ABSTRACT

As a literature on romance of heroes, many scholars think that though the Water Margin creates many glorious rugged images of heroes, it harbours negative views on women. Quoting various licentious characters as examples, they claim that the author is trying to imbue the readers with a view that women bring misfortunes and disasters.

However, on taking a closer look, other than the exquisitely vivid images of licentious women, the author does provide portrayal of various women with a myriad of characters who hail from various social strata. These characters are often neglected because they are rather sketchily portrayed. By giving them a thorough analysis, this thesis has found that the author does project positive images of women, contrary to the views of many scholars. For instance, through the characterization of heroines such as Gu Dasao and Sun Er Niang, the author has proven women's ability in the Liangshan rebellion. Besides these heroines, amiable mothers are given their well deserved acknowledgements and praises. Above all, the author has also shown much sympathy for female characters with less fortunate encounters, Lin Chong’s wife and songstress Jin Cuilian, for instance.

The reason that the author speaks ill of licentious women is because of the orientation of the novel. In peasant uprising, sexual continent is one of the crucial military codes. Therefore licentious women who commit sexual offences are strictly disparaged.

It is concluded that though the author cast aspersion on licentious women in the novel, we should not draw implication that he harbours negative views on women. Furthermore, this study has found that though the artistic merits of female characters are not as impressive as those of male characters, they are nonetheless significant.