



**HEROINES OF CONFUCIANISM: CHINESE WOMEN OF THE HIGH QING**

**Rachel Griffin (Prof. Margaret Wan)**

**Department of World Languages and Cultures**

Abstract

Confucianism is a core cultural aspect present in nearly all Qing Dynasty Chinese literature. While China is traditionally patriarchal, women play an important role within the context of Confucianism. Novels written at this time such as *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Flowers in the Mirror* and *The Tale of Heroic Sons and Daughters* provide a unique perspective into the lives of women and what constitutes a Confucian heroine. These novels place women in situations where they are able to perform nontraditional roles within the family and in society. Though the novels are fictional, they give insight into the virtues and abilities that were praised in women of the Qing Dynasty. While *Dream of the Red Chamber* focuses on the virtuous woman of home-centered life, the other novels praise talented women who stand up for Confucian virtues in society such as service to the government and filial piety. Analysis of these three novels demonstrates that women are truly shown as Confucian heroines who have a positive impact on their families and society as a whole.

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