Reverend Insanity, Chapter 1

A Comprehensive Literary Analysis

By Rain

"Even in death, a demon's heart knows no regret."

— Chapter 1 Title, Reverend Insanity

This document is a deep and expansive literary analysis of Chapter 1 of Reverend Insanity—the magnum opus of Chinese author Gu Zhen Ren (蛊真人).

The story follows Fang Yuan, a man who—at the end of his 500-year-long cultivation journey—activates a rare Gu worm known as the Spring Autumn Cicada, sending his consciousness back five centuries to relive life with all his memories intact.

Unlike most protagonists in the xianxia or cultivation genre, Fang Yuan is not a virtuous hero, nor a misunderstood antihero. He is a cold, calculating, ruthlessly lucid fiend who seeks eternal life—not for justice, revenge, or righteousness, but to fulfill his own uncompromising will. In doing so, he subverts every major trope of the genre and forces us to ask: What happens when someone sees the world clearly and still refuses to conform to it?

About This Analysis

This work focuses entirely on Chapter 1, the philosophical cornerstone and thematic microcosm of the entire novel. Every major idea, motif, and worldview that will echo throughout the 2334 chapters to follow is embedded here.

You will find in this document:

A full breakdown of the narrative structure of the chapter—from its explosive introduction to its quiet, cyclical conclusion.

In-depth studies of:

Themes (Zhenren, fate vs will, individual vs society, etc.)

Philosophies and ideologies (Daoism, Existentialism, Confucianism, Buddhism)

Symbolism and metaphors (sunset, cicadas, blood-stained robes, mountains)

Fang Yuan's character and psychology as revealed through prose, dialogue, and imagery.

Literary commentary on the poem spoken at death, which functions as a philosophical manifesto.

Worldbuilding analysis:

How Gu Zhen Ren constructs his setting, magic system, and social order through implication rather than exposition.

Note on Language Use:

The existing English translation of Reverend Insanity is, in my opinion, not ideal for capturing the full philosophical nuance, poetic rhythm, or cultural depth of the original.

Therefore, throughout this analysis, I use a hybrid approach: combining the official English translation, the original Chinese text, and machine translations to reconstruct meaning and expression where needed.

This ensures that the analysis is not constrained by mistranslations or oversimplified phrasing, especially in moments where word choice and cadence are philosophically loaded. If a phrasing seems unfamiliar, it may be my own re-rendering based on context and cultural reference.

This is a long read, but a rewarding one—especially for those who wish to understand Fang Yuan and Reverend Insanity, not just as a character or narrative trope, but as a thematic embodiment of ancient Eastern philosophy, literary inversion, and narrative rebellion.

If you have questions, points of confusion, or just want to discuss these ideas further, you're welcome to reach out to me:

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Chapter Title

纵身亡魔心仍不悔

→ Even in death, a demon's heart knows no regret.

Literal Translation:

纵身亡魔: "Even if the body dies as a demon…"

心仍不悔: "…the heart remains unrepentant."

This is a powerful philosophical thesis that introduces the protagonist Fang Yuan's unyielding and utterly non-redemptive worldview. His identity as a "魔" (demon/fiend) is not one forced upon him—it is one he chooses and embraces, regardless of consequence.

This line captures Gu Zhen Ren's subversion of traditional Xianxia morality, which usually features karmic retribution or enlightenment. Here, morality is irrelevant—survival, ambition, and freedom from fate are central.

Introduction

The opening of Reverend Insanity is not a beginning in the traditional sense. It does not offer comfort, orientation, or even hope. It begins at the end—with a man about to die, surrounded by enemies, unrepentant, and utterly calm. From the very first line, Gu Zhen Ren makes it clear that this is not a story of heroic rise, but of philosophical rebellion. The tone is fatalistic, the atmosphere claustrophobic, and the protagonist is unlike any other in Xianxia.

"Surrounded by enemies, there was already no way out."

This is the sentence that sets the stage. A circle of hostility, no path forward, no allies to call upon. The world itself has rejected Fang Yuan, and the reader is invited not to sympathize, but to observe. This opening does more than narrate Fang Yuan's defeat—it establishes the thematic battlefield for the entire novel: individual vs. society, will vs. fate, authenticity vs. morality, and clarity vs. illusion.

Subversion of Traditional Journey:

Most fantasy stories begin with humble origins. Reverend Insanity begins with a legendary demise. Fang Yuan is already a mythic figure: a demonic cultivator who has lived for 500 years, slain countless enemies, and refined the mystical Gu known as the Spring Autumn Cicada. He is dying not as a failure, but as someone who chose to die on his own terms.

"Even in the face of death, he remained expressionless, his expression calm."

This unflinching serenity is not just character description—it is philosophy in action. Fang Yuan exemplifies the Zhenren, the Daoist "True Person," who sees through illusion, sheds emotion, and acts in perfect alignment with his nature. He shows no regret, no fear, no hope for redemption. His death is not an end, but a pivot, a turning of the great wheel.

"If the Spring Autumn Cicada works, I will still be a demon in my next life."

This line is the manifesto of his Dao. Rebirth does not mean transformation. He will not become kinder, gentler, or more moral. He will become more himself.

Opening as Inversion:

・In literary structure, this is an inverted beginning.

・We do not start with ignorance, but with insight.

・We do not begin with a rising action, but with a fall that is really a leap.

Where most Xianxia novels begin with youthful ignorance, family strife, or miraculous opportunities, Gu Zhen Ren does something radical: he begins at the end.

Most stories ask: What will the hero become?

Reverend Insanity begins by answering: This is what he already is.

Main Theme

What is main theme?

The main theme in writing is the central idea, message, or underlying meaning that the author wants to convey through the story, essay, poem, or any form of writing. It's what the work is really about beneath the surface.

What is Zhenren?

In Daoism, a "Zhenren" (真人) is:

・One who is free from delusion and artificial constructs.

・Spiritually awakened, true to their nature (regardless of societal norms).

・Emotionally unattached, unmoved by fame, power, life, or death.

・Aligned with Dao—the natural, impartial, unfeeling "Way" of the cosmos.

A Zhenren is not a saint, but someone who has seen through illusions (名利 – fame and profit; 善恶 – good and evil) and pursues their path with clarity and detachment.

Fang Yuan is the demonic Zhenren—stripped of delusion, utterly lucid, yet ruthless and cold because he sees reality as it is.

Execution of "Zhenren" in Fang Yuan in Chapter 1:

"方源对局势洞若观火，不过即便死亡将临，他仍旧是面不改色，神情平淡。"

"Fang Yuan understood his situation clearly, but even in the face of death his expression did not change, it was calm."

Zhenren quality: Clarity and equanimity in the face of death.

・He is not panicked, not regretful.

・His inner state is untouched by external crisis.

・Death is just part of the Dao; fear is delusion.

"青山落日，秋月春风。当真是朝如青丝暮成雪，是非成败转头空。**"**

"The sun sets above the blue mountain, the autumn moon with the wind of spring... whether you succeed or fail when you look back there's nothing left."

Zhenren quality: Transcendence of duality (是非成败).

・Fang Yuan quotes poetry that dismisses the importance of success and failure.

・He sees life as impermanent; even "victory" is illusory.

・This is not nihilism, but detachment born of clarity—hallmarks of Zhenren.

"终究是失败了呀。**"…"**却并不后悔。**"**

"I failed in the end... yet there were no regrets."

Zhenren quality: No clinging to outcome. No remorse.

・Zhenren acts in accordance with inner principle, not results.

・Fang Yuan's path failed—and yet, his spirit remains unshaken.

・His will remains his own, never outsourced to fate or morality.

"若是刚炼成的春秋蝉有效，来生还是要做邪魔！**"**

"If the Spring Autumn Cicada works, I'll still choose to be a demon in my next life!"

Zhenren quality: Unwavering self-authenticity.

・A false man repents and changes.

・A Zhenren repeats his path without shame, because he knows it reflects his Dao—his nature, his vision.

・He rejects society's good/evil binary; he follows the true self, not imposed norms.

Fang Yuan recalls his past life:

"他本是地球上的华夏学子, 机缘巧合穿越到这方世界。**"**

"He was originally a Chinese scholar on Earth…"

"五百年的经历, 真像是个梦啊。**"**

"500 years of experience… it really feels like a dream."

Zhenren quality: Self-reflection, transcendence of time.

・Unlike typical "reincarnation protagonists" who are reborn with revenge, Fang Yuan is reborn with awareness.

・His life is seen like a dream—another illusion in the cosmic flow.

・Yet he remembers everything clearly and chooses his path again, not out of passion, but will.

・Fang Yuan chooses to awaken—and re-enter the world as himself.

Narrative Execution of Zhenren:

The entire battle scene is visually chaotic—shouting, threats, storm of emotions. Yet, Fang Yuan stands silent and still while the world rages. He is the eye in the storm—like a Daoist sage meditating while armies clash.

The Sunset and Autumn Imagery:

Sunset = end of a cycle. Autumn = fading.

Zhenren accepts the impermanence of cycles.

Fang Yuan's use Spring Autumn Cicada not to "correct wrongs," but to continue his vision with better clarity.

Conclusion:

He is not a good man. But he is a True Man—an authentic soul, stripped of falsehood, illusion, hypocrisy, and self-deception.

This is what makes Reverend Insanity radical—it centers a Zhenren who is evil by society's terms but pure by the Dao.

Themes

What are themes?

In writing, themes are the central ideas or underlying messages that a story, poem, or essay explores.

Rebirth and Time:

“春秋蝉果真起作用了**……**重生了，回到了五百年前！**”**

“The Spring Autumn Cicada worked… I’ve been reborn, returned to 500 years ago!”

Thematic Execution:

・Time here is not linear—it's something that can be manipulated, escaped, weaponized.

・Rebirth is not treated as redemption (as in typical reincarnation stories), but as a strategic second chance.

・Fang Yuan doesn’t want a new life—he wants to redo his same life, but better.

Thematic Implications:

・Time is a tool, not a healer.

・This introduces the series’ long obsession with cause and effect, butterfly effects, and temporal strategy.

・It foreshadows how cultivation in Reverend Insanity is about manipulating laws of nature, not aligning with them.

Man vs Society:

“今日我们正道各大派联合起来，就是要踏破你的魔窟。**”**

“All the righteous factions have gathered to destroy your devil lair.”

Thematic Implications:

・The collective unites to destroy the individual who defies it.

・Fang Yuan is surrounded by clans, sects, and families—representing society, conformity, lineage, tradition.

・Fang Yuan is rootless, unattached to clan or sect.

・Fang Yuan defies collective values in favor of pure self-determination.

・The novel pits the individual will against the machinery of society—from the very first chapter.

・The Gu Yue Clan’s ceremony also reflects this—elders trying to secure talented youths as tools for their own faction.

Hypocrisy of Righteousness:

“你为了练成春秋蝉，杀了千万人的性命。你已经犯下了滔天的罪孽！**”**

“You killed thousands to refine the Spring Autumn Cicada. Your crimes are unforgivable!”

Subtext:

・Those condemning Fang Yuan are often driven by personal vendetta, fear, or political interests, not morality.

・The woman whose family Fang Yuan annihilated screams with vengeance—yet her words are framed emotionally, not morally.

・The “righteous factions” employ siege warfare and political unity—methods as bloody and self-serving as his.

Thematic Implications:

・The novel deconstructs the binary of righteous vs demonic.

・Fang Yuan is evil, but honest about it. His enemies are good, but hypocrites.

・This creates a world where virtue is performance, and power is truth.

Impermanence (无常**):**

“五百年的经历，真像是个梦啊。**”**

“500 years of experience... it feels like a dream.”

Meaning:

All things—power, life, youth, even hatred—are fleeting. This Buddhist-Daoist notion sees existence as ever-changing and fundamentally unstable.

Thematic Execution:

・Fang Yuan’s reflection on his 500-year life as ephemeral.

・The sunset, spring rain, and ritual all show natural, transitory rhythms.

Thematic Implications:

Traditional Daoist or Buddhist impermanence leads to detachment and tranquility. Fang Yuan sees impermanence and chooses ambition, clarity, and control.

Reincarnation (轮回**) and Cyclicality of Time (**循环**):**

“春秋蝉果真起作用了**……**重生了，回到了五百年前！**”**

“The Spring Autumn Cicada worked… I’ve been reborn, returned to 500 years ago!”

Meaning:

・In Buddhism, rebirth is a result of karma—something to be escaped through Nirvana.

・In Daoism, cycles reflect the Dao—natural and inevitable.

Thematic Subversion:

・in Reverend Insanity, rebirth is not karmic or divine—it is artificial, mechanical, and strategic.

・The Spring Autumn Cicada is a Gu that reverses time—manipulating samsara, not escaping it.

・Fang Yuan does not seek liberation from cycles, but re-entry with advantage.

・Rebirth becomes an act of agency, not purification.

Man vs Fate:

"这次你必定身首异处！**"**

"You will definitely be decapitated this time!"

Yet Fang Yuan escapes his fate by using Spring Autumn Cicada.

Thematic Execution:

・"Fate" as declared by others is just a projection of their will.

・Fang Yuan refuses to accept prophecy, karma, or divine judgment.

Thematic Subversion:

・In Xianxia, people often speak of destiny, karmic fate, "天命" (Heaven's Mandate).

・Fang Yuan cultivates against Heaven ("逆天而行")—a phrase he will later embody completely.

Thematic Implications:

・This theme is foundational to the series: man vs. fate, will vs. Heaven, freedom vs. determinism.

・The Spring Autumn Cicada is the symbol of will triumphing over fate.

Power and Weakness:

"群敌环伺，早已经没有了生路。**"**

"Enemies surrounded him all around; there was already no way out."

"大家小心，魔头死到临头要反扑了！**"**

"Be careful! The demon's about to retaliate before death!"

Thematic Execution:

・Fang Yuan chooses how to die—by self-detonation, not capture.

・Even in defeat, Fang Yuan retains agency.

・Even in a weakened, bloodied state, Fang Yuan is feared to the end—the righteous cultivators don't dare attack first.

・The Gu Yue clan head and elders fight not battles, but political games. Their power lies in structure, not will or clarity. They crave new talents like Fang Yuan to use, not to nurture.

Thematic Implications:

・True power is not status, but self-mastery, strategy, and clarity.

・Weakness is defined not by lack of strength, but by dependence, delusion, and fear.

Heaven (天) and Fate (命):

“天地不容，举世皆敌！**”**

“Heaven and Earth reject you; the world is your enemy!”

Meaning:

・In many Eastern systems, Heaven (天) is the cosmic order—often moral, sacred, and all-knowing.

・Mandate of Heaven (天命) legitimizes rulers and heroes.

・In Daoism, Heaven is impartial but still in harmony with the Dao.

In Reverend Insanity:

・Heaven’s Will exists instead of Madate of Heaven, but it works the same nonetheless.

・Heaven is depicted as oppressive, mechanistic, and controlling.

・Fang Yuan is someone who acts against Heaven.

Thematic Subversion:

・This theme is central to Xianxia but twisted in Reverend Insanity.

・Fang Yuan refuses fate, crafting his own path through Gu and willpower.

The Illusion of Dualities:

“是非成败转头空。**”**

“Right or wrong, success or failure—in the end, it’s all emptiness.”

Meaning:

・Daoism teaches that dualisms (good/evil, right/wrong) are artificial distinctions made by humans.

・True wisdom lies in transcending duality—the Dao has no preferences.

Thematic Execution:

・Fang Yuan does not argue morality—he simply acts according to understanding.

・Fang Yuan embraces being called “devil”—because those are just labels.

This rejection of dualism lies at the heart of his Zhenren identity. He's not beyond good and evil because he's above them, but because they're irrelevant to his Dao.

Obsession and Ambition:

"若是刚炼成的春秋蝉有效，来生还是要做邪魔！**"**

"If the Spring Autumn Cicada works, I shall still be a demon in my next life!"

Thematic Execution:

・Fang Yuan is consumed not by lust or hatred, but ambition and transcendent will.

・He does not "become" evil—he is driven by clarity of what he wants.

Thematic Subversion:

Many cultivation protagonists are reactive: revenge, justice, survival. Fang Yuan is proactive—he chooses evil as a means to freedom.

Thematic Implications:

This introduces a major theme: obsession as fuel for cultivation. And only those who can bear the truth of their obsession can reach the peak.

Appearance vs. Essence

"三月能言，四月能走，五岁时就能作诗诵词。**"**

"Could talk at 3 months, walk at 4, compose poetry at 5…"

But he is a 500-year-old demonic genius reborn who also happens to be transmigrator who was a chinese scholar. His youthful appearance masks terrifying essence.

Thematic Implications:

・The novel plays constantly with the difference between what appears and what is.

・Power lies not in external form, but in inner reality—echoed in cultivation itself (内功 > 外功).

This is also a commentary on:

・Social judgment.

・Clan evaluations.

・Shallow measurements like "talent" or "appearance."

Authenticity (本真):

"面不改色，神情平淡。**"**

"He remained expressionless, calm even at death."

Meaning:

The Daoist “Zhenren” is the authentic man—true to nature, unmoved by death or illusion. They are rare, enlightened, unshaken beings.

Thematic Potrayal:

・Fang Yuan’s composure in the face of death.

・His clarity about his actions and choices.

・His lack of self-deception.

Thematic Implications:

Fang Yuan is the rare character in Xianxia who is radically honest with himself—a hallmark of Eastern authenticity.

Inner vs Outer Cultivation

“他目光幽幽，如古井深潭一般，一如既往的深不见底。**”**

“His gaze was dark and deep like an ancient well—as always, unfathomable.”

Meaning:

Traditional Eastern cultivation focuses on inner discipline (meditation, intention, breath, essence). Outer actions must follow inner clarity.

Thematic Potrayal:

Fang Yuan’s cultivation is entirely internal: will, awareness, detachment. He is outwardly wounded and dying—but inwardly composed and lucid.

Thematic Implications:

This inner stability marks Fang Yuan as someone with true Daoist cultivation, even if his Gu path is considered “demonic.

Legacy, Hierarchy, Bloodline, Lineage and Politics:

“希望此次开窍大典中能多多涌现出资质优秀的少年。**”**

“We hope many talented youths will emerge at the Awakening Ceremony.”

“尤其是那个古月方源**…** 可保自己这一支百年的昌盛不衰！**”**

“Especially that Gu Yue Fang Yuan… he could ensure a century of prosperity for one’s lineage!”

Eastern societies, especially Confucian-influenced ones, value patrilineal hierarchy, ancestral worship, and family roles. Talent is a means of enhancing clan prestige.

Thematic Execution:

・The Gu Yue clan is obsessed with recruiting talents, not raising children.

・Elders see orphans like Fang Yuan as political assets.

The general worldview of Reverend Insanity's world is:

・Clan as a political battlefield.

・Children as resources.

・Legacy as social capital

Thematic Critiquing:

・Gu Zhen Ren portrays this ideology as opportunistic and hollow.

・Fang Yuan, despite being within this system, is completely detached from kinship.

・Fang Yuan sees through this—he knows how clans work, and how to manipulate them.

Thematic Implications:

・This theme sets up the coming conflict: individual will vs. collective identity—the Confucian vs. Legalist self.

・Family is not love—it's hierarchy and exploitation.

Nature and Civilization:

“春雨绵绵，悄无声息地滋润着青茅山。**”**

“Spring rain quietly fell upon Qing Mao Mountain…”

These soft, naturalistic prose are often followed by violent detonating scene.

This makes a beautiful contrast:

・Nature is indifferent, gentle, cyclic.

・Civilization (Gu Yue clan, cultivation world) is scheming, ambitious, power-hungry.

Fang Yuan straddles both:

・He walks in the rain, not sheltered inside.

・He is natural and ruthless—Dao-like.

Philosophy

What is philosophy?:

Philosophy in writing refers to the underlying ideas, beliefs, and worldview that shape the themes, characters, and messages in a piece of literature or writing. It's not just what is written, but the deeper why behind it—the lens through which a writer understands and portrays reality, morality, existence, truth, and human nature.

Taoism (道家):

“青山落日，秋月春风。是非成败转头空。**”**

“The sun sets above the green mountain, the autumn moon with the spring wind. Right or wrong, success or failure—they vanish in a glance.”

Core Tenets:

・Detachment from life/death, gain/loss.

・Non-action (无为)—flowing with the Dao.

・Naturalness (自然)—authenticity over artifice.

・True wisdom lies in spontaneity, authenticity, clarity.

・Impermanence—things rise and fall like seasons.

・Rejection of binaries—no absolute good/evil, right/wrong.

How it appears:

・Fang Yuan’s emotional detachment in death.

・His lack of regret—viewing life as dreamlike.

・He echoes Zhuangzi’s Zhenren: still, unshaken, unmoved by illusions.

・He is still while the world rages—embodying Zhenren (真人).

・The transition from war to peaceful spring rain symbolizes cyclical natural balance.

・He remembers 500 years as if they were a dream—a direct echo of Zhuangzi.

Amoralism:

“是非成败转头空。**”**

“Right or wrong, success or failure—in the end, it’s all emptiness.”

Core Tenets:

・There is no inherent moral structure in the universe.

・Concepts like “good” and “evil” are socially constructed.

・Power, not morality, defines consequence.

How it appears:

・Fang Yuan’s complete indifference to condemnation.

・The hypocrisy of “righteous” clans who behave as murderously as he does.

・The lack of a divine or karmic voice condemning him.

Buddhism (佛家):

“五百年的经历, 真像是个梦啊。**”**

“500 years of experience… like a dream.”

Core Tenets:

・Life is suffering (苦), impermanent (无常), and without inherent self (无我).

・Enlightenment is found in detachment, selflessness, and the cessation of desire.

・Rebirth is a cycle to be escaped.

Implied Resonance:

・Fang Yuan reflects on the dreamlike nature of 500 years—aligning with the Buddhist idea of samsara (the illusion of reality).

・However, instead of seeking liberation, he embraces the cycle, seeking mastery within illusion.

Rejection:

Buddhism advocates compassion, surrender, and enlightenment. Fang Yuan seeks will, dominance, and continuity of self.

Existentialism:

“若是刚炼成的春秋蝉有效, 来生还是要做邪魔！**”**

“If it works, I’ll still be a demon in my next life!”

Core Tenets:

・Life has no inherent meaning—you create meaning through choice.

・Authenticity requires confronting absurdity without illusion.

How it appears:

・Fang Yuan doesn’t seek divine purpose or cosmic justice.

・He confronts the absurdity of 500 years of struggle and still chooses to act.

・Despite his way of life leading him to his death, he still chooses to live in the same manner again.

Fatalism vs. Free Will:

“他目光幽幽, 如古井深潭一般, 一如既往的深不见底。**”**

“Surrounded by enemies, there is no way to survive. The situation is set, and he will definitely die today.”

Core Tenets:

・Fatalism: Life’s outcomes are predetermined.

・Free Will: One can shape one's own fate.

How it appears:

・The world sees Fang Yuan's fate as sealed.

・He uses the Spring Autumn Cicada to rewrite that fate.

Rational Egoism:

你为了练成春秋蝉，杀了千万人的性命。你已经犯下了滔天的罪孽！”

"You killed thousands to refine the Spring Autumn Cicada. Your crimes are unforgivable!"

Core Tenets:

・One should act in self-interest, guided by reason, not impulse or morality.

・Altruism is irrational unless it serves the self.

How it appears:

・Fang Yuan calculates his odds, emotions, and strategy.

・Even his self-detonation is a rational gamble—to activate rebirth.

・He never sacrifices for abstract values like family, love, or loyalty.

Yin-Yang Duality (阴阳**)**

“青山落日，秋月春风。是非成败转头空。”

"The sun sets above the green mountain, the autumn moon with the spring wind. Right or wrong, success or failure—they vanish in a glance."

Core Tenets:

・Reality is a balance of opposing forces: light/dark, male/female, stillness/motion.

・Harmony is achieved by understanding and balancing these dualities.

Chapter 1 is full of dual imagery:

・Sunset and rain

・Blood and peace

・War and ritual

・Youth and ancient soul

Fang Yuan's Stance:

・Rather than balance Yin and Yang, Fang Yuan absorbs and uses both.

・He is both rational and ruthless, serene and violent, young and ancient.

Ideology

What is ideology?:

Ideology in writing refers to the set of beliefs, values, norms, and assumptions — often about politics, society, power, gender, class, race, identity, etc.—that are either consciously or unconsciously embedded in a text. It's the "invisible framework" that shapes how a story presents reality, what it portrays as normal or desirable, and what it leaves unquestioned.

Righteous Path (正道):

"你已经犯下了滔天的罪孽, 罪无可恕, 罄竹难书！**"**

"Your crimes are too great to be forgiven!"

Core Ideas:

・Good vs. evil is absolute.

・"Righteous" sects have moral legitimacy to punish and kill.

・Cultivation is justified only when it aligns with virtue.

How it appears:

・The siege on Fang Yuan is justified by moral outrage.

・Spring Autumn Cicada is seen as evil because it required human sacrifice.

・"Justice" is the cloak for political unity and mob violence.

Demonic Path (魔道):

"来生还是要做邪魔！**"**

"I shall still be a demon in my next life!"

Core Ideas:

・There is no good or evil—only strength and weakness.

・Morality is a chain forged by the weak to restrain the strong.

・Cultivation is the pursuit of power without apology.

How it appears:

・Fang Yuan's slaughter is seen not as cruelty, but efficiency—he removes threats, nothing more.

・The Spring Autumn Cicada's human sacrifice is a necessity, not a crime—its value outweighs the cost.

・"Justice" is mocked as a lie; true order is established by the fist, not the law.

Clan Loyalty:

"若是能收入自己这一脉中，好好培养，可保自己这一支百年的昌盛不衰！**"**

"If we recruit him, we'll ensure a century of prosperity for our line!"

Core Ideas:

・The family/clan is supreme.

・Individuals exist to serve their bloodline.

・Talented youths are commodities for clan advancement.

How it appears:

・The Gu Yue elders view young Fang Yuan as a strategic asset, not a person.

・Clans compete politically by absorbing geniuses.

・The ideology justifies intra-clan manipulation.

Heaven's Will:

"天地不容，举世皆敌。**"**

"Heaven and Earth reject you; the whole world is your enemy!"

Core Ideas:

・There is a cosmic, righteous order (Heaven, Dao).

・Those who defy it are cursed, doomed, or unnatural.

・Cultivation must align with cosmic order.

How it appears:

・Fang Yuan is called a "devil" not only by men, but by Heaven itself.

・Spring Autumn Cicada is an unnatural power—reversing time.

・Yet Heaven does not strike him down—it fails to stop him.

Fang Yuan's existence challenges this ideology. He cultivates against Heaven.

Meritocracy:

"若是此子测出甲等资质……未必不能和白凝冰抗衡。**"**

"If he has A-grade talent, he could rival Bai Ning Bing."

Core Ideas:

・Innate talent (资质) determines worth.

・Society revolves around evaluating and exploiting the gifted.

・"Genius" legitimizes status and resources.

How it appears:

・The elders estimate Fang Yuan's "grade".

・Bloodlines with more geniuses gain influence.

・Talent = moral and strategic value.

Ironically, Fang Yuan is a 500-year-old cultivator in a child's body—exposing the shallowness of this ideology.

Legalism (法家):

"方老魔, 你不要妄图反抗了, 今日我们正道各大派联合起来, 就是要踏破你的魔窟。这里早已经布下天罗地网, 这次你必定身首异处！**"**

"Old bastard Fang, stop attempting to resist anymore, today all of the major factions of justice have combined together just to destroy your devil lair. This place is already covered in inescapable nets, this time you will definitely be decapitated!"

Core Ideas:

・People are inherently selfish; control them through law, not virtue.

・Order and power are supreme.

・Morality is secondary to authority and results.

How it appears:

All the major factions of "justice" unite to destroy and decapitate Fang Yuan, and seize Spring Autumn Cicada.

Confucianism (儒家):

"为了家族增添新血和希望。**"**

"To add new blood and hope to the clan."

Core Ideas:

・Filial piety (孝) and loyalty to clan and society.

・Hierarchy and harmony are sacred.

・Moral cultivation as the path to nobility.

・The family is the moral unit of society.

How it appears:

・The Gu Yue clan head and elders perform a ritual of reverence to the ancestors.

・They express hopes for morally upright youths to serve the clan.

・They rank and evaluate children based on talents and expected contributions—classic Confucian meritocracy.

Fang Yuan's Position:

・He is born into the Confucian world (clan structure, rites, bloodlines), but he rejects it completely.

・His cultivation is not to "serve the family" or be a "noble gentleman (君子)"—it is for individual liberation and dominance.

Anthropocentrism:

"春秋蝉的作用，就是逆转时光。在十大奇蛊排名中，能名列第七，自然非同小可。简而言之，就是重生。**"**

"The use of the Spring Autumn Cicada is to reverse time. In the Ten Big Mystical Gu rankings, the Spring Autumn Cicada managed to be ranked seven, naturally it was no mere creature. In short, it is the ability to be reborn."

Core Ideas:

・Nature (蛊, beasts, Gu worms) exists to be mastered.

・Cultivators reshape the world through will and alchemy.

・Humanity is the dominant species due to cultivation.

How it appears:

This is implied—that the world exists to be controlled by humans through Gu.

Symbolism

What is symbolism?

Symbolism in writing is a literary device where an object, character, event, or idea represents something beyond its literal meaning. It's a way for writers to convey deeper layers of meaning, emotion, or theme without directly stating them.

The Sunset:

"青山落日，秋月春风。当真是朝如青丝暮成雪，是非成败转头空。**"**

“The sun sets above the green mountain, the autumn moon with the spring wind... right and wrong, success and failure—in the end, it’s all empty.”

Symbolism:

In classical Chinese poetry, the sunset represents the end of life, decline, or the ephemeral beauty of impermanence.

It is also tied to the Daoist idea of natural cycles—everything flows from birth to death.

Interpretation:

The sunset marks Fang Yuan’s death, but it is not mournful. Instead, it’s majestic and calm.

It frames death as transformation, not defeat—linking to rebirth.

His poetic words show a philosophical resignation but also freedom from attachment.

Blood-Stained Robes:

“血袍飘荡，如战旗般嚯嚯作响。**”**

“His blood-soaked robes fluttered in the wind like a war flag.”

Symbolism:

Blood in Chinese literature often denotes violence, vengeance, karmic debt, or tragedy.

The robe is associated with status, identity, and cultivation stage.

A war flag signifies resistance, defiance, and unbroken will.

Interpretation:

The bloody robe becomes a banner of Fang Yuan’s resistance—he wears his "sins" like a battle standard, without shame.

His identity is intertwined with blood and rebellion.

Unlike most Xianxia protagonists, Fang Yuan doesn’t wash the blood away—he embraces it.

Spring Autumn Cicada (春秋蝉**):**

“春秋蝉果真起作用了**……”**

“The Spring Autumn Cicada really worked…”

Symbolism:

Cicadas in Chinese culture symbolize rebirth, transformation, and immortality (they emerge from underground “reborn” after years of silence).

The phrase “Spring and Autumn” refers to seasons/time cycles, but also the Spring and Autumn period—an era of upheaval and philosophical birth.

Interpretation:

The Gu worm is more than a tool—it is a metaphysical gate to reenter the world on new terms.

It is symbolic rebirth as well as literal time manipulation.

It embodies Fang Yuan's rejection of fate and embrace of willpower-fueled reincarnation.

Rain:

"春雨绵绵，悄无声息地滋润着青茅山。**"**

"Spring rain quietly nourished Qing Mao Mountain."

Symbolism:

Spring rain in Chinese poetry is associated with renewal, fertility, and gentle change.

It often signals new beginnings, subtle transitions, or quiet fate at work.

Interpretation:

The rain follows Fang Yuan's death (in his reborn life)—symbolizing rejuvenation after destruction.

It subtly marks his rebirth, without divine trumpet or cosmic justice—just Daoist silence and continuity.

The contrast between violence (blood/death) and gentle rain emphasizes the cyclical balance of the world—even when one man defies it.

The Child's Body:

"看着自己年轻稚嫩的手掌**....."**

"He looked at his young, tender palms…"

Symbolism:

In Chinese spiritual literature, youth is symbolic of potential, purity, and a new Daoist beginning.

In Xianxia, awakening at a young age often means a cultivation destiny.

Interpretation:

Fang Yuan's child body is a mask—it hides a 500-year-old monster.

It also represents rebirth as a weapon, not innocence.

There is tragic irony: others see him as a prodigy, but he is a schemer far beyond their understanding.

Ancestral Ceremony:

"香烟袅袅**……**磕头，砰砰作响。**"**

“Incense smoke rose… Foreheads knocked on the floor in prayer.”

Symbolism:

Chinese ancestral rites represent continuity of lineage, harmony, and Confucian virtue.

Incense smoke rising = spiritual communication, loyalty to tradition.

The kneeling posture reflects obedience to structure.

Interpretation:

This whole ceremony is a symbol of society’s ideological machinery.

The Gu Yue clan pays lip service to virtue, but are really jockeying for power.

Fang Yuan exists outside this order, having no respect for ancestors, rites, or harmony.

Eyes:

“他目光幽幽，如古井深潭。**”**

“His eyes were like ancient wells—deep and unfathomable.”

Symbolism:

In classical Chinese literature, the eyes reflect one’s heart-mind (心).

A deep, still gaze suggests wisdom, past experience, or Daoist detachment.

Interpretation:

Fang Yuan’s eyes mark him as inhumanly old, utterly calm, and utterly unreadable.

Even before his rebirth, enemies hesitate because of the depth of his gaze—as if looking into an abyss.

Self-Detonation:

“轰的一声，方源悍然自爆。**”**

“With a loud bang, Fang Yuan detonated himself.”

Symbolism:

Suicide, particularly through fire/explosion, is often symbolic of liberation, transcendence, or ultimate defiance.

In Chinese military texts (like Art of War), self-destruction tactics represent ultimate strategic control.

Interpretation:

This is Fang Yuan’s final act of dominance in his first life: he refuses capture, humiliation, or repentance.

He chooses his death—and transforms it into a gate to rebirth.

Qing Mao Mountain (青茅山):

“春雨绵绵地滋润着青茅山**……”**

"The continuous spring rain gently nourished Qing Mao Mountain…”

Symbolism:

In Chinese mythology, mountains are sacred spaces — places of retreat, cultivation, isolation, and enlightenment.

“Qing” (青) = azure, often associated with youth, nature, and harmony.

“Mao” (茅) = grass, symbolizing simplicity, modesty, or even poverty (like “thatched hut”).

Interpretation:

Qing Mao Mountain is the cradle of the narrative—a place of rebirth.

Its peaceful surface conceals centuries of struggle.

The name evokes a Daoist harmony with nature, but Fang Yuan’s return disrupts that cycle.

Also, it's worth noticing that when Fang Yuan was reciting his poem before his rebirth, he uses 青山 - Qing Shan (Azure Mountain), which is exactly the same as 青茅山 - Qing Mao Shan (Azure Grass Mountain).

Fang Yuan's Characterization

What is characterization?

Characterization in writing is the process by which an author reveals and develops the personality, traits, motivations, and behavior of a character in a story.

The Calm Amid Chaos:

“他仍旧是面不改色，神情平淡。**”**

“He remained expressionless, his expression calm.”

Fang Yuan is introduced not through action, but through stillness.

Surrounded by dozens of powerful enemies and with death imminent, he does not panic, beg, or show hatred.

This external composure is not a mask—it is his true face.

Feared and Respected by All:

“群敌环伺，却没有人敢上前。**”**

“Enemies surrounded him, yet none dared to approach.”

He is so dangerous and unpredictable, even in defeat, that powerful cultivators fear his final move. Even enemies acknowledge his power, recounting past atrocities and grudges with deep emotion—implying legendary status.

A Figure of Inversion:

Fang Yuan subverts Xianxia archetypes:

・He’s not a hopeful youth but a dying villain.

・He’s not cultivating for family, revenge, or love—but for pure self-determined will.

・His youthful reincarnated body contrasts with his internal ancient self—setting up a visual and narrative irony.

Independent and Rootless:

“举世皆敌。**”**

“The whole world is his enemy.”

He belongs to no sect, no clan, no Heaven.

He is not loved, not mourned, and does not seek validation.

This social alienation is emphasized through dialogue and narrative tone.

Culturally Cultivated, Spiritually Alien:

“他本是地球上的华夏学子。**”**

“He was originally a Chinese scholar from Earth.”

His past as a modern Chinese student (as a transmigrator from Earth) gives him literary knowledge, which manifests in the poem he recites at death.

However, this scholar has become something inhuman through 500 years of suffering.

Fang Yuan's Psychology

What is psychology?

Psychology in writing refers to how an author uses psychological principles to understand, develop, and portray characters, emotions, motivations, and behavior in a believable and compelling way.

Radical Clarity of Purpose:

“他对局势洞若观火。**”**

“He saw the situation with utter clarity.”

His self-awareness is absolute. He knows he is going to die, and he does not resist emotionally.

There is no self-delusion, no bargaining, no “if only” reflection.

He possesses a psychological clearness of mind that borders on machine-like—but it’s rooted in deep life experience.

Total Detachment from Emotion:

“终究是失败了呀**……**却并不后悔。**”**

“I failed in the end… yet I do not regret it.”

No regret. No remorse. No despair.

He doesn't suppress emotions—he has already severed them.

This is not sociopathy; it's spiritual detachment, trained and hardened over centuries.

Supremacy of Will and Identity:

“若是刚炼成的春秋蝉有效, 来生还是要做邪魔！**”**

“If the Spring Autumn Cicada works, I will still be a demon in my next life!”

This is one of the clearest expressions of true selfhood.

He is not defined by failure, nor by rebirth—his core identity remains intact through death and time.

His psychology centers around absolute internal consistency.

Strategic Meta-Thinking:

“这种结果, 他也早有预见。当初选择时, 就有了心理准备。**”**

“This end result was something he had foreseen. When he made his decision in the beginning, he had prepared himself for this.”

The Spring Autumn Cicada is not a last-minute tactic. He had foreseen and planned for this defeat, cultivated a Gu worm that defies time, and remained calm enough to deploy it at the right moment.

Philosophical Inner World:

“五百年的经历, 真像是个梦。**”**

“500 years of experience… it feels like a dream.”

He doesn’t evaluate his life emotionally. He interprets it existentially.

This is not numbness—it is a cultivated, philosophical distance.

His recited poem shows that he’s always thinking in abstracted, symbolic, and universal terms.

Zhuangzi and Laozi

Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu) and Laozi (Lao Tzu) are two of the most important figures in Taoism.

Laozi is considered the founder of Daoism (Taoism). Laozi's main work is Dao De Jing (or Tao Te Ching), a foundational Daoist text. He emphasizes living in harmony with the Dao (Tao)–the Way or natural order of the universe. Advocates wu wei (無為)–non-action or effortless action, meaning not forcing things but going with the flow of nature. Values simplicity, humility, and the power of softness and yielding.

Zhuangzi is considered as one of the greatest Chinese philosophers, influencing not just Daoism, but also Chan (Zen) Buddhism and Chinese literature. His main work is Zhuangzi (a book named after him, partly written by him, later added to by followers). His philosophical teachings deepens and often radicalizes Laozi’s teachings. He oftem uses parables, dreams, and humor to question fixed distinctions (like life/death, good/bad). He emphasizes relativity of perspectives and the illusion of rigid knowledge or logic. He is famous for challenging concepts of identity and change.

Who is the Zhenren in Zhuangzi and Laozi?

Zhuangzi’s “Zhenren” (True Person):

Appears primarily in Zhuangzi’s “Chapter 6: The Great and Venerable Teacher” (大宗师):

“真人者, 不以生为喜, 不以死为忧。**”**

“The True Man does not rejoice in life nor mourn in death.”

“真人之息以踵。**”**

“The True Man breathes from his heels.” (i.e., naturally, not anxiously)

“其寝不梦, 其觉无忧。**”**

“In sleep, he dreams no dreams. Awake, he has no cares.”

Zhenren is someone who:

Is utterly free from the ego, from fear and desire.

Moves in harmony with the Dao (道)—the unnameable, impartial, spontaneous Way.

Has transcended social constructs (e.g., morality, ambition, grief).

Laozi’s View (Daodejing):

In the Daodejing, we see similar themes:

Chapter 8: *“The highest goodness is like water.”* 水善利万物而不争 —Water benefits all things and does not compete.

Chapter 67: *“I have three treasures: compassion, frugality, and not daring to be ahead of the world.”*

The sage is described as yielding, formless, invisible, but profoundly potent.

Thus, the Zhenren is both beyond and beneath—flowing through life with effortless authenticity, unaffected by status, life, or judgment.

Gu Zhenren's Zhenren:

Now let’s contrast and connect this with Fang Yuan.

Emotional Detachment:

“Even in the face of death, he remained expressionless.”

“He failed in the end, but had no regrets.”

Zhuangzi Ideal:

The Zhenren does not fear death or grieve over failure. Fang Yuan achieves this perfectly—he meets his end with serenity.

But while Zhuangzi’s Zhenren is serene from emptiness, Fang Yuan is serene from absolute will. One lets go. The other pierces through.

Transcendence of Good/Evil:

“所谓魔道，就是不修善果，杀人放火。天地不容，举世皆敌，还要纵情纵横。**”**

“So-called Devil Dao: no pursuit of virtue, killing and plundering, Heaven and Earth reject you, all humanity your enemy — and still you roam free!”

This is textbook Zhuangzian irony:

Morality is a human-made cage.

The Zhenren has no use for artificial codes.

In Zhuangzi, butchers, hunchbacks, and madmen can be sages—not Confucian officials.

Fang Yuan echoes this: He chooses to be a demon not because he's evil, but because he refuses to be false.

Clarity and Naturalness:

Fang Yuan's greatest power is clarity: he sees what others cannot. He never lies to himself. Like Zhuangzi's Zhenren, he doees not flinch from truth. Does not chase illusion (whether it be love, fame, or righteousness).

Fang Yuan says: *"500 years of experience… it really feels like a dream."*

Compare this to Zhuangzi's parable of the butterfly:

"Am I Zhuangzi dreaming I am a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming I am Zhuangzi?"

The key difference? Zhuangzi awakens to not-knowing; Fang Yuan awakens to knowing and choosing again.

He is not adrift—he is focused like a blade.

Fang Yuan's Dao:

The Dao in Reverend Insanity is not moral. It is:

・Cold.

・Impartial.

・Mechanistic.

・Rewarding only strength, wisdom, and decisiveness.

In this world, Fang Yuan doesn't seek to merge with the Dao—he seeks to dominate it by mastering its rules.

But is this not also Daoism?

Zhuangzi says:

"He who knows how to ride the dragon of the wind needs no chariot."

Fang Yuan rides fate like a beast—he cultivates against Heaven (逆天而行).

And this makes sense because:

In Reverend Insanity, Heaven itself is conscious and oppressive.

Thus, to be a Zhenren is to be at war with Heaven.

Fang Yuan is Daoist not in submission, but in supreme authentic autonomy.

Zhenren(真人) vs. Shengren (圣人):

A Shengren (Sage) is:

・A follower of Confucianism/Legalism.

・Harmonizes with, or reforms the society.

・Is benevolent.

・Is virtue-centered.

A Zhenren (True Person) is:

・A follower of Taoism.

・Rejects or transcends the society.

・Is detached.

・Is beyond good/evil.

Fang Yuan is not a Confucian hero. He would scorn Mencius or Kongzi as naive.

But he perfectly channels the wild, mystical, radical Zhuangzian sage—if the sage chose power over peace.

Conclusion:

Fang Yuan is a Zhenren without compassion.

A Daoist who weaponizes detachment.

A philosopher-king who chooses dominance over harmony.

And that is Gu Zhen Ren's masterpiece: a character who embodies Daoist clarity, but rejects its passivity.

He is Zhenren in form, Yama in function.

Fang Yuan's Poem

"青山落日，秋月春风。当真是朝如青丝暮成雪，是非成败转头空。"

The translation that we have for this poem is:

“The sun sets above the blue mountain, the autumn moon with the wind of spring. The morning is fine like hair and night is like snow, whether you succeed or fail when you look back there’s nothing left.”

But instead of that, I'd like to use a different translation, as that translation doesn’t captures the nuance, symblism, and thematic depth of the poem as well as the original language.

The translation I'll use is:

“The waning sun sets behind the Azure mountains, the spring breeze blows before the Autumn moon. What rises with the break of dawn, turns to dust with the descent of night. Right and wrong, success and failure, the fetters that bind one to the mortal coil are rendered empty with just one look back.”

Line-by-Line Symbolic and Philosophical Analysis:

“青山落日**”**

“The waning sun sets behind the Azure mountains”

Symbolism:

Sunset: death, end of a cycle.

Azure mountains (青山): permanence, nature, the indifferent Dao.

Qing (青) also represents youth or vitality fading.

This line sets the visual: the cosmic backdrop of detachment.

Philosophical Resonance:

Daoism: mountains endure, the sun rises and falls—all is natural, all is impermanent.

Zhenren imagery: unshaken in the face of endings.

Buddhism: all things pass—even the light of the sun.

Fang Yuan's Perspective:

He is watching his own death, and he sees it as just another sunset.

Emotionless, clear—like a sage. But with ambition waiting to bloom again.

“秋月春风**”**

“The spring breeze blows before the Autumn moon”

Symbolism:

Spring breeze: renewal, youth, life force.

Autumn moon: decline, contemplation, maturity.

Juxtaposition of opposite seasons evokes cyclical change.

Philosophical Layer:

Yin-Yang duality: life and death, warmth and coolness, creation and decay exist together.

Daoist balance: the world flows in eternal opposites, which are not in conflict but in harmony.

Time compression: spring and autumn appear at once, collapsing linear time into a Daoist whole.

Narrative Meaning:

Fang Yuan has seen the entire cycle—he's lived through spring and autumn multiple times.

But he no longer fears time—he harnesses it (via the Spring Autumn Cicada).

"朝如青丝暮成雪**"**

"What rises with the break of dawn, turns to dust with the descent of night."

Allusion:

This is the only line in the original translation that's better than this translation, since. This is a well-known line adapted from Tang poetry, likely echoing Bai Juyi or similar:

"朝如青丝暮成雪**"** — *"In the morning, black hair; by night, it's like snow (white)."*

Meaning: youth quickly becomes old age.

Symbolism:

Hair turning white = the brevity of life.

Dust = mortality, nothingness.

Dawn and dusk = the illusion of time; it happens in a breath.

Philosophical Impact:

Buddhism: illusion of time, inevitable decay.

Daoism: accept change, don't cling to form.

But Fang Yuan's twist is profound—he knows this, and yet does not retreat. He refuses to let time define him.

This is where Zhenren diverges from asceticism: awareness of impermanence doesn't lead to peace—it leads to clarity of will.

"是非成败转头空**"**

"Right and wrong, success and failure — the fetters that bind one to the mortal coil are rendered empty with just one look back."

Symbolism:

Right and wrong (是非): morality, judgment.

Success and failure (成败): human ego, societal validation.

Turn your head (转头): detach from it—see from above, like a sage.

Philosophical Weight:

Daoism: Morality is an illusion created by men.

The Zhenren sees through binaries and abides by inner nature.

Legalist Subversion: Law exists to control—Fang Yuan breaks all laws but keeps order through his own clarity.

Buddhism: Egoic attachment is suffering.

Fang Yuan severs this—not to attain peace, but freedom to act without illusion

Narrative Resonance:

This is Fang Yuan's creed.

Everything the world condemned him for—"devil, criminal, murderer"—he tosses away as irrelevant illusion.

He claims the Daoist right to live authentically—even if authentically evil.

How This Ties Together:

Main Theme: Zhenren (真人)

The poem is the Dao made verbal—the voice of a man who has shed illusion, and who acts only from self-knowledge, emotionless acceptance of death, rejection of judgment, refusal to cling to life or legacy, and absolute sovereignty of the self.

Fang Yuan is a Zhenren not because he is compassionate or passive, but because he is clear—and unshakably himself.

Theme Presence in Poem:

・Impermanence: "Morning becomes night, hair becomes snow."

・Reincarnation: Implied by cyclical imagery.

・Moral Illusion: "Right and wrong, success and failure… empty."

・Nature's Cycles: Spring breeze, autumn moon, sunset.

・Ego vs. Will: The poem rejects egoic definitions of success/failure.

・Life as Dream:Temporal compression—time collapses into image.

Philosophy Expression:

・Taoism: The heart of the poem; detachment, cyclical imagery, Zhenren ideals.

・Buddhism: Allusion to impermanence, dreamlike life, rejection of ego.

・Legalism: Subtext—morality as utility, not sacredness.

・Existentialism: Meaning is self-determined in a meaningless world.

Ideology Rejection Shown In:

・Confucianism: No mention of family, duty, legacy—total detachment.

・Orthodox Righteousness: Right/wrong labeled as empty—Fang Yuan refutes it outright.

・Clan Loyalty: He shows no attachment to clan, ancestors, or bloodline.

・Heaven's Mandate: The poem implies Heaven's laws are just wind and dust.

Symbolic Nature:

This poem is the declaration of philosophical war—against morality, against Heaven, against tradition.

It legitimizes everything Fang Yuan does—not through ethics, but through existential lucidity.

This poem is the marrow of Reverend Insanity. It is Fang Yuan's Dao in miniature: serene, cyclical, disillusioned, and utterly free.

It is not merely poetic. It is:

・A rejection of inherited belief.

・A synthesis of Eastern philosophies stripped of dogma.

・A perfect encapsulation of a character—Fang Yuan.

Worldbuilding

What is worldbuilding?

Worldbuilding in writing is the process of creating the setting, culture, rules, and logic of the fictional world in which the story takes place.

While Chapter 1 of Reverend Insanity focuses heavily on character and philosophy, it also lays the subtle but essential groundwork for the novel's worldbuilding. Gu Zhen Ren doesn't begin with info dumps or maps — instead, he uses implication, ritual, and conflict to suggest the shape of his world. The worldbuilding here is philosophical, structural, and social, rooted in Eastern metaphysics and literary traditions.

World Introduction

Structure:

・Opens with end of one life → transitions to rebirth → ends with ritual and village life.

・This inverted timeline introduces the world in reverse: First, we see its peak: a 500-year demon sage. Then, its roots: a clan ritual for children.

Gu System:

“交出春秋蝉！**”**

“Hand over the Spring Autumn Cicada!”

Key Elements Introduced:

The Spring Autumn Cicada is our first real Gu: it’s not just a power source, but a metaphysical mechanism—capable of reversing time.

Its use immediately defies common cultivation expectations, showing us that Gu in this world are:

・Living organisms.

・Ranked, categorized.

・Tied to extreme sacrifice.

・Can defy natural law.

What We Learn:

・Gu are not weapons or techniques—they are living systems of power, deeply integrated with the cultivator’s life, mind, and fate.

・The cost of Gu refinement is extremely high—thousands died to refine the Spring Autumn Cicada.

This implies:

・A moral ambiguity in the system.

・A trade-based, alchemical logic.

・A mystical-mechanical magic system, with rules that can be broken if you're cunning enough.

Social Structure:

“正道各大派联合起来，就是要踏破你的魔窟。**”**

“The righteous factions have united to destroy your devil lair.”

“古月一族，乃是蛊师家族。**”**

“The Gu Yue clan is a Gu Master family.”

Introduces existence of:

・Major clans (e.g., Gu Yue clan).

・Factional alignment (正道 – Righteous Path).

・Devil path vs Righteous path dichotomy.

Clans are self-contained political, economic, and cultural units, complete with:

・Elders.

・Ceremonial rites.

・Bloodline importance.

There's a wider world beyond Qing Mao Mountain—one where different sects can form alliances, meaning a global political system exists.

Status in society is determined by:

・Cultivation level.

・Talent grade.

・Bloodline and clan alignment.

There's also inter-clan rivalry (e.g., Bai Ning Bing of Bai clan), suggesting competition-based aristocracy among cultivators.

The world is feudal-tribal, where clans function as mini-states, and “righteousness” is more political than moral.

Cultural Norms:

“祈求本族在这一次开窍大典中，多多涌现出资质优秀的少年。**”**

“Praying that this year’s ceremony brings forth youths of outstanding talent.”

Cultural Institutions:

・Awakening Ceremonies (开窍大典): yearly events where children are tested for talent, symbolizing the world’s institutionalized meritocracy.

・Ancestral Worship: clans honor their dead, linking Confucian ritualism with cultivation destiny.

・Elders' Competition: even in prayer, elders think about gaining influence through youth recruitment.

Worldview:

・Children are seen as assets.

・There is no universal education or justice—one's status is entirely tied to talent and clan affiliation.

・The world is not kind, fair, or idealistic—it is hierarchical and pragmatic.

Geography and Setting:

"春雨绵绵，悄无声息地滋润着青茅山。**"**

"Spring rain quietly nourished Qing Mao Mountain."

Qing Mao Mountain:

・Large, possibly isolated.

・Contains multiple villages (e.g., Gu Yue Village).

・Surrounded by natural resources (Gu cultivation likely tied to geography).

The environment is described with Daoist softness: rain, mist, silence—this suggests nature is always present and of importance (Gu worms).

Thematic Worldbuilding:

"天地不容，举世皆敌！**"**

"Heaven and Earth reject you; the world is your enemy!"

The World's Spiritual Architecture:

・The existence of "Heaven" (天) is referenced.

・Morality is not internal—it is declared by factions, tied to cosmic law.

・Fang Yuan is accused of defying both Heaven and the world—meaning these are conceptual structures with real weight.

The Laws of the World:

・Rebirth is possible, but difficult—not a privilege, but an act of rebellion.

・Gu are not just insects—they can be the keys to rewriting causality.

Conclusion:

In just one chapter, we understand that:

・The world is unjust, structured, and dangerous.

・Power is not given; it is refined, sacrificed for, and taken.

・Morality is codified by clans and Heaven, but truth lies elsewhere.

・Nature does not save or punish—it endures.

This makes Reverend Insanity's world not just a fantasy setting, but a moral and philosophical ecosystem—one Fang Yuan is uniquely equipped to manipulate and dominate.

Conclusion

After the fire and fury of Fang Yuan's death, Chapter 1 concludes with something astonishing: a whisper of *"500 years of experience, it really feels like a dream."*

No cheers for justice. No divine retribution. No karmic judgment. Just spring rain, falling softly on the same mountain where Fang Yuan's childhood had past. But now, he is back—unseen, reborn, and unrepentant.

The rain falls like nothing ever happened. Nature—cyclical, impartial, eternal—does not care who won or lost. Qing Mao Mountain remains the same, its foliage quietly absorbing blood, memory, and time. This is a deeply Daoist image: the world is not here to praise or punish. It endures.

As the storm of rebirth calms, we are transported into a clan ceremony. The Gu Yue clan prays before their ancestral tablets, chanting for strength, unity, and promising a glorious future.

But what we see instead is ambition cloaked in tradition:

- Elders don't pray for virtue—they pray for "talent".
- Youth are not children—they are resources.
- Ceremony is not sacred—it is political theater.

The reader now knows what the clan does not:

- Their greatest genius, their most prized prodigy, has already emerged.
- And he is not their savior, but their predator.

Fang Yuan, now in his thirteen-year-old body, says nothing. He watches. Remembers. Waits.

His appearance is that of a quiet, intelligent orphan. His body is delicate, his history tragic. But we know what his clan does not: behind those calm eyes is the mind of a 500-year-old demon who remembers every injustice, every manipulation, and every resource he needs to take control.

This visual irony is sharp:

- The demon becomes a boy.
- The clan sees a tool, not a threat.
- The reader sees the battlefield, hidden beneath smiles and ceremony.

"夜色如墨，点点灯光从窗户透出。**"**

"The night was like ink, and dots of light shone through the windows."

The clan head watches the lights and feels hope. Fang Yuan watches the same lights and feels nothing.

This contrast is surgical:

・The clan elder is idealistic, wishing for a better future.

・Fang Yuan is disillusioned, having lived through the future already—and lost.

・The lights symbolize human aspiration, but also naivety.

・He does not hate them. He simply does not believe in their illusion.

Full-Circle Structure:

Introduction: Death of the Demon; End of old cycle, clarity of will.

Middle: Rebirth with Cicada; Rewriting fate through sacrifice.

Conclusion: Quiet integration into clan.

The structure is not linear—it's cyclical, like Daoist cosmology. The demon dies, only to return as the unknowing clan's secret disaster.

Closing Remarks

So this is it—my analysis of Chapter 1 of Reverend Insanity, focused entirely on the thematically and philosophically rich aspects of Fang Yuan's character and Reverend Insanity's world. I deliberately chose not to cover every detail or minor narrative beat; instead, I concentrated on what makes this chapter such a profoundly layered opening—one that blends existential clarity, cultural symbolism, and Eastern philosophical thought.

This actually took more work than I initially expected. Along the way, I found myself:

・Translating phrases directly from the Chinese, to capture the original nuance that often gets lost.

・Reading Daoist and Legalist texts, diving into Zhuangzi, Laozi, and other classic sources to understand the deeper meanings behind Fang Yuan's words and worldview.

・And even exploring the ritual and ideological structures of ancient and modern Chinese culture, to better appreciate the setting Gu Zhen Ren constructs beneath the fantasy.

Despite the effort, I believe the result was worth it. I hope that in reading this, you've come away with a greater appreciation for:

・The genius of Gu Zhen Ren as a philosophical storyteller.

・The literary and structural brilliance of Reverend Insanity's first chapter.

・And most of all, the complex, cold, transcendent clarity of Fang Yuan — the Zhenren who walks through illusion without blinking.

Thank you for reading.