

Character image analysis of Yuan variety play *Qihu philander his wife*

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Abstract: As the typical representative of love and marriage drama in Yuan variety play, *Qihu philander his wife* plays a relatively important role in it. This paper carries on the analysis in a few typical character image, which are Luo Meiyong who has the courage to fight, the hypocritical and insidious Qiu Hu, the ugly and vicious Li Dahu, the greedy and hard-hearted Luo Dahu, the kind and helpless mother-in-law Mei Ying, these five different images apparently jumping on the paper.

Keywords: Yuan variety play; *Qihu philander his wife*; Character image

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The *Qihu philander his wife* is performed by female lead singer, the play wrote that Qihu was conscribed to join the army after married three days, so he was separated with his wife ever since. His wife Mei Ying is virtuous and caring for his mother-in-law for years. Later, the family barely survived after Qiu Hu left, which makes a man named Li Dahu swoop in. He used the bug of Mei Ying didn't have husband at home, and tried to commandeer this young beauty, but she vowed to die instead of obedience, she berated him and his parents, so the contradiction temporarily calmed down. Ten years later, Qiu Hu became an official because of his military merits, and he returned home gloriously with awards. When he was passing through the mulberry garden, he came across with his wife, who was picking mulberry, so he had a flirtation with her, but his wife resolutely refused him. After Mei Ying fled

home, she unexpectedly found that the man molesting her was actually her husband, the guy who costed all her bitter waiting time for his return. Under grief and anger, she forced her husband Qiu Hu immediately agreed divorce with her. While Qiu Hu's mother at the cost of suicide and begged Mei Ying to forgive her husband, the story has a happy ending. There is no doubt that the main character of this drama is Luo Meiyong and Qiu Hu, the secondary characters are Li Dahu, Luo Dahu and mother-in-law. Below, I will carry on the analysis to these characters one by one.

1 Main characters (Luo Meiyong, Qiu hu)

1.1 Luo Meiyong

The three complete works of Shi Junbao are all female leading characters, which are *Qihu philander his wife*, *Li Yaxian liquor song in river* and *modes of ancient Chinese music flirting in Ziyun pavilion*. Its heroines are not traditional Chinese ladies, but the females who are laughing and naughty, cheerful and humorous, fearless and brave. Just as Zhu Quan's *Taihe zhengyin spectrum* comments on Shi Junbao's words "such as wintersweet in the snow", standing proudly in the white world, shining and colorful. The image of Luo Meiyong, the heroine of *Qihu philander his wife*, obviously has this characteristic. Although she was in a dirty and unwholesome environment, she was able to keep her own noble moral character and value and had pursuit in the midst of many contradictions and conflicts, which cannot but be praised by later generations.

First of all, she scrupulously abides by her duty and always keeps her promise. When Mei Ying appeared on the stage, she issued, "when boys and girls become adults, after they get married, they should

love and respect each other^[1].” Such a cry was also a manifestation of a new concept of marriage in the Yuan dynasty, she did not follow her parents’ words, and put mutual love and harmony in the first place. When she married Qiu Hu, the matchmaker instigated her and said, “sister, you should have chosen the rich man, so that you could have an enjoyable life. While Qiu Hu has a poor family, why you still marry him?” But Mei Ying retorted, “these are all bullshit granny!”^[1]. In [teleogryllus] this paragraph, she was singing and said, “If his house was shabby and covered with dust, it is my destiny. Thinking of the ancient military and political leaders, they all come from poor families, just now we are trapped with poverty, as if he didn’t have the chance to change the fate. You think he is a penniless guy, while I consider him as a potential magnate. Ever since the time of marriage, when I first saw him, my heart has gone with him^[1].” Perhaps in the secular eyes, Qiu Hu is just a “penniless guy”, he has no money and no right, under the feudal ethics-“Husband sets standards for wife, husband shares weal or woe with wife”, he is only the laborious man who struggling in the lower class, so as to get a little bit of labor income. However, Mei Ying would not change her faith, no matter how much the matchmaker worded. On the contrary, she thought that Qiu Hu would be a “potential magnate” in the future. It can be seen that she is still very trusting of Qiu Hu, it is also resonance between two lovers makes her unswervingly waiting for the return of Qiu hu in day and night. After Qiu Hu was conscribed, she said, “All people want for one night love, and I’m full of depression. He has gone to work, but who will have pity on me? I avoided the guests and the secrets are more than I can say. I didn’t dispute for the embarrassment, and I held the tears, but every woman wanted to have rampant love^[1].” “I understand the poorfamily situation, it seemed remaining well in the newly marriage. Why it is me to bear this lonely fate? Have you ever thought to ask the people why they don’t choose a good day to give birth?^[1]”. This is showing the image of her little lady, who is full of nostalgia for the newlywed life, for the helpless that Qiu Hu was in conscription. Also it is because her love and missing for Qiu Hu, which makes her in the following ten years, tried her best to take care of his parents, in the face of Li Dahu and his father’s forced marriage, she resolutely resisted and successfully defended her marriage right.

Secondly, she was faithful to her marriage. In the

ten years that Qiu Hu was conscribed, Li Dahu took a fancy to Mei Ying’s beauty, and he wanted her become his own. So he lied that Qiu Hu was died in the war. And bought over Mei Ying’s father, intending to marry her forcedly. In the face of such a situation, Mei Ying’s mother-in-law also bowed to the evil powerful forces, persuaded her to remarry. But Mei Ying swore to death, protested fiercely and said, “I already have been married once, then you want me to remarry again, how dare you tell such reason!”^[1]. She taunting her father for seeing money, “Daddy, how do you make this plan to pretending escape but having the attack after you turn back?”^[1]. In the face of vicious Li Dahu, who wa luring with money, she fought back mercilessly, “I know you have money, then sleep with your money!”^[1]. Mei Ying reveals and criticizes the essence of dirty money with her own noble character, which is profound and meaningful. She also had the illusion of her husband’s promotion to a higher rank and returning home with awards, she made a strong comparison with Li Dahu, who only had stink of money, “I scold you are the thief, monsters and freaks are your relatives, you have acquaintance with wealthy and influential family. Ah! Don’t know which official position are you in? Where is my man at this time? He is on the battlefield, wearing armor and riding the horse, while the soldiers lined up and carrying the banners. He recalled his mother was seventy years old this year, when he comes back to the hometown, it will be the time for having get together with his mother and me. I treat you as an countryside rustic, do you know who will he served for? The officials will arrest you. So he will find out why you teased me? Who bullied my mother?”^[1]. Mei ying’s sharp words are more than enough, she angrily to knock down Li Dahu, which is bold and shrewdness. This powerful resistance force is derived from Mei Ying’s own character and love for her husband Qiu Hu, her love at first sight makes their marriage have a short love foundation, while herself does not pursue fame and wealth, even after ten years of poverty and her husband’s uncertain return, she never insisted in her loyalty to love and marriage. Such an elegant working woman image without secularization presents in front of the readers.

Thirdly, she is hard-working, kind and caring the parents. Mei Ying is well aware of the family circumstances when she got married with Qiu Hu, but these cannot shake her insistence on love. Especially after Qiu Hu left home and joined the army, she still

abided by her duty and kept filial and piety in heart to take care of her mother-in-law, she diligently held the housekeeping for ten years in her own efforts, not only to survive in the days of starvation, but also to fight against feudal vicious powers in the years of waiting for her husband's return. The mother-in-law said, "It has been ten years without any news since my kid became a soldier; Thanks to my daughter-in-law, who became the darning, washing clothes, raising silkworms, so as to make money and support the family^[1]." All these moved my mother-in-law, "I only wish after my death, I could reincarnated to become her daughter-in-law, and taking care for her like this, so that I could pay her back^[1]. "Here fully protruding Mei Ying industrious kindness, for looking after the mother-in-law ten years as a day. After the "mulberry garden philandering issue", Mei Ying was very sad and angry, although she shouted, "Qiu Hu, I would like get divorce with you!"^[1]. But when the mother-in-law threatened her with suicide, how she could bear the mother-in-law lying dead in front of her eyes, so she compromised. All of these performances show Mei Ying has kind and filial nature.

Finally, she dared to assert her sovereignty. In the third chapter of the play we can see that in Qiu Hu passed by the mulberry garden on his way returning home, accidentally he was fascinated by Mei Ying's beauty, he could not help but having a frivolous intention, at first, he pretended to be virtuous and used poetry as the medium to carry out verbal frivolity, after Mei Ying rebuked him decisively, he began to expose his nature and touched her physically, his behavior was frivolous and shameless. Then he offered his pension, which should be given to his mother to tempt her, "Wait, this woman is not willing to compliance with me, so what can I do? I have golden treasure which was pension that given me to take care for my old mother, but she did not know it. As the saying goes, wealth will shake people's heart, if I give this golden treasure to this woman, she somehow will comply with me." Mei Ying said, "This guy is so rude! He is now showing he has golden treasure, I would like to keep away from him but he follows me all the way." "Hey beast you listen up! Men are easy to make mistake with the golden treasure; While women will hold on her ambition after seeing it. You wanted to lure me and I refused, then you gave me the golden treasure, how do you know it works well!"^[1]. In front of the faithful love, Mei Ying again helplessly defeated and she blamed, "The rich men are accustomed to making build momentum relying on their

money, while they are not real men on behalf of this." then she scolded, "The monkey is not a real man in his cap and clothes, while some men act like animals^[1]." The enraged Qiu Hu finally threatened her by force, "If you wouldn't agree, I will beat you to death^[1]." At this time in the face of the strong evil forces, Mei Ying was very brave and fearless, she cursed in rage, "If you look at me and I will pierce your forehead; If you pull me and I will cut off your hand and foot; If you touch me and I will handcuff your waist; If you pinch me and I will send you to three thousand miles away; If you hug me and I'll put you on the guillotine. Ah, you will bear the law of torture. While I have not lifted your grave, and I have not killed your family!" "The fellow stared at me and I cursed him to become the dead body; Seeing his face, I cursed his ancestor. How dare you philander gentlewoman in mulberry garden? Even your seven generations ancestors jumping out, you are not being forgiven!^[1]" In the face of provocation, Mei Ying did not give in, when she found her molester is Qiu Hu, their contradictions intensified to the peak, she did not retreat but shouted, "Qiu Hu, I would like get divorce with you!"^[1] From feudal dynasty was founded, the curing of the patriarchal thought has always been that only husband can divorce his wife, but at that moment Mei Ying decisively choose to divorce her husband, this not only makes her in a powerful stage in the marriage, but also the first time for "wife standards" publicly stand up to its as an equal with "husband standards"-- which is one of the "three ethic standards". Luo Meiying boldly fought for the legal rights of women and challenged the entrenched traditional feudal ethics, which was rare in the feudal society. Just like this, her image is particularly dazzling in the literature history.

The characterization of Luo Meiying can be said to open a new Times in the creation of female images in ancient literary works. This image of a flesh-and-blood woman who dares to love and hate has left a deep impression on the readers.

1.2 Qiu Hu

The character of Qiu Hu has always received mixed reviews from scholars. I will focus on the analysis of the development of his image.

The character of Qiu Hu was first seen in the *Biographies of Women* compiled by Liu Xiang in the Han dynasty. According to the description, Qiu Hu went after fame and fortune after marrying Mei Ying for five days, and he did not return home until five years later. While in his way home he met his wife in the mulberry

garden, but he didn't recognize her and philandered her. He was flirting with words, "I have a long way to go, so I wish to have a rest and invite you have lunch with me under the shady trees."^[1] And he tried to lure her with gold temptation, but his wife refused. When he returned home, he realized that he was flirting with his wife, whom he had not seen for many years, so he felt very ashamed and embarrassed. Here it seems that Qiu Hu understands the righteousness and honor, while he is not a completely vulgar. In *Xijing Notes*, there is no great change in Qiu Hu image, only a few changes in the plot. The ending is also "face down and back off", which implies Qiu Hu is a man of etiquette in *Xijing Notes*.

However, there are some changes in the *Qiu Hu Essay* in the Tang dynasty. He is selfish, regardless of the old mother in the family or the newly married wife, only thinking of their own future, he abandoned the family and going out to seek fame and fortune, although this doesn't rise to the height of breaching the etiquette or righteousness, but from filial piety he is an irresponsible person. When he returned home after achieved studies, he wrote poems in the countryside of his hometown to flirt with women, then he carried out gold temptation, in the hope of getting reply from the beauty. Because there are missing parts in *Qiu Hu Essay*, the words and behavior records of Qiu Hu is not very exactly, but according to the owned data shows, Qiu Hu still has some merits, he has the heart to serve the country, while he philandered the woman with learned knowledge, it harms the noble-minded image of intellectuals.

In the variety play of *Doctor Lu Qiu Hu philander his wife* in Yuan dynasty, the ugly veil of the Qiu Hu image is completely torn apart. At the beginning of the play, when the army came, he still remembered saying, "honey stay until I tell mother," "Mei Ying, I'll join the army. You stay at home and take care of the family, as long as you keep the very filial heart^[2]." All these show that Qiu Hu knows the righteousness in his bones. But when he returned home, his ugly face came out. Seeing the beautiful wife without recognition, then he first said, "What a beautiful woman! Standing on her back and hiding her face, only leaving the shadow; The white neck and the black hair. If she turns around for me to have a look, that will be wonderful! Oh, I would like to talk to her with verse, then she will surely turn back^[1]." Then he flirts with poetry, "a young lady who is carrying basket to pick mulberry. The dresses are blown hanging on the branch, the wind is full of fragrance. Why

she doesn't have a response^[1]?" After being contradicted, he had no shame in asking his "wife" to marry him, "Lady there is nobody right here, you have dropped my attention: it will be better to fall in love with young man instead of hard work, also it's better for you to marry me instead of picking mulberry^[1]." From his words and deeds, he had left decency, righteousness and shame behind, he was not succeeded in the words of the hook up, then he changed to take forced possession, which is simply more shameless and hateful than Li Dahu, after failed again so he lured with money, Mei Ying had fruitless resistance so she denounced, "The monkey is not a real man in his cap and clothes, while some men act like animals." Qiu hu saw lure, strong temptation, seduction are not useful, then he played shrewder attitude, forced Mei Ying, otherwise will kill her. At this time, Qiu Hu seems to be a bandit. Mei Ying cursed him to "stand condemned by God", which was exactly the point.

It can be seen that the Qiu Hu image in Yuan variety play is somewhat uglified compared with the previous literary works, whose purpose is to counter Mei Ying's "wife standrads" theory.

2 Minor character(Li Dahu, Luo Dahu, mother-in-law)

In the *Qiu Hu philander his wife*, in addition to the main character we mentioned above, Li Dahu, Luo dahu and the Qiu Hu's mother also play a crucial role in the promotion and development of the story, the following are the analyses.

The Li Dahu was portrayed as a country scoundrels in the *Qiu Hu philander his wife*. He was so rich that he could be considered as the rich gentry in the village, while everyone laughed at him only having money instead of a good wife. So he fixed his eyes on Mei Ying, who had not seen her husband for ten years, "There is an old man in my village, called Luo Dahu, who used to be a rich man but now he is poor. He borrowed some food from me and has never returned it back. He has a daughter, call Mei Ying, she is very good and got married with Qiu Hu. Now Qiu Hu has gone to the army and won't come back for ten years. Now I aks Luo Dahu coming and tell him Qiu Hu was dead, and make his daughter to remarry with me, then I will cancel the food that he used to borrow from me, and I will forgive him, meanwhile giving him some money. Luo Dahu is a poor man, so he will make the promise. I have sent servant to find him, and I dare that he will

come here sooner or later^[1].” When Luo Dahu refused to remarry his daughter, he began to threaten him and said, “If you refuse, I will tell the officials that you owed my food, and they will arrest you! If you give me your daughter, I will write off the food you owed me; Also I will give you some sheep and wine as betrothal gifts^[1].” he seems to be a scoundrel image who only has money.

2.1 Luo Dahu

Luo Dahu is Luo Meiying’s father in the play. He initially refused to unreasonable requirements of Li Dahu in the play, but under the temptation, he finally hard to resist and promised to “cheat” Mei Ying. In order to persuade Mei Ying to remarry Li Dahu, he even lied that the Qiu Hu was dead, cheating mother-in-law and Mei Ying, so how ruthless he is. But unpredictable, Mei Ying was loyal to love, and she vowed not to remarry. He said, “baby, if you remarried with him, I will also have the better life^[1].” “the beggar made you suffer from poverty, so why not to remarry Li Dahu to have a better life^[1].” In the face of the rich Li Dahu, he is difficult to defend the bottom line, he used his daughter as a pawn, which is a vicious father image.

2.2 Mei Ying’s mother-in-law

In *Qiu hu philander his wife*, Mei Ying’s mother-in-law has always been a kind-hearted elder, she knows Mei Ying is good to her, also always protecting Mei Ying, they don’t have the least bit of dispute, we can see the words from”. I’m Qiu Hu’s mother. I haven’t heard from my son since he joined the army. I got angry with my in-laws the other day, thanks to Mei Ying’s strong heart, she refused to remarry, if she was willing to do so, who would take care of me? She went to pick mulberry in the mulberry garden this morning, how

hardworking she is, she doing the laborious job to raise the family, I only wanted to reincarnate her daughter-in-law after my death, so that to take care of her like this^[3].”

After Qiu Hu molested Mei Ying, she was very angry and put forward the slogan of “rectify wife standards”. But her mother-in-law still wanted them getting back together, so she came up with the idea of “death forced” such a strategy. We can’t deny this kind of treatment, but it is worth noting that she did it because she did not want the whole family to break up. So her starting point is still worthy of affirmation.

As a result, from another point of view, the image shaping of Li Dahu, Luo Dahu and Mei Ying’s mother-in-law these characters, not only promoting the development of the story, but also adding a new scenery line in the Chinese character shaping gallery.

3 Conclusion

On the basis of drawing lessons from previous studies, this paper selects a small entry point of the play-*Qiu hu philander his wife*, and conducts a special research. It analyzes the Yuan variety play -*Qiu hu philander his wife*, and further explores the characters in it by combining the text. Thus getting painstaking attainments from the variety play that writers created in Yuan dynasty, also experiencing the unique charm of this representative play.

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