

**Ralston, Ramona**, State University of New York at Potsdam, United States;  
**Sondergard, Sidney L.**, St. Lawrence University, United States

**The Painted Screen: Reception Theory and Revisionist Popular Culture in Two Film Adaptations of Pu Songling's 'Painted Skin' (*hua pi*)**

Recent feature film adaptations of "Painted Skin" (*hua pi*), one of the most popular stories from Pu Songling's collection, *Strange Tales from Liaozhai* (*liaozhai zhiyi*), can be read through reception theory's premise that audience desires, values, and expectations drive the substance of cinematic narratives, in order to examine the degree to which the didactic values embedded in Pu's tale have been both revised and recoded via popular culture pressures in these cinematic versions. This essay examines the film adaptations directed by King Hu (1993) and by Gordon Chan *et al.* (2008) against the attitudes expressed in Pu Songling's source narrative, noting that despite apparent challenges to gendered notions of knowledge-as-power, and a decentering of the intellectual heritage of Confucian scholasticism and Daoist occultism in favor of an experientially-based, martial conception of heroism, both adaptations reiterate the central lessons of Pu's source.