

Iteration as a Structuring Element of Popular Narrative—Instances in Jin Yong's Novel *Tian long ba bu*

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The role of iteration, isomorphism and homology in literary texts has been a favorite subject of investigation by literary scholars for many decades. So far, most studies have laid their focus on repetitions on the phonetic level, that is, on the study of poetic meter and rhyme. Perhaps most prominently, in his essay »Linguistics and Poetics«, Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) defines the occurrence of equivalences in syntagma as a fundamental characteristic of the so-called »poetic function« of language: »*The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.* Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence.«¹ However, structural equivalences are not restricted to the phonetic level. In the same essay, Jakobson claims that in poetic speech »any sequence of semantic units strives to build an equation« and that »similarity superimposed on contiguity imparts to poetry its throughgoing symbolic, multiplex, polysemantic essence«². Readers familiar with Chinese poetry will think of the parallelism (*duizhang* 對仗) obligatory in the 2nd and 3rd couplets of Tang-regulated verse, which most often works on both the syntactical and the semantic levels.

These qualities of poetry are shared by the folklore narratives (tales, legends and myths) of various civilizations all over the world. In folk tales, just as in poetry, »any metonymy is slightly metaphorical and any metaphor has a meto-

1 Roman Jakobson, »Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics«, in Thomas Sebeok, *Style in Language* (New York: Wiley, 1960), 358.

2 Ibid., 370.

nymical tint»³. Signification occurs not merely through linear narration (*diegesis*), but also on a vertical, synchronic axis—in general, tales are to be read as metaphorical rather than as mimetic representations of reality.

Even though strictly speaking the object of my study, Jin Yong's 金庸 (b1924) novel *Tian long ba bu* 天龍八部 (Of Gods, Dragons and Other Such Creatures, 1963),⁴ can hardly be considered a 'folktale', I hope to provide evidence that the methodology developed by folklorists and mythologists can be adapted for and applied to it with interesting results. It is not by chance that in his groundbreaking work on the shared structural features of a set of Russian folklore stories, namely in *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp (1895–1970) explicitly mentions novels of chivalry as one literary genre which lends itself to similar analytic procedures:

One must also keep in mind that just as elements are assimilated within a tale, whole *genres* are also assimilated and intermingled. Highly complicated conglomerates are then sometimes formed, into which the components of our scheme [of functions in the folktale] enter as episodes [... T]he very same structure is exhibited, for example, by certain novels of chivalry. This is very likely a realm which itself may be traced back to the tale.⁵

Further support for this approach can be found in an essay by Liao Zhaoyang which opens with the following words:

Tian long ba bu is of an enormously broad scope and introduces a vast number of personages, but often seems to lack scrupulousness in matters of disposition and tailoring. However, if we abandon the Aristotelian view of unified structure which is held on to by realistic literature, and seek for explanations according to the characteristics of tale literature, the multi-threaded narrative of *Tian long ba bu* appears quite close to medieval European tales of chivalry and later epics of chivalry. So, naturally, it doesn't need to abide by the rules of horizontal narrative unity. The basic model of European tales is »vertical perspective«, which means that contrasting and repetition of meaning play a central role, whereas not so much attention is paid to logical succession and horizontal continuity.⁶

3 Ibid.

4 Jin Yong 金庸, *Tian long ba bu* 天龍八部, 5 vols. (Guangzhou: Guangzhou chubanshe, 2002). The book's title is a Buddhist term which can be translated more literally as 'the eight categories [of creatures]', which include heavenly spirits (*deva*) and dragon spirits (*nāga*).

5 Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* [Морфология сказки, 1928], tr. by Laurence Scott (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1968), 100.

6 《天龍八部》規模龐大，人物眾多，在佈局剪裁方面有許多地方似乎不甚嚴謹。其實如果舍棄寫實文類所服膺的亞里斯多德式密合結構觀，按照傳奇文類的特性來解釋，《天龍八部》

In this article, I will examine some instances of doubling and trebling in *Tian long ba bu*. While the occurrence of doublings will not be a big surprise, the accumulation of treblings in this novel appears more striking. Trebling has long since been identified as a fundamental structuring principle of the mythology of 'primitive' civilizations in various parts of the world and also of more refined collections of tales like *The Arabian Nights* (ca 8–10th c. CE) or the *Pañcatantra* (3rd c. BCE). What Vladimir Propp says about trebling in the folktale will be found applicable to *Tian long ba bu* as well:

[T]rebling may occur among individual details of an attributive nature (the three heads of a dragon), as well as among individual functions, pairs of functions (pursuit-rescue), groups of functions, and entire moves. Repetition may appear as a uniform distribution (three tasks, three years' service), as an accumulation (the third task is the most difficult, the third battle the worst), or may twice produce negative results before the third, successful outcome.⁷

The examples of doublings and treblings taken into consideration are by no means exhaustive, nor are they even homogenous—they operate at quite different levels in the narration. However, it is precisely this inhomogeneity which makes them useful for a demonstration of the various functions fulfilled by doubling and trebling in the present text.

Trebling #1: Protagonists

The most obvious example of trebling in *Tian Long Ba Bu* is the trebling of protagonists. Three characters—Duan Yu 段譽, Xiao Feng 蕭峰 and Xuzhu 虛竹—share the center stage of this novel in roughly equal proportions. The novel's basic narrative disposition is thus quite accurately described by Chen Mo as follows:

Now *Tian long ba bu* has three protagonists: one is Duan Yu, the prince of Dali; the second is the former chief of the beggars' gang, the Khitan Xiao Feng; the third is former Shaolin monk Xuzhu, presently the master of Lingjiu Palace and the husband

的多線敘事較接近中世紀歐洲騎士傳奇與後來的傳奇史詩，自然不必遵守水平方向的敘事統一。歐洲傳奇的典型是「垂直透視」，也就是以意義的掩映重疊為中心，不重邏輯次序與水平連接。Liao Chaoyang 廖朝陽，»*Tianlong ba bu de chuanqi jiegou*« 《天龍八部》的傳奇結構 [The Tale Structure of *Tianlong ba bu*], in *Jin Yong xiaoshuo guoji xueshu yantaobui wenji* 金庸小說國際學術研討會論文集 [Proceedings of the International Conference on Jin Yong's Novels], ed. by Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 (Taipei: Yuanliu, 1999), 519.

7 Propp, »Morphology«, 74.

of princess Yin Chuan of Western Xia. These three men differ in personality, status, even ethnicity and »nationality«. If in one book, one wants to tell the stories of three men, and even write a separate segment about each of them, readers can hardly be blamed for finding it loosely structured. There is no other case of a single book with three protagonists among Jin Yong's novels, and it is even rarer to find three neatly separated stories. [...]

Most importantly, the first four volumes of the book can be divided (roughly) into the following parts: Duan Yu occupies about one volume and a half; following this, Xiao Feng occupies another volume and a half; then Xuzhu occupies one volume. Then, in the fifth volume the stories converge. Not only do all three sworn brothers Xiao Feng, Xuzhu and Duan Yu meet at the beginning of the fifth volume (it is also the first time that Xuzhu meets Xiao Feng) and fight the enemy together, gaining victory in war; but also in later important events like »Western Xia looks for a royal son-in-law« and »Liao retires its soldiers«, the three protagonists and sworn brothers appear simultaneously. This is like planting three cacti in one flower pot: it seems that each is independent, but in reality, their roots are interwoven; and since they share one pot (the fifth volume is such a »pot«), can anyone say that this isn't one single arrangement of plants? The fifth volume serves as a pot; in summary, it doesn't matter how the plot of the first part is written or how independent or loosely structured it is because in the end it can be gathered up and unified.⁸

At first glance, we will observe a number of basic isomorphies between these three characters: Obviously, all three of them are male, all three of them possess superhuman fighting skills (or achieve them in the course of the narration), and, of course, all three of them become involved in a love story with a beautiful woman.

What is more significant is that only in the course of the narration do the three protagonists discover their true identity (that is, find out who their real parents are): Xiao Feng realizes that he is a Khitan from the enemy empire of Liao, and that the same Han people who raised him were responsible for the death of his parents; Xuzhu, who had been brought up as an orphan in a Shaolin monastery, discovers that he is the son of Shaolin's abbot Xuan Ci. Finally Duan Yu finds that he is in fact the offspring of his family's arch enemy Duan Yanqing.

It is remarkable that in all three cases the uncovering of the secret and the recognition of the parent occur through a story element which Propp has dubbed »the marking of the hero«. It is widely known that from the corpus of Russian folktales, Propp abstracted a group of thirty-six »functions«, basic

8 Chen Mo 陳墨, *Wuxia wu da jia pinshang* 武俠五大家品賞 [An Assessment of Five Great *wuxia* Writers], 2 vols. (Taipei: Fengyun shidai, 2001), 1: 163-166.

narratemes supposed to make up the framework of all tales. This procedure has been harshly criticized, mainly on the grounds that Propp has not achieved the degree of systematicity he aspired to, and that the definition of some of his »functions« remained arbitrary, since they could easily be subjected to further analysis.⁹ This is certainly not an appropriate place for a discussion of the ontological validity of Propp's system—when I am using Propp's functions, it is only for a practical purpose, namely that they provide a ready-made matrix for comparison. Certainly, many of Propp's »functions« do appear in *Tian long ba bu*, and they will be found to do so very often in doubling and trebling.

Before we examine the examples in our source text, let me call to mind Propp's definition of functions XVII and XXVII of his system: »XVII. THE HERO IS BRANDED [...] 1. A brand is applied to the body (J¹). [...] 2. The hero receives a ring or a towel (J²)«¹⁰, and subsequently: »XXVII. THE HERO IS RECOGNIZED [...] He is recognized by a mark, a brand (a wound, a star marking), or by a thing given to him (a ring, towel). In this case, recognition serves as a function corresponding to branding and marking. [...] Parents and children, brothers and sisters, etc., may recognize one another.«¹¹ In *Tian long ba bu*, a »branding of the hero« with the subsequent »recognition« occurs in the stories of all three protagonists. Let us first look at how Xiao Feng reveals himself as a member of the Khitan tribe before Yelü Ji, the Emperor of Liao:

Yelü was greatly pleased and said: »Brother, your surname is Xiao; it actually seems that you're one of my Khitan people.« Xiao Feng said, »I will not hide from my elder brother that I am indeed a Khitan.« While he was speaking, he loosened his robe and shirt, uncovering the dark-coloured wolf's head tattooed on his chest. When Yelü Ji saw this, he said with great elation: »Really, there's no mistake, you are a member of the Hou clan of Khitan.«¹²

In the second instance, nine incense marks on Xuzhu's back bring about his recognition by his mother, Second Lady Ye (which in turn leads to the uncovering of her love affair with Xuan Ci):

Suddenly, the sharp voice of a woman was heard screaming: »Hold on! What's that on your ... on your back?« Everybody looked towards Xuzhu's back, and they saw that

9 Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Strukturale Anthropologie* [*Anthropologie structurale*, 1958], 2 vols., tr. by Hans Naumann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), 2: 135–163.

10 Propp, »Morphology«: 52.

11 Ibid., 62.

12 耶律心下甚喜，說道：「兄弟，你姓蕭，倒似是我契丹人一般。」蕭峰道：「不瞞兄長說，小弟原是契丹人。」說著解開衣衫，露出胸口刺著的那個青色狼頭。耶律基一見大喜說道：「果然不錯，你是我契丹的后族族人。」 Jin Yong, *Tian Long Ba Bu*, 919–920.

he had been branded with nine tidily arranged incense marks between his hips and shoulders. [...] A middle-aged woman, wearing a long robe of light green and with three blood marks on each of her cheeks, suddenly jumped out from the crowd—it was no one other than Second Lady Ye of the »Four Great Villains«, known as »Shrinks-from-no-Evil«. She stormed forward speedily, and, opening her hands, had already shoved away two chastizing monks from the discipline court of the Shaolin monastery and begun pulling at Xuzhu's trousers with her outstretched hands, wanting to pull them down. Xuzhu turned around in fright and jumped back several feet, saying: »What ... What are you doing?« Second Lady Ye's whole body was trembling as she shouted: »My ... my son!«¹³

To make the trebling complete, Duan Yu is marked (though weakly) as Duan Yanqing's son by a necklace inscribed with his date of birth—compare with Propp's function J²:

[Duan Yanqing] bent down to look at Duan Yu's neck and saw that around it was a very fine golden necklace. When he pulled it out, he saw that, indeed, an oblong golden pendant was dangling from it. The words »a long life of one hundred years« were carved into one side, but when he turned it around, he saw engraved a line of small characters reading: »Born in Dali in the second year of the reign period Baoding, cyclical year Guihai, on the 23rd day of the eleventh moon«. When Duan Yanqing saw the words »second year of the reign period Baoding«, he was distressed: »The second year of the reign period Baoding? It was just in the second month of that year that I arrived outside Tianlong Monastery after the surrounding attack by my enemies in which I suffered severe injuries. Oh my, his ... his birthday is in the eleventh month, exactly ten moons later ... A pregnancy lasts ten moons—might he ... might he ... might he by my son?«¹⁴

The isomorphies mentioned above are shared by all three protagonists, making a clear case of trebling. However, there are a number of traits shared only by Duan

13 忽聽得一個女子尖銳的聲音叫道：「且慢，且慢！你……你背上是什麼？」眾人齊向虛竹背上瞧去，只見他腰背之間整齊齊的燒著九點香疤。[...]人叢中突然奔出一個中年女子，身穿淡青色長袍，左右臉頰上各有三條血痕，正是四大惡人中的「無惡不作」的葉二娘。她疾扑而前，雙手一分，已將少林寺戒律院的兩名執法僧推開，伸手便去拉虛竹的褲子，要把他褲子扯將下來。虛竹吃了一驚，轉身站起，向后飄開數尺，說道：「你……你干什麼？」葉二娘全身發顫，叫道：「我……我的兒啊！」 *Ibid.*, 1483-1484.

14 〔段延慶〕俯身去看段譽的頭頸，見他頸中有條極細的金鏈，拉出金鏈，果見鏈端懸著一塊長方的小金牌，一面刻著「長命百歲」四字，翻將過來，只見刻著一行小字：「大理保定二年癸亥十一月廿三日生。」段延慶看到「保定二年」這幾個字，心中一凜：「保定二年？我就在這一年間的二月間被人圍攻，身受重傷，來到天龍寺外。啊，他……他是十一月的生日，剛剛相距十個月，難道十月懷胎，他……他……他……他竟然便是我的兒子？」 *Ibid.*, 1692.

Yu and Xuzhu while contrasting with the experiences of Xiao Feng. It is thus justified to consider this pair of protagonists as our first example of doubling.

Doubling #1: Duan Yu and Xuzhu

While Xiao Feng is already a much feared and respected hero of the *jianghu* 江湖 ('rivers and lakes')¹⁵ when he first appears, both Duan Yu and Xuzhu enter the stage of the novel as young men with very limited martial arts skills. In the course of the novel, both acquire supernatural fighting skills and after passing an »examination« finally ascend to a position of power—Duan Yu becomes Emperor of Dali, Xuzhu becomes Prince of Western Xia. Furthermore, we witness a love story with a happy ending in both cases. By contrast, Xiao Feng's love story ends tragically, and so does his life story: Xiao Feng kills himself, having found it impossible to reconcile his conflicting Han and Khitan identities.

If we go back to Propp's list of functions, we will see that both Duan Yu's and Xuzhu's stories share many traits with that of a prototypical tale hero:

XII. THE HERO IS TESTED, INTERROGATED, ATTACKED, ETC., WHICH PREPARES THE WAY FOR HIS RECEIVING EITHER A MAGICAL AGENT OR HELPER. (Definition: *the first function of the donor*. Designation: D.) [...] XIV. THE HERO ACQUIRES THE USE OF A MAGICAL AGENT. (Definition: *provision or receipt of a magical agent*. Designation: F.) [...] XXIX. THE HERO IS GIVEN A NEW APPEARANCE. (Definition: *transfiguration*. Designation: T.) [...] XXXI. THE HERO IS MARRIED AND ASCENDS THE THRONE. (Definition: *wedding*. Designation: W.)¹⁶

Duan Yu is sent to Wanjie Valley and later abducted by the Tibetan monk Jiu Mozhi. In the course of his adventures, he learns to use three kinds of supernatural *gongfu* (of which the »Six-Artery Spirit Sword« is the most effective). He becomes Emperor of Dali and is reunited with Wang Yuyan. His »double« Xuzhu, after solving the Go problem set up by Wuya Zi, is initiated into the secrets of the Xiaoyao Sect, of which he becomes the head. He also becomes the head of Lingjiu Palace, and ends up marrying his dream mistress, Princess Yinchuan of Western Xia.

15 *Jianghu* is a term commonly applied to the world of the Chinese Knight Errant in which most of Jin Yong's novels are set, an adventurous sphere of chivalry and martial arts, quite removed from both the formalities of life at the imperial court and the everyday struggles of the simple Chinese peasant.

16 Propp, »Morphology«, 39–63.

Trebling #2: Forbidden Love

In the first part of the novel, Duan Yu successively makes the acquaintance of three beautiful young women, Zhong Ling, Mu Wanqing and Wang Yuyan, and falls in love with each one of them. Unfortunately, all three later (appear to) turn out to be his half-sisters—illegitimate daughters of his father Duan Zhengchun.

As was mentioned above, many examples of trebling exhibit a climactic structure. Such is the case here: While Duan Yu's relationship with his first sister, Zhong Ling, is one of naïvely romantic friendship, the meeting with Mu Wanqing has definite erotic overtones and results in an actual promise of marriage. The series culminates with Wang Yuyan, with whom Duan falls passionately in love at their first meeting. His desire for Wang Yuyan becomes the main motivation of Duan Yu's actions, and only by the end of the novel (ch. 48) does he find out that Wang Yuyan, too, is his half-sister—a discovery which almost makes him lose his mind.

This conflict is resolved only when soon after Duan Yu discovers that Duan Zhengchun is not actually his real father:

Lady Wang said with a soft voice: »Even though that man bears the same surname as your father and belongs to the same generation, he cannot be considered a brother in blood. Whichever of your daddy's daughters you like, be it Miss Mu, Miss Wang or Miss Zhong, you can just marry her ... That might be impossible in the empire of Song, where same-surname marriages are forbidden, but here in Dali we do not observe this rule; it's alright as long as you're not sister and brother. Even if you were to marry all these young ladies at the same time, that would be fine, too. Are you ... are you happy?«¹⁷

Doubling #2: A Zhu and A Zi

In addition to the three girls mentioned above, Duan Zhengchun has two more illegitimate daughters named A Zhu and A Zi, both born by his lover Ruan Xingzhu. The two young women play a key role in the story of *Tian long ba bu's*

17 段夫人輕聲道：“這個人和你爹爹雖是同姓同輩，卻算不得是什麼兄弟。你爹爹的那些女兒，什麼木姑娘哪、王姑娘哪、鐘姑娘哪，你愛哪一個便可娶哪個……他們大宋或許不行，什麼同姓不婚。咱們大理可不管這麼一套，只要不是親兄妹就是了。這許多姑娘，你便一起都娶了，那也好得很。你……你喜歡不喜歡？” Jin Yong, *Tian long ba bu*, 1711.

second protagonist, Xiao Feng, and a relationship of precise doubling can be ascertained between their experiences.

Let us first see how A Zhu, through another instance of the »marking of the hero«, recognizes A Zi as her sister—it may be remarked that here the marking itself is doubled (tattoo and necklace), uniting Propp's variant functions J¹ and J².

Xiao Feng was both frightened and sad. He didn't dare look at her any more, assiduously pulled her clothing into order, covered her shoulder and embraced her tenderly, asking: »You have the character “Duan” tattooed onto your shoulder—what is the meaning of it?« A Zhu said: »It was tattooed on my shoulder at the time when my dad and mom gave me away, in order to ... to be able to recognize me later.« Xiao Feng said with a trembling voice: »So this character “Duan” ...« A Zhu said: »Earlier today, after discovering a mark on Miss A Zi's shoulder, they realized that she was their daughter. Did you ... Did you see that mark?« Xiao Feng said: »No, I didn't, it would have been improper for me to look.« A Zhu said: »What she had tattooed on her ... on her shoulder was a red character, “Duan”, exactly like mine.« Xiao Feng understood immediately, and said with a trembling voice: »So you ... you are their daughter, too?« A Zhu said: »I never knew about all this, only after seeing the character tattooed on A Zi's shoulder did I realize she was my sister. Furthermore, she has a gold locket, which, too, is just the same as my gold locket. It also has twelve characters engraved on it. [...]«¹⁸

Xiao Feng rescues A Zhu, at first only a casual acquaintance, when he finds her wounded in battle, and looks after her while she is recovering from her injuries. He keeps her alive through the transmission of his own »real *qi*« (life energy), and risks his own life taking her to see a famous physician who is in league with his enemies. Finally, the two fall in love with each other. Through a tragic concatenation of circumstances however, Xiao Feng ends up killing her with a *qi*-loaded stroke of his palm. Before she dies, she asks her lover to take good care of her younger sister A Zi.

18 蕭峰又是驚奇，又是傷心，不敢多看，忙將她衣衫拉好，遮住了肩頭，將她輕輕摟在懷裡，問道：“你肩頭上有個‘段’字，那是什麼意思？”阿朱道：“我爹爹、媽媽將我送給旁人之時，在我肩上刺的，以便留待……留待他日相認。”蕭峰顫聲道：“這‘段’字，這‘段’字……”阿朱道：“今天日間，他們在那阿紫姑娘的肩頭發現了一個記認，就知道是他們的女兒。你……你……看到那記認嗎？”蕭峰道：“沒有，我不便看。”阿朱道：“她……她肩上刺著的，也是一個紅色的‘段’字，跟我的一模一樣。”蕭峰登時大悟，顫聲道：“你……你也是他們的女兒？”阿朱道：“本來我不知道，看到阿紫肩頭刺的字才知。她還有一個金鎖片，跟我那個金鎖片，也是一樣的，上面也鑄著十二個字。[……]” *Ibid.*, 801–802.

Thereupon, a very similar story evolves between A Zi and Xiao Feng. A Zi, unlike her older sister, is cruel and has a vengeful nature. She tries to kill Xiao Feng with a poisoned arrow. Saving himself, he injures her severely, again with a stroke of his palm. Although this incident is not his fault, Xiao Feng is inconsolable that instead of protecting A Zhu's sister, he has almost killed her. Again, he keeps A Zi alive by transmitting his life energy into her body, and takes her on a long journey to the north. Only after the two have reached the mountainous lands of the Jurchen tribe, which abound with high quality ginseng roots, does she gradually recover her health.

The reader's attention is repeatedly drawn to the parallels between the two women, and one may be seduced into believing that the story will develop along similar lines, A Zi replacing her sister as Xiao Feng's lover. However, even though A Zi does fall in love with Xiao Feng (and will react cruelly to his rejection), Xiao Feng himself stays resolutely faithful to A Zhu.

As an example of in-detail isomorphy between the stories of the two sisters, the following two scenes may be compared—first, Xiao Feng takes A Zhu to see a country doctor just after she has been injured:

Qiao Feng found the largest guest house in town, asked for two rooms, accommodated A Zhu and asked a physician to come examine her injuries. The physician felt A Zhu's pulse, shook his head repeatedly and said: »There is no cure for the young lady's illness. This prescription is what little I can do.« Qiao Feng saw that the prescription contained only things like licorice, peppermint, platycodon and pinellia—all these were harmless medicines that might not even have been able to cure a regular stomach ache.¹⁹

The second scene appears as a doublet of the first, the patient now being A Zi:

The physician Wang Tongzhi felt A Zi's pulse, looked at Xiao Feng, felt A Zi's pulse once more, then looked at Xiao Feng again. The expression on his face was most strange, and all of a sudden he stretched out his fingers to feel Xiao Feng's pulse. Xiao Feng said angrily: »Doctor, I am asking you to treat my sister's illness, it is not my humble self that needs treatment.« Wang Tongzhi shook his head and said: »It looks to me as if you were ill. Your thoughts are not clear, and your mind is upset and disordered. You need careful treatment.« Xiao Feng said: »In what respect are my thoughts not clear?« Wang Tongzhi said: »This young lady's heartbeat has stopped and she has died already; it is only that her body hasn't become stiff yet.

19 喬峰找到當地最大一家客店，要了兩間上房，將阿朱安頓好了，請了個醫生來看她傷勢。那醫生把了阿朱的脈搏，不住搖頭，說有：“姑娘的病是沒藥醫的，這張方子只是聊盡人事而已。”喬峰看藥方上定了些甘草、薄荷、桔梗、半夏之類，都是些連尋常肚痛也未必能治的溫和藥物。 *Ibid.*, 652.

What use is carrying her to see a doctor? Doesn't that show your mind is upset and disordered? Brother, when people die, they cannot come back to life. You should not grieve too much, but take your sister's corpse and bury her quickly. This is called "letting the dead rest in peace".²⁰

Doubling #3: Murong Fu and Duan Yanqing

The fundamental parallelism between *Tian Long Ba Bu*'s two major villains, Duan Yanqing and Murong Fu, will be observed at first sight: both have turned into villains because of their ambition to become emperor (of Dali and of Yan respectively). Now here, I would like to dedicate my attention to two examples of doubling which may not play a major role in the novel's narration, but nevertheless seem remarkable because of their close isomorphy, and because each doubling occurs within the limits of a single chapter.

First, in Chapter 31, both villains are kept from committing suicide by one of the protagonist heroes. While trying to solve a mysterious Go problem designed by Wuya Zi, the head of the Xiaoyao Sect, they are thrown into a state of severe disorientation by the complexities of the game. Out of disappointment with their own failure to solve the problem (which corresponds to their failure to achieve emperorhood in real life), they attempt to kill themselves. Murong Fu is saved from this predicament by Duan Yu, while Duan Yanqing owes his rescue to Xuzhu. Let us look first at Murong Fu:

While his vision became increasingly blurry, the white and black pieces of the Go game all seemed to have changed into generals and soldiers. There was a band of cavalymen on one side, a casern on the other, encircling each other, lunging at each other in turmoil and disarray. When Murong Fu, his eyes wide open, saw his own men and horses with their white armor and white flags surrounded by the black-armored, black-flagged enemy, storming and attacking on all sides, but finally unable to break out from the encirclement, he became increasingly anxious: »Our clan of Murong has exhausted its heavenly mandate, and all my troubles avail to nothing.

20 那儒醫王通治搭拾阿紫的脈息，瞧瞧蕭峰，又搭搭阿紫的脈息，再瞧瞧蕭峰，臉上神色十分古怪，忽然伸出手指，來搭蕭峰的腕脈。蕭峰怒道：“大夫，是請你看我妹子的病，不是在下自己求醫。”王通治搖了搖頭，說道：“我瞧你有病，神智不清，心神顛倒錯亂，要好好治一治。”蕭峰道：“我有什麼神智不清？”王通治道：“這位姑娘脈息已停，早就死了，只不過身子尚未僵硬而已。你抱著她來看什麼醫生？不是心神錯亂麼？老兄，人死不能復生，你也不可太過傷心，還是抱著令妹的屍體，急速埋葬，這叫做入土為安。” *Ibid.*, 906-907.

The labors of a lifetime turn out to be just a spring dream! Such are the times, such is destiny! What more am I to say?» All of a sudden he screamed out loudly, pulled his sword and chopped at his neck. [...] Duan Yu pointed his index finger and called out: »Don't do that!« A hiss was heard, and the sword swayed in Murong Fu's hands before it fell to the ground with a clang.²¹

It is through the following attempt to save Duan Yanqing that Xuzhu later becomes the head of the Xiaoyao Sect:

Duan Yanqing sighed: »Indeed, what's the point of staying alive in this world? It would be better to kill myself!« While he was speaking, his walking stick had approached his chest by two more inches. Xuzhu's compassion was strongly moved. He knew very well that in order to break the demonic spell which had jinxed Duan Yanqing, one had to start out from the Go game. It was only that his Go skills were so shallow that he really didn't dare think about solving the difficulties of this incomparably complex game. When he saw Duan Yanqing staring stupidly at the Go board while on the verge of calamity, he suddenly had an idea: »I cannot solve this game, but it would be easy to disturb it for a while. I need only to distract him, and he will be saved. Where there's no game, there is no victory and no defeat.« He said: »I will solve this Go problem.« He quickly stepped forward, took a white piece from the box, closed his eyes and instinctively set it down on the board.²²

Next, in Chapter 48 (in which several important narrative strands come to a conclusion), both Duan Yanqing and Murong Fu bring about the violent death of one of their own faithful followers in the course of a minor disagreement. First, Duan Yanqing kills the Crocodile Spirit of the South China Sea, third among the »Four Great Villains«, whose leader is Duan Yanqing:

The Crocodile Spirit of the South China Sea felt only a sharp pain in his back and chest as the steel staff had already penetrated his chest. In shock, it took him a while

21 眼前漸漸模糊，棋局上的白子黑子似乎都化作了將官士卒，東一團人馬，西一塊陣營，你圍住我，我圍住你，互相糾纏不清的廝殺。慕容復眼睜睜見到，己方白旗白甲的兵馬被黑旗黑甲的敵人圍住了，左沖右突，始終殺不出重圍，心中越來越是焦急：「我慕容氏天命已盡，一切枉費心機。我一生盡心竭力，終究化作一場春夢！時也命也，夫復何言？」突然間大叫一聲，拔劍便往頸中刎去。[……] 段譽食指點出，叫道：「不可如此！」隻聽得「嗤」的一聲，慕容復手中長劍一晃，當的一聲，掉在地下。 *Ibid.*, 1095.

22 段延慶嘆道：「是啊，活在世上，還有什麼意思？還是自盡了罷！」說話之間，杖頭離著胸口衣衫又近了兩寸。虛竹慈悲之心大動，心知要解段延慶的魔障，須從棋局入手，隻是棋藝低淺，要說解開這局複雜無比的棋中難題，當真是想也不敢想，眼見段延慶雙目呆呆的凝視棋局，危機生於頃刻，突然間靈機一動：「我解不開棋局，但搗亂一番，卻是容易，隻須他心神一分，便有救了。既無棋局，何來勝敗？」便道：「我來解這棋局。」快步走上前去，從棋盒中取過一枚白子，閉了眼睛，隨手放在棋局之上。 *Ibid.*, 1101.

to realize what had happened, and he turned to look at Duan Yanqing with an expression of doubt in his eyes—he didn't understand why all of a sudden older brother Duan had launched this fatal attack on him. But then first of all, Duan Yanqing had always been cruel, and, being the head of the »Four Great Villains«, of course his moves were deadly; secondly, he was exceptionally afraid of Duan Yu's Six-Artery Spirit Sword and deeply feared that the Crocodile Spirit of the South China Sea might liberate him from his bonds. That was the reason why, even though he had no intention of killing the Crocodile Spirit of the South China Sea, he had aimed his steel staff at one of his most vulnerable spots. When Duan Yanqing saw the expression in his eyes, he immediately felt a pang of sorrow and remorse, but this feeling of self-reproach passed as quickly as it had come. He forcefully pulled the steel staff out from the Crocodile Spirit's body and roared: »Fourth brother, bury him! This is an example of what happens if you don't obey your elder brother!«²³

A little further into the text of this chapter, we find Murong Fu kill Bao Butong, a faithful servant-official of his family, who has dared to make objections to Murong Fu's plan of recognizing Duan Yanqing as his foster father:

He hadn't even completed his sentence when suddenly, with a loud noise, a forceful blow hit him just in the middle of his back. He only heard Murong Fu say with a cool voice: »And to betray one's friends in order to achieve fame is disloyal ...« He had conveyed sufficient soft *yin* energy into his palm and hit the two acupressure points *tongling* and *zhiyang* on Bao Butong's body—a very deadly stroke. It would never have occurred to Bao Butong that this young prince, whom he had raised from childhood, would actually launch a fatal attack on him. He spat a mouthful of fresh blood and dropped dead to the ground. [...] In fact, what Murong Fu had been angry about was not that Bao Butong had spoken to him without the due politeness; he was more annoyed that Bao Butong had spoken so openly and without reserve, thus unexpectedly betraying his own secret plans.²⁴

23 南海鱷神只覺后背和前胸一陣劇痛，一根鋼杖已從胸口突了出來。他一時愕然難明，回過頭來瞧著段延慶，眼光中滿是疑問之色，不懂何以段老大竟會向自己忽施殺手。段延慶一來生性凶悍，既是“四大惡人”之首，自然出手毒辣；二來對段譽的六脈神劍忌禪異常，深恐南海鱷神解脫了他的束縛，是以雖無殺南海鱷神之心，還是一杖刺中了他的要害。段延慶見到他的眼光，心頭霎時間閃過一陣悔意，一陣歉疚，但這自咎之情一晃即泯，右手一抖，將鋼杖從他身中抽出，喝道：“老四，將他去葬了。這是不聽老大之言的榜樣。” *Ibid.*, 1687.

24 一句話尚未完，突然間波的一聲響，他背心正中已重重的中了一掌，只聽得慕容復冷冷地道：“我賣友求榮，是為不義。”他這一掌使足陰柔內勁，打在包不同靈台、至陽兩處大穴之上，正是致命的掌力。包不同萬沒想到這個自己從小扶持長大的公子爺竟會忽施毒手，哇的一口鮮血噴出，倒地而死。[……] 其實慕容復所惱恨者，倒不是包不同對他言語無禮，而是恨他直言無忌，竟然將自己心中的圖謀說了出來。 *Ibid.*, 1698.

These two examples of doubling underline the villainous character of Duan Yanqing and Murong Fu, who, even though they owe their lives to Duan Yu and Xuzhu, do not cede from their evil doings and continue to scheme against their rescuers. Both men are so obsessed by their desire for power that they do not show mercy even to their closest friends when those dare to contradict them.

Conclusions

The examples adduced above represent merely a fraction of the many dozen instances of doubling and trebling occurring within *Tian long ba bu*. Even with this modest sample, I hope to have demonstrated that doubling and trebling play an essential role as structuring principles in Jin Yong's popular fiction. Of course, this formal approach can only elucidate a limited (though by no means unimportant) aspect of Jin Yong's fiction, namely the elements of narrative structure that it shares with folk tales and legends.

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