THE ICE-DRINKER'S MANDATE: IMAGES OF LIANG QICHAO

BY

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

Unless otherwise stated, this is my own work.

Anne Alexandra Gunn
This thesis examines the images of Liang Qichao as presented in a broad range of different written material, from orthodox historical accounts, to fictional representations of his life and character, to his own fiction writing and autobiographical works. A major question that this work attempts to answer is why Liang Qichao was in his own time and has remained a subject of such intense interest by educated Chinese. After a brief Introduction, the thesis opens in Chapter 1 with a biographical study of Liang's life in his most influential years, beginning in 1895 when he became a student of Kang Youwei and entered the world of late Qing reform; and ending over ten years later in Japan when his journal, the *Xinmin congbao*, ceased publication. Chapter 2 discusses the various historical analyses of Liang's work since his death, including work from the United States, China and Taiwan. Chapter 3 contrasts these portrayals with images of Liang from contemporary late-Qing "social fiction", in which Liang himself played a role both as writer and as theorist. Chapter 4 analyses Liang's own work in shaping his public image as a translator of new ideas for a Chinese readership. Finally the Conclusion draws together the threads and contrasts presented in the body of the thesis to discuss how these contesting images help to explain the continuing fascination with the person of the late Qing reformer, Liang Qichao.
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"今吾朝受命而夕饮冰。我其内热与．"

庄子，人间世．
This thesis grew out of work I did on Liang Qichao concerning his early years as an expatriate in Japan, from his arrival in 1898 up to 1907 when his longest-running journal, the Xinmin congbao [Journal of a new people], was finally wound up. At the same time as I was becoming increasingly impressed by the volume of intellectual history writing on Liang, I came across Douglas Lancashire's Modern Times: A Brief History of Enlightenment, a translation of Li Boyuan's Wenming xiaoshi, with its entertaining and devastating caricatures of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. This, together with my growing interest in the wide range of attitudes among Liang's biographers towards their subject, and my puzzlement over what to make of Liang's self-representation in his Qingdai xueshu gailun, took me quite rapidly towards what has become the present piece of work, which looks at contesting images of Liang Qichao.

1 Li Boyuan, Wenming xiaoshi [A brief history of civilization], trans. by Douglas Lancashire as Modern Times: A Brief History of Enlightenment, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, Hong Kong, 1996.
Li Boyuan's novel *Wenming xiaoshi* was only one (though probably the best) of a number of late-Qing fictional works which made use of well-known public figures, such as Liang Qichao, in their cast of characters. Reading these works revealed an unexpected "unauthorized" and alternative view of Liang and his activities as a reformer and writer, beginning at the time of his association with his teacher Kang Youwei. Not that the views are all the same: they vary widely, ranging from shocked disapproval to admiration and envy. These fictional representations, which are however based more or less on real events, display an eager fascination with the figure of Liang and his colleagues. This is not surprising for a man who has, for subsequent generations of Chinese, represented the archetypal reformer and patriot, a sympathetic human figure with aspirations worthy of emulation by all warm-blooded youth. What became evident in reading these works, however, was the fact that during his lifetime Liang's popular image was in some respects very different from this later representation, and was instead something of a battle site, with the weaponry used to contest this site being the printed word. This in turn drew my attention back to the echoes of unresolved issues concerning Liang's position as an early beacon of reform, in the more recent literature on him.

This work is concerned with the several streams that have run together in the process of creating the historical figure of Liang Qichao. It does not evaluate the importance of Liang Qichao in his own time, nor does it consider the influence of Liang in the development of a notion of a modernizing China, though these are obviously important matters. There is already a large quantity of excellent literature on Liang, dealing with these and many other aspects of his life, his work, his contribution to his era and his significance beyond it. There remains, however, the question of why he continues to inspire so much attention: what has motivated the many scholarly and more popular studies that have been written on the life and work of Liang Qichao?

The answer is certainly not that he himself shone so much brighter than others in his generation, though his name may have been known more widely. His influence was great, but only very great for a short while, in the
ten years or so which this work mainly covers. Yet Liang became almost
instantly an icon in modern Chinese history, a figure who was already the
subject of mythologizing in his youth, as well as a person upon whose life and
work the seemingly disproportionate number of enquiring minds of
subsequent generations of historians have bent their attention.

Some tentative reasons for his lasting appeal emerge from a reading in
the literature on Liang. Perhaps the most important thing to note is his ability
to be so many things to so many people. Liang was a protean figure. He has
been revealed now in several quite different shapes and from different
theoretical perspectives: from traditional Chinese historiographical, Marxist,
modern or post-modern; and there remain no doubt more stories still to be
told. Despite the amount of material now available, by him (there are said to
be "over ten million characters" in his collected works alone') and about him,
which should help in pinning down the man and his life and achievements,
he remains elusive. Liang was a man who made a virtue of his willingness to
change, to turn to a completely different point of view in his politics and his
approach to moral and philosophical questions. Because of this, anyone
reading his work finds that while a little reading gives a good picture of
Liang, more extensive reading erodes the clarity of this picture. Liang was
neither single-minded enough nor narrow enough in his endeavours to deter
scholars who come to him with a purpose in mind; he seems able to satisfy the
requirements of many different propositions.

Liang Qichao, the historical figure, benefited from a number of
circumstantial factors, to which he added his own conscious efforts, and of
course his singular talent. His distinctive position both in historical time and
in his physical location during that time are crucial to the extraordinary
significance he has been given in recent Chinese history. Liang's life spanned
more than fifty years of almost unimaginable change. He is well known as a
prominent member of the first generation in the modern era to experience
directly the possible alternatives to the traditional polity in China. This

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Zhongguo da baike quanshu [Encyclopedia of China], v.II: Zhongguo lishi, Zhongguo Da Baike
Quanshu Chubanshe, Peking and Shanghai, 1992, p.577.
"transitional" generation was quickly overtaken by a new generation, many of whom received their education in the West or in Japan and were able to move around much more fluently in foreign languages and concepts. Although it is probably true that this second generation had more influence in determining directions for change in China, the confrontation with the new which Liang's generation experienced has made a lasting impression on the imaginations of successive generations of Chinese, and on youth in particular.

The importance of place as a significant element in the particularity of Liang's life must also be considered. He lived as an expatriate in Japan for the better part of fourteen years, with lengthy trips to Hawaii, North America and Australia. In this he was different from most Chinese who spent time in Japan, or indeed elsewhere outside their own country. Students arrived in a foreign country, completed their courses of study, and went home. Overseas Chinese business people were to a great extent in a world of their own, although their patriotic impulses, translated into financial assistance, were important in keeping the expatriate political world afloat. Liang's long years in Japan can be seen to have given him something of the viewpoint of a resident of the future looking over the water at the problems of the past—while anxious above all to find a way to help his people along, he was in another world and out of reach, for the most part a happy exile. Meanwhile everything came through Japan before it went on to China, a situation which Liang enjoyed and profited from. His exile seems to have brought him few of the problems which one associates with this condition of living—such as isolation, incoherence in a foreign language; and all of its advantages—excitement, intrigue, freedom to write as he wanted to, and a probably rather gratifying status in Japanese political and police circles.

Liang's continuing ability to inspire further investigation is also a lingering effect of the fact that he was for most of his life a person with very high public visibility. Most of the crucial elements of his fame are well known. First, he was drawn very early in his life (at the age of 17) into public view when he threw in his lot with Kang Youwei in 1890. Kang was the kind
of charismatic figure with questionable ethical underpinnings that easily catches the public imagination. Liang's earliest public identity, which he never altogether dispelled, was as Kang's brilliant student, his "gaozu" 高足, foremost among the "kang men dizi" 康门弟子 ["Kang's disciples"]. Kang's activities in the capital leading up to the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898 were notable for their tendency to catch public attention. Kang's "eccentric ardor for visiting people in 1894-98 in Peking" has been noted: it was "foreign to traditional Chinese customs". And he had stranger habits even than that. "Day after day," the Qing Censor wrote in his impeachment of Kang in July 1898, "he would stop a passer-by in the street and cry to him: 'China is doomed! China is doomed!'" Kang's ambitions were suspected by many to be driven by more complex and selfish motivations than a wish for political reform. Kang's biographer, K.C. Hsiao, has quoted from an early (1910) English-language book on Kang's arch-enemy, the Dowager Empress Cixi, in which the authors note that it was "difficult to acquit Kang Yu-wei of personal and interested motives, of a desire to wield power in the state".6

This period and the few years following it provided a rich source for the later satirical portraits of Kang and Liang found in fiction. Publishers took advantage of the probable curiosity of the ordinary reader concerning the unfamiliar political stand as well as the unusual lifestyle of the reformers. Their proscription by the Qing authorities in autumn of 1898 made the two men a legitimate target for sometimes libellous fictional representations, with or without witty pseudonyms, which in any case tended only to add to the libel.

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1 A note about Chinese characters in this work: where their use helps to clarify the pinyin term, they are included. Other characters will be found in the glossary only, or in the bibliography.
3 Chen Ch'i-yun, "Liang Chi-ch'ao's 'Missionary Education': A Case of Missionary Influence on the Reformers", Papers on China, v.16, 1962, pp.84-5. Chen says that one of the claims in the Censor's impeachment of Kang was that he had tried repeatedly to have meetings with the Censor, despite the traditional avoidance of "extra social activities and private contacts" among Chinese officials. Chen's impression is that Kang used methods learned from missionaries to make his activities known to the people.
Kang and Liang were further united as a reform entity in the public's imagination when they escaped the crackdown on the reform movement in 1898, left China and became for a few years the best-known off-shore source of anti-government activity. The Baohuang Hui [保皇会 Protect the Emperor Association], formed in Canada by Kang in 1899, further lifted the level of visibility of Kang and Liang, and was a hugely successful fundraising organ for the various political, publishing and investment activities of Kang and Liang. Overseas Chinese businessmen seem to have been the main target of this organization, and they did not disappoint.

Liang's years with the Qingyi bao [Journal of disinterested criticism] and the Xinmin congbao, which succeeded it, were most responsible for establishing his reputation in his own right, and gave him the high public profile which he never completely lost. Up until 1905, when he became embroiled in defending himself and his political stand against the writers from the opposition Min bao [People's journal], Liang's articles were read by almost every educated Chinese who was interested in being patriotic and progressive. Publication of the Qingyi bao began almost as soon as he arrived in Japan. It was essentially a propaganda vehicle for the Baohuang Hui; its termination at the end of 1901 and the immediate inception of the Xinmin congbao coincided with a leap in Liang's sense of independence and self-confidence. Many years later, Wu Qichang, a student of Liang's, recalled his reaction (and, apparently, that of many others) to Liang's writing, in a time of competing literary styles:

"Tan Sitong's writing ... is magnificent and lively, but difficult to understand. Xia Zengyou's writing, with terms from Zhuangzi and Buddhism all mixed in, was even more difficult to publish. Zhang Binglin's writing ... with a classical elegance and broad scholarship, is also hard to understand. Yan Fu's writing ... is profound and dense, but it has no great sense of personality. Lin Shu's writing ... has an easy-going and smooth style, but it only suits the short essay. ... But as for writing with a thundering roar, with reckless lack of inhibition, with the power to move the heavens and astonish the senses; sometimes perhaps

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moving, with a graceful air, elegiac, or recalling old poems about the
moon and flowers; or else making the blood boil and overwhelming the
spirit; with a pen full of emotion, in smooth and fluent language,
thousands upon thousands of words, appealing to both refined and
popular taste, absorbing the reader's soul, all exhaustion forgotten;
sometimes unexpectedly making the reader furiously enraged, or causing
hot tears to soak the page – none of this is flattery, and only Liang
Qichao's writing was like this! There was only Mr Liang who produced
literary works like this, from about 1896 up to 1910. For these sixteen
years, Liang Qichao was recognized as a 'favourite son' of public opinion,
an unrivalled literary hero.¹

After 1905, Sun Yat-sen's Xing Zhong Hui and a more radical
"revolutionary" tide quickly reduced Liang to being only one of the voices for
change, and a conservative and pro-Qing one at that. Although Liang led a
well-documented and busy life in following years, by the time of his death he
himself was seen to be largely irrelevant to the issues and trends in the
political and intellectual world in China, though his earlier work continued to
be influential. He had become the voice of the older generation, respected but
not listened to. Zheng Zhenduo, in a long obituary article soon after Liang's
death, remarked that Liang had already seemed to be from a bygone era,
although he died only in his mid-fifties, very little past the prime of his life.
Zheng generously explains this sense of Liang's obsolescence as due to the
great length of time that Liang had already put into his career as a man of
letters by the time he died.² But despite the truth of this, from the point of
view of the reaction of his contemporaries to his writing his period of
influence has to be found many years back, during his years in Japan.

Liang's greatest influence was on (mostly) young readers of his
essays, first in the Shanghai Shìwǔ bāo [时务报, Current Affairs, also called
"The Chinese Progress"³] in 1896-8, but especially the Qīngyì bāo and the
Xīn mín cong bāo. For these younger contemporaries of Liang's, he has

¹ Quoted in Meng Xiangcai, Liàng Qīchāo zhūn [A biography of Liang Qichao], Renmin
Chubanshe, Peking, 1980, pp.86-7; reprinted by Fengyun Shidai, Taipei, 1990. This
recollection comes from Wu Qichang, Liàng Qīchāo, a booklet written "during the anti-
Japanese war".
² Zheng Zhenduo, "Liàng Rēngóng xiānshēng" [Mr Liang Rengong], in Xiǎoshuō yuèkān, v.20,
no.2 (10 Feb. 1929), p.333. Zheng, twenty-five years younger than Liang, was a prominent
figure in literary circles in the 1920s, and later vice-minister of culture in the 1950s.
³ See Joseph R. Levenson, Liàng Ch'í-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China, Harvard University
frequently been turned into a milepost on the road to their own mature intellectual development. Many people from this generation include him in a sort of personal intellectual genealogy, as do many people in later generations of Chinese readers. I suspect that, even today, many older people who were educated in China in the early Republican period read Liang in their youth with an excitement not so far removed from that experienced by young people of the late 1890s and early 1900s.\footnote{Jon L. Saari quotes from an unidentified man who grew up in China between 1907 and 1923, whose three models or "moral exemplars" were Zeng Guofan, Liang Qichao ("a model of an activist and thinker") and Tao Yuanming; another, Shen Tsung-han (b.1895), chose Liang (who "fired his patriotic fervour"), Wang Yangming and Zeng. See \textit{Legacies of Childhood: Growing up Chinese in a Time of Crisis, 1890-1920}, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1990, pp.131, 163.}

A number of his readers became influential in their own right in later years, and the excited and impassioned comments about Liang made by these other great men are frequently reported. For example, Philip Huang, who passes on numerous comments of this sort, quotes Zheng Zhenduo: Liang's prose "toppled the drab and lifeless old style", and "carried an intensity of feeling that made the reader follow him".\footnote{Philip Huang, \textit{Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism}, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1972, p.6.} On Liang's historiographical writing, Huang quotes Hu Shi: Liang's 1902 essay on Chinese historiography "opened up a new world";\footnote{Huang, p.6, referring to Liang's "General Trends in the Development and Changes of Chinese Thought".} and Gu Jiegang: Liang's writing in the period before the Xinhai revolution "swept the country", carrying Gu along with the current.\footnote{Huang, p.6.} Philip Huang also quotes, from Edgar Snow, Mao Zedong's recollections of how at the age of sixteen, he worshipped Kang and Liang, and "read and reread" Liang's essays in the \textit{Xinmin congbao} until he "knew them by heart". Mao even took the name "Ziren" 子任 [Follower of Liang Gongren].\footnote{Huang, p.6.} Huang, again, quotes from Chen Duxiu: "The fact that we today have some knowledge of the world is entirely the gift of Mr. K'ang and Mr. Liang."\footnote{Huang, p.7.} Huang Zunxian, whose opinions on Liang were divided, seems to express both his admiration and his disapproval in this comment on Liang's influence:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Jon L. Saari quotes from an unidentified man who grew up in China between 1907 and 1923, whose three models or "moral exemplars" were Zeng Guofan, Liang Qichao ("a model of an activist and thinker") and Tao Yuanming; another, Shen Tsung-han (b.1895), chose Liang (who "fired his patriotic fervour"), Wang Yangming and Zeng. See \textit{Legacies of Childhood: Growing up Chinese in a Time of Crisis, 1890-1920}, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1990, pp.131, 163.
  \item Philip Huang, \textit{Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism}, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1972, p.6.
  \item Huang, p.6, referring to Liang's "General Trends in the Development and Changes of Chinese Thought".
  \item Huang, p.6.
  \item Huang, p.7.
  \item Huang, p.7.
\end{itemize}
"His pen possessed great mystical powers ... If he advocated destruction, then everyone would consider destruction to be a statute of Heaven. If he advocated assassination, then everyone would think of it as the way of Earth."17

What has not been so much reported on is the nature of subsequent reappraisals by these people, undercutting the more commonly reported and uplifting images of Liang. Some of these same people quoted here talking about the impressions from their youth have quite different things to say from a more grown-up perspective: Zheng, for example, while sympathetic to Liang, says that his prose is "... a bit shallow, enough to puzzle a young person, but a bit superficial for anyone older"18; Hu Shi noted in his diary, trying to think of what to say in his funeral scroll after Liang's death: "I have tried to think of one of his works that could influence future generations, and I could hardly think of any book or even any one article".19 He concluded that Liang's long serialized essay, "Xinmin shuo" [The renovation of the people] had been his most outstanding contribution.20 Hu Shi's evaluation in other respects is a devastating one:

Mr. Liang was friendly and lovable. He had no reservations and acted like a child. ... Mr. Liang was extremely talented, but he did not get a systematic training. He studied hard, but had no good teachers or good friends. He made his debut to the society too young and won fame too quickly. He assumed too much responsibility, therefore he enjoyed great influence, but his personal accomplishment was too little.21

From this it might be guessed that what most bothered Liang's friends in the generation after his was a certain lack of judgement in his character, which allowed him to make the choices of teacher and friends that he did, and

17 Mabel Lee, "Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873-1929) and the Literary Revolution of Late-Ch'ing", in A.R. Davis (ed.), Search for Identity: Modern Literature and the Creative Arts in Asia, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1974, p.206.
18 Xiaoshuo yuebao, 10th Feb. 1929, p.352. He dismisses Liang's poetry (just as Liang later dismissed Kang Youwei's; see below, ch.4): "Ta genbusha bushi yiwei shiren." [He was certainly not a poet.]
21 Chang, "Hu Shih and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao", p.39.
reduced his ability to make use of what all seem to have recognized as a great
talent. There is an irony in Liang’s overwhelming success in influencing that
part of his readership which was the most youthful, a constituency which was
arguably the least concerned by such a character deficiency. Liang in his most
influential years was a writer who publicly identified with youth and even at
the age of thirty, by any standard a grown man, still sometimes wrote under
the pen-name "Shaonian Zhongguo zhi shaonian" 少年中国之少年 [A youth
of young China]. Liang consciously prolonged this youthful stage long into
his adulthood, at least up until the abandonment of his more radical views in
1903, but it is an aspect of his character that has persisted.

In addition to these factors explaining Liang’s enduring appeal, an
examination of portrayals in fiction of the character of Liang Qichao suggests
that there are some further reasons which fill out his image for the largely
Chinese-educated writers and biographers who deal with him. These
fictional images were available to a very similar reading public as the one
which read Liang’s works. Thus, an awareness of these images throws a
different light on the attempts Liang made to define his own image, both in
his fiction and in self-representations elsewhere.

Given the very large literature on Liang Qichao, I have made every
effort not to repeat what is already well established and available elsewhere.
Something of an introduction to the figure of the man is still necessary,
though, and I begin this work with a biographical Chapter 1 that looks at
some of the less well-covered aspects of his life, which were however of
considerable interest and better known to his contemporaries.

With this as a background, Chapter 2 considers the images of Liang
Qichao constructed by a succession of scholarly writers in China and most
recently in the United States, as reformer and propagandist, modern thinker,
and window to the outside world. This composite of images is what now

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22 "shaonian" is a term which with a generous interpretation might stretch to the age of twenty,
but no more. See Sergio Luzzatto’s distinction between actual youth and the feeling of being
youthful, not "the real presence of youth" but "the presumption of its presence" in young
people and revolutionaries. "Jeunes révoltés et révolutionnaires (1789-1917)" in Giovanni Lévi
and Jean-Claude Schmitt (eds), Histoire des jeunes en Occident, v.2: L’Époque contemporaine,
this work.
constitutes the standard outline of the historical figure of Liang Qichao, who is by now one of the most prominent names in the lineup of modern Chinese reformers. These writers have written about Liang in various contexts, but it is not the disparity in their views which is central here, rather it is the sense of frustration, even of disappointment and discomfort, that one detects in many of the works.

The next two chapters attempt to address the difficulty Liang’s critics have experienced in their evaluation of him, using material which is either neglected in more narrowly focused historiographical studies of Liang Qichao, such as the works of fiction in which he appears, or else, as in the case of Liang’s fictional works and writing of an autobiographical nature, partly familiar but unexamined as far as its contribution to shaping Liang’s public images. Chapter 3 contains an analysis of the works of fiction, which extend over four decades but concentrate in the first decade of the twentieth century. Chapter 4 introduces and discusses some of Liang’s own fictional and autobiographical work. Liang himself, a master of the written word, played an important and, ultimately, largely successful role in determining how he would be remembered.
Chapter 1

Episodes in a Life of Liang

In the chapters that follow this one, I shall discuss some of the details of Liang's life, as they were appropriated by popular writers and as Liang himself chose to present them in his self-expository work, within the framework of the works themselves. In this biographical chapter, however, I shall deal with the life of Liang using these works as a guide. That is, I shall concentrate on providing a background for those aspects of his life which led to the writing of these works, which themselves contributed to Liang's fame (or infamy) in their own right. This will require coverage of a narrower period in Liang's life than an ordinary biographical treatment, because public attention and interest faded away to a great extent well before the Xinhai revolution of 1911 and Liang's return to China.

The details of the life of Liang Qichao have been given at length by his many biographers. Since 1959 the task has been greatly simplified by Ding Wenjiang's very thorough nianpu 年谱 [chronological biography].

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1 Ding Wenjiang (ed.), Liang Rengong xiansheng nianpu changbian chugao [Chronological biography of Liang Rengong, first draft], 3 vv., Shijie Shuju, Taipei, 1959; revised ed. by Ding Wenjiang and Zhao Fengtian (eds), Liang Qichao nianpu changbian, Shanghai Renmin
This chapter on Liang’s life concentrates on his most influential period, beginning with his early life, his involvement with Kang Youwei and the reform activities of the last few years of the nineteenth century, and ending in about 1907, a year marked by the last issue of Liang’s Xinmin congbao and the decline in the relevance and popularity of the Baohuang Hui in Japan. Much has been omitted; the aim is to include those aspects of Liang’s life which were most well-known both during his lifetime, and which have been used in the subsequent process of image-making around Liang Qichao. His relationship with Kang Youwei and other reformers, his role in late-Qing reform activities, his life in exile in Japan, and his newspaper journalism are all important in this story.

A Western reader expects to read about a character’s very early childhood life in order to understand something of their family background and early formative experiences. With Liang, following his own example in "Sanshi zishu" [Myself at thirty], it is not unusual for biographers to begin, after a brief genealogy, with his academic achievements at the age of four, when his grandfather began to instruct him in the classics. Liang’s essay begins its account of his childhood with an unabashed description of the author as child prodigy. Following the main biographical thread which deals with his precocious advance through the Chinese academic/scholarly repertoire, Liang deals with his early years, as do other biographers, by recording which classic he could read by what age. At the age of three and four, he says, he especially liked stories about the last days of the Song and Ming dynasties. These are Han Chinese dynasties conquered by non-Han successors: the anecdote is designed to put an early date on the beginning of Liang’s patriotism, rather than to show him delighting in the overthrow of Han authority. This detail has a very southern flavour, reminding the

Chubanshe, Shanghai, 1983.

2 "Sanshi zishu", 1902. See Lin Zhijun (ed.), Yinbingshi heji [Collected works (both wen and zhuang) from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio], Zhonghua Shuju, Shanghai, 1932 (hereafter referred to as wenji or zhuangji): wenji, v.4, 11 ce, pp.15-21 with added section, "Wo zhi wei tongzi shi"
reader of the remnant memories of last-gasp loyalty to the Ming, and still flickering popular resentment of the Qing. Liang was already known as a prodigy by the age of nine, when he had startled everyone with a cleverly constructed poetic couplet. Local stories from Xinhui record an even earlier example of Liang's cleverness at age seven. Thus, his passing the first exam available to prospective officials at the age of eleven, though unusually early, was not unexpected.

This is not to suggest that Liang's way of framing his childhood experience, and his classification as a child prodigy, were at all unusual. Traditional biographies of the sort that Liang would have read in his boyhood included just such details, intended to "show how the character of the subject was already evident in childhood". And because of the stress on achievement in the examinations as the only path to follow for bright boys with enough family means to study, Liang's early successes were in a pattern already set by many before him, notably by Kang Youwei, his senior by fifteen years, proclaimed a child prodigy at the age of twelve. Liang's exceptionally early brilliance as he started on the path to a scholarly career is a theme which remains in his later self-evaluations, and in works about him both during his lifetime and after his death. With regard to his own references to his precocity, perhaps his subsequent departure from the normal career track, and thus the removal of the usual measuring standard for success, made necessary this focus and insistence on his abundant talent, which found expression in many pursuits but not in the Chinese bureaucracy. Liang made four attempts to pass the metropolitan

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3 Ding Wenjiang, nianpu, p.15, quoting from Liang Zhongce, Liang's brother. For his brilliance at nine years old, see Meng Xiangcai and Yang Xizhen, Liang Qichao, Jiangsu Rennin Chubanshe, no place given, 1982, pp.4-5. See also the article "Shentong Liang Qichao" [Liang Qichao, the child prodigy], by Wu Rui, Chungliu, v.45, no.12, 1972, in Liang Qichao zhuanji ziliao, v.1, photocopied material, Tianyi Chubanshe (Taiwan), 1977, p.9.

4 See Ding, p.14.

5 Brian Moloughney, "History and Biography in Modern China", PhD, Australian National University, Canberra, 1994, p.25.

6 Hsiao, A Modern China and a New World, p.18.
examinations for the jinshi 进士 degree,7 but by the fourth try he had rather lost interest. Nevertheless, the suggestion remains that he could have taken high office had he wanted, a legitimating element helping to make his unorthodoxy acceptable to a wider audience in later years.

This child prodigy Liang was born the eldest son in his family in Xinhui,8 Guangdong, in 1873, in the first month of the Chinese year.9 After gaining his first degree, he studied with various local scholars before enrolling in 1887 at the Xuehai Tang in Canton, a school founded by Ruan Yuan, a high official and Han Learning scholar.10 It is here that Liang joins the Cantonese intellectual mainstream from which Kang Youwei, aged nearly thirty, had already departed.11 Ding Wenjiang's year-by-year account of Liang's childhood introduces a sub-text of Kang Youwei's concurrently unfolding life, foreshadowing Kang's first meeting with Liang in 1890: the brief entry for 1883, when Liang was only 10 years old, ends with a single line on Kang's new anti-footbinding association formed that year. This is the first mention of Kang, who appears again in the next year's entry, "brewing" in his mind the ideas for his Renlei gongli [Universal principles of mankind] and Datang shu [Book of the great unity]. One can't help sensing a hint of drum roll, and even a note of foreboding, in Kang's appearance so early in Ding's life of Liang. Liang did not actually cross paths with Kang until 1887, as he began his schooling at the Xuehai Tang, or one might want to say that Liang enters Kang's orbit at this point – one of Liang's teachers at this school was Zhu Ciqi, who had taught Kang ten years earlier.12 (It was from his period of study with the great scholar Zhu that Kang dated his belief that he could aim to become a sage, here apparently ignoring his mentor's admonitions against conceit.13) In 1889, Liang passed
the provincial exams in Canton, again impressing his examiners with his precocity, with the result that he was offered the hand in marriage of the younger sister of one examiner, Li Duanfen. (He married Li Huixian two years later in 1891.)

Liang went to Peking for his first attempt at the metropolitan exams in 1890 but failed, and came home via Shanghai, a diversion noted by Liang because of his encounter there with a copy of Xu Jiyu's *Yinghuan zhilüe*¹⁴ [A brief description of the world], and other books which introduced him to Western learning. That year Liang got to know Chen Qianqiu, a fellow student at the Xuehai Tang, who, Liang says, persuaded him to go with him to pay their first visit to Kang Youwei.¹⁵ Liang was at this stage further advanced in the examination process than Kang, who had not gone beyond his initial *shengyuan* 生员 degree. This did not deter him. Both Chen and Liang became Kang's students that year; the following year, 1891, Kang opened his school, the Wanmu Caotang.

**Early years with Kang Youwei**

Liang's intellectual apprenticeship with Kang consisted of a program combining academic curriculum and practical work-experience, the latter involving participation in the writing of Kang’s scholarly essays and, from 1893, helping with teaching duties. Both Liang and Chen Qianqiu helped to write Kang's *Xinxue weijing kao* [A study of forged classics of the Xin period]¹⁶ and his *Kongzi gaizhi kao* [A study of Confucius as a reformer].¹⁷ Liang also helped Kang with a study of Mencius and one on Mozi, among other things.

These years introduced Liang to a new way of life which he took to

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¹⁴ "An intense self-confidence bordering on self-conceit was easily [his] most prominent trait...", *A Modern China and a New World*, p.18.

¹⁵ Published in 1848.

¹⁶ "Sanshi zishu", see Ding, p.23. Liang was seventeen in 1890. He later says that he first knew Chen at the age of thirteen, see *Trends*, pp.98-9; Ding corrects this to fifteen, p.24.

¹⁷ 1896. Kang says he wrote it in 1892, having begun in 1886. Lo, pp.54-55, "...which my more talented students assisted me in writing".
and made his own very rapidly. Kang's studies on forged classics and on Confucius as a reformer drew Liang into a stream of political activism which was propelled by Kang's interpretation of Confucius, involving Liang along with his teacher in notoriety and scandal. Kang became doubly infamous after the publication of his *Xinxue weijing gao*: it was banned in 1894 for undermining established scholarship, but was also held by some to be plagiarized from the work of Liao Bing. Liang's close involvement in this affair taught him to accustom himself to criticism on all fronts. Liang characterized the two works by Kang above, and the ideas contained in Kang's *Datong shu,* in terms of their devastating impact in traditional circles, as "a cyclone, ... a mighty volcanic eruption and [a] huge earthquake." Liang was not himself entirely swept away by these cataclysms, being rather sceptical about Kang's elevation of Confucius to the status of religious leader, but Kang's ideas about reform did excite him.

In 1892, Liang tried again for the *jinshi* degree, unsuccessfully. His teacher was successful in the next year in the provincial exams: the teacher had at last caught up with his student. Kang antagonized the provincial examiners with both the content of his essays and his disrespectful attitude towards the examination supervisors, causing "a considerable stir" and "heated arguments". On a different front, in this year, 1893, Kang had a major dispute with local officials over his attempt to take control of the village militia which had been set up by Kang's great-uncle. This dispute may have been motivated by Kang's desire to remove the militia from corrupt stewardship and restore its good name; or it may have been an attempt by the new degree-holder Kang to claim some local power for himself. In this dispute Kang's student Chen Qianqiu was also involved. Kang came under so much pressure from his opponents in the village that he left and went to Guangxi, fearing for his life. Kang's bad standing with local gentry, and others who had perhaps seen or heard of Kang's unusual

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18 Not all of this was published during Kang's lifetime.
19 *Trends*, p.94.
20 Lo, p.57.
21 Lo, pp.57-9. He translates *tuanlian ju* as "Regiment and Drill Bureau".
behaviour in the provincial examinations, was already well-established after this year.

In 1894 both Kang and Liang failed in the metropolitan exams.

In March 1895, Liang and Kang went north to Peking again to sit for the metropolitan exams. Liang had just turned 22. Only a few weeks earlier, the Japanese army had captured Weihaiwei in Shandong. The town was a major naval base; during the engagement the Japanese turned captured Chinese cannon onto the ships in the harbour, destroying the Beiyang Navy, whose admiral committed suicide. Chinese people were provided with a foretaste of their country's imminent and humiliating defeat by the Japanese. On the way to the capital, the two men's boat was boarded and searched by "a Japanese party", and they heard rumours of plans to evacuate Peking, and of officials already fleeing. Kang recalls that he was convinced that China would not fall, and so armed with his conviction, they continued north.

The case of Chen Qianqiu

Chen had died of tuberculosis less than a month before Kang and Liang set out for Peking in 1895. As Liang's closest school-friend and Kang's first student, he appears as a rather mysterious figure in accounts by both Liang and Kang. His story serves to illustrate the intensity of the relationship between Kang and his students, and the degree of influence he managed to exert over them. In Liang's case, his relationship with Kang remained a central, enduring and indeed inescapable part of his public image for most of his life.

Chen, like Kang, was from Nanhai. Kang says in his autobiography that Chen came to see him in early 1890, and became his

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21 Lo, p.63.

24 Lo, p.58.

25 Kang's autobiography was written in stages: the stage ending in 1895 was written in that year; the events from the end of 1895 up to the end of 1898 were written in Japan at the
student "in the sixth month". Liang, according to Kang, did not become his student until "the eighth month": thus Chen is granted seniority here. Kang goes on to devote nearly a page to Chen and makes no further mention of Liang at this point. Kang very quickly found that Chen was a sympathetic student who was prepared to confide and to be confided in. His account of their budding relationship reads like a religious liturgy, with intoned verse and response (my italics added):

... I told him of the teachings of the great men of the past and present ... and of the authenticity and spuriousness of the classics, and he believed what I told him and found evidence to support these beliefs. I told him that the cultural states of Yao and Shun ... were actually hypothesized by Confucius, and he believed and found supporting evidence. I suggested to him that the horse could descend from man or man from the horse ... he believed and found supporting evidence. Then I told him of the worlds of the myriads of universes, ... and that within each world there were nations, peoples, ... he believed and found supporting evidence. I told him of the three stages of evolution to reach the world of Universal Peace, and of the Three Sequences; he believed and found supporting evidence. He had a natural talent for grasping knowledge and deducing conclusions ... I have met few scholars like him.27

Kang's refrain seems to diminish Chen's autonomy and dignity with each repeat. Chu-yin Chen has noted Kang's use of the word zheng 证 [testimony] in this passage: he is struck by the "purely religious" methodology of Kang's teaching, as suggested in this example.28 Liang has described the amazement the two friends experienced at their first encounter with Kang:29 but Kang's description shows Chen to have fallen much more under his spell. Perhaps Chen was simply unlucky to have died young, unable to respond to Kang with his own version of events. Two

beginning of 1899. See Lo, pp.17, 75-6, 144.
26 Lo, p.51.
27 Lo, p.52.
28 Chen Chi-yun, "Liang Chi-ch’ao’s 'Missionary Education'”, p.83.
29 Philip Huang has translated Liang’s account of his reaction: "K’ang, ‘as though with the thunderous sound of the surf, and the roar of a lion’, dispelled point by point the ‘useless old learning’, and caused [him] to feel ‘as though cold water had been poured over his back,’ as though ‘he had been hit over the head.’" (These last phrases Liang uses to signify sudden illumination, rather than actual physical assault.) Huang, pp.12-13.
years after Chen's arrival Kang appointed him a teacher in his school. (He was joined by Liang a year later in 1893.) Kang calls him "brighter than the others, energetic and indefatigable, ... he would have been the first man to assume the responsibility of carrying our ideals to fruition." Kang thus manages in his autobiography to favour Chen above Liang, who comes off as Kang's second-best disciple, the one he was left with rather than his first choice.

Kang and Chen were involved in a series of incidents in late 1893 and 1894, which caused Kang a great deal of personal anxiety, but were also, according to him, the background to Chen's death from tuberculosis. The incidents involved Kang's attempt to remove control of the local "Regiment and Drill Bureau of Fellow Villagers" from Zhang Sunfen, a man whom he accused of fostering lawlessness in the area. The Bureau had been set up initially by Kang's great-uncle, thirty years before. By Kang's account, it was Chen who suggested that they should apply to the Bureau "the principle of benevolence", by acting "according to the ideal of love in areas close to us"; that is, to intervene in the local situation and put things right. Kang "admired his words and spirit"; he gathered his fellow gentry around and went to see the man in question, and got back the Bureau's seal. This action provoked attempts to harm him, Kang says, and he was twice lucky to escape death. Chen seems to have followed Kang's example in attacking wrongdoing wherever he found it, and became disliked locally in much the same way as Kang. (At about the same time as this affair with the Bureau began, Kang had outraged local custom by refusing to pay his respects to the officials administering the provincial examinations, where he had recently been successful.) As a result of the pressure put on him after

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30 On almost every occasion where Kang praises his students, Liang is omitted. This may, of course, be taken for an indication of the strength of the tie between Kang and Liang. Kang might see no need to write the same sort of thing for the one student who was so intimately associated with him in these years. Compare Kang's treatment of Xu Qin, Cao Tai and Wang Yingchu. Lo, pp.57, 62.

31 tongren tuanlian ju 同人团练局.

32 Lo, p.57.
this affair, Kang had to leave. Chen stayed behind; he died not long after, having "sacrificed his life for the Bureau", as Kang put it.\footnote{Lo, pp.57-60.}

Kang evidently connected Chen's death from tuberculosis to his service in furthering Kang's interests in local affairs. In late 1898, after his escape to Japan, Kang made some revisions to his autobiography, including a long self-interrogation addressing these incidents and his role in Chen's death.\footnote{See Lo's note, p.19, for the date of the addition.} With the death of his brother and five others no doubt burdening his conscience after the rout of the reformers in Peking, Kang sees this earlier event in retrospect as the first in a sequence, where in each case he himself had been saved from disaster which brought down those around him:

> Since my attack on [Zhang Sunfen]... people had slandered me, and in the commotion I was almost killed. But it was Ch'en Ch'ien-ch'iu who died instead. Later when we attempted to put through our program to reform China, I and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao nearly died; but it was K'ang Kuang-ren, T'an Ssu-t'ung, ... [and others] who were killed.\footnote{Lo, p.60. Bracketed text in the original.}

This is what happens when you try to help people, he concludes. He had done no more than practise his "ideal of benevolence". Kang, who seems at first to be lamenting the cost paid by others, reveals that he is more worried about the disturbance to his own peace of mind:

> ... the fatigue to my mind and body, the time and the expenses, and the suspicion and slanders of the people against me which forced me to leave were, on a smaller scale, a parallel to [what happened to me after] the collapse of the reform movement in the eighth month [of 1898]. Why should I be so concerned about the affair of the bureau, which was actually a minor incident; why should I permit it to fatigue me, to take up so much of my time and energy, and cost me the life of my student Ch'en Ch'ien-ch'iu? Liang Ch'i-ch'ao had advised me not to be so concerned about it.\footnote{Lo, p.60.}
It is revealing of Kang's obsession with his own destiny above all else that he should say the affair had cost him the life of his student. One suspects that Kang is being disingenuous in appearing to criticize himself for being over-concerned; surely he is praising himself at Liang's expense. "I make no distinction between what is large and what is small but treat all equally with compassion", he adds, with a hint of reproval. Further on, in a line inserted during his 1898 revisions, he says of Chen's death: "I lamented him and intended to erect a memorial at his grave, but up to now I have not done so." Whether Kang means here to chastise himself, or to note his good intentions at a time when he is unable to do anything about them (which seems more likely), is not clear.

Chen was only one of several of Kang's students who came to an untimely end; Liang mentions two others. Cao Tai died the year before Chen, two months after Kang had paid him a visit at the mountain retreat where he had gone to meditate.\(^{38}\) (Liang refers to a poem Kang wrote in 1897 where his sadness over the death of his two students Cao and Chen was given appropriate form, in the second of three stanzas on the subject of the great contributions his Wanmu Caotang students were to make to the world.\(^{39}\) Kang's students seem to have been prone to over-zealous activity which Kang may have encouraged or unconsciously promoted: this student Cao Tai, for example, has been cited by Mark Elvin as an illustration of the "local moral bullying" engaged in by Kang's disciples. Elvin notes the similar "moral fervour" in the scholarly backgrounds of the Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan and Kang, an atmosphere passed along to Kang's students. In Liang's words, Cao had been "using great abilities on small matters" while maintaining law and order in a rural district; he seems to have been behaving in much the same manner as Chen. Elvin says of Cao, "He wore himself out before long, and died".\(^{40}\) Several years later, in 1897, Pan Jinghan died. Liang says that Kang at the time loved to discuss Buddhism.
and that Pan seemed to have responded with singular intensity. Kang, on the other hand, says that he took him travelling with him in 1896, but sent him home because he appeared to have gone mad. He died within a year.¹¹ One wonders if one of the strongest ties between Liang and his teacher Kang Youwei to emerge in these years was perhaps an awareness of their having survived when so many others around them had not. This episode involving Chen is the earliest in what became a theme of others dying in the course of Kang and Liang's reform efforts, continued in the 1898 reform movement and again in the misconceived 1900 uprising.

Liang's examination failure

In the jinshi exam of 1895, Liang failed again. It was his fourth and final attempt; but Kang passed. This success on Kang's part was unexpected, and there are different explanations given for it. Immanuel Hsü tells the most interesting story, which implies conscious scheming by Liang and Kang; Ding Wenjiang also includes several references to the examination.¹² From these accounts it is clear that the chief examiner, the conservative Xu Tong, was believed to be on the lookout for Kang's paper, intending to exclude it from consideration, and that Liang's paper was mistakenly thought to be Kang's and hence eliminated. Hsü goes further and suggests that Liang and Kang must have staged an elaborate bluff to try to make sure that Kang got his jinshi degree this time around. Kang had encountered hostility in previous examinations, and, not surprisingly, mistrusted the examiners' willingness to let him pass. Hsü says that because papers were anonymous, Xu Tong "could only look for the one with an eccentric style and unorthodox views, for which K'ang was noted."¹³ Ding quotes Chen Shutong's account: "Xu Tong was on the lookout for the Cantonese exam paper showing the greatest literary talent, which would have to be Kang's,

¹¹ Liang, "Shi hua", p.61; Lo, p.76.
to put it aside [and not consider it]." Liang's paper was proposed for supplementary inclusion in the final list of successful entrants by the examiner Li Wentian, but here Xu mistook Liang's style for Kang's, and over-ruled Li. Kang unexpectedly submitted a very orthodox paper. Thinking that he had managed to exclude Kang, Xu then approved the list of successful candidates, among them Kang. Hsü concludes that Kang and Liang "succeeded in fooling" Xu Tong.

Ding, on the other hand, includes several people's comments on the incident, which, while not excluding the possibility of a deliberate conspiracy to mislead, suggest different conclusions. Liang's brother prefaced his account of the affair with this comment: "Because he saw the country's affairs getting worse daily, he gradually developed a very vehement attitude." Perhaps Liang had simply learned so well from his teacher that his paper was, ironically, mistaken for Kang's. Chen Shutong's account above gives a slightly different reading, glorifying Liang by handing to him, over Kang, the distinction of being found to be the most illustrious Cantonese scholar.

Kang in his own autobiographical account naturally makes no mention of any such ruse, and only complains that he should have been ranked first, but was denied that honour both by Xu Tong who conspired against him in the initial examination, and by Li Wentian who had him demoted in the subsequent palace and court examinations. Kang got his degree but was not permitted to take much satisfaction from it. He was not made a member of the Hanlin Academy, an honour which he would have

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44 Ding, p.36.
45 Lin Keguang quotes Xu Tong's comments on Liang's paper to his fellow examiners: the language was all cribbed from text books, the paper was not that of a cultured person. Lin says that "Liang became his teacher's scapegoat". See his Gexinpai juren Kang Youwei [A great reform party figure: Kang Youwei], Zhongguo Renmin Daxue ChLibanshe, Peking, 1990, p.148. I am grateful to Immanuel Hsü for providing this reference.
46 Hsü, p.367.
47 Ding, p.36.
48 Lo, pp. 66-67. Kang was placed eighth in the metropolitan examinations. Kang made a similar claim after he was placed eighth in the provincial exams: "Originally I had been placed second ..." Lo, p.57.
expected to accompany his success in the examination, and was appointed
to a lowly official position which did not entail any right to send memorials
to the Emperor on his own behalf. He paid little attention to the duties of
this post in the years that followed.

This story of Liang’s sacrificing himself for his teacher seems to
place Liang still very much under the influence of Kang, or else at least still
determined to act as the loyal student of the teacher. Liang never sat the
exam again, and thus would never know whether he might otherwise have
passed this final academic hurdle. He seems, however, already at this stage
to have lost his desire to continue any further along the traditional scholar’s
road. Ding includes, as the only reference from Liang himself at the time of
the 1895 examination, a letter from Liang to his close friend Xia Zengyou in
which he says that he had originally not planned to take the examination
that year, instead wanting to travel around, looking for men of talent,
perhaps teaching at a school.49 If Liang did render this significant service to
Kang, it may have earned him a degree of independence, freeing him from
any obligation to his teacher apart from what he himself chose to honour.

A further comment which needs to be made about this strange set of
circumstances is that this story of clever scheming against the imperial
examiners immediately became part of the popular mythology that began to
attach itself to Kang and Liang in those early days of reform. One has only
to look at the images of the two men presented in serialized fiction dating
from a few years later to recognize the themes, which concentrate on Kang’s
dissatisfaction with his examination results. The peculiar relationship
between Kang, the unorthodox teacher, and his brilliant student, Liang, is
one element that attracted public attention; so is the way that the two men
came to be seen to defy the authority of the government, play with
established norms of behaviour and make a mockery of long-established
traditions.

49 Ding, p.37.
The Jiawu war ends...

The end of the Sino-Japanese conflict was marked by the signing of the Shimonoseki (Maguan) Treaty on the 17th April, 1895. Kang and Liang, still in the capital, organized a large number of exam candidates to sign a memorial to the Emperor proposing reforms and urging him not to ratify the treaty, which among other items ceded Taiwan to Japan. During the summer Liang worked for the Qiangxue Hui, which Kang had made his reform organization. Liang’s major writing role for the organization’s news sheet, the Zhong wai gongbao [Chinese and overseas bulletin], was probably his first experience of journalism.

The following year, 1896, the Qiangxue Hui was banned. Liang was targeted as a member, and all his possessions were confiscated. He moved to Shanghai, met Huang Zunxian and other reformers, and began his job as editor-in-chief of the Shiuw bao. Liang continued to hone his writing skills for an expanding audience.

In 1897, Liang was appointed principal of the newly-established but increasingly radical Shiwu Xuetang in Changsha, the capital of Hunan province. Changsha was a centre for political and educational reform from the mid-1890s, and the school itself had been established out of this interest in reform. Liang managed during his brief stay in Changsha to gather around himself a group of talented and loyal students, a number of whom later followed him to Japan. Either because of illness, or from a sense of self-preservation, he went back to

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50 Hao Chang says 1300, p.60. Immanuel Hsü corrects this commonly reported figure to 603: The Rise of Modern China, p.367.

51 The Qiangxue Hui 强学会 was established by Wen Tingshi; Kang took charge in 1895. Douglas Lancashire, Li Po-yunn, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1981, p.16. Its name is variously translated as the Self-strengthening Study Society, the Society for the Propagation of Learning, the Society for the Study of National Strengthening, or the Reform Club.

52 Huang, pp.24-5, gives estimates of the readership of these two publications. The Zhongwai gongbao ran for 6 months. The Shiuwbao appeared from 1896 to 1898; Liang was the editor for most of its life.


54 Wang Peiyiao says that Liang feigned illness and left Changsha to escape a crackdown on the reformers, having been warned by Chen Baoxian that the school had been named in a complaint by conservatives to Zhang Zhidong. Wang, in Wan Molin et al., Fengliu renwu
Shanghai in December, and then on to Peking to help Kang Youwei again in his reform work. Although his tenure at the school was short, it left a disproportionately deep impression on Liang's life. It established him in his own right as a member of a generation of young and radical, though traditionally-educated, intellectuals; it cemented his relationship with his colleague at the school, Tan Sitong, whose life was so soon to end, thereby linking Tan's martyrdom to the reform cause; and it gave Liang his first experience of teaching in the new climate of reform.

The reform movement in Peking culminated in the "hundred days reform" which ran from June to September, 1898. In July Liang had an audience with the Emperor; after the counter-reform crackdown in September he escaped to Japan, but the six who were imprisoned and soon after executed included Kang's younger brother Guangren, and Liang's colleague at the Shiwu Xuetang, Tan Sitong. Liang's brother-in-law Li Duanfen suffered a milder punishment and was banished to Xinjiang for his support of the reformers.55

Kang Youwei records the terrible days which followed: his house and those of other family members were put under official seal, and his school, the family temple and an ancestral shrine were closed by the authorities. Hundreds of cases of books were burnt, family property was confiscated. "Liang Chi-ch'ao's village had been surrounded ... and the villagers had fled to avoid arrest. During their flight a pregnant woman from a distant clan fell and died from miscarriage. Alas! It was tragic."56 Thanks to the intervention of foreign embassy officials, however, Liang and Kang escaped all this, and took different routes to Japan, each with a substantial price offered by the government for his head.

[Unconventional characters], v.1, Zhongwai Tushu Chubanshe, Taipei, 1974 (1st ed. 1973), pp.116-7: "Liang was evidently rather alert, and saved his skin, but not before having sown the seeds of national revolution in Hunan." Hao Chang says, on the other hand, using Ding's $niampilu$ as his source, that Liang was "cut down by serious illness", "forced to stop teaching and go to Shanghai for medical treatment." (p.129)

55 Ding, p.21.
To Japan

Liang arrived in Japan on October 16 with Wang Zhao, until his flight a secretary in the Board of Rites and a supporter of reform, and a manservant, Zhang Shun. He was 25 years old. Kang arrived towards the end of the month and he and "his followers" celebrated his escape together: "they wrote and recited poetry and recounted their experiences"; they went to a hot springs resort near Hakone. Perhaps the quiet and normality of their new surroundings acted as a buffer between them and the contemplation of recent events in their lives: in these activities the two men and their friends were enacting social rituals appropriate to their various roles as patriots, reformers, Emperor-protectors, teacher and students. At the hot springs guest-house, Kang wrote a poem on a scroll: he writes of how he walked the corridors at night in his wooden clogs, up and down, hundreds of times, picking over the troubles in his mind. During Kang's short stay in Japan, he and Liang, with Wang Zhao and Luo Xiaogao (another of Kang's students), celebrated the new year with bows in the direction of the Emperor's palace in Peking; and in March Kang and his students had a party in Ueno park in Tokyo to celebrate Kang's birthday. A week later Kang left for Canada. The Japanese government was prepared to give shelter to Liang, but Kang was a different matter. He was too prominent and too long established as an irritant to the Qing court, and the Japanese thought it wise to appease them somewhat by denying Kang permission to stay in the country. Liang was allowed to stay: he was "younger and slighter", according to Konoe Atsumaro's diary, in which he recorded an exchange with Zhang Zhidong on the matter.

57 Kang says Wang had planned in his final days in Peking to "climb the south wall [where the emperor was held prisoner] to rescue him." Lo, p.134.
58 Lo, p.178. Liang liked to stay at a particular hot springs resort hotel favoured by Ito Hirobumi (who had taken an active role in effecting his escape from Peking), at Tōnosawa (near Hakone), the Hansuirō 環萃樓; see Ding, p.274. See Lo, p.178: Kang visited "Tounosawa and Miyanoshi" hot springs.
Liang was not without resources in Japan. On first arrival in Japan, he was given living expenses arranged by Ōkuma Shigenobu, who was briefly Prime Minister at the time. Kang too was provided for during his short stay. In addition to this, Liang may also have had a considerable sum of private money at his disposal, brought from China. Hsiao Liang-chang disputes the claim quoted in Ding Wenjiang’s nianpu, that Liang arrived in Japan with only the clothes on his back, and passes along as contradicting evidence Wang Zhao’s claim that Liang’s brother-in-law Li Duanfen had given him 200 ounces of solid gold for the trip. Liang’s comment, "There is still a lot of money in my travelling bag...", in a letter to his wife dated late in 1898, would make more sense in this case. (Liang confirms in the same letter to his wife that his accommodation and food are being paid for by the Japanese government.) Wang Zhao, though, is a fairly controversial source. Very soon after his arrival in Japan he was already on bad terms with his erstwhile fellow conspirators. He is said by Feng Ziyou, for example, to have formally contradicted Kang’s claims to have secret decrees from the Emperor, and seems to have regretted his recommendation of Kang and Liang, which led to his unhappy exile.

Since there is apparent evidence (from Liang himself) of Liang’s scarcity of funds during these first years in Japan (his inability to help his Changsha

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61 His world travels in 1899 were also helped along by the Japanese who sent him off to Vancouver with a large sum of money and topped it up after he got there. Jansen, "Konoe Atsumaro", p.118.

62 See Ding, p.158.

63 Chijin 赤金, red gold, is ordinary gold, as nearly as possible pure. If he brought it in the most likely form, in 10-tael bars, it would not be impossible, though it might have been uncomfortable, to carry 20 of these on his person. A 10-tael bar of Shanghai gold is about the size of a disposable cigarette lighter. The value at the time would have been about 96 shillings sterling to one tael (a sovereign, 20 shillings, was a quarter-ounce of gold; a tael or Chinese ounce was 1.2 English ounces: Hsi.i, The Rise of Modern China, 4th ed., p.xxxi). Liang would have been carrying nearly £1000. Edlins gold dealers in Canberra suggest an approximate equality of value now and then, with gold at present valued at US$392 an ounce; a tidy sum. See E. Kann, The Currencies of China, 2nd ed., Kelly and Walsh, Ltd, Shanghai, 1927, pp.281-2, 304. Thanks to Steve Morgan for help with this.

64 Hsiao Liang-chang, "Wuxu zhengbian hou Liang Qichao liuwang Riken shiqi dongxiang zhi yunjiu (2)" [Studying Liang Qichao’s movements in exile in Japan after the 1898 Reform Movement, Part 2], in Giosshiguan guankan, no.6, 1 June 1989, p.37.

65 Ding, p.169. In letters to his wife in early 1899 he twice assures her that money from Hubei (E kuan 鄂款) has arrived, so that his living expenses are covered. See Ding, pp.176-7.

66 Lo, pp.165, 255.
students stranded in Shanghai, for example, in mid-1899, having "not a penny myself"), as well as evidence pointing the other way (Liang’s repeated stays at hot spring resorts, the belief by people such as Wang that Liang had more money than was spoken about), a possible conclusion is that Liang spent rather quickly whatever sums of money he did manage to get.

Liang was also not without friends. Tokyo and Yokohama already had a complex network of Chinese students and businessmen, some of whom Liang knew already. There were also Japanese friends in high places. Liang lived first in Tokyo but made regular train trips down to Yokohama where he had his newspaper office. Yokohama in 1899 had a Chinese population of 3003, of whom the vast majority were from Guangdong province, making the job of networking in the Chinese community, and finding sponsors for Liang’s newspaper projects a matter of appealing to fellow-provincial loyalty. A group of visitors who came to see Liang shortly after his arrival included Xu Qin and Luo Xiaogao. Both had been Kang’s students: Xu Qin had also worked on the Shiwu bao, and Luo was particularly close to Liang. Both remained in close contact with him. The first member of his family to join him was his cousin Liang Qitian, who arrived in February, only four months after Liang’s flight from Peking, and took up a position teaching at the Datong School in

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67 Ding, p.186.
68 Figures from “before the [1923] earthquake”, give a total of 4,241 from Guangdong province out of a total Chinese population of 5,721 resident in Yokohama. There was fluctuation in the population: many left in 1895 after the war but the numbers soon came back up. Chinese population numbers in Yokohama during Liang’s residence in Japan continued to rise to a 1909 high of 6,280. Guangdong provincials even had a choice of native place associations, one for those from the Pearl River Delta, one for those from further east around Chaozhou and Swatow, as well as a Hakka association which included members from Guangdong. Yokohama Kaikō Shiryōkan [Yokohama Archives of History], Yokohama Chikutai gai: kaikō kara shinseki made [Yokohama Chinatown from the opening of the port to the Kansai earthquake], Yokohama, 1994, pp.14-16, 43-4.
69 From notes compiled and kindly made available by Prof. Yamada Tatsuo, from Kakumeitō kankei (bunsetsu o fukumu) [Concerning the revolutionary party (including political refugees)], Kakkoku naisei kankei zasshū: Shina no bu [Miscellaneous collection relating to the internal affairs of various countries: China], vv.1-3, in the possession of the Japanese Foreign Affairs Ministry, Foreign Affairs Archives [Gaimushō Gaikō Shiryōkan], hereafter Zasshū; 22 Oct. 1898, ref.1-440016.
Yokohama.\textsuperscript{70} On the other hand, Liang’s wife and young daughter Sishun, accompanied by Liang’s father, did not join him until October 1899. It is worth digressing to note that this reunion after well over a year’s absence was spoilt by Kang Youwei, who arrived back in Yokohama the day after on the Empress of India, and caused a minor incident when the water police refused him permission to disembark. Repeated demands from the Qing minister in Japan for Kang’s arrest had led the Japanese to refuse to allow him entry. Because of his fears of proceeding on to Shanghai according to the ship’s itinerary, he then received permission to disembark but only in order to change ships. The Empress of India sailed to Kobe, where Kang was allowed ashore, and was met by Liang Bingguang (the son of a local overseas Chinese merchant and a friend of Liang Qichao’s), who apparently attempted unsuccessfully to persuade him to sail on to Hawaii.\textsuperscript{71} Kang then took the train to Fukuoka, and sailed on to Hong Kong four days after his arrival in Yokohama.\textsuperscript{72} Kang’s "Sequel to Chronological Autobiography" further records that "enemy agents" set fire to the offices of the Qingyi bao while he was in Yokohama [presumably on board ship], destroying the premises and many of his manuscripts waiting for publication.\textsuperscript{73} Whether or not the fire was linked to Kang’s visit, he caused maximum disruption.

\textbf{In Japan: work resumes...}

After the shock of the events of 1898’s summer of reform, the important thing for Liang seems to have been to maintain forward motion, to engage in further activity in the service of saving China. Liang published the first issue of the Qingyi bao in late December, less than three months after his

\textsuperscript{70} Zasshū, 8 Feb. 1899, 1-440058. He is mistakenly called Liang’s older brother in the police reports. See Huang, p.91.

\textsuperscript{71} Zasshū, 25 Oct. 1899, 1-440133-35. Liang Bingguang (Zigang), no relation to Liang Qichao, was also taken by the police who noted the visit to be Liang’s brother, in this case his younger brother. It must have seemed to those keeping an eye on the Chinese exile population that Liang’s family was busy everywhere.

\textsuperscript{72} Zasshū, 23-26 Oct. 1899; 1-44069-70, 1-440130, 1-440133, 1-440138.

\textsuperscript{73} Lo, p.182. The sequel is a compilation of texts, mainly by Kang’s daughter Tongbi, and seems to have some irregularities. The date of the fire is given as Nov. 5th, by which time Kang had already left Japan according to police records.
arrival in Japan. It ran for three years until the end of 1901. Feng Ziyou says that his father Feng Jingru, Feng Zishan and other overseas Chinese businessmen in Japan provided the money for the journal's publication.71 The Feng family's native town was Nanhai, like Kang Youwei, so it was probably district loyalty that led the Fengs, previously supporters of Sun Yat-sen, to switch over and support Liang. At this time, Kang and Liang and their Zhongguo Weixin Hui 中国维新会 [China reform association], later known as the Baohuang Hui, was the predominant anti-government political grouping for overseas Chinese, and it maintained its position for several years more until Sun's more strident anti-Manchu politics undercut the constitutionalists' popularity.75

A glimpse of independence

By mid-1899 Liang was well settled into his life in Japan. Although his first plan had been for only a brief stay in Japan,76 he had become involved in activities on many fronts, and can be said to have thrived in the new climate of his life in exile. His work on the Qingyi bao left him ample time for other interests. For the first time since his days in Changsha, he was able to see himself as relatively independent of Kang. He played an important educational role in the life of the Chinese community of Tokyo and Yokohama, establishing a branch of the Datang School in Tokyo and taking on the position of principal. He was also instrumental in having a similar school established in Kobe.77 He had meetings with Sun Yat-sen and other prominent activists, among them Zhang Taiyan.

In mid-1899 Liang swore brotherhood with a group of eleven former Shiwu bao co-workers, Wanmu Caotang fellow-students, Shiwu Xuetang fellow-teachers and Qingyi bao colleagues.78 They became known

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71 Ding, pp.171-2.
75 See Philip Huang for an account of the relations between Liang and Sun in 1899, and Liang's gathering his supporters about him 'in open defiance' of Kang, pp.91-4.
76 Ding, p.176.
77 Ding, p.184.
78 They were Han Wenju, Li Jingtong, Ou Jujia, Liang Qitian, Luo Runnan, Zhang Xuejing, Liang Bingguang, Chen Guoyong, Mai Zhonghua, Tan Xiyong and Huang Weizhi. See
as the Enoshima group, after the island near Kamakura where they met on this occasion. In August, Liang heard that some of his students from Changsha were in Shanghai, and wrote to them inviting them to come to Japan. Tang Caizhi, Fan Yuanlian and Cai Dongpo (Cai E) had had problems finding another school to take them as students because of the notoriety of the Shiwu Xuetang as a hotbed of radicalism, but had just managed to get into the Nanyang School in Shanghai. On receiving Liang's letter, however, they went instead to Japan, their boat tickets paid for by Tang's elder brother Caichang. They were followed by another eight students, who managed to find their way to join Liang and study again with him, like old times.

From this agglomeration of colleagues and ex-students Liang had created his own circle of supporters for himself, and for a brief moment it seemed possible that he might move beyond the reach of Kang Youwei. One writer describes Liang as having "temporarily thrown off his shackles". But perhaps it would have involved no more than transferring his allegiance to Sun: their tentative plans for amalgamation around this time gave Liang a role as second-in-command to him, according to Feng Ziyou's account. In any event, Kang in Singapore was made aware of the increasingly close contacts between Liang and Sun, and soon put a stop to them. Even from a distance, Kang was able to demand and get Liang's compliance. Liang was instructed to make plans for a trip to Hawaii and North America, to promote their recently named Baohuang Hui. Towards the end of the year, Kang made his unsuccessful attempt to stop in Japan on his way back to Hong Kong from Canada. Liang's father, having delivered

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Ding, p.180; Huang, p.91.
80 Tang Caizhi's recollections, Ding, pp.186-7. The others were Lin Gui, Li Binghuan, Tian Bangxuan, Cai Zhonghao, Zhou Hongye, Chen Weiyi, Zhu Maoyun and Li Weixian.
81 Hu Pingsheng, p.17.
82 Quoted in Ding, p.181.
83 Feng says that when Kang heard about Liang's activities, he sent a messenger with funds for Liang to make a trip to Hawaii. Ding, p.181.
the family and seen them settled into Tokyo, then took the boat from Yokohama home to China. The next day Liang set out on his visit to Hawaii. After Liang's departure, Kang engaged in long-distance interference in the Tokyo Datong School curriculum and Qingyi bao editorial policy, going so far as to forbid the use of the word "ziyou" 自由 [freedom] in the pages of the newspaper, fearing apparently that the atmosphere in Japan was turning in the direction of revolution. This was resented by, among others, Feng Ziyou, a student at the Datong school at the time, who dramatically changed his name from Maolong to Ziyou, in defiance.

On the road — Hawaii

Liang left Japan in December 1899, hoping to go to the North American mainland to raise funds for a planned military action in China supported by the Baohuang Hui. Unfortunately, he was unable to proceed beyond Hawaii because of quarantine restrictions. This was a severe blow to his fund-raising, and resulted in his making arrangements to get around the restrictions by entrusting what money he did manage to accumulate into the hands of swindlers. The large sums of money Liang had thought he could raise never appeared, and much of what he did remit to those in China organizing the uprising went astray. Liang busied himself organizing support for the Baohuang Hui among the Hawaiian Chinese community, incurring the lasting resentment of Sun Yat-sen who had in good faith written a letter of introduction for him, and many of whose political supporters in Hawaii Liang apparently won over to his cause. He may have also found time to think about an affair with a woman whose father was a prominent local Chinese businessman; rumours spread about Liang's relationship with the woman, though what happened is not really known. After some months, though, matters in China began to demand his

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85 Feng Ziyou, Gening yishi [Anecdotal history of the (1911) Revolution], v.4, Shangwu Yinshuguan, Chongqing and Shanghai, 1946, p.102.
86 According to Feng Ziyou, quoted in Hu Pingsheng, Liang Cai shi sheng yu huguo zhi yi, p.17.
88 Ding, p.249.
attention, and he left Hawaii in July 1900 on his way home.

The 1900 Uprising

Liang passed through Japan on his way to Shanghai, and spent several weeks travelling about and making ready to leave again. He visited Itô Hirobumi at Oiso; met and saw off again two Baohuang Hui associates from San Francisco on a two-day visit to Japan for "secret meetings"; and even took a day trip to Hakone, before finally departing on a lengthy trip from Tokyo, with overnight stops in Kobe and Kyoto, to Nagasaki, where Liang and a companion took a boat to Shanghai on August 20, travelling incognito under false English names which were dutifully recorded by police.

The Hankou uprising was led by Tang Caichang, and had some of its roots in the previous disaster in the reformers' recent history, the events of 1898. In particular, Tang had been a close friend of Tan Sitong, after whose death Tang "sank into a state of desperate depression and began to dwell on the idea of insurrection." Major positions in the leadership of Tang's military group, the Zili jun (Independent army), were held by many of Liang's friends and students. Liang's Enoshima group, presumably formed for this action or one like it, was involved, as were other students of Liang's from Changsha and Tokyo. It is doubtful that any of these men had much military training, let alone any experience in action. Their strength was their conviction that young men like themselves had a duty to help change China, and this was, in the event, not nearly enough. The uprising unravelled quickly and tragically. Qin Lishan, formerly a student of Liang's in Changsha, and a Tokyo Datong School student, in charge of one section of the army, did not receive the message that the action had been postponed, and so raised his men early with no backup, and was routed. The organization's base in the British concession in Hankou was uncovered, and Tang and others were arrested and executed. Other reports introduce an element of farce into the story, claiming that

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89 Zaoshù, 12 and 13 Aug. 1900, 1-440203; 20 Aug. 1900, 1-440208, ~232.
90 Levenson, p.66.
Tang or a fellow army member was overheard talking about their plans by a barber in Hankou, who informed on them. Liang left Nagasaki for Shanghai on the 20th August, but by the time of the newly scheduled date for the uprising three days later, Tang had already been arrested.

Feng Ziyu says that more than twenty Chinese students from Japan took part in this aborted insurrection, most of them from the Datang School. Various accounts put the numbers executed at twenty or thirty, and there were of course unspecified numbers of ordinary soldiers who fell in the field. Tian Bangxuan and Lin Gui, both in command of sections of the army, and both ex-students of Liang’s at the Shiwu Xuetang, died. Others lost from the same group were Li Binghuan and Cai Zhonghao. Some students and associates who escaped back to Japan held Liang responsible for the failure because of his inability to make necessary funds available in time, and because large sums of money had disappeared. Historians do not generally accuse Liang of dishonesty in this matter: Chang P’eng-Yüan, for example, takes a lenient view of his responsibility, considering his youth, inexperience in the ways of the world, and the particular difficulties he encountered in his fund-raising trip. Ding Wenjiang explains that money came from various sources and was used towards different ends. Not all went to the uprising itself. Because of this, many people claimed that there were irregularities in the disposal of the money. Liang, though once again untouched himself by disaster, had lost not only a large part of his support network but also a large part of his credibility. He was implicated more heavily than any other in the failure of this military adventure, took the loss very hard, and no doubt welcomed the opportunity which presented itself soon after, to disappear to Australia on another Baohuang Hui propaganda and fund-raising trip. He left behind an atmosphere of acrimony and mistrust, his attempts at bridge-building

91 Feng, Geming yishi, p.102.
93 Chang P’eng-yüan, Liang Qichao yu Qing ji geming, p.149.
94 Ding, pp.247-8.
with members of Sun Yat-sen's organization in ruins.

On his way to Australia, Liang stopped off to see Kang, who was living in Penang at the governor's mansion. Liang was disillusioned by recent events to the point that he suggested to Kang that because of the problem of China's size, autonomy should be granted to the provinces, which could be "made into eighteen states". This proposal was received with shock by Kang, who made a written note of it, along with his own response to Liang, that it "would bring about the fall of China."^95

**A new beginning**

Liang's trip lasted for six months. Material from Liang on this period in his life is scarce, according to Ding,^96 but it seems to have been a rather unhappy time, and money was short. On his return to Japan in 1901, he continued with his writing for the *Qingyi bao*. Included in the small number of pages Ding's *nianpu* provides for this year are several of Liang's poems, such as "Zi li" 自励 [Self-encouragement]^98 and "Zhi wei chou" 志未酬 [Unrealized aspirations]. Both poems appear to be written against a background of Liang's frustration and suffering; typically, though, he weaves his personal vexations into the greater theme of the national situation in China:

> The people's lives are endlessly troubled, like tangled threads. My melancholy and grief too are endless like tangled threads.\(^{99}\)

And yet, "All my life it's the language of complaint that I've hated most", he says firmly in "Zi li", as if to restrain himself from any such indulgence. Both poems reach past his present misery to reaffirm his determination to continue working towards his goals, "to write with the aim of teaching a
hundred generations”, "to take on great tasks”, "to dedicate [himself] to [his] country”. 100

In the new year of 1902 he turned thirty, by Chinese reckoning, in exile in Japan. "At thirty a man has established himself”, the saying goes. 101 For Liang the timing was significant. His coming of age coincided with the end of the old year and of an old enterprise, the *Qingyi bao*, at its one hundredth issue, carrying his "Unrealized aspirations" poem. On the first day of the Chinese new year, the first issue of Liang’s new journal, the *Xinmin congbao*, was published. This new journal was actually the indirect result of fire, which had destroyed all the *Qingyi bao* press office in January 1902, the day after the hundredth issue had gone out. There was a rumour that the fire had been started by agents of the Qing Dowager Empress Cixi, after plans to assassinate Kang and Liang had gone awry, but the timing for Liang could hardly have been better. 102 It became the longest lasting of his journals. In particular, it carried from its first issue the essays which were to become Liang’s "*Xinmin shuo*".

Liang’s family: an aside

In 1902 Liang had already been living in exile from China for over three years. His wife and daughter had arrived from China to join him; and his wife had given birth in 1901 to a second son, who unlike the first had lived. This child was almost a year old as Liang celebrated his thirtieth birthday. Although Liang had spent a considerable amount of time in Hawaii and Australia in these years, he must be considered by this time to have settled well into Japanese life. Liang began other new enterprises in this new stage of his life. His *Xin xiaoshuo* [New fiction] magazine started publication in November 1902. 103 In his personal life, he took his wife’s servant Wang

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100 Ding, p.267.
102 Chang P’eng-yüan passes on the rumour concerning the fire, but also notes in a closing comment that it suited Liang’s purposes very well. Chang, *Liang Qichao yu Qingji geming*, pp.285.
103 It ran to October 1905, 10 issues. Huang, p.184, fn 1.
Guiquan as his concubine in 1902 or 1903. Wang, according to one source, had lived with the family since she first came with Li Huixian from Guizhou at the time of Li's marriage to Liang. (Another source says that Li Huixian arranged for her to join the family only after Liang's stay in Hawaii, and his dalliance with a young woman there.) Liang's family life, held somewhat in reserve over the preceding few years, became more central in the years that followed, with sons and daughters following each other, a total of five children born to Liang's wife and to his concubine during their years in Japan. There were in addition eventually another five or more cousins who lived in the same house, all known collectively as the "Shuangtao yuan quntong" or "Children of the Double Wave Garden". The cost of maintaining such a household in Japan – Liang, his wives and children, their cousins and whichever of their parents made up the rest of the household, not to mention servants – must have been considerable. In 1902, of course, the household was still growing, but the need to feed and clothe his family no doubt played a part in the concentration of purpose one can observe in him at this time. Liang maintained extremely close relations with his children for the rest of his life, especially with his eldest daughter Sishun, of whom he was very fond. The undoubted importance of his family in his life, particularly his daily life with his children and their cousins, suggests a balance in his life's arrangements which is not usually remarked on. One might add to this the importance he placed in his friendships, and begin to see a picture emerge of a man quite successfully creating his own life and managing to give his talents their full scope of expression.

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104 His grand-daughter says 1903, see Wu Liming, "Liang Qichao he tade erniemen", Liang Qichao yanjiu, edited by the Liang Qichao Research Association, no.8, 1991, p.18.
107 Wu Liming, p.26. "Shuangtao" is a name dating from Liang's last few years in Japan: he uses it as a pen-name in his Guofeng bao [The news from China] (first issue 1910; his "Shuangtao riji" [Shuangtao Pavilion diary] appears that year in the same journal).
108 See articles which stress his rich family life, in the Xinhui-based journal devoted to all things concerning Liang Qichao, Liang Qichao yanjiu.
Keeping Afloat – The Baohuang Hui

Kang and Liang had considerable success with their political organization and fund-raising among overseas Chinese, which may have been a factor contributing to Liang's continuing relationship with Kang. As he settled into the pace of exile life in Japan, Liang's projects needed money, and this came mainly from Kang. Kang, as the senior partner in the pair, seems to have had almost complete control of Baohuang Hui money. During these early years in Japan, Liang's expenses were considerable. Apart from his own ventures in journal publishing, he had established a translation company in Japan, and a bookshop and publishing company in Shanghai (the Guangzhi Shuju, which in 1904 was badly in debt\(^9\)). There were numerous other projects which needed money: in 1904, for example, Kang and Liang made a substantial financial contribution to the establishment of the *Shibao* by Di Chuqing, Liang's friend who had accompanied him to Hakone.\(^{110}\) Kang's notes from this time, however, refer to "the arbitrary behavior of some of the revolutionary leaders and their drives for funds [which] alienated many of the overseas Chinese". This may have worked in favour of the Baohuang Hui, but it may also have had a souring effect on fund-raising attempts in general among their usually so generous compatriots (by 1907, the situation had become so bad that Kang complained to Liang that "without any inspiring news from China he could not stir up and persuade the overseas Chinese" to agree to membership dues of 25 cents a month).\(^{111}\) While in Canada in 1903, Liang discussed investment possibilities for the organization, in "banks, mines, land, rice brokerage, streetcar lines, river transport lines, hotels, restaurants, and others".\(^{112}\) The following year both Kang and Liang discussed at a Baohuang Hui conference in Hong Kong their plans "to engage in business enterprises as a means of obtaining funds for the society and thereby

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\(^{109}\) See articles which stress his rich family life, in the Xinhui-based journal devoted to all things concerning Liang Qichao, *Liang Qichao yanjiu*.

\(^{110}\) Lo, p.200.


\(^{112}\) Lo, pp.194, 209.
enabling it to continue its work of saving China". From this point on, business investments became a major line of the organization’s activities, sustaining members in the US, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong, Penang and elsewhere, who ran the branches and oversaw the progress of businesses. Even Mexico fell within the wide reach of the investment portfolio built up by Kang and his colleagues. Kang engaged in land speculation in a boom market there in 1906, buying and selling properties in a turn-around time of only a few days, and doubling his money or better. This encouraged him to establish a bank and a tram company in Mexico. To give some idea of Kang’s energy in his world travelling at this time, Kang spent 1906 in Mexico, Italy (Milan and Florence), Germany (where he was given a guided tour of the Krupp munitions factory), and Sweden (where he later bought a small island to retire to); in the new year of 1907 he travelled some more in Germany, then in Belgium, France (Paris), Monte Carlo, Spain (Madrid, Toledo, Cordova, Granada), Morocco (Tangier and Fez) where he met the king, back to Spain (Cadiz, Seville), Portugal (Lisbon) and then on to London, before going to New York, where he opened a new bank. His fiftieth birthday was celebrated in the same town with a party at the Waldorf-Astoria.

Presumably Kang lived on Baohuang Hui funds during this period. Meanwhile, he records “incessant demands for funds from Liang” and others back in Asia, which by 1907 “grew more insistent”. All the organization’s enterprises there seemed to need more money: the Xinmin congbao, for which Liang put in a request for $100,000; the Shibao, whose capital had been run through; the book-publishing company in Shanghai, in bad shape and no longer able to pay dividends; and a new school and newspaper in Hankou that Liang was planning to establish. Kang wrote to Liang reminding him of the $300,000 he had received for his newspaper

\[\text{Lo, p.195.}\]
\[\text{Lo, p.195.}\]
\[\text{Lo, p.202.}\]
\[\text{Lo, pp.203-5.}\]
\[\text{Lo, p.208.}\]
\[\text{Lo, p.275, fn 50.}\]

Interestingly, one of the reported expenses of the Guangzhi Shuju was a “subsidy” to the family of Tang Caichang of $10,000. Lo, p.275, fn 50.
and bookshop expenses over the previous three years, and other benefits which Kang (and the Baohuang Hui) were providing, including personal expenses for Liang, and $5,000 for Liang's brother's education in the United States.\textsuperscript{119} On top of his financial concerns, Kang had an incongruous reminder of the kind of life he had escaped, when he received in 1906 news of the death the previous year of his "close friend and follower", Liang Tiejun. This was the man who had arranged for Kang's mother's escape from China in 1898, and had later gone to Peking to collect the remains of Kang's brother Guangren in order to rebury them in Guangdong.\textsuperscript{120} He had been arrested in Peking in 1905 on another mission, this time an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Dowager Empress and restore the Emperor to power, and died in prison not long after.\textsuperscript{121}

The Xinmin congbao

Liang published his new journal from premises at no.152, Yamashita-chō in Yokohama's Chinatown 中华街 [Chūka gai]. This area had been part of the foreign settlement until 1899, when extraterritoriality was abolished in Japan.\textsuperscript{122} It was the same address that he had been based at for the last thirty issues of the Qingyi bao. Liang's offices remained at this address until the 32nd issue, at the end of May 1903, when the Xinmin Congbao Guan moved not far away, to no.160.\textsuperscript{123} He and his family had moved in 1901 from Tokyo down to Yokohama after some incidents, possibly connected to the rumours concerning the activities of Qing agents, which made him worry about his personal safety. They had taken up residence outside Chinatown, nearby at no.57, Yamate-chō.\textsuperscript{124} For some reason, perhaps because Liang's activities outside his enormous output of writing had diminished, and there was almost nothing that could be reported on, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118} Lo, p.208. He does not specify whether the money was in US currency.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Lo, pp.209-10.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Lo, pp.139, 184.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Lo, p.204.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Yokohama Chūka gai, p.14.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Yokohama Kaikō Shiryōkan, Son Bon to Yokohama [Sun Wen (Yat-sen) and Yokohama], Yūrindō, 1989, p.46.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Zasshū, 27 Sept. 1901, 2-440656-7.
\end{itemize}
police who had followed his movements so faithfully in previous years left him alone for two years. In this, they were not mistaken, since Liang's life indeed became over this time a model of scholarly industry interspersed with travel.

The Xinmin congbao, up and running after a hiatus of only a month or so, was a different enterprise from its predecessor. It came out less frequently, twice a month; the arrangements for its financial backing were changed, his new publisher being Feng Zishan; it became more of a Baohuang Hui publication; and Liang became much more involved in its writing. The new project was reflected in the journal's new name: to "renew the people".

Liang's energy in the early days of the journal's production was daunting. The first issue of the Xinmin congbao, for example, is almost entirely Liang's own work. Where authors' by-lines are given, only one is not a known pen-name for Liang – an article on "Junguomin pian" [On a militant citizenry] by Jiu Hesheng 旧翻生 ["Old-style scholar"]. Liang is the author of articles, in this and the following issues, in sections entitled Theory (in which he introduced the ideas of Bacon, Descartes, Darwin, Montesquieu and other European philosophers), History, Geography, Education, Technology, Religion, Current Trends, Politics, Military Affairs, Biography, and The Literary World. There are illustrations, unattributed articles and news reports. Liang also published his poetry and his novel Xin Luoma chuanqi [New Rome] in these pages. Poems and translations of fiction continued to appear in the Xinmin congbao even after Liang launched his Xin xiaoshuo [New fiction] journal in October.

The circulation of the journal is usually claimed to have been as

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125 In later years, the police records continue with sporadic notes of Liang's activities, even to such things as family holidays, and a day in the country with a group of children from the Kobe Tongwen school, whose founding principal, Tang Juedun, was a family friend. Zasshū, 7 and 10 Nov. 1908, 2-440790-1.
126 Yokohama Chūka gai, p.50.
127 Chang P'eng-yüan, Lian g Qichao yu Qing ji genming, pp.286-9.
128 The name refers to the scholar's quill pen. It seems unlikely that this was one of Liang's pen-names.
many as 10,000 by the end of its first year, and the management claimed
that it had reached 14,000 by 1906.\textsuperscript{130} Despite its having been banned in
China, it was passed around and read by many more than its readership
numbers could show. Liang, an interested observer but not necessarily
exaggerating much in this case, says that "For each issue that appeared [in
Japan], there were usually more than ten reprinted editions in China."\textsuperscript{131} Its
wide geographic reach can be guessed at from the following quote from
Cao Juren, who appears to have been himself an admirer of Liang Qichao's
writings. The \textit{Xinmin congbao}, he says:

\begin{quote}
... was published in Tokyo, Japan, but its distribution was so wide that
it reached into poverty-stricken and remote places. ... It took a month
to reach our family village, 400 li from Hangchow, by post, yet my late
father's thought and writing style were influenced by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao;
as far away as Chungking and Chengtu, the Hsin-min ts'ung-pao leapt
over the 'three gorges' [of the Yangtze River] and penetrated, changing
the perceptions of the gentry."\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quote}

\textbf{The "Xinmin shuo"}

Several of Liang's best-known essays appeared in serial form in the \textit{Xinmin
congbao}, including his "Ziyou shu" [Book of liberty] and "Xin lishi" [New
history]. Best known is his "Xinmin shuo". (The entire text of this twenty-
chapter work has recently been made available on the World Wide Web as
part of the Wesleyan University Confucian Etext Project, an indication that
it is seen by some people at least to be an important "Confucian" reading in
modern Chinese history.\textsuperscript{133}

Of the twenty chapters that make up the present compiled text of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[130] Ko Pyong-ik and Min Tu-gi, \textit{Qingmo gatgep't 5 zhong qikan munzi zong zuan fu zuothe suoyin}
[Comprehensive tables of contents of five reform group publications from the late Qing
\item[131] Leo Ou-fan Lee and Andrew J. Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture: Journalism and
Fiction in the Late Ch'ing and Beyond", in David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan and Evelyn
S. Rawski (eds), \textit{Popular Culture in Late Imperial China}, University of California Press,
\item[132] Liang, \textit{Trends}, p.102.
\item[133] Lee and Nathan, p.370.
\item[134] See http://www.wesleyan.edu/~sangle/etext/xms.txt. The "Xinmin shuo" is to date the
only material displayed in the area entitled "Late 19th and 20th Century Texts".
\end{footnotes}
the "Xinmin shuo", the first twelve seem to have been the most urgent, and the "Xinmin shuo" itself the most urgent of the things Liang had to say in the journal. Each issue from no.1 in early February 1902 to no.12 in mid-July began with a continuing piece of the "Xinmin shuo", carried in the lead-off section entitled "Lun shuo" [exposition and argumentation], straight after the illustrations at the beginning of the journal. After the twelfth issue the rate of production slowed from two instalments a month to one a month, that is, only every second issue of the journal contained another essay in the "Xinmin shuo" series. Later in the year, Liang's interest in fiction and his work on the Xin xiaoshuo took some of the heat off his "Xinmin shuo" fever. A two-month hiatus in "Xinmin shuo" output occurred at the end of the year, but the monthly instalments took up again from January to April of 1903. In March 1903 Liang left for a long period of travel in North America. By then, only three chapters of the total twenty remained to be written. On his return to Japan in October his intensity had dwindled considerably, and the last instalment did not appear until January 1906. The journal itself ended with a two-issue sputter in late 1907, after a year's inactivity.

Following the progress of the "Xinmin shuo" through each issue becomes an intricate business, especially after the first surge of chapters. Liang pursues other themes that take his interest, sometimes theoretical, sometimes connected to the life of overseas Chinese and students in Japan. Themes dealt with in chapters of the "Xinmin shuo" find their way into other sections of the journal. The major themes dealt with in the essay, though, appeared early on. The first issue included the introduction and chapters 2 and 3, outlining the problem: "On the urgency of renovating the citizen", and "Explaining the meaning of 'new citizen'". The next issue explained what happened to those nations which did not heed the warning which Liang was giving the people: "On the principle of the survival of the fittest". Ensuing chapters exhorted readers to abandon old selfish ways and to embrace ideas concerning the importance of a public morality, nationalism, and the willingness to throw oneself into a worthy enterprise without thinking of whether it might succeed. China needed to encourage rights, liberty, self-rule, progress and self-respect. "Great figures", mainly
from European and American history, were described to show how their adherence to these ideas had brought them their fame and the achievement of their goals.

At this stage, with almost twelve chapters completed in less than six months, Liang gave the "Xinmin shuo" a month's break. In September, he and his friends Di Chuqing, Tang Juedun and Huang Huizhi went for a well-earned holiday to the Hakone hot springs. Issue no.13 from the previous month had carried a photograph of the hot springs at Hakone, as the second in a pair of Japanese scenic landscapes. Perhaps Liang was announcing that he needed some time off to look at autumn leaves. This was the occasion that Liang and his friends discovered the scroll of Kang's calligraphy still hanging on the wall of the hot springs inn, from four years before. On his return to Yokohama, Liang recorded their trip in the October 31st issue of the journal, expressing his own feelings of emotion on thinking back to his first arrival in Japan, and including a poem written by Di Chuqing. Liang's attention was soon occupied by the new Xin xiaoshuo journal. Its first issue in November carried his well-known essay "Lun xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi" [Fiction seen in relation to the guidance of society], in which he stated his belief in the ability of fiction to play a part in the renovation of the people, the same project which he was outlining concurrently in the "Xinmin shuo". Liang believed that fiction could have a beneficial influence on a people still far from ready for self-rule: as some writers have pointed out, in this he predated the Chinese Communist Party's guiding hand on fiction-writing by many years.

Liang's "Xinmin shuo" chapters had by this time come to a chapter which dealt in detail with his concern for the "qun" [group, collectivity of

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134 Ding, p.293.
the people, "masses"], namely the need for people to group together [he qun 合群], in order to form a strong national body capable of meeting the challenge of other national groupings. Following his treatment of this important theme, the last chapters became increasingly sporadic. To the earlier chapter on rights was added one on duties. Liang's trip to the US in 1903 finally interrupted what had become less than monthly instalments, and on his return the message had changed somewhat. In "Lun side" [On private morality], published in issue no.39/39 in October 1903, Liang retreated from his previous radical espousal of the importance of considering the public over the private: by this time, he was concerned that individual morality should not be allowed to slip, and wrote this chapter to address the imbalance. The last three chapters appeared one at a time in each year from 1904 to 1906, almost lost among other writing.

**On the road again**

Liang made a third prolonged trip for eight months in 1903, this time to the United States and Canada. Kang Youwei, who had been living in Darjeeling for some months in a despondent state, was cheered when news reached him of the death of the Qing official Rong Lu, and he made an extended trip himself at the same time as Liang was visiting America, to South-east Asia where he established more branches of the Baohuang Hui and set up schools for overseas Chinese.\(^{138}\) By the time of this visit, Liang's status in the eyes of US government officials had increased, because of his position as a Baohuang Hui leader and the respect that this organization attracted from the majority of politically active or patriotic overseas Chinese in North America. Liang travelled widely across the continent, from Vancouver, to Ottawa, Montreal, then to Washington, Boston and Philadelphia, meeting the president, Theodore Roosevelt, and the Secretary of State. He came back to Japan with a new frame of mind, and his work from then on is often seen to reveal a break with his thinking before his trip.

Fire once again damaged the Yokohama office of the *Xinmin congbao*...
in March 1907, and the journal finally wound up in July. Liang's activities after this became more diversified: despite his unceasing expenditure of effort, his influence and that of the Baohuang Hui decreased as the fortunes of the alternative political party in exile in Japan rose.

Liang sailed from Japan back to China in November 1912.

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Introduction

In discussing the ways that Liang has been presented in earlier texts (and other writing on the topic), Duhautox notes with the three main English-language intellectual biographies published by Joseph Levenson, Hao Chang, and Philip Huang over a twenty-year span from 1955 to 1975. These three works have been made the point of departure because of the importance of Levenson’s work in helping to define the work that Liang and his significance in his times has been addressed. Hao Chang and Philip Huang, though in no way limited by Levenson’s earlier work, have nevertheless felt bound to examine some of his assumptions and preconceptions in their own work. I proceed to look at a shorter study of Liang’s thought published in China before Communist Party rule, two comparatively recent biographies from China, two brief biographical portraits, and last of all a new book from the United States, which some are likely to read as a sort of agenda of Joseph Levenson’s. It will be clear that much consideration later is only a

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139 Hao Chang, p.296.
Chapter 2

Liang Qichao as Historical Property

Introduction

In discussing the ways that Liang has been presented in scholarly (and other) writing since his death, I begin here with the three main English-language intellectual biographies published by Joseph Levenson, Hao Chang and Philip Huang over a twenty-year timespan from 1953 to 1972. These three works have been made the point of departure because of the importance of Levenson's work in helping to define the ways that Liang and his significance to his times have been addressed; Hao Chang and Philip Huang, though in no way limited by Levenson's earlier book, have nonetheless felt bound to address some of its assumptions and propositions in their own work. I go on to look at a shorter study of Liang's thought published in China before Communist Party rule, two comparatively recent biographies from China, two brief works for young people, and last of all a new book from the United States, which in some ways takes us back to where we start: Joseph Levenson. It will be clear that what is considered here is only a selection from the available range of viewpoints on Liang Qichao: the aim has been to reveal some of the problems which these works have in common,
in dealing with the significance of their historical subject, and to show the various ways they have chosen to come to terms with this.

Joseph Levenson’s intellectual biography of Liang begins a new stage in the "literature" on Liang Qichao. This is despite the fact that at the time Levenson's book appeared in 1953, there was a large amount of published material on Liang available (or, like Ding Wenjiang’s nianpu, in the latter stages of being made available). Before Levenson, Liang could be described as an important and indeed leading member of a crucial transitional generation of Chinese intellectuals, whose written contributions and historical influence had endured well in the succeeding generation. Having outlived the Qing, Liang had missed out on getting his own entry in Arthur Hummel's *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period*, a standard two-volume reference dating from the mid-1940s.¹ (He appears in this work only under other people’s names, most prominently associated with Tan Sitong, who does have an entry.)² Levenson is responsible for "problematicizing" Liang, establishing him as a figure on which he and subsequent historians have worked out various themes and theories, in an attempt to make sense of the larger questions in Chinese history from Liang’s lifetime. Not only was Levenson’s the first full-scale work on Liang, it was also at least partly responsible for provoking a variety of subsequent studies, and its longlasting influence can still be seen in the echoes of Levenson which continue to find their way into the present. Tang Xiaobing’s 1996 work on Liang, for example, contains one such (presumably conscious) echo on its first page, where he quotes the same words from Liang’s "Sanshi zishu" as Levenson did on the first page of his Chapter 1. Tang underlines his awareness of Levenson by ending his book with a quote from him in the last paragraph.³

Levenson’s *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China*, certainly the most easily readable of Levenson’s books, made accessible a vivid

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¹ Hummel, Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period.
² Liang also rated a mention in the entries for Zhang Zhidong and Huang Zunxian, among others. Kang Youwei is similarly treated.
portrait of Liang to English-reading historians of China. At the time, there was little in English on the ideas of the important figures of the last years of dynastic China, and thus Liang became the archetypal "reformer", and Levenson's book the standard reference for his life and work. The following year, Liang was given a prominent place in what became a basic tool for undergraduate students of Chinese history, Teng and Fairbank's China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923. Along with extracts from Liang's writing in his most influential early years around the turn of the century, his 1922 essay for the Shen bao [Shanghai news] on China's progress over the preceding fifty years was chosen by the editors to close their volume. Their short "Postface", immediately after, shows Levenson's influence: "As we watch Neo-Confucianism losing its grip upon the mind of modern China ....... when Liang Ch'i-ch'ao attacks the Confucian monarchy in order to save the Chinese nation ...." 

Levenson's propositions concerning the hollowing out of the Confucian tradition in China, as put forward in his book on Liang (and subsequently in his three-part Confucian China and its Modern Fate), rang a rather too triumphant note at Liang's expense and, more broadly, attracted criticism to the "impact and response" model of describing late-Qing China's handling of the coming of the West. If Levenson's book was not responsible for the two intellectual biographies of Liang which followed, it certainly provided a clear point of departure for them. In the early 1970s Hao Chang's and Philip Huang's intellectual biographies of Liang were published within a year of each other, both in some way responding to problems raised by

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4 Joseph R. Levenson, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China, 1953.
6 The translated extracts were from Liang's "Bianfa tongyi" [General discussion of reform] (1896); "Xinmin shuo" (1902); and "Wushi nian Zhongguo jinhua gailun" [A brief look at China's evolution over the last fifty years] (1922).
7 Teng and Fairbank, p.275. Levenson is thanked, with others, for "criticism and suggestions" in the Acknowledgements. See also Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan and Chester Tan, Sources of Chinese Tradition, v.II, Columbia University Press, New York, 1960, for more translations of Liang, who is called "the leading reformist-in-exile after 1898" (p.87). Page 92 footnotes Leverson's "searching and detailed analysis" of Liang's attitudes towards nationalism.
Levenson's book. Both Chang and Huang were critical of the common Western view of modern Chinese history, still being taught in the 1970s, which tended to play up the importance of the "Western impact" on the directions taken in China from the mid-nineteenth century, and to underestimate the importance of change spurred from within. Hao Chang points out that it is a particularly inappropriate model for looking at the Chinese intellectual tradition, which still paid little or no attention to the West up until the end of the nineteenth century. Philip Huang criticized Western attitudes towards Chinese thought for being "Western-centric": "if a Chinese thinker's new ideas differed from their Western sources of inspiration, scholars often simply presupposed inadequate understanding". Huang complained that Levenson and others had been unable to restrain themselves from "poking fun at the supposed naïveté of their subjects."

In the United States, work on Liang Qichao has continued to appear in a steady stream. Immanuel Hsi'i's translation of Liang's *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period* appeared a few years after Levenson's book, in 1959. Numerous shorter pieces of research, and several PhD theses, have added to the volume of work on Liang. This year another lengthy work, Tang Xiaobing's post-modern treatment of Liang's historical thinking, has appeared. Liang continues to inspire further interpretation.

In the Chinese-language literature, the picture is different, and has its own "special characteristics". Obviously, Liang continued to be a well-known character, unlike the situation in the West, in the years before Levenson's book on Liang appeared to familiarize an English-speaking audience with his life and work. Collections of Liang's writing are numerous. His first *Yinbingshi wenji* [Collected works from the Ice Drinker's
Studio] appeared in 1902, and 23 more editions or printings of various collected works of Liang came out in the years up to his death in 1929. Lin Zhijun’s Yinbingshi heji, in 40 volumes, was first published in 1932; this collection is still the most comprehensive and most frequently cited. Ding Wenjiang’s nianpu, first published in 1958, provided an astonishing amount of detailed material on Liang’s life and writing and is to a large degree responsible for sustaining the work of other scholars in China and in the West. More recently, Li Guojun’s chronological bibliography, which might be suspected of gilding Ding’s lily, has in fact usefully complemented the nianpu by presenting information on Liang’s writings, mostly already available embedded in Ding, in a more accessible manner. Philip Huang in his excellent “Comment on the Literature” welcomes the recent appearance (in 1972) of reprints of Liang’s journals such as the Xinmin congbao [Journal of a new people] and Qingyi bao. As for studies of the man and his work, most recently in China at least two extensive biographies of Liang have been published, by Meng Xiangcai (1980), and by Li Xisuo and Yuan Qing jointly (1993); as well as Xia Xiaohong’s book which deals with his literary career (1991). Smaller contributions appear regularly in historical journals; in 1986, perhaps as a result of a 1983 conference held in Xinhui, Nanhai and Canton, a journal of Liang Qichao studies was established, based in Liang’s hometown of Xinhui, in Guangdong Province, running to six issues over a few years.

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12 Li Guojun, Liang Qichao zhushu xinian [A chronological bibliography of Liang Qichao’s writing], Fudan Daxue Chubanshe, Shanghai, 1986, pp.15-16.
13 The Introduction to the volumes, item 2, notes what has gone into the wen 文 and zhuang 裱 categories.
14 Ding died in 1936; a small number of mimeograph copies of the first edition of this book were distributed later the same year. This seems to have been the version revised and published in Taiwan in 1958 with an introduction from Hu Shi. Zhao Fengtian did not complete the final version until 1983, when it was published by the Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe. See his Foreword.
15 Li Guojun, Liang Qichao zhushu xinian.
16 Huang, p.207.
18 Liang Qichao yanjiu, no.1, 1 Sept. 1986 – no.6, October 1989. The 1983 conference was on the
Taiwan, with a different political legacy, obviously shares Liang Qichao with the People's Republic of China as a central figure in its version of national history. In both Taiwan and China, Liang has occupied an uncomfortable historical position with regard to the respective ruling parties: he has been sidelined, criticized for not having made the appropriate political choices, yet he is inescapably an important part of the modernization story for both. Chang P'eng-yuan's *Liang Qichao yu Qingji geming* (1964), for example, the most outstanding work on Liang from Taiwan, puts him in the context of Guomindang [Nationalist Party] history, which focuses on 1911 as a formative and definitive period of change. With different requirements for the making of their national myth, mainland histories of Liang do not linger so long on the 1911 revolution, but instead stress, for example, his opposition to Yuan Shikai's attempt to install himself as emperor, or criticize him for his remnant loyalty to his teacher Kang Youwei and the reactionary politics he came to represent.

Most recently from Taiwan, Huang Ko-wu's *Yige bei fangqi de xuanze: Liang Qichao tiaoshi sixiang zhi yanjiu* has appeared. Huang borrows a conceptual framework from the American historian Thomas Metzger, to look specifically at Liang's "Xinmin shuo" essay with a view to understanding the changing possibilities presented in Liang's thinking, and its significance, in the late Qing.

Huang Ko-wu's study seems to represent a further stage in the cross-fertilization process evident in studies of Liang. This is a process begun by Ding Wenjiang's *nianpu*, which Philip Huang calls "a biographer's dream". After Levenson, who did not have access to the *nianpu* in any of its earlier versions, one of the distinctive things about the Western literature on Liang is that it has been almost entirely the work of Chinese-born scholars. On the other hand, academics such as Hao Chang, Philip Huang and Tang Xiaobing

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1898 reform movement, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao.

19 See Meng Xiangcai, *Liang Qichao zhuans*, p.413.


21 Not only work on Liang, Chinese-born scholars have made very significant contributions to the field of Chinese history in the post-war US.
all received their doctorates from American universities, and in their individual responses to Levenson's book I think it is possible to see the effect of their mixed loyalties, to the Chinese and American historiographical traditions. Western work on Liang has drawn heavily from mainland Chinese and Taiwanese scholarship and from its Chinese-born authors' own familiarity with the person of Liang in the Chinese history books; Huang Ko-wu's book gives an example of English-language work now flowing back into the Chinese and Taiwanese current.  

Two of the most frequently cited sources in biographical work on Liang Qichao are Ding Wenjiang, as noted above, and Feng Ziyou in his *Geming yishi* and *Zhonghua minguo kaiguoqian geming shi* [History of the revolution before the founding of the Chinese republic]. Ding, a geologist by training, became a good friend of Liang's when they travelled together to the Paris Peace Conference in 1918-19. He was later influential in the political world, published articles in leading journals, and not long before his death became secretary-general of the Academia Sinica. He died in 1936, leaving an unfinished draft of Liang's *nianpu*, which was not published in its "first draft" form until 1958, in Taipei, with the help of Hu Shi and others. Ding's work, apart from Liang's collected writings themselves, has been the prime source for biographical studies ever since. Only recently has any doubt been cast on its reliability. Wu Mingneng's article on recently published letters of Liang Qichao notes some editing irregularities of a political nature in the *nianpu*. Wu notes that Hu Shi is in error when he...

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22. I regret that I have not been able to deal with literature from Japan at any length due to considerations of space and time. Philip Huang's excellent bibliography, "A Comment on the Literature", contains information on some important Japanese work on Liang, although this is unfortunately now well out of date.


26. Wu Mingneng, "Xueshude liangzhi he yanjin: Liang Qichao 'nianpu' he 'shouyi' jiaodu ganyan" [Intuitive knowledge and rigour in academia: impressions from comparing the...
states in the preface to Ding’s 1958 edition that nothing has been cut. Comparing the *nianpu* with copies of hand-written manuscripts, there are changes and deletions which are clearly deliberate. The examples cited by Wu show the text of Liang’s letters to have been altered to put Chiang Kai-shek into more favourable light, whether by inserting a respectful "Mr" next to his name, changing the order of two names so that Chiang’s is first, changing a reference to Chiang’s "roping in" someone to the less accusing "enlisting their services", or in the most intrusive cases, removing material which criticizes Chiang or the Guomindang altogether. It would be difficult to know who made these changes, since the material which was collected to form the *nianpu* was edited or corrected by "family and friends" as well as by Ding, and it is also possible that any "correction" of Liang’s letters was limited to references such as the above to Chiang and his party, to allow publication of the book in Taiwan during the first decade of its rule by the exiled Guomindang. The examples do show, more importantly, how it is not possible to know whether the historical figure of Liang has been tampered with, in the absence of correlating evidence or original material.

Ding Wenjiang has not otherwise presented any indications of unreliability. Feng Ziyou, another widely quoted source on Liang, is a more complicated observer. Feng was in a good position to write about Liang, being a young student in Japan (his father and uncle were businessmen in Yokohama) when Liang first arrived in 1898. He was for some time a student of the Datong School run by Kang and Liang in Tokyo, knew most of the younger student members of Liang’s entourage, and by virtue of his father’s connections with the publishing side of Liang’s journal enterprises and his own allegiance to Sun Yat-sen, was in a position to know more than most about events in the world of local exile politics. While Feng is an essential source, some of his recollections are difficult to corroborate. Feng’s

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27 Thus, where the letters say that "it is evident that the members of the party cannot get the politics right"; the *nianpu* says "whether the party will get the politics right remains to be seen". In the next sentence, Liang’s explicit criticism of Chiang’s continual military failures, and the Guomindang’s irrelevance, has been entirely removed. Wu, p.27.
dislike of Liang and Kang Youwei is made clear on numerous occasions, and it sometimes descends into pettiness.\textsuperscript{28} Feng's political loyalties and difficulties should cause a degree of concern over his reliability: he was an early member of the Xing Zhong Hui 兴中会 [China Resurgence Society] (at his father's request), changed his own name as a public demonstration against Kang Youwei while still a schoolboy, was a Triad member (as was Liang, dating from his visit to Hawaii), and later a party organizer, fundraiser and confidential secretary to Sun Yat-sen. Later on, Feng seems to have liked to take an independent position in Guomindang party matters, and for many years suffered from having fallen out with the leadership. It is not possible here to judge whether his writing on Liang is significantly prejudiced, but Feng's intimate ties to those involved in the often heated disputes between the groups led by Sun and Kang/Liang, and his later estrangement from party leadership,\textsuperscript{29} suggest that he may give a version of events strongly coloured by his personal feelings. As people like Feng have given Sun's organization a bad name for their connection with secret societies, so Feng has also managed to cast doubt on Liang's character. For example, he criticizes Liang's financial integrity in the fiasco of the 1900 uprising, giving credence to the accusation that Liang and Kang embezzled money destined for the uprising.\textsuperscript{30} He mocks Liang for his famous clarity of style, which Feng claims was copied from Tokutomi Sohō, and in the same article attacks Liang's professional integrity as a writer, passing on the details of a scandal concerning plagiarism in which he claims that Liang paid off his accuser to silence him.\textsuperscript{31}

It may well be that some of these scurrilous accusations are true. Feng himself was aware enough of the different value placed on "official"

\textsuperscript{28} As in Feng's essay on the atomic bomb, surely not the place to quibble about where he first learned the word "atom" – from Liang, but since Liang had heard it from Sun, Feng thought that Sun should count as the real source. 

\textsuperscript{29} Boorman entry; conversation with Warren Sun.

\textsuperscript{30} Boorman entry; conversation with Warren Sun.

\textsuperscript{31} Boorman entry; conversation with Warren Sun.
historical accounts and "unofficial" or "informal" history (yeshi 野史, yishi 逸事) to divide his recollections into two separate volumes. Looking back now at the official and unofficial histories of Liang Qichao, one is prompted to ask at what point these histories converge. Feng’s anecdotes are a reminder that much of what we know about Liang is "official" and, moreover, of Liang’s own recording.

In the following pages of this chapter I discuss the three major English-language works on Liang; K.C. Hsiao’s chapter on his thought, representing a view from pre-1949 China; two works from post-1949 China by Meng Xiangcai and Li Xisuo (the latter jointly authored with Yuan Qing); one Chinese and one Taiwanese children’s book on Liang, by Meng Xiangcai with Yang Xizhen, and Mao Yiheng, respectively; and the most recent work from the United States, by Tang Xiaobing.

1. Joseph Levenson

Arthur Wright’s opening words to his review of Levenson’s book on Liang provide a valuable and necessary insight to the development of Western work in Chinese intellectual history before the publication of *Liang Chi’i-ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China* in 1953. He describes this field of history as having been for a long time "... a kind of no-man’s land", "an object ... of the partisan apologetics of those enmeshed in its controversies." In a brief but favourable review, Wright announced the beginning of a new stage in modern intellectual history, with Levenson just one of an increasing number of scholars ready to "provide the Chinese chapters".

Levenson’s biography of Liang Qichao was not only a ground-breaker in what is now, forty years later, "a veritable sub-field of Liang studies", but can also be said to have roused a much wider scholarly interest in the modern history of China, a country at the time only recently united under Communist Party government. Given the dearth of English-language

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12 The unofficial accounts went into Genging yishi.
14 Tang, p.5.
material available beforehand, it is not surprising that Levenson's book should have generated the favourable response that it did. What is surprising is that it should still serve as a backdrop for those writing today. Here I shall deal with Levenson's book and the contemporary reactions to it. Further on in the chapter, his name will reappear with insistent regularity.

**Liang, the mind of modern China**

Levenson states that his aim is to engage in "a search for news about the 'mind of modern China'." The book, however, reads as something of a pyrotechnic display in which the subject, Liang, gets singed by the author's cleverness. Levenson begins by describing his subject as "a brilliant scholar, journalist, and political figure" who "contributed heavily to modern Chinese history". Characteristic of Levenson, though, is his next comment, finishing the sentence: Liang "helped unwittingly to reveal its meaning." The "unwittingly" here is as good an indicator as any of Levenson's attitude towards Liang in his role as biographer, which tends at its best to be patronizing, and at its worst, as described by a reviewer, puts Liang "under the clinical observer's sharp scrutiny", treating him "like a rat in a maze, running down one blind alley after another ... never finding the way out." Levenson uses strong language and makes broad statements of purpose. This is heroic history-writing, but Liang is denied the lead role, which goes to Levenson. Liang, Levenson says, is without self-knowledge, "trapped like any man in his own present", with no "key to his own prison", which prison was "... a mind laced with necessary inconsistencies, incompatible ideas which he had to believe – not for their logical coherence but because of his personal need". Liang's conception of himself was "as a force, not a symbol". Levenson sometimes cannot stop himself: "He knew what he did. But only others could know what he was."  

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35 Levenson, p.vii.
37 Levenson, pp.vii-viii.
Levenson’s purpose, then, is to reveal the man, as Liang was unable to do for himself; to write not just about "his 'visible' career", but also "the inner history of his thought"; to find out "what wracked him". And on a slightly more sympathetic note, "For all the searchlight's glare on Liang, my intent, in this probe for his secret worry, is to establish what his milieu expected of him and could offer him."38

Levenson’s key to understanding Liang Qichao and hence others of his time is contained in the by now well-known formula: emotional commitment to history; intellectual commitment to value. Levenson’s point is that the erosion39 of the Confucian tradition increasingly deprived it of the ability to inspire an "intellectual commitment to value"; "Every man ... tries to make these commitments coincide."40 According to Levenson, Liang "tried to smother the conflict between history and value." This leads Levenson to diagnose Liang in psychological terms as emotionally disturbed, since what he needed to do to ease his torment was in fact impossible. Thus he refers to "Liang's crack-up in his effort to reconcile history and value".41 In fact there is no justification for this extreme interpretation of Liang apart from Levenson’s need to play out his theory. And indeed Levenson’s reviewers, most of whom were impressed with his display of scholarship, were not all convinced of the self-evident truth of his formula. One wrote of Levenson’s later work that the "need of men to believe certain things at certain historical moments" was "logically posed but not psychologically confirmed".42 Most reviewers were bothered by the neglect of his biographer's duty of care towards his subject. From Meribeth Cameron, again: "this reviewer is left with the curious impression that the biographer has outshone the subject of the biography".43 Arthur Hummel, in an essentially hostile review, says: "Some initial sympathy for the object of one's study ... is obligatory", and

38 Levenson, p.vii.
39 Hao Chang's word, see Brian Moloughney, "History and Biography in Modern China", p.33.
40 Levenson, p.1.
41 Levenson, p.40.
43 p.172.
continues: "If one sets out to debunk an important figure of the past ... one should temper malice and ridicule with a touch of urbanity". Hummel himself had previously described Liang in glowing terms as "K'ang's celebrated pupil ... already [in 1895] a publicist of outstanding literary ability, an advocate of political reform, and a student with many varied interests." Both Hummel and Arthur Wright commented on the fact that Levenson did not allow Liang to speak for himself. Wright in a favourable review regrets the absence of translations from Liang's essays, in which, for "all their false analogies, factual misstatements, and logical absurdities", can be seen "the feverish urgency of Liang's quest, his sense of the pressures of time and history on men of his generation." Hummel notes in an introductory grumble that "the reader must ... be content with Mr. Levenson's digest and criticism of them." Whether this absence was deliberate or not, its effect is to diminish Liang's presence and leave him mute as Levenson proceeds with his triumphant analysis.

What is interesting in the reviewers' comments is their friendliness towards the figure of Liang Qichao. There is evidently an effort to reassert around the person of Liang a sense of the existing popular appreciation of him, in Wright's emphasis on the "pressures of time and history" on people like Liang; in Cameron's reminder that "Liang was an historical figure of considerable stature; not a mere muddle-headed rationalizer, but an intelligent and indefatigable scholar and journalist who courageously turned his considerable talents to the effort to face acute problems of acculturation;" and in Hummel's many attempts in his review to correct Levenson's portrait and present Liang as a man "whom, in a moment of true illumination, the

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11 Hummel's review, Far Eastern Quarterly, v.14, no.1, Nov.1954, p.110. Hummel accused Levenson of sloppy language, the result of the corruption of words in feverish times (the present, 1954). Hummel basically disliked what he read as Marxist history-writing. He chastised Levenson for treating Liang's experience as "an exercise in dialectic", rejected his view of class divisions as significant in Chinese social structure, lamented the "wayward, corrosive thinking of our time" as exemplified by Levenson, and would not allow the book to stand as "a work of objective, historical scholarship". See pp.110, 112.
15 See in his Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, p.703.
16 Wright review, p.300.
17 Hummel review, p.110.
18 Cameron review, p.173.
author characterizes as 'the first mind of China'. This perhaps indicates the above scholars' links to the "partisan apologetics" referred to by Wright in his review. Their attitudes appear to be characteristic of a generation which, although it had no personal acquaintance with Liang, was still influenced by those who did. I think that one can also detect that Levenson may have hit an American nerve with his relentless dissection of Liang. The American friendliness and paternalism towards China under the Republicans had been dealt a body blow in 1949. For those who continued to see themselves as friends of the Chinese people, albeit a people reconstituted as a new entity under the Communist Party, Levenson's picture of Liang may perhaps have been understood to embody the long-suffering Chinese people, and Levenson's treatment of Liang to be an unfair attack on a people already down.

Levenson took the opportunity provided by the publication of a revised edition, six years later, to address some of this criticism of his book. A paragraph inserted in the otherwise unchanged text of his Preface reads:

To write historically of Liang Chi-ch'ao is to recognize the relativities of his situation. The very last impression I would like to leave is that I want to make debating points and cut down a magnificent reputation. When I speak of "inconsistencies," I mean to show not that Liang was ridiculous to think as he did — which would be odiously presumptuous, false, and in any case historically irrelevant — but that it was reasonable for him to think as he did. And this is what gives him a specifically historical significance. A philosopher may test thought for an essentially timeless rationality. But an intellectual historian is particularly concerned with thinking, to probe beneath it for a time's questions by divining how it is reasonable — perhaps in spite of or precisely because of imperfect rationality.

Levenson was perhaps a little unfortunate that his book, with its brilliant application of deft historical skills, appeared before his readers were ready to cope with the historical objectification of a man who was almost a contemporary of theirs (Arthur Hummel, for example, was only eleven years

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9 Hummel review, p.112.
younger than Liang and, given his residence in China for long periods, was very likely acquainted with him. Levenson's biography marks in stark relief the beginning of a new way of treating Liang and his significance, in Western historiography. Perhaps this can be seen as a normal progression in the transition of notable personalities in history from being real people with actual lives, anxieties and happiness and day-to-day concerns, to becoming objects for the study of larger issues. Ironically, Liang had already passed through a similar kind of transition well before his own death.

2. Hao Chang

Hao Chang and Philip Huang published within a year of each other two books on Liang which both challenged much of Levenson's earlier work. Hao Chang's *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China*, the earlier book, uses Liang to present a dense background picture of late-imperial Chinese intellectual currents.

A few things need to be said about the book's positioning in its time, both with respect to the previous literature it addresses, and considering the contemporary events in China and the US. The book was published shortly after the most tumultuous years of the Cultural Revolution in China: it would be hard not to imagine that there was some connection between the anti-traditional atmosphere of that era and its physical destruction of reminders of China's past, and Hao Chang's defence of the Chinese intellectual tradition. But Chang as a Chinese-born (Taiwanese) scholar may have been somewhat strung between different versions — American, Taiwanese, Chinese — of world-view, and as far as any reaction to contemporary events, his book reveals only that he was concerned about a general slippage in moral certainties, which one might find in the work of many scholars, from any era. Chang does not make direct criticism of Levenson's book a crucial element in his own, but a later study of Chinese

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52 It is worth noting that Chang's teacher was Benjamin Schwartz, who successfully competed for a position on the Harvard faculty against Joseph Levenson.
intellectual continuity certainly puts him into an opposing camp on the question. Tim Shin's work links Chang with scholars such as Feng Youlan, Qian Mu, Yü Ying-shih and Thomas Metzger, all supporting a position which underplayed the importance of Western ideas in the intellectual world of the late Qing, and argued that the dominance of Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy was uninterrupted. Levenson is shown to have been influenced by Liang Qichao and Hu Shi in arguing an alternative line, which partly holds that in the late Qing the influence of the West was responsible for the removal of the dominance of Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy by New Text Confucianism. Chang considered that Levenson's approach had trivialized the complex dynamics of late-Qing Confucianism. He grants that by the May 4th era the picture may have indeed changed, but Liang was still of a generation for whom much of the Confucian teachings continued to make sense. Chang rejects the view that Liang was intellectually alienated from his tradition, despite the undoubted influence of the West on some of his values. Levenson, Chang suggests, has at the same time managed to "overlook the subtlety of [Liang's] mind and to do injustice to the complexity of the Chinese cultural heritage." On the other hand, Levenson had shown some grasp of the subtlety of Liang's mind in his discussion of Liang's support for the concept of baojiao 保教, "preserving the teachings".

Hao Chang's central concern was to insist on the vitality of the Chinese intellectual tradition, which had been misrepresented by the "impact/response" model. In addition, he makes the point that the Chinese tradition was more correctly seen not as a single monolithic entity but as a complex assortment of parts not necessarily compatible with each other; the "West" itself can be understood in different ways, and the "Western impact" thus requires more careful study from both sides of the exchange. Hao

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53 Tim Sung Wook Shin, "The Concepts of State (kuo-chiia) and People (min) in the Late Ch'ing, 1890-1907: The Case of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Tan Ssu-t'ung and Huang Tsun-hsien", PhD, University of California, Berkeley, 1980.
54 Shin, pp.iii, 4, 32.
55 Hao Chang, p.2.
56 Hao Chang, pp.112-3.
57 Hao Chang, p.114.
Chang sets Liang's intellectual inheritance within the late Qing practical statesmanship (jingshi 经世) branch of the Confucian tradition, and thus facilitates an explanation for the "cultural erosion" evident in Liang's outlook on the world. That is, since the jingshi school paid particular attention to matters of government, it was most vulnerable to the Western impact, which challenged above all the ability of the Qing to respond as a national government to the new demands from outside. Liang could be seen as an early example of the search by Chinese intellectuals for an alternative to the failed jingshi model for relations between people and state, a "search for ideological reorientation" which Hao Chang still saw in progress in contemporary China of his own day, and which twenty-five years later still occupies the "mind of modern China".

Hao Chang shows a certain amount of anxiety about the speed of Liang Qichao's drift from the certainties of his tradition towards the shoals of relativism, in particular his very un-Confucian moral relativism, a matter of particular concern to American academics at the time his book was written. Here, I think Hao Chang can be seen to be using Liang to stand for the "erosion of Confucian moralism", while he himself seems to identify with the values of the tradition so eroded. Hao Chang's attitude towards Liang is interesting in another similar respect, which is his ambivalence concerning Liang's intellectual credentials. For all that scholars of Chinese background have been responsible for helping bring Liang into the foreground of Western understanding of reform in China, one senses in Hao Chang a regret that Liang was so inadequate a model of the Confucian scholar, after his excellent beginnings. One can detect apparent evidence of Hao Chang's unwillingness to protect Liang (his biographical subject, who deserves a

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58 Hao Chang, p.296.
59 Hao Chang, p.297.
60 See Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, p.169, "intellectual and moral relativism, which [Popper] saw as the main philosophical malady of the time." The authors date this particular revival of an old fear to the 1962 publication of Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Hao Chang, whether concerned with the burning questions of his academic generation or not, can hardly have been unaffected by the prevailing Vietnam-era questioning of moral certainties.
61 Hao Chang, p.189.
certain amount of respect from his biographer, even from an intellectual biographer) from ridicule. Why, for example, has he included the complete text in five awful verses of the "popular Western song", "Never look behind, boys", described as Liang's best attempt "to sum up the whole complex of qualities" of Western cultural dynamism which Liang admired? At the risk of perpetuating the insult, the text is as follows:

Never look behind, boys,  
When you're on the way;  
Time enough for that, boys,  
On some future day.

Though the way be long, boys,  
Face it with a will;  
Never stop to look behind,  
When climbing up a hill.

First be sure you're right, boys,  
Then with courage strong,  
Strap your pack upon your back;  
And tramp, tramp along.

When you're near the top, boys,  
Of the rugged way,  
Do not think your work is done,  
But climb, climb away.

Success is at the top, boys,  
Waiting there until,  
Patient, plodding, plucky boys,  
Have mounted up the hill.\(^{62}\)

Of course, it was Liang himself who put the whole song's text into his "Xinmin shuo", and for him it evidently did have connotations of qualities he was unfamiliar with, and which he suspected might explain something of Western difference and success. Nonetheless, the song is a ludicrous piece of work, and in the absence of further explanation from Hao Chang, it gratuitously tarnishes Liang, who with his limited command of English is easy game for this kind of ridicule. For all that Hao Chang seems to have been at least partly motivated by the need to re-dignify the reputation of

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Chinese intellectual traditions following the Levensonian attack, he shows hints of Levenson's willingness to sacrifice Liang in the achievement of his own intellectual project. This is one feature which recurs in the literature on Liang: for respectable intellectual historians, Liang is in some ways an expendable figure.

One of Hao Chang's most fully described examples of Liang's moral "erosion" is his belief in the power of effort to overcome fate. In his early life before he turned against the West as a source of inspiration (following his trip to Europe where he saw the terrible damage the Great Powers had done to each other during World War I) Liang was struck with what he identified as the Western pursuit of rational mastery of the world, compared with the Chinese whom he saw as preferring rational adjustment to the world. Chang says that although Liang could find Confucian cultural examples of the efficacy of effort, he used mostly Western examples to describe it, "suggesting that [his] faith in human effort was primarily Western-inspired".63 Chang has investigated two "concepts" from Liang's "Xinmin shuo", "yili" 毅力 [perseverence] and "maoxian jinqu jingshen" 冒险进取之精神 [the adventurous and enterprising spirit].64 Perseverance, will, action, the adventurous and enterprising spirit, are all things he sees, according to Chang, as being Western strengths, and notes their absence in China. Liang defines the adventurous and enterprising spirit with four words: hope, zeal, wisdom and courage.65 What strikes Hao Chang is the absence of a moral dimension here. He suggests that this Western dynamic spirit might be seen to approximate the Mencian phrase, haoran zhi qi 浩然之气, which he translates as "great morale". This term, though, arises from a moral confidence, whereas the "exuberant confidence" Liang admired does not. Chang follows Benjamin Schwartz in calling this amoral quality "Faustian-Prometheanism",66 and notes that Liang's conscious or unconscious

63 p.182.
64 Both these concepts are given a chapter of their own in the "Xinmin shuo", ch.15 and ch.7 respectively.
65 The Chinese words used by Liang are xiwang 希望, recheng 热诚, zhihui 智慧, and danli 胆力. See Yinbingshi zhuangji, 3, pp.25-8.
66 Schwartz uses this term in his book In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West,
"disregard of the moral orientation of the original Mencian concept" shows the increasing erosion of Confucian moralism due to the penetration of Western cultural dynamism.67

Chang nonetheless points out areas in which Liang's thought was significant in its time, developing in ways which differed radically from traditionally accepted notions. He identifies Liang's major innovation in the "Xinmin shuo" as the development of the idea of the qun, by which Chang understands Liang to mean the collective group in its largest form, the nation-state, the terminal community. Liang's acceptance of a relative position on what constitutes good or evil, depending on the state of the society in which a custom is practised, is also identified by Chang as a radical departure; as is his idea of progress, influenced by Kidd, where progress becomes a goal so desired that the present can well be sacrificed for it. All these beliefs - if they can be called that in Liang's case - depart in fundamental ways from what Liang's traditional education had instilled in him.

3. Philip Huang

Huang's book is the second of the "Chinese-born" responses to Levenson. Like Hao Chang's, it began as a PhD thesis written in the mid-1960s: Chang's on the east coast of the United States at Harvard, Huang's on the west coast at the University of Washington. Huang had the benefit of K.C. Hsiao as his teacher and mentor, and credits Hsiao's chapter on Liang in his work dating from the late 1940s as "the first to stress the decisive importance of liberal ideas in Liang's thought" (see below).68 Hsiao was working concurrently on Kang Youwei; his biography of Kang appeared finally in 1973.

Compared with Hao Chang, Huang takes on Levenson more frontally, although only at the back of his book, in a bibliographical essay, "A

67 Hao Chang, p.189.
Comment on the Literature". In the actual body of his book he makes only one reference to Levenson, raising the possibility of the truth of his "intellectual alienation/emotional commitment" maxim only to give his reasons for rejecting it again. Huang believes that Liang remained "both emotionally and intellectually tied to his tradition". In the "Comment", Huang is more blunt. He claims that Ding Wenjiang's work made scholarship on Liang published before it obsolete (including Levenson's) but also criticizes many errors "of fact and of reading" in Levenson unrelated to this, and states his complete disagreement with Levenson's interpretation. Huang rather neatly takes Levenson's diagnosis of mental conflict in Liang and reads from it, instead of "intellectual and emotional" tension, his own proposition that Liang had tensions "between [his] desire for a strong state and his liberal-democratic aspirations, and between the paths of reform and revolution.".

In stressing the part that liberalism plays in Liang's writing, with its central idea of the "new citizen", Huang rejects any suggestion that Liang espoused a Western liberalism at the expense of his previous Chinese Confucianism, and makes a claim for Liang's "dynamic" interpretation of liberalism, using all sources available to him, Chinese, Western and Japanese. "It was no mere Western transplant ..." This may be disingenuous, since Liang was by his own admission prone to frequent changes of mind in his intellectual odyssey, to the extent of being incapable of incorporating a full strand of thought intact into his mental framework. Here, though, Huang joins Chang in insisting on the continuing relevance of Chinese intellectual sources, while acknowledging that "Liang's intellectual life represents a microcosmic case of the recession of the lines of defense of Confucianism in a Westernizing China."

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69 Huang, p.34.
60 Huang, pp.203-4, 206.
71 Huang, p.204.
72 Huang, pp.161-2.
73 Huang, p.9.
Apart from his intellectual study of Liang, Huang presents a very coherent biographical picture, making frequent use of Ding's nianpu and Liang's collected writings. Huang manages to bring Liang's image back from its strenuous excursion with Levenson, where Liang's incapacity, anxiety and frustration were on display, and redraws him in more conventional language as the more familiar face readers of Chinese history had been accustomed to, the "outstanding member" of a generation which began its life in traditional China but had to "confront the full impact of modern ideas", and a writer who managed to influence important people in his time, and whose work between 1898 and 1903 "defined some of the fundamental assumptions of much of twentieth-century Chinese thought". Huang's sources also include "thousands of pages" of previously unfamiliar Japanese police reports on Liang. This body of notes on Liang (see examples in the previous chapter) provides an intriguing alternative view of Liang during his exile in Japan, a period when he was at peak writing form and himself providing large amounts of text for future historians. Huang has, however, made fairly sparse use of these police records, in chapters 3 and 5. While they answer some questions about Liang's movements in Japan and his contacts there, it may be that the concerns of the police informers were too removed from Huang's interest in Liang. The Japanese police reports give the impression that they assumed that they were keeping an eye on a closely interconnected, though fluid and changeable, group of secretly communicating exile conspirators. Huang was far from wanting to write a history of Liang as an exiled activist (though parts of his account feed into such a possibility, such as his detailed narrative of the aborted 1900 uprising), and thus perhaps found little occasion to dig into what was otherwise a rich lode.

4. K.C. Hsiao: a view from pre-1949 China

Hsiao is much better known for his work on Kang than on Liang; nevertheless, he devoted one dense chapter to Liang in his two-volume work

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71 Huang, p.5.
72 Huang, p.8.
from the 1940s on Chinese political thought. Philip Huang called this chapter "still ... the most authoritative short treatment of Liang's political thought". Apart from this, another striking aspect of Hsiao's chapter is his effort to draw comparisons between Liang and Kang Youwei, and to look hard at what enables Liang to stand on his own feet as an independent entity in the history of Chinese political thought.

Hsiao begins by stressing the ways that Liang's thinking diverged from Kang's, and here it is possible to infer something of the prevailing view of Liang in late-1940s China. Hsiao is apparently concerned to dispose of the idea that Liang is one part of a Kang/Liang pair, to be dealt with together in the history of their time. He outlines the difference in their education, noting that their training was from different parts of the Confucian educational spectrum. He manages to date the beginnings of Liang's inevitable departure from the intellectual road taken by Kang as early as the mid-1880s, when Liang was only in his teens. "Looking at what Liang has said about himself [on the extraordinary impact Kang made on him], it seems as if his deepest impression was not the Kang school's reverence for Confucius, but rather its high hopes of saving the people." Liang made a more substantial rejection of what he had been taught than Kang, who remained fundamentally in the Chinese tradition. Liang was never committed to Kang's stand on the false classics debate. Liang's membership in the Kang camp was in the interest of reform, from the first attacks on the old system, through the summer of reform in 1898, and eventually to their attempts to promote constitutionalism. As "the real face of Kang's false reformism" became increasingly clear, Liang felt unable to remain with him. Liang eventually cast aside his connection with Kang, to advocate the republic. Hsiao explains Liang's advocacy of repeated change as deriving fundamentally from his patriotic and reformist temperament.

Hsiao's second major concern, before launching on a quick chronological run through Liang's activities from 1898 on, is to look at the

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76 Hsiao, Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi.
77 Huang, pp.204-5.
78 Hsiao, v.6, p.734.
differences in character between the two men. Here he relies primarily on Liang, who has provided a detailed discussion of the differences, thereby perhaps seeming to gain something of an upper hand in the matter. Liang in fact does not spare himself much criticism. Hsiao quotes him: Kang had too many fixed ideas, Liang too few, he says. Kang was self-confident, according to Hsiao (and Liang), and had more of a theologian’s character. Liang was sensitive, with what Confucius would have called a "wild" [kuang 狂] character, with a taste for both poetry and literature, as he himself said many times. Hsiao also quotes him from the foreword to an article published in 1914, entitled "Shangxin zhi yan" [Wounded words], though omitting Liang’s disarming opening sentence which reads "I dare not hide anything from my respected readers":

I am a very emotional° person. Ever since I was first able to understand things, suffering has been my fate. One or two years ago, I was feeling very depressed and angry, and it kept getting worse. Even now I am still not able to control myself as before. When I am alone and deep in thought, I sing and cry for no reason. If I have company for my sadness, we weep and sigh with each other.°

Hsiao accepts Liang’s self-characterization here, perhaps restraining a degree of derision:

Now, a man in his forties, no longer of an age to be deluded, still singing and weeping uncontrollably, is indeed someone of rich emotions, one can honestly call them of a superiority rarely seen. With such plentiful emotions at the heart of his character, this was then the reason for his lifelong plunging into national affairs, with an unstoppable zeal which impelled him towards patriotism. Not only was he not inclined to official rank or scholarly honour, he was not even concerned about success or failure. Because of this, what he said and did in his life was completely open and candid, so that those national activists who came after him admired him as without an equal.

See Hsi.i’s translation of Liang, Intellectual Trends in the Ch’ing Period., pp.93, 106.
° "fu yu ganqing" 富于感情.
° Hsiao, p.734. Liang’s article was published in Da Zhonghua, v.1, no.10, 1914. See also wenji, v.12, 33 ce, p.54.
° "yi nian yu bu hao zhi ren" 以年逾不惑之人. A reference from Confucius, who at the age of forty "had no doubts" (Legge’s translation). Lun yu [Analects], II.iv.3.
However, emotions tend to be "deep in nature and easy to change". The characteristic in Liang that made him have too few fixed ideas was in fact a result of his rich emotions. In 1915 Liang in self-reflection said: "When I discuss politics, it's often because I've been stimulated by my own emotions, and then go on to stimulate other people's emotions. So the case I put may change many times." So, what Liang has said about "Challenging my past self with my present self" does not arise from an intended contradiction, but has a tendency to be something he can't stop himself from doing. 

After laying out some of the important areas in Liang's political and philosophical thought, Hsiao's summing-up of Liang acknowledges that his frequent changes of direction were detrimental to his theoretical coherence as a political philosopher, though not to his ability as a political commentator. Hsiao, though, thinks that a careful investigation reveals that Liang had some fixed ideas, among the many that changed. There were four main guiding principles from which Liang never strayed: that a person's essential public virtues should include patriotism and consideration for the people [qun]; that a democratic political structure was the final destination for human political life; that politics should be based on wisdom and morality; and that human life and society were properly headed in the direction of progress. Hsiao calls Liang an enlightened patriot, a moderate advocate of popular rule, and a firm liberal. As a political commentator Liang was unusual in bringing many other talents and interests to his work, while at the same time remaining at heart a scholar.

In the last paragraph, Hsiao considers Liang's importance to the creation of the Republic of China. Despite Liang's lack of success in the political arena during both the late Qing and the Republic, Hsiao thinks that he is now seen "in all fairness" to have made a "not unimportant" contribution. Hsiao quotes from Zhang Yinlin's newspaper article, published not long after Liang's death in 1929, on Liang's significance. Zhang, whose Guomindang party affiliation shows in such comments as "Although [Kang and Liang] did not have as high a level of [ideological] liberation as [revolutionary] party members ...", backs into the opinion that insofar as the

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81 Hsiao, pp.734-5.
81 Hsiao, p.770.
revolutionary movement began with the expression of political views, "For the ten years from 1895 to 1905, really the only people shouldering the responsibility for liberating China's thought were Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao." Zhang notes that at a time when Chinese people tended to see Sun Yat-sen and his party as no more than successors to the Taipings, Liang's essays were already being published in the *Shíwǔ bāo*, *Qīngyì bāo* and *Xīnmǐn cong báo*. It was years before the establishment of the *Su bāo* and the *Min bāo*, journals which were run by supporters of the parties which later became the Guomindang. In case he should be seen to give too much to Kang and Liang, Zhang then explains how the power of Liang's pen (an often-used image in writing about Liang, who himself also liked to give credit to his "magic ink" [or is it pen, see “bi you gui”? ]), by helping to remove popular confidence in the Qing, allowed the strength of the revolutionary party to increase. Liang in this way "unintentionally" helped the revolution through one stage.

Hsiao makes it clear that he does not support every claim in the above. But he "would certainly not find anything to contradict" in Zhang's claim that Liang was influential in clearing away obstacles for others. Hsiao's final judgement of Liang is a moral one. Liang, Hsiao says, once said that he wanted to be a Chen Sheng or a Wu Guang. "In seeking the virtue of humanity [ren 仁] one achieves it". Liang, then, while not achieving great things, had achieved distinction as a human being, since he had at least been looking for the right thing.

Hsiao clearly had some difficulty finding a way to do justice to Liang, and it is a problem that he shares with other Chinese who write about Liang. Hsiao, I think, makes a very fair judgement. But in what is after all an evaluation of Liang as a political thinker, Hsiao's reluctance to praise Liang, his inability to overlook the slightness of the intellectual achievements Liang managed in his life, overwhelms his apparent wish to give him some

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85 Hsiao, p.770.
sort of appropriate recognition, and he seems in the end to be giving him only points for trying. The reference to Chen Sheng (also known as Chen She) and Wu Guang is a well-known quote from Liang himself, which Hsiao uses here to underline the incompleteness of Liang’s attempt to achieve his goals. Chen and Wu are historical characters who rebelled against the Qin. Though they did not manage to defeat them, they started a process which made the success of others possible. Liang considered that he had done "the pioneer work of opening up new fields", for which he thought that he could be seen as "the Chen She of the new intellectual world". Zhang Yinlin also refers to the same image of Liang with his claim that Liang "unintentionally" contributed to the success of the revolutionaries, who later brought down the Qing. Zhang, though, has used the reference in a self-congratulatory way (if Zhang represents the "revolutionaries" here, as he seems to do), and thus links Liang to the Guomindang's political enterprise, making him an early servant of a cause not yet established. This seems rather an unfair way to treat Liang, but it is merely an early example of attempts by some politically motivated writers to use Liang and his wide public acceptance for their own ends.

The problem for academic writers in evaluating Liang is both intellectual and political. Intellectually, Liang is sometimes unable to earn the full respect of the serious intellectuals who have followed after him. But his fame pushes him into their view, and he has to be dealt with somehow. Politically, he was unlucky that he saw nothing in either the "revolutionary" party of Sun Yat-sen or the early communist groups to attract him for long, and was thus in the vulnerable position of being left with no political "heirs" to defend him. Tang Xiaobing, a writer who is a fairly recent product of what he himself calls a "hegemonic revolutionary culture in mainland China" (and whose study of Liang is discussed below), complains that Liang is still treated on both sides of the Taiwan straits (although less so in Taiwan) as "a transitional historical figure who was rapidly outmoded, and justifiably

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88 Trends, p.106.
89 Hsiao, p.396.
rejected, by his own times. " Liang's political allegiances ruled out any institutionalization by national history-writing as a part of a gallery of forerunners, where his activities, retroactively imagined, might be shown to lead the way to the present. Instead he is an ambiguous figure politically, never quite on side, often in opposition, and yet an undeniable part of the central story of national construction.

Views from post-1949 China

Liang's undeniable patriotism has continued to count for a lot in both China and Taiwan, and this combined with his continuing appeal to young readers has contributed to some of the work considered here. From the impressive amount of literature on Liang which has been published on the mainland after 1949, I will deal with only two lengthy biographies, written from very different viewpoints. Both books are simply entitled Liang Qichao zhuan [A biography of Liang Qichao]; and both were published in Peking. The first, Meng Xiangcai's 1980 work, plays a part itself in Tang Xiaobing's more recent lengthy work on Liang. Tang says:

About six years ago, I began my research, innocently enough, with Meng Xiangcai's biography of Liang Qichao ... When I finished reading that ferocious little book, I simply could not reconcile the evil image of Liang found there with Liang's impassioned and inspiring essays that I was also reading.

The second biography, by Li Xisuo and Yuan Qing, was completed in 1992, and benefited from the slightly less rigid political environment for academic writing that existed twelve years after the publication of Meng's book. Li has been more able than Meng, perhaps, to write the book he wanted. He explains in his Afterword that his work has been in the nature of a labour of love: Li's admiration for Liang dates from his childhood, and from his

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" Tang, p.6.
" Meng Xiangcai, Liang Qichao zhuan.
" Tang, p.vii.
comments on his longstanding desire to write Liang's biography one can
discern the surviving traces of this childish hero-worship: "Perhaps it was
arranged by fate ..." he says, that his path should have led him to be able to
accomplish his dream.\(^6\)

5. Meng Xiangcai

The vehement criticism of Meng's book by his countryman (though now
resident and publishing in the United States) and fellow Liang scholar, Tang
Xiaobing, apart from labelling Meng as the servant of an ossified political
ideology, also makes clear the constraining atmosphere in which Meng
wrote. Tang says:

The clumsiest example of [the] denunciatory approach to Liang is
perhaps Meng Xiangcai's biography of Liang Qichao ... Meng's book
belonged to a period during which historical studies were brutally
subject to serving the current ideological needs of the political
establishment.

Meng certainly conforms to the political requirements of his time and place
by criticizing Liang on many fronts: for his allegiance to the Baohuang Hui;
his "betrayal of warm-blooded patriots" in the disastrous defeat of the
Independence Army in 1900, in which the "shameless faces of the two leaders
of the Baohuang Hui were exposed";\(^9\) for his stand opposing revolution, and
so on. Meng's description of Liang as "a heroic fighter and a famous and
distinguished propagandist in the first wave of intellectual liberation in
China" refers only to his career up to his escape to Japan in 1898.\(^9\)
Subsequently Liang becomes a "stumbling block to bourgeois revolution"; a
"bourgeois reformist" whose "role in historical progress was basically already
completed".\(^6\) It is not that Meng finds nothing more to admire in Liang's

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\(^{10}\) Li Xisuo and Yuan Qing, *Liang Qichao zhuan*, p.670.

\(^{11}\) Meng, pp.74, 79.

\(^{12}\) Meng, p.1.

\(^{13}\) Meng, pp.1 and 67.
later life. He calls the years 1899-1904 Liang's "fahuang qi" 发皇期 [sic], his golden days, his most flourishing period.\(^7\) His description of the influence Liang’s writing style had on Chinese youth during this period is also notable, in particular his inclusion of Wu Qichang’s energetic account of the styles of the other famous writers of the day, and Liang’s overwhelming superiority to all of them (see Introduction).\(^8\) But taken as a whole, the over-rigid ideological underpinnings are an ungainly intrusion in Meng’s work, obscuring his many worthwhile observations.

Despite this rigidity, Meng’s book is similar in some of its judgements to a more forgiving short essay published by Li Zehou in 1979, the year before, as a chapter in Li’s *Zhongguo jindai sixiangshi lun* [On China’s recent intellectual history]. Li takes a less harsh political stand, but he agrees with the selection of the *Qingyi bao* and *Xinmin congbao* years, between 1898 and 1903, as the most worthy in Liang’s life. In these years, away from Kang’s control, Liang’s contribution to advancing the spread of new and enlightened thinking was so great that it "offset the errors and sins of Liang’s whole life, with some to spare".\(^9\) While Li acknowledges the need to criticize and repudiate the ideological errors made by Liang, Li’s ideological orthodoxy does not go so far as to exclude Liang completely: "Backward figures can in some respects also make important contributions."\(^10\) Li also stresses the importance of the influence of Liang’s writing on the youth of these years.

As to how the “ideological needs” of the day were served by such work, one example from Meng’s biography of Liang is his resolutely anachronistic interpretation of Liang’s political choices in his description of Liang’s reconciliation with Kang Youwei. Although the following example is beyond the time frame I have chosen to work within for much of this study, it gives a portrait of the relationship between the two men which goes back

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\(^7\) Meng, p.87.

\(^8\) Meng, pp.86-7. Wu was a student of Liang’s.

\(^9\) Li Zehou, *Zhongguo jindai sixiangshi lun* [On China’s recent intellectual history], Renmin Chubanshe, Peking, 1979, p.424.

\(^10\) Li, p.422.
to Liang's formative years. Liang attended Kang's seventieth birthday celebration in 1927, his first visit to Kang in twelve years, which turned out also to be their last meeting. Meng stresses that Kang had already outlived his times, noting his firm loyalty to the "already extinguished" Qing dynasty, in a brief account of the old and infirm Kang's travelling from Qingdao to Tianjin to attend the birthday celebration of the last of the Qing line, Puyi. Puyi, in turn, attended Kang's birthday celebration only three weeks later. Liang on this occasion seems to have been overcome with nostalgia for his youth and spared no effort in writing for Kang a "longevity couplet", a poem written on a scroll:

He set forth the sublime ideas of the first sage, put in order the disparities of a hundred schools of thought, and now this year has reached the age of seventy;

We make our offerings to the grand old man of China, and express our joy at this New Year's celebration, we three thousand students whom he taught.

Meng notes that it was said that of all the couplets displayed about the hall on the occasion, Liang's was popularly judged to be the finest. It holds nothing back from Kang, even allowing him his conceit of being the "new sage" by crediting him with three thousand disciples, like Confucius. Liang also wrote an essay in which he recalled his schooldays with Kang, and expressed his reverence for his teacher. Meng suggests here that with this public demonstration of Liang's continued devotion to his teacher, all the accumulated ill-feeling between the two men "vanished like smoke".

Thirteen days later, Kang died. "Liang immediately collected several hundred yuan to go towards the funeral costs", and convened a public memorial ceremony in Peking, to which were invited "surviving members of

\[58\] Meng, p.411.

\[59\] "The common saying is, that the disciples of the sage [Confucius] were three thousand." Confucius, too, lived past his seventieth birthday. See Legge, p.112.

\[60\] Liang Qichao, "Nanhai xiansheng qishi shou yun" [On the seventieth birthday of Mr [Kang] Nanhai], in wenji, v.15, 44 ce (shang), p.27.
the Qing ruling family, top-ranking members of the Beiyang clique, and Kang's old students". Meng quotes at length from Liang's address at the ceremony, in which he spoke of the certain inclusion of the 1898 Wuxu reform movement, in which Kang had played so central a role, as "the first chapter in the history of a new China".

Up to this point, one could be forgiven for reading a degree of sympathy into Meng's narrative. Kang is an old man, out of tune with the present. Liang, his most famous student, who had broken with him after many years of criticism on both sides, has come to him and made his peace. This theme of the relationship between teacher and pupil has been told many times, and is central in what has developed into a tradition of historical story-telling around the figure of Liang. In his behaviour on this occasion, Liang's wish to show his loyalty is clearly evident, and it was no doubt seen by many as no more than that. But Meng's tone hardens here, as he turns from his detailed picture of reconciliation late in the day to the more serious study of Liang's political choices and the evaluation history must make of him. He presents Liang's "over-exaggerated" estimation of Kang's historical achievements, his misrepresentation of Kang's mistakes, and his "excessive reverence" for his teacher as evidence that Liang's "political path was increasingly degenerate". Meng criticizes Liang for abandoning his previously critical attitude towards Kang and what he represented. Even Kang's support for Zhang Xun and the 1917 Manchu restoration attempt had been praised by Liang as evidence of Kang's integrity and honesty. Meng chides Liang for not being able to see, in 1927, that far from being the bleak picture he described, the situation in China was excellent. The Northern Expedition had already won "decisive victories", and "the red flag of revolution was already fluttering on both sides of the Yangzi and on the

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104 Meng, p.412.
106 "suihun er hou diao de songbo jingshen" 岁寒而后凋的松柏精神: the fir tree and cypress are the last to drop their leaves in the cold of winter, a reference to enduring loyalty and constancy, especially of officials. Compare with Lun yu [Analects], IX.xxvii.
shores of the Yellow River". Liang in his funeral oration, by contrast, could see around him only chaos, nature turned upside down: "foxes in the house, tigers and wolves at the door"; "everywhere the same, darkness in every direction. Evil spirits dance in the daylight, the people groan under the weight of injustice". Liang’s pessimistic view of the current conditions in China, according to Meng, demonstrated "the utter bankruptcy of his reformist road, and the sadness of his despair about the future for his own class now that China had entered a new stage".

Tang Xiaobing’s complaints concerning Meng’s clumsy denunciation of Liang, or his ferocity towards him, while borne out in numerous places, I think miss the mark somewhat. Liang is not the kind of character to provoke a biographer’s outright hostility, and it is doubtful that Meng is an exception. Meng’s picture of Liang is not entirely black and white: in this extract dealing with the relationship between Liang and Kang, he shows more evidence of disappointment that Liang should have allowed his sentimental side to overcome his better judgement, than of an attempt to demonize him, as suggested in Tang’s reference to the "evil image" of Liang found in this book.

There is much in Liang that Meng admires. Earlier, for example, discussing Liang’s appraisal in his Qingdai xueshu gailun of Kang’s work, Meng had said of Liang:

[In this treatment of Kang] Liang is full of respect for Kang Youwei. ... No one knows the teacher as well as their pupil. Liang is fairly clear about his teacher’s good and bad attributes. But to be able to write about him candidly and objectively, not going out of his way to be partial – such a faithful attitude to the truth is commendable.

Meng, writing inside the limitations imposed on his academic freedom by a
clumsy and sometimes ferocious publishing system, calls Liang "a famous bourgeois politician and outstanding scholar of modern Chinese history", which may be all one would expect that he could say of someone from Liang's class who did not take the chance to join the Communist Party in the few years when this option was available to him.

As a post-script to the consideration of Meng's book, there is an interesting comparison to be made between this 423-page biography and a greatly shortened version, with Meng as a joint author, published as an 85-page pamphlet two years later. The pamphlet, selling for a mere 25 fen, was published in a series called "Famous People in Chinese History", and seems to be intended for young people. It includes two full-page line drawings in the text: one of a heroic 11-year-old Liang Qichao travelling in a boat on the West River, on which occasion, the text tells us, his brilliance was noted by his fellow-passengers who were all, like him, on their way to Canton to the examinations (see illustration 1); and one of a slightly older Liang, frowning with studious concentration, writing at his desk. The same stern political line is followed here; like the longer work it effectively sets an end to Liang's period as a subject worthy of emulation in the early years of the century, at 1903, for example, when he came "back into Kang Youwei's orbit"; or at about 1907 at the latest, when Liang's poetry, for example, lost its former glory, "in line with his increasing political degeneration [and reactionary stance]." In this small book, Liang and the astonishing achievements of his youth are offered to a readership of contemporary young people as a kind of cultural artefact. His story concerns the pure heart, high hopes and apparently unlimited potential of youth. But Chinese Communist Party ideology, carried here by Meng's narrative, has some difficulty in its attempts to include Liang's story for the purposes of

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112 Meng, p.414.
113 Meng Xiangcai and Yang Xizhen, Liang Qichao.
114 Meng and Yang, pp.5 and 17.
115 Meng and Yang, p.38.
116 Meng and Yang, p.82; Meng's original includes the words in brackets, pp.388-9.
1. Liang Qichao, 11 years old, going up-river to sit for his first examinations. (Meng Xiangcai and Yang Xizhen, Liang Qichao, p.5.)
pedagogy or inspiration. While he is certainly a convincing hero figure, he is also a counter-revolutionary "stumbling block" to progress. The two characterizations only fit together if an evil force, in this case Kang, can be seen to interfere, turning the first into the second. For as long as Liang is "happy to risk incurring his teacher's accusations of treachery, he is able to jump beyond Kang Youwei's wide reach." (The extent of Kang's influence over Liang is described metaphorically with the baleful image of Thunder Lake, considered too broad to cross.) In this version of his life, Liang, with unbounded potential from an early age, achieves great things almost before he reaches maturity, but is corrupted by the influence of Kang, a figure from the past.

Meng and Yang's book for young Chinese has its counterpart on the other side of the Taiwan Straits in Mao Yiheng's *Liang Qichao*. Their common ground is the desire to present Liang as a natural friend to young people, and their view that Kang Youwei exerted an increasingly rigid domination over Liang, and became an influence which Liang had to do battle with. The author first met Liang in 1918, on the boat to Europe. Unfortunately, the discrepancy in their age and experience made him unable to profit much from the meeting and he is very modest about his worthiness to be Liang's biographer: "To be honest, I am not capable of understanding [Liang] Rengong ... " He admits that he had a different political stand from Liang at the time, but this seems to have melted away over time. This book displays his great admiration for Liang. Mao is, like Meng and Yang, writing for young people, for whom he considers Liang an ideal model and source of encouragement. Liang, he says, called himself "a hundred-year-old child; a three-year-old greybeard", but it was not youth for itself that he praised, rather a "youthful spirit", which he thought necessary for the construction of a new China. To represent Liang's fitness to be a figure for

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117 Meng and Yang, p.46; Meng, pp.1,106.
118 Meng and Yang, p.35.
120 Mao, "Xir" [Preface], p.1.
121 Mao, Preface, p.4.
youth to learn from, Mao has selected a paragraph from "Shaonian Zhongguo shuo" [On young China], which Liang authored under the pen-name "Shaonian Zhongguo zhi shaonian" in 1900. It is a characteristically lec­ern-thumping rallying cry:

If youth are wise, the country will be wise; if youth are rich, the country will be rich; if youth are strong, the country will be strong; if youth are free, the country will be free; if youth are progressive, the country will be progressive; if youth are superior to Europe, the country will be superior to Europe; if youth have power in the world, the country will have power in the world.\(^{122}\)

Liang’s affinity with youth does indeed require comment, which seems only to be found in small volumes such as this.

Mao describes in some detail (none of it attributed, it is as he says "chuan wen" or hearsay) aspects of Liang’s relationship with his teacher Kang, which is obviously of interest in a book for young people. One telling example reveals the author to be yet another who is troubled by Liang’s subservient stand vis-à-vis Kang (see illustration 2, where Liang makes his kowtow to Kang upon becoming his student). Mao dates Liang’s independence from Kang from the time of the disastrous failure in 1900 of the Gengzi uprising in China. Blame for this was heaped at Liang’s door: he, in a roundabout way of accepting guilt, apparently blamed the Guangzhi Bookstore in Shanghai, which had distributed his writings throughout China, thus it seems spreading the thinking which had spurred the military action. (The family of Tang Caichang, for example, were regular subscribers to his journal.) Mao describes an argument after the failure of the uprising, between Kang and Liang, in which Kang picked up a chair and attacked Liang with it. Mao’s disapproval of Kang is shown in his book’s inclusion of a full-page illustration of the incident, with a caption below reading: "When [Liang] Rengong met [Kang] Nanhai, Nanhai actually attacked him with a chair" (see illustration 3).\(^{123}\) Liang, wounded, prostrated himself before Kang

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\(^{122}\) Mao, Preface, p.4. Published in Qi11gyi bno, no.35; wenji, v.5, 2 cc, p.7.

\(^{123}\) "Rengong yu Nanhai wenjian shi, Nanhai jing ji zhi yi yi" 任公与南海晤见时, 南海竟击之以椅. Mao, p.88.
2. "[Liang] Rengong prostrates himself in front of his new teacher Kang Nanhai." (Mao Yiheng, Liang Qichao, p.25.)
and was forgiven. But Mao is unconvinced of Liang’s responsibility, which in this incident Liang seems to accept. Mao believes that there are many powerful arguments which would put the brunt of the blame for the failure of the uprising on Kang. Unfortunately, the two instances he chooses to clear Liang of Kang’s charges and turn the blame around are less than successful. Kang blamed Liang for betraying him by meeting secretly with Sun Yat-sen, which resulted in conflicting loyalties, especially when Sun’s people were also co-operating with secret societies. Kang, Mao argues, should have taken the responsibility for this inability of the Baohuang Hui to co-operate effectively with the Geming Dang, since it was he who had opposed their co-operation. Secondly, Liang was generally faulted for his apparent preoccupation while in Hawaii with an amorous dalliance, and his conspicuous lack of success there in raising funds for the uprising. Mao urges more sympathy for Liang’s position. Ms He, the woman in question, showed herself to be extraordinarily persistent in the face of Liang’s resistance to her overtures. Liang, on the other hand, made it perfectly clear to her that he already had a wife, and, moreover "was a man who advocated a system of monogamy".124 (This was not, however, a stand that Liang maintained for very long. Two or three years later he took a concubine, and had six children with her.) In the end, after some long months of discontent in Australia, exiled even from his exile in Japan, Liang was still (Mao says) not willing to break publicly with Kang, but he never again worked with him. His morality was solid, and he was not about to compromise his beliefs. Liang, still "not fully fledged", nevertheless showed character in this prolonged episode, as Mao tells it.125

Neither of Mao’s examples addresses sufficiently Liang’s involvement in the failure of 1900. No doubt Liang’s youth and inexperience played an important part in his inability to carry out his designated role in the affair. Nevertheless, Mao seems to want to leave Liang’s youthful spirit unmarred and move blame onto the unpredictable figure of Kang. Liang in this picture drawn by Mao is indeed a figure worthy of the heroic and romantic "young China" of the future. This rosy picture, but not Liang’s personification of the

124 Mao, p.90.
125 Mao, pp.87-91.
ever-bright spirit of youth, is spoilt by the course of history and Communist victory in China. In his closing chapter, the author laments the fact that mainland China has now become "completely red", vindicating the warning against "red imperialism" made by Liang at the end of his life.

6. Li Xisuo and Yuan Qing

Li's book on Liang takes a very different approach from Meng Xiangcai's. He confesses to an abiding interest in Liang Qichao, who was the hero of his childhood days. Fate, he believes, may have possibly played a part in his being assigned a job where he could concentrate on Liang Qichao as one of his main areas of teaching and research. His determination to write this biography intensified after he attended the conference in Guangdong in 1983 on Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and the 1898 Wuxu reform; by coincidence, the publishers from the Peking People's Press were looking for someone to write Liang's biography, and he was the person chosen. Li's "long-cherished" desire was thus fulfilled, and Liang became a "partner" in his life. This is perhaps not so uncommon a phenomenon in the experience of biographers (surely more common than an increasing dislike of one's subject), but it is worth noting in this case because of the very heartfelt expressions of sympathy from Li for his subject.

The criticism of Liang on ideological grounds in Li's book, while not absent, is far less strident than in Meng's. Li considers Liang's class perspective, but he does not take it to be a crucial factor in explaining the nature of Liang's life and achievement. Li, following in a pattern common to biographers (according to him), shows some concern in dealing with Liang's changeableness and devotes a good quarter of his Foreword, entitled "How I see Liang Qichao", to it. Li says that there is disagreement on whether Liang's life can be periodized in terms of "seven changes", "eight changes" or "ten changes". He divides these attitudes towards Liang's changeability into two categories. Many disparage his changeability as the natural product of Liang's belonging to the national bourgeoisie: since this class was economic-

126 Mao, p.140.
127 Li Xisuo and Yuan Qing, p.670.
ally weak and lacked an independent consciousness, this argument goes, Liang as its representative was naturally weak and changeable. Others look at the special characteristics of the era, with "wave after wave" of new trends "pushing quickly on forward", and new ideas soon becoming obsolete, and thus see Liang, who "always wanted to stand on the wave's crest", forced to follow a path of constant change in order to keep up with the top of the wave. Li takes neither of these positions. His interpretation focuses instead on the one aspect of Liang's beliefs which remained unchanged: his belief in reform. This, in practice, required him to lean one way or another in the direction of whichever faction he believed might advance the slow course of reform. Being neither a conservative nor a revolutionary but rather, at heart, "a scholar who participated in politics", Liang was never able to advocate one consistent line.  

Li asks whether Liang's life should be seen as comedy or as tragedy, and suggests that it has the "colours" of comedy but the character of tragedy. While he seemed to have led an interesting and meaningful life, one that could hardly be called wasted, in the end his achievements came to almost nothing. The tragedy of modern Chinese history, Li argues, determined the tragedy of Liang's life and ultimately of his character. Li ends his introductory musings on Liang with a curious reference to the comments of a "foreign scholar". This scholar, whom Li does not name but who is almost certainly Joseph Levenson, is quoted as having said that Liang spent his whole political and intellectual life drawing a circle whose starting point was also its finishing point. Levenson's Liang Qichao and the Mind of Modern China uses this circle metaphor in its conclusion:

... as time passed, and the disintegration of traditional Chinese society became ever more irreversible, Liang's ideas proceeded towards anachronism. The wheel had come full circle for Liang; for his first syncretism, which had set him on the road to his last, had been an effort to make Confucianism

128 Li, pp.4-5.
relevant to the actual world of which China was a part rather than to a by-gone world which was China alone.¹²⁹

Not an easy thing to be persuaded by, Li says, and yet enough to make one think deeply. Here Li's foreword ends, and one has the sense this may have been his last comment, written after finishing the manuscript of his book. These comments may be seen as merely a writer's philosophical flourish suggesting the futility of any biographer's attempt to sum up the meaning in a life, which inevitably ends with death, reducing all striving for heroism or significance to nothing. On the other hand, Li's willingness to leave these comments hanging, with no more effort to come to a firmer juncture in his summary of the meaning in Liang's life, reveals a gap between the author's deep personal interest in Liang and the case he is able to make for his subject's historical importance. This gap can be seen in also in the work of other writers on Liang.

7. Xiaobing Tang

Tang, the most recent author of a major work on Liang, closes this gap in spectacular fashion. Tang's book, Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao, is a postmodern and postnationalist exercise. Like the works of Levenson, Chang and Huang it is a revised PhD thesis, published in 1996.¹³⁰ Only ten years earlier he had been "a new graduate student who had arrived in the United States for the first time only weeks before school started".¹³¹ Tang's approach to Liang Qichao, more than that of any other of Liang's biographers, needs to be understood in the light of what he reveals about himself in his Acknowledgements. He began this work by reading Liang's "impassioned and inspiring" essays. Simultaneously, he read Meng Xiangcai's biography, and from the indignant reaction of the new world-traveller Tang to Meng's hard-edged summing-up of Liang's limited contribution to human progress, this book's thesis would seem to have evolved. Tang's identification with Liang has a very personal

¹²⁹ Levenson, p.218. The italics are mine.
¹³⁰ Tang Xiaobing, Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity.
component, one aspect of which is the similarity of the sudden widening of their horizons. For Tang, his reaction to a new world environment, beyond his national borders, has clearly been to rise to its challenges, and this leads him to recognize something of the same response in Liang:

On a brief and personal note, it has been a wonderful and stimulating experience reading Liang Qichao, imagining with him, and going through the same emotional and intellectual excitements that he went through more than three quarters of a century ago. ... I remember vividly one day in summer ... when I found myself turning the brittle, yellowing pages of Liang's journal La Rekonstruo. For one moment I could not free myself, nor can I now, of the notion that Liang Qichao and his times are indeed inextricably contemporary with our own.

Tang’s description of Liang’s intellectual transformation by the "new historical and intellectual landscape" in Japan after his flight from China in 1898 — "very much an acquisition and testing of an alien but invigorating vocabulary and language" — similarly, demands to be read as equally applicable to Tang, whose thorough adaptation to a postcolonial conceptual framework is periodically displayed throughout his work. While Liang enthusiastically embraced modernity, Tang has moved on to post-modernity.

It is clear that Tang has embarked on this intellectual enterprise with a sense of common purpose with Liang, and with the idea that in writing about Liang he is shouldering his part in a national, collective responsibility, to history and to his own generation:

During ... my research and writing, I felt ever more strongly that for my generation of Chinese, an inescapable historical responsibility is, as Walter Benjamin once put it, to recapture and reassemble images of the past as our own concerns and even identity before they disappear irretrievably. Or, as Liang Qichao himself would advise students of history in The Research Method for Chinese History, "we should not carelessly wipe out what was valuable in the past but is immaterial in

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111 Tang, p.v.
112 Tang, p.vii.
113 Tang, p.15. Tang's fellow-feeling with Liang is sometimes very much in evidence. Another example might be Tang's inclusion of Liang's reasons for naming his "Ziyou shu". Tang quotes Liang: "The Western scholar J.S. Mill once said: In the progress of mankind, there is nothing more important than freedom of conscience, of speech, and of the press. All these three major freedoms I now enjoy, and thus I shall name my writings." Tang continues, "A refreshing absence of political constraint and the concomitant prospect of unhampered expression gave tremendous impetus to his intellectual development." (p.16)
the present; nor should we easily let go of what was unimportant before but has become significant now." In retrospect, I see that my duty also includes having an intelligent dialogue with one of the greatest and most imaginative thinkers of twentieth-century China, a man who bravely lived and confronted history.\textsuperscript{134}

Tang now, ten years after his arrival in the United States, brings a mix of historical positions to his project, a complexity he shares with Chang Hao and Philip Huang, the previous two authors of major intellectual biographies of Liang published in the US. His fundamental enthusiasm for Liang is hard to separate from his nationality and his evident "patriotism", though "affirmation of native culture" is Tang's preferred postnationalist formulation.\textsuperscript{135} On the other hand, this book's proposition — that Liang "confronted history", moved from "a global imaginary of identity" to anticipate "a global imaginary of difference" (phrases which I shall attempt to explain below) — is straight from the European and American postcolonial "critical interrogation" of history, where "history" is shown to be inextricably linked to all the ills of the "Enlightenment project".

To characterize the "global imaginary of identity", Tang uses Hegel's phases of World History, in which can be seen the "best expression and justification" of the term. Simplifying Tang's explanation somewhat, "world space ... is temporalized [by Hegel] in a totalizing narrative", into four irreversible phases of World History which are embodied in a progressive sweep from East to West. "The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of history, Asia the beginning."\textsuperscript{136} The East is known for its "unreflected consciousness", and is characterized as the Childhood of History. Moving through the middle phases, the final stage, History's perfect maturity, is reached in the German world.

While this view of history was the one which Chinese intellectuals like Liang (and perhaps Tang in earlier days) received unquestioningly (although with some dismay), it carried with it the idea of nationalism, which in the hands of "subordinate" and "backward" peoples finally

\textsuperscript{134} Tang, p.vii.
\textsuperscript{135} Tang, p.234.
managed to subvert the valorization of time, and reintroduce space as a preferable, postcolonial, postnationalist "cognitive principle".

Tang argues for a new evaluation of Liang which takes into consideration his significance as a post-modern pioneer. He traces the development of Liang's historical consciousness from his acceptance and promotion of the "discourse of modernity", which was later "domesticated" by the May 4th generation, to his post-World War I shift in thinking to a new "historical vision". In terms of written work, these two stages of transition are marked by Liang's 1902 "Xin shixue" [New historiography], with which his 1922 "Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa" [Research method for Chinese history] "formed a distant dialogue". Liang's dissatisfaction with European modernity, Tang says, "is based not so much on a rhetoric of refusal ... as on the perceived need to contain it and to eventually overcome its aberration through a balancing completion." Tang defends Liang from any accusation that his new perspectives were a result of his disillusionment with the great nations of Europe, whose war damage he had seen during a visit in 1919-20: "Liang's new historical vision, it is necessary to emphasize, was not premised on a vindictive discovery of the fallibility of the West." Instead, Liang drew from his visit the "visionary" idea of a "new culture", which he introduced in his writing about his trip, and expanded on in his subsequent work. This "new culture" was a "synthetic, positive value", which suggested to Liang "an imaginative and remedial overcoming of the perceived insufficiencies of modernity". To Tang, it suggests "eventually, [what] may be called a postnationalist global imaginary in which cultural differentiation, rather than political uniformity, was the source of meaning and self-conception." In a rather extreme progression, Tang then notes that Liang Shuming took inspiration from Liang in a series of lectures in which he

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138 Tang, pp.171, 193.
139 Tang, p.205.
140 Tang, p.181.
141 Tang, p.192. He is referring to Levenson's discussion of Liang, which he had rejected earlier, see p.180.
characterized Western culture as a preliminary stage, which would require Chinese culture to "provide the world with a consummating alternative." Liang Shuming believed that "the future culture of the world will be a revived Chinese culture." Referring to this, Tang says: "Both Liangs shared the same confidence in the relevance of Chinese culture to the modern world". This seems a fairly mild response to what seems more like a simple case of cultural chauvinism on Liang Shuming's part. But Tang's case for Liang's brilliant "reconceptualization of the structure of human experience" seems to justify, perhaps inadvertently, such a belief. After all, Liang, the product of Chinese culture, was able to reach far ahead of contemporary overseas historians, who were still stuck in their own modernist discourse. What is more extraordinary is that he himself was well aware of it. Tang shares some of the triumphant and startling manner of Levenson's work on Liang, though obviously within a markedly opposite argument. Thus he quotes Liang, following on Tang's rewording of Liang's own argument in "Zhongguo lishi yanjiu fa" – that:

> Whereas the diachronic experience affirms historical causality as the first step in constructing historical intelligibility, totalization is an indispensable hermeneutic principle for making sense of the synchronic whole.

– with the conclusion that "Such a complex operation ... is absent from traditional historiography"; "even among the great number of modern works in Europe and America, it is rare to find." Tang finds that Liang's historical thinking moved through this process in a circular way, which turns out to be exactly equivalent to Li Xisuo's revivified metaphor from Levenson, mentioned above. Liang starts and ends with Chinese culture:

> This reconquest of history through the production of space is the point of both arrival and departure in Liang Qichao's historical thinking.

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113 Tang, p.195; Liang Shuming, *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* was published in 1921.
114 Tang, p.195.
115 Tang, p.213.
116 Tang, p.213.
Cultural history as a discourse that enables negotiations among historical visions is the logical consummation of Liang's postnationalist political engagement in the wake of the 1911 Chinese Revolution. ... Liang's postnationalist cultural politics anticipated Fanon's famous insight: "National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension."¹⁴³

Liang has been raised here to the most breath-taking heights of historical significance, which even he can never have anticipated.

**Tang and Levenson**

Tang makes numerous references to Joseph Levenson, and confirms part-way through his book that reading Levenson had fired some of his initial ideas for his new reading of Liang.¹⁴⁸ Despite this influence, Tang takes a very different view of Liang from Levenson. Tang distances himself from Levenson's famous formula, for example, and claims that Liang in fact "never cut his emotional and intellectual ties to China."¹⁴⁹ The respectful nod to Levenson on page one, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is a quotation from Liang, listing a few of the big events in history that preceded Liang's birth. Tang's translation reads:

> It was ten years after the demise of the Taiping Kingdom in Nanjing, one year after the demise of the great Qing scholar Zeng Guofan, three years after the end of the Franco-Prussian War, and the same year that Italy declared itself a unified kingdom in Rome.¹⁵⁰

Levenson, though, had charged in and established from the start his authorial superiority over his subject, following the quoted passage with a comment in parentheses which baldly notes an error in Liang's knowledge of world history: "(The last date is wrong.)"¹⁵¹ Tang, by contrast, presents

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¹²⁷ Tang, p.237.
¹²⁸ See Tang, p.185. Tang, though, says that it was Levenson's unfinished Provincialism and Cosmopolitanism: Chinese History and the Meaning of "Modern Times" that inspired him.
¹²⁹ Tang, p.3.
¹³⁰ Tang, p.1.
¹³¹ Tang, p.1; Levenson, p.15. The text reads: "Shi Taiping gao wang ya jingling hou 10 nian; Qing da xueshi Zeng Guofan zu hou 1 nian; Pu-Fa zhanzheng hou 3 nian; er Yidali jianguo Luona zhi sui ye." 实太平国亡于金陵后十年。清大学士曾国藩卒后一年。普法战争后三年。而意大利建国罗马之岁也。One might want to read the last phrase to mean that the establishment of the country in Rome was in the same year (3 years before Liang's birth) as the end of the Franco-Prussian war, in which case Liang's dates are right. Tang, though, reads it the same as Levenson.
Liang's record of these events as a premature prefiguring of his global awareness, which Tang dates from 1890, the year in which the seventeen-year-old Liang bought a book of world geography in Shanghai. Tang also finds recognition in Levenson of this aspect in Liang:

"It was the contraction of China from a world to a nation in the world," the historian Joseph Levenson once observed with great sympathy and insight, "that changed the Chinese historical consciousness." The intellectual and political consequences of this "contraction," in particular Liang Qichao's heroic effort at coming to terms with the new global space as an inescapable modern condition, are the subject matter of the present study.  

As mentioned earlier, Tang rounds his book's conclusion off with a final acknowledgement to Levenson, still on the same theme. Tang's last paragraph reads:

Joseph Levenson was absolutely right in claiming that "the contraction of China from a world to a nation in the world changed the Chinese historical consciousness." This modern historical consciousness, undoubtedly incurred by a violent time-space compression, found its mature and complete expression when Liang Qichao, in his notion of a differentiating cultural history, moved beyond the reified space of the nation and turned to a global imaginary of difference, which he invoked to resist a modernist-rationalist homogenization of time and space. Moreover, through his vision of a "boundless and profound ocean of cultural history," Liang transcended the nationalist discourse of modernity and made it clear that to contemplate the totality of human history in time and space was to encounter nothing short of the sublime.  

From Levenson to Tang, Liang's depiction has undergone a striking reorientation. Levenson treated Liang as a tortured soul, his loyalties deeply and painfully split between his "emotional" attachment and his "intellectual" commitment. Tang on the other hand presents a teenage Liang Qichao, present at the "birth of a collective modern Chinese subjectivity", undergoing a "sudden spatiotemporal reorientation", which instead of causing him torment, instead provokes "a remapping of world space". Liang had encountered not contradiction and failure but success, in "coming to terms
with the new global space as an inescapable modern condition". 155

It has not been the aim in this chapter to deal with the "truth" of the particular case put by each author in their work on Liang. Obviously, there are differences of interpretation at almost every stage of Liang's life: whether he was deep in despair or on the point of framing a new view of history; whether his later years, after the first flush of his youth and success in Japan had passed by, were a period of increasing irrelevance or the culmination of his life's work.

Partly in reaction to Levenson's book on Liang, the earlier Chinese-American scholars (or Chinese scholars in America) can be seen setting up the figure of Liang to assert the integrity of the Chinese tradition, as well as to make a case for the ability of this tradition to produce figures like Liang who responded intelligently to the changing environment of his life. Writers in China, not constrained by the need to write about the Chinese tradition in terms familiar to the American historiographic tradition, have had to satisfy their own different local conditions, and have judged Liang by standards such as his success or failure in "advancing history". What can be observed in Tang Xiaobing's work is a confident Chinese voice putting its case, in English and in terms invented in the West, unconcerned with the requirements of a traditional Chinese or Communist historiography. His claiming a space for himself and his generation is, if anything, more dramatic than the admittedly attention-getting claims that he makes on behalf of Liang.

What emerges unexpectedly from a reading of the literature is a problem which concerns how Liang's readers have responded to him personally, not only intellectually. K.C. Hsiao goes out of his way to make a moral judgement of Liang, without which his account would be much less interesting. Meng Xiangcai is surely moved by Liang's expression of loyalty to his aged teacher Kang on the occasion of his last birthday celebration, even though Meng uses the story to make the necessary criticism of Liang's

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155 Tang, pp.2-3.
political error in refusing to abandon this loyalty. Meng includes too much
detail of the lengths Liang went to in honouring Kang at this late
reconciliation, for a reader to take his criticisms of the degeneracy and
bankruptcy of Liang’s thought completely at face value. Both Li Xisuo and
Tang Xiaobing, too, claim to have been moved personally by the figure of
Liang, who both describe as a sort of companion on their intellectual journey.
Liang Qichao was left with no political heirs to canonize him as a founding
father in any nation-building account. Instead, he has become in some of
these cases an easily accessible figure whose personal qualities have been at
least as important as his intellectual achievements in entitling him to
continued attention from.

Liang’s intellectual achievements, on the other hand, confront the
biographer’s loyalties and cause some problems for modern historians whose
professional intellectual training differs so vastly from Liang’s. His political
allegiances are sometimes erratic; his enthusiasms move him in one direction
and then another, sometimes from the sublime to the ridiculous; he rarely
acknowledges sources for his material, which itself is not always reliably
borrowed; and his fame sometimes seems to have come partly from his
desire to be famous: in short, Liang sometimes fails to meet modern
professional standards for the practising intellectual.

The inescapable impression, then, from a reading of the literature
above is a sense of discomfort in the biographers’ work. It is not uniformly
present, and it is not discernible in the same way in each work where it is
present, but it arises from what I perceive as a clash between the
biographers’ emotional response to Liang, perhaps an important part of what
led them to undertake their work on him, and the requirements of the
biographer’s project. One might characterize their initial, emotional response
as youthful, and their written work as mature, and see the two collide.

Looking further into this, one has to note that a majority of these authors
began their studies of Liang at an early stage in their careers. Joseph
Levenson, Hao Chang, Philip Huang, Tang Xiaobing and Meng Xiangcai all
worked on Liang Qichao for their PhD dissertations; Li Xisuo was past this
stage, but confesses that his interest in Liang dates from his childhood. K.C.
Hsiao is unlike most of the others here in that his study of Liang is only a small part of a much longer work; Hsiao is moved by Liang’s personal qualities, and recognizes his huge talent and his lively concern, but his judgements on Liang’s contribution to political thought show no sign of his having had any illusions about Liang’s significance, of being pulled between early expectation and subsequent discovery. Among the other authors mentioned above, Levenson and Meng at one end of the range have treated the well-known figure of Liang rather harshly (although not without some sympathy); while Hao Chang finds the figure wanting in important respects which cause him to occasionally betray some bafflement and even irritation. Philip Huang is apparently not bothered by what he finds (perhaps the result of having the good fortune to be advised by K.C. Hsiao, who set him “on the trail of Liang” for his dissertation project); Li Xisuo on the other hand is bothered, unable to wrap Liang in as much glory as his youthful self might have liked. Tang, far from being dismayed by shortcomings in Liang or in his life’s achievements, in his extravagant claims for Liang’s significance himself gives rise to a certain degree of discomfort.

In the following chapters, I will look at two alternative sources of information on the figure of Liang Qichao to add to that which is more usually found in studies such as the above. Late-Qing serialized fiction is perhaps an unlikely historical source, and yet its use of the era’s most vivid personalities and events, thinly fictionalized for popular consumption, provides images of Liang which help to explain some of his peculiar attraction. Liang’s own self-representations add another dimension to the image-making, as will be seen.

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156 Huang, p.vii.
Chapter 3

Portrayals in Fiction

Liang's period of greatest public visibility, the decade or so from about 1898, was coincidentally also the period of the flowering of late-Qing serialized "social fiction" [shehui xiaoshuo 社会小说], later given the name "exposure fiction", or "castigatory fiction" [qianze xiaoshuo 谴责小说] by Lu Xun. Liang's own very early participation in this phenomenon, as both fiction writer and fiction publisher, did not save him from appearing as a character in satirical form in a number of works, in greater or lesser degrees of disguise. This chapter will look at the images of Liang in a variety of works of fiction from this decade, as well as one from much later which has a similar subject matter. These works are sometimes amusing, often sharply satirical, and in any case provide an interesting insight into contemporary perceptions of him. In the activities of both Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, as described by contemporary fictional accounts, there is a degree of recklessness and sheer enjoyment, which is described with concern and suspicion, but also with an unmistakable voyeuristic pleasure. The two are shown to be living their lives as adventurers, moving quickly from one astonishing incident to the next. There is also a prevailing tendency in these portraits to marvel at the capacity of the two men to deceive and self-promote, and to draw those less conniving than themselves into their schemes, sometimes with fatal results.

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1 See Milena Dolezelová-Velingerová's introduction, The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century, p.4.
From what one finds in these portraits of Liang, it becomes clear that he has not stayed so close to the imagination of subsequent generations in China solely by virtue of his advocating reform and learning from the West. The departure of the fictional character of Liang from conventional norms of behaviour, and his transfiguration into a character from a semi-historical and semi-fictional popular mythology has played a part in sustaining his presence in "the mind of modern China". When one considers later representations of the public figure of Liang Qichao in this period spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it does seem that the view has been unduly narrowed to present him in a way that ignores his wide renown (mainly as an associate of Kang Youwei but also in his own right) as a favourite object of interest and satire in the lively world of popular fiction and day-to-day urban mythology. Rather than treating the figures of Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei in what has become the standard manner, as historical actors furthering the cause of China's reform, this alternative representation focuses on their human vices and foibles, turning the real people into fictional characters, which paradoxically brings them closer to the lives of ordinary readers. In considering what the images of Liang now represent, after many years of their construction in the service of a "modern" China, there may be unexpected benefits in paying more attention to the more satirical representations.

Incorporating these often rather scurrilous, but usually not unsympathetic, characterizations of Liang, some of which were widely available at the time, into the composite picture given of him by the present field of "Liang studies" helps to explain an unspoken undercurrent flowing beneath some work on Liang. This undercurrent contains images of Liang and his life which have caught the public imagination, and resemble fictional stereotypes, precisely the ones which are found in this fiction: images and themes often based on rumours, gossip and unverifiable stories. While they are usually kept out of the scholarly mainstream, respectable literature on Liang, they affect the judgements made about him, both positive and negative. They suggest a reason for the slight unwillingness to treat Liang with the respect which his fame would seem to deserve, which can be seen in some Chinese-born writers, who still do not wish to tarnish the reputation of someone so intimately connected with China's long process of reform. They also
produce a much more robust and broadly delineated portrait of Liang, one which is certainly capable of inspiring the evident affection which has driven others to write very different accounts of Liang and his life and work.

**Fiction in the late Qing**

The motivation of fiction-writers in the early years of the twentieth century needs some clarification when considering the various portraits of Liang as represented in their works. Fiction at this time had scarcely achieved even the beginnings of respectability among the ranks of traditional intellectuals, although it was widely read by them, and for the most part written by them.\(^2\) For this reason, fiction writers could not hope to impress their readers merely with the excellence of their creative inspiration, and wrote from a combination of other motivations: to amuse, to instruct, to earn money, to comment on the times. Liu Ts'un-yan, describing the "thankless profession" of fiction-writing up until the May Fourth Movement, says that even "highbrow" literature like the *Hong lou meng* (A dream of red chambers) until that time "had been seen as just an excuse for a good sentimental weep".\(^3\)

The loose plots and myriad characters that one finds in the works mentioned below are characteristic of this stage in the development of Chinese fiction, which carried with it stylistic forms and trappings inherited over the course of many years, and was in the process of finding shapes more appropriate to its time. For example, one old genre that continued to be used in this period was the historical romance or *yanyi* (演义: loosely based on real events known to its readers, it allows itself considerable licence in dramatizing events from real life or indeed in departing completely from them, as can be seen in the example of the novel *Kang Liang yanyi* (The adventures of Kang and Liang), where long-dead religious patriarchs and philosophers from both East and West join the story as part of the cast.\(^4\) While its inclusion of the supernatural seems to put this work

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\(^2\) See Ah Ying (Qian Xingcun), *Wan Qing xiaooshuo shi* [A history of late-Qing fiction], Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1937, p.271.


into a category which seeks only to entertain, the story’s handling of its real-life characters indicates the author’s concern to expose the excesses of the contemporary political and social climate. The supernatural component is an inherited device, but can still serve a pur-pose in a new era whose nature and new requirements are not yet established. Similarly, Zeng Pu’s novel, *Niehai hua* [A Flower in a Sinful Sea], which has been described as a “panoramic novel” in the style of the novels in Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine,* with a vast gallery of characters and wandering plot, is said to have been written “from a nightmarish anxiety to save his country and his poor and downtrodden countrymen from further humiliation”; the author has “volunteer[ed] to serve as spokesman for the intellectuals of his time.” The author himself, responding to criticism, explained that he had written the book as a record of the thirty years (roughly up to the end of the century) when “China went through a great transformation from old to new”; he likened it to a photographic panorama. Commenting on the verisimilitude of fiction to real life, Zeng Pu also noted that “Although it is said that fiction is not history ... still one should not run too far counter to it.”

Most fiction in this period was written under a pen-name. Zeng Pu, for example, wrote under the name “Dong Ya bingfu” 东亚病夫 [*The sick man of East Asia*], and Li Boyuan, whose work is discussed below, wrote as The man in charge of the southern pavilion. Some identities, however, are not known. There was some risk in authoring works with characters who were too readily identifiable. The targets of the author’s innuendo (ying she 影射) might sue. Of the authors of this new kind of writing whose identities are known, most seem to have been approximate contemporaries of Liang’s. Li Boyuan was six years older; Huang Xiaopei was a year older than Liang.  

7 Peter Li, ”The Dramatic Structure of Niehai hua”, in Dolezelová-Velingerová, p.150.  
6 Liu Ts’un-yan, p.5.  
8 H.P. Tseng, p.197.  
9 *wanting* is also a homophone for “scandalous”, perhaps an intended double-entendre.  
10 Liu Ts’un-yan describes one lawsuit which arose from such a case, against Pu Songling (1640-1715), the well-known author of *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊斋志异 [Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio, as trans. by Herbert Giles]; see his Introduction in *Renditions, Special Issue: Middlebrow Fiction*, p.10.  
11 Biographical details on Li are from Douglas Lancashire, *Li Po-yuan*, “Chronology” (no page
Who read it?

Most late-Qing serialized fiction appeared in the leading Shanghai fiction journals, such as *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo* [Illustrated fiction], *Yueyue xiaoshuo* [Monthly fiction], and *Xiaoshuo lin* [Forest of fiction]. These journals were commercial enterprises, publishing popular fiction, including two of the works described below, *Wenming xiaoshi* [A brief history of civilization] and *Chiren shuomeng ji* [A dream told by an idiot], both published in *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo*. Liang's *Xin xiaoshuo* [New fiction], published in Yokohama, was the fourth leading fiction journal of the time. Its motivation for publishing was in one respect unlike the others, in its inclusion of a didactic element, Liang's distinctive contribution. Apart from publishing some of Liang's own literary efforts, it contained some of the well-known writer Wu Woyao's stories, and a number of foreign works translated into Chinese. *Xin xiaoshuo* seems to have engaged Liang's attention, and also its audience's (many of whom were attracted by his name to the journal), only briefly, and it gradually "fizzled out", though not until its third year.

The size and social type of the reading audience for this "social fiction" is hard to determine. It seems at any rate to have been substantially different in composition from the class of people by whom Liang and other reformists active in fiction circles hoped to be read. Liang, in stating his own reason for the active support he gave fiction publishing at this time, both as publisher and as occasional author, said:

Few people who can barely read will read the Classics, but they will all read fiction. Since they can't be taught by means of the Six Classics, fiction should be used.

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12 published by the Commercial Press, 1903-1906.
13 edited by Zeng Pu, began 1907. For all of these, see Dolezelová-Velingerová; and E. Perry Link, Jr, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981. One of Liang's most prolific critics in fiction, Huang Xiaopei, published in the Hong Kong *Shiliao*.
14 Mabel Lee, "Liang Chi-ch'ao (1873-1929) and the Literary Revolution of Late-Ch'ing", pp.215-6.
15 "Yiyi11 zlzengzlzi xiaoslzuo xu", *Qi11gyi baa*, no.1 (1898), from Shu-ying Tsau, "The Rise of 'New Fiction'", p.27.
His intended audience, then, seems to have been people who could read but who had not had a classical education. Xia Zengyou, who along with Liang was an early proponent of the new fiction, had a similar view of the intended audience: in his 1903 article in *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo*, he proposed two kinds of fiction, one for the elite and one for commoners [specified as 'women and illiterates']. Xia considered the majority, rather than the educated few, the more important audience for fiction.\(^{17}\) Perry Link has a different view of the actual readership of "social fiction" in this period. He distinguishes "social fiction" from the "novels of ideas" (such as Liang's *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* [The future of new China]), which "told how things ought to be": social fiction on the other hand "usually describe[s] the sorry state of the world".\(^{18}\) Link says that in addition to the "xiaoshin", or "petty urbanites" who are usually taken to make up the bulk of the reading public in early twentieth-century China, "readership extended higher on the social scale", including "[w]ealthy and powerful men", "respectable intellectuals" and students in the reform-minded schools of the time.\(^{19}\) Link believes that social fiction, in particular, with its exposure of folly and cynicism, was read by older readers, "whose optimism about society had peaked in the late Ch'ing years."\(^{20}\)

Who, then, were the readers of the works of fiction described here? While it must be partly a matter for conjecture, it seems fairly likely that Liang and Xia were over-optimistic in believing that people who were not already regular readers would suddenly begin to take up reading once they became aware of the offerings which were intended for them. At the same time, the social climate described in the works of fiction themselves was evidently changing rapidly, and one result was a greatly increased number of young people intent on getting an education and finding out about the world. The works below are not difficult to read, and would not have deterred any literate person; at the same time, they are sufficiently complex and tied into the intellectual and political world to hold the attention of people with much more

\(^{17}\) Shu-ying Tsau, p.30.
\(^{18}\) Link, *Mandarin Ducks*, p.139.
\(^{19}\) Link, *Mandarin Ducks*, pp.189-95.
than a basic literacy.

The works

From as early as 1899 up to about 1909, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao (to put them in the order which is most usual, as teacher and student) appeared as characters in quite a wide variety of fiction titles. Li Boyuan’s *Wenming xiaoshi* is well regarded today; *Kang Liang yanyi*, which is not widely available, is not. Huang Xiaopei’s *Da pian* [The great scoundrel] and *Huanhai shengchen lu* [Success and failure in officialdom] are clearly influenced by their author’s political affiliation with the Xing Zhong Hui. *Chiren shuomeng ji* is harder to place; unlike *Kang Liang yanyi* or *Da pian*, or even *Wenming xiaoshuo*, it is not libellous, though it takes great liberties with its descriptions of Kang and Liang. It seems to have included the characters of the two men, who represent the “reformers” as young men with a lot of time on their hands, as a convenience – making use of their public prominence and the controversies surrounding them – rather than using them to serve much moral or political purpose. I have come across references to the two men in other works, but not as part of any attempt at characterization. A later addition to the list is the sequel to *Niehai hua*, published in 1943 many years after the events of 1898 and after, which provoked so much of this fictional treatment.21 There is a vast array of titles to choose from in this period: I have been guided by Ah Ying’s discussion in *Wan Qing xiaoshuo shi*, with the invaluable *Zhongguo tongshu xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao* as a guide to all that he covers and more.22

(Liang’s short piece of “new” fiction, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji*, itself fits into the small collection of fiction, considered below, in which portrayals of Liang are found. For convenience, however, I have grouped it with other work by Liang in which he represents himself in the third person. The work deals mainly with the dialogue between two characters who have been taken to stand for Liang in his early and later political affiliations.23)

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21 *Niehai hua* itself was first published in 1903, in the first of its many incarnations; a subsequent edition which had Zeng Pu for the first time as joint author came out in 1905.
22 See fnn 2 and 11.
23 Liang was in 1902 still publicly identified with the more radical revolutionary stand, which he abandoned the year after publication of this piece of fiction, in favour of a more moderate
Ah Ying’s outline of late-Qing fiction describes a group of works which reflected the two sides of the constitutional movement (among which is counted this work of Liang’s). It belongs to the pro-constitutional government side, which, however, was heavily outnumbered by its opposition, a sizable body of fiction which has yet to be comprehensively studied. Ah Ying divides this latter group of anti-constitutional government works again into two streams: one which attacks people like Liang and Kang Youwei from a political or racial point of view, espousing a more radical (presumably anti-Manchu) approach; and the other which makes personal attacks on those who espouse constitutionalism.24 The latter category seems to include both more conservative and more radical points of view.

Another rather large group of works of fiction, whose attacks on constitutionalists were more diffuse, includes such titles as Xin dang facai ji [How the new (reform) party got rich], Shanghai zhi weixindang [The Shanghai reform party], Yizi burende xindang [The illiterate new party], Lixian jing [The constitutional mirror] and some of the exposé (xianxing ji 现形记) type of fiction.25 Shanghai zhi weixindang, for example, tells the sad story of a promising young student who gets in with the wrong company, in the shape of three Reform Party (Weixin Dang 维新党) members who lead him astray. These reformers do not appear to be real people in fictional disguise, but a little imagination would probably bring out the meaning hidden in their names: one, for example, is called Huang Modao 黄魔道, a homonym for "the way of desolation". One takes him to a brothel where he unexpectedly gets into trouble and falls foul of the law. Two others, whom he meets at a translation bureau run by the Reform Party, take him to another brothel, and he finally withdraws from school and goes to live with a prostitute.26 In Shimao xianxingji [Fashion exposed] a new-style school which has been hastily

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24 Ah Ying, Wan Qing xiaoshuo shi, pp.115-6.
25 Such as: Gemin guixianxing ji 革命鬼现形记 [Revolutionary devils exposed], and Xindang xianxing ji 新党现形记 [The new party exposed]. Li Boyuan also wrote one in this style, Guanchang xianxing ji 灌肠现形记 [The bureaucracy exposed], see Dolezelová-Velingerová, p.4. See tiyao, pp.1120, 916 and 863.
26 This 1905 work was apparently also published under the title Xin dang piaojie xianxing ji [The real story of the reform party's world of prostitution]. See tiyao, pp.943-4.
set up by unqualified charlatans is named, in an obvious allusion to Liang Qichao's "Xinmin shuo", the Xinmin Xuetang [New people's college]. This school, where the students embarrass their teachers by successfully arguing points of theory with them, is the setting for a story where characters with worthy names like Qin Delai 秦德来 [(new) virtue arrives] succeed in dismissing from the school other characters with unworthy ones, such as Gu Shi 顾时 [considering the times, i.e. watching which way the wind blows], and virtue does indeed finally triumph. These titles have not endured as well as some of their contemporaries. Ah Ying also makes reference to several plays in the Yuan-style, Weixin meng [Dream of reform], the most notable of them, which "reflect the 'hundred days' reform and the people in the reform movement".

While Ah Ying's categorization is to some extent helpful, few of the works included here for discussion fit neatly into one side or another. For example, Huang Xiaopei's works (Da ma pian and Huanhai shengchen lu) mentioned above are clearly motivated by political interest. Huang was a loyal member of the Xing Zhong Hui and, later, the Tongmeng Hui in 1905. But other works of fiction profited from the fame or notoriety of Kang and Liang in ways that were not strictly speaking politically motivated; they are more difficult to place in terms of political rivalries. Li Boyuan, one of the best known writers of this genre, is not easily pigeonholed. While he shares with others of the time a concern to expose the excesses of those abusing their power or the trust of others, his ridicule of the reformers, who took themselves and their vocation so seriously, is achieved with quite a light touch. The heavy hand of political agenda seems absent. Both Kang and Liang were perfect subjects for caricature, being extremely famous and also unorthodox; because of this one has to use a degree of caution in ascribing direct political motives to authors of satire. Responses in Chinese society to the sense of crisis at the turn

27 See liyao, pp.1067-8. No date is given.
28 Ah Ying, Wan Qing wenxue congshuo: chuangi zaju juan [Collected literature of the late Qing: short plays and poetic drama], shuang cc [vol.1], Zhonghua Shuju, Peking, 1962, p.2. See the text of Weixin meng in vol.2 (xia cc), pp.444-70. One of the four authors of this play was Lu Sheng, whose Chiren shuoneng ju is described below. Others referred to by Ah Ying are Wutong lei [Parasol tree tears], Penglai yi [The courier station on Penglai Island], Xing qiu meng [Starry autumn dream] and Cheng long jialua [Well-known tales of riding the dragon].
of the century resulted in "new" parties, "new" students and schools, "new" women, and so on, all of which provided writers (themselves writing a "new" style of fiction) with opportunities which were not to be missed. Writers took advantage of these, while at the same time the depiction in their stories of the changes in Chinese society, with the spirit of reform extending to government, schooling and relations between the sexes, reflected a possibly widespread scepticism regarding both the motivation of the reformers and the likely benefit from the reforms. A one-chapter unfinished work entitled Tianguo weixin [Reform in heaven], for example, published in 1908, describes how an emissary immortal, Lü Chunyang, is sent down from heaven to see what guidelines might be learned from the Chinese reforms, to apply then in the household of the Jade Emperor. The book concludes with the Kitchen God telling Lü: "Reform in China is nothing but a slogan. If you really want to investigate reform, I beg your celestial worship to make a tour of foreign lands and see what you can find there."29

(As an aside, it is interesting to note the similarities between the world of late-Qing fiction and Perry Link's description of "unofficial" fiction in the Cultural Revolution decade: in terms of readership (high school and university students were the most frequent readers of "unofficial fiction"), attitudes to authority (tending to be respectful), and the types of story enjoyed (the attraction of particular foreign works is notable, with Sherlock Holmes still a big favourite in "unofficial" fiction, having been introduced in translation on the back page of Liang Qichao's Shiwu bao over seventy years previously).30)

The following six works of fiction are discussed in chronological order. The first appeared the year after the 1898 coup. The last, Xu Niehai hua [Further episodes of Flower in a Sinful Sea], a continuation in the style of an earlier work, comes from a much later period (1943), but deals only with the events leading up to 1898. The works in between all appeared in the first decade of the twentieth century.

30 Perry Link, Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic, Westview Press, Boulder, 1989; Link's "An Interview with Pao T'ien-hsiao", Renditions, Special Issue:
1. Kang Liang yanyi

Ah Ying makes reference to this work, published in lithograph form in 1899 in four volumes, with no author ascribed.\textsuperscript{31} A similarly titled work dating from 1909, entitled \textit{Zhuona Kang Liang er ni yanyi} [The arrest of the two traitors Kang and Liang], is described in the comprehensive summary of late-Qing fiction, and is probably the same work.\textsuperscript{32} The identity of its author, "Gu run ye dao ren" 古润野道人 [The wild monk from old Jinjiang\textsuperscript{33}], is not known, and it has forty chapters in four volumes, with six illustrations. The book's title in its table of contents and the running head has the word "illustrated" [\textit{xiuxiang} 绣像] added to the front of it [\textit{Xiuxiang zhuona Kang Liang er ni yanyi}].\textsuperscript{34}

A third work, \textit{Xiuxiang Kang Liang yanyi} [The illustrated adventures of Kang and Liang], again apparently the same work, is the only version I have been fortunate enough to sight. It has four volumes, forty chapters, six illustrations, and a cover page which describes the book as a block-printed copy, and advertises its contents, "The new book on Kang and Liang" [\textit{Kang Liang xin shu}]. Its date, 1908, and its author, "Zi Ming" 子名, are different from either of the above versions, but its contents and its chapter titles are the same as the above version by the author "Gu run ye dao ren", leading to the conclusion that all these versions are the same book.\textsuperscript{35} What all this seems to suggest is that the book was circulated widely and reissued from time to time by different people. Whether this is an indication of its popularity, or simply a measure of contemporary publishers' unwillingness to deal with it, is not possible at this stage to say.

This book begins with a chapter praising the good management of the

\textit{Middlebrow Fiction}, p.243, for the Sherlock Holmes.
\textsuperscript{31} Ah Ying, \textit{Wan Qing xiaoshuo shi}, p.128.
\textsuperscript{32} See \textit{tiyao}, p.822, story summary on p.823. Tongwen Shuju, Shanghai, 1909, with an additional title, \textit{Weixin xiaoshuo Kang Youwei}, as well as the original title with the word “illustrated” added: \textit{Xiuxiang zhuona Kang Liang er ni yanyi}.
\textsuperscript{33} This translation of the meaning of the author’s pen-name is a guess. Runzhou is an old name for Jinjiang, in Jiangsu province.
\textsuperscript{34} See \textit{tiyao}, pp.822-4. The publisher is given as the Shanghai Tongwen Shuju.
\textsuperscript{35} Many thanks for help from (in order of appearance) the H-Net list for Asian History and Culture, H-Asia; Dr Huang K'o-wu, from the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taipei, who read my listed request and passed it on; Prof. Huang Chang-chien, of the Academia Sinica’s Institute of Modern History, who passed it on again and drew my attention to his most recent work; and Dr Lau Nap-yin, the Librarian at the Institute of History and Philology’s Fu Ssu-nien
dynasty: "Never has there been a dynasty so good at establishing laws"; "never has there been such a benevolent dynasty as this, nor one so good at government"; and examining the reasons for the recent problems, notably the military defeat by Japan in 1895. There have been virtuous officials, such as Hu Linyi, Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang and Shen Baozhen, but also some who have flaunted the law and escaped its reach. The author suggests that some of these unsavoury people have actually come from various constellations in the sky, and have been born here in the world in assumed guise. The author gives some examples of visitors from various constellations, who made their visits to the world over the course of several dynasties. The most recent two cases, from the Fox and Rat constellations, are (as their names indicate) particularly treacherous and cunning, and skilled at deceiving people.

These fox and rat spirits of course turn out to be Kang and Liang, respectively, who come down to earth from the heavens, full of a desire to "enjoy the wealth and rank of mortal life", and to stir up trouble in the world. The rat spirit (Liang) is described as fantastically talented in making doors open for himself, by whatever means, and the fox is similarly gifted. The rat, however, is clearly dependent on the fox, and somewhat nervous about the planned adventures on earth. He agrees to leave his home in the stars, but only if the fox agrees that when they get to the world, they will stick together, in wealth or in poverty, whatever the circumstances. The fox agrees. According to the rat's preference, they then choose to be born in Guangdong province, second only to England for its wealth and power. The decisive factor is that China has more culture, so they decide to go there, and travel overseas later. They have themselves born into the Kang and Liang families, both of which are expecting babies at the time. Just before they separate, the future Liang reminds the future Kang of their plans to get back together, and begs him not to forget. Kang reassures him: "What sort of talk is that? We
came down here together, and we'll stay together through thick and thin."\(^{40}\)

The fox becomes Kang Zhi 康直, the newest member of the Kang family. He is described as abundantly talented but morally adrift. He alienates members of the local gentry by his uncontrolled and spiteful behaviour, and engages in a fraudulent legal case in which he blackmails the object of his spite. The two men's examination trials and successes are described. Liang re-enters the story under his own name,\(^{41}\) sitting for the same examination as Kang. Liang and Kang meet in human form for the first time as they listen for the results: Kang comes fifth, Liang sixth.\(^{42}\) They become known as the literary prodigies of their respective counties.\(^{13}\)

Kang wastes no time after this, becoming involved in scandal within a page of acquiring his fame as a young scholar. Liang helps out as requested, by writing a memorial with his fellow students, complaining about the object of Kang's spite, a monk at the Baozhu Temple The story relates that the local gentry manage to have Kang stripped of his first degree, because of his behaviour in this case.\(^{44}\) Kang's father dies from shame brought on by his son's scandal: Kang's scrupulous adherence to the forms of mourning after his father dies is described, as well as his brother's discomfort with the funeral clothes he has to wear, and his minor deviations from the proper forms.\(^{45}\)

Kang, in disgrace, is now left with only Liang Qichao as his close companion, who "colludes with him in everything, no matter what".\(^{46}\) Kang changes his name from Kang Zhi to Kang Youwei to escape the examiners' attention, and succeeds in getting the degree on his next try. Kang finally has to overcome the determined opposition of the metropolitan examiners. In this he is less successful. Because of his presumption in having a sign pasted up at the door

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\(^{40}\) Kang Liang, ch.2, pp.6-7.

\(^{41}\) Kang is the only character from real life whose name is not given here in its real form from the start.

\(^{42}\) Kang Liang, ch.2, p.10.

\(^{43}\) Kang is correctly described as being from Nanhai, but Liang is erroneously given Panyu as his native place. Kang Liang, ch.2, p.11.

\(^{44}\) Kang Liang, ch.4, p.20.

\(^{45}\) Kang Liang, ch.5, p.27. Kang was only nine when his father died, but when his grandfather died he did indeed follow to the letter the prescribed rituals, and ate no meat for a year, wore funeral clothes, etc., for which he claims he was mocked by many people. See Lo, p.32.

\(^{46}\) Kang Liang, ch.7, p.27.
of his lodgings, reading "Residence of Kang, new Number One Scholar in the current examinations", anticipating the examination results, he is only given a degree of the third ranking, and is allocated an undesirable position in the Board of Works. This is not to his liking, so he takes leave, claiming to be going home to tend to family graves, but goes instead to Shanghai. Here he cultivates the friendship of important foreigners, advocates Western learning and belittles the court. For this he wins renown among foreigners as a modern genius.⁴⁷ He returns home, goes back to his pursuit of vexatious legal cases and other trouble-making, and in one incident hounds someone to death. This is too much for the local gentry who bring a law suit against him, and finally Kang is forced to flee overseas.⁴⁸

Liang's role in all this is as Kang's advisor and facilitator. He helps Kang out in his frequent disputes, and never finds fault with Kang's increasingly "arrogant and stubborn" behaviour.⁴⁹ Liang is not an instigator, though this does not mean that he is any the less Kang's accomplice in crime. He manages, for example, to profit on the side in one of Kang's devious activities, taking (or else being given) his own substantial cut from a sum of money which had been intended for the father of a murder victim.⁵⁰

Kang spends four years travelling in England, America, Singapore and Japan, and the gentry in Nanhai have no alternative but to drop their case against him. Once matters have settled down, Kang returns, and Liang urges him to come back to the capital, to avoid trouble. Kang and Liang discuss their plans to win influence and power, and Kang proposes that Liang should be his assistant, especially in matters of communication, both domestic and foreign. Liang is "overcome with happiness" to hear this.⁵¹

Kang's activities in the capital form the major body of the narrative. He chases down fellow provincials in high places, with mixed results. Some refuse to see him, others are impressed with his learning, his knowledge of the West and his suggestions for reform, and help him in his endeavours to make

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⁴⁷ Kang Liang, ch.7, pp.34-5.
⁴⁸ Kang Liang, ch.10, p.51.
⁴⁹ Kang Liang, ch.7, p.35.
⁵⁰ Kang Liang, ch.10, p.50.
himself heard by the Emperor. He continues to conspire to harm those who stand in his way, and advocates numerous suggestions for reform. Liang is proposed to the Emperor as the head of a translation bureau, and is approved. Finally, Kang's suggestion that religious institutions be turned into modern schools so enrages the monks that the matter comes to the attention of the founding fathers of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, who form a tripartite committee (see illustration 4), hold a conference and determine that "If we wait for their criminal deeds to be realized, the extinction of the dynasty will be inevitable". Meanwhile, the last days of the "hundred days" of reform are described. Kang's brother, and those officials who had had the misfortune to listen to Kang and help his program are brought to justice. The author seems to join in the widespread sympathy among the official class for the six men who are convicted of treason, largely on the evidence found in Kang's papers, carelessly left behind in his house. These include a membership list for the Baohuang Hui, and papers in Kang's handwriting, in which he says that the organization aimed "to protect China, not to protect the Qing dynasty", and, the most damning part of the case against Tan Sitong, names him as having been elected to be the "president" of a post-Qing government. The author takes the six men from their cells, where two of them have penned poems on the wall, to the execution ground at Caishikou and describes the demeanour of each – Tan Sitong and Kang Guangren remorseful; Liu Guangdi weeping; Lin Xu looking up to the sky with a cold smile – as they pass through the large crowd which has gathered to watch. "Every one of the onlookers on both sides of the street, in their conversations with each other, blamed Kang for implicating these sons

51 Kang Liang, ch.10, p.55.
52 Kang Liang, ch.19, p.44.
53 The Buddha, (Xitian fuguo shizu) Rulai fo西天佛国始祖如来佛; the Daoist "Primordial Heavenly Worthy", (Sanqing daojiao) Yuanshi tianzun元始天尊; and Confucius, Wanshi shi biaodao the Daoist "Primordial Heavenly Worthy", (Sanqing daojiao) Yuanshi tianzun 三清道教元始天尊; and Confucius, Wanshi shi biaodao da cheng zhi sheng 完事师表大成至圣, here usually called Zhi sheng xian shi 至圣先师. See Noguchi Tetsuro et al., Dōkyō jiten [Dictionary of Daoism], Heika Shuppansha, Tokyo, 1994.
54 Kang Liang, ch.26, p.31: "Dai qi zui'e guan sheng, bu nan yi chao miejue" 追其罪恶贯盈,不难一朝灭绝.
55 Bo li zi [天德] (bolizi [tiande]), a transliteration of the English, see Kang Liang, ch.34, pp.20-21.
56 Lin Xu's has been the focus of scholarly argument concerning whether it actually represented the text of Tan Sitong's real "prison-wall" poem more accurately than the version made public by Liang Qichao. See next chapter.
4. The heavenly committee: from left, Rulai fo, Yuanshi tianzun and Zhi sheng xian shi. ("Zi Ming", Xiuxiang Kang Liang yanyi, frontispiece.)
and grandsons of officials in his rebellion."

Kang's family escapes before the law arrives, but Liang's family are all interrogated. They all profess not to have known that Liang had been plotting with Kang, and are shocked to discover that he had been working against the country rather than for it. Liang gets a telegram from Kang warning him of danger, and the two escape, evading the law with the help of foreigners. This section, in which Kang and Liang evade capture and get out of China, is so densely detailed with particulars about dates and means of transport that the reader might suspect the author to have been a member of the official search party.

Once the two men are beyond the borders, the job of bringing them to justice becomes a matter for the forces of the supernatural. The tripartite committee in a moment of excessive tolerance had postponed arresting Kang, thinking that his crimes had not quite reached the required degree of treachery. The Daoist representative Tianzun reassures the others that although the foreign religious patriarchs (the English Yesu, the French Tianzhu and the American Jidu) hold different beliefs from their own, they do respect authority. He thinks they might be able to find common ground in stopping the criminals (see illustration 5, showing Kang and Liang with a foreign religious patriarch). At this point they somewhat tardily send their celestial emissaries to Hong Kong to arrest Kang, but he has already left for London. Liang has already made good his escape, and is no longer pursued, as attention focuses on the ringleader Kang. Kang is granted refuge in England, meets the king, intrigues with the two to three thousand members of the overseas Chinese community, and quickly wins them to the cause of reform. "Everyone wanted to join the [Baohuang] organization." In a final twist, the two emissaries, each riding on a cloud, make their way towards

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57 Kang Liang, ch.35, p.25.
58 Kang Liang, ch.34, p.16.
59 See, for example, Kang Liang, ch.36, p.31, "zui'e shang wei man ying" 他罪恶尚未满盈.
60 Yesu 耶稣 and Jidu 基督 are both transliterations of Jesus; Tianzhu 天主 is the Catholic God. Yesu is, rather confusingly, a Protestant Jesus, but also appears in Yesu Hui 耶稣会, the Jesuits. Jidu is the Jesus Christ of an overarching Christianity.
61 Kang Liang, ch.36, p.33.
5. Liang Qichao, a foreign religious patriarch, and Kang Youwei.
("Zi Ming", Xiuxiang Kang Liang yanyi, frontispiece.)
England, but are met by two yellow-haired, blue-eyed foreigners who refuse them permission to land. These two, who reveal themselves to be Solomon and Plato, thus thwart the attempt to arrest the wrongdoers. And here the story ends, with evil still at large.

The last lines of chapter 40 lay out the planned action for following chapters of the story, in which Kang, having escaped to America, is finally caught in an ambush by the combined armies of the three patriarchs in an encounter between the combined spiritual forces of East and West. Ah Ying reports that there were said to be two more parts to the story, but they were apparently never completed. The story is a peculiar mix of the real and the supernatural. The supernatural begins and ends the story, and what happens in between is a version of the actual events in Kang Youwei's and Liang Qichao's lives, if a not very accurate one, in which the supernatural is largely forgotten. Ah Ying, who enjoys the story's supernatural wrapping but finds the portrayal of Kang particularly unsuccessful, says: "This is a very backward (luohou 落后) book, unworthy of praise."\(^{63}\) He puts the work in a different and inferior category to the works of Li Boyuan or Huang Xiaopei, and thinks it was written for commercial reasons, as a money earner, rather than as an attack motivated by political or serious satirical reasons. This judgement, though, underestimates the book's value. Much of the content appears to be a somewhat faithful attempt to present events as they occurred. The people involved in the reform movement in 1898 are given their real names, and there is a degree of care shown to present the important details of each incident, so as to be able to apportion sympathy, responsibility or blame. From the point of view of its significance in explaining the popular reaction to the reform activities of Kang and Liang, one can see that the supernatural is brought in both to help explain the extraordinary behaviour of Kang and to attempt to deliver the punishments which the behaviour of the two men seems to require. By the end, they are still at large, and the combined power of the Chinese court and traditional religious institutions has been revealed as no match for the foreigners. What else indeed can explain the success of Kang and Liang in

\(^{63}\) Ah Ying, *Wan Qing xiaoshuo shi*, p.128.
avoiding the consequences of their wrongdoing, but their being not men but animal spirits? Their ability in this story to leap beyond the reach of the other-worldly powers of the Chinese pantheon is a theatrical touch which indicates how far beyond the pale the reformers had gone.

The character of Kang leads the way in all this flouting of respectable convention. Liang, though, is inevitably and inextricably a part of Kang's operation. In language which recalls the Qing court's arrest decrees of 1898 (as described in Levenson), the author paints a portrait of Liang as Kang's "devoted follower and fellow-conspirator", with the same use of the term "langbei" 狼狈, an animal image connoting collusion.\footnote{Levenson, pp.32-3. He translates the term langbei as "helplessly dependent", and goes further to note that langbei is "a little animal with short legs, riding on the back of a wolf" (his reference is from Mathews' dictionary).}

Liang is depicted as unable to survive independently: both in his rat spirit form and as a man in the world, he knows that he relies on Kang and needs to go along with whatever Kang does. The two men are typically incorporated in the phrase "Kang Liang er ni" 康梁二逆 [the two traitors Kang and Liang], even though it is clearly Kang's misdeeds which are the main focus. Liang, no innocent after all, a rat spirit and a happy conspirator, tries to moderate the excesses of Kang's need to make trouble but only for Kang's own safety, and not from any concern to spare others from the consequences of Kang's trickery. The interests of both men are shown to be entirely selfish and un-Chinese; in being beyond the reach of all the combined power of traditional Chinese standards, they are on a level with the foreigners who protect them.

\section*{2. Wenming xiaoshi}

Li Boyuan's work of only a few years later includes a very different kind of satirical attack on the figures of Kang and Liang. The first chapters of this lengthy serial appeared in Shanghai in 1903, in Li's fiction journal, while Liang Qichao was writing the later chapters of the "Xinmin shuo", and himself editing Xin xiaoshuo, in Japan.\footnote{Li Boyuan, Wenming xiaoshi; trans. by Douglas Lancashire as Modern Times: A Brief History of Enlightenment; quotes in the text are from this translation. Wenming xiaoshi's sixty chapters appeared in instalments in Xiuxiang xiaoshuo [Illustrated Fiction], a Shanghai journal edited by Li himself, from the first issue in 1903 until issue no.56, 1905. Republished in 1906 in}
Liang in the characters of An Shaoshan and Yan Yihui. The two are minor figures in the story, who are nonetheless given plenty of space in which to display the particularities of their character. The first to appear is An Shaoshan, easily recognizable as Kang Youwei from many of the references to his behaviour; in case there are any doubts in the reader's mind, his birthplace is given as Nanhai district in Guangdong. Kang/An is first introduced to the reader with a story about his Reform Society.

At first he told no one what the aims of the Society were, simply asking people to go to such and such an office of the Society to exchange views. When people turned up, he asked for the names of those he did not recognize and then took a brush and recorded their names one by one. People took no notice of this, but on the next day, he copied out each of the names of those who were present, and sent the list to the offices of the Xuanan Daily. The paper published it, stating that these were members of the Reform Society. Although the people concerned took An Shaoshan to task over what he had done, there was little they could do about it.

The author goes on: "His Society grew daily, as did his reputation." The reader is led to infer that his reputation is, similarly, built on fraudulent grounds. An is soon in trouble for his political activities. His political party is said to be "designed to further his own interests", and moreover its "perverted views lead people astray". The conservatives demand his impeachment, and the Emperor agrees; fortunately, he has a friend in government who warns him in time of the danger to his life. "He concluded that: 'Of all the thirty-six stratagems, flight is the best.'" An, like Kang in real life, takes a train to Tianjin, and from there sails to Shanghai and on to Japan. Here, "he rushes about like a homeless dog", and then leaves for Hong Kong. Li's dislike of the character of An is such that his satire, always tending to the black but usually


Modern Times, p.397. Kang recalled in his autobiography the opening of the Baoguo Hui at the Guangdong Provincial Club. "... many wept when they heard me speak. Not since the Ming period when Hsi..i Hsieh (1503-83) lectured at the Ling-chi Hall had there been so large a gathering." A footnote lists some of the 186 men who signed, as listed in the Guowen luo. Among them are the unfortunate Liu Guangdi and Yang Rui, who were among the six executed in 1898 for their support of Kang. See Lo Jung-pang, pp.89-90; fn 47, p.159.
delivered with a light touch, becomes rather blunt. After An flees China, Li makes the comment:

Now that he had committed a crime against the state and fled abroad, a number of ill-educated individuals gathered about him, saying that he was a man of supreme courage. He now began to trade on his reputation and hoarded much wealth.\footnote{Modern Times, p.398.}

Chapter 46 brings An into the story in person, when he receives a visit at his house in Hong Kong from Lao Hangjie, a young lawyer with a recent job offer to advise the Governor of Anhui. The first line of the chapter's typical paired-line title reads: "A visit to a patriot is like an excursion into the darkness of hell."\footnote{Modern Times, p.399.} Mr Lao's admiration of An is not shared by the author, who intersperses mockery of An's self-importance throughout the narrative, and relishes each damaging incident that he is able to relate. Mr An lives in a house guarded by a trained boxer\footnote{Lo Jung-pang notes that the Hong Kong governor in fact provided a guard of 20 Sikh police to protect Kang after an apparent succession of Qing attempts on his life; see pp.183, 263.} against the possibility of assassination: "Though I think little of my own death, I'm the only one who understands the concerns of the Emperor as well as those of the general public: who will be able to shoulder this responsibility if I die? The thought of this makes me take the question of my death seriously." An Shaoshan seems to be suffering from a variety of psychological delusions.\footnote{Kang may in fact have been the target of assassination attempts by the Qing court, as may Liang (see Chapter 1).} To get past the boxer, Mr Lao needs a password, "Nan mo tu" 難末土, an English transliteration intended to remind visitors of An's position in his family as "number two", the second son, like that earlier sage, Confucius.\footnote{This is reminiscent of Kang's own account of his naming two caves in Guangxi, one "Kang yan" 康岩 [translated as "Kang's grotto"], the other "Su dong" 素洞 [Plain cave], linking Kang to Confucius, the uncrowned king or "Suxiang" 素王. (Kang took Changsu 長素 as one of his assumed names [hao].) "I had the names carved on the rocks", he says. Lo, p.62.} This piece of outrageous ridicule is quickly followed by another dig, concerning An's unhappiness upon his discovery that a famous relative who had won fame in the capital was no more than a well-
known eunuch. An Shaoshan is also physically repulsive. When he shakes hands with his guest, his long curled and cultivated fingernails dig into Lao's flesh. Li has the character of An mouthing fatuous platitudes in a send-up of the traditional literatus, and shows him seeing off his guest with contrived foreign-inspired jargon: "Strive hard for the future, and take care of yourself for the sake of the nation!"

The character used to portray Liang Qichao is treated with no more respect, though slightly less unkindly. Li Boyuan has chosen a name which identifies him as Liang at the same time as mocking him and Kang Youwei in their teacher/student relationship. His fictitious name, Yan Yihui 颜轶回, refers to names which Kang Youwei is said to have given to his two most able students. According to Feng Ziyu's memoirs, Kang gave Chen Qianqiu the name Chaohui [超回], and Liang Qichao the name Yici [轶赐], meaning superior to Confucius's leading disciples (Yan 颜) Hui and (Duanmu) Ci. The character Yan's name mixes these two and thus means "superior to Yan Hui". This story discredits Kang by making reference to his often-mentioned desire to be seen as a sage, and at the same time mocks Liang for being a part of this nonsense. Here the disciple is described as a smoother and more plausible version of the master. Mr Lao meets him immediately after he has paid his call on An Shaoshan. Yan Yihui has left him a foreign-style visiting card, and Lao pays him a visit at his hotel, the Great Unity (Datang), its name a reference to Kang's Datong shu, which Liang was involved with as a young student.

In an aside to the reader, the author explains that Yan is An's leading disciple:

Since An Shaoshan had taught him everything himself, it was natural that he did things in much the same way. But there was one important

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72 Modern Times, pp.399-400.
73 See Li Guojun, Liang Qichao zhushu xinian, p.23, in his note on Liang's names. The practice of turning characters' names into puzzles for the reader is quite widely indulged in, among the works which are considered here: see Da ma pian, Xu Nichai hua. Li Boyuan is known to have liked doing this – see tiyao, p.873. (tiyao misprints the last character "hui" in Yan's name as "tian" 翼).
difference between the two men: although An Shanshan was versed in the ways of the world, there were some areas in which he behaved like a pedant. Yan Yihui, on the other hand, was perceptive and skilful in dealing with men or affairs, and was particularly expert in getting his hands on money.\(^7\)

Li says that Yan, a critic of the traditional examination system and an advocate of modern schools, had nonetheless sat for the examinations in Peking. When his motives were questioned, he had said: "Do you think I've come [to the capital] to win fame for myself?", though he was unable to provide a satisfactory alternative explanation. Li Boyuan tells another rather peculiar story about Yan, in which he was discovered by a visiting friend to have locked himself in his room, but was spied through the window practising his calligraphy. When the visitor knocked on the window and said "You're working awfully hard, Mr Yan!", Yan scuttled off to bed and started to snore. "There was no way of knowing whether he was really asleep or just pretending." This enraged his friend, who cut off his relations with Yan. The author's cryptic comment following these two stories is: "From the two events one can gain some impression of the man." Presumably he means that Yan works too hard to impress, without much success.

Yan has been very active among the overseas Chinese student population in New York (as Liang was in Yokohama), to whom he had given many books, some of his own, and some only "copied from other people's writings and passed off as his own." These works he had had collected and published under his pen-name, "The New Sage, Yan". Unfortunately, one of the works is recognized by its real author, whose complaint and threat of making the plagiarism public Yan manages to avert by paying him 500 ounces of silver. (This story in its main gist, if not necessarily in its details, recalls Feng Ziyou's accusations against Liang in an incident concerning plagiarism by Liang, which took place in 1901, according to Feng, several years before this chapter appeared.\(^7\))

\(^{74}\) Modern Times, p.401.

\(^{75}\) Modern Times, p.402. Feng Ziyou claims that Chinese students in Japan were familiar with and annoyed by Liang's indulgence in this vice. According to Feng, Liang directly plagiarized a piece of Tokutomichi Sohō's entitled "Inspiration", in his own piece "Yinshipilichun" [an attempt at phonetic rendering of the English word], in the Qingyihao [nos. 96-100, as part
Yan's relationship with Mr Lao is described as being openly friendly, though each speaks ill of the other behind his back. "But this was normal practice among members of the reform party ..." Yan, known for the depth of his Chinese learning, and Lao, whose specialty is Western learning, have a mutual respect for each other's talents. When Lao informs Yan of a job offer he has had to advise the Governor of Anhui, Yan rejoices in a very unpleasant way at the opportunity this will give him to expand his influence over students: "... the institutes along the Yangtze, as well as those that are overseas, will automatically fall into my hands", he says. Yan subsequently launches into an analysis of China's problems and advises Mr Lao on how he should himself proceed in advising the government. He concedes that it may not work, but adds:

"... Even if this should prove useless, you will at least establish a name for yourself as a firm negotiator, and not a mere yes-man. This is the humble opinion your friend and junior would like to offer you, and you must give heed to it."

Again, Li Boyuan suggests that Yan's predominant interest is in self-advancement. Yan continues:

"For example, in the year that the Boxers made trouble in Peking and laid siege to the foreign legations, if China had had someone who knew what to do, he would have advised the legations to leave the Capital within twenty-four hours and warned them that if they stayed longer than that, China would not be able to protect them. They would then have had no ground for complaint. There is no international law according to which legations can bring their own troops in. That being the case, we are entitled to treat them as enemies of the Ziyou shu], a month after the appearance of the original in Tokutomi's Kokumin shim bun [National people's news]. Two months later, the Shanghai Dalu zazhi [Mainland magazine], which was run by former students in Japan (Ji Yuancheng, Shen Xiangyun and Qin Lishan, the latter an ex-student of Liang's and a survivor of the 1900 uprising), carried the two articles together to expose Liang's plagiarism. Feng claims that Liang copied not only the content but also Tokutomi's style, and profited from the latter's deep familiarity with Chinese literature. "Riben Defu Sufeng yu Liang Qichao" [The Japanese Tokutomi Soho and Liang Qichao], in Gemia yishi, pp.269-71.

Modern Times, p.403.

Modern Times, p.404.
rather than diplomats. The pity of it is that in a country the size of China no one realized this. If you, my friend, had been in China at the time in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Zongli Yamen, things would never have got as bad as they did."

Mr Lao is persuaded by Yan's cunning self-depiction (not very well disguised as flattery of Lao) as the only man who understands how to save China. "You have too high an opinion of me. ... Only a person like you, Mister Yan, is truly talented" he says. Having begun his description of Yan by remarking on how he "was particularly expert in getting his hands on money" (as noted above), Li shows him to be expert, too, in spending it. Yan maintains his own carriage, and enjoys the good life, eating at a foreign restaurant with Lao where he treats himself to a vast array of foreign alcoholic drinks: "including whisky, brandy, champagne, vermouth, chartreuse and cocktails". Li draws a final picture of him as he arrives at the port to make his farewell to Mr Lao, who sees his friend arrive:

... in Western clothes ... A fresh flower was pinned to his lapel, and in his hand he held a walking stick, inlaid with gold. He wore an exceedingly elegant pair of leather shoes on his feet.

Mr Yan waves good-bye with his handkerchief as the boat leaves (see illustration 6). Although Liang preferred to be known as a simple scholar used to hardship, this picture of his indulgence in spending on himself recalls the claims of Wang Zhao concerning Liang's relatively secure financial position, as well as the generous funding which Liang and his business enterprises received from the Baohuang Hui.

Liang's written style is notable for the praise it has attracted, but Li Boyuan is apparently immune to its charms, and complains about the
6. "Seeing off a traveller, everyone waves white handkerchiefs." Yan Yihui (Liang Qichao, one of the men in coat and trousers) farewells Mr Lao. (Li Boyuan, Wenming xiaoshi, ch.46, in Xiuxiang xiaoshuo, no.42, opp. p.232.)
monotonous rhythm of his writing, which he caricatures with a nonsensical "Chu chu chu! Chu chu chu!".\textsuperscript{82} It is true that Liang's writing features the use of repetition to make a point. Another trick typical of Liang's style is to draw an example on and on to its most extreme.\textsuperscript{83} Li records a satirical copy of Yan's (Liang's) style current at the time, which cannot help but recall some of the stirring but yet sometimes over-drawn language of Liang's essays from the period:

A cat is a four-legged animal, a dog is a four-legged animal; therefore, a cat is a dog. The lotus seed is round and not flat; the lotus seed is sweet and not salty; lotus seeds are things eaten by people and not things which eat people. Long live bananas, long live pears, long live bananas and pears!\textsuperscript{84}

In this passage Li also laughs at his attempts at poetry, and records that "Jokes about him and his writings were so numerous that no author could hope to record them all."\textsuperscript{85} Ah Ying comments admiringly on this passage, and accepts

\textsuperscript{82} For an example from Liang's translation of Byron in Xin Zhongguo weilai ji | The future of new China|, zhuanji, v.35, 89 ce, pp.43-4, where Liang uses frequent doubled characters in an attempt to translate the poem's emotions. Thus the lines "Such is the aspect of this shore; Tis Greece, but living Greece no more!" become: "Congeong yi. Yuanya yi. Hai’an zhi jingou yi. Wuwu. Ci Xila zhi shantie yi. Wuwu. Ru jin ru cha zhi Xila. Jin zai he yi.”

\textsuperscript{83} These devices can certainly become tedious, although one of his admirers (a friend of mine, now deceased) has related to me his own astonishment and delight as a youth at these features of Liang’s style. An example from the “Xinmin shuo”, on the need for autonomy, comes from “Lian ziuz” [On self-respect], 19 July and 18 Aug. 1902, pp.72-3:

If a man is not above others, then he is below. Thus, the gentleman is above the people, who are below him. The father is above the son who is below the father. The husband is above the wife who is below the husband. In a household, the master has servants, who are below the master. In a shop, the boss has workers who are below him. In a party, the party head has followers who are below him. Of China’s 400 million people, probably 1 in 100 has control of others, and 99 out of 100 are under another’s control. And these so-called people “in control” sometimes have some one else in charge of them. (E.g. a wife is under her husband’s control, her husband may be under his father’s control; the father may be under the control of the boss of the company he belongs to; senior yamen officials and those of that class who are also under the control of one or two of the kind of people who steal from the people. You cannot count the numbers involved; it is inconceivable. Like grains of sand in the Ganges; a lotus in every world, a Buddha in every lotus, a mouth in the mouth of every Buddha, a tongue in the mouth of every Buddha, it goes on like this endlessly).

\textsuperscript{84} Modern Times, p.402.

\textsuperscript{85} Modern Times, pp.401-5.
Li's skewering of Liang Qichao's literary style here as accurate, as well as cleverly done: "Who else can this be but Liang? If this style is not Liang's, can it be anyone else's? Of course, what [Li] writes is not only factual, it is also a successful artistic achievement." Of all the anti-Kang/Liang fiction, Ah Ying considers this to be the best.  

Oddly, there is in the book a later reference to Liang in which his real name is given as the author of a poem (which as far as I know is not, in fact, by Liang) intoned by a character in the book as he sits by Mochou Lake in Nanking on a hot day, fanning his perspiring face with his hat. The poem, entitled "Entering the Temperate Zone by Train in Hot and Humid Weather – An Improvisation", is as follows:

Amidst yellow sand dunes and in blazing heat,  
A hot wind sears my brain, shrivelling it up.  
Though I reside in the Crystal Bowl for three million years,  
I know I shall never experience such joy as I now have.  

Li immediately introduces another character who writes the following lines on a wall (see illustration 7):

Thoughts crowd my mind as I sit silently facing lake and sky.  
Lotus flowers bloom while willow-wands intertwine like threads of silk.  
Speak not of sharing the fate of your country,  
For you have never known the wonders of its rivers and mountains!  

The man who chanted the four lines by Liang jumps up when he reads this and exclaims, "Marvellous; just marvellous! Only someone full of national sentiment could have written such a poem." Liang had by this time already used the device of wall-poems (tibishi 题壁诗) in his own fiction, Xin Zhongguo weilai ji, where Chinese students returned from overseas indulge in writing such poems to display their patriotic worth, and are in turn delighted

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66 Ah Ying, Wan Qing xiao shuo shi, p.126.  
67 *Modern Times*, p.486. The translator notes that "Crystal Bowl" refers to China.  
to find other people's displays. (See further examples and discussion of this below.) Here, not only is Liang's poetry mocked, but his prolonged absence overseas is thrown back at him as evidence of his being unfit to be involved with his country's affairs. The harshness and foreignness of the scene which Liang's poem describes is rejected for the purity and delicacy of the more traditionally Chinese images chosen in the second poem. Li Boyuan seems to have wanted to deliver a direct insult to Liang Qichao, as if his earlier, barely disguised, satire had not been enough.

The portraits of Liang and Kang here are clearly recognizable. Of the details that make up the portraits, the satire that should resonate most effectively is obviously the most closely rooted in fact. Here, Liang's writing style, famous but not without its critics, and his erudition give him away, as do the claims of plagiarism. On the other hand, stories often repeated may take on the appearance of fact, and in Liang's case this would include his affection for the things that money can buy, and his ability to find money to afford them.

Li's book has a moral, which is a solidly Confucian one: "... I hold a rather foolish opinion: In our Classics we are told that one should delight in establishing one's virtue, one's merit, and one's teachings, and that these three things are the imperishable features of a man. Nowhere is there any mention of wealth, honour, failure or success." Li perhaps found the self-promotion of Kang Youwei as saint or sage, assisted in this enterprise by his loyal disciples including his most brilliant pupil Liang Qichao, more than a little difficult to stomach.

It should be said here that despite the apparently neat fit between the satire in this book and the characters portrayed, it would probably be a mistake to imagine that Li was attempting an accurate depiction of the real Kang and Liang. As his translator says elsewhere, Li was obviously using

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89 One is reminded of Wang Zhao's claims that Liang came to Japan with much more money than he made known; and of Liang's ability to siphon off money from Kang to finance his own concerns.

90 Modern Times, p.521.
characters from real life, but he drew from their lives without particular regard for the facts: bits of one actual person may find their way into more than one character in his book, and conversely one character may be a composite of several real people. According to Lancashire, Kang Youwei, for example, can be identified not only in the character of An Shaoshan, but also in chapter 41, in Kang Yifang. It is also worth mentioning that of all the different political alternatives being explored by Chinese at the time, Li in fact seems to have preferred the moderate reform position of people like Kang and Liang. In this book, however, as in the others described here, the public images of the two men were irresistible material for the professional fiction writer.

3. Chiren shuo meng ji

Chiren shuo meng ji [A dream told by an idiot] was published in Xiuxiang xiaoshuo in 1904-5, starting and finishing within the life span of Wenming xiaoshi, which naturally had top billing since it was the work of the publisher Li Boyuan. The author's name, Lü Sheng 旅生, is a pen-name, to which no real identity has been traced. The story begins before the reform movement of the late 1890s and continues up to the events of 1900.

Both Kang and Liang appear as central characters, recognizable from such details as their activities in Peking, the Kang character's declarations regarding the falsification of the Confucian classics, and their escape to Japan. There are, however, large segments of the story where the threads connecting the two characters to their real-life identities get fairly thin. Kang is the character Ning Sunmou 宁孙谋 (his zi, his given name is Youshou 有守), and Liang is Wei Danran 魏淡然 (his zi; his given name is Yanqun 儒群).

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91 Douglas Lancashire, Li Po-yuan, p.121.
92 Xiuxiang xiaoshuo, nos. 19-30, 35-42, 47-54, thirty chapters. See Ah Ying, Wan Qing xiaoshuo shi, pp.50-53; tianao, pp.904-5, for summary. Ah Ying, Wan Qing wenyi baokan shulu, Gudian Wenxue Chubanshe, Shanghai, 1958, pp.18-19.
93 He (I assume the author to be a man) is also a co-author with Xi Qiu of a short piece of poetic drama in sixteen acts, “Weixin meng” [A dream of reform], carried by the same journal and well-received by readers. See Ah Ying, Wan Qing wenxue congshao: chuangzi zaijiao juan, xia ce [Collected literature of the late Qing: short stories and plays, part 2].
Liang's name, meaning "weakly", "indifferently" or "insipidly", is perhaps an indication that he is a paler, less vividly-drawn version of his close friend Ning. Sun Yat-sen also has a role in this work, as the character Li Langfu 黎浪夫. Kang is only senior to Liang by a year, although he takes the lead in most things; the details of their marriages and much more besides are totally fabricated. As will be seen, this work appears in some of its themes to refer to Liang's fictional work, and even to respectfully acknowledge it.

Ning and Wei are students, close friends of the novel's main character Jia Xixian. Wishing to find an alternative to being taught by foreign missionaries, they take the boat down-river to Shanghai. In Zhenjiang, Ning and Wei become separated from Jia, and their adventures diverge from his. Jia goes on to survive a series of events in Shanghai and Guangdong, and leaves for Japan where he is made the subject of events which in real life attached to Sun Yat-sen (his detention and escape from the Chinese embassy in London in 1896).

At this stage in the story there is another example of the popular theme of heroic poetry written on a wall. In this case, as before, and apparently in all examples from this period, the poet's motivation is to establish in a few preferably graceful lines his lofty aspirations, his acute sense of the nation's peril and his desire to devote his energy to the common good. Ning and Wei find the poem on the wall of a wine shop where they have gone after their unsuccessful search for their friend Jia. It is written in "grass" (cursive) script, in old-style verse with seven characters to a line, and begins:

Here again, making out the author's presumed intention in each name is an intriguing game for readers. Ning Sunmou is perhaps intended as a reading of "ning zuinnou" [宁钻谋 "prefer to curry favour"]; Wei Danran is odd because the danran itself already passes comment on the character; his given name Yanqun may refer to Liang's frequent "speaking [言 yan] of the collectivity". Sun's name is possibly intended to be a close homonym for "wanderer" [流浪]. "Wei" and "Jia" are favourite surnames in the satirical literature from this era, both implying "false". See tyyao, p.873, for a reading of Li Boyuan's names for characters in Huodiyan, such as Xing Guoming (xin guomin) and Wang Bodan (wangbidan).

Jia represents the author, according to Ah Ying. His given name means "hoping for immortality". Ah Ying, Wan Qing xiaoshuo shi, p.50.
Mt Jin and Mt Jiao are two spots of green. The moon drops into the heart of the river, and the flood dragon wakes. In the nine regions of China, the sacred turtles do not lift their heads. The sky falls, the earth caves in, the ocean covers everything. ...

The author's pen-name is given at the end, "Zuixia" 醉侠, "Drunken Swordsman". Wei (Liang), who sees it first, finds himself "dancing with joy", and calls Ning over to see. The author is clearly a man of extraordinarily high aspirations. The two men Ning and Wei not only succeed in finding this hero, but end up in his house marrying his two sisters, the reward for Ning’s rescue of one sister who had fallen into a pool of water. Before long, Ning and Wei have left their wives to go to the capital to sit the exams. On the way, they meet some of Ning’s friends from Guangdong. Ning draws up a joint memorial for all to sign their names to, in the manner of the real-life "Gongju shangshu" memorial of 1895. Ning comes fifth in the exams; Wei (like Liang) does not pass. Ning, however, persuades Wei and another friend to remain in the capital to work for reform. The events of the 1898 reform period follow. Ning is busy sending memorials, to reform all and sundry; Wei is granted imperial permission to run a translation bureau, and helps Ning with writing. The jealousy of the conservatives puts an end to all this. Ning is forewarned of impending disaster: he has been accused of rebellion. When Ning hears this, he knows this startling news was "no trivial matter; he stood up, and rode his horse out of the city."

Once again, the escape route is the train to Tianjin, an arrangement made earlier in anticipation that trouble was looming. Ning finds Wei and their associate Lifu in the same train carriage: all

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96 Mountains north-east and north-west of the town of Zhenjiang.
97 Jiuzhou, i.e. China, specifically the central part of the country around the Yangzi and the Yellow River.
98 Chiren shuomeng ji (hereafter Chiren), in Xiuxian xiaoshuo, no.21, ch.3, p.1. The sacred turtles, nodai, "were commanded by God (Shangdi) to lift their heads and revere him; only then would the five mountains stand tall and strong" (Cihai entry, Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, Shanghai, 1979). These are perhaps turtles who are responsible for holding up the world.
100 A protest against the terms of the Shimonoseki treaty, signed by a large number of provincial graduates from south China, who had come to the capital to take the examinations. Chiren, ch.12, p.2.
102 Chiren, ch.15, p.3.
103 Chiren, ch.15, p.3.
of them are too miserable even to greet each other. When they face the risk of being detected by Chinese authorities, they are protected by the foreign captain of the boat they board in Tianjin: not speaking his language, they are unable even to express their gratitude. The illustration makes the foreign intervention and frustration of the Chinese authorities very clear, with the foreigners standing in front of the two men on the boat’s deck as it leaves, and the soldiers and officials standing powerless at the edge of the dock (see illustration 8).¹⁰⁴

There follows a moving scene where the three travellers consider what they are leaving and plan their next move. Tokyo is not safe because of the presence of the Chinese legation and its officials; Ning proposes that they disembark at Yokohama. This suits the Wei/Liang character:

Wei said: "Good idea. We can do a bit of business in Yokohama, and work out a way to make ends meet. The only thing is that we haven't got much money. I don't know what to do about that." Ning said: "Don't worry. As soon as we run into a few of our colleagues, we'll find a way." Lifu looked back at the mainland and couldn't help weeping sadly, as he said: "We've escaped the flames of hell, but our fathers and mothers, wives and sons are all implicated and will die." Ning said: "No problem there. Anyway, I think we were framed. We didn't commit any terrible crime, after all. Even if it does come to punishments, it won't extend to wives and children. And in any case, you haven't left any evidence of treason, what are you afraid of? The only thing I'm worried about is that some of our hot-blooded friends in the capital may come to a cruel end. I really feel very sad about this." Ning then lay down and began to cry.

Wei, always a very tender soul, felt even worse when he heard this. All that they faced ahead of them was depressing. ... Clouds of misery hung around him. Suddenly, Ning had an idea. "Surely everything we've done has been done with the most loyal intention of serving the nation. Now we've been slandered and have had to flee. How can a generation of illustrious names be consigned to obscurity in this way? When we get to Yokohama, I think we should first publish a newspaper, and use it to vindicate all our colleagues who've been so enthusiastic, and let those who come after us know how we've been wronged."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Chiren, ch.15, p.4.
¹⁰⁵ Chiren, ch.15, p.4.
This is just the thing for Wei, who is after all a "professional littérature". On landing in Yokohama, the three men go out looking for premises and equipment for the establishment of a newspaper. They receive assurances of support from fellow-townsmen resident in Japan. It is only at this point that the friends hear the terrible news of their colleagues' execution in Peking. Ning is overcome at the news, and although the other two are not too distressed to go out looking for printing equipment and premises to rent, he stays in his room writing poems, which he sings, accompanying himself on the qin.

Here the story picks up its narration from several chapters earlier, where this same point in the story had been reached from the viewpoint of Ning's neighbour in the next room, who hears the unknown voice singing. In this earlier chapter, Ning's song had been given in full: it is full of the agony of exile, homesickness, gloom about the conditions in the country he has left, and brooding anticipation of disaster. Both the song and the manner of its being heard echo yet another scene from Liang's Xin Zhongguo weilai ji, and in this case may perhaps have been deliberately matched. The image of China as a sleeping lion, strong yet defenceless, occurs in each work, in a poem in Liang's novel and in Ning's song. Similarly, both include the corresponding image of a ferocious awakened female animal, a dragon (龙 long) in Liang's, and a tiger (虎 hu) in Ning's. In Ning's version, the tiger actually eats the lion. Ning is overheard by a friend of Jia Xixian's, Dongfang Zhongliang, in the next room. The two meet, establish the connection, and catch up on news of their mutual friend Jia. Dongfang hears all about Ning's activities in Peking, ending

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106 "wenxue zhuanjia" 文学专家.
107 See next chapter.
108 Chiren, ch.10, p.2.
109 Chiren, ch. 10, p.2, "You shi wo xi, you hu zun. Shi hu xing xi, hu suo dun" 有狮卧兮有虎蹲。狮不醒兮虎所吞 [There is a lion sleeping, there is a crouching tiger. The lion does not wake, the tiger has swallowed it.]
110 东方仲亮. His name includes the characters for "Light in the east"; or it may be intended as a homonym for "Loyal man of the East" 东方忠亮; or the "zhongliang" may refer to his staunch character, like the central beam in a roof 中梁 (thanks to Geremie Barmé and Bill Jenner for these suggestions).
8. "Implementing new policies results in disaster for a political faction." (Lu Sheng, Chiren shuomeng ji, ch.15, Xiuxiang xiaoshuo, no.37, frontispiece)
with the awful news concerning their friends' arrest and execution. Dongfang listens approvingly until Ning tells him the end of the story, which causes his "eyes to narrow and his hair to stand on end". Ning is stunned to hear Dongfang tell him that although his story is amazing and worthy, he has been at fault. The chapter ends on this note, with Ning begging Dongfang to explain what he has done wrong.\textsuperscript{111}

Zhongliang quite bluntly criticizes Ning for having paid too much attention to matters of court and not enough to the ordinary people. Ning rejects this charge, pointing out how many of his proposals to the Emperor had the people's interest in mind. Zhongliang, however, is not persuaded, and in a speech strongly reminiscent of Liang Qichao's "Xinmin shuo" (with its stress on the \textit{qun}, the collectivity, and the need to improve "public virtue and wisdom" instead of the "private virtue and wisdom" encouraged, according to Liang, by traditional Chinese morality) he tells Ning that the people are still unable to rely on themselves or to "form a collectivity", and urges him to concentrate more on raising the level of the people's wisdom, so that they may be able to rule themselves. Zhongliang reminds Ning of the theory which says that what is done on behalf of a family is private virtue, whereas what is done for all the people is public virtue. Regrettably, Ning has been in error, has expended his energy in vain, and what is more, has caused the death of many good people. Ning, exasperated, actually acknowledges that he has been over-enthusiastic, but pleads his inability to do anything about it now, and expresses his hope to further his aims through the newspaper which Wei is to manage.\textsuperscript{112}

Liang's "Xinmin shuo" chapters on public and private virtue were published in early 1902 and late 1903 respectively. This work by Lü Sheng was serialized from the following year, and there can be no doubt that he borrowed these formulas from Liang's writing on the "renovation of the people". It is interesting that in the above scene Liang's words are borrowed

\textsuperscript{111} Chiren, ch.15, p.4.
\textsuperscript{112} Chiren, ch.16, pp.1-2.
back in an anachronistic chastisement of the figure representing Liang's own teacher. Liang's fictional persona is a junior character in the novel's cast, but the author anticipates his imminent fame and influence; the light from which appears here to be already visible on the horizon.

There follows a great deal of action involving other characters, and an intriguing series of incidents, all the author's own invention, concerning Ning and Wei's wives, Muyin and Zhuihong (both conventional names for women). Fearing an unhappy outcome from their husbands' activities in the capital, they had for some time been practising martial arts, first having unbound their feet. Hearing of their husbands' escape from Peking, they dress as men and travel to the capital intending to take their revenge on the people responsible for denouncing Ning and Wei. On the way, however, they encounter a sedan chair bearing one of their intended targets. In her attempt to kill him, Zhuihong herself is killed. Muyin survives various episodes, finds her father-in-law, and is reunited with Ning/Kang in Singapore. Ning is inspired to write an account of his wife's and sister-in-law's experiences, which he sends to be published in Wei's newspaper in Yokohama.\textsuperscript{113}

This takes the story back to Wei's progress in Yokohama. Here he had been mixing constantly with famous public figures, and in general doing very well. His Wenming bao 文明报 [Civilized news] had been answering the needs of a new generation of youth and scholars, with its "straightforward discussion" which "drew together Chinese and foreign theories".\textsuperscript{114} Naturally it was much admired and selling very well, even to the point where pirated volumes of collected back issues of the paper were being sold in China, and Wei had had to put a stop to it. The author notes that unfortunately not all the people in China who made a fuss over Wei's writing actually understood it, so that its real influence was less than the large numbers of copies being bought might suggest. Some people's level of understanding was too low.

\textsuperscript{113} Chiren, chapters 19-22.
\textsuperscript{114} Chiren, ch.22, p.2.
Thus Wei's paper might be considered to be a newspaper that sorted the sheep from the goats. Those who profited from the good in it were those with a decent level of learning; those who were poisoned by it were those who hardly ever understood it.  

Wei is preparing to write a new chapter in his serial "Xianü chuanqi" 侠女传奇 [Tales of heroic swordswomen], when Ning's manuscript arrives. He weeps uncontrollably when he realizes that his own wife has died; an editor who comes into the room says, "There he goes again, crying his eyes out, fretting about the fate of his country." The editor reads the manuscript and realizes what has happened, but tells Wei that it is the perfect thing for the next chapter of his serial. Wei cannot be persuaded, but by the early morning, when he has been weeping for half the night, he suddenly realizes that his attitude is wrong; his wife has acted nobly, while he has only treated her death as a personal tragedy. The next morning, having slept peacefully, he writes Ning's story into his serial. The author compares Wei's more skilful writing to Ning's: Ning's writing is rather blurred and obscure; Wei's is extraordinarily distinguished. Wei's version is published instead of Ning's.

This episode, which departs extensively from the real details of Liang's family life, refers no doubt to his translation and serial publication of "Jiaren qiyu" 佳人奇遇 [Strange meetings with beautiful women]. Perhaps without meaning to, it also depicts Liang's character using the manuscript without permission, and turning it into his own, an example of deliberate and unconcerned plagiarism. One might also read into this episode a characterization of Liang, or perhaps only of the fictional character of Wei, as being so much a writer above all that he manages to overlook the fact that he has made his wife's tragic death serve his writing career. Liang, after all,
might have been thought to do something similar with his biography of his
close friend Tan Sitong, on the topic of which there has been some
questioning of Liang's complete honesty in the matter (see following
chapter). 119

But notwithstanding the depiction of some normal human moral
failings on the part of Ning and Wei, throughout the story their characters,
and the real-life sources for much of their formation, can be seen to be
treated with respect. The author presents their motivation entirely within the
theme of the desire of high-minded intellectuals to work for their country.
This is a sympathetic work as far as its treatment of Kang and Liang's
political line is concerned, and actually softens the public image of the two
men, perhaps deliberately, in the face of other criticism at the time. The boat
scene shows the author devising a picture which might serve to deal with the
criticism directed at the fleeing reformers for leaving their colleagues (among
whom, of course, Kang's younger brother was included), to suffer the cost of
the court's hostility to Kang. Ning and his friends have fled still believing
that things are not as bad as they turn out to be. Kang, who is almost always
characterized, and not only in fiction, as being arrogant and beyond regret, is
given a gentler personality here, one capable of more mundane human
emotions: he weeps, he singers a sad heroic song, he is forced to admit failure.
Wei, on the other hand, who has less responsibility and less guilt to deal with,
looks to the future, and worries about practical things – whether they can find
the money to start a newspaper, where to find suitable premises. Wei is a
professional, rather than an ideologue, in this portrayal.

4. Huang Xiaopei: Da Mapian and Huanhai shengchen lu

These two works were published a few years later than most of the others
treated here. Da ma pian [The great swindler], was published in Tokyo in 1908,

119 "Tan Sitong zhuang", published in Qingyi bao, 22 Jan. 1899, as the last of his brief accounts in
"Xunan lu loshi zhuang" [Biographies of six martyrs who died for their country], ch.5 of Wuxu
zhengbian ji [An account of the 1898 reform movement]; see zhuang, v.17, 1 cc, pp.106-12. For
a translation, see Chan Sin-wai, An Exposition of Benevolence: The Jen-hsiich of T'au Ssu-t'ung,
pp.35-48.
in sixteen chapters.\footnote{Huanhai shengchen lu [Success and failure in officialdom], was published in the Hong Kong Shi bao, in 1909.}

Huang, though born in Japan, was a native of Panyu, a town only a short distance from Kang Youwei's native town of Nanhai (Foshan). He joined Sun Yat-sen's Xing Zhong Hui in 1901, became an editor for the Hong Kong Zhongguo ribao in 1903, and there engaged in attacks on the editor of the rival publication in Canton, the Linghai bao.\footnote{Huang joined the Tongmeng Hui in 1905. Huang represents an anti-Baohuang Hui and anti-constitutionalist position in his attacks on Kang and Liang in these works. His vehement opposition to Kang and the Baohuang Hui adds weight to the suspicion that local feeling and loyalties within the Guangdong expatriate population exacerbated the political divisions at the time. Feng Ziyou, for example, whose dislike of Kang and Liang also verges on the extreme, was another native of Nanhai.}

Huang's antipathy towards Kang must be noted in any discussion of Da ma pian, in which all the characters appear as themselves with their own names: it is essentially a frontal attack on the integrity of Kang. Ah Ying says: "The things said in [this book] about Kang Youwei are not completely true: from the numerous dreadful incidents that are attached to the figure of Kang Youwei, one can see the depth of Huang Xiaopei's loathing for him."\footnote{Ah Ying says: "The things said in [this book] about Kang Youwei are not completely true: from the numerous dreadful incidents that are attached to the figure of Kang Youwei, one can see the depth of Huang Xiaopei's loathing for him."} This work is considered to be fiction, but there is little that justifies such a claim for it apart from the reluctance of his readers to accept his caricatures as fact. Huang has merely narrated his own fictionalized version of the events.

\footnote{Da ma pian is also reproduced in Ah Ying, Wan Qing wenxue congchao: xiaoshuo sanjuan, shang ce, Zhonghua Shuju, Peking, 1960, pp.213-312.}

\footnote{Ah Ying says: "The things said in [this book] about Kang Youwei are not completely true: from the numerous dreadful incidents that are attached to the figure of Kang Youwei, one can see the depth of Huang Xiaopei's loathing for him."}
leading to Kang's renown in Peking, and the final escape of Kang and Liang to Japan.

Liang is a minor character and is portrayed as Kang's victim. He is a person of some learning, who because of his youthful lack of experience has been "poisoned" by Kang and has chosen to follow him; he and his fellow student Chen Qianqiu unhappily submit to Kang's naming them Chao Hui and Yi Ci, and suffer the ignominy of others laughing at them. Liang's participation in reform activities with Kang in Peking is described, as is the frequently mentioned detail of his managing the translation bureau in Shanghai, and his escape to Japan.

Much is made of Kang's delusions of grandeur, his belief in his own sagehood (he is shown here insisting that he be called simply "Kang", his greatness no longer requiring further identification; this affectation is considered by those who know of it to be preposterous), and his scheming to gain influence commensurate with his inflated ideas of his own worth. Kang is described as being powerful enough to draw into his circle many worthy people who were not aware of his unscrupulousness. Huang does not concern himself much with the motivations of these unfortunates, preferring to turn each incident so that it reflects against Kang. Tan Sitong, in particular, is portrayed as having been duped by Kang into coming to Peking, although Liang is responsible for suggesting to his teacher that Tan and Tang Caichang be invited to join them. After his arrest, Tan "lifted his head and laughed" (a characteristic expression describing Tan at this point in his life, plucked straight from his prison poem) at his cell-mates, all complaining about their fate, for relying on Kang Youwei. In Japan, Kang's lecherous behaviour inspires Inukai Ki to say that Kang has three talents, for wine, sex and wild talk. Kang's crazy talk eventually leads to his being

124 Da ma pian, pp.10-12. Note a similar theme in Wenming xiaoshuo.
125 Da ma pian, p.3.
126 Da ma pian, p.101.
127 Huang notes that Inukai is the head of the Shimpotō (Progress Party) and the former minister for education, p.106. He became prime minister in the 1930s.
128 Da ma pian, p.110.
requested to leave Japan after failing to produce, on request, a secret letter
from the Emperor which he had boasted of carrying with him in his clothing
as he escaped from Peking.

Another of Huang's works which touches on the history of Kang
Youwei and Liang Qichao is *Huanhai shengchen lu* [Success and failure in
officialdom]. Kang and Liang appear in this book as Kang Wuwei 康无为
[his given name here means "inaction", but also, in contrast to Youwei,
"unpromising"] and Liang Xiyu 梁希誉 [hoping for fame]. The book
actually centres on Yuan Shikai; Kang and Liang naturally appear in his
story during the events of 1898. The two are shown plotting with the
Emperor, as indeed everyone plots with everyone else, and finally when the
reform movement fails Kang and Liang sail away, making good their escape
while abandoning Kang's brother and the five other gentlemen martyrs of
the reform movement, the "liu junzi" 六君子.

5. *Xu Niehai hua*131

The novel *Niehai hua* by Zeng Pu was extremely popular in the late-Qing
period.132 Its publication details are intricate: it was several times added to
and revised, from its original 6-chapter edition by the author "Ai ziyou zhe"
[One who loves liberty: actually Jin Tianhe], into a co-authored work with
Zeng Pu, under his alias "DongYa bingfu", published in *Xiaoshuo lin* in 1905
but then revised over the following twenty years. Before Zeng Pu's death in
1935, he entrusted a close friend and fellow provincial, Zhang Hong, with
the writing of yet another addition to the cumulative work still known as
*Niehai hua*. Zhang, writing as "Yangu laoren" 燕谷老人, completed the work
known as *Xu Niehai hua*, published in Shanghai in 1943.133 The real life

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130 Ah Ying, *Wan Qing xiaoshuo shi*, p.208.
131 "Yangu laoren" (Zhang Hong), *Xu Niehai hua*, Zhenmeishan Shudian, Shanghai, 1943.
132 Shu-ying Tsau calls it "the most popular novel of the times", in Dolezelová-Velingerová, p.26.
133 *Tyao*, p.889. The book has been published since then, at least as recently as 1982.
content consists for the most part of the events leading up to the reforms of 1898. The book is a long one, and I shall do no more than sketch some characteristics of the many scenes in which Liang appears.

The original *Niehai hua* in its jointly authored form is a *roman à clef*. Its action ranges from China to Europe and back, and its characters are numerous: it is published with a lengthy key to the well-known figures who appear in its pages. Liang seems to have made no appearance in the book, and his name is certainly not given in the character key, although Kang Youwei, Tan Sitong and even Tan Sitong's friend, the martial hero Big Sword Wang the Fifth [Dadao Wang Wu 大刀王五] are included. By the time of the writing of the sequel, however, Liang had come into much greater prominence retrospectively, and is given a major role in the character of Liang Chaoru (his fictional name is a combination of his own given and style names). Kang becomes Tang Youhui 唐猷辉.

The forty-odd years that have passed between the events described in *Xu Niehai hua* and its retelling of them have naturally contributed to a very different style of narrative here, compared to any of the preceding works. As in the original story, the lives of imaginary characters are wound in and out of the lives of historical figures, thinly disguised. The author deals with the political background to the story in terms which show how the times have changed: the reformers, far from being iconoclasts, or adventurers motivated by self-interest, are worthy young men, all trained as scholars, who are concerned for their country and concerned to protect the Emperor; who do their best and yet are no match for the forces of conservatism. By 1943, the ability of Kang and Liang to shock has faded substantially; what is left are the aspects of legend. The character of Tan Sitong ("Dai Shengfo") figures prominently, and receives preferential dramatic treatment. He first arrives on the scene in a cloud of yellow dust, kicked up by the large party of horsemen he is riding in company with. They pull up abruptly in front of

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134 Zeng Pu is said to have begun the collaborative work on the novel by drawing up a list of 110 names of actual people to be characters under altered names in the story. See *tiyao*, p.889.
the teashop at Taoran Pavilion, where Liang Chaoru and some of his mates were talking poetry and politics and admiring the surroundings. Dai strides up the steps towards them, "with an air of treading down everything in his path". Though respected as a scholar, he has something "a bit extravagant and freewheeling" in his behaviour.\^155 Dai is on very close terms with Liang. Liang and his fellow "Kang men dizi" 康门弟子, those from Kang’s entourage (here very simply transformed into "Tang men dizi"), are described in somewhat less heroic terms as an outstandingly talented group who engage in rousing discussions.\^136 Liang is a decent and committed young man of talent, invariably respectful to his teacher Tang, practical, hard-working and well-meaning. He plays an important role in the reform process, partly by using his links to other young men of talent, like Dai, who have come to the capital, to gather together around Tang the group which transforms itself into the Baoguo Hui 保国会 [Protect the country association]. Liang suggests the organization's name – "Baoguo", for its provocative sound, rather than "Aiguo" 爱国 [patriotic] – though he prefers the politically contentious "dang" 党 to the temporary-sounding "hui" 会; and he also writes up the organization's charter and regulations.\^137 He furthermore fancies himself as a poet, and in one scene at a party acquits himself stylishly in a social poetry game which tests the extemporaneous poetic skills of those involved. Liang's teacher Tang, with well-known works already published, his name known by "every scholar in Peking",\^138 is less comfortable in society of this sort, and works through the bureaucracy, seeking out those with similar interests in reform to help him put his case to the Emperor.

In the considerable space devoted to the relationship between Dai, Liang and Tang, the author stresses Dai's stubborn adherence to his beliefs

\^155 Xu Niehui hua, pp.29-30.
\^136 Xu Niehui hua, p.30.
\^137 Xu Niehui hua, pp.154-62. The Baoguo Hui was a short-lived society formed in April 1898 by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. See Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A Modern China and a New World*, p.104. The word dang had a pejorative sense attached to it, and implied a grouping for the purpose of opposition, specifically to the court.
\^138 Xu Niehui hua, p.30.
about life and death, which are strongly influenced by his Buddhism. "I put little value on life and death", he says. Tang urges him early on to value his life more; Liang makes every effort to persuade him to save himself, yet he insists on his indifference to his own death, and refers to the need for blood to be spilt in the process of political change.139 "If I do not enter Hell, who will?", he says.140 Here and elsewhere, the author has relied on Liang's account of their last meeting.141 If there can be said to exist something of a cult around the figure of Tan Sitong, the author is not, despite his drawing his character larger than life, a part of it. Dai is too extreme: at one point in a conversation with Tang he says that one way to change China's long inheritance of bad customs would be to follow Sparta's example of eliminating some of its children. He wants to "turn the whole society upside-down."142 When Liang is forced to take shelter in the Japanese embassy, Itô [Hirobumi] compares Dai to a similar type of radical in the Meiji Reform period. Dai has been in touch with his martial arts teacher and friend, Big Sword Wang the Fifth, with the aim of gathering together a band of martial heroes to storm the palace and rescue the Emperor, held under a sort of house arrest by the Dowager Empress. Itô, though, laughs at Dai, who cannot rid himself of his scholar's naivety, and whose project is sure to fail.143 Liang is made of softer stuff. He tries to write Dai a farewell letter:

He took up his pen to write to Shengfo, but was only aware of his eyes brimming with tears. By the time he had finished writing the word "Comrade", the sheet of writing paper was already damp; and after he had written the word "Shengfo", the black ink on the page had become wet, and the words all ran together. He started again with a fresh sheet of paper ....144

Nowhere does the author join in the earlier fiction's criticism of Kang and Liang for abandoning their friends to save their own lives: on the contrary,

139 Xu Niehai hua, pp.70, 323.
140 Xu Niehai hua, p.70. See Chan, An Exposition of Benevolence, trans. of Liang, "Tan Sitong zhuan", p.47, for the same words.
141 See Chan, pp.42-45, 47.
142 Xu Niehai hua, p.67.
143 Xu Niehai hua, p.326.
144 Xu Niehai hua, p.326.
their colleagues, including Tan's character, are shown to have the interests of Kang and Liang at heart, and insist on their taking the options available to get out of the country when the danger to their lives becomes too great. Liang escapes on a Japanese boat: his last request is for further attempts to be made to save Dai. Itô, moved, notes the sincerity of his regard for his friends, and states his firm belief that the hopes for a new China will be realized. Dai's prison poem is the last heard from him: the speaker reporting it explains that it refers to Tang.

The narrative is remarkable for its straight-faced presentation of the events involving Kang and Liang, contrasting markedly with the fictional accounts from a time not so far removed from the real events. The reform movement is, by 1943, common ground from which right-minded attitudes to the future of the nation have sprung, and the subtleties of the characters' motivations, all the conflicting details which so caught the imagination of earlier writers and their audience, are no longer so relevant. Liang Qichao, meanwhile, has undergone a transformation from being considered as Kang's junior, unable to move out of his circle of control, to become the human face of Kang's organization. In these characterizations and in that of Tan Sitong, Liang's writings have clearly been a major source for the author's reconstruction of the events involving the three men and the relationship between them.

Repeated themes

All the works of fiction described above deal with the characters of Liang and Kang over a fairly limited time span, covering not much more than ten years. There is a distinct pattern to the story, of fortunes rising and falling within these years, lending itself well to being carried over into fiction. Familiar incidents crop up repeatedly in the plots of these works of fiction.

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145 Xu Nihai hua, pp.327-8.
146 This is in accord with Liang's identification of the heroes in the poem corresponding in real life to Kang Youwei and Big Sword Wang Wu. See following chapter.
that touch on Liang, whether in passing or as a major character. These incidents are recognizably drawn straight from real events in Liang's life, but strung together they become the dramatic elements in a mythic story. In this story of the fictional character Liang, his early brilliance in the first examination is noted. (This is a common theme of the time: early promise, marked by success in the examinations, with later distinguished achievement, or, more often, disappointment and descent into dissolution.)

The teacher and student pair Kang and Liang go to Peking to sit for the metropolitan examinations, and meet their destiny organizing other scholars to protest against the 1895 treaty provisions. They travel about China, meeting other brilliant, or patriotic, or sometimes slightly feckless youth, rather like themselves, and discussing what is needed to save China. Tan Sitong is an important character at this stage; his martial arts teacher Big Sword Wang the Fifth often makes an appearance. The events of the reform movement are described, with the dramatic rise and fall from grace of the two men. Liang's appointment to head a translation bureau gives him the status he had missed out on by not succeeding in the examinations. Kang and Liang are warned in time of the impending crackdown by the forces of the Dowager Empress, but the six martyrs are arrested, and meet their sorry end. Tan's self-sacrifice, his friend Wang's grief, and the ignoble self-preservation of Kang and Liang together form a powerful theme which has contributed to Tan's own hagiography.  

Foreign intervention saves Kang and Liang, who thus escape the fate of their friends. Their respective escape routes are an apparently irresistible theme for most authors, bringing in suspense and high-level foreign connections. Liang goes to Japan, and here the tale usually ends.

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In another short work of fiction not included here, Wang is described after the execution, weeping loudly over the decapitated bodies, refusing to be pulled away. He is surrounded by spectators, many of whom themselves start to weep at the sight. The author notes that spectators variously blamed Kang Youwei for running away and leaving the six unlucky men, and said that he knew a lot of foreign devils. See "Teng gu gu xiang" 雷谷古香 (Sun Longwei), *Hong tian lei* [Thunder in heaven], Haiyu Wenshe, Shanghai, 1903, p.56. Reprinted in *Zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo quan ji*, Wan Qing xiaoshuo quan ji, v.27. See also *liyao*, p.896. Sun Longwei was a friend of the author of *Xu Niehai hua*, Zhang Hong. He became a member of the Tongmeng Hui.
The relationship between Kang and Liang, of course, runs through all these stories. Apart from the much later Xu Niehai hua, Liang is almost always described in a way that limits his autonomy, relegating him to little more than Kang’s amanuensis. In Kang Liang yanyi, Liang rides along on Kang’s coat-tails, not daring to go out into the world on his own, but seeking to enjoy the thrills provided by Kang’s greater daring. His is a more human-sized character than Kang, but at the same time marked by his complete willingness to turn a blind eye to his friend’s constant transgressions. Chiren shuomeng ji, though written some years later, deals with Liang’s life in the same years. Although in this work Liang is made only a year younger than the figure of Kang, it is sufficient to convey their relative positions. Kang’s success in the examinations gives him the access he needs to further the efforts of reform, and he alone bears the responsibility for the 1898 failure. The story leaves Liang on the verge of a new departure into relative independence, setting up a newspaper business. Li Boyuan looks at him a few years later, by which time Liang has established himself. He is evidently prospering, but still hankering after the power of which he has had so brief a taste. Li introduces him, though, as still his teacher’s disciple. They are sleazy in the same way, curry favour in the same way in their dealings with Mr Yan. Of course, Li specializes in depicting characters of this sort, who differ mainly in the degree of their corruption, hypocrisy and avarice. Here Liang is distinguished from Kang by a greater degree of worldliness. Li also acknowledges the real Liang’s already considerable fame, this time in his own right as a writer, by mocking his style.

Liang’s reaction

Leo Ou-fan Lee and Andrew Nathan have quoted from Ah Ying the following "curse" on fiction writers, written by Liang in 1915:

Alas! All you self-styled fiction writers. I have nothing to tell you but to make you aware of the everlasting and unalterable fact of retribution ... If you continue to produce monstrous works to ingratiate yourselves with society, thus directly trapping the youths of the whole country in a
bottomless hell and indirectly dooming our nation to ineradicable catastrophe, you must realize that heaven and earth are ultimately just and you yourselves will receive full retribution – if not in your own bodies, surely on your offspring; if not in this age, certainly in the age to come.148

Lee and Nathan wonder whether this "expression of personal rage" was perhaps "an acknowledgement of defeat?" Certainly it must have been apparent to Liang that the high-minded values, which he and others had espoused in calling for "new" fiction, had been left behind in the rush to satisfy popular demand for fiction that entertained, rather than seeking to improve, its readers. But one detects more than disappointment on this score, and something like a cry from the heart. Fiction which borrowed the character of Liang, mostly dealing with events from a period now receding quickly into the past and most of it unflattering, had continued to appear for the ten years following Liang's first year in Japan. Kang Liang yanyi, which originally appeared in 1899, had appeared again in 1908 and 1909 reprints; Wenming xiaoshi, which had run from 1903 to 1905, was republished in 1906; Chiren shuomeng ji had appeared in the middle of the same years. Huang Xiaopei's two works mentioned above were dated 1908 and 1909. Some years had passed before he made this frustrated outburst, but perhaps there had been more to provoke him. C.T. Hsia suggests that it was the dominance of the "Black Curtain" [heimu 黑幕] and the "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly" [yuanyang hudie 鴛鴦蝴蝶] Schools at the time that displeased him.149 Liang had worked hard for many years, and had made his own road from 1899 (though with injections of money from Kang). It is ironic that the new literature, into which he had put his own high hopes and creative energy, had in so many cases turned on him, and on a version of him which he had perhaps thought he had escaped. Liang may have felt that lampoonery at his expense would never end.

148 Lee and Nathan, "The Beginnings of Mass Culture: Journalism and Fiction in the Late Ch'ing and Beyond", p.386. The original is from "Gao xiaoshuo jia" [Speaking against fiction writers], see wenji, v.12, 32 cc, p.68.

149 C.T. Hsia, "Yen Fu and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao as Advocates of New Fiction", p.256.
These fictional portraits of Liang and his world are aimed at a newly-arriving literate class of people, different from the previous office-holding class in being less reliant on government favour and more mobile, more "modern". This stage in fiction-writing lasts only a short while, but is important in revealing the progress of public acceptance of the mandate of the new politico-intellectual alliance which will inherit the job of governing China. The earlier work condemns, this turns to mockery, and finally acceptance of the right of the reformers to reform. Kang Liang yanyi, the earliest work, comes from the tail-end of a period that has not acquired the worldliness evident only a few years later, and it maintains a strident tone of denunciation even while showing its fascination with the effrontery of the two men. Despite its conservative certainty of tone and its reliance on traditional foundations, it is free to express what can be recognized as quite valid doubts and criticism of the reformers and their motivations and conduct, in a way that soon became impossible. Li Boyuan and other less highly regarded writers of his kind have already developed a full-blown cynicism about the new breed of reformers. Works such as Wenming xiaoshi mock the pretensions of the newly established order of intellectuals like Liang, even though their authors may have been from a similar background. Huang Xiaopei perhaps represents a different process at work. His biting satires are only an interesting and unusual form of political attack on his rivals, whose activities are not so very different from those of his own party. Perhaps this similarity of interest and ambition explains the viciousness of his attacks on Kang – rather like family disputes. In Chiren shuomeng ji one can already see the closing of this brief window on independent alternative views of a society in the throes of realignment. This work's voice and independent stand are clearly influenced and limited by the phenomenal reach of Liang's writing on so much that was important and exciting at the turn of the century. Only a few years after these works of fiction appeared, by the May Fourth era, a certain cohesion of purpose and moral/political seriousness was evident across different political groupings – many of the basic principles of which were raised by Liang in his work dating from his
two journals in Yokohama. By 1943, when *Xu Niehai hua* was published, any questioning of the self-appointed roles of Chinese society's intellectual guardians has disappeared, the author and his characters joined by their common viewpoint on what the road behind has been, and the road ahead must be. In this, Liang Qichao has had much of the making.

Liang's Self-representations

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Chapter 4

Liang’s Self-representations

Liang may have been disconcerted, to say the least, to find himself portrayed in multiple and often unflattering versions in the new fiction at the turn of the century, but he was perfectly able to provide alternative versions of himself for his readers. Joseph Levenson’s claims to the contrary notwithstanding, an important area of Liang’s self-knowledge was his awareness of his own skills as wordsmith above all, and he made use of these skills in a vast output of articles, letters, creative works and commentaries. His management of the journals that he published from the time of his arrival in Japan, and in particular the Qingyi bao and the Xinmin congbao, gave him complete control over the publication of his own writing. One has the impression that Liang, more than anyone else of his time, not only managed to explore the furthermost edges of his writing talent, no mean feat in itself, but also achieved what must have been a satisfying near match between his writing talent and his ability to get his writing out to the public. In cultivating these two separate aspects together, he was clearly ahead of his time, and has been deservedly called a "'favourite son' of public opinion" [舆论之骄子 yulun zhi jiaozì], the late-Qing equivalent of a "media

\footnote{"He knew what he did. But only others could know what he was. ‘Self-knowledge is a remarkably elusive thing ..." Levenson, Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and the Mind of Modern China, p.vii.}
Liang successfully created a public appreciation of himself so that it could be said that it was his name that sold a journal issue first, even before the content.

Liang's name, or names, are a central theme in the public figure that Liang had become early in his life. In common with many of his literary contemporaries, he chose to write under a variety of names. Liang used more than most, and has been found during his lifetime under a total of 55 names. Some of Liang's names endured, while others reflected only a particular time or place in his life. These names should be seen in Liang's case as statements about his purpose: not only because a new name or pen-name is in itself an indicator of something the owner wants to say about themselves, whether lightly or heavily coded; but also because Liang chose so many that fit a theme of concern or anxiety for the nation and the people.

Significantly, Liang's collection of pen-names increased in about 1902, the first year of the new Xinmin congbao. Previously, in the Qingyi bao, he had stopped writing as merely "Liang Qichao", and used "Rengong" (his hao, his style or literary name), as well as three more temporary names, "Aishi ke" [Mourner of the times], "Aiguo zhe" [A patriot] and "Shaonian Zhongguo zhi shaonian" [Young China's youth]. Because of his dual position as manager and principal writer for his journals, he was able to split himself into several parts, and publish his own work under these different names, side by side. In the Xinmin congbao, the "Xinmin shuo" chapters and

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2 Quoted in Meng Xiangcai, Liang Qichao zhujuan, p.87, from Wu Qichang, Liang Qichao. Meng himself has picked up the phrase and used it in a chapter heading in his biography of Liang, for the period 1899-1904.

3 Mabel Lee quotes from Chang P'eng-yuan that many readers read Xin xiaoshuo because of Liang's name, and lost interest when he no longer authored any of the journal's content. Lee, p.215. Xin xiaoshuo was a "sister" publication to Liang's Xinmin xiaoshuo; it came out at the same time, and many Xinmin xiaoshuo readers read the Xin xiaoshuo too. Chang, p.310.

4 Chu Pao-liang, Twentieth-Century Chinese Writers and Their Pen Names, G.K. Hall & Co., Boston, 1977, lists 42. Li Guojun, pp.22-3, has eight more in addition.

5 "In China the building and naming of gardens or parts of gardens, and of studios, the taking of a new sobriquet, the carving of a seal, were all ways of signalling something more, a new connection or insight, a new stage in one's life ... [In Hongloumeng] One learns as much from the visual design and from the naming of a character's studio as one does from [a] character's words and deeds." See John Minford, The Chinese Garden: Death of a Symbol, University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming.

6 See Li Guojun, p.22. Of the three, the first two were rarely used after the Qingyi bao ceased publication. "Shaonian Zhongguo zhi shaonian", however, was resuscitated for the Xin xiaoshuo.
most of Liang's other articles are credited to "Zhongguo zhi xinmin" [One of China's new people]. This new name, or versions of it, he used extensively for the next few years, covering the life of the journal.

Liang Rengong, as he became known in his professional life, is a version of Liang's persona which derives from a story in Zhuangzi. Rengong, the prince of Ren, casts his immense hook and line, baited with fifty oxen, every day into the sea, but after a year has caught nothing. Finally he catches an enormous fish, battles with it and lands it, and with it feeds the people for many miles around. Liang was evidently so impressed by Rengong's desire to be of benefit to his people that he labelled himself with the same name.\(^7\) Liang also used other versions of this name in his correspondence, including "Renfu" 任父,\(^8\) a name which further underlines Liang's paternal concern for others.

From 1899, Liang also wrote as "Yin bingzi" 饮冰子 [The master of the Ice-drinker's Studio],\(^9\) or versions of it — "Yin bing" [Ice-drinker], and "Yinbingshi zhuren" 饮冰室主人 [The owner of the Ice-drinker's Studio]. The name is a curious one, and it is also one that endured. It was used in the title of the first edition (1903) of his collected writings, Yinbingshi wenji,\(^10\) and was retained in almost all of the 23 successive collections of his work that appeared up until his death. "Yin bing", another reference from Zhuangzi, connotes the anxiety of a man who has been chosen to carry out an important mission in his life. Liang introduced his new pen-name to the readers of the Qingyi bao in the preface to his "Ziyou shu": "I have named my studio from Zhuang Sheng, where it is said, 'I receive my orders in the morning, and in

\(^7\) The story brings to mind Christian references to fishing, which would not have been beyond Liang's reach since he had some association with Christian missionaries during 1895-6, and had been impressed in particular by the effectiveness of their organizations in disseminating their literature and beliefs. See Chen Chi-yun, "Liang Chi-ch'ao's 'Missionary Education'", pp.86, 91-2. Of course, the Christian metaphors attached to fish are not only found in the story of the loaves and fishes, a similar theme to the Zhuangzi, but also in the idea of "fishing" for converts to one's beliefs. Li Guojun, p.23, quotes Liang: "I'm a person who is crazy about writing [zuixin moxue 醉心墨学], and that's why I call myself Rengong". Perhaps he was referring to the action of dipping his pen into the ink-bowl or "sea of ink" (mohai 墨海: thanks to Geremie Barme for this allusion).

\(^8\) Perhaps meaning "The father of [the people of] Ren", just as Rengong is the prince of Ren.

\(^9\) Ding, p.268.

\(^10\) Yinbingshi wenji, ed. He Qingyi, Guangzhi Shuju, Shanghai, 1902. See Li Guojun, p.15, for a
the evening I drink ice water. Can it be that I am hot inside because of these orders?" The reference comes from a story where Shen Zhuliang confesses to Confucius his anxiety about a mission he is to undertake for the King of Lu to the kingdom of Qi. Shen continues:

I have not yet begun my assignment, and already I am anxious about something unforeseen arising. And while the matter is incomplete, I am anxious lest somebody talk. That makes two anxieties which, as an ordinary official, I cannot stand.

Confucius's advice to him is to order his personal feelings and allow them no precedence, to forget his own person. "How can [one] find time to be pleased with life and to dislike death?" The job is to be done. "Let your message be the simple facts." "Words are like the wind and the waves; their behavior can bring either success or failure." Therefore, "Do not shift from your orders. ... Fine accomplishment takes time. ... Whatever the result of your mission, it is best to devote your life to it." In choosing this name, and sticking to it, Liang informs his readers about the kind of man he is. From the Zhuangzi passage, the educated reader would know that Liang was willing to sacrifice the pleasures of life to carry out his perceived responsibilities.

Liang's choice of name conformed to some extent to what he wrote, so variations on "Yinbing" were used for writing fiction or poetry, whereas he assumed the "Xinmin" persona for his political and more didactic work (as will be seen below). In the works discussed below, for example, Liang used the name "Yinbingshi zhuren" to write "Xin Luoma chuanqi" [New Rome]; but "Zhongguo zhi xinmin" for the non-fictionalized "Yidali jianguo san jie chuan"

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1. Translation of Zhuangzi, "Renjian shi" [The world of men], is from The Sayings of Chuang Chou, trans. James R. Ware, New American Library, New York, 1963, p.34.
3. Looking at the name "Yinbing" as it stands, the reader also finds Liang warning against being "over-heated", a phrase which suggests worldly desire and envy. I thank Prof. Liu Ts'un-yan for his guidance concerning this aspect of Liang's name.
Before proceeding to the writing by Liang discussed below, it is worth bearing in mind his attitude towards his own writing. Liang's metaphor for himself may be said to be the pen. He says: "My tongue is divine; my pen is bewitched." [Wu she you shen, bi you gui.]

The pairing of shen/gui here is interesting. They represent gods and demons, the higher and lower forms of supernatural beings. Liang also wrote of the "magical power" [moli 魔力] that came from his pen's tip, and here the phrase again makes reference to evil spirits. In both these examples, the effect of the word describing the supernatural being is diminished by its common usage which is merely to describe an effect beyond understanding: the idea of "evil", particularly, is perhaps no longer inherent in either phrase. Liang's way of describing himself is, however, indicative of a respect for his own powers that transcends self-respect, and verges on awe.¹⁸

This chapter will cover some examples of Liang's writing where he considers his life, the significant events which occurred during his career, and his own significance during the age in which he lived. This is of necessity a limited exercise: one might want to argue that all of his writing reveals information about his view of himself. The texts chosen here have in common a relatively self-conscious form of representation. Since Liang wrote himself into much of his not very large output of fiction and plays, I have included one each of these: an unfinished play, Xin Luoma chuanqi [New Rome], dating from 1902, and an unfinished novel, Xin Zhongguo weilai ji.

¹⁶ Liang, "Zengbie Zheng Qiu fan jian xie hui hua" [Parting from Zheng Qiu fan and thanking him for the paintings], poem written for an Australian acquaintance; see Gloria Davies, "Liang Qichao and the Chinese in Australia", pp.188-95.

¹⁷ Liang, Trends, p.102; see below.

¹⁸ Perry Link gives an example of a knife attack driven by a man's fear that he had been possessed by the "wizardly power" of a newspaper column which he felt driven to read. People were perhaps not used to this kind of writing, even in the late 1920s, when this happened. Link adds: "Talk of 'wizardly powers of attraction' was not unusual on the popular fiction scene". Mandarin Ducks, p.191.
[The future of new China], published in 1902-3. These provide an interesting counterpoint to the previous chapter’s fictional portraits. I include Liang’s "Sanshi zishu", a short essay written in December 1902; and his "Tan Sitong zhuan" (1899). Finally, I look at Liang’s Qingdai xueshu gailun. This is written rather late in Liang’s life, in 1920, but the subject matter obviously deals mainly with the period up to 1911. Liang treats himself in this book as a historical character, yet still with the potential to "make even greater contributions to the intellectual world of the future". In fact, most of his life as a public intellectual figure had been lived by this time. Liang, nonetheless, went on writing and living the life of a public intellectual till his death in 1929.

As in the previous chapter, the written works covered here are treated in chronological order.

1. Xin Luoma chuanqi

This play was intended to include a prologue and forty scenes, but Liang suspended his creative effort after completing only seven acts and an appendix. It has been suggested that the play’s complicated structure (its time-span covered seventy years) became a burden to the author. This may well have been the case. Another possibility is that Liang was juggling too many projects at the time, and had to drop one. It is unlikely ever to have been performed. The play began in serialized form in the Xinmin congbao in June, and ended in November, the month in which Xin xiaoshuo began publication. Liang made the most of his Italian interest by publishing at the same time, also in the Xinmin congbao, the "Yidali jianguo san jie zhuan", from

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19 Liang, Trends, p.107.
20 Published in Xinmin congbao, nos. 10-13, 15, 20 (from June to November, 1902). Reproduced in Ah Ying (ed.), Wan Qing wenxue conghao: chuanqi zaju juan, xia ce, as Xin Luoma (the source of page references here). See Mabel Lee’s discussion of Liang’s plays, "Liang Chi-ch’ao (1873-1929) and the Literary Revolution of Late-Ch’ing", pp. 212-4.
21 The seventh act appeared two years later, in no.56 of the same journal (see Li Guojun, p.72). It is omitted in the standard collection of Liang’s works, Yinbingshi heji, Zhonghua Shuju, Shanghai, 1932.
22 Mabel Lee, p.214.
June until the end of the year. Portraits of the "three Italian heroes", Garibaldi, Mazzini and Cavour, had been included in issue no.9 of Xinmin congbao, immediately preceding the first instalment of the play. The appendix to the play, "Xiaqing ji chuanqi" [A record of heroism], was published in the first issue of Xin xiaoshuo. The seven acts cover the theme of Italy's reunification and the patriotic republicans who fought to that end. I shall only talk here about the short prologue, and the commentaries at the end of each chapter.

The prologue begins with the speaker introducing himself, apparently from somewhere in the sky (when his companions join him later, they are actually riding clouds). He is an old man dressed as an immortal: "I am the ghost of Dante, an Italian poet", he says. He describes Italy's division and subsequent consolidation, a triumph which he says has been achieved partly with the help of his writings, which inspired a later generation of heroes to reunite the country. Dante speaks in a noticeably Meiji-influenced Chinese, dotting his comments with phrases like "ziyou zhi yi" 自由之义 [the meaning of liberty] and "guomin jingshen" 国民精神 [national spirit]. His poetic skill is for the time being nowhere to be seen, as he goes on, a bit tediously:

Italy has now become once more a top-ranking, completely self-governing, mighty European country; now it has an area of 110,000 square li, 30 million citizens who share the same nationality, and an administration and legislature which are full of majesty and splendour! It has over half a million trained troops, and more than two hundred fully equipped warships...

Dante finds himself with nothing to do, as it happens, and plans to travel to

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23 Nos.9, 10, 14-17, 19 and 22.
24 Mabel Lee, p.218, treats this separately as A Record of Heroism. An Italian girl, an emigrant with her family in Uruguay, subsequently orphaned, waits for a hero to save her native country, and is given new hope when Garibaldi appears in South America, commanding an Italian regiment which has come to help a would-be independent state break away from Brazil.
25 See also Mabel Lee's description of this part of the prologue, p.213.
26 Xin Luoma (pagination from Ah Ying, Wan Qing wenxue congchao: chuanqi zaju juan, xia ce), pp.518-9.
the East, to China. From offstage comes a scripted question: why should it be worth his while to travel to a "sick country" in the East? Dante is pleased to be able to reveal to the audience that he has recently heard about a play (the one which follows), by a young fellow from China called (he thinks) "Yinbingshi zhuren" (Liang's pen-name), currently being performed at the Patriotic Theatre in Shanghai:

This play lays out the events leading to the unification of Italy, all the highs and lows, in vivid detail. Forty chapters in prose and verse, every word a gem; fifty years of failure and success, every phrase a pearl.\textsuperscript{27}

He plans to pick up a couple of old friends, an Englishman, Shakespeare, and the Frenchman Voltaire, and go to see the play together.

The voice offstage asks further: "What has made this young man suddenly write such a play?" Dante answers:

What man is without feeling? Scholars are all fixed upon some fine ambition or other, doggedly working away on some crazy scheme. Zhuangzi's quail would laugh at their foolishness. The sound of a cuckoo singing on a branch makes the man walking by weep. I think that this young man has been drifting about in a strange country, and when he looks toward his old home, he is consumed with worry about his country. Not having the skill to remedy its problems, he turns instead to using a few of his writer's tricks, and writes something moving and sublime. It's just the sort of thing an old fellow like myself would have done in my day.\textsuperscript{28}

Dante is then requested by the voice offstage to introduce the play, which he does, briefly, in four lines of verse: "Metternich abuses his autocratic power; Mazzini organizes a youth party. With the help of the people's army, air force and navy and their leaders, Cavour unifies Italy." Shakespeare and Voltaire are then seen arriving at a sedate speed on their own clouds, they are joined by Dante, and all leave on their way to Shanghai and the Patriotic

\textsuperscript{27} Xin Luoma, p.519.

\textsuperscript{28} Xin Luoma, p.519. The scholars are compared to the mythical jingwei who tries to fill the sea with pebbles. Zhuangzi's quail naturally has a narrower world view than some, see chapter 1 of Zhuangzi.
Liang's pen in 1902 is at its most prolific, and his enjoyment of his own work is evident. Here he lifts himself into the company of the most exalted literati of the West – a poet/patriot, a playwright/poet and a philosopher/playwright – and with the power of authorship makes them prepared to put up with the discomforts of travelling half way round the globe on a cloud in order not to miss his new play. Liang is not content merely to display for his compatriots' edification the greatness and patriotic achievements of his heroes in Western political and cultural circles, he must also join their successes to his own enterprise. It would be inappropriate to accuse Liang of arrogance in speaking of himself in the same breath as the three great men. (In any case, comparing Liang with Kang Youwei's liking to rank himself with Confucius as China's new sage, any arrogance here counts as very small indeed.) On the one hand, these figures are little more to him than names, examples of people who were well-known, like him, and, as far as he knew, also like him in their nationalist aspirations, using writing to serve the people. Liang was himself at this time practising in all the above-listed occupations of the three Western figures he brings on stage here. On the other hand, Liang's borrowing of the Western "greats" merely extends a familiar device from Chinese narrative traditions to include the so-far unfamiliar pantheon of Western literature. As in Kang Liang yanyi the figures of Plato and Solomon are enlisted, without evident irony, to represent Western patriarchs who confront the Chinese heavenly emissaries, so here Liang uses the same device, only a few years later, to underscore the novelty of his "new" drama.

Liang in Japan was in an enviable position to take advantage of the fashion for Western writing, which in 1902 was very scarce in translation, either into Japanese or else into Chinese translated from a Japanese version. If these foreign names were recognized by any of his readership in China, Liang was almost entirely responsible, since he had introduced them in the pages of the Xinmin congbao. Voltaire, for example, had been introduced in...
an earlier issue as "a literatus" who "wrote many novels and plays, waking up his country's people from their dreams." Voltaire's portrait appears at the front of issue 10, in which the Prologue to Liang's play was published. Metternich's portrait was also published, but only after the cessation of the play's serialization. Thus Liang refers in his plays to a body of knowledge about these figures whose limits, he can be fairly safe in assuming, he is himself largely responsible for setting. Liang was at this stage in his life a major provider of news from the West, and was free to make of it what he pleased.

Liang's former schoolmate from Kang's Wanmu Caotang, Han Wenju, wrote commentaries at the end of the prologue and six of the seven acts. Using his pen-name, "Menshi tanhu ke" 扣虱谈虎客 ["He who scratches for lice while talking about tigers"], Han filled in details concerning character and history which might have eluded the reading audience. He points out at the end of Liang's prologue, for example, how unusual the play is in treating real people and real events, far surpassing in its success the one previous instance noted. Han's subsequent chapter-end commentaries suggest at what level the play might most usefully serve as educational material, share with the reader his reaction to the play ("I felt as if cold water was pouring down my back, it sounded extremely moving"), and marvel at Liang's extraordinary talent ("The author in his youth was an expert at writing elegant prose"; "No one compares with the author in the field of literature"). With these extravagant words of praise for Liang's work, Han and Dante between them pre-empt the reader's own judgement, in Dante's case before the play has even begun. Han here plays the part of an

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30 See notes at the end of the commentary, Xin Luoma, p.521.
31 This description of Voltaire comes from his earlier play, Jiehui meng chuangqi [A dream of ruins of destruction]. This play went no further than its prologue, which was published in the first issue of Xinmin conghe on 8 Feb.1902, under the pen-name "Ruhui an zhuren" 如晦庵主人 [Master of the Dark Night Studio: see fengyi ruhui, with connotations also of social turmoil]. See Ah Ying, Wan Qing wenxue congchao: chuangqi zaju juan, xia cc, p.688; also Mabel Lee, pp.212-3.
32 In issue 22, 14 Dec. 1902.
33 Xin Luoma, p.520.
34 Following Act 2.
35 Following Acts 5 and 3.
accomplice in Liang's tour de force of self-promotion, doubling as the cutting edge of engaged writing. Liang presumably had something to say about what was needed in Han's commentary, and obviously had a free hand in Dante's comments, and thus must have intended the effect. It has an uncanny echo of more recent writing in the same didactic vein: the author appears to be talking to himself. The writing is intended for the benefit of the audience (the reader, in fact), but does not manage to address them fully as living beings with critical skills of their own. In Liang's case, the effect may be the product of two causes: his being only an experimenter in the field of drama, unused to the dynamic of an audience, and, related to this, his exuberant desire to amaze with his writing in this new form. This work comes from the peak period of Liang's hugely successful writing enterprise, for what could already be called a mass readership. Perhaps he can be forgiven for seeming to be a little giddy with his own success.

2. Xin Zhongguo weilai ji

Liang took up writing this short novel after abandoning the play above. While it is his most noteworthy piece of fiction, because of Liang's reputation as a reformer, it has been written about at greater length than it might warrant otherwise. As Philip Huang says, analysing the correspondence between the novel's two main characters and Liang's political development, "This disjointed story tells more about Liang himself than about China's future."

The four chapters of the novel, which was left unfinished, ran in the first three issues of Liang's Xin xiaoshuo, from November 1902 until January 1903. Liang says in his foreword that he had wanted to write it for five years, but the story itself comes to a mere 57 pages. The two central characters are Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing, two students returned from

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36 Huang, p.88. See also pp.84-90, etc. Other commentary on the novel includes: Hao Chang, pp.222-4; Tang Xiaobing, esp. pp.4, 30, 96, 120-37; Ah Ying, Wai Qing xiaoshuo shi, pp.116-20; Yang Yi, Zhongguo xindai xiaoshuo shi, v.1, Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, Peking, 1986, pp.21-2; Mabel Lee, pp.216-8.

37 Yang Yi says that Liang began to plan the novel after he finished translating Jiaren qiyu ji in 1898. See Zhongguo xindai xiaoshuo shi, p.21.
abroad, whose lives and conversations are recalled in a speech by the respected Mr Kong, many years later, aided by notebooks kept by Huang. The main conversation, and the novel's raison d'être, in which Huang and Li talk backwards and forwards between reform and revolution, in itself takes up almost half the novel's pages. There is little action, and few extra characters. One minor figure mentioned in the preamble, Luo Zaitian, "the first great leader" of an imaginary future Chinese nation, represents the Guangxu Emperor himself. There is also a patriotic youth, an unseen female wall-poem writer, and a Cantonese shopkeeper.

Both Philip Huang and Tang Xiaobing in their work on Liang Qichao devote a considerable amount of space to this novel in order to examine the political influences evident in the two strands of dialogue, and compare them with Liang's political path. Li, who tends to favour revolution, and Huang, a year older than his friend and more moderate in his political views, are seen by many commentators to represent the uncertainty Liang still felt at this point in his life about what road might lead to the "future of new China". Philip Huang uses the two characters to accentuate his division of Liang's political beliefs into those held before and after 1903. Up until Liang's 1903 trip to North America (after the publication of this work), Huang believes, his identification was still primarily with the character of Li, the representative of revolution over reform. Of course, Liang was still at this time in favour of constitutional monarchy, and it is a more complex sparring between the two characters here than a simple matter of revolution or reform. Li favours "awaken[ing] the people's patriotic and revolutionary sentiments", with his work as a "revolutionary publicist". Huang is more inclined to be a moderator, a statesman. As Philip Huang says, the difference between the two comes down to a question of means, and the role

38 In another example of Liang's game-playing, rather like his sending Dante and his companions to the Patriotic Theatre to see Liang's play, Mr Kong's speech "is taken down in shorthand and immediately wired to New Fiction in Yokohama, where it is published." Mabel Lee, p.217. This circularity evidently delighted Liang.

39 Philip Huang, p.85; Yang Yi, p.22, quoting Liang from a 1911 article. The "Luo" is the last syllable in the Chinese transliteration of the Mongol family name of the Qing emperors, "Aixinjueluo". Huang succeeds Luo as national leader at a later date: the story takes place in a "past" which is the late nineteenth/early twentieth-century present in the story.
played by each, since they both want a strong, sovereign and democratic China, for which they both assume that an aroused and active citizenry is a prerequisite.  

Tang Xiaobing, though he introduces Liang’s novel with the comment, "the debate reflects Liang’s internal dialogue around 1902", nevertheless goes on to say that the character of Huang "is cast in an obviously autobiographical frame by the author"; Li, on the other hand, he thinks is probably "a forerunner of the youthful Min bao revolutionaries". If the book was indeed something that Liang had been thinking about for many years, his identification probably moved between the two, making a determination of his final stand an uncertain task. Given Liang’s concentration at the time of writing this work on his role as writer, with the particular responsibility to stimulate his readers, one might hear his voice more strongly in Li’s character. But Huang too speaks with Liang’s voice.

Tang notes Liang’s particular satisfaction with the Huang/Li conversation: in Liang’s general commentary at the end of the third chapter which contains the dialogue, "he recommended it to all patriotic readers and mused that this closely reasoned and persuasive discourse was not merely unprecedented in the author’s own writings but also had little chance of being repeated." The exaggerated and boastful air is not unusual from Liang at this time, as has been seen in the previous work above. Here, though, he provides his own commentary, exactly in the style of his colleague Han Wenju’s in Xin Luoma chuanqi. Again, a reader might want to ask why Liang persists in such a degree of self-congratulation, as if he could not wait for the response from his readers to confirm its excellence. It might perhaps be read as evidence of the earnestness of his program of moral and political rearmament. But there is also the fact that what Liang was doing in this work and the preceding play was indeed a new departure from

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40 Huang, p.88.
42 Tang, p.137. Tang footnotes Huang Zunxian’s similarly high opinion that the novel was
established norms, and perhaps it is partly the excitement of creative composition that can be seen here.

After the two men's dialogue ends, a fourth and final chapter follows, doing its best to create some fictional liveliness and tension in what is so far a badly crafted story. Earlier, Huang and Li had travelled on the train from Russia, across Siberia to China, after some years studying overseas. On reaching Shanhaiguan, where the Great Wall meets the sea, they climb up and survey the scene, filled with emotion. Back at their lodgings, they get very drunk, and together write a poem on the wall of their room. This act aroused their patriotic ardour, and the long conversation in chapter 3 ensues, helped along by "a further ten or more cups of wine". As Tang says, writing the "despondent and nostalgic poem" on the wall was "as mandated of all unfulfilled scholars in old times".

The following morning, Huang suggests that they should go back to Lushun (Port Arthur), to see how it now is after its transfer from Japanese to Russian control. They find a very Russian-looking town, and are only able to continue because of the small amount of Russian language they had both picked up during their studies in Europe. Arriving early in the morning, they find a hotel, and have just put down their luggage when they hear someone playing a violin in the next room, singing these English words to the music:

Such is the aspect of this shore;  
'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more!  
... ... ...  
Clime of the unforgotten brave!  
Whose land, from plain to mountain-cave,  
Was Freedom's home or Glory's grave!  
Shrine of the mighty! can it be,  
That this is all remains of thee?  
Approach, thou craven crouching slave:  
Say, is not this Thermopylae?  
These waters blue that round you lave,

"even better than Liang's writings in [the Xinhua congbiao]" (p.259).

"Up to the recent Cultural Revolution scholars in China have applauded the political aim of this work, but even they considered that it could not be called literature." Lee, p.217.

Xin Zhongguo weilai ji, p.17.

Tang, p.124.
O servile offspring of the free!—
Pronounce what sea, what shore is this?
The gulf, the rock of Salamis!
These scenes, their story not unknown,
Arise, and make again your own;46

Liang added his translation at the end, using character repetitions to convey the heroic tone in the lines.47 The music stops; Li says, "Brother, wasn't that Byron's Giaour?" Yes, says Huang, "Byron loved the idea of liberty. He seems to have had a longstanding yearning for the spirit of literature, as well as for Greece. Later because of his support for Greek independence, for which he even joined the military, he died. He can be called a great hero in the world of literature."48 Huang remarks that the poem was written to encourage the Greeks, but might have been meant for China. The unknown singer starts up again, and the two recognize the familiar strains of more Byron, this time a stanza from Don Juan. ("The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece! ...") Huang can tell that it's Byron again; Li is even able to locate it down to its stanza number. He remarks that Byron here speaks with the voice of another, in order to rouse the Greeks; the lines are in fact from a song sung by a poet, a character within the Don Juan.49 Another stanza follows, but the singer next door is interrupted, and it is left to Li to continue, reciting selected lines from the poet's song, directly translated into Chinese, right to the song's end.50

47 See the previous chapter for Li Boyuan's direct mockery of aspects of Liang's written style in Wenming xiaoshi. Liang's source is not known. Su Manshu's translation of works by Byron was not published until 1908, in Tokyo. See Su's entry in Boorman and Howard, Biographical Dictionary of Republican China.
48 pp.42-6 for the conversation and the whole text in English of Byron's poem.
49 Don Juan, Canto III, LXXXVI, 1; see The Poetical Works of Lord Byron, p.695.
50 It is not known how much of the original text Liang had access to. Quite possibly he only had the song, extracted from the text, in which case he would not have seen the following lines in the stanzas leading into it:

He was a man who had seen many changes,
And always changed as true as any needle;
His polar star being one which rather ranges,
And not the fix'd-

... ...

Thus, usually when he was asked to sing,
He gave the different nations something national;
'Twas all the same to him - 'God save the king,'
Or 'Ça ira,'... (Don Juan, III, LXXX and LXXXV)
Huang and Li are naturally keen to know who their neighbour is, but manage only to catch a glimpse of him.

A scene with a Cantonese shop-keeper follows. That night, they find the violin-player eating his dinner at the same table with them. His name is Chen Meng 陈猛, styled Zhongpang 仲澱. Chen wants to achieve great things, but cannot find a patron to support him. He is an admirer of Milton and Byron, Milton for his support of Cromwell (a favorite of Liang's), and Byron for his support for Greek independence. Chen tells the two others his theory of the value of military music in the service of the national spirit. The three warm-blooded young men with their talk of heroes create a heady patriotic atmosphere, but the plot does not advance beyond this point.

Liang's story comes to an abrupt end shortly afterwards, with a final wall poem providing the only denouement. Huang and Li return to their room at the inn at Shanhaiguan to pick up their luggage. Early the next morning, they discover that in their absence someone has added some lines to the wall poems they had written while drunk. Huang and Li on the earlier occasion had written a poem in paired verses, each contributing a line to each verse. Their poem is tense and gloomy, anticipating a violent passage to a new day in China. There is a night wind; the heavens seem drunk. The world is dry and withered. In the shadow of the mountain there are large numbers of armoured cavalry. "Heroes weep, waiting for the coming of a new era. The cock crows, a discordant noise, as the sun comes

Ironically, the national feelings of the poet in Don Juan are by no means deeply rooted. Byron comments on the separation between the power of words to move the nobler emotions and the character of those whose job it may be to write or transmit them. Words may take on a nobility of their own, irrespective of the writer's or performer's beliefs or worthiness of character. A couple of stanzas on from the end of the song, Byron muses on the poet's ability to stir up feelings:

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,  
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think. (Don Juan, III, LXXXVIII)

Liang's character Huang is struck by how aptly Byron suits the Chinese case, but Liang may also have been impressed by this unquoted stanza (if the version he read went so far), with its great relevance to his own ambitions to be heard, as a writer and activist.

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51 See Huang, p.87.
52 Both names suggest someone of immoderate or impulsive character.
53 A ci poem, to the tune of "Congratulating the new bridegroom".
The two men are evidently patriots ready to serve their country in critical times, but depressed by the state of affairs. The poem written in response, with frequent reference to the matching line of the original, is a woman's. She is, if anything, more anxious. She sets the tone by answering the first poem's scene of wind and moon with her own, "blood rain, rank wind". The country is in ruins, families are destitute. She has drunken dreams, she herself is dry and withered. She weeps and wants to die. She pairs images of deep sleep in the first poem with her own line "The heroic lion is still sleeping." Women too have similar demands for greater freedom, she says: strangely, the female dragon has already woken up (perhaps she is referring to the Dowager Empress, awake while the Emperor sleeps on). The author reveals herself to be also a returned student from Europe.

These poems do not appear to be an attempt by Liang to show his colours as a poet; rather, they are included to identify the writers (including the two who seem to represent different facets of himself) as scholars, with heroic ambitions, patriotic, and prepared for self-sacrifice. There are no doubt meanings for the initiated to prise out of the lines, thus perhaps identifying them too as members of a select group. This device, as has been seen in the previous chapter, was commonly used to give evidence of a hero's fitness to be given the name. Liang has established for his readers in this work that something of the same sort is also known in the West: Dante, Voltaire and Byron have all successfully combined their writing with their work in the pursuit of liberty and political reform. These Western figures are for Liang heroic names to encourage and spur those in China with the ambition, but not yet the means, to join in the work of reform. Liang reveals here how deeply he has taken in European Romantic images of the literary political "activist". Reform will apparently succeed if enough warm-blooded young people, of the sort described in this work, are inspired by this kind of literature to throw themselves heroically into the fray.

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55 Xin Zhongguo weilai ji, p.55. See earlier discussion of Chiren shuoming ji. This may have been a fairly standard covert metaphoric reference to the Emperor and Dowager Empress.
Liang's success with this work of fiction was apparently greater than one would imagine from looking at how it has endured. It was later published in China as a single work.\(^{56}\)

It is interesting that Liang gives Kang Youwei an honourable mention in the book as Huang Keqiang's father, and Li Qubing's teacher (Tang Xiaobing points to an allusion in the characters for his name, Qiongshan, another name for Hainan, which is Kang's name in reverse; Huang senior's teacher, who was also Kang's, is said to be Zhu Ciqi\(^{57}\)). Understanding the relationship between Liang and Kang in the traditional manner, as resembling the tie between father and son, may help to understand why Liang never repudiated Kang as his teacher and mentor, and continued throughout his life to feel bound to honour him and promote his reputation, despite considerable differences and criticism by each of the other. By the time this work was published, Liang is seen by most to have broken away to a considerable degree from Kang's influence and control, and yet he still finds room here for a respectful nod in Kang's direction.

3. "Sanshi zishu"

In terms of presenting the details of Liang's early life up to the end of 1902, his one strictly autobiographical piece is "Sanshi zishu".\(^{58}\) This is the usual reference drawn on by his biographers, for Liang's precocious childhood, for his early discovery of the West, and for his amazement on first meeting Kang Youwei.\(^{59}\) It is a short essay, less than five pages long. At the end of 1902, which must count as his most productive year ever, Liang affirms his decision to make his contribution to the nation and the people with his writing.

Liang was on the verge of turning thirty (by Western reckoning) when he wrote this short autobiography. He recalls that he had earlier

\(^{56}\) Mabel Lee, p.216.
\(^{57}\) Tang, p.121.
\(^{58}\) See Li Guojun, pp.76-7. This was published in the first edition of Liang's *wenji* in 1902.
\(^{59}\) Levenson quotes from it; Hao Chang and Philip Huang quote from it, from Ding.
written ten verses as he approached his (Chinese) thirtieth birthday, travelling on the train along the route of the Tōkaidō. Time had flown, he had then discovered. Nearly a year later, he completed this piece in a mood, apparently, of failure. Of the many things he had set out to do, not even one in a hundred had been achieved: this lament he repeats towards the end of the essay. Following the model provided by Tan Sitong (though explicitly denigrating his own essay's comparable worth), Liang wrote this self-assessment, on how far he had come. In some ways it is a fairly modest account. Only his childhood progress through the reading curriculum required for future achievement of merit is described in much detail. Liang begins his description of his birth and childhood with the lines which Levenson later quoted and corrected, placing the date of his birth in the context of major Chinese and international historical events. Levenson thought this characteristic of Liang, in referring to the larger world rather than only Chinese history; it is also characteristic of him in the sense that he liked to be involved, himself, in the events of the world. Despite this, much of his account here of his activities in the momentous developments of 1895 to 1898 is rather mundane. He claims no special role for himself as an instigator of reform, apart from that of general assistant; he stresses instead his journalism. His activities in Peking in 1895, when he and Kang first began to memorialize the Emperor on reform, he describes as "running around after [Kang]." Similarly, he is busy in 1898, at the time of the establishment of the Baoguo Hui, "dashing about, helping with the setting up" of the organization. While Kang was deeply involved with his discussions with the Emperor, Liang says that he, meanwhile, joined in working with Tan Sitong and others in government who favoured the new policies: "I nearly worked myself to death." He does not mention that he himself took part in some of these imperial consultations. Of his own specific responsibilities, he mentions that in 1895 he was appointed to be the secretary of the Qiang Xue Hui; later that year he was given the job of staff

60 "Sanshi zishi", p.17.
61 "Sanshi zishi", p.18.
62 "Sanshi zishi", p.18.
writer at the Shiwu bao in Shanghai, working with Huang Zunxian. He mentions two works he published in the newspaper, his Bianfa tongyi (part 1), and Xixue shumu biao. Liang describes his departure from the newspaper and his engagement as head lecturer at the Changsha Shiwu Xuetang. While in Changsha he had some "slight involvement in drafting a plan", with other members of the Nan Xue Hui [Southern study association], for local self-administration in Hunan.

Liang covers the events of 1898 through to 1900, both involving the death of his colleagues or students, rather sparingly. He does of course mention the "liu junzi", and names six of those who died in 1900, by their surnames only. Nothing could save them, he says.

In its final paragraph, Liang's account contrasts his present quiet life in Japan with the earth-shaking events he had been part of in China. "That is how I come to be living in seclusion in Japan", he says, amazed how the time has gone by so quickly. He describes his daily occupation: "I am every day the slave of writing. I prattle on endlessly, of no use to the present calamities." Despite this protestation, he says he been working on the Xinmin congbao since the spring, and now as winter begins he has just begun the Xin xiaoshuo, which two projects have delayed his work on a "General history of China" [Zhongguo tongshi], a fifth of which has been drafted. He quotes from his friend Han Wenju's poem in which Han seems to regret that his spoken and written words have no heroic or magical power: Liang, who believes (as he says elsewhere) that his words do have "magic" power to inspire, nevertheless says that "my profession, speaking with my pen [literally "pen tongue" 笔舌 bishe], has already pushed me into middle age." Liang is back in form here, regretting his inadequacies, lamenting the disastrous state of the nation, making known the huge scope of his own ambition to contribute something to posterity. Liang's assurances of his shame for the poor showing he has made continue here to the end, though surely all his readers were by now convinced of his extraordinary conscientiousness and desire to exhaust himself in the service of the nation. "When I look at myself,

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B) Both published in 1896.
examine my spirit and my position today [insufficient as they are], without them I'd be even more without the skills to fulfil any of the many responsibilities of a citizen." "My insignificant body has little strength to bear its heavy responsibility." Liang, here as elsewhere, aims to "rescue the Chinese people", to rouse them awake. But he has a dual sense of where his obligations are directed. He makes his pledge to help wake up the people not to the people themselves, but to "the present day world's distinguished and public-spirited men". Naturally, Liang wants to win their respect and to be counted in their number.

Liang seems to have been afflicted with a greater than normal need to have his efforts acknowledged by his peers, many of whom, especially within the factionalized exile community in Japan, were far from wanting to grant him this recognition. At the same time, he seems to have difficulty here in deciding whether his efforts have actually been sufficient. Part of what he seems to suggest is that the man with high ambitions to serve is never satisfied: Liang clearly fulfils this requirement easily. On the other hand, he was at this time at the peak of his standing as a writer with a previously unimagined influence over his readers. Although Liang's modest denials and anguished statements of inadequacy get in the way, one can also read here a long list of achievements, in which the year just ended makes a respectable showing even compared to the historic years he spent with Kang Youwei in Peking.

This short essay is Liang's formal account of himself up to the age of thirty. He also began in 1902 a series of jottings in the Xinmin congbao, "Shi hua" 诗话 [Notes on poetry], under his pen-name "Yinbingzi". This genre of writing, which allows the poet-author to comment on "poems, poets and schools of poetry" as well as "record their own ideas and manner of doing things", was one well-suited to Liang. In these often sentimental and rather rambling pages, he gave his readers access to his more private life, though here made public, as a "wenren" 文人, a man of letters. These pieces add up

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64 "Sanshi zishu", p.19.
65 达人志士 daren zhishi.
66 From the Cihai definition of the term.
to 127 pages, and many years later were collected together as one long essay. They were published fairly regularly, certainly in more issues than not, in the period between March 1902 (issue no.4) and November 1907 (the second-last issue, no.95). Liang printed his friends' poetry in among his reminiscences of the events they had been written to commemorate. Huang Zunxian, Xia Zengyou and Jiang Guanyun, the three of his acquaintance whose poems Liang admired most, as well as his friends Di Chuqing, Han Wenju, and even Kang Youwei, "not well-known as a poet", are all represented here. The poems describe grief at the death of good friends, nostalgia for student days, and more recent memories of good times with his colleagues in Japan. In a "Shi hua" essay from 1902, Liang mentions, for example, one of the visits his friends Di and Luo Xiaogao made to see him in Hakone:

On a moonlit night we climbed up together all the way to the top of a tower, and intoned in loud voices a poem by Kang Nanhai. [Here, the poem in eight lines.] It is a poem, I feel, with a vast, expansive mood, with a strong feeling of the paired doubles and triples of the summer rain-dance ceremony [of former times]. We went back to the Hansuiriō hotel, where Pingzi [Di Chuqing] wrote out his poem in twelve verses for us to see. [Here, Di's long poem.] When I finished reading it, I was close to tears and did not know what to say. In the old days, Pingzi and I, as well as [Tan Sitong, Tang Caichang] and [Wu] Tieqiao studied Buddhism together. We spent many days "in retreat from worldly affairs, seeking Enlightenment", encouraging each other in the proper direction. In the years since, my young classmates had died, or now wandered far from home. I too had become tired of the ways of the world. I had become deeply immersed in foreign studies, and had long since lost my real self. When Pingzi and I saw each other, we asked

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67 Li Guojun, p.69. See wenji, v.16, 45 ce (shang).

68 Though, of course, like all educated people at the time, his knowledge of and ability to write poetry was considerable. Liang goes on to praise Kang's poetry for its direct correspondence with Kang's real character. Liang wrote out Kang's poems for publication in 1911, and had his own poems published together with Kang's in 1914. See Helmut Wilhelm, "The Poems from the Hall of Obscured Brightness", in Lo Jung-pang, pp.330-31.

69 Liang includes, for example, the text of a poem presented to him on the occasion of his marriage by Chen Qianpu, which rather sternly reminded the newly-wed Liang of the suffering of the people, and of Liang's plans to achieve great things in his life. "Shi hua", p.46. Chen's untimely death is itself the subject of a poem which Liang includes by Han Wenju, see "Shi hua", p.19.

70 "wuyu" 謀雩, see Lunyu, XI.xxxv.7; Legge, p.248-9.

71 "the two Liuyangs" 湘鄂. Both Tan and Tang came from Liuyang in Hunan.
each other what we had been doing. He encouraged me not to forget
our studies from that time. I was startled into an awareness of past
times.\footnote{Liang, "Shi hua", from \textit{Xinmin conghao}, no.21, 30th Nov. 1902; see \textit{wenzji}, v.16, 45 \textit{ce (shang)}, pp.29-30.}

The regularity of appearance of this section in the \textit{Xinmin conghao}
attest to Liang's abiding interest in poetry, and to his sharing in a particular
taste (among educated Chinese) for revealing the more emotional aspects of
their lives in a suitable poetic medium. But it also underscores his ability to
cover with his writing several aspects of the same subject, among which his
own emotions, activities and public persona, and those of his closest friends,
were included. All were apparently material for Liang's zealous reforming
pen, and play their part as background to the image of the new citizen,
Liang, who is responsible, active, involved in the wider world and abreast of
its changes, yet also a man of culture and feelings.

4. "\textit{Tan Sitong zhuan}"

Tan Sitong, a close friend of Liang's in Peking and Changsha, became a
heroic figure almost immediately after his execution in 1898. His refusal to
leave Peking, his untimely death, and his connections with the world of
wandering martial heroes, in the person of Big Sword Wang the Fifth, gave
him great prominence, and he has received considerable attention in works
of fiction. Unfortunately for Liang Qichao, Tan's fame came partly at the
expense of Kang and Liang, whose escape, leaving their colleagues to die,
gave Tan's story a further tragic edge, and elevated him still higher in the
ranks of heroism. Liang's biography of Tan may be seen to have mixed
motivations: his respect and affection for Tan, and his grief at the
circumstances of his death, no doubt play the most important part. There
must also be the suspicion that Liang used this piece of writing as an
opportunity to straighten the record, to clear himself and Kang of any blame,
and to enlist Tan's renown in the service of the continuing reform movement,
with the Bao Huang Hui at its head. It has already been noted in the previous chapter that the biography was used as the source for Xu Niehai hua's account of the last days of reform in Peking. Liang was quite successful in catching the legend of Tan before it got away, to the extent that his biography has become the most quoted source for the events of Tan's life. There is also, however, something of a literature which is critical of Liang's reliability, as will be seen below.

Soon after arriving in Japan and setting up the Qingyi bao, Liang published his biography of Tan in Wuxu zhengbian ji [An account of the 1898 coup] in the journal. Liang also published in the same journal an edited version of Tan's Renxue [Study of Benevolence], which Tan had handed to him shortly before his arrest, with a preface which he had written "ninety days after the death of the martyr".

The biography gives a brief account of Tan's early life before getting to the main theme which deals with the period of Tan's arrival into the circle of Kang Youwei and Liang in the mid-1890s up until his death in 1898. Tan was Liang's senior by not many years, and shared many of Liang's interests. Liang clearly describes him as a young man like himself in many ways: he had "set his mind on great things", and was "an able essay writer"; after hearing about Kang's teachings and ideas, Tan "was moved to great joy and proclaimed himself K'ang's disciple." Tan and Liang were among "many outstanding men" invited by the Governor of Hunan to come to Changsha in 1897. Both men "undertook to launch ... [reform] programmes in Hunan".

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73 As both Wang Teh-chao and Chan Sin-wai believe, to a certain degree: Chan, p.43, quotes Wang. "Of Liang's account, the first part could be an overstatement intended to give a noble reason and great importance to his, and also K'ang Yu-wei's, flight from danger ..." Chan adds, "one should be aware of the fact that Liang, being a member of the [Bao Huang Hui] in Japan, was inclined to depict T'an as a 'sage' or an 'idol' of the Society so as to draw the support of the loyalists."


75 Chan, pp.13, 53. Tan's long essay was published in thirteen instalments, from the end of 1898 to 1901. Liang says that he "chose its more comprehensible parts for publication", Chan, p.46. Tang Caichang published another version at approximately the same time, in the Yatong Shibao [East Asia Times] in Shanghai.

76 Tan, pp.35, 37.
Tan, though, is credited with much of the resulting radicalization which took root in Hunan. Most telling, in its similarity with Liang's own statements about himself, is Liang's assertion that "Tan took 'daily renewal' [日新 ri xin] as his guiding principle". He "was therefore unconfined and was always prepared to give up his own views in favour of those of others. As a result, he was constantly making progress in his knowledge." This may of course have been true of Tan. But it is also a central plank in Liang's self-evaluation, as he makes clear many years later in his *Intellectual Trends in the Qing*. "Daily renewal" in itself has a respectable place in a gentleman's process of self-cultivation. The standard reference to the term comes from the same chapter in the *Da Xue* [Great Learning] as the term "xin min" 新民 [renovate the people]; it is an important chapter for Liang. Liang's development of this precept, which justifies his "changeability", his tendency to abandon his old views for new views, has been much commented on, and is almost his main distinguishing idiosyncrasy.

In a theme which has annoyed several Chinese historians, Liang continues to expound at some length on Tan's enthusiastic support for Kang Youwei. Tan "wrote a book entitled *An Exposition of Benevolence* in which he elaborated on the principles propounded by K'ang Yu-wei." Liang is not averse to putting in here and there a passage promoting Kang such as the following:

[Tan] was immediately won over upon hearing K'ang's new interpretation of the *Book of Changes* 易经 and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋; and he was impressed by K'ang's thorough mastery of the principles of the Great Unity and the Great Peace and of the subtle meanings in the ruling of Heaven by the Primary Source of the first hexagram "ch'ien" 乾.

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77 *Tan*, p.45.
78 See below.
79 *Da xue*, Commentary, ch.II, 1: "Gou ri xin, ri ri xin, you ri xin." "If you can one day renovate yourself, do so from day to day. Yea, let there be daily renovation." Trans. from Legge, p.361.
80 *Tan*, p.38.
81 *Tan*, p.45.
Intimidated by the Empress Dowager, the Emperor did not dare place great responsibilities on K’ang Yu-wei as he had originally intended. For several months, when there was any need for consultation, the Emperor would make this known through the Tsungli Yamen; and when K’ang had any recommendations, he could only write them down on the memorials presented to the Emperor. Only after the “Four Secretaries” joined the Grand Council was the exchange of ideas between the Emperor and K’ang facilitated. As a result, the Emperor became very determined to carry out far-reaching reforms.\textsuperscript{179}

Within days, the coup d’
\textit{état} occurs. On hearing of the seizure of the Nanhai Huiguan, the club where Kang lived in Peking, Tan’s reaction, as described by Liang, glorifies Kang and gives Kang and Liang’s flight his approval:

T’an coolly said to me, “I wished to save the Emperor and had no way of doing so; now I wish to save K’ang Yu-wei and again have no way of doing so. There is nothing for me to do except to await death. Nevertheless, in this world, there are things we have to attempt even though we know there is no hope of success. You try to go and see Itô [Hirobumi] at the Japanese Embassy and ask him to telegraph the consul in Shanghai to find some means of saving K’ang.” I passed the night at the Japanese Embassy. ... The next day he came to the Japanese Embassy to see me, urging me to take refuge in Japan and entrusting me with some of his written works, ... He said, “Unless there are some who flee, there will be no one to work for the future; unless there are some who stay to die, there will be no way to repay the sage-ruler. Now, because K’ang’s life is hanging in the balance, you and I will have to share the tasks ... We then gave each other a hug and parted.”\textsuperscript{179}

The account then comes to Tan’s prison wall poem. Liang records it as follows, adding that the poem “expressed [Tan’s] regard for K’ang Yu-wei”:

Seeking a night’s lodging from door to door reminds me of Chang Chien.
Comparing myself to Tu Ken, I bear the pain of impending death for yet a while.
With the sword across my throat, I look up to heaven and laugh;
Going or staying, courageous both the K’un-lun friends.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{179} Tan, p.39.
\textsuperscript{180} Tan, pp.42-3.
\textsuperscript{181} Chan, p.44.
This poem, which is included in several of the fictional accounts, and perhaps became for a while in its time the most distinguished example of tibishi, has caused a considerable amount of controversy. In particular, the two "Kunlun friends" are, as Chan Sin-wai says, "the subject of much speculation and debate." Liang held that they were Kang Youwei and Wang Wu.

Liang's biography of Tan has been the subject of an extensively footnoted translation by Chan, who uses it as an attachment to his translation of Tan's Renxue. Chan picks through what appears to be a mess of contradictions, errors and even apparent falsifications left behind by Liang. The poem's inclusion in Kang Liang yanyi, with slight differences in the wording as well as a different person (Lin Xu) credited with its composition, led one scholar, Huang Chang-chien, to argue that Liang had falsified its last line, which should rather read as it is shown in the novel. Kang Liang yanyi's version omits the Kunlun reference, and instead has the line refer to the writer's guilt for a "public crime". This is, I believe, the only place where fiction has been called on to establish Liang's unreliability in the historical account. Clearly, Liang would not have wanted a fellow reformer's admission of guilt in this otherwise heroic poem. Huang, who has published work critical of Kang and Liang, admitted that his views on the two men led him to look at the novel's version with more favour as a likely true record of events. Recent work, however, has supported Liang's version, and Huang...
has himself published an article confirming this.\footnote{Huang Chang-chien, "Lun Tan Sitong yuzhong shi - yu Kong Xiangji xiansheng shuangque" [On Tan Sitong’s prison poem – discussion with Mr Kong Xiangji], Dalu zazhi, v.90, no.2, 15 Feb. 1995.}

This sort of controversy might belong more appropriately in a lengthy footnote, but for the light it throws on the degree to which Liang’s image was vulnerable to damage from Tan’s, despite Liang’s considerable success in aligning Tan’s fate with his own and Kang Youwei’s. Tan’s romantic and patriotic sacrifice in refusing to be saved, his short life, and his enduringly pure reputation, tangle uncomfortably with Liang’s own mix of fame and notoriety. Tan owes a part of his own legend to Liang’s construction of it in this essay soon after the events; yet Liang could not prevent his own escape from itself contributing to the legend that attaches to Tan. Chan’s use of Liang in his book on Tan is a good illustration of Liang’s incomplete extraction from this predicament. Liang is, on the one hand, indispensable to any account of Tan: Chan, for example, quotes Liang on his first page, extolling Tan as "a meteor of the late Ch’ing intellectual world".\footnote{Chan, p.1. The quotation comes from Liang’s Trends, p.107.}

Liang’s comments on the Renxue are also memorable: "the first part of it alone surpassed all the old learning in China."\footnote{Chan, p.12.} But there are too many errors in Liang’s biography for Chan to be able to pass over them, with the result that Liang’s credibility is seriously dented by an apparently reluctant Chan.\footnote{Chan is persuaded by the research of Chang Te-chün that at several key points Liang has committed deliberate falsification of events concerning Tan. "Liang, according to Chang, must have committed an error in his dating [of the first meeting of Tan and Kang], maybe quite deliberately." (p.16); "According to ... Chang Te-chün, Liang’s account of Tan’s inability to meet Kang in Peking is untenable." (p.37); etc. See Chang Te-chün, "Liang Qichao ji Tan Sitong shi shishi pin" [Clearing up the doubts in Liang Qichao’s biography of Tan Sitong], Wen shi, v.1 (Oct. 1962), pp.81-85. Chan is more indirect in his own comments on Liang’s reliability: ‘This, of course, is by no means the first attack on Liang’s historicity’ (p.44); ‘Nothing, however, can be found to substantiate such a point’ (pp.14-15).} In retrospect, Liang’s record of Tan’s life shows aspects which one might call damage-control, understandable in someone who might well feel a degree of survivor guilt after the tragic loss of a close friend.
5. Qingdai xueshu gailun

This is the other main source of information of a biographical nature about Liang which he himself provides. Liang wrote it in 1920 as a preface for Jiang Fangzhen's book on the European Renaissance, but it grew so long that Liang decided that it was worthy of publication in its own right. He then turned back and asked Jiang to write a preface for him. Perhaps Liang never actually intended to write a mere preface for his friend – whatever the truth of the matter, he states that Jiang had agreed that Liang should write a "comparative study", which, however, he was unable to stop "until [he] had written tens of thousands of words", in a mere fifteen days.93

Liang had this to say about his including himself in his own book:

As an active participant in the "Modern Text Movement" myself, I could not but include myself in the narrative. The present work will discuss my person in a purely detached and objective spirit; that is, virtually as another Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, the present writer will criticize the Liang Ch'i-ch'ao of the past thirty years as an historical figure. Whether my criticisms are adequate or not, I cannot say; I have only striven to do justice to the historical Liang Ch'i-ch'ao exactly as I have striven to do justice to the other historical personages.94

Although this is a piece of work from Liang's "later" life, he was only 47 when he wrote it. Yet he can already speak of criticizing "the Liang Ch'i-ch'ao of the past thirty years as an historical figure." According to this reckoning, his first year in the public eye was in 1890, at the age of seventeen. This is not too much of a stretch: Liang had already had two of his examination essays published in the Guangdong weimo [Guangdong selections from examination papers] by this time;95 it was the year he first met Kang Youwei. There is, however, something disturbing in Liang's easy assumption of his right to be called a "historical figure", however accurate the term is for him. One wonders if Liang's reputation as a child prodigy from the age of nine may have left in him an expectation of continuing

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94 First Preface, p.15.
95 Li Guojun, p.24.
attention from the world, creating something of a split in his image of himself, with one self having the responsibility to maintain the early renown of the other.

Liang, in this claim to authorial detachment, appears to respect what Pei-yi Wu calls "the convention of the impartial, invisible, and unobtrusive narrator" familiar to generations of Chinese biographers. In the case of autobiography (Wu calls them "self-written biographies"), Wu deplores this biographic convention for its "subservience to historiography", its inability to make use of personal knowledge, and its "suppression of an individual voice with its own whims or quirks". But in practice Liang manages not to be much hampered by this convention. In the several places in the book where his own contributions are discussed, the hand of Liang is visible shaping his own characterization in a manner which reveals both his dextrous facility with his pen and his frustrated yearning for a kind of recognition which he has not had.

Liang introduces himself in a chapter outlining the background to Qing period intellectual history: Kang and Liang were "the representative figures of the Period of Transformation", a period immediately preceding the Period of Decline. He himself was among Kang's two "most famous" students: he places himself second, presumably out of respect for the first, Chen Qianqiu, who had died so early. Liang pointedly says that although he "promulgated [Kang's] learning widely by lecturing and writing", he had independent views: "he frequently could not bear his teacher's dogmatism; therefore, there were differences [between them] in the end."

This matter of Kang's dogmatism is raised twice again, later in the book. Liang and Chen, Kang's two students (of whom Chen was "particularly gifted and competent"), helped Kang considerably with the writing of his Wei jing kao. Both "were often troubled by their teacher's dogmatism" in the book, but could not make their views heard because of

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97 *Trends*, pp.24-5. Translator's as well as my brackets.

98 *Xin xue wei jing kao* [Study of the forged classics of the Xin], 1891.
Kang's stubbornness. Liang is extremely critical of Kang in this passage. Kang's hypotheses in the *Wei jing kao* were "untenable even from a common sense viewpoint"; "because he was so anxious to be erudite and different, he often went so far as to suppress or distort evidence". Liang believes that Kang's disregard for objective facts, and his insistence on turning everything around to suit himself, led to both his rapid rise to fame at the head of his own school of thought, as well as his inability to sustain what he had built up. Passing from his section on Kang to one dealing with himself, Liang once again makes mention of the *Wei jing kao*. Despite his comment earlier (perhaps not wanting to undercut entirely a work to which his contribution had been significant), "Actually this book is quite excellent and competent on the whole, and the points that can be criticized are but minor ones", here he says instead, "Liang studied the *Wei-ching k'ao*, but since he was often unable to bear his teacher's dogmatism, he left it completely, without further ado."

Liang's description of Kang here contrasts with his earlier comparative reticence to write critically about this aspect of his relationship with his teacher. Evidently Liang was a shrewd publicist for the Baohuang Hui, and in its heyday confined his complaints to his frequent letters to Kang. Liang is by no means entirely negative in his assessments of Kang, though. Whatever the faults of Kang's work, he created a "hurricane" in the intellectual world of the Qing. Liang is, however, concerned to present himself as a member of a new generation which has superseded Kang's. This is evident in passing comments:

The younger generation for the most part disliked his conduct and exchanged criticisms with him, while K'ang, for his part, being over-confident, was contemptuous of these younger men, taking an even more recalcitrant attitude toward them.

And, on the same theme, at Kang's Wanmu Caotang school, "frequently old ceremonies were performed ... Ch'en and Liang had little taste for this..." In

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99 *Trends*, p.93.
100 Some of which are included in Ding Wenjiang's *niaoyu*.
101 *Trends*, p.93.
a more substantial evaluation of Kang, in a later section which compares Kang and Liang, Liang’s apparent flattery of Kang’s “fixed ideas”, and his self-deprecation for having too few, serves once more to characterize Kang as someone set in his old ways. Liang underlines this by quoting Kang’s boast that “My knowledge was complete by the time I was thirty”. Kang and Liang were both figures of the Period of Transformation, which Liang subsequently conflates with the Period of Decline; but Liang does not want to leave himself, as he is prepared to leave Kang, back there.

Liang’s own chapter on himself presents instead a picture of exuberant youth. He begins with his visit with his friend Chen Qianqiu to see Kang, known by the whole country as an eccentric. The two boys are curious to meet him; urge him to open a school; "ardently" proclaim what they have learned to others, and argue every day with "their elders and contemporaries". They are seized with enthusiasm for Kang’s Datang shu, wishing to publicize it, though against Kang's will. (Earlier, Liang had said of this book: "[Kang] had formulated a new ideal which he considered most worthy and most perfect, yet he did not desire its realization and even fought with all his might to suppress it. I suppose the strangeness and unpredictability of human nature can hardly exceed this." Liang opposed Xunzi and advocated the ideas of Mencius and Mozi which tie in with the "great harmony" spirit of Kang’s book.

In the capital, Liang meets Xia Zengyou and Tan Sitong; all engaged in “a spirit of high exuberance” in their generation’s anti-Xunzi movement. Liang includes a poem presented to him by Xia whose last lines sum up their feelings:

Flushed with drink we throw away our glasses and rise,
Laughing and looking about, carefree, and gay:
Within the universe, only this can give us joy.

He recalls his work on the Shizhuan bao, and the feverish months in Changsha teaching with Tang Caichang: "it was not unusual for [Liang] to spend whole

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103 Trends, p.98.
104 Trends, p.106.
105 Trends, p.98.
106 Trends, p.100.
nights ... without sleep."\(^{106}\) Liang describes himself and his colleagues as academic and political radicals: "he excoriated pitilessly all the scholars from Hsün-tzu down to those of the Han, T'ang, Sung, Ming, and Ch'ing"; "the atmosphere within the school became more radical day by day."\(^{107}\)

Liang deals quickly with the 1898 coup, Tan's death and his own exile, without bringing Kang into the picture. In the 1900 uprising, six of Liang's students died before he could do anything to help, including the three most promising of his Changsha students, previously named. At this point he abandons his descriptions of his life in the big events of his time: "from that time on he once again devoted himself solely to the task of propaganda".\(^{108}\) Liang's pronouncements on the quality and influence of his own writing end the section:

His countrymen vied eagerly [for the opportunity] to read [his magazines], and although the Ch'ing government strictly prohibited this, it could not be stopped. For each issue that appeared [in Japan], there were usually more than ten reprinted editions in China. The thinking of students for the past twenty years has been much influenced by them.

Liang never liked the ancient-style writing of the T'ung-ch'eng school. His own early writing had been modeled after that of Han, Wei, and Chin, and was quite cogent and skillful, but at this point he liberated himself from it, and made it a rule to be plain, easy, expressive, and fluent of communication. He interlarded his writings with colloquialisms, verses, and foreign expressions fairly frequently, letting his pen flow freely and without restraint. Scholars hastened to imitate his style and it became known as the New-Style Writing; however, the older generation were bitterly resentful of it and condemned it as heretical [lit., "a wild fox"]). Nevertheless, his style had a clear structure and the flow of his pen was often passionate, with a rare magical kind of power for the reader.\(^{109}\)

Liang makes one further reference to his writing style later in this book which is worth mentioning, in the chapter called "Translation of Western Works and the 'Scholars of New Learning'". Here he speaks of his contribution to the introduction of Western learning into China. While he does not take all the credit for the translations or the introduction of these works ("the translation profession flourished"); and there were "more than

\(^{106}\) Trends, p.101.
\(^{107}\) Trends, p.101.
\(^{108}\) Trends, p.102.
several dozen periodicals”, presumably at least partly devoted to translated works), he does name his writing style as the unique bearer of the ideas in this period, 1902-4:

New ideas swept in like a raging fire, but they were all introduced [into Chinese literature] in the so-called "Liang Ch'i-ch'ao style – disorganized, unselected, incomplete, ignorant of the various schools [of thought], and with an over-emphasis on quantity. Still, [Chinese] society welcomed these ideas, just as people in an area ridden by disaster will gulp down grass roots, tree bark, frozen birds, and putrescent rats, ravenously and indiscriminately, without asking whether these things are digestible or not, let alone whether they may cause sickness. In point of fact, nothing good and sanitary existed that could serve as adequate substitutes [for these things] either.110

Liang is more modest about his writing style here, but he could afford to mock himself when it was done with such splendid language. He makes no mention of his own work in transmitting Western learning in the pages of his journal, but perhaps his mild criticism of two other well-known translators suggested his own superiority. Yan Fu, he says, translated works half of which were "old and rather out-of-date [lit., "removed from the trends of the time"],111 and Lin Shu's translations from "second or third-rate European writers ... [established] no relationship with the new thinking."

While Liang may be thought to have made an adequate separation of his own life and intellectual standing from that of Kang's already by the end of the chapter on himself, his most passionate section is the one that follows, on the "Contrast between K'ang and Liang". Clearly, there had been too many years of bad blood between the two, and Liang took his chance here to criticize Kang for his conservatism and his errors. Liang refers here to the "K'ang-Liang school split". He quotes extensively from his own "repudiation" of Kang for his advocacy of Confucianism as a state religion.

The past two thousand years of "preservation of the [Confucian] cult" [bao jiao 保教] he had likened to "a band of monkeys, leaping and clutching at some

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111 "qu shishi po yun" 去时势远.
fruit, or a group of old women struggling over a penny and cursing each other." He had suggested that those who want to preserve the worship of Confucius were no better than "shoddy scholars" who "nurture a slavish spirit in the intellectual world." A further long quote on the errors this group is constantly making "reveal[s] ... [Liang's] opinions on the proper way in which new thought should develop in the future": by taking Chinese and Western learning side by side, rather than trying to find examples of every facet of Western learning already in existence in the Chinese past. Liang regrets Kang's need to find Confucian origins for his "creative masterpiece", the Datong shu. "If the root of this disease [of reliance on antiquity] is not eradicated, there can be no hope for the liberation and independence of thought. Liang tried to re-emphasize this point repeatedly", Liang says, suggesting that he himself is well on the way to liberation and independence of thought.

In the second part of this section Liang makes another attempt at establishing his own significance. His self-portrait here is something of a masterpiece, a covert attempt to claim the reader's sympathy, while apparently revealing his most egregious flaws of character. He begins with an artless description of his work's limitations:

In intellectual circles, Liang's destructive force was far from negligible, while his constructive [contribution] are not evident. He was partly to blame for the superficiality and vulgarity of the late Ch'ing intellectual world. Nevertheless, he frequently quoted the Buddhist saying: "Before being able to save myself, I try to save others. ..." Thus he produced a great many works in the course of his life, for whatever he had to say he published it! ... He did not think of the fact that he had not mastered the passages [he had just read] ... Teaching in this way, how was it possible not to mislead men?

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113 Trends, p.103. Translator's brackets. From "Baojiao fei suo yi zun Kong lun" [Preserving the faith is no way to respect Confucius], published in the Ximin congshuo, no.2, 22 Feb. 1902.
114 Trends, p.104. Also from "Baojiao fei suo yi zun Kong lun".
115 Trends, pp.104-5. Liang gives the source as the Guofeng bao, 1915. The editor of a recent Chinese edition points out that the journal had been defunct for four years by then. See Zhu Weijing (ed.), Liang Qichao lun Qingxue liang zhong [Two texts by Liang Qichao on Qing studies], Fudan Daxue Chubanshe, Shanghai, 1985, p.72.
116 Trends, p.105.
117 Trends, p.105.
Liang goes on to talk of the problems in his work. It is "extensive and thus superficial", with "dubious generalizations" and "outright errors". But he forgives himself:

Nevertheless, speaking objectively and taking into account the isolation and moribundity of the intellectual world of twenty years ago, without this type of crude and wide-ranging approach the pioneer work of opening up new fields would not have been possible. From this point of view, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao may be considered the Ch'en She of the new intellectual world. However, what his countrymen require and expect of him does not end here; with his innate forcefulness and the qualifications accumulated over a thirty-year period, he ought to try his utmost to lay groundwork for our new intellectual world. If this man lives out his life in the present manner, we cannot but say that it is a great loss insofar as Chinese cultural history is concerned.18

It is not likely that Liang is allowing himself a shared wry laugh with his readers here: an evaluation of Liang's contribution to the intellectual world, and his place in history, is something that he takes extremely seriously. This is followed by further apparently harsh appraisal of Liang's ability. Liang had too few ideas, unlike Kang who had too many; Liang never felt that he had, or ever would have, complete knowledge, whereas Kang considered his complete at the age of thirty; Kang left a definite body of thought, Liang none; Liang had too few convictions and less creative power than Kang. And yet, again, Liang criticizes himself in the compensatory context of his deep enthusiasm for what he is engaged in, his generosity of spirit which spreads his contributions too widely (his work was "interrupted" by "frequent foolish political activities which sapped his energy"), his self-sacrifice in saving others before himself, and his relevance to the future rather than the past. In much of this he undercuts Kang in subtle ways. Twice in this section he makes reference to his forthcoming contributions to the "intellectual world" of the future (post-1920), whereas his earlier reference to the "isolation and moribundity of the intellectual world of twenty years ago" refers precisely to the era of Kang's glory. Liang has thus created for himself here the opportunity to make his true confessions while

18 Trends, p.106. Hsiü notes that "Liang's life was marked by frequent excursions into politics, as well as lack of persistence and depth in literary pursuit." See p.141.
simultaneously going a long way towards exonerating himself.

Liang's willingness to disregard the conventions covering authorial impartiality (which he had made some reference to in his preface) even extends to his borrowing lines from a poem he had written in his daughter's diary:

"The flaw in my learning is my love of extensiveness; therefore it is superficial and discursive. A still greater trouble is my lack of persistence; whatever I won I quickly lost. You may imitate me in a hundred things, but not in these two!"

Liang adds, "He may be said to have had the wit to know himself." Perhaps Liang's sense of self-worth sometimes found difficulty in expressing itself except as a secondary message. He does, after all, tell her (and now the wider world) here that he is a man of learning who has won a good deal in his life, and he is aware of at least a hundred things in his own character that he would have her imitate. Liang shows himself here as a man who looks for more recognition than he has had, and who has the power to grant it to himself, if only by giving with one hand and taking with the other.

Liang draws for the reader a heroic self-portrait, in the Western tradition, of a man always in search of knowledge, with a burning desire for it, a "thirst for knowledge". Rather than succeeding in belittling himself here, Liang has in fact made a moving exposition of the many ways in which his selflessness has prevented him from achieving a place in the highest intellectual realm of the Qing. For a man like Liang, who is naturally concerned about the judgement of history, this is an interesting exercise. In weighing up his own claim for a worthy place in the historical record, Liang appears to avoid any charge that he has abused his authorial privilege, by writing himself into the second rank of significance, frankly admitting his limitations. Yet in the process he succeeds in redefining the standards, and makes himself quite clear in this: in the modern world, he implies, it is not enough to be a man like Kang Youwei. A "new intellectual world" is

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119 *Trends*, p.106.
arriving, and its challenges require a different kind of response, the kind a man like himself is most qualified to make.

In this self-assessment, the limits of Liang's perceptions of himself can be seen. His grasp of the new role of the "modern", publicly recognized intellectual was not at fault, rather it was his inability to understand that this was a form of self-presentation which had already been taken into the cultural vocabulary; his period of usefulness in formulating this transformation of an old ideal was now far in the past.

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Early in his life, in his precociously talented youth and particularly as Kang Youwei's brilliant student and fellow-reformer, Liang Qichao had achieved wide renown even before his years of exile in Japan, the time when he worked hardest at his writing and most consciously displayed himself as a character in the pages of his journals. This early image of Liang can be seen very clearly in the representations created of him in contemporary "social fiction": it reveals the ability of Liang and his colleagues in the reform movement to entertain, shock, and fascinate the fast-growing readership in the late Qing, with their radical new ways of approaching the country's crisis, their boldness, their apparent lack of concern for established forms, and their carefree and exciting lives in association with other young men like themselves. The sudden fall from grace of Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in 1898 and the tragic death of their friends and supporters may have passed by with less comment in another age, but instead the vivid scenes of triumph and disaster and the actions of the people involved were recorded immediately in the vigorous new publishing world of Shanghai and beyond.

Arriving in Japan as a young man with a certain celebrity, or notoriety (at least in the eyes of the representatives of the Qing court in Japan), Liang pursued what had already become his trademark occupation in
journalism with increasing success. Presumably not unaware of the damaging depictions of himself in the works of fiction that had begun to appear, like Kang Liang yanyi and Wenming xiaoshi, he provided his own quite different and more high-minded explanations of his mission in life, in essays and creative work noted for their emotional appeal and their candour. While political opposition and criticism of his role as a leader of the Baohuang Hui was a constant factor during his years in Japan, the more general public acceptance of Liang Qichao increased rapidly with his mounting popularity as an interpreter of the outside world. In these years Liang was able to write with one of the most authoritative voices of his time about events in which he played a role. His version of the happenings of the day has become at least essential reading, if not the locus classicus, for some episodes of the central historical action of the late Qing.

This seductive combination of roles, as actor and commentator, put a great deal of influence into Liang's hands, in effect giving him the power to account for his own actions in whichever way he pleased. It would be unfair to accuse him of any significant distortion of the record of events in which he took part; yet he can be observed to have profited from his situation both in presenting the story of these years to his advantage (or to the advantage of his colleagues) and in the mere frequency of the airing of his point of view, done with complete freedom in the pages of his journals.

Liang had a deft grasp of the printed word and its power to move and to transform. His early tempering in Peking in the days of reform had given him a taste for the public arena and an understanding of how to turn his skills to making himself a permanent fixture there. Some of his appeal came from the image he cultivated of himself as a guileless and emotional man, motivated only by the worthiest of ambitions and prepared to sacrifice his own reputation to advance the broad cause of reform. Another aspect entirely in his appeal was the perception that he was creating a new path forward, forging a new self-definition which reflected his fascination with the tide of change in a wider world. Liang was prepared to look away from tradition and towards the future. This apparent ability to confront the
"trends of the time" (shishi 时势), something that was made clear to his readers over a period of several years, had a great impact on their identification of him as a model for their own lives. Liang's willingness to reveal faults where he found them, to criticize without fear or favour, found him many followers. His famous changeability, which Liang himself made reference to on numerous occasions, belongs to the presentation of himself as a sort of universal tester of the new roles available to a Chinese intellectual at the beginning of the century. Zheng Zhenduo, whose appraisal of Liang is notable for many things but above all for how it reveals his admiration of Liang's character rather than the content of his works, says that it was exactly this changeability which was Liang's most outstanding characteristic: "if he hadn't changed, his value to China might have been nil". Zheng admires Liang because he did not hesitate to change again and again, to bend himself for the benefit of his country and its people.

Liang's changeability, the multiplicity of images that he projected of himself, may be partly a result of his having left behind him the full attachments of the traditional literatus, embedded in securely defined relationships with the state and the people. He had to make his own way as a self-defining independent intellectual, with all the challenges which that profession still throws up in the way of its members, and not only in China. Having few models to suit his purpose, he was in the difficult position of having to cast around for new ones appropriate to each stage of his life. Liang seems to have fallen back on his public images as a brilliant young scholar and literary celebrity, both undeniable aspects of his early persona and solidly grounded in the eyes of his readers, as the basis of an attempt to remake himself by transforming the traditional roles which would have been available to him such a short while before. In this he was usually guided by an ideal of his country's present need, at least, if not wherever possible that of the future. Many of the images he developed for himself come from the

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1 This origins of this word have been traced to Mencius, II.i.1.9, but it was a term much in use in Meiji Japan (in Japanese, jisei).

traditional picture of the literatus: as poet; as commentator on the times, making sense of current events in the light of received authority (or, in Liang's case, in the light of new and foreign ideas, carrying as their authority the success of their country of origin in world affairs); or, indeed, as moral exemplar (just as Liang himself was impressed by earlier figures like Zeng Guofan, whose writing reveals a similar didactic vein). Liang also liked to let himself be known as a thwarted scholar of Buddhism, who had put off his search for enlightenment to help those who needed his talents in the world of mortals.

However hard he tried to rework these traditional Chinese images, though, both the training and guidance he received in his formative years and the conditions of the life he lived resulted in his being an imperfect literatus in the traditional mould, and this fact is used against him both during his life and in the evaluations of him in subsequent scholarly literature. Thus one finds that he was known as a thinker, but not by other thinkers. As a writer he was a famous stylist in his time, but his poetry and prose have little lasting value apart from the fact that they stirred a whole generation of readers to various levels of patriotic fervour or political commitment. He saw himself as a literary man, a scholar, but was seen and scorned by others as a mere journalist.3

Prominent among a new range of images which Liang had to chose from was that of the literary/political activist, borrowed from the European cultural tradition and represented by heroes like Byron, Dante, Milton and Voltaire. Inspired by these heroes as well as other less literary and more military figures, Liang developed his own secondary reputation as a political activist. Early and spectacular failure in 1898 and 1900 did not deter him from a continuing tendency to dabble in politics, though he was by and large an unsuccessful politician. Liang seems to have felt that his self-proclaimed calling to make use of his remarkable talent for the sake of his fellow Chinese impelled him to consider all professions his own: as if his literary talent could be used to advance almost any pursuit.

3 Hu Shi's diaries mention that his friends warned him against starting a newspaper and
Looking again at the characterizations of Liang in late-Qing fiction, it becomes clear that Liang's self-created image as the main bearer of news about the world to the Chinese people encountered opposition from quarters other than the Xing Zhong Hui propagandists. While Liang worked hard to justify his prominence as the informed voice of progress in a rapidly changing era, the fictional works look more at personal images of Liang which, although he does not (could not) obscure them, he nonetheless preferred to ignore. Liang wanted to urge his readers along the road of self-improvement, to teach them how look beyond their narrow personal interests towards the greater goal of national advancement; but his readers, although concerned with how to save China, were also looking for new ways of dealing with the world, and Liang personified this new "cosmopolitan" approach to intellectual life. The fictional accounts take Liang's image only into his early years in exile, but they describe themes in an exciting and enviable life, whether presented in a straightforward manner or laced with satire. Liang mixes with the central actors in a brief but momentous attempt at reform, manages to escape certain death, and starts a new life, overseas but not really out of sight. He is an inspired writer, a committed activist, a poet, a friend of important people, a politician, a mentor to the young.

Liang's essays and his own creative work provided further details of the almost larger-than-life public figure that he had become. He lived a busy and productive life, but interspersed were the weekends at hot springs resorts, writing poetry and talking with colleagues about the affairs of the nation; the episodes of world travel; and the political life with its shifting alliances and secret meetings. Liang ranged freely from one great matter to another, and engaged in several professions, apparently confident in all. This appearance of liberty was aided by his pen, with which he travelled even more freely, at home in the national affairs of any country in the world, past as well as present.

Liang is thus a figure whose characterization in the public imagination has been enriched by what is variously known as yeshi 野史, becoming "another Liang Ch'i-ch'ao". Chang Peng-yüan, "Hu and Liang", p.40.
mishi 秘史, or yishi 逸事, all denoting the kinds of "alternative" histories produced when story-telling requirements (such as for details that make a character seem more real) begin to take over in oral or written accounts of current and past events. This is a kind of unofficial history that records the way that historical events were absorbed into popular culture. In neither Chinese nor Western historiography is this a respectable form: yet there are some aspects of the detailed description of historical events which are only retained in narratives of this form, especially personal characterization, and the motifs (such as the wall-poems, or the regular appearance of Tan Sitong's loyal sword teacher Wang) which struck a chord in the contemporary imagination. The existence of a lively body of this kind of material surrounding Liang's public image also attests to a key component in the way he was received in his own time and in the popular mind since then, namely that he was important as a new type of historical actor.

Readers of his work, who may also have read the works of fiction discussed here, took in the messages that Liang intended, but they were also interested in messages about Liang himself which he provided sometimes unintentionally. Liang's confrontation with the world, as well as his national salvation propaganda work, resonated with his readers who were facing many of the same challenges, if on a more mundane level.

In his writing and his self-representations Liang identified all his life, whether in opposition to authority or not, with the official side of the literary and cultural divide. In his role as propagandist Liang in certain respects resembles the face of "new China". He typifies a kind of prescriptive ideology that has become one of the ways for Chinese leaders to define preferred futures for their people. He was aware of the peculiarities of his historical characterization which might well work against his official recognition, however, as can be seen very clearly in his self-depiction in Qingdai xueshu gailun. He hoped above all to be eligible for inclusion in official historiography in such a way that his place in his time would be properly recognized and his dignity preserved. To do this, he accepted that

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1 "Wild history", "secret history" and "unrestrained anecdotes [about famous people]", respectively.
his intellectual contributions were insufficient and contradictory; instead he put together a "modern" portrait of a man whose ethical and moral attributes demand that he be considered as a great figure of his time, worthy of inclusion in the new century's "Standard biographies" [Liezhuan 列传]. One wonders whether any other public figure of his time, or indeed since, has displayed themselves in such a poor light with such high hopes for the consequences. Ironically, though, he was for a number of years an icon of the other side, of unofficial history, and the lingering traces of this can still be seen, in the strong emotional pull that his image has for some historians, as well as the discomfort he causes for those who prefer a less ambiguous historiography.

This study of Liang Qichao's public personae in the period from 1895 to about 1907 has made use of his representation in late-Qing fiction to examine the process that first established his longlasting residence in the public imagination of his readers. This material, and his own self-representations, facilitated what was in many cases and sometimes still remains an intensely personal connection with his readers, but one which he never entirely managed to control. Popular images gathered around Liang from very early in his life; these images were contested during his life, and since then have continued to develop in different ways in a literature which is still searching for the proper way to incorporate the many facets of his public image.

• • •
Glossary

Ai ziyou zhe
An Shaoshan
Baoguo Hui
Baohuang Hui
baojiao
bishe
bolixitiande
Cai Songpo
Cai Zhonghao
Cao Tai
Changsu
Chaozhi
Chen Guoyong
Chen Qianqiu
Chen Meng
Chen Shutong
chijin
chuan wen
Chūkā gai
Chun Qiu
Ci xi
Da Dao Wang Wu
Da gong bao
Dai Shengfo
Dalù zazhi
Datong
Di Chuqing
Dong Ya bingfu
Duanmu Ci
E kuan
fahuang qi
Fan Yuanlian
Feng Jingru
Feng Zishan
Feng Ziyou
fu yu gangqing
gaozu
Gu Jiegang
Gu Shi
Guofeng bao
Guomin bao
guomin jingshen
Han Wenju
Hansuirō

愛自由者
安绍山
保國會
保皇會
保教
筆舌
伯里玺天德
蔡松坡
蔡鍇浩
曹泰
長素
超回
陳國鏘
陳千秋
陳猛
陳叔通
赤金
傳聞
中華街
春秋
慈禧
大刀王五
大公报
戴勝佛
大陸雜誌
太同
狄楚清
东亚病夫
端木賜
鄂畵
發皇期
范源濂
冯鏡如
冯紫珊
冯自由
富與感情
高足
顧頤刚
顧時
国风报
国民报
国民精神
韩文举
環萃樓
haoran zhi qi
hequn
heimu pai
Hong Xiuquan
Honglou meng
Hu Shi
Huang Huizhi
Huang Modao
Huang Weizhi
Huang Xiaopei
Huang Zunxian
Itō Hirobumi
Jiaren qiyu
Jidu
jinshi
jingshi
Jiu Hesheng
Kang Liang er ni
Kang men dizi
Kang Wuwei
Kang Youwei
Kang Guangren
Kang yan
Kang Zhi
Kokumin shimbun
kuang
langbei
Li Binghuan
Li Boyuan
Li Huixian
Li Jingtong
Li Langfu
Li Wentian
Li xian jing
Liang Bingguang
Liang Qichao
Liang Qitian
Liang Sishun
Liang Tiejun
Liang Xiyu
Lin Gui
Lü Sheng
Luo Runnan
Luo Xiaogao
luohou
Mai Zhonghua
Mao Zedong
maoxian jinju jingshen
mishi
Menshi tanhu ke
Min bao
Mozi
Nan mo tu
Nan ting tingzhang
Nan Xue Hui
niangpu
Ning Sunmo
Okuma Shigenobu
Ou Jujia
Pan Jinghan
Pu Songling
qian
qianze xiaoshuo
Qiangxue Hui
Qin Delai
Qin Lishan
Qingyi bao
qun
ren
Rengong
"Renjian shi"
rixin
Ruan Yuan
Ruhui an zhuren
sanyen
shang
Shaonian Zhongguo zhi shaonian
shenhui xiaoshuo
Shen bao
sheng yuan
Shi bao
shimin
Shiwu Xuetang
Shiwu bao
Shuangtao yuan quntong
Su dong
Suwang
Sun Yat-sen
Sunwui
Tan Sitong
Tan Xiyong
Tang Caichang
Tang Caizhi
Tang Juedun
Tang Youhui
Tianzhu
tibishi
Tokutomi Sohō
tongren tuanliàn ju
Wanmu Caotang
民报
墨子
南末土
南亭亭长
南学会
年谱
宁孙谋
大隈重信
欧矩甲
潘镜涵
浦松龄
乾
谴责小说
强学会
秦德来
秦力山
清议报
群
仁
任公
人间世
日新
阮元
如晦庵主人
散文
上
少年中国之少年
社会小说
申报
生员
时报
石民
时务学堂
时务报
双涛园群童
素洞
素王
孙中山
新会
谭嗣同
谭锡镶
唐才常
唐才质
汤觉顿
唐献辉
天主
题壁诗
德富苏峰
同人团练局
万木草堂
Wang Zhao
Wei Danran
Weixin Dang
Wenming bao
Wu Qichang
Xia Zengyou
Xianzhu zhuanshi
xianxing ji
xiao shimin
Xiaoshuo lin
Xiaoshuo yuebao
Xin xiaoshuo
Xinhui
Xinmin congbao
Xinmin Congbao Guan
Xinmin shuo
Xinmin Xuetang
Xing Zhong Hui
xiuxiang
Xiuxiang xiaoshuo
xiwang, recheng, zhihui, danli
Xu Qin
Xu Tong
Xuehai Tang
Yan gu laoren
Yan Hui
Yan Yihui
yanyi
yeshi
Yesu
Yesu Hui
Yici
yili
yi shi
Yinbringshi zhuren
Yinbringzi
yingshe
Youxi bao
yulun zhi jiaozhi
yuanyang hudie pai
Zhang Taiyan
Zhang Xuejing
Zhang Zhidong
zheng
Zhongguo Weixin Hui
Zhongguo Ribao
Zhongwai gongbao
zhongzu
Zhu Ciqi
Zili jun

王照
魏淡然
维新党
文明报
吴其昌
夏曾佑
侠女传奇
现行记
小市民
小说林
小说月报
新小说
新会
新民丛报
新民丛报馆
新民说
新民学堂
兴中会
绣像
绣像小说
希望,热诚,智慧,胆力
徐勤
徐桐
学海棠
燕谷老人
颜回
颜轶回
演义
野史
耶稣
耶稣会
轶赐
毅力
逸史
饮冰室主人
饮冰子
影射
近戏报
舆论之骄子
鸳鸯蝴蝶派
章太炎
张学瓒
张之洞
证
中国维新会
中国日报
中外公报
种族
朱次琦
自力军
Ziren
ziyou
ziyou zhi yi
Zuixia

子任
自由
自由之义
醉侠
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