

WHY HEROES FAIL: NATIONAL IDENTITY IN JIN YONG'S MARTIAL ARTS NOVEL *THE BOOK AND THE SWORD*

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*Martial arts fiction presents a number of signs that define Chinese cultural separateness and reflect national identities of Chinese communities around the world. In this paper, we select the novel *The Book and the Sword* of Jin Yong, the most celebrated martial arts author, to analyze how the wuxia conventions can be applied to represent the formation of a new emigrant identity under the foreign rule and under the influence of abandoned Mainland China. Setting his novels in the mythical past allows Jin Yong to freely discuss the cultural, social and political circumstances of his present that contribute to the configuration of this new national identity. Examining comparative studies on martial arts fiction, we note that moral codes of Chinese chivalrous swordsmen and Western knights-errant do not differ significantly; moreover, these heroic images remain similar in different cultures and pertain to the universal mythic structure. We argue that the modified hero myth expressed in a work of national fiction always represents a cultural identity of a particular nation, a certain symbol through which the nation perceives itself and introduces itself to others. Although national identity is an imaginary construction that does not comprehensively reflect reality, each member of the nation (a native or diasporic resident) recognizes values and truths communicated through mythic storytelling. We show that national identity in the analyzed novel is not a stable concept and individuals can change their political loyalties depending on the circumstances or their preferences, but regardless of their ethnical origin. We conclude that the novel relates the failure of the nationally aware elite to establish self-governing within the state in order to defend their national identity from the foreign politically dominant group.*

Keywords: wuxia, hero myth, ethnicity, cultural heritage

ЧОМУ ГЕРОЇ ЗАЗНАЮТЬ ПОРАЗКИ: НАЦІОНАЛЬНА ІДЕНТИЧНІСТЬ У РОМАНІ БОЙОВИХ МИСТЕЦТВ ЦЗІНЬ ЮНА "КНИГА І МЕЧ"

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Белетристика бойових мистецтв представляє низку знаків, що визначають китайську культурну окремість і відображають національні ідентичності китайських спільнот по всьому світу. В цій статті ми обрали роман "Книга і меч" Цзінь Юна, найвідомішого автора белетристики бойових мистецтв, щоб проаналізувати як конвенції уся можуть бути застосовані для репрезентації формування нової емігрантської ідентичності в умовах чужоземного правління і під

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впливом покинутого *Континентального Китаю*. Розміщення подій своїх романів в міфічному минулому дозволяє Цзінь Юну вільно обговорювати тогочасні культурні, соціальні і політичні обставини, які сприяли оформленню цієї нової національної ідентичності. Дослідивши порівняльні студії з белетристики бойових мистецтв, ми відзначаємо, що моральні кодекси китайських благородних мечників і західних мандрівних лицарів значно не відрізняються; крім того, ці героїчні образи залишаються подібні в різних культурах і належать до універсальної структури міфу. Ми стверджуємо, що видозміна героїчного міфу, виражена у творі національної художньої літератури, завжди представляє культурну ідентичність окремої нації, певний символ, через який нація сприймає себе і представляється іншим. Хоча національна ідентичність є уявна конструкція, яка повністю не відтворює реальність, кожен представник нації (корінний чи діаспорний мешканець) упізнає цінності та правди, які передаються через міфічну оповідь. Ми показуємо, що в аналізованому романі національна ідентичність не є стійким концептом й індивіди можуть змінювати свої політичні лояльності залежно від обставин чи особистих переваг, але безвідносно до їх етнічного походження. Ми робимо висновок, що роман розкриває поразку національно свідомої еліти у встановленні самоврядування в межах держави з метою захистити свою національну ідентичність від чужинської політично панівної групи.

Ключові слова: уся, героїчний міф, етнічна приналежність, культурна спадщина.

Wuxia allows gasping the universal romantic spirit and trace the cultural signs of Chinese identity. The international audience is familiar with *wuxia*, or martial arts genre, mostly through movies. The *wuxia* fiction has not yet fully traveled to the West due to the lack of official translations, but numerous martial arts novels rendered by fans have been circulating in the web for some time. As a genre of Chinese popular fiction, *wuxia* deals with adventures of wandering heroes set in the imagined past and can be compared to Western chivalric literature. Martial arts fiction is packed with action and thrill but contains poor psychological descriptions. However, a number of outstanding writers, such as Zha Liangyong, developed rich characters and achieved a high aesthetic level of their works that brought the marginal genre to the mainstream.

Zha Liangyong (Louis Cha) (1924–2018), better known by his pen name, Jin Yong, is considered the most influential *wuxia* writer in the Chinese-speaking world, and his novels are already translated into several languages. Critics and readers regard Jin Yong as a writer who influenced contemporary Chinese literature, culture and defended national identity of the Chinese people around the world.

Contributors to [Jin Yong phenomenon 2007] studied Jin Yong's fiction in relation to language, cinema, culture, society, and politics. They entitled the popularity of his works and their universal circulation in original form and numerous film, television or video game adaptations as a “Jin Yong phenomenon”. Hamm [2006] investigated the literary and historical context of martial arts fiction and analyzed how the past and present realities of Hong Kong, where Jin Yong worked, influenced his narratives and shaped the hybrid colonial identity of his characters.

Since there are no Ukrainian translations of *wuxia* or Jin Yong's works, general Ukrainian public remains unfamiliar with martial arts fiction and few Ukrainian sinologists pay attention to the subject. Kuzmychov [2007] analyzed how the description of martial arts in Jin Yong's novels led to aesthetic pleasure represented by the beauty and harmony of action rather than violence. Seligey [2019] introduced the personality of Jin Yong, reviewed his major works in connection with the Western and Chinese literary traditions, and showed that Jin Yong inseparably blended foreign and native poetics to create purely Chinese narratives with unique transcultural semantics.

Jin Yong addressed the universal problems of humanity; thus, further analysis of his fiction allows extracting additional cultural experience. His legacy is so rich that it can be

used as a fertile material to discuss various topical issues in different fields of academic interest. Although previous studies have investigated the representation of Hongkongese identity in Jin Yong's fiction and its relation to the decentered mainland identity, we look at *The Book and the Sword* from the contemporary Ukrainian perspective and consider it as a rhetorical message that shows the formation of national identity through the struggle for national self-governing and interprets the causes of failure of the nationalistic project.

In this paper, we want to contribute to the study of Jin Yong's martial arts fiction by showing how *wuxia* represents Chinese cultural separateness. The **aim** of the paper is to examine the realization of national identity through conventions of martial arts fiction in Jin Yong's legacy. We base our investigation on the assumption that the core of *wuxia* is related to archetypal hero myth through which fiction constructs the images of the hero, the villain and the national struggle. Due to abundance of martial arts novels written by the author and limited scope of this paper, we analyze how national identity is fictionalized in the first Jin Yong's novel *The Book and the Sword* (serialized in 1955–1956).

To complete the task, we use mainly the **methods** of discourse analysis to understand the meaning of martial arts fiction in social, political, and cultural contexts and of structural analysis to emphasize the main motifs in Jin Yong's novel from the perspective of national identification. Within our research we also provide a concise characterization of *wuxia* as a genre, its major conventions, and its difference from the Western chivalric tradition by summarizing major studies on this subject. We apply the findings from [National Identity 1999] that people need familiar symbols to feel reassured and even to give shape to their existence. National identity is a person's identification with what is perceived common to a community to which he or she belongs. It is also the collective sense of cultural separateness defined and accepted by a self-aware group. Thus, cultural artifacts such as literature, cinema, or visual art reflect national ideology, convert or subvert cultural conventions, render mythologies, and devise new symbols of collective identity. From the perspective of national identity, literature represents how nation speaks to and of itself. Through fiction, collectivities can secure the sense of their national separateness and model their imagined future; politically dominant groups can create new symbols of identification to rule and assimilate the minority cultures within their borders; and nations without stable statehood or coherent self-awareness may re-imagine their past, release collective trauma, provide the idea of historical continuity, internal unity, and difference from other nations.

Wuxia xiaoshuo, or martial arts fiction (also translated as Chinese knights-errant fiction, fiction about Chinese wandering swordsmen, or fiction of martial arts and chivalry), is a unique genre in Chinese literature, which dates back to the Han dynasty. The *wuxia* stories have been a part of Chinese oral tradition for a long time, and the first recorded source ("The Biographies of the Wandering Swordsmen" in *Historical Records* by Sima Qian) dates back to the first century BC. The tales circulated orally parallel to the increasing number of written stories that flourished during the Qing dynasty. The genre was banned in Mainland China for the most part of the 20th century up to the 1980s existing only in Hong Kong and Taiwan. During more than two millennia of evolution, martial arts fiction has developed its recognizable conventions by blending action and romance.

The word *wuxia* consists of two characters *wu* and *xia* denoting martial arts and chivalry, respectively. A *wuxia* story deals with adventures of chivalrous heroes (*xiake*) related to restoring the right, punishing the wrong, and bringing justice by means of martial arts (*wu*) in accordance with their own moral code that incorporates righteousness, professional virtue, benevolence, loyalty, and solidarity. Though *wuxia* describes numerous styles of martial arts, they are mostly fictional and serve as a means to present the psychology of characters rather than objective martial reality (i.e. a vicious and deadly style practiced by a villain, an elegant style of a martial maiden, or a calligraphy-based style of a scholar). As Hamm [2006] points out, martial arts utilized as a literary motif facilitate shaping a distinctive cultural identity through reference to the native tradition. In this context, martial arts as a whole can be defined as the manifestation of Chineseness that emphasizes its

distinction and ambition of equality through a complex relationship with a Western “other” [Hamm 2006, 9].

Chinese wandering swordsmen are usually compared to Western knights-errant but scholars list several differences between these images. Huang [2018] sees the reason in specific historical, cultural and religious contexts from which *wuxia* and Western chivalric literature originated. Huang's arguments can be summarized and arranged as a set of concepts in the form of a paradigm for chivalrous swordsmen and knights-errant, respectively: lower class / upper class, folk beliefs / Christianity, brotherhood (personal loyalty) / obligation (duty), righteousness / honor, civilian / military, rebellion against the centralized monarchy / establishment of a stable national state, lack of recognition / glorification and promotion. Huang's claim about Christianity as a basis for the whole Western chivalric culture seems to be exaggerated, because it misrepresents the West as a cultural monolith disregarding differences between western nations and completely excluding the role of folk belief and traditions. Another weakness of this study lies in Huang's confusion of Christian faith, religion and church that can be regarded as related but unequal notions by a westerner. These limitations, however, do not diminish Huang's research but represent the Chinese view on Western culture as fundamentally Christian.

Jin Yong also states that the basic difference between the West and China lies in religious faith. In the preface to the English translation of his last novel, *The Deer and the Cauldron*, Cha [1997] explains that God is the source of morality in the West, but the Chinese have to decide for themselves what is right due to the absence of pronounced religious sense. He writes that *wuxia* as a particular genre represents Chinese culture and defines the spirit of a Chinese wandering swordsman who has strength to resist the wrong, help the weak who surrender to injustice, and even is ready to sacrifice his / her life for the right cause. Jin Yong considers martial arts skills of a swordsman only as a means to achieve the chivalrous and altruistic end.

Despite any historical and cultural differences, a *wuxia* hero and a Western hero are fundamentally similar. As James J. Y. Liu points out, the ideals of Chinese wandering swordsmen and Western knights, i.e. altruism and justice, especially with regard to the poor and the oppressed, high courage, searching for fame, generosity, mutual faith and truthfulness, “represent universal human aspirations and create a spiritual bond between them across space and time” [qtd in Mok 1998, 168–169]. The aim of a generic hero is to achieve a restoration of righteousness and reassure the sense of justice, but also be ready to sacrifice him or herself for the greater good.

The archetypes of the hero and the villain are essential components of national myth through which a nation perceives itself, constructs its identity and defines the image of the other. National myth incorporates and digests the totality of nation's existence through time to present it as a unified and distilled entity. For this purpose it also transforms national history and geography into the re-constructed imaginary realm able to preserve the dominant values and traditions. Rochelle [2001] states that mythological patterns offer cohesive meaning for communities and give people an “eternal mirror” to reflect the values of their culture. Storytelling that interprets myth charges fiction with additional senses, because it enables to embrace the implicit argument of the original myth and modify the mythic truths by the explicit argument of its particular adaptation. Since fiction exists as a form of rhetoric, or the art of persuasion, that forms attitudes and influences actions of the audience, the mythically charged story uses its expressive language to convince of certain truth through making the reality and creating identities.

Martial arts fiction reconstructs the historical continuity and redefines cultural identity by introducing *jianghu*, or Rivers and Lakes, an imaginary world of the mythical past in which all events are set. Actual geographical locations or historical figures mentioned in *wuxia* actualize their mythic existence after being integrated in the realm of *jianghu*. Helena Yuen-Wai Wu emphasizes the importance of Rivers and Lakes in characterizing the martial arts genre and defines *wuxia* as “a specific form of narrative that is mainly based on different imaginary happenings in the fictional realm of *jianghu*” [Wu 2012, 64]. The concept of

jianghu has deep roots in Chinese culture, literature and philosophy; it is a fantastic world of martial arts, mythical realm “out there”, beyond the reach of government. It functions as both a physical locale and a mental realm of anarchy, freedom, and resistance to restrictions and oppressions imposed by any authority, ideology or hierarchy. Thus, as “a space to project and reflect different abstract and ungraspable emotions and affects from the perspective of both the *jianghu* dweller and the urban dweller (i.e. the reader-producer of such texts)”, *jianghu* in martial arts fiction helps the readers to achieve catharsis and get rid of frustration or anxiety in reality [Wu 2012, 65]. Hence, the concept of *jianghu* both signifies Chinese cultural heritage and provides fictionalized escape from modern civilization. The function of *jianghu* can be compared to that of the frontier in American westerns. In this domain of complete liberation from law and order, new identities emerge, new senses are constructed and old morality is tested. However, the frontier signifies the struggle through which a new nation was born and that was overcome, while *jianghu* reflects the nostalgic recalling of the idealized past that has never existed.

Jin Yong's fiction has been discovered in the West through several translations, but it has not fully traveled beyond Chinese-speaking communities. The author of the English translation of *The Deer and the Cauldron*, Minford [1997] argues that only Chinese readers can share the sense of cultural euphoria created in Jin Yong's works and appreciate “a fictional experience which is in some aspects more 'Chinese' than any of the available Chinese realities” [31]. Non-Chinese readers of martial arts fiction in translation can enjoy Jin Yong's works but are not entitled to fully comprehend their Chineseness.

Jin Yong's fandom emerged in 1955 when he started publishing his debut novel *The Book and the Sword* in the *Xin wanbao* newspaper. Before book editions were issued, readers had cut and collected pages from newspapers with serialized novels. It has been suggested that Jin Yong's works allowed members of Chinese communities scattered around the world outside their now-Communist homeland to establish relationships among them, form a collective intelligence, and strengthen the bond with their origins through the shared cultural values and communal remembrance of mythical China fictionalized in martial arts fiction [Camacho 2017]. Jin Yong's contribution to Chinese community exceeds the realm of fiction. Scholars in [Jin Yong phenomenon 2007] state that Jin Yong managed to represent bravery and faith, to maintain the free spirit of creativity and to discover humanity buried with his characters, when Chinese traditional literature started to decline and fiction in Mainland China ceased to ideology [23–37]. In his writing, Jin Yong restored the beauty of Chinese language derived from classical language, preserved what was best in the native literary tradition and modernized it by adding modern narratives and consciousness to it [8–9]. Working in Hong Kong, Jin Yong combined the elite and consumer cultures and created a cultural space unoccupied by colony where Hongkongers “could somehow find a way to retrace traditional Chinese culture and release their nostalgic anxiety” [10]. However, the authenticity of imaginative space of Chineseness in Jin Yong's works is also questioned in [Jin Yong phenomenon 2007], since his Chineseness does not fit into the culture of now decentered Mainland China. The Chinese identities presented by Jin Yong undergo hybridization caused by living both outside the homeland and under the British colonial rule; thus, they can be close to different Chinese diasporic communities and signify the emergence of a modern Chinese identity. Jin Yong constructs the mythical “spiritual home” for the Chinese that preserves the old morality, glorifies heroism, but also tests traditions in new realities and introduces contemporary values. Hamm [2006] suggests that Jin Yong sets his novels during the historical struggle of Han Chinese against foreign (non-Han) rule to negotiate the problems of Hong Kong's colonial identity. Moreover, Hamm argues that the dramatization of the choices of Chinese placed among non-Chinese peoples provides distinction between the roles of hero and villain and shows how morality commensurate with their relationship to the Chinese empire. Loyalty to their Chinese origins and readiness to protect China are ascribed to heroes (e.g. Chen Jialuo, Guo Jing) while desire to attain wealth and power through conquest or at the expense of common people defines villains (e.g. Qian Long, the Jin, the Mongols when they decide to invade the Song).

In this context, martial arts fiction uses myths to create cultural images and symbols that can be regarded as common to community and thus contribute to presentation of its national identity. One of usual *wuxia* plots exploited by Jin Yong may be outlined as follows: a righteous martial hero who fights for China against a foreign enemy meets a worthy heroine; overcoming numerous tribulations, acquiring sacred knowledge and defeating a mighty villain, the hero and the heroine finally reunite. The mighty villain is a profound martial artist and his crimes are related to violation of the fighting community laws; he may serve or help the foreign enemy but does not always belong to his ranks. The foreign enemy is never completely defeated and China is not liberated. This pattern omits numerous subplots that follow enmity or romances among different characters and involve fights with various wrongdoers. In different novels it is tailored to specific goals but its core stays the same revealing the common structure of the hero myth. Through conventional opposition between a hero and a villain, Jin Yong not only discriminates between good and evil but also promotes what can be perceived as the traditional virtues and vices within Chinese moral code: righteousness, justice, benevolence, altruism, loyalty, and freedom in contrast to corruption, violence, and treachery. However, Jin Yong avoids defining the hero–villain opposition as a stereotyped struggle between pure good and pure evil by giving all his characters their flaws and strengths. His first novel *The Book and the Sword* [Cha 2005] marks the shift of *wuxia* toward emotional and psychological drama that Hamm [2006] denotes as Jin Yong's major contribution to the genre [57].

Set during the rule of the Emperor Qian Long, the novel describes the adventures of the Red Flower Society and their struggle to free the Han Chinese from the Manchu rule and to protect the Muslim tribes from the Emperor's invading army. The novel narrates the events related to the main political conflict parallel to several romantic plots. The tragic story about the love triangle between the protagonist Chen Jialuo and two Muslim sisters, Huo Qingtong and Fragrant Princess, complement the topic of national identification and conduce to the failure of the nationalistic project. The basic storyline revolves around the secret that Qian Long is not a Manchu but a Han: he is a son of the late Chief Minister Chen swapped for the late Emperor's daughter after birth. He is also an elder brother of Chen Jialuo, the Young Helmsman of the Red Flower Society. After learning the secret, the heroes and the heroines try to persuade Qian Long to overthrow the Manchu who oppress the common people and to establish a new Han dynasty. Utilizing the legend about imperial baby swap, Jin Yong discusses national identity in association with ethnicity and examines its role in political decisions. After learning of his ethnical origin, Qian Long tries Han clothes and food once and finds them amusing, however, does not dare to accept his non-Manchuness or demonstrate it to the public. Costumes and cuisine as external cultural manifestations prove to be insubstantial and negligible for national identification as compared with privileges offered by the politically dominant culture. Qian Long's choices are linked to taking advantages of difficult circumstances as well as his national and political affiliations are dictated by his personality traits.

The novel shows that the notion of the nation is not synonymous with the state and a particular national identification does not lead to the same political identification. Rejecting his acquired national awareness, Qian Long swaps his national loyalty for power and wealth similar to what Yang Kang did (the fictional character of Jin Yong's *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* who acknowledged an enemy as his father, disowned his poor biological parent and helped the Jin in their conquest of the Song). However, Yang Kang's betrayal is punished by death as well as the crimes committed by Fire Hand Judge Zhang Zhaozhong, the ruthless villain and martial traitor in *The Book and the Sword*, while Qian Long preserves his position of the Emperor. Characters with Chinese national identity are separated from the state and roam *jianghu* as outlaws. The novel mentions different attitudes to statehood of two generations of patriots. Chen Jialuo's father uses his position of the Chief Minister to beg the late Emperor on behalf of the common people, but Chen Jialuo rejects officialdom entirely and decides to choose seclusion in case of successful restoration of the Han dynasty. The younger generation of heroes does not lay claim to any political position themselves but aims

to establish the benevolent rule over the state through delegation of powers to the ethnically right Emperor.

The failure of such nationalistic project is caused by characters' inability to discriminate between friend and foe within their own ethnical community and by their wrong assumption about righteousness of others based on their birth origin. Chen Jialuo ignores numerous examples of Qian Long's cruel, devious, lustful nature and believes in his righteousness and benevolence, because the Emperor is a fellow Chinese and his elder brother. In exchange for the promise to participate in the Han political plot, Qian Long wants Chen's fiancée, Fragrant Princess, to become his concubine. Chen regards the restoration of the Han ruler on the throne as the ultimate goal and persuades his beloved to comply with the Emperor's wishes. When Fragrant Princess learns that Qian Long prepares a trap to destroy the Red Flower Society, she kills herself to warn Chen of the Emperor's treason. *The Book and the Sword* ends with the national and personal tragedy: Qian Long rejects his Han origin, strengthens his political power and slaughters the Muslim tribes; Fragrant Princess dies and her body turns into a butterfly (a symbol referring to the Chinese story of the star-crossed lovers); Chen Jialuo swears to be converted to the Islamic faith and to reunite with his lover in Heaven; the heroes and the heroines fail to kill the treacherous Emperor avenging their deceased brothers and sisters and have to leave China forever. Patriotic nationalism is impossible or deceptive in Jin Yong's fiction, as Hamm [2006] has highlighted; *The Book and the Sword* presents political catastrophe, exile and failure of the nationalist ideal, while the later novels question and almost completely reject heroic nationalism by elevating romantic gratification over political mission [25–26].

If we disregard any political or social import and read *The Book and the Sword* as a coherent text, we can conclude that Chen partially causes the failure by his breach of righteousness. By definition, a chivalrous swordsman is ready to sacrifice his/her life in doing right, but Chen Jialuo sacrifices his lover's life instead. He knew that Fragrant Princess would do whatever he asked for, so her fate was decided the moment Chen waived her. This motif reminds of a mythic plot, when a hero breaks his promise to his beloved and makes their reunion impossible. Chen betrays both himself and Fragrant Princess, because he breaks his promise to love her and to be with her, while she stays loyal to him and their love despite all mortal dangers, being ready to sacrifice even her immortal soul for her lover (she is a devoted Muslim, not a non-religious Chinese, so committing suicide leads to damnation). In the context of the novel, love becomes the determinant element of identity, thus the sin against true love equals the betrayal of patriotic mission. This statement becomes clearer in comparison with such Jin Yong's novels as *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* and *The Return of the Condor Heroes*, which combine the triumph of patriotic nationalism and romantic gratification: Guo Jing is loyal to Huang Rong in all circumstances, and together they manage to repel the Mongol army invading China; Yang Guo succeeds in his heroic deeds, because he fully embraces his love for Xiaolongnu. In the fictional world of Jin Yong, only mutual love between worthy partners represents the completeness of life, because it fills the lack created in the characters' national identity by the loss of the state or national government.

To **summarize**, *wuxia* as the genre constructs, reconstructs and protects Chinese cultural distinctiveness through its conventions that are considered to be the repository of Chinese traditions, values, and identities. In Jin Yong's martial arts fiction, the concepts of *xia* and *jianghu* as the embodiments of righteousness and freedom defy the restrictions of the state that is regarded mostly as an oppressive and corrupted entity. *The Book and the Sword* offers its readers the feeling of nostalgia for social forms that have never existed in the past and constructs the national hero myth that reflects the identity of the community whose culture, territory and self-government do not coincide. The novel can be read as the reflection of the cultural and political situation of the Chinese who went into exile after 1949 and as the study of the causes that led to the loss of self-governing. Although Jin Yong may release certain cultural disturbances of his time and try to amend the continuity of history in his martial arts fiction, he neither proposes any possible state-minded formation under the colonial conditions nor constructs a national mythic dream as an imaginative national project

for the future. Reviving familiar images of national myth in collective consciousness, *The Book and the Sword* dissociates the indigenous cultures from the culture of the politically dominant group. The novel proves that national identity is displaceable and selectable; it is connected only with national awareness of its bearers regardless of their position, origin or place of living. The novel narrates a model that permits expatriates and members of diaspora to claim their right to Chinese cultural heritage, when they are deprived of their nationhood or political control over their state. In Jin Yong's fiction, characters can achieve freedom and happiness through mutual love while protecting their nation instead of serving the state within the official system of government. We believe that our results may improve knowledge about national identity and its representation through the conventions of martial arts fiction. Further studies, which take mythical patterns into account, may investigate how signs of Chinese collective identity have evolved in *wuxia* to fit new cultural and political realities.

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