

1 **Women of Utopia: Female Saviours, Immortals and Deities in**

Late Ming and Early Qing Literature

烏托邦中的女性：明末清初文學中的女性救世主、女神與女仙

"Alien Creatures: Alterity, Boundaries and the Condition of Life",
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2 **Introduction**

3 **Popular Fiction:**

通俗小說

Mme Chao in the Novel *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*

小說《醒世姻緣傳》：改革者與神仙

4 **A Confucianist's Dystopia**

- Xi Zhou sheng 西周生 (fl. 1630s/40s) (Scholar of the Western Zhou) / Late Ming man & world
- *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* 醒世姻緣傳 (*Marriage Destinies that will Bring Society to its Senses*)
 - -> Berg, *Carnival in China*, 2002
- Confucian utopia = restoration of golden past
- Anti-utopia / dystopia = sin is fun to watch

5 **Introduction**

- New interpretation of the novel *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*.
- Previous work highlighted fox demon reincarnated as local elite wife Xue Sujie 薛素姐 as a shrew (Wu, 2001) and Mme Chao 晁夫人 as Great Mother archetype (Berg, 2002).

- Fox demon personifies the tensions of merchant class merging with literati elite, leading to inversion of social hierarchies, clash of old and new norms & values (Berg, 2002).
- New Framework: Woman as "Alien Kind", "Other" within anti-utopia:
- Utopia and anti-utopia as a new lens for this analysis on two levels:
 - An uneducated and illiterate old woman as an alternative social model to the male literati elite, within a grotesque dystopia, a "nightmare" of social and moral decay;
 - An otherworldly "Immortal", moral and religious alternative to status quo.

6 ☐ **Argument**

- Mme Chao's journey from an uneducated but virtuous widow to an immortal —
- Not just a utopian ideal within dystopia
- She personifies an "alien" on several levels—
- An "extra-ordinary" woman surpasses the male elite and
- A "supra-ordinary" super-human who transcends the mortal realm
- She offers a new social, moral and religious model for salvation.

7 ☐ **Mme Chao**

- Provincial elite widow
- → a new moral, social and religious model
- Embodies syncretic Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist ideals
- The only character in the novel to be granted apotheosis

8 ☐

CONCEPTS

9 ☐ **Alterity**

10 ☐ **Framing Madame Chao as "Other"**

- Female, alternative gender to ruling elite, alternative literacy

- Proposes new moral, social model
- After literati elite has been seen to fail
- Otherworldly
 - Immortal, lives longer than humans, ascends to Heaven
 - Religious solution for political problems
- Utopian / Anti-utopian: sketch of alternative worlds and satirical mirror images of the world
- Relation to perceived human world

11 **The Gendered Other**

- Madame Chao destabilises Confucian widowhood & gender roles
 - → reformer & goddess
- Embodies critique of incompetent literati patriarchy
- Gayatri Spivak: subaltern voice—
 - 'speaks' yet mediated by (most likely) male novelist's narrative voice
- Homi Bhabha: Mme Chao inhabits his "In-between space" ("Third Space") (*The Location of Culture*, 2004).
- Foucault: Heterotopia "different space" ("Of Other Spaces", 1967)

12 **Liminal/hybrid "in-between" spaces —Homi Bhabha**

The "In-Between Space" Mme Chao occupies

- Between mortal and divine: She shifts from human widow to immortal saviour.
- Between orthodoxy and critique: She inhabits Confucian ideals but also exposes their limitations in a corrupt, patriarchal society.
- Between genders: As a widow, she is confined to a female role within the household; as a deity and reformer, she assumes authority and agency usually reserved for men.
- Between traditions: Her representation blends Confucian ethics, Daoist transcendence, and Buddhist compassion — a hybrid religious identity.

13 **The Alien: Liminal & Supernatural**

- Mme Chao transcends human realm → Goddess of Mount Yi
- Victor Turner: liminality → widow → reformer → goddess
- Neither wife nor nun, Confucian exemplar nor Buddhist saint

14 **Alienness & Utopian/Anti-Utopian Imagination**

- 1 • Late Ming apocalyptic anxieties → need for 'alien savior', an "Other" alternative to literati
- Confucian elite fail → redemption from supernatural female "Other"
- Utopian inversion: goddess as reformer when men fail to act
- Anti-utopian warning: only divine "Other" can save corrupt world

15 **Utopia & Anti-Utopia**

17 **Chinese Utopia**

- *Wutuobang* 乌托邦
- *Lixiangguo* 理想国
- Utopia has long indigenous tradition in China
- → pre-imperial times
 - Spring and Autumn era, 770-476 BC
 - Warring States era, 475-221 BC
- Fig: Illustration for the first 1516 edition of More's *Utopia*.

18 **China's Utopia: *Locus Classicus***

Tao Yuanming 陶渊明 (365-427)
 'Record of the Peach Blossom Spring'
 ('Tao hua yuan ji' 桃花源记):
 no corrupt officials!

19 **Dong Yue 董說 (1620–1686)**

- Scholar and novelist, wrote in 1642:
 "Dreams are what the rich and noble, living in prosperity, and those in times of harmony, do not desire.
 They are what the poor and humble, and those in chaos, pray for and seek.

If the rich dream of poverty, they lose wealth and nobility.
If the prosperous dream of hardship, they lose their prosperity.
If the peaceful dream of chaos, they lose peace.
But the poor and those in chaos should dream."
(Cf. Berg, *Carnival in China*, p. 51)

26 **The Novel:**

Xingshi yinyuan zhuan

醒世姻缘传

(Marriage Destinies that will Bring Society to its Senses)

27 **小說《醒世姻緣傳》：改革者與神仙**

- 1 • 《醒世姻緣傳》這本小說是在明末，大約1630或1640年寫成的，作者沒有說真名，只用了筆名「西周生」。
- 小說裡有一位很特別的人物，叫晁夫人。她是山東武城的一位寡婦。
- 在故事中，她不是普通的寡婦，而是被寫成一位改革家、聖人，甚至像個救世主一樣。
- 她一開始是個守節的寡婦，後來慢慢變成一位地方的領導者。到了一百零四歲的時候，她成仙了。
- 她死後還被人當成嶧山的女神，很多讀書人和老百姓都很尊敬她，拜她。
- 她代表的是儒家的理想，是大家心中那種慈愛又公正的守護者。

2 EEC

28 **晁夫人：道德與慈善領袖**

- 1 • 她在丈夫去世、兒子也過世之後，一個人撐起家裡的莊園，還經常救濟災民和窮人。
- 她開粥場，給沒飯吃的人提供熱粥，也幫助其他寡婦和孤兒，在地方上是一個很好的榜樣。
- 大家稱她是「女性范仲淹」，意思是說她像范仲淹那樣關心百姓，有理想、有道德。

- 她把儒家、道家和佛教的優點都結合起來，是動亂時代中很難得的一個理想人物，像個活生生的烏托邦代表。

30 **Dating**

- Set in mid-Ming, but world described is:
- Ca. 1628-1644

31 **Author**

- Xi Zhou sheng = pseudonym ('Scholar of the Western Zhou dynasty')
- Nostalgia for antiquity's golden age
- Vision of a utopian society
- Possibly a provincial scholar in 17th century Ming/Qing transition

33 **The Novel's World**

- 1 • Two sides:
 - Utopian paradise = rural idyll
 - Dystopian urban culture = decadence & extravagance

34 **Plot Structure**

- 100 chapters, dual plot: Chao & Di families
- Themes: karma, satire, decline
- Family saga
- Chao family → Chao Yuan: anti-hero, reincarnated as Di family
- Di family → Di Xichen: the fool
- Xue family → Xue Sujie: rebellious woman

35 **Utopia**

- Chapters 23/24: rural idyll
- Unspoiled by urban culture, decadence, vices,
- No corrupt officials

36 **Dystopia**

- The other 98 chapters: grotesque satire, moral inversion
- Dialectic of ideal vs. dystopia
- Families linked by reincarnation and karma

- Punishments and rewards often grotesquely disproportionate
- Flood destroys all evil in society

37 ☐ **《中國的嘉年華》**

Carnival in China (2002)

- 這本書主要是探討明清時期的小說《醒世姻緣傳》，
- 這是一部匿名的反烏托邦作品，
- 我試著從這部小說中，看它如何反映當時社會的真實生活。
- 我在書裡提出了一種新的解讀方法，
- 希望能透過這部小說，挖掘出中國的俗文化、非官方的歷史，
- 還有晚期帝制時代人們對世界的理解和想像。

38 ☐

- 我這本書的研究重點，包括了小說裡醫者、精英階層和女性的形象，以及跟治療、治理和救世有關的主題。
- 為了研究這些問題，我參考了大量的資料，包括小說、詩歌、醫學倫理的文獻、宗教典籍、道德書、還有政治、哲學、法律著作，甚至地方志。
- 透過這樣的閱讀方式，我試著去了解17世紀的士大夫階級，他們的世界觀。
- 這種重構，能幫助我們看見，當時士大夫共同的夢想、期待、恐懼，甚至噩夢。
同時，這也為研究俗文化提供了一個新的角度，可以和官方文化形成鮮明的對照。

39 ☐ **Place**

40 ☐ **Ming China: set in Shandong**

41 ☐

44 ☐ **Zhangqiu County, Ming Dynasty**

45 ☐ **Shandong, 1793**

46 ☐ **Market town, Shandong, 19th Century**

47 **Sacred Mount Tai**

48 **Mt Yi Goddess 峰山娘娘**

- After ascension to immortality Mme Chao becomes the Mother Goddess (niangniang 娘娘) of Mount Yi 峰山 (Yì Shān)
- Zou county 鄒城 (Zōu Chéng) in southern Shandong,
- famous for Qin Shihuangdi's (r. 221-210 BC) visit in 220 BC. [Shiji, 6.242.]
- Mme Chao presides over a site of historic importance for state religion.
- Like mother goddess of Mount Tai, whose cult includes imperial dimension, supporting the ruler and the state (see (baojuan 'precious scrolls')
- -> Mme Chao, too, builds on imperial prestige and power.

49 **Temporary assignment of Mme Chao to Mount Yi as regent deity of Mount Ni (Ní Shān 尼山)**

- in Qufu, birth-place of Confucius,
- emphasises her association with the Confucian tradition.
- Mme Chao turns into a cult figure on both elite and popular levels. Magistrates and literati offer libations after her ascension to heaven.
- The commoners of her native Wucheng erect a shrine in her memory & make a pilgrimage to Mount Yi to pay homage and pray to the mother goddess.

50 **Female Parallels 女性平行範例**

- Cult of Wusheng Laomu (Eternal Mother)
- Tan Yangzi: visionary widow (1580s)
- Qin Liangyu: warrior widow
- Ms Wang (Tan Yangzi's niece)
- Courtesans, e.g. Xue Susu
- Three Ye Sisters
- Tu Yaoze & Shen Tiansun

- But — Mme Chao is illiterate, not “talented”

52 民間信仰與無生老母

- 1 • 無生老母把天下的百姓都當成自己的孩子。
• 她代表一種男女平等的宗教理想。
• 在十六世紀，無生老母第一次以「母神」的樣子出現，是一個全新宗教的創造者。
• 她被看作是西王母和觀音的「母親」。
• 她也出現在白蓮教的創世神話裡。
• 到了明清時代，很多宗教故事裡的女性形象開始變成戰士和領袖。
- 2 無生老母：平等與救贖的母神形象

53 Popular Religion & The Eternal Venerable Mother

- Wusheng laomu 無生老母
 - All people are her children
 - Equality of the sexes
- In 16th century
 - created as a NEW archetypal mother goddess
 - = Mother of both Xiwang mu and Guanyin
- White Lotus sect creation myth
- Ming 明 (1368-1644) /Qing 清 (1644-1911) era:
 - Women as fighters and leaders

58 秦良玉：女將領與民族英雄

- 1 • 秦良玉，大約生於1574年，是四川人。
• 她一開始是跟丈夫一起參與軍事行動，在1600年協助平定地方叛亂，從此聲名大噪。
• 她的丈夫是一位地方的土司，也就是少數民族的酋長。丈夫去世之後，秦良玉沒有退下來，而是以寡婦的身份繼續領兵，成為一位真正的軍事領袖。
• 她的軍事能力獲得朝廷高度肯定，曾在1620年和1630年兩次奉命出征，對抗滿洲的入侵。
- 2 Qín Liángyù

60 女戰英烈王氏——譚陽子之侄女

- 1 • 1643年，著名士大夫錢謙益曾經讚揚一位女性戰士王氏，
 - 她是譚陽子的侄女，也就是他哥哥王衡的第五個女兒。
 - 在崇禎年間，這位王氏曾經和她的丈夫一同守衛四川新都，英勇地抵抗叛軍首領張獻忠。
 - 其實早在1603年，王衡就曾說過，
在亂世中，像隋朝喬國公主那樣的女戰士，是可以救人的。
 - 明代著名作家馮夢龍 Féng Mènglóng (1574–1646) 也寫過喬國公主的英勇事蹟，並對她大加讚賞。

2 Ms Wang: Tanyangzi's Niece

65 曇陽子的昇天：才女如何成為女神

- 1580年重陽節那天，成千上萬的人聚集在蘇州的直塘村，想要親眼看到曇陽子「昇天」。
- 她的形象結合了宗教和文學的元素。
- 她說自己是一位未婚守節的寡婦，拒絕結婚、遠離世俗生活。
- 在她「昇天」之前，她寫了很多東西，還特別沐浴、換上乾淨衣服，跟親人朋友、還有文人告別。
- 她的故事因為文人們的記錄流傳下來，最後變成一位有神話色彩的人物。

72 薛素素簡介

- 1 • 薛素素，也叫薛五，
是晚明時期，也就是大約1580到1610年間，很有名的名妓、詩人、畫家和藝人。
 - 她被認為是「明代八大名妓」之一。

2 Xue Susu

73 薛素素的著名仰慕者名單

- 1 薛素素在當時的文人圈中，其實有不少重要的朋友和支持者。比如：
 - 胡應麟 Hú Yìnglín (1551–1602)
 - 就曾經跟素素互相作詩唱和，還在詩裡稱讚她年輕時的風采和才情。

- 袁保德 Yuán Bǎodé (d. 1604)
- 也就是她的戀人，雖然在政治上讓她失望，
- 但兩人之間的詩歌往來，也記錄了不少情感交流。
- 李日華 Lǐ Rìhuá (1565–1635)
- 則在詩中描寫她年老時的模樣，帶著一種感慨和懷舊的眼光。
- 還有許經 Xǔ Jīng,
- 也在詩裡回憶她去世後的身影，流露出懷念之情。
- 畫壇上的大人物董其昌 Dǒng Qíchāng (1555–1636) 和 錢謙益 Qián Qiānyì (1582–1664) ,
- 都曾公開讚賞過薛素素的畫作，這也讓她在藝術上的成就更受肯定。

2 Xu Susu's Admirers & Lovers—she as "Male Scholar" surpasses them all

74 ☐ Other Female Immortals

75 ☐ Three Ye sisters

76 ☐ 葉小鸞：父親塑造的神童詩人

- 1 • 葉小鸞 (1616–1632)
- 她從小學詩、學音樂，也學下棋，被大家當作神童來看待
- 她的父親教她詩詞與藝術。
- 她的詩由她的父親 葉紹袁 (Yè Shàoyuán) 精心整理並出版。
- 父親的編輯讓她的才華看起來符合儒家的標準，但也讓她的聲音變得不那麼自由。

2 Ye Xiaoluan: The Prodigy Poet Created by Her Father

77 ☐ 詩中仙女——少女才情與放逐命運

Girl Poets – Banished Immortals

- 1 • 少女詩人葉小鸞與她的姊姊葉紈紈 (1610–1632)
- 她們是最有名的「被放逐的仙女」

78 ☐ Tu Long's Daughters Tu Yause & Shen Tiansun

79 ☐ • Tu Yause 屠瑤瑟 & Shen Tiansun 沈天孫

- Daughter and daughter-in-law, respectively, of the scholar-official Tu Long (屠隆, 1543–1605).
- They were celebrated in their time as "talented women" (*cainü* 才女), known for their poetic skill, deep friendship, and tragic early deaths.

84 結論

Conclusion

85

- Madame Chao as alterity embodied:
 - Gendered Other: Extra-ordinary, transcends her gender roles
 - Supernatural Alien: Different and supra-ordinary non-human, transcends human boundaries
 - Utopian Outsider: Morally super-human, transcends all humans and becomes a utopian model in an anti-utopian world

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- Qiú Yīng 仇英 (1449-1552), "Peach Blossom Spring"
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-
-
- Mme Chao reflects late Ming anxieties & search for salvation
- A figure of both (Confucian conservative) critique and moral renewal, not subversive

88 Shitao (1642-1707) "Taoyuantu"

89 Shitao: Peach Blossom Paradise

Not a Nowhere, nor an Otherworld

The viewer is right there — in the midst of the Peach Blossom Utopia

Utopian figure of Mme Chao = Critique of contemporary conditions

Criticism of Absolutism & Confucianism: merely conservative,

cleanse corruption in bureaucracy,
A sketch on how to solve challenges looming on horizon of late
Ming

90 ☐ 衷心感谢

91 ☐ 明末清初的女性：
我的著作