de Ho Fan, le final voit l'héroïne se faire soudainement, et sans aucune raison, violer." (And if you can read French, you can probably understand why I've chosen to leave that passage untranslated! None of this, perhaps, should come as a surprise to those who have seen an uncut version of Robotrix.)

00:25:30	Master Sai has Scholar Wei trussed up and suspended. Insults him about his dick size. Some humiliation follows, and there is some begging for help. "Unless your dick is as long as a horse..." Master Sai then walks off. <sup>15</sup>
00:26:50	Yu Xiang at home, looking at the finest of Yuan Dynasty porn. Scholar Wei is away and she feels lonely and sad. Starts writing a really horny letter that leads into use of vaginal secretions to mix ink, which in turn leads into a very peculiar exercise in how to hold a calligraphy brush.
00:29:20	Scholar Wei mourns his inadequate dick size while cutting fruit. Threatens genital self-harm, and a confrontation between Scholar Wei and page involving the knife leads to the luckless page suffering a grisly penile injury. Scholar straps page to a chair and takes him to see a doctor, who happens to be on vacation. In desperation, they find the Tian Can Zi (Kent "Fatty" Cheng Jak-si, 鄭則仕), a very questionable medical practitioner, an immensely fat man who is eating and drinking. Dr. Tian treats the page and insists he will promptly recover. During a post-treatment, meal, Dr. Tian tells Scholar Wei that he is skilled in surgery and especially in transplants (sure), including that of animals to humans. After rejecting the concept of transplanting an elephant dick ("it would be like a third leg"), Scholar Wei hits about the clever idea of transplanting a horse dick. <sup>16</sup> Let it not be said that China's was not an ancient and subtle civilization.
00:33:20	In comes Scholar Wei leading a horse. Scholar Wei is undressed and put into a barrel which has a knothole through which he is to put his inadequate wedding tackle. The operation is set for 3 a.m. Scholar Wei is given an anesthetic, and the horse is given wine. A miniature guillotine is affixed the knothole (note: referring to this tool as a "guillotine" is an anachronism, even more so because Dr. Tian claims to have learned about its construction from "reading foreign books." If if this had been possible during the Yuan Dynasty he could hardly have read about a "guillotine" as it would have been almost 500 years too early for this and shit what am I writing about this is a movie in which a guy gets a horse dick transplant.). Dr. Tian then explains that he has trouble with rainy nights. (Trauma. His mother was raped and killed on a rainy night.) Scholar Wei's equipment is then

15 In the source text there is a chapter-length dialog between Vesperus and the Knave largely devoted to genital size and its relationship to sex.

16 In the source text it is a far more elaborate operation involving a dog's penis, but my discussion of the details of thereof would be inconsistent with decorum. The operation to achieve Vesperus's enlargement also involves considerably less slapstick.

	<p>guillotined off, and surgery begins. Or at least it is supposed to begin. Then it starts to rain. Then the Dr. Tian' dog runs off with Scholar Wei's severed penis, only a fragment of which (ick) Dr. Tian manages to eventually retrieve. A proposal has been made to emasculate Scholar Wei's page and transfer his penis to Scholar Wei, but fortunately the horse finally passes out and the Dr. Tian is able to remove its equipment. But then the horse kicks Dr. Tian in the head, and the page passes out after the horse penis flies up in the air and lands in his mouth. With time running out before the operation becomes impossible (as measured by the omnipresent joss sticks), Scholar Wei is forced to roll himself in the barrel across the floor to revive the Quack, unfortunately in the process spilling anesthetic all over the Dr. Tian's hands. The the storm outside blows open the shutters, which at least has the fortunate effect of knocking Dr. Tian out of his anesthetic funk, and there is some desperate last-minute surgery to attach the horse's organ. Success!</p>
00:40:50	<p>In bursts Master Sai on the recuperating Scholar Wei. He had been lured there by a promise of a dual with Scholar Wei. Scholar Wei expresses gratitude for his being beaten up and brought to his senses about the whole horse's dick thing. There is then some dick measuring. This commands some admiration. "Get it up," commands Master Sai. An erection is attempted but it proves impossible, in spite of the sexual humiliation of the poor page (he is required to provide a hand job and then to fellate Scholar Wei as part of the process). Master Sai says that that it should be cut off (else Scholar Wei become poisoned through lack of sex), but some swordplay done by Master Sai gets the hoped-for result (displayed discreetly wrapped in silk, of course). "My master never told me the secret about this blade." Yes, it's the legendary Sword of Viagra.</p>
00:45:10	<p>Off to visit Wang de tai-tai, to "buy some silk," as a pretext for a seduction. (In fairness to Scholar Wei, I can't say I wouldn't try it myself if I lived in her town.) Dyer Wang intervenes and runs Scholar Wei off with a large club, and is about to beat him senseless when Master Sai intervenes and kung-fus Dyer Wang into submission. Humiliated, Dyer Wang stalks off and beats up his wife before heading off on some sort of business trip (locking her in a chastity belt before he goes).</p>
00:48:30	<p>Wang de tai-tai at home, gets a letter from Scholar Wei, who with the help of Master Sai, is lowered into her chamber. She protests that she is a virtuous woman. This is all being spied on by a banana-eating plump neighbor. More attempted seduction, which reveals the chastity belt. In leaps Master Sai, who of course is an accomplished picklock. Charming sex scene involving</p>



	lots of wind and silk. (The use of a ladder is necessary to accommodate Scholar Wei's enhanced equipment at one point.) Interesting use of camera angles and ecstatic poses gives us an view of Ayukawa Mari back molars, something I up until that point would not have seen as cinematically possible but maybe someone finds it erotic.
00:54:40	Restaurant. In comes Dyer Wang with a posse and a cleaver, only to notice that Master Sai is eating with them. Dyer Wang rants and raves at Master Sai, but knows he can't win in any sort of direct confrontation. So a proposal is made by the Dyer Wang to sell the wife and leave town ("Elvis has left the building.") This is done, he signs a contract with this thumbprint and receives a paper certificate, which I believe is money. As far as I can tell Wang de tai-tai has simply dropped out of the movie at this point. Poor girl. <sup>17</sup>
00:56:00	A bureaucrat is leaving to do service in the capital, and is pestered by his wife (Rui Zhu?) He got a venereal disease the last time, and so she presents him with a hand-crafted condom as a sort of going-away present. It's bent in the middle. He goes off protesting that he's not bent like that.
00:57:00	More rain, more antics. Scholar Wei gets going with one of the pavilion girls, who is really impressed by his equipment, which, it is suggested by her subsequent acting, might really be a bit too big for comfort. Turns out she has an unusual interest, which is in being whipped. Scholar obliges, to her pleasure. Hot flogging scene, followed by some energetic girl on top sex.
01:02:00	Master Iron Gate bursts in on his daughter Yu Xiang, who is doing her "calligraphy." Introduces Dyer Wang who will be serving as the new gardener, what a coinky-dink. <sup>18</sup> Master Iron Gate is needless not pleased by his daughter's turn to the salacious side and deals with it by subjecting Yu Xiang's maid to some casual physical abuse. Presents books of discipline, followed by a miserable study session in which Yu Xiang is required to read while her lady's maid is forced to hold a box over her head. While this is going on, Yu Xiang looks out the window lustfully at ex-Dyer Wang, who is chopping wood shirtless.

17 She isn't finished in the source text, however, as Scholar Wei, having purchased her, takes her as a second wife and sets up house with her for a while. He will impregnate her and she will give birth to twin baby girls, before both she and the babies die as part of the karmic retribution against Scholar Wei for his many improprieties and transgressions.

18 But not a coincidence in the source text, in which Honest Quan, after selling Fragrance to Vesperus and leaving town, tracks down Yu Xiang and patiently conceives an executes a complex stratagem to get into Master Iron Gate's household in order to seduce Yu Xiang as a means of getting revenge on Vesperus.

01:04:40	Scholar Wei is serving strawberries to his latest conquest (Hua Chen) over a board game, at which he is distracting her with a game of footsie. Starfruit <sup>19</sup> is...seasoned...before being fed to the scholar. Handjob with a loaf of bread. I guess you can't say that the people aren't creative. Cousin Rui Zhu comes barging in, forcing Hua Chen to hide Scholar Wei in a box. Some serious cattiness ensues, while cousin insist that if there is anything good, she has to share. The presence of the cum bread gives away the Scholar's presence. Rui Zhu stabs the trunk, and when she finds blood on her knife, she carries it off to what I can only describe her sex lair.
01:11:10	The notorious bath scene. Yu Xiang goes to take a bath, and Dyer Wang, covered in sweat and wearily sharpening his axe, notices. Yu Xiang plays with a bath brush for a while until Dyer Wang dives in for some bath sex. It's pretty rapey at first (Dyer Wang stuffs the bath brush into Yu Xiang's mouth to keep her from crying out) but appears to take a turn for the more consensual later. (How woke do you expect a Hong Kong Category III based on a centuries-old novel to be? Also, how deep is this tub and how long can Wang Qi hold his breath during all this underwater sex?)
01:15:30	Master Iron Gate, reading a letter from his errant daughter. <sup>20</sup> Yu Xiang has been impregnated thanks to her aquatic sexytimes with Dyer Wang, and she and Dyer Wang have hit the road. At an isolated woodland spot Dyer Wang gives her some "tea" and has hired a palanquin for her, but it turns out to be a trap as Yu Xiang gets chained in. Gu Xian Niang (played by Carrie Ng Ka-Lai/吴家丽 Wú Jiālì), a high-rent madam, is brought in on her own palanquin and announces that Yu Xian has been sold, displaying the contract with what frankly strikes me as unseemly satisfaction. The herbal tea is an abortifacient, and the rocking is to help terminate Yu Xiang's inconvenient pregnancy. Poor Yu Xiang is then carried off in chains to Madam Gu's brothel in the capital city.
01:18:00	Meanwhile Scholar Wei is smoking opium (probably another anachronism but honestly who's counting at this point) with Rui Zhu in her boudoir of hedonism, falls asleep and dreams of being in Buddhist hell. <sup>21</sup> Wei Yang Shang is a tyrant sentenced "torture and rape until death."

19 The fruit of *Averrhoa carambola*, which you can easily find today in just about any Chinese supermarket. You'll probably have to provide your own seasoning, though.

20 In the source text Li Yu suggests that the fate of Yu Xiang is itself a form of karmic retribution directed at Master Iron Gate for having carried his rectitude to far into misanthropy.

21 Or so I interpret the matter. The scene doesn't have a direct parallel in the source text and appears to have been an invention of the screenwriters.

	He is whipped and tormented with penis-stimulation wheels, and undergoes a variety of other inventive sexualized tortures. (Lots of naked women in Buddhist hell, it would seem.) He is eventually carried in a crucifixion position and forced to have sex with a mare (karmic justice "this mare will be reunited with its mate").
01:21:20	Meanwhile, Yu Xiang is getting training on the finer points of oral and vaginal discipline and sex work from Madam Gu, further training with cooch calligraphy and swallowing gall on a string. "You'll be the top prostitute." It's good to have goals.
01:23:00	Scholar Wei brought home on a palanquin. He looks like a meth addict, or at least what I imagine a meth addict looks like, right down to at least one missing tooth, and his vision seems to be shot. A visit to the "Chamber of Revolving Heaven" is arranged, which as it happens is the very same brothel where his once-wife is working. (Master Sai is invited by instead insists he has a dual to go and fight.) There is an unfortunate moment of mutual recognition, delayed by his poor vision. (Yu Xiang is presented as, "the doctor." (She does not believe that the Scholar is her husband, because his equipment is too large.) There is some interesting squat sex between the two <sup>22</sup> before the recognition. Angry tit-squeezing. Yu Xiang runs off and by anyone catches up with her she has hanged herself...by two strands of red silk, a macabre echo the red silk stirrups she put her feet up on her wedding night.
01:31:00	Scholar Wei presents himself to Sack Monk, as does Master Sai. Master Sai has lost his hands in a dual. The Scholar is to be taken in as a monk. Wang Qi is also there, doing penance for his evil deeds in life. As Scholar Wei and Wang Qi embrace in mutual forgiveness, the credits roll, beginning with RECOMMENDED BY PENTHOUSE. I cannot help but wonder what is being recommended by <u>Penthouse</u> here: the renunciation of worldly things for the sake of achieving enlightenment? Seems unlikely.

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22 In the source text sex in this position is referred to as Dousing the Candle.

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