

Analysis of the differences in Baoyu's relationship with male characters, who he does not hold in high esteem

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Abstract. Cao Xueqin created the character of "Young Master Bao" in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a person who lived and socialized with many young girls in the Jia family. Grandmother Jia and Lady Wang's devotion for him created an atmosphere in which Baoyu could assemble and enjoy the company of a large number of young girls. Through long-term shared living, he gradually found the pure and holy beauty of human nature in these young ladies, as well as their lyrical senses and literary skills. This contrasted sharply with the males he met, enhancing his understanding of the actual goodness and beauty inherent in the young girls vs the men's deception, evil, and ugliness. A thorough study of the original text reveals that Jia Baoyu is not the "womanising" character that many readers believe him to be, "who solely favors women and despises males." While his feelings for women are real, his stated dislike to males is deceptive. He has many male buddies, including Qin Zhong, Jiang Yuhan, Liu Xianglian, and Feng Ziyang, all of whom are close confidants. This article will go further into Baoyu's view on males via his attitudes, words, and actions towards his male subordinate "Mingyan" and his buddy "Qin Zhong".

Keywords: classical Chinese literature, fiction, literary studies, Dream of the Red Chamber, character analysis

1. Introduction

In *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Cao Xueqin developed the character of "Master Bao" from the Jia family, who resided near many sisters and female relatives. Jia Baoyu, a very empathetic male proponent of women's rights, seems inherently disinclined towards male companionship. He perceives a sense of novelty in the presence of women, but is overwhelmed by the repugnant odor of males. This dramatic disparity illustrates Baoyu's profound regard, respect, and empathy for women, thereby challenging the dominant feudal ideology of male superiority in his culture.

The indulgence of Grandmother Jia and Lady Wang afforded Baoyu an atmosphere conducive to socializing and deriving pleasure from the company of several young ladies. Through extended cohabitation, he progressively uncovered the profound, holy beauty of their humanity, as well as their lyrical abilities and literary capabilities [1]. This sharply contrasted with the males he met, enhancing his awareness of the genuine virtue and beauty in the young ladies, and the deceit, malevolence, and ugliness in the men. Consequently, he attained a revolutionary and invaluable realization: The purest quintessence of heaven, earth, mountains, and rivers is exclusively conferred onto daughters; men are only dross and contaminants, and "Daughters are composed of water, whereas men are formed from mud". His profound antipathy to and bias against masculinity, along with his amicable relationship with women, solidified a reputation of him loathing males and valuing women [2].

Jia Baoyu had a deep disdain for certain masculine personalities, particularly those fixated on career success, material wealth, or characterized by crassness—most prominently the opportunistic bureaucrat Jia Yucun.

Upon meticulous examination of the original text, it is apparent that Jia Baoyu is not the "womanizing" character that many readers assume him to be - one who "exclusively favors women and scorns males". His real compassion for women contrasts with his insincere disdain for males. He has many male buddies, including Qin Zhong, Jiang Yuhan, Liu Xianglian, and Feng Ziyang, all of whom are his intimate confidants. Jia Baoyu did not possess a general disdain for all men. Examine his handling of his male subordinate Mingyan, which contrasted significantly with that of typical servants: Baoyu often participated in verbal interactions and physical touch with Mingyan. He shown notable attention and sincere, genuine concern for his close buddy Qin Zhong. This article will further investigate Baoyu's viewpoint on masculinity by analyzing his attitudes, discourse, and behaviors towards his male subordinate Mingyan and his male companion Qin Zhong. The true nature of Jia Baoyu's relationship with Qin Zhong remains obscure in Cao Xueqin's writing [3].

2. Baoyu and his servant smoking

The most significant exception in Jia Baoyu's handling of his male subordinates was Mingyan. In his contacts with Mingyan, Baoyu exhibited a demeanor of effortless patience and forbearance, dramatically contrasting the typical relationship between master and servant, or superior and subordinate. Mingyan, Baoyu's personal attendant, appreciated his master's profound devotion. He could see Baoyu's thoughts, and the two were also close companions.

The exceptional master-servant relationship between Baoyu and Mingyan is shown in Chapter 9. For example: "After formulating a strategy, he pretended to show respect, moved to the back, and discreetly called Mingyan, Baoyu's servant, to join him." He thereafter murmured a few things to incite him.

Mingyan, as Baoyu's most trusted servant and yet youthful and inexperienced, overheard Jia Qiang remark: "Jin Rong has severely mistreated Qin Zhong, implicating your master Baoyu as well." Failing to impart a lesson will just exacerbate his insolence in the future. Mingyan, habitually inclined to unjustly target others, now equipped with this knowledge and supported by Jia Qiang, boldly entered to face Jin Rong. He ceased to refer to him as "Master Jin" and instead growled, "You bastard Jin!" Mingyan entered, grabbed Jin Rong by the collar, and said, "Our sexual relations are none of your concern! We are not engaging in any inappropriate relations with your father, that is all! You are a commendable young man; emerge and expedite your actions for your Uncle Ming!" Baoyu was adjusting his coat when he saw the throng being hushed. He said, "Li Gui, collect the books and get the horse—I am going to inform the Grand Master." We have been subjected to bullying and refrain from discussing it. Shouli approached Grand Master Rui to convey a message, although Grand Master Rui reproached us instead, allowing them to berate us and even encouraging them to assault us. Mingyan saw their harassment of me—how could he fail to defend me? They conspired against Mingyan, resulting in a laceration to Qin Zhong's cranium. What methods can we use to study here at present? This illustrates Baoyu's twin objective: to support Mingyan while also advocating for his own cause. Such generosity for a subordinate illustrates Baoyu's unique esteem for him, distinguishing it from his treatment of regular staff [4].

Ultimately, this playground comedy may seem commonplace or even insignificant to outsiders. Had we experienced Baoyu and Mingyan's age and circumstances, we would not regard it so dismissively. Despite being the respected Second Young Master of the Rongguo Mansion, Baoyu was but a youngster of thirteen or fourteen years. In the presence of injustice or grievance, he did not need a subordinate like Li Gui who tried to placate the situation. He longed for a someone like to Mingyan—one who overlooked the social disparity between servant and master, who would advocate for him and uphold his dignity. amid such instances, Baoyu and Mingyan saw one another as blood brothers, steadfast allies amid adversity.

In the nineteenth chapter, Baoyu uncovers Mingyan's secret liaison with a maid called Wan'er, but expels her without ado. Inquiring into the maid's past, he maintains confidentiality, even humorously proposing that Wan'er marry Mingyan [5]. This indicates that while Baoyu saw the clandestine affair and exhibited astonishment, he chose not to create a disturbance. His logical attitude to the servant's indiscretion and adept management of their private affair illustrate This demonstrates Baoyu's empathy for women, along with a deep compassion and affection for mankind and his subordinates. Although his management of the situation seemed composed, he was, in reality, reflective on the idea that a misaligned upper beam results in a corresponding misalignment of the lower beam. This reflects his own emotional entanglements with women and indicates that Baoyu, like to Mingyan, has a degree of indiscretion toward illegal relationships. Although his behavior towards staff seemed very unconventional and even crude to the home, it demonstrated an egalitarian ethos. This sharply contrasted with his vehement critique and ridicule of officials and anyone seeking official positions. Why did Jia Baoyu favour girls and detest men [6]?

After Jia Baoyu took up residence in the Grand View Garden, he found himself inactive for a while. The women of the courtyard were oblivious to his genuine sentiments, save for Mingyan, who comprehended Baoyu's heart. He thus sought unorthodox literature to entertain Jia Baoyu. In the twenty-third chapter: "Observing him in this manner, Mingyan endeavored to entertain him." Upon extensive contemplation, he saw that all of Jia Baoyu's customary pursuits had become monotonous, save for one he had yet to experience. Having resolved his decision, he proceeded to the bookstore and acquired many volumes of historical novels, in addition to the legendary narratives of Lady Feiyan, Lady Hedé, Empress Wu Zetian, and Yang Yuhuan, as well as theatrical scripts, which he subsequently presented to Jia Baoyu. Baoyu saw them as if they were invaluable artifacts. Mingyan admonished him: "Do not bring these into the garden. If someone finds these, I will be in significant trouble." Mingyan's act of 'gifting books' was profoundly significant." It disclosed that Mingyan eschewed the pursuit of fame and wealth, distinguishing him from the materialistic individuals whom Baoyu abhorred—those who incessantly urged him to "seek economic stability and adhere to the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius", incessantly emphasizing lofty ideals and aspirations that conflicted with Baoyu's intrinsic values. Conversely, Mingyan let Baoyu to engage in such uninhibited, sincere endeavors. Throughout his life, Jia Baoyu esteemed the literary forms of poetry, songs, and prose that conveyed authentic feeling, while detesting the Four Books and the strict, formulaic eight-legged essays. He condemned and opposed the Cheng-Zhu School of Neo-Confucianism and the feudal literati fixated on imperial exams, the quest for official positions, and material wealth [7].

How could Baoyu feasibly refuse to accept them? After much hesitation, he chose only the most polished and beautiful literary titles, transporting several sets to his bedchamber for private reading. The crude and excessively graphic pieces he hid in the outside study. This sentence illustrates Baoyu's acute understanding of the difficulty Mingyan would have if such books were

discovered by the garden's residents. Consequently, he meticulously adhered to Mingyan's instructions, hiding the crude and excessively graphic tomes inside the inner rooms. This illustrates Baoyu's hesitance to impose a challenging situation on his subordinate Mingyan, highlighting his prudent and empathetic disposition. This sharply contrasts with those bosses who behave capriciously and irresponsibly, completely indifferent to the repercussions their subordinates may encounter [8].

3. Beyond friendship: the relationship between Baoyu and Qin Zhong

Jia Baoyu maintained an abundance of female companions over his life, while simultaneously fostering connections with a select number of male associates. Using Qin Zhong, a notably intimate acquaintance, as an example, one may discern Baoyu's unique viewpoint and disposition towards male relationships. Jia Baoyu and Qin Zhong were biologically connected as uncle and nephew. Nevertheless, Baoyu overlooked such conventions, referring to him as a brother. They attended school together, engaged in discussions on music, chess, calligraphy, and painting, and participated in leisurely activities, their connection strengthened by common interests.

Chapter 7 illustrates their initial meeting, highlighting Baoyu's response: "As he spoke, a young lad was indeed introduced. Slightly more slender and delicate than Baoyu, he exhibited clear brows, bright eyes, a rosy complexion, and crimson lips. His physique was handsome, his demeanor graceful—seemingly eclipsing Baoyu's own—yet he exuded a timid, bashful quality, almost effeminate in manner... Upon observing Qin Zhong's presence, Baoyu experienced a profound sense of loss within his heart. He remained transfixed for an extended period, then reflected: 'That such a being should exist in this world!'" This excerpt reveals Baoyu's profound inner contemplation, indicating that he regarded Qin Zhong with the same reverence one might reserve for a maiden. His evaluation lacked the rigorous analysis usually applied to males, instead overflowing with adoration and affection reminiscent of that directed towards a woman or a long-lost companion. Clearly, Qin Zhong was an exceptional individual—attractive in visage, elegant in demeanor, and cultured in comportment. Baoyu saw himself as somewhat less attractive in comparison to him. Even Feng Jie, renowned for her sagacity and vast interpersonal experience, extolled Qin Zhong's beauty profusely. This highlights the exceptional quality of Qin Zhong's appearance, which even enthralled Baoyu. It is uncommon for a man to induce feelings of inadequacy in Baoyu, highlighting the significance of Qin Zhong in Baoyu's regard. At that point, Qin Zhong introspected: "It is no surprise that everyone adores Baoyu." It is regrettable that I was born into a modest household, precluding my association with him... This exemplifies how the chasm between affluence and destitution restricts individuals, epitomizing one of life's profound injustices. In contrast to Baoyu, who assessed based on intrinsic attributes, Qin Zhong exhibited a more pragmatic approach. His emphasis on Baoyu's ostentatious adornments—"gilded crowns and embroidered robes, arrogant maids and lavish attendants"—constantly highlighted the disparity between Baoyu's affluent position as an Jia family heir and his own modest beginnings. During their first encounter, Qin Zhong concentrated on Baoyu's external adornments, whilst Baoyu endeavored to perceive the profundity inside Qin Zhong. This contrast demonstrates that, despite their divergent views on riches and poverty arising from their distinct situations, nothing could impede their immediate connection and mutual comprehension.

Upon their first encounter, Baoyu and Qin Zhong engaged in reciprocal observation and introspection, revealing significant interest about each other. The author used their first meeting to establish the context for later conversations. For example, in the same chapter: "Having finalized their plans, by the time they emerged, it was already the hour for lamps to be illuminated. They observed others playing cards for a while longer. When the accounts were reconciled, it was Qin Zhong and You Shi who had lost the wager for the subsequent round of wine. They consented to host the feast the day after tomorrow. They then dined together. After Baoyu's initial acquaintance with Qin Zhong, their relationship swiftly intensified as they engaged in leisure and companionship. In the fifteenth chapter: Qin Zhong inquired, "What does that imply?" Baoyu responded, "Will you not uphold your promise? We shall proclaim it loudly". Embarrassed, Zhi'er discreetly withdrew into the shadows. Baoyu pulled Qin Zhong outside and asked, 'Are you still so arrogant now?' Qin Zhong chuckled, 'Dear brother, just refrain from shouting. I shall comply with your wishes'. Baoyu laughed, 'No need for further words now'. Once we are settled for the night, we will reconcile our accounts appropriately. This line illustrates how, upon uncovering the clandestine relationship between Qin Zhong and Zhi'er, Baoyu chose to remain composed and avoid creating a disturbance. Instead, he generously maintained the confidentiality of their romance and whimsically proposed reconciling accounts with Qin Zhong. The expression "settle accounts" in this context may be misconstrued; yet, in that scenario, in the presence of maids and matrons, the two refrained from "settling accounts" in any manner [9]. This accurately reflects the depth of their attachment. It elucidates the complicated nature of their connection and the profound intimacy they shared.

In-Depth Analysis of Dream of the Red Chamber: The Stories Behind Jia Baoyu's Affection for Girls and Aversion to Me.

At the conclusion of the chapter, Baoyu's sorrow, compassion, and apprehension over Qin Zhong's predicament—overwhelmed by mourning for a deceased relative and thereafter afflicted by a severe illness—profoundly resound. As recounted in Chapter 16: "By this time, Qin Zhong had lapsed into unconsciousness two or three times and had been on his deathbed for some while. Upon seeing him, Baoyu could not help but burst into tears. Li Gui hastened to advise, "This is unwise. Brother Qin suffers from a delicate constitution; the hard bed may cause him discomfort. Hence he has been temporarily moved to a softer

surface. Your weeping will only aggravate his condition." Hearing this, Baoyu restrained himself and approached. He saw Qin Zhong's face as pale as wax, his eyes closed, breathing laboriously as he tossed and turned upon his pillow. Baoyu cried out urgently, "Brother Whale, Baoyu has come!" He called out two or three times, but Qin Zhong did not respond. Baoyu called again, "Baoyu has come!" This scene highlights the depth of their bond, with Baoyu's "could not help but burst into tears" conveying his anguish and helplessness at Qin Zhong's critical condition. Baoyu's repeated cries of "Baoyu is here!" convey his desperate, persistent summons and his remorse for arriving too late. His mourning and longing after Qin Zhong's death are described in Chapter 17: "After Qin Zhong's passing, Baoyu wept uncontrollably. Li Gui and others spent half a day comforting him. His anguish persisted even after coming home. Grandmother Jia sent several dozen taels of silver and arranged further funeral gifts for Baoyu to show his respects. The interment occurred seven days later, with no further reference. Baoyu lamented everyday, his thoughts always reverting to Qin Zhong, despite his inability to effect any change. The duration of this state remains unknown before its eventual cessation. This excerpt illustrates Jia Baoyu's sorrow as comparable to the loss of one's parents, as genuine affection is unveiled in hardship, encompassing both life and death. His lamentation and reminiscence of Qin Zhong hark back to their initial encounter and the moments they shared, encapsulating their profound affection, camaraderie, and kinship with striking clarity. It also underscores the connection between Baoyu and Qin Zhong—a relationship that transcends mere acquaintance and familial bonds. Baoyu's affable and benevolent demeanor towards Qin Zhong sharply contrasts with his typical disdain for other men.

4. Baoyu's attitude towards himself

Baoyu abhorred male attributes, resulting in his diminished self-esteem. He described himself as a "muddled monster with beard and brow," which reflects Baoyu's self-deprecating demeanor throughout the narrative, particularly obvious in his dealings with Qin Zhong. Although he abhors the quest for authority and affluence, he profoundly acknowledges the intrinsic hierarchical concepts of medieval society. Despite his disdain for those preoccupied with fame and wealth, his internal reflection upon first seeing Qin Zhong discloses: "That such a being should exist in this world!" Observing him now, I perceive myself as a soiled swine or a scruffy canine. What is the reason for my birth into this aristocratic lineage? Had I been born to an impoverished scholar or a humble official, I might have formed a friendship with him long ago, and my existence would not have been squandered. Although I possess more nobility than he, these brocades and silks simply adorn this desiccated stump and decayed lumber; lambs and exquisite wines merely occupy this excrement-laden trench. The phrases "wealth and honour" have really corrupted my spirit! In Baoyu's internal monologue, expressions such as "mud-covered swine and mangy dog" and "withered stump and rotting timber" are all derogatory words. Baoyu compares himself to a clay pig and a scruffy dog, symbolizing the "muddy" and "filthy" essence of masculine disposition. This reflects his profound disdain for commonplace individuals, dramatically contrasting with his esteem for lofty figures like as Qin Zhong and his veneration for purity, alongside his own constrained literary insight and understanding. This juxtaposition with Qin Zhong's intellectual sophistication critiques those who isolate themselves from the world, engrossed only in classical texts. It also exposes Baoyu's discontent with his heritage and his inherent disposition. It discloses a contemplation of his masculinity, recognizing his considerable experience with others but yet expressing a trace of jealousy when faced with someone more exceptional and smart than himself. This also indirectly illustrates Baoyu's juxtaposition of his own affluent upbringing with that of Qin Zhong, who hails from modest roots.

5. Conclusion

Although Baoyu had a disdain for the ordinary guy, he did like a certain kind of male friend. His ideas for male friendships were bifurcated: one half rested on stunning physical attractiveness, while the other half was grounded on either a haughty demeanor or common ambitions. Neither could be omitted. Mingyan, a subordinate who comprehended Baoyu's preferences, adhered to his directives, and exhibited steadfast loyalty, along with sophisticated gentlemen like Qin Zhong, who possessed both aesthetic appeal and talent, compelled Baoyu to extend to them the same gentle, accommodating, and meticulously considerate treatment he reserved for women. This created a clear disparity in his demeanor towards common people.

The false and vulgar men that Baoyu detested represented his rejection of societal norms, his criticism of patriarchal values that favored sons over girls, and his denunciation of the inherent vulgarity and corruption associated with the pursuit of official status and renown. Baoyu's disdain for the quest for riches and rank was grounded in a distinct logic. As a person of aristocratic lineage, Jia Baoyu often associated with officials like Jia Yucun and Sun Shaozu. However, these individuals deeply disillusioned him: Jia Yucun, avaricious and self-serving, first permitted the monk Hu Lu to corrupt justice in the Gourd Case, therefore jeopardizing Zhen Yinglian, the daughter of his patron. Subsequently, to gain favor with Jia She, he misused his power to seize Shi Daizi's fan, resulting in the destruction of Shi Daizi's family. This instilled in Baoyu a dominant aversion to and repudiation of the conventional masculine archetype. In contrast, male friends like as Mingyan and Qin Zhong resonated more profoundly with Baoyu's sophisticated, romantic beliefs and his quest for equality and liberty. Consequently, akin to his treatment of the

ladies in his entourage, Jia Baoyu saw them with uniform harmony, tenderness, and ease. This contrast in his handling of common men compared to these extraordinary masculine characters is what distinctly separates them.

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