

Analysis on Female Images in "Water Margin"

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ABSTRACT

"Water Margin" is the essence of wisdom in Chinese history. With 108 heroes in Liangshan as the main line, this book describes the social outlook and human sentiments of the Northern Song Dynasty, and portrays the loyalty and cunning among people. This book is mainly on the stories among men. At the same time, a series of bright female images have been created throughout the book, making the conflicts in the book constant. "There is no conflict, there is no literature". These female images not only push this literary masterpiece to the climax of ups and downs, but also make the work full of vivid details. This paper will mainly analyze the two female images of Jin Cuilian and Yan Poxi, and discuss the causes behind the shaping of female images/fate, as well as the reference significance for women today.

Keywords: "Water Margin", Female image, Symbol, Birth of body, Birth of spirit.

1. INTRODUCTION

The story of "Water Margin" mainly took place in the late Northern Song Dynasty. In the Song Dynasty, Neo-Confucianism was promoted, emphasizing women's concept of "chastity" and deepening the imprisonment on women by the feudal ethics. The rulers of Yuan Dynasty and Ming Dynasty also respected Neo-Confucianism. The author's thoughts could not be separated from the background of the times. The creation of "Water Margin" would also be influenced by Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, this book spent a lot of time to render the stereotyped image of women as "Dangerous Beauty". [1]

The female images in "Water Margin" are as follows: three heroines in Liangshan (Hu Sanniang, Gu Dashao and Sun Erniang), immoral women (Pan Jinlian, Pan Qiaoyu, Yan Poxi and Lu Junyi's wife), Lin Chong's gentle and loyal wife, Yulan (who has an engagement with Wu Song), Miss Cheng (Dong Ping's wife), etc, the abominable Wang Po (who is related to Wu Dalang's death), the official's wife (Cai), and Li Shishi (the first prostitute). There are also women with vague characters, such as Yan Po Xi's mother (Yan Po), Wang Jin's mother, Li Kui's mother and so on.

This paper focuses on the comparison of two female images who had promoted the stories of

"Water Margin" to a certain extent. The first one is Jin Cuilian, the daughter of Jin Laohan (Lu Zhishen was forced to go to Liangshan because of this female, and Jin Cuilian was the first woman in "Water Margin" with a name and surname). The second female is Yan Poxi (to a certain extent, Song Jiang was forced to go to Liangshan caused by this female).

2. ANALYSIS ON THE LIVING BACKGROUND OF CHARACTERS

When people discuss a character, it is required not to separate from the social environment, education level, family background of characters and so on.

2.1 Social Background

The two women lived in the same social background in the Northern Song Dynasty. However, there is difference that Jin Cuilian lived in Weizhou, in which people can support the family in the teahouses and taverns, and Yan Poxi lived in Yuncheng, where people did not like romantic banquets.

2.2 Family Situation

The family situation of the two women is basically similar. They were from small families.

Because there was a disaster at home, they have to seek refuge with relatives. The difference is that the three members of Jin Cuilian's family went to Weizhou (northwest) to seek relatives, the relatives moved to Nanjing, her mother fell ill and died in the inn, leaving the father and daughter. Three members of Yan Poxi's family came to Shandong to seek official relatives, but her father died of the epidemic, leaving the mother and daughter. From the description of Yan Po, Yan Po didn't love Yan Poxi very much. She wanted to send Yan Po to brothel every time.

2.3 Survival Skills

According to the book, both fathers can sing, and both of them can sing. They have no other means and skills to make a living.

Although they have the same social background, family situation, growth experience and means of making a living, they have different life experiences and endings. This paper will discuss their appearance and life experience.

3. DIFFERENT LIFE ATTITUDE AND DIFFERENT LIFE SITUATION

3.1 Jin Cuilian's Appearance and Life Experience

Lu Da, Shi Jin and Li Zhong were eating at the hotel, and suddenly heard that someone choked up in the pavilion. Lu Da was anxious, so he threw all the dishes on the floor. The bartender explained: "the people who were crying are the father and daughter. They don't know that the officials are eating here, and they cry for a while." Lu Da said: "That is a mischief! You call them here." The bartender went to call, and after a while, two persons arrived in front of him.

An eighteen or nine-year-old woman, and a fifty or sixty-year-old man behind her, with a string of clappers in hands, all came to the front. Looking at the woman, she didn't have a very good appearance, but she also had some moving colors.

The daughter had made the pine bun on the head, with a green jade hairpin. Her waist was slender, with the skirt of thin silk. Plain-white old shirt covered the snow body, and the light-yellow soft socks were on her feet. Her eyebrows were frowning, and her eyes were full of tears; The head was drooping, and the muscles were delicate. If this wasn't for the sickness, it would be for concerns

and regrets. In general, her muscles and bones were good, and she was also romantic without using cosmetics. [2]⁴³

This is Jin Cuilian's appearance. Before the character speaks, people can generally see that this person is not very old, an eighteen or nineteen-years-old woman. The skin was fair, the figure was good-looking, the dress was relatively simple, the face was embarrassed, and the mental state was not very good. The appearance details are as follows: Jin Cuilian was in front, the father was behind her. "An eighteen or nine-year-old woman, and a fifty or sixty-year-old man behind her, with a string of clappers in her hand, all came to the front. The daughter wiped her tears and walked forward and said three blessings deeply. The same is for the old man." [3]⁴³

Such an order of appearance is obviously not in line with the convention even in the modern times, let alone in the feudal society of "hiding a young girl in the boudoir". Besides, the scene described in the book is as follows: several men were in a good mood. They were furious because of the crying of the women. The hotel attendant asked the two persons to apologize, otherwise they would have trouble. Then the two appeared, but the daughter was in front of them. Lu Da asked, "where are you from? Why do you cry?" The daughter replied more than 300 words with clear thinking and accurate words. People can understand the following contents from the description of Jin Cuilian.

First, three members of the family did not meet their relatives, and the mother died, leaving father and daughter lonely and helpless.

Second, Zheng Tu was a matchmaker in Guanxi Township. Zheng Tu, a local rich man in Guanxi, forced Jin Cuilian to be his concubine by some forces, which violated Jin Cuilian's wishes.

Third, Zheng Tu did not give money according to the contract, but the white paper and black words proved the fact that Jin Cuilian had obtained the money.

Fourth, Jin Cuilian was concubine of Zheng Tu in Guanxi town for nearly three months. The wife could not allow Jin Cuilian to be in the family, and drove her out of her family and asked to pay the ransom.

Fifth, the father and daughter lived in the hotel and sang for the debt. Income was still considerable. In addition to father and daughter's

daily expenses, most were used for paying the debt, a small part of the money left.

According to this detailed description, Jin Cuilian is more thoughtful, more independent and more able to deal with interpersonal relationships than Jin's father. She is very good at making use of her own advantages and showing weakness. She uses his beautiful appearance to create a weak woman image of "frowning, tearful eyes and drooping head". At the same time, she tells her tragic situation in a concise and comprehensive way. Such a pitiful woman, even an iron man like Lu Da was also deeply moved and willing to die for her.

Lu Da was so angry that he wanted to beat Zheng Tu. After being dissuaded, he took out all her money and gave it to Jin Cuilian. He also asked friends who met for the first time to help her. Later, in order to help Jin Cuilian and his father escape the threat of the Zheng family, Lu Da personally went to the butcher shop of Zheng Tu in Guanxi town, and repeatedly provoked Zheng Tu until he was killed. For this reason, Lu Da himself had to flee.

In forty or fifty days after Lu Da fled, he happened to meet the Jin family in Yanmen County, Daizhou. Jin Cuilian who played this time had special charm and a prosperous life.

The golden hairpin was inserted obliquely, and the green sleeves were delicately cut, covering the snow-white body. The small mouth was light and reddish, and the hands were soft and tender. She had slender waist, green skirt, light body and red embroidered jacket. The face was full of warm emotion, and the eyebrows were fine, the muscles were fair-skinned, and the green skirt was loose. [4]53

According to the description of father Jin, the father and daughter came from Weizhou to Yanmen. Looking for someone to be a matchmaker, Jin Cuilian became a mistress for a ministry councillor, Zhao. Obviously, she didn't enter the family of Zhao, that is, to some extent, Zhao did not recognize the identity of Jin Cuilian (the village where Zhao lived was about ten miles away from Jin Cuilian). But it is not denied that Zhao likes Jin Cuilian. First, Zhao had set up a good house; second, he gave Jin Cuilian clothing and food, with maid and footboy; third, he heard that Jin Cuilian and men drink alcohol and took thirty people to catch the adultery; fourth, he took Lu Da (the benefactor of Jin Cuilian) back to the village, and

arranged him to avoid the manhunt of the government.

From the description of the second appearance, it is found that Jin Cuilian is more favored by Zhao. As for why she was not a concubine in the family, it may also be due to a kind of self-awareness. Jin Cuilian came from small family, and was proud of her young looks and self-esteem. It is inevitable that the plot like "fighting" would occur when entering the large family. When she met a lady like Zheng's wife, there was also the possibility of repeated evictions. It was better to take such clothing and food. If she could give birth to Zhao outside a son and a daughter, she could go through the second half of life more smoothly.

Perhaps, as Yang Jiang said, a person who has been exercising in different degrees will gain different levels of cultivation and different degrees of benefits. Just like spices, the more crushed they are, the finer they are, and the stronger their fragrance is. [5] After being in exile and suffering from life, Jin Cuilian achieved her with a safe mind. She used the weakness to give up a part of self-esteem and attached to a squire, and lived a life of hard intentions and abundant clothes. At the same time, the father and daughter were grateful and good-hearted. Lu Da was arrest by the government for killing Zheng Tu, so he had to escape. In Yanmen County, Daizhou, Jin Cuilian's father was met by chance. The old man was not afraid of the government's order, but invited Lu Da to his home. The father and daughter thanked again and again, claiming that "if they were not saved by the benefactor, how could they survive till this day" and resolutely helped Lu Da go through the current difficulties with help from Zhao.

3.2 Yan Poxi's Appearance and Life Experience

Yan Poxi is introduced by Wang Po (like the neighbor of Wu Da) to Song Jiang. Yan (Yan Poxi's mother) was exiled from Dongjing to Yuncheng, Shandong Province. Her husband (Yangong) died of illness and had no money for burial. Song Jiang paid to help Yan bury Yan's husband, and Wang later arranged Song Jiang to accept Yan Poxi as a lover.

It is often said that "character decides fate". What is Yan Poxi's character and how is it formed? According to the book, Yan Poxi is a bit of a beauty. She learned living skills (singing songs) from her parents since childhood, and lingered in

brothels and other places. In addition, Yan's words vaguely revealed the meaning of betraying Yan Poxi. It can be seen that Yan and her wife do not care about Yan Poxi very much. They did not hesitate to betray Yan Poxi's happiness in exchange for pension capital. As a young woman, Yan Poxi often went to nightclubs. She was used to having a good time, and developed a character of avarice, vanity, selfishness and short sightedness.

She was not very familiar with the world, imagining a better life and yearning for a better love. However, she was born in such a family, received such education and lingered in such a romantic place, so her background and ability could not earn the life she wanted. In the emotional aspect, Song Jiang was not handsome, and did not understand the wind and moon, her life and feelings were not satisfactory. Zhang San had a good face, knew the wind and moon, could play music, and had a wide range of similar interests with Yan Poxi. They could be a couple in some sense. To a certain extent, his appearance made up for Yan Poxi's yearning for beautiful love.

She was regarded as a mistress by Song Jiang, ending her life of exile. At first, she might be grateful to Song Jiang, but because Song Jiang was not very interested in her, Yan Poxi began to change (from being grateful to indifferent), and then turned to utilize (because Song Jiang was highly respected in the local area, he was rich in money). After meeting Zhang San, she became disgusted with Song Jiang. Even so, Yan Poxi did not have the courage to fight for the independence and freedom, but continued to rely on Song Jiang's financial support (because Zhang San could not give Yan Poxi material needs). Later, after discovering the evidence of Song Jiang's banditry, she wanted to extort money and live a "happy" life with Zhang San. Yan Poxi's tragedy was largely caused by the utilitarianism of family education. She wanted to get rid of Song Jiang and pursued good life, love freedom, but she couldn't do without his money. She wanted to parasitize on others to enjoy rights, but did not want to pay responsibility. She depended on others and didn't know how to be grateful. Instead of being grateful to Song Jiang, Yan Poxi chose to betray him. In the end, he was killed by Song Jiang.

During the period of living with Song Jiang, Yan Poxi didn't have a single line. Yan Poxi's first sentence is that she mistook Song Jiang for Zhang San: this short life is hard for me. Yan Poxi had no right to speak in the matter of combining with Song

Jiang. At the same time, she was just a symbol, representing not only herself, but also thousands of women who were drifting like duckweeds and could not control their own destiny at that time. The man she wanted to commit herself to was Zhang San. In Chinese culture, Zhang San was a general term, which can represent any ordinary man. It can be seen that Zhang San was also a symbol. Yan Poxi tried to pursue her love and freedom through resistance, but ended up in a tragic death. The failure of resistance was not only her individual failure, but also the collective failure of women with similar fate.

"Water Margin" is a classic novel full of masculinity, which describes the chivalrous spirit of heroes. But the women in this male hero world were not very fine. The beautiful people like Pan Jinlian and Yan Poxi are the symbols of licentiousness, while the heroines in Liangshan are completely masculine, without the slightest femininity. [6] Throughout the book, many heroes are forced to Liangshan because of the beauty. Song Jiang committed a homicide case because of Yan Poxi's coercion; Lu Da killed Zhen Guanxi for Jin Cuilian and her father; Lin Chong had to kill Lu Qian, Gao Qiu's confidant; Wu Song avenged his brother and killed Pan Jinlian; Guanghai went to Liangshan because Liu Gao was "the wife of Liu Zhizhai" who paid good for bad; Yang Xiong's wife, Pan Qiaoyun, had an affair with monk Pei Ruhai; Lu Junyi's wife had an affair with Li Gu, the housekeeper... All the above men were directly affected by the "beauty" and went to Liangshan to become bandits. For the sake of hero's righteousness, more men were indirectly dragged to Liangshan.

The book also records chaste martyrs in line with the traditional female image. For example, Lin Chong's wife and Qiongying were the representatives. Especially the heroine Qiong Ying is the perfect incarnation: she was beautiful, clever, and majestic; and she was able to lead the army to fight and loyal to the imperial court. After Zhang Qing's death in the war, Qiong Ying kept the chastity and brought up his children. [7] She had faithfully safeguarded the three cardinal principles of the patriarchal society. The perfect woman whom the author had painstakingly shaped, experiencing ups and downs, was the model in the whole society.

4. CONCLUSION

According to Jin Cuilian's and Yan Poxi's life experiences, two enlightenments can be obtained.

First is the priority of the right to life. Due to the limitations of the society at that time, the vilified and aphasic women in "Water Margin" were in a low position. They could not fully show the beauty of women, nor could they freely express themselves. They had to obey a certain man, be good at showing weakness, recognize their position, make clear their position, give up part of themselves, and even succumb to the ideology of the whole patriarchal society.

The second is to be an independent woman. Everyone has two births: one is the birth of the body, which means that people can go towards independent survival step by step; the second is the birth of spirit, which means that while the body survives independently, spiritual independence should keep up with the pace of physical independence. Both of them begin with crying, and both of them will go through a difficult process, but both of them are indispensable.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Junyan Zhou.

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