ABSTRACT

Liaozhai Zhiyi (聊斋志异) is a collection and re-creation of demonic stories written during the Qing Dynasty by Pu Songling (蒲松龄 1640 - 1715), based on legends or folklores, mainly to indirectly criticize the unfair practices towards the common people, especially women at that time. Since then, these stories have attracted a lot of academic interests. Interestingly, of all the characters portrayed in the novel, demons, the imaginary images that have long been portrayed in ancient Chinese mythology (志怪小说), are rarely studied extensively.

This study attempts to critically examine the demons and their characterization in Liaozhai Zhiyi. Chapter 1 discusses the origin and development of mythology in the history of Chinese Literature. Chapter 2 explores the relationship between Taiping Guangji (太平广记), a narrative compilation of unusual things and events that occurred before the Qing Dynasty, and Liaozhai Zhiyi in creating the images of demons. Chapter 3 investigates and analyzes the characteristics of demons in Liaozhai Zhiyi. As demons could transform themselves into human beings, traits such as benevolence, flirt, integrity, etc. are often associated with them. Chapter 4 appraises and evaluates the images of demons created by Pu Songling.

Based on this study, similarities have been found between Taiping Guangji and Liaozhai Zhiyi on the images of demons. However, as a great writer, Pu Songling had managed to create demons with features that are distinctive and original.