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Babbitt in China

## *Babbitt's Impact in China: The Case of Liang Shiqiu*

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*Liang Shiqiu  
an important  
literary figure  
of twentieth-  
century China.*

Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987), one of Irving Babbitt's Chinese students at Harvard, was an important critic, littérateur, lexicographer and translator in twentieth-century China. Liang was chairman of the English departments at Peking University and Peking Normal University before going to Taiwan in 1949, where he taught at Taiwan Normal University until his retirement in 1966. He first came to national attention in China for his extended literary debate—the famous “war of words”—with Lu Xun, who was everywhere regarded as China's leading leftist or “proletarian” writer of the 1930s. Decades later, Liang's reputation would attain new heights when, having been invited to join a committee of prominent scholars who were jointly to produce the first translation of Shakespeare's complete works into Chinese, he somehow managed to finish the gargantuan task all by himself.

This article will discuss Babbitt's influence on Liang Shiqiu and the ways the latter actively advocated the ideas of Babbitt's New Humanism through his writings and translations. In particular, I intend to demonstrate that Babbitt had a decisive influence on Liang's literary and social thought, which in turn profoundly affected his selection of Western literary works for translation into Chinese, together with his critical commentary on those works. Fi-

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nally, I shall argue that the influence of Babbitt and his intellectual ally Paul Elmer More played a crucial role in Liang's literary battle with Lu Xun, which is ranked among the most notable intellectual events of twentieth-century Chinese history.

That Babbitt is the thinker who had the most significant influence upon Liang's worldview would be hard to dispute. When Liang was a student at Tsing Hua (sometimes transcribed as Xinghua) College (1915-1923), he was a romantic young man who was very interested in romantic writers, particularly Oscar Wilde. Liang considered Wilde "a great figure in every aspect."<sup>1</sup> Liang also maintained a good relationship with the Creation Society ("chuang zao she"), the ideas of which were largely inspired by romanticism. On the day he left for America, the people who saw him off were Creation Society members.<sup>2</sup> Liang's writings during that phase of his life also show his positive opinion of romantic literature. In February 1925,<sup>3</sup> he published an article in the *Chinese Students' Monthly* entitled "The Chinese 'New Poetry,'"<sup>4</sup> in which he praised Guo Moruo, then the leading romantic poet in China, and in which he described novelty as an important quality of poetry.<sup>5</sup> When he arrived in America, Liang first studied at the University of Colorado, where he wrote an article, "Baron and Romanticism,"<sup>6</sup> in which he lauded Rousseau as "the pioneer of the French Revolution" and "the ancestor of the romantic movement in the whole of Europe." The mission of Rousseau, Liang declared, was to "get rid of the fetters on the human spirit and to help people acquire the freedom to develop themselves without restraint."<sup>7</sup> He also praised Byron, saying that his ideas represented "universal human liberal thought" and that his poems symbolized "the holiest earth-shaking outcry of humankind." Liang added that no romantic poet could surpass Byron in poetic

*Prior to Babbitt's influence, Liang admired Rousseau.*

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<sup>1</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "On Mr. Babbitt and His Ideas," in *Irving Babbitt as a Master*, Liang Shiqiu and Hou Jian, ed. (Julang Publishing House, 1977), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Tsunami." *Qiu Shi Za Yi* (Biographical Literature Press), 49.

<sup>3</sup> In 1925, Liang was already at Harvard, but this article was written before he had adopted Babbitt's ideas.

<sup>4</sup> This article was published under Liang Shiqiu's other name "Liang Chih-hua."

<sup>5</sup> Liang, Chih-hua, "The Chinese 'New Poetry.'" *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, 1925, 55.

<sup>6</sup> Although written in Colorado, this article was published in *Creation Monthly* ("chuang zao yue kan") in 1926.

<sup>7</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Baron and Romanticism," in *Creation Monthly*, 1926, 110.

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China's "New  
Literature  
Movement"  
marred by  
excessive  
romanticism.

self-expression and that, in spirit, Byron was "equal to Goethe."<sup>8</sup>

But great changes occurred after Liang took Babbitt's course on "Literary Criticism after the Sixteenth Century." Liang decided to take the course not because he admired the renowned teacher but because he intended to challenge him. At first Liang found Babbitt's opinions hard to accept as they were completely different from his own, but after reading Babbitt's books and attending his lectures Liang's opinions changed dramatically. "From an extreme romanticist," he later would recall, "I changed to a stance which is more or less close to classicism."<sup>9</sup> This change of viewpoint is reflected in Liang's writings of that period. In a course paper entitled "Oscar Wilde and his Romanticism,"<sup>10</sup> he appraised Wilde, who had previously been his favorite writer, from a new perspective. He maintained that Wilde pursued "absolute independence of the arts," in which the latter not only were isolated from the ordinary audience, but were also divorced from "universal and common human nature."<sup>11</sup> It took Liang about half a year to finish this paper, which, as he later reported, received Babbitt's "rather favorable comments."<sup>12</sup> This essay on Wilde clearly indicates that Liang had divorced himself from romanticism. Even more illustrative of Liang's change of position concerning the role of literature and culture is "The Romantic Tendency of Modern Chinese Literature,"<sup>13</sup> in which Liang applied key insights of Babbitt's to an analysis of the prevalent direction of early twentieth-century Chinese literature. Expressing views that are plainly traceable to Babbitt, Liang took sharp issue with certain romantic tendencies that had come to the fore in China as part of the "New Literature Movement," among them an impressionism that called for a "return to nature" and an uncritical extolling of foreignness and originality for their own sake. In what would become one of his most persistent themes, Liang stressed that, rather than self-

<sup>8</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Baron and Romanticism (Continued)," in *Creation Monthly*, 1926, 97-98.

<sup>9</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "On Mr. Babbitt and His Ideas," 3.

<sup>10</sup> The original paper, written in English, has not survived. Liang Shiqiu subsequently wrote an article in Chinese entitled "The Estheticism of Oscar Wilde," which is included in his collection *The Romantic and the Classical* (Taipei: Wenxing Book Store, 1965).

<sup>11</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "The Estheticism of Oscar Wilde," 154-155.

<sup>12</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "On Mr. Babbitt and His Ideas," 3.

<sup>13</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "The Romantic Tendency of Modern Chinese Literature," in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, Li Zhao ed. (Beijing: Hualing Press, 1997).

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indulgence, great literature should express what he termed “universal human nature.”

While still a student at Tsing Hua College—which was more susceptible to foreign influences than most Chinese universities of that era—Liang participated in the famous May Fourth Movement of 1919. As part of that movement, various Western political and literary ideas poured into China. Those ideas took a tremendous toll on traditional Confucian thinking, which was then considered by many Chinese intellectuals to be the root source of their nation’s backwardness. After Liang arrived at Harvard, however, he undertook a dispassionate investigation of traditional Chinese ways, many of which were highly esteemed by Babbitt. Liang would later write of his American professor, “Babbitt does not sermonize, he does not have dogmas, but only sticks to one attitude—that of sanity and dignity.”<sup>14</sup> This stance became Liang’s and, largely through him, that of the Crescent Moon Society, which he helped to establish. “The Attitude of *Crescent Moon*,”<sup>15</sup>—according to the preface of the first issue of the society’s journal, also called *Crescent Moon*—would consist of two principles: “sanity and dignity.” Liang credited a colleague, Xu Zhimo, with the actual writing of the preface and attributed the ideas expressed therein to the society’s collective membership. “When starting a publication,” he subsequently explained, “a preface is needed as a matter of course. We discussed the matter several times—each expressed his opinion freely—and finally came up with several tenets. Zhimo wrote the preface and, when finished, it was read by every member. This is how the article which calls for ‘sanity and dignity’ came into being.”<sup>16</sup> Still, in all probability, the central principle was put forward by Liang, as he was the only disciple of Babbitt to participate in those discussions.

Liang later said of Babbitt, “I have been greatly influenced by him. He led me to the road of harmony and prudence.”<sup>17</sup> He saw Babbitt as providing a response to problems in his own country.

*Crescent  
Moon Society  
indirectly  
influenced by  
Babbitt.*

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<sup>14</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Several Books that Influence Me,” *Yashe Essays* (Taipei: Jiuge Press, 1985), 125.

<sup>15</sup> Xu Zhimo, “The Attitude of *Crescent Moon*,” *Crescent Moon* (1st issue, 1928).

<sup>16</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Before and after *Crescent Moon*,” *Essays on Literature by Liang Shiqiu*, Chen Zishan ed. (Changsha: Yuelu Book Store, 1989), 126.

<sup>17</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “How I Began to Write Literary Criticism—Preface to *Liang Shiqiu on Literature*,” *Collected Essays on Literature by Liang Shiqiu*, ed. Chen Zishan (Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1989), 7.

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*Path of  
prudence and  
reason offered  
for a troubled  
China.*

Serious spiritual and social crises beset the Western world before and during the First World War. Babbitt held that, in order to alleviate those crises, people must find remedies from history and tradition. He believed that there is a duality of good and evil in all men and women and that only through the cultivation of an "inner check," a quality of will that restrains desire and impulse, can human beings elevate themselves and society at large. China, if anything, was beset by even graver crises, and with its intellectuals looking primarily to the West for solutions, it was not surprising, given Babbitt's prominence in Western discussions of literature and criticism, that some, including Liang, would discern in Babbitt's writings a potential path of prudence and reason for their beleaguered country.

*Liang's  
reading habits  
transformed.*

Among the particular ways in which Babbitt influenced Liang was changing his reading habits. Previously, while studying at Tsing Hua College, Liang had read widely but unselectively, devoting his attention for the most part to whatever new books, whether original works or translations, happened to come his way and strike his fancy.<sup>18</sup> Later he came to realize that reading should be guided in large part by discriminating judgment and purpose. "When I was young," Liang explains, "I lacked reading experience. At first, I read without a guiding principle, and read randomly according to my interest, but later I gradually realized that this was mistaken."<sup>19</sup> One result was that Liang gave more effort to reading classical works.<sup>20</sup> Not only Liang's reading habits but also the nature of his own writing was influenced by Babbitt. At Tsing Hua, for example, Liang wrote poems and short stories, e.g., "Bitter Rain and Sad Wind," that betrayed a strong attachment to sentimental romanticism. After returning to China from America, however, he nearly stopped composing poems and short stories. Moreover, his writing from thence forward conveyed a more balanced and historically accurate view of human nature than was characteristic of his earlier writing.

Babbitt devoted much effort to criticizing Rousseau, viewing him as the precursor of an excessive form of romanticism. After

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Letter to Ms. Lin Zhi," in *Yashe Yi Wen* (Beijing: China Friendship Press, 1999), 489.

<sup>20</sup> Qiu Yanming, "Qiu Yanming's Interview with Liang Shiqiu," *Ode to Autumn*, ed. Yu Guangzhong (Taipei: Jiuge Press, 1988), 402-404.

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embracing much of Babbitt's thought, Liang not surprisingly began a reassessment of Rousseau, whom he previously had admired greatly. The celebrated intellectual debate between Liang and Lu Xun was sparked by a disagreement concerning Rousseau's famous book on education, *Emile*.

Wei Zhaoji, the translator who introduced *Emile* to a Chinese audience, commented that Rousseau's idea of "returning to nature" not only had brought major changes in eighteenth-century Europe, but that it had offered similarly "far-reaching inspirations for our nation [China] in the twentieth century."<sup>21</sup> Yet though praising Books I through IV of *Emile*, in which Rousseau expounded his views on how a boy's character should be molded from infancy through early manhood, Wei denounced Book V, in which Rousseau advocated a different form of education for young women. Rousseau's beliefs concerning the education of women, Wei wrote, "lacked thoroughness and did not acknowledge women's character." He added that the spirit of Book V, with its unequal treatment of the sexes, was "contradictory to that of the previous four Books," which, he asserted, "showed reverence for humankind."<sup>22</sup>

Liang differed with Wei's assessment of every aspect of Rousseau's work. Unlike the admiring Wei, Liang held that the preponderance of Rousseau's influence was pernicious. The only aspect of Rousseau's writings in which Liang saw any merit at all was the one part singled out by Wei for harsh criticism—Book V of *Emile*. In "Rousseau on Women's Education," an article first published in *Supplement to the Morning News* ("chen bao fu juan") on December 15, 1926, Liang argued that "there was nothing correct in the part in which Rousseau talked about the education of boys, but his discussion on women's education was surely accurate."<sup>23</sup> According to Liang, Book V was thorough, but more importantly, in acknowledging differences between men and women, it reflected the profound differences that exist among human beings in general, i.e., not only between the two sexes but also among different men and among different women. Since the in-

*Extended  
debate  
between Liang  
and Lu Xun  
sparked by  
disagreement  
concerning  
Rousseau's  
Emile.*

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<sup>21</sup> Wei Zhaoji, "Preface," to Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Wei Zhaoji (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1923), 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Rousseau on Women's Education," in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, ed. Li Zhao (Beijing: Hualing Press, 1997), 85.

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Liang's writings challenged dogmas of proletarian literature.

terests and aptitudes of individuals and groups vary, Liang held, it is a fitting reflection of human character that differences among those to be taught be accommodated by differing forms of education.

Liang's position on Rousseau's *Emile* ran contrary to then popular ideas of egalitarian democracy, and it posed a challenge to the dogmas of proletarian literature, which called for a radical form of equality for the suffering masses. Soon Lu Xun, widely recognized as the initiator of proletarian literature in China, fired back. In an article entitled "Rousseau and Appetite,"<sup>24</sup> Lu not only took issue with Liang's views on Rousseau but lampooned Babbitt as well. Using words from *Mamma Art*, by the American novelist Upton Sinclair, Lu Xun characterized Babbitt as a reactionary who would return society to "blameless ancient times when children obeyed their parents, slaves obeyed their masters, wives obeyed their husbands, subjects obeyed their Pope and Emperor, and university students raised no questions and had a high regard for the professors' teaching materials."<sup>25</sup>

Much as Lu used the writings of an American novelist to score points against Liang, so did Liang employ passages and ideas gleaned from important Western writers as literary weapons in his jousts with Lu Xun and others. And, above all others, Liang gave credit to Babbitt and his intellectual ally More for most directly influencing his taste in Western literary and social thought over the remainder of his long career as writer, critic, and translator. In a letter written in the 1980s, for example, Liang noted that "Professor Babbitt and Professor More have had the greatest influence upon me, and I have read all of their works."<sup>26</sup> In particular, Liang credited More's essay "Property and Law" (included in vol. IX of *Shelburne Essays*), which he translated for *Crescent Moon*, with having fueled his determination not to allow Lu Xun's pro-Marxist assertions to go unchallenged. After translating that essay, Liang explained in his interview with Qiu Xiuzhi that he became convinced that private property was the basis of civilization and that opposing private property amounted to opposing civilization.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Lu Xun, "Rousseau and Appetite," in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, 89-92.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>26</sup> Liang Shiqiu, Letter to Ms. Fang Rennian, in *Yashe Yi Wen*, 497.

<sup>27</sup> Qiu Xiuzhi, "Random Talk on Essays and Others: Reply to Ms. Qiu Xiuzhi," *Ode to Autumn*, Yu Guangzhong ed. (Taipei: Jiuge Press, 1988), 425.

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After his accepting Babbitt's New Humanism, Liang's view of literature remained remarkably stable for the remainder of his life. In his "Preface to the New Edition of *The Romantic and the Classical*," written in the 1960s, Liang wrote: "My view of literature has hardly changed in decades, which probably is a shortcoming."<sup>28</sup> In "How I Began to Write Literary Criticism—Preface to *Liang Shiqiu on Literature*," he was even more sweeping: "My viewpoints have not changed since 1924."<sup>29</sup>

Babbitt's influence had a profound effect upon Liang as a translator, especially upon his selection of works for translation. When he was at Tsing Hua College, Liang translated literature from Russia (e.g., the works of Chekov), from France (e.g., the works of Alphonse Daudet), and from America (e.g., Edgar Allan Poe). Having come under the influence of the New Humanism, he became more cautious in selecting materials for translation. In his famous article "The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature" he said:

The most obvious way in which China is invaded by foreign literature is through the translation of foreign works. Translation is a mainstay of the New Literature Movement. But the translated literature always exhibits romantic characteristics—translators do not adopt a rational and discriminating attitude towards foreign works to be translated, and their selection is not guided by principle or by a certain purpose but by whim. They try to translate whatever strikes their fancy, and as a result foreign works of the third or fourth rank have been introduced into China and cherished as a most valuable treasure and have been imitated enthusiastically. (Author's translation.)<sup>30</sup>

Then what is Liang's criterion for selecting materials for translation? It is derived from his conception of great literature. The works should be classical and reflect permanent aspects of human nature. Though Babbitt profoundly affected his standards, it cannot, of course, be assumed that Liang's literary tastes coincided in all particulars with Babbitt's or that his understanding of Babbitt's ideas was always or in all respects accurate.

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<sup>28</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Preface to the New Edition of *The Romantic and the Classical*," *The Romantic and the Classical*. (Taipei: Wenxing Book Store, 1965), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "How I Began to Write Literary Criticism—Preface to *Liang Shiqiu on Literature*," 13.

<sup>30</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "The Romantic Tendency in Modern Chinese Literature," in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, 11.



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“Moral  
seriousness”  
of best British  
literature  
admired.

Among the bodies of foreign literature, Liang had a special admiration for that of Great Britain. He praised English Victorian literature, for example, for its “moral seriousness.”<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, most of the works Liang translated are English or British, including *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, the most famous and most important of his translations, and two novels by George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, *The Weaver Of Raveloe* and *Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story*. After Liang retired from Taiwan Teachers College (now the National Taiwan Normal University), he finished two monumental works, *The History of British Literature*<sup>32</sup> and *Selected Works of British Literature*.<sup>33</sup> Liang was the first person in China to finish translating *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. It took him about 37 years (1930-1967). Yet when he had been at Tsing Hua College, he had not had much interest in Shakespeare: “I could not fully appreciate Shakespeare’s drama; although his language was not a dead one, it appeared somewhat old.”<sup>34</sup> But after becoming a Babbittian, he began to look upon Shakespeare’s works from a new point of view. Liang chose to translate Shakespeare because the latter’s works met his standard for great literature; that is, they conveyed the fullness and enduring quality of human nature. Liang repeatedly claimed that “the value of literature lies in its reflecting human nature.”<sup>35</sup> “The permanence and universality of Shakespeare lie in his faithful description of human nature, which is permanent and universal.”<sup>36</sup>

It is noteworthy that, on various occasions, Liang emphasized these lines in *Hamlet*: “For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature.” In one of his lectures, for example, Liang referred to these famous words and added that

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<sup>31</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “On Modern Literature,” *Prejudices* (Taipei: Wenxing Book Store, 1965), 133.

<sup>32</sup> Liang Shiqiu, *The History of British Literature* (Taipei: Xiezhi Industrial Publishing Corporation Ltd., 1985).

<sup>33</sup> Liang Shiqiu, trans., *Selected Works of British Literature* (Taipei: Xiezhi Industrial Publishing Corporation Ltd., 1985).

<sup>34</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Eight Years at Tsinghua,” *Qiu Shi Za Yi* (Biographical Literature Press, 1970), 38.

<sup>35</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “The 400th Anniversary of Shakespeare’s Birthday,” *An Anthology at the 400th Anniversary of Shakespeare’s Birthday* (Taipei: National Institute for Compilation and Translation, 1966), 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

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“drama not only reflects actual life, but further mirrors human nature.”<sup>37</sup> Here it is necessary to make a comparison between Shakespeare’s original text and Liang’s translation, and then to compare the latter with other Chinese translations of the same passage, always paying special attention to the meaning of the word “nature.” The original text is:

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o’erstep not the modesty of *nature*; for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as ’t were, the mirror up to *nature*; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.<sup>38</sup> (*Hamlet*, Scene II, Act III; emphases added.)

Liang’s translation is:

ke ye bie tai song xie, zi ji yao chuai mo qing zhong; dong zuo dui yu yu yan, yu yan dui yu dong zuo, dou yao qia dao hao chu; yao te bie liu shen zhe yi dian: bu ke chao yue *ren xing de zhong he zhi dao*; yin wei zuo de tai guo huo bian shi qu le yan xi de ben zhi, zi gu zhi jin, yan xi de mu di bu guo shi hao xiang ba yi mian jing zi ju qi lai zhao *ren xing*; shi de mei de xian shi ta de ben xiang, chou tai lou chu ta de yuan xing, shi dai de xing xing se se yi qi cheng xian zai wo men yan qian.<sup>39</sup>

The following is the rendering of Zhu Shenghao, another famous translator of Shakespeare:

ke shi tai ping dan le ye bu dui, ni ying gai jie shou ni zi ji de chang shi de zhi dao, ba dong zuo he yan yu hu xiang pei he qi lai; te bie yao zhu yi dao zhe yi dian, ni bu neng chao guo *zi ran* de chang dao; yin wei ren he guo fen de biao xian dou shi he yan xi de yuan yi xiang fan de, zi you xi ju yi lai, ta de mu di shi zhong shi fan ying *zi ran*, xian shi shan e de ben lai mian mu, gei ta de shi dai kan yi kan ta zi ji yan bian fa zhan de mo xing.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Shakespeare’s Thoughts,” in *Collections of Liang Shiqiu* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Literature Research Society, 1966), 184. Liang Shiqiu also emphasizes this line in his articles “Shakespeare on Money” and “The 400th Anniversary of Shakespeare’s Birthday.”

<sup>38</sup> *Hamlet*, Scene II, Act III. Some words in this passage as well as in the following translations were emphasized by the author of this article.

<sup>39</sup> Liang Shiqiu, trans., Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Taipei: Far East Book Co., Ltd., 1974), 99.

<sup>40</sup> Zhu Shenghao, trans., Shakespeare, “Hamlet”, in *Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Vol. 9), (Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House), 68.

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*Babbitt's  
thought  
reflected in  
Liang's  
translations.*

Zhu Shenghao translated the two “nature”s into “zi ran”(nature), but Liang translated both into “ren xing”(human nature), and translated “modesty of nature” into “ren xing de zhong he zhi dao” (the moderate way of human nature), in which “zhong he zhi dao” (the moderate way) may remind readers of the Chinese traditional idea of the “Golden Mean”(“zhong yong”), which is connected to a central theme of the New Humanism. We should not interrelate ideas mechanically, but we can be certain that Liang did not choose these words arbitrarily. Liang placed a footnote at the second “nature”: “In the original text, ‘to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature’ means that the actors’ performance should be natural according to human nature and should not be exaggerated. Nowadays people take this expression as urging ‘realism’ and ‘naturalism,’ yet this is mistaken.”<sup>41</sup> It is clear that Shakespeare’s words had a special meaning for Liang Shiqiu, and the similarity to Babbitt’s position is surely more than coincidental.

Liang Shiqiu and Lu Xun had very different opinions about human nature, and these views colored their opinions of Shakespeare and other writers. Contrary to the Marxist practice of viewing and evaluating literature through the lens of class consciousness, Liang stressed that the best literature, including Shakespeare’s, faithfully reflects the enduring realities of human nature. Thus, in his article “On Literary Criticism,” Liang wrote:

*“Universal  
human nature  
the basis of all  
great works.”*

The circumstances and attitudes of humans vary, but human nature is universal, and the quality of literature is immutable. Therefore great literary works can survive the test of time and space. The *Iliad* is still read and Shakespeare’s plays are still performed, because universal human nature is the basis of all great works—thus the quality of literary works, regardless of the time of composition or the country of origin, can be evaluated according to a stable standard. (Author’s translation.)<sup>42</sup>

Liang here used the example of Shakespeare to illustrate his view that human nature in general—rather than class nature, as Lu Xun contended—should be the subject of great literature. In another article, entitled “Literature and Class Nature,” Liang cited *Macbeth* as a great literary work, notwithstanding that class differ-

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<sup>41</sup> Liang Shiqiu, trans., Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Taipei: Far East Book Co., Ltd., 1974), 134.

<sup>42</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “On Literary Criticism,” in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, ed. Li Zhao (Beijing: Hualing Press, 1997), 133-134.

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ences were of minor importance in the portrayal of the main characters and for interpreting the play. He asserted that “class nature is only a superficial phenomenon” and that “the essence of literature is the expressing of human nature.”<sup>43</sup> Liang did not think that Shakespeare was either a bourgeois or a proletarian writer. In his article “The Heritage of Literature,” Liang said that it was wrong to conclude that Shakespeare was in favor of the bourgeoisie because of some contemptuous statements by aristocrats about the common people in Shakespeare’s plays.<sup>44</sup> He argued that, since there were many expressions of sympathy for poor people in Shakespeare’s works, it would be just as easy to prove that Shakespeare is a “proletarian writer.” Actually, Liang concluded, “what Shakespeare satirized was the weakness of human nature and the unfairness of society” without regard to class differences.<sup>45</sup>

*Class distinctions only superficial.*

Liang could not accept Marxism or communism, but he did translate a part of the section on “The Power of Money” from Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, in which Marx speaks approvingly of Shakespeare’s depiction in *Timons of Athens* of what the lust for money can do to men and women. In the “editor’s comments”<sup>46</sup> printed with this translation, Liang writes:

The text by Marx contains significant insight, and I think that there are two points worthy of attention: (1) Shakespeare is a great artist, and one aspect of his greatness is that his works do not belong to any class and that they comprise all humankind from emperors and aristocrats to the common people . . . People who say that Shakespeare is a bourgeois artist should read Shakespeare and then read the above text by Marx. (2) Shakespeare is not a writer of a certain party or group. Rather, his art is to use a mirror to reflect human nature. (Author’s translation.)<sup>47</sup>

If even Marx could like Shakespeare, how could Marx’s followers hold that Shakespeare was a bourgeois writer? Liang points out

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<sup>43</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Literature and Class Nature,” in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, 453.

<sup>44</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “The Heritage of Literature,” in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, 450.

<sup>45</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “On Shakespeare Part 4 Shakespeare’s Class Nature,” *Free Criticism*, 9th Issue, Jan. 17, 1936, 14.

<sup>46</sup> The so-called “Editor’s Comments” must have been written by Liang Shiqiu himself.

<sup>47</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Shakespeare on Money,” in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, 631.

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that “Marx mentions Shakespeare in his works several times, and Furnivall, the greatest Shakespeare scholar, who died in 1910, was also Marx’s good friend.”<sup>48</sup> Liang’s purpose here was obviously not to propagandize Marx but to deflect Marxist attacks upon Shakespeare. It is possible to argue that Liang’s translation of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* not only reflected his literary taste, but also, to some extent, provided a way of debating his opponents.

Liang’s translation of *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* is similarly both a reflection of his literary preferences and a way of denouncing excessive romanticism in modern China. In his article “The Romantic Tendency of Modern Chinese Literature,” Liang wrote that, since the New Culture Movement, love poems could be seen everywhere in the newspapers and magazines and that these were a fashion or embroidery that expressed a quest for unchecked expansion, liberation and freedom:

... at this time, human feeling is like a violent tiger in a cage, which not only wriggles free from the shackles of the Confucian ethical code, but also casts away restraining reason. Unbridled feelings burn in everyone’s heart. Here and there a few persons could not help but write a love poem or two, but now, like a spark setting the prairie ablaze, suddenly everyone has begun to write love poems. As sexual love is easily aroused among the young, the new poetry can hardly avoid the themes of love. An examination of an anthology of poetry reveals that there is a “kiss” for every four poems. A psychoanalyst would find that almost all the poems reflect sexual desire. (Author’s translation.)<sup>49</sup>

In Liang’s view, the explosion of love poems and letters published in China since the May Fourth Movement was the result of a loss of reason and of the catharsis of feelings, and this detrimental tendency needed to be rectified. *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* was just one of the books Liang chose to translate to serve this purpose.

The twelfth-century French lovers Abelard and Heloise are among the most renowned lovers in the world. They are “representatives of the best of their time in their classical knowledge and the way they express themselves, in their passionate interest in

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<sup>48</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Sinclair’s “Mamma Art, by Upton Sinclair,” *Prejudices* (Taipei: Wenxing Book Store, 1965), 80.

<sup>49</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “The Romantic Tendency of Modern Chinese Literature,” in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, 14-15.

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problems of faith and morality, and in their devotion to the Christian Church which ruled their lives.”<sup>50</sup> Robertson comments that their love story is one of the greatest on record, and that Abelard has had a dual impact on European cultural history, “first as a great teacher and philosopher,” and secondly “as one of the world’s great lovers.”<sup>51</sup> *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* has also been rendered in Chinese by Ye Lingfeng, another famous writer, who said in his “Translator’s Preface” that “Abelard and Heloise can be said to be the greatest lovers from ancient times until now. . . . Compared with them, Romeo and Juliet are not only flighty, but even near frolicsome.” “Judging from their letters, the tragic love story of Abelard and Heloise is not very different from that of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai in our China.”<sup>52</sup>

Liang’s translation was first published in the eighth issue of the first volume of the *Crescent Moon* on October 10, 1928. The following advertisement appeared in *Crescent Moon* no less than ten times:

This is a love story which happened 800 years ago. A nun and a monk have written a bundle of love letters. No love letters, whether in China or in a foreign country, are more grief-stricken, more sadly touching and more sublime than those found in this volume. The beautiful and ingenious lines have become popular quotations of lovers in later generations, showing the greatness of their influence. The most admirable point is that there is nothing frivolous in these poems, and the translator considers this anthology a “transcendent and holy” masterpiece. (Author’s translation.)<sup>53</sup>

Abelard and Heloise a “transcendent and holy masterpiece.”

What this advertisement for the anthology did not say was that its poems were quite different from the love poems prevalent in China at that time. In the “Postscript to the Translation,” written in August 1928, Liang said, “I do not intend to pour oil on youths’ flames of desire. I think it is quite easy to stir up feelings,” and what one should do is “properly to harness feelings rather than releasing them in the wrong direction.” The difference between

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<sup>50</sup> *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, intro. and trans. Betty Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), 9.

<sup>51</sup> Durant Waite Robertson, *Abelard and Heloise* (New York: Dial Press, 1972), xiv.

<sup>52</sup> Ye Lingfeng, “The Translator’s Preface,” in Ye Lingfeng, trans., *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (Hong Kong: Shanghai Book Store, 1956), 1 and 3.

<sup>53</sup> 7th issue, volume 1, *Crescent Moon*, 10.

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Better  
"properly to  
harness  
feelings" than  
to release  
them in the  
wrong  
direction.

*The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* and romantic, sexually charged love poems lay in that, although the former were full of tender feelings, their diction was extremely elegant and did not "intend to incite, but concentrates on the pure and sorrowful feelings—from the love of flesh ascending to the love of soul—which are really transcendent and holy and of a supreme quality."<sup>54</sup>

In an article entitled "Life is a Longtime Temptation—About *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise*," Liang revealed his motive for doing the translation. Referring to the advertisement mentioned above, he said that it "used the words 'a bundle of love letters' deliberately, as at that time there was a rather popular book with the name *A Bundle of Love Letters*. Many people considered it too frivolous and vulgar, so I translated this collection of love poems to provide a distinct contrast."<sup>55</sup> The writer of *A Bundle of Love Letters* is Zhang Yiping (1902-1946), in whose writings people may find blatant erotic expressions. Zhang Yiping said, "One of my girl friends asked me why I did not feel ashamed as *A Bundle of Love Letters* was so obscene. I answered, 'I do not think that I have anything to be ashamed of as I am a man of letters.'"<sup>56</sup> This comment showed that Zhang Yiping did not deny that there were obscene expressions in *A Bundle of Love Letters*, and did not feel ashamed of this and even considered such writing a prerogative of the man of letters. This kind of attitude could never be tolerated by Liang. In his eyes, Zhang Yiping's *A Bundle of Love Letters* was frivolous and vulgar, "decked out solely with bawdy expressions" which "display the temptation of sexual desire" "in the guise of literature."<sup>57</sup> What Zhang had done was, in Liang's opinion, immoral. In Liang's essay "The Immoral Men of Letters" Zhang Yiping was among those targeted for criticism.<sup>58</sup>

In "Life is a Longtime Temptation—about *The Love Letters of*

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<sup>54</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Postscript of the Translation", in Liang Shiqiu, trans., *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, (Taipei: Jiuge Press, 1988), 186-187.

<sup>55</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Life is a Longtime Temptation—About *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise*," *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (Taipei: Jiuge Press, 1988), 8.

<sup>56</sup> Zhang Yiping, *Three Types of Essays* (Shanghai: Modern Book Store, 1934), 62.

<sup>57</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "On the Bawdy Expressions in Literature," in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, 409.

<sup>58</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "The Immoral Men of Letters", in *Debates between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, Li Zhao ed., (Beijing: Hualing Press, 1997), 484-485.

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*Abelard and Heloise*,” Liang wrote: “Abelard asked Heloise not to love him anymore, but to devote herself to God. He asked her to get rid of the root of love and not to recollect the worldly happiness of the past, but to be a model of Christian confession—this is really transcendent, ascending from the sphere of the world to that of religion.”<sup>59</sup> This ascent involves the fight, at a high level, between one’s higher and lower desires, which is made necessary by the duality of human nature that Babbitt emphasizes. In “Postscript to the Translation,” Liang wrote,

One of my teachers has said, “there are three levels of human life: the first is the naturalistic level, the second humanistic, and the third religious.” At the naturalistic level, human beings are no different from animals; at the humanistic level, feelings are checked by reason; at the religious level, there is really sublime spiritual life. At the present time, in which human desires are rampant, what we should endeavor is to check feelings with reason. Perhaps this collection of spiritual love letters that I have translated is not suited to the present times? (Author’s translation).<sup>60</sup>

By identifying the restraining force at the humanistic level with “reason” Liang simplifies Babbitt’s position, which emphasizes the need for ethical will rather than reason, but Liang’s statement shows his dissatisfaction with the extreme romantic tendency at the time and his intention to help counteract this unhealthy trend. The teacher whose name he did not mention was obviously Irving Babbitt. In another article, “On Mr. Babbitt and His Ideas,” Liang also wrote about Babbitt’s conception of three possible levels of human life: naturalistic, humanistic, and religious. Liang argued that the naturalistic life, though in a sense inevitable, should be subject to balance and restraint; the life maintaining truly human nature is what we should always try to attain; the religious way of life is, of course, the most sublime, but, being also the most difficult and beyond the realistic capability of most people, should not serve as an excuse for the latter to live life less than fully at the humanistic level.<sup>61</sup> It is clear that the three levels mentioned in Liang’s two articles are the same as those defined by Babbitt. The

*Naturalistic life should be subject to balance and restraint.*

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<sup>59</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Life is a Longtime Temptation—About *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise*,” *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 22.

<sup>60</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “Postscript to the Translation,” in Liang Shiqiu, trans., *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 187.

<sup>61</sup> Liang Shiqiu, “On Mr. Babbitt and His Ideas,” 5.



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Art not  
separable from  
life and  
morality.

influence of Babbitt upon Liang in deciding to translate *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* is thus evident.

Another translation of Liang's that tells much about his perspective on feeling is that of *Married* by August Strindberg (1849-1912). Liang's translation is based on Thomas Seltzer's English version. The original has nineteen short stories, of which Liang chose to translate nine. According to Liang, he finished reading this book when he was on the train from Beijing to Hangzhou in August 1921, and his first impression of the book was not favorable. At that time, he was still a young student at Tsing Hua College and was full of romantic and colorful visions concerning women, love, and marriage. Strindberg's book, by contrast, painted a very different picture of women and revealed cruel facts of real life. Liang could not accept Strindberg's opinion but could not muster any strong reasons to refute him.<sup>62</sup> But as time went by, Liang began to see that marriage was not merely a romantic union but full of responsibilities—to earn money to support the family, to take care of the children as well as the parents, etc.—and he realized that Strindberg was correct to some extent. Liang did not wholly agree with Strindberg, particularly not with his antipathy towards women, yet he thought that much that Strindberg revealed about marriage was real. People should get rid of escapist, romantic expectations of marriage and courageously assume their responsibilities.<sup>63</sup> Liang's translation of *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* and of *Married* shows his emphasis on the importance of responsibility and morality for the man of letters. In his words, "The degenerate doctrine which holds that art is separable from morality is morbid and is also a manifestation of escape from human life."<sup>64</sup>

Liang translated two books by George Eliot, namely, *Silas Marner, the Weaver Of Raveloe* and *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*. One reason he liked Eliot's books is that her attitude to writing is deeply

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<sup>62</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "To the Readers," in August Strindberg, *Married*, trans. Liang Shiqiu (Shanghai: Chinese Book Store, 1930), 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. In actual life, Liang took marriage seriously. When he was in Shanghai, Xu Zhimo intended to introduce a girlfriend to him. Liang responded frankly, "just tell her that I have a wife and three children." See Song Yiqiao, *Biography of Liang Shiqiu* (Taiyuan: Beiyue Wen Yi Press, 1996), 210.

<sup>64</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Sinclair's *Mamma Art*, by Upton Sinclair," *Prejudices* (Taipei: Wenxing Book Store, 1965), 86.

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serious. She plumbs the depths of human existence. In the preface to *Silas Marner*, Liang said, "Eliot does not write novels only to entertain people, but completely devotes herself to every book she writes."<sup>65</sup> In the Postscript to *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*, Liang said, "I have special admiration for George Eliot's works. I have translated *Silas Marner, the Weaver Of Raveloe* . . . and now I have finished this novelette. I always think that only novels written in this way can be penetrating."<sup>66</sup> The moral terms of life are placed in the center and are penetratingly explored. Seriousness of this kind in literature is what Liang appreciates the most, and it is this attitude that he endeavors to advocate, for example, in "The Principles of Literature." Liang writes, "the writer should have a serious attitude, in which case works may carry valuable meaning; and the reader should read in a serious manner, in which case the estimate of the works may be perceptive and accurate."<sup>67</sup>

*Moral terms  
of life  
penetratingly  
explored in  
George Eliot's  
novels.*

Liang appreciated Eliot because "the contents of Eliot's novels are descriptions of human nature."<sup>68</sup> In the Chinese original, the words "ai li ao te de xiao shuo shi" (the contents of Eliot's novels are) were emphasized in the Chinese manner with a circle under each character, and "ren xing de miao xie" (the descriptions of human nature) were emphasized with a double circle under each character. In another comment on *Silas Marner*, written for a later edition, Liang wrote:

In the story, there are rich people as well as hard-working laborers, but its main point is not to describe the class conflict, but to elaborate human nature. . . .

This is an English novel written more than 120 years ago, and this is an old translation done more than 50 years ago. Now that the novel is offered to the readers again, it has lost none of its significance, as human nature is universal and eternal (Author's translation).<sup>69</sup>

According to Liang, for a novel to be good it should describe human nature in depth within the body of the story. Otherwise it

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<sup>65</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Preface," in George Eliot, *Silas Marner, the Weaver Of Raveloe*, trans. Liang Shiqiu (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1966), 4.

<sup>66</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Postscript to *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*," in *Yashe On Books*, ed. Chen Zishan, 544.

<sup>67</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "The Principles of Literature," *Crescent Moon*, 1st Issue, 1928, 18.

<sup>68</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Preface," in George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "The Story of *Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe*," in *Yashe Essays*, Vol. 2 (Taipei: Jiuge Press, 1988), 104.

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lacks value and can only serve as leisure reading for ordinary people.<sup>70</sup> In *Silas Marner* there are people of different classes, but the book, in Liang's view, was not intended to reflect class problems, but rather to elucidate human nature. We may compare this view with that of the "Introduction" to another translation of the book by Cao Yong (published in Shanghai in 1957). In Cao's opinion the novel "faithfully exposes the ugly features of the feudal landlord class."<sup>71</sup> That the novel would be so evaluated in the China of the 1950s is not surprising. Liang's evaluation, however, was based not on ideological prejudice but on his understanding of what makes great literature and on his reading of Eliot's work from within its own vision of life.

Liang chose to translate *Silas Marner* partly because he thought the novel reflected the moral seriousness of the British nationality. Liang believed that in this respect British nationality was different from that of southern Europe; the latter, in his view, tended toward frivolousness. Liang observed that there were few depictions of lewdness in *Silas Marner*. Only one sentence was used to narrate how a pair of lovers move from getting acquainted to engaging in physical love. "If the writer of this novel had been a Frenchman," wrote Liang, "this part of the story probably would have covered several chapters and would have been told in great detail!"<sup>72</sup>

Liang also translated two classical philosophical works, namely an *Anthology of Cicero* and *Meditations*, by Marcus Aurelius. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) was a great orator, lawyer, politician, and philosopher. According to Liang, Cicero's great contribution is that he was "capable of conveying the most essential part of Greek thinking to Rome."<sup>73</sup> Liang also commented that Cicero was an important figure in his own right in the classical literary tradition. Since he had a thorough understanding of Greek culture, his thinking did not contravene the tenets of classical literature.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "On Modern Literature," *Prejudices*, 131.

<sup>71</sup> Cao Yong, "Introduction," in George Eliot, *Silas Marner, the Weaver Of Raveloe*, trans. Cao Yong, (Shanghai: New Literature and Art Press, 1957).

<sup>72</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "On the Bawdy Expressions in Literature," in *Debates Between Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu*, ed. Li Zhao (Beijing: Hualing Press, 1997), 408.

<sup>73</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Preface," in *Anthology of Cicero*, trans. Liang Shiqiu (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1972), 11.

<sup>74</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Cicero's Literary Criticism," in *The Romantic and the Classical* (Taipei: Wenxing Book Store, 1965), 100.

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Liang learned Latin when he was at Harvard and read Cicero's works there. In the Preface to *Anthology of Cicero* he said that he had undertaken the translation "gladly" "in order to brush up on the old lesson."<sup>75</sup> His purpose was, more importantly, to introduce Cicero to Chinese readers. "If I can stimulate some people to study Cicero," he explained, "my translation, however poor it may be, will be beneficial."<sup>76</sup>

Marcus Aurelius (121-180) was a Stoic philosopher as well as a Roman Emperor. Liang considered the *Meditations* a treasure for the world. Readers could gain from Marcus' example very valuable insight into how to behave and think.<sup>77</sup> In an article entitled "Several Books that Influence Me," Liang says of *Meditations*, "This Stoic masterpiece reveals the inner world of one who meditates. Parts of it find an echo not only in Buddhism, but also in our traditional ideas, as expressed in the line of *I Ching*, 'Heaven, in its motion, gives the idea of strength; accordingly, the superior man makes himself engage in ceaseless activity,' as well as in Confucius' idea of 'restraining self and observing ritual.'<sup>78</sup>

Liang translated the fifth chapter of Babbitt's *Rousseau and Romanticism*, "Romantic Morality: The Real." In his preface to this translation, Liang wrote, "When thirty years ago, as a student of Mr. Babbitt, the translator read this book, he could only form a general idea of it and could not understand it fully. Today, after translating this section of the book, I admire his extensive knowledge and profound scholarship even more. The original is trenchant and well documented. It is a pity that the translator is not sufficiently capable to convey all this."<sup>79</sup> Whereas in the above-mentioned translation of Marx Liang did not intend to propagate Marx, in the translation of Babbitt he did intend to advocate Babbitt's ideas. Both of these translations as well as many others have the same aim, that is, to promote Babbitt's New Humanism in China. Toward that same end Liang, when he was in Shanghai

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<sup>75</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Preface," to *Anthology of Cicero*, 1.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>77</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "The Translator's Preface," in Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Liang Shiqiu (Taipei: Xiezhong Industrial Publishing Corporation Ltd., 1985), 1.

<sup>78</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Several Books that Influence Me," *Yashe Essays*, 29.

<sup>79</sup> Irving Babbitt, "Romantic Morality: The Real," Liang Shiqiu, trans., in *Collected Works of American Literary Criticism*, ed. Lin Yiliang (Hong Kong: World Today Press, 1961), 14.

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Liang's  
attitude not  
blind hero  
worship.

in 1927, edited an anthology called *Babbitt and Humanism*, a collection of translated articles about Babbitt that had appeared in *Critical Review*. He had it published by Crescent Moon Book Store in 1929.

Though Liang's interpretation of Irving Babbitt's ideas may have been flawed in some respects—his sometimes giving the impression that Babbitt trusts reason to check the passions comes to mind—Liang's selection of materials to be translated were greatly influenced by what he understood to be Babbittian standards. Indeed, his translations became for him an important means of spreading a Babbittian outlook. Yet Liang's attitude toward Babbitt did not amount to blind hero worship. Though Liang admitted that Babbitt had profoundly affected him, he did not like to be labeled a New Humanist. He said that he opposed "personal cults" and did not rely merely on "authority."<sup>80</sup> Here, too, he seems to have followed Babbitt, who argued that the criterion of reality has to be found not in "outer authority" but in immediate experience. Using language that Babbitt would not have found entirely satisfactory, Liang said that the "authority" to which he submitted himself was his own "reason."<sup>81</sup>

Irving Babbitt has been widely misunderstood as well as criticized. Brennan and Yarbrough commented that "Babbitt remains perhaps the most neglected and misunderstood important American thinker of the twentieth century."<sup>82</sup> Liang Shiqiu remarked that Babbitt's New Humanism was considered by many Americans to be "reactionary, fogeyish, and impractical" and to have had a limited influence during his lifetime.<sup>83</sup> Babbitt was highly controversial. Liang's fate was not much different from that of his teacher. He is one of the most controversial figures in modern China. Liang and his opponent Lu Xun have been assessed very differently, ideological considerations having been and remaining one of the

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<sup>80</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "How I Began to Write Literary Criticism—Preface to *Liang Shiqiu on Literature*," *Collected Essays on Literature by Liang Shiqiu*, ed. Chen Zishan (Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1989), 7-8.

<sup>81</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "Preface," to *Babbitt and Humanism*, trans. Xu Zhene, Wu Mi, and Hu Xiansu (Shanghai: Crescent Moon Book Store, 1929), 3.

<sup>82</sup> Stephen C. Brennan and Stephen R. Yarbrough, "Preface," *Irving Babbitt* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987).

<sup>83</sup> Liang Shiqiu, "On Mr. Irving Babbitt and His Ideas," 1.

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major reasons. Under the influence of leftism, Liang has for quite a long time been labeled as a reactionary bourgeois *littérateur*. Mao Zedong said, "Literature and art for the bourgeoisie are bourgeois literature and art. People like Liang Shih-chiu [Liang Shiqiu], whom Lu Hsun [Lu Xun] criticized, talk about literature and art as transcending classes, but in fact they uphold bourgeois literature and art and oppose proletarian literature and art."<sup>84</sup> By the name of Liang Shih-chiu [Liang Shiqiu] in this text, was placed an endnote, which says, "Liang Shih-chiu, a member of the counter-revolutionary National Socialist Party, for a long time propagated reactionary American bourgeois ideas on literature and art. He stubbornly opposed the revolution and reviled revolutionary literature and art."<sup>85</sup> In contrast, in "On New Democracy," Mao was unstinting in his praise of Lu Xun:

*Mao  
denounced  
Liang, praised  
Lu Xun.*

Lu Hsun [Lu Xun] was the greatest and the most courageous standard-bearer of this new cultural force. The chief commander of China's cultural revolution, he was not only a great man of letters but a great thinker and revolutionary. Lu Hsun was a man of unyielding integrity, free from all sycophancy or obsequiousness; this quality is invaluable among colonial and semi-colonial peoples. Representing the great majority of the nation, Lu Hsun breached and stormed the enemy citadel; on the cultural front he was the bravest and most correct, the firmest, the most loyal and the most ardent national hero, a hero without parallel in our history. The road he took was the very road of China's new national culture.<sup>86</sup>

Under the influence of the ideology dominant in China Liang was for decades a target of criticism. What he believed and represented was often distorted beyond recognition. With regard to the reaction to *Babbitt* during his life-time among the powers-that-be in American literary and intellectual circles, Ryn says, "Unfortunately, discussion of *Babbitt* was characterized more by vague generalities or vituperation than by careful and dispassionate examination of his ideas."<sup>87</sup> Today the study of the lives and work of

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<sup>84</sup> Mao Zedong, Yanan Forum on Literature and Art. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume III* (English Version) (Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 76.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>86</sup> Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume II*, 372.

<sup>87</sup> Claes G. Ryn, *Will, Imagination and Reason: Babbitt, Croce and the Problem of Reality* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 10. Also available as "Irving Babbitt: an Introduction," [www.nhinet.org/babintro.htm](http://www.nhinet.org/babintro.htm).

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*Babbitt and  
Chinese  
disciples  
newly  
appreciated.*

Irving Babbitt's Chinese students also should avoid "vague generalities or vituperation." Rather, such study should be "careful and dispassionate." Since the late 1980s, scholars have begun to evaluate Liang more objectively. The just-mentioned endnote about Liang has been changed in later editions into an impartial reference. Many Chinese scholars are today exploring Babbitt's work, which is becoming more widely accessible because of prominently published new translations of Babbitt's books. There is a corresponding renewal of interest in Liang. One may hope and perhaps even expect that this expanding body of scholarship will exhibit the kind of care and calm judgment that the subject deserves.