Contemporary Literary Criticism

CLC 358

Contemporary Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works of Today's Novelists, Poets, Playwrights, Short-Story Writers, Scriptwriters, and Other Creative Writers





Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol. 358

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Contemporary Literary Criticism

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Preface

amed "one of the twenty-five most distinguished reference titles published during the past twenty-five years" by *Reference Quarterly*, the *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (*CLC*) series provides readers with critical commentary and general information on more than 3,000 authors from 91 countries now living or who died after December 31, 1999. Before the publication of the first volume of *CLC* in 1973, there was no ongoing digest monitoring scholarly and popular sources of critical opinion and explication of modern literature. *CLC*, therefore, has fulfilled an essential need, particularly since the complexity and variety of contemporary literature makes the function of criticism especially necessary to today's reader.

Scope of the Series

CLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors of the twenty-first century. Volumes published from 1973 through 1999 covered authors who died after December 31, 1959. Since January 2000, the series has covered authors who are living or who died after December 31, 1999; those who died between 1959 and 2000 are now included in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. There is minimal duplication of content between series.

Authors are selected for inclusion for a variety of reasons, among them the publication or production of a critically acclaimed new work, the reception of a major literary award, revival of interest in past writings, or the adaptation of a literary work to film or television.

Attention is also given to several other groups of writers—authors of considerable public interest—about whose work criticism is often difficult to locate. These include mystery and science-fiction writers, literary and social critics, world authors, and authors who represent particular ethnic groups.

Each *CLC* volume contains individual essays and reviews selected from hundreds of review periodicals, general magazines, scholarly journals, monographs, and books. Entries include critical evaluations spanning an author's career from its inception to current commentary. Interviews, feature articles, and other works that offer insight into the author's works are also presented. Students, teachers, librarians, and researchers will find that the general critical and biographical material in *CLC* provides them with vital information required to write a term paper, analyze a poem, or lead a book discussion group. In addition, complete bibliographical citations note the original source and all of the information necessary for a term paper footnote or bibliography.

CLC is part of the survey of criticism and world literature that is contained in Gale's Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC), Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC), Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800 (LC), Shakespearean Criticism (SC), and Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism (CMLC).

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A CLC entry consists of the following elements:

■ The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Singlework entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the author's name.

- The Introduction contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication information of each work is given. In the case of works not published in English, a translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is a published translated title or a free translation provided by the compiler of the entry. As a further aid to the reader, a list of **Principal English Translations** is provided for authors who did not publish in English; the list selects those translations most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, plays are dated by first performance, not first publication, and the location of the first performance is given, if known. Lists of **Representative Works** discussed in the entry appear with topic entries.
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- A complete Bibliographical Citation of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Citations conform to recommendations set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed. (2009).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief Annotations describing each piece.
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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *CLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of titles published in other languages and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, plays, nonfiction books, and poetry, short-story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *CLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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Jin Yong 1924-

(Pseudonym of Zha Liangyong, Cha-Leung-yung in Cantonese; also wrote under the pseudonyms Louis Cha Leung-yung and Louis Cha) Chinese novelist and journalist.

INTRODUCTION

Jin Yong is the author of the world's best-selling Chinese martial-arts novels. His works are read in communities of Chinese-language readers all over the world and have been translated into numerous Asian languages, including Thai, Bahasa Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Malay, though little of his work is available in English. It is estimated that more than one hundred million copies of his fifteen novels have been sold, and they have been adapted for radio, television, film, graphic novels, and video games. In addition to his immense popularity among Chinese-language readers of all ages and classes, Jin Yong has been lauded for transcending the boundaries of genre fiction, producing work that combines traditional Chinese philosophy, literature, and religion with crowd-pleasing, action-filled plots and compelling characters.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The author known as Jin Yong was born Zha Liangyong into a family of scholars in Haining, in the Zhejiang province of China, on 6 February 1924. He studied at Hangzhou High School and Jiaxing No. 1 High School until he was expelled for his outspoken critique of the Nationalist Party of Chiang Kai Shek, which ruled mainland China from 1928 to 1949. He pursued studies in foreign languages at Chongqing Central University, from which he was also expelled after complaining that another student was spying on his classmates for the Nationalist Party. In 1946, Jin Yong began work on a degree in international law at Soochow University in Shanghai, and, after receiving his degree in 1948, he took a job as a journalist for the newspaper Da Gong Bao. In 1952, he was dispatched to the newspaper's Hong Kong headquarters, and he rose to deputy editorship of the evening edition of that paper, Xin Wan Bao. As John Christopher Hamm (2005) explained, Jin Yong became interested in martial-arts fiction through his friend and colleague at the paper, Chen Wentong, the author of the martial-arts novel Longhu Dou Jinghua, which was serialized in Xin Wan Bao in 1954 following a historic boxing match between Wu Gongyi and Chen Kefu in Macau. The match, which pitted a master of traditional Chinese martial arts against a fighter whose training had been partially westernized, generated intense public interest conducive to the emergence of a new kind of martial-arts fiction, which became popular among the many Chinese refugees who had fled mainland China during the Communist Revolution of 1949.

In this atmosphere, he began writing his first martial-arts novel, *Shujian enchou lu* (published as *The Book and the Sword* in 2004), which was serialized in *Xin Wan Bao* in 1955 under the pseudonym Jin Yong. The novel rapidly established his popularity and contributed to newspaper sales as eager readers devoured the story in thousand-character installments. Jin Yong continued to write *wuxia* (chivalric stories about the martial arts) serializations after he left the newspaper in 1957 to work as a screenwriter and director at Great Wall Movie Enterprises and the Phoenix Film Company.

In 1959, Jin Yong established his own newspaper, *Ming Pao*, with Shen Baoxin, a former high-school classmate. As editor-in-chief, he contributed *wuxia* serials (as Jin Yong) to the paper's pages, as well as columns and editorials. The newspaper grew to become Hong Kong's most respected daily news source, though sales were also driven by the public's hunger for its martial-arts stories.

In addition to his *wuxia*, each of which first appeared in serial form in newspapers between 1955 and 1972, Jin Yong has also produced articles and essays on other topics, such as Chinese religious and military history, the future of Hong Kong, and Chinese culture. He has also held political positions, serving from 1985 to 1989 on the Hong Kong Basic Law drafting committee. He resigned to protest the massacre at Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. He served as a senior adviser to the Chinese government regarding the British handover of Hong Kong in 1997. Jin Yong stopped writing novels in 1972 and sold his stake in *Ming Pao* in 1993.

MAJOR WORKS

The Book and the Sword is set during the eighteenth century, when China was ruled by the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), and follows the adventures of the Red Flower Society, a secret organization devoted to the overthrow of the Qianlong emperor's Manchu rule and the reestablishment of Han rule in China. The society is commanded by fifteen leaders, the fourth of whom, Wen Tailai, is kidnapped by the emperor to prevent him from revealing secrets. Led by its chief, Chen Jialuo, the society sets out to rescue Wen. On their way, they assist a group of Muslim

tribesmen in recovering a stolen Koran—the "book" of the title. As they continue their journey, Chen Jialuo meets the emperor, who is traveling in disguise, and the two men befriend each other. When their true identities become known they both grow suspicious and angry. A martialarts tournament arranged between the emperor's men and the Red Flower Society proves the superiority of the society's warriors. Chen Jialuo subsequently rescues Wen Tailai and makes the shocking discovery that the Qianlong emperor is not only really a Han Chinese but also Chen Jialuo's older brother, who was switched with another infant at birth. Later, Chen Jialuo encounters the Muslim tribe again and falls in love with a princess named Kasili. The emperor also falls in love with Kasili, however, and asks her to become his concubine. Upon learning that the emperor intends to destroy the Red Flower Society, Kasili commits suicide in order to warn Chen Jialuo. A battle ensues, and the Qianlong emperor is forced to come to a truce with the society. The Red Flower warriors then depart for the western regions after paying their respects at Kasili's grave.

The novel Xueshan feihu (published as Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain in 1993) was serialized in Xin Wan Bao in 1959. It is also set during the Qianlong emperor's reign and takes place over the course of a single day. The story begins with the discovery by a group of martial artists of a treasure chest containing a precious sword. They fight over it until a monk named Baoshu intervenes and asks for their help in defeating an enemy named Hu Fei (Flying Fox). The fighters then begin to tell the story of the sword, as well as their own personal histories. They are all descendants of four bodyguards employed by the warlord Li Zicheng. Misunderstandings among the bodyguards led to feuding and the pursuit of vendettas that have continued for generations. One of the warriors, believing that his daughter has been molested by Hu Fei, challenges him to a duel; in truth, however, Hu Fei wants to marry the daughter. The story ends with the two men fighting at the edge of a cliff that is about to collapse.

Xiaoao jianghu (may be translated as The Smiling, Proud Wanderer), serialized in Ming Pao from 1967 to 1969, is considered a political allegory of China in the 1960s, when Mao Zedong, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. instituted the massive and devastating social changes of the Cultural Revolution. The novel opens with a battle over a renowned manual of martial arts that has been passed down through generations of the Lin family. After the melee, Lin Pingzhi, the sole survivor of the Lin family, is rescued by a member of the Five Mountains Sword Sects Alliance and becomes a pupil there. Within this alliance, there is much in-fighting, and Linghu Chong, the hero of the story, finds himself at the center of the conflict, in the course of which he suffers many wounds. He rescues a young girl, Ren Yingying, from an attack, and she takes him to the Shaolin monastery to recover. He learns

there that he has been expelled from the Five Mountains Sword Sects Alliance, whereupon he decides to become a wandering knight, independently rescuing those in need. Eventually, he finds himself again in the presence of his former master and Lin Pingzhi, who have both castrated themselves in order to master the swordplay of the secret manual. They then slay each other's wives. After fighting leaves nearly all parties dead or disabled, Ren Yingying, having been appointed head of the Sun Moon Holy Cult, insists upon a truce. She marries Linghu Chong and, disillusioned with the conflicts of the world, they retire from martial arts.

Serialized in Ming Pao from 1969 to 1972, Luding ji (published as The Deer and the Cauldron in 1997-2003) is Jin Yong's final novel. Its protagonist is an antihero, the lazy, illiterate but cunning Wei Xiaobao, who is the son of a prostitute. Through a series of adventures, Wei finds himself in the Forbidden City, the imperial palace, where he befriends the Kangxi emperor, who reigned from 1661 to 1722. Wei is captured by a gang of martial artists, however, and he eventually swears allegiance to the antigovernment Heaven and Earth Society. Through luck and craftiness, he manages a series of coups on behalf of the imperial government, including the rescue of the presumed-dead father of the Kangxi emperor and the execution of a successful campaign against the Russian Empire. At the same time, he assists the Heaven and Earth Society in escaping imperial punishment on several occasions. Upon discovering his divided loyalty, the Kangxi emperor insists that Wei must choose sides. Unwilling to choose, Wei retreats to an unknown location, never to be seen again.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

As the most famous living writer of Chinese fiction, Jin Yong has been the subject of much critical attention. Critics have been largely preoccupied with the reasons for Jin Yong's worldwide popularity and the literary value of his works. On the subject of the author's popularity, Simon Elegant (1996; see Further Reading) cited translator John Minford's suggestion that Jin Yong's works respond to the cultural vacancy left behind by the ravages of the Cultural Revolution, and produce a "cultural euphoria" through stories that venerate traditional arts and historical settings and plots. Hamm (1999) explained that Jin Yong's nationalistic stories held particular value for Chinese refugees dispersed by civil war in 1949.

In response to the question of the literary value of Jin Yong's works, John Minford (1997; see Further Reading) described the writer as a master of Chinese traditions who was also sensitive to Western literary and cinematic influences. Meir Shahar (1998) suggested that through studying the use of martial arts in Jin Yong's fiction, readers can see that "the evolution of Chinese martial-arts fiction isn't

unrelated to the history of Chinese martial-arts practice." According to Shahar, Jin Yong's fiction "mirrors the profound transformation that the Chinese martial-arts underwent during the Qing period." Petrus Liu (2011) argued that, despite their nostalgic orientation toward China's past, Jin Yong's novels address the contemporary situation of the stateless subject through their treatment of the independent warrior. In his comparison of the protagonists of two novels by Jin Yong and Lu Xun, who is widely considered China's most important writer of the twentieth century, Paul B. Foster (2004) suggested that the characters demonstrate the authors' differing assessments of the Chinese national character.

Irene Hsiao

*PRINCIPAL WORKS

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- Shujian enchou lu [published as The Book and the Sword]. Xin Wan Bao [Hong Kong] 8 Feb.-5 Sept. 1955. 2 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1975. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2003. (Novel)
- Bu yao li kai wo [may be translated as Never Leave Me]. Great Wall Movie Enterprises and Phoenix Film, 1955. (Screenplay)
- Bixue jian [may be translated as The Sword Stained with Royal Blood]. Xianggang shangbao 1 Jan.-31 Dec. 1956. 2 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1975. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2003. (Novel)
- San lian [may be translated as The Three Loves]. Great Wall Movie Enterprises and Phoenix Film, 1956. (Screenplay)
- San jianlou suibi [may be translated as Essays from Three-Sword Pavilion]. With Baijian Tangzhu and Liang Yusheng. Hong Kong: Wenzong chubanshe, 1957. (Essays)
- Shediao yingxiong zhuan [may be translated as The Eagle-Shooting Heroes]. Ming Pao [Hong Kong] 1 Jan. 1957-19 May 1959. 4 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1978.
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- Lan hua hua [may be translated as When You Were Not with Me]. Great Wall Movie Enterprises and Phoenix Film, 1958. (Screenplay)
- Xiao ge zi u niang [may be translated as *The Fairy Dove*]. Great Wall Movie Enterprises and Phoenix Film, 1958. (Screenplay)

- You nii huai chun [may be translated as The Nature of Spring]. Great Wall Movie Enterprises and Phoenix Film, 1958. (Screenplay)
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- Shendiao xialü [may be translated as The Giant Eagle and Its Companion]. Ming Pao [Hong Kong] 20 Apr. 1959-12 Oct. 1961. 4 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1976. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2003. (Novel)
- Wang Laohu qiangqin [may be translated as *The Bride Hunter*]. Great Wall Movie Enterprises and Phoenix Film, 1960. (Screenplay)
- Feihu waizhuan [may be translated as The Young Flying Fox]. Wu Xia Yu Lishi 1960-61. 2 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1976. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2004. (Novel)
- Yitian tulong ji [may be translated as The Heaven Sword and the Dragon Saber]. Ming Pao [Hong Kong] 6 July 1961-2 Sept. 1963. 4 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1976. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2005. (Novel)
- Suxin jian [may be translated as The Pure-Hearted Swordsman]. Dongnanya zhoukan 1963. Pub. as Liancheng jue [may be translated as A Deadly Secret]. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1977. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2004. (Novel)
- Tianlong babu [may be translated as The Demigods and Semi-devils]. Ming Pao [Hong Kong] 3 Sept. 1963-27 May 1966. 5 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1978. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2005. (Novel)
- Xiake xing [may be translated as Song of the Swordsman]. Ming Pao [Hong Kong] 11 June 1966-19 Apr. 1967. 2 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1977. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2004. (Novel)
- Xiaoao jianghu [may be translated as *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer*]. *Ming Pao* [Hong Kong] 20 Apr. 1967-12 Oct. 1969. 4 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1978. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2006. (Novel)
- Luding ji [published as The Deer and the Cauldron]. Ming Pao [Hong Kong] 24 Oct. 1969-23 Sept. 1972. 5 vols. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1981. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2006. (Novel)
- Zai Tai suojian, suowen, suosi [may be translated as Observations and Reflections on a Visit to Taiwan]. Hong Kong: Ming Pao youxian gongsi, 1973. (Essays)

Jin Yong zuopin ji [may be translated as The Collected Works of Jin Yong]. 36 vols. Hong Kong: Ming Ho, 1974-98. (Essays, novels, and short stories)

Xueshan feihu; Baima xiao xifeng; Yuanyang dao [may be translated as Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain; The White Horse Neighs in the West Wind; Mandarin Duck Blades]. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1976. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2004. (Novel and short stories)

Yuenii jian; Sanshisan jianke tu [may be translated as Sword of the Yue Maiden; Illustrations of the Thirty-Three Swordsmen]. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1977. Rev. ed. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2004. (Novel and short story)

Tanqiu yige canlan de shiji: Jin Yong, Daisaku Ikeda duihualu [may be translated as Compassionate Light in Asia: Dialog between Jin Yong and Daisaku Ikeda]. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 1998. (Dialogs)

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Jin Yong sanwen [may be translated as Jin Yong's Essays]. Hong Kong: Ming He she, 2007. (Essays)

Principal English Translations

On Hong Kong's Future: A Collection of Ming Pao's Editorials. Trans. Stephen Wang. Hong Kong: Ming Pao Daily News, 1984. Print.

Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain. Trans. Olivia Mok. Hong Kong: Chinese UP, 1993. Print. Trans. of Xueshan feihu.

The Deer and the Cauldron: A Martial Arts Novel. 3 vols. Trans. John Minford. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997-2003. Print. Trans. of Luding ji.

The Book and the Sword. Trans. Graham Earnshaw. Ed. Rachel May and Minford. Hong Kong: Oxford UP, 2004. Print. Trans. of Shujian enchou lu.

*Jin Yong's publication history is complicated. His works were first published in serial form in Hong Kong and circulated underground in Taiwan before they were published in book form in mainland China much later. He revised all of his works in the 1970s and 1980s and again between 1999 and 2006.

CRITICISM

Robert E. Hegel (review date 1994)

SOURCE: Hegel, Robert E. Rev. of Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain, trans. Olivia Mok. CLEAR: Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews 16 (1994): 203-04. Print.

[In the following review, Hegel evaluates Mok's translation of Jin Yong's Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain.

He explains Jin Yong's wild popularity among Chineselanguage readers throughout the world. Hegel provides a summary of the novel, points out its difficulties for Western readers, and criticizes Mok's decision to use formal, archaic English to render Jin's text.]

Advertising copy for this thick volume announces that Jin Yong (pen name of Louis Cha, born 1924 in Zhejiang but for many years a resident of Hong Kong) is "the best known Chinese writer of his generation," I would expect that he has sold more books than any other writer, excepting, perhaps, Hao Ran (and maybe Mao Zedong). But while Hao Ran reportedly sold hundreds of thousands of copies on the mainland during the Cultural Revolution when there was little other fiction to read, Jin Yong has produced at least a dozen of the most popular wuxia adventure novels ever written—to be found in bookstores and other shops in every city around the world that has a substantial Chinese population. This is one of the first complete translations into English from this genre of novels (Blades from the Willows [Liuhu xiayin] by Huanzhulouzhu, translated by Richard Chard, was published by Wellsweep in London, 1991), giving foreigners a taste of the best of the fiction that provoked so many movies and has filled so many idle hours for countless Chinese readers.

Fox Volant [Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain] is a rendering of Xueshan Feihu, a one-volume novel first serialized in Ming bao in 1959 and subsequently made into both a television series and a feature film. Its cast of characters is large and confusing (the translator provides several lists and genealogical tables to help keep them straight); it narrates a number of seemingly final confrontations between various armed factions descended from Li Zicheng and other military leaders from the seventeenthcentury change of dynasty. By invitation members of the Four Families, the Dragon Lodge, and various professional bodyguards and bandit gangs assemble at the villa of one of their number atop the insurmountable peak of a remote northern mountain. It is deep winter, and all rock surfaces are coated with ice. Once the rope-and-pulley elevator is destroyed, the warriors can either decimate each other or learn to cooperate in solving the mystery of the lost martial treasure and deciding who among them is to blame for its disappearance. Needless to say, there is a good deal of fighting but little death; the fun of the contests is in the flamboyant moves by feet, hands, elbows, and a bewildering array of weapons (some-but not all-of which are identified with pictures in the introductory matter of the book). To increase its appeal, the story has intrigue, betrayal, combat in the dark and deep in caves-it even has, through indirect narration, illicit sexual liaisons! The novel is built around confessions and oral testimonies about events of a generation before: in the novelist's skillful hands, the reader, like the viewer of the majestic Japanese film Rashomon, is treated to conflicting, even contradictory, versions of the same events. There is no "truth" in this

delightful fiction; each narrator shapes events to justify him/herself or an ancestor for the violence each perpetrates as the honor of the knight-errant comes head-on into conflict with base greed. Sorting out these versions is fun enough; the novel's indeterminate ending leaves one confounded over which of two fighters will finally be able to remain stuck to an icy ledge and cast his opponent into the blackness below. Appropriately, a lovely maiden awaits the outcome of this mighty battle as well. (Appropriately, too, Jin Yong published *Feihu waizhuan* somewhat later to fill in some of the gaps.)

Translating a popular novel of this sort is a difficult business. It is filled with details to delight the aficionado of the genre, names for martial arts forms and moves, weapons, references to Chinese history, philosophy, and other stories. Olivia Mok has endeavored to balance precision in translation with the necessary aura of mystery and exoticism; consequently the warriors seek the missing "poniard," "piquing" each other's "paralytic points" at every opportunity, speaking in stiff formal terms even when addressing family members. The use of archaic and exotic European terms and a tendency toward rather literal translation of dialogue makes the English slow to read and may dismay readers who are used to fiction that revolves around plot rather than style. And surely Jin Yong's fiction is stylish, a fact hard to convey into another language. For this reason Western readers may not be captured by this rendition, despite the valiant efforts of its translator and the rare view she offers of this unmistakably Chinese genre. Who knows—if Japanese manga (comics) and the philosophical cartoons of Taiwan's Tsai Chih-chung can seize the imagination of Western readers, a foreign market for wuxia xiaoshuo in translation may be next to develop!

Meir Shahar (essay date 1998)

SOURCE: Shahar, Meir. "Martial-Arts Fiction and Martial-Arts Practice: The Concept of *Qi* in Jin Yong's Novels." *Jin Yong xiaoshuo guoji xueshu yanjiu hui = Proceedings of the International Conference on Jin Yong's Novels.* Ed. Wang Quigui. Taipei: Yuan-Liou, 1999. 105-39. Print.

[In the following essay, originally presented at a conference in 1998, Shahar discusses how the representation of the martial arts in Jin Yong's novels reflects twentieth-century developments in technique, particularly with respect to the idea of moving freely with qi (vital energy). Shahar points out that in writing his action scenes, Jin Yong researched martial-arts manuals, which began to include instruction regarding qi during the Qing dynasty. Chinese characters originally in this essay have been silently removed.]

I. INTRODUCTION

In one of the climactic moments of Jin Yong's (1924-) Extraordinary Beings (Tianlong babu), Duanyu, who is

the novel's principal protagonist, discovers inside a mysterious cave a jade statue of a divine maiden. Like Baoyu, after which he has been fashioned, and with which his name resonates, Duanyu is consumed by admiration to women, which he considers as superior to men. Perhaps for this reason, the discovery of the lifelike images touches the depths of his soul. Overcome with emotion, he kneels in front of it.

Inadvertently, Duanyu's romantic impulse transforms him into a martial-artist. This is because from his kneeling posture Duanyu chances upon a tiny inscription on the maiden's feet. It reads: "After kowtowing to me a thousand times, even if you experience a hundred deaths you will have no regrets." All too happy to comply with this instruction and worship the lovely creature, Duanyu prostrates himself on a small mat, which he finds spread in front of the statue. By the time he completes his prostrations, the mat is torn to shreds, revealing underneath it an ancient book, which endows Duanyu with invincible powers. This sacred book contains the secret fighting methods of the "Free and Easy Sect" (Xiaoyao pai).²

In many ways this episode is characteristic of Jin Yong's writing. Its plot is full of surprising turns, connecting as it does the veneration of beauty with hidden martial techniques. We find in it mysterious caves and sacred books, love and invincible fighting methods. Perhaps most significantly, the protagonist of this episode is, from the perspective of martial-arts fiction, an anti-hero: Duanyu is, at least initially, much more interested in romance than in warfare.

All of these elements are vintage Jin Yong. All but one. There is one item in this episode that isn't the product of Jin Yong's imagination. This is the book discovered by Duanyu, or, more precisely, the name of the sect which martial techniques it purports to disclose: the "Free and Easy" (Xiaoyao). Gymnastic techniques titled the "Free and Easy" are common in twentieth-century Chinese martialarts.3 These techniques derive from a Ming-period manual of physical education, attributed to one "Free and Easy" (Xiaoyaozi), and titled The Free and Easy's Gymnastics Formula (Xiaoyaozi daoyin jue). This manual, which enjoyed considerable popularity during the Ming—it is preserved in several editions—teaches a combination of external limb movement with internal circulation of qi.4 Ultimately, of course, the title of this manual, like its presumed author's sobriquet, derive from the "Free and Easy Wandering" (Xiaoyao you) chapter of the Zhuangzi.

Thus, into a fictional narrative which is the product of his own creative imagination, Jin Yong has inserted a term borrowed from the realm of martial-arts practice. This phenomenon is not atypical of Jin Yong's writings, which attest a close connection between fictional representation and practice in the Chinese martial arts. Jin Yong's fictional