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**Ethics of Love and Heroism:
Reading Jin Yong's Martial Arts Fiction and Lacanian Psychoanalysis**

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Abstract

Jin Yong, the best-known novelist of the *wuxia*, or martial arts genre, asks different questions of ethics about love, duty and honour in each of his novels. Lacan's writing is also a journey of ethics, which is relentless in re-shaping the ground upon which any thinking, including its own, is defined. This thesis reads Jin Yong and Lacan together, to extend the Lacanian insight by bringing in materials that have remained foreign to psychoanalytic theory until now. In so doing, it reconfigures criticisms regarding romance, sexuality, and tragedy as a contribution to the field of Chinese literature.

The thesis starts with a brief history of Chinese literature, focusing on martial arts fiction. Lacan's arguments on the master signifier provide insight into crucial themes of the genre, such as *xia* (chivalry, heroism), *zhong* (loyalty to the leadership), and *yi* (allegiance to equals). Each of the following three chapters introduces one key set of Lacanian terms, focused on a diagram: the four discourses, the schema L, and the diagram of sexuation. Each of these presents a different take on Jin Yong and the martial arts genre.

The second chapter looks at the circulation of Jin Yong's novels. It focuses on "Jinology," the Jin Yong scholarship that consists mainly of fan letters and fan writings, which I examine as a discourse in Lacan's quite specific use of that term, as a social link that runs on its own excess and incompleteness. The tragedy of Qiao Feng in *The Demi-Gods and Semi-Demons (Tianlong Babu)* is unfolded in the third chapter, using an insight from Lacan's schema L: Qiao Feng starts fully assuming his subjectivity only when he realizes that there is no Other of the Other, and that the Other does not guarantee justice. The fourth chapter looks at the impossibility of the sexual relationship, and the infinity of desire and drive, by reading the story of the most loved couple in Jin Yong's novels, Yang Guo and Little Dragon Maiden (*Xiaolongnü*) from the novel *The Giant Eagle and Its Companion (Shendiao Xialü)*.

The first two chapters pave the way for the next two chapters' discussions on these characters, whose stories or tragedies present a rich source for an ethical investigation of the forced choice in the conclusion. Yang Guo faces the *Duty or love!* challenge, a double-bind always present in Jin Yong's novels. Qiao Feng's forced choice between two fatherlands, on the other hand, allows us to see the meaning of self-sacrifice, and the terror of freedom to choose. We find that one simply must act even when the sacrifice is for nothing and there is no assurance that the choice made will be the right choice. And when one does act, it will be an event of love, and a moment of ethics.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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Introduction

Not only is the martial arts genre one of the most produced genres in Chinese TV and cinema, it also fascinates audiences worldwide. Hou Hsiao-hsian 侯孝賢 won the best director award in 2015 Cannes Film Festival for *The Assassin* (*Cike Nie Yinni* 刺客聶隱娘), a movie that is based on a prose romance (*chuanqi* 傳奇) of the Tang dynasty, “Nie Yinni 聶隱娘.” While Hou’s work pays homage to a story type that is regarded as the precursor of the martial arts genre (Cao Zhengwen, 46; Jin Yong, appendix, *Ode to Gallantry*), Jin Yong’s novels have always been a source of inspiration for Chinese popular culture. His works have sparked the imagination of comic book writers, games programmers, moviemakers, and TV producers from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The most recent adaptation is a TV drama based on *Ode of Gallantry* (*Xiake Xing* 俠客行). It is shooting now and will be the tenth time this novel has been made into a TV drama or a film.

The Jin Yong phenomenon reached a peak in the 1990s, with his complete works going into yet another new imprint, a fandom growing in the People’s Republic,¹ and the enthusiastic involvement of academics. Several international conferences took place in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the U.S, adding to the already vast body of “Jinology” (*Jinxue* 金學), most of which is made up of fan-produced writings. My project joins the field of Jin Yong studies bringing a theoretical aspect that has not quite been explored in Chinese literature.

The psychoanalytic approach of this thesis sets it apart from the psychologistic readings of atrocity or violence prevailing in Jin Yong studies. The standard explanation can be summed up as this: “the violence [in martial arts fiction] unveils the hidden blood-thirsty desire” of Chinese people, a desire unconsciously repressed by the civilisation (Chen Pingyuan, *Literati’s Chivalric Dreams* 178-83). A similar concept of the “dark side” is also used to explain away villainous behaviour. Critics and Jin Yong himself agree that evil characters would have remained kind-hearted and benevolent were it not for their traumatic past or repressed sexuality. All these trappings of pop culture and the obvious vocabulary of psychoanalysis actually have little to do with psychoanalysis. There are, however, serious psychoanalytic works in Jinology: Zhang Xiaohong 張小虹 on object relation and love, Huang Zonghui 黃宗慧 on fetishism and narcissism, and Wei Lingdun’s “Yang Guo and his Problem,” which looks at the concept of the Name-of-the-Father. These articles will be

¹ Martial arts novels were banned in the two decades after the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949.

mentioned in the relevant chapters of this thesis and some of their points of view will be expanded in my analysis of the Lacanian concepts.

The arguments of this thesis develop alongside the Lacanian triad of the imaginary/symbolic/real. This thesis avoids the imaginary reading that sees “human discourse” in dyadic terms, as no more than a “two-person relation” (*Ecrits* 220). This tendency is discernible in two aspects of literary criticism. The first aspect is the readerly identification between the reader and the fictional character that provides a good role for the readers or audience to identify with, or a bad role to identify against (counter-identification). This argument belongs to the realm of the Lacanian imaginary because it fails to register the symbolic dimension that complicates any two-way communion. By inference, the other common imaginary practice is to focus on the positive or negative attributes of the character, to unearth the “subversive” potential, or to applaud certain “feminist” aspects of the characterisation. We see both of these approaches frequently in critical work on Jin Yong and martial arts fiction. For example, the nature of *xia* 俠 (chivalric gallant, martial arts masters) is defined as the endowment of “great compassion for all” (*weida de tongqing* 偉大的同情).² “Compassion” and other key words such as “sympathy” and “human nature” reveal a perspective on human relations that mis/recognises an egalitarian reciprocity between the involved parties. Yet the imaginary personal relation is always necessarily complicated by the symbolic identification, or the big Other that interpellates the subject with social values and cultural influence, with or without the subject’s knowing or preference. On the other hand, the symbolic realm is inevitably disrupted by the real, for every process of interpellation leaves behind traces and residues that cannot be symbolised or socialised.

The ethics of psychoanalysis is the ethics of the real. No proper ethical decision can be predetermined by human relations or social regulations, and there is no other more suitable arena in which to pursue ethics than in the martial arts genre. The genre of martial arts, or *wuxia* 武俠, foregrounds moral conducts and honour right in its name: *wu* stands for martial arts, *xia* denotes chivalry and heroism. “*Xia* is the goal, while *wu* is but the means to become *xia*, to achieve the state of *xia*” (Tong Yanzhi [Liang Yusheng]). While martial arts novelists draw on genre conventions and attempt to design a series of “standards for right and wrong acknowledged by everyone” (Jin Yong, “A Few Words” 715), they also do so in order to explore the space that is not covered by clear-cut rules and norms. To explore this ambiguous space, which involves unsolved moral issues, slippage

² “Compassion for all” is a much-quoted quality of *xia* (for example, Ye Hongsheng 82). It is first used by Chen Xiaolin 陳曉林 (qtd in Gong Pengcheng 467).

among different social links, as well as clashes between the classic and modern literary traditions, is the duty of the genre, the ethical imperative of *wuxia* novelists.

Jin Yong is no exception. The actions he narrates are laced with dilemmas and difficulties, and each of his novels attempts to re-define the proper conduct of *xia*.³ Lacan's writing is also a journey of ethics. It is relentless in re-shaping the ground upon which any thinking is defined. By reading both of their writings together, my thesis will follow a similar course to inquire into what constitutes a heroic act, and what is the thing called love.

The thesis consists of four chapters. The first two chapters address wider topics such as the history of the genre and the circulation of Jin Yong's work, laying the foundations for the focused discussions of heroic figures and their moral predicaments in the remaining two chapters. Apart from the first chapter, each chapter will introduce one Lacanian matheme: the four discourses, the schema L, and the sexuation diagram.

What is a matheme? And why the diagrams? Matheme is a term coined by Lacan. It derives from "mathematics," as well as "mytheme," the term used by Claude Lévi-Strauss to "denote the basic constituents of mythological systems" (Evans 108). There is indeed a relation between mathematics and myth. For example, as Alenka Zupančič explains, it is from Freud's myth (of the primal horde) that Lacan derives the first two mathemes of the sexuation diagram. For Lacan, "the myth has exactly the same function as the matheme," because his project of mathematisation is to articulate something that "cannot be directly transcribed in the Symbolic, something visible in the Symbolic only by means of its consequences and its impasses" (*Ethics of the Real* 171). In Lacan's discussion of myths and tragedies such as *Oedipus the King*, *Antigone*, and the Claudel trilogy, we can see his attempt at "'formalizing' analytic experience, and not . . . to 'poetize' this experience" (171). The myth is all about the structure, and "the manner in which Lacan treats myth is above all an attempt to disclose this structure, this 'real'" (172). Martial arts fiction belongs to the literary

³ Another aspect of Jin Yong's relentless pursuit can be seen in his twice over revision projects. The first revision involved the editing and some re-writing of the booklets that were the compilation of newspaper serialisations, resulting in *The Collected Works of Jin Yong* (1975-1981). The novels that this thesis looks at are from this collection because it is the edition that most criticism focuses on. A second revision, termed as the "newly revised edition" (*xinxiu ban* 新修版) was published from 1999-2006. This new revision involves editing and re-writing to a greater extent than for the first edition of the collected works. There are even significant plot alterations; although none of the re-writing has any major bearing on the characters and plot developments we look at in this thesis.

genre of fantasy, and fantasy is all about how things are framed and structured. This is why I propose to look at Jin Yong's novels and two of his principal tragic heroes, Qiao Feng 喬峰 who kills himself, and Yang Guo 楊過 whose love relation may have come to a tragic end, in terms of structure and through the framework of Lacan's mathemes and diagrams.

To allow non-Chinese readers to have a further grasp of the moral concepts in the martial arts genre, Chapter 1 "Chinese Novels and the Master Signifiers" provides a brief history of martial arts fiction within Chinese literature. Although there are historical accounts of these two fields in works such as *A Brief History of Chinese fiction* (Lu Xun 魯迅), *The Chinese Knight-Errant* (James J.Y. Liu), *A History of Chinese Xia Culture* (Cao Zhengwen 曹正文), and the introduction "Xiaoshuo, Xia and the Literary Representation of the Female" in *The Sword and the Needle* (Roland Altenburger), I take a different approach. My chapter is informed by Lacan's theory of the master signifier, serving a dual purpose: on the one hand, psychoanalytic theory sheds light on the transformation of the central values and themes in martial arts fiction like *xia*, *zhong* 忠 (national loyalty, loyalty to the leadership), and *yi* 義 (allegiance or loyalty to friends and colleagues); on the other hand, it helps readers who are not familiar with psychoanalysis to understand the Lacanian world view and in particular the four diagrams that will initiate the discussion in the following chapters.

In Chapter 2, "The Jin Yong phenomenon: Publishers, Readers, and the Critic as Hysteric" I look at the Jin Yong phenomenon with Lacan's theory of the four discourses (*Seminar XVII*), which stems from the concept of the master signifier. The chapter starts with a close reading of a fan letter to Jin Yong written by the Chinese literary critic Chen Shih-hsiang 陳世驥. I argue that the relation between Chen and Jin Yong is akin to one of the four discourses or social links, that of the hysteric. Chen's effort produces Jinology, and this particular field of knowledge enacts the social link of the university. As John Christopher Hamm shows in *Paper Swordsmen*, his cultural studies analysis of Jin Yong's fictions, what enwraps Jin Yong's fiction is not only the novelist's aspiration of modernising the genre, but also a series of promotion strategies from Jin Yong's Ming Pao 明報 press cooperative in Hong Kong. This chapter hence is not to identify one particular discourse but to examine how the Jin Yong phenomenon is a complex set of movements and slides among the various discourses. This methodology differs from the discourse analyses of cultural studies.

The next two chapters focus on two novels, *The Demi-Gods and Semi-Demons* (*Tianlong Babu* 天龍八部), and *Giant Eagle and its Companion* (*Companion*) (*Shendiao Xialü* 神鵬俠侶).⁴ Huang Zonghui 黃宗慧 argues thus:

in the masculine world represented in the martial arts fiction, the ‘mission’ assigned to female characters has always been rather fixed: they are there to help depict a subplot of love and hate, to go along with the main plotline that is designed for the male protagonist and as such focuses on loyalty, camaraderie, and the settling of favours and bad blood in the martial arts society. (182)

However, I will argue that the so-called masculine world of martial arts fiction is not as one-sided or biased in Jin Yong’s works. In both *Demi-Gods* and *Companion* we see the double-bind of duty and love dramatised in such a way that it is difficult to tell whether the main plot is the character’s moral struggle or his desire for love.

In Chapter 3, “The Tragic Hero and the Lacanian Subject,” the focus is on Qiao Feng, one of the four protagonists in *Demi-Gods*, and his tragedy will unfold through a discussion of Lacan’s schema L. The schema L draws out two relations that cross and interfere with each other: the personal and imaginary relation between the ego and the small other, and the symbolic and unconscious relation between the subject and the Other as the locus of Truth. At the start of the story, Qiao Feng is a well-respected guild leader who takes pride in living up to the expectations found in the gaze of the Other. Yet Qiao Feng only starts to fully assume his subjectivity of *xia* when he realises that his tragic path is not predetermined by the big Other, or by Karma, for the Other does not guarantee justice and truth—there is no Other of the Other. And yet, Qiao Feng still chooses to sacrifice his life having a full knowledge of the non-existence of the Other, as a consequence of his making the impossible “forced choice” between his Han-Chinese fatherland, and his Khitan homeland.

Chapter 4, titled “Jin Yong’s ‘Love Letter’ and Lacan’s Sexuation Diagram,” will look at love, desire, and drive as they are depicted in *Companion*. The theme song “Oh the world we live in, tell me what is the thing called love” is sung by Li Mochou 李莫愁 throughout the novel. Li with her drive-like persistence is worthy of being on the list of ethical heroines, alongside Medea and

⁴ I follow Hamm’s style by using “Companion” as the abbreviated title of the novel. The use of “Companion” can prevent confusion with the naming of the *Giant Eagle* trilogy, the first book of which is *Eagle-Shooting Heroes* (*Heroes*) (*Shediao Yingxiong Zhuan* 射雕英雄傳).

Antigone, for example. Furthermore, Li no doubt can be seen as an exemplary “female” role, and her characterisation may fit easily into one of the chapters in Altenburger’s *The Sword or the Needle: the Female Knight-Errant (Xia) in Traditional Chinese Narrative*, with its clear emphasis on literary representation of female *xia*. (The film *The Assassin* is based on the same tradition.) One can even say Li is one of the double protagonists in the double narration of *Companion*, alongside Yang Guo and his romance with Little Dragon Maiden (*Xiaolongnü* 小龍女), though this chapter will follow only the latter. Yang Guo’s progression into a *xia*, and his determination not to sacrifice his love for Maiden to the national cause best illustrates the structure or logic of sexuation (a term that for Lacan is neither biological sex nor cultural expectation, but the name for a constitutive split in the symbolic). Christian Fierens claims that Lacan’s sexuation is a course of journeying, because sexuation, not sexuality, is “always under construction, in process, in function” (*Reading L’Étourdit* 92-93). Yang Guo is a male character that moves between the four sexuation mathemes, two masculine, two feminine.⁵

Jin Yong’s *Companion* is often dubbed as the book of love, or Jin Yong’s love letter (*qingshu* 情書). On the one hand, the novel showcases the constancy of Yang Guo and Maiden’s relationship, treating it as an exemplary case of a harmonious love. On the other hand, the novel also attests to Lacan’s “there is no sexual relationship” by portraying various failed desires, as well as the long series of unfortunate occurrences that befall Yang Guo and Maiden. Still, while sexual relation is impossible, love does exist. Forced to choose between duty and love, unlike other male protagonists in melodramas, Yang Guo always chooses love, although at a great cost. The issues of sexual relation will bring us in line with Žižek’s ethical pursuit. Most of Žižek’s accounts of the feminine and the masculine, illustrating Lacan’s formula, serve as overtures to discussions of desire versus drive, of the concept of “not-all” (*pas toute*)⁶ and always arrive at the investigation of the real where an authentic act takes place (his *Parallax View*, for example).

The conclusion will sum this up by examining the forced choices that both of our heroes have to make. *Your life or your money!* and *Freedom or death!* are the two classic scenarios that Lacan mentions in *Seminar XI*. The paradox of forced choice is not unique to martial arts fiction. For example, in her book *Ethics*, Zupančič regards Sophie in the film *Sophie’s Choice* as making the

⁵ Lacan’s theory of sexuation, on the other hand, is also illuminating for us to understand issues of gender politics and ideologies. However, as the thesis is a double-reading of both Lacan and Jin Yong, the theoretical discussions of Lacan’s sexuation and other diagrams and their implications will not be included in the main text and will be found in the appendix.

⁶ The concept of *pas toute* has various English translations: “not-all,” “non-all,” “notall,” or “not all.”

ethical act *par excellence*.⁷ It is just that in the *wuxia* genre, the choice is not only intrinsically moral, but overtly so, always pitting one morality against the other morality: it is either *zhong* or *yi*; either loyalty to my father's country or loyalty to my foster-father's country (Qiao Feng, for example, in Chapter 3); either duty towards the people, or duty towards the loved one. The abyss of freedom involved in the forced choice is terrifying, and the choice that heroes need to make can be "inhuman." Žižek, explicating Lacan, argues that psychoanalytic ethics always goes beyond the good and the bad, surpassing the "human, too human" interpretation to enter "the dimension of the 'inhuman', the point at which 'humanity' disintegrates, so that all that remains is the pure subject" (*Interrogating the Real* 16).

⁷ That there is a split right down the heart of some moral principle and that imperatives conflict is a common starting point for fiction. *Hamlet* is another example.

Chapter 1

Chinese Novels and the Master Signifiers

Fiction, including the novel as a literary genre, had not won much scholarly favour until relatively recently in China. It was easily sidelined as “merely popular” by an intellectual tradition that overall preferred the lyrical to the narrative and favoured writings that conveyed educational or ideological messages. In this tradition the only accepted form of narrative is history, the record of real events. Neither proper, nor correct, novels and short stories as fictional writing are always at risk of being anti-historical and even immoral. *Xiaoshuo* 小說 is the Chinese signifier that translates “novels” or “fictional stories,” although this seemingly straightforward equivalence between words of two languages did not come through without complication, and without some remainder. Being a compound phrase, constituted by two characters meaning “little,” and “speech” or “persuasion,” the term has never quite escaped from the undertones of insignificance or triviality. In terms of writing style, it is not until the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) that a form of narrative that most resembles the Western novel emerged: the chaptered novel (*zhanghui* 章回) that evolved from the story-teller’s script (*huaben* 話本). But even so, this classical form of novel was only dubbed as *xiaoshuo* much later in the late Qing; *xiaoshuo* was sought out or “recycled” to signify what “fiction” or “novel” means in English by modern Chinese critics who had the Western literary tradition in view. Before this retrieval or renewal of the term by modern scholars, *xiaoshuo* meant something quite different, and could apply to a few different things. According to its first appearance in *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the term refers rather to a style of expression. In this Taoist classic, Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (or Zhuangzi 莊子) (c369-c286 BC) contrasts *xiaoshuo* to *dadao* 大道. The former is a way of speaking that makes up stories or spreads ungrounded gossip for the purpose of personal interests, whereas *dadao*, the “grand way,” is a discourse that states the truth or argues for a bigger cause.⁸ Taoism is one of the Hundred Schools of Thought in the pre-Qin period (770-221 BC). Among all these contentious schools of knowledge, the Eastern Han historian Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) enumerated Ten Schools as the most representative, in which *xiaoshuo* is included, but only just—it is placed at the end of the

⁸ Regarding the history of Chinese literature, when based on general knowledge, the accounts will not be specifically referenced. When it concerns the history of the novel, I rely mostly on Meng Yao’s (孟瑤) *The History of Chinese Fiction* and Lu Xun’s *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*.

list that begins with Confucianism, Taoism and Mohism (three philosophies that play important parts in Jin Yong's novels). In Ban Gu's mind, *xiaoshuo* is created by the "folk historians" (*baiguan* 稗官) who serve as the eye and ear of the ruling class. While doing so they not only collect local lore customs and current affairs, but also rumours and trivia that are not credible. As such *xiaoshuo* has its function, though it is far less systematic and established than the first nine schools of knowledge.⁹

The same ideological differentiation between "small talk" and "grand ways" continues, and in the succeeding periods the usage of *xiaoshuo* can be found in two contexts. On the one hand it is found as a kind of narrative that is not as truthful as official history and on the other hand, it represents a category of writings that cannot be readily categorised. Bibliographer Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602) of the Ming dynasty, "judging the [*xiaoshuo*] genre too indefinite," regrouped it as follows: myths or records of marvels, prose romances of the marvellous, anecdotes, miscellaneous notes, researches and moral admonitions (see Lu Xun, *Brief History of Chinese Fiction* 5). But wide as the variety of the miscellaneous "genre" covers, it does not list the story-tellers' script of the Song dynasty, neither does Hu's bibliography take into consideration the Yuan and Ming novels at all. The fictive was seldom incorporated, admitted into the canon by the contemporary literati, or later by historians. Two best examples of this are prose romances in the Tang dynasty, and the folk art of story-telling starting in the Song dynasty.

Prose romances of the marvellous

Prose romances of the marvellous (*chuanqi* 傳奇) are listed as the second of the six types of *xiaoshuo* in Hu's categorisation, and the only reason for that is their historical value: it is a definite genre of writing originating almost a thousand years ago in the Tang dynasty (618-907). Back then, the only two recognised literary forms were first the regulated verse (*shi* 詩), which exemplified the tradition of the lyrical, and the classical prose (*guwen* 古文), which was characterised by the maxim *wen-yi zai-dao* 文以載道 (words must state the (grand) way). A genre that narrates stories that are verging on legends and too fabulous to believe (hence the Chinese term *chuan*, meaning "to pass on and spread out" and *qi*, "the absurd and incredible") would have no place in the literati tradition of "small talk versus grand ways," regardless of its wide circulation amongst the elite. Nowadays, not only is the legacy of the Tang prose romances recognised among scholars of classical literature, it is

⁹ Hence Ban Gu's *Jiuliu Shijia* approach that means Nine Branches and Ten Schools. Ban Gu acknowledges there are indeed ten schools, but only considers the first nine respectable enough to be deemed as branches.

mentioned in almost every work on the history of modern martial arts fiction. Critic Cao Zhengwen 曹正文 claims martial arts fiction derives from the Tang prose romance (46). Of the same opinion, Jin Yong includes in his “Illustrations of the Thirty-Three Swordsmen” four heroes of Tang romances, each introduced by his lengthy commentary. The four Tang romances are “The Romance of the Curly-Bearded Stranger” (*Qiuran Ke Zhuan* 虬髯客傳), “Nie Yinniang 聶隱娘,” “The Red-Thread Maid” (*Hong Xian* 紅線), and “The Servant from Qunlun” (*Qunlun Nu* 崑崙奴) (Appendix, *Ode to Gallantry*).

Such a romance of the fate of fiction—of the re-appreciation or renaissance of fictive writing—was first told by Lu Xun (or Lu Hsun 魯迅) in his *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*. Lu takes care to distinguish prose romances from “tales of the supernatural” (*zhiguai* 誌怪) of the previous era, as both share themes in the unbelievable and marvellous: “Occasionally, it is true, the prose romances also use parables to convey a mood or speak of divine retribution, yet on the whole the aim is to write tales of imagination, whereas the earlier tales recorded supernatural happenings as warnings to men” (81). Imagination is the key word here. Stories that are more self-consciously composed are to be named “romances,” and not just “tales.” Another ideological nodal point at work in Lu’s argument is populism:

The conventional critics thought [prose romances to be] a low form of literature and dubbed them [*chuan-qi*] to distinguish them from the work of Han Yu and Liu Tsung-yüan [韓愈 and 柳宗元, two most representative classical prose writers]. But these stories became popular among the people, and men of letters would write them for use as introduction when they sought the patronage of high officials. (80-81)

A literary work’s broad reception suddenly becomes a wager for Lu, an ambitious critic who attempts to rearticulate the field of scholarship, to take a stand opposing those “conventional critics” who judge the literariness of the work by its subject matter, and not by its number of readers. Although it is doubtful whether the genre was “popular among the people”—for the literati would be the only audience who could understand the bookish classical Chinese adopted in the prose romances—popularity did start to play a more important role in Chinese literature. As we shall soon see, the story-telling tradition in the Song dynasty did truly become popular among the people and not only with men of letters.

Quick note on Buddhism

Before going into the last four dynasties of ancient China to complete the overview of the history of fiction, I would like to quickly review the influence of Buddhism on Chinese people in general, and on novelistic writing in particular. While Lu Xun draws attention to the wide reception of the Tang prose romances, he simultaneously condemns Buddhist concepts and superstitious beliefs in literary works, even though religions and shamanism have always been an important part of Chinese people's life. Therefore, he gives very little attention to a group of Buddhist documents called *bianwen* (變文), which include canons, sermons, and vernacular novels, all crucial to the development of the novel.¹⁰ These documents were transcribed in the Tang dynasty, when Buddhist ceremonies were carried out in lecturing and singing to attract the audience (a performance style from which the story-telling and plays benefited). Several Buddhist sutras were transformed into a popular version, from which vernacular prose fictions drew inspiration (Meng Yao 56, 111). Treating an important category of writing lightly, Lu perhaps unwittingly aligns himself with the so-called conventional critics who deem the themes in prose romances ridiculous and thus reinforces the demarcation between what is properly stated, and what is not, a demarcation he set out to overthrow. Buddhist stories, regardless of their pervasiveness “among the people,” are slighted by Lu on account of the association with superstitions, an association that critics of the May Fourth Movement who endeavour to “modernise” novels would of course avoid.¹¹

But an attempt to define the literariness of any writing is always ideological, and such activity of drawing an ideological contour is not so much based on biases as it is on the double-operation of inclusion and exclusion, that is, the operation that necessarily promotes certain master signifiers and not others (Boucher 275).¹² Take the field of Buddhism itself as an example. Apart from being a complex network constituted by different sects or branches, what the term covers is an enormous range of multifarious meanings, from a philosophy or trend of thought, to ritualistic

¹⁰ These documents are recorded on the scrolls discovered in the Thousand-Buddha Caves at Tunhuang during the reign of Guanshu in the late Qin (*Brief History* 131).

¹¹ The May Fourth Movement (*Wusi Yundong* 五四運動) refers to a movement originally organised by students from Beijing, which occurred on May 4, 1919. It was an anti-imperialist, political and cultural movement that involved many literary figures such as Lu Xun and Hu Shi 胡適.

¹² The term “master signifier” is Lacanian. More explanations of the term and how it is applied in the Lacanian theory will follow. Here we can first understand it as the hegemonic concept or key word in the arguments or debates. For example, “freedom” and “democracy” are master signifiers in the contemporary political discourse.

practices and beliefs of retribution. Taoism is another master signifier that takes its cue exactly from the heterogeneity of its elements. It is mostly recognised by the West as a body of thought as prominent as Confucianism; and yet it is also a folk belief that is not at all philosophical, or spiritual, but rather a disjointed system of rituals, superstitions, and theories (or mysticism) of well-being. Whereas, in Jinology, the twist is that both “Buddhism” and “Taoism” are subjected to yet another ideological mapping called the “Chineseness.” It does not really matter what kind of Buddhism it is or what aspects of Taoist knowledge are drawn on, they both belong to a Chinese tradition, and serve to add to the aura of Jin Yong’s work.

The rise of prose novels: story-telling of the Song

Thanks to the stability of the state, industries and commerce, the Song dynasty (960-1279) came to enjoy a general prosperity. Along with the rapidly growing cities, story-telling became a profession, and story-tellers entertained the urban residents in teahouses. The competition was high, and apart from relying on oral eloquence to attract the audience, story-tellers were also known for their skills of dramatisation that would ensure return patronage. The story-telling form was therefore also the result of very specific industrial demand for episodes of a precise length, each of which is to end with some sort of hook, a demand we also see in newspaper instalments and serialised TV dramas. Jin Yong more than once likens himself to a story-teller (afterword, *Eagle-Shooting Heroes*) and often declares that a good novelist’s job is to tell enchanting stories, to entertain (*Hundred of Schools and Scholars on Jin Yong: Book 3* 31, 44, 103, 151). No doubt when his novels were serialised in the newspapers, narrative features such as climaxes and cliff-hangers all gestured to the heritage of the influential folk art. (Readers of Jin Yong shall remember that in several novels he tells a tale, a story-within-story, via the performance of such a traditional story-teller role in the novel.) The dramatic skills and format of the story-teller’s narration then developed into the chaptered form. Another significant contribution the story-telling tradition makes to later modern martial arts fiction is the use of vernacular Chinese (*baihua* 白話), in contrast to classical Chinese (*wenyan* 文言). The latter was the bookish or literary form of written Chinese, used mainly by the literati and was of course hardly suitable for creating the face-to-face excitement between the artists and the audience at the scene of story-telling. Page: 12

There are four major streams of the story-telling: “historical recounting” (*jiang shi* 講史) that savours the rise and fall, battles and events of the dynasties; “Buddhist expounding” (*jiang jing* 講經) that narrates Buddhist tales as well as lectures in sermons and religious dialogues; comedian

acts (*he sheng* 合生);¹³ and the miscellaneous group that contains stories of romantic love and social realism, tales of the marvellous and supernatural, historical legends, accounts of law-courts and detective work, episodes of wars on the frontier, stories of sword-fights and contests of clubs, tales of personal success, and so on (see *Brief History* 134-35). As we can easily observe, the last group, fittingly and not surprisingly dubbed as *xiaoshuo*, already includes several story elements found in the martial arts novel. However, the other three streams are also strongly reminiscent of the major themes of Jin Yong's works: all but two of his novels are set in clear historical periods and can be categorised as historical novels; teaching of Buddhism looms large in his later works; and lastly, the comedic element, either the comic relief or political satire, is another noticeable characteristic of Jin Yong's ability to entertain (which crystallises in the character named Trinket, the protagonist/comedian in *The Deer and the Cauldron*).

Yuan plays and “Four Great Marvellous Works”

While the story-telling continued into the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), another performance art arose in the form of variety plays (*zaju* 雜劇). The fact that variety plays are the canonical literary genre of the time marks two significant changes in the literary tradition. First is the conflation of “high” and “low” cultures, manifested both in the audience and the authorship. For a start the variety plays are indeed variety shows, consisting of non-drama sections such as story-telling, stunts and jesting alongside the performance of the play, and the play itself is intermingled with an assortment of elements that include music, singing, narration, action scenes, and clowning. The modern Peking opera is a theatre performance that derives from one of the branches of the Yuan variety plays, and from there we can gain a glimpse at the motley nature of the art. When the roles sing their parts, the songs are lyrical poems, whereas soliloquies and dialogues are conveyed in vernacular or classical Chinese. A hybrid show like this easily appealed to a mixed audience, and the same play might be viewed in several different settings, including the royal court, big temples' front courts, wealthy households, and theatre houses open to the general public.¹⁴

¹³ Performers or hosts of *he sheng* either resemble stand-up comedians of the modern day and crack jokes, make fun of contemporary people and events, or are party hosts who involve the audience in word-puzzles, group games and so on (Meng Yao 147).

¹⁴ This is one reason why Yuan plays are often adopted as a reference point by modern literary critics who argue for Jin Yong's canonical status: both bodies of work demonstrate the hybrid nature manifested in authorship, reception, and the multiplicity of contents. Chen Shih-

It is then hardly surprising to note that playwrights such as Guan Hanqin 關漢卿 and Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠 were also accomplished writers of prose and poetry, although they did not serve in the bureaucratic system and hence were not standard literati. Faced with the difficulty and humiliation of pursuing fame and wealth in the political system ruled by the “alien tribe,” more intellectuals thus occupied themselves with the “unofficial” literary forms. For some of them, composing the plays was a leisure activity; for others, it was a means of survival. As trades and commerce of the Mongolian empire continued to expand, gathering even more metropolis than the Song, a general prosperity spread throughout the region, meaning that there was enough demand to support a whole theatre group and the playwrights as well. But on top of the phenomenon of intellectual efforts mingling with popular culture, the Yuan plays also mark a crucial shift in the status of the fictive. While some of the plays are based on historical accounts, the majority of them hark back to the un-historical, unfounded stream of “small talk.” Take the two most representative plays of Yuan, *The Misfortune of Dou’e* (*Dou’e Yuan* 竇娥冤), which is based on folklore, and *Romance of the West Chamber* (*Xixiang Ji* 西廂記), a re-write of Tang’s prose romance *Huizhen Ji* 會真記 or *Yingying Zhuan* 鶯鶯傳.¹⁵

To return to the narrative form that most concerns us, story-telling was a popular performance mode throughout the Song and Yuan, and it eventually facilitated the prose novels of Ming (1368-1644), novels that hold direct and undeniable sway over modern martial arts novelists.¹⁶ Late-Ming commentator Li Yu 李漁 named four works to be the Four Great Marvellous Works (*Si Da Qi Shu* 四大奇書) and all of these are novels: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo Yanyi* 三國演義), *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu Zhuan* 水滸傳), *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou Ji* 西遊記), and *Jin Ping Mei* (金瓶梅 or *The Gold Plum in the Vase*). Among them, significantly, *Three Kingdoms* is the only one not written in vernacular Chinese. The years of the late Ming were

hsiang is one example and we will soon read his second letter to Jin Yong where he parallels the martial art novelist’s extraordinary achievement to the success of the Yuan plays.

¹⁵ And a quick note on *Romance of the West Chamber*: as indicated by the title, it is a full blown romantic story, and regarded as the forerunner to the “scholar-and-beauty (caizi-jiaren 才子佳人)” genre. This proto-type of a love couple is seen in variations and adaptations in modern martial arts novels, including those of Jin Yong’s.

¹⁶ With the gradual emergence of prose novels of extensive length, the short-fiction form continued to grow and was to be found in the following imperial periods too. It is worth noting that during the Song and Yuan periods, the best known story-telling scripts were collected and published by a few men of letters, and compilations like these were rightly named *xiaoshuo* (Meng Yao 156).

when “books became firmly linked with profit, in both the economic and moral sense, in the minds of readers and publishers” (Dorothy Ko qtd. in Ding, 51). The descriptive term for Li Yu’s four marvellous novels is *qi*, the same word used in *chuan-qi*, the prose romances of Tang. The implication of this is as follows: although it is remarkable that these novels are written by talented hands and catch the interest of a huge readership, it is also a discreditable phenomenon, when one thinks of the fact that the attention, which should have been paid to works of Confucianism, or lyrical poems, is divided up by these non-orthodox “small talk.” Hence the lament: “books are not books, reading is not reading,” uttered by Chen Longzheng 陳龍正 (1585-1645) (qtd. in Ding 51). However, this lament would find no place in the present day, as these four marvellous or unbelievable books are often referred to as the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese Literature. The same indignation of the elite facing the market success of the “marvellous novels,” and the same shift in critical acclaim that later followed, were to reoccur twice, and each time it was aimed at the martial arts novel. This first occurred during the early years of Republic China when the booming business of newspapers helped popularise the so-called Old School martial arts fiction. The second occurrence was during the rise of the New School martial arts fiction to which Jin Yong’s works contributed.

Jin Ping Mei

One way or another, in the Four Marvellous Works, various links to the martial arts genre are to be found. Due to its profuse moral warnings, *Jin Ping Mei* is categorised by the term “novel of manner” by Lu Xun (see chapter 19, *Brief History*). This is an ironic categorisation indeed, since the warning of retribution could hardly plaster over the sexual transgressions graphically portrayed in the novel. Critics of the martial arts genre face a similar predicament as there is also an internal contradiction existing between good manners (the chivalrous demands) and the obscenity of the ruthless displays of violence. Apart from these issues of morality and propriety, we should not forget that, with a title made up by the names of the three heroines of the novel, *Jin Ping Mei* also belongs to the vein of romantic stories whose heritage is found in *Dreams of the Red Chamber*, the most important novel of the Qing dynasty, which serves as a significant source of inspiration for many modern novelists including Jin Yong. This clear influence can also be traced out by its adoption of tropes of social realism, which include a vivid portrayal of the contemporary folk life and a minute representation of the characters’ cunning in dialogues as well as in narration, all features that martial arts novelists

aspire to achieve.¹⁷

Journey to the West

Also known as *Adventures of the Monkey God*, *Journey to the West* is loosely based on the pilgrimage of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang 玄奘 during the Tang dynasty. Xuanzang left Chang'an (now Xi'an) in 629 AD and ventured into the Western regions of China, eventually reaching India in pursuit of Buddhist sacred scriptures. The authorship of this novel is still under dispute, but it is evident that *Journey to the West* is a compilation of materials and texts including local folklore, the Song scripts and the Yuan plays, Taoist tales of gods and devils and Hindu mythologies.¹⁸ The novel belongs to the fantasy genre, or more specifically, the genre about gods and devils (*shenmo xiaoshuo* 神魔小說). The way the novel weaves the adventures of human protagonists by having them cross fates with supernatural beings is passed on to the Qing novel *Seven Swords and Thirteen Gallants* (*Qi Jian Shisan Xia* 七劍十三俠), which later pioneers the subgenre of “sword-gods” (*jianxian* 劍仙) for the best-selling early martial arts fiction such as *The Legend of the Swordsmen in Shu Mountains* (*Shushan Jianxia Zhuan* 蜀山劍俠傳) by Huanzhu Louzhu 還珠樓主.¹⁹ Although later works of the martial arts genre gradually shed the fantastic elements, especially the presence of immortals and goblins, a taste for mythical creatures lingers on, and Jin Yong readers will be familiar with fantastic animals such as the “mighty eagle” (*shendiao* 神鷲) in *The Giant Eagle and Its Companion*, and the “pale-faced fire monkey” (*yumian huohou* 玉面火猴) that was the childhood pet of Zhang Wuji 張無忌 in the earliest version of *The Heaven Sword and the Dragon Sabre* (*Yitian Tulong Ji* 倚天屠龍記). What links *Journey to the West* to the martial arts genre is its expansive episodic developments of narrative that consist in incredible encounters with people (or unreal creatures) who are often accompanied by an abundance of marvellous or magical objects, for example, weaponry, jewellery or medicinal and poisonous potions. Lastly, carrying down the tradition of the performance art, the comedic facet plays an important part in *Journey to the West*, just as how it anticipates Jin Yong's fondness of appropriating comic relief in his novels. Andre Lévy claims that *Journey to the West* is “so replete with extravaganzas” that it “verges on burlesque”

¹⁷ It is perhaps an amusing coincidence then that scholarship of *Jin Ping Mei* and Jinology, studies of Jin Yong's works, share the same Chinese term, *jinxue* 金學.

¹⁸ For more details, see Cai Tiejing 蔡鐵鷹 “Research on the Writing of *Journey to the West*.”

¹⁹ See Cao Zhengwen's discussion of the “sword-gods” (83-84).

(Lévy 731). He ponders aloud whether the novel, in a retroactive fashion, might well have meant to be a parody of the martial arts genre.²⁰

Now let us turn to the other two Great Marvellous Works, *Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*, and examine how the constant (yet inconsistent) theme of the genre—ethics of *xia*, chivalry and gallantry—is developed through them.

Wuxia genre and the master signifiers: *Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*

Before Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 (c1330-c1400) finished the 240-chapter *Three Kingdoms*, the heroic events of the Three Kingdoms period had long been popular among people, and later these historical accounts inevitably became historical stories, glorified and dramatised in plays and by story-tellers.²¹ In fact, some of the most celebrated episodes deliberately swerve away from historical truth and are completely fictional. The best example is right at the beginning of the book, in the episode called “the oath of the peach garden” (*Taoyuan san jieyi* 桃園三結義). The three protagonists of the Han Kingdom, Liu Bei 劉備 (the king of Han), and his two subjects, Guan Yu 關羽 (or Lord Guan 關公) and Zhang Fei 張飛, were real historical figures; however, the ceremony in the garden of peach blossom trees in which the three formed a pact of camaraderie (*jieyi*), a pact of *yi*, and swore to be brothers of different surnames, never took place.²² However, without this

²⁰ His arguments remind us of how Jin Yong’s *Deer and Cauldron* is meant to be a parodic exemplification of the martial arts genre, especially when Lévy’s analysis of the chivalric quality of Wukong 悟空 (the Monkey) can also be applied to Jin Yong’s Trinket who starts his adventure with the pilgrimage to the Forbidden City (729-28). On a different note, there are similar practices in English novels too. Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, for example, is often seen as a parody of the novel and everything it can and cannot do, before the genre has even really been established.

²¹ It is obvious that the making of *Three Kingdoms* involves other efforts than novel-writing, such as historical research and editing story-tellers’ scripts. Luo has been most critics’ choice to be bestowed with the authorship of the novel.

²² Xu Zhuoyun 許倬雲 points out that the relationship of the three protagonists of the Han Kingdom, Liu, Guan, and Zhang, was that of the master and subject. It is only due to the re-writing effort of later novelists that the relationship of Liu, Guan, and Zhang was played-up and transformed into that of the brotherhood. “Ever since *Three Kingdoms*, what binds the masters and subjects becomes camaraderie instead; personal connection henceforth replaces the institutional loyalty” (“The Knight-Errant” 181).

fictional episode, without the ritual in which the oath—“If we should ever do anything to betray our friendship, may the gods in heaven strike us dead” (*Three Kingdoms*, ch. 1)—was uttered, the concept of *yichi* 義氣 or *yi* 義, the loyalty to friendship or brotherhood, might have never become the ultimate moral standard in the world of martial arts fiction, nor might members of secret societies nowadays continue to plead the gods to witness their oath-taking act: “We seek not to be born on the same day, in the same month and in the same year. We merely hope to die on the same day, in the same month and in the same year” (*Three Kingdoms*, ch.1). The truth is, such a ritual is historically impossible. The relational social roles assigned to the sovereign and the subjects were too rigid at the time to allow for a comradeship that celebrates equality between the roles. And yet it is exactly against this historical truth that Luo is able to create something not merely beyond history, but rather beyond the regulated morality and the pre-set hierarchy. Through a touch of fictionality, *Three Kingdoms* is then able to advance the discussions of morality to something higher, something that cannot easily be contained by legalities or by social obligations. And this kind of interventional act is exactly what the modern martial arts genre still aims to do.

Luo does not invent anything new, he simply reorders all the possible meanings of the concept of *yi*, by singling out fraternal loyalty and giving it a prominence as weighty as loyalty towards the sovereign, a prominence that is now seen as self-explanatory, since *zhong* and *yi* have been combined into a new phrase, *zhongyi*. All these signifiers in the field of morality stay the same, but they change positions relative to one another. (How they are re-defined in the field in relation to other signifiers will be examined more fully in the next chapter.) Thanks to Luo’s intervention, *Water Margin* is then able to heroise the group of bandits: by swearing their loyalty to each other to death, they are deemed “good fellows” (*haohan* 好漢). The characters in *Water Margin* are constituted by “hot-blooded ‘good fellows’ (*haohan*) who, driven from ordinary society by injustice or by their own passions, forge bonds with fellow practitioners of the martial arts and create an alternate society of their own” (Hamm 17). This “alternate society finds concrete form in the bandit stronghold at the Marshes of Mount Liang,” and Mount Liang is seen as one part of the “geographic and moral margins of settled society” that is generally expressed as Rivers and Lakes (*jianghu* 江湖) (17). The Mount Liang brothers are no more than a bunch of outlaws exiled from lawful society due to transgressions such as theft and killing. But now that they are part of Rivers and Lakes, part of the imaginary community of *xia*, they will be considered as chivalrous gallants.

While *Three Kingdoms* exemplifies honour and loyalty towards the state and among sworn brothers, it is in *Water Margin* that the amalgamation of chivalric motif and fight scenes—fight scenes being a trademark of martial arts fiction—reaches maturity, and that is why Cao Zhengwen

calls *Water Margin* the first martial arts novel in the broad sense (55).²³ Now it should be clear to see the inadequacy of reading *wuxia xiaoshuo* as a “martial arts novel,” a translation that captures only the superficial part of the genre (*wu* as martial skills or martial arts), and misses the other element, the backbone of the genre, *xia*.²⁴ James Liu translates beings of *xia* as “knight-errant,” and utilises words such as chivalry and gallantry of the knighthood to explain the qualities of being a *xia* (*The Chinese Knight-Errant*). However, Chinese *xia* seldom have a title, and do not always wander in search of adventures, as Jin Yong and other critics quickly point out.²⁵ And while *xia* can be placed in a comparative cultural context, *xia* does not share the romantic feature found in the European novels of knighthood or about chevaliers.²⁶ For that reason and due to the complex historical and cultural background of the genre, Jin Yong prefers to call it directly by its Chinese term *wuxia*, without translating what it means into English (“A Few Words” 718-19). But are not the big concepts such as *xia* and *yi* already (and always) “untranslatable” in Chinese?²⁷ What exactly are the qualities of *xia* anyway? The richer the concept seems, the more difficult it is to pinpoint what it really means. As the master signifier, *xia* or *yi* is “not a point of supreme density of Meaning” (Žižek, *Sublime Object* 99). On the contrary, its richness comes from its being most “empty,” devoid of a stable and fixed signified. It is exactly because of this emptiness that *yi* could mean one thing in *Three Kingdoms* and yet another in *Water Margin*. And yet, because of this very emptiness, there is also something excessive about it: *xia* can be re-defined whenever it enters a different field or is positioned differently in relation to other signifiers. This “too much” is also “not enough,” and that is why the master signifiers in the *wuxia* genre can be incessantly re-articulated, and translated into a different time, or into a new novel.

²³ Whether the novel is a real martial arts fiction or not may depend on the critic, but most would agree with Cao that *Water Margin* had a direct impact on the genre, or even “pioneered” it (Ye Hongshen 96; also see Ma Youyuan 298).

²⁴ The reason for this might be just as Petrus Y. Liu argues: the fact that modern critics prefer “martial arts fiction” is reflective of the popularity of martial arts practice in North America (32).

²⁵ See Jin Yong’s “Comments on *Xia*” (716).

²⁶ For detailed comparison of knights and *xia*, see Jacques Pimpaneau’s “Chinese Wuxia and their Western Counterparts.”

²⁷ See Derrida’s “What is a Relevant Translation?,” for example, where he discusses the im/possibilities of translation and differences of languages.

Object cause of desire, and fantasy

The *objet a* (or object *a*, *petit a*) in the Lacanian matheme for the excessiveness that is often related to the master signifier could mean a few different things, depending on where and when Lacan revisits it. First, it is of course the object cause of desire: why is it that the ethical imperative has to be uttered again and again? What is the point of loss or lack that induces the repetition and the endless pursuit of ethics on the part of the martial arts novelists, of ceaselessly asking what *xia* really is? Secondly, the *objet a* is the surplus *jouissance*, a form of enjoyment that becomes displeasure, as something that cannot be shaken off. The best example is the experience of reading the martial arts genre. Fans of Jin Yong often “complain” that they cannot put the novels down for days (hence Xue Xingguo’s book title “Reading Jin Yong throughout the night and into the day”).

Yet another way to understand the *objet a* is to think of fantasy, written as “ $\$ \diamond a$ ” in Lacan’s theory. It is a formula that links the subject and the subject’s cause of desire with a sign \diamond that can mean “more and less” (“ $>$ ” and “ $<$ ”), or opening and closing of the unconscious (“ \wedge ” and “ \vee ”). Martial arts fiction is a fantasy genre. According to the “escapist” theory, all genres of fantasy writing are “adults’ fairy tales,” which provide a temporary relief, a nice trip away from reality. However, more often than not, what readers encounter right in enunciation, in the middle of the fantastic dream, is the dimension of the real, of the split between the enunciation and statement, or, the split between the Law and the laws. For example, if Rivers and Lakes is where all justice is realised and all wrongs are undone, and the members of this imaginary community know well the code of conduct and the right way to do things, why is there still injustice? How come after the imperative, *Be loyal!* is enunciated, there is still left in the demand a the disturbing desire that cannot be articulated. *Be loyal to whom? How? And what do you want from me by saying that?*

On Heaven’s behalf

In the novel *Water Margin*, the bandits’ imperative of *xia* is to “carry out the Way on Heaven’s behalf” (*ti tian xing dao* 替天行道) (Hamm 17), to right the wrongs and undo the misfortunes bestowed on fellow beings for Heaven, the point from which our actions are judged. What exactly is the right thing to do? How is one supposed to know the judgement of Heaven or the impersonal big Other that is the locus of Truth? This dimension of the Law is not so readily answered by beings of *xia*, and certainly cannot be “designed” by the *wuxia* novelists, pre-written as part of the whole set of ethical and moral codes. Tian Xiaofei is right to call the construction of a moral world the “primary condition” of a martial arts community (227), for ethics and morality are the *raison d’être*

of the *wuxia* genre; however, her analogy to a computer game completely misses the point of such a moral world. In a computer game, “there has to be, first of all, a set of clear-cut rules prescribed for the game, and one plays according to these rules” (227)—if only one could just play the game of *xia* and fulfil *yi* according to the rules.²⁸

To go back to *Three Kingdoms*, the ethical demand is of a slightly different order. As we have mentioned, the *yi* of fraternal loyalty, the respect to your equal, is made by Luo as the founding code of conduct right at the start. The first meaning of *yi* is righteousness, doing the right thing, and justice. The fraternal *yi* is *yi*, the national *yi*, the loyalty to the leader or the sovereign, is also *yi*. What will then happen when these two moralities clash? This dilemma is admirably depicted in another famous fictional episode, “releasing Cao Cao on Huarong path” (*Huarong Dao shi Cao* 華容道釋曹). Cao is the Wei king, the arch enemy of the three sworn brothers who claim their kingdom under the Han orthodox. Yet, when the Cao army are defeated and are stopped by Guan on their way to escape, Cao pleads with Guan to let him go for old times’ sake, urging Guan not to forget the benevolence (*en* 恩) that Cao once endowed on him, and that now it is time to return this benevolence. In other words, Cao reminds Guan that his *yi* towards an old friend, though now an enemy, should not weigh less than the pact of brotherhood he has with his sworn brother Liu Bei and Zhang Fei, nor should it be given less value than Guan’s loyalty to Han Kingdom. Caught in this double-bind, Guan opts for the loyalty to a former friend and benefactor, Cao. It is a decision that much startles modern readers—how can one prioritise personal feelings over a national affair? For convenience some critics may call the former brotherly duty “small *yi*,” and the national honour “big *yi*,” but in *Three Kingdoms*, both kinds of loyalties are just as important, and it is up to the protagonist to decide what will be the best conduct to respond to the “do your duty” imperative. Whenever one needs to choose, it will be a moral choice, and it will have sacrifices involved. This scenario of a “forced choice” is not unique to martial arts fiction.²⁹ It is just that in

²⁸ The comparison between computer gaming and the novel can be a good starting point for us to understand Lacan’s not-all (*pas toute*). With computer gaming, one can in effect get the finite answer from the big Other, just by trial and error. As long as the player is patient enough, they will get there. It is not the content that is the powerful fantasy, it is the enunciation. In this fantasy, the player can play the big Other herself, as with novelistic narration. It is a fantasy because the Other does not exist for someone to play its role. However, the world of narration is not a finite set but an infinite set in which one does not “get there at the end”, and will have to continue the journey by endless trial and error. We will talk about not-all in Chapter 4 on love and sexuation.

²⁹ There being a split right down the heart of some moral principle and a conflict between imperatives is a common starting-point for fiction, for example in *Hamlet* and *Sophie’s Choice*.

the *wuxia* genre, the choice is not only intrinsically moral, but overtly so, always pitting one morality against the other morality. The choice is either *zhong* or *yi*; either loyalty to my father's country or loyalty to my foster-father's country (Qiao Feng, for example, in Chapter 3); either duty towards the people, or duty towards the loved one (although the loved one being a moral object will not come into play until the late Qing, which we will soon discuss).

The true code of *yi*, or *xia*, or *zhong*, is indeed only written on heaven's behalf. It is tautologically empty—the right thing to do is just the right thing to do and none of the “clear-cut rules” could fully determine this half-said space. But the consequence of claiming for one's righteousness on heaven's behalf has its dangers, which we will soon see in Chapter 3. When a killing is justified as “I'm merely obeying the will of the Other,” the subject will be stepping into the pervert's position, for a pervert is one who both believes in the Other's existence and erroneously sees herself as being capable of reciprocating the demand of the Other. This becomes the ethics of the imaginary, and not ethics of the real.

Qing novel of chivalry; love story in *Sons and Daughters*

At the end of *Water Margin*, the heroes of the Mount Liang submit to the imperial sovereignty and in so doing become incorporated into the policing forces against other bandits, rebels, and foreign invaders. The tides are turned again, and the ethical injunction on Heaven's behalf eventually gives way to *zhong*, the fidelity to the emperor, and the chivalrous fellows who used to be outlaws are now lawful citizens working for the emperor, an ending that incites indignation among the Ming and Qing literati and modern-day critics alike. To whose name should one be loyal? Where should the final guarantee of the Other be situated? In the *xiayi* (俠義) novels of the Qing, these questions are further complicated or, should we say, simplified.³⁰ This category of novels is the next successor of *Water Margin*, and its best known example, *Three Heroes and Five Gallants* (*San xia wu yi* 三俠五義), is what “strictly speaking inaugurated the Chinese *wuxia xiaoshuo*” (Cao Zhengwen 74-75). The novel focuses on *xia* characters just as the title spells out (literally, “three heroes of *xia*, five gallants of *yi*”), and the way the plot lines develop is very similar to the picaresque narrative of *Water Margin*. However, to those who feel disdain seeing the supposedly rebellious good fellows of

³⁰ The genre is often mixed with court-case fiction (*gong'an xiaoshuo* 公案小說) and combined in a bigger category named *xiayi gong'an*. Chen Pingyuan 陳平原 suggests there are two distinct genres, because in *xiayi* novels the protagonists are *xia* characters, and plot lines such as crime-solving and punishment are only used in the background (*The Literati's Chivalric Dreams* 72-74).

Rivers and Lakes being assimilated into settled society, they would only find *Three Heroes and Five Gallants* more distressing. The heroes are constables, acting well within the law and the leader of the five gallants at some stage is even appointed with a title by the emperor. Displaying not defiant spirit but rather respect for moral orders, the Qing's novels of chivalry often receive harsh critiques such as being "ideologically problematic" from martial arts scholars (Cao Zhengwen 79). Along with a less refined use of the vernacular, this category of novels has never been favoured by scholars of Chinese literature in general (Gong Pengcheng 466-67; 490 n2).

Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程 nevertheless points out that it is not so much that *xiayi* fiction is not politically correct in itself, as that it does not live up to the ideological standards of the critics. These critics view the *wuxia* genre in transference and henceforth endeavour to include *xiayi* fiction within the grand tradition of the chivalric fiction where values of *xia* and *yi* are supposed to be in opposition to the interests of the established order. Moreover, Gong concedes that heroes and gallants in *xiayi* novels may not appear as grand as other images of *xia*, but asserts that this is because they are closer to reality in the historical context (482). The *xiayi* genre derives from the story-telling tradition and as such, it is less a literati form of writing than a folk performance art. What is behind the image of *xia* is but humble wishes of the commoners, rather than the romanticism or rebellious consciousness of the intellectuals (484-85). This is yet another place we can see that critics play an important role in re-defining the field of moral meanings, regardless of their inattention to, or at times anachronistic interpretation of, the historical context. We shall address the literary critic's status in relation to master signifiers and the surplus *jouissance* in Chapter 2.

There are two other novels of note in the Qing period: *The Fortunate Union: A Romance* (*Haoqiu Zhuan* 好逑傳), and *The Story of Sons and Daughters as Heroes* (*Ernü Yingxiong Zhuan* 兒女英雄傳). *The Fortunate Union* is the first classical Chinese novel translated into English, and unlike other Qing novels, which focus on chivalry, it features affection and romance as well. The book is also titled *The Story of Chivalry and Love Relationship* (*Xiayi Fengyue Zhuan* 俠義風月傳). The word "fengyue" ("wind and moon") in the title generally means the nicety of love affairs, for romance often occurs in a pleasant natural setting with a gentle breeze and under a bright moon. (The romantic imagery evoked by the term is subverted by Jin Yong in *Companion*, where he names the first chapter "fengyue wuqing" (風月無情), "romances are ruthless.")

The artistic achievement of *The Story of Sons and Daughters as Heroes* is still felt in the present day, evident in the Peking opera, modern movies and TV adaptations (Altenburger 227). The impact the novel has is many-fold. First of all, it breaks the convention created in the prose romance of the Tang by separating heroism from emotions and passions. Although there is

seemingly a love triangle in one of the Tang prose romances, “The Romance of Curly-Bearded Stranger,” the affair is momentary, and is a rare exception to the emotional world of swordsmen and swordswomen of the Tang tales, which is ruled by the Taoist doctrine that promotes abstinence and contains female *xia* characters who are especially “noted for their striking lack of emotions” (Altenburger 126). This convention of celebrating abstinence and indifference remains an important trope in the modern martial arts genre. For example, at the School of the Ancient Tomb where Little Dragon Maiden and Li Mochou are trained, there is a clear and rigid regulation on chastity as well as an indifference to human feelings. Still under the influence of the genre convention, the majority of the chivalry novels of the Ming and Qing feature heroes and good fellows who pride themselves in “shunning women.” And when there are roles of husbands and wives involved they generally appear to be more functional than romantic (Cao Zhengwen 81; Chen Pingyuan, *Literati’s Chivalric Dreams* 90). *Sons and Daughters* differs greatly from this convention of indifference to emotions by treating the love relationship between Shisanmei 十三妹, the heroine and An Ji 安驥 as the major plot line. It “portrays heroes and *xia* characters from the angle of ‘young love between boys and girls’ and has an impact on the history of martial arts fiction that cannot be underestimated” (Cao Zhengwen 81).

The second significant achievement of *Story of Sons and Daughters* is its making Shisanmai the protagonist, and an extraordinary martial arts master at that. It is not that there have never been female gallants or swordswomen, it is just that more commonly “the female *xia* is merely the ‘helper’ of the male *xia*, instead of forming a couple [with him]. Writers are only interested in the social consequence of their companionship, and not concerned with the changes of their feelings” (Chen Pingyuan 91). Shisanmei is “the first magnificent female gallant in the history of the Chinese *wuxia* fiction.” She demonstrates “chivalry, a tender heart, superb combat skills, and remarkable wits” (Cao Zhegnwen 82). The third significance of *Sons and Daughters* is that unlike other novels of *xiayi*, which are a compilation or re-editing of episodes in *huaben* (story-telling or stand-up performance), *Sons and Daughters* is the work of a man of letters (the other example of a literati novelist is Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, author of *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢)). The result of a serious literary creation can be seen in a language that is colloquial and closer to the local tongue of Beijing city, as well as in scenes that reflect contemporaneous social realities of different classes (Cao Zhengwen 82).

The last noteworthy aspect of *Story of Sons and Daughters* is its inventiveness in plot development. “The predestined couple has to endure long-term separation and overcome obstacles such as intrigues, deceptions and misunderstandings until they can eventually unite in marriage” (Altenburger 261-262). This is a development of dramatisation familiar to modern audiences of

genre writing and serialised television shows, but it is also one that harks back to the “scholar and beauty” convention (*caizi-jiaren* 才子佳人) that was first seen in the Yuan play *Romance of the West Chamber*, a subgenre that is later fully employed in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The Chinese novel tradition has seen several variations of sexual relation and roles between the two sexes: from “scholar/beauty” to “men of gallantry/ women of chastity and honour,” to “male heroes/female warriors,” and finally to “heroes/romance” (Chen Pingyuan 92). The last variation is achieved in *Story of Sons and Daughters*, which re-orders the field of possible meanings of partnership by its perfect matching of *qing* 情 and *xia*, love and chivalry, and lays the foundation for modern *wuxia* fiction that, as a rule, portrays honourable heroes and heroines in love, or struggling with love.

The New Novel and the modern martial arts fiction

The fate of fiction started to turn around the end of the nineteenth century when China was going through different stages of modernisation. In 1897, Yan Fu 嚴復 and Xia Zengyou 夏曾佑 openly acknowledged the popularity of fiction and the fact that fiction has had a profound impact on human conduct, “almost more so than scholarly classics and historical works” (qtd in Huang Jinshu 591). Liang Qichao 梁啟超 then further attributed to fictional writing an educational function, by dint of its ability to affect people (*ganran li* 感染力) (see Huang 591). Liang and his contemporaries hence “equated fictional works with cultivation of the people” (qtd in Huang 592), recognising that while the classical literati education was designed for the selected few, vernaculars were accessible to all and enjoyed by the majority (592). In the eye of the intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century, the novel is not only a form of writing that reaches the farthest, but also a text of pleasure that succeeds more than serious, didactic writings in moulding personality and conveying moral messages. However, the activists of the May Fourth Movement (1919) distrusted the affective aspect of the fictional narrative, in particular reference to popular novels, namely the *xiayi* genre and romances of the late Qing. These activists, led by Lu Xun, did agree with Yan Fu and Liang Qichao that the novel was the most effective form of writing to cultivate the mind, but they also proclaimed that the new novel for the new China should distinguish itself from the classical novels by first being ideologically motivated, seeing it as its duty to awake in people the “concern with society and national status (*ganshi-youguo* 感時憂國).³¹ The novelists of the May Fourth Movement actualise this appeal by adopting a realism that is set in present time and focuses on

³¹ The phrase is most known by C. T. Hsia’s (夏志清) use in *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*.

portraying social realities.

Even though now the literary tradition of favouring the lyrical over the narrative is reversed, the same ideology of “small talk versus grand ways,” which dates back to the time of Hundred Schools more than twenty centuries ago, continues to prevail. What the novels should incite in people is not individual satisfaction or sensations, but social concerns and political awareness of being a Chinese person. From this point of view, martial arts fiction was of course heavily criticised by intellectuals of the new era, and the same attitude went on until the genre reached what Cao Zhengwen calls the “second climax” in the 1920s (after the Qing novel of chivalry, which is the “first climax”) (97, 69). Martial arts fiction is set in the remote past, its chaptered structure harks back to imperial China, and the storyline is made up of unbelievable events and naïve heroism taken on by unrealistic characters. The popularity of the genre certainly did not help. Contrasted to the ideologically correct modern novels, all popular genres were called “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies” (*yuanyang hudie* 鴛鴦蝴蝶), and among them *wuxia* enjoyed the greatest popularity, more so than romance and fantasy (Cao Zhengwen 99). The commercial success again invoked the indignation of the intellectuals who saw it as their responsibility to instruct and educate the general public; for them popular writing reflects the readers who “read by rote,” who read novels for entertainment and escapism, rather than for the enhancement of political consciousness.

For a start, both the new and the old novel forms share the same language: the vernacular. While Hu Shi 胡適 promoted the notion that “one should write as one speaks” (a well-known maxim at the time) and encouraged the use of the plain and daily language, the classical novels had been practicing this slogan, providing a rich ground of expressions outside of the bookish classical Chinese for several hundred years. Moreover, the social concern that modern men of letters emphasise so insistently is an ethical imperative that has long been coded in the conducts of *xia*. *Zhong*, loyalty to one’s country, finds its precise echo in the campaign for “Chineseness” opposing whatever that is “Western.” It is from the same place, the locus of the Other, that modern critics of novels seek confirmation of what is ideologically correct, and it is because of this faith in the Law, in believing they know how things should be done rightly, that they are able to lay a demand on the writers and readers of the novel, that a moral position is likewise presumed, and fantasised, in the world of martial arts fiction.

And as all ideological articulations necessarily fail, there is always a “surplus value” produced out of, or excluded from the social bond. That is, defenders of the new novel also cannot complete their attempt of dominating the field without leaving some stain, some surplus *jouissance*, no matter how much they would like to swerve away from the affective in the novel. No ideological

operation can be achieved without transferential effects. Each ideology works in its own unique way and structures its own economy of *jouissance*. Firstly, as we have just discussed, when readers come into the fantasy world of martial arts fiction, what faces them might not be pleasure, but distress at not being able to account for the gap between the Law and the laws. Activists of the New Novel are also such anxious readers. Since for them a realist novel should provoke social and political concerns—*ganshi-youguo* (to “feel for” the present time and “worry about” our country)—one cannot be upright and ideologically aware without at the same time being captured in sentiments and emotions which necessarily arise in the face of the inconsistency of the symbolic. What is more, the surplus enjoyment (that is, the enjoyment outside of the enjoyment of producing works, liking what they do as literary critics) is also displayed in their vehemence of being righteous, by fantasising that they can actually play the role of the Other, the Other that is, in effect, never present and cannot be equated to any personal stance, or any persona. This is just like those good fellows in *Water Margin* who act on behalf of Heaven and consider themselves the executor as well as executioner of an absolute Justice.

Here is an example of this surplus *jouissance* in playing the role of the big Other. Ho Jian 侯健 in his paper “On Martial Arts Fiction” (1978) points out a few involvements of pleasure in the experience of reading martial arts fiction, such as the escapism provided by the novel as a “daydream” (by reference to Freud’s theory) and the commonsensical “vicarious gratification” obtained through identification with the characters (253-54). What is more problematic for Ho, however, is the “unconscious tendency of cruelty” manifested in the “sadism” of “punishing others” and the “masochism” of “punishing oneself” from which readers seek enjoyment. He henceforth concludes that the grave consequence of the genre is not the temporary indulgence, but something permanent: *wuxia* novels “rot the human heart, breach the law, impede normal social adaptation”; they are “‘reactionary’ to the society, and to the civilisation” (255). To summarise, Ho again stresses martial arts fiction will never be in the same league with “high literature,” which encourages readers to strive upwards, while *wuxia* will always stay under the ground, providing entertainment that works like “sugar-coated poison” (256). This may just be the obverse of the *jouissance* that Ho reveals when he starts the article: “In the past thirty years I devoured tons of martial arts fiction; I held on to the craze so much that I did not eat, did not do anything, all I wanted was to read on all day long and all night long.” (229) The article was written while Ho was a literature professor of National Taiwan University, roughly about the same time that Chen Shih-hsiang expressed his admiration of Jin Yong’s martial arts fiction, a view utterly contrary to the dominant literary criticism that Ho represented. The clash between Ho and Chen is a telling episode of the relationship between the existing and emerging ideological arguments. In other words, between the master’s discourse and the university discourse, the latter takes the dominant position in terms of

Lacan's four discourses. Let us proceed onto the second chapter.

Chapter 2

The Jin Yong Phenomenon: Publishers, Readers, and the Critic as Hysteric

Prologue: letters and discourses

The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils must not be read by rote; if you bear the prologue firmly in mind, you will find the themes of karma [or misfortunes and sins, *yuan nie* 冤孽] and transcendence developed to their fullest throughout the work. With regards to characters and plots in the novel, no one escapes from injustice, and every relationship suffers the wicked play of karma. The only way to develop these themes fully is to render ordinary people and their ordinary stories unbelievable and absurd, to cast the under-the-sun, orderly world in shadow of evil spirits, threatened by malicious schemes, so to bring out unexpected revelation and irony – how can the novel not be ill-organised if it is to portray a world wherein the pitiful multitudes dwell? It is through these unbelievable characters and plots that we catch glimpses of the unbound transcendence of the Buddhist Law; upon these touching moments, we experience the same fear and pity that Greek tragedy theory addresses. Pardon me for being even more pedantic: what is deemed to be “unbelievable and ill-organised” might be fittingly explained as “the unity of form and content.” (“Chen Shih-hsiang’s Letters,” appendix, *Demi-Gods*; first sentence trans. by Hamm 232)³²

Chen Shih-hsiang wrote these sentences in one of the two private letters to Jin Yong, expressing an appreciation for the novelist’s art, as well as expounding a certain Buddhist philosophy introduced in the prologue of the novel *The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils*.³³ This passage,

³² Whenever Jin Yong’s novels or writings included in his *The Collected Works* are discussed, I mostly indicate the chapter number or the section for reference, instead of the pagination. All Jin Yong’s writings are accessible online, and there are at least three book-form versions of his *The Collected Works*.

³³ The book title refers to eight half-gods, half-human supernatural beings in Buddhist mythology (we looked at some mythological elements in the Chinese novel when discussing *Journey to the West* in Chapter 1). In the prologue Jin Yong thus illustrates the meaning of the book

though written in an off-hand fashion, has itself become a prologue to all the other literary criticisms to come. Chen Mo 陳墨, the best-selling Mainland-Chinese Jin Yong critic, titles his book on *Demi-Gods* with the often-quoted couplet in the letter: “No one escapes from injustice, and every relationship suffers the wicked play of karma” (2005). Another prolific Jin Yong writer, Pan Guosen 潘國森, based in Hong Kong, starts his book *A General Criticism on Jin Yong* (1998) by illuminating Chen’s letters sentence by sentence. And when Zhang Dachun 張大春, a Taiwanese novelist renowned for his postmodern novels and attempts to revive martial arts fiction, gave his paper at the International Conference on Jin Yong’s Novels held in Taipei in 1999, his prologue consisted of the exact passage quoted above from Chen’s letter. This amounts to three Jin Yong experts, or “Jinologists,” addressing the same topic from three different Chinese regions. No wonder American cultural studies scholar John Christopher Hamm opens his *Paper Swordsmen: Jin Yong and the Modern Chinese Martial Arts Novel* by claiming Jin Yong’s fiction is a “ubiquitous element in the popular culture of Chinese communities around the globe” (1).

The immense popularity of Jin Yong’s works was evident ever since his first novel *The Book and the Sword* (*Shujian Jiangshan* 書劍江山) appeared in serialisation in *New Evening Papers* (*Xin Wanbao* 新晚報) in 1955. But his novels did not gain literary recognition until much later, and Chen Shih-hsiang, writing the letters in 1966 and 1970, might have been the first scholar to turn his pleasure of reading Jin Yong into academic critique.³⁴ Both Chen and C.T. Hsia belong to

title:

In many sutras of Mahayana Buddhism, mention is made of the “Vyantara” who listen in the background when Buddha is preaching to the assembled Bodhisattva, Bhikshu etc. In the Devadatta chapter of the Dharmayasha Sutra it is written, “The Vyantara, people and non-people, all came to watch from a distance the apotheosis of the serpent-demon Bilva.” The “non-people” here are beings who have certain human aspects but are in reality not human. The Vyantara are all “non-people,” they consist of eight categories of supernatural beings. Because the most important of them are the celestial beings and the dragons, the Vyantara in China are also called “Celestial Beings, Dragons and Six Other Categories of Supernatural Beings” (Prologue, *Demi-Gods*; translation with some modification from “The Poem Based On the Names of JY’s 14 Novels”).

³⁴ Song Weijie notes that during the 60s and 70s several university professors in the South-East Asian countries created a new field called “Eagle-ology” (*diao xue*) which specialised in two

the same generation of overseas Chinese academics in the U.S. With Chen teaching at the University of California at Berkeley and Hsia teaching at Columbia University, they were two leading scholars in the two most prestigious departments of Comparative Literature.

Hsia is the author of *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction* (1961), a textbook and must-read for anyone who is interested in Chinese Literature. What makes Hsia's work stand out from other research on the same topic is his controversial move of promoting Eileen Chang (Zhang Ailing 張愛玲) over Lu Xun. The former, until then, had been thought to be no more than a popular novelist whose short stories of romance, though attractive, were centred on triviality and not worth too much attention. Whereas, Lu Xun, one of the most influential Chinese writers who was associated with the May Fourth Movement (1919), conveyed in his writing of various forms a deep concern for politics and social realities in his time (as seen across his essays, his fiction and his *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*).³⁵ Compared to Hsia, Chen certainly did not create as much controversy then, mostly due to the fact that his expertise lay mainly in classical Chinese literature, and his academic achievement was less well known. Yet, once his letters to Jin Yong were made public in 1978, printed as an appendix to the revised version of *Demi-Gods*, it was all about to change. That an accomplished overseas academic specialising in classical literature held a popular writer in the highest esteem, was just as shocking as Hsia's prioritising Eileen Chang's "trivial" romances over Lu Xun's "serious" reflections. These days, while Hsia's scholarship remains inescapable in the field of Chinese studies, Chen enjoys a wide publicity that spreads far beyond the intellectual or scholarly circle. At the same time, however, it is also because of this fame surrounding Chen that what seemed as incongruous and hard to believe in Chen's letters has long stopped surprising us. It is no news that Jin Yong's novels are taught in Beijing University, and it seems only natural that classical literature scholars should present their papers at international conferences on Jin Yong, as they often do.

It seems just the way things have always been. How does this effect come about? The name "Jin Yong" is so rich in connotations that a definitive quality of the "Jin Yong-ness" remains uncertain and ambiguous, regardless of persistent efforts by numerous fans and critics to pin down that "something in Jin Yong." The name "Jin Yong" interlaces with other discursive activities and institutions, most noticeable of which are the literary critical discourse from which both Hsia and

Jin Yong novels that have "eagle" in the titles, however, Song does not provide any references or further details (189). Chen's letters then are the first piece of scholarly critique in existence.

³⁵ Eileen Chang did write novels of more serious themes, such as *The Rice Sprout Song: a Novel of Modern China*; it is just that her reputation or popularity was first garnered by her romantic stories.

Chen make their utterances, the ideology of “Chineseness” behind the desire to single out a Chinese literary figure, the social bond between the martial arts genre and its fans, and the joint efforts of fan writing and academic research in Jinology.

Chen’s letters occupy a vantage point for us to examine the interrelations between the different social aspects of the Jin Yong phenomenon. But their importance also resides in the fact that they are posited first of all in structures of address, on the level of empty speech, not least because letters are, in the first instance, correspondence between addresser and addressee. The Chinese word standing for message or correspondence, *xin* 信, conveys a double meaning of its own. The character *xin* is made up by two smaller characters, 人 representing “people” and 言 “speech.” Together they denote the primary import, “to trust,” from which other connotations such as “honesty,” “fidelity,” or “credibility” derive. If the pledge of trust between people is speech, then this speech is empty, not in the sense that it has a trivial content, but in the sense that it is prior to any content, prior to any actual words and statements that are delivered.³⁶ Empty speech in this sense is the most basic level of the social bond, an exchange of tokens, or *tessera*: “The tessera was used in the early mystery religions, where fitting together again the two halves of a broken piece of pottery was used as a means of recognition by the initiates, and in Greece the tessera was called the *sum bolon* [thrown together]” (*Ecrits*, fn 786). *Tessera* then is *xinwu* 信物, token of trust, symbol of reciprocity.³⁷ It would retain its value even after the engraving on the two halves has become

³⁶ Another way to detect the relation between the Chinese character and the Lacanian symbolic is to focus on the two formative categories of Chinese writing, pictographs and ideographs. Characters of these two kinds are rebus-like symbols, very much as dreams are for Freud (*Interpretations of Dreams* 296). To be able to decipher these Chinese rebuses requires etymological knowledge, as well as an acute awareness of poetic association. As to metonymy and metaphor (or displacement and overdetermination), the two governing principles of language and the unconscious, are also what constitute the “dream-like” structure of the Chinese character. (See Appendix for more discussions on Lacan’s arguments of metaphor and metonymy.) Only four percent of Chinese characters are ideographs or pictographs; the majority is semantic-phonetic compounds, with one element to indicate meaning and the other to suggest the pronunciation (for a further examination of the formation of Chinese characters, see DeFrancis).

³⁷ Exchange of tokens and gifts is certainly one of the recurrent themes in martial arts fiction. Suffice here to mention the pair of daggers in Jin Yong’s *Eagle-Shooting Heroes*, the prequel to *Companion*. First the daggers are given as a gift (by Cleric Qiu Chuji 丘處機) to Yang Tiexin 楊鐵心 and Guo Xiaotian 郭嘯天. Being sworn brothers they exchanged these not only as

unrecognizable. Similarly, as Lacan specifies, “even if it communicates nothing,” speech or discourse “represents the existence of communication; even if it denies the obvious, it affirms that speech constitutes truth; even if it is destined to deceive, it relies on faith in testimony” (*Ecrits* 209). Whether the statement (*énoncé*) contains truth, we already have faith in words and language, in the signifier or the symbolic network that guarantees the truth value; the truth lies in the act of making the statement, the act of enunciation (*énonciation*). The wordplay of *xin*/letters will reappear in Chapter 4.³⁸

Judged by the contents, Chen’s letters are a piece of literary criticism, an example of what Lacan calls the university discourse. However, the form of circulation also determines how Chen’s letters are received and structured in other social links. Were it not for Jin Yong’s presence as a media phenomenon and literary entrepreneur, these private letters between a fan and an author would not have been made public property, let alone been invoked as the foundation of an academic genre. This chapter will locate and examine the movements that different discourses perform at this particular junction, where the first Jinologist Chen Shih-hsiung appears, along with the rearrangement of this field of knowledge.

Master Jin: the discourse of the master

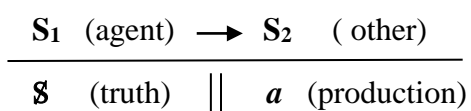


Fig. 2.1. The discourse of the master

It has become a common practice for literary scholars to publish their research on Jin Yong, and both academic effort and fan writing are included in Jinology, a field of literary studies named after

tokens of their brotherhood, but also as pledges for the relation of their about-to-be born children. Depending on the combination of each child’s gender, the daggers could attest to the pre-destined brotherhood, sisterhood, or marriage. Zhang Xiaohong dwells upon several exchange circuits in Jin Yong’s fictions in her “O Jin Yong, Tell Me What Is the Thing Called Love?—Gifts, Tokens, and Objects of Evidence.”

³⁸ Jin Yong’s novel *Companion* is often dubbed as his *qingshu* 情書, his book on love, or his love letters, and it is indeed a novel that starts with the correspondence between a pair of lovers that talk about love by not saying anything about it.

Jin Yong. This is the working of the master signifier. In the first chapter, we talked about how moral concepts such as *zhong* and *yi* (both mean “loyalty” but to different objects) are the signifiers that became prominent through works of literary writers and critics, and in turn re-defined the field of ethics in the later writings. Because of the emergence of the master signifier, elements that would have been heterogeneous or contradictory are “quilted” within the same set. In the case of the Jin Yong phenomenon, the master signifier is, simply, “Jin Yong.” The name of “Jin Yong” is a nodal point (*point de capiton*), or quilting point, through the intervention of which the then startling mix of classical literature and martial arts fiction passes into an ordinary affair, giving the retrospective illusion that “this is how things have always been.” It is not by any coincidence that Jin Yong is “Master Jin,” or “Jin the great *xia*” (*Jin Daxia* 金大俠), as critics and fans call him.³⁹

Master and Slave

The relationship between Master Jin and his critics and fans is like that of master and slave: critics and fans are like the slave, being put hard to work, and the master steals what they know and makes it his own. All the master has to do is to announce, “Look, this is what I write, and I am what I do: I am Jin Yong.” He “gives a sign, the master signifier, and everybody jumps” (*Seminar XVII* 174). Lacan borrows Hegel’s pair of master and slave to illustrate the master’s discourse, but the point of the allegory is not about relations among people, but rather about those among signifiers, subjects and *jouissance*. The first lesson that the master/slave story gives is that the master is not, and does not need to be, the subject who knows, for the master’s discourse functions by extracting knowledge from the slave “in order for it to become the master’s knowledge” (*Seminar XVII* 22), therefore we have $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ on top of the diagram:

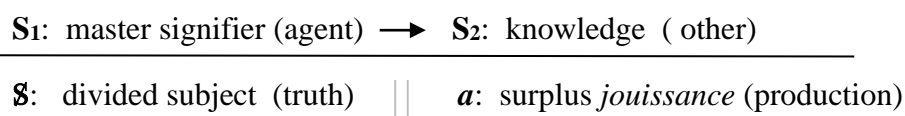


Fig. 2.1.a. The master’s discourse: S_1 and S_2

³⁹ *Point de capiton* refers to upholstery buttons that stabilise the stuffing in a mattress, hence the translation “quilting point.” Lacan first brings up this term in *Seminar III* (268-69), and reviews it later in his graph of desire (*Ecrits* 681-690). Žižek in most places treats the quilting point as synonymous with the master signifier (*Sublime Object* ch. 8; “Four Discourses” 76).

In this sense, the mastery of the master signifier lies in the fact that it is a “signifier without signified,” a point that is itself devoid of meanings and yet holds the nodal position according to which the contour of meaning is drawn. The Jin Yong phenomenon is then about how the signifier “Jin Yong” comes to order a field of knowledge, and in so doing becomes the point to which all that knowledge is directed. Jin Yong the person, therefore, does not quite occupy the place of Jin Yong the master signifier; in fact, in the master’s discourse the subject is not placed either as Jin Yong or as the critic, but on the bottom left of the diagram, as the truth of the agent:

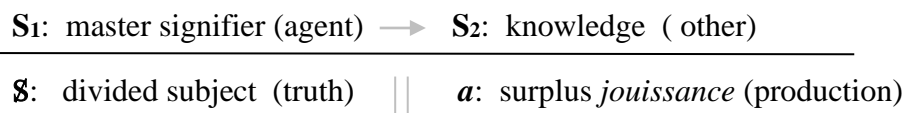


Fig. 2.1.b. The master’s discourse: S₁ and §

The second implication of the master/slave pair is to accentuate the fact that inevitably there is an irrational side to what constitutes mastery. “The king is king”— what makes a king a king is not so much his true capability to reign. Rather, it is the throne or the institution itself that guarantees the status from which he speaks. We do not have to take what a king says as true, we just have to take it as something said by a king.⁴⁰

Subject as truth

In the case of Jin Yong, he is no doubt a master novelist who has written substantial works in order to be given the title “Master Jin.” However, it takes more than his artistic achievements or personal qualities for his name to become the master signifier in literary criticism. “I am just a storyteller,” Jin Yong more than once exclaims, “like the professional storytellers of the Song dynasty” (qtd. in Minfred, Translator’s introduction xi). This profession, influential in terms of the development of the *wuxia* genre, as we have seen, refers to the long tradition of stand-up artists and entertainers who told historic tales and romances in teahouses or markets, offering amusement for anyone who could spare a few cents and a little time. Jin Yong’s likening himself to a storyteller is certainly a double claim. On the one hand, Jin Yong asserts that he has in mind the taste of the commoners, and

⁴⁰ Žižek in many places elaborates on the concept of “the king is king” and the master signifier. See, for example, *For They Know Not What They Do* (267; 271-73).

the “main function” of martial arts fiction is to “give pleasure” (qtd. in Minfred, Translator’s introduction xi). On the other hand, even though Jin Yong intentionally sets his works apart from those of “serious” literary nature, he at the same time aligns himself with classical Chinese literature, and in so doing claims a canonical seat. In other words, as the truth of Master Jin’s discourse, Jin Yong the novelist is indeed a split subject (see the diagram above), split between “serious” writing and “popular” demand, and yet that split does not stop “Jin Yong” the master signifier from quilting together the disparate voices within Jinology criticism that all address the same thing, the master’s works. In this splitting, the logic of “the king is king” is at stake here too. It does not matter if he is revered as the greatest Chinese novelist,⁴¹ or criticised as a backward thinker for his male-centred and chauvinistic plot setting, whatever he touches will be good and whatever he writes will be canonical. Therefore, regardless of the mixed reactions from the critics, the “newly revised edition” (*xinxiu ban*), a project that revises his already classic *The Collected Works* and alters several major plotlines of the novels, still enjoys a wide readership.

The objet a: agalma, and more

No matter how great the name “Jin Yong” is in producing the quilting effect, or how effectively it has grouped together a wide range of heterogeneous meanings and bestowed a kind of coherence to it, the field of knowledge can never be totalised. On the one hand some statements seem to be simple facts. Jin Yong is the grand *xia*, the master novelist—what is there to doubt? Nevertheless, it is at the same time impossible to say with certainty what that “Jin Yong-ness” really is, to what is the hidden treasure, *agalma*, that makes him the master:

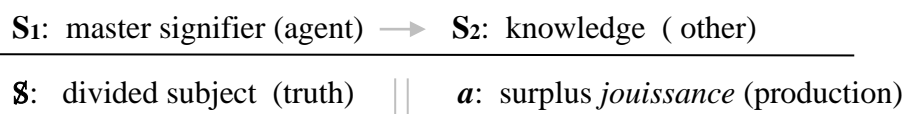


Fig. 2.1.c. The master’s discourse: S₁ and a

Agalma is a Greek word that denotes a precious object tucked away in an insignificant container. It is the word Alcibiades invokes in his amorous move on Socrates in *Symposium* to describe the

⁴¹ Ni Kuang 倪匡, for example, declares that Jin Yong’s achievement as a novelist “surpasses all predecessors, and will never be exceeded by future writers” (preface, *My Reading 2*).

elusive object that is the cause of desire.⁴² When in love, we inevitably consider the loved one endowed with some inestimable precious value, something in the person that makes him or her irreplaceable. This fascination with the love object may be an overbidding, but it is not simply illusory. Just as the list that follows “I love you because ...” could extend endlessly, the enumeration of reasons for the fan or critic’s fascination with Jin Yong could go on and on. And yet, this rich cluster of meanings only yields to the corollary that there is still something missing, as if all we need is to name one more Jin Yong quality and we will expose that *agalma*, pin down what “Jin Yong” really is all about. It is a strange infinity of answering “this is not it!” in order to ask again “what is it?” (This is an infinity that Zupančič calls “bad infinity,” which we will examine further in the chapter on love). The pursuit may be futile when caught in the loop, but failing to reach the goal of finding out what “Jin Yong-ness” is does not mean that there is no satisfaction gained. The pursuit is its own reward, it is “it” every time, according to the logic of drive. As we saw in Chapter 1, the experience of reading martial arts fiction is an enjoyment in-between pleasure and displeasure, a kind of (dis-)satisfaction that Lacan calls *jouissance*.

Impossibility and impotence of the discourse

In the Jin Yong phenomenon, the master signifier “Jin Yong” acts the part of the agent, occupying the dominant point of the discourse (the top-left corner) to give order to serious literary criticism and fan knowledge alike, namely Jinology, the system of knowledge, S₂. In doing this, it creates a sense that “this is the way it has been; it is how things should be.”

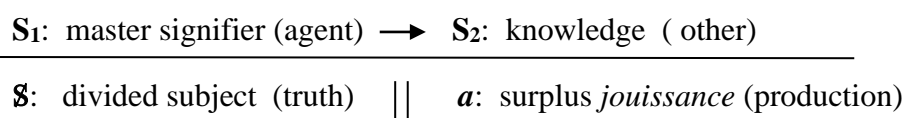


Fig. 2.1. The discourse of the master

The (master) signifier “Jin Yong” represents the person Jin Yong in this literary critic-fan formation Jinology. But the actual subject Jin Yong is never completely represented by this signifying function. Something is always left behind or in excess. In Lacanian terms, while the signifier (S₁) represents the subject (\\$) for another signifier (S₂), there is always something left over. This is the *objet a*

⁴² Lacan more than once refers to this anecdote. For example, see *Ecrits* 699. The main locus and most extended discussion can be found in *Seminar VIII, Transference*.

located at the bottom-right corner, the “essential by-product” of any quilting operation of the master’s signifier (Zupančič, “Surplus Enjoyment” 158). The production of a leftover object proves that the signifying work of “ $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ” is impossible, it always fails. The product is always barred from truth, hence the barrier between the two places in the lower part of the discourse.⁴³ “Now the structure of each discourse necessitates there an impotence, defined by the barrier of *jouissance*, to be differentiated as a disjunction, always the same, of its production from its truth” (Lacan, *Radiophonie* 29). *Jouissance* is the barrier because *jouissance* is the reason why the signification fails. Furthermore, whatever is spawned from the hard work done by the slave (critics, fans, or scholars) will never be “it” to explain away the truth about Jin Yong. The link from the *objet a* to the subject is not just impossible, but barred, as in the diagram above, meaning that all social or discursive links involve both impossibility (on the top layer), and impotence (on the bottom layer). This is why the four discourses are unstable and never stand still: the master signifier that occupies the position of the agent here may, as we shall see, change places.

Jinology and the excessive object: the discourse of the university

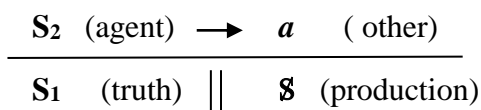


Fig. 2.2. The discourse of the university

The fact that the final word on Jin Yong is still lacking serves only to guarantee that there will always be more to be said. This “coincidence of loss and surplus” is a paradox essential to the Lacanian *objet a* (Zupančič, “Surplus Enjoyment” 163). It is a surplus *jouissance* precisely because it has always already been lost. In contrast to the romantic idea of a lost paradise where one always gets what they want and where *jouissance* is the ultimate satisfaction granted to all, the paradox of

⁴³ The impossibility and impotence of the discourse are not marked out in the diagrams in *Seminar XVII*, although Lacan does address the three impossibilities (187). In *Radiophonie* Lacan clearly links the impossibilities with Freud’s three impossibilities: to govern (master’s discourse), to educate (university discourse), and to psychoanalyse (analyst’s discourse). Lacan also suggests a fourth impossibility to desire, the hysteric’s discourse (28). In this text, all four discourses have a crossed out arrow on top between the places of “agent” and “other” (30). Later in *Seminar XX*, the word “impossibility” is shown on the top level of the master and the analyst’s discourses, and “impotence” is shown on the lower level of the university and the hysteric’s discourses (16).

jouissance is that it has been in principle inaccessible right from the beginning. It can only be “perceived in the dimension of loss,” and such loss “necessitates compensation”: “Only the dimension of entropy gives body to the fact that there is surplus *jouissance* there to be recovered” (*Seminar XVII* 50).⁴⁴ Here, we shall follow this logic of entropy and surplus *jouissance* through the concept of “Chineseness.”

Obsession with China

Jin Yong is always associated with a certain “Chineseness,” which is reflected in certain aphorisms, such as, “Where there are Chinese people, there is Jin Yong,” as the cover blurb of his *The Collected Works* says. This is acutely felt by those who attempt to transport a Chinese Jin Yong into the English world. As one of his translators describes it, “the novels of Jin Yong are a deliberate celebration of Chineseness, full of nostalgic touches. Who knows whether the endless displays of Chinese culture in the novels bore or attract the non-Chinese readers?” (Lai, “Translating Jin Yong” 356).⁴⁵ “China” is something that has always been lost and could only be approximated through retrospective “nostalgic touches” by the novelist, as well as those of readers and critics. The “endless displays of Chinese culture” attest to the novelist’s desire to recollect what should belong to the old China, and reading Jin Yong’s fictions also becomes an experience itself of *jouissance*, a repetitive attempt to regain as fantasy the non-existence of a great China. The “Jin Yong craze” (*Jin Yong re* 金庸熱) is a China craze.

Writing on Jin Yong, on the other hand, acts upon the (lost) cause of affirming the splendour of Chinese culture. As Jiang Ningkang argues, what underlies both the “concerned mentality” that Chinese intellectuals share when facing the invasion of Western culture and powers, as well as the persistent pursuit of a new identity prevalent in representations of contemporary [Chinese] literature, is the same “anxiety over national identity” (249, 286). Indeed, from Jin Yong’s constant reference to the martial arts genre being “especially Chinese” (Jin Yong, author’s preface, *Deer and Cauldron* [Minfred] viii), to Jin Yong critics’ enthusiasm in deeming him the “Chinese

⁴⁴ In Chapter 4, we shall see how this plays out in the love relation of Yang Guo and Little Dragon Maiden in *Companion*.

⁴⁵ Also discussing the problems translators encounter, Liu Shaoming 劉紹銘 simply calls Jin Yong’s *Deer and Cauldron* a “Chinese fairy-tale for adults” and remarks that the heavy dose of chauvinism the novel contains would make it quite hard for English readers to enjoy (“Notes on translating *The Deer and the Cauldron*” 302).

pride,” the “obsession with China” is ever-present. All these are manifestations of surplus *jouissance* plastering over the traumatic loss, the impossible spot for China to be the “nation at the centre of the world” (the literal translation of the nation’s name, *Zhongguo* 中國).⁴⁶

There is no *jouissance* that is *not* surplus, arising as it does from the gap left by the loss of the (Chinese) object. But whatever that gap is opened up to will never fill it up. While aiming to compensate, it always over-compensates, in its persistent and tedious repetition. The problem with *jouissance* is not “not enough,” but “too much.” It is impossible to get rid of and is irritating in its excessiveness. In literary critical discourse, we can read the symbol *a* in two ways. Firstly, the profuse “research labour” dedicated to the field of Jinology (Lin Baochun, “Study of the Editions of Jin Yong’s Fictions” 402) follows the same logic of waste and loss. Secondly, Jin Yong’s fiction is exactly that irritant, that excessive object, to the Chinese literary tradition.

Literary critics and Jin Yong fans do all the work to explain what “Jin Yong-ness” is. While the knowledge resulting from their efforts is stolen by the master and becomes the master’s knowledge, the real end product of the master/slave relationship is “pure work,” which falls out of this operation (*Seminar XVII* 50; Zupančič, “Surplus Enjoyment” 162). Let us have a quick look at the fan affect. Fan writers see the writing as reward in itself and are content with how the knowledge they produce freely circulates on blogs and fan sites. Even though sometimes their work wins them social recognition or financial reward, the amount of “pay-back” received for their work is disproportionate to how much it contributes to Jin Yong’s aura, as well as to the sales of his books. The fan affect is therefore the surplus of the production process, the surplus *jouissance* that is clearly invested in, but at the same time “wasted” in the discursive link. It is this logic of entropy that enables Lacan to equate surplus enjoyment to surplus value in Marxist theory, the unpaid portion of workers’ labour that is produced in a capitalist social system, which in turn contributes to the accumulation of capital.

The split between “high” and “low” literature

Chen’s letters to Jin Yong demonstrate such an expenditure of work and affect. It is no easy task to group half a dozen critical discourses and theories together, and make them appear consistent; and

⁴⁶ It was C.T. Hsia who first brought attention to the Chinese complex (533-54), and his expression “obsession with China” has been referred to widely by more contemporary literary critics. Rey Chow, for example, re-appropriates Hsia’s concept and calls it the “obsession with ‘Chineseness’” (introduction, *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory*, 2-5).

yet, since this piece of knowledge he proffers is only presented in private letters and not in academic journals, his labour is not meant to be recognised by other enthusiastic fans, nor should it be acknowledged in academia.⁴⁷ As waste, Chen’s surplus *jouissance* at work is a necessary by-product of the master/slave social bond, the *a* in the master’s discourse. However, once his letters are published and put to use by Jin Yong’s media enterprise, the affect of or work involved in Chen’s letters (and other Jin Yong criticism) is no longer unaccounted-for: in the university discourse of Jinology, surplus work and surplus *jouissance* are calculated, counted, and turned not only into cultural value but capital itself:

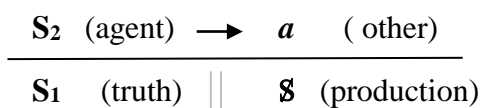


Fig. 2.2.a. The discourse of the university: S₂ and a

We will look at the discourse of the university in more detail very soon.

The popular genre, (and, more broadly, the fictional narrative form) has always been something extra and serves no moral or ideological purpose regarding the history of Chinese literature. The same contrast has been seen between the terms *xiaoshuo* and *dadao* (“small talk/fiction” and the “grand way”) since Zhuang Zhou’s time (4th century BC), as mentioned in the first chapter. (Also recall the controversy that C.T. Hsia raised by endorsing Eileen Chang’s fictions, which until then had fallen out of the established system of literary knowledge).

Martial arts fiction is this excessive object that irritates the quilted literary field and in so doing reveals how the *dadao/xiaoshuo* pair has translated into *yasu zhi fen* 雅俗之分, the differentiation of the elite and the popular (in terms of readership), or the refined and the vulgar (in terms of literariness). This can be seen in the context of Western literature as the tension between “high-brow” literature and “low-brow” genre writing. It is this tension that induces Chen to write his fan letters to Jin Yong in the first place. In this sense, Jinologists’ research labour thrives on making sense of the impasse. Along with the disagreements or debates arising from the split of “high versus low,” there would only be more elements of enjoyment whirled into it. Read as a literary object of excess, Jin Yong’s fiction is what stands in not only for the lost cause of “China,” but also as an impossible unified literary totality that is presumed to have existed but now gone, and whose loss is considered to be retrievable if only the “high versus low” debate, or *yasu zhi fen*,

⁴⁷ Chen even declined the opportunity to publish some of this work in one of the Ming Pao journals. See his “Chen Shih-hsiang’s Letters.”

could be resolved through critical effort. In effect, this tension between the elevated and the vulgar presents the same impasse for the novelist.

In 1969 when *The Deer and the Cauldron* was serialised in *Ming Pao*, Jin Yong declared it was going to be his last piece of work. Instead of getting new ideas for new novels, he would devote his time to revising all his previous works, from *The Book and the Sword* (1955–56) onwards. It was an unusual move for a martial arts novelist to stop producing work while market demand was high. For someone like Jin Yong, only 44 years old at the time and for whom each novel had reached a new peak in creativity and sales, to stop writing seemed unthinkable. Hamm states that Jin Yong's revision project showed his "ambitions for a 'higher level,'" displaying an attempt to canonise his own corpus of work and break away from the tag of popular literature (235). Jin Yong's project of bringing all his novels into a new version did more than simply finesse his phrasing and improve his word choices. The revising efforts were also devoted to adding and deleting stories or plot lines. The additions were mainly for the purpose of fleshing out the historical aspect,⁴⁸ whereas the majority of the deleted scenes, as Lin Baochun 林保淳 rightly points out, consists of "clichés" particular to the genre, such as episodes that appear "fantastical" and accordingly "in lack of credibility" ("Study on the Editions" 417). The revision by the master therefore aimed to circumvent the split between the refined and the vulgar by taking away elements common in genre writing, and aiming for higher literary standards. He did this by both fine-tuning the style as well as strengthening the historical appeal, since historical narratives, being credible and carrying moral intent, belong to the category of "upright" writing in the Chinese literary tradition.

The consequences of Jin Yong's "serious intent on the popular genre" (Lin Baochun, "Study on the Editions" 423) are at least two-fold: firstly, it added new momentum to the commercial success of his novels; secondly, the work devoted to evaluating both editions has alone become a new area of scholarship, *banben xue* 版本學, further expanding the mapping of Jin Yong studies. As one of the authorities in this sub-field of Jinology, Lin deems Jin Yong's ambition of aiming high unnecessary, for the reason that he risks the work losing the trademark flavour of martial arts fiction, which is first of all a popular form of fiction. With a concern for fans and readers who grew up reading Jin Yong on daily newspaper instalments, Lin is uncertain of some of the "overly refined" classical poetry and couplets found in the new versions: "were Jin Yong not the Master Jin of our time, I doubt readers would have accepted that" (412). Lin's statement here sums up the effect of the master's discourse: as long as it is the word of Master Jin, any excessiveness or

⁴⁸ The historicising effort is unanimously observed by Hamm, Lin Baochun, Ye Hongshen 葉洪生, and Pan Guosan.

irrationality is to be taken seriously. Furthermore, the fact that Lin here expresses his discontent with Jin Yong’s manoeuvre is itself an affirmation of the quilting effect: “were Jin Yong not the master, I doubt I would have cared this much about that ‘high’ and ‘low’ clash.” The surplus status of martial arts fiction is something that Jin Yong and the critics find irritating and difficult to assimilate and totalise. However, exactly because such object of excess is the by-product of the discourse of the master, inseparable from the name “Jin Yong,” it propels the discursive link, urging on academics and fans to invest, or rather, squander their labour and affect, only to maintain the relation between the master signifiers and the knowledge in the Jin Yong phenomenon.

From the master to the university

As previously mentioned, the fan affect and academic work in Jinology are far from being “wasted” and have acquired a fully calculable, accountable value. This is demonstrated by the fact that fan writing is compiled and collected into books and serious scholarly articles on Jin Yong are published. These activities are no longer considered “extra-curricular” for academics, and can even count towards tenure. As if hinging upon the *objet a*, the master’s discourse goes through a quarter turn, tilting to its left, only to have the *objet a* emerge in the manifest content of the university discourse. The latter can be seen as the social link or the discourse of the university, in which Jinology addresses, tackles and takes use of the surplus value of the excessive literary object:

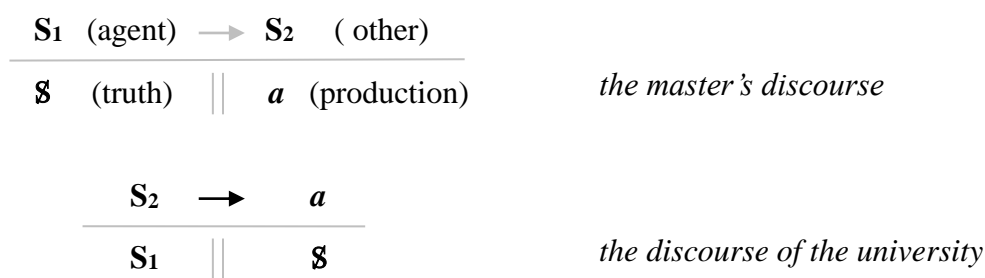


Fig. 2.3. The master’s discourse and the discourse of the university

Through the ambiguous status of *objet a* in the master’s discourse and in the university discourse, we see how one discourse topples into another, how one is necessitated by another.⁴⁹ In the master’s

⁴⁹ For this reason it is not surprising to observe a split among Lacanian theorists concerning capitalism. Both Žižek and Zupančič designate the university discourse to be the *matheme* for the capitalist social link (Žižek, “*Objet a* in Social Links” 108-109; Zupančič, “Surplus

discourse, the residual effect is the split opinions on the elegant versus the vulgar literariness, whereas the university discourse of Jinology is not the knowledge that aims at solving the impasse, but a knowledge that works on and feeds off its unsolvable antagonism. Jinology as such is the epitome of contemporary Chinese literary criticism. Chen Pingyuan reflects that “the confrontation of *ya* and *su*,” of “high” and “low,” “constitutes a significant driving force in the development of twentieth-century Chinese culture,” or more specifically, of Chinese literary criticism (preface, *Literati’s Chivalric Dreams* 7). That this declaration appears in a piece of research on the martial arts genre is telling in itself. This driving force is also a force of capital, which the development of Jinology evidently demonstrates, for the discourse of the university is what makes the “pure work” or wasted affect calculable and profitable in a consumer society, in which the impossible suddenly becomes possible.⁵⁰ By openly commanding the joint force of both camps, the discourse of Jinology works to the interest of the master, accumulating value for his media enterprise.⁵¹

Master signifiers revisited

Jin Yong’s other non-literary identity, though not particularly known to Western readers, enjoys just as much admiration as his artistic achievements. Jin Yong is also Zha Liangyong (or Louis Cha, the

Enjoyment” 169-170), while others like Fink call the consumer’s society a modern version of the master’s discourse (see *Lacanian Subject*, 131).

⁵⁰ “Capitalism, in its junction with the university discourse, is the discourse of the possible” (Zupančič, “Surplus Enjoyment” 171).

⁵¹ Another piece of proof of how Jinology proliferates in a capitalist society is the “Wang Shuo incident” that started off in 1999. Wang Shuo is a Chinese writer based in Beijing, renowned for both the popularity and critical acclaim of his novels in the 80s. In “Reading Jin Yong,” a short essay published in one of the biggest newspapers in China, Wang criticised severely the “vulgarity” of Jin Yong’s fiction and its “non-literariness.” Wang’s reasons for his condemnations of Jin Yong were nothing new, all standard critiques of martial arts fiction based on its formulated style and language, unreal depiction of people, indulgence in violence and depravity, and so on. Jin Yong did give polite responses, but a debate that became known as the “Wang Shuo incident” started off heatedly between different camps of scholars, spreading rapidly on Internet discussions. Following this, the sales of Jin Yong’s books reached another new high. See Hamm’s Chapter 10 in *Paper Swordsmen*. For a collection of writings generated from the incident see *The Debate on Jin Yong’s Fiction*, edited by Liao Kebin.

anglicised name), the successful entrepreneur who rules a media kingdom in Hong Kong called the Ming Pao Group, which includes the newspaper *Ming Pao* (where Jin Yong's novels were serialised), *History and Fiction* (a martial arts literary magazine), *Ming Pao Journal* (where larger instalments appeared), *Ming Pao Monthly*, and Ming Ho Publishing. There may be a number of master discourses at work at the one time, each with their own irreducibly different master signifiers. The ideology of capitalism, for one, is another master's discourse at play. Hamm describes the logic of the marketplace as an ideological imperative in the Jin Yong phenomenon (239). As far as Hamm is concerned, commercialism is a trace deliberately dimmed down by Jin Yong's literary success; however, for readers of Jin Yong the capitalist operation is not only taken for granted but also regarded as part of the charm of a Chinese artist who is perfectly in control of the modern world of commercialism. Such an icon that combines lofty art with worldly achievement is certainly a prideful thing for Chinese communities. The obsession with China (*a* in the master's discourse) is but the flip side of the Chinese master.⁵²

Different master signifiers join forces and back each other up. The only reason we are able to see Chen as the precursor of Jin Yong studies is that Taiwan's Yuanliu (遠流) Publishing, in cooperation with Jin Yong/Zha Liangyong's Ming Ho (明河), publishes Chen's fan letters as serious literary critique, and as if to affirm Chen's importance, Jin Yong in turn writes on him. In his afterword to *Demi-Gods*, Jin Yong expresses his gratitude for Chen's recognition of the genre, and emphasises the eminency of Chen's scholarship in classical literature. On the one hand the literary knowledge produced in Chen's letters is snatched away by Jin Yong the master to be part of the canonising, publishing enterprise; on the other hand, Chen himself is retrospectively promoted as a master-critic of Jin Yong. It does not matter that his letters to Jin Yong comprise only a small portion of his life work. Furthermore, what he actually writes in the letters is of less importance than the effect they provoke: "Look here, this is Chen, and this is what he says." By virtue of the

⁵² This may be explained by how the analyst's discourse, where the *objet a* occupies the dominant position, is the "counterpoint" of the master's discourse (as Lacan calls it in *Seminar XVII* 87), and that each discourse generates the other's agent. In the matrix of four discourses, S_1 and *a*, like S_2 and $\$$, are terms that can never address or be addressed by each other. Rex Butler develops the dialectic of the master signifier and the *objet a* throughout his book *Slavoj Žižek*: "The final ambiguity of the master-signifier," Butler writes, is that "it is its own opposite (*object a*); but it is an opposite . . . that leads only to another master-signifier, that can be seen only through another master-signifier" (65).

expertise embedded in “Chen says,” his letters are adorned with the form of citation, and his name becomes a master signifier itself, an asset of an all-knowing S₂, knowledge stepping into the dominant place of another discourse, the discourse of the university:

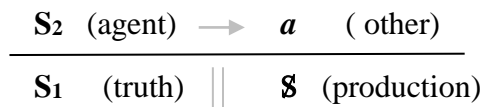


Fig. 2.2.b. The discourse of the university: S₂ and S₁

This knowledge, sustained by Chen’s name, by the Chinese pride “Master Jin” and by the Ming Pao media empire as well, is none other than Jinology.⁵³

But before Chen’s writing becomes the discourse of the university, it first has to be something else in order to put the discourse in action. Here we move to another discourse, *the hysteric’s discourse*, which not coincidentally is the only one of the four that *produces* knowledge.

Fans and critics: the discourse of the hysteric

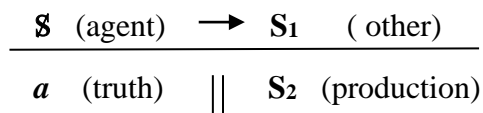


Fig. 2.4. The hysteric’s discourse

In 1975, Ming Ho launched the long-awaited revised and authorised *The Collected Works of Jin Yong*. In 1980, the same grand collection of the 14 novels in 36 volumes was published by Yuanjing 遠景 in Taiwan. This most finely printed Yuanjing version of *The Collected Works* is where Chen’s letters were first published, including scanned copies of the original letters in calligraphy. But what was also launched, side by side with this collector’s edition of Jin Yong’s novels, was the *Studies in Jinology* series (*Jinxue yanjiu congshu*). With this,

⁵³ Alexandre Leupin calls the university’s discourse “fundamentally a quotation discourse” (78). Lacan in *Seminar XVII* briefly talks about effect of citation (37) and later says the name “plays the role of a master signifier”: This order of production [culture and thesis by U] is always related to the master signifier... simply because it forms a part of the presuppositions according to which everything in this order is related to the author’s name” (*Seminar XVII* 190-91).

the bulk and visibility of secondary writing on the topic of Jin Yong's novels vastly increased, and the field of "Jinology" was formally inaugurated, with Yuanjing's 1980 publication of the first volume in its Studies in Jinology series, Ni Kuang's *Wo kan Jin Yong xiaoshuo* (My reading of Jin Yong's fiction). (Hamm 235)

With newer editions of *The Collected Works* continuing to come out every couple of years or so, writings of Jinology continue to proliferate. There have been 38 volumes published under either the series "Studies of Jinology" or the re-named "Jin Yong Teahouse," all achieving record high sales.⁵⁴ Chen Shih-hsiung's letters to Jin Yong appeared in one of the later volumes of *Studies in Jinology*, even though his name was mentioned right at the beginning in the preface to the series. Wang Rongwen 王榮文, the chief-editor of Yuanliu/Yuanjing Publishing at the time, introduced Chen as "one of the path-breaking academics who helped found the new field of 'Jinology' (*Jinxue*)."⁵⁵ At this moment when the term "Jinology" was coined, Wang's announcement is telling. First, it conceals a retroactive paradox of Chen's status: he is here to be defined and introduced *by* the field of knowledge that he pioneered and helped found. This switch of perspective, according to Žižek, is due to "the intervention of the signifying network in which the event is inscribed," an event realised in the process of passing from the "original" to its repetition ("Most Sublime" 44). Secondly, Chen's writing is regarded by Wang as somehow exterior to the field, and his academic identity differs from the lay Jinologists such as Ni and his fellow writers.

Once again the distinction between the refined and the vulgar appears. This time, the differential criterion for literary works, applied by critics, becomes the criterion for writings that critics themselves create. Previously we saw how both Jin Yong and his critics are ill at ease about

⁵⁴ Ni Kuang is chosen to be the first Jinologist to publish for several reasons: he is a close friend of Jin Yong, a culture columnist in Hong Kong, has been writing commentaries on Jin Yong since the *Ming Pao* era; though not as accomplished, he writes martial arts novel too, and was once the "ghost writer" for Jin Yong when the latter went abroad. What is also important is that Ni himself is a popular writer who pioneered another fantasy genre, the romantic sci-fi novel (*qiqing kehuan*) in Chinese regions. Later, Ni continued to produce four subsequent criticisms, including *My Second Reading to My Fifth Reading*. One can even say that he is the most-read martial arts critic of the most-read martial arts novelist.

⁵⁵ The preface to this series of Jinology could only be found in earlier editions. This passage is quoted and translated by Hamm in *Paper Swordsmen* (233).

the category of “popular novel” that the martial arts genre falls into. Here, not only do “serious” scholars frown at the naming of “Jinology,” but Jin Yong himself expresses a discomfort around his fiction becoming the object of canonising research. Under the request of the master, the series of Jinology is renamed “Jin Yong Teahouse” (*Jin Yong Chaguan* 金庸茶館), and without exception Jin Yong refuses to honour with his appearance the academic conferences that showcase the term. Certainly, there is ambivalence towards the neologism, reflected by the fact that it is often framed by scare quotes. In Wang’s Chinese text quoted above, the use of the scare quotes is not so much sceptical or ironical, but rather emphatic, indicating an importance or novelty associated with the word, which is not quite the same as the English convention. Nevertheless, after translating the above passage of Wang in his *Paper Swordsmen*, Hamm continues to suspend “Jinology” in scare quotes throughout the book and in so doing makes known a dignified academic attitude. Having a field dubbed with “-ology” (*xue* 學) is, normally, a sure sign of canonisation. Until then, there had only been a couple such studies, and among them *Hongxue* 紅學 or Redology is the most indisputable (*Hongxue* 紅學 refers to the study of the late Qing novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou Meng*)). Yet the irony of this is that “-ology” or “-*xue*” is not a privilege of academics alone but a sign of flippancy as well. It can be coined together with fields of connoisseurship (omnibology as “the studies of motor buses,” for example) or objects of ridicule and humour.

Hamm, attempting to further argue for the distinction between the Jinology Series and the “real” Jin Yong studies, goes on to cite Chen Mo: “most of the articles and monographs remain at the preliminary level of appreciation, response, and impression; they lack a sound scholarly foundation, and, even more, any clear or sufficient scholarly standard” (qtd. in Hamm 235). Li Jie in his/her PhD thesis in the same vein quickly dismisses fan-based Jinology and declares the research would exclude the “largely content-oriented and non-comparative scholarship, which has dominated the field of Jin Yong studies” (abstract, “Heroes in Love”).

However, what we learn from the Jin Yong phenomenon is again that the high versus low debate is right at the heart of the knowledge’s proliferation. This impasse cannot be resolved, and need not be. It is not so much that there is no clear-cut demarcation between Jinology and scholarship; after all, Chen Mo himself is a Jinologist. Furthermore, there has not been any piece of Jin Yong criticism that is not content-oriented and all criticisms adopt a comparative view, since all are informed with knowledge of Western literary works and theories. Rather, in terms of the hysteric’s discourse, the antagonism only functions as a hidden motor force. The hysteric’s discourse is one that “does not set out to carefully cover over paradoxes and contradictions . . . that it works in every instance . . . but rather to take such paradoxes and contradictions as far as they can go” (Fink, *Lacanian Subject* 135).

Fan discourse

Chen Mo is not without reason in accusing Jinologist fan writing of lacking “a sound scholarly foundation.” The true foundation upon which the subjects in the hysteric’s discourse issue their discontent and questions is not any of the usual criteria for an academic piece of writing (such as well-structured organisation and an established methodology, which Li Jie finds necessary). The grounding for a hysteric critic’s utterance is desire, illustrated by the *objet a* in the lower-left corner underneath the split subject:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{S} \text{ (agent)} & \rightarrow & \mathbf{S}_1 \text{ (other)} \\ \hline a \text{ (truth)} & || & \mathbf{S}_2 \text{ (production)} \end{array}$$

Fig. 2.4.a. The hysteric’s discourse: \mathcal{S} and a

“It’s the hysteric who has the desire to know, and leads to knowledge” (*Seminar XVII* 23). The hysteric can be a writer in academia (such as Li Jie the PhD candidate and Hamm the cultural studies scholar), or a Jin Yong fan who is as enthusiastically opinionated as Ni.⁵⁶ Of course, the hysteric might very well be someone like Chen Shih-hsiang, a professor who pretends he is not a professor of Jin Yong. All of them share the same cause of desire: desire is the desire of/for the Other. The hysteric wants the truth, and it is up to the master, which is in the position of the Other, to yield it. In other words, through a desire to know, critical discourse cannot help but be the hysteric’s discourse, and generate knowledge. Also note that although the combinatory of four discourses runs on the same set of elements, these elements do not always convey the same meaning, and are received differently once they are re-positioned in another discourse. We will soon find out how \mathbf{S}_1 , \mathbf{S}_2 , \mathcal{S} , and a work quite differently in the hysteric’s and the master’s discourses.

In his first letter to Jin Yong, Chen starts by distinguishing a sort of “Jin Yong book club” that takes place in his living room, from the university classroom where he works. After several lines of critical writing, he asks for pardon for such pedantic intrusion and reasserts the pleasure of discussing Jin Yong’s novels with other Jin Yong book lovers in company of tea and wine. Chen’s dismissal of pedantry is akin to what fan writers often claim: “I’m no academic and I don’t need

⁵⁶ Hamm writes of Ni’s “breezy, enthusiastically opinionated rankings of the novels” (235).

that kind of knowledge to back me up.”⁵⁷ What gives weight to the fan knowledge is not so much the content but how his address is structured. The fan writer nevertheless needs to address a master in order to occupy the position of dominance, to claim as credible whatever utterance he would like to make. The master that Chen addresses is of course Jin Yong. Here let us reflect on the nature of fan writing a little more. Even in that huge volume of material that seems to be aimed at fans, from fans, most of which will never even be seen by Jin Yong himself, the structure still stands true, for what defines the fan activity is the act of addressing the name, whether the master is aware of the address or not. What counts is the structure of empty speech, and not necessarily the actuality of communication, as we have discussed before. As long as one addresses that name “Jin Yong,” one becomes a fan and what determines fan identity is the name of the master:

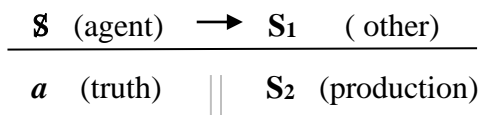


Fig. 2.4.b. The hysteric’s discourse: \mathfrak{S} and S_1

The hysteric’s discourse is the only discourse of the four in which a subject is in the position of agent. And yet, the agent in four discourses is not “someone who does” but “someone who is caused to act” (*Seminar XVII* 169). As a matter of fact the hysteric’s discourse denotes not so much a sense of “agency” or “empowerment,” but rather impossibility and powerlessness. First of all, it is an impossible relation between the agent (\mathfrak{S}) and the other (S_1). What the fan subject inquires and interrogates does not reach the master, let alone incite his desire (as Lacan says, the impossibility of the hysteric’s discourse is “causing desire” (*Seminar XVII* 173)). The truth of the discourse is the fan’s desire to know, the cause of which is the mystery of the fascination that “Jin Yong” holds. However, the truth is paradoxically divorced from the fan subject: $\frac{\mathfrak{S}}{a}$. The secret to the master’s *agalma* will stay hidden. Both in spite of and because of this, the fascination is the surplus jouissance that continues to irritate or excite the fan subject, to spur her to be engaged in fan activity. Differently put, the cause of fan affect will always remain hidden and veiled: truth is “at the level of the impossible” because it is in the real and cannot be known (*Seminar XVII* 163). In

⁵⁷ For example, another best-selling Jinology author Wu Aiyi writes: “I find the prevalence of ‘Jinology’ of recent years implausible: to forge [the reading of] great fictions into scholarship is like demanding a good lover to be a husband, both can truly dampen one’s spirits” (preface, *The Women of Jin Yong’s Fiction*).

psychoanalysis, truth is always truth about *jouissance*, it is the “little sister of *jouissance*” (67). The final paradox of the hysteric fan’s discourse is this: while fan writing does produce knowledge (S₂ in the lower-right), the knowledge is barred from truth: there is a barrier between the place of truth and the place of production, as is the case with all four discourses.⁵⁸ However, it is exactly through all these relations of impossibility and impotence that the fan’s address to the master constitutes the fandom, and through which the hysteric’s discourse comes to be the structure of subjectivity per se (Žižek “Most Sublime” 40-41). Now, let us return to the underlying truth evoked in Chen’s fan letters.

Empty Q-and-A

The relationship between the fan and the master may remind us of the master/slave social bond that we discussed in the previous section; however, “the hysteric is not a slave” (*Seminar XVII* 94). In the master’s discourse, it is the master who puts the slave to work and steals knowledge from the slave. Here in the discursive link of a hysteric fan, the dynamics are reversed: it is the master who is pressed to justify himself as the subject who knows. But what really does the trick in the hysteric’s discourse is not how much the master actually knows, but how the master is looped into the link through a supposition. It is due to the hysteric’s positioning that the master becomes a knowing subject. In other words, as long as the master is presumed to have the knowledge, the discourse will work, and the master will always be the subject who is *supposed* to know (*sujet supposé savoir*) (S11 232), in spite of what he really knows or does not know.

The function of the supposition is that of empty speech—as long as there is questioning and interrogation, the work is done. Put otherwise, the answer is already inscribed in the question itself, with or without the response from the addressee, from the master who might or might not be able to answer. As a side note, this circular movement of asking and answering is already beyond

⁵⁸ Lacan calls truth *mi-dire*, half-saying: “the only way in which to evoke the truth is by indicating that it is only accessible through a half-saying, that it cannot be said completely, for... beyond this half there is nothing to say” (*Seminar XVII* 17 51). Zupančič reads the lower part of the hysteric’s discourse “*a + S₂*” as “lack + knowledge,” and sees it as the algorithm for Lacan’s *mi-dire*. She argues that “the whole truth would be the signifier + castration/lack, and not something existing beside it, the truth is never ‘whole.’” “[T]he other half of truth could simply be said to be *jouissance*.” “Yet,” Zupančič continues, “not in the sense of the whole truth being something like ‘the signifier + *jouissance*,’ but the sense of *jouissance* being the inherent impasse of impossibility of the signifier itself” (“Surplus Enjoyment” 166).

desire's "this is not it," and is closer to the dimension of drive. When Chen addresses Jin Yong, such empty speech is formalised into a Q-and-A session, set up all by himself. After depicting the leisurely scene of the fan club which consists of members from all fields, Chen poses an interrogation: "Once in a while someone would raise the critique that *Demi-Gods* lacks consistency in structure and the characters and occurrences are on the verge of being fantastic and unbelievable" ("Chen Shih-hsiang's Letters") (Recall Lin's observation of how Jin Yong takes pains in minimising episodes and themes that are "too fantastic.") To this challenge, Chen immediately retorts: "However, the novel is so full of compassion for the misfortune of all mankind." Chen insists that "*The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils* must not be read by rote," meaning, it must not be read in the way that the Beijing Opera, a popular art form in some Chinese societies, is consumed by the common folks. "If you bear the prologue firmly in mind, you will find the themes of karma and transcendence developed to their fullest throughout the work . . ." ("Chen Shih-hsiang's Letter"). From there he begins his answer, as quoted at the beginning of the chapter.

As to critics of Jin Yong who do not regard him as a masterful writer worthy of academic effort, their inquiries are just as incessant and relentless, aiming at a place that is held responsible for the truth: "Jin Yong" is an "excuse" through which the ultimate master is addressed, to which the critics have to ask, "But why? What determines literariness? Why is Literature the Good?" Even for "non-serious" critic like Ni, the master who is supposed to know is likewise needed to occupy the point to which one issues interrogation. In *My Reading of Jin Yong's Fiction* Ni argues that 99.99% of Jin Yong's readers are "readers of novels" and not "literary critics, or scholars of ethics," and it is with this majority group of "pure" readers that he aligns himself (preface, 2). If Jin Yong is the master with whom readers exercise their pure reading, then what exactly defines the pure truth of reading and criticism? The master signifier in Ni's writing that guarantees the worthiness of "pure reading," is Literature, Literature as the Master (S₁), too (see fig. 2.4.b).

Well-equipped with explanations and theories of literariness, Chen nevertheless finds Jin Yong's martial arts fiction a challenge, claiming it is ill-organised in terms of form, and its content is made up of unbelievable, if not absurd, plots and characters ("Chen Shih-hsiang's Letters"). How can these non-human beings, which are akin to the demi-gods and semi-devils in Buddhist mythology, have anything to do with our truth and our reality? And what would be the law of Literature behind the clash between the established system of scholarly knowledge, and the disorganised literary world of Jin Yong? Is there a unifying truth that encompasses the difference between the super beings and human beings? Chen seems to be saying that there is, invoking the Buddhist Law that, according to Chen, holds such "unbound transcending power" ("Chen Shih-hsiang's Letters"). The addressee behind the addressee of Chen's letters is the big Other, the locus that guarantees truth, the guarantor of karma and justice, karma and justice that are lived by kung fu

masters, martial arts fiction fans, as well as literary theorists.⁵⁹

No guarantee

“There is something about Jin Yong”—this something is the *agalma*, the hidden treasure within Master Jin that incites in the hysteric critics the desire to know. However, Jin Yong is also the reason why the object-cause of desire serves as a core of antagonism. He is a pop writer who strives to achieve a canonical status, and this “high versus low” controversy in turn spurs the critics on to aspire for a final unifying truth: “the hysteric loves truth and wants to have it whole” (Zupančič “Surplus Enjoyment” 167). The hysteric’s discourse starts with the desire for truth, and results in producing knowledge, S₂:

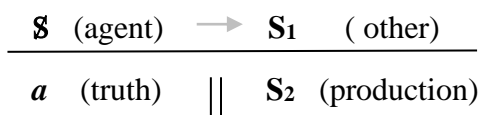


Fig. 2.4.c. The hysteric’s discourse: a and S₂

Due to the inherent powerlessness of the discourse, this produced knowledge is barred from truth, which is here represented by the *objet a* to its left. Nevertheless, the way to experience truth is via the detour of knowledge, with its mistakes and errors. The hysteric interrogates “a full and substantial Other supposedly hiding in its depths some ‘secret’” (Žižek, “Most Sublime” 41) with

⁵⁹ Chen’s evocation of the Buddhist Law is significant for two reasons. Firstly, fiction as a narrative form in China harks back to *bianwen*, a hybrid group of Buddhist writings including sermons, stories and songs (see Chapter 1). Secondly, the fiction of Jin Yong that Chen writes on, *Demi-Gods*, is a work written during the time when Jin Yong embarked on a search for the answer to the “matter of life and death” by reading Buddhist scriptures. Jin Yong to his interlocutor Ikeda Daisaku (池田大作) relates that his Buddhist journey began with the incident of his son’s suicide, and it was through the understanding of Buddhism that he could receive his sorrow in a state of joyful peace (“The Future of Hong Kong, Buddhism, and Life” in *The Dialogues between Jin Yong and Ikeda Daisaku*. The Dialogues between Jin Yong and Ikeda Daisaku can be accessed through several websites. Yuanjin published it in Jin Yong Teahouse series, and renamed it *Welcome a Glorious Century*).

the hope to resolve the impasse of the refined and the vulgar. The hysteric's addressee, occupying the place of the master, however, is only the Other who is *supposed* to know. If the master really did know, then the interrogation would be a one-off event, and the hysteric would not be a hysteric any more without having to incessantly post questions. It is as if the hysteric were the one who knows, and what she knows is that the master does not have it, for the secret of Jin Yong-ness is also a secret for the big Other. The Other as a guarantor does not exist, just like the law of karma does not set things right once and for all. This is why gallants and good fellows in the martial arts genre are bestowed the mission (or the function) to fulfil their duty by undoing the wrongs, mending what is not set right by the karmic law.

Contrary to the concept of an all-powerful master, for Lacan a master is necessarily impotent, that is, the master is castrated (*Seminar XVII* 97, 101). The hysteric “unmasks . . . the master’s function, with which she remains united” (94). While the hysteric’s questioning reveals the powerless side of the master, it is also her questioning that anchors the master on the spot of playing the part of the guarantor: it is only by being addressed that the master remains on his seat in the altered dynamic of being master, a dynamic that cannot function without his castration. That is also to say, the master’s incompetence is structurally necessary in the act of address. This structural incompetence is the reason that the four discourses do not “stand still,” and the four elements will inevitably enter a different discursive link with their places re-arranged: have we not just seen Chen’s hysteric effort turn into the discourse of Jinology? But how can his fan letters be *both* a flawed product of the hysteric’s discourse, *and* the knowledge that is prestigious enough to totalise the pop culture fans and highbrow academics?

Knowledge in repetition

The hysteric remains united or in complicity with the Other. The empty Q-and-A session might seem futile, but that does not mean there is nothing being produced. In the master’s discourse, the discursive circuit is not a closed circle and no master’s words could totalise the field without a remainder; likewise, the hysteric’s discourse is not simply an expenditure that produces nothing after all that relentless questioning, for all structures of address leave behind something in excess or lacking, a reminder of the impossibility of an equal sum. What spins out of this empty asking-and-answering exercise about truth, paradoxically, is none other than knowledge:

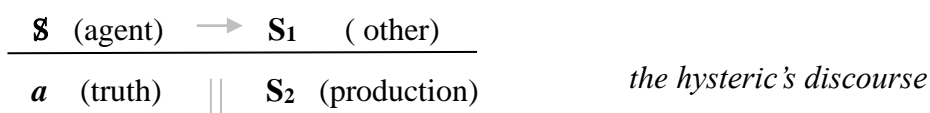




Fig. 2.5. The hysteric’s discourse and the discourse of the university

What is the difference between this S_2 as the product of the hysteric’s discourse, and the S_2 as knowledge that gives commands in the university discourse?

Chen’s letters to Jin Yong pose questions in the hysteric’s discourse and the Jinology that this question-posing gives rise to, whether it be a fan knowledge or an academic discipline, is the agent in the discourse of the university. To speak in Žižek’s Hegelian terms, Chen’s founding attempt to define Jin Yong’s literariness is the thesis, necessarily premature. The antithesis is the failure of the hypothesis. The synthesis then, is “the ‘signification’ of the thesis emerging from its failure.” The synthesis simply repeats the thesis, though it is a repetition that passes through the symbolic process of signification (“Most Sublime” 45-46). Let us now forget that Chen’s writing is repeated, in the literal sense, in the appendix of *Demi-Gods*, where there is a facsimile of the original calligraphy of Chen’s letter. This in turn is commented on by Jin Yong in the epilogue, and thus quoted, recruited as a master signifier. Now the signification of Chen’s question has gone through a symbolic process, and its repetition adds to it a different layer of perspective: the synthesis is but the thesis seen in a different light. Chen’s failed act “implies a constitutive blunder, it misses, it ‘falls into a void’; and the original gesture of *symbolization* is to posit this pure expenditure as something positive, to experience the loss as a process which opens up a free space, which ‘lets things be’” (Žižek, “Most Sublime” 45).

Chen’s hysteric’s discourse constitutes what Žižek calls “the symbolic act,” which “*succeeds in its very failure*” (45). Chen’s failure to reconcile the “high versus low” controversy is the success of Jinology, the knowledge that is in the dominant position of the university’s discourse. Or put more precisely, the strength of Jinology relies exactly in its medley of theories and fan writing, its continuous attempt to present a solution to the contradiction that confronted Chen: Jinology is a knowledge born out of paradoxes and contradictions, and proliferates through this unresolved antagonism. As long as the contradiction remains, research labour of Jinologists will always be exploited, invested and expended by the S_2 presuming the seat of the capitalist master—all Jinologists will do is repeat the failure, or success, of Chen.

But of course, Jinology is also a product of the contemporary discursive link where critical theory is gaining prominence. One could presume that the process of symbolisation involves promoting new master signifiers, since the synthesis is but the thesis viewed in a different light, in a

field where meanings have been “requilting” in a master’s discourse. Cultural studies, a discipline that sees popular culture as its key text, is one of the master discourses that emerged and re-arranged the field of literary criticism from the founding moment of Jinology (when Chen wrote the letters), to the time when Jinology became such pervasive scholarship. Zheng Shusen’s “Popular Literature, Narration, and Genre: Note on *Wuxia* Literature” documents such a symbolising process. In this short article, Zheng reports that the well-known pieces of martial arts fiction were most illuminating in explaining theories when he lectured a course called “Contemporary Western Literary Criticism” in Hong Kong during the late 70s and early 80s, the period immediately preceding the rise of the Jin Yong phenomenon. Zheng then summarises how the worthiness of martial arts novels and Master Jin could be “proved” by an array of various theories, including the Frankfurt School, feminism, Russian formalism, narratology, and genre studies.

The wicked of karma, the inconsistency of the Other

In one sense, “impasse is already its own resolution (Žižek, “Most Sublime” 54). On the other hand, the truth is glimpsed when inconsistencies are pushed further: “a logical system is consistent, no matter how ‘weak’ it is . . . only by designating its force of effect of incompleteness, where its limit is marked (*Seminar XVII* 67). It is by showing how multifarious and “ill-structured” the field of Literature is that Chen Shih-hsiang reveals the truth. The truth is half-said, inconsistent, or incomplete (the implication of a consistency that comes at the cost of incompleteness will be fully examined in Chapter 4). The biggest paradox in Chen’s letter is the co-existence of the Other endowed with Buddhist compassion, and the wickedness of the karmic law:

The Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils must not be read by rote; if you bear the prologue firmly in mind, you will find the themes of karma and transcendence developed to their fullest throughout the work. With regards to characters and plots in the novel, no one escapes from injustice, and every relationship suffers the wicked play of karma. The only way to develop these themes fully is to render ordinary people and their ordinary stories unbelievable and absurd, to cast the under-the-sun, orderly world in shadow of evil spirits, threatened by malicious schemes, so to bring out unexpected revelation and irony – how can the novel not be ill-organised if it is to portray a world wherein the pitiful multitudes dwell? It is through these unbelievable characters and plots that we catch glimpses of the unbound transcendence of the Buddhist Law. . . . (“Chen Shih-hsiang’s Letters,” appendix, *Demi-Gods*; first sentence trans. by Hamm 232)

Chen suggests that one should read *Demi-Gods* by having in sight the Buddhist premise of a “compassion for all mankind”; however, such compassion, albeit transcendent and comforting, is only imaginary. Love for one’s fellow beings does not ever contain “the themes of karma,” of misfortunes and sins (*yuan nie* 冤孽), which Chen argues are “developed to their fullest throughout the work” of Jin Yong. It is understandable why Hamm picks the word “karma” to represent *yuan nie*. The karmic law does seem to govern the “account balance” of miseries and wrongdoings in life by ensuring that they are delivered or transcended, if not in this life, then in other lives to come. That is to say, karma, according to the popular Chinese wisdom, ensures a full circle in which everything eventually ends up in its right place: “Good deeds are rewarded, evil deeds punished (*shan-you-shan-bao, e-you-e-bao* 善有善報, 惡有惡報).” The concept of reciprocity is closely linked to that of vengeance in martial arts fiction. The story lines are often centred upon the “exchange of ‘symbolic values’” such as *bao’en* 報恩 and *baochou* 報仇, the former meaning to return favours, the latter to avenge wrongful deeds. Revenge, particularly, “has become identified as the most typical pattern of *xia* behaviour” (Altenburger 29-30). And vengeance out of filial piety is especially prominent in the practice of *bao* (reciprocity), as we will soon see in the relationship between father and son in Chapter 3 (Qiao Feng) and in Chapter Four (Yang Guo).

Still, some payback never arrives, favours still wait to be returned, and debts are destined to remain unsolved. It is as though the full circle means to be indefinitely deferred, the excess being the motor force of karma. The Chinese concept for the equivocal, unclear debts is *nie*. *Nie* is either the unknown cause of a misfortune, or the leftover consequence that the karmic calculator is incapable of accounting for, or somehow overlooks. No matter which, the Law cannot answer for undeserved injustice and misery, or even explain why it cannot answer for it. The word for these miseries is *yuan*. Contrary to the common reading of karma as a complete and cosmic rolling justice without failure, the two products of the karmic machinery, *yuan* and *nie*, are there to make plain that there is excess beyond the Law, or of the Law. Instead of depicting the state of transcendence, which could either mean a zone devoid of desires and pains, or a blissful state resulting from the final deliverance of misfortunes and sins, the novel presents a system of law and justice that is not exactly effective.

The hysteric continues to wonder and pose questions precisely due to the ineffectiveness of karma and the impotence of the master: “[T]hat which defines the subject... is precisely the question” (Žižek, *Interrogating* 39), and one of the subject’s central inquiries is of course the enigma of sexuation. “Why am I this? Why am I a woman/man? Why am I attracted to this sex and not that?” These doubts and anxieties are all because of the split at the heart of the subject, who

cannot but be a sexual being. We will soon see another hysteric quest evoked by the tragic hero Qiao Feng in the next chapter, also due to a split. For him, it is the national split: “Why am I a Han-Chinese/Khitans?” But perhaps the most well-known hysteric line in Jin Yong’s fictions is the theme song of *Companion*, the eerie singing that always accompanies Li Mochou the villain: “O the world we live in, tell me what is the thing called love, which makes one willing to sacrifice one’s life for it.” The question is only rhetorical: Li Mochou knows well there will be no answer, but all the same, she does not stop her ferocious questioning.

Before we look at her empty asking-and-answering in greater detail in Chapter 4, I would like to first point out there is a good reason that the hysteric figures (such as Antigone or Medea) are often seen as figures that best represent the feminine logic in Lacan’s sexuation theory. As we have seen, when one is on the track of pursuing one’s desire, there is a good chance that the desire will suddenly turn into drive, by the mere torsion of desire itself. The object-cause of the hysteric’s circuit is still there, but in drive the object has stopped being the goal; or rather, the object is always impossible to be obtained, due to the inherent instability of the discourse, which, in terms of sexuation, means the impossibility of having a perfect rapport between the sexes. Does not Chen’s deployment of *yuan* and *nie* remind us of the two Chinese expressions for sexual relationships: *nieyuan* (孽緣) and *yuanjia* (冤家)? *Nieyuan* implies that the partnership of the couple, either due to its ill-match or ill fate, would eventually lead to doom. As to *yuanjia*, it is an endearing term to call one’s lover with whom one always quarrels, as if he or she is the fated foe. Will this bear any resonance to Lacan’s claim that “there is no sexual relationship”?

Heroism and love: the discourse of the analyst

Lacan writes on the underlying structure of the discourses: “There are four of them only on the basis of the psychoanalytic discourse” (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 16). So far we have looked at three of the four discourses, although the analyst’s discourse has been there all along: “there is some emergence of psychoanalytic discourse whenever there is a movement from one discourse to another” (16). The first meaning of this is that as readers and writers, we are also the agent of the psychoanalytic discourse. The analyst is “the subject of the unconscious” and “knows how to read” (37); readers and writers are also such subjects who “know how to read,” how to discern and explore the instability and slippage in-between the discourses, and even facilitate the movement from one discourse to another.

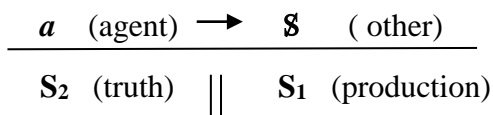


Fig. 2.6. The analyst's discourse

The “knows how to” is the truth of the discourse. The analyst's knowledge (S_2) is a set of *savoir fair*, know-how skills, and not the content of knowledge. What the analyst does is “give a different reading to the signifiers that are enunciated than what they signify [give a different reading to what is enunciated qua signifier than what it signifies]” (37; [37 n36]). Whenever a new reading emerges, the analytic discourse is at work, consequently producing a master signifier (S_1 in the bottom-right). The new master signifier re-quilts the field of meanings and starts another discourse of the master, or of the university, which may in turn produce yet another hysteric's discourse, and so on and so forth. All these movements are only possible due to the impossibility inherent in each of the discourses. The *objet a*, now in the position of agency in the top left, stands for this impossibility.

Here we come to the second reading of what the analytic discourse does in the machinery of the four discourses: it is where we can see how the impossibility functions. Žižek reads the *objet a* in the analyst's discourse as “the inconsistency of the Other” (“*Objet a* in Social Links” 117). The *objet a* is the *nie* and *yuan*, the excess of the Law, or the impotence of the Master. Following this, the third way of understanding the analyst's discourse is to see it as the relation between wickedness of karma and the hysteric (the split subject) in the place of the other.

The following two chapters, one on heroism and one on love, will examine two different consequences of what happens when the *objet a* leads things as the agent, as well as how the subject sees himself when facing the inconsistency of the Other, or the excessive object. Chapter 3 discusses the heroic subject's ethical dilemma. The emptiness of the ethical call is represented by the left-hand side of the diagram: a is on top of S_2 , it is a void against knowledge, against the conventions or set rules of how to act morally. Regardless of all the written or unwritten codes of conduct, the ethical injunction is simply *Do your duty!*, an enunciation without a statement, a saying without saying what that duty is, or which duty among many you should act on in a particular given circumstance. This void in the ethical injunction, the terrifying autonomy of making the right choice, is not to be confused with the ethics of the superego. The ethics of the superego is best represented by the university discourse, where the knowledge (S_2) is the master signifier of morality in disguise:

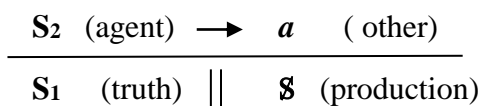


Fig. 2.2. The discourse of the university

One's cause of desire, bombarded by the superego's moral demands, is hystericised and manipulated into feelings of guilt and anxiety, hence the split subject in the bottom-right corner. In the analytic discourse, on the other hand, the subject in the position of the other is one who acts and produces something, not something that is being produced and left hystericised. The subject, together with the empty ethical call, produces a new master signifier, a new interpretation of the law that is both particular and universal.

Unlike the superego, ethics belongs to the discourse of the analyst. By the same token, we have to object to Jacques-Alain Miller's reading of the analytic discourse in which the *objet a* stands for the superego injunction *Enjoy!* (see Žižek, "*Objet a*" 110). *Enjoy!* is there to exploit the *jouissance* of the other, and it, like the *Do your duty!* command, functions with the structure of the university social link. The knowledge (S_2) in the university discourse is the "perverted master" (Lacan, *Seminar XVII* 182) of a consumer society and the passage from the master's discourse to the university discourse is "the process of spoliation" (182). In capitalism, "surplus *jouissance* is no longer surplus *jouissance* but is inscribed simply as a value" (80). The new regime says, "Pleasure is good for you; be happy!" Or, "Jin Yong fiction is great fun to read, you *must* enjoy it." Haven't we already seen how Jinology as a system of knowledge is promoted by the publishing house to make profit, to use the fandom of Jin Yong like raw material, transferring fans' surplus *jouissance* into values, and leaving them unsatisfied, split, stuck in the loop of desiring to desire more Jin Yong?

Different from desire, the possibility of love belongs to the discourse of the analyst: "love is the sign that one is changing discourses," says Lacan in *Seminar XX* (16), which is where he re-thinks the four discourses, while drawing out the diagram of sexualisation. The impossibility that is the motor force of the discourses is also what sexualisation is based on: a perfect sexual relationship does not exist, and that is why love is possible. The top level of the analytic discourse, on the other hand, resembles the matheme for perversion ($a \diamond \mathcal{S}$), which is the reverse of the matheme for fantasy and desire ($\mathcal{S} \diamond a$). The most perverse scene of love described by Lacan in his *Seminar VIII* is this: the desire is the hand that reaches for a flower or a fruit that is to blaze up (52). Just when the hand is about to touch the flower, a hand appears from the flower to meet with the first hand and the object of desire is no longer just an object, but a subject. When one encounters the subject of the drive with its *jouissance*, one falls in love and has to "resubjectivize accordingly" ("Case of Perforated Sheet" 283). This is the relation between the *objet a* (agent) and the subject (other) on the top level in the discourse of the analyst. The protagonist I explore in Chapter 4, Yang Guo, will lead us

through the movements between the four sexuation mathemes that cross from the male dynamics of desire to the feminine circuit of $L\bar{a} \rightarrow S(\mathbb{A})$, where $L\bar{a}$ is the feminine subject, and $S(\mathbb{A})$ stands for the signifier of the inconsistency of the Other.

Chapter 3

The Tragic Hero and the Lacanian Subject

The kung fu masters are those who themselves take on the role of defending the laws, speeding up the retributive process. Literary critics of the genre argue that karmic laws should be at play in the genre for the sake of education, meaning that bad deeds should not be rewarded, and good deeds should not be overlooked.⁶⁰ Critics, like agents in the hysteric's discourse, ask unanswerable questions, addressing an Other, be it Literature or karma, that will not answer. And if the pursuit of the good and the true loom large in the discourse of literary criticism, the same ethical demand is only more ferocious in the world of Rivers and Lakes, which upholds values such as justice, chivalry and gallantry.

This chapter, to continue the discussion on Jin Yong's *Demi-Gods*, will place one of the heroes in the book, Qiao Feng, to the foreground. His tragic fate shares some similarity with Oedipus. Both of them enter a pre-written script—Qiao Feng by human errors, Oedipus by an oracle—and are held guilty for wrong-doings they have no intention of committing. Oedipus may claim that his lack of knowledge—not knowing beforehand that the rude stranger he met and subsequently killed was his real father—makes him less guilty, but it is not so easy for Qiao Feng to deny the guilt. Qiao Feng's real father is a malicious schemer and killer, and in the martial arts genre, the father's guilt is by definition the son's. I will read the twists and turns of Qiao Feng's fate in the light of an obscene “other side” in which righteous conducts that means to act on Heaven's behalf goes astray and leads into guilt, death, and sacrifice. We shall, in a word, be concerned with ethics. As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, the discourse of the analysis offers a framework for our examination: the split subject is being worked up by the *objet a*. Knowing well the inconsistency of the Other, the subject still needs to act. Qiao Feng's act is to sacrifice his own life, and it is difficult to say if his sacrifice will have made any difference. The analyst's discourse produces a master signifier, and there are two ways to think of the master signifier: it can be a new ethical signifier that indicates a shifting in the prepositions of morality; or, it can simply mean that

⁶⁰ For example, Kuang Jianxing 鄺健行 complains that modern martial arts fiction seems to go astray on its moral responsibility and follow less and less the rule of having due returns of good/evil deeds. It is especially unacceptable when “bad deeds win good rewards” (“The Negative Impact of Martial Arts Fiction and Its Educational Function” 381).

the produced master signifier goes on to start yet another master's discourse, which in turn continues to quilt the field of meanings just as before.

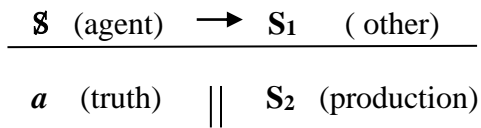


Fig. 2.6. The analyst's discourse

The Judge of the truth: the big Other

Demi-Gods is set in the years of the North Song (960-1127 AD). During this tumultuous time the Chinese Empire was under the constant threat of the Liao kingdom formed by the nomadic Khitan people, and the antagonism between the two Empires had an impact on the martial arts society. A *xia* or a chivalric gallant has the duty of safeguarding the “good,” which includes the good of the people or the county, and so the usual esteemed martial arts schools such as Shaolin and Wudang are necessarily part of the conflict. So too is the Beggars’ Guild, the ubiquity of whose members make it the most powerful of the guilds. Over the generations, its leaders have always made it clear that the Guild’s ultimate mission is to protect the Chinese people from the pain and suffering brought by the Khitan’s attempts to invade China.

Qiao Feng, in his prime at age thirty, is the present leader of the Beggars’ Guild. He is well respected by all sides for his superb martial arts prowess and brilliant leadership, as demonstrated in several patriotic actions against the Northern nomads. But as soon as he appears in *Demi-Gods* at the peak of his career, he faces a challenge: half of the Guild is determined to dethrone him. With his management skills, quick mind and, of course, impressive demonstration of kung fu, Qiao Feng turns the table and regains the trust of the guild members. However, the cause of their initial distrust remains unknown and no one involved in the revolt has dared to explain the cause of their actions. Try as he may, Qiao Feng doesn’t know, and can only conclude that it is a conspiracy conjured up by his adversaries. In the martial arts world one can offend people without knowing, and fame and status easily invite envy and resentment. Despite the suspicion and uncertainty, though, Qiao Feng is more than ready to confront the conspiracy: “Go ahead and pull out your most scheming tricks. I Qiao Feng have never acted against my conscience in my whole life, so what do I have to fear of your plotting and framing?” (*Demi-Gods*, ch. 15).

Qiao Feng has great confidence in his capability: he is not appointed the job of leading the biggest guild in China for nothing. What he ultimately has faith in, however, is the big Other. Though he may be suspect in others' eyes, he has faith that in the eyes of the final judgement of truth itself, and of right and wrong, he is righteous. He has always adhered to the conduct of a hero, and has always seen it as his duty to exemplify the principle of the Guild, to come to the aid of the weak, be loyal to the country, and help protect the Song Empire from its Khitan enemy. How could justice itself not approve of him and be on his side? But is there really such a big Other that oversees everything and guarantees justice? What if it is coincidence that renders Qiao Feng under suspicion of his fellow kung fu masters? And yet, do not all heroes require the gaze of affirmation to know how to act like a hero?

One event after another, Qiao Feng's faith in the big Other is eventually shattered. Firstly, some hidden letters emerge,⁶¹ bringing to light a massacre that occurred thirty years prior. An assembly of Han Chinese martial arts masters had come to the border to launch an ambush upon a group of Khitan soldiers and fighters who, according to intelligence, were going to enter Han territory with malicious intentions. A Khitan group dressed in civilian clothes did show up and the Han camp had an advantageous start in attacking. But it soon became evident to the Han camp that this group of Khitans were not soldiers or trained practitioners, as they could hardly defend themselves in combat. The tip-off the Han masters received was obviously erroneous (later we find this to be part of an elaborate double-cross) and there was only one Khitan man in this group who could fight. He did his best to protect his people, including the woman and child who appeared to be his family. Even though his tremendous combat skills outshone that of the Han group, he could not alone defeat them. At the end, too grieved to continue fighting after seeing the loss of his people and his wife, he leapt off a cliff. The only survivor of the Khitan camp was the infant, the child of the Khitan warrior and his wife.

Qiao Feng is that infant, now thirty years old and a hero of the battles against the Khitan. For all of his righteousness, he has also been a traitor to his fatherland all along, and a shameful son.

⁶¹ The letters are deliberately sought out by Madam Ma, the widow of the vice-leader of the Gang. But her intention for doing so is not revealed until the second half of the novel. Madam Ma is humiliated that Qiao Feng does not fall for her good looks, like everyone does. Her vicious scheming is the ultimate cause of Qiao Feng's tragedy; in other words, it is a love affair, or an absence thereof, that kick-starts the events leading to Qiao Feng's downfall. Shu Guozhi 舒國治 considers the frustrated affection of Madam Ma crucial in the plot development of *Demi-Gods*, and is yet another example proving that for Jin Yong, love is at the heart of everything (179). I will discuss love and desire in more depth in Chapter 4.

The very kung fu masters who taught him everything he knows were accomplices to the border massacre that took his real parents' lives. After realising that the Qiao couple who brought him up are his foster parents, Qiao Feng is at a loss:

If I were a Khitan, then wouldn't I be the most disloyal person by having killed several Khitan people, destroyed war plans of my county? And wouldn't I be the most disgraceful son? If my parents were murdered by Han people at the border and I looked up to the killers as my masters, mistaking them to be dear parental figures to me? My, Qiao Feng, what shame that you live as such a shameless, disloyal person? And if Mr Qiao were not my real father, then should I not be Qiao Feng either? What's my family name? What name did my father give me? Alas, not only am I a disloyal citizen and shameful son, I'm also a person without a name. (ch.18).

Conspiracy theory: the Other of the Other

The addressee of these questions is still the big Other. Previously, however, the big Other appeared as the guarantor of the truth, providing the subject a point from which he was judged. Now the big Other seems to be to blame for the caprice that throws the hero into profound doubt:

But then, what if all of this is but the tricking and plotting of some vilest character? How could I Qiao Feng, a dignified man, let others ruin my life and meddle in my fate like this? If I simply give in, drop my duty towards the Gang and leave it at the mercy of others, then wouldn't I be exactly what the villain wishes? Well, what it comes down to is, I have to get to the bottom of all this. (ch.18)

At the start of the story Qiao Feng had no fear of adversaries because of his faith in a just big Other, but now, though intimidated by the scale of the conspiracy, he is more determined than ever. That is not because he is more confident in an Other which should be on his side; quite the opposite, his determination comes from the belief that someone or something is responsible not only for the malicious plotting and scheming, but also for the turn of his fate, for temporarily obscuring the big Other *qua* Justice.

He visits the site of the massacre, hoping to find traces of the encounter that happened thirty years ago, and to solve the problem of his identity. As though the past is re-enacted, he finds a Song troop hunting down a group of Khitan civilians as prey. An elderly Khitan who has seen his

fellow tribesmen killed and has been fatally wounded himself, rips open his shirt, howls to the sky, and dies with indignation on his face. Underneath the ripped shirt is a wolf's head tattooed in blue ink, identical to the one on Qiao Feng's own chest. Qiao Feng's identity is revealed: the wolf's head is the symbol of one of the most distinguished families of Khitan, the Xiao clan, and all Xiao boys are tattooed with it at a young age.

All uncertainties and suspicion are cleared up: Qiao Feng's surname is not Qiao, but Xiao. He is not Han Chinese but Liao. Though he has done nothing wrong, he has been a disloyal citizen and a shameful son. The ambush that took his parents' lives was organised by a highly respected kung fu master known to everyone as Lead Brother, who is thus the direct cause of Xiao Feng's misfortune. There is no need for Xiao Feng, or Qiao Feng, to wonder, "Why me?" There is now a Villain, who is to blame for everything.

The next task is clear: Lead Brother must pay for Xiao Feng's parents' deaths. But who exactly is Lead Brother? The band of Han martial arts masters who survived the border massacre would certainly know who he is; yet since they presume Xiao Feng, being a Khitan, will be an adversary and act maliciously to Lead Brother, they refuse to give up Lead Brother's identity to Xiao Feng. Anyone who is about to speak is mysteriously found dead. For Xiao Feng, this only shows the extent of the conspiracy: Lead Brother is murdering the elders in order to remain anonymous. As if to double Lead Brother's apparent villainy, there are always traces that link these murders to Xiao Feng. Some victims seem to have died from punches that resemble Xiao Feng's signature kung fu move; there are even witnesses who claim to have seen Xiao Feng fleeing from the scene.

Clearly, this arch-enemy possesses a cunning comparable to Xiao Feng's, and because of this Xiao Feng starts to refer to the still unknown Lead Brother as the Villain. This is a familiar logic of fantasy: whenever the rightful order is threatened, it is always due to the conspiracy of the evil Other. And this is how a conspiracy theory works: firstly, one accepts that the big Other does actually exist and there is a "right order of things" and secondly, one believes that there is someone to blame for the malfunctioning Other, for the world that has gone wrong. The villain is the figure of the Other of the Other: *if it weren't for you, my symbolic universe would still be intact and whole; I would still be the hero, who has done nothing wrong in the eye of the symbolic Other*. However, this is the conspiracy of conspiracy theory: it is to have one think that someone is to blame for the schism of society, while in reality the society is never a whole, and is always split and inharmonious (Žižek, "Between Symbolic" 50). As we will soon find out, the strategy Xiao Feng adopts to deal with his crisis is a grave mistake that will cost him dearly.

The villain and the Other: misrecognition

Xiao Feng's mistake is a classic example of misrecognition: an actual person, the Villain, is conflated with the role of the Other. In Lacanian terms, it is a conflation of two different registers, the imaginary and the symbolic, exactly what Lacan warns analysts against. From Xiao Feng's mistake, we will go on to discuss the fantasy of the Other of the Other, and then eventually the emptiness of the Other's ethical demand. It is therefore important that we look at the schema L carefully, starting with the more preliminary setting of the psychoanalytic scene between patient and analyst, and moving on to the grid of subjectivity for one individual. For the moment, we can picture the two-person scene comprising Xiao Feng and the Villain, the former in the position of analysand, the latter as the analyst:

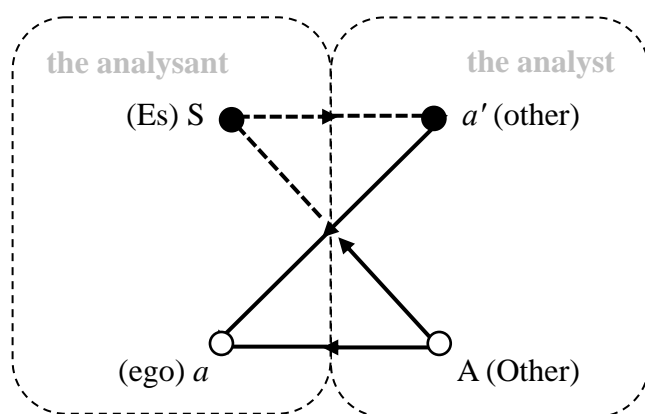


Fig. 3.1. Schema L: the analytic scene (adapted from Lacan, *Écrits* 40)

In the schema, the left-hand side represents the analysand, the right-hand side the analyst. What Xiao Feng should pay more attention to is the S-A vector, but as the schema illustrates, the symbolic axis is half-way obscured by the axis between a (ego) and a' (other), the relation between the opposing couple who are “involved in reciprocal imaginary objectification” of a mirror stage relation (Lacan, *Écrits* 41). Just like in an analysis, it would be a mistake to do psychoanalytic work based on this kind of two-person relationship, Xiao Feng's first wrong move is to focus on this relation only, and allow the antagonism, competitiveness, and envy—drama that is characteristic of the mirror stage—to consume his time and energy.⁶²

⁶² Huang Zonghui also employs the schema L to think through issues of imaginary relation and subjectivity in her article “Is She There When He Is Not Looking At Her?” Huang depicts the revengeful behaviours of the female characters surrounding Duan Zhengchun 段正淳 in *Demi-Gods*

Lacan uses the metaphor of card games to explicate the difference between the imaginary and symbolic relations. He likens the two-person scenario to the mind game between two card players: card players try to guess the opponent's hand (by reading certain body movements such as a facial tic or the caressing of a wedding ring), in order to gain an advantage and this is what Xiao Feng is mainly doing with his opponent the Villain, Lead Brother. Nevertheless, the two-player imaginary relation alone cannot function, and what better describes the analytic dual, Lacan suggests, is the game of bridge, where there are four players involved. Firstly, while the analysand does see himself in the ego (*moi*), his subjectivity also lies somewhere else, in the position of S, as indicated in the schema L. This is the "him" that he himself does not know of (or the unconscious part of himself). S is capitalised, indicating its unconscious status just like that of A, the Other. As for the analyst, she also has an ego comprising her personality and values that inform judgement. However, she does not play her role alone and has another partner, the dummy, which is a hand that the French call *le mort*, the death, in bridge. The analyst "must be dead enough not to be caught up in the imaginary relation" (*Ecrits* 162), so to "bring out the fourth player," the subjectivity (S) in the analysand (492).

Xiao Feng, being in the position of the analysand, should envision that beyond the imaginary relationship between his ego (*a*) and the Villain's ego (*a'*), his unconscious subjectivity is also at stake. His opponent, like the analyst, plays not just one hand but two hands, by enlisting the hand of the dummy which is allocated in the corner of A (big Other). However, Xiao Feng spends most of his time and energy second-guessing the Villain, playing against him on the level of the specular relation, of the mirror stage. Before the final twist is revealed, Xiao Feng does indeed have a growing uneasiness whenever he sees his own image in the mirror. At one point, he briefly sees someone who looks just like him. His look-alike is Ah Zhu in disguise. Ah Zhu later becomes Xiao Feng's lover, but at this point, she is only known to Xiao Feng as the house maid/personal assistant to Murong Fu 慕容復 (the other major character in the novel who will come into our discussion soon). Ah Zhu is an expert in putting on disguises and at the time is attempting to rescue some trapped Beggars' Guild members by pretending to be Xiao Feng without his knowing. As the story

and regards that these female subjects, not unlike Qiao Feng in our chapter, are stuck in the imaginary relation and cannot get out of the "vicious cycle of speculation, narcissism and aggression" (203). Huang then urges readers to learn from the predicament of these female characters so as to "break away from the illusionary side of the imaginary by thinking through the dialectic between the symbolic order, the ego and the other", so that one can "be aware of one's own dark side" (203). My chapter will contend that the unconscious or symbolic axis in the schema L promises us more than this.

unfolds, Xiao Feng's suspicion about there being a criminal double who is framing him for murders is not unfounded. All the while when Xiao Feng is attempting to get the upper hand on Lead Brother the evil Other, there is another Other of the Other, another conspirator behind the imagined conspirator; there is another Villain who has been the true mastermind, staging the murders of those who know Lead Brother's identity, as well as manipulating Xiao Feng's hostility against the false enemy, Lead Brother. This real Villain behind the Villain is no other than Xiao Feng's supposedly dead father.

Xiao Feng's father Xiao Yuanshan has been playing dead – the father did jump off the cliff, but due to luck and his superhuman kung fu, he didn't die, and later returned to the precarious martial arts world. He has been following Xiao Feng around and framing his son for the murders, doing so easily thanks to their close resemblance in appearance. But the reason that Xiao Yuanshan, the real Villain, can manipulate Xiao Feng is not so much that he resembles his son, but that he evokes the symbolic register simply by dint of being the father: the position of A is the position of the Name-of-the-Father (*Ecrits* 462).⁶³ And the subjectivity of being a son is what really triggers Xiao Feng's guilt and revengeful desire and renders him vulnerable in the imaginary set-up between his ego and the alter ego, whom he presumes to be Lead Brother.

The father, the Other, and the superego

On one level, Xiao Feng's error is to stake too much on the imaginary relationship, devoting effort and cunning to the antagonism towards Lead Brother, who is in the position of the small other. (On the other level, Xiao Feng's mistake is that he is too symbolic, and not real enough—this will be discussed shortly.) By doing so he overlooks the actual conspirator of the “conspiracy” against him, his father Xiao Yuanshan, who stands in the place of the Other and can enlist Xiao Feng's fantasy that there is the Other of the Other:

⁶³ Lacan draws out the schema R as a spin-off of the schema L with a couple of extra dimensions, one of them being the trio of I (ego ideal), M (mother) and P (*père*; name-of-the-Father) of Ideal Ego-Mother-Father (*Ecrits* 462).

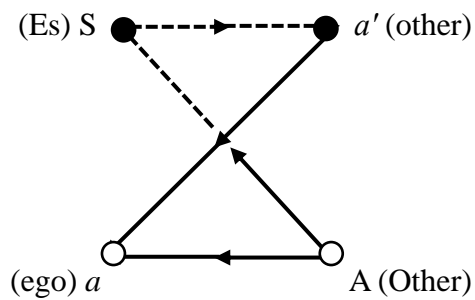


Fig. 3.1.a. Schema L

Being at the vantage point of A, Xiao Yuanshan is able to manipulate the players on the imaginary register, Xiao Feng and Lead Brother, to his own use. Xiao Yuanshan himself plays two parts: first as a father who employs the specular, hence the imaginary advantage of resembling the son; and, second as the Other Villain who is able to be A in the schema L. This is ultimately because there is a non-coincidence between the actual father as the person, and the symbolic father as the paternal metaphor. “[T]he symbolic father is a metaphor, a metaphoric substitute, a sublation [*Aufhebung*] of the real [actual, physical] father in its Name which is ‘more father than father himself’,” hence “the Name-of-the-Father,” a term that Lacan uses almost synonymously with paternal metaphor (Žižek, *For They Know Not* 134). As a corollary of being the symbolic figure, Xiao Yuanshan knows well what the son wants and desires as the subject, and he exploits the unconscious relation between S (Xiao Feng’s subjectivity) and A (the role of the Other that the father plays).

What exactly does it mean when we say Xiao Yuanshan knows well the desire of our protagonist? First of all, paternal demands teach the subject his first lessons about social values and cultural idioms. Žižek explains it thus: “what I desire is predetermined and at the Other Place: my desire is ‘mediated’ by the symbolic network of the cultural tradition” (*Indivisible* 167). Xiao Feng’s desire is mediated by what his father and his fatherland demand of him. Indeed the filial responsibility (*xiao*) and loyalty (*zhong*) are the two virtues highly regarded in Chinese tradition. In the world of martial arts fiction, as previously mentioned, a kung fu master or *xia* is one who must have exemplary ethics and morality.

The demands of filial responsibility and loyalty are symbolic demands because they do not change even when one’s father is deceased, or when one’s nation no longer exists. In Xiao Feng’s case, the symbolic demands do not change even when his father is the Villain, even when previously Xiao Feng had believed it to be his utmost duty to overthrow the Liao Empire, and kill as many “Khitan dogs” (the discriminatory term used for Liao people by Song people) as possible. Xiao Yuanshan knows that as a dutiful son Xiao Feng will still have to revere the father and respect his wish. Similarly, Xiao Feng knows the father knows, too, even when the father’s wishes or

desires involve sabotaging plans of the Song troop, and killing Song masters. These masters include Qiao Feng's own teacher, without whom he would not have become the leader of the Beggars' Guild, or the number one kung fu master in North China, and the Shaolin *shifu* who gave Xiao Feng the mission of organising the campaign against the Khitan. Which father should Xiao Feng (or Qiao Feng) listen to? Whose demand should he adhere to, since fulfilling one father's wish would mean failing the other's? We will return to this ethical dilemma later.

The price of Xiao Feng's misrecognition of the imaginary for the symbolic will be a number of lives sacrificed. But there is another misrecognition at work here too. Xiao Feng does not see the dimension of the real in the symbolic relation between him and his father. A son will always presume his father to be the best, the most heroic *xia*.⁶⁴ When Xiao Yuanshan has finally come back to life, he turns out to be the opposite of the ideal father: he is the Villain who uses his own son as the vehicle of vengeance on all those who have been part of the border ambush. Yet he is still the father whose symbolic demands—to be a good son and remain loyal to the Khitan clan—will remain unconditionally binding. We can even say that the function of the symbolic father and the imaginary father is to cover up the fact that the father is also an obscene creature, withholding unspeakable desire, and Xiao Yuanshan is exactly this super-egoic father of the real who plays his own son like a fool. While the symbolic father, according to Žižek, is the sublation of the man who is the father, there is something left not sublated: “the ‘non-sublated’ part of the father” is the father of the real, who “appears as the obscene, cruel and oddly impotent agency of the superego” (Žižek, *For They Know Not* 134). The Master, to be sure, is by nature incompetent, as seen in the previous chapter. The “oddly impotent” aspect of the real father in Žižek's arguments here is then to be understood as his failure to fulfil the paternal task of setting correct and moral examples. A super-egoic master even actively subverts the paternal demand by transgressions that involve cruelty and obscenity. All of Xiao Yuanshan's ruthless killings and manipulation of Xiao Feng's fate are based on one secret desire, unknown to his son: the desire to avenge his ill fate on everyone, Khitan or not, Han or not.

The impact that the ambush on the border has on Xiao Yuanshan is just as grave as his son Xiao Feng's loss of faith in an Other that should be knowing and just. Liao and Song at the time enjoyed a relatively peaceful relationship and were content with the treaties on border territory between the two Empires. Xiao Yuanshan was a great favourite of the dowager Xiao of the Liao Empire, and was made a high-rank general because of his unparalleled combat skills, which he

⁶⁴ We shall see more of this in the next chapter, when Yang Guo pictures his father Yang Kang to be the best man in the world, even though he has defected to the enemy and committed several murders.

learned from his Han *shifu* at a young age. With a successful career and a new-born son, Xiao Yuanshan had planned a trip to the Song China to pay his *shifu* his gratitude when the ambush occurred. One moment he was at the top of the world; the next moment he had fallen to the bottom. The Other was no longer the guarantor of justice and karma. Worse, unlike Xiao Feng, Xiao Yuanshan could not even conjure up an evil Other of the Other to provide justification for his ill fate; there is no plausible explanation whatsoever for the attack and consequential loss of his family members. No one is to blame, and yet the world is against him, so the target of his revenge becomes the whole world.

Nevertheless, what Xiao Yuanshan is not aware of is that while he toys with other people's lives, his own life is the target of another "conspiracy." His seemingly unpredictable misfortunes have a direct cause; it is Murong Bo 慕容博 who designed and set up the whole border ambush. Murong Bo was the one who created the false intelligence about a Khitan assault that led Lead Brother to organise the ambush. And why is Murong Bo doing this? This has to do with another "Name-of-the-Father"—Murong is the surname of the royal family of the Yan Kingdom during the Sixteen Kingdoms period (304-439 AD). The Kingdom was built by the Xianbei clan of Hunnish descent, and was extinguished long ago during the wars between several tribes and kingdoms. Ever since, every Murong member has the demand laid upon them of being a filial child, and the only way to meet this demand is to rebuild the fatherland and bring back the glory of the Yan Kingdom. What we have here is a chain of superegos. Xiao Feng blames the (illusion of) the Other of the Other for his turn of fate, and it turns out to be his father, Xiao Yuanshan, who plays the super-egoic Other. When Xiao Yuanshan orchestrates revenges and killings on others by being in the Other's seat, he does not know he is but a pawn in Murong Bo's scheme. As for Murong Bo himself, he cannot shun the demand of the Name-of-the-Father and not understand that he is only there to meet the desire of his forefathers.

Whenever one conjures up a conspiracy theory, the fantasy of the Other of the Other arises. And when there is one Other of the Other, there will be yet another Other of the Other behind the previous one, and it goes on and on. But what initiates the string of superegos, or the Others of the Others in the first place is the faith in the Other *qua* Truth and the belief in a transcendent agency. Before finding out about all these superego figures (Lead Brother, Xiao Yuanshan and Murong Bo) Xiao Feng has already been plagued by guilt: "Alas, not only am I a disloyal citizen and shameful son, I'm also a person without a name" (*Demi-Gods*, ch. 18). And "we are guilty," Zizek argues, "in so far as we accept that the big Other exists in the guise of a transcendent agency which plays a perverse game of cat and mouse, knowing well what our duty is but concealing it from us" (*Indivisible* 171).

“Knowing well what our duty is” means there is always symbolic demand; however, “concealing it from us” means the demand can never be met. Demands, by definition, cannot be fulfilled. For example, a dutiful child will be in constant doubt whether she has done enough and a loyal citizen suffers constantly the anxiety of not doing right by his country. That is why ultimately, the demand of the Other is the desire of the Other: *you tell me this, but what exactly do you want me to do?* Things are much easier when one presumes there is “an external agent with whom a relationship of exchange, sacrifice, ‘haggling’, is possible” (Žižek, *Indivisible* 171). By doing so, the moral law is “reduced to the level of ‘representation . . . becomes an object that stands opposite ourselves” and ceases to be “the absolute Other” (Žižek, *Indivisible* 171). The Other is demanding, but there is no way to confirm what its demands really are, while one is still obligated to do the right thing. Thus, does the Other exist, or not? It does not exist, because it does not provide answers; but at the same time it also does exist, otherwise the subject would not feel pressed by its demands. One way to look at this antimony is to consider the differences between “*il n’y a pas*... [there is not]” and “*n’existe pas* [doesn’t exist]” that Žižek discusses in his *Less Than Nothing*:

We should also not confuse the series of Lacan’s “*il n’y a pas*...” (*de l’Autre*) with the series of “*n’existe pas*”: “*n’existe pas*” denies the full symbolic existence of the negated object . . . , while “*il n’y a pas*” is more radical, it denies the very pre-essential nomadic being of specters and other pre-ontological entities. In short, *la Femme n’existe pas, mais il y a des femmes* [the Woman does not exist, but there are women]. (798)

Therefore, “God does not exist, but ‘there are gods’ who haunt us; the unconscious does not exist as a full ontological entity, . . . but it insists in haunting us” (798). That is to say, while the symbolic Other does not exist as an entity (its real Demand also does not exist, is empty), its demands and desires nevertheless haunt us. The “*n’existe pas*” in “there is no Other of the Other” would mean that it denies all possible existences of such a thing: there is no superego, no transcendent agency that guarantees the truth, and no conspirator who is behind the evil scheme of Heaven when things go wrong.

Retribution, for whom?

A belief in the super-egoic Other which imposes the moral injunction on us is based on the presumption that there is a transcendent agency that has the answers regarding what is right and what is wrong. Previously we saw how, in order to “gentrify” or “soften” the utter Otherness of the

Law (*Indivisible* 171), one comes up with external agencies to represent the moral law. But can the subject herself play the role of such an agency? I would argue that the kung fu masters are exactly such subjects, as they do presume to be representatives of the big Other, upholding justice. This explains the theme and structure of retribution in martial arts fiction, the repetitive cycle of revenge, payback time, and the debt redeemable only by blood.

The kung fu masters act in the name of justice, considering themselves the instrument of the big Other, uprightly carrying out laws and punishments. Xiao Feng is no exception. When he was the leader of the Beggars' Guild and his reputation was still intact, he thought it was right to protect the Song civilians from the "barbaric" Khitan tribe at all cost, and the lives of Khitan civilians could be dispensed without any ethical conflict. After his turn of fate, avenging his parents is all he could think of, because revenge means getting things even and balancing the accounts: *you took my father's life, so you should pay back with your life or the life of your beloved; I have the right to collect the debt from you*. Kung fu masters are like self-appointed bookkeepers as well as executioners of the big Other. The actions they take, no matter how cruel and ruthless, are to ensure the balance of universal karma, guaranteeing that good deeds are rewarded, bad deeds reprimanded, and all adhere to the cycle. While the Buddhist notion of karma may incite hope for a better afterlife, martial arts masters are more interested in speeding things up, preferring to give the verdict in the present life. (Kung fu masters are indeed beings above the law. We will look at this contradiction between exception and the law in the next chapter.)

The Sadean subject is also one that performs the role of the big Other. The Sadean subject sees it as his duty to supervise the process of Nature and act on its behalf. As far as he is concerned, the more death and destruction the better, as this gives birth to the new. This is how the Sadean subject believes Nature functions. What will it be like when it is this subject who takes the seat in corner A of the schema L? To explain this, Lacan switches from the analogy of a game of bridge to the metaphor of theatre, and refers to the spot of A as the spectator's box, in which the subject has his seat (*Ecrits* 250). The kind of subject who takes the seat in the spectator's box, "invisible from the stage," is the obsessive subject. But, paradoxically, it is by being "merely the spectator" (*Ecrits* 250), seemingly "placed on the sidelines" (Fink, *Lacan to the Letter* 27), that "the very possibility of the game and pleasure" is constituted for him (Lacan qtd. in *Lacan to the Letter* 28). It is a double-play, or a double-dealing, for the obsessive, on both the symbolic and the imaginary levels. On the one hand, being in the position of the Other, the subject is an indifferent onlooker, who is again playing dead. He is "dead in a sense," and keeps himself "out of the line of fire" (*Lacan to the Letter* Fink 27). On the other hand, he is not only involved but also enjoys the "circus games between the two others" (*Ecrits* 526), the heated actions of the firing line that is the imaginary axis. In effect, this spectacle of a circus game is arranged by the obsessive himself for the big Other to

see, even though he himself is also assuming this role. He “puts on a show,” “addresses his ambiguous homage towards the box in which he himself has his seat, that of the master who cannot be seen [*se voir*]” (*Ecrits* 250).

Kung fu practitioners appear to possess the same features of the obsessive: the subjects stand in for the Other, seeing themselves as advocate of a just Other, orchestrate the show, and oversee the account balance of others. Kung fu masters, then, are also experts in “mastering . . . the high-wire act” between the small others and their opponents (*Ecrits* 250). Payback time and vindication are actions staged for the eye of the true master, the super-egoic big Other. On the level of readership, the elaborate retributive plots are manipulated for the eyes of ardent readers, who occupy the same position as the big Other and share the same belief in universal justice, just like swordsmen and masters in the martial arts genre. The gratuitous violence and excessive cycle of retribution in the genre have always been frowned upon by critics such as Hou Jiang, as discussed in Chapter 2; however, I contend that a moralistic reading of martial arts fiction may make the same mistake that Xiao Feng does, being captured by or lured in on the imaginary spectacles, and overlooking the dimension of the Other. Or rather, must not critics presume they can play the role of Other before they utter their criticism? For whose good do they do that?

Jin Yong’s corpus itself is a rich source for us to ask similar questions, and the two registers, imaginary and symbolic, of the schema L can serve as a starting point to explore the ethics of the Good. As Lacan says in Seminar VII, the good is about for whom and for whose good, and there is always a small other as the object-cause behind the Cause (218-37). Playing the role of the Other is the same as satisfying one’s superego desire, which inevitably involves personal gain and interests.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer*, for all of its satirical tone, is Jin Yong’s major examination of one of the common settings of the genre, “the division between Good and Evil” (*zhengxie zhi fen* 正邪之分). In it, kung fu practitioners of the Good side take it as their duty to extinguish those on the Evil side and do it so seriously that at times their actions are even more coldblooded and malicious than the Evil practitioners. This is the danger of equating oneself to a superego Other that ensures justice. Furthermore, the claim to righteousness can even cover up self-interest. In *Smiling, Proud Wanderer*, while the Good practitioners seek to safeguard the opposition of Good and Evil, they are also defending their own agendas. Upholding a Cause has the benefit of consolidating the brotherhood, recruiting young blood for one’s own school or guild, and ultimately securing the school or guild’s status quo, if not aspiring for more supremacy. But the real irony of “the division between Good and Evil in *Smiling, Proud Wanderer* is that the Evil side is doing the exact same thing. They have to protect themselves from the Good, but when the self-defence

Lively game, mortified desire

On one hand, Xiao Feng is blindsided by the imaginary retributive actions and consequently falls prey to the super-egoic fathers Xiao Yuanshan and, beyond him, Murong Bo. On the other hand, the engagement with imaginary second-guessing and retributive games are there to keep Xiao Feng busy, so that he does not have to face his own desire, or the fact that his desire is already made mortified, due to the inconsistency of the Other itself.

The best arena to illustrate the intense but unnecessary imaginary game is the bloodbath in Juxian Mansion (*Juxian Zhuang* 聚賢莊). Xiao Feng accidentally causes Ah Zhu a serious injury, when both of them are in Shaolin Temple. Thinking himself partially responsible for Ah Zhu's injury, Qiao Feng ventures to go to Juxian Mansion to seek medical help from the well-known Doctor Xui, nicknamed "Foe of Death God," who at the time is organising the "heroes' forum" with the two You brothers who own the Mansion. The forum's purpose is to get together as many kung fu good fellows as they can, converse over Rivers and Lakes affairs, and most importantly, form a united line against Qiao Feng's Khitan malice (by this time almost everyone has heard of the murders that Xiao Feng has supposedly committed). Upon his arrival at the Mansion, Qiao Feng soon realises that there is no easy way out of the trap he voluntarily jumps in. The first thing he does is to have one of his previous associates see to Ah Zhu's safety and medical condition; next, he requests for barrels of wine. Wine is sent for, drinking vessels are arranged, and Qiao Feng

raises a bowl of wine and says, "My dear good fellows, some of you are acquaintances and friends of mine, but you now no longer believe in my integrity. I therefore propose a toast to the end of our brotherhood. Any of you who would like to end my life, please come and have a drink with me, and our fellowship should thus be annulled. Once this is done, should I take your life it would not mean I'm ungrateful to you, and should you kill me first, it would not be regarded as a disloyal move. I here ask all of you good fellows to witness today's toasting vow." (*Demi-Gods*, ch. 19)

becomes a proper campaign of "defeating the Good", the Evil practitioners also use the campaign as a means to expand their territory and recruit new members of the camp. In short, they do this to further their own ends in the name of the Cause and the name of the superego Other, just like the Good kung fu masters.

This ritual of “mutual annulment” of brotherhood is again based on the ethics of equal sum, attested by the ceremonial act of toasting: *I’m not indebted to you any more, you owe me nothing, and all will be witnessed by the big Other.*

The combat begins and at first Qiao Feng refrains from seriously injuring his opponents and causing death. But as time goes by, he gradually loses his patience. The first casualty occurs, and even though it’s not intentional and not directly his fault, Qiao Feng is held responsible for it by the majority, which turns out to be the last straw in Qiao Feng’s self-restraint. Untrue accusation is the only situation that Qiao Feng cannot tolerate: “all of a sudden, his barbaric temper bursts out and, like a fierce animal” (ch. 19), he exercises his combat skills to the fullest, and casualties start to build, till the heroes’ forum becomes a heroes’ slaughter house.

No doubt Jin Yong plays up the so-called “barbaric” Khitan temperament in this scene. Similar romanticisation of non-Chinese people is ideologically suspect, but it is also a standard trope in a literary genre that sets out to glorify “Chineseness.” The Han kung fu fellows, believing in the superiority of their nationality, fail to recognise that Qiao Feng’s Khitan identity automatically makes him the enemy of good fellows, and the good fellows will have to win this. Each opponent presumes justice to be on its side, both ending up stuck in the imaginary dramas. In *Demi-Gods* the division of Good/Evil is transformed into the “division of Hu/Han” (Hu-Han zhi fen 胡漢之分; Hu refers to all foreigners), as the title of the novel’s Chapter 19 says.

The spectacle put on here “consists in showing that [the subject] is invulnerable”; for it is “important to show how far the other—the small ego, who is merely his alter ego, the double of himself—can go” (Lacan qtd. in Fink 28). Juxian Mansion is no other than an arena of egos, vicissitudes of Xiao Feng’s ego. The bursting out of his indignation, pride, and “barbaric” impulse resembles the mechanism of resistances and defensive moves that one displays when facing the analyst, or any other whom is imputed to be one’s alter ego or double. In Juxian Mansion, Qiao Feng is trapped in his assumptions about who he is and what he is like in the eye of the others. What he struggles to gain is in no different to what his opponents are aiming for: it is all about winning and losing, about getting even, showing off one’s martial arts skills, and about dealing with biases and prejudices. The bloodbath in Juxian Mansion is but an extension of Qiao Feng’s mirror-stage of lively games.

For Qiao Feng there is a sole purpose to the imaginary interaction he partakes in with Lead Brother, his father, or anybody who has done him wrong: “showing that he is invulnerable,” as Lacan says. The need to appear invulnerable and invincible springs from the desire to hide the fact that he is, in truth, vulnerable. He invests greatly in the activities developing upon the imaginary

relation of $a-a'$, knowing that they will cost him dearly. What other outcome does he expect upon meeting hundreds of rivals in Juxian Mansion? Even so, he cannot do otherwise, because by engaging himself in the lively game, Qiao Feng is at the same time staying out of the firing line, avoiding confronting where his tragedy really lies.

An obsessive is “an actor who plays his role and assures a certain number of acts as if he were dead” (Lacan qtd. in Fink 28). In view of the subjectivity structure of the obsessive, Qiao Feng/Xiao Feng is indeed already dead. In contrast to the lively game of egos and retribution, the subject “has, in some sense, killed in advance the desire in himself; he has, so to speak, mortified it” (Lacan trans. in Fink 28). The more spectacular the game is, the more disengaged its player can be on the symbolic level of his subjectivity. On one hand, Xiao Feng plays his role and maintains the cycles of retribution. On the other, he keeps his desire intact, “remains out of the range of all the blows” (Lacan trans. in Fink 28). The other role he plays here is the “dummy,” “as if he were dead,” for what he does is fake death, just as the analyst might in a psychoanalytic scene, in order to take the place of the big Other (A in the schema). The purpose of the analyst’s playing the dummy is to better bring out the fourth player in the patient, his subjectivity, which can be obstructed by the imaginary goings-on (*Ecrits* 357). For the obsessive subject, though, taking up the seat of the Other and faking death is only to stay invisible, to hide the fourth player further away, or even to make it disappear, to the extent of collapsing into the place of A, according to Bruce Fink’s argument (*Lacan to the Letter*, 27-28):

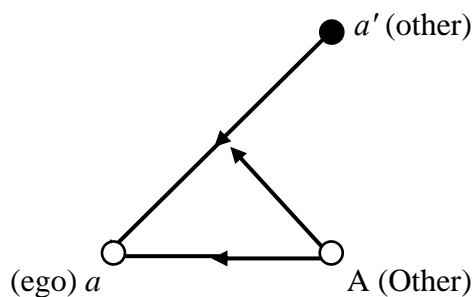


Fig. 3.2. Three-cornered Schema L (adapted from Fink, *Lacan to the Letter* 27)

By doing so, the subject is “in the spectator, who is invisible from the stage, to whom he is united by the mediation of death” (*Ecrits* 250). United with the Other through death, the subject’s mortified desire is therefore in accordance with an Other that is dead. The death here, should be read as “God is dead”: *when there is no God, I no longer am, I stop existing*. When the private letters are deliberately made public and “alter” Qiao Feng’s fate, Qiao Feng resorts to a big Other that acts as his witness and guarantees the truth that he is innocent. This big Other he relied on soon

ceases to be on his side, because justice has been manipulated by the evil Other, Lead Brother. This provides even more reason for Qiao Feng to jump through various sorts of hoops and involve himself in circus shows of egos and small others. This, however, comes with a cost. Ah Zhu, his companion and lover, sacrifices her life to direct his suspicion away from her father who is at one stage misrecognised as Lead Brother.

As his subjectivity is structured like the obsessive's, "his desire is for difficulty" (*Ecrits* 529). The delay and deferral of locating and getting rid of the Villain are necessary but redundant acts, because the more effort Qiao Feng dedicates to hunting him down, the longer Qiao Feng avoids the truth that the big Other might not be on his side. Furthermore, he avoids asking the question, *Does the big Other even exist? For, to believe there is an Other is to pretend that I know well my existence, to pretend that I am invulnerable.* Only then can his being be safely "tucked away" (*Ecrits* 529), protected from "the inconsistency of the big Other." On the other hand, the bloodshed in Juxian Zhuang also confirms Xiao Feng's status as a tragic hero: "it is an honour to be guilty," says Hegel (Zupančič, *Ethics* 173). Xiao Feng can no longer claim he is innocent and guilt-free, that all the wrong doings are done by others, or rather the Others of the Other, his father and Murong Bo. He himself, a stubborn and impulsive barbarian, is to blame for the loss of Han lives that he has vowed to protect. But what makes him a tragic hero is more than his untamed temperament or personality— that will be too imaginary and lack the dimension of the real.

The national Thing

The symbolic order "ultimately means that there is no signifier that would adequately represent the subject . . . the subject forever lacks a firm hold in the order of symbolic existence" (Salecl, introduction, *Sexuation* 6). In effect, the Name-of-the-Father, a concept that is mostly related to the symbolic, is "far from clinging to paternal symbolic authority," since "the 'Name-of-the-Father' is for Lacan a fake, a semblance that conceals this structural inconsistency" (Žižek, *Interrogating* 350). The voice of conscience and the sensation of an all-seeing gaze of the Other, as we have discussed, are but representations of a "false transcendence," of the Other of the Other or the superego underside of the Other. Their function is to screen us from what we really cannot cope with, the "true transcendence" of the pure Law and the "Otherness of the Imperative" (*Indivisible*, 171). Under the imaginary relation, "under the neighbour as my semblable, my mirror image, there always lurks the unfathomable abyss of radical Otherness, a Thing that cannot be 'gentrified'" (*Interrogating* 347). "In order to render our co-existence with the Thing minimally bearable, the

symbolic order *qua* Third . . . has to intervene” (348). Even someone like Qiao Feng/Xiao Feng, who is unsure of his surname and who has failed both demands of filial responsibility and loyalty, will still have no choice but to obey the pure Law: no matter who he is and what has happened to him, he still just has to do his duty as a *xia*. The emptiness of this ethical call is far more terrifying than the perverse game of cat and mouse that the external agencies play with the subjects. An Other that is characterised or imaginised into an obscene godly creature is still the better of the two evils. Life will still be easier when one can blame everything on the capricious “Ruler of Heaven” (*Laotianye* 老天爺), accuse it of “knowing well what our duty is but concealing it from us” (Zizek, *Indivisible*, 171), and lament that “Fate plays on us all” (*zaohua nong ren* 造化弄人), as the Chinese saying goes.

In his Seminar III, Lacan draws the schema L to explain the dialectic between the analyst and the analysand. The psychoanalytic scene is first and foremost an ethical scene. By playing the dummy, stepping into the seat of the Other, what the analyst does is not to provide a signifier that can hang things together for the patient and in so doing to assure the patient that everything will be fine. What the analyst does instead is to speak from the point of a crossed-out Other, a point that gives no guarantee. The analyst “authorizes himself in the sense of being fully responsible for what he refers to as his duty, without any guarantee from the big Other” (*Indivisible* 169-70). This “without any guarantee” is the common ground for all ethical acts that follow the categorical imperative of *Do your duty!*. While the injunction is seemingly issued from the Other in its seat of the theatre box, the imperative is enigmatic: “Do your duty!”: “Your duty is to do your duty”: “Your duty is . . . (silence).” It is a saying that is half-said (*mi-dire*), an utterance emptily enunciated, for its importance is in the act of saying it rather than the content (which can thus be tautological or contradictory). It is then up to the subject “to translate this injunction into a determinate moral obligation, and left with uncertainty; the subject never knows if he has ‘got it right’” (*Indivisible* 169).

The ethical Thing in martial arts fiction, following Žižek’s arguments above, can be put as, “Do your duty as a hero or *xia*,” and how does one do that? In Jin Yong we get the repetition of the question itself over and over, with all of its contradictions, and an elaborate staging of it as *mi-dire*. While Jin Yong searches for answers, and indeed sometimes provides them, they can only be half-answered, half said. In the first chapter of the thesis, we briefly addressed how the concept of *xia*, of chivalry and gallantry, transformed and developed over different eras, and Jin Yong’s writing itself epitomises this particular historical development of the genre. Right from his first novel, *The Book and the Sword*, Jin Yong sets his mission to depict the moral conflicts a *xia* may face. In *Companion*, one of the half-said answers to the ethical call is Guo Jing’s motto, “To be a grand *xia*

is to put one's country and people first (*weiguo-weimin, xia zhi da zhe* 為國為民，俠之大者)" (ch. 21, 22). Guo Jing is at the position of leading the Han people to withstand the invasion from the Mongolians. For the national cause he is willing to sacrifice his family life, or even lives of his children. Jin Yong re-asserts the social duty of the hero, or *xia*, with the injunction *Your duty is zhong* (loyalty to your country). In *Demi-Gods*, Qiao Feng/Xiao Feng is primarily characterised as a charismatic martial arts adept who bows to no one and fears no adversary. Although, at the same time he ranks *zhong* (to the Han-Song Empire) above all values and is deemed a hero by his active patriotism and devotion to the nation. However, as we have been discussing, once the suspicion of his non-Han identity is raised, the duties and values that he adheres to become ambiguous and less than absolute. And the injunction from the Other *qua* Third, the symbolic tenet *Be loyal to your country!* itself turns into the Other *qua* Thing. That is, the ethical Thing in *Demi-Gods* is the national Thing.

As previously mentioned, the opposition between Good and Evil, a common theme in the martial arts genre, is transformed into that between Hu (all foreigners) and Han-Chinese people in *Demi-Gods*. For Qiao Feng/Xiao Feng, the inconsistency of the big Other firstly means it is impotent to guarantee the truth and justice. Secondly, the inconsistency is a matter of a constitutive split within the Other, and that split is what allows for the conflict between the loyalties towards Han and Liao Empires, between the two fatherlands. Defending Song China may very well mean sabotaging the well-being of the Khitans, and vice versa. While both tell him to do the right thing, neither give an answer as to how he should act in order not to fail their desires.

Qiao/Xiao Feng's dilemma, the split subject's freedom

When Fink redraws the schema L, he changes it into a three-cornered diagram with S "truncated" (see Figure 3.2 above). As the obsessive subject, Qiao/Xiao Feng endeavours to stay out of the line of fire, the result of which is that he ceases to exist. Nonetheless, instead of saying Qiao/Xiao Feng stops existing when he, like the obsessive, tucks his being away and avoids facing the traumatic truth about the Other, rather Qiao/Xiao Feng only *starts to really exist* as a subject when he finds out God is dead, the Other doesn't exist. For Lacan, subjectivity does not lie in personalities (these are imaginary), nor in the concept of identity such as ethnicity, nationality, or even gender. The subject emerges only when he is in the act of asking questions:

the question of the subject's existence arises for him, not in the kind of anxiety it provokes at the level of the ego, . . . but as an articulated question—"What am I there?"—about his

sex and his contingency in being: namely, that on the one hand he is a man or a woman, and on the other hand he might not be, the two conjugating their mystery and knotting it in symbols of procreation and death. (*Ecrits* 459)

Qiao Feng's father is the Khitan warrior named Xiao Yuanshan, a father who has been playing the dummy. His re-emergence brings Qiao Feng the deadly sign that mortifies his desire: he is no longer just Qiao Feng, but Qiao/Xiao Feng. The question of existence of Qiao/Xiao Feng is not "Am I woman or man?" Rather the question is, "Am I Han or Khitan?" Let us review the questions he utters when he is left seriously injured at the end of the Juxian Mansion battle:

Am I really a Khitan or Han? Who is that person who killed my [foster Han] parents and *shifu*? Why did I, a man who has always been proud of his loyalty and virtues, today impair so many lives of gallants for no reason? Didn't I make a fool of myself in front of everybody by my stubborn decision of risking myself for Ah Zhu? (ch.19)

Four questions in a row. Except for the first one, all of the other three questions are answered: the person who comes to his rescue and gets him out of the bloodbath is his own father, who is also the murderer of Qiao/Xiao Feng's foster-parents and *shifu*; and it is his own "barbaric," impulsive nature to blame for the deaths and injuries, including his own. And yet these three questions link back to the first question: it is Murong Bo and his patriotic agenda (of reviving the long-gone Yan Kingdom established by the Murong family) that incites Xiao Yuanshan to seek retribution from the whole world. As for the real reason behind the futile combats and unnecessary sacrifices of lives, it is Qiao/Xiao Feng's powerlessness when facing "the unfathomable abyss of radical Otherness," the national Thing "that cannot be 'gentrified'" (Žižek, *Interrogating* 347) and remains forever Other, and crossed out: \bar{A} . The realisation of the radical Otherness signals the emergence of true subjectivity: $\$$ the barred S is the algorithm for the subject in Lacanian theory. From Lacan's schema L, to Jin Yong's schema L, only two extra strokes are needed. S becomes $\$$, and A becomes \bar{A} . The crossed out subject corresponds to the barred Other.

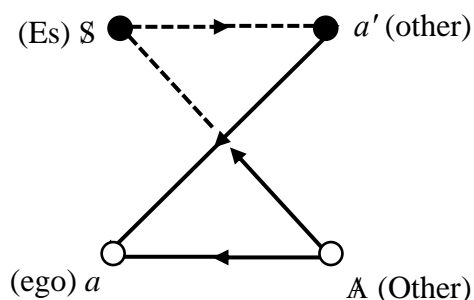


Fig. 3.3. Schema L with the split S, and split A

The first question of Qiao/Xiao Feng “Am I Han or Khitan?” remains unanswerable. The unfathomableness of the radical Other is indeed terrifying; however, its abyssal emptiness is also what makes an answer possible: the cruel forced choice of “Han or Khitan” at the same time promises “absolute freedom, autonomy and responsibility” (Žižek, *Interrogating* 346). As long as one acts, one is responsible, and dutiful, as the subject.

Love, compassion, or death

Previously we saw that Qiao/Xiao Feng’s desire is mortified and tucked away as the consequence of the inexistence of the Other. It is also true, however, that his desires—both for his love and for the Other—are not just tucked away, but killed off and taken away from him.

As mentioned, Ah Zhu sacrifices herself for his cause of locating the Villain. His desire for the love of his life is gone, but he still has the desire of/for the Other to meet, the desire of his father Xiao Yuanshan, and the desire of Murong Bo, both scheming to create uneasiness and conflict in Rivers and Lakes for the sake of personal grudges and national dreams, respectively. Xiao Yuanshan and Murong Bo compete with each other not only in kung fu prowess but also in their sons’ achievements, an antagonism that seems destined to end poorly. Conversely, it ends in mercy and compassion for the two characters, as Xiao Yuanshan and Murong Bo are led to enlightenment by an unknown low-rank Shaolin monk (who also employs the trick of faking death). Both fathers relinquish their ambitions, retreat from Rivers and Lakes for good, and enter the state of indifference, where love, anger, happiness, and pain do not exist. Buddhism calls this state of indifference “mercy” or “compassion” (*cibei* 慈悲). According to Buddhism, the only possible love towards mankind is to let go of all personal and worldly (hence, imaginary) concerns. (This is the ultimate reason why Chen Shih-Hsiang in his comments on *Demi-Gods*, as seen in this thesis’s Chapter 2, writes of “the unbound transcendence of the Buddhist Law” (“Letters”) that will contain wrongs, sufferings, and injustice.) Once this happens, the desire of the father no longer has any hold on Qiao Feng; he is not in debt to his paternity and he does not have to settle any accounts left between his father and Murong Bo. Furthermore, Xiao Feng does not have to answer for the Han Other, since he has not only committed the friendship-annulment ritual at the Juxian Mansion, he is also made exiled from the Han brotherhood after the bloodshed in the battle. With no lover, no father and no community, Xiao Feng embarks on the journey of seeking his clansmen in the Liao Empire.

In the Liao Empire, things are easier for a subject with mortified desires. He has the tattoo to prove his identity of being a Xiao royalty and he is simply Xiao Feng. All the matters that have happened back in the days when he was Qiao Feng are left behind. As Xiao Feng, his duties are just the basics, and the desire of the Khitan Other is straight-forward: do well by the Khitan king, whom Xiao Feng chances to help and becomes sworn brothers with. Although Xiao Feng is assigned to the position of the general of the South and has leagues and troops to manage, he has capable officers and captains to assist him. Having no clear duties to tend to and feeling rather bored, he spends most of his days hunting and hanging out drinking with his soldiers. The only task that makes his life worrisome is looking after Ah Zhu's little sister Ah Zi. (It is a whole other story with Ah Zi. Let us simply say that she uses her chronic medical condition to ensure Xiao Feng will always stay by her side.) One may say that Xiao Feng finds himself a new life in Liao territory. But a life without desire, without a cause to live for, is not living. This is another place where Xiao Feng's tragedy shares a similar setting to Oedipus' at the end of the story: both of them roam on exile, outside of the community or symbolic order, because they have entered the realm of the second death, the realm between the symbolic death and the physical death at the end of life.

All is well, until one day the Liao emperor declares his wish of conquering the Song Empire. Alas, the monstrous national Thing has never gone away, with or without one's desire killed off. Xiao Feng tries to persuade the emperor not to break the peace between the two Empires so to avoid sacrificing thousands of lives of soldiers and civilians on both sides. Outraged by Xiao Feng's defiance, the emperor locks Xiao Feng in a lion cage. Days later when the news of Xiao Feng's defiant act and his consequent imprisonment spreads to the Song land, Xiao Feng's old colleagues of the Beggars' Guild, take it as a sign that Xiao Feng is really still a Han-Chinese at heart, and travel to the Liao to get him out of the lion cage and take him back with them to the Song. This band of good fellows, including Xiao Feng's sworn brothers and their guild members, as well as friends and foes from Shaolin temple, succeed in rescuing Xiao Feng out of the Liao camp and head back to the Song. But just before they reach the border of Song, the Liao army catches up with them. A brutal combat starts. Several Liao soldiers are killed, but the beggar brothers and other adepts are no competition for the immense and disciplined Liao troop. Seeing what is going to happen, Xiao Feng captures the Liao emperor, and forces him to make a deal: he will be released as soon as he pledges not to invade the Song territory ever again in his life. The Liao emperor gives his words in front of everyone, is released and escorted back to the Liao camp by Xiao Feng. The emperor has a roaring welcome from his soldiers. They are overjoyed by learning that they do not have to leave their families and risk their lives battling with the Song Empire.

The emperor then says to Xiao Feng: "you will surely soon be excellently awarded and given a high position in the officialdom, now that you have done such a great service for the Song."

Xiao Feng replies: “My lord, I, Xiao Feng, am Khitan, and have just become a great criminal of Khitan by threatening you with life by force. How can I ever live on [with such shame] and face the world?” (ch. 50). Xiao Feng picks up two pieces of a broken arrow from the ground and stabs them into his heart. His brothers try to mend the wound, to no avail. The injury is too great. He stops breathing, but the wolf head tattoo on his bare chest remains just as lively and fierce.

Even though Xiao Feng had long before learned that the Other does not provide answers, he gives himself the verdict of being the criminal and traitor of the Liao. By killing himself, does it not mean that Qiao/Xiao Feng gives in and succumbs to the unfathomable ethical call that he cannot cope? The crowd of the masters and good fellows, again acting like the choir in a Greek drama, deliberate on his death:

“Was Leader Qiao really a Khitan? Then why is he helping the Song camp? There might be heroes and gallants among Khitan people too.”

“He grew up among us Han people, so it is from us that he acquired the lessons of compassion and loyalty.”

“He had made himself a great national benefactor in stopping the war between the two countries, how did he have to end his life?”

“He may have done service greatly to the Song camp, but he also became a traitor in Khitan by helping their enemy. He killed himself out of fear and guilt.”

“What do you mean by fear? A hero like Leader Qiao had nothing to fear in this world.” (ch. 50)

But perhaps the cry from Ah Zi best sums up the cause of Xiao/Qiao Feng’s death: “All of you go away! It is you all together who killed my brother-in-law . . .” (ch. 50). The two conflicting Causes—loyalty to the Han nation, and loyalty to the Khitan Empire—kill him; the inconsistency of the Other kills him.

The Liao emperor is in deep thought, too: “Did he succeed in helping Liao, or hurting Liao? He begged me not to send out the troop to Song, did he do it for the sake of Song people, or for the sake of Khitan people? . . . He ended his life, clearly not caring for winning favours from the Song court. Then . . . why did he do it exactly?” (ch. 50). The war paused, but will be resumed a decade later. Does his death and sacrifice achieve nothing?

Žižek in *On Belief* talks about several kinds of sacrifices, some false, some moral. After relating the “irrational” or “empty” sacrifice that heroines such as Isabel Archer (*The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James) and Sygne de Coûfontaine (*Hostage* by Paul Claudel) make, Žižek comments: “While men sacrifice themselves for a *Thing* (country, freedom, honor), only women are

able to sacrifice themselves for *nothing*. (Or, men are moral, while only women are properly ethical.)” (78). Žižek, like Zupančič, links ethics with sexuation, and we will discuss more on that in the next chapter on sexual difference. Is Qiao Feng moral or ethical? He is both sacrificing himself for the ethical Thing—the national Thing—as well as for nothing, except the reflections his death brings to his former Han colleagues, some Khitan soldiers and generals, and us readers. But that impact is only momentary, because nothing has been changed. The national Thing remains as monstrous as ever.

Then what exactly is the lesson in Qiao Feng’s suicide? Let us see if we can reach a conclusion.

Chapter 4

Jin Yong's "Love Letter" and Lacan's Sexuation Diagram

No other Jin Yong novel makes a better declaration of love than *The Giant Eagle and its Companion*. The work enjoys the reputation of being Jin Yong's *qingshu* 情書, "the book of love, or the love letters," and features the much adored pair of lovers, Yang Guo and Little Dragon Maiden.⁶⁶ Even before the story of the couple begins, in the opening chapter, the theme of love, or rather, the impossibility of relationship, is already fully depicted. The chapter is titled "*fengyue-wuqing* 風月無情," a phrase taken from the first line of a poem by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修: *fengyue-wuqing ren an huan* 風月無情人暗換. *Fengyue* refers to romance and sexual affairs, but here the phrase is coined with *wuqing*, "without affection," and followed by "*ren an huan*"—"people (or those you love) change without one's knowing." The line points to a ruthless fact about love. Love disappoints and often fails.

Lacan's 1972-1973 seminar, is also a book of love: *Seminar XX: Encore, On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*. In this seminar, Lacan speaks of the "love letter (*la lettre d'amour*), [or] of the declaration of love." What he says of love is "that one cannot speak about it" (12). "Love is impotent (though mutual) because it is not aware that it is but the desire to be One, which leads us to the impossibility of establishing the relationship between 'them-two' (*la relation d'eux*)—them-two sexes" (6). Jin Yong's love letters are indeed letters and words that "revolve around the fact that there's no such a thing as a sexual relationship" (57). Not only is *Companion* Jin Yong's "book of love/love letter," but it also showcases the letters among a couple, or a non-couple, who declare their love by not speaking of it: the correspondence between Wang Chongyang 王重陽 and Lin Chaoying 林朝英. Both being top swordsmen, Wang and Lin admire each other's talents and achievements; it is just that they never manage to form a love relationship. Wang and Lin can be seen as the proto-couple of the novel, for their failure in love is the ultimate cause of Yang Guo and Maiden's chance meeting: Wang and Lin's non-relation is exactly the empty space that major events in the novel revolve around.

⁶⁶ Chen Xiaolin: "*Companion* being Jin Yong's book of 'love' is a well-established view (46). Ni Kuang: "The book from cover to cover writes about one word: 'love.' It is a 'book of love,' and no other works of Jin Yong can serve as a similar example (*My Reading* 41). Shu Guozhi calls love the "foundation of Jin Yong's story," where everything starts (153).

Lin established Maiden's martial arts branch, which never has an official name and is mostly referred to as the School of the Ancient Tomb. Disciples of the branch live in an underground cave, the Tomb of the Living Dead (*huo siren mu* 活死人墓), originally built by Wang as a military shelter for his anti-Jurchen troop members. Not much detail is known about how Wang and Lin started as best friends but ended as foes. Eventually Lin came to inhabit the Tomb, and Wang become the founder of the Complete-Real Monastery, the branch that Yang Guo will later be sent to as a disciple. Both the Tomb and the Monastery are located on Zhongnan Mountain and though in close vicinity, the couple never saw each other again. One thing is revealed though when Yang Guo and a then mortally wounded Maiden discover a bunch of letters neatly tied together in the Tomb on their wedding night. It turns out that while Wang was away at the border fighting the Jin Kingdom, he maintained a sparse but steady correspondence with Lin.

These letters from Wang mentioned nothing but his troop's conditions and his worries of Song's defeat. After viewing several letters together, Yang Guo expresses his thoughts: "Chongyong Great-*shifu* was indeed a great male model who put the national and military affairs above everything else. However, he was rather affectionless, no wonder Granny-*shifu* [that is, Lin] became disappointed in their relationship" (ch. 28). Maiden holds a different view. In her opinion Lin must have been delighted when receiving the letters from Wang:

You see, the military situations in each of the letters were always dire, and yet Chongyang Great-*shifu* caught in such difficult times still did not forget to write to Granny-*shifu*. So what do you think, does it not mean that he always had her on his mind?" (ch. 28).

The love between Wang and Lin, both revealed and concealed in the letters, faces the challenge of the choice between duty and love. This is a common theme in the genre of melodrama. Žižek argues that melodrama is centred upon a male struggle, a male forced choice: *Your duty, or your loved one?* A well-known example of this choice is how the protagonist in *Casablanca* sacrifices his love for the cause of the "Free French," or in the name of male friendship (*Interrogating the Real* 72). The male protagonists in Jin Yong's novels as a rule all have to face the same predicament: *Be loyal to your country, or to your love relationship?* Yang Guo in *Companion* is challenged by the same forced choice, and in effect chooses the 'wrong' side for most of the novel.

This chapter contends that the ethical dilemma of *wuxia* heroes will be best understood through Lacan's theory of sexuation, and particularly through the journeying of the four mathemes in the sexuation diagram. "The letter always arrives at its destination," says Lacan (*Écrits* 30). Fierens explains it like this: "this destination is not the addressee who can read the letter, but rather the real that the letter circles, *cerne*, the vacuole which makes a place especially for the addressee"

(Fierens, *Reading L'étourdit*, "First Turn" 17). The love story of Yang Guo and Maiden is exceptional and particular, and yet it at the same time exemplifies the universality of genre conventions. "What Jin Yong does is write one love story after another, reveal one secret and complicated love psychology after another, and ask one question of love after another, without supplying an answer. To be sure, it is impossible to answer anyway" (Chen Mo, "On Love in Jin Yong's Fiction" 3). Each love story speaks of love, and yet all of them put together do not answer for love, do not stop the quest of love. Love is that which "does not stop being written" (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 94, 144). What then is the relation between love and desire? And how does one distinguish desire from drive? In his theory of sexualization, Lacan offers two trajectories to think through love: desire and drive. On the masculine side, there is the pursuit of desire that resembles love, but always fails to reach the love object, because there is no sexual relation. On the feminine side, while the futile desire to love remains, something is shifted, and we enter the realm of drive. That something is but a minimal difference in desire—it is still the same circulation. It is different only in not aiming at the obtainment of the desired object. The goal of drive is to stay in circulation, to be on the move, and it gets satisfaction and *jouissance* every time. Such a minimal difference is like the torsion on the Möbius band; it can be located anywhere on the band, as long as you know how to read the structure. And when you do, you encounter love.

Love is ruthless: there is no sexual relation

Set in a breezy autumn time, south of Yangzi River in Jiangnan, the opening scene of *Companion* zooms in on a group of young girls rowing a boat to pick lotus seeds in a lake. They laugh and sing, and one of their song choices is the poem of Ouyang Xiu, quoted above. All this is observed from the eye of a beautiful Taoist nun in an apricot colour suit, her left hand covered in blood. The nun is Li Mochou, the murderous villain nicknamed "Fairy of Crimson Serpent." In the next scene, we visit the tombs of long-dead husband and wife, Lu Zhanyuan 陸展元 and He Yuanjun 何沅君. Both were involved in traumas caused by love in the past: He Yuanjun's foster-father grew amorous towards her and lost sanity due to his insufferable guilt and confusion; and Lu Zhanyuan was the object of the unrequited love of Li Mochou.

In the household of Lu Liding 陸立鼎, Lu Zhanyuan's brother Lu Liding wakes up in the morning to find nine palm prints in blood, on the wall of the living room. He immediately recalls the unsettled business between his brother and Li Mochou, who had sworn to come back to take his brother's life after ten years. Although Lu Zhanyuan is dead, Li Mochou will take Lu Liding's life

instead, together with the lives of Mrs Lu, their daughter, their niece, and five servants and maids. Knowing the danger is impending, two servants attempted to escape but were stopped in front of the house and are killed by Li Mochou. The two girls, however, are rescued by helpers. With the children gone, the now relieved Mr and Mrs Lu, sit vigilantly in the living room facing each other, and think of the past ten years or so and of a married life which was littered by both serious altercations and quarrels over petty matters. At this moment however, they are as one. “Knowing well their time together is limited, they cannot help but be closely leaning to each other, hands holding tight” (ch. 1).

Mr and Mrs Lu appear to be the only couple in the first chapter that enjoys an ordinary two-some relationship that has not been compromised or complicated by others. However, no sooner do they rest in a rare moment of marital bliss then a singing voice is heard from afar: “Oh the world we live in, tell me what is the thing called love, which makes one willing to sacrifice one’s life it?” (*Companion* ch.1) It is the signature warning of Li Mochou. Within seconds, she is at the doorstep of the Lu mansion. the three lives of the remaining servants are taken on the spot. Mr and Mrs Lu only get to live for a few more hours. After some futile defiance the lives of the only ordinary couple in the novel end. The juxtaposition of love and death is evoked in the two lines in the poem, and Li Mochou’s eerie and recurrent singing, is as the theme-song of the book. Li Mochou is like the Sphinx, posing the question of love to humans, and setting the tragic tone throughout the novel, regardless of the happy ending of Yang Guo and Maiden’s love story.

As if to provide balance against the assemblage of dead couples and failed desires, Jin Yong places a short flashback in the middle of the first chapter. It focuses on Guo Jing and Huang Rong, the golden couple of this novel’s prequel, *Eagle-Shooting Heroes*, the first book of the “Eagle-Shooting” trilogy. The short episode gives a quick account of how this couple have fared in the years after the “happy ever after” ending of *Eagle-Shooting*. What announces Guo and Huang’s appearance is a pair of giant white eagles soaring in the sky. The association between the eagles and lovebirds is clear, as displayed in the Chinese phrase *biyi-shuangfei* 比翼雙飛 (“fly wing to wing”). Hamm regards the white eagles as a “love symbol” (96). Zeng Zhaoxu 曾昭旭 compares the two couples—Guo and Huang on the one hand, Yang Guo and Maiden on the other. In Jin Yong’s world in terms of love relation, Zeng calls the former the “orthodox,” and the latter the unorthodox, or exhibiting “lateral approach” (18). What Zeng has in mind is two things: first, Yang Guo and Maiden, as disciple and *shifu* 師父 (“master,” literally “teacher-father”), are not meant to be together. Their relationship is unusual, if not immoral. Second, even though their love enjoys a happy ending, they have to go through seven rounds of separations and re-unions to eventually get it. As a matter of fact, critics such as Chen Xiaolin 陳曉林 and Ni Kuang 倪匡 have voiced their

speculation that *Companion* should have ended in tragedy. When Maiden jumps off the cliff after the first six rounds of breaking up and getting back together with Yang Guo might have been a suitable ending (Chen Xiaolin 50; Ni Kuang “My Reading” 43).

Ni Kuang is of the opinion that the biggest failure of the novel is that it has a happy ending, which is unexpected and unfitting to the tragic mood of the whole book. “Right from the start it is meant to be a tragedy. Was it or was it not true that it made an awkward change of course and turned into comedy upon the wish of the readers? We can never know.” However, Ni Kuang believes “that when Jin Yong began his writing [of the novel] he . . . planned for a tragic theme” (43). Hamm relates this anecdote, or urban legend, in *Paper Swordsmen*, and confirms that there were indeed “letters asking for a happy ending” appearing in the column “Reader’s Mailbox” in *Ming Pao* (177-78). Ni Kuang’s argument is that it was the starting years of *Ming Pao*, and Jin Yong could not afford to risk losing popularity by offending the readers: Who could really stand to see Maiden disappear and Yang Guo die in a heartbreak?” (43). Viewed in this light, the following episodes, the sixteen years where Maiden is missing and Yang Guo matures into the proper knight-errant or *xia*, may be what was needed for Jin Yong to make up his mind for the ending of the couple, or figure out how to do that. Maiden’s jumping off the cliff reads rather conclusive in ending the fate of the couple. Knowing well that her injury was lethal, Maiden vanishes after leaving two lines of writing on the cliff front: “Meet me here in sixteen years later. Please promise me this for the sake of our profound love as husband-and-wife” (*Companion* ch. 32). Maiden has to commit suicide first, so that Yang Guo will live on; a plot also familiar from *Romeo and Juliette*. If Maiden were to die, Yang would kill himself in grief, as they are so much in love that neither can live without the other. Therefore, Maiden leaves a message to mislead Yang into thinking that somehow she has been cured after all. But of course that was not the case. Maiden simply chooses to commit suicide without witness, in the hope of thereby prolonging Yang’s life. Her hope being that his love for her would over sixteen years slowly diminish. Thus even if he came back to keep the promise but found no traces of her, he would by then have learnt to live without her.

It may or may not have been the truth that Yang Guo and Maiden’s union was not predestined, but it is certain that Yang Guo would not have become one of the Jin Yongian heroes were he not have been given the extra sixteen years. Judged now by the final result, Yang Guo’s journey of becoming a fully-fledged master is demonstrated to be far from being the “superfluous” plot that some critics regard it as (Tianmu Shi 15-16). The sixteen years’ duration does not really distract the novel from “the book of love” into “the book of chivalry.” In effect, the peculiar setting where Yang Guo roams the world by wearing a mask, is a wonderful exploration of the “love or duty” double-bind that the novel is intent on examining keenly. And sixteen years later, Maiden reappears in the second last chapter. It turns out that there is a cure for her injury after all. She has

indeed attempted suicide by plunging into the seemingly bottomless gorge, but the gorge turns out to be a deep pool. The deep pool is connected through underground channel to a valley in another mountain, and that is where Maiden ends up too. This valley is isolated from the outside world but provides just enough materials and food for Maiden to live. The poison buried deep in her veins is gradually removed by the healing effect of an unknown white fish in the water. All this is retold to Yang Guo when he finds her in the valley. And he finds it by repeating the same attempted suicide, jumping into the pool, finding the water channel, and ending up just where Maiden is. Due to at least two wondrous plot manoeuvres that can only occur in martial arts fiction, Yang and Maiden are united, to never part from each other again.

When unfortunate incidents and external obstacles happen over and again, one starts to doubt if these obstacles are just external or if they are not due to some internal logic of things. Especially in Jin Yong's "book of love," the heartbreaks and deaths are so various that they seem to be the norm. This loveless and ruthless norm is what Lacan terms the "*ab-sens*" (ab-sense/absence) of the sexual difference. It means that there is no universal and absolute way to make sense of the gender differences, and because of that, there is no such thing as a sexual relationship.⁶⁷ The underlying law of sexual relationships is the impossibility of the sexual relation, that is, impossibility *qua* the real. "The Real, situated beyond and at the same time in the Symbolic, can only be inscribed by way of a deadlock in formalisation" (Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender* 112). The deadlock is often veiled under some imaginary solutions, such as personality traits or karmic function. For example, when Yang Guo and Maiden reunite in the secluded valley, Maiden shows gratitude to the heavens for granting them the blessing (ch. 39). And yet just before this scene, Yang Guo has been feeling dejected by the elusive and capricious will of the heavens. After, though, Yang Guo seem to have forgotten all his frustration about being made a plaything of the heavens, and is glad that he is born to be "affectionate," and pigheaded enough to have jumped off the cliff with the intention to follow Maiden in death (ch. 39).

What is more fundamental than these ambiguous imaginary beliefs in blessing, curse, providence, karma, or god's will, is the symbolic effort, and there are two main symbolisations, or rather two attempts of symbolisations that do not quite work: the masculine and the feminine trajectories. The masculine trajectory can be explained by the saying "exception proves the rule": Yang Guo and Maiden as an exceptional couple are a particularity that upholds the universality of the law of desire, and the outcome is the fantasy of a perfect love or marital bliss (we will soon see

⁶⁷ The original French phrase "*Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*" sounds stronger than the usual English rendition "there is no sexual relationship." Fink's translation here – "there is no such thing as a sexual relationship" – therefore is to stress radical impossibility.

the matheme of “ $S \rightarrow a$ ” in the lower section of the diagram, figure 4.1). The feminine attempt of making sense of the non-existent sexual relation is a different approach. Instead of excluding something as the exception to achieve an “all,” the feminine logic makes clear the totality of the law of desire is “not-all,” and that there is no exception. “No one escapes from injustice, and every relationship suffers the wicked play of karma”: the maxim from *Demi-Gods* that we discussed in chapter two tells us that every relationship, no matter how much it suffers or is wronged, is still a relationship that is subject to love and desire. All the relationships—be they perfect or in pain—put together, however, do not constitute a consistent set, or a totality that answers to Li Mochou’s quest: “tell me what is the thing called love.” All is incomplete, hence allowing for contingent occurrences of love, and for more letters and books on love to be written.

Sexuation diagram: contradiction and incompleteness

As we have seen, the two logics, feminine and masculine, do not complement each other and neither are they contraries or opposites to each other. Their logical relationship can be understood in a wordplay, in the relation of the signifiers, of the signifying chain. Yang and Maiden’s romantic trajectory, the *deux* (“two” being a symbolic number, a singular signifier) is in effect *d’eux* (of them, for them, any of them—multitudes) (Lacan, *L’Étourdit* 24a). The two logics are presented by the four formulae in the upper level of the sexuation diagram:

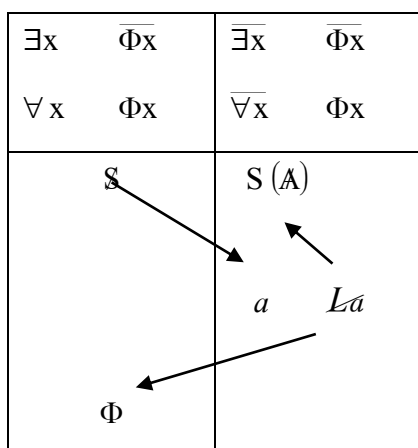


Fig. 4.1. Sexuation diagram (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 78)

The diagram shows the masculine on the left and the feminine on the right. The formulae in the two top grids are pure logical formalisations (contradiction of all, exception, and incompleteness with no exception), and are devoid of imaginary trappings of sex and gender. The mathemes in the

bottom grids can for the moment be seen as how the two parties operate according to the two logics in relation to each other, while being unable to strike a relation of “two.” Let us start with the top four mathemes or formulae.

Φ is the matheme for the phallus in Lacanian theory. In the sexuation diagram, it stands for the phallic function. Why the phallus? A few reminders on Lacan’s word choice of phallus first. The word has nothing to do with the real organ, or the imaginary castration, such as the threat of cutting off the penis. It is rather to be understood on the symbolic level. In the context of a signifying chain, the phallus is the signifier without the signified, hence S_1 (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 80). To call Φ the phallic function is to emphasise how the signifier works and functions as nothing but the pure difference between signifiers. On the other hand, the function is also the function of desire, of the lack that remains behind consequent to symbolisation. For that reason the phallus is the signifier of desire, and can stand for the law of desire and the function of symbolic castration, especially in the context of sexuation and sexuality.⁶⁸ It is in this sense that Verhaeghe writes that “the human world, being a symbolic world, is strictly reduced to a phallic world” (*Beyond Gender* 15).

Now we can look at other symbols or signs in the four mathemes on top of the diagram. The logical operators are to be understood this way: x stands for any element of a system; whose ordering principle is Φ . A bar over any term is a negation. \forall stands for “all,” and \exists stands for “some.” Below the four formulae are explained one by one, in the particular order that Lacan uses in *L’Étourdit*. The phallic function works by moving between the four mathemes, starting on the bottom left and then moving clock-wise:

- 1st function (bottom left): $\forall x \Phi x$: All x are subject to Φ
- 2nd function (top left): $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$: Some elements x are not subject to Φ
- 3rd function (top right): $\overline{\exists x \overline{\Phi x}}$: There are no elements that are not subject to Φ

⁶⁸ Whenever castration is mentioned, it should not be confused with “real” castration where one finds evidence of a threat of having the actual organ cut off, or anything to do with other imaginary ideas such as penis envy. Neither is castration a metaphor. Sentences like “he is castrated after losing his fortune” and “the dominant role his mother plays in his life castrates him” are to express the stereotypical concept of a masculinity where anything that makes a man less masculine can be seen as “castrating.”

- 4th function (bottom right): $\overline{\forall x} \Phi x$: The elements which are subject to Φ do not form a totality

The first and the second functions together explain the masculine logic of contradiction. In order for the first statement “all is subject to Φ ” to hold, there has to be something that contradicts or negates the phallic function. And yet, the point of such a negation is also to reinforce the phallic law, to make sure its universality prevails. Such a negation or exception stands out. It is not within the universality but nevertheless defines it and frames it, and that is why Lacan calls the exception an “ex-sistence.” The ex-sistence of such an exception is also spelt out in the lower section of the diagram:

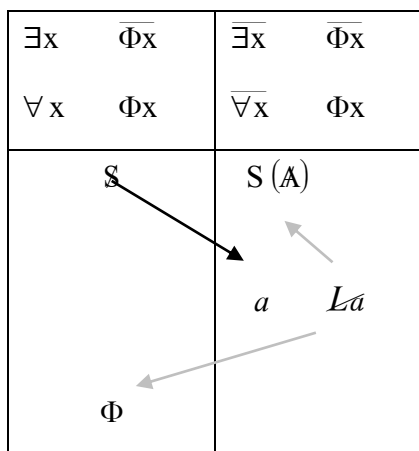


Fig. 4.1.a. Sexuation diagram: the male pole and “ $\mathcal{S} \rightarrow a$ ”

In “ $\mathcal{S} \rightarrow a$,” the male subject reaches out, crosses the division, and aims at his cause of desire, the *objet a* located on the other side. For this reason, the masculine logic is dubbed by Žižek as the “male fantasy” (*Interrogating* 70); it is a universality or a totality “suspended” by something that ex-sists outside of the realm of the masculine set.

The third and the fourth formulae belong to the feminine logic. The third function says no to the second function: $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ (some elements x are not subject to Φ) becomes $\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$ (there are no

elements not subject to Φ). There is no exception, it is just that the set of all the elements put together do not constitute a universality; it is a set, but only inconsistently so, hence the fourth formula. The four formulae can be seen as saids (*dit*), and the phallic function as the act of saying (*dire*) that cannot be pinned down to any of them, and because of that facilitates the roundabout of the function between the different saids or formulae.⁶⁹

We previously mentioned that Jin Yong could have ended *Companion* in tragedy, so as to be consistent with the first chapter's theme that romance is ruthless, *fengyu-wuqing*, without exception, even with such a loving couple like Yan and Maiden. But even if Jin Yong had carried out his original plan of subjecting the couple to an unhappy ending, it would not have made any difference to the end result. This is because there are only two ways to make sense of the *ab-sens* (Lacan *L'Étourdit*), the senselessness or absence of the sexual relationship. Here we can read the two plot manoeuvres as the result of having no possible narrative solution. This result is mentioned by Žižek when discussing the two versions of *Tender Is the Night*. The two versions are like the two maps of the same Levi-Strauss village;⁷⁰ the two versions should not be read consecutively, but synchronously, structurally, “[T]he gap between the two versions is irreducible, it is the ‘truth’ of the both of them, the traumatic core around which they circulate; there is no way to resolve the tension, to find a ‘proper’ solution” (*Interrogating* 19).

Sexuation and gender

Before going into the male and female logics in more detail and other ramifications, here I will quickly address one question: do the two logics have anything to do with biological sexes? Namely, is there a difference between concepts of “sexuality” and “sexuation”? Some of the clues to answering the question lies in the lower quarters of the diagram.

It has been mentioned that the upper level of the sexuation diagram is more logical than biological or cultural. Fierens claims that “the phallic function opens up a sexual bond between speakers which is based neither on an anatomical relationship, nor on a chromosomatic relationship,

⁶⁹ In *L'Étourdit* Lacan matches each of the four modalities: “possible,” “necessary,” “impossible,” and “contingent.” The relations between the four formulae and the four modalities will be explained later; note that they pose somewhat different connotations when used in *Seminar XX*.

⁷⁰ See Žižek's “Between Symbolic Fiction and Fantasmatic Spectre” where he relates the village plans drawn in Levi-Strauss's *Structural Anthropology*.

nor on a cultural relationship” (Fierens, “First Turn” 92). Our first example of sexuation—of how the romance genre operates, should have made clear that the feminine masculine logics, though dubbed with gender terms, are but two ways to make sense of the thing called love. The masculine logic is not tied with either a male character or any masculine “trait,” for example. The two possibilities correspond to the Gödelian logic: either completeness, or consistency, and henceforth does appear to be logical. However, is the sexuation utterly “independent of biological sex” (Fierens, “First Turn” 76)?

While introducing the Gödelian logic mentioned above, Thwaites argues that Lacan assigns the two sexuation poles *after* the formulation of logic. For him the two Gödelian possibilities “describe the two basic ways in which one can inhabit the Symbolic,” and since “there are two of them, they thus come to represent the two available—if necessarily and rigorously quite inadequate—ways by which *masculine* and *feminine* can be inscribed in the Symbolic” (“Hospitality” 151). But if this is the case, then why does the male position correspond to “complete but inconsistent” and not “consistent but incomplete”? Is it just a random assignment without any human regard? And yet Lacan himself does not hesitate in making statements where the subjects are “man” and “woman.” Thus he says that “phallic jouissance is the obstacle owing to which man does not come (*n’arrive pas*) . . . to enjoy woman’s body, precisely because what he enjoys is the jouissance of the organ” (*Seminar XX 7*), and in *L’Étourdit* is found the statement “[t]hat a woman here is of use to a man only when he ceases to love another one” (78; fr 25d). And as we all know, most of the exemplary figure of ethics that Žižek’s mentions are female, and they always link back to the feminine function of the sexuation.

Perhaps a better way to understand the non-biological nature of Lacan’s sexuation theory is to see the *sexual difference itself* as devoid of sex and gender. Sexual difference “does not designate any biological opposition grounded in ‘real’ properties but a purely symbolic opposition in which nothing corresponds in the designated objects” (Žižek, *Interrogating* 338). It is not so much that the two poles do not correspond to gender terms as that the man and the woman are inscribed in such a way that they do not adhere to ideas of compatibility. “There is nothing complementary about their relationship, nor is there a simple inverse relationship or some kind of parallelism between them” (Fink, *Lacanian Subject* 105). The difference of the two sexes is not symmetrical, neither is it binary. When we say the two poles do not meet in reciprocity, it does not mean that man and woman are in an oppositional position. Rather, what Lacan’s diagram expresses is that the two sides will always be out of phase, and that “each ‘feminine’ formula responds to a masculine formula by a break in continuity, by a discontinuity, by a modal leap” (Fierens, “First Turn” 116). The two sexes connect by dis-connection, they match by not matching.

The sexual difference itself is independent of biological sex and cultural meanings, but that does not mean that Lacan’s diagram has no ideological implications. This is easier to discern in the lower sector of the diagram. For example, La in the bottom right quarter:

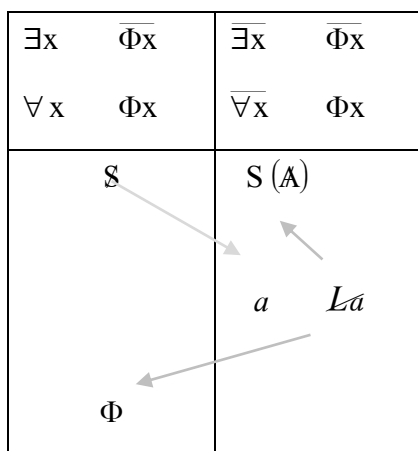


Fig. 4.1.b. Sexuation diagram: the female pole and La

It stands for *La Femme*, Woman as a special noun, sometimes rendered as a capitalised W with a slash in some English texts. The matheme clearly addresses the concept of woman, a sexual identity. For Lacan “Woman” as a whole does not exist: “a woman is not reduced to this universality; Lacan ‘repudiates’ the generality, *the* woman, or the universal *the* women: a woman worthy of the name is a singular woman” (Fierens “First Turn” 116). But while “the” woman or Woman does not exist, that does not mean women are not subject to the phallic function, which leads us back to the two functions and on the top of the diagram. If Fierens is right to claim that the four phallic mathemes refer to the “logical development of sexual destiny from language” (First Turn/76), then it will be impossible for the subject not to be sexualised, not to be destined to stumble over the Oedipal complex if the subject is a speaking being, and is the subject of desire. One way to read the lower sector of the diagram is therefore that it depicts relations between two subjects of desire, a mapping out of the necessary implications of how desire works in each case, and between the two parties given the arrangements in the upper sector. Though the two parties do not necessarily mean a

biological man and a biological woman, which we will come back to it later. If the upper sector is about the law, and that law runs into an impasse in each case (contradiction, incompleteness), then the lower is about desire and the logic of how it copes with those impasses. Roughly speaking, the top sector is the failure of the symbolic in dealing with the real (the impasse of the law), and the lower sector are the options left for the imaginary in dealing with that (the impasse of desire), in so far as the imaginary is to be considered as one of the three orders that are always interrelated to each other. Hence we see the matheme of fantasy ($S \rightarrow a$), often dubbed as “male fantasy” by theorists.

The sexuation, therefore, is not without biological sex or cultural expectations. Lacan, like most identity politics or queer theories, does address issues of gender and sexuality. What sets Lacanian theory of sexuation apart is that Lacan takes into consideration the real *qua* impossibility. Sexual difference is a deadlock; “there is only a nonrelationship, an absence of any conceivable direct relationship between the sexes” (Fink, *Lacanian Subject* 105). The ab-sense of sexual difference should be the starting point of understanding gender politics and sexual ideologies. The second implication of sexual relation as the real is the dimension of *jouissance* and drive. The positions of the two sexes are two attempts of subjectification that necessarily fail. What is “leaving in the wake of this failure” is “an endless series of anxious questions” (Thwaites 152). “What is a man?” “How can I be a woman?”—“Tell me what is the thing called love, which makes one willing to sacrifice one’s life for it?” Mochou asks. Such is the desire of the hysteric. The pursuit of the hysteric’s insistent act of asking questions, or in Jin Yong’s case the act of endlessly posing the same question, is where we will encounter pure desire, which promises a moment of drive. The pure difference, ultimately, as Žižek modifies in his later book *Parallax View*, is the minimal difference between one and the void, the difference of itself to itself. The minimal difference is “not the unfathomable X which elevates an ordinary object into an object of desire, but, rather, the inner torsion which curves the libidinal space, and thus transforms instinct into drive” (63). This torsion or curving, like the twist on the surface of a Möbius band, will serve to help us further understand the relation between the phallus (Φ) and the enigmatic $S(A)$ in the lower sector of the diagram. For detailed discussions on further nuances and subtleties involved in the diagram, including relations with other diagrams such as the Graph of Desire and mathemes of metaphor and metonymy, see Appendix.

Jin Yong’s “phallic” world: yin and yang do not meet

One has to admit that the martial arts genre cannot be otherwise than “phallogentric.” *Wuxia* is always associated with maleness, the majority of martial arts novelists are male, the majority of readers are male, and the majority of the protagonists are male. The genre’s male-ness is even more apparent when it comes to the image and appearance of weaponry. Rightful weapons like daggers and swords are in a “phallic” shape, whereas weapons handled by villains or insignificant martial arts schools are not. Mochou and Dragon Maiden, disciples of the all-female School of Pure Maiden, combat with a horse tail whisk and silk ribbons, weapons that possess feminine qualities such as fluidity and softness.

From a Lacanian perspective, all these are indeed imaginary. The metaphoric appropriations of gender in the genre are only further reinforced by the traditional worldview of yin versus yang. Yin cannot stand alone, and neither can yang. Yin and yang are two different states of the same thing. The characters yin and yang refer to a mountain’s shady side and a mountain’s sunny side. With the course of the day the sunny side grows while the shady side wanes, and vice versa when the day turns into night. But even when the whole mountain is completely in shade during the night, it does not mean the sunny or yang side is gone, for the seed of yang remains inherent in the shady or yin condition, and that is why the yang element will start to increase at the dawn of a new day, pushing back the yin or shady areas. The idea of yang seeding in yin, or vice versa, is expressed in the Taoist diagram of Taiji below:



Fig. 4.2. Taiji diagram

Even though there are inexhaustible possibilities of the ratio between the two poles, they are there to serve one single purpose: to express the existence of the One, and that the One exists right from the beginning. Taiji, the primal state of where everything starts, is therefore metaphorised by a circle. Yin and yang are not always in a perfect balance, but they will eventually come to complement each other and present the unified inner state of any matter.

This yin-yang philosophy is the backdrop of the martial arts genre. Yang, not surprisingly, corresponds to the usual masculine qualities such as solidity, forcefulness, brightness, directness, and so on. The heroic figures are mostly described in yang terms and accompanied by masculine “phallic” weapons. The same tautological logic applies to yin features, too. In opposition to yang

features, yin means softness, flexibility, mobility, fluidity, and obscurity. The feminine, “non-phallic” weapons are yin, so is the roundness of the gold wheels of the Monk of Holiness, Yang Guo’s arch enemy, regardless of his masculine prowess and robust appearance. The negativity of a villainous role is associated with yin hence shade and darkness. Yin versus yang in martial arts fiction is not all that different from the oppositions of evil versus good, or black versus white, in the Western fantasy genre, except that yin and yang as signifiers themselves already are referents of biological sexes and they are coined into terms for female and male genitalia respectively. The binary qualities of yin and yang are further complicated by being intertwined with other metaphors, human ethics, and cosmic justifications. The two binaries therefore are not value free, just like the good is preferred to the bad, and light over dark. Yang dominates, and yin is negativised.⁷¹

It can be seen that Jin Yong’s work has a “phallic” worldview. There are two ultimate secret scrolls in *Companion*, one is called “The True Scripture of Nine-Yin (*jiu-yin zhenjing* 九陰真經),” the other “The True Scripture of Nine-Yang (*jiu-yang zhenjing* 九陽真經).” “Nine-Yin” is invented by Lin Chaoying, the founder of Maiden’s all-female lineage of martial arts, whereas “Nine-Yang” derives from Buddhist practice. We should remember that in a martial arts world, monks such as those of Shaolin Temple are considered the exemplary practitioners of the orthodox, hence masculine, kung fu. Although martial arts skills learnt from the yin scripture are incredibly powerful, these yin moves or skills only become truly invincible when supplemented by the knowledge obtained from the yang scripture.

Yin and yang may not always be on equal terms, but their relation will eventually achieve a harmony, comprised and reciprocated as in the circle of the diagram of Taiji. The formulae for how yin and yang coordinate may be numerous, but every ratio between them will be the right one. This is unlike Lacan’s theory of the feminine and masculine poles where there is no *rapport* (French: “relation, ratio”) between them. While Lacan is intent on a revolution against the philosophy of spherical topology, yin-yang philosophy is perfectly captured and retained in a circle. The Chinese yin-yang seems to oppose to psychoanalytic sexuation theory in every way. Or does it? As it happens, the novelist adopts the Chinese idiom *ying-cuo yang-cha* 陰錯陽差, meaning literally “yin goes wrong, yang errs.” He uses the idiom to explain the string of incidents and coincidences that occur as the result of our protagonist Yang Guo ending up being subscribed into an all-female school, and calling Little Dragon Maiden, then just turning 18, his *shifu*, his martial arts master or teacher-father.”

⁷¹ Zeng Zhaoxu’s article “The Emotional World of Jin Yong” elaborates the same yin versus yang dynamics from the Confucius point of view (15).

A quick recap of the incidents before Yang Guo and Maiden meet. Guo Jing brought Yang Guo to Complete-Real Monastery so that the latter could receive kung fu training. Guo Jing picked Complete-Real for several reason. The head of the school used to be the master of Yang Guo's father, Guo Jing himself was initiated into martial arts by one the seven masters of Complete-Real, and Complete-Real is considered the most righteous in morality and most incredible in combat skills. The Monastery is a perfect starting point for Yang Guo who is treated dearly as a son by Guo Jing because of his close relations to Yang's father. But on the day they arrived at the foot of Zhangnan Mountain where Complete-Real is based, the school was facing an attack from Mongolian monks and troops led by a few martial arts adepts. The reason of the attack is two-fold. Complete-Real had devoted itself to anti-Mongolia efforts and campaigns for years; and the Mongolian troops would like to make contact with the School of the Ancient Tomb. Disciples from the school did not make any public appearance until one day, one the 18th birthday of Maiden, who was rumoured to be holding a combat competition as a way to pick her future husband. The promise of a marriage or a chance to view the secret scroll of a school where Li Mochou had been trained attracts several kung fu masters, as well as some hooligans, to visit the Tomb of the Living Dead where the School of the Ancient Tomb is located, and when travelling they had to pass by the Complete-Real Monastery. Guo Jing was mistaken for one of the masters and hooligans, and since he refused to be persuaded away from his purpose of meeting the elders, the Complete-Real clerics guarding the entrance to the monastery had to find ways to stop Guo Jing. The Monastery eventually ended up in exhausting all its men to fight with Guo Jing, while these men should have been protecting the main houses against the Mongolian assault. After Guo Jing helped the clerics to defeat the Mongolian force and made everyone understand his innocent intention of bringing Yang Guo into the School, Guo Jing finally got to sit down with the head-master of Complete-Real and looked back together at the day's events. The head-master said:

This was a disaster that Chongyang Palace [the main house of the monastery] was destined to experience. Were it not for the misunderstanding resulting from the unfortunate coincidence when yin went astray and yang erred, our grand formation of the North Star would have been able to defeat that bunch of evils . . . (*Companion* ch. 4)

The head-master then laughed about the ill-luck of the School experienced on that day, and continued to chit-chat with Guo Jing. Others did not take the whole thing so lightly, as they did almost lose to the Mongolians, and that was partially due to the fact that they exhausted all their man power in stopping Guo Jing from going into the monastery. Cleric Zhao was appointed to be the primary instructor of Yang Guo by the head-master, and Zhao shared the same thought with the

majority. Guo Jing thanked the head-master and left; Yang Guo stayed and was initiated into the School, though was never treated kindly by his peers or by his own master. Yang Guo would have endured the bullying in order to honour Guo Jing's wish if the malice around him had not broken into aggression that had threatened his life. Yang Guo fled and whilst in that act, trespassed into the domain of the Tomb of the Living Dead, and was rescued by the servant of Maiden. Hence, instead of becoming a disciple of the most renowned and rightful martial arts school, he is now with the School of the Ancient Tomb. That School had never had any male disciple until now. It is based in an underground abode, a half-artificial, half-natural cavern that sees no daylight and is above an underground stream. The darkness and the vicinity to water makes this location ultimately yin, and it is unsurprising that residents call themselves the "living dead," for being the opposite of life, and the opposite of the bright yang force.

All this would not have happened were it not that yin and yang mistook their course, and missed each other at a non-place where there is no yin-yang relation, no pre-written ratio of how the two come together as one. Before any of the imaginary intrigues and metaphoric uses of yin and yang get to be played out, there is the absence of yin-yang. The imbalance of yin and yang is not the cause of imperfect relations; on the contrary, the lack of complementariness between yin and yang is at the heart of how things happen. The non-place where yin and yang do not meet is the necessary empty space that provides the condition for possibilities, not impossibilities. Without the non-place, there simply could not be these battles for honour, loyalty, national identity, and true love. At the same time, that yin and yang miss each other in the non-place indicates that there are no guarantees for any of these pursuits, identities and events, and that they can all go horribly wrong. This logic of non-place, is exactly the ab-sense of sexual relation that Lacan demonstrates in his diagram of sexualisation. There is no correspondence, nor complementariness between the two poles: there are only movements whose motor is the non-existence of the relation between men and women. There is a "non-relationship between the two sexes" (le Gaufeys 64). The masculine and the feminine do relate, but not relate in terms of complementarity or reciprocity. This is why I disagree with Shu Guozhi's view on the relationship between Yang Guo and Maiden. Shu argues that Jin Yong's fiction obeys the worldview of binaries. Yin is a parallel to yang, the good contrasts with evil, and man and woman are paired up. Therefore, Yang Guo and Maiden do not only match in their upbringing (both are orphans), their good looks, their superb martial arts skills, they also match by their lacks. Maiden lost her virginity to a man who is not Yang Guo, and that regret or imperfection is made up or balanced later by Yang Guo's loss of an arm; chopped off unintentionally by Guo Fu 郭芙. So they match in how "the insufficiency of Heaven" (天殘 *tiancan*) is answered by "the lack of Earth" (地缺 *dique*) (79-80). Maiden's loss of virginity is an unfortunate incident, the result of

“the insufficiency of Heaven,” when yin and yang go astray. But that imbalance will eventually be put right, complemented by “the lack of Earth.” We will soon see that while metaphorically Yang Guo’s lack seems to Maiden’s loss, there is some excessive remainder to their perfect match—and that match works because of, not despite that remainder.

Of course one can always argue that yin errs and yang goes astray in other genres too. There is one thing in Jin Yong’s martial arts philosophy that defies an ideal yin-yang harmony: formlessness defeats all forms (*wuzhao sheng youzhao* 無招勝有招). The other work, *Proud and Laughing Gallant*, may be where Jin Yong really lets this philosophy shine. In *Companion*, he already makes a neat demonstration of the invincible formlessness that will prove to be beyond yin and yang. He does so via a character named Dugu Qiubai, the Fiend of the Sword, who has been dead for years before Yang Guo has the chance to “learn from him” and respect him as his yet another *shifu*. Duguo is a dead master, but he has a surviving lackey/companion/disciple, the Mighty Eagle, who witnessed the prowess of Dugu and also memorised his particular tricks of martial arts training. For Wei Lingdun, Dugu is the final influence on Yang Guo that rids him of the influence of feminine kung fu passed on from Maiden. Without Dugu’s yang combat skills, Yang Guo would not have become a *xia*:

Even though the novel does not indicate clearly the gender of the Fiend of the Sword, the masculine image of the Fiend is nevertheless rather apparent. Practising moves with the Mighty Eagle, Yang Guo obtains hard-wrung and stoic martial arts, in stark contrast to those of the Ancient Tomb School. (31)

Jin Yong in places writes that the Ancient Tomb kung fu features mobility, flexibility and swiftness, but lacks stability and forcefulness. Wei Lingdun concludes that is the novelist uses an intentional plot line where Yang Guo develops his masculinity. Overseen by the Mighty Eagle, he starts by handling a metal sword, in a way which “focuses on human strength and weight of the weapon” which has little in common with the Ancient Tomb School’s swift and mobile moves. Such a change is indicative of Yang Guo’s “establishing his identity of maleness” (Wei Lingdun 31). This renewed “male identity” of Yang Guo is confirmed by his new title or by-name: “Xia of the Mighty Eagle.” During the long wait till the sixteen years’ mark is up, Yang Guo roams about with his eagle friend and does all the typical things that a knight-gallant would do. He rights wrongs, helps the needy and appeases conflict wherever he find it.

What Wei Lingdun overlooks is that while Yang Guo starts with a heavy-duty metal sword under the Mighty Eagle’s guidance, he later progresses onto other weapons the prowess of which is not determined by muscular strength. There are four progressive stages in the mastery of Dugu the

Fiend of the Sword. He starts with a conventional sharp edged steel sword the advantage of which is apparent. Later he switches to a “soft sword” made of pliant metal, which is an unusual choice for a male master but perhaps fitting for a “Fiend,” as Dugu is titled. The hefty sword made of rare metal that Yang Guo picks up was the last weapon Dugu adopted before he turned 40. The note that comes with the sword says: “A weighty sword needs no sharp edges; superior moves do not rely on dexterity.” The fourth stage of Dugu’s skills is represented by a wooden sword. “After age of forty, the material itself has no impact on the skills. Stone, bamboo, wood, or grass can all be used as a sword. Following this principle and training with rigour, I gradually proceeded into the realm where having no sword defeats all swords” (*Companion* ch. 26).

This “swordlessness” theory is very dear to Jin Yong, and is related to his philosophy of “formlessness defeats all forms”; which assumes that formlessness is the highest principle a kung fu master can adopt. Normally all swordsmen do is learn the sets and moves of their own school as many and as well as they can. Then they will hit the libraries of other martial arts schools, to learn as much as they can and hope they learn what counter moves to appropriate when they need to fight. Theoretically most moves have had corresponding counter moves thought of. But once you assume formlessness, meaning none of your moves resemble any of the established schools or sets, then your action cannot be predicted, and you provide no clue for your opponent to counter or break you. Since you cannot be beaten, then you should remain invincible. Therefore, the best form of kung fu moves is without a form; to push it further, the absence of a set form guarantees multitudes of forms, theoretically endless possibilities of moves.⁷² This kind of “form without form” martial arts philosophy is beyond yin-yang and devoid of gender, so both swordsmen and swordswomen can perfect a formless kungfu; and since it is formless, all the yin and yang attributes like mobility, forcefulness or swiftness become irrelevant. The same goes to the “sword without sword” master, Dugu, who ultimately is the last mentor to Yang Guo, and because of that it is not exactly correct to say Yang Guo’s yang and muscular prowess takes over other more yin-included combat skills. Rather, the key to Yang Guo’s maturity of kung fu is his realisation of what is beyond yin and yang, the non-existence of yin-yang division. On this level, Jin Yong’s philosophy or aesthetics operates beyond the metaphors and meanings typical of the age-old yin-yang theoretical system.

Jin Yong’s “absence of form as the best form” may serve as a metaphorical exemplar for Lacanian sexualisation. This is particularly so in *Companion*, where things *do* start from the non-relationship between Wang Chongyang and Lin Chaoying, the proto-couple that we looked at previously. After putting the worst day of the Complete-Real Monastery behind him, the head-

⁷² The best illustration of assuming formlessness is Linghu Chong 令狐冲 in Jin Yong’s *Proud and Laughing Gallant* (*Xiao’ao Jianghu* 笑傲江湖).

master related to Guo Jing the details of how the Monastery was founded by Wang—consequent to the failure of Wang and Lin’s love. After Wang had lost the battle to the Jin Kingdom (the Jurchens), he called himself “the living dead” and hid himself in an ancient tomb—the same tomb that Lin and her disciples of the Ancient Tomb lived in later—just so that he would not share the same sky with the national enemies. He only came out of seclusion eight years later, after he could no longer put up with the insults and humiliating words that Lin laid on him to invite him to a fight. For a while Wang and Lin travelled together and fulfil *xia*-duties in Rivers and Lakes. But even though Wang knew well Lin’s admiration towards him, he did not want to marry her. “How can one build a family when the national enemy still exists [to plague your country]?” was the way he expressed his reason. In order to push Wang into clear action towards their relationship, Lin cunningly initiated a contest with Wang which she knew she would not lose. The contest came with a wager: if she won, Wang would be given two choices. First, she would claim the Tomb as her home and Wang would be at her beck and call (Lin was too proud to bring up the marriage proposal of her own accord, but the implication of the bet was that Wang would be as obedient as a dutiful spouse towards her, who would be co-inhabiting the tomb with him). The other choice is that Wang would enter into religion by becoming a monk or a cleric (so as not to be able to form a relationship with anyone else). Wang lost the bet, and for some reason simply could not bring himself to pick the first choice. So he moved out of the tomb, became a cleric, and built himself a hut on Zhongnan Mountain.

The head-master concludes the story of Wang and Lin as follows: Wang at first was rather upset and reluctant to go into religion. But after perusing enough Taoist classics Wang realised that all was predestined. He then devoted all his life to promoting the Taoist teaching and establishing the Complete-Real Monastery. “To go back to real beginning of everything, were it not for the female master [Lin] and her cunning plan, there would not have been the School of Complete-Real, I would not become who I am, and who knows where you Guo Jing would have ended up to!” (ch. 4). And were it not for Guo Jing, Yang Guo would not have been brought to the Complete-Real Monastery to be later expelled from it, so as to then start his journey with the School of the Ancient Tomb and Maiden. The core of the matter, of where it all began, is the ab-sense of the sexual relation, the non-place where yin and yang do not meet.

The masculine, and the father of Yang Guo

The martial arts genre is male-centric and it is also an epitome of the masculine logic. All heroes, male or female, are superheroes. “[M]ain characters are exceptional people: they nearly always

have superhuman power. They don't live by the ordinary rules; they are adventurers who do not fit well in their society . . ." (Jacques Pimpaneau 359). *Wuxia* promotes the fantasy of the superman or super heroes, who by definition are the exception to the universal law—that is the first matheme proved by the ex-sistence of the second matheme. On the other hand, however, *wuxia* is also feminine through and through—the feminine logic is the other side of the same logic in terms of sexuation—produced firstly in serialisation, and completed by its incompleteness and openness. There are altogether three editions of Jin Yong's works. The "old edition" is the compilation of the newspaper instalments, the "new edition" refers to the *The Collected Works* series (1975-1981), and the "newly revised edition" is Jin Yong's re-writing of some of the novels, including *Companion*, starting in 1999. The same double-ness of the masculine and feminine logics are also found in the Western genre including with the Marvel superheroes—the stories focusing on the constitutive exception at the cost of spilling out into an endlessness. But what makes *Companion* so interesting and ex-sists in terms of the fantasy genre is that its male protagonist Yang Guo presents such a doubleness all by himself. His life course follows almost the same route as the phallic function in Fierens' reading of Lacan's sexuation that we discussed earlier on. It starts with the first matheme, then moves to the second matheme, crosses the division to the feminine side, and lastly returns to the first matheme where all is subject to the phallic function.

As the hero in *Companion*, Yang Guo is by definition the exception, and does not "live by the ordinary rules" (Pimpaneau 359). But before Yang Guo is a martial arts hero, as one who does not worry about earning his bread and whose life is full of coincidences, he is just a sly kid of 13-14 years of age. He lives on the fringe of the town and survives by being a beggar and hunting frogs for food, all by himself. His father died before he was born, and his mother passed away a couple of years prior. Being an orphan does not make Yang Guo exempt from the function of the father. It is not hard to presume that Yang Guo holds dear to an imaginary father, a heroic man and kung fu master, which would have been the best father if he had still been alive. What Yang Guo does not know—but all readers know well—is that Yang Guo's father Yang Kang was the exactly opposite of the picture Yang Guo paints in his mind. Yang Kang went against the chivalric code in almost every way. He defected to the Jin Kingdom which at the time was invading the North Song Empire of China, he betrayed his own Han-Chinese people for his own interest, then went behind the back of his martial arts *shifu* to learn kung fu from others, he seduced Yang Guo's mother Mu Nianci, and had several Han adepts killed, including Guo Jing's *shifus*. In contrast to the image of a "real" father, there is Guo Jing, a figure first as an uncle, then ultimately as the symbolic father.

Guo Jing and Yang Kang are sworn brothers, or "arranged brothers" (as in arranged marriage), ordained by their respective fathers. These fathers were best friends and wished their future children to continue the family tie, either by being sworn brother or sisters, or predestined

husband-and-wife, depending on their sexes. With Yang Kang being deceased and Yang Guo having no other known existing relatives, Guo Jing takes up the job of looking after Yang Guo. He brings him into his own household where Guo Jing cares for his family plus his only remaining *shifu* Ke Zhen'e, as well as two male disciples. Guo Jing would have become a fitting foster-father if things have gone well. But of course things rarely do, and the reason for it this time has a lot to do with *le nom du père* in both senses: the name of the father, and father's saying no.

Yang Guo's name was chosen by Guo Jing when the mother Mu Nianci was pregnant. He named the unborn child "Guo 遇," along with a school name "Gaizhi 改之." "Guo" means mistakes, and "Gaizhi" means to correct the mistakes. What mistakes or whose mistakes? Those of Yang Kang's. As the story of the hero Qiao Feng in Chapter 3 made clear, in Chinese patriarchy, sons inherit everything of and for their fathers. This includes any past wrongful behaviours. It is this name-carrying that ensures that Yang Guo will not be easily inscribed into the phallic world. When Yang Guo is taken under Guo Jing's wings, no one in the Guo family, apart from Guo Jing, has faith in Yang Guo. The elders like Guo Jing's wife Huang Rong and Ke Zhen'e cannot look at him without thinking of his father's unresolved evil deeds; the playmates of Yang Guo, being kids of decent family background, cannot put aside the memory of Yang Guo being this parentless beggar kid when they first met. All in all, Yang Guo does not get along so well with Guo Jing's family group, and that is why Guo Jing brings Yang Guo to Chongyang Palace. His hopes are high that Yang Guo will receive the best education from his Complete-Real cleric *shifu*. And there at Zhongnan Mountain, because yin and yang fail to follow their right course, Yang Guo digressed off the path that Guo Jing has carefully paved for him to become a hero. Wei Lingdun in his article "Yang Guo and His Problems" is correct to point out that Yang Guo's problem is the problem of the father. First, his father's unheroic deeds, especially his defection to the Jin Kingdom, are like an open wound; second, his relation with his *shifu* Maiden, makes him the enemy of the martial arts society. For Wei Lingdun the novel is a *Bildungsroman* that will witness the protagonist's maturation in both moral and combative lessons by rectifying the following three mistakes (*guo*): first those of his father's, secondly his "betrayal of the Complete-Real Monastery" and "turning to the Ancient Tomb School" (which specialises in yin kung fu and cannot be right), and lastly, and worst of all, his "marrying his *shifu*." Wei Lingdun's view is that all these erroneous steps Yang Guo takes are "offending 'the name of the father'" (271). The use of "the name of the father" here in Wei Lingdun's article does have a Lacanian reference. However, as Lacan makes clear, the father's function goes beyond a set of rules that you either adhere to or offend against. What "offends" the symbolic function is firstly the primal father in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*—such a father figure is embodied in the second matheme, the constitutive exception, in relation to the first matheme, in which castration is the norm. It is "through the phallic function that man as whole

acquires his inscription, with the proviso that this function is limited due to the existence of an x by which the function Φx is negated” (*Seminar XX* 79):

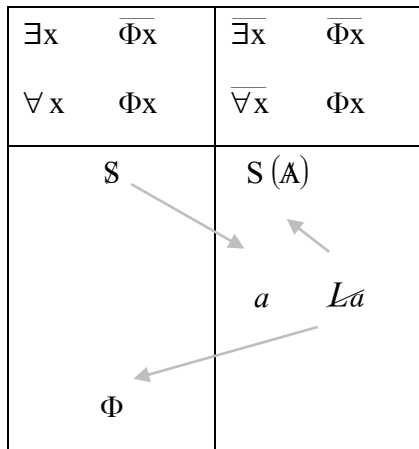


Fig. 4.1.c. Sexuation diagram: the second matheme

The example of negation Lacan gives in *Seminar XX* is the function of the father, since it “grounds the operativity of what makes up for the sexual relationship with castration, insofar as that relationship is in no way inscribable” (79).

The primal father in the horde says no to the sons that desire their mother or sisters; the father monopolises the access to women. He is the law maker, but he himself is above the law, which here the taboo against incest (Freud, *Totem and Taboo*). Of course the pseudo-anthropological primal horde story is a fable, or even Freud’s fantasy. However as we discussed in the introduction, for Lacan myths or tragedies should be treated as “an attempt to disclose this structure, this ‘real’” (Zupančič, *Ethics* 171). What Lacan reads from the primal father is that it is this father’s “no” that bars *jouissance*, so to enable love and launch desire (we will look at the paradox of desire and *jouissance* later). And it is in this sense that when Yang Guo swears his love to Maiden, he steps into the second matheme of the sexuation diagram, for enjoying the access to the incestuous *jouissance* that is forbidden to all others.

Yang Guo is never in lack of a father figure; in fact, he has a metonymic string of people he calls “father” who in one way or another perform the “No!” to him. After Guo Jing, there is Ouyang Feng (who used to be the villain in the previous book of the *Eagle-Shooting* trilogy and now instructs Yang Guo the first proper martial arts move), the Complete-Real cleric Zhao (who treats Yang Guo rather badly), Maiden, as well as the long deceased last master, Duguo Qiubai. These fathers come and go, for the seat of the father’s function is just an empty spot, anyone can take up the task, be inscribed in it, and then step out. Maiden in this list of fathers stands out. She is

not only the martial arts father figure to Yang Guo but also plays a mother role in his up-bringing. After Maiden inducts Yang Guo into the Ancient Tomb lineage, Yang Guo promises to stay loyal to the school tradition on one condition: he will acknowledge Maiden as his *shifu*, but he will address her as “*gugu*” and not “*shifu*.” *Gugu*, roughly meaning “auntie” in English, can refer to the sisters of the father, as well as senior female relatives in general. As there are no other residents in the Tomb, Maiden has to act like a parent and be the provider of Yang Guo as he grows into a teenager. This situation is unlike in other martial arts families or communities where either servants or dollars would fulfil the need.⁷³ Yang Guo, not unlike the father of the primal horde, has the *jouissance* over a maternal figure that is forbidden to all on account of symbolic castration. He himself is both subject to the law, and at the same time the exception that is above the law.

One thing has to be made clear before we go on. Although Yang Guo is considered to be in an incestuous relation with his *shifu*, he and Maiden are novices at love and have no experience of sex. Even as innocent lovers they are yet to first confirm their mutual adoration. The Tomb is like a paradise, hidden in the underground and away from the mundane world. Being a paradise, it will inevitably be lost. To make a long story short, when Maiden awakes to her desire towards Yang Guo and as a consequence requests affirmation from him, Yang Guo is taken by surprise and profoundly baffled by it. For Yang Guo, all he has for his *shifu* is respect. He is indebted to Maiden’s kindness and generosity of making an exception to accept him in to the all-female School, and to her teaching him everything she knows about martial arts. He does love her to the degree of sacrificing his life for her, but that in his mind is just the right thing to do, not desire. Bitterly disappointed by not receiving Yang Guo’s pledge of love in return, Maiden leaves the Tomb. Maiden’s absence finally brings home to Yang Guo his desire. He now realises that Maiden has been the love of his life all along.⁷⁴ Maiden’s absence on the other hand, kicks off a further

⁷³ Wei Lingdun makes an interesting observation in his close reading of the passage where Yang Guo re-unites with Maiden at the unexpected valley after he jumps off the cliff. He points out that when Yang Guo enters the make-do cabin that had sheltered Maiden for the past sixteen years, he first sees the clothes made in tree bark that resemble those that Maiden made for him during the early years of their co-habitation in the Tomb. “What Maiden has missed and reminisced is rather the Yang Guo of the young age,” and “not the Yong Guo who is old enough to be knowing of the romantic matter.” Wei Lingdun thus deems the couple in a relation that is more “mother-and-son” than “master-and-disciple” (280, n20).

⁷⁴ The same episode in longer version: Yang Guo and Maiden are initiated into sexual or amorous desire gradually over a few incidents. First they have to practice the Pure Maiden kung fu together, palms to palms, to assist each other in terms of chi. And as the circulation of chi cannot be

trajectory of desire. Maiden, as a lost lover, a love lost to Yang Guo, comes to embody the object-cause of desire, which as a consequence launches the narrative into six chapters of Yang Guo's pursuit of Maiden. The pursuit of the lost cause of his desire in turn puts Yang Guo on the track of chancing to meet with a metonymic series of women who win Yang Guo's favours by bearing some resemblance to Maiden. The resemblance may be simply the whiteness of the apparel (Maiden dresses only in white), a certain a look in the eye, or the way the weapon is handled. We have now arrived in the realm of desire along with Yang Guo, at the moment when Yang Guo locates his object-cause of desire, the *objet a*, in the feminine pole.

blocked in any way, they need to strip naked when they practice. Although they are novices, they somehow find nudeness between a man and a woman not appropriate, it is just that they cannot explain why that is. Eventually Yang Guo finds a perfect location outside where they can practice naked without seeing each other; there is a row of bush trees just thick enough to allow them to sit on both sides of the wall with their arms stretched out, hands held, but without seeing each other's unadorned bodies. A second incident is when their two-people world meets intruders, in the form of two Complete-Real clerics. One happens to have had a crush on Maiden years ago, while the other is the most ambitious and conniving one in the Monastery. Seeing Maiden and Yang Guo naked together, they immediately presume that the two can only be committing indecency, and they accuse them. Maiden is so enraged at the accusation that the chi in her goes astray and causes her serious injury. In order to allow her to recuperate from the injury, Yang Guo cuts open his wrist to feed her his blood. This is the only scene in the book where the lovers have an intimate contact that can be seen as a simile of sexual behaviour, for after drinking the blood, Maiden comes back from her faint, with reddened cheekbones.

A third incident involves Li Mochou's unannounced visit of the Tomb, attempting to menace Maiden into giving away the secret scripture left by their *shifu*. Seeing Yang Guo's devotion to Maiden, Mochou, almost a family member of Maiden, announces to them that they will make a great couple if they care for each other this much. The last fatally tragic incident is where Maiden is raped by the cleric Yin Zhiping 尹志平. Yang Guo and Maiden are back to the hedge/wall to practice daily. One day Yang Guo has to leave to hunt for food while Maiden is left to recuperate from the exertion of practice, blind-folded so that they won't see each other's bare skin. As it happens, one of the two Complete-Real clerics, Yin, stumbles into the spot where Maiden is left alone, and takes advantage of her. Maiden not being able to see, mistakes him for Yang Guo. By the time Yang Guo comes back, the cleric has left and Maiden's "crimson dot of virtue" (*shougongsha* 守宫砂) has disappeared. Yang Guo has no inkling as to what has happened, and is taken aback when Maiden requests for him to embrace her and pledge his love to her.

Crossing over to the feminine, when there is no exception

The route of “ $S \rightarrow a$ ” links the split subject to the *objet a*, the cause of desire, and along with it there is a passage from the second formula of sexualisation to the third; a passage that is facilitated by a negation as well. While the second formula attests to an exception that there are some that are not subject to the phallic function, the third formula denies that exception. In $\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$, there are no elements that are not subject to Φ :

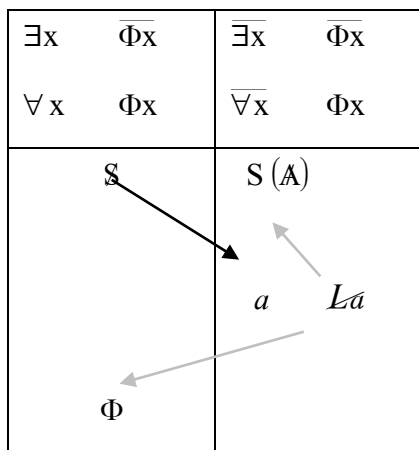


Fig. 4.1.d. Sexualisation diagram: the second and the third mathemes and “ $S \rightarrow a$ ”

The exception cannot be after all. After Yang Guo and Maiden reunite and vow to each other their love, they will be made to part again because of their incestuous relation to each other. In this section, I will discuss the relation between the second and the third mathemes, and address the law of desire and *jouissance*. Will Yang Guo continue to move along to the fourth formula of “not-all”? We will soon find out.

Yang Guo and Maiden’s reunion occurs at an assembly organised by the Beggars’ Guild. We have learnt in our previous chapter on Qiao Feng that the Beggars’ Guild in martial arts fiction is often celebrated for its righteous code of conduct and this is what we find in *Companion* too. The

Guild invites all good fellows and swordsmen to a feast and to confer on anti-Mongolian strategies and deployments. Maiden hopes to find Yang Guo here, and Yang Guo needs to relate the news of the former leader of Beggars' Guild to the current leader Huang Rong (Guo Jing's wife), and the guild members. But the nature of this crowd gathering is also what makes their reunion fail: when all everyone thinks of is duty towards the country, the last thing they can tolerate is behaviour that does not follow *xia* morality.

We have discussed how Yang Guo's desire for Maiden finally dawns on him during their separation. Just as important is Yang Guo's gradual comprehension of the concept of *zhongyi* 忠義, national loyalty and comradeship. Thus the seed of the double-bind of love or duty is planted. The initiation into *zhongyi* happens when Yang Guo witnesses the final battle between his foster-father Ouyang Feng, and the former leader of the Beggars' guild, Hong Qigong. The battle in a way is between the good and the bad, with Ouyang the number one villain, and Hong the champion and rightful master of their generation. Being there with the combatants for the whole battle and listening to their reminiscence, arguments, and finally their reconciliation, changes Yang Guo. He learns that although his foster-father has always been most dear to him, Hong's heroic conducts move him even more. Hong's words and behaviour make clear that there are matters more important than self-interest and personal affection. When Yang Guo meets Guo Jing again at the assembly, the moral education continues. Not only is Yang Guo finally made aware of the truth of his father Yang Kang's past deeds and scandals, but he also rebuilds the bond with Guo Jing and Huang Rong. There is every promise that he will be put on the right track and develop into a hero just like Guo Jing.

But as soon as Yang Guo admits to the crowd that Maiden is not only his respectful *shifu*, but also the beloved woman he intends to marry, everything breaks apart and falls through. Seeing that Yang Guo will not relent from his "wrongful" behaviour of being together with his *shifu*, Guo Jing is hurt and enraged: "I treat you like my own son, therefore I will never allow it if you do not relent and undo the wrong you did." Yang Guo retorts with dignity: "I was not wrong! I did not commit any wrong! I did not get anyone hurt!" (*Companion* ch. 14) The audience in the assembly hall, after hearing Yang Guo's exclamations, then think to themselves:

What [Yang Guo] said stood for some reason. If he and his *shifu* did not say a word, and wed to be husband and wife in a valley away from the world or in a place that has few visitors, keeping their marriage from the world to know, then that will be harmless. However, behaving waywardly like this in front of everyone is offending morality and humanity will only make them scum of the martial arts community. (ch. 14)

The thoughts of the crowd expressed here carry a function similar to the chorus in Greek tragedy. Good fellows from different schools and guilds here think and act in unison, as if being the medium of what the big Other might say if it spoke.⁷⁵ The crowd's and Guo Jing's reactions together put a stop to Yang Guo's status of being the exception of having access to incestuous enjoyment, pushing Yang Guo away from the second matheme (where there is exception), and towards the third matheme (where no element is exempt from the law).

However, it is no easy matter to complete the passage from a masculine function to a feminine one. Lacan in *Seminar XX* discusses the “indetermination suspected between $\exists x$ and $\overline{\exists x}$,” between the second ($\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$) and the third mathemes ($\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$) (102-103). This indetermination can be read in two senses, first in grammar and equivocation, and second in set theory and the infamous “not-all.” In *L'Étourdit* Lacan quibbles about the non-relation of the second and third mathemes in terms of tenses and ends up by coining “*nyania*,” a word made up by connecting two identically sounding but out-of-phase syllables, which remind us of the identical doors to Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a repetition with a difference, and can only be understood by reading back from the third matheme to the second theme. The syllable “*nya*” is the condensation of *il n'y a pas de*, of “there is no trace of,” and of that “which that had denied (*nia*)” (*L'Étourdit* 22; trans. 70): there isn't a trace of such exception of denying the first matheme” (Fierens, “Second Turn” 20).⁷⁶ There used to be an exception that contradicted the phallic function. That exception, albeit “necessary” in the modality that goes with the second matheme, is now—when seen from the present “there is no”—deemed or denied as “impossible” in the modality of the third matheme. It is seen as something that had only existed in the past (as expressed in the past perfect tense in French) and is one phase apart from what is in the present. The second matheme cannot be fully comprehended without the third matheme, and the latter by the same token cannot stand alone and function on its own. The phallic function—as ultimately the formal law of a system of differences without a positive term, is always incomplete or inconsistent, and thus cannot help but veer between irreducible options. The sexuation diagram has therefore always to do with a “passage from one formula to another”

⁷⁵ Jin Yong is fond of writing crowd reactions at any assembly (of heroes and villains alike). Almost every time the crowd of “fellow heroes” (*chunxiong* 群雄) serves as commentators occupying the seat of the symbolic.

⁷⁶ Gallagher's attempt of translation for *nyania* is “thereisnotonewasdenied” in which the *nia* is expressed as simple past tense in English. Fierens, on the other hand, points out that *nia* is said in the past perfect tense (First Turn/71).

(Fierens, “First Turn” 117), a forward-and-backward, zigzag journeying between the masculine and the feminine mathemes (117-118).

It is only after we have crossed over to the right hand side of the diagram that we can see that the exception to the law is but to deceive. Through the second matheme’s necessary “No!” the ab-sense of the relationship “*would seem to be* plugged at the suspension point of the function”; the negation of the second matheme is far from being the subversion or transgression of the law. It is but a pretence which works to “deaden the shocks of the absence of the sexual relationship” (Lacan. *L’étourdit* 16b; Fierens, “First Turn” 99). The deception is necessary, because it makes us look away from the fact that the sexual relationship does not exist. The deception tricks us into believing that the forbidden non-castrated *jouissance* had once existed and we can therefore continue to long for it. This clearly occurs with Yang Guo’s problem of the father figure. His love relation with Maiden in the Tomb was not comprehended as the paradise until it is already a paradise lost, a case collapsed.⁷⁷ The past that is understood in the present is the “past of the past,” or the past perfect tense, always already lost. There is no remaining trace of an incestuous Thing or the *jouissance*, that had defied or denied castration.

Now we can pick up where we left off with Lacan’s explanation of the second masculine matheme; that “there is no chance for a man to have *jouissance* of a woman’s body, otherwise stated, for him to make love, without castration . . . in other words, without something that says no to the phallic function.” It is this “no” that enables the pursuit of love and launches desire as a lack that start longing. Castration, or the impossibility of gaining *jouissance*, “doesn’t stop him from desiring woman in every way . . . He not only desires her, but does all kinds of thing to her that bear an astonishing resemblance to love” (*Seminar XX* 71-72). Without castration, there will be no desire, for “[c]astration means that *jouissance* must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire” (Lacan, *Ecrits* 700). The paradox of castration is this: without it one will have no chance at all to have *jouissance*, while with it, one still has no chance; but aspiration for it as if it were accessible becomes possible. This is because one has been deceived into thinking: “Were it not for X, I would have had it /it would have happened.” Were it not for castration enforced by the father’s name/no (*nom du père/non du père*), I would have been able to enjoy, to be the real me, to have a happy life, and so on. Were it not for the meddling of Guo Jing and the force of public opinion, Yang Guo and Maiden would have not become separated right after their reunion and would have been happy ever after.

⁷⁷ “Case” and “collapse” is Lacan’s wordplay on Latin *casus*, meaning to collapse, which goes along with the false (*falsus*) (Fierens First Turn/97/98).

In terms of the structure of the narration, the deplorable X in this “were it not for X, it would have...” formula are also all the “external forces” such as bad timing, ill-luck, coincidences that could have been avoidable and hence should not have prevented the lovers from being together. Were it not for these “exceptions” of nature, when yin and yang go astray, there would have been the culmination of a perfect harmonious love. The example Žižek gives is James Cameron’s *Titanic*: “the catastrophe . . . is reinterpreted as an answer of the Real to the deadlock of the creation of the couple,” so the “the iceberg catastrophe helps us to sustain the illusion” or the fantasy “that if the iceberg had not hit the ship, the couple would have lived happily ever after,” which “obfuscates the fact that this relationship was doomed to fail for a priori structural reasons (‘there is no sexual relationship’)” (“The Thing from Inner Space” 223). The icebergs or external obstacles are to deceive us from seeing the internal thwarting by the ab-sense of sexual difference. A couple is never wired to be in a successful romance; it never has been and never will be. But the masculine trick in turn generates the feminine logic. It is exactly due to the ab-sense that more romances are possible, and in this sense, the internal thwarting is the motor of the story, is what guarantees endless potential.⁷⁸

None of the desiring, or desiring to desire, would exist until the subject moves from the first and second mathemes—the two together make up for the Oedipal complex that is hinged upon castration (Lacan, *L’Étourdit* 14e-17b; Fierens, “First Turn” 90)—into the feminine realm. Here the third matheme denies the existence of any ex-sistence of (or exception to) the phallic function. And then what happens? Does the realisation that there is no exception necessarily mean one can live up to that experience? In the case of Yang Guo, with his desire that is first launched during Maiden’s absence and then reinforced by the incest taboo that is upheld by Guo Jing and others, we can say that he as a (masculine) subject has crossed over to the feminine side. What will it take for him to continue the movement and make the passage towards the fourth matheme? He will first have to get rid of that “bad luck” that Lacan mentions in *L’Étourdit*.

Women “one by one”: back to the series of exception

⁷⁸ It is for this reason that Lacan often talks about courtly love: “It is a highly refined way of making up for the absence of the sexual relationship, by feigning that we are the ones who erect an obstacle [instance and counter-instance, often in arguments (n 13)] thereto” (*Seminar XX* 69).

Even though it seems plausible for the subject to keep up with the roundabout of all four mathemes, the journey may pause, may stagnate, or go on a different direction. The movement of the sexuation diagram between different mathemes is therefore rather similar to that of the four discourses: each discourse may tilt to the right, or to the left, or even flop over (like the relation between the master's and the analyst's discourses). Yang Guo has made it to the feminine side; from there, he has two possible routes to follow. He can either see-saw back to the second matheme, or go all the way with the feminine side and take up the fourth matheme. The second route involves enacting a certain not-all that not only expands the third matheme into the realm of the infinite, but also relates back to the view of a totality or universality expressed in the first matheme (all x subject to Φ). Or Yang Guo may very likely adopt both routes in different given times. In this section and the next one I will look at the first route plan where it involves the constitution of exceptions and the ethics of desire.

The “*mâledonne*” or misdeal is inherent to phallic function (Lacan, *L'étourdit* 18c). When the subject does not continue to move about, the masculine logic becomes no more than “*préjudice*” meaning damage or harm (*L'étourdit* 17c-18c). The prejudice is one-sided and male-sided. Being fixed to the male side can do harm because it means sticking to a said truth as if it is the full truth, and as a result leaves the “di-mension” (Lacan's word play: dimension of the said, of *dit*) of the saying behind, forfeiting the journeying movement of the phallic function. The case of fixity occurs as well in the context of the four discourses. When one is caught up in a discourse, one is nailed to the discourse's promises of “happiness” (Lacan, *Ecrits* 591; Fierens, “First Turn” 104). Happiness (*bonheur*) for Lacan is always *mâleheur* (male/bad luck) (*L'étourdit* 16e). The subject's luck, “by remaining at these two masculine formulae,” is “going to be turned into bad luck (Fierens, “First Turn” 102). Yang Guo may have ventured into the feminine side, but judged by the metonymic series of women and the forced choice imposed on him of *Your love or your country!*, we can presume that his journeying may be stuck in the Oedipal structure of a universal and its exception.

The bad luck first has to do with the infinity of desire. The infinity refers to Zeno's paradox where Achilles pursues but never reaches the tortoise in a foot race. Lacan uses the scene to describe the relation between the split subject and the *objet a* in the sexuation diagram (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 7-8). Zupančič terms this relation “bad infinity” in both “The Case of the Perforated Sheet” and *Ethics of the Real*. The perforated sheet refers to the story in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* where a woman's body is revealed to the male protagonist “part by part” through a hole in a sheet (Zupančič, “Case” 283). While it may seem to be a series of fragmented body parts, these parts, no matter how many of them have been revealed or are yet to be revealed, constitute a complete set, like an “all” that Lacan's first two sexuation formulae define. “The exception is not something which has to be added to the set of ‘all,’ but rather something which has

to be subtracted from an indefinite set in order for this set to become a set” (“Case” 283-284). The masculine side of the logic is the logic of desire. All body parts are subject to the same function, that of desirability, because of the exception that is not in the series: the hole in the sheet. The exception frames the limit of the set, and makes the set a totality regardless of the heterogeneity among the set elements. It is the same in Yang Guo’s case, which has a “part by part” series corresponding to the “one by one” sequence that is often used to describe the conquests of the seducer, such as Don Juan and Valmont in *Les Liaisons* (although Zupančič would argue that Don Juan’s serial affairs demonstrate a logic of the drive, not desire, which we shall come back to later).

In Yang Guo’s dynamics of desire, the exception is Maiden, as her absence ensures his admiration of all the other women even while Maiden herself is excluded from the set. Maiden is the cause of his desire, and her absence is in effect the incarnation of the lacking of the desire, the hole in his desire, corresponding to “ $\$ \rightarrow a$,” the matheme of fantasy in the lower quarters of Lacan’s sexuation diagram. Yang Guo only “sees” the women when they are seen in the frame of his love for Maiden. For example, simply because Lu Wushuang has a certain look that resembles Maiden’s facial expression, Yang Guo voluntarily picks up the role of being Lu’s protector at all costs, even though Lu’s erratic temperament is the opposite of Maiden’s. As similar scenarios take place again and again, it seems that almost anything about any particular woman—a colour, a look, a kindness—could remind Yang Guo of the blissful years he had with Maiden. However, the more he invests in the resemblance of these women to Maiden, the more he is fixed to his bad luck, since his infinite pursuit of the love objects only further distances him from the goal of his desire, which is to be with Maiden. Later, Maiden is so baffled by his affections towards other women that she buys into the story of Yang Guo’s marrying Guo Jing’s daughter. To see it from a different point of view, “the institution of the exception (which is the operation for the law) ‘*exceptionalizes*’ the set of all. All that appears through the hole in the sheet seems exceptional or... very special indeed” (Zupančič, “Case” 285).⁷⁹

Another example of the institution of exceptions is Yang Guo’s father problem. Throughout his life—fathers and *shifus* appear one after the other: Ouyang Feng, Guo Jing, the Complete-Real cleric Zhao, Maiden, and Dugu Qiubai. Maiden and Guo Jing are the only two “fathers” who stay around, but since Maiden cannot be both a wife and a parent at the same time, it takes Guo Jing’s stepping into the seat of the symbolic to put things right. Can we still call the series of fathers the metonymy of desire? Guo Jing puts an end to the string of various fathers: the paternal function is a

⁷⁹ Žižek talks about exceptions at length in *Interrogating*, and argues that the “one by one” scene is when “the series and exceptions coincide” (331).

metaphoric function, and this “one for another” manoeuvre replaces that of the metonymic “one by one.”⁸⁰

Ethics of (the Other’s) desire: duty or love?

But let us not forget that, ultimately, desire is the desire of the Other. “One must understand ethics as a pursuit of the desire of the Other” (Zupančič, *Ethics* 165). Think of Qiao Feng, our hero in in the previous chapter, and many other kung fu masters; think of how they must answer to the ethical demand. “The subject, of course, will never be capable of satisfying the demands of the Other” (Zupančič, *Ethics* 165). Attempts at doing so inevitably yield a series of failures, and results in guilt and self-accusations, after “not having found the right answer to the enigma of the Other’s desire.” And this is so exactly because the subject knows well that the Other does not exist (165).

The dialectic of desire makes one do “all kinds of things to her that bear an astonishing resemblance to love” (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 72), whereas the Other’s desire makes one sacrifice one’s love object for a grander or nobler cause. In the symbolic space of the martial arts world, the national cause always trumps the love object, and so do honour, filial piety, and friendship—the characters’ love objects never make it to the top of the list, because that is the law of the genre. In *Companion*, as soon as Guo Jing re-asserts the Name-of-the-Father, Maiden and Yang Guo’s love is brought to a standstill. Maiden, though not caring much for the public opinion of the crowd, eventually understands that Yang Guo will be seen as a disgrace to the community if they insist on being together. As for Yang Guo, he has always known the inappropriateness of marrying one’s senior:

Yang Guo is not as naïve as Maiden as to have no awareness of the rule [against incest], but he just does not want to give in. Why is it that Gugu [Maiden] cannot be his wife only because she has taught him kung fu? Why is it that even Uncle Guo would not believe that he and Gugu have done nothing shameful? (ch. 14)

Outraged and in indignation, Yang Guo yells out to the crowd: “So what that Gugu has taught me kung fu, I must make her my wife. Even if you stab me with a sword one thousand times, or ten

⁸⁰ For more discussion on the mathemes of metaphor and metonymy, especially Jane Gallop’s explication of them, please refer to Appendix.

thousand times, I would still insist on making her my wife” (ch. 14). Disregarding the moral norm and symbolic expectation, Yang Guo “does not give up on his desire” (maxim from Lacan’s *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*). Yang Guo’s choosing love over duty is one of the reasons he stands out from the other hero figures in Jin Yong’s works. He makes a clear decision to defy the Other’s desire by not sacrificing his desire for Maiden. Yang Guo would rather be dead—either physically dead, or as dead to those who care for him by being thrown out of the martial arts society—than living without Maiden. His desire for Maiden is the core of his existence: should she die, he could not live alone, for his love is his life. Zupančič calls this kind of choice-making an “ethics of the master,” the maxim of which is “better death than...” (*Ethics* 217-18).

However, when the dilemma switches to “your country or your life,” the ethical demand becomes ever stronger. What appears to be at stake is the well-being of others, or even millions of lives: *Companion* is set at the declining years of the North Song Dynasty, when the empire is in a losing battle with the Mongolians. Guo Jing is commissioned to be the second commander of the Song troops in Xiangyang, the most important border town in China. Everything is saying “love your country, not your lover,” but even so, Yang Guo still does not waver and chooses what values most to him, his love for Maiden. We have seen that Maiden has become aware of the fact that their relationship is severely frowned upon by the Rivers and Lakes society. So in order not to damage Yang Guo’s reputation and Guo Jing’s regard for him, she takes leave of Xiangyang. Yang Guo, despite his promise of helping Guo Jing defend the border town, drops everything and leaves the town too. When Yang Guo eventually finds her in the Jueqing Valley (*jueqing* 絕情 means “void of love”), they are faced with further obstacles. Yang Guo is incidentally poisoned, and the only way he can get the remedy required to save him is to trade it for the heads of his uncle and aunt, Guo Jing and Huang Rong, who are defending Xiangyang. This is because the hostess of the valley who has the remedy is intent on avenging her brother who is said to have been killed by Guo and Huang. Yang Guo promises that he will fulfil her wish with little hesitation, as he has learnt that Guo and Huang were involved in his father’s death. Yang Kang had cut his palm on the fatal potion smeared on the armour Huang Rong wore when Yang Kang intended to strike her. Regardless of that and of the fact that Yang Kang who was a traitor and a murderer would not have deserved any retributive act from his son, Yang Guo holds Guo and Huang responsible for his father’s death, and the two causes—revenging his father and preserving his own life—suffice to justify his decision of killing the second commander of Xiangyang and putting national security at risk.

Such an “immoral” decision from the hero of a book is unprecedented in Jin Yong’s works. Ordinarily nothing takes priority over loyalty and love for your country, and the only kind of moral struggle that chivalric gallants face is the choice of life against honour, or between different objects

of loyalty.⁸¹ For example, Lord Guan in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is considered the “supreme example of righteousness” (*yijue* 義絕) because he chooses to spare the life of the enemy Cao Cao to repay the favours that Cao Cao has done him, thereby and risking his own life. We have seen that Qiao Feng is torn because it is impossible to pick sides between two fatherlands that have equal claims over his loyalty. As to a choice between country or love, in martial arts fiction this is always a false choice. After painful deliberation as to how to act, the heroes will inevitably choose the love of county. The choice between honour and love is an exception game that is inherent to the masculine logic. “Man escapes the inconsistency of his desire by establishing a line of separation” between the sexual sphere which includes “sexual enjoyment” and “the relationship to a sexual partner” on the one hand, and the “domain of non-sexual and public activity” on the other (Žižek, *Interrogating* 72). In other words, the causes worthy of one’s devotion mean everything *except* love for your woman. The existence of “everything” relies on the exclusion of the singular thing, hence it is the same “exception proves the rule” scenario all over again. “Man subordinates his romantic relationship to the domain of ethical goals: when forced to choose woman or ethical duty, profession, his mission, whatever, man immediately opts for duty,” while knowing well that his happiness lies with the relationship with the woman “The man sacrifices his love for the woman for some superior cause”; sometimes furthermore, “sacrificing his love is the supreme proof of his love for her” (Žižek, *Interrogating* 72). The man says to the woman “I really did it for you,” the moment he sacrifices her. Žižek calls this the “dirty trick of the male economy” that is witnessed in “every good Hollywood melodrama” (72). Is not this also a trick to block the traumatic real that there is no sexual relation? It is better to end it now than end it badly later. Should the Hollywood hero choose his love for the woman and not the public cause, that is, should he insist on the metonymic route of desire, who is to say that his *bonheur* will not turn into *mâleheur* (male/bad luck) (Lacan, *L’Étourdit* 16e), and caught in the bad infinity of forever in anticipation of the “one by one” sequence?

Martial arts fiction allows for no exception to the melodramatic trick of the male economy. Yang Guo’s unconventional choice of love over duty is only momentary. Let us go back to the scene where Yang Guo promises to take Guo Jing’s and Huang Rong’s lives to trade for the antidote to the poison. He is confident that the mission will be done within the limited time, since Guo Jing treats him like a son, soldiers and civilians alike in Xiangyang respect him for that, a

⁸¹ Wei Xiaobao 韋小寶 in *The Deer and the Cauldron* (*Luding ji* 鹿鼎記) may seem to be an exception to the moral demand of the genre. Wei is meant to be a rascal in the fiction and does not care much for the conduct of a *xia*. And yet he does have one principle that he adheres: he cannot fail the trust of his friends. Loyalty to comradeship for him is more prominent than loyalty to the nation.

mighty kung fu practitioner like him is more than welcome in the time of war. But what Yang Guo fails to consider fully is that by getting close to Guo Jing, he will be under greater influence of the name/no of the father. “Ever since he was a child, he [Yang Guo] pictured his father to be chivalric, handsome and courageous; in one word, he was the greatest man in the world” (*Companion* ch. 21). After finding out the truth about his father—Yang Kang was everything but what he pictured him to be—Guo Jing becomes the person who could best embody the image of an ideal father. “In the heart of his heart, he has been forming a feeling that his father is far from being as great as Uncle Guo” (ch. 21). Thus, after a few failed attempts of putting Guo Jing into precarious situations, and having tricked him into going to the trap set by the Mongolian kung fu masters, Yang Guo ends up saving Guo Jing’s life.. Bringing Guo Jing safely back to the Song camp, is also to bring Yang Guo back to himself and the course of maturing into a true martial arts master: “To be a grand *xia* is to put one’s country and people first (*weiguo-weimi, xia zhi da zhe*)” (ch. 21, 22). This is not just a maxim uttered by Guo Jing; it is also Jin Yong’s ultimate definition of a hero.

Guo Jing is delighted that the son of his sworn brother has reformed himself and turned into a competent and gallant young man. Huang Rong, now reconciled with Yang Guo and having stopped holding him responsible for his father’s past deeds, helps Yang Guo obtain the antidote for the poison. Unfortunately, while everything seems to be falling into the right place, yin errs and yang goes astray again, and the story is not yet to be concluded. It is Maiden’s turn this time to be fatally poisoned, being shot by Guo Fu using Mochou’s venomous needle. This leads to the before-mentioned sixteen years separation. Thanks to a Hindu monk who happens to come to the valley, the poison is gradually removed. Before finding out for certain whether Maiden is still alive or already dead, Yang Guo will live on, but not move on. The first thing he does is to leave everyone and seek company from the Mighty Eagle with whom he has built a friendship. The Mighty Eagle used to serve Dugu Qiubai the Fiend of the Sword. With the help of the Eagle, Yang Guo is able to achieve a mastery of martial arts that completes all the previous kung fu he has picked up along the way, and now includes Ouyang Feng’s wicked move, Maiden’s yin teaching, Nine-Yin scripture, and the Complete-Real swordsmanship

When Yang Guo and Maiden finally see each other again after sixteen years, everything changes. All they want to do is retreat from the mundane world to a small secluded farm and live like an ordinary couple. However, due to a series of incidents, they end up in Xiangyang again, helping to rescue the younger daughter of Guo Jing from the villainous Holy Monk of Gold Wheels, who leads a band of martial arts adepts for the Mongolian camp. They defeat the Mongolian army and ensure a few months’ peace at the Song border. All ends well, and the loving couple will not be separated again in the novel. At the end, Yang Guo is well-respected and embraced by the communities such as the Complete-Real School and Guo Jing’s family, that had previously cast him

out. He ends up living up to his name, “rectification of the mistake,” having atoned for his father’s sins. Now that he has fulfilled the *xia* responsibility of “putting nation and people first,” his romance with Maiden is no longer a disgrace, but only a minor violation of norms. He gets to have both: he is able to live up to the standards of a kung fu hero without having to sacrifice his love for Maiden. The contradiction makes it clear that Yang Guo has retreated back to the masculine side, and his not having to choose between the national cause and his love object is a fantasy that serves the purpose of concealing the violence of the forced choice.

The deadman’s mask, the feminine masquerade, and the not-all

Previously we mentioned that Yang Guo crosses over from the second formula to the third formula; the third formula says no to the second formula on account that there is no element that is not subject to castration. After that crossing, he has two possible route plans: either he see-saws back to the second formula, or he continues on to the fourth formula, in which all that is subject to the castration does not constitute a totality, hence is a not-all. Yang Guo does indeed fall back to the second formula and thus the masculine side and its exception game; but then, has he also taken the second possible path and operated by the fourth formula, with its “not-all”? The key to this question is the mask Yang Guo wears during the sixteen-year wait before Maiden’s reappearance, while he roams as the Xia of the Mighty Eagle. In this period of time the story digresses from the central course, and is in itself a split that ensures all elements do not make up for the totality of the martial arts convention. But before we can fully understand his masking, we need to go on a detour by reading the theory of the feminine masquerade.

Lacan introduces the concept of not-all by first introducing set theory and the infinite: “as soon as you are dealing with an infinite set, you cannot posit that the not-whole implies the existence of something that is produced on the basis of a negation or contradiction” (*Seminar XX* 103). The feminine not-whole or not-all can only be talked about in an infinite set, and not the masculine kind of not-all where “some elements are not subject to the phallic function.” The masculine ex-sistence that negates or contradicts is different from “woman insofar as she is not found [she does not find herself]” (103). This woman who is not found, of course refers to the maxim “Woman does not exist,” represented in the lower quarters of Lacan’s sexuation diagram by $L\bar{a}$. For Žižek the best illustration of Lacan’s “Woman does not exist” is the feminine masquerade. The masquerade has often been associated with hysteria and femininity. In *Indivisible Remainder*, after deliberating on Lacan’s sexuation diagram, Žižek goes on to argue that “it is precisely in so far as woman is characterized by an original ‘masquerade’, in so far as all her features are artificially

‘put on’, that she is more subject than man,” for “what ultimately characterizes the subject is this very radical contingency and artificiality of her every positive feature, that is, the fact that ‘she’ in herself is a pure void that cannot be identified with any of these features” (160-61). This subject is the Lacanian subject $\$$, “the subject *qua* original void, deprived of any further positive qualifications . . .” (160).

That is the hysteric and feminine masquerade. As regards the masculine masquerade, the cut between what he is “in himself” and what he is “for the other” is of a different order. For the man, “the macho image is experienced not as a delusive masquerade but as the ideal ego one is striving to become.” The masculine masking is “to give the impression that he really is what he pretends to be” (161). We have seen a similar split regarding the gap between the ideal father figure and the actual father who is by no means the man he says he is and is often the opposite, a plain or even pathetic person. The act of masking allows the man to pretend to be what he is expected to be by the others, but at the same time he also firmly believes that “beyond his symbolic title, there is deep in himself some substantial content, some hidden treasure which makes him worthy of love” (163). But there is no such hidden treasure: “behind the macho image of a man there is no ‘secret’, just a weak ordinary person who can never live up to his ideal” (161).

Where does Yang Guo stand in terms of the split between the masquerade and his “inner secret”? His masking split at first seems to correspond to Žižek’s description of the male façade. When the mask is on, Yang Guo strives hard to live up to the expectation of doing the right thing; when the mask is off, he is a melancholic who suffers from his love for Maiden and needs no human company, with his only friend being the eagle). However, the fact that Yang Guo literally wears a mask complicates both sides of the duty/love separation, the cut between “for the other” and “for himself.” The mask is made of a layer of human skin that fits his face so well that it is almost impossible to tell it is a mask. Moreover, it is expressionless and unpleasant to look at. His masquerade thus serves two functions: to disguise himself, since Yang Guo does not want anyone to recognise him, and to minimise the chance of his stepping into the role of a seducer again, for the mask conceals his handsome appearance and makes him ugly. On the dutiful front “for the other,” Yang Guo is living up to the symbolic title, though he does not care if he is known for the hard-won title “Xia of the Mighty Eagle.” All the efforts he puts in this identity, sometime even at great risks, are there only to protect the substantial content “in himself” as the most precious thing about him. Maiden remains the core of his life, and is still the cause of his desire. The operation of the masculine masquerade is reversed: “My masking, my alter ego of Xia of the Mighty Eagle is doing my job for me, so can you please just leave me (the Yang Guo who is in love with Maiden) alone?”

This reversal of the masculine pretence therefore puts Yang Guo's masquerade closer to a feminine one.

Žižek tells of the complaint of a millionaire in one of Claude Chabrol's films as follows: "If only I could find a woman who would love me only for my millions, not for myself!" (*Indivisible* 162). Yang Guo's millions are his *xia*-dom, for by now he has built an esteem as Xia of the Mighty Eagle that almost parallels Guo Jing's long standing fame. Like the millionaire, Yang Guo wishes that people would just love him for his *xia* identity, and not for himself. To wish people to love "what they are not," according to Žižek, is woman's specialty. While what a man wants is "to be loved for what he truly is" (162), "a woman knows that there is nothing beneath the mask—her strategy is precisely to preserve this 'nothing' of her freedom out of reach of man's possessive love" (163). Yang Guo is asking for the same thing: love me for what I am not, love me for the false *xia* pretence, so that I can keep what is in myself out of reach of people's possessive love and actions of meddling. The image of Xia of the Mighty Eagle is meant to be delusive and misleading, and Yang Guo deploys this "for the other" function of the mask in just the way woman exercises "the 'trick' of the feminine masquerade" (161). The split of Yang Guo's masquerade is not exactly masculine, and also not quite feminine, for he does have something to preserve under the mask, and that is not just the void that most defines the feminine subjectivity or the hysteric.

Žižek then relates the difference between feminine and masculine masking to that between not-all and totality. Man exists, and can be constructed logically as a totality, due to the logic of exception: "there is a limit, an exception, which allows for this construction" (*Indivisible* 165). In contrast to that, woman does not exist. It is not because the feminine character is "constructed," but rather that "*woman' cannot be constructed.*" For this reason, "femininity *qua* masquerade is strictly co-dependent with the position of woman as 'not-all': the very notion of mask implies that the mask is 'not all'." Since "there is nothing, no hidden truth, beneath the mask, there is also no positive, substantial element which is exempt from the masquerade" (184, n84). There is no element that is not subject to the masking, Lacan's third formula of sexuation says. This further explains the "in itself" and "for the other" cut. "[W]oman's 'in itself' is always-already 'for the other'"; "woman-in-herself" designates no substantial content but just a purely formal cut, a limit that is always missed"—a limit that is like a torsion on the Möbius band, which can happen anywhere, as it is an internal exception that is just a formal limit that makes no actual differentiation on the band. The band therefore can be seen as an infinite set of all the possible cuts or torsions, each appearing at a contingent moment.⁸²

⁸² This concept of a torsion is tied to Lacan's second turn in his *L'Étourdit* where he resorts to cross-cap. However, here in the final chapter of the thesis we will not go that far, and will just

To say that woman does not exist “equals the claim that the status of the subject is feminine—that which eludes logical construction.” The bar in $L\bar{a}$ therefore is the void of the Lacanian split subject and “the reef of impossibility as which symbolic construction fails, is precisely the subject *qua* \mathcal{S} , the lack in the signifying chain” (165).⁸³ But if the feminine subject $L\bar{a}$ is “the subject *par excellence*” (161), then what do we make of the other split subject on the left hand side of the diagram?

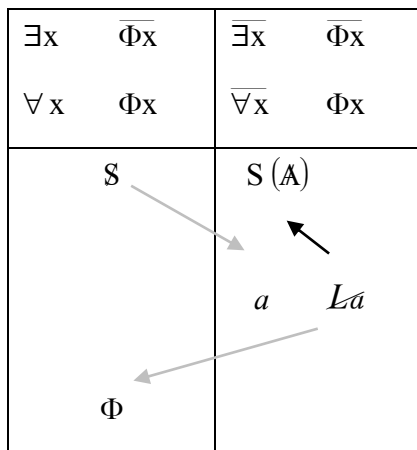


Fig. 4.1.e. Sexuation diagram: \mathcal{S} , and “ $L\bar{a} \rightarrow \mathcal{S}(\mathbb{A})$ ”

The most noticeable difference between the split subjects, \mathcal{S} and $L\bar{a}$, is $\mathcal{S}(\mathbb{A})$. In Lacan’s words, the female subject is not only paired up with the phallus, but she also has a relation with $\mathcal{S}(\mathbb{A})$.⁸⁴ Zupančič then elaborates as follows: “If she had only a relationship to the phallus (\rightarrow), that is, if she took only the path of desire, she would be as whole as a man is in his relationship to the

discuss the relation between desire and drive, to pause at just one moment of Yang Guo’s ethical pursuit.

⁸³ Zupančič is of the same opinion as Žižek. The reason that Woman does not exist is “because ‘she’ is a subject in the strict sense of the word; and that if Man exists, it is because he is not yet altogether a subject” (“Case” 290).

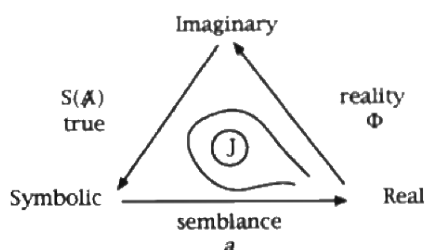
⁸⁴ Lacan explains $\mathcal{S}(\mathbb{A})$ in *Seminar XXI* that while $L\bar{a}$ “coupled” to the phallus, women are “also inextricably “tripled” (*troisees*) to the signifier of a lack or hole in the Other (*Seminar XXI*, March 19, 1974; qtd in Fink, *Lacanian Subject* 113-114).

objet a. But she has, in the first place, a relationship to the Other ($\rightarrow S(\mathbb{A})$) (“Case” 293). To call Lacan’s $S(\mathbb{A})$ “the Other” can be confusing; what Zupančič is trying to express in her use of “the Other” is the Otherness of the Other, and is close to Lacan’s explanation: “the impossibility of telling the whole truth” (*Seminar XX* 95). $S(\mathbb{A})$ has a radical Otherness that dismantles the masculine logic of the all and the exception, saying no to the totality (the big Other) sustained by that logic. Hence it is commonly understood as “there is no Other of the Other.” Žižek for this reason explains $S(\mathbb{A})$ as that which “stands for the impossibility of the signifier of the big Other” (*Indivisible* 158).

Nevertheless, if $S(\mathbb{A})$ stands for the Other that does not exist, a crossed out Other (*Autre*), \mathbb{A} , will suffice, and it will also go nicely with $L\mathbb{a}$, the latter being clearly defined as “Woman does not exist.” What does S do in $S(\mathbb{A})$? According to Fink, it cannot be just the signifier of the lack of the Other, for that would mean $S(\mathbb{A})$ is synonymous with the phallus, and “the phallus is this signifier of lack, of desire” (“desire-implies lack” or “lack-implies desire”) (*Lacanian Subject* 114). Fink’s supposition is that $S(\mathbb{A})$ may stand for “the first exclusion or loss[, which] somehow finds a representative or signifier . . .” (115), such as “the mOther’s desire as loss” (114) or “the lost mother-child unity” (195 n36). We have to reject this line of argument though, for what Fink does here is again find an exception, here a lost and should-have-been non-castrated *jouissance*, to uphold the truth of the castration—it is a masculine logic.⁸⁵ $S(\mathbb{A})$ is a signifier, or symbolisation of something,⁸⁶ but that something is not just a lack or an incompleteness, neither is it something that is excluded from the masculine or the castration operation, because, according to the third formula

⁸⁵ Fink makes the same mistake when speaking of feminine subjectivity by claiming that she has both the phallus and the forbidden *jouissance* in her. This is still the same exception game that plays on differentiation, whereas what is at stake with femininity is exactly *not* having the exception. For example, he claims that femininity is “*not* being wholly hemmed in” by the phallic function, and “not altogether subject to the symbolic order” (*Lacanian Subject* 107).

⁸⁶ In *Seminar XX*, $S(\mathbb{A})$ is a trajectory of “imaginary \rightarrow symbolic” (90):



of sexuation, there is no x that is not subject to the phallic function. How and where exactly, can we see this Otherness in a manner that is different from, but not other than the Other *qua* the signifying chain? The only possibility is that it is the Other's own pure difference in itself, and this difference can only be discerned from a different perspective.

The pure difference is defined by Žižek as a difference that “is no longer a difference between two positively existing objects, but a minimal difference which divides one and the same object from itself” (*Parallax View* 18). In this light, the slash in (A) can be understood as no more than the formal cut of the not-all, which we discussed regarding the feminine masquerade. The splitting between the Other itself and its pure difference is like a torsion on the Möbius band. It can be located anywhere in the Other, and allows for more than one perspective to discern the pure difference, to discern the not-all of the Other; as long as we know how to look, or to look awry in a right way, there will be a multitude of possible parallax views. Does this not remind us of Lacan's wordplay? The feminine *d'eux* is not the *deux* that speaks of the “two” as the ideal love relationship, but *d'eux*: of them, for them, any of them, multitudes.⁸⁷

Now we can define $S(A)$ as “a saying that reveals the minimal difference in the Other.” The first example of this saying that Lacan gives is when he talks about woman's *jouissance*. “When I say that woman is not-whole and that that is why I cannot say Woman, it is precisely because I raise the question (*je mets en question*) of a *jouissance* that, with respect to everything that can be used in [or encompassed] in the function of Φx , is in the realm of the infinite” (*Seminar XX* 103). For Zupančič, Lacan here is addressing the passage from a first *jouissance* (finite) to a second *jouissance* (infinite). In “The Case of the Perforated Sheet” Zupančič writes: “one does not get to the other *jouissance* by the negation of the first, since the negation (i.e., the exception) is precisely that which, far from giving access to some other *jouissance*, sustains the phallic *jouissance* and maintains it within the frame of the infinite.” The space of the other *jouissance* will be opened up if “one takes away from the first *jouissance* its exception (the noncastrated *jouissance*) which maintained it within the finite frame.” It is when the function of castration loses its “reference to totality, to all” that it becomes not-all (295). Not-all has nothing to do with the “quality or quantity” of the *jouissance*; instead it “refers to the structure or topology of enjoyment” (296). In this structure which can be termed “infinite,” the other *jouissance* or feminine *jouissance* “takes on and endures (the possibility of) some supplementary *jouissance*; it tolerates addition and subtraction” (295). The *jouissance* can be more or less, and in effect “too much” and “not enough” at the same time: it is *plus-de-jouissance*, the surplus *jouissance*. This *jouissance* is not inaccessible. On the

⁸⁷ In *L'étourdit* (24a); mentioned also in section “Sexuation diagram” in this chapter.

contrary, it is only too accessible and exists everywhere and we all enjoy it, put up with it, don't know what to do with it, when we are reading Jin Yong's martial arts fiction.

Object of drive, moments of love and jouissance

Following the structure of an infinite set, we can read Yang Guo and Maiden's relation in another way. The relation when viewed in the masculine pole is illicit. But when viewed in the third matheme, or via the female logic, Yang Guo and Maiden's coupleship is not an exception, but is rather one of the many possible forms of *jouissance*, of which love is one. Love "is the sign that one is changing discourses" (Lacan, *Seminar XX* 16), and switching to a different topology. Zupančič deems that it is "love [*agape*]" that "breaks with the law" or creates a new law, and that such a new law can only be explained by the feminine logic in Lacan's sexuation theory ("Case" 287, 294). The *objet a* as the agent in the discourse of the psychoanalysis, may just be the feminine *jouissance* that has no exception, and welcomes both surplus and deficit in pleasure:

$$\begin{array}{c} \underline{a \text{ (agent)} \rightarrow \mathfrak{S} \text{ (other)}} \\ \mathfrak{S}_2 \text{ (truth)} \quad || \quad \mathfrak{S}_1 \text{ (production)} \end{array}$$

Fig. 2.6. The analyst's discourse

The top level relation, " $a \rightarrow \mathfrak{S}$," is the Lacanian formula for perversion. The discourse of the analyst is where one enters the realm of drive. In the realm of drive, what counts is not the attaining of the object but the circulation of drive itself, and its circulation has the structure of a *jouissance* that is without quality or quantity.

Jouissance for Lacan is "what serves no purpose" (*Seminar XX* 3), because it is equal to surplus work which goes under the radar, so to speak, albeit being right at the heart of the production line. "Castration means that *jouissance* must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire" (Lacan, *Ecrits* 700). We can therefore understand the paradox of castration in yet another way: it is necessary to refuse it as an exception, so that it can be reached as a *jouissance* that is not excepted from the masculine law, as a *jouissance* that is everywhere, albeit not seen, and not calculated into the value system. In Chapter 2 we talked about the surplus work of fan writings in the circulation and distribution of Jin Yong's novels. The surplus work or

surplus *jouissance*, like fandom, is nevertheless what triggers the tilting and switching of the social bonds or discursive links. As we mentioned at the end of Chapter 2, the analytic discourse, where the *objet a* is in the place of the agent, is the basis of the four discourses.

How is the *objet a* in the four discourses different from the *objet a* in the sexuation diagram? In the sexuation diagram, *a* is the object-cause of desire, whereas in the four discourses it may be termed “the object of drive.” Žižek differentiates the two in his *Parallax View*: the object-cause of desire is “an object which is originally lost” and “coincides with its own loss.” The object of drive, on the other hand, is “not driven by the ‘impossible’ quest for the lost object; it is *a push to enact ‘loss’—the gap, cut, distance—itself directly*” (62). The object-cause of desire corresponds to the *objet a* in the sexuation diagram; it is in a relation to the split subject $\$$, as the cause of the subject’s “bad infinity” of desire. Together the subject and the *objet a* constitute the fantasy of the masculine totality, or as the Other that does exist but can only do so by being sustained by an exception. Nevertheless, the *objet a* in the sexuation diagram is at the same time also the object of drive; it is the split version of the object-cause of desire seen in the feminine topology. The object of drive needs no cause, because it serves no purpose, because it achieves its goal by not achieving its goal. Fandom as drive is the fervent engagement in the “endless circular movement of expanded self-reproduction,” and the circulation becomes an end in itself (to use Žižek’s words on capitalism; *Parallax View* 61). Drive, then, is the pure difference between desire and itself—it is the same logic that explains the slash in $S(A)$. It is just like the difference between perversion (“ $a \diamond S$,” or the top level of the analyst’s discourse) and fantasy (“ $\$ \diamond a$,” or the trajectory of desire in the sexuation diagram), which differ only in how *a* and $\$$ are placed topologically. Drive and desire share the same circuit, it is just that drive, with a minimal torsion of desire’s track, appears to pursue no goal, and henceforth gets satisfaction every time, without exception. Is there an ethics of drive that sticks out or distorts Yang Guo’s ethics of the master, and pushes askew his seemingly inevitable forced choice between duty and love? We will come back to it in the thesis conclusion.

Zupančič argues that “one might . . . come to the drive if one follows the ‘logic’ of desire to its limit” (*Ethics* 243). Here I would like to give one example on the matter of sexual difference in Jin Yong’s writing. When Yang Guo is caught in the bad infinity of desiring women one by one, can his trajectory be viewed with a different angle? Will it be possible now, after having investigated Lacan’s sexuation diagram, to locate a circuit of drive in the “phallic-centric” setting of Jin Yong where one man is favoured by several women? Earlier on we looked at the string of Yang Guo’s “conquests.” The women he encounters all fit into one category: they resemble Maiden in a certain way. The loss of Maiden is the object-cause of Yang Guo’s act of courting or caring for these women. We therefore concluded that Maiden functions like an exception that upholds the

totality by grouping these various women in a set. However, at the heart in this game of desire, something sticks out. If desire is, to use Zupančič's phrase, a "*fait à accomplir*," a "this is not *it!*," that "maintains itself by not being satisfied" (Zupančič, *Ethics* 136), then Yang Guo's pursuit of women differs from in that he is already satisfied, with a *fait accompli*, having attained the "it." His object to attain is Maiden who, though at the moment not being around, is clearly in love with him. In other words, it does not serve much purpose for Yang Guo to act gallantly towards these women who fall for his charm and gallantry, except to sooth his morose state of being without Maiden—or rather increasing his moroseness. In this case it is the course of desire itself that brings him satisfaction, which is basically how drive works. It is in this sense that we can liken Yang Guo to Don Juan, who is regarded as an embodiment of drive by Zupančič in her *Ethics of the Real*. In the book Zupančič compares Valmont in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* with Don Juan in the legends. Every woman for Don Juan is the right one. He picks the women without first filtering them through a perforated sheet, so to speak. Valmont, though, seeks another woman so as to keep open the gap between his desire and the "it" that any object pretends to satisfy. Don Juan, on the other hand, moves to another woman "not due to disappointment of lack" and gets satisfaction every time. Moreover, while Yang Guo picks only women who resemble Maiden, it is also true that he is not really picking, for every woman will come to resemble Maiden one way or the other in the chance encounter. Yang Guo therefore is Don-Juanian; for both of them, the aim of seducing is nothing but "getting back into circulation" (*Ethics* 136). This circulation of not obtaining the goal makes Yang Guo's series of women a set of not-all: none of them is not subject to his law of desire, and yet adding all of them up does not constitute the totality of what his desire is. As a matter of fact, all these women that Yang Guo falls for and takes risk to protect turn out to not resemble Maiden all that much, and moreover often act in ways that are very different to Maiden's overall temperament or behaviours. Because of that, Yang Guo at the end becomes appreciative of features and moods of women that do not necessarily fall within his frame of fantasy.

Yang Guo's case therefore may serve to bring insight into the so-called chauvinism in Jin Yong's romance stories. In novels such as *Demi-Gods, The Heaven Sword and the Dragon Sabre* (*Yitian Tulong Ji* 倚天屠龍記), and *The Deer and the Cauldron*, there are also plots similar to this "seducer scene" that we just discussed. The plots as a rule involve several women favouring one heroic male character. The seducer's scene can be first explained by the exception game where the series of encounters is launched because of the lack or disappointment that Jin Yong may possess against an ideal image of 'Woman'; however, the series of chance encounters also showcase the dissimilarity between them, and overall the women do not contribute or reinforce to the ideal image but on the contrary confirm the impossibility of such an ideal "Woman." Following this, it may be more appropriate to call Jin Yong's metonymic series of women a hysteric series. All these female

characters are just like the capricious and variable composite mask that a hysteric puts out, and she does so only because she wants to preserve the fact that there is no substantial content underneath to hide: Woman does not exist.

Double act of desire and drive; double-bind of heroism and romance

As far as Žižek is concerned, the reason a woman has a relation with S (\bar{A}) is that she “‘sees through’ the fascinating presence of the Phallus” and “is able to discern in it the ‘filler’ of the inconsistency of the big other” (*Indivisible* 157-158). Discerning the filler that covers up the non-existing big Other is one thing, but potentially, everyone can be $\bar{L}\bar{a}$, the subject *par excellence*, in so far as one persists to see the pure difference in the phallus, drive in the exception game, and feminine not-all in the masculine logic—or in effect, ab-sense of sexual relation in each of the four formulae of the sexuation diagram. Fierens argues that the discord between the first and second formulae of sexuation shows that “the Other, the ‘notall’ is already at work in the passage from the first to the second formula—but only when saying is already well advanced” (“First Turn” 129). A well-advanced saying is a saying that reveals the split in the thing itself with a parallax view, and that can take place whenever the phallic function is on the move. Insofar as the phallic function is in action, there will be an opening for not-all. Not-all does not occur only with the fourth formula; rather, not-all is “in potency in the three others” (“Second Turn” 20), in all the passages between different formulae, including even the one from the fourth back to the first formula, as we have discussed regarding Yang Guo’s journeying of the four mathemes. These movements between the four mathemes are not merely one-direction, either. We started with a clock-wise direction when we first introduced the sexuation diagram, and yet Yang Guo’s route plan of see-sawing from the feminine side back to the second formula (from “there is no exception” to a game of exception) also demonstrates a counter-clock-wise course. The masculine trajectory can cross over to the feminine side, and vice versa—as Fierens claims right at the start, the two, the feminine and the masculine, are but two parts of the same logic. The double-direction of the journeying is called “logical chicane” by Lacan (*L’Étourdit* 25c), rendered as “sig-sagging” by Fierens. And ultimately, I argue, that is what makes a subject a subject in the Lacanian sense. A subject see-saws and zig-zags between the two sides, among the four mathemes, regardless of his or her gender. The only way to be un-subjective, or to “go astray” on the roundabout as Lacan calls it (*L’Étourdit* 25c-d; trans. 78) will be to stay put and not to switch sides. Though whether this is this purely a matter of choice is another matter (see Appendix).

For a Jin Yong reader, the not-all moment or Möbius torsion happens in the double act of desire and drive. Jin Yong's novels are presented as a series (*Companion* itself is the second book *Eagle-Shooting* trilogy), grouped together by the master-signifier "Jin Yong." Readers pursue the characters, romances and incidents in each of the novels; the more we read, the more we want to read. When all novels have been read over and over again, we still have the appetite to follow every new TV or movie production. Some of these may simply carry out the plots, others may be so adapted and edited that they do not resemble the plots or even endings of the "original" stories (including Jin Yong's own re-writing of his so-called "newly revised edition"). But as long as they are linked to Jin Yong, the fans will devour them. At some point, this act of pursuit, of desiring to desire, crosses over to the side of surplus *jouissance*. We endure the fatigue when we stay up all night to watch the TV episodes back to; we either cannot get enough of it, or take in too much of it, but we get satisfaction every time—that is drive. Having read the same novel a dozen of times pretty much guarantees that we do not need to be motivated any more by the *objet a*—an unknown cause, an unexpected twist of plot, an unbelievable coincidence—in order to keep us going, for we are already in the circulatory action of reading itself and enjoying it (or putting up with the enjoyment of it). While this *jouissance* gets us nowhere and serves no purpose, it nevertheless pursues us, distorts our life course and will not let us go, because that is what drive does.

This dynamics of desire and drive can be seen in all popular fiction and serialised TV dramas. Among them it is those with a theme of love that can best teach us lessons of Lacan's sexuation diagram. Faced with the ab-sense of the sexual relationship, all the writers can do is, like Jin Yong, to write about all kinds of impossibilities of achieving a perfect union of love so to ensure the possibility of the exact same thing. The various couples and lovers will never be able to say it all, to define what relationship is and should be, to answer Li Mochou's Sphinx-like riddle: "Oh the world we live in, tell me what is the thing called love, which makes one willing to sacrifice one's life for it." And yet, in a way, that quest is already answered by itself, by its own minimal difference: love is the thing that makes one sacrifice one's life for it. "Better dead than..."—one would rather die than live without love, for a life without love is the life of a living dead. This matter of life and death, of living between two deaths, is the thing called ethics.

Conclusion

The Forced Choice

While all martial arts fiction respects the goal of chivalry, Jin Yong has been particularly brave in also addressing the ethical questions of love, ever since his first novel. Jin Yong's "book of love/love letters," *The Giant Eagle and Its Companion*, elevates love to the same level as honour, duty, and national issues, thereby foregrounding, but not resolving, the struggle between heroism and romance, and the forced choice between duty and love. The same apparent failure to resolve the ethical issue can also be seen in Qiao Feng's final act of sacrifice: he succeeds in stopping the war between the Han and Khitan groups, but only temporarily so. He then kills himself, which appears to be for nothing. If the ethics of psychoanalysis is that of the real, the ethics of Jin Yong perhaps is not quite a Lacanian ethics of the real.

The ethics of the real that Zupančič has in mind is the ethics of drive. On the one hand, she argues that there can be drive-like moments when a Möbius torsion or an incurving occurs: "if we persist in moving on one of [the sides of a Möbius band], we will suddenly find ourselves on the 'other' side" (*Ethics* 244). On the other hand, however, she sees the ultimate ethics of drive as beyond desire and object-cause altogether. As far as Zupančič is concerned, the ethics of desire is mostly portrayed in classical dramas (such as Greek tragedies), whereas we have to go to modern drama to find a comparable ethics of drive being worked out. Her exemplary figure of drive, following Lacan's argument in Seminar VIII, is Sygne de Coüfontaine in Claudel's trilogy. Žižek, also explicating Lacan, comments that the ultimate object of Sygne's tragedy is that meaningless twitch on her face after she sacrifices herself for nothing. Her sacrifice is one that gives her no symbolic gain or imaginary satisfaction. Sygne's "no" is not just "no to the father"; the twitching of the muscle, the tick on Sygne's face, is something that cannot be symbolised. The feminine no is a "refusal/withdrawal which cannot be reduced to the paternal 'No' constitutive of the symbolic order" (Žižek, *Parallax View* 83).

Neither Qiao Feng's tragedy nor Yang Guo's action can be included in dramas of drive. Both their acts exemplify the ethics of desire, where they do not give in to the cause of their desire. For Qiao Feng it is his concern for the well-being of the people in both the Song and Liao empires; for Yang Guo, it is Little Dragon Maiden, the love of his life. But that does not mean we cannot persist in pursuing ethics in a drive-like fashion. In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, we established the double-binds faced by our two heroes. Here in the conclusion we can now sum up the previous discussions and come to a reinterpretation of tragedy and sacrifice in the Chinese martial arts genre,

with the Lacanian exploration of the abyss of freedom that both Yang Guo and Qiao Feng face when they are given the choice to choose “freely” between two options. Such is the ethical call that Žižek defines in *The Parallax View*: “it is a radical contingency, in which there is no guarantee for my decisions, in which the agent has to confront the abyss of freedom” (87). The choice can be between love for your *xia* duty, and love for your companion, as in Yang Guo’s case. It can also be a choice between two fatherlands, as it is for Qiao/Xiao Feng. The abyss of freedom to choose is as monstrous as the emptiness between two deaths, between the actual death and the symbolic death, or the second death as Lacan calls it.

With Yang Guo we can discern something like that twitch on Sygne’s face that cannot be totalised, the mask he puts on as Xia of the Mighty Eagle. Wei Lingdun rightly points out that the condition of Yang Guo’s establishing his masculinity is the absence of Maiden (31). To be more exact, however, it is rather that Yang Guo might as well accomplish some chivalric obligations while he has sixteen years of freedom from having to solve the dilemma of *Your duty or your love*. The purpose of his wearing a mask is two-fold: he does not want to be recognised as Yang Guo, and he would like to avoid having more women fall for his good looks. But to fulfil these two functions, he needs not wear such a specially made mask that makes him look so inhuman and disfigured. When Guo Xiang 郭襄 first hears about the heroic stories of Xia of the Mighty Eagle, she imagines him to be a handsome man whose appearance will match his gallantry and virtue. And yet when she finally meets him, she “cannot help but be grasped in a shudder. She sees a face that is sallow, woody, and wizened. How can it belong to a living being? It is very much (a face of) a zombie” (*Companion*, ch. 35). Regardless of that repulsion, Guo Xiang falls in love with Yang Guo. Guo Xiang is Guo Jing’s younger daughter, who serves to link Yang Guo back to the reality of national affairs. Guo Xiang later finds that the repulsive face is only a mask, and calls the mask “mask of a dead person” (*siren mianju* 死人面具). So, for most of the sixteen years, Yang Guo bears the face of a dead person. To turn the logic of masking around, the mask, far from hiding something in him, reveals his real state of mind in its apparent excess. It is his face of the real (not symbolic, not imaginary, and serving no purpose), his face between two deaths; he not only looks like the living dead, he is the living dead.

When Yang Guo is actively roaming Rivers and the Lakes fulfilling his chivalric responsibilities, he is in effect dead inside, as if being shut up in the tomb, the tomb where he and Maiden built their lives together and became bonded in love. The tomb is called the Tomb of the Living Dead, the origin of most of the double-binds in the novel: living and dying, desire and frustration, and love and duty. Everything starts with the ab-sense of sexual relation between Lin Chaoying and Wang Chongyang, the object of Lin’s unrequited love. Lin is the founder of

Maiden's martial arts school, and Wang that of Complete-Real Martial Arts School and Monastery. But it is this very ab-sense that brings about both love and the mastery of martial arts. The partnership of their disciples is decisive in defeating the Mongolian forces of the arch-villain Monk of the Holiness. This defeat is both an indirect fulfilment of Wang's earlier campaign to keep the nomad tribes out of Han-Chinese land, and the mending of the breach between the two founders. Duty arises through the loss of love, and love is understood through the accomplishment of performing one's national duty. The incomprehensible mask of Yang Guo at the end leads us to the ultimate double-bind in Jin Yong's work. Martial arts fiction is all about ethical duty, but the modern martial arts fiction is known for its theme of love, and between the two, you have to make a choice. As briefly mentioned, Yang Guo is the only hero in Jin Yong's novels who chooses wrongly, because everyone else picks duty, albeit often with much ado. Although, at the end Yang Guo is given an impossible happy ending where he does not have to make up his mind (the fact that Maiden is his *shifu* is conveniently forgotten), one cannot easily put aside the confusion caused to us by the living dead's mask. In this short digression (lasting only four chapters, out of forty), Yang Guo keeps the freedom to choose wide open, allowing us to gaze at the violence of the forced choice. It is like the twitch on Sygne's face, an open wound, though only momentarily glimpsed.

The dilemma of "duty or love" belongs to the ethics of the master that Zupančič discusses in her *Ethics of the Real*. Her discussion starts with the mechanism of forced choice that Lacan looks at in Seminar XI. One classic example is *Your money or your life*: "If I choose the money, I lose both. If I choose life, I have life without the money, namely, a life deprived of something" (Seminar XI 212). Zupančič explains that the paradox of the choice between money and life "comes from the fact that one of the alternatives between which we are required to choose is at the same time the universal (and quasi-neutral) medium of choice itself." In other words, "it is life which is at the same time the part and the whole" (215). Yang Guo's forced choice, in the martial arts fiction setting, shares the same paradox. In *Your duty or your love*, the former is the whole, the latter the part. Duty is the definition of being a *xia*, it is the core of a hero's life. If Yang Guo chooses love, he loses both love and duty, because without living as a *xia*, he cannot enjoy love, which will only suffer and fade away. And if he chooses duty and the life of a *xia*, then life will be deprived of something, deprived of the heart to live. The only way to have either love or duty, is to have both of them together. And that is what Yang Guo does in those four episodes, or the sixteen years of deferred decision-making, the price of which is to live as one of the living dead. This brings us to the second example of Lacan's forced choice in Seminar XI: *Freedom or death!* (212).

Out of freedom and death, one can only choose death: "the only proof of freedom that you can have in the conditions laid out before you is precisely to choose death, for there, you show that you have freedom of choice" (213). We can look at Yang Guo's choice this way: he chooses to

remain between two deaths, and in so doing proves that he is free after all, free to reject the violence of the forced choice, and free to love. The paradox of “freedom or death” lies in the fact that “the only way you can choose A is by choosing its negation, not-A: the only way the subject can stay true to her Cause is by betraying it, *by sacrificing to it the very thing which drives her to make this sacrifice*” (Zupančič, *Ethics* 216). This paradox of choosing A by choosing non-A can explain why, in melodrama, the right choice for *Duty or love!* is always duty. After choosing duty and sacrificing his love, the man can say this to his lover: “I chose duty to prove that I am worthy of your love. I have proven my love for you by not choosing you, therefore I really did it for you!” In terms of the whole/part paradox, one needs to sacrifice the part (the love) in order to prove that one *has* the part, the part that (as in the masculine logic of Lacan’s second formula of sexuation) is the necessary exception that sustains the totality of one’s duty as a man. In contrast to this, Yang Guo’s choice has always been love (for Maiden); it is just that this choice, once made, will mean he will lose both, and roaming as living dead is the only way out of the enforced double-bind.

Zupančič calls the above two types of forced choice the “ethics of the master,” the master’s maxim being “better death than...” (*Ethics* 217). The master would rather be dead than not defending her cause, living a life not worth living, or losing the freedom to choose. Zupančič then goes on to introduce another kind of the forced choice that she deems the ethics *par excellence*, ethics that has nothing to do with desire, death, or freedom, and is face-to-face with an inhuman terror. The example she gives is the film *Sophie’s Choice*, in which Sophie is faced with a choice between two parts (not the part and the whole). She has to choose one of her two children to live (*Ethics* 216). The forced choice Qiao Feng faces is similar to Sophie’s: he has to choose between two fatherlands. When the ethical dilemma is put to him, Qiao Feng is in the state of the second death. His colleagues and old friends condemn him as a heartless killer after the bloodshed in Juxian Mansion. His lover Ah Zhu sacrifices herself for him so that he can achieve the aim of being a dutiful son. His father, after committing several wrongful deeds, has found peace in Shaolin Temple, embraced by the limitless compassion of Buddhism. Left with no desires relating to the Song land, Qiao Feng “returns” to Liao Empire from where his real parents originate. Although the relatively simple lifestyle of hunting and drinking with the tribesmen seems to suit him, it is a life devoid of desires and purpose. The Liao emperor is glad that his sworn brother is by his side and ready to provide service, but for Qiao Feng fulfilling his role as a loyal Liao citizen seems to be just a compliant chore without hardship, and without glory. Later, when the two countries are in conflict (one is his father’s country, the other his *shifu*’s country), he is not excused from the ethical call despite long being a subject without desire.

Part of the terror in Sophie’s choice is that she cannot *not* choose, otherwise both of her children will be executed, as per the rule set by the perverted German officer. At first glance, Qiao

Feng's situation is perhaps less severe than Sophie's. He has the opportunity not to pick sides, and neither of his fatherlands will perish because of it. Still, it is also impossible for Qiao Feng to walk away from the battle. If he does something, perhaps some lives can be spared and fewer people will be sacrificed in the conflict. In this sense Qiao Feng's predicament is not unlike Sophie's: either leaving both children to die, or save one of them. Zupančič argues that Sophie's choice to save one of the children is a properly Kantian one: "[s]eeing that one life is going to be lost in any case, [Kant] might have said that the categorical imperative demands that we save the other" (217). Qiao Feng makes a similarly Kantian judgement: he does not walk away from the battle between the two countries, and instead makes the decision to help one of them.

How is one child's life more valuable than the other? How can the duty towards one father or fatherland be more prominent than the duty towards the other? Qiao Feng eventually picks one: in order to ensure the safety of his former brothers and colleagues of the Song, he betrays his Liao brother. But what makes Qiao Feng's choice just as terrifying as Sophie's is the pathology (in the Kantian sense) produced out of the forced choice. In other words, it is the surplus enjoyment after the act that remains, irritating and nagging at your pathological side, namely your personal, selfish emotions. The pathological side can be viewed as the inhuman part in a human that is more human than herself. There is a reason behind Sophie's choice of saving the particular child and that reason can only be pathological: "It is precisely the moment when she must invest herself in the choice with, so to speak, her own flesh, with a little piece of her own pathology, which renders her irredeemably guilty" (Zupančič, *Ethics* 217). How about Qiao Feng? Is there a selfish reason for his choosing the Han side? In order to fully understand his decision, we need to pause and ponder on the ethical meaning of self-sacrifice, guilt, and suicide.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there does not seem to be much point in Qiao Feng's ending his life. It even looks as if he shuns the unfathomable ethical call because he finds he cannot cope with it. On the other hand, if he kills himself with an intention to sway the Liao emperor's mind, ensuring a relatively long-term peace with the Song, then Qiao Feng's action is a failure. Žižek lists several kinds of false sacrifices in *On Belief*. A typical false sacrifice is to haggle: "I offer the Other something precious to me in order to get back from the Other something even more vital to me" (69). Sometimes asking for return may just be "to ascertain that there IS some Other out there who is able to reply (or not) to our sacrificial entreaties" (69). Yet another falsity in a sacrificial act is "not to profit from it himself" but "to fill in the lack in the Other, to sustain the appearance of the Other's omnipotence or, at least, consistency" (70). Or else, "one sacrifices not in order to get something from the Other, but in order to dupe the Other" so to keep one's *jouissance* intact (72-73). None of these sacrifices are heroic in nature. Instead, they treat the Other like the small other, for they all have to first presume the existence of the Other and play card games with it. Lacan's

schema L has helped us to see the downside of such imaginary exploits. Since Qiao Feng is a mortified subject with the knowledge that the Other does not exist, none of these falsehoods relate to his suicide.

Lastly, there is the sacrifice that is related to the superego, when one acts or makes sacrifices for the sake of “compensating the guilt imposed by the impossible superego injunction” (74). This is again an action based on exchange: “if I do this, please make me feel better.” What psychoanalysis does, on the other hand, is avoid such super-egoic economics. Psychoanalytic ethics endeavours to “enable the subject” to “*resist* the terrible attraction” (74) of such sublime sacrifice, like that of Oedipus. We have seen some similarities between the ill fate of Qiao Feng and that of Oedipus. Both figures come to know their real identities only when it is too late. Qiao, without the knowledge of his true Khitan identity, organises anti-Khitan campaigns and Oedipus murders a stranger who turns out to be his father. Both of them, with their desires stripped away are thus left in the realm between two deaths, after their symbolic death, and before their physical death. But at the end Qiao Feng takes the path to death, and Oedipus does not. In *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus does not end his life to atone for his sins, murdering his father and wedding his mother. He insists he is not guilty because he did not commit them with full knowledge. He therefore refuses the suicide that would maintain the false smooth surface, the existence of the Other. He remains as an excess that irritates and keeps the book open, the accounts unsettled. Oedipus’s defiance is to keep off his own guilt as well as the guilty charges from others, and to reject being judged so by the Other. Qiao Feng, on the other hand, does indeed feel guilty for the innocent Song lives that he took at Juxian Zhuang, and thus exiles himself to live in Liao, in a life without desires.

No desire, no guilt—is it here that we will witness the all-encompassing Buddhist transcendence, transcendence that firstly consists of indifference? There is indeed a Buddhist scene when Qiao Feng is caught in the war between the two sides. When the band of Song masters are stuck outside the border gateway into Song, Shaolin monk Xuanfu compliments Qiao Feng for being a Han-Chinese, as he fought with them against the Liao troops who pursued the Song brothers and gallants. Qiao Feng replies: “Master, you are Han, and therefore always presume Han is on the righteous side, and Khitan the villainous side. However, Khitans would say the Liao Empire is the righteous one, and the Song villainous” (ch. 50). Qiao Feng then retells the history of how the Khitan ancestors were oppressed, murdered, threatened by the tribes and kingdoms around them. During the Tang dynasty, the Han side had the upper hand and persecuted hundreds of thousands of Khitan people. Since the Khitan Empire took the advantage in military force and wealth, it has become their turn to bully and murder Song people. “It is either we kill you, or you kill us, when is this cycle ever going to stop?” (ch. 50).

The monk heaves a big sigh and says: “Only when all kings and emperors on earth covert to Buddhism and hold compassion in their heart can the misery of warring and killing be ended.” Qiao Feng replies: “There is no way to find out what year and what month that will happen, when a world of peace will ever come.” (ch. 50)

Qiao Feng has seen through the inconsistency of the Other and knows that the day of world-wide compassion and concord is not likely to come soon, if ever. But the realisation of this does not stop him from having to act. Before the warring between countries stops, the ethical Thing will remain just as monstrous, and he cannot shun his duty of being a *xia*. The ethical command may be empty, and yet the lives and sacrifices of either Han-Chinese or Khitan soldiers are not simply empty lives. In order to stop the Liao troop from pursuing the Song band of martial arts brothers, Qiao Feng forces the Liao emperor to make a pledge that he will never invade Song again in his life. In the forced choice of “Han or Khitan,” he picks the former, and as a result regards himself as having betrayed the Liao emperor and his fatherland. At the end, Qiao Feng becomes this undutiful citizen and disloyal son that he never thought he would become; however, the result would have been the same if he had made the opposite choice.

In Chapter 3, we quickly talked about how for Žižek there is a sexual difference in ethics. Men are moral because they sacrifice themselves for a noble cause, for a Thing like honour and nation; whereas only women are truly ethical because they sacrifice themselves for nothing, capable of the “‘irrational’ sacrifice or ‘empty’ sacrifice” exemplified by heroines such as Sygne, and Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*” (Žižek, *On Belief* 78). Qiao Feng is then both moral and ethical: he is made a sacrifice in front of the national Thing, and yet at the same time his sacrifice achieves nothing, as the war, which is temporarily stopped by his death, will proceed later. Qiao Feng has always known the monstrous freedom in the forced choice. Still, that does not stop him from deciding on suicide, an act that is futile, useless, and even unnecessary. No one will blame him for having threatened the Liao emperor to save Song lives, in fact the Liao soldiers only have gratitude towards him and the emperor himself thanks Qiao Feng for sparing his life. As for the Han martial arts adepts and brothers, they are overjoyed that now their Leader Qiao has come around and resumed his “original” identity of being a Han-Chinese. In other words, while the karmic law has gone back to normal functioning after the conflict between the two countries, Qiao Feng is still rendered irremediably guilty, due to some pathology. In Sophie’s case, “it is this pathological bit (that which allows her to choose one child and not the other), more than the loss of her child itself which is the real kernel of her suffering” (Zupančič, *Ethics* 217). Her pathology is a “pathology beyond pathology,” beyond the “‘ordinary’ logic of pathology, where the subject gives priority to her interests, her inclinations, and so on, over the duty . . .” (217). Even though both of the children

are the parts (in terms of the part/whole paradox), they are not equal; one part will always weigh just that little more than the other.

In the case of Qiao Feng, of course he would also sacrifice all he has to be able to avoid a pathological act. There should not be any reason for him to sacrifice either the Han or Khitan people, but there must be a reason by which he ends up choosing one and not the other. I contend that his pathology or guilt is two-fold. Firstly, at the end he picks Han by sacrificing the Liao emperor's dignity in public. The motive is somewhat selfish: his Han brothers and colleagues are righteous men, while the Liao emperor is self-centred and heartless. Additionally, Qiao Feng is well aware of the manipulation that the Liao emperor enforces upon him, and of his merciless plans to invade other nomadic tribes. While Song and Liao are two objects equally worthy of his loyalty, he makes a choice based on an imaginary standard, which says that Han colleagues overall are more just than the Liao brother. This is the first level of Qiao Feng's guilt: he does not pick justly and he cannot pick fairly. The second level of his pathology or suffering is genre-specific. "The grand *xia* is one who puts first his country and people," as Guo Jing says (*Companion* ch. 21, 22). Disloyalty to your country is, by definition, the most un-*xia* thing that a martial arts hero can do. Regardless of the truth that the Other does not exist, it is imperative for the hero to act, even though he is rendered irremediably guilty for simply having acted. Either way he chooses, he loses, because there will always be a pathology that cannot be separated from his act.

Zupančič addresses the question of ethical acts being "against humanity" (21). Žižek, as we have seen at the start of this thesis, also argues that psychoanalytic ethics surpasses the "human, too human" domain, and that it enters "the dimension of the 'inhuman', the point at which 'humanity' disintegrates, so that all that remains is the pure subject" (*Interrogating* 16). This "inhuman" dimension can refer to the "part of our flesh" discussed by Zupančič: the ethical call is empty, but no act can be purely empty, completely devoid of pathological reason. It is "the figure of a part of our flesh which inevitably remains caught in the formal machinery of the law" (*Ethics* 217). And then, in Qiao Feng's act, we see the piece of flesh right within the pure subject, the human part that is more human than him, and the human part that makes him "inhuman," hence ethical. Qiao Feng's death is like *yuan* or *nie* (misfortunes, debts, wrongful causes) that we spoke of. *Yuan* or *nie* is an excess that cannot be traced in the machinery of the law; however, it is exactly because of the imbalance set off by *yuan* and *nie* that the wheel of karma will always be in motion.

Whether Qiao Feng kills himself out of guilt or not, his sacrifice equals to nothing. At the same time, his sacrifice may also be more than nothing. We need to be endowed with a parallax view to see both, and the discourse of the analyst may offer us some clues to the consequences and effects (or lack thereof) that an act brings out. The analyst's discourse produces a master signifier:

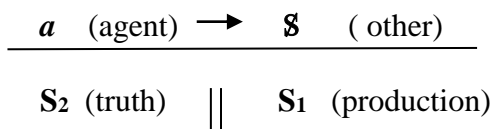


Fig. 2.6. The analyst's discourse

As illustrated, the master signifier is barred from the truth and it has no effect on the moral ground—namely, the knowledge of code of *xia* conducts—from which martial arts gallants and swordsmen base their ethical decisions. Whatever hard-won changes that an act may produce, the discourse may simply rotate, resulting in a new master's discourse, with the new master signifier being the agent. The discourse of the analyst is but the flipside of the master's discourse:

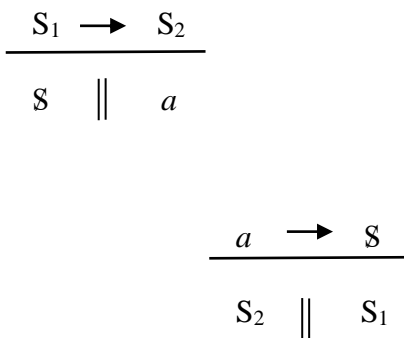


Fig. 5. The discourse of the master and the analyst's discourse

In the new master's discourse, the field of meanings, of *xia*, *zhong* (national loyalty) and *yi* (loyalty to friends and colleagues), is again ordered and quilted by the master signifier, as if nothing has changed. There might have been something, but it is all gone now. Qiao Feng's act does not lay a foundation to make things easier next time one has to choose; there can be no litmus test produced from Qiao Feng's experience that will tell you whether you have passed the ethical test, or whether your sacrifice is worthwhile. However, after an ethical act everything is changed, because while the signifiers for moral values and *xia* conducts remain the same, the hegemonic relationship between them will have shifted. Fiction before Jin Yong's time generally conveyed a world where all non-Chinese people are barbarians, and when *Demi-Gods* was serialised in the newspaper, it was severely criticised by the novelist Liang Yusheng 梁羽生 for "blurring the line between right and wrong," that is, between the Han-Chinese side and the non-Chinese side. For Liang, the invading Liao Empire will always be in the wrong, and the invaded China will always be in the right. This is

a simple historical fact that will not be altered just because “there were also some Song soldiers robbing and killing Khitan civilians” (Tong Yanzhi [Liang Yusheng]). But something must have shifted since then, because today we are able to see the ethical dilemma in Qiao/Xiao Feng’s forced choice, rather than simply seeing it as a war between the righteous side and the villainous side.

The logic of ethics is therefore the logic of sexuation. Its desire is to pursue an ethical object or an ethical cause. And although the object cannot be obtained and the cause is always failed, we may still reach a drive-like moment by persisting in pushing forward on the circuit of our pursuing. Drive has an object, but not obtaining the object or not fulfilling the impossible duty does not mean the circulation is in vain. An action is ethical not because it has a certain content, as it were, but just because it is capable of being treated as a universal: that is the formalism of Kant’s logic of categorical imperative. Drive thus opens up to the ethical as it is no longer interested in the object as such, but affirms the purely formal aspect of that circling around the object. Just as the discourse of the analyst may end up flipping back to the master’s discourse, something will have shifted. The circuit is still the same, and yet it has already bestowed satisfaction, or unpleasure, or surplus *jouissance*. And next time, when another pursuit of ethics starts off and fails to achieve its goal, it will have already been circulating on a different ground, demonstrating a new possibility of reaching a moment of drive, a parallax view in thinking ethics. “The letter always arrives at its destination,” says Lacan (*Ecrits* 30), and this is something that has been demonstrated throughout this thesis. In Chapter 1, we introduced the Chinese character *xin* 信 to explain the logic of the signifier. *Xin* originally means words exchanged among people (the left hand side element means “people,” the right hand side “speech or words”). It can also mean “trust,” or refer to letters exchanged in correspondence. Chen’s letters to Jin Yong opened our second chapter, where we saw how the fan letters turned the field of Jinology around. In Chapter 3, some letters that were trusted not to be opened emerged, and changed Qiao Feng’s fate. And in Chapter 4, by reading Jin Yong’s *qingshu* (“love letters; book of love”), we learnt that the love of Yang Guo and Maiden was only possible due to the ab-sense of sexual relationship. The letter always arrives through the circulation, although not necessarily in the same field where it was sent off.

The logic of drive is love, not so much as a way to magically patch up the failed sexual relation (achieving the object of desire), but as a way of turning that oscillation between the two non-binary possibilities (the rotation around the object of desire) into a formal affirmation. There is no element that is exempt from the law (as Lacan’s third sexuation formula tells us). When we read novels with love and apply a parallax view in seeing the forced choice between love and duty, one will find “it” (as in “This is not *it*!”) in every romance story, and will find that every scenario *is* love, *is* ethics, without exception.

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Appendix

The Sexuation Diagram, and more

In this appendix we will explore the sexuation diagram we looked at in Chapter 4 in greater detail: in particular, the bar and the division in the middle of the diagram, with a focus on the mathemes and conjunctures in the lower sector. We will compare the sexuation diagram with other diagrams and mathemes, such as the graph of desire, the mathemes for metaphor and metonymy, and the four discourses diagrammed in Chapter 2. It will let us further the discussion on sexual identities and gender politics, by investigating the potential as well as the limits of Lacan's theory of sexual difference.

The bar and the division

Why is the diagram divided into an upper sector and a lower sector?

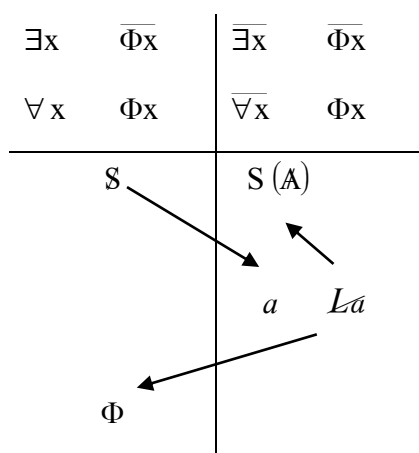


Fig. 6.1. Sexuation diagram: bar and division

The first place to look, in order to understand the relation between the two sectors separated by a horizontal bar, is Lacan's modification of the Saussurian pair of signifier and signified, $\frac{S}{s}$ in "The Instance of the Letter" (*Ecrits* 428). There, the S (signifier) sitting atop the small cased s (signified) model is soon complicated or modified into the infamous diagram of the washrooms: "Gentlemen" and "Ladies" on top, with two identical doors underneath the bar:

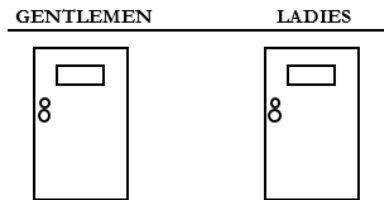


Fig. 6.2. “Gentlemen” and “Ladies” (Lacan, *Ecrits* 416)

Žižek calls the two doors “imaginary referents,” claiming that “at the level of the imaginary referent, *there is no difference... the same door reproduced twice*” (Žižek, “The Real” 338). The two doors are indistinguishable, or will be totally so without the letters written over them. In the sexuation diagram, however, while the topology of top and bottom remains, not only do the imaginary referents become recognisable in symbols, but the symbols are also represented in conjunctions, linked even, by arrows that shoot from one side to the other. There are now some differences between the imaginary referents of the feminine and the masculine.

In “Instance,” the signifier crosses the bar and reigns the signified. Here in *Seminar XX* we cannot but theorise that the reigning also works the other way. If symbolic attempts fail, then the signified meanings only further spell out how these attempts of sexuation fail, to materialise the failures in the imaginary lures and “sexual identifications”:

Underneath—that is, below the horizontal bar where the vertical bar (*division*) is crossed over, that division of what is improperly called humanity insofar as humanity is [supposed to be] divided up into sexual identifications—you have a scandé [punctuated] indication of what is in question. On the side of man, I have inscribed S, certainly not to privilege him in any way, and the Φ that props him up as signifier and is also incarnated in S1. . . .

(*Seminar XX* 80; addition is translation of Gallagher)⁸⁸

⁸⁸ French text of the passage:

*Au-dessous, sous la barre, la barre transversale où se croise la division verticale de ce qu'on appelle improprement l'humanité en tant qu'elle se répartirait en identifications sexuelles, vous avez l'indication, l'indication scandée, de ce dont ils'agit, c'est à savoir, à savoir qu'à la place du partenaire sexuel du côté de l'homme, de cet homme que j'ai - non certes pour le privilégier d'aucune façon—inscrit ici du S, et de ce Φ qui le supporte comme signifiant [S1] (Lacan *Séminaire* 20)*

where “any *subject* is able to situate herself on either side” (check quote closure); the other level is imaginary, which entails “successive identifications that constitute the ego” (usually identification with one or both parents) (*Lacanian Subject* 116). The lower part of the sexuation diagram is then a sketchier version, or rather, it shows differently punctuated relations of the imaginary elements in the graph of desire, with the addition of focusing on the division between the sexes:

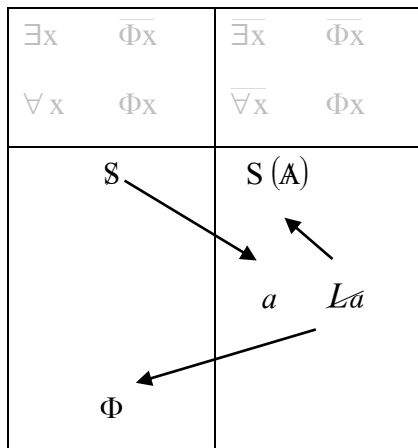


Fig. 6.1.a. Sexuation diagram: lower sector

“[A]t the place of the sexual partner on the side of the man,” we have the divided subject (quoted in the above passage; also see note 3). The subject here is a sexual being, propped up as signifier by the phallus, Φ . The phallus is “also incarnated in S_1 ” (*Seminar XX* 80). S_1 is the master signifier in the diagram of the four discourses (Chapter 2).

Following the four discourses theory, the split subject can be regarded as being related to the hysteric or the obsessive. Fink argues that the “masculine structure is in certain respects synonymous in Lacan’s work with obsessive neurosis,” the feminine structure the hysteric (*Lacanian Subject* 106-07). The feminine split subject, as we looked at in Chapter 4, is the crossed out $L\bar{a}$ on the feminine side. What also interests us here is the vertical arrangement of the divided subject and S_1 that props it up. When it comes to signification, the standard allocation is always vertical, ever since Saussure’s linguistic invention of the “signifier” and the “signified”:

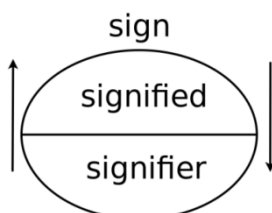


Fig. 6.4. Saussure’s diagram of the sign

When reading “Instance of the Letter,” Fink claims that Lacan in this seminar “strives to debunk” “the fantasy of the whole” (*Lacan to the Letter* 166). The “whole” here refers to the unity between the signifier and the signified in Saussurian theory, and what Lacan does is to first release the two elements from the capsule and flips the structure upside down into $\frac{S}{s}$.

In “Instance,” the same vertical structure has two other spin-outs, both relating to sexualization. But even before Lacan draws the two doors of “Gentlemen” and “Ladies,” there is already a dissension between metaphor and metonymy. Lacan, adopting Roman Jakobson’s linguistic theory, links metaphor with “vertical dependencies” and metonymy with the “horizontal signifying chain” (*Ecrits* 428). The former describes the position of S on top of Φ on the side of man, while the latter is witnessed on the side of woman. The object of desire of man, a , is metonymically or horizontally positioned with $L\bar{a}$, the crossed out, barred (*barré*) Woman.

In $S(A)$ the Other is crossed out (*barré*), and so is Woman. The same bar (*barre*) that crosses them out can be found in the metonymy structure. In () on the right hand side of the “equation” there is a “minus” sign:

$$\text{Metonymy} \quad f(S \dots S')S \cong S (-) s$$

$$\text{Metaphor} \quad f\left(\frac{S'}{S}\right)S \cong S (+) s$$

Fig. 6.5. Metonymy and metaphor (*Ecrits* 428-29)

The bar, according to Lacan, “denotes the irreducible nature of the resistance of signification as constituted in the relations between signifier and signified” (*Ecrits* 428). In contrast, the metaphoric structure gives us a “plus” inside (). Whereas metonymy resists signification, metaphor “brings the signification in question into existence: the + sign “manifest[s] here [in] the crossing of the bar” (*Ecrits* 429).

The signs themselves, at first glance, do not seem to be value free. The signifiers “minus” and “plus” say as much. Once they are corresponding to femininity and masculinity, the “inequality” between the two sides becomes even more telling. Woman is not only crossed out but is in lack (lack of the phallus), whereas the male side has the phallus, or is the phallus, for the male function indeed is associated with metaphor (for the vertical arrangement of the two elements, split subject and the phallus). On the other hand, if we have a closer look at the three dots, the ellipsis, in the metonymic structure, we can argue for the opposite and give privilege to metonymy (hence femininity) over metaphor. The elision represented by the three dots is something by which “the signifier instates lack of being [*le manque de l’être*] in the object-relation, using signification’s

referral [*renvoi*] value to invest it with the desire aiming at the lack that it supports” (*Ecrits* 428). The elision or the lack of being is how the desire can be invested; the less brings out the more. Something is unsaid; when you relate it, you cannot say it all. The signifying chain of S-S’ will always be incomplete and remain not-all, as we have learned from the two feminine functions on the top of the diagram. The same reason explains $L\bar{a}$ in the bottom part of the feminine pole. Woman does not exist as a totality or as a whole. Hence, the feminine logic is consistent but incomplete. It is because of the incompleteness that it anticipates: “the signifier, by its very nature, always anticipates meaning . . . it is content to make us wait for it” (*Ecrits* 419).

As is well known, the latter argument, that femininity is metonymic and more “valuable,” is the line of argument taken by French feminist psychoanalysts such as Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. However, one of the reasons that Lacan mathematizes his theory is that the signs, or the signifiers, and consequently the mathemes written by them, are value-free. And we did see that in Chapter 4: the four mathemes on top are lines of logics and devoid of gender issues. To come back to the lower quarters, the male subject S is split and barred as well, just like $L\bar{a}$. Therefore, even in the lower quarters of the diagram where Lacan is discussing “sexual identifications,” the division is not based on biological sexes, neither does it simply correspond to social roles or cultural imagination (*Seminar XX* 80). With (+) /(-) sign demarcation, we should follow the argument further, to insist that both sexual beings are under the influence of (-), under the “horizontal bar” and it is exactly because of the resisting bar that there can be a “crossing for the emergence of signification,” which Lacan contributes to the function of the metaphor (*Ecrits* 429). Both male and female sides have been crossed over, entered, by the four symbolic formulae on top, just as the signifier, the letter S on top of the bar in Lacan’s S/s matheme dominates signification (s): “the signifier stuffs (*vient truffer*) the signified” (Lacan, *Seminar XX*, 37; Fink, *Lacan to the Letter* 83). Thus, as we have seen in Chapter 4, the ‘male’ protagonist Yang Guo zig-zags between the two sides, and through his masquerade he also has a relation with S(A). The logic works beyond the merely physical.

Fink argues that the two levels—the structural (the symbolic) and the imaginary—often come into conflict with each other in terms of sexual identity. Following that, we have to presume that there are various transactions crossing the horizontal bar that separate the symbolic formulations on top and the imaginary relations on the bottom. The two sides of the vertical division, by the same token, will also be constantly in dialogue, or in tension—and the movements occurring in the upper level will also have to be transcribed into the lower level—is there not a (+) sign right in the middle of the sexuation diagram?

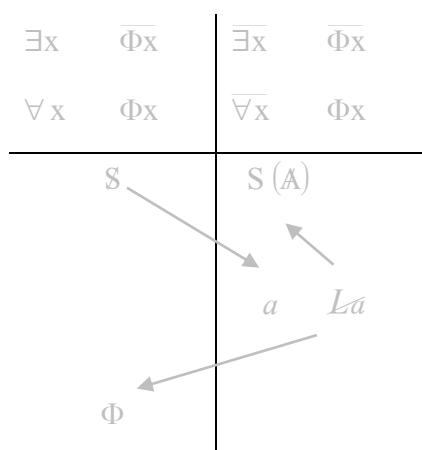


Fig. 6.1.b. Sexuation diagram: bar and division as (+) sign

Jane Gallop, reading Lacan’s “Instance of the Letter” is right to stress that the “plus sign” in the algorithm of metaphor is both vertical and horizontal, and that any “polar opposition between metaphor and metonymy (vertical versus horizontal, masculine versus feminine) is trapped in the imaginary order, subject to the play of identification and rivalry” (132).

Gallop’s argument sets out to refute the French feminist psychoanalysts who latter claim that Lacan’s writing is full of phallogentrism. Irigaray, for example, complains of the prominence of the male organ. She “accuses the privilege of metaphor (quasi solid) over metonymy (which has more to do with fluids” (qtd in Gallop 127), and by interpreting the phallus as metaphoric, Irigaray “connects the privilege of metaphor over metonymy with the phallogentric neglect of femininity” (Gallop 127). The fluid femininity for Irigaray is associated with feminine genitalia, which is latent, and metonymic. Gallop’s close reading of Lacan’s “Instance of Letter” proves otherwise: the phallus, which is always veiled, is in effect latent; its anticipatory nature makes it more metonymic than metaphoric (125-26). But, Gallop stops herself from tagging any of the male and female pole as potent or latent, metaphoric or metonymic, for she soon realises that as long as there is an attempt to privilege one pole over the other (regardless of the means and terminology), it will be “trapped in the imaginary order,” and will henceforth be just as phallogentric as the French feminists’ “amputated, unipolar” emphasis on femininity (132).⁸⁹

⁸⁹ The adjectives “amputated” and “unipolar” are Jakobson’s words. Gallop quotes Jakobson when the latter complains of a tendency for literary critics to give metaphor more prominence: “The actual bipolarity has been artificially replaced in these studies by an amputated, unipolar schema” (132).

Beyond man and woman

“One ultimately situates oneself there by choice,” states Lacan when explicating the male pole in *Seminar XX* (71). The French phrase for “situates oneself” is *se range*, which also has the meaning of settling in or settling down in a new place. Lacan’s statement henceforth suggests that those who are categorised as women can relocate themselves and settle in on the male side. By the same token, those who are defined as men can choose to immigrate to the other side and function in accordance with the feminine logic. This fluidity between the two poles seems to be supported by the movements of the four mathemes: the “saids” of the four functions shift and move, so the position where the subject utters the “said” is mobile, too. But is it really? Let us look at Lacan’s “by choice” paragraph more closely:

One ultimately situates oneself there by choice—women are free to situate themselves there if it gives them pleasure to do so. Everyone knows there are phallic women, and that the phallic function doesn’t stop men from being homosexuals. It is, nevertheless, the phallic function that helps them situate themselves as men and approach woman. (71)⁹⁰

There is a lot to unpack. Lacan mentions two unconventional “identities,” the “phallic women” and “men as homosexuals,” referring both to choice of sex and choice of love object. The use of the “phallic” in “phallic women” does not have the same neutrality as rendered in “phallic function,” a function based on pure difference. Such is the precarious status of the signifier: its signification slips and its signified is not and cannot be locked in, especially when the word is associated with “phallus” (which we have discussed in Chapter 4). Let us simply presume that the term “phallic women” refers to those who appear to have more so-called masculine features than other women. The implication is then that women, regardless of their biological sex, can function like men by

⁹⁰ Fink’s translation is based on the version published by Seuil in 1973. What follows is the same passage taken from a different French text:

c’est-à-dire du côté où se range, ensemble par choix... Libre aux femmes de s’y ranger aussi si ça leur fait plaisir- hein ? —chacun sait ça, qu’il y a des femmes phalliques ! Il est clair que la fonction phallique n’empêche pas les hommes d’être homosexuels, mais que c’est aussi bien elle [la fonction phallique] qui leur sert à se situer comme homme et aborder la femme. (Lacan Séminaire 20)

choice. The second example is “men as homosexuals.” In Fink’s translation, the two examples are placed in the same sentence, and because of that one would expect the mentioning of homosexual men to further the “by choice” claim by giving an example from the male side. But that is not the case. In the quoted French passage given in footnote 3 below, the second “example” is introduced in a different sentence and indeed on a different matter altogether. Unlike phallic women who cross over to the other side, homosexual men who desire men, regardless of their same-sex choice of love object, remain situated as men, exactly because of the phallic function. It is clear that we have a counter-example of the “by choice” claim in that homosexual men are bounded by their sex and do not have the choice to switch sides, so much so that they “approach woman” just the same (71). Is it by choice, or not by choice? We will come back to this shortly. Here I would like to follow up the thread of how a homosexual relationship is defined in the sexuation diagram.

“It is ... the phallic function that helps [homosexuals] situate themselves as men and approach women.” Lacan seems to be saying, judging by this sentence alone, that what makes a person man or woman “from a psychoanalytic perspective”⁹¹ has little to do with the sex of their desired object, that is one’s “sexual orientation” does not affect one’s inscription of a sex determined by the phallic function. But that cannot be. The phallic function introduces the father’s function, father’s no/name, and because of this every speaking being has to come out the rite of passage, the Oedipal complex that prescribes that men will desire women and women men. How to “be a man” is interrelated with how a man approaches a woman as his sexual object, and vice versa. The purpose of the sexuation diagram is to figure out the sexual rapport in a non-overlapping, not symmetrical way *between men and women* for a start. We can loosely define “sexual rapport” as any rapport between two sexes, but we cannot deny that most of the time the sexuation theory deals with the relation in which men desire women or women desire men. In other words, the sex of sexual objects matter, and homosexual men should not be any different.

Therefore, there can be two interpretations of the relation where homosexual men approach women. (1) The sexual partners of homosexual men, being biological men, are in effect psychoanalytically female. This seems to fit into the stereotype that gay couples have a role designation like heterosexual couples, one playing the man, the other the woman. But the stereotype does not hold true for all homosexual couples. (2) In the case of gay icons like Marilyn Monroe or Judy Garland, they enjoy the status of being the object of admiration. That is to say, homosexual

⁹¹ Fink is of the opinion that the analyst has to determine if the patient falls on the male pole or female pole “regardless of their biological/genetic makeup” in order to proceed with the analytic process (106; see Chapter 8 in *The Lacanian Subject*). I will use “psychoanalytic sex” to refer to the sexes defined by Lacan’s mathemes.

men do approach these women as objects of desire, but perhaps not as sexual objects. These women, and other women as well, present attraction for homosexual men through their glamour, their stories that inspire empathy, or simply by being the image of a charismatic and alluring woman. This is not unlike how a woman is for the man in a romantic or sexual relationship: what the man “approaches is the cause of his desire” and the cause of desire in Lacanian terms is the object a (*Seminar XX 72*). Here, we are of course referring to the “ $\$ \rightarrow a$ ” relation in the bottom half of the diagram:

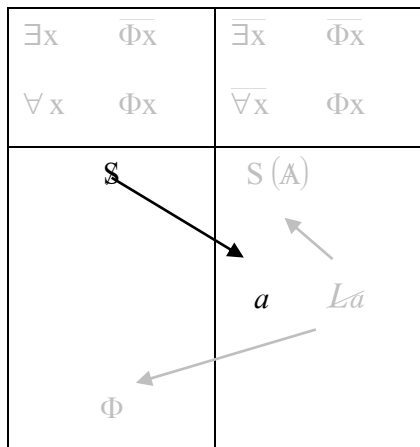


Fig. 6.1.c. Sexuation diagram: “ $\$ \rightarrow a$ ”

Lacan thus defines the relation: “this $\$$ never deals with anything by way of a partner but object a inscribed on the other side of the bar. He is unable to attain his sexual partner, who is the Other, except inasmuch as his partner is the cause of his desire” (80).

Homosexual men also approach women, doing so in the same manner as how heterosexual men approach their love partners. The corollary of this will have to be that the “ $\$ \rightarrow a$ ” orientation is not limited to a romantic or sexual relationship and can also describe other social relations that are not strictly sexual. By inference, we can say that the diagram of sexuation is not exclusive to sexual relationships between men and women. Let us recall the second spin-out of Lacan’s S/s bar series that follows the observation of the identical doors under “Gentlemen” and “Ladies”: the anecdote happening on a train:

A train arrives at a station. A little boy and a little girl, brother and sister, are seated across from each other in a compartment next to the outside window that provides a view of the station platform building going by as the train comes to a stop. “Look,” says the brother,

“we’re at Ladies!” “Imbecile!” replies his sister, “Don’t you see we’re at Gentlemen.”
(Ecrits 417)

In this first instance where “Dissension” (417) between the sexes is raised, the two parties arguing over matters of being at Ladies or at Gentlemen, are a pair of brother and sister. The sexual difference, after all, is the difference between those who call themselves men, and those who call themselves women, not the sexual difference between partners or lovers. Although it is true that when Lacan goes on to the lower quarters of the sexuation diagram, he treats the oriented conjunctions ($\$ \rightarrow a; \mathcal{L}\bar{a} \rightarrow \Phi; \mathcal{L}\bar{a} \rightarrow S(A)$) mainly in terms of sexual relations, it should not stop us from making the inference that the relation investigated by the diagram can be social, too, and even as inclusive as any relations staged between any man and any woman (who are psychoanalytically defined so). The logic of sexuation may then apply to, for example, relations between a child and his mother or father (depending on how the parents are categorised in sex psychoanalytically), for the reason of transference. The sexuation can apply to the relation between the analysand and the analyst, too, again due to the work of transference. The upper level of the analytic discourse can be seen as the same $\$ \rightarrow a$ relation inverted by the analyst when the analysis is proceeded properly:

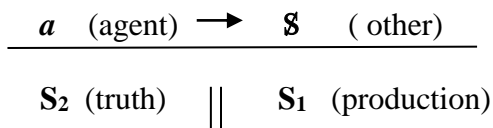


Fig. 2.6. The analyst’s discourse

To push it even further, any relation with an obscene kernel can be understood in terms of Lacanian mathemes: “the oriented conjunction of $\$$ and a is nothing other than fantasy” after all (80). The fantasy can be a sexual fantasy, it can also be a social fantasy, as Žižek elucidates in his *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Put very briefly, for anti-Semitism, the Jew is but the imagined obscene Other (located in the female pole), functioning as the cause of desire that ensures the fantasy of a wholesome society (which is a male logic). Therefore, although Lacan mostly talks about the sexual relation between men and women, his example of homosexual men and their object a makes us infer that any relations concerning desire, enjoyment, and affect, can be understood by the male logic, as well as by the feminine logic, as drawn out in the sexuation diagram.

All relationships work, provided that the two parties occupy two separate poles. Is it then possible to imagine a relationship where both are situated in the same pole? Even though we argue

that the sexuation is beyond the sexual, it is mainly on the sexual relationship after all, and that should not exclude same-sex relations. What if in a homosexual relationship, both partners are psychoanalytically female, or psychoanalytically male? According to Fink, had “object (a) functioned as the sole partner for both of them—at least their desire as sexuated beings would be structured in some sort of parallel (*homosexuelle*) way. . . . But the dissymmetry of their partners is utter and complete . . .” (*Lacanian Subject* 121). Even if the desires of the two partners share some parallelism, the disjunction between the partners remains unbreakable, because one still does not complete the other, and the two miss each other just the same. For a female same-sex relation, it will not make a perfect match, either. Whichever way you look at it, there is no sexual relationship; it is just that the way homosexual pairs miss each other may be different from how a man and a woman miss each other or do not match in the relationship. How differently can that be done? Can it still be configured by using the same sexuation diagram? These questions are too much beyond the scope of the thesis, and I will leave them for further study in the future.

Does choice matter?

Having thus clarified the choice of the sex of one’s partner, now we can continue with the investigation of the other choice: can one situate oneself, by choice, on any of the two poles? As mentioned, homosexual men have no choice but to stay on the male side and approach women in the same way as heterosexual men do; however, it does not mean homosexual men would not choose to be on the feminine side.⁹² Choices are open in two other circumstances when we read on in *Seminar XX*. Discussing mysticism, Lacan suggests that when one is male, one “can also situate oneself on the side of the not-whole,” namely, on the feminine side, for there are male mystics (76). Addressing the feminine pole, Lacan writes: “Any speaking being whatsoever . . . whether provided with the attributes of masculinity—attributes that remain to be determined—or not, is allowed to inscribe itself in this [masculine] part” (80). We can for the moment conclude that, in *Seminar XX* at least, Lacan considers the psychoanalytic sex as switchable. What is unclear is whether one can really do so at will, by one’s *free* choice. After all, in psychoanalytic theory a choice is never free, it

⁹² Of course there is also a choice issue in terms of homosexuality: can one “choose” to be with a same-sex partner? Or is it all just a matter of genetics or biology? And yet, can there be anything purely determined by biology, especially when we want to celebrate Lacan’s endeavour in thinking of the two sexes as being free of a biological set-up? But, in order not to complicate things further, we will stop here.

is either done without our knowing, or given without an alternative choice, hence a forced choice or false choice.

Thwaites argues that between the two positions, it is “impossible not to switch around over and over during the course of a single day, or not to occupy both irreducible and subcontrary places (151). Given the mobility between the four formulae on top of the diagram, the change of psychoanalytic sex should be just like how we go through different social scenes and accordingly play different roles (parental relation, work environment, dog park group, etc), sometimes “multi-tasking” as we go, without even having time to think “Ah, now it is time to change to...” In other words, such switching can only be done unconsciously, therefore not leaving much space for free choice. There can be moments when one fails in performing the switching. But that is only part of the sexualization logic, because both male and female logics are already failures at making sense of sexual difference.

No matter which you choose, you will fail in your choosing, that is the definition of Lacan’s forced choice. All choices are false choices, albeit superficially posited as “choices.” Let us search for more clues in *L’Étourdit*. In this text, Lacan particularly elaborates on the feminine part: “That the subject here proposes itself to be called woman depends on two modes,” the two modes in the female pole (70; fr 22a). He then goes on to argue that the male function—achieved in the first two formulae—“fortifies [*retranche*] itself against” the feminine function, the latter being “cut off from it” (76; fr 24d). “Why withdraw oneself in this way from the ‘feminine’ side?” Fierens asks, in his reading of *L’Étourdit*: “It is a matter of a defence, a protection, a retrenching before the enigma of the ‘notall’ ... ‘the man’ ‘entrenches himself’ in the fortress of the first two phallic formulae” (First Turn/130). While the subject which proposes itself to be called man prefers to stay on the side of the masculine, “some women do not disdain to take up the running in” the male function (*L’Étourdit* 76; fr 24d). For this kind of woman who ventures into the masculine side, Fierens gives a list of likely examples: “Jeanne d’Arc, Catherine de Médicis or Madame de Maintenon,” who lead “the dance of history which is a masculine affair” (First Turn/130). Take Jeanne d’Arc as an example. Her choice is a “she has no choice but to” kind of choice: leaders are male, players of politics are male, and in order to pass as a male leader, she has to cross-dress. She invokes the voice of God, which recognises her as what she claims to be, although she is clearly seen as a woman by all. In modern history, we may name Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, as an example of one of these women. Thatcher, as a woman, has to do a lot more in order to play the man’s politics and run the political sphere that is dominated by men. But at the same time, she has to insist or even “drag up” her femininity by employing the hairdo, the dress, and impeccable make-up.

What we are certain is that, yes, a man can take up the female position, and a woman can adopt the male position. Nevertheless, to think this in terms of the bisexuality that Freud theorises,

even though we all have the potential to be bisexual, not all of us will attempt to switch from one sexual preference to another (from heterosexual desire to same-sex desire, or vice versa). Even if we are determined to do so, it is far more complicated than just trying out a new outfit “by choice” or “at will,” and have it stripped later when it does not suit us. The same goes with sexuation: sure there are two poles, or two parts of a logic, between which we can take a side, but not all of us will want to switch sides or be able to achieve a switch of sides. Furthermore, the matter of changing sides may just be “sexist.” It is much harder for a person who is inscribed in the male position to run the feminine logic, than a person who calls herself a woman to manage the male logic. There is something about the feminine logic that makes it hard to live up to. For Fierens, as just mentioned, the hardship involved in the femininity lies in the not-all. It is “the enigma of the ‘notall’” that men protect themselves from (130). On the other hand, if you choose to stick with the feminine logic and embrace the not-all, you may gain a moment of drive, of ethics. The metaphor Zupančič uses, as seen in Chapter 4, is the Möbius strip: “if we persist in moving on one of its sides, we will suddenly find ourselves on the ‘other’ side” (*Ethics* 244). The key word is “moment.” No one can persist in living up to the feminine logic all the time. And for those who do—Antigone, Media, and Sygne de Coûfontaine, for example—they reach the moment between two deaths, before the physical death and after the symbolic death. It is not that a man cannot achieve an ethical act like these female figures do (Yang Guo comes very close to it); however, if the ethical figures in psychoanalysis are all female, then it must mean that if one already calls oneself a woman, hence having stayed more or less within the feminine logic, it will be easier for one to achieve an ethical act, to approach the not-all. Lacan’s sexuation theory and its mathemes provide a metapsychology of gender, in the sense in which Freud refers to psychoanalysis as metapsychology: the sexuation mathemes are the conditions under which there can be something like gender and sexuality.