

Research on Masculinity in the Late Ming Dynasty: Taking the Male Images in Tang Xianzu's "Four Dreams of Linchuan" as an Example

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ABSTRACT

The "Four Dreams of Linchuan" are "The Peony Pavilion", "The Purple Hairpin", "The Nanke Dream", and "The Handan Dream", all of which have their original works - "The Revival Of Du Liliang For Love", "The Biography of Huo Xiaoyu", "The Biography of the Governor of Nanke", and "The Record in the Pillow". Tang Xianzu adapted them and recreated the male characters in the original works. This article aims to explore the male images in the "Four Dreams of Linchuan" from the perspective of masculinity and analyze the era context of the "The scholarly temperament", "The gentlemanly temperament", "The chivalrous temperament" and "The reclusive temperament" of men in the late Ming Dynasty. Through research, it is found that the construction of masculinity in the late Ming Dynasty was closely associated with the social environment during that period, and "The scholarly temperament" reflected the internal and external troubles of society, the revival of the imperial examination system, as well as the economic and ideological changes; "The gentlemanly temperament" reflected the moral norms of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism; "The chivalrous temperament" was in line with the prosperous commodity economy and the spirit of the school of mind; "The temperament of an anchorite" originated from the political darkness and the ideological atmosphere of the integration of the three religions.

KEYWORDS

Late ming dynasty; Masculinity; "Four dreams of linchuan"

1 Radiating talent and charm, mighty in strength - "the temperament of a gifted scholar" in "Four Dreams of Linchuan"

1.1 The era context of "the temperament of a gifted scholar" in the late Ming

The idea of "valuing literature" in the middle and late Ming Dynasty was a continuation of the historical experience and cultural psychology of previous dynasties. Looking back, whether it was the Han regime of the Song Dynasty, which was repeatedly attacked by ethnic minorities, or the Han shizu clans of the Yuan Dynasty, which was politically marginalized due to ethnic estrangement, they all rebuilt their identity with the emphasis on the orthodox status of "literature", after facing the loss of governance and cultural suppression. This high recognition of "culture" had a profound impact on the formation of masculinity in the late Ming Dynasty.

As the revival of the imperial examination system took place in the Ming Dynasty, the closed-loop system of "education - examination - officialdom" was gradually established. After the middle of the Ming Dynasty, the ranking of the imperial examination was directly linked to the rank of official positions, and the success of the imperial examination became the crucial factor in determining the future of scholars and the distribution of political resources. "Entering officialdom through literature" made it possible for talents to gain political power. "The temperament of scholar" therefore became a vital element in shaping the masculinity of the late Ming Dynasty.

In addition, as the commodity economy and urban culture developed in the middle and late Ming Dynasty, numerous ordinary men who had the "literary" traits participated in cultural production by selling paintings, writing articles, teaching and so on. The monopoly of the traditional scholar class on "talent" did not exist any more, and "The temperament of a gifted scholar" was no longer the exclusive characteristic of a certain sort of cultural elite with "poetic talent". The subsequent rise of popular literature reshaped the concept of "a gifted scholar", expanding the scope of literary, genre, refined and popular of culture, and influencing the perception of "the temperament of a gifted scholar" among men in the late Ming Dynasty.

1.2 The interpretation of the "emotional" quality in the gifted scholar's temperament

1.2.1 Liu Mengmei's "emotional" quality

Liu Mengmei in "The Peony Pavilion" has more "emotional" traits than in "The Revival Of Du Liliang For Love". In "The Peony Pavilion", Liu Mengmei is a scholar in white robes. Despite the gap in social status between him and Du Liniang, the daughter of a prefect, which hindered their love, he showed no intention of giving up, even when imprisoned and tortured, and this demonstrated the tenacity of his "emotion".

From the origin of the name, in "The Revival Of Du Liliang For Love", the mother dreams of eating plums and becomes pregnant, she therefore names her baby Liu Mengmei. In "The Peony Pavilion", a line "One day the spring light dimmed

the golden willow, and the snow broke through the white jade plum" shows that "Liu Mengmei" carries his longing for worldly fame and a happy relationship. Isn't this also an expression of "emotion"? Not only that, in Tang Xianzu's writing, Liu Mengmei became a vassal of the powerful, and behind this was the poor man's yearning to attain his own value, not contrary to "emotion", but instead reflects the very rich meanings of "emotion" in the Ming Dynasty.

In terms of plot addition, in "Peony Pavilion", there are plenty of descriptions of the war between the Song and Jin dynasties, and Du and Liu's love is in the realistic background of the war, which can better highlight Liu's "emotion". In the scene called "Ji Nan", after the trial, Li Quan rebels, and Liu Mengmei sets off immediately to see the relative of Dulinang without considering his own safety. Besides, although some scholars have argued that the scenes including "Shi Hua" and "Wan Zhen" do not help to develop the plot, Tang Xianzu's ingenuity lies in this: through "calling paintings", he conveys Liu Mengmei's infatuation, madness, wildness, and truth of "emotion", and the act of "calling paintings" contributed to the appearance of Du Liniang's soul, which displays an affectionate Liu Mengmei.

1.2.2 Li Yi's "emotional" quality

Unlike the cold-hearted Li Yi in "The Biography of Huo Xiaoyu", Li Yi in "The Peony Pavilion" is a passionate and talented man. From the origin of his relationship with Huo Xiaoyu, Li Yi is attracted by her appearance. The opening lines, "Every time he was proud of his style, thinking of finding a good wife, he sought famous courtesans, and for a long time they were not in harmony," reveal Li Yi's dissipation. When he hears Bao Shiyiniang say, "There is a fairy who lives in our world," he "became extremely excited, jumped high and held Bao's hand to bow and thank her, saying, 'I'm willing to be your slave until the end of my life'". It was the beginning of his frivolity and lust, which doomed his unfaithfulness and abandonment of Huo Xiaoyu. And after Tang Xianzu's adaptation, although Li Yi in "The Purple Hairpin" also falls in love with Huo Xiaoyu because of her beauty at first sight, after hearing Bao Shiyiniang's description of Huo Xiaoyu, the line "May I see her?" shows his refined and steady demeanor as a scholar, and "it is a serious issue influencing my whole life, no joking" indicates that Li Yi's purpose is to find a lifelong partner instead of hunting for beauty.

Regarding the special meaning of the purple hairpin, in the biography of Huo Xiaoyu, the purple hairpin is not a clue that runs through the relationship between Li and Huo, but is used to express the change between the present and the past: "Then he was escorted to the house of Princess Yanxian, where the previous events were recounted in detail, the princess was moved for a long time, and gave him 120,000 yuan." In "The Purple Hairpin", the narrative of the falling of the hairpin, searching for the hairpin, selling the hairpin, receiving the hairpin, and making the plots of falling in love because of hairpin, separation because of hairpin, and reunion because of hairpin reasonable as the hairpin becomes an important symbol to show Li Yizhi's "emotion".

1.2.3 The origin of the "emotional" quality of the late Ming scholar

The "emotional" quality of the talented men of the late Ming Dynasty benefited from the Lu-Wang School of Mind and the late Ming trend of respecting emotions. In the context of Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties, "mind" is composed of "nature" and "emotion". Mr. Ichuan believes that "nature" is "principle", with the emphasis on the "nature" part of the "mind". He argues that the "nature" is the body of the "mind", the unexpressed; "Emotion" is the function of the "mind" and is "already expressed". Therefore, he put forward the idea of "let emotions be", that is, to restrain the initiation of emotions by means of rectifying the mind and cultivating the nature, so that the initiation of emotions is always consistent with the Doctrine of the Mean. Lu Jiuyuan proposed that "mind" is "principle", and he believed that "everyone has a mind, and the mind serves as principle". Therefore, he believes that human "emotion" is also "principle". The discourse on respecting human emotions in the Lu-Wang School of Mind system established a philosophical framework for the "emotion" quality of the late Ming scholars. Besides, the theories of Luo Rufang of the Taizhou School, "the mind of a child", "the benevolence of life", and Li Zhi's "the childlike heart-mind" gave rise to the "respect for emotion" trend - Tang Xianzu's "the ultimate emotion" theory, Feng Menglong's "the teaching of emotion" theory, etc., all further developed the "emotion" quality of the late Ming scholars. From this, it can be considered that the "emotion" of the scholar expressed in Tang Xianzu's "Four Dreams of Linchuan" is not only love, but also a kind of human nature and desire from the heart, an aesthetic ideal opposed to feudal ethical concepts, a kind of enlightenment of life, the spirit of fundamental principle. The key to the scholar's "counteracting principle with emotion" lies in whether the "principle" is incompatible with "emotion".

1.3 The interpretation of the "martial" quality in the gifted scholar's temperament

1.3.1 Liu Mengmei's "martial" quality

Liu Mengmei's "martial" is shown in the scene called "Nao yan", "he beat more than nine people, leaving a face of one person." He fights several men just to enter the banquet and meet Du Bao, which shows that Liu Mengmei is not a fragile scholar without physical strength, but a talented man of Lingnan who is excel in martial arts, courageous and masculine.

1.3.2 Li Yi's "martial" quality

Li Yi's "martial" was manifested when he works at the frontier where he defeats Hexi. He devises to bring Hexi back to the Tang Dynasty. It is obvious that Li Yi, as depicted by Tang Xianzu, is a man of both wisdom and courage.

1.3.3 The origin of the "martial" quality of the late Ming scholar

On the one hand, the "martial" nature of the talented scholars in the late Ming Dynasty was associated with the social background of internal and external troubles in that period. The coastal Japanese war which lasted for more than a hundred years was not resolved until the end of the Jiajing reign, providing the circumstances for a large number of talented scholars to possess "martial" qualities.

On the other hand, the "martial" nature of the late Ming scholars was linked to the "valuing martial" ideology in the practical learning trend of the late Ming. A great number of practical thinkers in the late Ming Dynasty advocated "equal emphasis on literature and martial arts", such as Qiu Jun, Qi Jiguang, Chen Di, Zhao Nanxing, Huang Zongxi, Li Zhi, etc. During the Hongzhi period, Qiu Jun put forward that "literature and martial arts are not two separate ways" and "military preparedness and education should go hand in hand". During the Jiajing period, Qi Jiguang proposed that "literature and martial arts are one way", and Chen Di believed that "the way is everywhere and the learning is everywhere. If one must take literature as the way and learning, and take martial arts as neither the way nor the learning, it is a shallow discussion of the way and learning." Huang Zongxi proposed "to combine literature and military as one path." Li Zhi's view of heroes, his emphasis on martial arts, and his military theory further elaborate on the idea of valuing martial arts. Li Zhi believes that heroes need to have true nature and courage, and he uses "courage" to explain Confucius' "the brave are not afraid" - wisdom is knowledge, benevolence is talent, and courage is braveness; Li emphasizes the role of military preparation. He criticizes the proposition of "using literature in times of peace and using martial arts in times of chaos", arguing that literature and martial arts should be combined and that martial arts should be thought highly even in times of peace. With the emphasis on "military", Li Zhi inherited the "theory of the Way of deception" and "theory of the prophet" from Sun Tzu's art of War and proposed "to fight with a proper army and to win with a surprise army." "In fact, it is necessary to know the enemy's own urgency. If one knows oneself and does not know the enemy, how can one defeat the enemy and control his destiny? Spies play a part." And other important military thoughts.

2 Civil and military strategies, loyalty and justice - "The gentlemanly temperament" of men in the "Four Dreams of Linchuan"

2.1 Du Bao's "Gentlemanly temperament "

In the Confucian discourse system, the moral rank of a gentleman is second only to that of a sage. Du Bao was undoubtedly a gentleman in the feudal society as a scholar-official who excelled in both civil and military affairs and was loyal, righteous, benevolent and courageous.

Du Bao's "gentlemanly temperament " was manifested in his concern for the country and the people, and his dedication to public interests. When he was the governor of Nan 'an, he personally asked the farmers, rewarded them with flowers and wine, and the villagers said to him, "We are the elders of Qingle Village, Nan 'an Prefecture." Congratulations to my Lord Du, who has been in charge for three years. He is kind and upright, and opposes corruption. In every village and township, the community schools are established. Du Bao is an honest and upright official, as can be seen in the scene of "Ming Pan", the flower goddess praises him "being an upright official", confirming Du Bao's official virtue. When Li Quan's troops besieges Huai 'an, Du Bao leads his troops to charge into the city without considering his own safety, takes his sword and goes into battle in person, and finally subdues Li Quan, displaying his bravery, behind which is Du Bao's patriotic heart of "taking the world as his responsibility". When Li Quanli uses Chen Zuiliang to falsely report that Du Bao's wife has been killed by the rebel army, Du Bao weeps sadly but resolutely warns himself, "The wife is a noblewoman of the court, and it is only natural that she died by cursing the rebels." How could I lose my composure and the morale of the troops because of her? As a general, how can I care about my own interests?" It shows Du Bao's integrity and selflessness of "sacrificing his life for the benefit of the state".

It should be noted that the "gentlemanly temperament " of Du Bao, as depicted by Tang Xianzu, is more characterized by obsessive rationality. Bai Zhi, the translator of the English version of "The Peony Pavilion", believes that Du Bao is a Confucian scholar who adheres to "rationalism". Du Bao's obsessive rationality is mainly manifested in the scene called "Yuanjia". Even though he has met his daughter, Du Bao still refuses to acknowledge Dulinang, the one comes back from the dead- "This must be a flower spirit." Even as the emperor orders to verify that Du Liniang's reincarnation was a real person rather than a ghost, and even when Zhen Shi comes out to testify, Du Bao still denied it before the emperor's order - "both Dulinang and her mother are spirits deceiving the people in the daytime." Even though they finally get married, Du Bao still refuses to accept her in his heart. Obviously, the restraint of emotional desires and the adherence to feudal

dogma had taken root in his heart and become an instinct of Du Bao.

2.2 The era context of "gentlemanly temperament " in the late Ming Dynasty

Masculinity in the late Ming Dynasty was rooted in the ideological foundation of patriarchy. Scholar masculinity was consistent with the values of the ruling class and dominated in the four dimensions of power, production, emotion, and symbolic relationship in the structure of gender relations, becoming the hegemonic masculinity of late Ming society. Du Bao, who had the "gentlemanly temperament ", represented the hegemonic masculinity of the late Ming Dynasty - a scholar-official with political achievements.

The discourse of the gentleman, which originated in the Pre-Qin period and was expounded by Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, became more prominent in the late Ming Dynasty in terms of suppressing emotions and emphasizing self-restraint. It should be noted that "to preserve Heaven's laws and eliminate human desires" does not mean eliminating all "desires", but rather eliminating those sensual desires that are in conflict with moral laws. As Zhu Xi pointed, "A gentleman follows principles and thus is at ease and unrestrained. The petty man indulges in desires, so he does the opposite. It lays the theoretical foundation for the rational qualities of the "gentlemanly temperament " of the late Ming Dynasty.

3 Meeting a hero in front of flowers, the Spirit of sword and flute - "The chivalrous spirit" of men in the "Four Dreams of Linchuan"

3.1 The "chivalry" of the man in the Yellow robe

Unlike the yellow-clothed Man in "The Biography of Huo Xiaoyu", who plays a limited part in the ending, the yellow-clothed Man in "The Purple Hairpin" shows a more heroic and impartial "righteous" quality. He is the decisive figure in the ending of the love comedy between Li and Huo. In the scene of "Meeting the Hero Before the Flower", he draws his sword to rescue Li Yi from the guards of the Lu family and facilitates the reunion of Li and Huo. In "Drunken Swordsman's Comment", from the Yellow swordsman, "I see Li Yi, this faithless man, who was kidnapped by the Lu family and sent his ex-wife Xiaoyu, disappointing her. this is the most unjust thing in the world. If I do not draw my sword to save him, I can't be a hero! "Call the servants, you give money to the Huo family" shows his righteous power of chivalry, punishing evil and promoting good, and being generous with money.

3.2 The era context of the chivalrous spirit of men in the late Ming Dynasty

The "chivalry" culture, which stems from the practice of martial arts by the ancestors of the Chinese nation, evolved from a "martial" trait to a more "righteous" trait. In the Ming Dynasty, the "chivalry" culture based on "righteousness", displayed an unconventional color of unrestrained spirit, self-assertion, and proud independence, and tended to be more secular and common. The place in which the martial arts figures of the Song and Ming dynasties practiced martial arts was primarily in the commoner society. The nature of the chivalrous behavior was secular, and the martial art community aligned itself with the common people.

On the one hand, the prosperous commodity economy and urban economy of the late Ming Dynasty also played a role the emergence of the chivalrous spirit among men. The need of the merchant groups for chivalrous men to protect their own safety led to the emergence of a large number of folk martial arts groups. The emergence of the "Wulin" and "Green Forest" classes represents the secularization of "chivalry" culture - "chivalry" was no longer an exclusive identity of a certain special group.

On the other hand, the more unrestrained chivalrous temperament of men in the late Ming Dynasty was linked to the thought of the late Ming school of Mind and later evolved into the righteousness of "acting on behalf of heaven". the Taizhou school, which "regards chivalry as holy", further formed the chivalry of the late Ming Dynasty as free and unrestrained, straightforward and open.

4 Renouncing emotions, attaining Buddhahood; Waking from a dream, becoming a fairy - "The temperament of an anchorite" in the "Four Dreams of Linchuan"

4.1 Li Quan's "The reclusive temperament"

Li Quan, is a new character added by Tang Xianzu in "The Peony Pavilion", and the only male who chooses to seclude. His "The reclusive temperament" can be seen in the end when he and Yang Miaozen withdraw from the world and travel around together.

4.2 Chunyu Fen's "The reclusive temperament"

Chunyu Fen's "The reclusive temperament" was shown in the fact that after experiencing the rises and falls in the State

of Huai 'an, he completely understood the emptiness of form and became a Buddha on the spot. Unlike Li Gongzuo's account of the reason for Chunyu Fen's dream in "The Biography of the Governor of Nanke" - "from intoxicating to illness", in "The Nanke Dream" Chunyu Fen's dream was due to the karma of "lust" - "infatuation", "sentience", and unlike the ending of entering the Taoism in "The Biography of the Governor of Nanke", Chunyu Fen in "The Nanke Dream" eventually converted to Buddhism. The narrative which focuses on Buddhism reflects Tang Xianzu's sudden realization of the Zen view of "form is emptiness; emptiness is form".

4.3 Lu Sheng's "The reclusive temperament"

Lu Sheng's "reclusive temperament" can be seen when he follows Lu Dongbin to the Penglai Immortal Mountain to be the flower sweeping messenger in the Peach Blossom Garden after waking up from his dream. By using Lu Sheng's "seclusion", Tang Xianzu articulated the Taoist concepts of purity and self-restraint, modesty, gentleness, and the value of non-competition. The metaphysical speculation in "The Handan Dream" that integrates "famous teachings" into "nature" is a unique expression of Taoism in the late Ming Dynasty - "The one who is alone in the realm of the mysterious and the dark can achieve great harmony."

4.4 The era context of "The temperament of an anchorite" in the late Ming Dynasty

The "reclusive temperament" is depicted in the "Four Dreams of Linchuan" by chivalrous men, traitorous ministers and scholars, indicating that the mentality of withdrawing from the world in the Ming Dynasty was not exclusive to the scholar-official group, but influenced all social classes and presented diverse types.

One reason for the emergence of the reclusive mentality of men was the congestion of the imperial examination system leading to the stagnation of the social path for scholars. Another reason was the political darkness and the dominance of eunuchs, with the gradual prevalence of the idea of "serving the ruler in accordance with the Dao and if it cannot be done, withdraw" in the late Ming. When officials lost the trust of the ruler, the choice of "seclusion" was an escape from their own "Yin" role in the "Yin Yang" relationship between the ruler and his officials. In addition, Confucianism was further integrated with Buddhism and Taoism in the Ming Dynasty, presenting a pattern of "three religions in one", and the interpenetration of mind studies with Chan and Taoist thought provided spiritual soil and ideological space for the "reclusive temperament" of men in the late Ming Dynasty.

5 Conclusion

Wang Siren once noted: "The Handan Dream", immortal; "The Nanke Dream", Buddha; "The Purple Hairpin", chivalry; "The Peony Pavilion", emotion." The diverse traits of the male characters in the "Four Dreams of Linchuan" not only reflect Tang Xianzu's male perspective, but also is a product of the social and cultural environment of the Ming Dynasty. It is worth noting that the male figures in the works do not have a single temperament. This article only takes their most prominent temperament as a starting point to observe the construction and presentation of the male temperaments in the late Ming Dynasty.

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