

LIN YU-T'ANG



**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**



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1840

June 26, Friday: [David T.Y. Ch'en](#) has become convinced on the basis of research into the 19th-Century availability of translations from the [Chinese](#), and on the basis of detective work among several strands of converging internal evidence, and on the basis of a series of seven paradoxes written into Thoreau's journal on this day, that our guy had just been perusing one or another of the translations of [Lao-tze](#), most likely the one by [M.J. Pauthier](#). Do any changes or developments in [Henry Thoreau](#)'s patterns of thought hinge on this period?¹

THOREAU AND CHINA

1. "Thoreau and Taoism," pages 410-11: We must also ask ourselves questions about possible readings of translations of Chuang-tze for, according to [Ch'en](#)'s reading, [Thoreau](#)'s personality was more like Chuang-tze's than like [Lao-tze](#)'s. Ch'en notes



that there are more affinities between Thoreau and Chuangtse than there are between Thoreau and Laotse.... [T]he fundamental teaching of Laotse was humility. He often praised the virtue of gentleness, resignation, non-contention and the wisdom of lying low. Chuangtse, on the other hand, was inclined to speak of the virtue of quiescence, of keeping and preserving men's spiritual power through tranquility and rest. Therefore, while Laotse regarded water, the softest of all substances, as a symbol of the wisdom of seeking lowly places, Chuangtse often compared it to the tranquility of the mind and clarity of spirit: "Calm represents the nature of water at its best. In that it may serve as our model, for its power is preserved and is not dispersed through agitation." In another instance, Chuangtse likened the mind of the perfect man to a mirror: "The mind of the perfect man is like a mirror. It does not move with things, nor does it anticipate them. It responds to things, but does not retain them. Therefore, he is able to deal successfully with things, but is not affected." In like manner, Thoreau wrote of Walden symbolically: "Walden is a perfect mirror.... Nations come and go without defiling it. It is a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs; no storms, no dust, can dim its surface ever fresh; -a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush, -this the light dust-cloth, -which retains no breath that is breathed on it, but sends its own to float as clouds high above its surface, and be reflected in its bosom still." On the surface, this passage is a beautiful description of the pond. But when we look beneath, we shall find that the limpidity of its water is intended to signify the transparency of Thoreau's character.

(After becoming aware that Thoreau retained this perspective, unchanged, for the remainder of his short life, we may wonder when this perspective developed, and from whom he "absorbed" it.)



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There is a [Taoist](#) concept, [tzu-jan](#), that we ought to be investigating in connection with research into such “Thoreauvian” attitudes. It is that ideal state of human existence which would proceed from a life which, because wholly spontaneous, would be in complete harmony with all the realities of nature. This world is constantly being made and unmade and made and unmade, therefore we should offer no resistance whatever to the process of making and unmaking. Question: what would be the primary [Chinese](#) sources in which we should study such an attitude, and when did these sources become available in the Western world which Thoreau inhabited? Question: To what extent was [Lin Yu-t'ang](#)'s endorsement of [Thoreau](#) as Chinese in his writing and in his thought processes merely an identification of Thoreauvianism with this sort of [tzu-janism](#)?



June 26: The best poetry has never been written, for when it might have been, the poet forgot it, and when it was too late remembered it — or when it might have been, the poet remembered it, and when it was too late forgot it.

The highest condition of art is artlessness.

Truth is always paradoxical.

He will get to the goal first who stands stillest.

There is one let better than any help —and that is —Let-alone.

By sufference you may escape suffering.

He who resists not at all will never surrender.

When a dog runs at you whistle for him.

Say —not so —and you will outcircle the philosophers.

Stand outside the wall and no harm can reach you — the danger is that you will be walled in with it.



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1895

October 10, Tuesday: [Lin Yu-t'ang](#) was born in Chang-chou in the province of Fukien, [China](#), son of a Chinese Presbyterian minister.

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT





LIN YU-T'ANG

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1916

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) graduated from St. John's College, [Shanghai](#). His initial employment would be as a teacher at Tsinghua University in Beijing. While in Beijing, he would marry.



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1919

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) and his wife went from Beijing, [China](#) to [Harvard University](#), so he could study Comparative Literature under Professors Bliss Perry and Irving Babbitt.



CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT



LIN YU-T'ANG

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1920

In England, a Dangerous Drug Act attempted to implement the agreement entered into by the Hague Convention in 1912 by restricting [opiate](#) distribution to medical channels, while continuing to affirm the doctor's right to possess and supply controlled drugs in the provision of medical care.

[Bertrand Russell](#) visited [China](#).

Receiving an MA from [Harvard University](#), [Lin Yu-t'ang](#) went to work with the YMCA in France.



LIN YU-T'ANG

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1921

Formation of a [Chinese](#) Communist Party.

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) studied at Jena, and would go on to study at the University of Leipzig.



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1923

After a MA from [Harvard University](#), [Lin Yu-t'ang](#) received a PhD from the University of Leipzig. His initial academic appointment would be in English philology at the University of Beijing in [China](#).



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1926

During this year and the following one there would be a joint Kuomintang/Chinese Communist Party expedition against local warlords which would have only limited success and would create a hostile division of the [Chinese](#) nation.

Dr. [Lin Yu-t'ang](#) became Dean of Arts at Amoy University in [China](#).

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





LIN YU-T'ANG

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1927

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) accepted a post with the Hankow Revolutionary Government as secretary of the Foreign Ministry. It would take four months of deskwork for him to realize that this had not been a wise move.



By that summer he had resolved to devote himself entirely to writing. He would come to be able to mainstream “bold-whimsical” essay after essay, for Chinese literary magazines.

General Chiang Kai-shek commissioned [Shanghai](#)'s notorious Green Gang to break up labor unions that were operating in and around the International Settlement (Chiang and his foreign financiers were taken aback by the unreasonableness of the union leaders' demands, which included 12-hour workdays and 6-day workweeks). The gangsters would be so good at this that gang leader Tu Yüeh-sheng would be rewarded with the job description “Public Welfare Worker” at the rank of Major General. With Japanese support, General Tu would seize control over the Chinese opium business, a position he would not relinquish even after his relocation to Hong Kong in 1948. To join this gang was referred to as “entering the monastery,” and paying one's dues was referred to as “making vows” — such slang being derived apparently from the novel *The Water Margin*.



LIN YU-T'ANG

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1932

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) founded the Analects Fortnightly or Lun-yü pan-yüeh-kan, a satirical news journal.

CHINA



LIN YU-T'ANG

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1935

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#)'s MY COUNTRY AND MY PEOPLE.

In [Shanghai](#), during this year and a portion of the following one, he would translate Shen Fu's early 19th-Century masterpiece *FU-SHENG LIU-CHI* as SIX CHAPTERS OF A FLOATING LIFE. (This was, it goes without saying, very much a labor of love.)

During this school year, [George Mills Houser](#) was attending [Lingnan](#) University as an exchange student.



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1936

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) relocated to New York City.



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1937

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) at this point became acquainted for the first time with the writings of [Henry Thoreau](#), and created THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING (NY: Reynal & Hitchcock).²

2. [Lin](#) added a footnote of explanation to this: “[Thoreau](#) is the most [Chinese](#) of all American authors in his entire view of life, and being a Chinese, I feel much akin to him in spirit. I discovered him only a few months ago, and the delight of the discovery is still fresh in my mind. I could translate passages of Thoreau into my own language and pass them off as original writing by a Chinese poet, without raising any suspicion.” But see comments on the [Taoist](#) concept of [tzu-jan](#).

THOREAU AND CHINA



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"A richly, enjoyably wise and suggestive book."
— *The New York Times*

The Importance of Living



The Classic Bestseller
That Introduced Millions
to the Noble Art of Leaving
Things Undone

Lin Yutang



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1939

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#)'s novel MOMENT IN PEKING.

HDT

WHAT?

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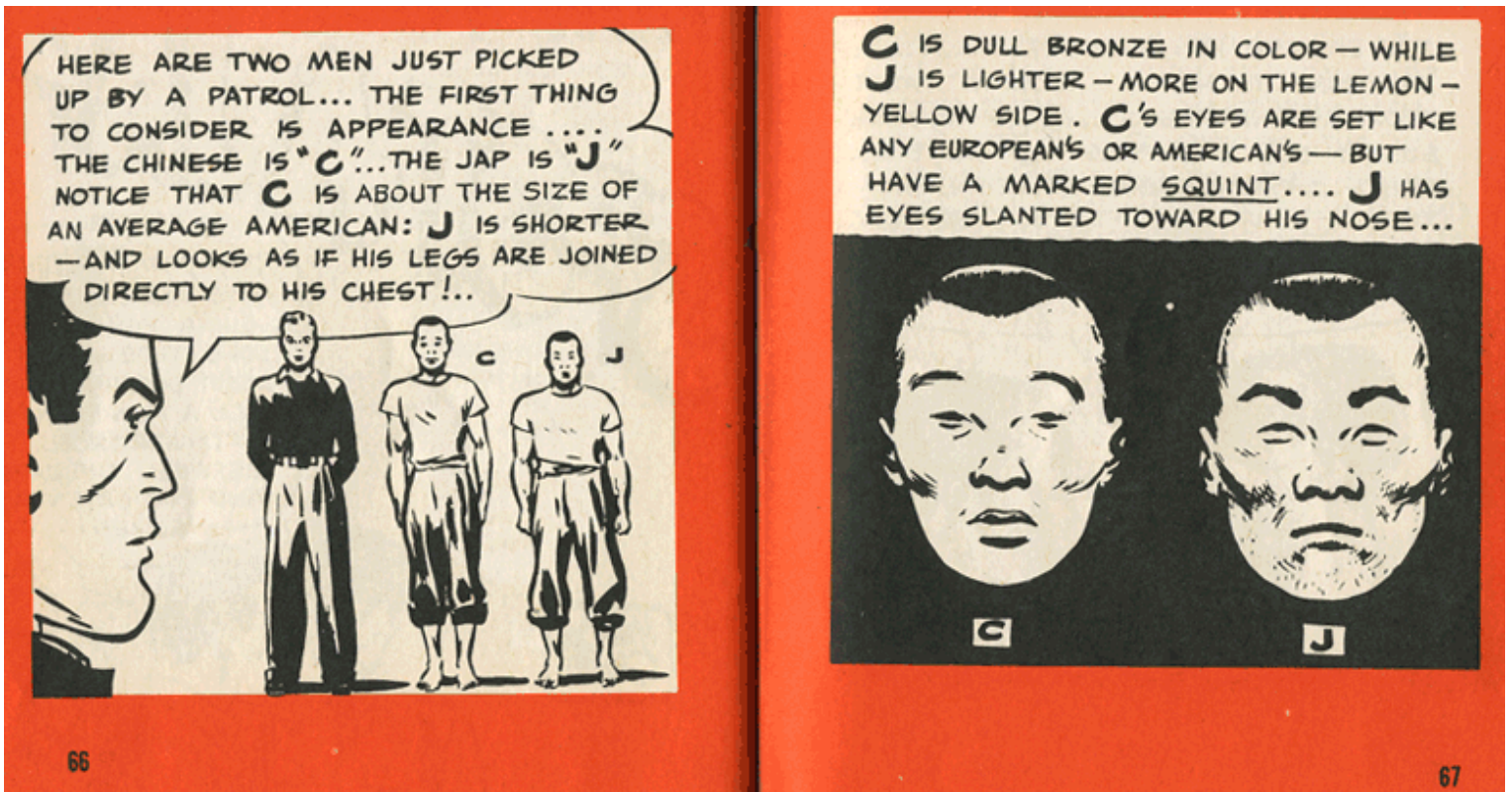
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1942

Lin Yu-t'ang's THE WISDOM OF CHINA AND INDIA.

The US War Department's POCKET GUIDE TO CHINA was drawn by Milton Caniff, imaginative author of "Terry and the Pirates":



JAPANESE

WHAT I'M WRITING IS TRUE BUT NEVER MIND YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE TO YOURSELF



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1943

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) returned briefly to [China](#) only to discover that his individualistic, self-expressive journalism was in disfavor among the socially committed Marxist Leninists.



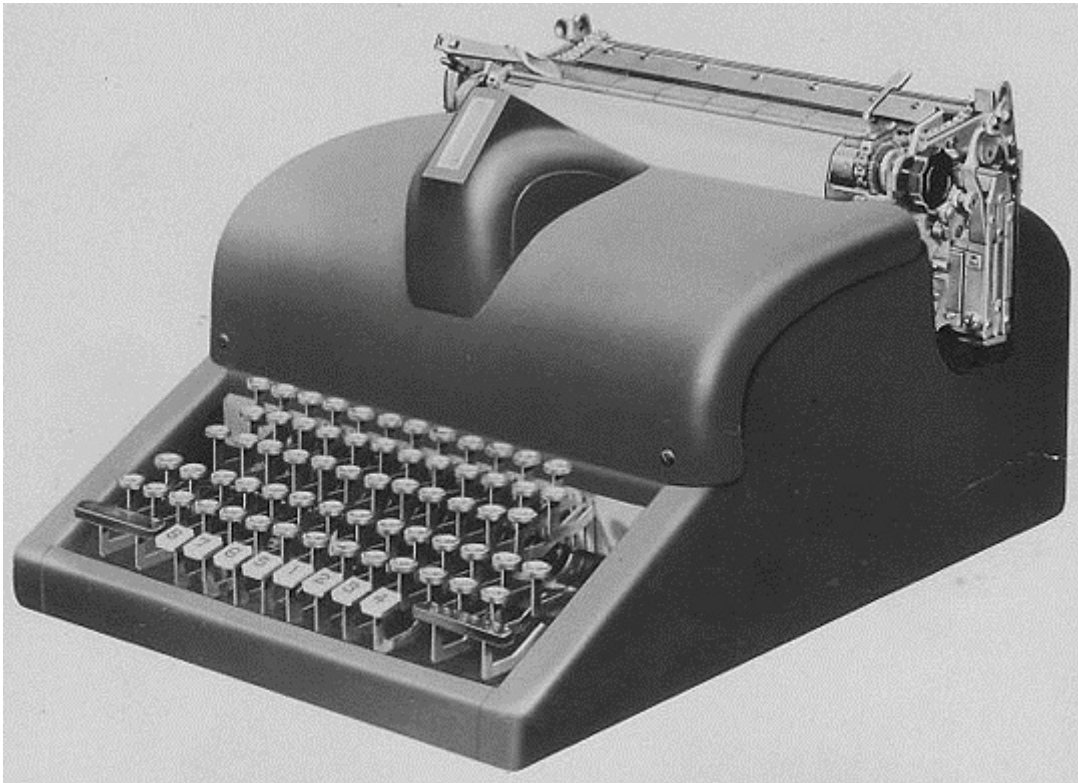


LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1946

April 17, Wednesday: [Lin Yu-t'ang](#) filed for a US patent on a [Chinese](#)-language typewriter (his machine implemented, by means of hardware levers, basically what a Chinese-language text editor implements today, by means of software electrons):



DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1948

A marine consular guard was sent to Jerusalem to protect the US Consul General.

Nanking fell to [Chinese](#) Communist troops, and US Marines were put ashore to protect the American Embassy. US Marines also went ashore at [Shanghai](#) to aid in the protection and evacuation of Americans. Our side wasn't winning. Who lost China?

US MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

Dr. [Lin Yu-t'ang](#) became Head of the Arts and Letters Division of UNESCO. His novel CHINATOWN FAMILY.



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1954

[Lin Yu-t'ang](#) returned again briefly to [China](#) but found that his individualistic, self-expressive journalism was still in disfavor among socially committed Maoists.





LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1961

Dr. [Lin Yu-t'ang](#)'s novel THE RED PEONY.



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1965

Dr. [Lin Yu-t'ang](#)'s novel THE FLIGHT OF THE INNOCENTS.



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1967

In exile, Dr. [Lin Yu-t'ang](#) translated and edited THE [CHINESE](#) THEORY OF ART.



LIN YU-T'ANG

LIN YU-T'ANG

1976

March 26, Friday: [Lin Yu-t'ang](#) died in [Hong Kong](#).

“NARRATIVE HISTORY” IS FABULATION, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY

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“It’s all now you see. Yesterday won’t be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago.”

– Remark by character “Garin Stevens”
in William Faulkner’s INTRUDER IN THE DUST





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Prepared: January 11, 2014



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.