

Men Conquer the World and Women Save Mankind: Rewriting Patriarchal Traditions through Web-based Matriarchal Romances

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Abstract: This article examines one Chinese women's literature website by the name of Jinjiang, and focuses especially on a particular type of popular romance, *nüzun*, or matriarchal narratives. By identifying with a morally ambiguous yet powerful female protagonist, readers can suspend the social and moral constraints placed on their lives imaginatively albeit temporarily, and claim sexual and political power through reading. In producing such tales of female power, authors can satisfy their creative urges and yearnings for empowerment by simultaneously appropriating from and undermining dominant official ideologies and social norms. Ultimately, Jinjiang provides both a new platform for Chinese women to explore their gender identity and an alternative community where women can have easy access to emotional nurturance as well as entertainment and diversions.

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Web writing has caused major shifts in the modes and mores of popular Chinese romance. In 2008, China became the world's largest Internet market (Barboza), and Web literature, consisting mainly of unedited items and featuring various genres, has surpassed the volume of published print matter since 2000 (Linder 647). Yet few scholars have

examined popular Chinese print romances in depth, let alone produced any study of how Chinese women participate in their production and consumption on the Chinese cyberspace. While English-language scholarship on the Chinese Internet focuses on issues of state censorship and civil liberties and ignores “cultural production” (Hockx 148), Chinese scholars usually engage in abstract discussions of the ontology, aesthetics, and sociology of Web literature rather than regard popular romance as a genre worthy of separate and serious attention.^[1] We thus face a dearth of both ethnographic research and theoretical conceptualization in the study of web-based popular Chinese romance.

In order to investigate the impact of new media on the reading and writing practices related to the romance genre and, to a lesser extent, to explore the relevance of Western theories, especially Janice Radway’s findings, to Chinese-language popular romances, I will look at one Chinese literature website by the name of Jinjiang. I will focus especially on a particular type of popular romance, *nüzun*, or matriarchal fiction, which describes a woman’s ascent to power in the public arena and/or her success at establishing and heading a happy domicile consisting of her and one or several male sexual partners in a society ruled by women.

In her ground-breaking study *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, published in 1984, Janice Radway produces a taxonomy of the “ideal romance” based on her ethnographic research of a group of female romance readers in a small town in the United States. According to Radway, the typical narrative structure of the “ideal romance” traces the heroine’s path of self-realization from her loss of social identity to its full restoration when she, after a series of misunderstandings and mishaps, eventually earns a love declaration and “unwavering commitment” from a super-masculine, “aristocratic” hero (134). Furthermore, Radway asserts that these readers can most relate to an “ideal heroine” who is “spirited” and “passionate,” but never loses these alluring “feminine” characteristics: “sexual innocence, unselfconscious beauty, and desire for love” (131).

English-language romances have changed shape since Radway’s study came out in the 1980s, as has romance scholarship. Nowadays it is common in popular romances, if not quite the universal norm, to encounter a sexually experienced and even adventurous heroine who seeks to control her life rather than being controlled.^[2] Some scholars have also argued that Radway’s theory does not apply to Chinese popular print romances, because they reflect different sets of socio-political developments and cultural imperatives, such as the centrality of the multi-generational Chinese family (e.g., Lin). However, Radway’s description of the ideal heroine and her self-realization, in which heterosexual romantic love plays a definitive role, does shed light on pre-Internet popular Chinese romances such as those authored by Qiong Yao, “the Queen of Chinese Romance” whose works flooded the mainland Chinese market in the 1980s and 1990s.

I thus posit Radway’s theory as a point of departure, rather than seek to use it to fully explicate the web-based Chinese romances I examine. Despite its specific historic and cultural underpinnings, Radway’s conceptualization of “the circuit of culture” that energizes the production and consumption of popular romance reveals the contradictory elements both within popular culture and in our own identities as both researchers and consumers of popular culture (Wood 152). Indeed, not only does her central argument that women read popular romances in order to deflect the reality of a patriarchal world still remain provocative, but her interdisciplinary approach also proves highly useful for my

study of Chinese popular romance. Thus, rather than regard Radway's feminist bent only as "a form of political moralism" (Ang 104), I will not only test the relevance of her theory on female romance readers' motivations and character identification, but also, more importantly, explore whether a different kind of readership has emerged who derives different kinds of pleasure from the act of reading popular Chinese romances in the age of the Internet.

I will show that catering mainly to a group of well-educated and articulate Chinese women, Jinjiang possesses interactive features that inculcate a reader-oriented form of writing, while the text is transformed from a single and closed-up entity into a continual process of becoming, thanks to the collective contributions and negotiations of multiple agents. Employing this reader-oriented style of Web writing, Jinjiang users often appropriate from existing works and tropes to access power granted by the production of meaning. They deploy their creative and playful consumption of cultural artifacts to deflect the power of the dominant social order and ideologies that they otherwise lack the means to challenge or change. Ultimately, the Internet empowers these Chinese women to carve out new identities for themselves and a communal life on the Chinese cyberspace, precisely because it enables them to rewrite patriarchal narratives with other women who share many of their beliefs and values.

I will begin with a brief overview of Jinjiang and the genealogy of popular romances in mainland China since 1949. Next, I will look at the three groups of human players in the creation and consumption of these texts—webmasters, authors, and readers—and analyze how interactive features of the website shape their relations to one another. Finally, I will examine examples of *nüzun* romances published at Jinjiang, and seek to discover what kinds of pleasure that users of Jinjiang derive from them.

The Rise of Popular Romance in Mainland China

Although not the largest Chinese literature website, Jinjiang Literature City (www.jjwxc.net) is known as one of the earliest and most influential women's literature websites, with an almost exclusively female readership that is famous for its enthusiasm, loyalty, and powers of articulation (Yin 31). Judging by their self-introductions, the majority of Jinjiang users are fairly well-educated women whose ages range from the late teens to late thirties.^[3] Only a few are full-time writers. Most have other occupations such as teachers, office workers, and accountants, or are students. The majority of them reside in mainland China, but a significant number appear to be living abroad and are, nevertheless, eager to participate from their various locations in the Chinese Diaspora (Xu 71-74). The webmasters, many of them volunteers, represent themselves as women interested in reading and writing fiction. The age, education background, and occupation of Jinjiang users fit the national profile of users of Chinese literature websites, as they are described by some as possessing the "three highs" (*sangao*): high salary, high level of education, and high social status (Yang). Jinjiang users are thus perhaps more highly educated, urban, and politically liberal than the small town romance readers discussed by Radway.

Compared with other Chinese literature websites, Jinjiang not only almost exclusively answers to contemporary Chinese women's interests and concerns, but also

frequently changes and enhances its web features in order to make them more conducive to candid, sophisticated, and in-depth discussions (more about this later). Jinjiang thus offers an invaluable source for me to conduct a preliminary “virtual ethnography” on female Chinese readers of popular romances, both because of its user profiles and because of its responsiveness to user needs.

Furthermore, the history of Jinjiang also reflects the rapid rise of market economy in the publishing industry in China. Although having started out utilizing volunteer labor, Jinjiang experienced financial hardships, legal crises, and ownership changes before finally finding an investor in Shanghai, Shengda Internet Development Cooperation, in November 2007. Shortly afterwards it followed the examples of other Chinese literature websites to charge a fee for access to certain “VIP” works. This practice, albeit controversial, reflects the increasing commercialization of the publishing industry in China.^[4] So far only a small percentage of Jinjiang works have appeared in print media, most of them published by newly emerged houses known for their lists of popular literature, rather than by large state-run publishers specializing in serious literature.^[5] But more and more mainstream Chinese publications have begun to cash in on the rise of popular fiction, and they have especially targeted female romance readers as a profit-generating consumer base (Qin).

Romance—and especially time-travel romance—dominates in popularity and volume among various Jinjiang genres. Moreover, the sub-genre of *nūzun*, or narratives of matriarchal societies, not only have gained increasing popularity at Jinjiang, but also reveal in a distinct way the mores and modes of web-based popular romance in China. Before I turn to *nūzun* texts per se, a brief sketch of trends in popular literature in contemporary China can illuminate not only the large social milieu into which *nūzun* has made its entrée, but also the raw materials from which it often appropriates to its own ends.

The rise of *nūzun* romance signals a new phase in the production and consumption of popular literature in mainland China. Although romantic tales abounded in both the premodern vernacular fiction of Scholar and Beauty^[6] and the Republican-era popular fiction of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly,^[7] contemporary popular romance did not make its debut in mainland China until the 1980s. Since 1949, official discourses in China had always emphasized the utilitarian function of literature, regarding it as a tool of civic education and social engineering that should mobilize the people under the banner of socialist construction and national salvation. Under such severe strictures, not only was popular literature such as Butterfly fiction denounced as “relics of a feudal society” and consequently banned, but any description of romantic relationships, not to mention sex, immediately made a work suspect in official eyes.^[8] Needless to say, it was virtually unheard of to embrace the entertainment value of literature, even if this may have been desired by readers. Indeed, as late as 1979, a short story entitled “Ai shi buneng wangji de” (Love must not be forgotten), written by the female writer Zhang Jie and today a canonized piece of the post-Mao Scar Literature (*shanghen wenxue*), caused considerable controversy. Even though the author portrays a self-sacrificing female protagonist who never acts on her secret love for a married communist cadre, this work roused criticism of its “bourgeois sentiments” just because it holds that individuals have a right to romantic love, quite separate from and beyond the revolutionary cause and ethical code of Communist China (Hong 259).

Then in the 1980s entered Qiong Yao, a female mainland-born romance writer from Taiwan, followed by her peers from Taiwan and Hong Kong, such as Yi Shu. State control of

literature and ideology relaxed somewhat following the economic reform and opening of China in the late 1970s. Consequently, untold copies of popular literature such as romance and martial arts fiction, many of them pirated, were published and sold in China. Popular Chinese print romance deserves a separate and more full-fledged study.^[9] Suffice it to state here that in light of the long years of state censorship of popular literature, works penned by Qiong Yao provided female readers with a sense of liberation as well as novelty and entertainment, since their emotional lives were acknowledged, validated, and indeed, made into the focus of literary works for the first time since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The commercial success of these romance novels was never in doubt. They not only attracted numerous female readers in China, whose ages ranged from the teens to the sixties, but also made their way into various popular TV series and movies. Romance has thus been associated with the rise of popular culture and with a female consumer base in mainland China from the very beginning. Popular romance novels such as those authored by Qiong Yao and Yi Shu typically describe the romantic entanglements of an urban, middle-class, and young Chinese woman. The setting is predominantly contemporary China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, but futurist settings sometimes appear in Yi Shu's works while Qiong Yao's later works such as *Huanzhu gege* (The "pearl-returning" princess) adopt the historical setting of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 C.E.). In any case, heterosexuality and monogamy, especially on the part of the heroine, dominate as the norm of romantic relationships in these novels. Both Qiong Yao and Yi Shu wrote very tame love stories by today's standards, since they were devoid of any explicit sex scenes. Instead, the heroine in Qiong Yao's works was often extolled for her sexual innocence, spirit of self-sacrifice, capacity for suffering, and, of course, faith in the ultimate triumph of romantic love. While this image harkens back to the gender code in premodern China, for it promotes women's self-effacement and chastity, the idea of love reigning paramount signals the influence of Western notions of romantic love and makes this heroine resemble the "ideal heroine" in popular romances studied by Radway (131).

Meanwhile, Chinese popular literature also catered to the needs of male consumers, as revealed by the proliferation of male-centered time-travel fantasies starting in the 1990s. Some have ascribed the popularity of time-travel fiction to *Xun Qin ji* (Tale of seeking Qin, ca. 1991), a fantasy written by a male Hong Kong writer named Huang Yi, and adapted to a popular TV series in 2001. This novel tells the story of a special force soldier who travels back to the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.E.), and helps the Duke of Qin to unify China and establish the first Chinese imperial dynasty. The hero's sexual conquests as well as his miraculous deployment of modern knowledge have spurred widespread imitations on the Chinese web. Women also utilized the trope of time-travel to write popular romance. Xi Juan, a female author from Taiwan, describes the romantic adventure of a young woman traveling back to the Song dynasty (961-1279 C.E.) in her novel *Jiaocuo shiguang de ailian* (Love that crosses time, 1993), to wide commercial success and reader acclaim.

Traditionally a women's website, Jinjiang also caught the fervor for romance, especially time-travel romance. Furthermore, while romance remains crucial in these web-based works, authors also explore alternative paths for their heroine's self-realization. As can be seen perhaps most clearly in *nüzun* fictions, romantic love is by no means the only ingredient to the heroine's identity, and military, political, and business accomplishments

are also described as self-fulfilling and validating. In some cases, the heroine's romantic relationship even pales to her achievements in the public arena. The emergence of *nüzun* fiction thus signals a major departure from the generic characteristics of popular romance as defined by Radway and the Romance Writers of America (and represented by Qiong Yao's works): that a romance should have a central love story and an optimistic, emotionally satisfying ending. To some extent, rather than American popular romances, web-based matriarchal romances more closely resemble some British "romantic novels," where the romantic plot plays an important, but not central part in the heroine's *bildungsroman*.

While listing many popular culture products in print, on the Web, and on TV as sources for their inspiration,[\[10\]](#) Jinjiang writers also express a deep dissatisfaction with these predecessors. They show no patience with what they consider to be the insipid heroines of Qiong Yao's works and frequently parody the author's melodramatic narration. Most recently, some have even penned fan-fiction versions of Qiong Yao's works to criticize what they consider the original author's lopsided promotion of romantic love to the detriment of traditional morality and the heroine's independence and self-esteem.[\[11\]](#) At the same time, Jinjiang authors also disparage blatant male fantasies in male-authored time-travel novels, unflatteringly calling them "stud (*zhongma*) fiction" because they depict male protagonists who, endowed with super-human prowess, invariably change history and acquire numerous beautiful women at the same time.[\[12\]](#) Consequently, romance novels at Jinjiang often display self-conscious differences from existing works.

Deliberately diverging yet simultaneously borrowing from existing popular fictions, Jinjiang authors have made radical changes in setting, characterization, and ethos in their works. Top-ranked romance novels at Jinjiang and other websites favored by female readers all share the following characteristics. First, certain elements of fantasy prove essential to attract readers. While relatively realistic contemporary urban settings still appear, the trope of time-travel, futuristic settings, and elements of the paranormal and fairy tales usually carry the work. Furthermore, the heroine in high-ranked titles differs widely from those in Qiong Yao's works. Jinjiang authors generally do not appear enthusiastic about disseminating the myth that women's ultimate fulfillment can be achieved only through marriage and domesticity, once a favorite theme of both premodern Chinese fiction and Qiong Yao's works. Nor are they interested in promoting the role model of Chinese *guixiu* prevalent in Scholar and Beauty romances: women who not only possess poetic talent but also hold "higher standards of behavior when it comes to piety, chastity, or other forms of self-sacrifice" (Widmer 229), a type often replicated in Qiong Yao's heroines. Rather, the heroine in a Jinjiang romance often possesses character traits traditionally associated with masculinity.

Jinjiang authors often celebrate not only the heroine's achievements in traditionally masculine occupations such as commerce, politics, and military, but also her sexual peccadilloes including simultaneous (and at times incestuous) relationships with multiple partners, a far cry from Qiong Yao's feminine and sexually innocent heroines. Moreover, the heroine also often exhibits a kind of radical individualism: Her single-minded pursuit of personal power—of the control of her own life—if not money and status alone, trumps any considerations of ethical code or the collective good, and defies any forces and attempts at subjugation. For example, high-ranked Jinjiang romance *Wan qingsi* (Coiling up black hair), since published in multiple volumes in print form (Huashan wenyi, 2007-2008), portrays a

modern woman who travels back in time to inhabit the body of another woman, survives abduction and rape, and achieves amazing feats in her checkered career: she becomes, sequentially, a much sought-after courtesan, successful business owner, mistress and manager of a prominent family and clan, and political player in court conspiracy and coup. At one point in the story she even enters the underworld in pursuit of her lover.[\[13\]](#) Furthermore, a Jinjiang heroine often regards the hero with a cool, if not jaded, eye, and rarely abandons her career and family just for the sake of a romantic relationship. Readers also share the authors' penchant for a heroine with agency and critical capacity. In their comments, they tend to criticize female characters who seem to have forsaken notions of gender equality and submit to the power of romantic love, and demand from them a modern or even feminist consciousness, even while acknowledging such behavior as anachronistic and improbable in the plot.[\[14\]](#)

Following this general trend of "female supremacy" in Jinjiang romances that depict heterosexual relationships in a patriarchal society, matriarchal narratives further challenge patriarchal norms. Before I look at specific examples of *nūzun* works at Jinjing, I will examine its interactive features first. For these web features have not only played a crucial role in user experiences, but also changed the shape of Chinese popular romance in significant ways.

Readers/Authors, Consumers/Producers

Rather than viewing Jinjiang as a tool of social engineering, users identify it as a place to find entertainment, satisfy creative impulses, and derive emotional nurturance.[\[15\]](#) Further, in most cases only the Internet can enable and enhance such experiences. As a "general" women's literature website that publishes a variety of genres and sub-genres of popular romance, Jinjiang shows more hospitality to female users than either membership-only sites or male-oriented sites such as Qidian, which is famous for its proliferation of "stud-fiction." It thus not only provides a haven for matriarchal romance, a sub-genre that has rarely appeared in print in mainland China, but also facilitates the cross-fertilization of narrative features between different genres. Furthermore, Jinjiang grants its users anonymity and the opportunity not only to produce and consume popular romance, but also to exchange ideas and comments at no cost. It does not require users to register before they post comments. Although technically IP addresses can be traced, in practice users can assume as many web identities as they wish. Not only do they sport numerous outlandish Web names, they also feel free to express their interest in taboo topics more frankly than would otherwise be possible or acceptable. Moreover, Web versions of Jinjiang works can contain more explicit sexual content, while in print versions authors have to make severe cuts before passing censors and getting published.[\[16\]](#)

With relatively lax rules of censorship and intellectual property at Jinjiang, users find it an ideal space not only to escape daily problems and make time for themselves, but also to air their feelings and thoughts freely. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated below, Jinjiang's interactive features make it possible for users to find entertainment and nurturance regardless of geographical distance and class stratification, to let loose their

creative impulses by experimenting with and re-inventing existing cultural products, and ultimately, to constitute an alternative social community.

After undergoing a series of improvements and upgrading, Jinjiang settled on the current layout. Each web page is vertically divided into two large “blocks,” and each block is further divided into two columns, with one being wider than the other. In the upper block the text occupies the left-hand and wider column, and is prominently displayed in black font. Also occupying this column is a row entitled “Author’s Words,” which is demarcated from the fiction text by a black line and displays authors’ comments and responses to readers’ remarks in a distinctive smaller green font. Side by side and to the right of this text column lies a narrower column, also divided into two parts vertically. The upper row in this narrower column displays chapter headings of the whole work, while the bottom row, entitled “Author’s Recommendation,” allows authors to recommend other works published at Jinjiang in small, grey font (Graphic A).



(Graphic A: Author's Words, Recommendation, and Text Display)

The upper block, mostly featuring author's activities, is then divided by advertisements from the bottom block of the page, which showcases readers' activities. Readers can grade each installment and leave comments in a commentary space placed in a wide column that is positioned at the left-hand side of the bottom block and also right underneath the text column above. To the right of this column of reader comments comes a narrower column of “Comments of Author's Choice,” for authors to highlight reader comments that they have found most appealing and profound (Graphic B).



(Graphic B: Commentary Space)

Thus, three major players shape the text: authors, readers, and, least obvious but equally essential, webmasters. Webmasters work as both the original architects and maintenance crew of the website. They offer a variety of service and tutelage to its users, such as instructing prospective authors on how to create tight-knit plots, display text in a more attractive format, and approach publishers.^[17] But more importantly, they have not only established the interactive devices and rules of the Net, but also continually moderate the roles of author, reader, and the text. In this regard, the commentary space set up by them warrants particular attention.

The basic function of the commentary space is to record points given by readers, and thereby to serve as a barometer of the popularity of the work and the author. However, the webmasters emphasize the quality of readers' comments, and especially encourage textual remarks that are produced by the commentators themselves. Prominently displayed at the side of each commentary space are the following regulations: a) open communications with the author are highly encouraged; b) commentators can grade one chapter only once daily, but can post comments as often as they like, provided that a neutral "0" point is given with additional postings; c) commentators may not copy and paste large amount of the original text as part of their comments; d) commentators may not cite other commentators' words excessively in their own remarks; and e) commentators may not pile up non-textual symbols in their comments or paste an all-purpose, form commentary. Furthermore, webmasters mark certain long commentaries as "high quality," and list the links to them beside the commentary space to encourage substantive discussion of any work. Needless to say, the webmasters also discipline reader behavior. They waste no time cracking down on what they see as irregularities in grading and

commentary, issuing warnings to violators and adjusting cumulative points totals accordingly (Graphic C).

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63	第二十章 (4)	白浅的求婚。	3010	45996	2008-10-08 23:05:54
64	第二十章 (5)	这是一出静态床戏。	2995	49329	2008-10-10 13:14:57
65	第二十一章 (1)	师父归来。	2614	44432	2008-10-14 10:24:41
66	第二十一章 (2)	白浅是个女娇娥。	3186	27531	2008-10-18 13:21:03
67	第二十一章 (3)	夜深了，你回房歇着罢。	2593	13619	2008-10-19 23:35:44

总点击数: 3691359 全文阅读数: 0 总书评数: 61444 当前被收藏数: 10778 文章积分: 198,991,984

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请读者们注意，为了不给喜爱的作者带来麻烦，请自觉遵守打分规则，停止删分行为。

(Graphic C: Webmaster's enforcement of rules)

The commentary space forms the basis of Jinjiang's well-regulated ranking system. Using a mathematical formula to calculate the points accrued by each work, [18] webmasters produce four lists that rank, variously, total, half-year, quarterly, and monthly accumulative points of works; additionally, the produce four other lists that showcase and encourage the following: newly joined authors, authors who update their texts most frequently, and works recommended by Jinjiang webmasters and readers, respectively. These lists do not just reflect the tastes of Jinjiang readers, they also help to attract readers to particular themes, genres, and authors, and add to the existing followings of certain authors and works. In this light, the ranking system works to both represent and also form communities of readers and authors.

The commentary space generates authoritative rank lists and plays a crucial role in shaping reader and author behavior by facilitating the free exchange of information, opinions and (positive) feelings. Like users of other Chinese websites, Jinjiang readers and authors share among themselves a unique "Web language" (Zhou). They often use initials of *pinyin* spellings, Arabic numbers, emoticons, words from other languages, or Chinese characters of similar pronunciation to replace the correct words. The circulation of this sort of written patois unintelligible to the uninitiated demarcates the boundary between insiders and outsiders. However, Jinjiang users also take time to educate novices and alert each other to new works worth pursuing. More importantly, the content of their communications induces feelings of recognition and identification more effectively still.

Because of the serialized nature of the novels, readers' comments and authors' responses often involve negotiations over plot and characterization. But as far as its complex and multifaceted functions are concerned, the commentary space combines the functions of a writer's workshop, an opinion column, and a social space. Here the authors and readers discuss novel-writing in general and theorize about rhetorical devices. They also express their opinions on a variety of controversial topics such as homosexuality, rape, and polygamy, occasionally branching into political parodies with their word play on current political slogans. Perhaps because it is more important than acquiring new knowledge and ideas, readers and authors navigate to this space because of the social energy and emotional support that it offers. The authors and readers often exchange season's greetings and tell each other about changes and problems in their lives, such as unemployment, marriage, and pregnancy. In return, they receive not only consolation and congratulations, but also practical help at times.^[19] For instance, when one author told readers about her loss of job, fellow readers responded with numerous comforting comments.^[20] They even post calls for Japan to apologize for forcing Asian women into sexual slavery during WWII,^[21] obviously assuming some degree of homogeneity in ideology from their peers. That Jinjiang provides users with a haven from daily toils and tribulations, such as a tedious job and draining family situation, reigns as a resonant theme in all these extra-textual exchanges.

While the commentary space allows readers to make their voices heard and heeded, other interactive tools help authors to seek out readers. Authors often post in "Author's Words" to respond to readers' questions and comments. Author's *wen'an*, the summary passage at the top of the page of the table of contents, demonstrates this gesture of reaching out to readers especially well (Graphic D). In addition to providing some clue to the plot, authors often use this space for a variety of other purposes: to describe the inspiration for their text; to introduce other websites that concurrently publish their novels as a backup in case Jinjiang encounters technical problems; to inform their readers of their frequency of updating; and to paste images and links to particular music that they regard as appropriate accompaniment to the text.

《最鸳鸯（女尊）》 锦秋词——【小说】——晋江原创网[作品库]

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文案	文章基本信息
 <p>发生在灵异神怪世界的女尊故事。守身如玉一心修仙的女主，遭遇了各色美男阴谋阳谋诸多阻挠，终于烹成八珍三鲜美人汤一锅。 材料：白中透紫女猪一只、腹黑男、忠犬男、凤凰男各一、特色配角、甘草路人若干，狗血为汤底..... 味道：多糖醋，少麻辣，微甘苦.....</p> <p>本文准备十二月入V，在此期间，照常更新，连续更两天停一天，节假日除俺请假外照常更新，不倒V一章。请留言时注意登陆，谢谢~！</p> <p>关于群：（敲门砖：秋的任何角色名） 秋秋的后宫（总攻群）：64712817 最鸳鸯（新群）：48016263 三生约（误尽三生群）49958026 （锦秋词贴吧）（欢迎大家来坐坐，喝杯茶）</p>	<p>文章类型：原创-女尊-架空历史-爱情 作品风格：轻松 所属系列：无从属系列 文章进度：连载中 全文字数：178328字 是否出版：尚未出版（联系出版） 发表方式：独家发表（说明如下↓） 编辑评价：尚无任何编辑评价</p>



(Graphic D: Author's wen'an (summary passage))

We can see that this summary space not only helps authors to create their authorial personae, but also allows them to manipulate reader responses to their works. Such spaces enable authors to make their texts user-friendly by providing information on content and ideological bent, and also to actively seek readers who share similar values, or who are at least attracted to their work for its setting, plot, protagonist, or for other texts, films, images, and music that their work invokes. Furthermore, authors also use this space to solicit feedback, and thus extend to readers a virtual invitation to participate in the creation of the work. Often authors also play the role of webmasters by reiterating the rules of commenting and grading so that they can receive points successfully. As with the commentary space, *wen'an* can be seen to allow authors to form supportive cohorts and communities by making the text more “reader-oriented”: more responsive to the plethora of readers’ comments.

Despite authors’ attentive “courtship,” however, Jinjiang readers show remarkable independence. Although willingly collaborating with authors in the creation of the text, they sometimes also defy authorial intentions and authority. Some point out mistakes or inconsistencies in the plot. Others request the author to move the plot in certain directions. Still others even bring in external sources to argue for their own interpretation of the work and make demands of the author. At times readers also recommend other web-based works to their fellow readers. This apparently orients readers’ attention and commitment to other works, and further strengthens the bond among readers as it acknowledges shared tastes, enforces homogeneity, and demonstrates collective reader independence from a particular author or text. Discussions in the commentary space sometimes also lead to the creation of other texts as spin-offs or parodies of a work published at Jinjiang, creating a

type of fan fiction usually self-styled as a “sequel” to the original.[\[22\]](#) Thus, readers have come to take up not only the traditional task of the author to produce texts, but also that of the webmasters to regulate user conduct and enforce communal behavior on the web.

As a result of the lively conversations between webmasters, authors, and readers, texts published at Jinjiang display extraordinary fluidity. This can be seen first in the different kinds of border-crossing that Jinjiang makes possible. As mentioned above, Jinjiang works often describe and even celebrate moral and sexual transgressions otherwise not condoned by society. Moreover, behavior generated by these works challenges both the traditional demarcation of genres and the boundary between author and reader. Since most works published at Jinjiang utilize multimedia functions and incorporate elements of music, cartoon, and cinema, the boundaries between literary text and other media become increasingly blurred. Furthermore, each work published at Jinjiang is in a perpetual state of flux, as it undergoes endless editing, modification, and even deletion. Because authors aspire for high ranking and positive reception, they take pains to respond to comments left by webmasters and readers. The reading community of any work is thus able to produce almost concurrent, “interlinear” (Rolston) commentary that can change the shape of the text precisely because of the speed of response and the instantaneity of results. Given that high-ranked novels at Jinjiang often catch the eyes of publishers, this malleability on the authors’ part is not just a goodwill gesture to attract a greater following, but also an effective way to make their manuscripts publishable; and thus makes financial sense (Yin 30-31). In this light, these web-based works clearly illustrate what Glen Thomas calls the “creative industry” of popular romance (20).

Perhaps most interesting for researchers of fiction-writing, Jinjiang authors and readers also experiment with innovative devices that considerably change the form of popular romance. A perfect case in point is their use of *fanwai* (*bangai* in Japanese) to insert a chapter that tells the story from the perspective of a character other than the heroine. *Fanwai*, “special features” in cinematic terms, denotes scenes that have been shot but edited out of the final version of the film. By using this device, the author creates an interstice in the narrative and generates unique reading effects. Although the flow of the plot seems to be interrupted, *fanwai* allows readers to see the other side of the story. This device can be used to provide a glimpse into male psychology, and correct what Radway regards as a fatal flaw in print romances of the 1950s and 1960s, in which the transformation of the hero from a sadistic antagonist to a gentle and caring lover remains unexplained at the time the transformation occurs (147). But more importantly, in using *fanwai* the author can induce affective identification by making the reader see the gentler side of the male figure and thus understand, if not endorse, the female protagonist’s relationship with him. This makes satisfying reading in that the reader not only feels involved and invested in one of the most important parts of the heroine’s self-realization, but is also granted superior knowledge of and insights into her romantic entanglements with the hero.

Often, *fanwai* becomes not only a teaser to attract readers, but also a bargaining chip for authors to appease readers’ insatiable appetite to read as much of the main story as quickly as possible; for in *fanwai*, authors can repeat previous scenes and hint at future developments without actually delivering new chapters of the main story. On the other hand, *fanwai* also attracts readers to participate in the writing of the novel. Some readers post *fanwai* chapters in their commentaries, while others individually or collaboratively

turn their *fanwai* into a fan fiction in a different space,[\[23\]](#) and thereby change from readers into authors. Jinjiang thus inculcates an interactive and reader-oriented style of writing and a community of writers and readers, and makes the boundaries between webmasters, authors, and readers increasingly fluid and their identities mutually constitutive. Consumers of web-based popular romance fiction, as it turns out, easily morph into its producers who, furthermore, produce by engaging in acts of textual poaching.

The Pleasure of Textual Poaching

Michel de Certeau has used the term “textual poaching” to describe the ways that members of a subordinate group appropriate from mainstream cultural products in order to resist, negotiate, or transform the system and products of the relatively powerful. As women living in a patriarchy, Jinjiang users have become exactly this kind of “textual poachers” who launch “nomadic” raids on existing cultural products, and make do (*bricolage*) with various heterogeneous elements in order to elude or escape institutional control (De Certeau 184). In producing and consuming *nüzun* fiction, they produce meanings outside official-sanctioned interpretive practice and generally accepted social norms by adding new twists to existing texts or tropes.

Jinjiang matriarchal romances typically portray a modern woman who travels back in time, either in her own body or inhabiting the body of another woman, becomes a dominant public figure in a matriarchal society, and sets up her seraglio of attractive men. The trope of time-travel initiates what Radway has called the heroine’s “loss of social identity,” since she is plucked out of a familiar milieu and placed in an environment alien to her upbringing. However, time-travel romances at Jinjiang also all depict an empowered heroine who accomplishes not just the “recovery of her social identity” but also the enhancement of her former social status by embodying the basic plot of redemption. The heroine departs from modern times as a result of a variety of traumas including physical and emotional abuse from others. Her time travel, in contrast, provides her with the opportunity to redress the wrongs of the modern world and to put things right; if only at another, fantastic time and locale. In addition, in matriarchal romances, whether they feature time-travel or not, the heroine does not solely rely on the love declaration from the “ideal hero,” as Radway claims, to make her life worthwhile.

Yet, while matriarchal romances attract female readers because they delineate the *bildungsgroman* of a powerful heroine, they also reveal the dilemmas of modern Chinese women. This can be seen most clearly in the way that authors deploy the trope of time-travel. For although the protagonist’s modern perspective, knowledge, and skills grant her power over history just as a typical male time-traveler in the infamous “stud fiction” does, unlike him, she nevertheless yearns to escape from modern times in exchange for a past that promises a more authentic and satisfying emotional life. Moreover, while the time-traveler enjoys the best of both worlds because of her dual perspective, the opportunity for her restoration and transformation initially comes by accident rather than through individual will or endeavor. She is therefore shown as at the mercy of fate even while struggling against the unsatisfying reality of modern life.

In order to tease out the complex layers in reader reception, below I will look at three examples of matriarchal romances published at Jinjiang. While these three works fall on different parts of the spectrum of “female supremacy” when portraying the power of the heroine vis-à-vis men in a matriarchal world, they share certain similarities as well. Setting the story in a matriarchal society alone identifies them as gender benders to a greater or lesser degree, of course. In producing such tales of female power, authors can fulfill their creative urges and yearnings for empowerment by simultaneously borrowing from and undermining canonical works and popular tropes. Furthermore, reader comments show that on the one hand, by identifying with a morally ambiguous yet powerful female time-traveler, they can suspend the social and moral constraints placed on their lives imaginatively, albeit temporarily, and claim “virtual” sexual and political power through reading. On the other hand, by exchanging ideas with authors and among themselves, they also generate what Henry Jenkins calls a “participatory culture,” or a kind of “viewer activism” in another context (2). That is to say, users at Jinjiang enact a social process through ongoing discussions among themselves, by which individual interpretations are shaped and reinforced, experiences of any particular text are expanded beyond its initial consumption, and a sense of belonging and validation is gained.

Sishi huakai (Flowers of Four Seasons)

Sishi huakai (Flowers of four seasons),[\[24\]](#) one of the earliest and “classic” matriarchal novels published at Jinjiang, tells the story of a woman who dies in an accident in the modern world and whose soul then inhabits the body of a princess in a matriarchal society, just because the king of the underworld announces that she “wins the lottery” and deems it so. The protagonist seems to possess all the advantages in the matriarchal world: not only is she born into a royal family and beloved by her older sister the queen, she is also physically attractive and strong. In contrast to this omnipotent female protagonist, “really a man in the name of woman,” some readers protest that the men in this novel are just “women in disguise” since they are all physically and psychologically weak. [\[25\]](#) Moreover, while the protagonist has absolute power over men both in the public world and in her household, the men in her “harem,” disadvantaged in education and social status at birth because of their male gender, compete with each other in order to win her favor.

The author Gongteng shenxiu deliberately borrows the setting of the matriarchal society (*nü'er guo*) from *Jing hua yuan* (Flowers in the mirror), and turns the patriarchal hierarchy completely upside-down. The 18th-century Chinese novel *Flowers in the Mirror*, written by Li Ruzhen (1763-1830 C.E.), describes the travel of a group of men who encounter various kingdoms in their trips overseas; including a matriarchy where women serve in public roles while men have bound feet, wear cosmetics, are confined to domestic space, and generally have to behave according to the female gender code that rules women in a patriarchy. However, *Flowers of the Four Seasons* takes a step further. As Keith McMahon argues, *Flowers in the Mirror* in effect paints women in a matriarchal society as only a “grotesque . . . mirror image of the male tyrant”; for, once they gain power, they oppress men the same way that women are oppressed in a patriarchy (288). In contrast, Gongteng Shenxiu depicts a female protagonist who is intelligent, rational, strong, and benevolent to the extent of acting maternally to all of her husbands, while doling out to male characters physiological and psychological traits traditionally seen as feminine and negative. She not only describes men as vain and jealous, but also has them experience

menses, childbirth, and breast-feeding. Needless to say, the female protagonist under Gongteng Shenxiu's pen contrasts with either Qiong Yao's poetic, ethereal heroine fully consumed by romantic love or the feminine yet socially disadvantaged beauty in Radway's summary.

Although the more sophisticated Jinjiang readers point out that such narratives of gender bending only reverse patriarchal gender hierarchy without eliminating gender inequality,[26] they also attract a faithful following of readers who see such works as entertaining and empowering.[27] For example, one reader argues that as the social status of men and women is reversed in the story, so should be the aesthetic standards of masculinity and femininity. She finds it entirely reasonable and plausible that in this matriarchal society, women are admired for their physical strength and intelligence while men have to devote themselves to maintaining their physical attractiveness and chastity.[28]

As we can see on the one hand, as some readers admit, this kind of gender reversal satisfies female readers' "unconscious yearnings for social status [in a patriarchy]." [29] On the other hand, however, the protagonist's miraculous transformation from an ordinary modern woman into a powerful matriarch can find no explanation in the plot. Although in the modern world the female time-traveler supposedly has "neither external beauty nor internal beauty [spiritual worthiness]," [30] once waking up in the body of a princess in the matriarchal world, she suddenly demonstrates exceptional intelligence and willpower. Furthermore, the accident of her time-travel, or in this case, the transmigration of her soul, happens only because of the divine will of the king of the underworld, and can hardly be attributed to the protagonist's own agency. *Flowers of the Four Seasons* thus leaves some readers dissatisfied even as it fulfills other readers' fantasy of female empowerment.

Wangzhe zhi tong (Pains of the Queen)

Recognizing structural flaws in early works, later authors of web-based matriarchal novels attempt to address them in various ways. Luzi (Stove), author of *Wangzhe zhi tong* (Pains of the queen), another popular matriarchal novel at Jinjiang, states that because she is angered by how a peasant woman is treated in Rou Shi's short story "Wei nuli de muqin" (A slave mother), she wants to tell the story of "how a 'weak' woman conquers the world" through her own work.[31] She portrays a princess warrior who—although not physically stronger than the men in the story—returns from the dead, recruits supporters, overcomes incredible setbacks and sufferings, and eventually overthrows the regime that dethroned her earlier, while also acquiring two powerful and devoted men as spouses in the process. While it would be all too easy to dismiss this story as only a female version of "stud fiction," we should pay close attention to the way that it rewrites a piece of state-sanctioned canonical work that is often hailed as indictment of "old society," because the author Rou Shi, a communist and "revolutionary martyr," relentlessly exposed the oppression of women and peasants in pre-1949 China.

Above all, Luzi has turned a tale of unrelieved suffering for women into that of female empowerment and triumph. Rou Shi portrayed a peasant woman who has been pawned by her husband to an upper-class family as a surrogate mother to produce a male heir for them, but eventually has to give up her child because of class oppression. In contrast, in *Pains of the Queen* the heroine marries herself to the peasant who has rescued her from the battlefield as a form of repayment. After the peasant dies and she has

recovered from her injuries, she takes her daughter born out of this marriage and leaves the peasant family to seek revenge and retrieval of her power. Moreover, although she is later found to be infertile due to old injuries sustained in battles, her lovers remain dedicated to her rather than abandoning her for her “lacking” as a woman. She thus seems to have traded her procreative capacity for military and political power, instead of remaining a passive “baby machine” and a commodity bartered by men, as is the fate of the slave mother in Rou Shi’s story.

This web-based matriarchal novel subverts the discourses of national salvation and class struggle produced by radical male intellectuals such as Rou Shi in early twentieth-century China, in that it depicts a woman who uses her intelligence, resilience, and political talent to attain empowerment, rather than relying on a savior such as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for her liberation, as we can find in works by male pro-CCP authors such as Zhao Shuli.^[32] The readers express their admiration for a heroine that is strong, independent, and highly intelligent, and root for her when she is faced with enormous obstacles in her fight to regain power. ^[33] Furthermore, because of the portrayal of the protagonist’s long and hard struggle, some of them also comment that they can relate more to this kind of plot and heroine than to matriarchal novels that portray the female protagonist as talented and all-powerful but paint minor characters as “total idiots”^[34]; a characterization that fits early matriarchal novels such as *Flowers of Four Seasons*, which paint a rather lop-sided picture of power dynamics between women and men in the matriarchal world.

Fenghuang jiangjun liezhuan (Biography of General Phoenix)

In comparison to Luzi’s celebration of the heroine’s military and political accomplishments in *Pains of the Queen*, Jun Suiyuan, the author of *Fenghuang jiangjun liezhuan* (Biography of general phoenix), another high-ranked matriarchal novel at Jinjiang, believes that feminine nurturance, rather than masculine aggressiveness, is the only hope for the world. “Men conquer the world, and women save mankind,” she boldly declares. Challenging the old saying “Men conquer the world, and women conquer men” as “chauvinistic,” she asserts: “Men are more extroverted and aggressive, while women tend to be introverted and accommodating. So only a world dominated by women can treat the disadvantaged group of the opposite sex with enough tolerance.” Moreover, she quips, “Had Saddam Hussein been a woman, he would have seen to it first that his people had adequate food and clothing. Had George W. Bush been a woman, he would not have launched a war just to acquire oil from half a world away: his military expenses could have been spent on finding clean sources of energy.”^[35]

In contrast to many authors of matriarchal novels, who portray female protagonists that possess extraordinary intellectual and martial prowess and excel in traditionally masculine realms, Jun Suiyuan depicts a modern-day, ordinary Chinese woman who has the misfortune to time-travel and wake up in the body of General Phoenix, formerly the avatar of a powerful alien from another planet, Princess Sarah (Sala Gongzhu). As can be expected, rather than displaying the ET’s political and military power, this new General Phoenix is frequently exposed as ignorant, timid, and generally muddle-headed. Her only redeeming feature seems to lie in her sincere love of her twelve husbands, which include two princes, a prime minister, a powerful businessman, a knight-errant adept at sword play, and a

leader of organized crime, each of whose intellectual capacity, martial prowess, social status, or political clout overshadows her own.

In exposing the modern woman's weakness as compared to the men in her life, *General Phoenix* appears to be a reversal of typical matriarchal narratives in that it does not glorify her abilities or unconditionally extol female supremacy. This kind of characterization has arisen from the author's conscious wish to debunk clichés in existing time-travel romances that feature plots such as: "The heroine becomes a super star [in the other world] just by singing a modern song and performing an erotic dance, a millionaire by opening a hot-pot restaurant and frying a few pieces of chicken, and a 'Talented Woman' by reciting [plagiarizing] a few classical poems,"^[36] all true of time-travel "classics" such as *Coiling up Black Hair*. Yet by emphasizing the heroine's feminine nurturance, Jun Suiyuan does not differ widely from Gongteng Shenxiu and Luzi, the two authors discussed above.

Although these three matriarchal novels undermine patriarchal prescriptions of women's procreative duties—Gongteng Shenxiu relegates gestation and birthing to men while Luzi makes her heroine barren—they also delineate the female protagonist's love and protection of her household and her people. Indeed, the protagonist in these three matriarchal romances can be seen as the supreme mother figure of benevolence and nurturance, even though she does not necessarily play the maternal role in the traditional sense. This kind of characterization again poses a sharp contrast with Radway's ideal heroine, who expects and thrives on the attention and nurturance showered on her by an ideal hero who is super-masculine yet acts like a nurturing pre-Oedipal mother (113). Yet we can also see that these matriarchal romances simultaneously reverse gender stereotypes and reinforce them, in that they debunk the centrality of romantic love in women's self-definition while also emphasizing the ultimate value of feminine nurturance.

Since *General Phoenix* has not been completed yet, it remains to be seen how the author will describe the protagonist's eventual ascent and triumph. However, Jun Suiyuan mentions in her *wen'an* that the female protagonist will "meet many people, experience a lot of things, eat a lot of bitterness, make a lot of mistakes, and eventually live up to her title 'General Phoenix' after many years of trials and tribulations."^[37] Additionally, in the completed Part One of this novel, she has included several *fanwai* chapters to both foreshadow what happens in the future and also to appease various protests that readers raised earlier on, who either thought that the author had not given them a satisfactory, powerful female protagonist or expressed concern that this novel would not have a happy ending given the protagonist's obvious weakness. For example, in a *fanwai* chapter entitled "Tuanyuan" (Reunion),^[38] Jun Suiyuan describes how at the Mid-Autumn Festival, a traditional Chinese holiday for family reunions, General Phoenix waits for her twelve husbands at the family banquet, only to drink herself to oblivion when none of them show up because they are all tied up with affairs of the state or other important public duties. However, when she wakes up from her drunken stupor the next morning, she can tell from various traces, such as the hickey on her neck, a coat that someone has wrapped around her, a fan left behind, and so forth, that they have indeed come back after she has fallen asleep. This *fanwai* thus not only promises readers a reassuring happy ending, but also provides a tantalizing glimpse into the marital life of the female protagonist, without either revealing any substantive plot developments regarding the change of dynamics between the heroine and her male partners or compromising her own idea of how a modern woman would behave in the matriarchal world that she has set up in the novel. *Biography of General*

Phoenix will thus most likely provide the same kind of entertainment and validation for its female readers in portraying a modern woman's miraculous transformation and growth in a matriarchal society that we have seen in the other novels I have discussed.

Conclusion

Although Radway's characterization of the "ideal heroine" applies, more or less, to pre-Internet popular romance works authored by Qiong Yao, we encounter in web-based matriarchal romances female protagonists whose identities lie at once outside the realm of women who sacrifice themselves for romantic love and also outside of the heroic, nation-centered male narratives of the Mao era. Thus, in the age of the Internet, the thematic emphasis of popular Chinese romance has shifted from the reign of heterosexual romantic love typical of Qiong Yao's works to women's explorations and adventures into various (masculine) realms, even as the genre's formal features integrate elements from various premodern and contemporary popular genres such as fantasy.

We can see that the overflow of popular cultural products and the rise of the Internet provide Chinese women with necessary tools to reinvent themselves through appropriation, if only in a virtual space that can only offer illusions of democracy and liberation. Web-based *nǚzūn* fiction at Jinjiang thus offers a new platform for Chinese women to shape and test their own creative voices, explore their gender identity, and challenge dominant cultural norms. It is of course arguable that the compensation generated through producing and consuming matriarchal romances only provides an escape from reality, and that it exposes these women's inability to wage substantial challenges to a patriarchal society, as we can infer from Radway's theory. However, seen in the context of the grand official narrative that accentuates anti-colonial national salvation and the search for a monolithic cultural identity, this self-conscious embrace of "banal" entertainment is anything but banal.

For in unequivocally defending their right to fantasy and entertainment, Jinjiang users not only cite male precedents in various cultural products, such as the infamous "stud fiction," but also charge that the patriarchal society lashes out against them only because men feel profoundly threatened by women's need for sexual exploration and expression.^[39] As Rey Chow argues, the deliberately light-hearted and "vulgar" lyrics in Chinese rock music in effect undermine official ideologies.^[40] While Jinjiang authors and readers of popular romances do not all rebel against patriarchy out of feminist consciousness, they recognize gender inequality and seek to subvert patriarchal hierarchy through the creation and consumption of matriarchal narratives.^[41]

Stuart Hall rightly points out that popular culture is neither "wholly corrupt [n]or wholly authentic" but rather "deeply contradictory"; characterized by "the double movement of containment and resistance, which is always inevitably inside it" (228). Readers and authors of matriarchal romances at Jinjiang are not wholly or always resistant to or complicitous with dominant official ideologies, but rather continuously re-evaluating their relationships to the text and reconstructing its meanings according to more immediate interests. Ultimately, the online exchanges generated around matriarchal novels show that Chinese women discover the utopian dimension of popular culture through

interacting with each other. They react against unsatisfying situations in their real lives, trying to establish a world more open to creativity and responsive to women's needs. Jinjiang thus provides an alternative community where women can have easy access to emotional nurturance as well as entertainment.

Perhaps the pleasure of web-based popular matriarchal romances comes down essentially to this: it induces a special kind of reader identification and allows Chinese women to cross various gender, generic, and socio-cultural boundaries to form a nurturing community through their creative play on the Chinese cyberspace. It still remains to be seen whether the utopian alternative that web-based matriarchal romance posits can spur action in life. Nevertheless, these web-based works have undoubtedly fulfilled what romance novelist Jennifer Crusie, and the romance readers studied in Radway's ethnographic research, both seem to claim as the ultimate positive function of popular romance: They reinforce women's "sense of self-worth" by allowing them to "recognize the truth and validity" of their lives.^[42]

[1] A search by the keyword *wangluo wenxue* (web literature) in CNKI, a database of full-text Chinese sources, yields more than a thousand entries, most of them theoretical constructions.

[2] E.g., see some of the comments in Jayne Ann Krentz, ed., *Dangerous Men & Adventurous Women: Writers on the Appeal of the Romance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

[3] <http://bbs.jjwxc.net/showmsg.php?board=18&id=12579> (accessed March 5, 2008); also see Linder, "Web Literature," 647.

[4] <http://bbs.jjwxc.net/showmsg.php?board=2&id=121844> (accessed March 5, 2008).

[5] <http://bbs.jjwxc.com/showmsg.php?board=18> (accessed March 5, 2008).

[6] It is so called because it portrays love relationships between scholars and beautiful and "talented women."

[7] This refers to a form of "sentimental" fiction popular in early Republican era (ca. 1911-1940s) that catered to the need for entertainment among urban residents in China. It was often disparaged by radical nationalists of the era for its lack of "revolutionary" content. For a more detailed discussion, see Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

[8] This is amply proved by the criticism that Xiao Yemu's "Women fufu zhijian" (Between us the couple) faced. Although upholding the call for self-reformation on the part of bourgeois intellectuals, the story was severely criticized because the author describes the tender relationship between husband and wife and details of their conjugal life rather than class struggles. See Hong Zicheng, *Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi* (Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 138.

[9] E.g., Fangmei Lin's "Social Change and Romantic Ideology: The Impact of the Public Industry, Family Organization and Gender Roles on the Reception and Interpretation of Romance Fiction in Taiwan" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1992), treats

Qiong Yao's novels from a sociological perspective, but focuses mostly on the context of Taiwan.

[10] E.g., <http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/4a6d1fd0010009jg> (accessed March 6, 2008).

[11] One such example is a fan fiction of Qiong Yao's *Yilian youmeng* (Dreams inside the screen), <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=644963> (accessed June 16, 2010), written by A Dou, in which the Web author subverts the original story and makes fun of the original heroine who "grabs" her older sister's boyfriend in the name of true love.

[12] E.g., <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=173864&chapterid=63> (accessed July 30, 2007); and <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=228479&chapterid=25> (accessed March 6, 2008).

[13] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=130145> (accessed December 28, 2008).
<http://www.du8.com/books/oututxt33086/66.shtml> (accessed December 28, 2008).

[14] <http://bbs.jjwxc.com/showmsg.php?board=25&id=5785> (accessed March 5, 2008).

[15] <http://bbs.jjwxc.com/showmsg.php?board=25&id=5785> (accessed March 8, 2008).

[16] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=50785&chapterid=55> (accessed March 5, 2008).

[17] E.g., <http://bbs.jjwxc.net/board.php?board=18&page=1> (accessed March 5, 2008).

[18] Points=number of hits/number of chapters *Ln (total number of characters in the text)*average points+ Ln (total number of characters in commentaries of over one-thousand-character) *grades on commentaries+additional points given to quality commentaries.

[19] For example, <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=141437&chapterid=86> (accessed March 18, 2008).

[20] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=245091&chapterid=64> (accessed March 3, 2007).

[21] <http://www.jjwxc.net/comment.php?novelid=92363&chapterid=27&page=2> (accessed March 9, 2007).

[22] E.g., the popular time-travel romance *Bubu jingxin* (Suspense at every step) (<http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=38029> (accessed March 15, 2008) not only generates numerous comments and reviews, but also several "sequels" at Jinjiang, including this one: <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=181060> (accessed March 15, 2008).

[23] E.g., <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=154277> (accessed January 28, 2007).

[24] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=91786> (accessed March 6, 2008).

[25] Ibid, reader comments (accessed October 20, 2009).

[26] <http://bbs.jjwxc.com/showmsg.php?board=25&id=5706> (accessed March 6, 2008).

[27] <http://bbs.jjwxc.com/showmsg.php?board=25&id=5960> (accessed March 6, 2008).

[28] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=91786> (accessed October 23, 2009).

[29] Ibid.

[30] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=91786&chapterid=1> (accessed October 21, 2009).

[31] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=231059> (accessed October 21, 2008).

[32] E.g., see "Meng Xiangying Stands Up," in W. J. F. Jenner, ed., *Modern Chinese Stories* (Oxford UP, 1970), 120-138.

- [33] E.g., <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=231059&chapterid=8>, <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=231059&chapterid=10> (accessed October 22, 2008).
- [34] E.g., <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=231059&chapterid=9> (accessed October 22, 2008).
- [35] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=144848&chapterid=1> (accessed June 8, 2008).
- [36] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=144848> (accessed October 21, 2009).
- [37] Ibid.
- [38] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=144848&chapterid=148> (accessed October 21, 2009).
- [39] <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=291638&chapterid=85> (accessed 3/30/08).
- [40] Rey Chow, "Listening Otherwise, Music Miniturized," in Simon During, ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader* (Routledge, 1993), 382-399.
- [41] Users' defying of patriarchal gender prescriptions can also be seen in the case of web-based danmei fiction, or female-authored romance that features male-male homoerotic love. For an in-depth discussion of how danmei fans battle criticisms from a patriarchal society, see Jin Feng, "Addicted to Beauty: Web-based Danmei Popular Romance," in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 21.2 (fall 2009): 1-41.
- [42] Jennifer Crusie, "Romancing Reality: The Power of Romance Fiction to Reinforce and Re-Vision the Real." <http://www.jennycrusie.com/for-writers/essays/romancing-reality-the-power-of-romance-fiction-to-reinforce-and-re-vision-the-real/> (accessed June 16, 2010).

Glossary of Chinese Characters

“Ai shi buneng wangji de” 愛是不能忘記的
Bo Bo 波波
fanwai 番外
Fenghuang jiangjun liezhuan 鳳凰將軍列傳
Gongteng shenxiu 宮藤深秀
Guixiu 閨秀
Huanzhu gege 還珠格格
Huang Yi 黃易
Jiaocuo shiguang de ailian 交錯時光的愛戀
Jing hua yuan 鏡花緣
Jinjiang 晉江
Jun Suiyuan 君隨緣
Li Ruzhen 李儒珍
Luzi 爐子
nǚ’er guo 女兒國
nüzun 女尊
pinyin 拼音
Qidian 起點
Qin 秦
Qing 清
Qiong Yao 瓊瑤
Rou Shi 柔石
Sala Gongzhu 薩拉公主
Shanghen wenxu 傷痕文學
Shengda 盛大
Sishi huakai 四時花開
Wan qingsi 綰青絲
Wangzhe zhi tong 王者之痛
“Wei nuli de muqin” 為奴隸的母親
wen’an 文案
“Women fufu zhijian” 我們夫婦之間
Xi Juan 席娟
Xiao Yemu 蕭也牧
Xun Qin ji 尋秦記
Yi Shu 亦舒
yuanchuang wang 原創網
Zhang Jie 張潔

Zhao Shuli 趙樹理

Zhongma 種馬

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