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文學碩士 學位論文

The Distortion of Female Narratives
in *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*,
and “Qingwa shen”

《이와전》, 《유의전》, 《청와신》
속 여성 서사의 일그러짐

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指導教授 Olivia Milburn


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【Abstract】

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In this thesis, the genuineness of happy endings in literature is questioned in the perspective of female characters. In the process of achieving a happy ending, the female characters face a distortion in their narratives. This research focuses on the distortions of female narratives in three selected works of Chinese literature: *Li Wa zhuan* 李娃傳 (The Tale of Li Wa), *Liu Yi zhuan* 柳毅傳 (The Tale of Liu Yi) and “Qingwa shen” 青蛙神 (The Frog God). These literary works have been selected due to their thematic characteristics despite their different authorship and textual history. The phrase “female narrative” refers to the personal story of the female characters. A distortion in the narrative of a character refers to illogical and sudden changes in one’s personality which can be accepted as literary flaws. The phenomenon can be seen, and is focused in the narratives of the female protagonists of the three selected works. The female characters are faced with abrupt changes in their narratives for the benefit of their male counterparts. This thesis seeks for the purpose of such distortions in the female characters and also questions the equality of the happy ending for the two sexes.

Before focusing on the purpose and the effect of the distortions, two popular plotlines each from Western literature culture and traditional Chinese literature culture are introduced: the marriage plot and the *datuanyuan jieju* 大團圓結局 (The great reunion ending). The marriage plot focuses on the story of a female character in pursuit of a husband and she successfully achieves a happy ending once she marries the male protagonist, but the tale concludes with the wedding. The marriage plot has been criticized from a feminist perspective as it encouraged the domestication of women and the sole pursuit of romantic love and marriage for women without any consideration of the subsequent context. The *datuanyuan jieju* of Chinese culture provides readers with the feeling that all conflicts are resolved at the end of the story, however, it has also been criticized for causing literary flaws by rushing to a happy ending. The characteristics of the two plotlines are found in the three selected works as a designated ending is planned for the female characters. Chinese marriage traditions also influence the narratives of the female characters as the Confucian ideal for women is to become a support for men.

To fulfill the requirements of the marriage plot, the *datuanyuan jieju*, and also those of an ideal wife of traditional China, the female characters face distortions in their narratives regardless of their previous personalities as the story comes to a close. In the process of achieving the desired ending, female characters

face distortions while male characters undergo the process of hypergamy. Through hypergamy, male characters achieve a higher social status and the story's ending focuses on the success of the male character. The narratives of the three female characters are silenced as they are forced the role of a supportive wife. This thesis explains the phenomenon of the distortions of female narrative and provides an explanation of cause and effect. Only three works of literature that display the phenomenon are referenced and the research concludes with a hope for further research.

Keywords: female narrative, *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, “Qingwa shen”, marriage plot, *datuanyuan jieju*, distortion, male hypergamy.

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Table of Contents

【Abstract】	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Textual History	9
2.1 Textual history of <i>Li Wa zhuan</i>	9
2.2 Textual history of <i>Liu Yi zhuan</i>	14
2.3 Textual history of “Qingwa shen”	16
3. Theoretical Basis	21
3.1 The Marriage Plot and the <i>Datuanyuan jieju</i>	21
3.2 Marriage in Chinese Literature	31
4. Textual Comparisons	36
4.1 The Distortion of Female Narratives	36
4.2 Hypergamy of the Male Characters	40
4.3 The Happy Ending	49
5. Conclusion	54
【Bibliography】	56
【초록】	62

1. Introduction

The question that paved the way for this research is simple: “Is this a happy ending?” The question was initially directed at the Tang 唐 dynasty novella *Li Wa zhuan* 李娃傳 (The Tale of Li Wa) by Bai Xingjian 白行簡, but it can also be applied to many other works of Chinese literature that claim to have happy endings. To be taken into full consideration, this question has to be asked more specifically: “Is this a happy ending for the female protagonist too?”

What is a happy ending? What must a character achieve to accomplish a happy ending? Overcoming hardships, gaining endless riches, fame, glory, and perhaps true love? For the main characters of *Li Wa zhuan*, both the male and female characters achieve all of the above. But then why does one doubt the genuineness of it? To answer this question, Li Wa 李娃, the eponymous heroine of *Li Wa zhuan*, must be the subject of thorough research. Li Wa is a wealthy courtesan known for her beauty and talent. A scholar from a noble family squanders his money on her. She abandons him once he is penniless,

but she subsequently assists him to acquire a position at court.¹ She wishes to leave him and advises him to marry a noble woman as contemporary social norms demanded.² Surprisingly, the father of the scholar welcomes Li Wa into his household and she carries out the duties of a noble lady perfectly. The emperor gives her the title Lady of Qian 汧國夫人, a great honor for women of that era.³ The story ends with claiming Li Wa’s happy ending.⁴ Li Wa, a former courtesan, seems to achieve a happy ending with riches, honor, and a loving family.⁵

¹ The action of Li Wa, a courtesan abandoning a penniless scholar, is rare in Chinese literature. Li Wa stands out from her fellow fictional courtesan characters of Tang dynasty tales and traditional Chinese literature for this reason. She is also praised as she leads the scholar to greatness. See Tsai, “Ritual and Gender in the ‘Tale of Li Wa’”, pp. 117.

² It was forbidden for Tang dynasty men to marry courtesans due to their difference in social status. Marriage was not out of love but for the benefit it brought to one’s family. There were women (future wives) whom were suitable for marriage and women such as courtesans whom were for sex and entertainment. Different requirements were made for the two types of women. See Jen, “Tang Tragedies: Men and Love in the Tang Dynasty”, pp. 92.

³ Renowned women of the Tang dynasty were summoned to the palace by the emperor. A famous poet of the Tang dynasty, Li Ye 李冶 (ca. 720-783 A.D.) who was also called Ji Lan 季蘭 had an audience with Emperor Daizong 唐代宗 李豫 in 779 A.D and was granted with numerous awards, but still not a title. Considering that Li Wa was a courtesan, receiving a title from the emperor is an even greater accomplishment. See Shi, *Notable Women of China: Shang Dynasty to the Early Twentieth Century*, pp. 213-216.

⁴ For the original text and English translation of *Li Wa zhuan*, see Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa*, pp. 105-186.

⁵ Compared to the outcomes of courtesans in fiction and nonfiction, Li Wa’s ending is a relatively happy one. Tang dynasty courtesans were mostly under

Li Wa achieves worldly success, but is this what she wanted? Was she willing to marry the scholar? As will be demonstrated in this paper, the answer is no.⁶ Crucial incidents show that Li Wa had no intention of marrying the scholar and she undergoes a major change of character for the marriage to happen.⁷ Then what has led Li Wa's narrative to end in marriage? This paper intends to answer questions for *Li Wa zhuan* along with two other Chinese literary works that share similar patterns for the female characters. One is the Tang dynasty short story *Liu Yi zhuan* 柳毅傳 (The Tale of Liu Yi) by Li

thirty and they usually became courtesan mothers 假母 to young courtesans or became concubines to regional generals when they got old. See 손계, 최령흠 지음; 최진아 옮김, 『북리지; 교방기』, pp. 54-55. “妓之母，多假母也，亦妓之衰退者為之。... 率不在三旬之內。諸母亦無夫，其未甚衰者，悉為諸邸將輩主之。” “The mother of courtesans, were mostly stepmothers, they were also courtesans who got old and retired. ... Most of them were not under the age of thirty. Most of the mothers also did not have a husband, the ones that were not very old served regional generals as their master.” The female protagonists of *Huo Xiaoyu zhuan* 霍小玉傳 (The Tale of Huo Xiaoyu) and *Du Shiniang nuchen baibaoxiang* 杜十娘怒沈百寶箱 (Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger) who are famous fictional courtesans were abandoned by their lovers and left to die.

⁶ Whether Li Wa had the intention of marrying the scholar or not is an ongoing debate. Most papers are based on the idea that she wanted to marry the scholar. For a paper that is not, see 黃月芬, 〈《李娃傳》之無情論〉, 《河南廣播電視大學學報》, 第31卷第2期, 2018, pp. 57-60.

⁷ Li Wa transforms from an independent character to an obedient housewife. This transformation is elaborated in Tsai, “Ritual and Gender in the ‘Tale of Li Wa’”.

The Distortion of Female Narratives in *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen”

Chaowei 李朝威. The main characters conclude in marriage even though there are many occasions where both the male and female protagonists could marry other characters and still have a happy ending. The female protagonist of the story, the Dragon Girl 龍女 also undergoes an abrupt change in her character. The Qing 清 dynasty short story “Qingwa shen” 青蛙神 (The Frog God) by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 from *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio) ends in marriage of the main characters that is also based heavily on a sudden change of character in the female protagonist, Shiniang 十娘. The three female characters all undergo a rather alien change, or to say, a distortion so that the story can acquire a designated ending that shares a pattern. The three selected works: *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan* and “Qingwa shen” will be analyzed and questioned in the perspective of the female characters.

These three works of literature have been chosen despite their difference in textual history since they share an important element in common: marriage that leads to a happy ending that is framed in terms of the success it brings the male protagonist. They are also perceived as stories with a definite happy ending. Marriage functions as the key to happiness for the three heroines, regardless of their personality and desires. But even though the marriage leads to a seemingly successful conclusion, it brings with it a distortion of the

1. Introduction

psychologically plausible female character. All three heroines face abrupt changes in their personalities to “fit in” to a male-centered ending. A consistent female narrative that was building up gradually is diverted, if not perverted. The female narrative ends abruptly as the focus shifts to benefit the male characters, or more specifically, the patriarchal system. This paper will focus on how marriage is used as a tool to deliberately distort and shut down female narratives in order to enhance and fulfil the male story-line and the patriarchal system. Here in this paper, the expression “narratives” as in “female narratives” refers to a character’s own story in the main plot. As a developing being, a character is expected to have a basic degree of consistency in their personality and actions.⁸ They are not expected to have a sudden illogical change in personality except in the event of extreme circumstances within the plot. In this paper, these sudden changes, or distortions of character and their narrative functions will be explored from the viewpoint of the female protagonists.

The theme of female socialization is also hinted in the three selected works. Two of the three female protagonists are deities and one is a courtesan, these three female characters are socialized into domestication after their

⁸ Theophrastus (c. 371 - c. 287 BC), who is a pupil of Aristotle, was in accordance with his teacher said that habitual actions gave character consistency. See Frow, *Character and Person*, pp. 109.

marriage. The male characters experience hypergamy through marriage while the female characters undergo a process of socialization and domestication.⁹

The representation of women within the Confucian tradition is strictly familial; women are cycled into the social roles of daughter, wife and mother.¹⁰ To be socialized into such roles, women are trained to serve their father, husband, and son according to the phases in life. For these women, domesticity defines female socialization and success.

⁹ Hypergamy is a term first used by W. Coldstream, to denote the custom which forbids the marriage of a woman into a group of lower standing than her own. It also means any marriage with a partner of higher social standing. "hypergamy, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, December 2019. Web. 16 December 2019. The phenomenon of hypergamy occurs to the male protagonists as they achieve a significant social climb through marriage with a woman from a higher social status. Hypergamy has been studied regarding the caste system, interracial marriages, modern marriage market, its relation with the level of education and many more. The following researches are recommended for a basic understanding of hypergamy. 1) Davis, "Intermarriage in Caste Societies", pp. 376-395. 2) Berghe, "Hypergamy, Hypergenation, and Miscegenation", pp. 83-91. 3) Esteve, García-Román, and Permanyer, "The Gender-Gap Reversal in Education and Its Effect on Union Formation: The End of Hypergamy?" pp. 535-546. 4) Floyd, "Male Hypergamy and Social Status", pp. 1-6. This paper gives examples of non-fictional male hypergamy cases. 5) Esteve, Schwartz, Bavel, Permanyer, Klesment, and García-Román, "The End of Hypergamy: Global Trends and Implications," pp. 615-625. Normally, women are referred to the subjects of social climbing when hypergamy is mentioned, this paper will use the term "male hypergamy" to specifically direct the phenomenon where the male experience social climbing.

¹⁰ Rosenlee, *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation*, pp. 47.

1. Introduction

A Chinese woman, certainly in the past and even in today's People's Republic and among Taiwan's elite, finds her place in society most clearly defined by her family. Marriage, childbearing, and housework are her first domain and her primary responsibility.¹¹

Marriage is a necessary event in life to women who see it as a crucial rite of passage as they advance from the status of daughter to that of wife and mother. But marriage is not a necessary element in life for women who are free from such requirements and these women are brought up in different ways. Suppose there is a sudden switch of environments for the two types of women, a quick and agile adaptation is not convincing. However, descriptions of women from outside the boundaries being quickly and successfully absorbed into socialization and domestication appear in the selected literary works as important events. As mentioned before, these transfers come with the distortion of the female characters. The distortions will be a key factor of analysis in means of how they happen and why they are necessary for the domestication of female characters.

¹¹ Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China*, pp. 75.

The Distortion of Female Narratives in *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen”

Before going into further analysis of the selected works, it should be emphasized that the three literary works have been selected due to the key characteristics of their narrative even though their period of composition are different. *Li Wa zhuan* and *Liu Yi zhuan* are Tang dynasty works and “Qingwa shen” dates to the Qing dynasty, none of the works share the same authorship. Although the novels are not contemporary, their treatment of female narratives share important similarities. These characteristics make a comparison of these texts meaningful, and the paper will focus on thematic rather than temporal elements. The recurring pattern of the distortion of the female narratives despite the different authorship and textual history will be the main focus of this research in hope of setting the foundation for seeking more literary works that share the same pattern of distortion focused on the female narratives.

2. Textual History

2.1. Textual History of *Li Wa zhuan*

Li Wa zhuan is a Tang dynasty novella written by Bai Xingjian. The version of the story which is included in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era) attributes itself to Bai Xingjian as the author in the text. This paper will be using the textual version that is based on Bai Xingjian's writing in *Taiping guangji*. Bai Xingjian is the younger brother of the celebrated Chinese poet Bai Juyi 白居易.¹² Compared to Bai Juyi whose life and works are thoroughly recorded and studied, not much is known of Bai Xingjian's life and most of his works that were collected by his brother Bai Juyi have been lost. There is no known writing of the past that is solely dedicated to the chronology of Bai Xingjian, but mentions of Bai Xingjian are made in discussions of Bai Juyi and thus some details of his life are

¹² Bai Juyi (772-846), whose courtesy name is Letian 樂天, is a much loved and celebrated poet and government official from the Tang dynasty. His works are still admired and studied up to modern days and he has earned much more reputation than his younger brother, Bai Xingjian. For more information of Bai Juyi and some mentions of Bai Xingjian, see Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i, 772-846 A.D.*

known.¹³ Bai Xingjian’s life is mentioned in the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (The Old Book of Tang) and other historical recordings of the Tang dynasty. The chronology of Bai Xingjian’s life in this thesis will be based on the works of Huang Dahong 黃大宏, Tan Chaoyan 譚朝炎, and Glen Dudbridge.¹⁴ The following is a brief chronology of Bai Xingjian’s life which highlights the major events of his life and is solely focused on the events of Bai Xingjian.

¹³ Another figure that is constantly mentioned in the chronicles of Bai Juyi and Bai Xingjian is the Tang dynasty poet and politician Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831) whose courtesy name is Weizhi 微之. Yuan Zhen is also a famous figure in Chinese history and literature, one of his most famous works is the Tang *chuanqi* 傳奇 novella *Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳 (The Tale of Yingying) which is a tragic love story. He and Bai Juyi formed a close relationship as both writers and friends throughout their lives. See 卞孝萱, 《元稹年譜》 for more information on the life of Yuan Zhen.

¹⁴ Huang Dahong has written two works on the chronology of Bai Xingjian based on various researches of Bai Juyi and one of his works is a revision of his own chronology. Tan Chaoyan’s work is a criticism of the latter work of Huang Dahong. Tan Chaoyan claims that Huang made numerous mistakes in his revised chronology of Bai Xingjian and attempts to correct them. The chronology provided by Glen Dudbridge is also based on the researches done by other scholars who referenced the recordings of Bai Juyi. See 黃大宏, 〈白行簡年譜〉; and 〈白行簡行年事跡及其詩文作年考〉. He has also written a paper that specifically researches on the exact written date for *Li Wa zhuan*. His research claims that there is an existing controversy as the in text recording of the writer’s position at the written time confirmed by himself and the given chronology are contradicting. 黃大宏, 楊蓉, 〈《李娃傳》爲白行簡晚年作品考論〉. For Glen Dudbridge’s chronology of Bai Xingjian, see Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa*, pp. 14-18.

Bai Xingjian, whose courtesy name is Zhitui 知退, was born in 776. The father of the Bai brothers, Bai Jigeng 白季庚 passed away in 794. Bai Xingjian gained a *jinshi* degree in 807.¹⁵ In 811, Madam Chen 陳氏, the mother of the Bai brothers, passed away and the brothers retired to go into mourning. After the mourning period, Bai Xingjian joined the staff of a military governor in Zizhou 梓州. In 818, Bai Xingjian left his post in Zizhou to join his brother Bai Juyi in Jiangzhou 江州. Bai Juyi was summoned back to court in 820, thus he returned to the capital Chang'an 長安 with Bai Xingjian. Bai Xingjian also received the position as Remembrancer 左拾遺 in 821. Bai Xingjian maintained his position and in 825, he was promoted to fifth grade post in the capital. Bai Xingjian passed away in the winter of 826. The life of Bai Xingjian is not recorded in detail and is consisted mostly of the records of his positions in court and in relation with his brother. Most of his works are lost, but his representative work *Li Wa zhuan* is passed through the collections of *Taiping guangji*.¹⁶

¹⁵ On the issue with the date of Bai Xingjian's first try at the *jinshi* examinations, Huang Dahong and Tan Chaoyan are not in accordance. Huang Dahong and Dudbridge's recordings claim that Bai Xingjian gained his *jinshi* degree in 807.

¹⁶ The *Taiping guangji* is a collection of various stories that date from the Han 漢 dynasty to the early Song 宋 dynasty. It was ordered to fourteen scholars which included Li Fang 李昉 by the second emperor of the Song dynasty,

Of the textual history of *Li Wa zhuan* and its origins, Glen Dudridge has done a greatly detailed research in his book, *The Tale of Li Wa*. This paper will base mainly on his researches along with other researches for the following section. The theory that the story takes its original sources from the popular folk tale *Yizhihua* 一枝花 (A Spray of Flower) that circulated in the markets is broadly accepted.¹⁷ The story of Li Wa the courtesan is not only recorded in *Taiping guangji* but also in another early compilation which is the *Leishuo* 類說 (Categorized Fiction).¹⁸ Both compilations have used the

Song Taizong 宋太宗 in the year 977 as an imperial order to compile a collection of stories. The compilation of the stories was finished after a year and a half and it was published after another five years. *Taiping guangji* is consisted of five hundred *juan* 卷 and approximately seven thousand stories and it includes stories of encounters with ghosts, love and many more. However, the book was met with criticism since such stories were not regarded helpful to scholars. The book was retrieved in a national scale and thus caused the scarce amount of surviving manuscripts. After its republication in late Ming dynasty, there has been many publications made. See 김장환, 박재연, 이래종 역, 성임 변, 《태평광기상절》, pp. 3-29.

¹⁷ Some versions of the story in the publication of *Leishuo* claim that Li Wa's former name was Yizhihua. Also, Yuan Zhen's poem 《酬翰林白學士代書一百韻》 which is recorded in the tenth volume of 《元氏長慶集》, speaks of an incident where the poet and the two Bai brothers enjoyed a night of listening to the story of Yizhihua in its footnote. See 程國斌, 〈《李娃傳》研究綜述〉, pp. 73-75.

¹⁸ *Leishuo* is a collection of stories by the Song dynasty scholar Ceng Zao 曾慥 (d. 1155) whose courtesy name is Duanbo 端伯. *Leishuo* is an important collection as the works that are included are of various themes depicting the everyday lives and scenes of the past and also of its historical data value due to the textual corrections made by Ceng Zao. *Leishuo* has a

2. Textual History

same source which is the now lost collection of *Yi wen ji* 異聞集 (Collection of Strange Tales) by Chen Han 陳翰 of the Tang dynasty. Thus there is no existing version that can verify the authenticity of the story in both *Taiping guangji* and *Leishuo*. The *Leishuo* version of the story of Li Wa is under a different name from the version in *Taiping guangji*. A longer and more detailed version of the story is recorded in *juan* 484 of *Taiping guangji* with the title *Li Wa zhuan* while a relatively brief version is recorded in *juan* 26 of *Leishuo* under the name of *Qianguo furen zhuan* 汧國夫人傳 (The Tale of the Lady of Qian). Significant differences exist between the two versions and this paper will take the longer version in *Taiping guangji* as its textual source for its detailed elaborations of the story. However, the *Taiping guangji* itself has been published various times with differing contents and their versions of *Li Wa zhuan* also have inconsistencies.¹⁹ In this thesis, the original text included in the 1961 publication of *Taiping guangji* by 中華書局 will be used due to its accuracy and revisions made by its authoritative publishers.

total of 60 *juan* and is also used for the correction of the textual history of other works from the past along with providing readers with rich contents. However, due to multiple publications throughout time, *Leishuo* has experienced omission of texts and authors, loss of full texts and many more problems. See 薛琪薪, 金坡, 〈曾慥《類說》的史料價值與問題〉.

¹⁹ For the history and transmission of *Taiping guangji* and an overview of the publications made, see the editorial foreword by Wang Shaoying 汪紹楹 in the reprint of *Taiping guangji* made in 1961, vol. 1, pp. 1-3.

2.2. Textual History of *Liu Yi zhuan*

Liu Yi zhuan is a Tang dynasty work written by Li Chaowei and similar to *Li Wa zhuan*, the literary work is recorded in *Taiping guangji* with its sources originating from the lost collection of *Yi wen ji*. The author of *Liu Yi zhuan* is directly mentioned in the latter part of the text as it says that Li Chaowei of Longxi 隴西 took record of the story of the Dragon Girl and Liu Yi 柳毅. Not much is known of Li Chaowei and of his life, but it is estimated that he was an active scholar during the ruling period of Dezong 德宗 (785-805) and Xianzong 憲宗 (806-820) of the Tang dynasty.²⁰ Only two of his works remain today, *Liu Yi zhuan* and *Liu Canjun zhuan* 柳參軍傳 (The Tale of Liu Canjun), but *Liu Yi zhuan* has been praised by many scholars including Lu Xun 魯迅 who compared *Liu Yi zhuan* with *Yingying zhuan* as equal masterpieces of the Tang dynasty *chuanqi* 傳奇 stories.²¹ The original work is recorded as *Liu Yi* in *juan* 419 of *Taiping guangji*, but it is frequently referred as *Liu Yi zhuan* as the other *chuanqi* works of the Tang dynasty with

²⁰ See 이영미, 〈당대 전기소설 연구 중기 작품을 중심으로〉, pp. 18-33.

²¹ See 李富強, 〈唐代隴籍傳奇作家李朝威及其作品述評〉, pp. 6-12 for an outline of Li Chaowei and his works.

2. Textual History

the additional character *zhuan* 傳 (story) at the end of the title.²² It is estimated that the original title recorded in *Yi wen ji* is *Dongting lingyin zhuan* 洞庭靈姻傳 (The Tale of the Supernatural Marriage at Dongting) since it is recorded so in *Leishuo* after the collection's title.²³ The textual version that will be used in this paper is also the 1961 publication of *Taiping guangji* by 中華書局 for the same reasons mentioned previously and unity between the sources. There are other works of literature in *Taiping guangji* that contain similar plots and details with *Liu Yi zhuan*, which gives the information that the basic storyline of *Liu Yi zhuan* was a popular story in transmission during the time written. *Liu Yi zhuan* stands out among similar works as it is praised for its realistic descriptions of the clash of common man's world with the supernatural while including Confucian ideas, the treatment of women in patriarchal society, realistic depictions of the immortal beings and rich imagination.²⁴

²² In Lu Xun's 《唐宋傳奇集》, pp. 29, he refers *Liu Yi* as *Liu Yi zhuan*. Lu Xun is also the first to make textual corrections of the literary work. This paper will refer the story as *Liu Yi zhuan* since it is a broadly used term for scholars and is more suitable for the title of a Tang *chuanqi* story.

²³ See 程毅中, 《古小說簡目》, pp. 42.

²⁴ There are approximately three pieces of work in *Taiping guangji* that show similarity with *Liu Yi zhuan*. They are 1) *Guantingjiang shen* 觀亭江神 (The God of Guantingjiang) in *juan* 291 which claims to be derived from *Nanyue zhi* 南越誌 (The Recordings of Nanyue), 2) *Humuban* 胡母班 (Humuban) or *Humuban zhuan* 胡母班傳 (The Tale of Humuban) in *juan* 293 which

2.3. Textual History of “Qingwa shen”

“Qingwa shen” is a Qing dynasty story by Pu Songling in his book of strange stories *Liaozhai zhiyi* which contains approximately 500 stories of ghosts, lovers, criticism of the feudal system and the imperial examination and many more. Pu Songling is known best for his tales of the strange and the supernatural which interacted with and criticized the common man’s world.²⁵ Also known as *Liaozhai xiansheng* 聊齋先生 (Mr. Liaozhai) due to his most prestigious work, Pu Songling was born in Zichuan 淄川 and his courtesy name is Liuxian 留仙. His life along with his works are thoroughly recorded and are still the subject of research up to modern days.²⁶ At the age of 19, he passed the local imperial examinations in first place with the admiration of

is also recorded in the fourth volume of *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (In Search of the Supernatural), 3) *Shaojingbo* 邵敬伯 (Shaojingbo) in *juan* 295 from *Xiyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (Miscellany from Xiyang). See 俞炳甲, 〈李朝威《柳毅傳》研究〉, pp. 257-278 for a research on *Liu Yi zhuan* and a detailed comparison of the different stories that share the same original form. For the process of compilation of *Liu Yi zhuan*, see 程國賦, 〈《柳毅傳》成書探微〉.

²⁵ For an introduction to Pu Songling and his style of literature, see Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*, pp. 1-12.

²⁶ For the life of Pu Songling and his chronology, see 張景樵, 《蒲松齡年譜》.

Shi Runzhang 施閏章 who was a great poet of that time and was given the title of *Xiucai* 秀才, but his luck with the imperial examinations did not continue as he failed multiple times at the provincial examinations. Finally at the age of 72, he was given the title of *Gongsheng* 貢生 and he passed away at the age of 76.²⁷ But it was during his days of countless failures and teaching young scholars to make ends meet that he started writing the strange stories. He was in conflict since he gained comfort from writing stories but could not focus on preparing for his exams and was also criticized by his friends for writing fiction. It is said that Pu Songling started writing the strange stories during his stay in Jiangnan 江南 when he was invited to stay as a private secretary by Sun Hui 孫蕙 in 1670. He returned home in 1671 and continued teaching and preparing for the examination. Pu Songling stayed as a tutor at the house of Bi Jiyou 畢際有 for thirty years starting from 1680, Bi Jiyou was a man of power in the region and he was able to provide Pu Songling not only with better financial support, but also encouraged his writings by participating in some works in *Liaozhai zhiyi*. It is thought that Pu Songling was able to focus more on his personal writings

²⁷ For information on Pu Songling and his history with the imperial examinations, see 서중위, 〈論文: 蒲松齡與科舉制度〉.

as he was relatively well paid compared to his past positions and was also able to meet with different scholars who visited the house of Bi Jiyou.²⁸

The textual transmission history of the *Liaozhai zhiyi* manuscripts is thoroughly arranged by Allan Barr.²⁹ After the death of Pu Songling, *Liaozhai zhiyi* was only transferred as manuscript versions copied by hand for 50 years which caused inevitable variations in the text. Barr focuses on four versions of manuscripts for his research, but he gives accounts for seven manuscripts in the paper and concludes that the original format of the book was in eight volumes. The hand written manuscript by Pu Songling himself, the *Liaozhai zhiyi shougaoben* 聊齋誌異手稿本 was preserved by his family after his death and was partly copied for transmission, Pu Songling's descendent donated the manuscript to the government in 1948. Half of the manuscript is lost, but it since it is the manuscript made by the author, it is the

²⁸ Pu Songling's relationship with the imperial examinations and his strange stories are inseparable since his motivation for the creation of *Liaozhai zhiyi* was initiated by the failures of the imperial examination. This is also apparent in his works as criticism towards the society and the corruption of the imperial examinations is largely apparent in his works. See 배병균, 〈논문: 포송령의 생애 - 《료재지이》의 창작동기와의 관련을 중심으로〉, for a research on the relation of *Liaozhai zhiyi* and the imperial examinations.

²⁹ See Barr, “The Textual Transmission of *Liaozhai zhiyi*,” pp. 515-562. A following research dealing with the chronological order of the individual works of *Liaozhai zhiyi* by himself is mentioned in his former paper. See Barr, “A Comparative Study of Early and Late Tales in *Liaozhai zhiyi*,” pp. 157-202.

2. Textual History

first resource for researchers. *Liaozhai zhiyi* was read in various versions of copied manuscripts until the first printed edition, the *Qingketingkeben* 青柯亭刻本 was published in the 31th year of the reign of Emperor Qianlong 乾隆, fifty years after Pu Songling's death. The publication of the first printed edition caused the book to spread broadly and new printed editions were soon made with their primary resource as the *Qingketingkeben*. Editions with footnotes were also published and countless editions of the *Liaozhai zhiyi* were made, proving its popularity.³⁰ The text used in this research is from *Quanbenxinzhu Liaozhai zhiyi* 全本新註聊齋誌異 published by 人民文學出版社 in 1989, it is included with footnotes and mainly edited by Zhu Qikai 朱其鎧 who took records from various editions for each story.

The story “Qingwa shen” is included in the surviving manuscript by Pu Songling, it is recorded with a consecutive piece named *You* 又 (Another) dealing with the frog god but no relations with the first piece seem to exist. “Qingwa shen” is not one of the most popular works from *Liaozhai zhiyi* and only a handful of researches have been made, but its description of a strong female character who succumbs to the standards of patriarchy is worth

³⁰ For a full list and research of the editions of *Liaozhai zhiyi*, see 張憲春, 〈《聊齋誌異》版本敘錄〉; and 王平, 〈二十世紀《聊齋誌異》研究述評〉.

The Distortion of Female Narratives in *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen”

noticing as this paper did.

3. Theoretical Basis

3.1. The Marriage Plot and the *Datanyuan jieju*

For *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen”, the stories end with a happy marriage of the male and female protagonists. This kind of “marriage plot” is a broadly used form of narrative which dates back to the 12th century and it has been extensively studied in terms of Western, particularly Anglophone, culture.³¹ For a marriage plot, the core of the narrative is the female protagonist’s pursuit of a husband.³² The story of acquiring true love and successfully engaging in marriage is a popular plot up to modern days. The marriage plot is the story of heterosexual love and courtship culminating in marriage, it is one of the dominant cultural narratives since the rise of the modern novel and the process is as described below:

³¹ Researches on the marriage plot in Anglophone literature are abundant in its quantity and related area of study. The phenomenon has been studied regarding 12th century troubadour lyrics, domestic fiction works from the Victorian era, the works of renowned writers such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Virginia Woolf, the well-known child’s tale of Cinderella, movies such as “Pretty Woman” (1990), and up to present day romantic comedy and literary works such as *The Marriage Plot* (2011) by Jeffrey Eugenides and many more.

³² See Livingston, *Marriage, Property, and Women’s Narratives*, pp. 2.

In 18th- and 19th-century novels and in contemporary popular culture, plots typically center on the courtship between a heroine and hero and emphasize the perspective of the woman. Conflicts, misunderstanding, and tension threaten to derail the relationship, but ultimately the two characters correctly understand and express their love for each other; their marriage, projected to be a happy one, concludes the story.³³

Stories with the marriage plot conclude with the main characters marrying each other. The events that take place after the marriage are not noticed and it is not required of the writer to depict it.³⁴ The problem with marriage plots is that by positioning marriage as the sole most important goal for the female character's life, it suggests that marriage is the primary fictional and life goal

³³ See Harrison, “Reading the Marriage Plot”, pp. 113.

³⁴ Some literary works counter this tradition of glorifying marriage by depicting or alluding “unhappy” events that happen through marriage. *Wuthering Heights*, *The Golden Bowl*, and *To the Lighthouse* are some works that counter the traditional marriage narrative structure. See Boone, “Uneasy Wedlock and the Counter-Tradition's Contribution to Open Form: Beyond the ‘Happy Ending,’” pp. 141-225.

3. Theoretical Basis

for women.³⁵ Novels which make use of the marriage plot have successfully normalized a particular set of heterosexual gender roles in culture and have also idealized an idea of marriage that is based on love and affection.³⁶ Another problem with the marriage plot is that the male characters, who normally initiate the relationship, tend to be older and more socially powerful than the female characters.³⁷ Young women are frequently shown being drawn into marriage with men from a higher social status and attaining social climb; thus, the marriage plot is fundamentally predicated upon the phenomenon of hypergamy. Through marriage, the female character acquires both love and a higher social status that promises her a better life. But as the marriage plot's primary goal is to promote marriage, it does not inform the reader about the aftermath of marriage. The stories of a woman finding a man

³⁵ Novels with marriage endings took their toll especially on female readers who took the fiction narratives as real life. "They are doubtless the cause of many rash engagements and unhappy marriages." See Southey, *Letters From England*, pp. 348-349.

³⁶ A marriage that was successful both financially and romantically had become a marker of a person's personal and social success in life. It also defined a set of "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors that was expected to be followed for those who pursued a marriage plot in their lives. See Boone, "The Emergence of a Literary Ideal of Romantic Marriage: A Historical Perspective," pp. 31-34.

³⁷ Courtship was an important element in the romantic marriage. Men approached women and initiated the love relationship, but women were normally already in love with the men. See Harrison, "Reading the Marriage Plot," pp. 113-118.

who she loves, and making her ultimate goal in life to marry him have influenced its readers, to be more specific, its female readers into incorporating the novel's narrative into her own. Marriage was originally not an action of love, it was a pact between families to reinforce themselves and a political strategy of the government, the idea of the romantic marriage based on affection is a rather recent idea that spawned.³⁸ The 18th and 19th century novels of Britain have promoted a new ideology of marriage that was based on courtship, mutual love and free choice, not the conventional economic alliance. One goal and ideological function of the marriage plot was to move women and their property from their father to their husband.³⁹ In English fiction, the marriage plot had a task to equate love, marriage, married love and domestic bliss.

The marriage plot, which has predominantly been studied in the context of Western literature, nevertheless underpins the narrative in the three Chinese stories considered in this research. In these tales, the three female

³⁸ Based partly on the works of historians J.C.D. Clark and J.G.A. Pocock, Lisa O'Connell claims that the marriage plot developed from the tense constitutional relations between the Anglican Church and the British state. See O'Connell, "The Theo-Political Origins of the English Marriage Plot", pp. 31-37.

³⁹ For the relation of women and property in a male-centered society, see Livingston, "Property and Propriety in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century England: Burney, Austen, Eliot," pp. 75-98.

3. Theoretical Basis

protagonists are joined in marriage with the male protagonists and they are told to live happily ever after. The female characters are domesticated after marriage and they success in bringing more fame and glory to their households. The theme of hypergamy also appears in the literary works, but they take a different form compared to the conventional marriage plot as the female character enjoys a much greater wealth and has a higher social status than the male character. The phenomenon of hypergamy occurs for the male characters as they obtain a striking rise in social status and wealth through marriage with the female characters. Male hypergamy is a radical action in social mobility since female hypergamy is the dominant phenomenon in most of the marriage plots. However, in all three of the selected works, the reversed power dynamics take another reversal to return to its conventional form as the ending focuses on the welfare and the accomplishments of the male character even though they originate from the female character. Thus, despite the radical male hypergamy, the plot takes a conservative approach in gender roles as the male character is the center of success and the female character is depicted to be domesticated and supportive of him after a distortion of her original narrative and character. But why do the stories insist on distorting the narratives of the female characters? What is being attained despite the literary flaws? The answer is the Chinese happy ending of the *datuanyuan jieju* 大

團圓結局 (The great reunion ending).

The *datuanyuan jieju*, or great reunion where all conflicts are resolved, all is united and everyone lives happily ever after, has long been identified as a standard, stereotypical conclusion for a fictional narrative in Chinese literature.⁴⁰ The phrase implies that all matters have come to a “round”, amicable, and harmonious ending.

Datuanyuan closures (*datuantuan jieju*) are an aesthetic representation of the ideology of ‘fullness’ [expressed in *tuan* 團 and *yuan* 圓], reflecting Chinese hope and desire for happiness. Therefore, these closures romanticize real life, painting it with light. They also bring a pleasurable warmth that consoles and satisfies audience emotions.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The *datuanyuan jieju* translates into “ending of great gathering”, “great reunion”, “the happy ending”, “grand finale”, “happy reunion ending” and many more. To avoid confusion, the phrase will be used directly as *datuanyuan jieju*, with it meaning “great reunion”. Researches regarding the *datuanyuan jieju* are 1) 魯迅, 〈中國小說的歷史變遷〉, 《魯迅全集》, vol. 9, 北京: 人民文學出版社, 2005. 2) 魯迅, 〈論睜了眼看〉, 《魯迅全集》, vol. 1, 北京: 人民文學出版社, 2005. 3) Gu Tian, “Negotiation and Instrumentalisation – The Reception of “the Tragic” in Modern Chinese Literary Discourse, 1917-1949.”

⁴¹ Li Suyuan 鄺蘇元, “The Narrative Model of Chinese Early Cinemas”, cited in Berry, Chris, and Farquhar, “Notes” in *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation*, pp. 248.

For a romance plot with the *datuanyuan jieju*, the female and male protagonists must conclude with a happy ending in which the designated pair unite, regardless of its form of reunion.⁴² The pursuit for a happy ending is a global phenomenon as many readers seek for it in both fiction and real life. In China, this type of ending with a happy conclusion for the characters is named the *datuanyuan jieju* and it is a well-used and popular type of ending in Chinese literature up to present day. Numerous Chinese scholars have given their say for the *datuanyuan jieju*: it has been praised for its effect in presenting the readers sensations of an amicable cushion-like closure as an ideal form of art, and it has also been criticized for its lack of reality, irresponsible naivety and weak literary structures. During the New-Culture Movement 新文化運動 period of China, the *datuanyuan jieju* had been greatly criticized by countless new thinkers.⁴³ Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩

⁴² The characters are not required to be alive for the *datuanyuan jieju* to take place. A great example for this is the folk story of *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* 梁山伯與祝英臺 (Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, but widely known as “Butterfly Lovers”) where the female protagonist joins her dead lover by jumping into his grave while she is on her way to a forced marriage. This ending is considered to have a *datuanyuan jieju* since the lovers are happily reunited and it offers relief to the readers. See Idema, *The Butterfly Lovers: the Legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai; Four Versions, with Related Texts*.

⁴³ Initiated by the renowned Chinese scholar and writer, Hu Shi 胡適

(1889-1962), a Peking opera actor and film director criticized the literary tradition to be unnatural and contrived.⁴⁴ Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978), another renowned Chinese poet and writer also criticized it to be the superficialities of pitiful boring authors who wrote unnecessary sequels to fine works.⁴⁵ In this paper, the literary flaws, which is the distortion of the female characters, made in the process to achieve a *datuanyuan jieju* will be the point of focus, rather than its other criticisms such as cultural influences on the people of China.⁴⁶ When a plot is rushed into a designated form of ending without the necessary logical steps, it is prone to make in-text

(1891-1962), the New Culture Movement of January 1, 1917 insisted Chinese literature to abandon its ancient classical style of written literature and to write as they speak, which means to give the literary standing to the vernacular. Many scholars were inspired by the movement and began reflecting their traditional ways of writing that secluded the common people from literature works. See Hummel, “The New-Culture Movement in China”, pp. 55-62.

⁴⁴ See 歐陽予倩, 〈戲劇改革之理論與實際〉, pp. 47.

⁴⁵ See 郭沫若, 〈《少年維特之煩惱》序引〉, pp. 210.

⁴⁶ Lu Xun, (which is the penname for Zhou Shuren 周樹人) one of the greatest scholars and writers of China, criticized the *datuanyuan jieju* on a different aspect, focusing on its influence on the minds of the Chinese people. He argued that the longing for an amicable ending in every circumstance caused the weakening of China’s nationality and brought forth a literature of concealment and deceit, along with it the cowardliness of not being able to face the harsh reality. In his work “The Real Story of Ah-Q” 阿Q正傳, Lu Xun criticizes the *datuanyuan jieju* directly by ironically naming the final chapter “Datuanyuan jieju” (A Happy Ending) when it is clearly not a happy ending at all. See 魯迅, 〈中國小說的歷史變遷〉, pp. 326; and 〈論睜了眼看〉, pp. 254-255. For an English translation of “The Real Story of Ah-Q”, see Lu Xun, and Lovell, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China*.

3. Theoretical Basis

structural flaws such as mismatching settings that conflict previous storylines and evident inconsistencies in the narrative of a character.⁴⁷ A fictional character is in the hands of the writer, but sudden changes in a character that are illogical and not relevant to former actions and personality can be seen as literary flaws. These literary flaws also appear in the marriage plots of Western novels. Joseph Allen Boone, when discussing about these noticeable flaws, specifically analyses the sudden changes in the female characters of Charlotte Brontë's social novel *Shirley, A Tale* as an example:

The disquieting shifts in perspective and characterization necessary to bring about this romantic ending are also anticipated throughout Brontë's text by strategic readjustments in its organizational structure, ones that occur less as part of any organic evolution than as disruptions of its original trajectory... As Brontë's text gradually overwrites the dominant plot of female friendship with a dual one of

⁴⁷ Changes in characters are expected and are some of the major points that make a story interesting, but it must be done in a manner that is convincing to the reader and it is expected to take logical steps to do so. Ebenezer Scrooge, the protagonist of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens successfully changes into a kind and generous man when the plot finishes, but his transformation is a long process of persuasion that is carefully plotted. See Bell, "The Character's Arc in Plot," pp.141-151.

The Distortion of Female Narratives in *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen”

romance and marriage, inconsistencies between the two strands begin to surface and undermine the apparent unity of the text.⁴⁸

The female protagonists of the renowned novel meet with changes in their characteristics as the marriage plot, or the love plot, becomes the main focus of the novel. Similar literary flaws are made in both the marriage plot and the *datuanyuan jieju* as they bluntly head towards the same goal. The three selected works of *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen” are works with the typical *datuanyuan jieju* of the male and female protagonists having a reunion in the form of a happy marriage with blessings of fortune and honor. However, in the process of heading towards a conventional *datuanyuan jieju*, literary flaws have been developed in the narratives of the female characters. The female characters show distortions in their personalities and actions as they transform to fit with the standards of a female character required of a *datuanyuan jieju* and the Confucian standards for an ideal wife. Their distortions are screened under the “happiness” that the *datuanyuan jieju* offers to the readers. Then why are the female characters the object of the distortions?

⁴⁸ See Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction*, pp. 14-15.

The marriage plot and the *datuanyuan jieju* are intertwined in the three selected works: the male and female protagonists must marry and enjoy a happy life to meet the terms of the marriage plot and the *datuanyuan jieju*. Marriage was a crucial factor in the life of a Chinese man, and it was regarded a filial duty for him to have a wife who could produce an heir to the household, thus, it is not surprising to see the marriage plot necessary for a Chinese happy ending. For a marriage that is acceptable in the eyes of a traditional Chinese reader, there are some requirements that must be made for the bride to be.

3.2. Marriage in Chinese Literature

Before introducing the forms of marriage in Chinese literature, a popular and dominating idea and rule of marriage in feudal China needs to be made known. Simply put, the idea of *mendang hudui* 門當戶對 (being matched for marriage, or the marriage of matching doors) is about the two families engaging in marriage to be equal in social status and wealth.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁹ Originally, the words *mendang* and *hudui* are architectural structures of a Chinese household gate from ancient times. *Mendang* are a pair of round or drum shaped statues that are each placed on the left and right sides of the gate. They can be made from either wood or stone and their designs and inscriptions differ according to the social status of the master of the house. When a *mendang* is present, a *hudui* is also mandatory in the gate's structure. *Hudui* are pairs of rods that are parallel with the ground, sticking out vertically from the gate's lintel or the sides. They always appear in pairs, so there are

mendang and *hudui* are architectural decorations with practical and ritualistic functions for gates in Chinese households, but their cultural connotations are full with meaning and significance as they symbol social status, act as a totem for auspiciousness and many more. The expression *mendang hudui* is used as the fundamental rule for the consummation of a man and a woman. The two households must be equal in both social and financial statuses to be qualified for a marriage to take place. Marriage will only be established once the *mendang* and *hudui* of the two households match and do not degrade the rank of one another, from this, one can assume that such marriage is not based on love between the bride and the groom, but rather on the financial and social statuses, and sometimes due to political reasons. Sons and daughters did not have a say at their own marriage as their parents arranged the marriages with finance and social status as the main elements in concern. For many eras, it was regarded illegal to marry someone who did not have the right qualifications.⁵⁰ One will simply not marry a person from a lower household since marriage was a social contract between two families rather than two lovers, and to lower oneself by marriage was not acceptable to a noble family.

either two rods or four rods in total. For more information on the architectural structures and the cultural connotations of the *mendang hudui*, see 陳英征, 〈淺析“門當”與“戶對”的文化內涵〉, pp. 114.

⁵⁰ See 田雅琦, 〈“門當戶對”的社會學基礎研究〉, pp. 234.

The strict marriage law of *mendang hudui* was based on the morals and rites of the feudal society, it also consolidated the classification of the social strata and reinforced the preexisting social hierarchy.⁵¹ It does not see marriage as an act of love between two people, but as a social pact between two families to strengthen their power and finances. This has caused the tragic tradition in Chinese *caizi jiaren* novels 才子佳人小說 (love stories of beautiful women and talented young scholars) where courtesans were abandoned by the scholar once he had passed the imperial examination. Once the young scholar acquired a position in court, his parents immediately interfered to arrange a marriage with a daughter from a respectable family and the scholar was forced to abandon his courtesan lover.⁵²

In the three selected works of this paper, the law and ritual of the

⁵¹ See Hu, Yang. "Marriage of Matching Doors: Marital Sorting on Parental Background in China", pp. 559.

⁵² In *Huo Xiaoyu zhuan* by Zhangfang 蔣防 (b. c.792) of the Tang dynasty, the female protagonist Huo Xiaoyu is well aware of her lowly status as a courtesan in the marriage market and is already expecting herself to be abandoned by the scholar as he passes the imperial examinations. She says to the scholar: "With your endowment, family and fame, you are admired by most people. Of course there will be many people who want to be related to you through marriage. Furthermore, you still have parents at home, but have no daughter-in-law yet in your family. Once you leave this time, certainly you are going to make a good match." (以君才地名聲，人多景慕，願結婚媾，固亦眾矣。況堂有嚴親，室無冢婦，君之此去，必就佳姻) For a full translation of the story, see Nienhauser, "The Tale of Huo Xiaoyu."

mendang hudui are not followed by the book as the parties that engage in marriage are not of equal social status or even of the same “kind”: a courtesan marries a son from an extremely prestigious family and the daughters of deities marry common men. But as Henry James said, “It (the novel) can do simply everything, and that is its strength and its life. Its plasticity, its elastic are infinite.”⁵³ Indeed, anything can happen in fiction, but works of literature depicting characters from the written era will not be able to convince its readers of the least necessary reality if they stray too far from real life. Also, in traditional Chinese literature that is similar to those dealt in this paper, there is a habit of claiming their stories to be authentic by mentioning facts about the characters and the narrators themselves regardless of them being true or not. Fiction cannot stray too far away from reality unless there is a deliberate intention to do so. For the three selected works of this paper, the order of *mendang hudui* can be applied as a basic acquirement for the marriage to be fulfilled and also as an obstacle to overcome. The influence of *mendang hudui* can be seen in many Chinese literary works from the past, one typical and popular plot regarding the idea is in the *caizi jiaren* stories. Many famous *caizi jiaren* stories such as *Huo Xiaoyu zhuan* and *Du Shiniang nuchen baibaoxiang* all have plots where the courtesan is abandoned by the scholar

⁵³ Quoted from James, *Theory of Fiction*, pp. 340.

3. Theoretical Basis

due to the towering pressure of the *mendang hudui*. For the *mendang hudui* to be fulfilled or be overcome, and for the protagonists to achieve a successful and approved marriage, the levels of the two characters or their households must meet in equal terms as the story progresses. In *Li Wa zhuan*, Li Wa is extracted from her past status and relations as a courtesan, she also experiences an elevation of status as she is treated like a noble lady from her in-laws and also honored with a title. She herself had also contributed to the scholar by elevating his status from a beggar to a man in court. In the other two stories where the common man marries a female deity, the status of the female character is lowered to be adjusted to that of the male character. The female deities undergo processes of being weakened of her control over the common man, providing him with wealth and status and even voluntarily lowering herself for the male protagonist.

For a story with both the marriage plot and the *datuanyuan jieju*, marriage must take place, but it must be a marriage that fulfills the requirements of the *mendang hudui*. All terms must be met for a happy ending and in the process, it is the narratives of the female characters that undergo heavy distortions.

4. Textual Comparisons

4.1. The Distortion of Female Characters

By examining the three stories, a pattern can be discovered in the narratives of Li Wa, the Dragon Girl, and Shiniang. Li Wa is a courtesan who has made her own fortune. Her aim is her own welfare, not love. The Dragon Girl is a deity, but she does not have a strong voice nor an independent personality. Shiniang is also not of the mortal world, but she leaves any undesirable situations when she wishes to since she has a powerful and supportive family to return to. However, the final form these three characters take when their narratives end shares many similarities. Even though they do not share much in common as the story unfolds, the three female characters can be barely distinguished in their final form of domestication. For each of the three female characters, their husband's families acquire riches, fame and glory through marriage, the female characters themselves are successful at producing offspring, and they wholeheartedly support their husband without benefiting themselves. Li Wa, the Dragon Girl, and Shiniang may have started as different characters, but as they conclude their stories, they share the

identity of the supportive wife who is obedient under the patriarchal system.⁵⁴

These female characters all undergo a same process to achieve a final form. They all experience a distortion of their original personalities whether it be sudden or of a slow and gradual process. Li Wa's distortion of character is a sudden and quick event, it takes place as a direct result of the intervention of the scholar's father, the gentleman of Xingyang 滎陽公. From the moment a powerful patriarch enters the plot, the independent female character who was devoted to her own interests becomes a loyal wife of a noble family. Is this sudden transition possible? Courtesans were brought up in different ways than women preparing for the marriage market and they were not educated of the household rituals managed by housewives who prepared their whole life for the role.⁵⁵ The Dragon Girl is helpless and powerless as the story begins. The author claims that she had feelings for Liu Yi from the moment she saw him, but the process of her pursuit for Liu Yi takes place outside the timeline

⁵⁴ A popular material for educating women is the 女誡 *Lessons for Women* by Ban Zhao 班昭 (45 - c. 116 CE). The book contains seven chapters and it tells of the four virtues 四德 a woman must have and the right conduct for a woman. Women must be gentle, humble, obedient and devoted to her husband and his family members, it was a virtue and obligation to do so.

⁵⁵ Women who prepared themselves for the marriage market were educated to be obedient for their husband and his family. Women who did not aim for marriage were brought up differently. See Watson and Ebrey, “Grooming a Daughter for Marriage: Brides and Wives in the Mid-Ch'ing Period.”

of the main incidents of the plot and surfaces only when he is free from all other ties.⁵⁶ Conventionally, gaining voice and will is considered a positive change and growth, but in the case of the Dragon Girl, this change is carefully planned so that she does not interfere with nor degrade Liu Yi's narrative as a righteous man.⁵⁷ Her personal growth happens silently behind the scene and she is allowed to have a voice and reveal her desires once she is qualified as a good wife under patriarchal and Confucian standards.⁵⁸ The Dragon Girl's "positive transformation" is actually a downturn for her own narrative since she does not benefit from it and voluntarily confines herself under the suppression of patriarchal rules. The scene where she declares herself presentable and worthy after assuring that her child will survive indicates that

⁵⁶ Under Confucian teachings, a righteous man, or a Confucian gentleman 君子 is morally perfect, does not succumb under violence or take advantage of others who suffer and many more. Had the Dragon Girl pursued him from the moment she had feelings for him, Liu Yi could not have stayed a righteous man. For more on the Confucian gentleman, see 송갑준, 『논어』의 군자상과 그 현대적 의미.

⁵⁷ A memorable character has a character arc that shows the gradual change that happens to him or her. A positive character arc will have the character show signs of growth and improvement from the former self. See Weiland, "The Positive Change Arc."

⁵⁸ Under Confucian ideas, women/wives were regarded to commit the worst crime when they failed to produce sons who would carry on the family name. Wives were servants to the whole family and their husbands. Compared to the two previous wives of Liu Yi, the Dragon Girl successfully produces a child for Liu Yi. For more on the lives of women under Confucian ideas, see Gao, "Women Existing for Men: Confucianism and Social Injustice Against Women in China", pp. 114-123.

the Dragon Girl has completely subsumed her desires for the markers of social success for her husband. Shiniang is transferred back and forth between being a free independent woman and an obedient wife. The gap starts small, but as the shape of the graph diverges and forces her into submission at her each attempt to revolt against her mistreatments, Shiniang is stopped at the pinnacle of being a good wife after her greatest revolt of arbitrarily leaving her position as a wife. Her distortion takes place gradually, but the final effect is sudden and dramatic as Shiniang abandons a better chance in life to return to be the prized possession of the male protagonist. No logical persuasion is given as she claims that she had gone through a sudden recognition of her love towards her male counterpart for the reason of her unexpected return.

The obedient and supportive model of the good wife the three female characters are distorted into have much resemblance with a noted figure in Victorian literature. The Angel in the House, who also shares a very confined ending as a sympathetic and selfless housewife for her husband and family, has many aspects in common with the final form of Li Wa, the Dragon Girl and Shiniang as she is also praised for her obedience, loyalty, silence and yet still known to enjoy a happy life.⁵⁹ This resemblance between the characters

⁵⁹ The Angel in the House is an idealized model of a housewife in the Victorian era. This idealistic housewife was created by Coventry Patmore (1823-1896) in his narrative poem *The Angel in the House* where he describes

of the two different realms of literature is no surprise since the female counterparty of the conventional marriage plot is also prone to have such traits. The appearance of the marriage plot and the resemblance to the Angel in the House support this paper's claim that the female characters have been uniformly put under distortion to transform into a specific model of character.

4.2. Hypergamy of the Male Characters

A pattern is also existent in the male characters from the three stories. The male characters have all achieved success in different ways, the young scholar brought glory to his family, Liu Yi became a being of the immortal world after enjoying a successful life as a mortal man, and Kunsheng 昆生, who is Shiniang's husband, became a wealthy man with authority over his villagers. By marrying female characters who are from higher statuses, these men have all acquired a higher social status. The phenomenon of male

his wife, Emily Augusta Andrews (1824-1862) who he believed that was the ideal Victorian wife. The Angel in the House is a devoted, submissive and selfless wife and mother, she is pure, innocent, but also helpless, weak and silenced at the same time. She is the symbol of the domestication of women. For more information, see Hoffman, "“She Loves with Love That Cannot Tire”: The Image of the Angel in the House across Cultures and across Time", pp. 264-271. Virginia Woolf claimed that the idea of the Angel in the House had tormented her and that she had to kill her inner Angel in the House to claim freedom. See Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women", pp. 136-137.

hypergamy takes place for these male characters. The marriage pattern has a slight modification in *Li Wa* and the young scholar’s case, but the three male characters have definitely benefitted in all means, especially socially and financially, from the marriage with a women of a higher rank.

The male hypergamy that takes place in *Li Wa zhuan* has a different form compared to the other two cases in *Liu Yi zhuan* and “Qingwa shen”. In the case of *Li Wa zhuan*, the male character is not inferior to the female character when they first encounter. Even though *Li Wa* acquired a great fortune of her own and a reputation as a famous courtesan, her status is nowhere near that of the scholar who is from a renowned household. Legally, marriage between a courtesan and a noble man that accepts the courtesan as the main wife *qi* 妻 is forbidden, but the marriage in *Li Wa zhuan* positions itself as a tool for the male character to restore his former status and acquire more greatness through hypergamy.⁶⁰ The process of the young scholar’s

⁶⁰ There was a significant status difference between the main wife *qi* and the concubine *qie* 妾. The main wife was normally from a family that had a matching reputation and status with that of the man, it was illegal to take in a courtesan as a main wife. Courtesans had the same status as slaves, so they could only be taken in as concubines and never a main wife. Concubines were far more inferior than the main wife, a man without a main wife but with a concubine was legally listed unmarried. The marriage ritual with a main wife was a serious and important event with its rituals taken to the fullest, while a marriage ritual for a concubine would only take place if there was a need for a “promotion” for her status from slave to concubine. Normally, concubines were bought and sold without any marriage ritual of any kind. See Bossler,

4. Textual Comparison

hypergamy initiates as Li Wa decides to restore the devastated scholar with the intention to escape future punishment. At this stage of the novella, the young scholar is in an even lower status than Li Wa as he is abandoned by his family and is also deprived of his riches while she still maintains her wealth. Only with Li Wa's help is the scholar able to pass the imperial examinations and is qualified to be accepted back to his family. Even though the marriage does not take place as the first event for the scholar's social climb, it is undeniable that he has paved his way towards greatness with the help of Li Wa and continues to benefit from the marriage. Through this marriage, the scholar is significantly presented with more benefits than Li Wa, thus, the marriage represents hypergamy for the young scholar, but with the marriage event happening relatively later compared to the two other male characters.

In *Liu Yi zhuan*, the hypergamy of Liu Yi is elevated to another level compared to the other two cases. Not only is Liu Yi gifted with riches and the position of a socially successful man, he becomes a deity with the help of the Dragon Girl. Before Liu Yi encounters the Dragon Girl, he is a scholar returning home after failing to pass the imperial examination.⁶¹ His family's

Courtesans, Concubines, and the Cult of Female Fidelity: Gender and Social Change in China, 1000–1400, pp. 53-128. The Tang dynasty law punished inter-status marriages of freemen and slaves, see Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa*, pp. 75.

⁶¹ The fate of a scholar who failed to pass the imperial examination was not

fortunes and status are not mentioned, his only accomplishment that is depicted as his personal achievement is that he is a righteous man under Confucian standards. The narrator of the story constantly emphasizes this aspect of Liu Yi as if he is attempting to hide the prevailing hypergamy and claim that Liu Yi has been fairly rewarded by the Heavens for his good deeds of being a righteous man.⁶² However, the hypergamy that takes place in *Liu Yi zhuan* cannot be concealed since the elevation of status that Liu Yi experiences is extremely grand. From a failed scholar returning home without glory, Liu Yi becomes a wealthy man and a successful patriarch with a devoted wife and child. He ultimately becomes a deity as his wife leads him to the world of immortals. Compared to the other two cases of hypergamy dealt in this research, Liu Yi experiences the ultimate level of social climb

promising since the passing of the examination was the ladder for a social climb. Scholars were given the chance for a marriage with a daughter from a good family once they secured a title. The imperial examination was the only chance for a poor scholar to acquire wealth, fame and a different fate from his parents, thus, scholars who failed to pass the exam would take it multiple times. For information of the imperial examination as a tool for a social climb, see Ho, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911*, pp. 53-91.

⁶² Liu Yi represents the righteous Confucian gentleman and Confucian ideals. Even though he is a failed scholar, he does not succumb to unfairness or take advantage of inappropriate situations in the eyes of the Confucian scholar. On how Liu Yi represents the Confucian ideals through his actions and how the Dragon Girl symbols love and affection towards him to achieve a marriage in the plot, see 黃蓓蓓, 〈以‘兒女之情’改寫‘儒者之義’—論越劇對唐傳奇《柳毅傳》的兩次改編〉.

through his marriage as he enjoys two kinds of extreme success each as a mortal man and a deity. The hypergamy of Liu Yi is extremely evident throughout the plot, and the story does not allow any other form of marriage that is less benefitting than that with the Dragon Girl.⁶³ In this process of hypergamy, the Dragon Girl is made humble of her original status as she voluntarily succumbs herself to the rules of patriarchy and is also willing to regard herself as a lesser being than Liu Yi, the Confucian gentleman of great righteousness. She is also constantly beaten down by the powers of patriarchy as her former husband mistreats her and her uncle attempts to bestow her to Liu Yi.⁶⁴ With the Dragon Girl being constantly lowered, Liu Yi becomes a

⁶³ The Dragon Girl in her human form is Liu Yi's third main wife. The two former wives who die mysteriously are implications that Liu Yi is destined to be united with the Dragon Girl who is the only partner worthy for him. The idea of being "third time lucky" is also hinted in the process of her marriage. For the significance and meaning of the number 3 in Chinese culture, see Cammann, "The Magic Square of Three in Old Chinese Philosophy and Religion", pp. 37-80.

⁶⁴ The marriage of a princess was a tool for the imperial family and the government to reinforce themselves and the princess did not have an opinion on her marriage. A princess would be married to an imperial member of another country for political reasons to avoid an upcoming war (the tradition of *heqin* 和親) or to a family in regions outside the capital to reinforce the central government's power over growing states, and used for many more purposes to serve the imperial family. When a princess married a man of a lower status than her, conflicts were inevitable between the wife and the husband. For different types of marriages of Tang Dynasty princesses and the life of the princesses after the marriages, see 郭海文, 〈論唐代公主的婚姻形態〉.

more prominent being worthy of his good fortune and the immense status gap between the Dragon Girl and him is mitigated.⁶⁵ The incident of the female protagonist lowering herself to such an extent is estimated to be a reliever for the extreme hypergamy that takes place.

In “Qingwa shen”, the hypergamy of Kunsheng to Shiniang takes place as the first major incident of the story. There are no mentions of the riches or fame of Kunsheng’s family, but as Kunsheng marries Shiniang, they are gifted with wealth and power provided by Shiniang. Kunsheng’s family experiences wealth and respect that they have never had and at the end of the story and Kunsheng enjoys dominance over the villagers as they all consult him when in trouble with the Frog God, not his daughter.⁶⁶ As he becomes a member of the Frog God’s family through marriage, Kunsheng is presented

⁶⁵ The conflict that came from having a wife from a higher status than her husband can be seen in the marriages of princesses. Normally, the woman/wife was supposed to be inferior to the man/husband due to the natural correlation of the *yin* 陰 and the *yang* 陽, but the marriage of a princess violated the idea and caused irritation to scholars who were devoted to the principles of *yin* and *yang*. See Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China*, pp. 153-168.

⁶⁶ Only the wives were able to visit Shiniang at her inner quarters when their husbands were in trouble. In ancient China, women did not interfere with matter of the external which was the *wai* 外 since it was the boundary that belonged to men, their husbands. The separation of men to the external and women to the internal due to Confucian ideas allocates more power to Kunsheng as he is the main representative of the Frog God. See Li, “Confucianism and Feminist Concerns: Overcoming the Confucian ‘Gender Complex’”, pp. 187-199.

4. Textual Comparison

with wealth and a higher status than he has had before. The fact that he does not have any achievements made on his own and even loses his properties during the period Shiniang left him also emphasizes the hypergamy. He is only able to achieve greatness in the state of marriage with Shiniang and the hypergamy is more bluntly depicted in “Qingwa shen” as Kunsheng does not accomplish anything before he marries Shiniang. It is mentioned that he is a smart and handsome looking person, but the story does not mention anything notable, and Kunsheng does not enter himself for the imperial examination before or after the marriage.⁶⁷ Kunsheng is a normal man from a normal family, his great wealth and status upgrade among his villagers are all outcomes of his hypergamy to a much more powerful and wealthy wife.

⁶⁷ Taking the imperial examination was a way to join the courts when one was not of the hereditary aristocracy. It was the transformation of the scholar *shi* 士 from men of good birth to men of culture and education. Even though not all scholars succeeded in passing the exam and acquiring a place in court, it signified that education was not solely confined to the elites of the society and that common men had a chance at joining the upper class and changing his original status. Passing the exam and acquiring a title was a significant marker for a man since it represented his success and brought forth promises of marriage to a girl from a good family. Young scholars have been constantly depicted to abandon their courtesan lover for marriage with a girl from a respectable family after passing the examination. Thus, it was the pursuit of many men, causing them to prepare for the exam for his and his family’s future. See Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, pp. 1-65.

The Distortion of Female Narratives in *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen”

The three male protagonists all undergo hypergamy to achieve a marriage plot and a *datuanyuan jieju*. There is a major shift in the power dynamics between the male and female characters after the marriage as the female characters' power shifts to the male characters and the female characters are deprived of their voice. Male hypergamy prevails in all of the three works and it is the driving force for the narrative of the male characters to proceed and succeed, the phenomenon happens under the name of the *datuanyuan jieju* that is focused on the success of the patriarch. The male hypergamy in the three literary works take an interesting stance as it is both radical and conservative at the same time. As mentioned, the male hypergamy is radical in that it breaks the conventional marriage plot pattern of the female character obtaining a social climb by marrying a powerful male character. Here in the three selected works, the genders are interchanged as the male character attains a climb up the social ladder by marrying a female character who is more powerful than him. This is a radical approach in social mobility since the typical roles of the man and woman have been reversed. But the male hypergamy takes a conservative stance after the marriage as the power that belonged to the female character and all the focus of the plot shifts to the male character. The origins of power may have changed, but how the power is distributed still remains conservative as it concentrates in increasing the

4. Textual Comparison

fame and glory of the male character. Li Wa is fully devoted to the duties as a good wife to support her husband. After Liu Yi becomes a deity, the Dragon Girl does not resurface but Liu Yi reappears in the mortal world in an extravagant appearance and gifts his friend with elixirs. Shiniang stays silent and smiling in her inner quarters domesticated. The phenomenon of male hypergamy has taken place to reinforce the conventional *nei-wai* 内外 gender roles of Chinese society where the wife is kept in her inner quarters while her husband must be superior to her and responsible for outside matters for the public.⁶⁸

The traditional Chinese gender roles of the *nei-wai* binary are applied and restored immediately after the socially radical phenomenon of male hypergamy, and the women who roamed in the *wai* are domesticated and confined into the *nei* 內 to fulfill her role as an ideal wife in Confucian traditional standards.

⁶⁸ The idea of men belonging *wai* (outside), and women belonging *nei* (inside) has long dominated Chinese culture. The *nei* and *wai* have divided men and women of China to perform certain roles required by the society. Women belonged to the narrow inner quarters of her house as she took matters of the house to her hands; men occupied the broader realm outside the house which was the society and he was able to roam freely outside and accomplish many more things than his wife. See Rosenlee, “Nei-Wai, Gender Distinctions, and Ritual Propriety,” pp. 69-94.

4.3. The Happy Ending

All three texts claim that these characters are happy with their final positions in the story. Li Wa, the Dragon Girl and Shiniang have all married the love of their lives to live happily ever after, what more can these characters ask for? They have been gifted with the greatest blessings a fictitious female character can be given in the standards of patriarchy and the marriage plot. However, the distortions in the narratives of Li Wa, the Dragon Girl and Shiniang which have been made for the better outcome of the male characters are apparent. The personal stories of the three characters have been tailored into a fixed shape for the use of the male characters.

As seen in the cases with the young scholar, Liu Yi, and Kunsheng, there are many ways a male character can acquire a happy ending, but for a female character, only the role of a silently supportive wife is obtainable. Thus, the claim that the female characters have also achieved an equally happy ending with their male counterparts is disagreeable. Determining the personal level of satisfaction and happiness for each character seems unobtainable, but comparing their final images at the end of the story is possible. A variation exists in the definition of success for the male characters while the female characters are all silenced and shunned into the role of a supportive wife. Have the situations for the female characters turned out better after the

4. Textual Comparison

marriage? Is there personal growth and accomplishments in her life that solely benefits herself? A life in the inner quarters as a main wife who have accomplished all the required duties and aids her husband is a successful life in the standards of patriarchy for traditional Chinese women. It was regarded the most coveted and ideal life for women of that era, but in modern standards, an ending that is acquired after confining female characters into a designated role to highlight male characters and descending them into a supportive role after a distortion of the original character cannot be considered a happy ending.⁶⁹ The striking contrast between the ending of the male and female characters of the selected works have been observed, along with the male-centered Confucian guideline for depicting the female characters as a silenced, obedient and supportive role. The three female characters are beautiful, loving, talented, wealthy, supportive, obedient and most importantly, they know not to outshine their husbands. The existence of such characters is a fantasy for the male reader. Domestic bliss which was also the controversy of marriage plots in literary works of the Victorian era is depicted to be the greatest goal

⁶⁹ The repetitive process of a character becoming a submissive being regardless of their former characteristics is centered on the female characters. This is due to the patriarchal standards in Confucian ideals that influenced the works and preferred male characters to outshine the female characters. For an introduction for the cases of oppression of women that occurs in literature, see Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate; a History of Misogyny in Literature*.

of the female character. More similarities are existent as the three Chinese stories also do not inform the readers of the personal lives of the female characters after marriage, all is known is that they are in love, with children and happy. Even in *Li Wa zhuan* where the title directly translates into “the story of Li Wa” and the young scholar’s name is deliberately left out by the author, the story is written only because she has made herself an exemplary woman by showing great loyalty that is rare in courtesans, and has led her husband on to the way of greatness despite her lowly status.⁷⁰ The happy endings come as different meanings to the female characters as they are distorted, faded into the background and silenced into a designated ending.

Li Wa, the Dragon Girl and Shiniang have been distorted to be incorporated into the lives of the male characters through marriage. The sudden distortion of character that ignores the original personalities of the characters, lead them into marriage and the biased treatment after the marriage are key reasons why the claim of an equally happy ending for both

⁷⁰ The name of the young scholar is not mentioned in the current version of the story this research uses, but his name is gradually added in later versions of the story as it is developed into plays and longer stories. Glen Dudbridge claims that the deliberate act of omitting the name of the young scholar is to rather emphasize the identity of the scholar who readers of that time could speculate. Dudbridge also claims that the character of the young scholar was based on three non-fictional brothers of a noble family that the author knew. See Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa*, pp. 39-60.

4. Textual Comparison

the sexes is not persuading. But rather than the marriage event itself being the problem, the process into marriage is the fault. The marriage plot has indeed been criticized for setting fixed standards and stereotypes, and the courtship narrative has had a tendency to depict women helplessly falling in love with a powerful man. Even though the gender roles in the selected works have been reversed to show male characters marrying powerful women, the male characters are bestowed all the power and spotlight through marriage. After the distortion, the female characters are not only deprived of their original privileges, but also of their subjectivity and independence in marriage. The marriage of Li Wa and the scholar is decided by his father even though Li Wa had strongly refused to marry him, the Dragon Girl was once handed to Liu Yi by her male family member and she marries him in a situation that suits him the most, not her. Lastly, Shiniang returns to Kunsheng with no persuading process but only a sudden personal enlightenment. The absence of a persuading process of the female characters' decision to marry also leaves no room for subjectivity in their marriage. Subjectivity and a reasonable process of engaging in marriage is crucial for an equal and independent relationship in a relatively positive courtship narrative. Jane Austen's romantic novel *Pride and Prejudice* of 1813 also has the structure of a courtship narrative of the main characters. The female protagonist Elizabeth

The Distortion of Female Narratives in *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen”

Bennet is depicted to be poor while her male counterpart Fitzwilliam Darcy is extremely wealthy and from a renowned family. They follow the casual marriage plot as they face hardships in engaging in a relationship and processing it into marriage, but this courtship narrative is considered different from the typical as there is room for personal character growth for the female character instead of depicting her to be weak and heavily dependent on the powerful male character. Readers are persuaded by the author that Elizabeth Bennet does not lack anything except social status compared to her male counterpart and their marriage and happy ending takes place as a plausible event based on an equal relationship.⁷¹ Compared to *Pride and Prejudice*, the three Chinese literary works fail at depicting a progressing relationship where the female character is not degraded and taken advantage. Li Wa, the Dragon Girl and Shiniang do not share an equally happy ending nor are they given a fair narrative that is free from distortion.

⁷¹ The courtship narrative in *Pride and Prejudice* is regarded different from the conventional courtship narrative. The story is considered a rare accomplishment in the history of the English and American marriage tradition as it negotiates the self with society. Jane Austen does not rush her female character into marriage nor does she distort the character to reach a designated ending. Instead, the process spreads over the whole plot and persuades the reader, proving itself different from the conventional marriage plot of the rich man and the poor woman. See Boone, “‘Uniting Them’ Ever After: The Courtship Narratives of Pamela and *Pride and Prejudice*,” pp. 80-98.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the credibility of the happy endings of *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen” have been questioned. The three Chinese stories that are broadly accepted to have happy endings have been analyzed from the perspective focusing on the female characters. The 18th and 19th century English novels’ popular literary theme of the marriage plot which promoted the happy marriage between a man and a woman, along with the traditional Chinese happy ending of the *datuanyuan jieju* where the male and female protagonists are reunited regardless of all obstacles can be seen in the three selected works. The “happily ever after” of the three stories have been questioned with its focus on the female characters and this research concludes with the claim that the female characters do not share an equally happy ending as the male characters. Li Wa, the Dragon Girl and Shiniang all undergo a significant distortion in their narratives to accomplish a marriage plot and a *datuanyuan jieju* that meets the standards of patriarchal success for the male protagonists. As courtesans and deities, the female characters are free from the boundaries of patriarchal social requirements and there are many moments in the story where their narratives can end without completing the marriage

The Distortion of Female Narratives in *Li Wa zhuan*, *Liu Yi zhuan*, and “Qingwa shen”

plot with the male protagonist, however, they are domesticated into the social requirements as an ideal wife for their husbands. The distortions of the female narratives are met with literary structural flaws and illogicality. In the process of their distortion, the phenomenon of male hypergamy takes place, but the radical stance takes back its original direction towards conservative gender roles as the male characters enjoy social success based on their new statuses presented by their wives, while the female characters are confined to their new position of the supportive wife who is domesticated and silent.

This research has only questioned three selective works of Chinese literature with different authorships with the credibility of the happy endings for the female characters. The questions are not asked with the intention to degrade the great literary works of the past, but with an approach to read them from a new perspective of a modern point of view. *Li Wa*, the Dragon Girl and *Shiniang* are denied an equally happy ending, but there are literature works that still achieve a happy ending without the need for distorting characters of a typical gender. The way readers see the world and literature will change forever throughout time, I hope that this research will contribute in seeing past works from a new modern perspective and inspire to challenge more literary works from the past with questions.

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【초록】

본고는 행복한 결말의 진정성을 여성 인물의 관점에서 새로이 고찰하고자 한다. 본 연구가 선정한 작품들인 《이와전(李娃傳)》, 《유의전(柳毅傳)》, 그리고 《칭와신(靑蛙神)》에 등장하는 여성 인물들은 행복한 결말에 도달하는 과정에서 인물의 일그러짐을 경험한다. 세 작품은 각자 다른 작가에 의해 쓰인 다른 시기의 작품들이지만, 이들을 관통하는 주제의 통일성의 중요함을 고려해 선정되었다. 본고에서의 “여성 서사”는 여성 인물들 개인의 이야기를 지칭한다. 한 인물의 서사에 등장하는 일그러짐은 비논리적이고 갑작스러운 성격의 변화를 뜻하며, 이는 작품 내의 설정 오류로도 볼 수 있다. 이러한 일그러짐 현상은 세 작품 속에 등장하는 여성 인물들의 서사에 집중되어 나타난다. 여성 인물들의 서사는 그들과 짝지어지는 남성 인물들의 이익을 위해 갑작스러운 변화를 맞이하게 된다. 본 연구는 여성 서사에 등장하는 일그러짐의 이유를 살펴볼 것이며, 행복한 결말이 남성과 여성, 두 성별에 동등하게 다가오는지 분석할 것이다.

일그러짐 현상의 효과에 관한 연구에 들어가기에 앞서, 서양 문학과 중국 전통 문학에서 지배적으로 등장하는 두 개의 이야기 형식을 살펴보았다. 이들은 서양의 결혼 플롯 (marriage plot)과 중국의 대단원 결말 (大團圓結局)이다. 결혼 플롯은 여성 인물의 ‘남편 구하기’에 초점을 맞추기에, 남성 인물과의 결혼을 행복한 결말로 보며 결혼에 도달한 이후 이야기를 마무리한다. 결혼 플롯은 여성을 가정 안으로만 국한되게 하며 결혼 이후의 삶은 고려하지 않는 낭만적인 사랑의 추구만을 목표로 하게끔 하는 효과를 불러일으켰기에 페미니즘적 관점에서 비판을 받았다. 대단원 결말은 이야기의 끝에 이르러 모든 분쟁이 해결되었다는 원만한 감정을 독자들에게 선사하지만, 행복한 결말에 도달하는 과정에서 작품 내부적인 설정상의 오류가 등장하는 등의 문제로 인해 비판을 받았다. 작품에서 등장하는 세 여성 인물들은 정해진 결말로 향하는 과정에서 두 이야기 형식을 모두 거치게 되며, 여성을 남성의 조력자로 여기는 유교 사상에 의해서도 영향을 받아, 결말에 이르러서는 하나의 통일된 인물의 모습을 갖게 된다.

세 작품에 등장하는 여성 인물들은 결혼 플롯, 대단원 결말, 그리고 유교 사상의 영향을 받은 중국의 전통적인 여성상을 모두 충족하기 위해 이야기의 결말에서 일그러짐 현상을 겪으며, 이는 진행되어오던 개인 서사의 성격을 무시하며 일어난다. 정해진 결말에 도달하는 과정에서, 여성 인물들은 일그러짐 현상을 겪지만, 남성 인물들은 승혼을 하게 된다. 남성 인물들은 이를 통해 높은 사회적 지위와 부를 얻게 되며, 이야기의 결말 또한 남성 인물들의 성공에 초점을 맞추는 모습을 보인다. 여성 인물들은 남성 인물들을 보조하는 아내의 역할에 국한되며 그들의 서사는 침묵 당한다.

본 연구는 세 작품 속의 여성 서사들에 등장하는 일그러짐 현상과 그 원인과 효과를 연구한다. 이후 더 다양하고 많은 작품의 여성 서사와 결말들이 새로운 관점에서 분석되길 희망한다.

주요어: 여성 서사, 《이와전(李娃傳)》, 《유의전(柳毅傳)》, 《청와신(青蛙神)》, 결혼 플롯, 대단원 결말, 일그러짐, 남성 승혼

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