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The Perfumed Garden

Sheikh Nefzaoui

Translated by **Richard Burton**

Read by **Jonathan Keeble**



1	The Perfumed Garden	8:27
2	Introduction	9:22
3	Chapter 1: Concerning Praise-worthy Men	8:41
4	Next day the prophetess mounted horse	9:10
5	Bahloul then began thus...	6:24
6	Bahloul recited as follows...	7:36
7	The sultan's daughter continued her ride...	7:12
8	Chapter 2: Concerning Women who Deserve to be Praised	3:54
9	The Story of the Negro Dorérame	9:20
10	The king then began to look for a place...	8:24
11	The king then went to the inner door...	7:32
12	However, the negro wanted to draw the woman...	6:43
13	The king then asked for the reason...	7:56
14	Chapter 3: About Men who are to be Held in Contempt	3:25
15	Chapter 4: About Women who are to be Held in Contempt	4:45
16	Chapter 5: Relating to the Act of Generation	8:00
17	Chapter 6: Concerning Everything that is Favourable...	3:54
18	Sundry Positions for the Coitus	7:09
19	First Manner: El asemeud (the stopperage)	9:41
20	Seventeenth Manner: Dok el outed (driving the peg home)	7:41

21	I shall now treat of coition...	8:29
22	As regards the copulation of a very small man...	3:58
23	If a little woman is lying on her back...	6:44
24	It is well for the lover of coition...	7:44
25	I have composed on this subject the following lines...	8:15
26	Chapter 7: Of Matters which are Injurious...	7:22
27	As injurious may be considered coition in the bath...	8:19
28	Chapter 8: The Sundry Names Given to the Sexual Parts of Man	6:53
29	If one dreams that he gets out of a window...	9:13
30	The name of el aïr is derived...	6:13
31	El dekhhal (the housebreaker)	7:19
32	Chapter 9: Sundry Names Given to the Sexual Organs of Women	5:17
33	The man who dreams of cohabiting with women...	4:47
34	He who dreams of seeing himself mounted upon...	6:55
35	Abou Belâoum (the glutton)	5:42
36	El sabeur (the resigned)	8:34
37	The History of Djoâidi and Fadehat et Djemal	9:35
38	She began to laugh...	9:44
39	Chapter 10: Concerning the Organs of Generation of Animals	4:22
40	Chapter 11: On the Deceits and Treacheries of Women	8:23

41	The Story of the Lover Against his Will	8:27
42	Story of the Woman with Two Husbands	8:34
43	The Story of the Man who was an Expert in Strata	8:45
44	When asked for explanations...	7:41
45	Chapter 13: Concerning the Causes of Enjoyment...	5:33
46	Chapter 14: Description of the Uterus of Sterile Women...	2:51
47	Chapter 15: Concerning the Causes of Impotence in Men	2:16
48	Chapter 16: Undoing of Aiguillettes (Impotence for a Time)	2:37
49	Chapter 17: Prescriptions for Increasing the Dimensions...	4:11
50	Chapter 18: Of Things that Take Away the Bad Smell...	2:34
51	Chapter 19: Instructions with Regard to Pregnancy...	2:14
52	Chapter 20: Forming the Conclusion of this Work...	3:58
53	The History of Zohra	6:17
54	Abou el Heïdja left the negro in charge of the horses...	9:05
55	Now among the virgins that were present...	9:50
56	Appendix to the Autograph Edition: To the Reader	6:56
57	Everyone knows, in fact, the grave inconveniences...	6:07
58	However it may be, as regards the origin of the text...	7:05

Total time: 6:34:43

Sheikh Nefzaoui

The Perfumed Garden

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The prominence of erotic literature comes and goes with fashion – at least in the West. The extraordinary success of *Fifty Shades of Grey* in 2012 was more a reflection of where society had arrived in terms of public acknowledgement and acceptance of things erotic, rather than any particular merit of the E. L. James trilogy.

There have been other times when the public has endorsed such kinds of literature. The free licentious ways of 18th-century England allowed novels such as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* to emerge in 1749 at virtually the same time as John Cleland's much more untrammelled

Fanny Hill, which was published in 1748. Of course, Fielding is literary in his suggestiveness, while Cleland pulled few punches, had fewer literary pretensions and was duly prosecuted for 'corrupting the King's subjects'.

Jump forward a couple of decades and we come to the start of the Marquis de Sade's unpleasantly violent oeuvre, which put the spotlight on another corner of mankind's fascination with lascivious activity. Of course, neither the activity, nor the recording of it was new. It was only as a result of his writings that a name was given to it: sadism.

True pornographic material, often

raw and basic, has surfaced in every age. Underneath the covers of Victorian England, there was a wealth of the stuff, led, perhaps, by *My Secret Life*.

The 20th century eventually opened the doors to erotic art and literature of all kinds, but only after battles were fought for many years over books as varied as *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. To gain this freedom, art had to contest with religious niceties, and prurience (delightful or nasty) coloured both sides.

How far away this all is from the open enjoyment expressed by the two great classic erotic texts of the East: the *Kama Sutra*, from the Indian yogic tradition, and *The Perfumed Garden*, from the Arab tradition. They are very different, of course. For a start, the *Kama Sutra* is much older, dating from somewhere between the 4th and 2nd century BCE, while the *Perfumed Garden* was written some two millennia later, between 1410 and 1434 CE. Again, the *Kama Sutra* is far more didactic in tone and detailed in instruction, going into considerable physical detail worthy of any Hatha Yoga book. On the other hand, *The Perfumed*

Garden mixes commentary and advice with entertaining and stimulating stories, which lighten the reading pleasure.

It was unknown in the West until the bold, characterful and highly intelligent linguist and explorer Richard Burton first translated it in 1886, and it is this translation that is used here. His language has grandeur with wit – an engaging combination – and he navigates deftly through the intimate, the sly, the informative and the instructional with a lightness of touch. Though an Arabist (most famous for going disguised to Mecca and producing an attractive translation of *One Thousand and One Nights*), he used, as his source material, an Arabic copy of *The Perfumed Garden*, which had been printed in France and was unfortunately (probably for reasons of propriety) incomplete. Some sections, including those to do with homosexuality, were missing. Towards the end of his life, Burton worked again on the text, but, incomplete at his death, the work was lost when his wife burnt many of his manuscripts.

Nevertheless, the essence of Sheikh

Nefzawi's work is here. Nefzawi's name indicates that he came from the Berber tribe of that name based in southern Tunisia, and it became widely known throughout the Arab world. Its tone is not weighted by moral observances but by practical enjoyment – intimate details of sex are considered in terms of pleasure, not guilt. Also to be noted is the high importance given to mutual pleasure between the man and the woman, as the text moves from advice on complicated positions to the stories of handsomely endowed Dorérame and his sorties into the women's quarters of the palace.

Would this text stand up to the kind of scientific scrutiny that we have been accustomed to throughout the 20th and 21st centuries? What would our research scientists make of Sheikh Nefzawi's analysis of different vulvas, such as *El deukkak* (the crusher) or *El tseguil* (the importunate)? Or how about his 'prescriptions for increasing the dimensions of small male members and making them splendid' (some of which involve anointing with ginger and honey, or potions of mixed pepper, lavender, galanga and musk)? Then again,

for heightening a man's strength, there is much that can be done beforehand in the kitchen by eating asparagus fried in fat with yolks of egg poured over it. Have these recipes been put to the test in the 21st-century laboratory? If not, why not? Is modern medication just too easy a solution?

Burton has been accused of legerdemain in his translation, indulging too frequently in invention, interpolation and exaggeration, and other English translations are now available. But this is the classic translation of one of the world's greatest classic erotic texts, with its gleam in the eye and the spring in the step.

Notes by Nicolas Soames



Jonathan Keeble combines his audio work with a busy theatre and TV career. He has featured in over 500 radio plays for the BBC, from Shakespeare to Sherlock Holmes. An award-winning reader, Jonathan has recorded over 100 audiobooks.

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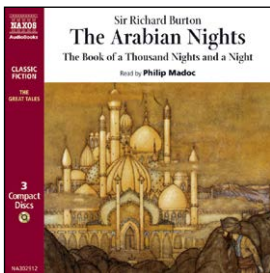
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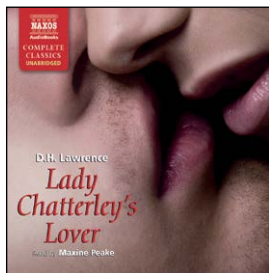
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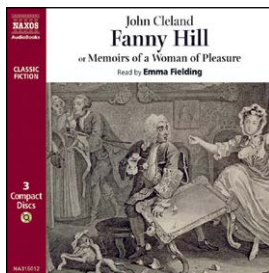
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The **Sheikh Nefzaoui** *Perfumed Garden*

Translated by **Richard Burton**

Read by **Jonathan Keeble**

The 15th-century Arabian text *The Perfumed Garden* stands with India's *The Karma Sutra* as one of the greatest erotic texts in classic literature. It is primarily a manual for sexual activity of all kinds, dealing in some considerable detail with physical attributes, foreplay, coital positions and advice for how to achieve greater satisfaction for both partners, as well as sexual health. In addition, it contains some enlivening stories of sexual encounters and sexual needs fulfilled. Jonathan Keeble reads Richard Burton's famous 1886 translation with aplomb.



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