



TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

Empire of Wives

*In the voice of the Yellow Emperor of China
(c.2697-2597BCE)*

Misshapen Mo Mu—
do not curse me for propagations of lineage
or be-groan bedroom arts
or avert your eyes from needles
soothing stagnations in my head.
I am sorry for war,
devastations that cast your world dim.
I view your inland sea
more as a reservoir of kindness—
even my vain Fang Lei knows to slice bamboo
to rake hysteria from your hair.
And what of Tong Yu, with her culinary chop-chops,
feeding you parcels of wine-seeped pig's trotters—
she's Goddess of Fattened Forms,
she'll keep your waist wide as an oak.
Mo Mu, I am certain it is only the grievous peak
of your spine, that scares away ghosts.

Michelle Leber

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