

■ Liang Qichao's Modern Project in *The Future of New China*

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Abstract

Moments of the modern occurred in late Qing fiction as a response to the general historical circumstances of Western intrusions. Meanwhile traditional Chinese literature experienced a creative transformation in and through its contact and conflict with Western literature. This essay will examine the intricate interplays between the modern and the pre-modern in *The Future of New China* to reveal the difficulties and contradictions in Liang Qichao's modern project. Along the way, how to define the modern and the pre-modern in a Chinese context will be discussed. In addition to the socio-historical context, the author analyzes the narrative techniques of *The Future of New China* by comparing it with *Hong lou meng*, the crowning achievement of pre-modern Chinese fiction. More or less, the pre-modern is reformed, transformed, or deformed by the nascent, emergent modern.

Keywords: Liang Qichao, *The Future of New China*, *Hong lou meng*, the modern, the pre-modern, tensions, modernization, modernism

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(Received 22 September 2007; accepted 25 May 2008)

In discussing modernity in late Qing fiction, both Leo Ou-Fan Lee and David Der-wei Wang draw on Matei Calinescu's definition of the modern—"a temporal consciousness of the present in reaction against the past" (Lee 499), or simply "to be new and innovative" (Wang 5). Granting the superficiality of such a grasp since literary self-renewal had already occurred prior to the Qing Dynasty, e.g. in the Tang, in the Song, and in the late Ming, the two modify their stands by adding the register of encounter with non-Chinese elements in late Qing fiction. "Modernity' in China thus connotes not only a preoccupation with the present but a forward-looking search for 'newness,' for the 'novelties' from the West" (500), writes Lee. For Wang, late Qing fiction is modern in its "*global relevancy* and its *immediate urgency*" (18). The modern in late Qing fiction, as well as the modern in May Fourth literature, was (to be) born as a response to the general historical circumstances of Western intrusions, military, economic, political, cultural, and literary. Meanwhile traditional Chinese literature experienced a creative transformation in and through its contact and conflict with Western literature. *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* (*The Future of New China*), a famous fictional work by Liang Qichao, is an early case in point. This essay will examine the intricate interplays between the modern and the pre-modern in this provocative text to reveal the difficulties and contradictions in Liang's modern project. Along the way, how to define the modern and the pre-modern in a Chinese context will be discussed.

Since no complete English translation is available, it is necessary to introduce the novel first.¹ *The Future of New China* was written in 1902-03, and serialized in *Xin xiaoshuo* (New fiction), a magazine started in Yokohama under Liang Qichao, who was in exile in Japan after the failure of the Reform Movement in 1898. The novel opens with the fiftieth anniversary of the Great Chinese Republic in 1962. The picture of New China is one of peace, power, and glory. At the Grand Exhibition held in Shanghai, Dr. Kong Hongdao, the most outstanding scholar of the country, delivers a series of speeches on the last sixty years of Chinese history. Then the story flashes back to 1902, narrating how two patriotic youths, Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing, having lived and learned in Europe, return to China and make diligent preparations for the founding of the Constitutional Party to save the country. In the introductory part of his speech Dr. Kong outlines the history of sixty years in six periods. The novel reaches

¹ David Wang touches on the plot of the novel in his monograph on late Qing fiction, *Fin-de-siecle Splendor*. See esp. 165-66, 303. Recently there appeared on the Internet a partial translation (only the first few paragraphs) of *New China: A Future History* by ZHWJ (<http://my.opera.com/zhwj/blog/new-china-a-future-history-1>). All the quotations in this essay from *The Future of New China*, including Liang's "Preface," are my own translations.

only the preliminary stage of the first period, and then abruptly stops at Chapter 5, remaining an unfinished work.

Leo Lee holds that *The Future of New China*, as a novel of political fantasy, owes much to “the conventions of fantasy used in traditional Chinese literature” (459). Nevertheless, occasional fantasies of the ideal society were located in the contemporary land overseas or isolated Peach Blossom Spring, and “future history” had never appeared in traditional Chinese fiction (Xia 233). The original narrative framework of *The Future of New China* must be attributed to the influences of Western and Japanese novels, from which the future orientation is derived. Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, adapted and translated by the British missionary Timothy Richard as *Bainian yijiao* (*A Hundred Years' Sleep*), was serialized in a newspaper from 1891 to 1892, and then published in 1894 (Wang 254, 273). Liang referred to the translation twice in 1896 (Xia 53-54). Obviously the unusual narrative impressed Liang very much. In the “Preface” to *The Future of New China* Liang says that he had been intending to write the book “for five years,” so he must have started to hatch the work in 1897, shortly after reading *A Hundred Years' Sleep*.² Liang was also familiar with Thomas More's *Utopia* (Xia 234n). On his voyage to Japan he came to know the Japanese political novel, and translated a specimen, *Jiaren qiyu* (Strange adventures of a beauty) by Shiba Shiro (Xia 210-11). Finally, the opening of *The Future of New China* is strikingly similar to that of *Setchubai* (Plum blossoms in the snow), a political novel by Suehiro Tetchō, which begins with the 150th anniversary of the first convocation of the Japanese Parliament, and a boast of the developed and powerful Japan in 2040 (Xia 232-33; Wang 303). Liang's direct indebtedness to Western and Japanese works signals the arrival of the factor of the modern in the writing of Chinese fiction. *The Future of New China* is the first political novel, and the first utopian novel in the history of Chinese literature (Xia 64-65). Chinese fiction walked into a “new” era. “New fiction,” and “new new fiction,”³ flourished for over a decade. The event, however, is rather ambiguous. For one thing, the advent of the “new” in fiction is a mere by-product of a series of evils produced by Western powers: wars, fires, blood, savageries. The nascent ray of the modern emerged against a dark background of imperialism and colonialism.

² Before *Looking Backward*, Washington Irving's *Rip van Winkle* was translated in 1872 as *Seventy Years' Sleep* (Chen 1989, 24). Irving might have influenced Bellamy, but not Liang Qichao, for two reasons. First, we do not know whether Liang read *Seventy Years' Sleep* or not; second—which is more decisive—Irving's narrative model—a supernatural experience in another world results in incredible passage of time and great changes in this world—was already current in traditional Chinese works of fantasy.

³ Names of two Chinese periodicals in the beginning of the 20th century.

Liang's activities are at best an active response to such suffocating darkness. For another, we are keenly aware of the Eurocentric nature of the notion of the modern in late Qing fiction or in *The Future of New China*. The "modern," defined as such, is not a native species, but has been imported from the West.

Were it for the purpose of accounting or studying history alone, the terms "modern" and "pre-modern" might well be dispensed with. Scholars have made excellent studies of the history of late Qing fiction or Liang Qichao by, say, tracing the factual external influences, but doing without the discourse of the modern, as Xia Xiaohong and Chen Pingyuan have done. In Mainland China the predominant view dates "modern" Chinese literature from the May Fourth period, in accordance with the political periodization. Literary history is relegated to the humble status of handmaiden subservient to socio-political history. Xia and Chen do not openly breach the heavily ideologically colored naming, although Chen occasionally claims, on the authority of Yu Dafu, who designated the "worldization of Chinese fiction" as "modern" Chinese fiction, that "modern" Chinese fiction started when Chinese writers consciously learned and borrowed from foreign fiction (1989, 23), i.e. in late Qing. In the "Introduction" (Chapter 1) of *The Transformation of Chinese Fiction's Narrative Pattern*, Chen mentions the "modernization of Chinese fiction," which he chooses to approach through the transformation of narrative pattern (1898-1927). But the ambiguous concept of "modernization of Chinese fiction" is left unexplored. Consequently, one important facet of the period is repressed or half-concealed, consciously or unconsciously. Researching on the "repressed modernities" of late Qing fiction, David Wang discovers that "the crucial burst of modernity came in the late Qing, not the May Fourth period" (8), and argues that "late Qing fiction is not a mere prelude to 'modern' Chinese literature, but a most active stage that precedes its rise" (16). The "modern" has always been circulating in "modern" Chinese literature scholarship, so common as to invite no special note; Wang's contribution lies in the corrective predating of the appearance of the "modern."⁴ The previously neglected corners of literary history are brought to light, and literary history is re-claiming its legitimate liberal independent status. Further, the concept of the pre-modern may be introduced to supplement the modern. The two define each other and exist in a dialectical relationship. If the pre-modern registers the traditional, the indigenous, the done, then the modern refers to the

⁴ Before David Wang, Leo Lee comments, "The origins of modern Chinese literature can be traced to the late Ch'ing period, more specifically to the last decade and a half from 1895 to 1911, in which some of the 'modern' symptoms became increasingly noticeable" (452). But Wang's late Qing lasts from 1849 to 1911. My concept of late Qing is closer to Lee's.

new, the foreign, the doing. The modern engages itself with, transforms, and is confined by, the pre-modern, and vice versa, depending on the relative strength of the two elements. The pre-modern is either revived, or abandoned, or assimilated, by the modern. (But the general tendency is that the modern actively transforms the pre-modern.) What we usually call “modern” comes into being only after the engagement of the modern with the pre-modern, as the outcome of such an engagement. The modern is a productive process which drags the pre-modern into the process itself and makes it part of—that is, a party that participates in—the process.

I deliberately avoid the term “modernity” or “modernities” to bring out the doing-ness of the modern: it is not a finished product, nor an inherent quality, but something in process. The modern, thus defined, boasts the advantage of approaching the actual history-making more easily and more intimately. Meanwhile the concept of the modern connotes both kinds of modernities as explicated by Matei Calinescu. According to him, since the first half of the nineteenth century, “an irreversible split occurred between modernity as a stage in the history of Western civilization—a product of scientific and technological progress, of the industrial revolution, of the sweeping economic and social changes brought about by capitalism—and modernity as an aesthetic concept” (qtd. in Lee 499). This formulation is analogous and close to Marshall Berman’s distinction of modernization and modernism within modernity: “Current thinking about modernity is broken into two different compartments, hermetically sealed off from one another: ‘modernization’ in economics and politics, ‘modernism’ in art, culture and sensibility” (88). In the West modernism emerges in the wake of, and exists in a sphere separate from, modernization. In Liang Qichao and *The Future of New China*, however, “modernization” is constructed through “modernism;” the political and the aesthetic cohabit the same space. Liang’s modern project is at once a project of “modernization” and a project of “modernism.” Generally speaking, China had not undergone the stage of capitalism and industrial revolution yet, so in the Chinese context “modernization” and “modernism” existed on paper rather than in reality, and had different implications from their counterparts in the West. For Liang, “modernization” mainly involves political registers like enlightenment of the people and establishment of constitutional monarchy; “modernism” means elevation of the status of the novel and renovation of fiction by introducing the “new mood.”

According to Liang Qichao, to renovate the people of a nation (“modernization”), one must first renovate its fiction (“modernism”). The renovation of various spheres of national life all hinge upon the renovation of fiction. Fiction or fiction writing was held in low esteem in the traditional hierarchy of literature;

Liang elevates the genre to the throne of “the crowning glory of literature” (Denton 76). What Liang sets his heart on is the utilitarian function of the novel: “A newly published book could often influence and change the views and arguments of the whole nation” (Denton 73). Liang is not interested in literature or fiction per se, but uses fiction as an educational tool. His revolution in fiction serves the ultimate aim of national renovation. In Liang’s project of the modern, the vehicle of “modernism” is subsumed under the urgency of “modernization.”

This point is well illustrated in *The Future of New China*. Liang forewarns his reader in the “Preface”: “The writing of this volume is intended for the publication of political views alone;” “The volume includes laws, constitutions, speeches, papers, etc.” In Chapter 2, Dr. Kong recites first the Constitution, and then the Rules for Action, of the Constitutional Party. The body of Chapter 3 is a 16,000-word-long transcript of a debate on the current political situation and proper line of action between Huang Keqiang and Li Qubing. Fiction recedes into oblivion; politics is staged instead. They lament the partition of China by imperial powers and the slavish nature of government officials. The deplorable China is compared to “a cow pen uncleaned for thirty years” (31), in an allusion to the story of Hercules. The two argue with each other continuously for forty-four rounds, citing in burning passion neologisms such as the French Revolution, Napoleon, Rousseau, Mazzini, democracy, tyranny, constitutional monarchy, etc. They diverge on which way to take for saving China: bloody revolution or bloodless reformation. The author’s mouthpiece Huang supports the latter. The intense, engrossing political debate is bracketed by two poetical works. The first one, coauthored by Li and Huang after drinking, vents patriotic feelings and triggers the long debate. The second, quoted toward the end of the debate, satirizes people’s despicable slavishness: “Having been slaves to Manchus, let’s serve foreigners: servility’s passed on, rooted in mind Slaves are good, slaves are happy, slaves’ homes are where they live, why preserve the seed or the country?” (39) Both belong to classical genres, only the second is much more colloquial. Both are invested with powerful political feelings, lyrical or sarcastic. The political debate is sandwiched between the poems, but the poetical is steeped in, and governed by, the political, as is also suggested by the fact that the political debate continues beyond the second poem, as if unbridled and uncontrollable by the aesthetic. It is the political that gives content and life to the poetical and makes it “modern,” which would otherwise be mere antiquated and lifeless form. Li and Huang’s poem is immersed in the old pattern and the familiar atmosphere, only the image of sound sleep and the poignant statement “Incredible—isn’t there a single Man in a thousand-year race of Gods’ offspring?” (19) are new, connected respectively with “awakening of the sleeping lion (i.e. China)” and “East Asian sick men” (referring derogatorily to the Chinese

people by the imperialists) current at the time. The sarcastic tone of the second poem is new for the genre. In both cases the political revives the poetical by introducing new dimensions and violating its conventions.

Traditional Chinese fiction puts the emphasis on plot, but Liang reduces plot to political argument. Here we clearly see the rebellion of the modern against the pre-modern. On the other hand, Liang's view of the educational function of fiction originates from the Confucian notion *wen yi zai dao* (literature should carry the Way). His mode of thinking about literature does not transcend the traditional model. As David Wang shrewdly comments, "If Liang Qichao should be praised, it is not so much for introducing anything foreign as for ingeniously reviving traditional Chinese literary didacticism and utilitarianism by packaging them as Western and Japanese imports" (34). Dr. Kong, a descendant of Confucius, bears two names: *juemin* (enlightening the people) and *hongdao* (enhancing the Way). The christening design is telling enough. The moment of Liang at his most modern and new is, in its core, pre-modern and old.

"To contain the new mood in the old mode"—that is Liang's slogan and strategy of literary revolution. Both in fictional or poetical writing and in translation, Liang works with this same principle. Tensions inevitably arise between the modern mood and the pre-modern mode. Let us take Liang's rendition of Byron in Chapter 4. Presumably Liang has his characters listen to the singing of Byron's poems and chooses to translate this particular poet because Byron fought for the independence of Greece, an ancient, faded civilization like China, and because of the poems' multiple contrasts of past and present, glory and misery, freedom and yoke. The translations are intended to startle the reader into awareness and action. The modern intent and the political content are embodied in the traditional forms of *sao* and *qu*. For one thing, the refrain and the parallel structure in *sao* and *qu* strengthen the original meaning and promote Liang's ideological project. For instance, the appositional phrase "thou craven crouching slave" is broken into two sentences in translation, stressing each of the two adjectives and the identity as slave (47); the sentence "I could not deem myself a slave" is repeated: rhetorical question first, followed by exclamation (48). To some extent the pre-modern mode lends itself to the expression of the modern mood. But its flexibility is rather limited, and cannot compensate for its essential incompatibility with the new sentiment. This is manifested in two aspects, which are, by and large, equally awkward and unsuccessful: the "familiarizing" of the exotic, and the defamiliarizing of the indigenous. The genres of *sao* and *qu* employ the elegant classical Chinese with a fixed, rigid metrical pattern, according to which even a sigh or an exclamation must be uttered at a definite point. The transliterations of Western proper names, such as Thermopylae, Salamis, Sappho, Phoebus,

and Marathon, sound jarring in the ancient meter. The nineteenth-century Lord Byron is made to speak like Qu Yuan, who lived two thousand years before. The incongruous old mode, especially *sao*, significantly undermines the expressiveness of the new mood. Liang admits himself that he is “all fettered” when forcing the foreign meaning into the Chinese tune (48). In fact, by choosing *sao* and *qu* to translate Byron, Liang enslaves himself while condemning slavishness, and surrenders to the pre-modern while advocating for the modern. Liang seems not to have realized the serious political consequences of his seemingly innocent, natural aesthetic decision.

In Liang Qichao’s project of the modern, modernization occupies the central position: it is the primal force, and the ultimate purpose of modernism; it provides the raw material for, and stipulates the direction of, modernism. In 1898 Liang, in collaboration with others, attempted to modernize the state through the Reform Movement. The Emperor was persuaded and decided to carry out the Westernization measures and create a new nation-state, but the interferences of Dowager Ci Xi aborted the Movement. Almost everything reformed was restored to its original state, leaving the Capital College as a witness and crop of the failed Reform Movement. When Liang describes the lectures on Chinese history at the Grand Exhibition, which are organized by the Capital College, he obviously continues his political project of modernization and rewrites the recent history of failure with literary imagination, fulfilling his psychological wish and relieving himself of the fresh pain. The object of reformation changes from the politic body to the literary body; the same end is aimed at with a different means. For Liang, this is a psychological, as well as a political, necessity.

In Liang’s modern project, on the other hand, the relationship between modernization and modernism is more complex than one of objective and vehicle, or the political and the aesthetic. More often than not the political *is* the aesthetic, and the aesthetic *is* the political. Liang’s promotion of the status of fiction—hence the movement of fiction from periphery to center in the paradigm of literature—is an aesthetic *and* political act. This remapping of literature overthrows the deeply-ingrained literary hierarchy, subverting the feudal, pre-modern order. In fiction writing, Liang often makes political choices while choosing aesthetically, as when translating Byron or investing the traditional poetical genre with political content. At such moments modernization and modernism not merely inhabit the same space; they are joined into one inseparable entity.

The modern stands in a dialectical relationship with the pre-modern, which to understand better we shall make a comparison between *The Future of New China* and *Hong lou meng* (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*, or *The Story of the Stone*). *Hong lou meng* is the crowning achievement of classical Chinese fiction,

while *The Future of New China* is a crude, immature work of modern Chinese fiction in its embryonic state. To compare the two might do injustice to the infinite richness of the former and overrate the intrinsic value of the latter. Since, however, *Hong lou meng* is arguably most representative of traditional fictional techniques, the juxtaposition of the earliest modern with the best pre-modern can set off the new elements more effectively. We may draw a comparison with the artistic incomparability in mind.

Like *The Future of New China*, the ending is displaced at the beginning in *Hong lou meng*; unlike *The Future of New China*, the ending is *implied* at the beginning in *Hong lou meng*. In Chapter 5, Bao-yu the hero enters the Land of Illusion and reads the Register of the Twelve Beauties of Jinling, suggestive poems with fine illustrations. Then he listens to the twelve songs of "A Dream of Golden Days," beautiful and enchanting. These poems and songs tell implicitly the different but equally deplorable fates of all the main maiden characters. In a graceful, poetical and allegorical manner Cao Xueqin sets the beautiful, melancholy, and inevitably tragic tone of the whole novel, and foreshadows the development of the story by singing once and again the tearful and pitiful outcome of the lives of the twelve beauties. Doubtless, *Hong lou meng* is aesthetically superior to *The Future of New China*; but in terms of novelistic technique it is not necessarily so. The foreshadowing in *Hong lou meng* is framed in a dream, in the Land of Illusion, i.e. in the other place; the sphere of temporal order is kept intact and continuous. In *The Future of New China*, the form of future history begins with a scene—which is the consummating part of the story—at another *time*; the places, Nanjing and Shanghai, are real. With the decisive change from spatial displacement to temporal displacement, the traditional narrative order of Chinese fiction is violated. The foreign influence transforms the pre-modern convention. The liberating redefinition opens new space and stimulates new possibilities for new fiction. As Leo Lee observes, the future-oriented political fantasies like *Chiren shuomeng ji* (An idiot's dream tale) and *Shizi hou* (The lion's roar) may have been inspired by *The Future of New China* (459).

The speakers in *Hong lou meng* and *The Future of New China* play different roles. Dr. Kong tells the whole story, drawing from his memory; his voice is supposed to be behind all the words noted down by the scribe. The speaker is the main narrator. In Chapter 2 of *Hong lou meng*, there is a one-time character that appears suddenly and vanishes for ever, Leng Zi-xing. Leng serves as the author's mouthpiece, his sole function being to introduce the family background of the Jias and present the peculiar character of Bao-yu. If Leng is an announcer of the stage, showing up before the performance and withdrawing immediately afterwards, then Dr. Kong is an orator on the stage, the play alive only in his

narration of the past. If *Hong lou meng* shows, then *The Future of New China* tells. Paradoxically, however, the showing of *Hong lou meng* cannot put off the coat of story-telling (*shuoshu*), whereas the telling of *The Future of New China* takes on the new costume of story-writing. In other words, the showing of the former induces us to hear, while the telling of the latter induces us to read.

Traditionally story-telling bears considerably upon fiction writing, and some novels are the literati's adaptations of the story-tellers' oral versions. A novel is divided into chapters (*hui*, meaning both "time" as in "next time" and "chapter") that are entitled in couplets, each ending in suspense at a critical moment: "What happens next? Please wait and hear." *Hong lou meng* is essentially a written text, and the endings of several of its 120 chapters deviate from the story-telling pattern: ". . . Please see the next chapter" (Chs. 17, 32, 66, 70, 79, 89). But the majority of the endings conform to the pattern: ". . . Please wait and hear next time."⁵ Both the deviations and the conformities seem to be unconscious on the part of Cao Xueqin. In contrast, Liang Qichao's theory of fiction shows his clear awareness of the reader. As Leo Lee notes, his four powers of fiction, "thurification" (*xun*), "immersion" (*jin*), "stimulation" (*ci*), and "lifting" (*ti*), are "concerned not with the writer, nor with the intrinsic 'world' of literature, but solely with the reader" (457). In *The Future of New China* the "reader" is deliberately evoked. Chapter 1 concludes with "What happens next? Please wait and see" (my emphasis). Sometimes the narrator addresses the reader directly: "Gentle reader, this lecture by Old Mr. Kong lasts over two double-hours, his mouth gone dry, the audience's ears tired, and we the scribes' hands exhausted. Probably the eyes of people reading the fiction have also become bleary" (43). The fiction's mode of circulation turns from telling-listening to writing-reading.

True, "Gentle Reader" is addressed in the first and last chapters of *Hong lou meng* (1: 47, 5: 369). But like the seeing-endings of some chapters, the occurrence is occasional and irregular and cannot represent a decisive transformation from telling-listening to writing-reading. Throughout the book the narrator assumes the role of story-teller, the most obvious signal of which, besides "Please wait and hear" at the end of a chapter, is *huashuo* (literally, "words saying") that opens a chapter.⁶ The variations of *huashuo*, such as *qieshuo* and *qeshuo* (both

⁵ David Hawkes apparently does not realize the significant difference between hearing and seeing (reading) at the end of a chapter. The hearing is sometimes preserved (e.g. Ch. 16, "What followed will be told in the following chapter"), sometimes neutralized (e.g. Ch. 9, "The following chapter will reveal"), and more often distorted (e.g. Chs. 11, 13, 14, ". . . you will have to read the next chapter"). The same with the seeing (preserved: Ch. 89), except that more are neutralized (Chs. 17, 66, 70, 79) than distorted (Ch. 32). Another problem is that the punning *hui* is reduced to "chapter."

⁶ David Hawkes and John Minford follow the original formula only in rare places: Hawkes, e.g. Chs. 29, 33, "Our story last told . . ."; Minford, e.g. Chs. 99, 108, 119, "We have already told. . .".

containing the word “saying”), often start a new section dealing with a new plot within a chapter. “Saying” is a convenient, artificial transitional device developing from the habit of story-telling. The chapters of *The Future of New China* begin with the saying-connectors as well, but they are not from the omniscient, God-like story-telling narrator; Dr. Kong the human speaker utters these words. Liang Qichao may have been influenced by the traditional story-teller in the creation of Dr. Kong, which as character might be deemed as a variant of story-teller (Xia 68). But the difference is still there.

More important, the feature of writing-reading in new fiction enables it to reform the omniscient point of view of traditional fiction. *Hong lou meng* is narrated basically from an omniscient point of view, while *The Future of New China* deploys a complex triple narration: the major narrator (Dr. Kong) from a limited point of view, the minor narrator (the scribe) from an omniscient point of view, and the author-narrator also from an omniscient point of view.

In Chapter 3 of *Hong lou meng*, Cao adopts a limited point of view and depicts the setting and the characters from Dai-yu's eye. For instance, when Dai-yu and Bao-yu meet, both have the strange feeling that they have seen the other before. But Dai-yu thinks about it in astonishment, and Bao-yu speaks this out with a laugh. The subtly discriminating treatment chimes in with the personality of the two characters, and also proceeds from the limited point of view. The novel as a whole, nevertheless, takes the story-teller's omniscient point of view. Even Chapter 3's limited point of view is not thoroughly consistent. It is broken at least twice when everyone “realiz[es] that she must be suffering from some deficiency” (1: 90) and when Bao-yu “after reflecting for a moment or two on what she had said, offered no further resistance, [considering it very reasonable]” (1: 104).⁷

In *The Future of New China*, Dr. Kong “experienced everything personally” (4), so his point of view cannot but be limited. This is where Dr. Kong differs from the traditional omniscient story-telling narrator. The limited and personal point of view strengthens truthfulness, e.g. when Dr. Kong tells how he responded tearfully to *Xinmin congbao* (New people miscellany, edited by Liang Qichao) in Tokyo in the early 1900s (14-15). In Chapter 3 Dr. Kong gives a word-by-word account of the debate of Huang and Li. Since Kong was not present at the debate, the author solves the problem of the limited point of view with a supplementary narrator, the scribe, who explains away the matter through Huang's notebook *Chengfeng jixing* (Traveling the wind), which records the debate. Hence the

⁷ Literally, Hawkes' rendition here is not faithful enough for one to make narrative analyses; to which end I foreground the psychological dimension by emending the accompanying adverbial.

trajectory of the debate:

Huang's notebook *Traveling the Wind* → Dr. Kong's speech → the scribe's transcript → *The Future of New China* in *New Fiction*

The complex genealogy, by disguising the author's writing with every possible means, aims to confirm the reliability, truthfulness, and certainty of the narrative. So far the double narrative is successful. Liang Qichao not only transcends the convention of omniscient point of view, but also compensates for the inadequacy of limited point of view with a minor narrator. When we compare this with the mixture of omniscient and limited points of view in *Hong lou meng*, we come to realize the ingenuity and significance of Liang's innovation. Unfortunately, however, Liang's double narrative is not thoroughly consistent either. Starting from Chapter 4, both the major narrator and the minor narrator disappear, substituted by the omniscient author-narrator, who knows how everybody thinks.⁸ The modern renovation of the double narrative collapses into the pre-modern story-telling. The tone of story-telling is most manifest in Chapter 1 (except for the last sentence "What happens next? Please wait and see"), where the future history and the need of introducing the origin of the novel (Dr. Kong's speech transcribed for *New Fiction*) necessitate an omniscient narrator. But in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 Liang might, and should, have stuck to his double narrative; his failure to do so points to the resistivity of the pre-modern and the difficulty of the modern.

The uneven quality of *The Future of New China* can be attributed to its form of publication: serialization in the monthly periodical *New Fiction*. The chapters are composed at intervals, not continuously. Liang says in the "Preface:" "The time to write this novel is no more than two or three days each month." The inadequate design of the whole and the hasty writing inevitably result in gaps and inconsistencies. Serial publication also explains Liang's adoption of the traditional chapter-division, *hui* taking its meaning from the serial number, rather than in the teahouse (as in story-telling) or in the book (as in *Hong lou meng*). *Hong lou meng* began to circulate around the 1750s, and was not published in print until 1792 (Hsia 249). The thirty or forty years in between saw the book in manuscript form, because it was banned by the Qing government. From the scribal spread of *Hong lou meng* to the periodical serialization of *The Future of New China*, the change signifies the technological progress in printing, the print boom

⁸ For the double narrative in *The Future of New China*, see Xia 67-71.

(rise of the printing industry, abundance and popularity of newspapers and magazines, etc), and the formation of a reader market at the beginning of the 20th century.

Scholars, such as A Ying and Chen Pingyuan, have recognized the print boom in late Qing and its impact on the development of new fiction, but they fail to inquire how the technological progress in printing came about. The technological breakthrough in Chinese printing is an import from the West; in this area, as in the field of fiction writing, we observe the supplanting of the pre-modern by the modern. The art of printing was originally invented in China, and spread all over the world. But by the nineteenth century, when the West stepped into the machine-press period (1800-1950), China still lagged behind in the hand-press period. *A History of Chinese Books and Libraries* dates the machine-press period in China from 1840, the year the Opium War began. Formerly the Chinese types were made of clay, wood, tin, copper, or lead, but lead types were rarely used in printing (Xie 113-19). In the early nineteenth century a British missionary succeeded in making Chinese “lead types” and printing the Bible with them (Xie 205). The imperialist cause of Christian and cultural expansion led to the introduction of the advanced printing technology as a by-product. By the beginning of the 20th century machinery printing had become the mainstream of Chinese printing, and the printing industry gradually became the capitalist-run industrial enterprise, with its concentration in Shanghai (Xie 207). Now we understand, in terms of technology, why the print boom occurred in the opening decades of the 20th century and why most of the periodicals devoted to new fiction were published in Shanghai.⁹ *New Fiction* was founded in 1902 in Yokohama, and in the next year it was moved to Shanghai (Chen 273). *The Future of New China*, published in *New Fiction*, also moves its scene to Shanghai (Ch. 5), the most modern city in China.

Thus we have carried out our comparison of *Hong lou meng* and *The Future of New China*. Liang Qichao departs from Cao Xueqin in each of the following aspects—narrative order (foreshadowing vs. future history), readership (audience vs. reader), point of view (omniscient vs. double point of view), and form of publication (scribal spread vs. periodical serialization). In readership and point of view Liang is not so successful as in the other two. The difficulty of the modern coincides with the stubbornness of the pre-modern. The conflicts between the pre-modern and the modern began to, and would soon, transform the nature of traditional Chinese fiction. Like *The Future of New China*, both modernism

⁹ According to the statistics provided by Chen Pingyuan (1988, 161, 273), of all the 27 fictional magazines (including one daily) started from 1902 through 1917, 21 were published in Shanghai.

and modernization are unfinished projects, unfinished yet already started. If Liang Qichao and his *Future of New China* are unsatisfactory in actual achievements, they are rich in potential possibilities. Typical of all pioneering revolutionary efforts, they destruct more than construct; or rather, they fail to construct well only because of the immediate task of destruction.

Liang Qichao's modern project is full of conflicts and contradictions. He realizes the modern transition from the oral tradition "audience" to the print culture "reader," but by the end of Chapter 5 he completely regresses to the pre-modern convention: "What happens next? Please wait and *hear*" (82; my emphasis). He adopts three systems of time-counting at once: in the year of our Lord (Western calendar), in the year of Confucius, and in the year of the Emperor, and mistakes A.D. 2062 for A.D. 1962 (3). He uses vernacular language (*baihua*), Shanghai dialect (68), imported neologisms, and even Hong Kong English (69), but cannot get rid of the influences of *wenyan* (e.g. classical-styled poems, sentences, and vocabulary). His introduction into the novel of journalistic reportage (53, 57, 58), partisan papers, and political argumentation expands the subject matter of fiction, but also harms readability and artistry. The result is a queer hybrid of irrelevant genres: "like fiction, not fiction; like unofficial history, not unofficial history; like a treatise, not a treatise: a sort of nobody-knows-what genre" (Liang, "Preface"). The generic chaos in the transitional period enables a variety of literary experiments, lending itself to a fiction boom, but it also sacrifices quality for quantitative popularity, and overwhelms the more profound need of a revolution in the linguistic medium, which was not accomplished until the Vernacular Movement in 1917.

The richness of *The Future of New China* consists in its impurity, uncertainty, instability, and the inner tensions between the modern and the pre-modern. Liang Qichao applauds, advocates, and experiments with, the new and the modern, but he can by no means rid himself of the old and the pre-modern. The modern struggles hard to be free, only to find itself still in the grips of the pre-modern. Liang's strategy to promote "modernization" even at the expense of "modernism" sometimes damages both. The interference of the political with the aesthetic proves to be destructive of the old literary conventions, but fails to be constructive of the new aesthetics. His modern project is destined to become a sacrifice on the altar of history. But this is precisely the value of Liang Qichao and the value of studying *The Future of New China*. To a greater or lesser degree, the pre-modern is reformed, transformed, deformed by the nascent, emergent modern. To use the metaphor of birth, that would be: the labor of the modern. We do not hear the distinct cries of the newly born baby yet; but we do hear the heavy, hopeful groans of the laboring mother.

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梁啟超《新中國未來記》中的現代規劃

摘 要

作為對西方侵略的回應，晚清小說表現出一些現代性的特色。與此同時，中國傳統文學在與西方文學的接觸和碰撞中，經歷了創造性的轉化。本文檢驗《新中國未來記》中現代與前現代的複雜關係，並揭示了梁啟超現代規劃中的種種困難和矛盾。同時本文亦討論在中國情況下定義現代與前現代。除了社會歷史背景外，本文也將《紅樓夢》與《新中國未來記》的敘事技巧作比較。或多或少，新生的現代也改造、轉化或變形前現代。

關鍵字：梁啟超，《新中國未來記》，《紅樓夢》，現代，前現代，張力，現代化，現代主義