Bridging Between Chinese Tradition And Popular Culture: Jin Yong's Knight-Errant Novels And Chinese Popular Culture

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Bridging Between Chinese Tradition and Popular Culture: 
Jin Yong's Knight-Errant Novels and 
Chinese Popular Culture

by
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A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department
of Asian Studies at Seton Hall University
South Orange, New Jersey
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BRIDGING BETWEEN CHINESE TRADITION AND POPULAR CULTURE: JIN YONG'S KNIGHT-ERRANT NOVELS AND CHINESE POPULAR CULTURE

THESIS TITLE

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE AS SPECIFIED FOR MAJORS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES AT SETON HALL UNIVERSITY, SOUTH ORANGE, NEW JERSEY.
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This thesis is inspired by years of interest in Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels and personal study under a diverse educational experience. I have been enormously assisted by Collection of Jin Yong’s Works (Sanlian Bookstore & Publish House, Beijing, 1994), as well as the posters and notes on the Internet by the anonymous fans of Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels.

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Introduction

This thesis is a study on the inheriting and popularizing of Chinese traditional culture in current Chinese-speaking community. Obviously, this is too enormous a topic to be accomplished in such a limited length; however, I attempt to cut into the topic by the intuition and inspiration I obtained when reading Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels.

"Jin Yong’s novels" as a phrase, is now becoming a proper noun in Chinese, almost equally known, if not more famous, as the Four Chinese Classical Masterworks.\(^1\) As the product of popular culture, Jin Yong’s novels have been long categorized into entertaining books, especially when they were first introduced to readers in Mainland China by bookmen who sold pirated books and scandal sheets. The inferior quality in printing made the old pedants asserted that he, who read Jin Yong’s novels, did not attend to his proper works or duties. Nevertheless, Jin Yong’s novels have already been deeply rooted in Chinese people’s heart.

It has been almost twenty years since first Hong Kong TV series adopted on Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels were shown in Mainland China. The official publishing of Collection of Jin Yong’s Works has become an event eight years ago. But it seems now in China, still more readers are addicted to Jin Yong’s novels. The Chinese Central Television (CCTV) is even sponsoring to produce TV series of Jin Yong’s novels one by one, competing their peers in Taiwan. Meanwhile, Jin Yong himself was honored professor as several preeminent universities, as the symbol to be admitted by the Chinese mainstream of literature.
Then, what backs up the phenomenon? What builds up the popularity of the stories merely telling the legends of the knights-errant living in the ancient times? What makes the "entertaining novels" become "classics?"

After the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Chinese in the mainland experienced the hunger of culture. All the traditional elements were dumped and buried; the communist movements exhausted people's zest to explore in idealism. Some intellectuals seek for ways out in learning from the West, but the nature of the Western culture was not made for the Chinese.

The emergence of Jin Yong was not accidental. His background, talents and experiences provided him with the capability to fill in the gap and bridge between the tradition and the popular. He was born to an open-minded literary family with eminent history, which endowed him with rich traditional education, and shaped him as a very "Chinese" intellectual. Working as a journalist, and later on running his own journals, he was sensitive to the popular tastes. Attracting readers to make money and writing knight-errant novels supplemented each other. Moreover, his rich imagination, plus his experiences as movie director and playwright, allows him to make use of all kinds of modern writing skills borrowed from the Western literature, in order to vivify the storytelling.

What distinguishes Jin Yong from other knight-errant novels is the "Chineseness" of the novels. No matter it is Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism, though never frankly declared, the novels convey the Chinese tradition in an easy-to-approach way. Virtually,

\[1\] Referring to Romance of the Three Kingdoms, The Story of the Stone, Water Margin, and Journey to the West.
with the popularization of the novels, the Chinese tradition has been extended. At the same time, the development of entertainment industry contributed to the spreading of Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels.

Even though Jin Yong’s novels are popular in Chinese-speaking countries and regions, it is not well-studied in the academics in China. There did publish a couple of books commenting on Jin Yong’s novels, but they are always personal and aim at entertaining. The difficulties in translating Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels has retarded the recognition of their value in literature and culture in the foreign countries, despite quite a few translation versions on several of his novels. The American scholars, such as Geremie R. Barmé, when researching on Chinese popular culture, mentioned Jin Yong in the same breath as the romance novelists from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Therefore, the lack of authoritative sources in both Chinese and English has brought more difficulties in researching for this thesis.

The version of Jin Yong’s fourteen knight-errant novels that I rely on is an electronic source called “A Collection of Selected Books for Family Library,” which was launched by Hongqi Publishing House in 2000. This collection contains ten compact discs, and the set of Collection of Jin Yong’s Works is on the second disc under the catalogue of “Chinese Literature.” This is the electronic edition of the one published by Sanlian Bookstore & Publish House in 1994. Therefore, in the footnotes and bibliography, I refer “Sanlian” as the publishing information.

There published some Jin Yong’s novels translated into English, such as The Story of Book and Sword, Fox Volant in the Snow Mountain, and The Duke of the Mount
Deer, but they are not accessible for me at present. There are many translation versions on the patches of Jin Yong’s novels on the Internet, and their quality proves intermingling the good and the bad. I should admit that I borrowed some ideas from those translation versions, but I devoted a lot of time and energy to translating some specific terms in Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels, combining my own understanding of the language, with my knowledge on the stories, while for the romanization of the proper nouns, I employed pinyin system, unless quoting directly. Of course, there must be errors and mistakes, and all advices and suggestions are welcome.

2 Such as Ni Kuang's Comments on Jin Yong, by Jin Yong’s close friend Ni Kuang.
Chapter One

A Brief Biography of Jin Yong

It is widely admitted that no matter where the Chinese stay, they will bring Jin Yong's legends and stories into their life. No other Chinese writer enjoys such fame in the current societies. Born in Zhejiang, a province located at the Southeast of China, Jin Yong is regarded as the father of the knight-errant novels (or wuxia novels).

Jin Yong is the pseudonym of Zha Liangyong (or Louis Leung-yung Cha). He was born in his hometown Haining in 1924, a seashore town on the east coast of China, which is for tides (called in Chinese "Haining Chao"). This small but typical town in Southeast China intoxicated Jin Yong all his life. In nearly every novel he wrote, he described scenery in this area, which provides a touch of combined atmosphere of sentimental and heroic spirit. As a native of Haining, Jin Yong was so influenced in the local legends and the people. This place became the setting of his first novel, The Story of Book and Sword.

The Zha family had been a prestigious family since the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). His ancestor, Zha Shenxing, was a student of Huang Zongxi. He served in Emperor Kangxi's imperial library as a famous poet, an expert in the study of The Book of Change (Yi Jing). Emperor Kangxi once named the Zha family in Haining as "a renowned family since Tang and

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1 Zha Liangyong splitted the the character "镛" in his name, which became "庸."
2 Haining is a historical county in Zhejiang Province in East China, locating at the joint of Qiantang River and Chinese East Sea.
3 Huang Zongxi was a famous philosopher in the Qing Dynasty.
4 Zha Shenxing left a poetry collection named The Collection of Jingye Tang, which was highly appreciated among Qing scholars, such as Zhao Yi and Ji Xiaolan.
Song Dynasties, and the outstanding surname in Jiangnan area. In Zha Shenxing’s generation, the Zha family once had seven jinshi, and five hanlin at the same time. Zha Siting, a historical figure in the incident of “wei min suo zhi” was one of them. His grandfather, Zha Wenqing was a local official in Jiangsu Province under the rule of Emperor Guangxu. He was said to be very learned and righteous. As an official, he violated decree to set free the prime criminals in “Dan Yang Jiao An”, and eventually had his ranks removed. Later, he led all the Zha family back to Haining, spending all the rest of his life in compiling and publishing the works from Zha ancestors. Jin Yong’s father Zha Shuqing was a Westernized landlord, but was well educated in Chinese tradition. He even gave Jin Yong Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol as a Christmas gift; this book accompanied Jin Yong always.

Due to his family tradition, Jin Yong was well educated in Chinese classic works, and was so much influenced by Chinese tradition. The scenery and legends in his hometown were branded in his mind. At the age of eight, Jin Yong happened to read a knight-errant novel, called

Female Knight-errant in Huang Jiang (Huang Jiang Nü Xia). It was said that since then, he

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5 Jiangnan indicates the area South to the lower reaches of Yangzi River, but north to Zhuijiang River basin.
6 Jinshi and hanlin are both ranks in the civic examination system. Jinshi was the one who succeeded in national-levelled civic examination, and the Jinshi who was selected to get into emperor’s library to study Confucian works was called Hanlin.
7 In Qing Dynasty, especially under the rule of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, there was a movement called wen zi yu, literally meaning the Chinese Character Prison. The purpose of the movement was to rid of those who were against Qing Government, destroying anti-government books and thoughts, and throwing related intellectuals into prison. Zha Siting was the official in charge of civic examination for Emperor Yongzheng in Jiangxi Province. The topic he set forth to the examinees was “wei min suo zhi,” a quote from The Book of Poetry (Shi Jing), meaning that land belongs to the people, and that emperor should love his people. It is from Confucian classics and absolutely complied with Confucianism. However, the characters “维” and “止” are the lower parts of the two characters of Yongzheng (雍正) Emperor’s reign name, and consequently Zha Siting was accused of conspiring to chop off the Emperor Yongzheng’s head. Therefore, Zha Siting and his immediate family were all arrested and tortured. Other members of the Zha family were exiled to the border areas. The intellectuals in Zhejiang province were not allowed to participate in national civic examination for six years.
8 “Dan Yang Jiao An” refers to a series of church arson cases during the reign of Emperor Guangxu, initiated in Dan Yang, Jiang Su Province, when Chinese civilians set fires on foreign churches, just to express their anger towards
became obsessed by knight-errant novels. At the age of fifteen, when he was studying at Jiaxing High School (presently Jiaxing First High School), he published his first book, *To the Candidates of Junior High School* (*Gei Tou Kao Chu Zhong Zhe*), which was his first attempt to show his talent in words; the book was very much welcomed by readers in and out of Zhejiang Province. At the age of seventeen, he posted his own article, "The Adventure of Ali," on the public board of the school, alluding to the director of studies, who was mean to the students.

In 1941, the Pacific war broke out. Upon graduation from high school, Jin Yong dreamt to be a diplomat, and hence he was admitted to Central China University in Chongqing, majoring in International Law. He left his hometown for the first time and started his adventure by himself. As he recalled, he stayed in Hunan province for a while, since he could not afford the travel expense from his hometown to Chongqing in the wartime. However, he was dismissed by the university because he was against those students who were supported by the Republican Party. In order to make a living, he found a job in the reading room of Central Library in Chongqing, which allowed him to read numerous books. Chinese traditional knight-errant novels were among them. The unbelievable *gongfu* and their chivalry deeds made him forget his troubles and the troubles China had. More importantly, the experience of this period of time inspired his knight-errant novel writing later on.

After the success of Anti-Japanese War in 1945, Jin Yong went back to his hometown. Soon, he arrived in Hangzhou, and became a journalist of *Southeast Daily*. Several months later, he went to study in the Law School of Dongwu University, majoring in International Law.

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8 The missionaries’ bullying people. Zha Wenqing was the local official of Dan Yang, then. He was demanded to decollate the leaders of the incident, but he set them free.

9 Central China University in Chongqing was a temporary university, composed by several prestigious universities in China during the Anti-Japanese War. Those universities moved to the temporary capital, Chongqing, because their campuses were occupied by Japanese troops. Beijing University was one of them. About 50 years later, when Jin Yong was awarded an Honorary Ph.D. from Beijing University, he emotionally mentioned this.
Nevertheless, the Civil War started. In 1948, when he was about to graduate, he figured it was impossible for him to obtain a job as a lawyer, so he participated in the nation-wide English examination by *Da Gong Bao* in Shanghai, one of the most important newspapers in China before 1949. Fortunately, he successfully passed the strict examinations and excelled three thousand competitors with the best score and obtained the job as English translator. At the end of 1948, *Da Gong Bao* decided to open up a branch in Hong Kong. Jin Yong was one of the staff, who were assigned to move to and work in Hong Kong with the newspaper.

Right after the People’s Republic of China was established in October 1949, Jin Yong once wished to realize his dream to be a diplomat for his country, China. He published some papers concerning foreign affairs and international relations, and he was appreciated by a Chinese expert in international law, Mei Jiu’ao. Working for *Da Gong Bao*, Jin Yong also knew Qiao Guanhua, the secretary of Zhou Enlai, China’s first Minister of Foreign Affairs after 1949. With the recommendation from Qiao Guanhua, Jin Yong went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing. Nonetheless, he was born to a landlord family. This family background required him to be trained in People’s University and to write an autobiographical self-criticism. Upon thinking twice, Jin Yong gave it up and went back to *Da Gong Bao* in Hong Kong.

In 1951, he was transferred to *The New Evening Paper (Xin Wan Bao)* as editor of its supplementary journal, on which he used the pen name “Lin Huan” to write movie reviews. Meanwhile, he took on the job as scenarist-director at the Great Wall Movie Enterprises Ltd. and Phoenix Film Co. focusing on play writing and movie directing. The famous Hong Kong movie *Beauty of Beauties (Jue Dai Jia Ren)* was one of his representative plays. It was said that Jin Yong was in love with Xia Meng, who starred in *Beauty of Beauties*. At that time, Xia Meng only considered him as her best friend. With the sentimental feelings he had for Xia Meng, Jin
Yong always modeled his heroines of his later knight-errant novels in her characteristics and comportment. He once admitted that his relationship with Xia Meng was his inspiration to write the touching love and friendship between men and women in his novels. Other movies Jin Yong was involved with were: *Girl In Love (You Nü Huai Chun)*, *Tiger Wang Grabbing Bride (Wang Lao Hu Qiang Qin)*, *Orchid Flower (Lan Hua Hua)*, and *Music In the Midnight (Wu Ye Qin Sheng)*. Jin Yong even directed the former two movies. Had things going smoothly, it would have been very likely that Jin Yong might have become an outstanding movie director. Nonetheless, movie enterprises in Hong Kong in 1950s lay a great emphasis on social education with a lot of restrictions on movie making. Failed to have several scripts approved, Jin Yong felt it hard for him to explore his talent in movie making. Hence, he turned to the idea to run a journal. This was the origin of *Ming Bao* and its series.

In 1953, Jin Yong’s colleague and good friend Liang Yusheng was inspired by a duel in Macao between two Hong Kong martial-art masters, and wrote his hit novel *Dragon and Tiger Fighting in the Capital (Long Hu Dou Jing Hua)*. Encouraged by Liang’s success, Jin Yong began to write *The Story of Book and Sword (Shu Jian En Chou Lu)*, which was published in installments in *The New Evening Paper* in 1955 and it proved to be the beginning of the “Jin Yong Miracle.” In 1956, *The Sword Tainted with Royal Blood (Bi Xue Jian)* appeared in installments. In 1959, he published *Fox Volant of the Snow Mountain (Xue Shan Fei Hu)*. From 1957 to 1959, *The Legends of Condor Heroes (She Diao Ying Xiong Zhan)* appeared in *Hong Kong Business Journal (Xiang Gang Shang Bao)*, and it promoted him as a master of knight-errant novels when he was only thirty-four years old.
In the 1950s, Jin Yong, Liang Yusheng, and Bai Jian Tang Zhu were called “three swordsmen” in Hong Kong. They set up a special column, writing essays concerning knight-errant novels in newspaper.

At the age of thirty-five, Jin Yong started his own journal business of *Ming Bao* with but eighty thousand Hong Kong dollars as funds. This amount of money was from the literary success in his knight-errant novels. He made every effort to earn money in order to support his own journal, whose early drawing card was the thousand-word excerpt it printed each day from the latest novel by Jin Yong. Under such circumstances, he started serial of *The Return of Condor Heroes (Shen Diao Xia Lü)*\(^\text{10}\) in 1959 and finished it in 1962. *Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber (Yi Tian Tu Long Ji)*\(^\text{11}\) came out from 1961. Meanwhile, in 1961 and 1962, he finished *The Legends of Fox Volant (Fei Hu Wai Zhuan)*\(^\text{12}\) and *White Horse Neighing in West Wind (Bai Ma Xiao Xi Feng)*. In 1963, he finished *The Deadly Secret (Lian Cheng Jue)*. In 1967, *Eight Demigods and Devils (Tian Long Ba Bu)* was completed.

In 1967, he began to write *Laughing Proudly at the World (Xiao Ao Jiang Hu)*, and began to start a new serial of *The Duke of the Mount Deer (Lu Ding Ji)* in 1969, which was not finished till September 1972. At the same time, he wrote another novel for *Ming Bao* in 1970, named *The Quest of Oriental Chivalry (Xia Ke Xing)*. *The Duke of the Mount Deer* was his last knight-errant novel.

Other minor knight-errant novels and stories by Jin Yong include *White Horse Neighing in West Wind (Bai Ma Xiao Xi Feng)* (1961), *The Lovers’ Sabres (Yuan Yang Dao)*, a short story

\(^{\text{10}}\) *The Return of Condor Heroes* is the continuation of *The Legends of Condor Heroes*, considered as the second novel in the “Condor Trilogy”.

\(^{\text{11}}\) *Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber* is the continuation of *The Return of Condor Heroes*, considered as the third novel of the “Condor Trilogy.”

\(^{\text{12}}\) *The Legends of Fox Volant* is the supplement of *Fox Volant of the Snow Mountain*. 

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The Sword of Yue Maiden (Yue Nü Jian), some articles, such as “The Charts of Thirteen Swordsman" (San Shi San Jian Ke Tu) (1970), and historical research paper “Historical Comments on Yuan Chonghuan” (Yuan Chong Huan Ping Zhan) (1975).

For nearly twenty years, Jin Yong kept on writing regular columns and editorials. Usually he wrote novels in order it could be published the next day to satisfy the eager readers, while at night, he spent a lot of time writing editorials. Ni Kuang\(^\text{13}\) once commented that it was a big question whether Ming Bao could survive or not, if without Jin Yong’s editorials or knight-errant novel-installments. Even though novel-writing seemed just a way for him to attract readers and to support Ming Bao, Jin Yong devoted his life and spirit in writing. Otherwise, there would not be the vividly portrayed heroes, such as Guo Jing, Yang Guo, and Linghu Chong;\(^\text{14}\) nor would there be the touching love stories between Ding Dian and Ling Shuanhua;\(^\text{15}\) nor would there be the talks with great relish upon “eighteen palm-strikes to defeat dragon” (xiang long shi ba zhang).\(^\text{16}\) Generally speaking, his novels broke through the boundary line between “pure literature” and “popular literature.” He attempted imputing a new spirit into the old Chinese genre of the knight-errant novel; he praised the dignity and individuality of human personality and carried on patriotism, which directly touched the hearts of Chinese people, no matter where they were.

\(^\text{13}\) Ni Kuang is Jin Yong’s close friend. He was also Hong Kong writer, famous for scientific stories. In 1965, when Jin Yong traveled in Europe, Ni once wrote some chapters for Jin Yong for the installments of Demi Gods and Semi Devils in Ming Bao. When Jin Yong came back to Hong Kong, Ni confessed to Jin Yong that he made Azi, one of the heroines blind. Jin Yong kept the plot when he revised this novel. Ni Kuang published Nikuang’s Comments on Jin Yong.

\(^\text{14}\) These are the heroes in Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels.

\(^\text{15}\) These are a couple in The Secret of Liangcheng.

\(^\text{16}\) This is the name of a set of gongfu appearing in “the Trilogy of Condor.”
After finishing his last novel *The Deer and the Cauldron*, Jin Yong spent about ten years revising all his fourteen novels word by word. During this period of time, readers had already been impatient, so much so that there were pirated and crude novels under Jin Yong’s name. Ironically, both Taiwan and Mainland China once officially banned Jin Yong’s novels for political reasons. However, this did not kill the readers’ ardent interests. The real fans could always manage finding his books somehow. *Collection of Jin Yong’s Works*, compiled into thirty-six volumes, including all important knight-errant works he ever produced, was formally publishing in Mainland China by Sanlian Bookstore & Publishing House in 1994.

It is fairly difficult to equate the typical Chinese intellectual of Jin Yong with the fanciful knight-errant adventure stories for which the Chinese reading public seems to have an inexhaustible appetite. However, it is even more difficult to connect his literature achievements with his successful business legend. The supplementary journal of *Ming Bao* was the major carrier of Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels, while those novels helped Jin Yong get through the most difficult period in his journal business by attracting readers and enhancing the Journal’s fame. However, *Ming Bao* rose to become Hong Kong’s most respected daily concerning Hong Kong’s life and future, because of its news reports and daily editorial column. Jin Yong’s cooperator Shen Baoxin was his high school classmate. As another major shareholder, he was a good hand in charge of administration, and Jin Yong was the senior editor, the one to write high-

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17 In Taiwan, Jin Yong’s novels were banned because the name of the book *The Legends of Condor Heroes (She Diao Ying Xiong Zhu)*. The phrase “*she diao*” was once used by Mao Zedong in a line of his poem. Based on this name, together with Jin Yong’s intention to work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1950s, Taiwan government deemed that Jin Yong was pro-communist. This novel changed its name into *Da Mo Ying Xiong Zhuan*, to avoid using “*she diao*,” but remained banned till late 1980s. His other novels became officially accepted since September 1979. In Mainland China, Jin Yong’s books were banned together with other knight-errant novels and romances and were regarded as “ideological pollution.” The ban was lifted in 1984 when *Tianjin Baimia Literature and Art Publishing House* published *The Story of Book and Sword* formally.
quality editorials everyday. Under his guidance, *Ming Bao* seized every chance to expand. In 1962, a large amount of Chinese escaped to Hong Kong from Mainland China due to the three-year nation-wide natural disaster. The immigration tide caused social chaos in Hong Kong, which aroused heated debates in the society. Jin Yong challenged big newspapers like *Da Gong Bao*, and set forth his peculiar viewpoints. *Ming Bao* also started a special column called "Watching China in the North,"\(^{18}\) to observe political situations in Mainland China closely during the ten years of "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution."\(^{19}\) This column gradually became the authoritative sources on Mainland China's news in 1960s and 1970s. Upon these achievements, *Ming Bao* began making money.

In 1966, Jin Yong launched *Ming Bao Monthly*. The purpose of this journal, according to him, was to preserve a region in overseas for Chinese traditional culture when it was deadly damaged in the Mainland. As the editor-in-chief, he hired Xu Guansan, Sima Changfeng, Wang Shiyu and Huang Jundong as editors, in order to follow the "pure literature" style. Later on, Jin Yong employed Hu Juren as editor-in-chief for thirteen years, who maintained the Journal as a high-standard academic monthly publication.

Just at that time, Hong Kong was influenced by the leftist of China's Great Cultural Revolution. Jin Yong was attacked as a "reactionary" because of his editorials on the tide of Mainlander immigration, Chinese Nuclear Bombs and the Great Cultural Revolution itself. Facing the rigorous test, Jin Yong intended to emigrate to Singapore and Malaysia. He set up *New Ming Bao Daily (Xin Ming Ri Bao)* in Singapore. However, he was tired of the local political restrictions on his journal business and he went back to Hong Kong and focused on his career there.

\(^{18}\) In pinyin, *Bei Wang Shen Zhou*. 

13
In 1968, Jin Yong established *Ming Bao Night News* and *Ming Bao Weekly*, the latter of which was an entertaining weekly journal for housewives and non-academic readers. It now developed as the most famous entertaining news weekly in Chinese community over the world. Besides, he expanded his Ming Bao Group by running Book Publishing House, and travel agency later. He listed Ming Bao Group on stock market in 1991 and served as Chairman of Board of Directors. The Group was said to make profits as high as one hundred million Hong Kong dollars in that year. Jin Yong's personal assets reached six hundred million Hong Kong dollars, which ranked sixty-four in Hong Kong's Chinese Millionaire List, according to *Finance* magazine in 1991. He sold Ming Bao Group to Yu Pinhai in February 1993 and retired from business to focus on researches in culture and history. The property of his family was estimated at 1.2 billion Hong Kong dollars by December 1995. Since Mr. Chu in Spring and Autumn period\(^{19}\), Jin Yong could be counted as the second intellectual who became rich by doing business.

Perhaps being a millionaire was not Jin Yong's intention. On the contrary, doing something meaningful to the nation and people, establishing a significant career are more likely to be the ideal of a typical Chinese intellectual like Jin Yong. As a successful businessman, he never hesitated donating money to help society and support education. He ever contributed one million Hong Kong dollars for disaster relief in July 1991 and three million Hong Kong dollars to build a library at Jiaxing School of Higher Education in 1993. In 1994, he donated Twenty thousand Hong Kong dollars to the school's library to purchase books.

\(^{19}\) From 1966 to 1976, also called the Great Cultural Revolution.

\(^{20}\) Mr. Chu is Fan Li, the Prime Minister of the State of Yue in Spring and Autumn period. After he helped Gou Jian,
He actively participated in politics since 1970s. Concerned about Hong Kong’s future, he acted as important consultant to the administrator of Hong Kong in early 1980s and was interviewed by Ms. Thatcher, the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the Chinese political leaders such as Hu Yaobang, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zeming. He worked as executive member of the Basic Law Drafting Committee and Consultative Committee of the Hong Kong Special Autonomous Region (Hong Kong SAR) since 1985\(^2\) and resigned as a senior advisor in 1989 after the “Tiananmen Square Incident,” but later he accepted a position on the China-appointed committee that would supervise Hong Kong’s handover in 1997. Renowned for his anti-communist stance during the Great Cultural Revolution, he counseled a conciliatory attitude in dealings with the Central Chinese Government.

While serving as Honorary President of Ming Bao Group, he was also a panel member of the Legal Reform Committee, the Association of International Press and academician of Modern China Research Center of the British Oxford University. He was appointed member of the Preparatory Committee of the Hong Kong SAR in December 1995. Jin Yong served as a senior adviser to the Chinese government during the drawn-out negotiations over the handover in 1997.

He was awarded the title of OBE in 1981 by Queen Elizabeth II. In 1986, he received honorary doctorate from Hong Kong University and in 1989, he was invited to work as honorary professor of Chinese Language and Literature Department in Hong Kong University. He was named “honorary citizen of Jiaxing City” in 1994 and engaged as honorary professor of Beijing University in October of that year. In November 1996, he was appointed senior advisor of the

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\(^2\) He resigned from this position on May 20, 1989.
People's government of Jiaxing City and honorary professor of Zhejiang University as the Dean of Chinese Literature. Jin Yong became a household name in China.

Despite such accomplishments, Jin Yong faces a problem much like that which confronted a writer he cites as one of his formative influences, Arthur Conan-Doyle, the creator of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries. Conan-Doyle became so exasperated with the public’s infatuation with his detective that he killed Holmes off, only to be forced to bring him back to life after a prolonged outcry. Jin Yong, too, is plagued by constant entreaties for new works, but he is able to meet such demands with an equanimity that Conan-Doyle, who was always short of cash, could not. Jin Yong’s novels and newspaper publishing have brought him wealth on a scale the impoverished Conan-Doyle could never even imagine.

His wealth has allowed himself to resist calls for more knight-errant novels. But now that he has retired from journalism and sold his controlling stake in Ming Bao in 1993. Ever since then, he has been spending his time on historical research that might lead to a nonfiction book, maybe a readable history of China, or he might decide to write a historical novel. Up to now, he has already managed to publish a series of works on Chinese history and culture ranging from The Life and Times of Genghis Khan to The Concept of Materiality in Buddhist Thinking.

Perhaps Jin Yong still feels more comfortable be counted as literati, rather than a businessman, or a politician. The literati’s comportments were carried through all his life. Even though he was famous for writing knight-errant novels, he did not know martial arts at all. Instead, all the gongfu description was based on his imagination. He named them from the quotations in Chinese classic works, such as Tang Poetry, or ancient works like Zhuangzi. He is
also devoted to studies of Confucian and Chinese Go. He formally acknowledged famous Chinese Go player, Nie Weiping\textsuperscript{22} as his teacher. Besides, he has a considerable collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy. He has been intrigued by Buddhism all the time, and started to learn the most difficult language in the world, Sanskrit, just to read Buddhist works directly. The zeal is absolutely worthy of esteem.

Jin Yong’s family background, his education and his experience shaped his legends, whereas Jin Yong’s life is much more than writing novels. Nonetheless, his works, especially the fourteen knight-errant river novels, functioned as a bridge between Chinese tradition and popular culture, are the magnum opus of the knight-errant novels in contemporary Chinese literature. Since the end of 1980s, there have been research books on Jin Yong and his novels. On Internet, countless Jin Yong fans foster heated and detailed discussions on all the novels he wrote. The Biography of Jin Yong was published in 1994 in Hong Kong. As a man of letters, ranking the fourth in Chinese contemporary novelists, only after Lu Xun, Ba Jin and Shen Congwen, more and more research is being done on him and his novels, which formed “Jin Study” (Jin Xue). This can be only compared to The Story of the Stone (Hong Lou Meng). Because of him, knight-errant novels are now promoted from low-class literary works to a standard catalogue in Chinese literature.

\textsuperscript{22} Nie Weiping was entitled the “King of Chinese Go” in China.
Chapter Two

Jin Yong’s Knight-errant Novels: Much More Than Just Gongfu

飞雪连天射白鹿
笑书神侠倚碧鸳

The above couplet came into being by putting together the first Chinese character of Jin Yong’s fourteen knight-errant novels. Jin Yong made this couplet after he finished revising all his novels, just to distinguish them from the novels by “counterfeit Jin Yong” in the book market. As for the novels written by the “real” him, Jin Yong doesn’t know how many books he has sold. What he knew was that the legitimate versions of his hugely popular knight-errant novels were sold nearly ten million in Mainland China two years after Sanlian Bookstore & Publishing House formally published the Collection of Jin Yong’s Works in 1994.

However, in 1984, when his books were finally able to be published in Mainland China after being banned for many years due to its unsound ideology, the director of China’s Bureau of Publications told him that an estimated forty million pirated copies of his fourteen novels were circulating in the country. They half-jokingly accused him of being responsible for the lack of paper to print textbooks on. To add to that number, one million legitimate copies have been sold every year for the last decade in Hong Kong and Taiwan. It can be convincingly assumed that Jin Yong has become the most popular contemporary Chinese writer, even though he hasn’t been writing knight-errant novels since 1972. The total sale of his novels must have reached 100 million, not to take the translated versions into account.
In Vietnam as early as in 1967, twenty-one newspapers in Saigon serialized *Laughing Proudly at the World* simultaneously as *Ming Bao*, in three different languages: Chinese, Vietnamese and French. The congressmen even quoted Jin Yong’s novels and heroes to denounce their rivals.\(^1\) According to the materials from Internet, up to now Jin Yong has authorized a Japanese publishing house to translate all his fourteen novels plus a short story into Japanese, of which *The Story of Book and Sword, The Sword Tainted with Royal Blood* have been finished translating and have already been published. The “Condor Trilogy” has been translated and published into Korean and Indonesian. *Fox Volant in the Snow Mountain, The Story of Book and Sword*, and *The Duke of Mount Deer* have been published in English.\(^2\)

The facts reveal the popularity of Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels, whereas the reason behind readers’ devotion lies in the glamour of the novels themselves. Among Western canons of the similar genre, perhaps only *The Musketeer Romances* by Alexandre Dumas Senior could be mentioned in the same breath. The closest modern comparison might be Patrick O’Brian’s historical novels that follow the adventures of an English naval captain in the Napoleonic wars.

Jin Yong’s novels are exciting, complex epics featuring the exploits of “dashing heroes and heroines possessing in varying degrees extraordinary prowess” in the traditional Chinese martial arts, according to John Minford, an academic at Hong Kong

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Polytechnic University. 3 "Gongfu, together with Chinese medicine, calligraphy, painting, playing Go and strumming the seven-stringed zither constitute the core of the Chinese cultural essence," Minford commented. All these elements appear in the novels, and their placement firmly in the myth-shrouded past combine to produce a kind of "cultural euphoria" in Chinese readers that cannot be found anywhere else in modern Chinese literature. The historical settings and plots often seem designed to stoke the glow of cultural euphoria. The plots of Jin Yong’s books “always involve so-called Barbarians trying to invade the Han lands,” and “the Han Chinese try to fight back.”

Minford is correct. All the features he mentioned impenetrate in the fourteen knight-errant novels Jin Yong wrote.

Jin Yong’s first novel, The Story of Book and Sword was developed on a widespread rumor about Emperor Qianlong’s pedigree that he was actually an offspring of a Han official and was brought into court due to the cruel fight for thrones. Chen Jialuo, the leader of an anti-Qing organization, Red Flower Society, was a blood brother of Qianlong. He led his men to organize anti-Qing activities, while plotting to persuade Qianlong to drive the Manchu out of Han’s land and to restore Han people’s sovereignty. Nevertheless, after sacrificing his lover, the beautiful Hui Princess Xiangxiang, he only found that the lust for power and the desire to keep it could make men betray even their own blood brothers. Heartbroken, he and his underlings left for the Northwest China. Chen Jialuo was an ambitious but inexperienced young leader. Perhaps Jin Yong is trying to portray his naiveté and inexperience at writing martial arts novels through him. There floated obvious trace in imitation of Liang Yusheng’s style, who wrote several novels of

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3 He is coordinating an Oxford University Press project that aims to translate all of Jin Yong’s works into English.
the same subject matters. Besides, the art of composition and language remind the readers of *Water Margin (Shui Hu Zhuan)*.

Jin Yong's unique style emerged in his second novel, *The Sword Tainted with Royal Blood*. Yuan Chengzhi, the son of a famous anti-Qing general⁴ shouldered intense hatred against Qing invaders and the paranoid last Ming Emperor Chongzhen. He practiced martial arts in order to kill Chongzhen and at the same time, save the country from being conquered by the Manchu. Hence, he witnessed the historical moments of Dorgon assassinating Abahai,⁵ the fall of Ming, and the collapse of the uprising peasants' army of Li Zicheng. His life experience was interwoven with the legend of a weird swordsman, Mr. Gold Snake, and this weird man’s illegitimate daughter, Wen Qingqing. Without any alternatives, he gave up his affection to the Ming Princess Changping, who became a Buddhist nun when her father Chongzhe committed suicide. After Yuan Chenzhi heard that Manchu army had taken over the Beijing, he departed China to the overseas.

Jin Yong became a household name when he wrote his landmark novel *The Legends of Condor Heroes*. In this novel, Jin Yong brought his rich imagination into play, and created many interesting storylines and vivid characters like Guo Jing, Huang Rong, Evil East, Malicious West, North Beggar, South Emperor and old-but-naughty man Zhou Botong. Guo Jing, a “Forrest Gump” styled young man was brought up in Mongolian tribe after his father was killed by Jurchen officials. Bearing family and nation’s hatred to the Jin government, he learned martial arts from a lot of weird masters. As an obscure

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⁴ Yuan Chengzhi was said to be the son of Yuan Chonghuan. Jin Yong must have done a serious historical research on this general, since he wrote a historical research paper *Historical Comments on Yuan Chonghuan* in 1975.

⁵ Abahai (1592-1643) was the second leader in the Manchu line after Nurhachi. He was the father of the first Emperor of Qing Dynasty, Shunzhi. Dorgon was Abahai’s brother, and the capable regent of Shunzhi.
civilian, he witnessed how the Mongols expanded their territory. As a slowwitted learner, he mastered the unmatched *gongfu* of “eighteen palm-strokes to defeat dragon” and “Jiuyin Lection” through sheer guts and determination. Besides, the story conveys affection between lovers, between teacher and student, and between friends. It is counted as the most popular novel not because it is the best, but that it complies with the taste of common people.

This popularity attributes to its continuation, *The Return of Condor Heroes*. However, *The Return of Condor Heroes* is more striking in that it reveals Jin Yong’s understanding in love. The rebellious and cynical hero, Yang Guo, swallowed all kinds of humiliation and tortures before he met his unworldly girl master Xiao Long Nü, who he dared to marry with, in spite of the traditions. They were separated several times, but Yang Guo never succumbed to fate or social pressure, even after he lost one arm. Accompanied by a gigantic condor, he wandered everywhere to get rid of the evils, and later, helped Guo Jing defend the city of Xiangyang to keep the Mongolians from further invading Han territory. Finally he was reunited with Xiao Long Nü sixteen years after they departed. It is in this novel, Jin Yong brought forth his idea that the greatest hero is the one who concerns the fate of the people and the country. This novel was written when Jin Yong was just establishing *Ming Bao*. He was said to be writing about his own frustrations, angers, worries, and difficulties he encountered in the real world during that period.

As the third session of the “Condor Trilogy,” *Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber* employed a totally different style. The story mainly took place long after all the major characters in *Legends of Condor Heroes* and *The Return of Condor Heroes* passed away.
China was under the rule of Mongolians, whereas the whole society of martial arts masters were struggling to find out the secret of the two weapons that Guo Jing and Huang Rong left: Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber. Zhang Wuji, an orphan, was involved and became the leader of an “evil religion,” Ming Jiao by chance. However, unlike other heroes in Jin Yong’s novels, he came across as a wishy-washy, naive and indecisive person, so much so that he could not even figure out which girl he loved. Getting through various adventures, he acquired zenithal gongfu, but he still remained an incompetent leader. Therefore, he had to give place to Zhu Yuanzhang, who eventually founded the Ming Dynasty. Jin Yong admitted in the postscript of this book that Zhang Wuji was not a hero so admirable as the heroes he ever created. He had weakness as everyone would have. Maybe he was not a good leader, but he could be a good friend.\(^5\)

*Fox Volant in the Snow Mountain* has only around one hundred thousand Chinese words, Jin Yong tells the story totally in flashback and montage through the statements of different witnesses. It is a bold try on the traditional genre of Chinese knight-errant novel writing. As a result, he felt so restricted that he was hardly able to develop the characters to the full extent. Therefore, *The Legends of Fox Volant* came out to vivify the hero, Hu Fei. Even though Jin Yong defined these two novels as two independent stories\(^7\), they are both in the light of Hu Fei’s revenge on the ones who killed his father.

In the early 1960s, Jin Yong was very productive. He wrote several novels simultaneously for different journals, so as to support his own journal business *Ming Bao*, and to make money. *White Horse Neighing in West Wind, The Lovers Sabres, The Deadly Secret* and *The Quest of Oriental Chivalry* honed Jin Yong’s writing skills, but it was

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\(^7\) Jin Yong, *Book 15*, 762-3.
not until the coming out of *Eight Demigods and Devils*, did Jin Yong show to the readers his mastery of Chinese tradition and philosophy. The title is adopted from sutra, indicating eight types of supernatural creatures with differential capability, which inevitably undergo the same happiness and sadness as the mass. As the title implies, people from different tribes, different social classes, and different religious background got together to set forth their enemy and benefaction. Duan Yu, the prince of a small state in Southwest China served as the clue, while the ups and downs of Xiao Feng, a real hero, questioned the concept that Han people was always the orthodox. The experience of a Shaoling Monk, Xu Zhu, added comic atmosphere to the serious theme of the philosophy in Buddhism.

In the late 1960s, *Ming Bao* began to boom. As for Jin Yong's knight-errant writing, it was not a necessity, but a carrier of his political opinions. *Laughing Proudly at the World* was written after the Great Cultural Revolution started in Mainland China. It was not only an entertaining book, but implied the political situations in Mainland China, Jin Yong never approved it, though. Linghu Chong, an unruly but sincere disciple of a hypocritical noble master, was dismissed on the hook, and hence developed his friendship with numerous figures that were considered as "evils" by the orthodox. However, the evil persons stressed on friendship, and even died for loyalty, whereas the orthodox betrayed all principles in order to be the leader of all corners of the country at all cost. Besides, the novel also shows an age-old problem of power corrupts. This novel is said to have a strong taint of anti-Marxism and anti-totalitarianism and to advocating freedom of thought and activity.
Jin Yong reached his apex of knight-errant writing in The Duke of the Mount Deer, in which he deliberately tried a totally different style. As Jin Yong commented, this novel is rather a historic novel than a knight-errant novel.\(^8\) The hero, Wei Xiaobao, unlike the heroes in all other knight-errant novels, was an illiterate, barely knowing anything in martial arts. As a son of a prostitute, he was brought up in whorehouse, so he was absolutely immoral, obnoxious, obscene, and lazy. However, he knew all the savoir-faire, good at flattery to get out of danger and to win favor, based on which, he became the leader of the Green Wood Sect (a branch of the Heaven and Earth Society which is committed to overthrowing the Manchus and reestablishing the Ming Dynasty), the Qing Emperor, Kangxi’s closest friend, and the special missionary flirting with Russian Tsarina. He played politics, not to obtain power, but to survive, to amass huge fortune and to marry seven beautiful wives. Nonetheless, he was sincere and loyal to friends, confident, and not hypocritical at all. In this character Wei Xiao, Jin Yong expressed his understanding in Chinese people’s humanity. Many critics compare this novel with Lu Xun’s The Story of Ah Q, which shows that Jin Yong has already transcended the restrictions of knight-errant novels. Wise as he is, he stopped knight-errant novel writing, mostly because he was aware that he may not be able to write after The Duke of the Mount Deer.

The above brief of Jin Yong’s novels may not be convincing enough to reveal the reasons for the prolonged popularity of his knight-errant novels, but it is for sure that this cannot be fully explained only in terms of the intelligibility. Otherwise, they would not be called the “fairytales” for the grown-ups. It was especially true in the 1960s and 1970s,

\(^8\)Jin Yong, Book 36, 2107-8.
when Jin Yong and other knight-errant novelists wrote stories to make money and to attract readers so as to survive the journals. This required the novels to have the features of popular culture, while the "pure literature" was obviously too profound to win acceptance from ordinary readers. For Jin Yong himself, the core reason for his popularity rests on a simple rule: the storytelling and exciting developments. His knight-errant novels are easy to read both in content and structure. Most of the stories were more or less written after fixed formula.

A self-addressed "great fan of Jin Yong," Oliver Chang once posted his summarization an eight-step theory on the structure of Jin Yong's novels: the story always starts with a slaughter, resulting in a child orphaned, who, in most of the cases, will be the major hero of the book, and the revenge is always served as a major clue because the knight-errant stories always tell the adventure and encounters this orphaned child experienced on the way of his revenge; coincidentally, while the child goes into exile, he always encounters an expert in martial arts, sometimes quite a few masters, who are always weird; after learning the tour de force from his master or masters, the child, now a young man begins to wander from place to place to remove noxious influences; he is destined to be courted by a handful of beautiful ladies and girls; at the same time, he is deeply perturbed, for he finds his beloved girl is unrighteous, but he is not able to forget her now; meanwhile, as there are always several malicious swordsmen foil him, and then, he prostrates himself at another master's feet; he is more and more deeply involved in the fight against the "evil" forces, while the secrets about who his parents are or who causes his family tragedy begin to unravel, and with the aid of a book which records long lost unmatched martial arts, he avenges his parents and gets rid of all evils; at last, he goes
away from the world of noise and turmoil, and lives quietly and happily with his beloved.\(^9\)

Chang’s “eight-step structure” theory generally frames a Jin Yong’s knight-errant novel. It is true that as far as structure is concerned, most knight-errant novels created an imaginary world, which is less complicated and less diverse. In contents, Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels have relatively obvious judgment in value. They are created by the dual contradiction between kindness and evilness. Those martial-arts masters were created to eliminate the wicked and promote the kindness and righteousness, and to attain the affinity of man and heaven. On the contrary, the evil perpetrates every kind of villainy. These two extremities of martial-arts masters incompatible as fire and water. They give full play to their martial arts skill, and have earthshaking fight. In the end, the righteous beats the evil; the bad is always doomed, either to be converted or die pitifully. Usually, the stories reveal moral lessons more directly than the “pure literature” does.

The simple structure and content of Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels achieve a quality of duration that makes readers hard to get tired of reading. However, the reflection of traditional culture in Jin Yong’s novels institutes the internal trait for its lasting popularity in the Chinese-speaking community all over the world. From the angle of its literature attributes, the novels also embody popular cultural essence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism besides popular aesthetic tastes as other genres of popular literature may have. In this sense, Jin Yong’s novels have already surmounted other novels of the same genre. One example is his combined use of vernacular Chinese (bai hua) and classical Chinese (wen yan), which provided the sense of historical

background. He avoided using modern words such as “putong,” “suoyi,” “sudu,” or “xianzai;” instead, he would choose “xunchang,” “shiyi,” “kuaiman,” and “xianjin.” This causes enormous difficulties in translating his novels into other languages. At the same time, he complies with the popular taste by eliminating rare-used words and long sentences to achieve perspicuity and simplicity.

Erudite and informative, Jin Yong’s novels consist of people of all social groups: noble figures, government officials, scholars, smiths, knights-errant, plebeian, monks, and even foreigners. Their attitudes to value and moral principles are in common with whole society, which act on their own to a great extent. Jin Yong stressed on the details, in accordance with historical records. Unlike other popular literature, he quoted from Chinese classics in various areas, including literature, music, traditional medication, Chinese calculation, the Eight Diagrams, Chinese Go and geography, based on which he created quite a few wizards. However, what makes his novels so “Chinese” is the tradition of Taoism and Confucianism embodied in brotherhood of the knights-errant. In the first few novels he wrote, these “Chinese traits” are protuberant on the heroes by description, whereas in his later works, sermons turn more and more illegible, melting away into the hero’s activities, and finally exhibiting in The Duke of Mount Deer in the form of quips.

Another perpetual topic in Jin Yong’s novels is affection. Out of all the elements of popular culture, love is the easiest to call on readers’ resonance, and thus, is the most touching part of a story. Jin Yong is a perhaps more skillful writer than Shakespeare. In The Return of Condor Heroes, he described comrade-styled love between Guo Jing and

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10 Jin Yong, Book 8, 1568.
Huang Rong, faithful love between Yang Guo and Xiao Long Nü, unanswered love that Li Muochou suffered, and hostile love between Qiu Qianchi and Gongsun Gu, not to mention the metaphor he used: the flower of love\(^{11}\). Even though Jin Yong portrayed all kinds of women in his novels, they are always stereotypical: in general, they should be stunningly beautiful; after that, they are either sharp but capricious, or learned and tender. Besides, major female characters all fall in love with one hero. Interestingly, Jin Yong’s attitude changed from strictly observing monogamy in *The Legends of Condor Heroes*, to allowing Yang Guo to flirt with other girls in *The Return of Condor Heroes*. When it comes to *Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber*, Zhang Wuji has four girlfriends. Fortunately, the story ends when he has to make decision whom he wants to marry. However, later in *Eight Demigods and Devils*, Jin Yong gave permission to Duan Zhenchun to have quite a few lovers out of marriage, and in *The Duke of the Mount Deer*, Wei Xiaobao finally practices polygamy openly and married seven wives at the same time. Probably this is one of the reasons why Jin Yong stopped writing knight-errant novels: it is really hard to break through the existed plots.

Jin Yong spent seventeen years finishing writing his fifteen knight-errant novels, and later, he spent another ten years revising all of them word by word, to make up for the inconsistencies, to add foreshadowing, and to delete irrelevant parts. His sincerity is comparable with any other masters in contemporary Chinese literature. Several centuries ago, Cao Xueqin worked his heart out for his work *The Story of the Stone*. Coincidentally,

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11 The flower of love (*qing hua*) is Jin Yong’s invention. The flower itself is extremely beautiful and inviting, whereas there are poisonous pickles on the stems. The fruits are bitter, at times they are sweat, though. In case one is suffered from the poison of the pickles, only the poisonous grass living near the flower can cure, whereas the grass is going to “cut one’s guts into pieces,” which is exactly like love-sickness.
he also spent ten years revising this novel for seven times, in order that he left a classical works in Chinese literature. However, Jin Yong has fifteen great novels, and he revised all them just once. Consequently, there inevitably some mistakes and inconsistencies in the novels, especially in the ones with clear history background. For example, by tracing the sequence of the events taking place in the “Condor Trilogy”, many readers pointed out that in *The Legends of Condor Heroes*, Jin Yong miscalculated the major hero, Guo Jing’s age, so that Guo Jing eventually is one year younger than his lover, Huang Rong, which contradicts his description in the novel. Nonetheless, only those who really love Jin Yong’s novels will study the stories so seriously and scholarly. It happens to prove how exciting and how complex the structures are. As “Jin Yong’s novels” became a proper noun phrase, the mistakes and inconsistencies become the topics in “Jin Studies,” just like what the Chinese scholars have done with *The Story of the Stone*.

There were knight-errant novelists, such as Gu Long and Wen Rui’an, who employ Western impressionism and symbolism, but Jin Yong is obviously not one of them. By dint of traditional story-telling skills, Jin Yong excelled in content, especially based on Chinese specific historical background, the understanding of Chinese traditions and Chinese philosophy, and Chinese humanity. A real reader will sense the very “Chinese” traits out of the fantastic stories and *gongfu* description, and empathize their love and hatred into the stories, so as to dig out their “Chineseness.” This makes Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels much more than just *gongfu* novels.
Chapter Three

Chinese Tradition in Jin Yong’s Knight-errant Novels

The word “knight-errant,” in Chinese, youxia, is not a newly invented word. Sima Qian¹ (145-90 B.C.) in his *Historical Records* has already set up the standards for the knights-errant: whatever he says must be true; whatever he does must be fruitful; whatever he promises must be sincere; he does not treasure his own body, but he will be there when gentleman is in trouble.² However, as early as in the third century B.C., Han Fei (d. 233 B.C), an important legalist thinker, marked, “knights-errant violate rules by practicing martial arts,”³ which became a representative opinion that the administrators had towards knights-errant. Unlike Samurai class in Japan, Chinese knights-errant did not belong to any traditional Chinese social class⁴, and knight-errant novels or stories were basically not included in the mainstream of Chinese literature.

However, knight-errant novels and stories as a genre were developed with the growth of Chinese fiction, sharing common features that Chinese fictions had in the corresponding periods. As Paul S. Ropp pointed out, fiction in China evolved from shorter to longer forms. In the fourth century A.D., short notes, tales, observations, and anecdotes called biji, literally meaning “notes,” became popular. Sometimes, they were nothing but jottings, mostly a paragraph or two in length. When it came to Tang Dynasty (618-906), a longer and more precisely defined type of

¹ Sima Qian was considered as the founder of the great Chinese tradition of historical scholarship, which remained a highly influential part of Chinese intellectual life until modern times.


story evolved called *chuanqi*, literally meaning “propagation of wonders.” The authors of both categories were delighted in the strange, the supernatural, and the bizarre figures and stories, although the *chuanqi* stories dealt with a broader range of fictional topics, including love, knight-errantry, and a variety of historical themes. Ropp also summarized other forms of Chinese traditional fictions reflecting the didactic emphasis, two most important of which are the *pianwen*, and the *gong’an*. The former one, the *pianwen* are Buddhist-inspired tales of moral retribution in parallel prose of alternating verse and prose; the latter one, the *gong’an* are detective stories. The *pianwen*’s emphasis on moral retribution came to be a main feature of most later Chinese short stories. In the *gong’an*, a crime is committed, often in full view of the reader. A magistrate then proceeds to solve the crime, usually through elaborate and clever stratagems. The suspense is not in discovering the criminal but in following the magistrate’s thought and action to see how justice will be served. No matter it was the Buddhist-inspired tales or the detective stories, the knights-errant were seen, wandering in and out. Especially after the *gong’an* booming in Song and Yuan Dynasties (960-1368), the civilian people began to accept the popularized figure of knights-errant.

When the full-length novels eventually appeared in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Chinese had already seen the golden ages of nearly all other major literary genres. By the end of the Ming, the *chuanqi* reached its acme in the work of Pu Songling, who wrote a marvelous collection titled *Strange Stories from Liaozhai* (*Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*), which is a collection of short ghost stories, blending humor, satire, mild eroticism, reporting exotic or strange phenomena, terrifying vivid descriptions of suffering and injustice. The short *chuanqi* finally grew into long

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4 Referring to *shi* [officials], *nong* [farmers], *gong* [artisans], and *shang* [merchants].
and coherent works, the most representative of which is *Journey to the West* (*Xi You Ji*). As of the other branch, historical records were developed into *tongsu yanyi*, literally meaning to elucidate and popularize history, by adding legendary and popular elements, such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Yan Yi*), and *Water Margin* (*Shui Hu Zhuan*). Gradually, the trace of history was desalted, and the two branches of Ming novels were incorporated and reached the maturity in *The Story of the Stone* (*Hong Lou Meng*) in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). These four novels in the Ming and Qing periods are considered as Four Chinese Classical Masterworks, they were regarded as popular literature at their time, though.

Patrick Hanan has identified three distinct literatures in the Chinese tradition corresponding to three general audiences. The bulk of the population, illiterate and relatively poor, enjoyed an oral tradition, consisting of stories told in vernacular Chinese at marketplaces and in urban entertainment districts. For the highly educated literati class literature included the short tale in classical Chinese, the highly allusive written language of officialdom that required years of study to master. From at least the fourteenth century on, a written vernacular literature that drew of both oral and classical traditions also developed; it appealed especially to an urban “middle class” of semiliterate shopkeepers, merchants, artisans, clerks, bookkeepers, and low-level officials. Many highly educated writers also borrowed the storytellers’ conventions in writing these stories for a relatively well-educated reading public.\(^7\) The first and the third categories are both considered as part of Chinese popular culture, distinctively differentiated from the classics.

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\(^6\) Ibid.

Jin Yong's novels are mostly of the third category. He inherited and was inspired by the Chinese classic novels; at the same time, he inputs modern language elements into his writing. On the traditional side, Jin Yong occasionally interspersed his narratives with verses in classical Chinese, popular songs, sayings, and ballads, sometimes even applied existed anecdotes and unofficial history, which help popularize his novels by adding quasi-authenticity to the plot; moreover, he digests Chinese philosophic and traditional worldview, interweaving them into the plots. To meet the taste of modern readers, he skillfully combines the traditional elements with modern writing skills, which differentiated him from his peers, especially the westernized knight-errant novelists, such as Gu Long and Wen Rui'an.

Even though there are not typical knights-errant as major roles in the Four Chinese Classical Masterworks, Jin Yong inherited the traditional nature of Chinese traditional novels, revealing various aspects of the society, of Chinese humanity, of Chinese-styled fantasy, and of many more. In this sense, one can trace Jin Yong's knight-errant novels back to the tradition of the Four Chinese Classical Masterworks.

*Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is a historical narrative based on the dissolution of the Han Dynasty into three competing kingdoms after A.D. 220. The main characters, Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei are model heroes. They swear an oath of brotherhood at first, and much of the rest of the story tells the consequence of this act. This brotherhood "celebrates the Confucian virtue that personal loyalty in a good cause assumes and even surpasses the force of blood ties." The description on various complicated struggling for power in an era of dynastic collapse must have provided Jin Yong with a good example. In his *Eight Demigods and Devils*, Jin Yong

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* In *Water Margin*, those heroes are bandits, not knights-errant.
exhibits the chaotic situation and the political struggling among the Northern Song, Liao and Jin in the North, Dali in the Southeast, Tibet in the West, and Xixia in the Northwest. The three main roles, Duan Yu, the prince of Dali, Xiao Feng, the general of Liao, and Xu Zhu, the son-in-law of Xixia Emperor, are also sworn brothers. In this book, readers can find out the similar tragic view of human life, whereas with Buddhism enlightening, instead of mere narrating, one sees the pessimistic picture of dynastic collapse, but the view is “ultimately too long-term and too morally confident to be defined as tragic,” as one may view in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Unlike in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Jin Yong did not directly describe battles and wars among different countries in *Eight Demigods and Devils*. Instead, he implied this pessimistic worldview upon the dynasty collapse by employing the Buddhist metaphor: “everything is based on a rule, which is like dream and shadow, which is like dew and electricity, and which should be viewed like this.” This line, when emerging in *Eight Demigods and Devils*, was carved into a bronze mirror in Bodhi Hall of the Shaoling Temple. The various roles’ life experience became the carrier of this metaphor, and Jin Yong’s challenge to the perception that Han people are always orthodox and superior, while the minority tribes are always evil and barbaric, served as the clue. The only heroic figure, Xiao Feng, was brought up by a Han couple near Shaolin Temple. As the leader of the Confraternity of Beggars, an orthodox organization, he was the one fighting against Liao’s invasion, but when it turned out that he was

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9 Ropp, 318.
10 Ibid., 319. Meanwhile, Ropp further explained his view on this point: “The assumption remains that human life goes on, and the narrator (and implicitly his audience) appreciates and affirms the good cause. The confident hope also remains, whatever the concrete evidence to the contrary, that the people will ultimately flock to support the virtuous ruler and allow him to reestablish a just order. It may take centuries, but China’s experience is so long and the Chinese viewpoint so long-term that centuries of disorder, even a few in succession, are not enough to shake this confidence in the eventual return to virtue, peace, and harmony.”
11 一切有为法，如梦幻泡影，如露亦如电，应作如是观。*Jin Yong, Book 22, 748.*
actually the son of a Qidan\textsuperscript{13} general in Liao, he lost everything, whereas his old Han friends used his nationality as an excuse, exercising all evil methods to pursue him and wipe him out, just to grasp the power of the Confraternity of Beggars. As a Qidan people, he saved Liao Emperor's life and was assigned a Liao general to invade Song. Gnawed by psychological conflicts, he kidnapped the Liao Emperor in order that Liao troops retreated from Song territory to save the Song people from the sufferings, but he then realized he betrayed his principle of loyalty to his motherland. No way out, he ended his life by committing suicide. His death proved Buddhist awareness of "vacuity:" power, treasure, territory, tribal discrimination, and even one's life principles are all transient and frail. The change of dynasties was just a flip in history, and what persists is what Buddhism preaches vacuity. This reminds readers of the poem in the first chapter of \textit{Romance of the Three Kingdoms}, the last line of which reads: to success or to fail, to be right or to be wrong, it is written in water; those stories in the past and at present are now the topics of chats.\textsuperscript{14} However, what is more in \textit{Eight Demigods and Devils} is the Buddhist leniency, sacrificing oneself to save the mass. Enlightened by a monk in the Shaolin Temple, Xiao Feng finally killed himself to save the people from wars.

Considered as a betrayer who was also betrayed by friendship and personal loyalty, Xiao Feng's painful struggles deeply depict an anti-traditional Chinese hero. Chinese traditional heroes, by contrast, are models worthy of emulation. The basic, optimistic assumption of the \textit{Zuo Zhuan}, the massive semi-historical chronicle compiled in the fourth century B.C., was that the virtuous man would be rewarded here and now — by promotions, honors, and status.\textsuperscript{15} In

\textsuperscript{12} Duan Yu is too easy-going and Xu Zhu is too naïve, to be counted as heroes.

\textsuperscript{13} Qidan was one of the minority tribes in Northern China.

\textsuperscript{14} 是非成败转头空，古今多少事，都付笑谈中。

Romance of the Three Kingdoms, nearly all heroes are of this type. Before Xiao Feng, Jin Yong had enough traditional heroes of this type, such as Chen Jialuo in The Story of Book and Sword, Guo Jing in The Legends of Condor Heroes and in The Return of Condor Heroes, Hu Fei in The Legends of Fox Volant, Zhang Wuji in Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber, but Xiao Feng is obviously not. He is Greek-styled and tragically dramatized. Probably this is one of Jin Yong’s attempts to break through tradition.

Furthermore, Buddhism and Buddhist doctrine are greatly held in esteem in Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels by the incarnation of the Shaolin Temple since there is a famous saying quoting that “all gongfu originates from Shaolin.” The Shaolin Temple represents mystery and the occult to an incredible extent. The abbot of the Shaolin Temple is usually the spiritual leader as well as the arbitrator of right and wrong of the whole knight-errant world. They usually hold the rule to follow the mandate of nature, comply with the will of heaven, and leave the offensive and defensive movements to take their own courses. Even though the Shaolin gongfu is not always the most powerful in the novels. The Buddhist vacuity, in which a mortal human being cultivates himself to be a Buddha who has no ego, and totally loses his mundane identity, always prevails the stronger with evil spirit. From this angle, Jin Yong preaches that Buddhist nature is comprehensive and profound. Moreover, as martial arts are concerned, there alludes Buddhist metaphor: the highest level one can achieve is to try to forget all sets of movements he masters, concentrating his mind on entering into the realm of syncretism of man and nature, only till when can he be an element in the nature, to use anything in the nature as fatal weapon.

Numerous roles and characters in Jin Yong’s novels were saved and enlightened by Buddhism, as Xiao Yuanshan and Murong Bo in Eight Demigods and Devils, and Xie Xun in
Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber, and Qiu Qianren in The Legends of Condor Heroes and The Return of Condor Heroes.

Ironically, the Shaolin monks are depicted by Jin Yong, in some occasions, as narrow-minded and stubborn. In The Duke of the Mount Deer, they are flattery; in Laughing Proudly at the World, they force Linghu Chong to join into Shaolin Sect in order to save his life; in Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber, they haggle over trivia and are shamed by Mongolian troops. In fact, Buddhism is not the only solution in Jin Yong’s novels. Even in Eight Demigods and Devils, which is regarded to have more Buddhist enlightenment than other Jin Yong’s novels, the Buddhist-Taoist-Confucian allegorical interpretation beneath the storyline is clear enough. Nevertheless, with Buddhist and Taoist monks wandering in and out of the story, his novels are always full of religious wisdom, revealing his critics of greed and his amusement at human absurdities. His major heroes, however, are usually endowed with his appreciation for filial devotion, humaneness and loyalty, which are overwhelmingly of Confucian tradition. Yet, his heroes are knights-errant who were defined by Han Fei as “violating rules by practicing martial arts” twenty-three centuries ago. In order that they are still Confucian heroes, Jin Yong sets them in all types of chaos and has them shoulder the responsibility of saving the country from foreign invasion, or rescuing the people from tyranny. In this sense, his heroes resemble the heroes in Water Margin.

Water Margin is considered as a former originator of knight-errant novels. It is a story about a band of outlaws in the Northern Song Dynasty (1101-1125), and the one hundred and eight heroes are mostly martial arts masters. Compared with Romance of the Three Kingdoms, this novel is far less rooted in historical events and far more indebted to the vernacular short
story tradition. The vernacular language, which is far more colloquial than Romance of the Three Kingdoms, was what Jin Yong applies to his knight-errant novels. Besides, its style, which is far less dependent on historical narratives, was also help form the style of most of Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels. In his first novel, The Story of Book and Sword, there are obvious vestiges of imitation from the chapter title to the language, and to the description of the martial arts and heroes’ personalities. In both The Story of Book and Sword and Water Margin, the bandits are frequently the heroes, but the government officials, right up to the emperor, are either ignored or portrayed as weak, misguided, venal, and corrupt. Chen Jialuo, a visibly “Song Jiang styled” leader. Basically, they are well educated with good family background, but Song Jiang was forced to revolt to Song Government, whereas Chen Jialuo subjectively gave up his family fortune and status, trying to persuade his blood brother, Emperor Qianlong, to drive the Manchus out and become a Han emperor.

As a traditional novel, Water Margin enhanced the virtues of righteousness, loyalty, and justice, which are quite respectable Confucian virtues. As a result, Song Jiang and his fellows finally have no choice but to surrender to the government in order to trade for recognition of the Confucian virtues. Like Water Margin, The Story of Book and Sword also marks several events that the “Red Flower Society” has done against Qing Government. Jin Yong even used similar language to describe the fights between the “bandits” and government. It is probably not a coincidence. When Jin Yong sketched the characters and plots of his first novel, Water Margin

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16 Ibid.
17 Evident examples could be easily found Jin Yong, Book 1, 251-330.
18 Ropp, 320.
19 Chen Jialuo, the son of a Prime Minister, is even more “noble” than Song Jiang, who was the son of a country gentleman.
20 One example is the book the bandits designed to kidnap the emperor. In The Story of Book and Sword, Qianglong was kidnapped by the “Red Flower Society” when he went to visit a famous prostitute Yu Ruyi, and in Water Margin, Song Hui Zong was kidnapped when he slept with another as famous prostitute Li Shishi.
must have been there in his mind as a model. The vestiges can be found in his second novel, *The Sword Tainted with Royal Blood*, as well, but the imitation was restricted to a smaller scale, only after Chapter Ten when Yuan Chengzhi obtained the treasures and became the leader of all the smaller tongs. The stress also moved on personal revenge rather than nationalism. His third novel, *The Legends of Condor Heroes*, however, has already cast off the influence of *Water Margin*, and eventually started Jin Yong’s own and peculiar style. What left are the types of vivid characterizations of brave exciting heroes who are fun-loving, hard-drinking, loyal companions to the death. What kept unchanged is the major influence of Confucianism.

Confucianism teaches people how to cultivate one’s personality and then to regulate the world externally. As a group, knights-errant in Jin Yong’s novels do not necessarily obey the laws of the country formulated by emperors and officials, but the laws of the knight-errant sects and societies they belong to, such as Shaolin Sect, Wudang Sect, Heaven and Earth Society. The laws of most of the sects and societies are almost the replications of Confucianism. Confucius preaches setting for high ideals, fearing no evil, and always fighting for justice, emphasizes on respecting one’s master and the elders, keeping promise and never betraying one’s own sect and country. The laws of life acknowledged among the knights-errant have overall supremacy, though fame, status, face-saving and fighting skills are important. Those who break the laws to gain fame or wealth will be hunted down to death by the knights-errant society with a sense of justice.

As in the Confucianism, Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels often embody the axiom that the benevolent is invincible. In most cases, Jin Yong’s heroes are the model master with righteousness and benevolence beside first-class martial arts. The power of the heroes, however, depends less on the martial arts than their “great and profound love for all mankind.” The
emphasis on hierarchy is another Confucian feature embodied. In a special hierarchical social
group ranked by the level of martial arts, those who have lower rank and lower level of martial
arts have less value, and those who betray or are dismissed by their sects are distained.
Interestingly, Jin Yong created a hypocritical junzi, or man with virtue, in Laughing Proudly at
the World as a foil up to the Taoist hero Linghu Chong. Yue Buqun, the master of Linghu Chong
and the head of Huashan Sect, is considered as a junzi by the peers. His behaviors comply with
every Confucian rule. However, on the sly, he framed up his innocent disciples, traded off his
own daughter’s marriage, just to get a book of gongfu, so as to be the head of the knight-errant
world. Through him, Jin Yong criticized the hypocrite, who shows to the world as a devoted
Confucian.

Besides, a knight-errant who only perfects himself is not a perfect hero. As in The Return
of Condor Heroes, Guo Jing instructed Yang Guo that a great knight-errant is the one who cares
the nation and the mass. As a paragon, he guided the defense of Xiangyang City to prevent
Mongolians’ further invasion for sixteen years, and at the end sacrificed his life in a defensive
war. Not only that, he told Yang Guo to value the nation’s profit and to undertake the task to
save the nation and the mass. As rebellious as Yang Guo was, he accomplished quite a few grant
and vigorous deeds before retreating from the world. It is exactly the Confucius creed that the
rise and fall of the nation is the concern of every man. Many of Jin Yong’s novels are set in
turbulent period in Song, Ming or Qing Dynasty. All of the heroes such as Guo Jin, Yang Guo,
Yuan Chengzhi and Zhang Wuji suffer misfortunes in childhood, and stand the hardest trials. In
the end, they shoulder heavy responsibility to defend the nation. From the children in the trouble
times to the hero saviors, they embody the Confucius sense of mission to take the nation’s
responsibility as their owns. They die to achieve virtues as Mencius said: money cannot
degenerate them, evil force cannot subdue them, and poverty and destitution cannot modify them. These are the genuine incarnations of the Confucius spirits. One of Jin Yong's original contribution lies in that he opens up a new road for knights-errant, rather than intellectuals, to carry out national undertakings by doing sublime deeds, and thus raise them to a level of dazzled national heroes.

In spite of the heavy influence of Confucianism, Jin Yong does emphasize more on individuality than the traditional novelists, who generally viewed human nature as very malleable and as heavily influenced by the larger society. But the shift of stress is very limited. His heroes, who wish to shape their own destiny, have to struggle hard against the view on the broad canvas of human society. The most representative is Yang Guo, who is the only anti-traditional rebel, but who is depicted positively as a hero. He dared to dismiss his orthodox master and prostrated a girl who was only four years older than him as his new master. When the master and student fell in love with each other, they decided to marry each other, despite the strict etiquettes and customs at that time. Therefore, they came across countless obstructions and heartbreaking separations, not to mention the distains from everywhere. Eventually, Jin Yong could not but endow them with Taoism, having them happily enjoy reclusion when they finally reunited after sixteen years' departure. From another angle, this also indicates that Jin Yong has been very careful not to violate Chinese traditional view of value, of etiquettes and of customs.

Confucianism in Jin Yong's novels applies to a knight-errant world, but all in all, the knights-errant have to listen to the emperor if they are bona fide Confucians. In Water Margin, Song Jiang and his heroes surrender to the government, but Jin Yong's heroes choose to retreat from the world after accomplishing their responsibility. This "out-world" attitude is the opposite
of the active "world ward" Confucian worldview, and rather implies Taoism. It is true that Confucianism is the spiritual backbone of knight-errant novels, whereas if there were not Taoist romance in them, knight-errant novels wouldn't have been so attractive. As Lin Yutan said: "A nation, as a man, has a spontaneous romanticism and spontaneous classicism. Taoism is the romanticism of Chinese spirit, Confucianism the classicism. Everyone has a potential desire to walk on the bare feet."

Taoism is the opposition to Confucian etiquette. As in Jin Yong's knight-errant novels, most of knights-errant have the unconventional and unrestrained dispositions. They are Confucians in politics, but Taoist in behavior. They indulge in emotions: they stand at the edge of the cliff and cry into the air, such as Xie Xun, the Golden Hair Lion King in Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber; they ignore social rituals, concentrate on studying the change of nature, and input it into gongfu with romantic names, such as the Evil East in The Legends of Condor Heroes; they sing loudly to their heart contents while drinking alone in a moonlit light, such as Linghu Chong in Laughing Proudly at the World; they experience the affinity of man and heaven in the tranquil deep mountains, and is eventually enlightened by the nature, such as Zhang Sanfeng, a Taoist monk who founded famous Wudang Sect, in Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber. Even Guo Jin, who seems to always stick to Confucianism, would rather break his promise and not listen to his dead mother's prearranged marriage to marry Hua Zheng, a princess of Mongolia, but to marry his true love, Huan Rong, the daughter of the eccentric Evil East.

It is notable that Jin Yong created countless incredibly fantastic martial arts, many of them may be too powerful to be true, but unlike the Four Chinese Masterworks, he never employed superstition or black arts. In this sense, his novels are realistic, emphasizing humanity. He took advantage of Taoist qigong, or breathing exercises that enhance internal force, to explain
the supernatural capability described in the novels. A great knight-errant not only is required to master many kinds of martial arts, but also should acquire complicated and profound *qigong*, or so-called “internal force”. *Qigong* has no limit, so some knights-errant develop their *qigong* so advanced that they reach the supreme realm of not having the sense of their own existence and their bodies are free of mortal hurts. Besides, Taoism has close ties to pharmacology, magic spell, witchcraft and philter. Jin Yong applies them onto some wizard masters, combined with Chinese traditional medicine, including acupuncture, and pressure points theory, and with Chinese legends of all kinds, so that he created a romantic wonderland for grown-ups, which Confucianism alone fails to do.

Confucianism as the essence of the Chinese direct the heroes to devote for the right and the good, whereas Jin Yong holds that man has the right to resign from his social responsibility. From Chen Jialuo who retreated to the West of China, to Yuan Chengzhi, who escaped to the Southeast Asia, to Yang Guo who simply quit the world with his master, their retreats did not cause harm, but return balance to the original world. The co-existence of Confucians and Taoists embodies Chinese faith in harmony, balance, and a cyclical view of reality that work against the tragic endings. Taoists argued that all situations and qualities contain the seeds of their opposite. Extreme power leads to defeat, extreme wealth to poverty, and any one virtue, if carried to extremes, becomes a vice. In this view, a hero should not be always self-centered, or he will be pointed at by the world. Just like the *gongfu* in the novels, the most powerful tour de force is the one without any tour de force.

Critics often criticize Chinese traditional novels for the holistic and organismic Chinese worldview, which sees life in recurrent cyclical and interrelated patterns, does not encourage the development of the Western-style unilinear plot; the climax or pivotal point in a work occurs not
at the end but two-thirds or three-fourths of the way through the story; Chinese appreciate in the final calming "after flow" a sense of the completion of a cycle, the implicit assumption that "life goes on," and that the completion of one cycle is the prologue of another.\textsuperscript{21} Jin Yong obviously took in this set of Chinese worldview, so none of his novels is tragedy, in spite of tragic characters, though. In \textit{Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber}, this worldview flashed, when Xiao Zhao, the virgin heir to a religious group in Persia, sang the ballad, which reveals life as the ceaseless alternation and interplay of young and old, life and death, rich and poor, wane and wax.\textsuperscript{22} However, the purpose of this religion is to sympathize the mass, which seems in the middle of Confucianism and Taoism.

Other than the Confucian heroes who retreated from the world, there are numerous heroes who stand aloof from worldly affairs from the beginning to the end. Linghu Chong in \textit{Laughing Proudly at the World} is one of them. He has no interests in politics; nor does he have any leadership in organization. He refused to be the head or any group. When he was forced to head the Buddhist nuns of Hengshan Cult, he messed things up. When knowing that various forces were conspiring to unite the knights-errant, his immediate reaction was to withdraw and leave them. He only wanted to enjoy music, swordplay and to stay with friends who are like him. He seeks for art, nature and individuality. However Taoist he is, he still bounds himself by Confucian morals as a perfectionist. On him, Jin Yong, howbeit, tried to achieve balance of Confucianism and Taoism.

There are downright Taoist martial arts masters in Jin Yong’s novels, but they are not counted as knights-errant; neither are they major roles, as a result. Xiao Long Nü and Zhou

\textsuperscript{21} Ropp, 314-5.
\textsuperscript{22} Jin Yong, Book 17,780-1.
Botong in *The Return of Condor Heroes* are good examples. Xiao Long Nü’s quiescence represents Taoist spiritual freedom upon motionless profundity, whereas Zhou Botong’s dynamism indicates peripateticism without deception. That’s why Xiao Long Nü distained all the ritual decorum to marry her student, Yang Guo, and Zhou Botong acted as an old-but-naughty martial arts master when his middle-aged grand-students called him granduncle. Obviously, this is not the mainstream of Jin Yong’s novels. Even though *The Return of Condor Heroes* is the most Taoist book among Jin Yong’s fourteen novels, Xiao Long Nü and Zhou Botong were there to foil the value of the worldview that humaneness and loyalty go first. Yang Guo’s love to Xiao Long Nü reveals the activist’s desire to unload all the social responsibilities.

*Water Margin* has been more appreciated for its drama, rather than for its morality, but *The Story of the Stone* is said unparalleled by any other Chinese traditional novel. As one of Liang Qichao’s associates, Xia Ren declares, “Of our country’s novels none is more wonderful than *Hung-loo meng* [in pinyin: Hong Lou Meng, *The Story of the Stone*]. It may be called a political novel, a novel of human relationships, a philosophical novel, a moral novel.”\(^{23}\) Maybe it is true that Jin Yong’s novels are not comparable to *The Story of the Stone* in terms of the fame, the scale of comments, and the depth of arts, but as far as the sharpness in reflecting social reality, *The Duke of the Mount Deer* reached knight-errant novel’s apogee.

Wei Xiaobao in *The Duke of the Mount Deer* is the only anti-hero playing as a major role. As an illiterate brought up in whorehouse, he applies the worldly savoir-faire to politics, instead of Confucian principles. Ironically, he survived and succeeded in both Kangxi Emperor’s

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government and the Heaven and Earth Society, while these two forces were trying to destroy each other. Barely knowing any martial arts, he muddled along by cheating, bribing, flattering and shifting, but no matter how lazy and how obscene he was, he set store by friendship and tried to help friends generously. Certainly he is not a hero, but from him, the Chinese see their own demerits that they hide in the hypocrisy, while to have a good fortune as he does is everybody’s dream.

It is true that Jin Yong inherited Chinese tradition in novel writing, but what makes Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels so “Chinese” is that he carries Chinese tradition in the stories. Literature conveys a nation’s philosophy and culture, while the essence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have spread and melted away into omnipresent cultural experiences and the code of conduct of Chinese people. During the several thousand years of evolution of Chinese culture, it has been woven so tightly and extensively into the life pattern and the language formation that in the fields by the medium of language, the spiritual traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and the worldly wisdoms still have the countless ties with contemporary Chinese people, and shape their cultural outlooks. Jin Yong carried forward the Chinese tradition by successfully popularizing his novels and bridging to the popular culture.
Chapter Four

Jin Yong’s Knight-errant Novels and Chinese Popular Culture

As early as in 1994, a group of scholars and students from China who were associated by “alt.Chinese.text” published a written proposal to nominate Jin Yong as the candidate of Nobel Prize in Literature. While collecting signatures, they seriously set forth five reasons: 1) Jin Yong’s novels are comprehensive, touching all areas of Chinese tradition, such as philosophy, literature, history, geography, arts, mathematics, medication, agriculture and technology. The various subjects, the grand spectacles, the detailed description and the profound depiction are exceptional in the history of Chinese literature; in case he be awarded, it would greatly expand the chances for the communication between China and the outside of the world, and would enable the world to accelerate their understanding to the Chinese culture; 2) Jin Yong exposes serious themes by popular forms: he successfully discussed various aspects of humanity, and depicted man’s merits and defects; he melted Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism into the stories, shedding the benevolence to the mass in the sufferings; his novels suggest that people do good, be patriotic, stay peace and remove the wicked; reading his novels can intoxicate one’s sentiments in Chinese tradition; 3) Jin Yong’s language is graceful and natural; he inherited the essence of both Chinese traditional vernacular stories and modern novels, giving full play of expressive, rhythmical and musical Chinese language, which sets an example for contemporary Chinese writers; 4) Jin Yong’s storylines are so skillfully designed that he combined the official history with anecdotes nearly flawlessly, which attract readers from different educational background; 5) Jin Yong’s novels belong
to the genre of popular literature, whereas those novels are worth reading many times, which becomes a great influence in Chinese community.\(^1\)

Even though the proposal is not academically influential, it reveals the popularity of Jin Yong’s novels and their value in Chinese readers’ judgment. Six years later in 2000, Gao Xingjian, another Chinese writer living in France, was awarded Nobel Prize in Literature “for an œuvre of universal validity, bitter insights and linguistic ingenuity, which has opened new paths for the Chinese novel and drama.”\(^2\) Even though Gao is the first writer writing in Chinese, his works are far less identified with by most of the Chinese readers than Jin Yong’s.

Popular culture, as the phrase indicates, embodies the cultural tastes of the common public, which is differentiated from the academic and political élite. The product of popular culture must be relatively universal and homogenous in its appeal, with one product or a series of similar product cross-ranging age, educational, income and status differentials. Nevertheless, as in other civilizations in the world, Chinese orthodox culture has been always snobbish, with a strict distinction between “xia li ba ren” [vulgar culture] and “yang chun bai xue” [noble culture].\(^3\) Traditionally, especially in the sphere of the intellectuals, the “vulgar culture,” because of its popularity, is not distingue enough and thus is generally distained. The “noble culture,” on the contrary, because of being abstruse, is worthwhile of being respected and advocated. The differential was resulted from the limited education populace, when the literati intended to defense their privilege.

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\(^3\) In Chinese, 下里巴人 and 阳春白雪.
and superiority. As they held, popular culture appealed to the lowest common denominator of taste rather than refined aesthetic preferences.

It is reasonable to some extent. Nonetheless, as far as literature is concerned, many traditional masterworks used to be of popular catalogue. In fact, the origins of popular culture are dual in nature, i.e. the division between the “popular” and the “popularized.” For example, in history, the Four Masterworks were popular as a “bottom-up” phenomenon, while centuries later, after their value was recognized by the authority, they are popularized, as “top-bottom” phenomenon. Only those works that could stand testing during a long period of time can be called masterpieces, and the criteria of the testing is whether the work has any contribution to the society. In the case of Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels, they fulfilled the mission to bridge between Chinese traditions and the popular culture, especially in Mainland China after 1979.

The dividing line between “non-popular” and “popular” appears very arbitrary, and seems to be drawn differently in China than in Europe. Most Chinese intellectuals still look down upon popular literature as something unimportant, or in any case much less important than elite literature, although something that needs to be recognized because of its economic weight. The Chinese intellectuals’ attitude is partly a reaction to the Chinese government’s condemnation of the experimental ambitions of elite writers as unfortunate foreign influence, with its simultaneous praise of popular literary products for their capacity to create profits.

In the early 1980s, the rush for things traditional in cultural matters was, surely, not only a sign of the wish to compensate for what had been lost or inaccessible to the common citizen during the culturally impoverished years of the Cultural Revolution, but
it was – consciously or unconsciously – an attempt by the intellectual elite to reintroduce to the cultural sphere a more traditional symbolic code, through which a more powerful position for this elite could be reestablished. But it seems that many intellectuals had been fooled by appearances, and had actually neglected the changes in China at large.⁴

Since last emperor of the Qing Dynasty, Puyi, was overthrown in 1912, China’s political and social reform has been wheeling on the three-period circle: the period of defreezing, the period of reform, and the period of reorganization. Correspondently, there emerged three types of cultures influencing China’s society: “the Western culture,” “the revolutionary culture,” and “the coming back of traditional culture.”⁵ This circle started from the New Culture Movement (1915-1927), when the Chinese intellectuals educated in the Western countries introduced Mr. De [democracy] and Mr. Sai [science] into Chinese intelligentsia. After the establishment of People’s Republic of China in 1949, Mainland China was dominated by “the revolutionary culture,” which reached its extremity to break all Chinese cultural traditions during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). When the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party held in 1979 decided to shift the nation’s focus on socialist modernization, the culture stepped into the period of defreezing. Western ideas penetrated Chinese society via Chinese scholars and intellectuals, bringing new breath to the Chinese post-Mao generation, and challenging the Chinese political structure,

⁵ Adopted and translated from Xiaoya Chen, “Three Concept of Culture,” China Spring, January 2000, 73.
including Marxism, Maoism, and the “revolutionary culture” which was formed during the Mao era.

However, Western influence was not powerful and widespread enough to guide successful social movements. Firstly, unlike in Western countries, there was no ready propertied class in post-Mao China. At the beginning of the 1980s reform, the state remained the sole owner of all capital, and the well-educated were basically dependent on the state. China, in the early 1980s, lacked a vibrant middle class that could lead the way toward socio-economic and cultural-ideological changes. Besides, most of the main players at that time came from a handful of elite institutions, such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, as well as Beijing University. Wielding great status, these scholars tended to speak for the “people” and the “nation” in a “transcendental, universalistic posture, often without self-reflexive or self-critical thought about the legitimate violence their privileged position superimposes on social problems and social spaces, on heterogeneous and complex social relations."

Secondly, Western ideas penetrated China immediately after the launch of the “open-door” policy, when the policy itself was still undergoing challenges within the CCP. Deng Xiaoping found no contradiction between the economic progressivism and his conservative politics; yet the two were intrinsically incompatible and could not coexist except as a temporary expedient. The conservative CCP leaders, who were the majority, were not able to tolerate “Westernization,” especially when it touched their political authority. The numerous bouts concerning freedom of literature emphasized this.

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Moreover, solutions for China’s problems often could not be drawn from Western ideas, because the nation’s difficulties were found in different Chinese social and political contexts. The terms “democracy” and “freedom” did not even exist in the Chinese language. The obscure people, especially the less educated who has been the absolute majority in Chinese society, had been overwhelmed by Chinese tradition, in particular, Confucianism, in which “hierarchy” and “obedience” prevailed, rather than “equality” and “liberty.” That probably is why, although the masses often sympathized with social movements, they were reluctant to support them. Mao Zedong’s success during his revolution came from his success in awakening the peasants and promising them a better future. Deng Xiaoping used the same strategy in his reform efforts, but in a more pragmatic way, which turned the dream to become rich and strong into “modern nationalism.” “Bourgeois” Western ideas were successfully planted in urban areas, penetrating into ideological realms among the educated. However, it would take time for these ideas to permeate the whole of Chinese society.

Consequently, there appeared “cultural vacuum” among the mass: the “revolutionary culture” has already been folded into memory; the “Western culture” proves not the remedy to the case; the “traditional culture” was knocked out completely. Chinese intellectuals, however, remain bound by the traditional sense of social responsibility, looking for a way of expressing themselves to the extent of their abilities. When comparing eras of Chinese history, Chinese intellectuals find the twentieth century to have been full of dreams and reflections. Having experienced the rise and fall of Western influence and revolutionary powers, China’s intellectuals returned to Chinese traditional culture, trying to find a solution to China’s future that would suit the Chinese
most, and also would be in accord with balance and discipline, which Chinese ancient philosophy emphasized. Now that the umbilical cord connecting the tradition was cut off, and the revival of Chinese tradition lacks the populace support. Consequently, Neo-Confucianism rose to the center of discussion among Chinese intellectuals in the 1990s. There are many books introducing Chinese traditional thoughts and philosophy, which are good and scholarly, but they are mostly written in a very clumsy and hard-to-read style. Spoiled by the popular literature and Western "individuality," Chinese readers, especially young readers, do not bother to read the obsolete texts.

However, Jin Yong's knight-errant novels, when they were introduced to Mainland China as underground literature, satisfied the desire of the readers who had already been bored by the homiletic texts. Besides, the pure "Chineseness," together with the easy reading but literally graceful language, pleased ordinary readers. As noted by Geremie Barmé, the popularity of knight-errant culture can be seen in relation to a complex of social issues. It was in part a popular response to the official negation of Cultural Revolution ideology, a corollary to the spiritual confusion that ensued and an expression of the longing for a sense of cultural continuity based in popular traditions, rather than on elitist or Confucian/Communist models.⁸

The audience for literature in the 1980s was different in many ways. It was larger, covered more varied social groups and was accessible to people with a wider range of educational levels.⁹ The reason for the popularity lies in that he is able to endow morals

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in the form attracting not only the intellectuals, but also the populace with various backgrounds. It is not deniable that Jin Yong wrote his novels to enhance the popularity of his journal Ming Bao, but Jin Yong won popularity, all in all, is because of the traditional “Chineseness” reflecting in the stories. Even the Communist founding leader, Mao Zedong, wrote poems totally in the old style. People could remember his poems and recite them, but people couldn’t remember other new poems written in the Western style. There was little or no attempt to draw on the traditions of the past and evolve a new style based on those traditions. It was the hunger created by that vacuum that Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels have filled. People like adventures and like to read adventure stories. But he also identifies that “Chineseness” of his novels as an important element in their continuing success. Besides the style, the roles in his novels are thinking and acting in a very Chinese way, without any taint of the Western influence. Readers are easy to find themselves in the stories. As the story goes, people can find a passionate release, even if the actual fighting is fairly meaningless. The heroes of Jin Yong’s novels do not have to worry about distinguishing the good from the bad, nor do they care one whit for convention, propriety, or the law; they do what they feel like, have no regrets and no complaints. Although they endure incredible hardships in the end poetic justice is always theirs. This clearly gives intellectuals who are totally powerless to extricate themselves from the Way of the Golden Mean a certain kind of spiritual comfort.\(^{10}\)

Readers were excited by the personal possibilities with which the reforms presented them in the 1980s and 1990s, but they were also frustrated by their impotence in the face of the actual economic maelstrom in which they lived. Burdened by heavy

workloads and tons of social norms, they did not dare go against prevailing conventions, attempt to leave their mark on the world, or create any excitement in their lives. Probably what they expect to find in Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels is rather an escape than an active learning, “a momentary reprieve in the chivalrous personalities of heroes who were willing to fight to the death to protect their integrity.”¹¹

Besides, the generation after the Great Cultural Revolution, just like the Lost Generation in the West after World War II, seeks to overcome the sense of desperate isolation they felt after the damage of their spiritual world. Jin Yong’s novels provided them the chance relating the knights-errant with their ideal selves, who did whatever they wanted to do with unmatchable capability and good luck against execrable surroundings. In the past, the Chinese intellectuals and hermits could abandon the world for a reclusive life in the mountains, whereas the modern people have no alternative but to search for an escape in fictions.

Moreover, the popularity of Jin Yong’s novels owes much to its intelligibility and its reflection of the traditional culture. From the angle of social panorama, roles in Jin Yong’s novels also carry the cultural spirit of “Chineseness” from all social classes. Their attitudes to value and moral principles are in common with whole society. Therefore, the knight-errant novels embody the traditional culture of whole society. For the Chinese, the essence of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have spread and melted away into omnipresent cultural experiences and the code of conduct of Chinese people. During the several thousand years of Chinese cultural evolution, it has been woven so tightly and extensively into the life pattern and the language formation that in the fields by the

¹¹ Ibid.
medium of Chinese language, the spiritual traditions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism still have the countless ties with contemporary Chinese people, and shape their cultural outlooks. As a result, contemporary readers can be entertained in a direct and intrinsic way by reading knight-errant novels in which the spirits of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are ubiquitous.

However, modern Chinese, being exposed to the Western civilization, they do not reconcile to stay as "another brick in the wall," just like their ancestors did. Controversially, the by-product of the industrialized civilization turns out to be the loss of individuality. The features of Jin Yong's novels that connect the traditions with the contemporary society, and to make the readers project their empathy into the novels and get what they lack for and what they are losing in reality, win Jin Yong universal praises.

Besides, everyone has a desire to feel self-satisfied and self-esteemned. Yet with the evolution of industry civilization, human-beings seem too obscure to differentiate themselves from the others. And the incarnations of so-called collective heroism are model workers who are not heroic enough to idols in people's minds. Therefore, in the stories where there are omnipotent heroes, experiencing all kinds of sufferings and fortunes, it is easy to place the "self" into the adventures, so that one spares himself from countless tribulations and trials of life, to kill the sense of being a loser, dreaming that they have seized the fate by the throat. It is the feeling of powerlessness facing the rapidly changing world that makes people want something as a savior. As Barmé commented, while there may be no direct, easily identified connection between the 1980s and 1990s cultural liumang, or hooligan, the knight-errant, and the unconventional figures of tradition, a reading of Chinese literature and criticism reveals a generic
relationship. Knights-errant fought for justice and sometimes simply self-righteous toughs, formed a special and usually admired group in traditional China. The ideals of the knight-errant are generally enunciated as altruism, justice, individual freedom, personal loyalty, courage, truthfulness and mutual faith, honor and fame, generosity, and contempt for wealth.  

Knight-errant novels also meet people’s nostalgia psychology. According to Bermé, the word nostalgia originally connoted a longing for or painful yearning to return home. Nostalgia is a condition of being lost to a familiar abode, an exile from home and, as such, is said to be loosely related to the homing instinct. The widespread condition of nostalgia can be symptomatic of a social interior dialogue regarding the irrevocable past, an identification with what is perceived as having been lost. Good knight-errant novels are especially able to touch people’s nostalgic nerves. By quoting famous poems, idioms, lyrics, or having historical figures jumping in and out of the stories, readers will be brought into a makeup world.

Based on Bermé’s theory, nostalgia is a central feature in how people form, maintain, and reconstruct a sense of self and the place of the individual in the world. Nostalgia develops usually in the face of present fears, disquiet about the state of affairs, and uncertainty about the future. Confronted with social anomie and disjunction, nostalgia provides a sense of continuity.

It is also worth mentioning that in Jin Yong’s novels, the heroes show more Buddhist tendency. Buddhists’ merciful feelings for all mankind replace the simple

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12 Bermé, 82.
13 Ibid., 317.
14 Ibid., 319.
Confucian moral judgment. They are often placed in dilemma that they have a Buddhism insight into life (they are not willing to do any killing) while the Confucian sense of mission orders them about to carry out fights and kills. The Buddhist thinking here and there enhances the aesthetic grade, makes knight-errant novels worth to be reviewed and reread. This is an important reason why knight-errant novels suit both refined and popular tastes.

The knight-errant novel is a balm to reader’s heart. It has almost all the proper ingredients. Knights-errant come out resting hand on swords, prepare to rescue everyone in trouble; dauntless knight-errant overrun the whole world and go anywhere as they please; their excellence in martial arts enable them to achieve everything they want to. Although they believe in the code of brotherhood, the spirit of the knight-errant reflected by the swordsmen is the negation of the outlook on life of no individual character and hypocrisy. They break the bandage of mankind, and surpass their limits of life by rescuing other people. Reader’s imagination is sparker by knight-errant novels that place all adventure – fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, chase, escapes, true love, miracles – in the past tense, and the empathy to be an unmatched swordsmen, roaming freely from place to place, loving deed, and help those who in need, make readers’ lives glistened with wonder luster — in the present tense. In this sense, they are the “fairy-tales” for the grown-ups.

Meanwhile, knight-errant novels, as subculture, differed from the still powerful construct of mainstream values and lifestyles. The readers in Mainland China approached Jin Yong’s novels via pirated versions. From the “popular” to the “popularized,” TV
series and movies from Hong Kong and Taiwan played a vital role. What happened in the
US in the 1950s happened in China in the 1980s. Rising incomes and open trade resulting
from the Deng economic reforms ushered in the Television Revolution. Owning a TV
was the status symbol of a good living in the 1980s, and now a center of household
culture. As early as in 1981, the movie Shaolin Temple won people’s heart, which
forecast the booming of knight-errant novels. In 1982, Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels
were introduced among a small circle of readers. But it was in 1983, when Huo Yuanjia, a
TV series from Hong Kong was widely disseminated, that the traditional gongfu
appealed Chinese youngsters’, especially the teenagers’ life. By that time, Jin Yong’s
novels had already enjoyed great popularity among the Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan
and other Chinese speaking community. In the late 1970s, the Shaw Brothers made
screen versions of a number of Jin Yong’s most famous novels, and the Hong Kong
woman director Ann Hui (Xu Anhua) made a two-part movies of Jin’s The Story of Book
and Sword in the mainland, using the scenery of Hangzhou and Xinjiang. The genre has
been more readily adapted to lengthy television serials. In the mid-1980s, as the
publishing and media industries became economically more independent, reprises of the
past accrued a market value. Mainland China entered the age of spontaneous and not
merely state-directed, revivals. Hong Kong and Taiwan played a crucial role in this by
providing a ready audience for films and books that dwelled on the imperial past.

Traditional popular knight-errant culture underwent a revival on the mainland in
the 1980s, fostered initially by the introduction of gongfu literature, movies, and

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15 Huo Yuanjia tells a story of a Gongfu expert named Ho Yuanjia fighting against the foreign invaders. In
the story, Chinese nationalism and patriotism are praised.
16 Barmé, Notes 405.
television series from Hong Kong, and it was this refined and modernized version of an ancient subculture that was now re-imported to the mainland. Nonetheless, it was the popularity of Jin Yong's knight-errant novels that initiated the booming of gongfu movies and TV series, so that the tradition this subculture bears became popularized in Mainland China. With the development of shooting techniques, the gongfu movies also gain fame in the world. From Jackie Chan, to Jet Lee, and the Oscar Award movie Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon\(^{18}\), the Chinese traditions feature in those movies and TV series are the selling points, while virtually, the popularity the movies bear disseminates Chinese traditional culture into other cultures.

During the 1980s, popular literature appeared in Mainland China as an important economic and cultural factor. The more liberal cultural policies made it possible to import cultural products from abroad; the economic reforms introduced elements of market economy even into the cultural sphere. Since then, Jin Yong's knight-errant novels, promulgating by modern media, became the representative entertaining culture, which is actually much more than popular culture. The tradition the novels undertake, in fact, bridge over the gap that the "Great Cultural Revolution" created in Mainland China, and settle for the people's psychology of escape, and nostalgia, providing with them an outlet to abreact their discontentment towards reality, and functioning as the media to accomplish the cultural continuity.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 82.
\(^{18}\) Directed by Ang Lee, this movie obtained several Oscar Awards in 2001.
Conclusion

In the long history of Chinese literature and culture before the Ming Dynasty, su (vulgar) and ya (classic elegance) were always antagonistic to each other. The vulgar culture belonged to civilians, while the classical culture was the entertainment and products of the educated and the upper class. Things changed upon the birth of Chinese novel and stories as a genre, which provides the vulgar culture the chance to turn to the “classics” with the widespread of education and the recognition from the orthodox. When it comes to the 21st Century, the popular culture, as it gets popularized, is possible to become the classics. In fact, nowadays, the distinction between the popular culture and classical culture is blurred. However, there are still not many classical works in contemporary China, which makes “Jin Yong Miracle” more outstanding.

Out of question, Jin Yong’s success mostly lies in his special synthesis of the Chinese tradition and popular culture, of the old and contemporary history. He skillfully mixed historical factors with his own imagination; while recurring to the popularity of his novels, he advocated Chinese tradition effectively, which he wove into the stories as a syncretic blend of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. The “Chineseness” complies with the Chinese readers’ mentality, wakens their self-recognition buried deep in mind, and spreads the essential features of the Chinese culture to other Asian countries, even into other alien cultures in the world, with more and more languages that Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels are being translated into.

This is very precious for the Chinese culture today when the Chinese
underwent the oppressive humiliation from the foreign invasion and the dream-broken desperation from internal political movements in the past century. The young Chinese generation’s indifference to the tradition endangered China of facing the cultural crisis of being assimilated. Jin Yong’s knight-errant novels, based on their popularity and the resounding success in abridging into TV and movie versions, are much more accepted and welcomed, which in fact activates the passion of the readers and transmits the tradition into the younger generations.

A current Chinese writer, Wang Shuo, once challenged Jin Yong and his novels, mentioning him in the same breath with four Hong Kong popular singers, with an air of defiance to declare that his novels are the representative of vulgar culture and the sheer copy of *Water Margin*. However, it is not deniable that no other Chinese writer is as popular as Jin Yong is. It is notable that after Jin Yong ceased writing knight-errant novels in the 1970s, there has not been any significant novels of the same genre ever so successful. As a representative knight-errant novelist in popular culture, his novels function as a bridge over the cultural gap that the history left the Chinese with. “Jin Yong phenomenon” also needs more studies.

The thesis is but a preliminary attempt to explain the phenomenon theoretically. When there is much controversy over this issue, I hope that the thesis offers a few commonplace remarks so that others may come up with valuable opinion.
Jin Yong’s Fourteen Knight-errant Novels:

书剑恩仇录 (Shu Jian En Chou Lu)  The Story of Book and Sword
Finished in 1955
Historical background: Qing Dynasty, during the reign of Emperor Qianlong

碧血剑 (Bi Xue Jian)  The Sword Tainted with Royal Blood
Finished in 1956
Historical background: End of Ming Dynasty

射雕英雄传 (She Diao Ying Xiong Zhuan)  The Legends of Condor Heroes
From 1957 to 1959
Historical background: South Song Dynasty

雪山飞狐 (Xue Shan Fei Hu)  Fox Volant in the Snow Mountain
Finished in 1959
Historical background: Qing Dynasty, during the reign of Emperor Qianlong

神雕侠侣 (Shen Diao Xia Lu)  The Return of Condor Heroes
From 1959 to 1962
Historical background: End of Southern Song Dynasty

飞狐外传 (Fei Hu Wai Zhuan)  The Legends of Fox Volant
From 1960 to 1961
Historical background: Qing Dynasty, during the reign of Emperor Qianlong

白马啸西风 (Bai Ma Xiao Xi Feng)  White Horse Neighing in West Wind
Finished in 1961
Historical background: Unknown

倚天屠龙记 (Yi Tian Tu Long Ji)  Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber
From 1961 to 1963
Historical background: End of Yuan Dynasty
鸳鸯刀 (Yuan Yang Dao)  The Lovers Sabres
Published between 1961 and 1965
Historical background: Qing Dynasty

逃侠诀 (Lian Cheng Jue)  The Deadly Secret
Finished in 1963
Historical background: End of Qing Dynasty

天龙八部 (Tian Long Ba Bu)  Eight Demigods and Devils
Between 1963 to 1967
Historical background: Northern Song Dynasty

笑傲江湖 (Xiao Ao Jiang Hu)  Laughing Proudly at the World
From 1967 to 1969
Historical background: Mid-Ming Dynasty

侠客行 (Xia Ke Xing)  The Quest of Oriental Chivalry
Finished in 1970
Historical background: Mid-Ming Dynasty

鹿鼎记 (Lu Ding Ji)  The Duke of the Mount Deer
From 1969 to 1972
Historical background: Qing Dynasty, during the reign of Emperor Kangxi
Glossary of Proper Nouns

Abahai  阿拔亥，即皇太极
An Lee  李安
Azi    阿紫
Ba Jin  巴金
Bai Jian Tang Zhu 百剑堂主
Beggar’s Society 丐帮
Beauty of Beauties 绝代佳人
biji    笔记
Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹
Chen Jiahuo 陈家洛
Chongzhen 崇祯
chuangqi 传奇
classical Chinese 文言文
Collection of Jin Yong’s Works  金庸作品集
Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon 卧虎藏龙
Da Gong Bao 大公报
Da Mo Ying Xiong Zhuan 大漠英雄传
Dali    大理
Dan Yang Jiao An  丹阳教案
Deng Xiaoping 邓小平
Ding Dian 丁典
Dorgon 多尔衮
Dragon and Tiger Fighting in the Capital  龙虎斗京华
Dragon Saber 剑龙刀
Duan Yu 段誉
Eight Diagrams 八卦
eighteen palm-strikes to defeat dragon 降龙十八掌
Evil East 东邪

Female Knight-errant in Huang Jiang (Huang Jiang Nü Xia) 荒江女侠

Gao Xingjian 高行健

Girl In Love 有女怀春
gong'an 公案

Gongsun Gu 公孙谷

Green Wood Sect 青木堂

Gu Long 古龙

Guo Jing 郭靖

Haining Chao 海宁潮

Han Fei 韩非

Hanlin 翰林

Heaven and Earth Society 天地会

Heaven Sword 倚天剑

Hengshan Cult 恒山派

“Historical Comments on Yuan Chonghuan” 袁崇焕评传

Hong Kong Business Journal 香港商报

Hu Fei 胡斐

Hu Juren 胡菊人

Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦

Hua Zheng 华筝

Huang Jundong 黄俊东

Huang Rong 黄蓉

Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲

Huo Yuanjia 霍元甲

Jackie Chan 成龙

Jet Lee 李连杰

Jiang Zeming 江泽民

Jin Yong 金庸
Jinshi 进士
“Jiuyin Lection” 九阴真经
Journey to the West 西游记
Kangxi 康熙
Liao 辽
Li Muochou 李莫愁
Li Shishi 李师师
Li Zicheng 李自成
Liang Qichao 梁启超
Liang Yusheng 梁羽生
Lin Huan 林欢
Lin Yutan 林语堂
Linghu Chong 令狐冲
Ling Shuanhua 凌霜华
liumang 流氓
Lu Xun 鲁迅
Malicious West 西毒
Mao Zedong 毛泽东
Mei Jiu’ao 梅久鏖
Ming Bao 明报
Ming Bao Monthly 明报月刊
Ming Bao Night News 明报晚报
Ming Bao Weekly 明报周刊
Ming Jiao 明教
Mr. Gold Snake 金蛇郎君
Murong Bo 慕容博
Music In the Midnight 午夜琴声
New Ming Bao Daily 新明日报
Ni Kuang 倪匡
Nie Weiping
North Beggar
Nurhachi
Orchid Flower
pianwen
Princess Changping
Princess Xiangxiang
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Sima Changfeng
Sima Qian
Song Jiang
South Emperor
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“The Adventure of Ali”
"The Charts of Thirteen Swordsmen"  三十三剑客图
The Collection of Jingye Tang  歙业堂诗集
the flower of love  情花
The New Evening Paper  新晚报
the Shaw Brothers  邵氏兄弟影业公司
The Story of Ah Q  阿 Q 正传
The Story of the Stone  红楼梦
the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party

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tongsu yanyi  通俗演义
vernacular Chinese  白话文
Wang Shiyu  王世瑜
Wang Shuo  王朔
Watching China in the North  北望神州
Water Margin  水浒传
wei min suo zhi  维民所止
Wei Xiaobao  韦小宝
Wen Qingqing  温青青
Wen Rui’an  温瑞安
Wudang  武当
Xia Meng  夏梦
Xiao Feng  萧峰
Xiao Long Nü  小龙女
Xiao Yuanshan  萧远山
Xiao Zhao  小昭
Xiangyang
Xie Xun
Xixia
Xu Anhua
Xu Guansan
Xu Zhu
Yang Guo
Yi Jing
Yongzheng
Youxia
Yu Pinhai
Yu Ruyi
Yuan Chengzhi
Yuan Chonghuan
Yue Buqun
Zha Liangyong (or Louis Leung-yung Cha)
Zha Shenxing
Zha Shuqing
Zha Siting
Zha Wenqing
Zhang Sanfeng
Zhang Wuji
Zhou Botong
Zhou Enlai
Zhu Yuanzhang
Zuo Zhan

襄陽
谢逊
西夏
许鞍华
许冠三
虚竹
杨过
易经
雍正
游侠
余品海
玉如意
袁承志
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