

The Types of Love and Marriage Stories in Jian Deng Xin Hua

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Abstract: Jian Deng Xin Hua is a pioneering work of classical Chinese novels in Ming Dynasty, which plays an important role in the history of Chinese classical novels. Among the stories in Jian Deng Xin Hua, love and marriage stories are the representatives and these stories have the characteristics of typification. These love and marriage stories in Jian Deng Xin Hua can be divided into four types: the happy and pure love stories in the late Yuan Dynasty, such as *The Adventures of Wei Pond*, *The Lian Fang Tower* and *Golden Phoenix Hairpin*; The tragic love stories, such as *The Biography of Aiqing*, *The Biography of Cuicui* and *The Qiuxiang Pavilion*, all of these stories show the steadfast faithful love during the alternation of Yuan Dynasties and Ming Dynasties; the couple parting love stories, love between the living one and ghost. It reflects the author's sadness of being apart from lovers forever. Such as *The Biography of The Woman in Green*, *Teng Mu's Drunken Journey to the Garden*; the point-of-view stories, in other words, stories show the author Qu You's attitudes about life with love and marriage, such as *Peony Lamp*, *Send Plum*. These four types of stories have their own uniqueness and internal relations, which are closely related to Qu you's lyric literature views and his life experience the alternation of Yuan Dynasties and Ming Dynasties.

1. Introduction

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2. Introduction

Many of the stories in *Jian Deng Xin Hua* have obvious characteristics of marketplace culture, which are mainly reflected in several romantic love stories with the background of Jiangsu and Zhejiang in the late Yuan Dynasty, such as *The Adventures of Wei Pond*, *The Lian Fang Tower* and *Golden Phoenix Hairpin*. Through the works of citizen's love, the author expresses his recollection of the good past life. This kind of story has the following common characteristics: firstly, they are all set in the late Yuan Dynasty. *The Adventures of Wei Pond* is in Zhishun period, while *Golden Phoenix Hairpin* and *The Lian Fang Tower* are in Dade period and Zhizheng period respectively. Secondly, the location of the story takes place in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. *Phoenix Hairpin* takes place in Yangzhou. The hero and heroine in *The Lian Fang Tower* meet in Wujun. In *The Adventures of Wei Pond*, the hero, a scholar Wang lives in Jinling and the heroine lives near Songjiang. Thirdly, the characters in the stories are mainly businessmen, followed by literati. Lan Ying and Hui Ying in

The Lian Fang Tower are the daughters of businessmen, but they are brilliant. They sing poems and prose in harmony with the scholar Zheng, and eventually get married. In *Golden Phoenix Hairpin*, Xingniang's father is a rich man in Yangzhou. In *The Adventures of Wei Pond*, the scholar Wang ran into a good relationship because he went to Songjiang to collect rents. Last, in the story, the protagonists and heroines are always in love with each other, often in poetry. Their interaction is obviously romantic, and they are not bound by etiquette and law in the ancient time. In *Golden Phoenix Hairpin*, Xingniang attracts the scholar Cui with *golden phoenix hairpin*. In *The Lian Fang Tower*, Lan Ying and Hui Ying invite the scholar Zheng with litchi. In *The Adventures of Wei Pond*, there is daughter of a businessman who runs a restaurant, flirt the scholar Wang with the eyes, and they also meet in a dream. All these behaviors are forbidden at that time. However, the author doesn't deny this kind of combination, but arranges a happy ending for them.

It is worth noting that the story of *Golden Phoenix Hairpin*, the heroine Xingniang's died and turned to be a ghost, and her soul got into her sister's body, then she still was in love with the scholar Cui. After the marriage, Xiangniang made her sister Qingniang's soul leave the body, and then continued the love with Cui. From the plots of the story, the love story between Qing Niang, Cui and Xingniang was not only mixed with sadness and joy, but also mixed with the plots of ghost love. But the reason why it is classified into the first type of story is that the author's ideological tendency is to praise the romantic love of "death can live". The soul of Qing Niang is not a tragedy. The ghost love between Qing Niang and Cui is not a clue to show the sadness of leaving, but only a means of romance.

From the analysis of these articles, it is obvious that this kind of romantic marriage stories with the background of late Yuan Dynasty has the characteristics of citizenry and lyricism. The types of the protagonists are usually businessmen with an outsider personality. Their pursuits are civic, which is in line with the characteristics of the new civic class. They are no longer bound by traditional ethics, but affirm their feelings and desires. Therefore, these stories also have obvious lyrical characteristics of emphasizing nature, feelings and desires. The natural environment appears in the form of background, which provides a place for stories to take place and adds more romantic elements to these comic stories. It is under the beautiful scenery that the love between men and women naturally occurs. Lust is the most important factor to promote the love between men and women. The author doesn't obscure to describe the love affairs of men and women, and the author lets these love affairs occupy the major part of every story. The love between men and women is often based on the combination of sex at the beginning. For example, the women in *The Lian Fang Tower* and *Golden Phoenix Hairpin* even invited men to chat by lying on the bed and putting heads on pillows. It's worth noting that men and women who attract by lust once make up their minds, they swear an oath not to change mind and their parents often do not stop them, which is quite different from the traditional "parents' orders and matchmaker's words", and has a preliminary tendency to emancipate the mind.

3. Sentimentality and Criticism: Love Tragedy in Troubled Times

Based on the war in the late Yuan and early Ming Dynasty, the second type of story describes the love tragedy caused by the change of dynasties. These stories of the second type share the same plot pattern: love, separation, meeting, separation. The plot is tortuous, euphemistic and touching. The reason for the separation of the heroine and the heroine comes from external force. Their reunion after the separation does not change the tragic ending, but only increases the sadness of the whole story. In *The Biography of Aiqing*, Luo Aiai, a prostitute, was coerced by the Miao army and then killed herself. Her soul met her husband in front of the tomb and her soul had to leave the next morning. In *The Biography of Cuicui*, Liu Cuicui and Jin Ding fell in love and got married. Later,

Cuicui was abducted by General Li and became a concubine. Jin Ding and Cuicui met each other in the capacity of a brother and sister, but they died of depression one after another. In *The Qiuxiang Pavilion*, Yang Caicai and the scholar Shang had a childhood sweetheart and made an engagement. Later, they separated because of the war, but they met again. They could only express their love through letters. This structural pattern of separation after meeting is more tragic than simple separation.

Different from the first type of story, the love between the hero and the heroine in these stories does not come from talent, beauty and love at first sight, but comes from a deep emotional foundation. In *The Biography of Cuicui* and *The Qiuxiang Pavilion*, the protagonists and heroines are childhood friends who have known each other since childhood and have decided to get married on the basis of mutual understanding. In *The Biography of Aiqing*, although Luo Aiqing was a prostitute and was married by Zhar because of her talent and appearance, in their marriage, they were deeply attached to each other, so Luo Aiqing couldn't bear to become other man's wife and committed suicide. Her suicide is not the need of "keeping chastity", but the love of her heart, the basis of mutual understanding. Being together based on the mutual understanding, and then separate, this adds more tragic atmosphere of the story.

This type of story shows the author's serious criticism of the war more or less, which has the characteristics of literature in troubled times. In the turbulent times of alternation of Yuan Dynasty and Ming dynasties, Qu You felt the change of the times' fate, he wrote works to reflect his tragic life with tragic love, and expressed his depression and crucial social reality with the words of the characters in stories. In *The Biography of Aiqing*, the death of Aiqing was due to the capture of Pingjiang by Zhang Shicheng during the Zhizheng period. The Prime Minister of Zhejiang, Da Shitiemuni, summoned the Miao military appointed Yang Wan to take part in politics for Zhejiang Province and set up defense in Jiaying. Yang Wan did not restrain the soldiers, and the Miao army plundered the residents. After Ai Qing's death, Qu You wrote in his poem *Qin Yuan Chun* that "the eyes are full of fighting, and when the fate is weak, he will meet a lot of misfortunes"[1]. In *The Biography of Cuicui*, the separation of Cuicui and the scholar Jin is also due to the rebellion of Zhang Shicheng and his brother in Gaoyou. After the two lovers met, Cuicui wrote in her poem: "when there is fighting on the frontier, we are full of old worries and new hatred. Although the intestines have been broken, it is difficult to break the emotions, if we can't live together, and then we will die together"[1]. In *The Qiuxiang Pavilion*, Yang Caicai and Shang fell in love. Because of Zhang Shicheng's rebellion and chaos, they lost and they couldn't find each other. Caicai's left a posthumous note to Shang, it was written that "since the previous dynasty, they lost their Zheng Dynasty, many counties suffered terrible wars, there were serious injuries and small deaths, and the only law was a law of the jungle, we were in trouble for several decades. Occasionally survive, a reason for no sense could let us run from East to West, left and right to escape"[1]. These stories are based on real historical events, and the emotion of the characters in the book is just Qu You's intuitive feeling of the war.

4. Sympathy and Reflection: the Sadness of the Change of Dynasties

In the third type of story, *The Biography of The Woman in Green* and *Teng Mu's Drunken Journey to the Garden* have very similar plots. They are both based on the Yuan Dynasty and tell the love stories between the dead women of the Song Dynasty and the men of the Yuan Dynasty. The hero and the heroine in each story met by chance, and after three years of good time, they were separated because of "the end of fate", and the ending of the hero was quite similar. One of them "went to Yandang Mountain to collect herbal medicine, and then never returned to his beloved"[1]. The other "became a monk in Lingyin Temple, and spent all his life there"[1]. The

ending of the two heroes is full of Buddhism and Taoism and seclusion feelings, echoing with the fantastic and treacherous love between people and ghosts, giving people a kind of real and illusory hazy feeling. From the point of view of ideological tendency, the two stories are based on the clue of human ghost love, and repose the author's perception of history and feelings of home and country. *Teng Mu's Drunken Journey to the Garden* expresses the sadness of separation at the time of the change of dynasty through the words of the palace maids. *The Biography of The Woman in Green* criticizes the treachery and cruelty of the treacherous minister Jia Sidao and reflects on the death of the Southern Song Dynasty. However, the structure of *The Biography of The Woman in Green* is more complicated than that of *Teng Mu's Drunken Journey to the Garden*. The love between the protagonist Teng and the woman in green is more sorrowful and touching. They got married in the previous life, and they were still together in this life, but they both died because of the treacherous minister Jia's killing, which adds more emotional factors to their combination. At the same time, Qu You takes their love story as a clue to describe the social reality of treacherous officials in the late Southern Song Dynasty, and to reflect on history. *The Biography of The Woman in Green* reflects the sadness of troubled times with love tragedy, which lays the foundation for the later literary works such as Peach Blossom Fan.

These two stories are full of strong humanistic care. The heroine of *Teng Mu's Drunken Journey to the Garden* is a palace maid in the period of emperor LiZong of Song Dynasty, who died at a young age. The heroine in *The Biography of The Woman in Green* is Jia Sidao's chess waitress. Their status is not noble, different from the general sense of the ladies. But the author is full of deep sympathy for them, arranged a good relationship for them in the stories, satisfied their yearning for love, and this shows a strong humanitarian spirit.

Through these two stories, Qu You connects the history of the last years of the Southern Song Dynasty. In fact, he implicitly expresses his feelings and thoughts about the changes of Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties. In *Teng Mu's Drunken Journey to the Garden*, the palace maids recited the poem "all the intimate friends died, who can I talked with freely"[1], which is a true portrayal of Qu You's life. During the change of Yuan Dynasties and Ming Dynasties, the economy and culture of the rich southern area of the Yangtze River suffered a heavy blow. At the beginning of the founding of the Ming Dynasty, the rulers were suspicious of the literati and were worried about the Confucians. Losing the environment and object of poetry and prose, Qu You was so sad to live in this social reality. In *The Biography of the Woman in Green*, the woman in green narrates her tragic past life, exposes the cruelty of the treacherous minister Jia Sidao, and satirizes Jia Sidao's fate has been decided, he will be punished because he does all kinds of evil. In fact, it reflects Qu You's dissatisfaction and indignation with the dark side of the society in the early Ming Dynasty. But Qu You, as a scholar, has no good way to help the world. He can only express his personal feelings through novels. Therefore, the endings of the two novels are not satisfactory. Women are not allowed to leave against fate, while men choose to retire. The woman in the story is the symbol of the beautiful world in Qu You's heart, while the man is the symbol of Qu You himself. This kind of ending symbolizes that Qu You gives up his pursuit after struggle.

5. Seclusion and Alienation: a Life Attitude Tending to Be Plain

Compared with the first three types of stories, *Peony Lamp* and *Send Plum* are more special. At first glance, they have no clear theme, and there is no similarity in structure and content between the two stories. But in fact, Qu You's plain attitude towards life is hidden in the different ways of expression of the two stories.

Peony Lamp tells the story of the scholar Qiao being seduced by Fu Lijing, a beautiful female ghost, and being hurt by it, and then just followed the female ghost to do the evil things, and finally

be suppressed by the Taoist with high legal power. In this story, the marriage and love story is no longer the focus of the author's narration, but it is presented as a leading in. The characters have no obvious distinction between good and evil, and their behaviors are suited with their own characteristics. Whether it is because of lust for beauty, seduced by female ghost, or young woman ghost who died, eager for love, or was in danger, the Taoist and wizard Wei who fought demon, they all have full reasons for their actions, which are full of contradictory "mortals". As a common man, Qiao, when he met beautiful women, he fell in love at first sight, it is natural; Fu Liqing, a ghost, died in a young age, and did not enjoy the sweetness of love, and there should be not no criticism about her love with Qiao; the master Wei and the Taoist were entrusted by people to subdue evil spirits, their behaviors were welcome by people. Several characters in the story are in the net of the world and connected with each other, there is no wrong and no right. As a result, Fu Liqing and Qiao were finally suppressed, the Taoist lost finally could not be found, and master Wei became dumb. In this story, the author lost his subjectivity and is no longer the "God" guiding the protagonist. Instead, he tells the story as an onlooker, showing a detached attitude towards life. After experiencing chaos and ups and downs of life, Qu You realized the force majeure of historical evolution, he no longer actively pursued and explored life, but learned to adapt to it. With this kind of life attitude, *Peony Lamp* is probably his new exploration of novel creation.

Send Plum is the last story in *Jian Deng Xin Hua*. The story takes place in Lin'an of Southern Song Dynasty. In order to repay Ma Qionggiong, a prostitute, for her kindness, Zhu Duanchao takes him as a concubine. Because his wife and concubine often argued, he finally resigned his official job in the government. The plot of this story is simple, but one fact is that it is hard for Zhu Duanchao to pass the provincial civil service examination under the old Chinese examination system, so it seems illogical that Zhu Duanchao abandoned his official to go back home because of a letter from his concubine. For ancient Chinese traditional literati, official career is usually above everything else. Moreover, in this story, the contradiction between wife and concubines is not prominent. Zhu Duanchao's practice is contrary to the value pursuit of traditional Chinese literati, from which we can find out the author's seclusion feelings after he was disappointed in the real life. Qu You spent his youth in the war in the late Yuan Dynasty. After entering the Ming Dynasty, the Ming government carried out the policy of heavy taxes on the southern area of the Yangtze River, an area which once under the govern of former rule, Zhang Shicheng. And the new government ruled the literati with high pressure. The officialdom was dark, and the literati were often punished for their words. Qu You himself also had a bad career. He failed in both dynasties and took charge of only a few minor officials. He is more like a spectator to the great changes of society. He has a deep understanding of the gains and losses of life, and his pursuit tends to be plain, his detached attitude towards life is shown in *Send Plum*.

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