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years old. The steel or whalebone corset began to shape the child's body, so that when she became of marriageable age, she had the perfect size waist, which means the prospective husband could put his hands around it (Write).

Like the Padaung neck ring wearer, the long-term corset wearer would develop serious physical problems. Usually they were gastrointestinal because of the constriction of the waist area. Often liver and kidney displacement occurred as well as respiratory distress, uterine prolapses, muscle and spine deformation along with swelling of extremities (Write). Luckily for women, the corset-wearing fashion lost favor in the 1920's, but the beautifying practices in the United States did not end with it.

In modern times, the attainment of beauty can come through the scalpel of the plastic surgeon. Today more than ever, elective plastic surgery to beautify is done in various forms: liposuction, face lifts, chemical peels, or implants. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, in 1999, 89% of these surgeries were performed on women and most of them involved breast implants (Plastic Surgery Information Service). Breast augmentation involves having a slit done under the breast and a saline-filled sack inserted between the pectoral muscle and the breast. The sack increases the breast size, firms it, and lifts the breast up to give it more sensuous look. The same as the other beautifying practices, breast implant surgery has its share of pain and health risks. Some of them include hardening or dissipation of the implant, infection, and loss of sensation (Plastic Surgery Information Service).

In ancient China, women made themselves more beautiful by foot binding, which like breast implants, was a painful and debilitating practice. It began in the 10th century, and in the following two hundred years became rampant among all classes of women. The goal of foot binding was to stop the growth of feet since small feet were viewed as sexually attractive. Thus,

it became necessary for Chinese women to bind their feet in order to find husbands and achieve a good life.

The process of foot binding was very painful and started when a girl was four to six years old. The procedure involved folding tightly the smaller four toes under, toward the ball of the foot. A ten-foot long and two-inch wide silk cloth was wrapped from the top of the foot around the folded toes and then around the heel. The tight binding brought the heel and ball of the foot together like the bending of a bow, which eventually led to the breaking of the instep of the foot. Once the binding was complete, the girl was forced to walk and begin the process of breaking her toes and instep, a very painful practice that lasted for at least two years. She continued to wear bindings for ten years, so the feet would not re-position themselves to their natural shape. During this time, the girl would embroider her own shoes which were then sent to a prospective husband by way of a matchmaker, so he could judge her skill with a needle as well as the size of her feet (Jackson 35).

John Fairbank writes that, "The small foot was called a *'golden lotus'* or *'golden lily'* (*ch'inlien*) and was much celebrated in poems and essays by male enthusiasts" (287). A Sung poet, Su Tung-p'o, who lived in 1036-1101, wrote this about a Chinese woman who is considered socially and cosmically fitted through foot binding:

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→ Anointed with fragrance, she takes lotus steps;
Though often sad, she steps with swift lightness.
She dances like the wind, leaving no physical trace.
Another stealthily but happily tries on the palace style,
But feels such distress when she tries to walk! (Fairbank 287)

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All these beautifying practices helped women to attain a better position in society through marriage and consequently better life. That's why, "When the anti-footbinding movement began at the end of the 19th century, many mothers, and daughters too, stubbornly clung to it to avoid the public shame of having large feet" (Fairbank 290). To this day, women continue practices that make them more attractive to men. They need not be as drastic as foot binding, but making the foot look more attractive through wearing the bird-beak pointed stiletto shoe, or a five-inch high platform are designed to elevate the leg and make it more sexually appealing to men. Are such shoes safe, or comfortable? No one asks.

I recently interviewed a co-worker who had breast augmentation performed two years ago, and she stated, "I have never felt more confident and beautiful in my life. I wish I could have done this procedure years ago" (Twilliger). She regarded the pain and expense as well worth the results. It is for these reasons that women will continue to do almost anything for beauty.

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