

Mojca Pretnar

Decoding the causation of a happy ending: a cognitive narrative structure analysis of “Du Zichun” 杜子春 and “Toshishun” 杜子春

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the question of causation in common human efforts to achieve and maintain happiness by attempting to gain insights into the causation of a happy ending in narratives, doing so through the investigation of an example of the metaphorical pursuit of happiness, as presented in the theme of pursuing immortality. It compares two versions of the same story that ends with the agent’s failure to achieve immortality, but the two stories have different outcome emotions: the Chinese legend “Du Zichun” 杜子春 ends with a tragic tone, while “Toshishun” 杜子春, as retold by Akutagawa, ends with a happy state of mind. A closer look into the information encoded in the three main elements of the narrative structure (the goal, the causal sequence and the agent of both stories) reveals some significant differences. The process of decoding the final causation is carried out first by a comparison of the image schemas underlying the goal; second, the numeric symbolism behind the causal sequences is examined; and third, the use of positive junctural and outcome emotions. The investigation reveals that the new story with a happy ending is a product of a shift in perspective.

Keywords: narrative structure, causation of a happy ending, Chinese legend “Du Zichun” 杜子春, Akutagawa’s “Toshishun” 杜子春, conceptual metaphor theory

1. INTRODUCTION

People prototypically strive for happiness, and such attempts have long been recorded in literature. As such, literature through history has been an abundant source of wisdom and inspiration regarding the various paths

that might lead to happiness. One theme that expresses one such attempt which often appears in Chinese literature is that of pursuing immortality. The theme of immortality implies on one hand the desire of prolonged or eternal life, which in Chinese culture was considered to be one of the sources of happiness,¹ and on the other hand it implies discontent with reality, an escape to fantasy and seeking inner happiness. The world where immortals dwell is a place with no death, no anxiety or sadness, and a place where human life has a value (Wang 1994: 205-223).² While the question of becoming immortal is not pertinent for the majority of people nowadays, and since all thought and language are fundamentally metaphorical, this theme can be understood to be a metaphor for exploring the limits of the self, and of achieving transformation and happiness through self-realization.

The aim of this study is to investigate possible outcomes of such attempts through an analysis of the story of Du Zichun 杜子春 as told on the one hand in the Tang dynasty (618-907) legend (chuanqi 傳奇) “Du Zichun” by Li Fuyan 李復言³, and on the other hand as retold in the modern Japanese short story “Toshishun” (1920), written by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892-1927). The story of Du Zichun, in both Chinese⁴ and Japanese⁵ versions, is about a man striving to achieve immortality. The successful pursuit of immortality in medieval China, where the story takes place in both versions, was regarded as achieving happiness, although success itself

1 In *The Book of Documents* (Shangshu 尚書) from pre-Qin era, in the chapter “Great Plan” (Hongfan 洪範) we read: “Five (sources of) happiness. The first is long life; the second, riches; the third, soundness of body and serenity of mind; the fourth, the love of virtue; and the fifth, fulfilling to the end the will (of Heaven).” (Legge 1990: 149).

2 The earliest Chinese literary works with theme of immortality as a focus are the works of Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 340–278 BC) and *Zhuangzi* 莊子, in both cases there is the idea of escaping reality to the spiritual world, where one can find peace and happiness. The theme was soon entwined with the theme of reclusion (Wang 1994: 205-223).

3 There are some doubts as to the authorship of the legend. It is likely that Li Fuyan only recorded the story, and not much is known about his life. He seems to have lived during the Dahe 大和 and Kaicheng 開成 reigns (827-840), came from Longxi 隴西 (modern Lintao 臨洮, Gansu), and around 830 traveled to the region of modern Sichuan, where he met the scholar Shen Tianxiang 沈田相 and decided to write a kind of supplement to Niu Sengru’s 牛僧孺 (780-849) *Xuangai lu* 玄怪錄 [Tales of Mysteries and Monsters] (Liao 2012: 209).

4 For the purpose of this study, the version included in the Song dynasty collection *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 [Extensive Records of the Taiping Era] was used (Li 1961: 109-112). The story is also included in *Xu xuanguai lu* 續玄怪錄 [Continued Tales of Mysteries and Monsters], a collection of stories compiled by Li Fuyan 李復言 during the Tang dynasty. *Taiping guangji* quotes a segment from *Xu xuanguai lu* (Nimiaoji 尼妙寂), stating that in 839 Li Fuyan from Longxi 隴西 traveled to Banan 巴南 together with an official in Pengzhou 蓬洲, called Chen Tianhui 沉田會, and he told Li the strange story. English translations by Rania Huntington can be found in *Tang Dynasty Tales: A Guided Reader* (Nienhauser 2010: 49-59), and by J. R. Hightower in *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (Mair 1994: 830-835).

5 For the purpose of the study the Chinese translation of the story was used, as found in *Diyu bian* 地獄變 [Transformations of Hell] (Akutagawa 1986). An English translation by Dorothy Britton can be found in *Tu Tze-Chun* (Akutagawa 1965).

is not all that common in literature.⁶ The two versions of Du Zichun stories bring two different outcomes: the end of “Du Zichun” still leaves readers perplexed, since it is interpreted as showing that the main character faces a tragic end due to his inability to get rid of a loving heart. Interpretations usually discuss the religious aspects of the tale, mostly the rejection of Buddhism and Daoism, which require people to overcome human nature, and as a confirmation of Confucianism and its emphasis on humanity and love, although such ideas are not clear from the story (Xu 2010: 40). There are only a few researchers who have tried to interpret the story in such a way that would give some other meaning to the end.⁷ However, such rare interpretations might be based on a contemporary point of view (Lai 2007: 159). The father of Japanese short stories, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, famous for his borrowing of existing works from different cultures and periods and rewriting the stories to be more suitable for modern audiences, took the story and kept many elements of Chinese culture, but in the end leaves Toshihshun in a satisfied state of mind, creating the sense of a happy end. The modern Japanese version thus end with an idealizing goal achievement (happy end), while the original Chinese version ends with further pursuit of the goal being impossible.⁸ Most studies that compare the stories rather simplistically conclude that the main difference between them is the factor of love, due to which the main character fails: this is maternal love in the Chinese version and love towards parents in the Japanese one. This study thus focuses on other pre-linguistic elements that might contribute to the different endings.

Since the human mind tends to see the causal relations behind every experience, and causation is one of the most fundamental concepts in thought, the main idea of this study is to compare the two very similar stories and decode the encoded information that affects the final causations.⁹ Through the process of encoding we select, segment and give preliminary structure to our experience. When encoding experiences (semantic, linguistic, perceptual) we select different aspects of discourse due to the different sets of emotional arousal, different models, and so on, and

6 According to Reed’s research, for example, among the 18 stories with the theme of immortality collected by Li Fuyan in *Xuxuan guailu*, eight of them end with failure (Reed 2009: 309-342).

7 To name a few, Wang Tuo 王拓 suggests that the legend negates Buddhism and Taoism and emphasizes a loving heart (Wang 1975: 15-20). Mei Jialing 梅家玲 argues that love breaks the illusion of the imaginary world (Mei 1987: 131). Le Hengjun 樂衡軍 believes that the main idea of the story is to find what is really important in life, and while desires fade away, the most natural love does not (Le 1992: 60-72).

8 Stories prototypically involve resolution in the end, which is either an idealizing goal achievement (a happy end) or rendering further pursuit of the goal impossible (Hogan 2011: 121).

9 Final causation is a type of causation (besides the general and efficient) that deals with means and ends: naming a goal and a set of beliefs. Prototypical narratives push toward final causality, they tend to maximize the explanation in terms of intent. They present the main events in terms of an agent’s goal, but also tend to transform as many causal sequences as possible into final causal sequences (Hogan 2003b: 218).

structure the discourse differently due to slight differences in the scripts, prototypes, and the like. We are also cognitively designed to notice what does not fit and tend to exaggerate the differences among our various imaginings of the story (Hogan 2011: 100-101). With an attempt to decode some of the precursors of the final causation, this study focuses on some basic concepts of cognitive linguistics and narratology. The investigation considers the structure of each story and observes it from three basic elements that constitute a narrative: the goal, the causal sequence of events, and the agent (Hogan 2003b: 205). The study discusses the most relevant image-schemas underlying the goal, which is conceptualized as a primary conceptual metaphor of event structure STATES ARE LOCATIONS, the numeric symbolism behind the causal sequence of events and the expressed positive emotions that help to constitute the outcome emotion. Though a comparison of the two versions of the story the study attempts to provide insights into the causation of the happy ending.

2. THE ENCOUNTER OF “DU ZICHUN” AND “TOSHISHUN”

2.1. The story and its ending

The Tang dynasty legend “Du Zichun” and its ending are not completely original.¹⁰ The main character’s attempt to pursue immortality by following the old man brings a surprising end that is somewhat unsatisfying: even though Du Zichun successfully overcame some really unimaginable tests, in the end he fails, because he is not able to let go of one emotion – a mother’s love for her son. Du Zichun is left scolded by his master with a heart full of regret in the place where he started the imaginative part of the journey. Despite the linguistically expressed possibility of further pursuit by the old man: “I can refine my elixir again, but your body will remain in worldly form, do your best!” (吾藥可重煉，而子之身猶為世界所容矣，勉之哉。) (Li 1961: 112) and the fact that he has all the recollections of past events, even from the fantasy world which transformed him, most interpretations through the centuries have viewed such an end as tragic, and concluded that if pursuing immortality demands one to abandon the most primal love then it is not a goal worth following. The story of Du Zichun inspired writers to recreate new works with changes to the ending as well. For example, in “Du Zichun san ru Chang’an” 杜子春三入長安 [Du Zichun enters Chang’an three

10 The Tang dynasty legend “Du Zichun” is not a complete creation of Li Fuyan, but has Indian origins, and he combined it with elements of four different stories: firstly “Lieshi chi” 烈士池 [Martyr pool] from *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 [Records of the Western Regions of the Great Tang Dynasty], secondly Duan Chengshi’s 段成式 “Gu Xuanji” 顧玄績 from *Youyang zazu xuji* 酉陽雜俎續集 [Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang], thirdly “Xiao Dongxuan” 蕭洞玄 in *Hedong jì* 河東記 [Tales of Hedong] collected in *Taiping guangji*, and fourthly “Wei Zidong” 韋自東 from Pei Xing’s 裴鏞 work *Chuanqi* 傳奇 [Legends]. Moreover, other works assigned to Li Fuyan, such as “Zhang Feng” 張逢, “Xue Wei” 薛偉, “Ni miao ji” 尼妙寂 are also based on other stories (Lai 2007: 157-188).

times], a Ming dynasty (1368-1644) *huaben*¹¹ by Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646), collected in *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恒言 [Stories to Awaken the World], the main character is allowed to continue the pursuit, then he succeeds and brings even his wife to immortality.¹² In the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) Duan Yue 岳端's legend "Yangzhou meng" 揚州夢 [Dreams in Yangzhou] and Hu Jiezhi 胡介祉's legend "Guangling xian" 廣陵僊 [Guangling immortals] also used the story. The changed endings clearly show that the confusion about the conclusion of the story is not bound to one culture or time (Nienhauser 2010: 62-63).

When the father of the Japanese short story, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, more than a millennium later¹³ retold the story, it at first glance seemed that he did not change much, only the ending: while Toshishun still fails the test in the end, both main characters, Toshishun and the old man, stay in a happy state of mind, and the end is left open, full of possibilities and positive expectations of achieving the new goal. Observing the similarity of both stories one might get the impression that Akutagawa's story is close to plagiarism. Indeed, Akutagawa was criticized because many of his 150 stories are skillful expansions or adaptations of themes which he found in the literature of other cultures, adding a modern psychological twist (Yu 1972: 21). Upon looking deeper into the problem, however, it becomes clear that he also made some significant changes that affect the causation of the story. Akutagawa was a stylistic perfectionist (Ueda 1976: 137) and encoded cultural and personal information that is different to that seen in the Chinese version of the story.

2.2. Structure and content

The story of Du Zichun is a prototypical narrative with a telic structure including an agent, a goal and a causal sequence connecting the agent's various actions with the achievement or nonachievement of the goal.¹⁴ Due to the rigid form of traditional stories, the same structure repeats

¹¹ A genre that existed prior to the novel, it can be short or medium length story or novella written mostly in vernacular language, sometimes including simple classical language. There is no doubt that *huaben* is the product of Song Dynasty (969-1279), even though the earliest examples are from following Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) and some of those published in Ming dynasty clearly state that they have origins in Song dynasty *huaben* (Luo 2011: 558).

¹² Xu Jiankun explains that such a comforting end is evidence that people read the story as religious, where "good people" with high moral standards can ascend and become immortal (*shenxian* 神仙) (Xu 2010: 43).

¹³ "Toshishun" was published in 1920. Akutagawa's reputation stands on the stories he produced between 1916-1922. These stories are "characterized by detachment, self-consciousness and irony and are the antithesis, at least on the surface level, of the confessional" (Jolly, 2001: 30-31).

¹⁴ In both stories becoming immortal is the main goal of the agent. Following Hogan's research on three prototypical narratives: personal romantic, social heroic and spiritual sacrificial, the aspiration for divine or spiritual happiness, as found in the story of Du Zichun, is not a universally prototypical story. The striving for personal happiness by achieving immortality has certain cultural implications.

over and over cross-culturally and gives an excellent ground for investigations into how people incorporate the structure into their knowledge (Mandler 1984: 17-18). All these characteristics were adopted from the Chinese version in Akutagawa's story, too.¹⁵

Table 1. Structural comparison of “Du Zichun” and “Toshishun”¹⁶

	Du Zichun	Toshishun
Story setting	Between the Northern Zhou (557-581) (Northern and Southern dynasties) and Sui dynasty (581-618), Chang'an (capital)	Tang dynasty (618-907), Luoyang (capital) ¹
Beginning	Bankrupt Du Zichun	The bankrupt Toshishun is thinking of suicide
Development	He meets the old man	He meets the old man
Complex reaction	He decides to serve other people and the old man invites him to join him	He is tired of people, and wants to become the old man's apprentice
Goal path	To become immortal	To become immortal
Outcome	Failure with regret	Failure with relief
Ending	Tragic end – no possible return	Happy end – setting a new goal

These elements of general structure of a story are constituted on EVENT structure metaphor which lies on PATH schema: SOURCE-PATH-GOAL. The most notable difference among elements of general structure of both stories lies in the outcome emotion (GOAL). A more detailed observation of the content and its structure (PATH) is necessary to reveal some cultural, personal elements that might have affected the different endings.

¹⁵ In Akutagawa's opus there are some stories that fit into the frame of “märchen” genre: a short story that typically features folkloristic characters (Ueda 1976: 135).

¹⁶ According to Mandler's research into the structure of traditional stories, such works begin with a setting: introducing the characters, time and place of the story. This is followed by one or more episodes that can be either causally or temporally connected and that form the overall plot structure. There is a development, which has many parts: the first thing that happens is that the protagonist reacts in some way to the events of the beginning: perhaps a simple reaction (anger, fear, or another emotion) that causes the protagonist to perform the action, or more typically a complex reaction occurs, where the simple reaction causes the protagonist to set up a goal to do something about the initial event. There follows a goal path, an attempt to reach a goal and the outcome of the attempt (success or failure). The episode comes to a close with an ending constituent, which provides some kind of commentary on the preceding events. If it is the final ending of the story it may include an emphatic statement of the type: “they lived happily ever after” (Mandler 1984: 22-23).

Table 2. An analysis of the tests (PATH) in the content in “Du Zichun” and “Toshishun”

Test/emotion	Du Zichun	Toshishun
1. LEVEL real	Material life: test with money body	Material life: test with money body
1. desire, anger	The old man encourages the bankrupt Du Zichun to increase the amount he wants three times: 3-50,000, 100,000, 1,000,000: he buys horses, clothes, and drinks, hires musicians, singers, and dancers, living an extravagant life until he runs out of money	The old man provides Toshishun with gold: this is used to buy a home, luxurious life, the best wine and fruits, peacocks, peonies, brocades and precious stones, carriages built of aromatic woods, chairs made of ivory, banquets, golden goblets, European wine, a magician from India swallowing swords, 20 female musicians – until he has spent everything
2. desire, anger	10,000,000: returns to his previous extravagant life	Gold: he returns to his previous extravagant life
3. desire, anger	30,000,000: awakening: he buys 100 qing of land, builds a house in Huainan for widows and orphans, tends to the weddings, completes the burials, repays debts, rewards the favors – all in one year	He refuses gold, wants to become the sage’s apprentice (he does not despise wealth and luxuries, but people)
2. LEVEL virtual CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION	Yuntai peak of Mount Hua (meeting at zhongyuan, 15th day of seventh month – Ghost Festival) ² World of fantasy Forbidden to utter a word	Emei Mountain ³ soul Forbidden to utter a word
1. fear	An army of 1000 chariots, 10,000 riders, the great general	Voice – first death threat
2. fear	Fierce tigers, venomous dragons, lions, serpents, scorpions	Voice – second death threat

3.fear	Rain, thunder, darkness, lightning, wheels of fire, flood	Tiger, white serpent
4.evil, fear	The great general returns, cow-headed soldiers of hell, ghosts and spirits with strange faces: stabbing and pulling his heart	Wind, black clouds, purple lightening, thunder, torrential rain, a pillar of fire hits his head
5.evil	The torturing of his wife (beating, shooting, chopping, boiling, frying)	Demon warrior
6.evil	The begging of his wife and cutting her	Demon soldiers
7.evil	The beheading of Du Zichun	The demon warrior kills Du Zichun with a trident – in death his soul continues the journey
8.evil	The soul of Du Zichun meets King Yama, torture with molten copper, iron rods, the mortar and pestle, the grindstone, the pit of fire, the sea of molten metal, the mountain of knives, the forest of swords	/
9.evil	Being born again in a woman's body	/
3. LEVEL virtual CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION	Songzhou, Shanfu county, Wang Quan family World of fantasy	Toshishun's soul travels through hell spirit
1.sadness	Sickness, falling out of bed and into the fire, physical pains of all sorts	Ghosts The first of King Yama's threats with an iron scepter
2.sadness, evil	Being insulted for her stupidity, psychological pain	The second of King Yama's threats with an iron scepter

3.evil	When witnessing the killing of her son, Du Zichun exclaims: “Yi!” (yi 噫) and finds himself in real life	Unbearable torment: chest pierced by daggers, face scorched by flame, tongue pulled out by its roots, skin flayed from flesh and bone, ground to a pulp with an iron pestle, boiled in oil, poisonous snakes suck out his brain, and birds of prey peck at his eyeballs
4.	/	Meeting with the souls of his parents as horses: The first threat to beat his parents dead
5.	/	The second threat to beat his parents dead
6.	/	Beating his parents almost to death
7.	/	His mother’s words: bearing anything for a son’s happiness causes Toshishun to exclaim: “Mother!” and he finds himself back in real life
CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION	Returning to Yuntai Peak, Mount Hua – irreversible outcome, no path forward	Returning to the beginning – Luoyang Western gate – a new goal

2.3. Goal and causation - the pursuit of immortality and image schemas

A goal is anything an agent might strive to achieve. An agent’s goals are always imagined to elicit conditions for happiness, or the means to the eliciting of conditions for happiness (Hogan 2003b: 221). In this case, the goal is to achieve immortality, or at least transcend the worldly life.

The theme of seeking immortality is one of the ten most archetypical themes in Chinese literature. It connects religion, mythology, thought, folk psychology and so on. Immortality represents a chance for everlasting life without pain and trouble, which is one idea of a happy life. The pursuit of immortality prototypically includes two levels: spiritual transcendence and a prolonged bodily life. However, the real and unreal elements are usually blended together. An important thing worth noting is that the emphasis was never so much on immortality, but rather than on the journey (Wang 1994: 202-218). In Daoism, as

seen from the story of Du Zichun, the theme implies causal relations between entering mountains, searching for medicine, practicing asceticism, alchemy and the like, and achieving immortality.

Causation is a basic human concept used by people to organize physical and cultural realities. While having an emergent core, it can be metaphorical as well. Lakoff and Johnson presented causation as experiential gestalt, as constituted by a set of properties that construct prototypical causation.¹⁷ The goal of this story – the pursuit of immortality – has all the features of prototypical causation. However, just as the goal can be seen as a metaphor, so does causation have its metaphorical extensions and is conceptualized as a change from one state to another and having a new form or function. Such changes usually have to do with evolution. Another metaphorical extension of causation is a case where a mental or emotional state is viewed as causing an event (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 72-75).

Metaphorically, the process of immortality can be seen as the pursuit of happiness, as both are based on the EVENT structure metaphor and primary conceptual metaphor STATE (of happiness) IS LOCATION (ending point of the process), and along these lines eventually CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION. This metaphor is based on the PATH schema: every path in our life has the same parts: a source – the starting point, a goal – the endpoint, and a sequence of contiguous location connecting the source with the goal (Johnson 1987: 113-114) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: PATH schema

There are sets of schemas that are specific to narrative and to the particular sort of narrative at issue here, and these help in interpreta-

¹⁷ They break causation into twelve properties (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 69-71), and Lakoff later presented causation using ten properties. These properties, the building blocks of prototypical causality, include: 1. There is an agent that does something. 2. There is a patient that undergoes a change to a new state. 3. Properties 1 and 2 constitute a single event; they overlap in time and space; the agent comes in contact with the patient. 4. Part of what the agent does (either the motion or the exercise of will) precedes the change in the patient. 5. The agent is the energy source; the patient is the energy goal; there is a transfer of energy from agent to patient. 6. There is a single definite agent and a single definite patient. 7. The agent is human. 8. a. The agent wills his action. b. The agent is in control of his action. c. The agent bears primary responsibility for both his action and the change. 9. The agent uses his hands, body, or some instrument. 10. The agent is looking at the patient, the change in the patient is perceptible, and the agent perceives the change (Lakoff 1987: 54-55). The idea of this study is to read these components in a metaphorical sense, where the agent is represented by Du Zichun and the patient means his life.

tion of narratives (Hogan 2003a: 117). Besides the PATH schema, there is another image schema closely intertwined with this, a CYCLE schema, since the main character returns home at the end of such prototypical stories. Paths can have temporal dimensions mapped onto them. One starts at point A at a certain time and moves to point B at another. The timeline is mapped onto the path (Johnson 1987: 114). We experience our world as embedded within temporal cyclic processes, and the time of the story in question is an often discussed topic.¹⁸ The cycle prototypically begins with some initial state, proceeds through a sequence of connected events, and ends where it began, to start anew the recurring cyclic pattern (Johnson 1987: 119) (Figure 2).

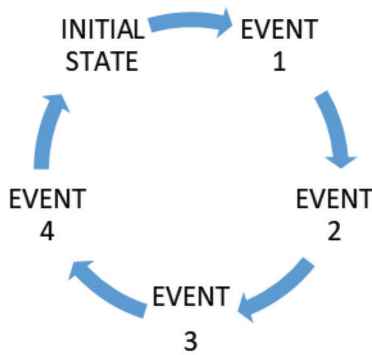


Figure 2: CYCLE schema

In these two stories there is one difference in the spatial aspect of the cycle: after failing the last test and returning to reality, Li Fuyan locates Du Zichun on Mount Hua, where he started the second level of his imaginary journey. The old man's house is burned down, there is no path forward, and his only option is to return home. When he later returns to the mountain again all evidence of the event is gone. The circuit is cut, and a change does not occur, or at least the agent does not perceive it (Figure 3 top). In this respect the causation behind "Du Zichun" lacks the last property and is slightly less prototypical. However, despite the impossibility of continuing his transformation in the fantasy world, Du Zichun has full recollection of successfully overcoming some tests and the reason why he failed, therefore the ending emotion *hen* 恨, commonly interpreted as regret, has a rather ambiguous meaning. Akutagawa, on the other hand, places Toshishun back to the beginning – Luoyang, to the place where he first met the old man, and that makes all the difference, the structure of the cycle is complete (Figure 3 bottom). The change occurs, because the

¹⁸ Reed points out that the way time is organized is an element of the Indian ancestor story (Reed 2009: 309-342).

agent sees it. He is ready to start over, a new cycle, and he sets a new goal: to live a happy life by being an honest person.

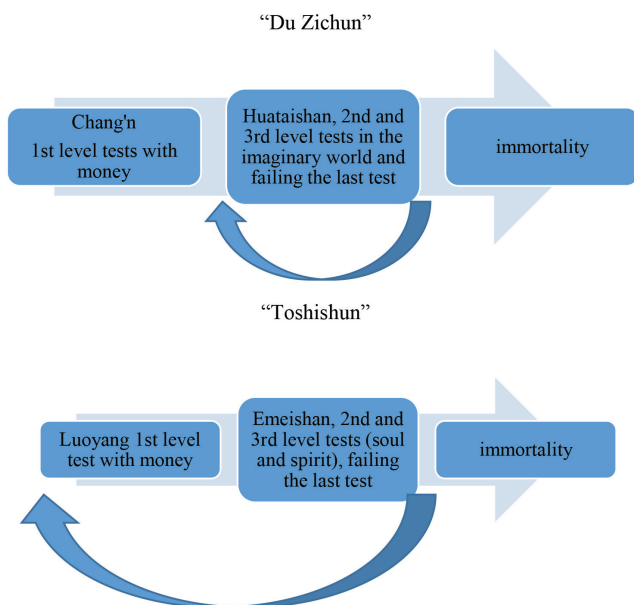


Figure 3: PATH and CYCLE schemas in “Du Zichun” and “Toshishun”

2.4. Causal sequences – the symbolism behind numbers

Both Chinese and Japanese version of the story are based on repetition. The story as a whole is based on number “three” – in both cases, there are three levels of tests (Table 2). Cross-culturally, the number “three” is considered auspicious, with rich symbolic meaning, it includes the numbers “one” (unity) and “two” (diversity). “Three” symbolizes spiritual synthesis and is the formula for the creation of each of the worlds. It represents the solution of the conflict posed by dualism. It forms a half-circle comprising birth, zenith and descent. It is the harmonic product of the action of unity upon duality (Cirlot 2001: 232). In fairy tales and legends “three” is a symbol of completion, it is the number of tests that a hero needs to pass to achieve a goal.

In Chinese culture “three” is an also auspicious number and, like other magic numbers, has masculine (*yang* 陽) characteristics. The most basic wholeness in Daoism and Confucianism represented by the number “three” is that of Heaven, Earth and Man, a triad in the basis of every other system of trinity,¹⁹ such as the three levels of a man: body, soul and spirit. The most obvious meaning in Chinese culture is “a lot, plenty”.

¹⁹ However, in Buddhism, too, there are certain concepts based on number three (Eberhard 1994: 289).

Li Fuyan and Akutagawa both have tests on three different levels, which represent bodily, soul and spiritual levels of trials on the path of transformation. Moreover, in both cases the first level, which is material and physical, is also based on the number “three”. Li Fuyan’s legend even uses an amount of money based on “three”: firstly, Du Zichun raises the amount three times, and the third time triples the previous amount and ends with 30 million. The main characters obviously fail the first and second tests without any improvement, but after failing twice for some reason he is given a third chance, which helps him to transcend the material level and attain a new level.

Moreover, the multiples of the number “three” have special meaning. “Nine” amplifies the power of “three”: it is the triangle of the ternary, and the triplication of the triple. It is therefore a complete image of the three worlds. It represents a triple synthesis; that is, the disposition on each plane of the corporal, intellectual and spiritual. It is the end-limit of the numerical series before its return to unity (Cirlot 2001: 233-234). In Chinese culture, “nine” is also an auspicious number, its pronunciation (*jiu*) sounds the same as the word for “long-lasting”, and therefore “nine” is associated with eternity, completion, wholeness and fulfillment. Li Fuyan, in his story, uses the symbolism of number “nine” in the second level of the tests. On one hand, he uses “nine” on a linguistic level describing the environment (in a hut on the mountain there is a nine *chi* high alchemical stove and there are nine jade maidens – Daoist protective spirits), and on the other hand, Du Zichun has to go through nine tests, “a lot of” tests become tripled. The completion is whole, he completes his life and reincarnates. Du Zichun’s reincarnation in a female body begins the third level of tests. Although this level is still unreal, however, it seems similar to real life. Therefore, Li Fuyan switches back to the number “three”. With completing the final test – the failed test of abolishing love – Du Zichun returns to reality.

Akutagawa, on the other hand, came across a cultural barrier he needed to overcome. In Japanese culture “nine” is considered unlucky, because its pronunciation *ku* sounds like the word for pain, agony or torture. Therefore, in order to create an atmosphere that would support the success of Toshishun he only kept seven tests on the second level.²⁰ The symbolism of the number “seven” is in some ways similar to the symbolic meanings of “nine”, it indicates the meaning of a change after an accomplished cycle and of positive renewal. “Seven” is a symbol of perfect order, a complete period or cycle. It comprises the union of the ternary and the quaternary, and hence it is endowed with exceptional value (Cirlot 2001: 233). “Seven”

²⁰ Similar culturally related discrepancies in numeric symbolism are present even in Western cultures. For example, a comparative study of idioms in German, English, Lithuanian and other languages reveals a similar interchange between seven and nine, although the authors explain the difference with reference to Christianity and biblical symbolism (Dobrovolskij and Piirainen 2006: 27-41).

is the sum of “three” and “four”: “three” is, in many cultures, the number pertaining to Heaven (since it constitutes the vertical order of the three-dimensional spatial cross) and “four” is associated with the Earth (because of the four directions—comparable with the cardinal points—of the two horizontal dimensions). As such, “seven” is the number expressing the sum of Heaven and Earth (Cirlot 2001: 283).

Table 3: Numbers of tests on each level in “Du Zichun” and “Toshishun”

	Du Zichun	Toshishun
1 st LEVEL	3	3
2 nd LEVEL	9	7
3 rd LEVEL	3	7

Since in Akutagawa’s story the marital relationship is excluded,²¹ Toshishun’s tests do not include the torturing of his wife, as in the Chinese version, and he creates the seven tests with the use of some redundancy: repeated threats, threats before the act. His third level of tests is spiritual, and not a representation of real life in a virtual world, and he also avoids reincarnation and the changing of the sex. For Akutagawa the transformation is a journey from the material, soul and spiritual levels. The symbolism of the number “seven” encompasses both real and virtual levels. Since the third level has the same number of tests as the successfully completed second level, it brings a sense of success on the spiritual level.

2.5. The agent and emotions

Comparative research of the Chinese and Japanese versions of the story of Du Zichun mostly focus on two differences: the change of sex in the Chinese version and the change in the aspect of love: in the Chinese version the emphasis is on the most primal love, that of a mother for her child, while the Japanese version emphasizes the child’s love and the respect for their parents (*xiao* 孝), who always do what they think is the best for their child’s happiness. However, a different aspect of love itself does not cause the outcome emotion of either happiness or sorrow. Following the idea of prototypical causation, that the emotion elicits the event, it is worth considering the causal relations between the happy emotional states and events in both stories. Since the idea of this

²¹ This, too, might reveal Akutagawa’s personal beliefs: he was not able to marry the woman he loved because his family opposed the union, for which he blamed the selfishness and hypocrisy of people (Iga 1986: 79).

study is to read the story metaphorically and investigate eliciting conditions of a happy end, it focuses on the two positive emotions²² among the seven basic emotions in Chinese culture²³, that is love and joy, and how they appear as junctural emotions.

The horrifying tests cover the five negative emotions, and the two positive emotions – joy and love in the Chinese version are shown in only one place, with both joy and love appearing together as a reaction to an event. When Du Zichun is in a female body and gets married, the story reports marital happiness, including the birth of a child. Marriage in Chinese culture is the most prototypical eliciting condition of long-lasting happiness. In this case, however, it only lasts a few years. It is, however, worth noting that during the second level of tests of Du Zichun, when his wife was tortured or begged him to save her, he keeps silent. The emotion of love shown in the story is not the prototypical romantic love. After failing the test there are no indications of possible positive emotions in his reality. Moreover, while the story emphasizes the abolition of seven basic emotions to achieve immortality, the old man who apparently possesses some magical powers, and although being in training himself (as seen in the creation of the elixir), in the end also becomes angry and disappointed. Du Zichun's process ends, however, with a feeling of regret, and no future perspective. Not only does the outcome emotion in such an irreversible situation place the story into the prototype of sorrow, but even through the story the points with a happy state of mind are minimized to one reaction to a certain happy event.

Akutagawa's version does not expose the end of all emotions as a condition to achieve immortality, but on the other hand he directly raises the question of personal happiness. Toshishun is disappointed with people and wants to turn in on himself. Immortality is presented as the achievement of happiness. Joy appears during the story in the first and last course of the repetitions. It is worth noting that the old sage is the image of a satisfied and happy person: he is compassionate and understanding at the first level of the tests, he laughs and is pleased in the end. On the first level each appearance of the old sage brings a moment of relief. In the end, he tells Toshishun he would kill him himself if he did not speak when he did. Then he rewards him with a property described with symbolic images of the place of immortals: images of Taishan and peach blossoms. Toshishun is also happy in the end despite the failure, and in such a state he finds a

22 "Positive emotion" is used here to refer to an emotion that people wish to achieve and sustain, such as love and joy, as opposed to "negative emotions", such as anger, sadness, fear, and so on, which people usually want to end or avoid (Hogan 2003b: 90).

23 In Chinese thought there are seven basic emotions: joy (*xi*喜), anger (*nu*怒), sadness (*ai*哀), fear (*ju*懼), love (*ai*愛), disgust (*e*惡) and desire (*yu*欲) (Sun 1990: 606). A similar categorization is present in traditional Chinese medicine and was adopted in literary theory and criticism after Liu Xie's *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (Liu 1984: 83).

new goal – to become an honest man and live an honest life. The outcome emotion is happiness, perhaps not in the sense of “happily ever after”, but with clear intent. The content is intertwined with some junctural happy moments, although the prototypical example of personal happiness – the extension of romantic love in marital love – is completely absent. The happy state seems independent of previous events. It is also worth noting that what causes Toshishun to speak is not the horrific torture of his parents, but rather the gentle and loving mother’s words expressing a desire for her child’s happiness. The same loving, forgiving and compassionate love shines from the sage. Love here has the power to change the course of the event more than any of the fearsome tests. The positioning of a happy state of mind at the very end of the story also raises the implication and expectation of lasting results – long-term happiness.

3. DECODING THE FINAL CAUSALITY

The process of decoding the elements that make the difference in the final causation of the story on the level of the goal, causal sequences and agent, and a comparison of the results of such an attempt, all have something in common. What really makes the difference is the shift in perspective from figure to ground in the Japanese story “Toshishun” (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Edgar Rubin: figure and ground (Stockwell 2002: 13): the image on the picture can be either two faces (black) or a vase (white), depending on the focus

First, the shift of perspective is noticed in relation to the goal. In stories that are based on the EVENT structure metaphor, conceptualized in terms of the STATES ARE LOCATION primary metaphor with an underlying PATH schema, the CYCLE schema is an important element since the main character usually returns to the place where he started the journey, any other position of the agent might imply an incomplete cycle and irreversible outcome. If one of the properties of causation is a perceivable change, in the last test the agent does not see it. Du Zichun together with the old man is completely focused on the goal, and therefore the failure of that last test, forgetting the fundamental characteristic in pursuing immortality – that the journey is more important than the goal. His process is based on the FINAL STATE IS FINAL LOCATION conceptual metaphor with no other entailments. This slight encoded declination from prototypical causation might be the reason

why readers are often left perplexed by the outcome. Toshishun on the other hand shifts his focus from the goal to the whole picture: he holds the knowledge from previous tests, he is aware together with his master that the price for immortality might be too high, and he is planning to find another way to happiness. He perceives the change and changes the conceptual metaphor he lives by: in his case the general STATES ARE LOCATION metaphor expands to its entailment LIFE IS A JOURNEY, releasing the finality.

Second, the shift is seen even in the basis of the numerical choices and repetitions: the numerical symbolism of “three” and “nine” in the Chinese version is focused on the sense of completion and finality, and while the symbolism of “seven” in Japanese version also implies completion, the focus shifts to repetition of the same number of tests on the level where Toshishun succeeds and that where he fails, which is achieved by redundancy – a repetition of the content of the tests. This way the process is kept on the spiritual level, where it continues.

Finally, the most notable difference between the both stories is the obvious shift of perspective from one aspect of love (maternal love) to its reverse (a child’s love for their parents), which might be the authors’ encoding from personal experience, however this question exceeds the scope of this study.²⁴ Furthermore, while in the Chinese version the few happy emotions are presented as reactions to the events, the Japanese version separates the happy state of mind from the events. One reason for this might lie in the fact that, while in the Chinese story Du Zichun lacks focused intention, it is not clear from the beginning why he was chosen and given the chance, Toshishun decides intentionally on his own to step on the path of pursuing immortality. Despite the unpleasant events he maintains the initial intent to be happy.

4. CONCLUSION

From the narrative analysis of the causal relations between the ending and the basic narrative aspects of the story in the case of “Du Zichun” and “Toshishun”, looking at the goal, causal sequences, and agent, there are some elements encoded in the structure that pertain to the outcome and, moreover, prove that Akutagawa’s adoption of the classical Chinese story is not merely plagiarism, but a skillful playing with shifting the focus

²⁴ Akutagawa’s mother suffered from mental illness, and thus he was raised by his aunt, but he was worried about inheriting his mother’s disease. He committed suicide at the age of 35 because of “vague anxiety”, emerging from unsatisfied basic childhood needs, a pessimistic view of life and a highly accepting view of suicide. Family pressure was probably one of the causes of these, since his identification with his family was so intense that he became emotionally dependant upon it. He could not marry the woman he loved because she did not belong to a samurai family. His suicide note revealed his view of life as a miserable battle and of family which, in his opinion, stifled individual freedom (Iga 1986: 76-85).

from the figure to the ground. From the comparison of these elements it is possible to point out some specifics of causation with regard to a happy ending.

First, a complete focus on the goal can cause a fixation on failure, too, and prevents perception of the change and therefore blocks continuation of the process, while a shift in perspective and the gaze to the whole picture can give way to more junctural happy emotions, and in case of a failure bring the idea of a new goal and an expansion of the metaphor one lives by. Second, while the symbolism behind the number of repetitions can be important, it is also culturally determined. What is more important is the consistency of the repetitions of events that lead closer to the wanted goal and which bring some sense of accomplishment, together with maintaining the accomplishment on the spiritual level rather than the material one. Third, happy states of mind that are reactions to the outcomes of events do not lead to the happy ending. On the contrary, happy states that can be achieved and maintained independently in spite of the events can bring a long-lasting, happy state of mind. From the comparison of the two stories it is possible to conclude that, despite the physical outcome of failure with regard achieving the goal of immortality, what makes the difference and turns it to a happy ending is the change in perspective.

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SUMMARY

Decoding the causation of a happy ending: a cognitive narrative structure analysis of “Du Zichun” 杜子春 and “Toshishun” 杜子春

The study addresses the question of causation in common human efforts to achieve and maintain happiness by attempting to gain some insight into the causation of a happy ending in narratives, doing so through an investigation of an example of the metaphorical pursuit of happiness as presented in the theme of pursuing immortality. It considers possible causes that lead to a happy ending by comparing two versions of the same story that ends with the agent’s failure to achieve immortality, but the two stories have different outcome emotions: the Chinese Tang dynasty legend “Du Zichun” 杜子春 ends with a tragic tone, while “Toshishun” 杜子春, as retold by the father of the Japanese modern short story, Akutagawa, ends with a happy state of mind. A closer look into the information encoded in the three main elements of the narrative structure (the goal, the causal sequence and the agent of both stories) reveals some significant differences between the stories that have an impact their overall reception and the outcome. The process of decoding the final causation is carried out first by a comparison of the two main image schemas underlying the goal, that is the PATH and CYCLE schemas together with the conceptual metaphors based on these; second, the numeric symbolism behind the causal sequences is examined; and third, the use of positive emotions of joy and love as junctural and outcome emotions show the skillful narrative approach of the modern author. With all the obvious similarities between the two versions of the story presented in this work, the investigation reveals that the new story with a happy ending is a product of a shift in perspective.

Keywords: narrative structure, causation of a happy ending, Chinese legend “Du Zichun” 杜子春, Akutagawa’s “Toshishun” 杜子春, conceptual metaphor theory

SAŽETAK

Dešifriranje uzroka sretnoga kraja: kognitivna analiza narativne strukture „Du Zichun“ 杜子春 i „Toshishun“ 杜子春

Studija se bavi pitanjem uzročnosti u zajedničkim ljudskim nastojanjima da se postigne i održi sreća nastojeći steći neke uvide u uzročnost sretnoga završetka u narativima, radeći to kroz istraživanje primjera metaforičkoga traganja za srećom, kako je prikazano u temi traženja besmrtnosti. Studija razmatra moguće uzroke koji dovode do sretnoga završetka uspoređujući dvije verzije iste priče koja završava neuspjehom agenta da postigne besmrtnost, ali dvije priče imaju različite ishodišne emocije: kineska legenda dinastije Tang “Du Zichun” završava s tragičnom tonom, dok “Toshishun” koju je stvorio otac moderne japanske kratke priče Akutagawa, završava sretnim stanjem uma. Detaljniji uvid u informacije kodirane u trima glavnim elementima narativne strukture: cilj, uzročna sekvenca i agent u obje priče, otkriva neke značajne razlike između priča koje utječu na cijelu njihovu recepciju i ishod. Proces dekodiranja konačne uzročnosti provodi se kao prvo usporedbom dviju glavnih shema koje leže u osnovi cilja, a to su sheme PUT i CIKLUS zajedno s konceptualnim metaforama na kojima se temelje; potom se ispituje brojčana simbolika iza uzročnih sekvencija; i naposljetku, upotreba pozitivnih emocija radosti i ljubavi kao prosječnih i ishodišnih emocija – koji svi zajedno pokazuju vješti narativni pristup suvremenoga autora. Uza sve očite sličnosti između dvije verzije priče prikazane u ovome radu, istraživanje otkriva da je nova priča sa sretnim završetkom proizvod promjene perspektive.

Ključne riječi: narativna struktura, uzroci sretnoga kraja, kineska legenda “Du Zichun” 杜子春, Akutagawina priča “Toshishun” 杜子春, teorija konceptualne metafore