

THE PIMP AND THE MUSE (China)

(In memory of Teo Baba. Suisse painter that lived and died in (freak street) Kathmandu Nepal. Teo Baba gave 90% of his wealth to the orphans)

Play at giving—there is no more entertaining pastime. Give everything away and, when death—that ungrateful heir—comes to claim its part, it will find your coffers empty, the leftovers of a party and a derelict house. Lanza del Basto

In the mid-20th century in China, on the banks of the river Yang-Tse, lived a lewd pimp named Ching-Yao. He owned eight brothels, junks built of fine oak painted in rainbow colours, in accordance with his refined taste.

Ching-Yao was a profligate. His libertine temperament knew no virtue or integrity. For that atheist, lover of drugs, bacchanals and feasts, God and religion were pipe-dreams, legends, fables, primitive superstitions, the triumph of myth; in short, a collective neurosis which man had created to assuage the impotence he felt amid the supernatural forces surrounding him—a rationalisation of the ineffable mysteries of the universe. For that impostor, reincarnation was a fantasy invented by men who clung to life like shipwrecked seamen to a plank, those who refuse to accept that you only live once and that death is the threshold to nothingness. For that callous man, altruism and goodness were weaknesses of the heart.

“The only valid urges are self-centredness and avarice because they are the only worthwhile things,” said Ching-Yao. That heartless rascal lived by a creed of indulgence, ambition, appearances, perversion and unfettered orgies of unspeakable morbidity. Ching-Yao was a wheeler-dealer who cunningly amassed wealth by exploiting the purity of maidens and the lust of debauched rich men.

The basest passion of that brazen neurotic, that patriarch of filth and high priest of the gutter, was the delight he took in destroying someone's innocence. Carrying a bag full of gold coins (some of them, counterfeit), Ching-Yao used to approach poor villages and seduce young peasants by promising them lavish luxuries, fantastic illusions intended to rob them of their virginity, satiate himself with them and then sell them to honorable clients. His best patrons were the old patriarchs of the system, the high priests of infamy who earn dirty money with clean hands.

The grand pimp liked to go by the name "hurricane in the mist", a preacher of ideas of salvation and, to arouse the darkest passions in his wealthy clientele, he wrote on the stern of each junk aphorisms that appeared to synthesize the callous destruction of man's purest and loftiest sentiments.

For that incorrigible lecher, love and compassion were a disease of the heart, an iconoclastic sentiment that would end up destroying the great saviour of humankind—the goddess Freedom.

The daunting phrases adorning the brothel walls were designed to devastate good, order, generosity and all noble sentiments. Like invisible darts, they pierced the minds of his clientele, arousing their dark side and goading them to amass greater riches. Ching-Yao's regulars praised the eloquence of his oratory, worthy of an incorrigible rebel. They read as follows:

Why make a woman unhappy when you can make so many happy?

Marriage is the tomb of love.

If you fall in love, you're a conqueror vanquished by your conquest.

Be sensual, not sentimental.

Woman does not fall in love with you, but with your sperm—the child you can give her—and, subsequently, all the comforts, security and favours you will shower on her and her child.

Within this junk, the temple of Eros, the man is king—let her be your slave. In love, she is the queen—don't become a slave to her.

Flee from love like a bird in a burning forest, so that the fire will not burn your wings of freedom.

My junks are temples of self-knowledge. Enjoy the senses until you are exhausted, until you are satiated, for that moment will be like a torch lighting something deep inside you which the high priests and Church admonitions have forced you to repress.

If you sow seeds of generosity you will collect ingratitude. Help the conceited that he will never forgive you.

Cut off the wings of the dove of love to prevent it from fluttering in your heart.

Love between a man and a woman is twofold egoism, the most formidable illusion invented by society. What unites couples is not love but convenience.

Politicians seasoned in the art of oratory, generals bedecked with the metals of victory, given to reminiscing about their tragic feats, and bankers, salaried moneylenders, more dangerous than a piranha in a bath-tub, were Ching-Yao's regulars. They rented the junks for exorbitant sums and sailed for several days on end, revelling in the solace of the orgies, replete with music, singers and dancing girls⁽¹⁾.

Ching-Yao knew the dark and bright sides of his soul in the extreme. Despite having plunged into the darkest side of life, despite his blood being a drug-tainted cesspool and his mind corrupted by money, he was a creative, sensitive person with a keen curiosity about discovering new pleasures.

Ching-Yao, like a visionary dazzled by his own light, shouted out to the winds that routine nourishes the dragon of boredom and ends up withering the most beautiful flowers in the garden of the love of life and happiness. He upheld freedom like a champion, with

(1). In China, dancing girls were high-class concubines, connoisseurs of the art of love. The oldest of them was highly respected.

the same courage as a warrior defending his castle.

But the heart is weak and, when he least expected it, the insatiable seducer, the cage-destroyer and harbinger of the darkest ideas, the champion of a new school, was suddenly ensnared in the alluring arms of love. Cupid pierced him with his seraphic arrow, lacerating his heart for good. The chosen one was a maiden named Kuan-Yin, like the Chinese moon goddess, whom he had purchased for a tidy sum from her father, a nobleman and regular of the brothels who had frittered away his fortune in gambling and ruinous luxuries.

What stole the heart of that preacher of freedom, that out-and-out renegade of Confucius' anathemas, was the innocence and purity of that spring flower opening out to the gentle warmth of the rising sun. Her crystal-clear voice was like fairy-song and her deep, clear eyes like stream water. Her breath bore the scent of innocence, her breasts were as taut and delicious as two peaches and her smooth skin like a lily petal caressed by a dewdrop lit by dawn light.

The immaculate beauty of innocence is capable of moving the most perverse of men. Ching-Yao, who thought that all the springs of sentiment in his heart had dried up, succumbed to the irresistible power of love. His intake of drugs came to an abrupt halt; he ordered the provocative aphorisms on his junks to be erased, embraced the Buddhist religion and became a fervent believer in God and reincarnation.

On one night of the full-moon, in the main pavilion of his luxurious mansion on the riverbank, they were seated on red silk cushions embroidered in golden melons and silver butterflies. Kuan-Yin, as naked as a flower, in all her shapely, virginal splendour, stroked a harp called Ku-Chang⁽²⁾ with her fine, ivory-white fingers and recited the following poem by Chang-Heng

(2). The Sudanese harp, from West Java, named kecapi probably comes from the Chinese Ku-chang.

from the Han dynasty. The words floated out of her mouth like the scent of a bouquet of roses:

*“Having taken the good opportunity of meeting you,
I have now entered your women’s quarters.
Although my love hankers after our first union,
I am fearful, as though about to touch boiling water.
I have no talents, but shall exhaust my abilities
So as to acquit myself of a consort’s duties.
I shall take good care in supervising the proviant,
And reverently, I shall assist in the ancestral sacrifices.
In my thought I long to be changed into your bed mat,
So as to act as a cover for your square couch.
I wish to be changed into a silken coverlet and canopy,
So as to protect you from draughts and cold.
I have swept clean the pillow and the bed mat,
And I have filled the burner with rare incense.
Let us now lock the double-door with its golden lock,
And light the lamp to fill our room with its brilliance.
I shed my robe and remove my paint and powder,
And roll out the picture scroll by the pillow side.
The plain girl I shall take as my instructress,
So that we can practice all variety of postures,
Those that an ordinary husband has but rarely seen,
Such as taught by Tien-Lao to the Yellow Emperor.
No joy shall equal the delights of this first night,
This shall never be forgotten, However old we may grow! (3)*

The river was like a mirror of the universe, reflecting the infinite pearls of distant galaxies. The moon, with its mother-of-pearl light, caressed her innocent, untainted body. Her virginity was like a girl awakening, her passion like a flock of doves startled by a tiger.

Ching-Yao, seduced by the harp music, by the seraphic tone of her voice, by that fairy-like body and by the way she recited the poem, gently caressed her feet (in those times, the feet were a woman’s most private, most erotic part). With a mastery commensurate with his age and experience in the art of Aphrodite, he kissed her all over her body, as if savouring the finest delicacy

(3). *Sexual life in Ancient China*, Robert van Gulik

as an offering to Venus. As he nibbled on her neck and lips, the great satyr whispered in her ear. "In the divine circle of wisdom, the extremes meet—pleasure, pain, heat, cold, happiness, sadness. We are so different—I, a pervert, and you, so pure—that we are similar. Your exceptional beauty, kindness, innocence and mastery of poem recital are like a strong wind in a forest fanning the flames of passion I feel for you."

They enjoyed the delights of love until the eye of day peeped coyly over the horizon, painting the sky like a Turner canvas with a spray of colour never seen.

Ching-Yao, well versed in the importance of controlling one's passion, of preventing one's elixir from leaving one's body, led Kuang-Yin three times to the paradise of pleasure. At length, Kuang-Yin fell asleep, like a flower that closes up to the cold of night.

The next morning they savoured figs and *lechis* with buffalo-milk custard and cherry juice. Kuang-Yin, her lips relaxed and her eyes radiating satisfaction like the sun, caressed Ching-Yao's hand and, with a gaze that appeared to lay his soul bare, said softly:

"Allow me, with deep respect, young and unskilled as I am in the secrets of life, to give someone wiser and more experienced than me a piece of advice: my father was one of the richest men in Yu-Nan province. Gambling, like a serpent in his blood, put paid to his fortune and his life. Do not follow in the footsteps of my deceased father. *Consume your wealth before your wealth consumes you. Do not be the wealthiest man in the cemetery.* You must know how to use the double-edged blade of your money so as to avoid cutting your own flesh." Kuang-Yin paused and then fell taciturnly silent for a long while, her eyes and lips crossed with sorrow. Then she continued:

"The world is moving headlong towards the abyss of the Great Chaos. Injustice, like an enormous larva, is getting fatter, turning into a deformed monster. The rich are becoming richer; the poor, poorer. Overpopulation and unemployment are growing and the food

supply is dwindling. A good man whose family feel cold and hunger can turn into a criminal. Easy to understand because in those circumstances we may do the same. “If we do not take drastic measures to alleviate human injustice, by the year 2020 humanity will have reached the limit of its endurance. My Taoist master calls it ‘the ceiling of life and death’. We shall return to the law of the jungle. Hunger and hardship will turn human beings into animals. A man in order to survive will need a knife or a gun to feed his family. You and I cannot alleviate suffering in the world, but we can carry away a grain of sand from the desert of injustice.

“Set aside enough to live on without having to work, and give away the rest to the needy. But do it carefully, for a good deed done clumsily can produce harmful effects. Giving is detachment, freedom is the prerogative of kings and receiving is the pleasure of lackeys. A saint cannot become an unscrupulous tyrant, but a tyrant can become a saint.”

Kuan-Yin’s eloquence pierced Ching-Yao’s soul like an invisible arrow. He sold his brothels, set aside what he required to live on and gave the rest of the proceeds to the needy. He led a frugal life in Kuan-Yin’s company, doing away with the luxuries that had once characterized his lifestyle. They had a boy and a girl. Ching-Yao died while laughing in Kuan-Yin’s arms at the honorable age of a hundred years⁽⁴⁾. Some say that Ching-Yao was the wisest and happiest Warrior in China; others, that he had gone mad, because ever-present mundaneness masks the difference between wisdom and madness.

The epitaph on his tomb reads: “*It is easy to be born, but difficult to be human*”⁽⁵⁾. ■

(4). “At the exact moment of death, if a person’s own note is sounded, it will coordinate the two streams of energy and eventually rupture the life thread, but the knowledge of this is too dangerous to transmit yet and can only later be given.” A. A. Bailey: *Treatise on White Magic*, p. 506.

(5). Chinese saying.