

Social and Aesthetic Values of the Novels in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

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ABSTRACT

The Ming and Qing dynasties were the cradle of novels. Literati from all walks of life reacted to reality and expressed their opinions through literary works. The novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties are valuable and have research value in the literary history of China and even the world. However, many researchers have taken the Ming and Qing novels as a whole without investigating their social and aesthetic values in detail, which is a great challenge to the academic community. This research paper uses textual analysis as the basis for a comparative study of the social and aesthetic values in several Ming and Qing novels, including Feng Menglong's *Stories to Instruct the World*, *Stories to Caution the World*, and *Stories to Awaken the World*, Pu Songling's *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, Wu Jingzi's *The Scholars*, and Cao Xunqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Social values refer to the educational significance of these novels to the people and society, with the effect of guiding people to goodness while aesthetic values are the use of language and the narrative of tragic stories which bring beauty to readers. The paper finds that social and aesthetic values are not contradictory, and a novel can embody one of them or both.

Keywords: Social values; Aesthetic values; Ming and Qing dynasties; Novels

1. INTRODUCTION

Narrative literature in ancient China entered a mature period during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Ming and Qing novels reached their culmination with their completeness and richness in terms of literary philosophy, literary style, and means of expression. Regarding the broad social life scenes, fruitful artistic creations, and rich socio-political ideals, the novels in the Ming and Qing dynasties undoubtedly forged the splendor of classical Chinese literature. During this time, some literary figures saw the problems in the social system and thus wrote many works to inspire people and criticize the social system. Some authors were influenced by their families and thus created influential works. These novels were based on the social background of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and to a large extent, they reflected the social situation of the time. At the same time, the authors' literary qualities and their pursuit of aesthetics contributed to these novels' social and aesthetic values. This essay will explore the social and aesthetic values of the novels that emerged in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Research on Ming and Qing novels has flourished, and it has been multi-faceted and all-embracing. There are many studies on the historical background of the

Ming and Qing dynasties. Nappi said that at the end of the Ming dynasty, public attention was on the peasant uprising, the struggles of various social classes, and the ethnic conflicts with the Manchu [1]. These elements were the context of the novels and operas at that time. Zou indicated that the audience is the most important factor in the development of novels and operas. The emergence and flourishing of the novels were no longer a literary phenomenon [2]. It resulted from the combined effect of social, literary, and public psychology.

Many researchers have studied the social and aesthetic values of literary works. Bonetto said that literature could bring positive energy. This means people can turn this energy into practice, regulate their own words and actions, and influence others to transform the public's spiritual world [3]. Aesthetic values are to give the readers the enjoyment of beauty. Beardsley argued that traditional Chinese culture is a culture with a strong vitality characterized by its aesthetics [4]. Horn believed that literature and artworks as aesthetic objects are the products of a certain era of society [5].

At the same time, some researchers have conducted a series of studies on individual novels. Thematic studies of novels are still popular. Many researchers have studied

Feng Menglong's works. Hsu indicated that Feng Menglong's works provide an artistic portrait of the social reality of the late Ming Dynasty and the political influence and reflect the life of the common people [6]. Wei noticed the conflict between individual human values and social value standards in *The Scholars*, mainly socio-political [7]. Regarding the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Zhao pointed out that it does not give up pursuing social values, though it exalts the value of individuality [8].

There are more macroscopic studies on the novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and there is a consensus about the background and characteristics of these novels. However, few studies examine specific works and their social and aesthetic values. Also, few researchers have analyzed the social and aesthetic values of the work based on the novels themselves. This research will focus on the social and aesthetic values of Ming and Qing novels to fill the gap and inspire more people to study the Ming and Qing novels.

This paper adopts literature analysis, looking deep into several representative novels, including Feng Menglong's *Stories to Instruct the World*, *Stories to Caution the World*, and *Stories to Awaken the World*, Pu Songling's *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, Wu Jingzi's *The Scholars*, and Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber*. First, it investigates the historical background of the Ming and Qing dynasties to contextualize the prosperity of the novels. Second, it does a careful horizontal reading to see these novels' social and aesthetic values.

This research argues that novels can embody social and aesthetic values either singularly or simultaneously. *The Scholars* and *Stories to Awaken the World* mainly reflect social values, while *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* mainly reflects aesthetic values. Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber* embodies both social and aesthetic values.

2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE MING AND QING DYNASTIES

Several masterpieces emerged in the Ming and Qing dynasties. These novels are known as masterpieces because of their rich and moving storylines, detailed portrayal and description of characters, and inclusive artistic expression. Many literati used novels to express their thoughts on society. Some were influenced by society, while others were influenced by feudal families, resulting in a series of masterpieces.

2.1. The Rise of Novels

During the Ming Dynasty, novels, operas, and other literary and artistic works began to appear, adapting to the needs of the people's life and cultural entertainment.

After the middle of the Ming Dynasty, the creation of long novels entered a climax period [9]. The novels formed in this period were diversified, like historical novels and Good-evil spirit novels. At the end of the Ming Dynasty, public attention was on the peasant uprising, the struggles of various social classes, and the ethnic conflicts with the Manchu. The contents of these novels affected not only people's lives but also the operas at that time. In that era of disintegration, the passionate concern for social affairs at that time had become a way for people to understand society and express their emotions. It formed part of people's life scenes. At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, on the one hand, the change of sovereignty had already become a fact; on the other hand, the cruel massacre during the dynasty transition in *Jiangnan* area left people's hearts palpating.

Novel was the greatest achievement in the literature of the Qing Dynasty, represented by Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the pinnacle of ancient Chinese novel art. Wu Jingzi's *The Scholars*, which is an outstanding work with satirical meaning in the history of Chinese literature, had a great influence on the condemnation novels in the late Qing Dynasty.

The wide range of subjects in the Qing Dynasty novels is related to the class conflicts in the late Qing Dynasty society. At that time, the social class contradictions were very serious, and such a social background provided writers with a lot of material to choose from. The large number of novels, the variety of styles, and the selection of materials close to the life in the Qing Dynasty made it a golden age for the development of Chinese novels.

Many Ming and Qing novels reflect the characteristics of the times. The most obvious one is Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which criticizes the culture and system of China's feudal society. In Feng Menglong's *Stories to Caution the World*, there is a story called *Lady Bai Pressed Down the Lei-Feng Tower*. Lady Bai is a demon, but Feng made her a gentlewoman so that it shows the woman's tenderness and affection, showing the White Snake's brave pursuit of happy love [10]. However, in feudal society, traditional thinking does not allow free love. The story of Lady Bai is not simply a myth but expresses the people's aspiration for a free life at that time. This is also reflected in the tragedy of Lin Daiyu and Jia Baoyu in *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

2.2. Representative Novels

There were countless novels and operas during the Ming and Qing dynasties, such as Feng Menglong's *Stories to Instruct the World*, *Stories to Caution the World*, and *Stories to Awaken the World*, Cao Xueqin's *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Pu Songling's *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, and Wu Jingzi's *The Scholars*. These novels are the products of different

social backgrounds and have different social and aesthetic values.

Feng Menglong's works were mainly popular novels circulated in the marketplace at the end of the Ming Dynasty, which had strong educational and social values. The classical satirical novel *The Scholars* reflects the turmoil of the feudal society at that time and the social value of changing one's life through the imperial examinations. On the other hand, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* has a strong aesthetic value. Pu's aesthetic ideas are very noteworthy in developing Chinese aesthetics from ancient to now. He was a writer persistently pursuing beauty. There is no other works in the history of Ming and Qing literature, except for *Dream of the Red Chamber*, that can match the number of beautiful characters and stories and their rich and moving connotations in *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. *Dream of the Red Chamber* is one of the pearls of Chinese literature, a novel that not only reflects the society in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the rise and fall of the great families but also has aesthetic values through the love tragedy of Lin Daiyu and Jia Baoyu.

3. SOCIAL VALUES IN THE NOVELS

Many of the Ming and Qing novels embody social values. Social values mainly refer to the educational significance for the people, starting from the novels' characters and using their stories to tell people the truth about being a good person. The authors used the fate of the characters in the novels to warn people and make the readers think deeply, which are the social values of the novels.

3.1. Social Values in the Works of Feng Menglong: Revealing Truths with Civilian Stories

Feng Menglong (1574-1646) had made outstanding contributions to novels, operas, and literary theories and had an important position in the history of literature. His *Stories to Instruct the World*, *Stories to Caution the World*, and *Stories to Awaken the World* (also known as *Three Yan*) are excellent illustrations of the society of the late Ming Dynasty. These three works describe the prosperous towns and cities, the trading activities of merchants who travel from south to north, and the life of the common people in the marketplace. The various characters shown in the novels reflect the reality of the conflict between the traditional feudal agricultural economy and the emerging commercial economy. In these novels, the characters are more distinct, and the pursuit of desire is no longer concealed.

Generally, the influence of politics and officialdom on civilian life is inevitable, reflected in literature. In China's feudal era, when the political rule was harsh, political indoctrination and specific moral ethics had

formed an important part of social life. In this regard, the works cleverly narrate folk tales in such a way to dilute the political influence on his works, reflecting the leisurely life of the common people. High-ranking officials can abuse their power to influence the lives of commoners, as the story of *Qiao Taishou's Disorderly Lovebirds* tells [11]. The novels also contain descriptions of corruption and the oppression of people's lives. Still, the works tended to cater to the preferences of the common people in dealing with such negative phenomena and were designed to show that justice is finally done.

Many characters who forget righteousness and selfishness, and have greed for money are rewarded in his works. For example, in *Gui Jianwai Repents for Being Poor*, Gui Qian is helped by the Shi family when he is desperate. Still, he is ungrateful in his actions and steals money and silver from the Shi family [6]. Feng Menglong used various stories to tell people that "people get what they sow" [9].

Once again, Feng Menglong celebrated the talents and wisdom of women in his works. However, still, he portrayed women within the traditional scope of the intersection, advocating the old concept of male superiority over females. In *Yang Bailao's Strange Encounter with the State of Yue*, Yang Bailao has a virtuous wife at home, goes out to do business, and then marries again for his benefit, which is not blamed in work. Still, the author gives Yang a happy ending with a reunion of two wives and two sons [7]. In his works, no matter what kind of woman, the only ideal and happiness the author gives her is her husband's wealth and prosperity.

There are more than one hundred stories in the three novels, and most of the works are about karma and retribution. Some of these karma stories stand alone, while others intersect. Some are about present rewards and encourage people to do more good deeds. The content is relatively extensive, involving almost all aspects of social life. However, Feng tried to control and reduce evil deeds by increasing people's sense of responsibility. He achieved the purpose of persuading goodness through the unity of righteousness and profit. In the real world, good people and good deeds may not be rewarded as they should be, and in some cases, sometimes even good people will have more sacrifices.

Good people may encounter difficulties, but in the end, they will surely succeed, which is the truth Feng wanted to tell the world and the embodiment of the social values contained in his works. Countless facts have proven that good deeds will eventually be rewarded, even though such award may not come immediately. The accumulation of good karma and merit is real wealth that can be constantly appreciated and never lose, and its significance far exceeds the accumulation of material wealth in general. The truths conveyed in these stories provided examples to the people of the Ming and Qing

dynasties. They had a powerful ability to persuade people to be good and achieve their social values.

3.2. Social Values in *The Scholars*: Seeking Truth and Pragmatism

The Scholars, written by the Qing Dynasty writer Wu Jingzi (1701-1754), represents the peak of ancient Chinese satirical fiction, pioneering the use of fiction to evaluate the real life directly.

The Scholars reflects the conflict between the individual and social value standards, mainly at the socio-political level. At that time, the social value standard was to pass the imperial examinations, enter the civil service, and get merit and wealth. In the novel, Zhou Jin, Fan Jin, and other people strictly follow this standard to achieve their social value. Other celebrities in this work are also direct or indirect products of this standard [10]. However, their end is the loss of true feelings and the alienation of human nature.

Therefore, the author redesigned the ideal personality of “true Confucianism”. General Confucianism refers to the pursuit of fame and fortune, and in the process, gradually forgetting one’s true nature and becoming numb. “True Confucianism”, on the other hand, means to maintain one’s character and true nature, not to join the masses and follow the crowd, but keep one’s good heart [10]. Wang Guan, Du Shaoqing, and Zhuang Shangzhi are representatives of this “true Confucianism” [7]. The author’s tendency to affirm individuals’ natural needs and pursue the liberation of individuality can be seen in them. However, they are different from the hermits in history in which they had a strong sense of social responsibility and a practical spirit while remaining pure. They practiced the ideas of “ritual, music, military, and agriculture”, which were not advocated by the rulers at that time [2]. In the society of that time, many literati and officials studied Confucianism by reading the *Four Books* and *Five Classics* and the *Eight Stocks*, but when it came to the time to really let them govern the society, they did not know how to practice. Wang Guan, Du Shaoqing, and Zhuang Shangzhi, in the book, however, play a completely different role. They serve the society with what they have learned and seek truth and pragmatism, which has important social values.

In the feudal society, the literati could not take social responsibility independently according to their ideas, so the “true Confucianism” was not achieved. However, the work did propose a new vision of combining individual values with social needs.

The social values advocate in the book are not the official positions and fame that were generally sought after at the time but rather practical matters that could bring benefits to society and people’s livelihood. Although this is only a vision, it reflects the writer’s foresight in the issue of human values. Moreover, the

portrayal of the Confucian scholars and various famous scholars, who are also officials, reveals profoundly the loss of humanity and the decay of society caused by the decadent political system and cultural policies at the end of feudal society.

3.3. Social Values in *Dream of the Red Chamber*: Writing Federal Society through Love Stories

The Scholars reveals the opposition between the traditional values of life and the true feelings of human nature at the end of feudal society. In this case, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, written by Cao Xueqin (1715-1763), profoundly demonstrates the true goodness and beauty brought by this opposition. In the novel, Jia Baoyu’s affection for women is not out of natural lust but rather out of a desire for a realm of truth and goodness in life. Still, the pursuit and desire are reflected in sympathy and adoration for girls. Cao Xueqin’s work describes Jia Baoyu’s disdain for fame and fortune. However, in the face of the beauty of the scenery and the girls, Jia Baoyu will produce a deep sadness because the beauty of the women in the book will pass away with time. When Jia sees their beautiful hearts and youth which are one by one buried by life mercilessly, he has unresolved doubts and resentment, “there is such a heartless thing under the sky” [11]. He wants to keep the beautiful things in the world forever and become eternal. The tragic spirit of Chinese literature reaches its peak here.

Although *Dream of the Red Chamber* is so high on the value of individuality, it does not give up the pursuit of social values. Jia Baoyu spurns fame and fortune and regards those who study and join the government as fools. He is not without the will to help the world [8]. The ideological and social values of *Dream of the Red Chamber* are high. It seems to be a love story, but it is about feudal society, turning feudal rituals and systems into love, using various trivial conflicts to reflect social situations and conflicts. The author’s intention is extremely profound, with a spatial and chronological span of thought, expounding the arrival of an end time. *Dream of the Red Chamber* speaks of the end-time love affair in a prosperous world through the mouth of an immortal.

4. AESTHETIC VALUES IN NOVELS

Aesthetic value is not the same as social value, but more of a sensory pleasure for the reader. Social value is more about teaching people the truth and educating readers. On the other hand, aesthetic value is the author’s ability to make the reader feel aesthetic through the characters’ complicated fates, flamboyant rhetoric, and other literary means [4]. The tragedy is more likely to convey aesthetic value [2]. Tragedy can make readers think and keep the story in their minds. From the tragedy, readers can better feel the poignancy and aesthetics expressed by the authors.

4.1. Aesthetic Values in *Dream of the Red Chamber: Love Tragedy of a Feudal Family*

The Scholars and Feng Menglong's works mainly reflect social values. When writing these works, the authors' main purpose was to educate the people and make them understand how to be better people and make the country a better place. However, *Dream of the Red Chamber* has both social and aesthetic values. The next section discusses the aesthetic values in *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Dream of the Red Chamber is a great work of realism because its ideological content and expression are extraordinary. Some people say it is an encyclopedia, and it is not unreasonable. It has a history of more than two hundred years since it was published during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty. During these two hundred years, *Dream of the Red Chamber* has had a tremendous and far-reaching impact on all segments of Chinese society.

The aesthetic value of the tragedy of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* is that it reveals the duality of family tragedy and marriage and love tragedy. The family tragedy is the inevitable demise of something corrupt. Many women in this novel have unhappy endings, which is the destruction of something ideal. The young woman is the subject of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and the family prosperity and decline are the environments of this novel. The environment determines the existence and development of the subject [8]. *Dream of the Red Chamber* is tragic in its simplicity, showing that reasonable ideals cannot achieve the status of reasonableness.

4.2. The Aesthetics Values in *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio: The Tragedy of Human-Ghost Love*

The ultimate purpose of Pu Songling (1640-1715) in creating these legends is to use his pen as a sword to express his lonely and angry feelings. *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* does not follow the traditional tragic writing method of using a happy ending. Instead, the tragic essence is carried through to the end, using imperfection to deepen the work's level. From the aesthetic point of view, the beauty of tragedy is to give people a different aesthetic feeling through tragedy. By shaping various tragic images under his pen, Pu repeatedly made the readers sigh with sorrow and have a strong emotional impact.

The tragedies in *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* all have beautiful characters. Most of the women in Pu's book are fairies and ghosts, and their different identities make the behavior and appearance of these characters different from the world. These characters do not exist in the real world, and they come from heaven or

hell. In *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, generally, a beautiful goblin meets a man who is infatuated with her. Still, they cannot stay together forever due to the rituals' prejudice and bondage. These kind-hearted goblins and ghosts have to bear the fate of injustice [12]. The brilliance of Pu lies in the tragic aesthetics he constructed in his novels. He focused on the destruction of beautiful things to expose the darkness and horror of real society and used profound tragedies to wake up the beauty of human nature that has been dormant in people's hearts for a long time, thus strengthening the aesthetic value of tragedy.

The more than 500 stories in *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* all happen in the marketplace and are close to real life. Most of the main characters are common people, and the beauty of these short stories is delicate, soft, and trivial [13]. The delicate emotion of Pu's writing does not weaken the tragic power of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*. On the contrary, this ordinary sadness has a more penetrating power. Pu challenged the view that only those with perfect personalities can become tragic characters, allowing those with various character defects in their bodies to become aesthetic objects of tragic fiction.

Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio uses delicate brush strokes to depict the personal experiences of the novel's characters in their tragic encounters. These daily trivialities that happen to the minor characters can arouse the physical experience of most readers [14]. Regarding reception aesthetics, such works are closer to the readers' hearts and feelings, and readers are more likely to resonate with them [15]. In his novel, Pu used a fantastical and beautiful mood to set off the deeper meaning of tragedy so that the readers are sad about the plot and the characters in the story [12]. It can be said that without Pu Songling's wonderful creation of the mood, there would be no tragedy of *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* [16]. It is not only a masterpiece of Chinese literary fiction but also a valuable pearl in the field of aesthetic studies.

5. SOCIAL VALUES AND AESTHETIC VALUES

Social values and aesthetic values can coexist. Many novels have both social and aesthetic values, but authors' different intentions influence the focus of the content. For example, Feng Menglong's *Stories to Awaken the World* mainly reflects social values because he wanted the novels to educate people. In contrast, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* mainly embodies tragic aesthetics, as Pu Songling wanted to make readers feel the aesthetic value through tragic love stories. However, Cao Xueqin's work *Dream of the Red Chamber* embodies social and aesthetic values.

5.1. Works with Social and Aesthetic Values

Dream of the Red Chamber is an example of the coexistence of social and aesthetic values. Cao Xueqin set it in the historical context of Qing dynasties, reflecting social values by depicting the rise and fall of the great families. He also conveyed different social values to people through his depiction of the fate of each character in the novel.

The book takes the tragedy of love and marriage between the noble youngsters Jia Baoyu, Lin Daiyu, and Xue Baochai as a clue to reflect the inevitable process of feudal society from its prosperity to its decline [8]. The social value of *Dream of the Red Chamber* is that it does not depict the love tragedy in isolation. Still, it uses this love and marriage tragedy as the mainline to depict the rise and fall of the four major families, Jia, Wang, Shi, and Xue, representing the time [11]. The Jia family is the center of the four families, representing the dark forces of the late feudal society and revealing the evils and irreconcilable conflicts in the feudal family.

The author criticized the behavior exhibited by the decadent and declining feudal aristocracy and also made a ruthless critique of the collapsing feudal system, which is its social value. All these enable the readers to deeply foresee that the feudal ruling class's decadent and slippery social system will not change its fate of being destroyed. At the same time, by portraying Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu, two characters with rebellious spirits, the novel also expresses a new kind of misty thoughts and the pursuit of an ideal fate.

In the history of Chinese literature, no work has been able to write a love tragedy as heartfelt and exciting as *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which has a high artistic impact. No writer can reveal the love tragedy and its social roots so profoundly and comprehensively as Cao Xueqin, who, in addition to making a profound criticism of feudal society, also linked the fate of the characters to the decay and decline of feudal society [8].

Dream of the Red Chamber has its high artistic achievement and aesthetic values. Cao Xueqin was a writer who could grasp the true essence of social life. He used a broad social background to present social life delicately and realistically and was able to portray numerous characters in a complex living space. More than four hundred characters appear successively in *Dream of the Red Chamber* from different times and perspectives. There are at least dozens of characters with typical images and deep impressions. For example, Jia Baoyu, Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai, Wang Xifeng, etc., are artistic archetypes with a world level of creativity [8]. Other secondary characters, such as Jia Zheng, Jia Mu, You San Jie, Qing Wen, Raider, Tan Chun, and Shi Xiangyun, are also artistic figures with their personalities and full flesh and blood.

Many different personalities of the characters portrayed in *Dream of the Red Chamber* are uncommon in classical Chinese fiction. The novel is aesthetically pleasing because of not only the grandeur of the scenes and the twists and turns of the plot but also its ability to portray characters with different personalities in a concentrated manner. Cao Xueqin, with his profound literary skills, was good at portraying characters' images and personalities by using their physical characteristics and inner activities. He was good at portraying characters of similar age, living environment, or the same way of life in the same environment in a comparative manner. The characters' personalities are clear and not blurred or mixed up. For example, Wang Xifeng and Tanchun are sisters-in-law. Both are very spirited, but Wang Xifeng's spiritedness conceals a deep scheming. In contrast, Tanchun's spiritedness is reflected in the straightforwardness, lack of detail, and integrity [11]. Cao Xueqin's portrayal of the characters is unique.

Another aesthetic value of *Dream of the Red Chamber* is its language art. It is a model in the history of Chinese literary language development, mainly in two aspects: first, the narrative language of the entire work, using the language of prose culture, so people can feel a sense of mind with a strong aesthetic effect infectious. The second is that the characters can say what they want to say in personalized language, reflecting their different ideological outlooks and characteristics.

6. CONCLUSION

The Ming and Qing dynasties were a prosperous period in the history of Chinese fiction. The novels of this era embraced the essence of traditional culture to the maximum extent in terms of ideological connotation and subject matter expression. After secularization and illustration, traditional culture entered thousands of households with palpable images and touching stories. These literati from the Ming or Qing dynasties may have been influenced by the social system or their families, but they equally conveyed social or aesthetic values in their works.

Social and aesthetic values can coexist in novels, depending on the authors' purpose in writing. The Ming and Qing literati used novels to convey their views. If the novels focused on social values, then the authors might use the novels to teach people how to be moral or to remind officials how to be truthful and pragmatic. If the authors wanted to use the novels to convey aesthetic values, then they might write a tragic love story with gorgeous rhetoric and beautiful characters to convey aesthetic values.

This study is based on the novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties to analyze the values in the novels, centering on the social and aesthetic values. It can show a direction to later researchers and encourage them to

analyze more about the values and meanings of the Ming and Qing novels and the meanings the authors wanted to

convey to the society and people.

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