

Renditions

Chinese texts—

Among the flowers that bloom from plants and trees, on land, and in the water, there are a multitude that merit man's favor. The poet T'ao Yuan-ming of the Chin period was fond of the chrysanthemum. Ever since Li, founder of the T'ang dynasty, all the world has loved the peony. I alone love the lotus, because it is a flower that grows out of the mud without being tainted, one that bathes in the clear water of the pond without seeming indecent. The lotus has a stem, hollow within and straight on the outside, that creeps not, neither does it branch off; it has a fragrance that is the purer when spread into the distance. There it stands neatly rooted, capable of being admired from afar but not to be fondled. So I say: the chrysanthemum is the hermit among flowers; the peony is the wealthy and well-born among flowers; and the lotus is the gentleman among flowers. Alas! After T'ao one seldom hears of the lover of chrysanthemums. Is there a soul to join me in admiring the lotus? Small wonder that their names are legion who lavish their love on the peony!

—CHOU LIEN-CH'I (CHOU TUN-I)
"My Love for the Lotus"

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