



The Plum in the Golden Vase, or, Chin P'ing Mei, Vol. 1: The Gathering

From Princeton University Press

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In this first of a planned five-volume set, David Roy provides a complete and annotated translation of the famous *Chin P'ing Mei*, an anonymous sixteenth-century Chinese novel that focuses on the domestic life of Hsi-men Ch'ing, a corrupt, upwardly mobile merchant in a provincial town, who maintains a harem of six wives and concubines. This work, known primarily for its erotic realism, is also a landmark in the development of the narrative art form--not only from a specifically Chinese perspective but in a world-historical context.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This first masterful volume of a projected five-volume translation of one of China's most important classical novels will be its most complete rendition in English. Alternately vulgarly colloquial and comprehensively erudite, the translation surpasses earlier efforts by Clement Egerton et al. in that it translates all the verse and prose as well. Originally published around 1618, this 100-chapter novel unravels the greed and political and sexual exploits of a Sung dynasty merchant. Infused with eroticism and high irony, the story is often seen to be a microcosm of 17th-century Chinese society. With its 40 period woodblock illustrations, this book is essential in any collection of world literature. The copious notes, scholarly and philosophical introduction, 60-page cast of characters, and commentary render it indispensable for the scholar of Chinese literature as well.

- *D.E. Perushek, Univ. of Tennessee Libs., Knoxville*

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Review

One of *Choice's* Outstanding Academic Titles for 1994

"[A] book of manners for the debauched. Its readers in the late Ming period likely hid it under their bedcovers."--**Amy Tan, *New York Times Book Review***

"[I]t is time to remind ourselves that *The Plum in the Golden Vase* is not just about sex, whether the numerous descriptions of sexual acts throughout the novel be viewed as titillating, harshly realistic, or, in Mr. Roy's words, intended 'to express in the most powerful metaphor available to him the author's contempt for the sort of persons who indulge in them.' The novel is a sprawling panorama of life and times in urban China, allegedly set safely in the Sung dynasty, but transparently contemporary to the author's late sixteenth-century world, as scores of internal references demonstrate. The eight hundred or so men, women, and children who appear in the book cover a breath-taking variety of human types, and encompass pretty much every imaginable mood and genre--from sadism to tenderness, from light humor to philosophical musings, from acute social commentary to outrageous satire."--**Jonathan Spence, *New York Review of Books***

"David Tod Roy enters with zest into the spirit and the letter of the original, quite surpassing ... other earlier versions."--**Paul St. John Mackintosh, *Literary Review***

"Reading Roy's translation is a remarkable experience."--**Robert Chatain, *Chicago Tribune Review of Books***

"What Roy has already accomplished [in this volume] is enough to establish his translation as definitive. . . . A tremendous achievement."--**Charles Horner**, *Commentary*

Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: Chinese

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