ABSTRACT

*Liaozhai Zhiyi* 聊斋志异 by Pu Songling 蒲松龄 in the Qing period is hailed as one of the greatest work of short stories written in classical Chinese.

In it, Pu Songling successfully depicts a myriad of female characters who hail from various social strata. Scholars who tried to determine the author's views on women by analysing his portrayal of these female characters, often end up with quite different conclusions. Some feel that the author's views on women are conventional, since he depicts women who are submissive wives and concubines, like Linshi 林氏 and Shanhu 珊瑚. Others argue that, through the characterization of heroines and talented women, the author's views on women are iconoclastic.

The aim of this study is to reinvestigate and redefine Pu Songling's views on women, by giving his array of female characters a critical and thorough analysis. Results show that the author's views on women are actually twofold, that is, conventional and iconoclastic at the same time. This is mainly due to the complex ideological trend during the Ming-Qing period.

Due to the restrictions of his times, we should not excoriate Pu Songling for exhibiting conventional views on women. Instead, we should give due recognition to the iconoclastic part of his ideology on women. Without it, later works like *Honglou Meng* 红楼梦 by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 and *Jinghua Yuan* 镜花缘 by Li Ruzhen 李汝珍 might not be able to depict female characters which are much more liberal and democratic.