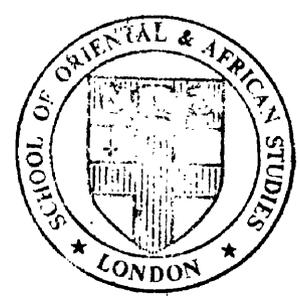


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Liang Shih-chiu's View of the Nature and Social Function
of Literature and his Assessment of post-May 4th Writing

Peter Alexander Bremner Thomson

May 1974



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A B S T R A C T

Liang Shih-chiu is a contradictory figure: a student-patriot who then advocated a thorough-going western orientation of Chinese literature; a somewhat reactionary member of a coterie led by a man dedicated to evolutionism; a staunch advocate of western classicism who associated closely with poets whose inspiration was largely drawn from western romanticism.

I have developed this dissertation in three stages. In the first three chapters I have examined Liang's background. In Chapters 4 - 7 I have looked at what he had to say during the period 1927-34 about literature in general terms, modern Chinese literature as a whole, and certain specific ideas (and presentations of those ideas) in particular. In the last three chapters I have endeavoured to answer three slightly difficult, but interesting, questions which immediately arise from a reading of Liang's commentaries: that of his true identity; that of his motives; and that of his significance.

My secondary purpose has been at intervals to try to trace the source of Liang's thinking, and then, in establishing his identity, also to uncover the closest association that I can find. A third, and also subsidiary, purpose has been to comment briefly on the impression that Liang Shih-chiu makes on the reader, both as an advocate and as a person.

Approached in this way the contradictions outlined above do not disappear, nor are they wholly explained. They do however become easier to understand.

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Preface

Chapter 1. Early Life, Education and Career to 1934

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P R E F A C E

Leaving aside his substantial achievements in the field of translation, Liang Shih-chiu is of interest to the more casual reader because of his early association with Hu Shih, Hsu Chih-mo, and Wen I-to, and because of what he had to say about these front-rank literary figures in later life.

To those interested in the detail of modern Chinese intellectual history he is also significant in his own right as a contemporary commentator on the literary scene which evolved in China in the fifteen years after May 1919.

The purpose of this essay is to look, against the background of his early years, at what Liang said in this commentary, to try and place him in the scheme of modern Chinese literary history, and to try and deduce what made him take up his unique position.

Generally, I have referred to statements contained in pieces published during the period under review, the years 1927-34. In a few cases, where the views expressed seem better articulated, I have quoted from essays written long afterwards. I feel justified in so doing because in the preface to the 1969 edition of Lang-man Te Yü Ku-tien Te (Romantic and Classic) Liang tells us that his philosophy of literature has not changed over the years.

When quoting from essays old and new that are contained in published collections, I have referred the reader to the easily obtainable

current editions of these books rather than to original editions. In these cases I have collaterally referenced, as well as I have been able, the periodicals in which most of the articles first appeared (some only appeared in the collections). Where a periodical only is cited as a reference, the piece in question was, to the best of my knowledge, not republished.

Because of familiarity, I have consistently referred in the text to the Hsin-yueh Tsa-chih, Hsin-yueh Shu-tien, Chuang-tsaο She and Tai-yang She by their well-established English names, that is Crescent Monthly, Crescent Book Company, Creation Society and Sun Society. Otherwise I have used Chinese names throughout. The only abbreviation I have used is confined to the notes, where for convenience I have referred to the Hsin-Yueh Tsa-Chih as HY.

It remains to thank the following friends for their great help: Professor Liang himself for taking the trouble to answer my letters so promptly and so fully; Dr. David Pollard of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for some invaluable advice; Professor William Schulz of the University of Arizona for launching the project; Mr. Chang Wei-jen of the Academia Sinica both for the introductions he arranged and for the source material he provided; Dr. Leo Lee of the University of Princeton for supplying a most useful bibliography; Mr. Gaylord Leung, formerly of the School of Oriental and African Studies, for the endless photocopying and dispatching of Crescent Monthly material that he undertook on my behalf; Mr. Yeh Kung-chao for

recalling the spirit of the Crescent venture so vividly; and Professor Li Hwei-~~ing~~_{ing} of the Chinese University of Hong Kong for describing so clearly the atmosphere in student circles in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties. Without this help I would have been quite lost.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

¹Established in Peking in 1861 after the second Opium War to provide instructions in foreign languages and sciences (see Teng and Fairbank China's Response to the West, pp. 73-9)

²Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 15th September, 1971.

³Ch'iu-Shih Tsa-I (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), pp. 13-14
("Ch'ing-Hua Pa Nien") (Eight Years at Tsinghua)

⁴Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 15th September, 1971.

⁵Ch'iu-Shih Tsa-I (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), pp. 1-2
("Wo Tsa~~z~~ Hsiao Hsueh") (When I Was at Primary School)

CHAPTER ONE

Early Life, Education and Career to 1930

Liang Shih-ch'iu was born in Chekiang in 1901, the fourth of eleven children. His father, who held the first of the three degrees awarded in traditional China, the Hsiu Ts'ai, had studied English for two years at the T'ung Wen Kuan¹ in Peking at the turn of the century. His mother, a native of Hangchow, Liang has described as a "paragon of the ideal traditional Chinese woman"². In "Ching-hua Pa Nien" he tells us that he "was brought up in an old-fashioned home" and that at the time he took the entrance examination for Tsinghua he had never been out on his own³. When Liang was still small the family moved to Peking where his father had been appointed to a position in the police bureau. In the capital the family was moderately well-off rather than wealthy⁴.

The young Liang started to learn to write Chinese characters at home with his brothers and sisters at the age of six. Not long afterwards he entered his first school, which was newly opened and very near his home, but it was only a short while before the school closed. In the hands of a tutor for the next two years, Liang's first reading material was a newly published literature primer rather than the three-character classic⁵.

In 1909 Liang was sent to an expensive but supposedly very good school to receive the beginnings of a modern education. He continued

⁶ibid., pp. 3-4 (ibid.)

⁷ibid., pp. 5-8 (ibid.)

⁸ibid., p. 9 (ibid.)

⁹ibid., p. 10-11 (ibid.)

¹⁰ibid., p. 13 ("Ch'ing-Hua Pa Nien")

to study there until the outbreak of the 1911 revolution when that school, too, closed. After the turbulence of revolution had subsided Liang entered the outstanding Third Public Primary School⁶.

A source of enlightenment in Liang's life during the next three years was a conscientious young teacher from Shansi who taught Liang's class literature, history, geography and calligraphy. In addition there were lessons in English, in which Liang was comparatively advanced thanks to his father's tuition, mathematics, which he saw as something devised exclusively to grind down young children, and chemistry, the highlight of which was an explosion during a practical demonstration⁷.

In Liang's class there were about twenty boys, who got on well together, although Liang notes that the school provided an excellent training in the art of self-defence. Most were from poor families, and very few had the opportunity to continue their education beyond primary school level⁸.

During his three years at "Third Public" Liang walked to school every morning regardless of the weather. At the end of the period he sat the primary school leaving examination sponsored by the municipal education office, and won more prizes than any other candidate⁹.

As a result of the blandishments of a friend, Liang's father had decided that the boy should sit the entrance examination for Tsinghua College¹⁰. Tsinghua was financed by the American share of the Boxer indemnity, and the principal was a Chinese Foreign Office appointee. The school was designed to prepare boys from all over China for university

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 14 (*ibid.*)

¹² *ibid.*, p. 14 (*ibid.*)

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 14 (*ibid.*)

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 15-22 (*ibid.*)

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 23 (*ibid.*)

education in America. Each province was allocated a quota of places each year¹¹.

Although Liang was technically a native of Chekiang, his father arranged for him to sit the examination in Tientsin as a Chili student. Chili's share of the vacancies in the school in 1915 was five. Of the thirty candidates for these places, Liang was one of those who were successful¹².

In his essay "Ching-hua Pa Nien" Liang tells us that, although by 1915 the Tsinghua experiment had been underway for some eight years, it had yet to attract the attention of Chinese parents. Therefore the decision that a boy of fourteen from a conservative household should be sent away to a boarding school with a view to going abroad later for further study was a bold and imaginative one¹³.

The college, outside the capital near the ruins of the Summer Palace, was divided into a middle school and an upper school. Students spent four years in each. The discipline in the middle school was very strict, but Liang considers that the benefit of such discipline outweighed any harm it might have done¹⁴.

In the mornings the boys were engaged in foreign studies. Subjects included English, mathematics, western history, geography, physics, chemistry and biology. The medium of instruction was English, and the teachers and the textbooks they used were mostly American¹⁵.

The afternoons were devoted to Chinese studies, which included Chinese literature, Chinese history and Chinese philosophy. The medium

20.

¹⁶ibid., p. 23 (ibid.)

¹⁷ibid., p. 23 (ibid.)

¹⁸ibid., pp. 27-29 (ibid.)

¹⁹ibid., pp. 32-36 (ibid.)

of instruction was the National Language, and the teachers mostly elderly Chinese scholars cast in the traditional mould¹⁶.

In the graduation examinations only the results of the papers on "western" subjects counted for anything. For this reason, and because of the indifferent quality of the teachers of "Chinese" subjects, the students tended to neglect their Chinese studies. Liang considers this situation to have been Tsinghua's biggest failing¹⁷.

Besides academic subjects, Tsinghua offered less formal courses. The young Liang took to music and displayed some ability in this direction, but lost interest when his first teacher left. For painting and handicrafts he had no aptitude. Whilst in the middle school students had to participate in school sports every afternoon. Liang admits to having been physically lazy at that time¹⁸.

The May 4th movement of 1919, which occurred when Liang was eighteen, caught the imagination of the students. Tsinghua contingents took part in the demonstrations of 3rd and 4th June. Unfortunately the college principal mishandled the whole affair, and from then on the student body was in a state of simmering revolt. Three successive appointees to the position of principal were forced to resign by the students and there were endless boycotts of classes. Liang notes that what was gained from the May 4th movement was the genesis of the new culture movement; the negative aspect of the movement was the beginning of the fashion of struggle. During this time Liang was a member of the policy-making committee of the students' union¹⁹.

²⁰Reproduced as an appendix in Ch'iu-Shih Tsa-i (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber)

²¹ibid., pp. 40-41, "Ch'ing-hua Pa Nien". David Roy, Kuo Mo-jo's auto-biographer, says that Kuo made the acquaintance of Liang in April 1923 (Kuo Mo-jo -- The Early Years, p. 124)

²²ibid., pp. 43-44 (ibid.)

²³T'an Wen I-to (Talking of Wen I-to), p. 8.

²⁴Ch'iu-shih Tsa-i, p. 45 (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), "Ch'ing-hua Pa Nien"

²⁵ibid., p. 48 (ibid.)

Shortly afterwards Liang entered the upper school. He was already interested in literature. Together with some of his contemporaries, and with the support of Wen I-to (who was two years ahead of Liang at Tsinghua), he formed the Tsinghua Literary Society. At about the same time he began writing. He had a poem published in the Creation Quarterly. He was enthusiastic about the new "pai hua" poetry, but not indiscriminately so. Although he applauded Kuo Mo-jo's Nü-shen (Goddesses), he was sufficiently sceptical about K'ang Pai-ch'ing's T'sao-erh (Grasses) not only to write but also to publish a criticism²⁰. As a result of his interest in poetry he came to know some of the members of the Creation Society, whose life-style in Shanghai shocked him²¹.

In his last two years at Tsinghua Liang did not work hard. During his final year he devoted a lot of time to editing the Tsinghua Weekly magazine. In this capacity he met Hu Shih for the first time²². Also during his last year he met Chou Tso-jen and Hsu Chih-mo when they came (separately) to address the Literary Society²³.

By the end of his eight years at Tsinghua Liang was not at all sure that he still wanted to go to America. However the assurances of Wen I-to, who had gone there only a year ahead of Liang, having spent an extra year at Tsinghua, and the fact that no Tsinghua graduate had not gone on to America, overcame his reluctance²⁴. He left Shanghai in August 1923, aged twenty-two²⁵.

At the beginning of September of that year Liang began a year's

²⁶ T'an Wen I-to, (Talking of Wen I-to), p. 28.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 28

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 29

²⁹ Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 28th September, 1971.

³⁰ T'an Wen I-to, pp. 49-51.

study at Colorado College, Colorado Springs. This was a very small university with less than a thousand students. It was one of seven small western colleges from which Harvard would accept students for further study²⁶.

Very soon afterwards at Liang's suggestion Wen I-to arrived at Colorado Springs from Chicago where he had been studying painting. The two youths lived together in the home of a newspaper typesetter²⁷.

Liang had arranged before his arrival to enrol in the fourth-year class of the English department. Two courses he found particularly rewarding were entitled "Tennyson and Browning" and "Modern English and American Poetry". In T'an Wen I-to he acknowledges the debt he felt towards the teacher of the department's poetry courses²⁸.

At the end of the academic year Liang, together with five other Chinese students, received his Bachelor of Arts degree. As a result of his performance at Colorado he was awarded a place in the Harvard graduate school²⁹.

On his way east he spent two weeks in Chicago with ten other Tsinghua graduates. The group formed the Ta Chiang Hui (Great River Society), which Liang describes as neither a political party nor a charity organisation. It was perhaps a patriotic society. Liang summarises the society's programme as nationalism, democracy, technology. Eventually there were about forty members³⁰.

At Harvard, where he arrived in September 1924, Liang pursued his study of English literature. The three courses he took were Irving

26.
31 George Lyman Kitteridge (1860-1941), author of several books on Shakespeare and Chaucer.

32 Kenneth G. Tremayne Webster (1871-1942), actually Professor of Old English during Liang's time at Harvard.

33 Letter from Liang Shih-chiu, dated 15th September, 1971.

34 Ch'iu-shih Tsa-i (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), pp. 55-63, "P'i-pa Chi Te Yen Ch'u" (The Staging of the Lute Story)

35 T'an Hsu Chih-mo (Talking of Hsu Chih-mo), p. 7.

Babbitt's "Literary Criticism", G.L. Kittredge's³¹ "Shakespeare" and K.G.T. Webster's³² "Bacon and Milton". His admiration for Babbitt and the influence which Babbitt's teaching exerted on Liang's whole thinking are well known and will be discussed more fully later. Less well known is the fact that the source of his later enthusiasm for Shakespeare, in whom he had lost interest at the time of the May 4th movement, was Kittredge. In a letter he has said:

"Kittredge left a lasting influence on me, though my knowledge of Shakespeare then was utterly inadequate for me to be much benefited by his profound lectures. However he aroused my interest in Shakespeare."³³

Among Liang's extra-curricular activities during his time at Harvard was his role as translator of another student's prose rendering of Kao Tse-ch'eng's "P'i-Pa Chi" (The Lute Story). Liang's translation was used as the text for this work when it was produced by the Chinese students at Harvard as a play³⁴. Also, during both his postgraduate years, Liang contributed articles to the literary supplement of the Peking Morning News, then under the editorship of Hsu Chih-mo³⁵.

Liang left Harvard in the summer of 1925 without taking a degree, and proceeded to Columbia for a further year of postgraduate study. Again he enrolled in the English department. At Columbia he listened, although his later essays perhaps do not show any marked reflection this, to a Professor Wright, the head of the English department, whose views of Rousseau and Romanticism, he says, "were diametrically opposed

36 Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 28th September, 1971.

37 Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 28th September, 1971.

38 See T'an Wen I-to, (Talking of Wen I-to) p. 72.

39 T'an Hsu Chih-mo (Talking of Hsu Chih-mo), pp. 6-7 and 13.

40 Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 15th September, 1971.

41 Ch'iu-shih Tsa-i (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), p. 44,
"Ch'ing-hua Pa Nien" (Eight Years at Tsinghua)

to those of Professor Babbitt at Harvard"³⁶. This experience he considers enabled him to "mediate between the two extremities of their critical insight" and so "obtain what I thought a fairly objective understanding of the nature of the modern romantic trends in literature". He left Columbia, again without taking a degree, in the summer of 1926 to return home to China³⁷.

Liang returned first to Peking in July³⁸ in order to visit his parents. Whilst in the capital he attended the highly controversial wedding of Hsu Chih-mo and Lu Hsiao-man, and heard Liang Chi-ch'ao's thunderous address to the assembled company³⁹.

In the autumn of that year he proceeded south to Nanking to take up a teaching post in the English department of the South-Eastern University. This appointment was the result of the recommendation of a Professor Mei Kuang-ti who was then working in the Chinese department at Harvard.⁴⁰ Shortly afterwards Liang married Li Shu-fang, who had been teaching in the junior school of the Peking Girls' Normal University when Liang was still at Tsinghua and who had been one of the extra-curricular objects of his attention during his last two years there⁴¹.

The spring of the next year saw the approach towards Nanking of the then joint Nationalist-Communist Northern Expedition. The situation in the city became so chaotic that the South-Eastern University was forced to close. Liang and his new wife decided to make for Shanghai, not only for safety's sake but also because an influx of intellectuals from Peking as well as from Nanking and of students returning from

⁴²Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), p. 144, "I Hsin Yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly), T'an Hsu Chih-mo, p. 28, and T'an Wen I-to, pp. 73-74.

⁴³Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 15th September, 1971.

⁴⁴T'an Hsu Chih-mo, p. 28. Chang Chun-ku claims it was the left-wing writers who attached the label "faction" to the contributors to the Crescent Monthly — see his Hsu Chih-mo Chuan (Biography of Hsu Chih-mo), p. 363.

⁴⁵Grieder, Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, p. 226. Grieder says on p. 206 that Hu did not "undertake any sustained presentation of his political opinions" for five years prior to the launching of the Crescent Monthly.

abroad had transformed Shanghai into the intellectual centre of China. When the South-Eastern University reopened Liang was not one of those members of the staff who was asked to return. Consequently he remained in Shanghai for three years⁴².

These three years were of course the years of the Crescent publishing house and the Crescent Monthly magazine. Although Liang's most well-known essays were written during this period, he has said in a letter that "my literary activities were a side-line"⁴³. His regular occupation was teaching English literature at Chi Nan University and simultaneously offering courses at the China National Institute, then under the direction of Hu Shih. However it is his literary activities which claim our attention.

In T'an Hsu Chih-mo Liang says of the Crescent group: "Our group had no tight organisation, no ambition we shared a greater or lesser tendency towards liberalism"⁴⁴.

The most well-known of the members of the group were the thinker, Hu Shih, and the poets, Hsu Chih-mo and Wen I-to.

Hu arrived in Shanghai in April 1927 after visits to London and Japan. During his three and a half years in Shanghai he held concurrent posts at Kuang Hua University and the China National Institute. He contributed to the Crescent Monthly articles on Buddhism and vernacular literature, autobiographical articles, book reviews, translations of short stories and "forceful critiques of KMT ideology"⁴⁵. Hu's Pai-Hua Wen-Hsueh Shih (History of Vernacular Literature) was the first book to

46 T'an Hsu Chih-mo, p. 29.

47 Chang Chun-ku in his biography of Hsu says there were five (see p. 362). He adds Liang and Shen Kuang-tan to Liang's list. Yeh Kung-ch'ao in an interview recorded on 26th February, 1973, said that the five editors were Hu, Hsu, Wen, himself and Jao Meng-kan.

48 T'an Wen I-to, p. 78.

49 He was also teaching at three different colleges (see Chang Chun-ku, op. cit., p. 362).

50 T'an Wen I-to, p. 78.

51 see Liang, Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), p. 153, "I Hsin Yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly)

be published by the Crescent publishing house and also, according to Liang, the one which sold best.

Hsu Chih-mo came to Shanghai from Peking towards the end of 1926 with several other intellectuals because, according to Liang, "of the atmosphere" in the capital. Hsu was the moving spirit behind the Crescent group. Liang records: "Hu Shih naturally was the leader of the Crescent writers, but Hsu Chih-mo was the soul"⁴⁶. In T'an Wen I-to (Talking of Wen I-to) he notes that although the Crescent Monthly was nominally edited by a board of three⁴⁷, in fact of the three Wen I-to was in Nanking and Jao Tzu-li was a full-time official in the Shanghai municipal government⁴⁸. This left Hsu as the real editor of the magazine⁴⁹. Besides his contributions to the Crescent Monthly, several collections of Hsu Chih-mo's poems were published by the Crescent publishing house during this period.

Wen I-to was in Shanghai intermittently between the autumn of 1926 and the summer of 1928, when he moved to Nanking to take up a post at the Fourth Chung Shan University. On the editorial board of the Crescent Monthly until April 1929, he contributed poetry translations and some articles on Tu Fu besides introducing the work of various young poets⁵⁰. His own well known collection, Ssu-Shui (Dead Water), was published by the Crescent publishing house⁵¹.

According to a survivor, Mr. Yeh Kung-ch'ao, the group to begin with was concerned with "art for art's sake". It was only later, he said, that their magazine assumed any political character, and this, in

52 Interview with Yeh Kung-ch'ao, recorded 26th February, 1973.
Jerome Grieder in Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance notes (p. 236, note 40) that the editorial policy of Crescent Monthly was liberalised in April 1929 to make the magazine a more suitable vehicle for the publication of political opinions. As we noted earlier this was the month Wen I-to gave up his membership of the editorial board.

53 See Chester^{C.} Tan, Chinese Political Thought in the Twentieth Century, pp. 226-34. For a discussion of the essays written by Hu Shih during the Crescent period, see Jerome Grieder's Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, pp. 225-241. For a list of the more important of Lo Lung-chi's Crescent Monthly articles, see Grieder, p. 236.

54 Literary Debates in Modern China, p. 21.

55 Studies in Modern Chinese Literature, p. 24.

56 Interview recorded 26th February, 1973.

his view, was due to the efforts of Hu Shih, Lo Lung-chi and Liang Shih-ch'iu. He believed that overall the magazine, after this development, opposed both the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party. At the same time, he said, it lost the more active participation of some of the founder members including Hsu, Wen and himself⁵².

The political values of the Crescent writers centred around a concern for the survival of human rights. To Hu Shih this meant that the authority of a government must be formally limited by the terms of a constitution. To Lo Lung-chi the extinction of certain of these basic rights, such as freedom of speech, resulted in the destruction not only of the lives of individuals but also of the life of the community and a consequent and justifiable cancellation of the authority of the government. To Liang Shih-ch'iu, as we shall see, the only stable political arrangement was a social order which rested on the interaction of a tolerant government and a consenting populace⁵³.

Of their standpoint in the debate then taking place in China on the place of literature in a political-cum-social context, A. Tagore summarises the general impression received when he says that the Crescent Society "acted as the only serious check on the trend towards socialist realism and proletarian literature in modern Chinese literature"⁵⁴.

What then of Liang's role in the Crescent group? Prusek has described him as the "principal theoretician" of the group⁵⁵. Yeh Kung-ch'ao, a fellow member, recently classified Liang as "our only ideologist"⁵⁶.

⁵⁷ Chung-kuo Hsin Wen-hsueh Shih-kang (An Outline History of the New Chinese Literature), p. 44.

⁵⁸ see T'an Hsu Chih-mo, p. 29

⁵⁹ Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), "I Hsin Yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly), p. 152.

Ho I-~~hsian~~ian, writing shortly after the Crescent period, said:

"(The Crescent Group) publicly opposed the revolutionary literature of the time. Liang Shih-chiu individually took the strongest line, and therefore came under the fiercest attack".⁵⁷

As we shall see, the idiosyncratic view of literature advanced by Liang in opposition to the literary Marxism of the left-wing writers makes his association with the Crescent group less than straightforward. The resultant placing problem becomes the most interesting question in this study.

Besides his theoretical essays, Liang contributed a number of translations and reviews to the Magazine. Translations included "Abelard and Heloise" (Pope), "Tam o'Shanter" (Burns), and chapters one and two of Facts about Shakespeare (Neilson and Thorndike). Among his reviews were those of translations of A History of English Literature (Sefton-Delmer) and All Quiet on the Western Front (Remarque).

So much for Liang's contributions to the Crescent Monthly, which brought him into collision with both the Creation Society and, a little later, with Lu Hsun. The other activity in which the Crescent group engaged was the management of the Crescent Book Company, actually established before the Crescent Monthly magazine. Liang was active in this venture too. He was appointed as the house editor⁵⁸.

In "I Hsin-yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly) he disclaims any knowledge of the financial affairs of the company⁵⁹, which were presumably left to the manager, Chang Yu-chiu, but he is able to list

⁶⁰In his essay, "I Hsin Yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly), Liang objects to the label "faction".

⁶¹T'an Wen I-to, p. 81.

the names of many of the books published. His own included Lang-man Te Yü Ku-tien Te (Romantic and Classic), published in June 1927; Wen-hsueh Te Chi-lü (The Discipline of Literature), published in March 1928; and (edited only) Pai-pi-te Yü Jen-wen-chu-yi (Babbitt and Humanism), published in February 1927. The last was a collection of essays originally contributed to the South East University (Nanking) magazine (a "wen-yen" style magazine) in 1922-3. It is of interest because these articles represent an initial, and unsuccessful, attempt to popularise in China the thought of the man who was to become Liang's mentor. Furthermore it establishes a link between Liang and the most well-known of China's literary conservatives, a link which explains his otherwise incongruous traditionalism.

By the end of 1930 most of the members of this unique group, if it can be so called⁶⁰, had left Shanghai. Hu Shih, having been unseated from the presidency of the China National Institute, moved to Peking to become dean of the College of Arts at Peita. Liang and Wen I-to accepted appointments in Tsingtao. Hsu Chih-mo soon followed Hu Shih to Peking. The magazine continued, but with a changed character. The publishing company was sold to the Commercial Press.

Liang and Wen I-to had been invited by Yang Chin-fu to head, respectively, the departments of foreign literature and of Chinese literature at the newly-established Tsingtao National University in Shantung⁶¹.

Tsingtao Liang found to be a town that was in Wen I-to's words

⁶²T'an Wen I-to, p. 97.

⁶³ibid., pp. 98-100.

"devoid of culture" although the quality of the restaurants provided some compensation⁶². Also because he refused to support student action at the time of the Japanese occupation of Mukden in September 1931, there was a period during which his relations with his students were strained⁶³.

During his time at Tsingtao Liang edited a Chinese edition of the writings of Cicero and published a history of western literary criticism for middle-school students. He also edited the literary supplement to the Tientsin newspaper I-shih Pao and contributed articles to the Nanking literary periodical Tu-shu P'ing Lun (Book Review). His third collection of essays, a retrospective collection of articles that had already appeared in journals, was published just before he left Tsingtao as part of a series edited by Wang P'ing-ling. This was the collection entitled P'ien-chien Chi (Prejudices).

Such then was the early life of the subject of this essay and the life that he led during the period when his greatest interest was in literary theory. His departure from Tsingtao in 1934 saw a change of emphasis in his preoccupation with literature. He continued to write articles on literary topics and also reviews, though at a reduced rate. However after his arrival in China's ^{former} capital, Liang's greatest work lay in a field he had already begun to enter seriously three years earlier, that of translation. Unlike Wen I-to, who turned to the classical literature of China, he decided to embrace Elizabethan England.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

- ¹ T'an Wen I-to, p. 103.
- ² Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 15th September, 1971.
- ³ Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), "Hu Shih-chih Hsien-sheng Lun Shih" (Hu Shih on Poetry), p. 137.
- ⁴ T'an Wen I-to, p. 103. John Israel, in Student Nationalism in China, 1927-37, furthermore quotes an article Liang wrote for the Ta Kung Pao in 1935 which contains a strongly-worded criticism of the KMT's politically repressive domestic policy (see Israel, p. 102)
- ⁵ See John Israel in Student Nationalism in China, 1927-37, p. 146. According to Barbara Tuchman the riots of December 1935 were caused by a Japanese demand for regional autonomy for northern China (see Stilwell and the American Experience in China, p. 191).
- ⁶ Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 15th September, 1971.
- ⁷ See preface to Ya-she Hsiao P'in (Sketches of a Cottager)

CHAPTER TWOSummary of Later Life

Given the shortcomings of Tsingtao and his disagreement with his students, Liang must have felt relieved in the summer of 1934 when he was offered an appointment in the English department of Peking National University¹. He was in Peking for the next three years², during which he also edited a magazine called Tzu-yu P'ing-lun (Free Criticism)³ and contributed editorials to the Peking Morning News criticising the KMT government's foreign policy⁴.

In early 1936 he was a supporter of the National Salvation Movement, a nation-wide united-front movement which had grown out of Tsinghua's National Salvation Committee after the student riots in Peking in December 1935⁵.

Liang spent the years 1937-45 in Chungking, the war-time capital of unoccupied China. During this period he worked as a senior editor at the National Bureau of Translation and Compilation. At the same time he was a member of the People's Political Council⁶. It was during the war and immediately afterwards that Liang's most popular casual essays appeared. Originally published in the Chungking Weekly Review and the Peking Century Review, they later formed the basis of the still very popular Ya-she Hsiao P'in (Sketches of a Cottager) collection⁷.

⁸ Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 15th September, 1971.

⁹ Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 12th December, 1971.

¹⁰ Letter from Liang Shih-chiu dated 12th December, 1971.

In 1946 Liang took up the post of head of the English department of the Peking National Normal University, a post which he occupied for the next three years⁸.

In June 1949 he moved to Taipei. The same year he was appointed as professor of English at Taiwan Provincial Teachers Training College. Shortly after the college became the Taiwan Normal University, Liang was promoted to the position of Dean of the Faculty of Arts. He continued to hold this post until his retirement in 1966, working concurrently first as a senior translator and then as director of the National Institute of Translation and Compilation⁹.

Liang's major achievement after the Crescent period is undoubtedly his translation of the whole of the extant work of William Shakespeare. He started this project in 1931 under the sponsorship of the China Foundation. At that time Hu Shih was in charge of the Foundation's translation programme. By the time the outbreak of war made further progress impossible he had completed the translation of ten plays. It was only after his arrival in Taiwan that he was able to resume work on the project. By 1963 ten more plays had been translated, and all twenty completed translations were published by the World Book Company.

On his retirement Liang was able to accelerate the programme, and work on the thirty-seventh and last play was finally finished in 1967. The thirty-seven translations were published as a series by the Far East Book Company in September of that year. The three volumes of translated poetry followed in October 1968¹⁰.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

¹See Chiu-shih Tsa-i (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), p. 2,
"Wo Tsa~~h~~ Hsiao-hsueh" (When I was at Primary School).

²op. cit.

CHAPTER THREE

Formative Influences

The results of many of the forces which influenced Liang Shih-chiu during his early impressionable years are discernible to the reader of his essays. In some cases these influences clearly had a decisive effect on the development of his thinking.

Firstly discipline, which Liang took as the theme of his most significant essay on the theoretical aspect of literature and which he lost no opportunity to recommend in his other writings. That a certain self-discipline had been successfully implanted by the time he was six is evident from Liang's own observation that he then already "had the habit of rising early" and that at his first school he was usually the first to arrive in the morning¹. This admirable condition was no doubt considerably reinforced by the strict imposed discipline he encountered during his first four years at Tsinghua. At the very least the detailed description of the rigours of the college's middle school provided by Liang in his essay "Ch'ing-hua Pa Nien"² suggests that the experience was not forgotten.

Then the peculiar circumstances of Tsinghua College surely account for the nationalistic behaviour displayed by Liang during his later student days in America. More important, perhaps Tsinghua also provided the germ of the concern for the fate of his country which undoubt-

³Chiu-shih Tsa-i (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), p. 24,
"Ch'ing-hua Pa Nien" (Eight Years at Tsinghua)

edly underlay the almost aggressive quality of some of the polemical pieces he wrote on his return from abroad. Firstly, Tsinghua was a genuinely national school: each year a quota of places was offered to applicants from each province of the new republic, with the result that every entry contained boys from every corner of the country. Secondly, because the school was financed by Boxer indemnity funds, the students could not but be aware of the national humiliation that China had suffered at the hands of the Western powers fifteen years before and the state of continuing powerlessness that resulted from it. Liang specifically records the sense of anger and shame that he and his friends felt at the association of the school with this disastrous event³. Thirdly, it is clear that the low priority accorded by the Tsinghua authorities to Chinese studies ran counter to the sense of nationhood of the youth of a newly-established republic. Chinese subjects were badly taught, counted for little in the school examinations, and were lightly regarded.

The young Liang's sense of national identity was of course powerfully reinforced by the events of May 1919, when he was half-way through his course at Tsinghua. Of two other side-effects of his experiences during the May 4th period, one acted as a stimulus and one generated a sense of restraint. In the first case, like all students at the time, his thirst for knowledge suddenly became insatiable: he began to devour fashionable books as fast as he could. Although such study was superficial, it led to a degree of mental expansion that was a prerequisite

⁴Chiu-shih Tsa-i (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), p. 36,
"Ching-hua Pa Nien" (Eight Years at Tsinghua)

⁵Tan Hsu Chih-mo (Talking of Hsu Chih-mo), p. 23 (comment on patriotic
letter written by Hsu on going to America)

⁶Chiu-shih Tsa-i (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), p. 26,
"Ching-hua Pa Nien" (Eight Years at Tsinghua)

⁷ibid., p. 26 (ibid.)

for success in his later training as a scholar. In the second case, the interminable and largely fruitless student strikes and student protests during the months which followed May 4th made him doubtful of the benefits that were supposed to flow from mass organisation. He records that it was his first taste of "mass psychology" and that he found it disconcerting⁴.

Again, like most young Chinese intellectuals of his generation, Liang was an admirer of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao during his adolescence and early youth. "To be honest," he says, "who amongst the young at that time (1918) did not revere Liang Ch'i-ch'ao?"⁵ He records that his enthusiasm for Chinese literature, which was admittedly brief but also productive, was catalysed by a lecture given by Liang Ch'i-ch'ao at Tsinghua College in 1922 entitled "Feeling as expressed in Chinese verse"⁶. Perhaps to the youth of the early 1920's Liang Ch'i-ch'ao personified the "scholar-nationalist" who possessed the vision as well as the dedication that was required for the successful regeneration of China. Indeed in this connection Liang states that people admired him because of his scholarship and because of his enlightened, up-to-date thinking⁷.

Liang also records a debt of gratitude dating from this period to Wen I-to, the moving spirit behind the Tsinghua Literary Society. From what he says (on p. 9 of Tan Wen I-to) it would seem that if he owed Wen nothing else, he owed to him the extreme enthusiasm for literature which perhaps provided the basis for success in his subsequent career as a man

⁸The two essays were published privately in the same volume on 1st November, 1922. The two most significant beliefs expressed by both men were opposition to the use of a "free metre" and opposition to the concept of the "ordinariness" of poetry. Liang's critique is examined in more detail in Chapter 5.

⁹Tan Wen-I-to (Talking of Wen I-to), p. 47.

of letters. However it is also noticeable that in his contemporary critique of K'ang Pai-ch'ing's poetry collection, Tsao Erh (Grasses), Liang made several of the points made by Wen at the same time in his critique of Yü P'ing-po's Tung Yeh (Winter Nights)⁸.

On his arrival in America in 1923 Liang's sense of nationality was further enhanced by a feeling that he and his fellow students were victims of racial prejudice. Describing his experience during his year in Colorado he writes:

"A man or a country ... can only comprehend the importance of equal treatment when that equal treatment is unobtainable..... America had been the country that had been most cordial to the Chinese people, and had never had any designs on China, but they (the Americans) too had their feeling of superiority..... the way of expression sometimes was the veiled insult, sometimes a frigid keeping of distance, sometimes an arrogant dispensing of pity".⁹

He cites as examples the refusal of the local customers of a barber's shop to patronise the shop unless the barber barred Chinese, and the unwillingness of American students to pair off with Chinese students at the university's graduation ceremony.

Nationalism, together with democracy and industrialisation, were the stated beliefs shared by the members of the Ta Chiang Hui. (Great River Society), which Liang and some of his old Tsinghua friends formed

¹⁰Tan Wen I-to (Talking of Wen I-to), p. 50.

¹¹See Wen-hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities), p. 59. Curiously, Lin Yu-tang, under whom Liang had studied English literature at Tsinghua and whom he respected, had also been a student of Babbitt's at Harvard.

¹²ibid., p. 59.

in the autumn of 1924. At that time Bertrand Russell, who had made a great impact in student circles during his year in Peking in 1920-1 and who was then teaching in America, was advocating a world commonwealth. Liang records that Russell "eventually acknowledged that with China's current situation as it was, we could only take the road of nationalism. Otherwise there would be no salvation" and that his decision to do so gave Chinese students in America "great encouragement".¹⁰

If Liang's experience in America put the finishing touches to his evolving sense of nationality, it also marked the beginning of his evolution as a literary theorist. For it was during his year at Harvard that he came under the influence of Irving Babbitt (1865-1933). It will later be shown that most of the ideas set out by Liang in his essays on literature are directly attributable to Babbitt's influence. Liang freely acknowledges this debt in an essay written in 1957 called "Kuan-yü Pai-pi-te Hsien-sheng Chi Chi Ssu-hsiang" (On Mr. Babbitt and His Thought) and published as a part of the collection known as Wen-Hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities).

Ironically, Liang notes in this article that "when I attended Babbitt's classes it was not out of esteem for him; on the contrary, I went to listen nursing the emotions of a provocateur"¹¹. At this time Liang was engaged in writing a term paper entitled "Wilde and Aestheticism", a topic he had selected himself because, as he records in his essay on Babbitt, "I had previously been very fond of Wilde's works"¹².

That part of Babbitt's teaching which most conspicuously underlies

¹³Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 36

¹⁴ibid., p. 44.

the ideas propounded by Liang during the period under discussion is to be found in the original in two books, one entitled Rousseau and Romanticism, the other Democracy and Leadership. First published in 1919 and 1924, the editions consulted during the preparation of this essay were issued by Houghton and Mifflin of New York in 1947.

Babbitt's interpretation of modern European literary history was that the mainstream of the Western classical tradition, which he considered began with Aristotle, was abandoned in the 18th century for the pursuit of a deceptively shallow tributary known as Romanticism. The cause of this diversion of progress was partly what he later called the Baconian spirit ("an indubitable fact is that scientific or rationalistic naturalism tended from the early 18th century to produce emotional naturalism")¹³; and partly the formalism of the neo-classical movement and of contemporary Christian teaching:

"If the plea for genius and originality is to be largely explained as a protest against the mechanical imitation and artificial decorum of a certain type of classicist, the assertion of man's natural goodness is to be understood rather as a rebound from the doctrine of total depravity that was held by the more austere type of Christian".¹⁴

In Babbitt's view the first major figure to rebel against the constraints of these orthodoxies was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He held that the results of Rousseau's evangelism had continued to influence western

¹⁵Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 104.

¹⁶ibid., p. 105.

¹⁷ibid., p. 80.

literature down to his own day. He considered that the Realist writing of the late 19th century "does not represent any fundamental change of direction" but is rather "romanticism going on all fours"¹⁵. The two are bound together by "their common repudiation of decorum as something external and artificial"¹⁶. In sum "to shake off the trammels of tradition and reason in favour of free and passionate self-expression underlies, as I have pointed out, the conception of original genius, which itself underlies the whole modern movement"¹⁷. Babbitt's objection to preoccupation with such freedom was that "the freer it (the romantic imagination) becomes, the further it gets away from reality"¹⁸. The result for modern man is stated with stark clarity in his introduction: "If I am right in my conviction as to the unsoundness of the Rousseauistic philosophy of life, it follows that the total tendency of the Occident at present is away from rather than towards civilisation."

Although Babbitt's focus in this book was on what he called "Rousseauistic naturalism", he also attacked that spirit which he saw as at the same time both causal and complementary, namely "Baconian naturalism". This school of thought as developed by John Locke he considered to be the source of modern faith in scientific empiricism as the key to all truth. He believed that such faith was as misplaced as exclusive commitment to the "free and passionate self-expression" advocated by Rousseau:

"English empiricism gained international vogue in

¹⁹Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 26.

²⁰ibid., p. 368

²¹ibid., p. 371

the philosophy of Locke..... Locke's method of precise naturalistic observation is in itself legitimate; for man is plainly subject to the natural law. What is not truly empirical is to bring the whole of human nature under this law"¹⁹.

He went on (on page 28) to point out that the human judgements which Pascal's "esprit de finesse" enables man to make "rest upon such a multitude of delicate perceptions that he is frequently unable to account for them logically".

At the end of the book, having conceded that "I have no quarrel... either with the man of science or the romanticist when they keep in their proper place,"²⁰ Babbitt summarised his view of the limitations of scientific knowledge:

"It is possible to look on the kind of knowledge that science gives as alone real only by dodging the critical problem — the problem as to the trustworthiness of the human instrument through which all knowledge is received"²¹.

So much for Babbitt on romanticism and on scientific enquiry. In the second book of which the substance is reflected in Liang Shih-chiu's writings Babbitt developed his case to demonstrate the political consequences of the naturalistic movement.

In his introduction Babbitt equated naturalism in its political aspect with humanitarianism. He then went on to define the hallmark

²²Democracy and Leadership, p. 8.

²³ibid., p. 117.

²⁴ibid., p. 127.

²⁵ibid., p. 287.

of this humanitarianism:

"The humanitarian is not ... primarily concerned, like the humanist, with the individual and his inner life, but with the welfare and progress of mankind in the lump"²².

A part of the humanitarian spirit, he had already announced, was the concept of "democratic fraternity". His twin theme in Democracy and Leadership was the inadequacy of such mass democracy and the superiority of more traditional ideas about leadership.

His main objection to "direct and unlimited" democracy was its falsity — far from being "the same as liberty", he claimed that it was "the death of liberty"²³. The basis of his claim was that "the net result of the Rousseauistic (i.e. thorough-going democratic) movement is not to get rid of leadership, but to produce an inferior and even insane type of leadership, and in any case leadership of a highly imperialistic type"²⁴. As a result, in turn, of this kind of leadership, he considered that "We are being deprived gradually of our liberties on the ground that the sacrifice is necessary to the good of society"²⁵.

Even on a theoretical level he believed that mass democracy must be disastrous. Leaving aside the practicalities, he rejected the very idea:

"The notion that wisdom resides in a popular majority at any particular moment should be the most completely

²⁶Democracy and Leadership, p. 263.

²⁷*ibid.*, p. 304.

²⁸*ibid.*, p. 309

²⁹see Wen-hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities) p. 59.

³⁰*ibid.*, p. 59

³¹*ibid.*, p. 60.

exploded of all fallacies"²⁶.

In contrast he advanced the view that "the hope for civilisation lies not in the divine average, but in the saving remnant". The saving remnant were the "ethical leaders", the men of "inner cultivation", who had been the subject of the second half of his introduction.

Developing his case for the indispensability of leadership of this kind, Babbitt stated that in his view "the basis of leadership is not commercial or industrial efficiency, but wisdom"²⁷. Subordination to this wisdom, he believed, best provided the true balance without which the State could not function:

"The unit to which all things must finally be referred is not the State or humanity or any other abstraction, but the man of character"²⁸.

In his essay on Babbitt Liang admits that when he arrived at Harvard in the autumn of 1924 his knowledge of literature was "very limited". "On the subject of literary criticism", he goes on to say, "I simply did not know that it was a field of learning. I thought you simply took up a pen" ²⁹

As a result of Babbitt's guidance during the preparation of his paper and especially as a result of his mentor's insistence on "an infinite amount of care"³⁰, Liang came to understand the paramount importance of the historical perspective in literary criticism and the seriousness of literature at its best³¹. By the time he left

³² ibid., p. 60.

³³ Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), p. 147.

³⁴ see Wen-hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities), p. 62.

³⁵ see Introduction to Rousseau and Romanticism

³⁶ see Wen-hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities), p.64.

Harvard he had shifted "from a position of extreme romanticism to one of more or less approximating to that of classicism"³².

Looking back on the Crescent period (1928-30) thirty years later in "I Hsin-yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly) Liang says:

"As for myself, at that time my philosophy of literature tended towards that of the traditional non-innovative school. I had been influenced by the demands for innovation of the May 4th movement, but I had also absorbed to a considerable extent the influence of the Harvard professor, Babbitt."³³

Later it will be seen that the main thread running through Liang's essays on literary theory is his belief that the function of literature is the description of human life. This belief he himself attributed to Babbitt. In the essay already referred to in the Wen-hsueh Yin-yuan collection (Literary Affinities) he says: "Babbitt looked at actual human life he directly examined human nature. He most of all admired a line by the 18th century poet Pope -- 'The proper study of man is man'."³⁴ Liang's emphasis in these essays on the importance of the place of the intellect in human affairs too would seem to be linked to Babbitt's distinction between "the natural law" and "the human law"³⁵. For Liang tells us in his essay on Babbitt that "what he (Babbitt) revered was the intellect"³⁶.

The patriotism lying submerged in the essays Liang contributed to periodicals after his return from America in the summer of 1926

³⁷In another essay he says of this slogan, "Only faith, not criticism, was permitted" — see Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), p. 150

³⁸P'ien-chien Chi (Prejudices), p. 175 ("Suo-wei Ti-ts'ai Te Chi-chi Hsing") (The So-called Positive Quality of Subject Matter)

³⁹ibid., p. 175 (ibid.)

appears to be muted in comparison to the feeling and behaviour displayed during his student days as described in Tan Wen I-to and "Ch'ing-hua Pa Nien". He refers briefly to this sobering process, which clearly coincided with his return, on p. 67 of Tan Wen I-to. He seems to attribute it to the dispersal of his fellow members of the Ta Chiang Hui, to the taking up of careers, and to the change in the political climate of the country represented by the slogan "No parties outside the party, no factions inside the party"³⁷. "How," he says, "could the nationalism of the Great River Society not be as ephemeral as the gathering of dark clouds?"

However his anxiety for the plight of his country and its people and his indignation at the treatment both received from within and without remained. He was certainly not unmoved by the state of affairs he found on his return home. Although in the great debate on the role of literature which was raging in China at the time he vehemently opposed the subordination of literature to politics, he stated that "for contemporary Chinese literature to express the sufferings of the masses is a natural reflection"³⁸. He voiced his concern and indignation more specifically when he said:

"Life at the present time for the Chinese people, apart from a few warlords, politicians and compradors, is in the case of the great mass extremely harsh. Anybody who is not totally insensitive feels a continual sense of oppression in his life."³⁹

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 176 (*ibid.*)

⁴¹ see P'ien-chien Chi (Prejudices), p. 215.

Although opposed to class struggle, revolutionary literature, and totalitarianism, the situation was such that he could not remain entirely uninfluenced by the ideals and the blandishments of the Communist party after the rift between it and the KMT. For in the same essay ("Suo-wei Ti-tsai Te Chi-chi Hsing") he said:

"Bandit areas is not a description that can be used to write off the agrarian soviets of Fukien and Kiangsi. Whether the activities of the Communist Party can relieve the suffering of the Chinese masses is not for discussion here. But the ability of the movement to reverberate in men's hearts, especially those of intellectuals and of the young, is an incontrovertible fact."⁴⁰

He was also concerned about the low level of attainment in the arts then to be found in China. In an essay entitled "Wen-hsueh Te Yu-chih Ping" (*Infantilism* The ~~Childishness~~ of our Literature) he briefly discussed the defects of contemporary writing. His opening remark was that "our Chinese culture has at present fallen behind in every respect"⁴¹.

The *strength* influence of this awareness of the sorry state of affairs in all areas of life in China was such that when he looked back on the Crescent period thirty years later in his essay "Kuan-yü Lu Hsun" (On Lu Hsun) it is clearly one of the salient features of his memories:

"Our nation and our race, our political institutions

⁴² see Kuan-yü Lu-hsun (On Lu Hsun), p. 3.

and our culture, were riddled with blemishes.

What could we do?"⁴²

Early personal discipline, national, and possibly racial, humiliation, traditional western scholarship, and deep patriotic concern — this was the sequence of Liang's experience during the first twenty-five years of his life. More personal influence was provided by Liang Chi-ch'ao, who served initially at least as a model of the scholar-patriot ideal, and Wen I-to, whose irrepressible enthusiasm for literature appears to have infected Liang permanently.

The result of this experience and of this influence was a controlled, but fierce, determination to bring the benefit of his upbringing and education to the attention of his countrymen through the channels of literary theory, literary criticism, and literary polemics. In the next chapters we will look at each of these in turn.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

¹ Like Hsu Chih-mo in the Crescent manifesto, Liang's demand was for "healthy" literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

Liang as Literary Theorist

The appearance in June 1927 of his first collection of essays marked the crystallization of Liang's view of literature. The title of the collection was Lang-Man te yü Ku-tien te (Romantic and Classic). After the publication of this book Liang's ideas on the subject of literature changed very little. The order of appearance of his essays, and to a lesser extent the order of the essays within each of the two collections which preceded the Crescent Monthly contributions, perhaps therefore indicates the priority Liang attached to the issues he discussed rather than the course of development of his thinking.

If this is so, then his primary concern was the effect of the romantic spirit on the development of China's "new" literature¹. The title of this first essay was "Hsien-tai Chung-kuo Wen-hsueh chih Lang-man te Ch'ü-shih" (The Romantic Trend in Modern Chinese Literature). The strength of the feelings expressed here may be a further indicator of Liang's order of priority.

His distinction between the romantic writer and the classical writer is a direct reflection of Irving Babbitt's teaching:

"What the classicist esteems most of all is the human head. What the romantic esteems most of all is the human heart. The classicist says, 'By means of the

² see Lang-man te yü Ku-tien te (1969 edition), p. 10. This edition is an enlargement of the original and contains some of the essays in Liang's second collection as well.

³ *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 21. Although this essay was primarily an analysis of the romantic spirit, and although this is the most interesting aspect of it, Liang did not altogether fail to make the case announced in the title. The analysis was conducted within the framework of the separation of four "symptoms" of romanticism: the prevailing western mood, emotionalism, impressionism, and compliance with nature. At the end of the discussion Liang concluded that contemporary Chinese literature was generally characterised by all four of these features and was therefore essentially romantic literature.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 58.

highest intellect I can arrive in the realm of truth.' The romantic says, 'I have a beautiful soul, I can transcend all things'".²

In cases where the romantic spirit was allowed to become predominant, Liang believed; the result was the triumph of the emotions over both propriety and the intellect. "Romanticism," he said, "is unbridled emotionalism".³ Its products, he affirmed, were decadence and false idealism.

Liang believed that the source of this emotionalism was universal sympathy proceeding from self-pity, which in turn proceeded from the basic false assumption of human equality. These attitudes, Liang said with some distaste, led to a constant (and disastrous) search for idiosyncrasy and escape, "escape from the phenomenal world to the world of illusion, from maturity to childhood, from a civilised society to a primitive society."⁴

In a short piece entitled "Yü Tzu-jan Tung-hua" (Assimilation with Nature) later in this collection Liang explored the (as he saw it) significant symptom of this urge to escape, the romantic's idealisation of and desire to be "assimilated" by nature. His conclusion was that the romantic concept of nature served as a kind of drug which enabled the writer to find the escape he sought.

In the second major essay in Lang-man te Yü Ku-tien te Liang presented in contrast his interpretation of the Aristotelian doctrine, which he believed to be "the first masterpiece on the principles of art"⁵

⁶ ibid., p. 62.

⁷ Both the collection and this first essay were called Wen-hsueh Te Chi-lü (The Discipline of Literature). The essay is currently published in the enlarged edition of Lang-man te yü Ku-tien te, referred to earlier. It was also reproduced in HY1/1.

⁸ Lang-man te Yü Ku-tien te (1969 edition), p. 115.

⁹ ibid., p. 119.

and "the core of western classicism"⁶. In this interpretation we find attributed to Aristotle the guiding principles Liang himself elaborated in later essays in which he pronounced his own judgement on the literary art. These principles amount in the first place to the belief that literature is imitation, that what is imitated is truth, that truth represents the artist's ideal, that the subject of this ideal is the "timeless" and "universal" aspect of human nature, and that it is this "timelessness" and "universality" which sets literature apart; in the second place to the implicit corollary that both the critical imagination and the creative imagination must be subject to the control of the intellect.

In the first and most substantial piece in his next collection of essays,⁷ published in March 1928, Liang developed his own views on the subject. Most importantly, he took up Babbitt's concept of a literary standard. Early on in the piece he declared "literature need not have rules, but it ^{must} ~~cannot~~ not have a standard".⁸

Behind Liang's insistence on such a criterion of course lay his attachment, asserted earlier, to the idea of the supremacy of the intellect. The product of intellectual mastery, restraint, itself became one element in his standard:

"The strength of literature lies in concentration rather than dissipation, in restraint rather than release... The strength of restraint consists in the control of the emotions and of the imagination by the intellect."⁹

¹⁰ Lang-man 'te Yü Ku-tien 'te (1969 edition), p. 127.

¹¹ see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 183. The article was written in 1933-4.

The other product of intellectual control and the other element of the same standard was truth — not the "particular" truth of history, but Aristotle's ideal or universal truth which only a developed but intellectually disciplined imagination could attain. Literature, he believed, should be a reflection of this higher truth.

These central beliefs led him to the parallel conclusion that form in literature was all-important; but that the form to which he referred was the higher form of the meaning of a literary work, rather than the form of the words:

"So we can demand the greatest measure of freedom for the words whilst necessarily preserving a strict discipline over the meaning."¹⁰

However it was in a still later essay that Liang spelt out most lucidly his well-known creed that literature amounts to the description of "universal human nature". This was a short piece contributed to the Tientsin I-Shih Pao entitled "Ku-tien Wen-hsueh Te I-i" (The Significance of Classical Literature). In it he stated quite uncompromisingly:

"A literary work has its essence, and it also has an ancillary 'spirit of the time' and 'locational flavour'. Its essence is the description of human nature."¹¹

The longest article on literature that Liang wrote before 1934 was his critique of contemporary Chinese literature entitled "Hsien-tai Wen-hsueh Lun" (On Modern Literature). This originally appeared in the

¹² see P'ien Chien Chi, p. 112. Earlier in the same essay he described Taoism as a kind of home-grown romanticism. The significance of these two statements taken together is that he appears in this essay to have rated the effect of "native" romanticism as equal to that of the "foreign" romantic influence detailed in "Hsien-tai Chung-kuo Wen-hsueh chih Lang-man te Ch'u-shih" (The Romantic Trend in Modern Chinese Literature). Nonetheless his perception of the result remained unchanged. The article was written in 1933-4.

literary supplement of the Tientsin newspaper I-Shih Pao when Liang was teaching at Tsingtao. In it we see applied to general criticism the thinking put forward in the earlier essays.

He first looked at Chinese literature in the round. In analysing its shortcomings he made a surprising assertion:

"As I see it Taoist thought constitutes the unhealthy obstruction in Chinese literature. I consider that the first thing for the new literature movement to do is not to attack the 'Confucian shop'..... but to subject Taoist thought to earnest criticism."¹²

He then urged Chinese writers to adopt "healthy" Western literary theory as a substitute. In the centre of the mainstream of the Western tradition, he believed, stood the humanist, the artist who was concerned with real life and with the cultivation of human nature. Humanism he saw as a creed which could restore the quality of Chinese literature. Sound literature in turn would make for a regular attitude to life and for sympathetic relationships between men.

Going on ^{to} ~~the~~ appraise the achievements of the "new" (i.e. post 1919) literature Liang addressed himself in turn to each of four areas. In the case of poetry he noted a lack of substance and a lack of form. Of the prose writers then active in China he isolated five as "superior": Hu Shih, characterised by clarity; Hsu Chih-mo, whose prose was ^{moving} ~~apposite~~; Chou Tso-jen, who was thought-provoking; Lu Hsun, whose writing was pungent; and Kuo Mo-jo, distinguished by his vitality.

In the case of contemporary Chinese novels he believed that only by the application of the kind of moral seriousness to be found in English fiction of the Victorian period could the prevalent shallowness be made good. The new (i.e. European-style) drama of the time, he believed, would not stand up to criticism because of preoccupation at one extreme with Western dramatists' thought and at the other with modish stage techniques, both at the expense of comprehension of European dramatic method.

Reversing the order in which ^{he} set out his findings, therefore, his complaint against contemporary Chinese writing centred on the lack of a serious approach; his prescription for the new literature was a healthy dose of Western humanism. Given the fact that Mao Tun's first two trilogies, Wen I-to's most successful poetry, and the first of Tsao Yu's major plays had appeared before this article was written, Liang's wholesale condemnation of fiction, poetry and drama seems ^{unjustified} inequitable; given the naturally voracious appetite for new ideas of a people breaking with a long cultural tradition, his obsession with Babbittian humanism as a panacea seems excessively single-minded.

During the period under review Liang voiced his opinions on one other controversial but non-political issue then engaging the attention of literary men. This was the question of the correct relationship between the newly-regenerated literature of China and newly-imported science.

The demand that the relationship needed consideration caused Liang

to discern an external threat to the unique position occupied by literature which complemented the internal menace detailed in "Hsien-tai Wen-hsueh Lun". Perhaps because less sure of his ground, he was more defensive and more conciliatory in this second discussion than he had been in the first.

Liang's views are contained in two articles written during his sojourn at Tsingtao, "Wen Hsueh Yü K'e Hsueh" (Literature and Science) (originally contributed to the literary supplement of the Tientsin I-Shih Pao) and "K'e-hsueh Shih-tai Chung Chih Wen-hsueh Hsin-li" (Literary Psychology in a Scientific Age) (originally contributed to the Nanking periodical, T'u-shu P'ing-lun [Book Review]). Both are currently published in the P'ien-chien (Prejudices) collection.

Liang considered that there were two factors which increased the danger to literature posed by science beyond the level of healthy competition for precedence in the area of education. One factor was common to all civilised countries, the other was peculiar to China. In the case of China the two worked in concert.

In the first case the development of the new disciplines grouped under the heading of social sciences enabled scientists everywhere to claim a superior ability to discharge the responsibilities traditionally assigned to the creative writer. In the second case the plight in which China found herself in the 1920's enabled her scientists to claim that only undivided attention to science could regenerate the country. In both cases literature was declared to be redundant.

¹³ see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 150 ("Wen Hsueh Yü K'e Hsueh")

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 151 (*ibid.*)

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 100 ("K'e-hsueh Shih-tai Chung chih Wen-hsueh Hsin-li")

ibid., p. 101 (*ibid.*)

In the first essay mentioned Liang said: "The advance guard in the attack on the citadel (of literature) consists of sociology and psychology."¹³ In both this essay and the essay entitled "K'e-hsueh Shih-tai Chung chih Wen-hsueh Hsin-li" (Literary Psychology in a Scientific Age) Liang voiced his scepticism of the purported significance of both these branches of learning.

Of sociology he had this to say: "The statistical method is a quantitative assessment. It certainly cannot get to the heart of the problems of human life."¹⁴ His criticism of psychology was similar in kind: "Psychology is still a comparatively immature science, not because its history is still short, but because its subject is too complex from the point of view of the present standard of science, much that is human is as much of a mystery as before."¹⁵

However that was not to say that these new fields of knowledge were entirely without value. To him they were able to extend both the range and the vision of the creative writer. But this he saw as an auxiliary role and by the nature of these sciences permanently so:

"Perhaps the results of scientific investigation can make available some new literary material. Perhaps they can enable the writer to comprehend better certain natural or social phenomena. But how to transform this material and knowledge into literature still depends on the writer's talent and skill. It is not something over which science can assume control."¹⁶

¹⁷ see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 150 ("Wen-hsueh Yü K'e Hsueh")

Such was Liang's view of the claim that literature was redundant because its role could be better fulfilled by new disciplines: he believed, in sum, that the practitioners of these disciplines could assist but not replace the writer.

The second claim of course was more sweeping in the sense that the advocates considered that, given China's circumstances, neither the literary man nor the scientist should waste his energy on "the explanation and criticism of life", because such effort made no contribution towards the main task in hand, which was "rescuing the country".

Earlier we saw why Liang considered that China needed a "healthy" literature: the development of such literature would form an indispensable part of the regeneration of the country for which those who advocated a preoccupation with science clamoured most loudly. In this sense Liang saw literature and science as complementary:

"I personally consider the debate (between literature and science) to be unnecessary. In the future literature and science should be even more closely tied..... literature needs to absorb scientific knowledge. Science needs to be humanised."¹⁷

In "K'e-hsueh Shih-tai Chung chih Wen-hsueh Hsin-li" Liang elaborated on this concept on interdependence. Here he showed how literature and science were addressing themselves to the same problem and why the two different approaches to that same problem were complementing each other:-

¹⁸ see P'ien chien Chi, p. 105 ("K'e-Hsueh Shih-tai Chung chih Wen-hsueh Hsin-li")

"The same subject can be treated from many sides.

Science investigates natural and social phenomena by means of the method of positive proof. Literature explains human life by the methods of experience and imagination. The scientific method is not as beautiful and moving as the literary method; the literary method is not as finely precise as the scientific method. ...but the demarcation between literature and science is a demarcation of method and of viewpoint, not an apportioning of area of activity."¹⁸

This view of the relationship between literature and science seems to be entirely reasonable in 1974, when the brutalising effects of a further forty-odd years of technological advance have become apparent. Perhaps as early as the 1930's it was a statement of the obvious, even if it was not then universally agreed. What is significant, on a personal rather than a philosophical level, is that in this case Liang Shih-chiu displayed a sense of proportion and a lack of prejudice which was perhaps missing in his judgement of the quality of existing modern literature.

Liang only published two other theoretical essays of any length during the period under review. The first was another article in the Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te (Romantic and Classic) collection. Entitled "Hsi-chü I-shu Pien-cheng" (Dramatic Art Clarified), the theme was the central importance of the literary nature of drama.

¹⁹see Lang-man-te Yü Ku-tien te (1969 edition), p. 29.

²⁰ibid., p. 36

²¹HY 1/8, October 1928.

²²HY 1/8 ("Lun San-wen") p. 45.

²³ibid.

Early in the essay Liang presented his definition of drama, based on his interpretation of Aristotle's teaching:

"Drama is the imitation of men's actions. The method of imitation is the written word. The form is not narration but action. The purpose is the purgation of the emotions and the criticism of human beings."¹⁹

He went on to compare the performance of a play with the hanging of a picture, and to express the opinion that the strength of the very best plays could not be conveyed by performance. He believed that the basic responsibility for the success of a play rested firmly with the author. The skills of the director, the actor and the lighting expert were not of the same order because they were outside the realm of art. In sum "the stage is built for the play, but the play is not created for the stage."²⁰

The remaining theoretical article of some substance was his piece "Lun San-wen" (On Prose)²¹. In it Liang, having outlined some of the difficulties of writing good prose, first made a plea for simplicity. The first two of four defects he discerned in most prose were complexity and verbosity. "But", he said, "the beauty of prose consists in appositeness"²²; therefore any decoration of language must be integral, not superimposed. Turning to the other two of his four defects, harshness and crudeness, Liang allowed that "naturalness must be preserved"²³. However he also believed that excellence could only be achieved by means of artistic discipline. Naturalness to the point of crudity, totally

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ He also introduced to his readers, and quoted, Dionysius, whom he saw as a disciple of Aristotle

²⁶ see Lang-man te Yü Ku-tien te, p. 62

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 68.

²⁸ *op.cit.*

neglectful of this discipline, Liang could only deplore. Indeed writing of this kind ("where the language of the rickshaw boy and the fishwife have become the orthodoxy of prose"²⁴) simply did not qualify as literature.

It will be seen therefore that the ultimate authority referenced by Liang Shih-chiu in his presentation of his view of literature was Aristotle²⁵. Indeed Liang in places interpreted Aristotle with considerable freedom in order almost to force an attribution. Thus we find him introducing into a summary of Aristotle's theory the notions of realism and romanticism²⁶ (admittedly as negative examples, but the effect is that Liang appears more to be trying to prove his theory of modern literature than to summarise Aristotle's original precepts). Later in the same essay²⁷ he quoted a passage from Chapter 6 of Ars Poetica in which Aristotle affirmed that details of costume and stage management had little to do with the poet's (i.e. dramatist's) art. This became Liang's authority for his strongly held conviction that "the stage is built for the play, but the play is not created for the stage".²⁸

Like Aristotle Liang Shih-chiu dealt with general principles rather than specifics. Like him too, Liang returned again and again to a central belief: indeed Liang's central belief (that literature was the description of universal and unchanging human nature) clearly derived from Aristotle's theme (that literature was the imitation of life). To Liang truth in art, too, was Aristotle's ideal truth.

²⁹e.g. in "Ku-tien Wen-hsueh te I-i" (see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 179) and
in "Wen-hsueh te Yen-chung-hsing" (see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 48)

Moreover of the classical Western writers Liang introduced to his readers, Aristotle was the master he recommended. The purpose of introducing the others (Dionysius, Longinus, Horace and Cicero) was to explain rather than to commend. In the case of the five later Western writers he chose to introduce at any length (Pope, Carlyle, Wilde, Schenkler and Eastman) his purpose was positively to refute.

Curiously despite his assertion of the impact of Kittredge's teaching whilst at Harvard and despite his later preoccupation with the subject, Liang appears to have written nothing on Shakespeare during this early period. There are a few references²⁹, but they only cite Shakespeare's name (together with that of Milton) as an example of a "classic" (that is Aristot^{el}ian) creative writer. Admittedly Liang was clearly most interested in theoretical writing at this stage, but given his latent enthusiasm for Shakespeare one might argue that his case might have convinced ordinary readers more readily had it been based on informed analysis even of the few of the bard's plays then available in translation.

One major Western writer whose influence on Liang is more easily discernible in these early writings is Arnold. That the general tenor or Liang's essays is reminiscent of Arnold may already have struck the reader of this dissertation. There is no essay devoted to him in the *Crescent Monthly*, the collections published by the Crescent Book Company or the later collection P'ien-chien Chi. Certain ideas of Arnold's however are widely and explicitly quoted. For example in "Hsien-tai

³⁰see Lang-man te Yü Ku-tien te, p. 14

³¹ibid., p. 33

³²ibid., p. 117.

³³see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 149.

Chung-kuo Wen-hsueh chih Lang-man te Ch'ü-shih" (The Romantic Trend in Modern Chinese Literature), the major piece in Liang's first collection of essays, he quoted as a description of the truly classical writer Arnold's characterisation of Sophocles: "He saw man clearly, and he saw him whole"³⁰. . In the second article in the same collection, "Hsi-chü I-shu Pien-cheng" (Dramatic Art Clarified), he made use of Arnold's concept of "high seriousness" to authenticate his belief in the supremacy of the intellect in art³¹. Again, in "Wen-hsueh Te Chi-lü" (The Discipline of Literature), the major piece in his second collection, Liang cited Arnold's definition that "culture is the investigation of perfection"³². Furthermore just as Liang's view of the nature of literature was based directly on his interpretation of Aristotle's teaching, so his view of the relationship between literature and science derives from his understanding of Matthew Arnold. In the essay "Wen-Hsueh Yü K'e-hsueh" (Literature and Science), already discussed, Liang referred to the debate which took place between Arnold and Huxley. His summary of Arnold's case presents a view that is identical to his own:

"He acknowledged the importance of science, but he considered that although science was able to subject all material phenomena to analysis and experiment in search of truth, the scientist could not be asked to connect this (scientific) truth to the problems of human life."³³

Liang Shih-ch'iu also quoted where it suited him from the works of

³⁴see Lang-man te Yü Ku-tien te, p. 44 ("Shih Yü T'u Hua") (Poetry and Painting)

³⁵HY1/11

³⁶In the introduction to Rousseau and Romanticism Babbitt said, "Just as I have called the point of view of the scientific and utilitarian naturalist Baconian, and that of the emotional naturalist Rousseauistic, so I would term the point of view that I am myself seeking to develop Aristotelian." (p. XXI).

³⁷Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 57

writers with whom we can assume, he to some extent, disagreed. Thus for a definition of imagination he turned to Goethe³⁴, whose Faust elsewhere (like Milton's Paradise Lost) is cited as a "classic" work, but whose more romantic Werther Liang must have deplored. In the case of Pope Liang explicitly stated his overall disapproval in his essay "T'an-t'an P'u-po" (On Pope)³⁵. Despite this disapproval, at the beginning of his major essay, "Wen-hsueh Te Chi-lü" (The Discipline of Literature), he took as his text a quotation from Pope's Essays on Criticism.

However perhaps looming larger than any of these, and certainly standing in the foreground, was the controversial figure of Irving Babbitt. Admittedly Babbitt appears to have acted largely as a transmitter, but in certain areas he also served as a source in his own right.

Babbitt's central purpose in Rousseau and Romanticism was to transmit the Aristot^{eli}lean doctrine³⁶ and to represent it as fundamental to the European classical tradition. But one need for this message was created by Babbitt's own belief that the appeal of the countervailing romantic spirit persisted to a dangerous extent. Babbitt's articulation of this belief shows how direct Liang's connection with him was. Thus Babbitt's distinction between classicism and romanticism was close to Liang's:

"The general truth at which the classicist aims the Rousseauist dismisses as identical with the grey and the academic."³⁷

Babbitt, like Liang, described romanticism as emotional naturalism. He, as did Liang, traced its source to the spring of introversion:

³⁸Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 305.

³⁹ibid., p. 289.

⁴⁰ibid., p. 64.

⁴¹ibid., p. 40

"We think we see the Rousseauist prostrate before the ideal woman or before God himself, but when we look more closely we see that he is only 'in perpetual adoration before the holy sacrament of himself.'"³⁸

On the subject of the romantic's obsession with nature there is a clear connection between the views of master and disciple: Babbitt's sentiments were these:-

"The (romantic's) error is to look on these moments of recreation (when we delight in nature) as in themselves the consummation of wisdom"³⁹.

Liang's interpretation of Aristotle too seems to have been based on Babbitt. This is clear from the similarity of Liang's statements on the subject to these passages in Rousseau and Romanticism:

"The very heart of the classical message, one cannot repeat too often, is that one should aim first of all not to be original, but to be human, and that to be human one needs to look up to a sound model and imitate it."⁴⁰

"The great achievement of tradition at its best was to be at once a limit and a support to both reason and imagination and so to unite them in a common allegiance."⁴¹

Similarly Liang's attachment to the idea of a "standard" to be applied to all literature can be traced to Babbitt. In the same book

⁴²Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 65

⁴³ibid., p. XVIII

⁴⁴ibid., p. 383.

Babbitt said:

"There is a fatal facility about creation when its quality is not tested by some standard set above the creator's temperament".⁴²

Babbitt's other motive (other, that is, than his distaste for romanticism) for championing Aristotle was his doubt about the value of science. In this area too one can connect Liang Shih-chiu's views to those of his mentor. Indeed the following statement in the introduction to Rousseau and Romanticism shows that Liang's views were a direct reflection of Babbitt's belief, which, as will now be obvious, coincided with the earlier views of Arnold:

"Perhaps the most pernicious of all the conceits fostered by the type of progress we owe to science is the conceit that we have outgrown this older experience."⁴³

Interestingly, whereas Liang expressed himself more strongly when describing the dangerousness of romanticism, his sense of alarm at the consequences of preoccupation with science did not generate the strength of feeling expressed by Babbitt on that subject:

"If scientific discipline is not supplemented by a truly humanistic or religious discipline, the result is unethical science perhaps the worst monster turned loose on the race."⁴⁴

Thus Babbitt's influence can be shown to be present in everything

45 "Wen Hsueh Yü K'e Hsueh" (see P'ien Chien Chi, p. 146)

of substance that Liang Shih-chiu said about literature. It seems therefore most likely that Liang's attachment to Aristotle (on the nature of literature) and Arnold (on the place of science) were attachments formed as a result of a first reading of Babbitt. In this sense the connection with those greater masters was linear but probably indirect, whilst the primary influence remained that of the author of Rousseau and Romanticism.

Liang's thinking on the subject of literature seems only to show the influence of Western writing and teaching. We have already noted that he believed that only "healthy" Western literary theory could adequately fortify the tender plant of modern Chinese literature. There is no evidence that he saw the classical Chinese tradition as a complementary source of energy or inspiration. Given his devout commitment to the new-found cause of Pai-hua Wen and given his almost exclusively Western education, this is perhaps not surprising. What is surprising, and the more so in the light of the strong sense of nationality already noted, is that in the few cases where reference was made in the essays of the Shanghai and Tsingtao periods to the Chinese tradition, Liang should have been positively contemptuous almost to the point of unreason. Thus for instance in one of his essays contributed to the Tientsin I-Shih Pao he complained that:-

"Something that we Chinese lacked most of all was the kind of complete and refined theory of literature of the West."⁴⁵

46 There is, of course, a subsidiary tradition, that of literature as a diversion, but we are concerned here with the orthodoxy.

47 "Wen-hsueh Yü K'e-hsueh" (see P'ien-chien Chi (Prejudices), p. 145)

48 "Wen-i Yü Tao-te" (Literature and Morality) (see Shih-ch'iu Tsa-wen (Miscellaneous Essays), p. 47.

49 "Wen-hsueh Chiang-hua" (On Literature) (see Wen-hsueh Yin-yuan, p. 120) (Literary Affinities)

This statement is surely only true in Western terms. In the West the questions of artistic purpose and of artistic method have periodically been associated with controversy. Similarly innovation has regularly if not consistently been expected of artists. For these reasons a number of different theories of art have emerged. Because none is compatible with the others, so each has been expounded in great detail and considerably refined.

In China the orthodox view of the role of literature has consistently been that it should "convey right principles". Similarly the orthodox creative method has always been held to be "imitation of the ancients". This theory is complete in the sense that the two central questions a theory of literature sets out to answer are answered. If it was neither refined nor even developed in detail, then perhaps we may assume that this is because it was never seriously challenged.⁴⁶ But to the Westerner it is only this European-style refinement that was missing. The theory itself was not lacking, nor, given the circumstances, was it incomplete.

Another criticism of the Chinese literary tradition that Liang made concerns the status of literature in imperial China. During the Crescent period he stated that "we have in the past only made use of literature, we have not respected it."⁴⁷

This feeling is reflected in later essays, when he said "we did not fully acknowledge the value of literature"⁴⁸, and "we have never treated literature as an independent and serious art form."⁴⁹

To a European these statements seem curious. In terms of the orthodox Chinese view of literature, it would seem that its social value at any rate was fully acknowledged. Similarly, it is hard for a European to detect any lack of respect for literature in a society where literary accomplishment, admittedly of a conventional kind, was almost a condition of social success. Again, Chinese literature (leaving aside the diversionary tradition noted) seems to most foreigners to have a serious quality. It may not express independence of conventional social doctrine, and here may be the burden of Liang's case. If so, one can only comment that Liang's purpose elsewhere was to diminish the importance of the potential of literature in this sense in order to emphasise a purely creative independence of spirit that was evident before.

Indeed, these affirmations only make any sense at all if modern notions of literature as a force at work in society are very rigidly applied. That is to say the value of literature must be seen to consist in its potential as a sensitive device for reflecting the quality, and by extension the need for change, of contemporary society; respect for literature must consist in acceptance of the writer's need for detachment and objectivity and of his right to innovation. Liang's notion of literature was rooted in Western classicism and hence did not reflect all these concerns. To this extent his complaints were inconsistent.

Admittedly here Liang was condemning the traditional Chinese view of literature rather than Chinese classical literature itself. Moreover, in general Liang was more concerned with the present than the past,

- ⁵⁰ Leaving aside, of course, avowed Marxists, who, like Li Chu-li, insisted that "all literature (to date) is blind tradition".
(see Ho I-hsien, Chung-kuo Hsin Wen-hsueh Shih Kang [An Outline History of the New Chinese Literature], p. 47)
- ⁵¹ "Hsien-tai Wen-hsueh Lun" (On Modern Literature) [see P'ien-chien Chi (Prejudices), p. 108]
- ⁵² ibid., (see ibid., p. 110-111)
- ⁵³ ibid. (see ibid., p. 108)

and therefore at the forefront of his mind may have been a concern to emphasise the inapplicability of traditional literary thought to modern society rather than to demonstrate that thought's earlier failure.

However when he moved nearer to discussing the product of the tradition his apparently Western conception of literature (perhaps confirmed by his consistent citation of Western examples whenever discussing "great literature") led him on in his early essays to even harsher criticism. Like most students of the subject, he detected two main philosophical strands running through the development of classical Chinese literature, namely Confucianism and Taoism. Unlike all but the severest of commentators⁵⁰, however, Liang characterised the one as "lifeless", the other as a manifestation of "extreme romanticism".⁵¹ In the same essay he developed the first point of view by explaining that "the Confucians basically never had any serious literary thought. Moreover the Confucian line was basically unsuited to literary development."⁵² The complementary mode he had already dismissed by saying merely that "the Taoist thought reflected in literature is escapism and back-to-naturism."⁵³

It is perhaps strange that someone who during his student days both at home and abroad had displayed such strong feelings of nationality and who on his return from America had demonstrated a deep sense of involvement with the regeneration of his country should only a little later be so unreserved in his condemnation of his own cultural heritage. Of course Liang belonged to the May 4th generation, and therefore was

54^m That even stronger feelings existed is well illustrated by an essay by a Tsinghua contemporary, Wang Chi-chen, contributed to a 1951 U.C.L.A. compendium entitled simply "China". Wang says, among other things, that the Chinese glorified mediocrity and tradition, and had no general conception of literature; that the comparison between classical literature and modern literature was like that between the wheelbarrow and the automobile.

55 "Hsien-tai Wen-hsueh Lun" (see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 109) The first reference comes in "Ku-tien Wen-hsueh fe I-i" when Liang takes two passages from the Shih-ching to demonstrate his distinction between "classic" and "non-classic" literature.

influenced by the feeling that China's humiliation was attributable both to lethargy and to fantasy amongst her ruling class. But to transfer these qualities so unreservedly to the thought that generated her classical literature is to proceed further than either of the heroes of Liang's Tsinghua days, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Hu Shih, would have done. On the contrary it smacks of the very extremism that Liang elsewhere consistently deplored.

It must be admitted that Liang, unlike many contemporaries⁵⁴, stopped short of denigrating the actual fruit of the Chinese literary tradition, that is the literature itself. Nowhere is there an essay dating from the period under review that is devoted to the subject of classical literature or to a specific body of work within that tradition. Indeed there are only two references to examples of Chinese classical literature in all the articles examined. Only the second reference contains a qualitative judgement. Thus of the Ch'u T'zu Liang has this to say: "Empty and obscure mystic thought fills many of Chü Yuan's works and most of the literature of Chü".⁵⁵ He went on to list other examples of poems and stories that he believed to be impregnated with the Taoist spirit.

The fact that in the one case where Liang passed judgement there is no sign of approbation, and the fact that when he wished to cite examples of great literature he turned to the West, together tend to indicate that Liang saw the classical literature of his own country at most as an irrelevance, at least as a lesser art. The evidence is not

conclusive, and indeed is largely negative evidence. But had he held that literature in any considerable regard, he would surely have included it in his discussions on literature in his own time.

Returning to Liang's themes, the "unhealthiness" of the romantic spirit, the humanistic quality of classical literature, and the shortcomings of modern Chinese literature, we must make a provisional assessment before moving on in the next chapter to look at Liang as a critic.

Given the rigours of the highly competitive educational system through which he passed, given the conservative nature of the institutions where he spent his second and third years abroad, and given an evident natural strictness of spirit, it was to be expected that Liang would reject the romantic approach to literature. However one might have expected that, as well as the negative face, he would have acknowledged something of the positive aspect of the spirit which governed one of the richer periods of European art history. Had he done so he might have concluded that true classicism, using all three words in a broad, non-technical sense, is a synthesis of that spirit and its reverse cycle, realism.

As we have already seen, Liang's view of the nature of the best literature was essentially a Western view. We attributed this to his largely Western education. His preoccupation with Aristotle betrays a primary commitment to the mimetic theory of literature, the one theory not usually associated with the Chinese literary tradition. This commitment is understandable for the same reasons that explain his distaste for romanticism.

⁵⁶see HY 2/8. This essay should not be confused with that entitled "Wen-i Yü Tao-te" contained in Shih Chiu Tsa-Wen (Miscellaneous Essays).

An essay not discussed so far spelt out Liang's attitude to the other two of the three traditional doctrines. In "Wen-hsueh Yü Tao-te" (Literature and Morality)⁵⁶ he went some way towards acknowledging the value of the didactic theory of literature when he said "Great literature has a moral quality, because it has a moral purpose". Later in the same article he effectively dismissed the expressive theory of literature by saying "What it is that is expressed is more important than whether or not it is expressed well."

In rejecting the substance of the expressive theory, and in acceding so completely to his own instinct for restraint, Liang implicitly denied the creative writer the right to consider his emotional reaction to his subject even against the background of the countervailing demands of the intellect. However one might object that if men are to be moved, the appeal must surely be in small part at least to their feelings as well as to the intellectual faculty. Here we return to the case for a synthesis noted earlier, reduced this time to the proposition that perhaps the intellect should balance rather than control the imagination.

Thus, when asserting in contrast that the purpose of literature is solely to describe the universal and unchanging aspect of human nature, Liang not only imposed severe limits on the scope of the literary man's subject, he also overlooked the full potential of the human imagination as an instrument to complement the intellect by extending its range.

There is also one striking omission in his investigation of the

nature of literature. Liang did not examine the peculiar quality of literary language. Subject matter and treatment are certainly valid criteria for the distinction between literature and non-literature, but it is surely the actual presentation of these things which determine the effectiveness of the literary writer's attempt to fulfill his aim. This calls for a degree of subtlety, of expressiveness, and of aesthetic quality which is absent from language which is only designed to convey information. This special mode of language is an indispensable attribute of the kind of writing that Liang clearly had in mind when described "literature". Nowhere however was this acknowledged.

Liang's depreciatory view of contemporary Chinese literature, like his rejection of romanticism and his enthusiasm for Western classicism, is clearly attributable to his educational background. Once again however the perspective one might expect of the recipient of a first-class education is missing. Thus Liang on the one hand failed to take into account the brevity of the period over which Chinese writers had had access to the unfamiliar literary forms under discussion; on the other he failed to allow for the pressures in modern Chinese society which tended to divorce writers from the role of clinical observers of contemporary life and cultivated guardians of immutable moral and aesthetic values. The severest judge should consider mitigating evidence.

We emerge therefore from an examination of Liang Shih-chiu's writings on the subject of literature with an impression of single-mindedness. It may well be argued that everybody in China in the 'twenties and

57 see Lang-man #e Yü Ku-tien te, p. 116.

'thirties was single-minded, and that it would be unreasonable to expect someone writing in the highly-charged atmosphere of the time to be anything else. But whereas writers outside the Crescent Group openly advocated commitment, Liang in "Wen Hsueh Te Chi-lü" extolled the alternative course:

"Great literary men ... must detach themselves from the clamour of the age. Only then can they produce sober, considered, and serious work."⁵⁷

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

¹ For instance see David Roy's Kuo Mo-jo -- The Early Years, p. 124; Jerome Grieder's Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, p. 225; and Huang Shung-k'ang's Lu Hsun and the New Culture Movement, p. 111.

² Published in Tung-fang Tsa-chih (The Eastern Magazine), December 1927. This was the only piece of Liang's that appeared in this journal.

CHAPTER FIVE

Liang as a Literary Critic

In the context of the general literary history of the 'twenties and early 'thirties, Liang Shih-chiu is normally thought of and referred to as a critic¹. It is certainly true that several of the articles he wrote during the period may be classified under the broad heading of critical writing. Therefore any examination of his early career would be incomplete without a look to see what sort of critic Liang was and an attempt to assess the effectiveness of that criticism. However, as he also wrote a number of theoretical essays on the subject of criticism, we may usefully start by investigating the question of Liang's view of the correct approach to and the function of criticism so that we may understand his ideal.

Towards the end of 1927 Liang wrote an article entitled "Chin-nien Lai Chung-kuo Chih Wen-I P'i-p'ing" (Literary Criticism in Recent Years in China)². He asserted that there had been very little serious criticism because such endeavour was out of fashion, and that such authors of critical writing as had emerged had been diverted along four false trails: those of introductory criticism, corrective criticism, impressionistic criticism and destructive criticism.

He felt that in contemporary China the first condition of successful "introductory criticism", profound understanding of the writing under

discussion, was absent. This had the twin result that the wrong works were introduced and nothing was introduced competently. Corrective criticism, he felt, could be of benefit to literary activity in China only providing it was itself the subject of adjustment. For to simple correction, in Liang's view, must be added "definite recommendations and positive effort" before such writing could become worthy of the name of criticism.

Whereas he could discern some value in "introductory criticism" and in "corrective criticism" provided both were developed along the right lines, Liang condemned outright the other two strands that he could see in the patchwork of contemporary Chinese critical work. Impressionistic criticism he rejected because "there are no criteria and there is no system". These two causes, he thought, had two effects: "no more than individual likes and dislikes and passing pleasures and horrors are flaunted" and "there is a lack of proportion and of depth of perception". Destructive critics Liang denounced in turn as the "anarchists of the literary arena" who wished to abolish the immutable principles that had governed the creation of art in east and west from time immemorial. "Total destruction", Liang felt, "does not carry with it the smallest hope of reconstruction."

Liang ended his essay by calling for a new critical standard. The ingredients he saw as "an intellectually acceptable central thought" (from the Chinese tradition) plus "sound Western critical theory."

In an essay included in the Lang-man Te Yu Ku-tien Te (Romantic

³ The essay is entitled "Wen-hsueh P'i-p'ing Pien" (A Discussion on Literary Criticism). See Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te, pp. 103-11.

⁴ Later he quotes Plato and describes it as "diversity in uniformity".

and Classic) collection, Liang returned to and attempted to develop the concept of an unchanging standard to be observed in literary criticism³. Predictably he linked it to the constancy of human nature.

"The quality of human nature is universal⁴

universal human nature is the basis of all great literary works. Therefore the greatness of a literary work can be measured entirely according to a fixed standard."

This standard, Liang said, enables criticism to "transcend the limits of time and space". However, he went on, it is something which has to be "sought out" and only the man of "deep perception, immediate understanding and sensitive feelings" will find it. Nor must it be confused with a set of rules, because it "transcends rules".

This presentation of an immutable, transcendent standard for literary criticism is not altogether satisfactory. The proposition that the basis, or subject, or literature is unchanging does not automatically and immediately provide us with fixed criteria for assessment of literature. Liang went some way towards acknowledging this problem when he later said that the criteria must be "sought out". But in both essays he only described certain abstract features of his standard. Nowhere was there a clear definition of its consistency.

If Liang failed in these essays to delineate the shape of his critical standard, he usefully described his view of the make-up of criticism as an intellectual concept. Criticism, he observed in the

5 See HY 2/5. The title of the essay is "Lun P'i-P'ing te T'ai-tu" (On Critical Attitudes). Liang distinguished between a commentator's "critical basis" (which includes the standard referred to in the earlier essays) and his "critical attitude". A sound critical basis did not in his view automatically lead to a sound attitude to criticism. The latter needed to be developed separately.

6 This essay was clearly an indirect attack on Lu Hsun. As we will see, clever comment, personal attack and obsession with semantic detail were precisely the tactics which were the subject of Liang's complaint against Lu. Lu however was hardly engaged in literary criticism during his exchanges with Liang. To transfer this complaint from the area of commentary to that of criticism without producing evidence that the transfer was valid was scarcely "rigorous".

7 See P'ien-chien Chi, pp. 159-66. The article originally appeared in the literary supplement to the Tientsin Yi-shih Pao in 1933-4.

second article, is no more than "judgement", the motive governing it is simply "the seeking of truth", and the method "the objective method". If we accept these premises, he said, we will acknowledge that criticism is not a creative art; if, on the other hand, we accept that there is more to it than the deduction of facts or the assembly of statistics, we will acknowledge that it is not a science.

In his next essay devoted to the theory of criticism Liang moved on to what he called a critic's attitude⁵. In his opinion there was only one attitude which was appropriate to literary criticism and that was one of "strictness". He considered that it was precisely this rigorous attitude that was missing from contemporary Chinese critical writing. As substitutes for serious analysis there had emerged a vogue for clever comment, personal attack, and obsession with semantic detail. Such superficiality was not consistent with a proper approach to the business of a critic⁶.

A little more detail on the question of approach was supplied in the last essay written during the period 1927-34 on the subject of critical writing, an article entitled "Wen-hsueh P'i-p'ing te Chiang-lai" (The Future of Literary Criticism)⁷. The title is misleading because the main body of the essay was devoted to a review of the merits and demerits of what Liang saw as the traditional (or classical), modern (or romantic), and contemporary (or scientific) schools of criticism. However, in the conclusions presented at the end of the essay Liang stated that the arrival of scientific methods, which could complement but not

⁸ Liang's essay is currently published as an appendix to his Chiu-shih-Tsa-yi (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber) collection. The title is "Tsao-erl P'ing-lun".

replace previously existing modes, had rendered criticism a more complex task in the sense that science demanded closer investigation than had ever been required before. Thus, he concluded, the critic of the future must synthesise the seriousness of the classical critic, the sympathy of the romantic critic and the knowledge of the scientific critic.

To a synthetic standard culled from both east and west therefore Liang would have liked to have seen added a synthetic attitude culled from both ancient and modern. In the one area of literary theory therefore where Liang himself made clear and positive "recommendations" the appeal of a kind of harmony that was almost Confucian in quality proved irresistible. But a "standard" itself provides a link with, and makes his theory of criticism an extension of, the rest of his thinking.

As noted in Chapter One, Liang had first tried his hand at literary criticism whilst still at Tsinghua. In November 1922 he had published privately a volume which contained Wen I-to's critique of the collection of poems by Yü P'ing-po entitled Tung Yeh and his own commentary on K'ang Pai-ching's Ts'ao Erk collection⁸. This venture had drawn a letter of congratulation from no less a figure than Kuo Mo-jo. It had also marked Liang's early entry into the milieu of public literary controversy. Although the opinions expressed were at variance with many of the ideas contained in the essays written after his return from America, the same combative spirit is immediately noticeable.

At the beginning of his piece Liang spelt out his purpose: "to guide those who appreciate art onto the right track". He hoped to

counter the insidious attraction of a book that was "totally out of keeping with the principles of art".

He then declared that half of the items in K'ang's collection could not be classified under the heading of poetry at all. These items he wrote off as speeches, fiction, narration and maxims. He took each of these four categories in turn and explained why it had no connection with poetry. In each case his reason amounted to the absence from the genre of the lyrical quality that he believed to constitute the essence of a poem.

Turning to the remainder of the collection, Liang acknowledged some value in three of K'ang's descriptive poems. For the rest, lack of feeling and lack of imagination precluded success. Looking for evidence of feeling, Liang noted that there were no love poems, that the poems of parting were diluted by an intellectual and moral input, and that even the poems describing natural beauty were too objective to be wholly successful. Lack of imagination Liang believed to be a consequence of lack of feeling, because he saw the role of imagination in poetry as the formulation of feeling.

Although he admitted the monotony of any "dead" metre", Liang was sceptical towards the lack of rhythm in the poems of the Tsao Erh collection because he believed it was not unconnected with the lack of feeling expressed. He also considered that the whole collection was characterised by an inappropriate impulsiveness which in turn created an impression of immaturity.



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Finally Liang looked at the personality reflected in these poems. Here he believed he found the basis of the shortcomings he had already described. He believed he detected a pedestrian, utilitarian quality wholly incompatible with the idealistic nature of a poet. So, he concluded, the author of Tsao Erh had first to learn how to "be" a poet before embarking on further attempts at writing poetry.

As this essay was written before Liang left for America, and more importantly before his year at Harvard, it is not fair to measure it against the standards of criticism that he declared after his return. Similarly, in a survey of Liang's position from five to ten years later it would be inappropriate to take too much notice of what he said well before the completion of his education. By his own admission Liang arrived in America a romantic and left a traditional ^{list} ~~list~~.

The essay is however of interest because, as we shall see, the views expressed link Liang at twenty-one with Wen I-to and Hsu Chih-mo. It is also the only traceable piece of criticism that Liang wrote which examines the detail as well as the substance of the writing under review. Finally there is a similarity of approach between this early essay and later, and thus more relevant, critical pieces.

This last observation refers to a predisposition to reject out of hand the work in question because it goes against the grain of purely personal conviction: that is to say Liang showed little inclination to try to understand what the writer was trying to achieve before announcing his verdict, and a considerable reluctance to try to find redeeming

⁹ See HY 2/6-7 and 2/10. Though he admitted to having been moved, Liang declared Remarque's novel to be episodic and structurally loose.

¹⁰ See Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te, pp. 51-6

¹¹ See Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te, pp. 141-56.

features afterwards. One must immediately admit that even before the political polarisation of the Chinese literary world of the time, discussion of purely literary matters had assumed a partisan character; but in view of the then common goal of successfully adapting an alien literary form to the Chinese language, a little more generosity of spirit might surely have been expected.

Among the essays written whilst Liang was in Shanghai and Tsingtao there are six which may be classified loosely under the heading of criticism.

Two of these were straightforward short reviews of books of no great consequence, Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front and Sefton-Delmer's History of English Literature⁹. The criticism is no~~t~~ doubt serious but, naturally, does not have the substance of longer essays addressed to weightier subjects. These two critiques Liang himself would perhaps have categorised as introductory criticism. As Liang possessed considerable "understanding of the writing under discussion" these essays, by his own and by any reasonable criterion, were useful as such.

Two others can be classified as criticism only in the broadest sense of the word. These are the essays in the Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te (Romantic and Classic) collection entitled "Ka-lai-erh te Wen-hsueh P'i-ping Kuan" (Carlyle's View of Literary Criticism)¹⁰ and "Wang-erh te te Wei-mei-chu-yi" (Wilde's Aestheticism)¹¹. In the first case Liang rejected Carlyle's notion that the mission of the critic was to "annotate

¹²See P'ien-chien Chi, pp. 71-86.

¹³See *ibid.*, pp. 87-107.

and explain" (Liang's words) literary writing. In the second case he argued against Wilde's well-known concept of "the critic as an artist in his own right". Neither discussed one particular book and neither introduced a new or even (then) currently active writer to the public. As both writers under discussion had been long dead and as in both cases their works were well-established and thoroughly appraised, "correction" was clearly not Liang's purpose. Therefore historical appreciation is a more accurate term with which to describe these articles.

Finally there are two essays, both contributed to the Nanking periodical T'u-shu P'ing-lun (Book Review) whilst Liang was in Tsingtao, which might be seen as constituting a small body of criticism of substance. The first of these was entitled "Hsin-ke-lai-erl te Pai-chin-I-shu" (^{Simclair's} ~~Schenkler's~~ Mammonart)¹², the second "K'e-hsueh Shih-tai Chung Chih Wen-hsueh Hsin-li" (Literary Psychology in a Scientific Age)¹³,

The latter was a critique of Max Eastman's, The Literary Mind: its Place in an Age of Science. Liang first explained Eastman's analysis of writers' selfish reasons for resisting the claims of science and of their resort to "unintelligibility" and "pure poetry". He further explained the outline of his (Eastman's) "scientific theory of literature" (by which science rather than literature is the source of truth and the explanation of life, and literature is merely the artistic medium of expression of these scientific discoveries) and his demand for "scientific criticism". He then pointed out the short-comings of scientific methods and the limited application of these methods to the

¹⁴whereby

¹⁴whereby all literature, except a very small proportion created by "writers of resistance", may be seen as designed to uphold the interests of the established ruling class (the major case) or designed to further the interests of a rising class about to secure a position of dominance (the minor case).

field of literature, arguments which we examined in Chapter Four when discussing his view of the relationship between literature and science. He ended the essay by concluding that the only task which science could take over from literature was that of explaining "the true shape of literary psychology".

Liang's critical theme in this essay was his argument that science could not provide a panacea for the fulfillment of the writer's task. We have already examined and assessed this proposition elsewhere. Therefore, bearing in mind the cogency of the case Liang made in this article, it is more profitable to pass straight on to his piece on ^{Sinclair} Schenkler.

In this essay Liang's purpose was to refute a class theory of literature. Having reproduced ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's own summary of this theory¹⁴, Liang proceeded to examine the examples selected by the author from across the board of literary history to support his theory. In every case Liang found flaws in ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's presentation.

He first looked at the case of Homer. The argument that the Aeneid was propaganda on behalf of the ruling class, Liang pointed out, was based on the content of precisely four lines. Moreover, he complained, ^{Sinclair} Schenkler ignored the diversity of the elements which make up the Aeneid, concentrating only on the epic quality of the poem.

In the case of Shakespeare Liang's objections to ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's thesis were again twofold. He rejected as baseless ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's belief that the comedies were deliberately designed to lull the sense of

dissatisfaction with their lives of the members of the audience, arguing convincingly that the evidence on the contrary was that Shakespeare's purpose was no more than to entertain. Then he objected to ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's failure to cite in any detail the cases of the tragedies and the historical plays. Liang ended this section of his critique by observing that the complexity of Shakespeare's work made it difficult to define where his sympathies lay and invalidated inferences drawn from isolated examples.

Liang felt he had even more cause for complaint in the case of ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's treatment of Milton. In this case, Liang said, the author did not even go so far as to offer a class analysis of the writer's work, confining himself largely to a narrative of his life.

He did not quarrel with ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's verdict on Molière, that here was proof that great work can only be produced by those who seek to improve human life. He pointed out, however, and with some justification, that this verdict did nothing to support ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's main thesis. Moreover, he observed, in the case of Molière this thesis was in special need of support, because the patronage enjoyed by a writer who satirised the class to which his patrons belonged was not immediately explicable in economic terms.

Finally Liang looked at ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's view of Goethe. He found that ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's analysis of Goethe's life was unobjectionable but that his conclusion that Faust was a "contradiction" was both self-evident and incomplete. ^{Sinclair's} Schenkler's argument that the lesson of Faust could

only be applied in a future and better world Liang dismissed as an arbitrary judgement.

Liang then presented his conclusions. ^{Simclair's} ~~Schenkler's~~ faith in a socio-economic explanation for the success of literature which had become established, he thought, had led him to see complex issues in simple terms, and arbitrarily to apply to a diverse subject a straightforward formula. This dogmatic and simplistic approach had in turn led, in Liang's view, to omissions, contradictions, and forced interpretations.

Such then are the two critical essays of substance that Liang published during the Crescent period. The two had much in common. Each was refuting a presentation of a comparatively new theory of literature. Each concentrated on the author's main proposition: in neither case did questions of detail such as style, organisation, force and clarity come under examination. Each sought to correct if not the writer's then certainly the reader's understanding of the subject. Each critique was clear and well-reasoned. In each Liang wrote with conviction.

No doubt Liang could be presented as a "corrective" critic whose "judgement" was marshalled "rigorously" and presented cogently. More naturally however he appears as less of a critic and more of a literary theorist. That is to say he only judged the author's main argument. In rejecting it in each case he also implicitly rejected out of hand the whole presentation.

If, however, the popular identification of Liang as a critic is upheld, then assuming that it is the business even of a theoretical critic to examine more than the central thesis of his subject, surely Liang's assessments were incomplete. Admittedly the aspects he neglected were not of central importance, but his rejection, in each case, of the whole work was nonetheless unjust because it was to this extent unsupported.

The following table shows the results of the experiments conducted on the 15th of June 1914. The first column gives the number of the experiment, the second column the time taken for the reaction to take place, and the third column the amount of gas evolved. The fourth column gives the temperature of the reaction mixture at the end of the reaction.

Experiment No.	Time taken for reaction to take place (min.)	Amount of gas evolved (c.c.)	Temperature of reaction mixture at end of reaction (°C.)
1	1.5	10.0	25.0
2	2.0	12.0	25.0
3	2.5	14.0	25.0
4	3.0	16.0	25.0
5	3.5	18.0	25.0
6	4.0	20.0	25.0
7	4.5	22.0	25.0
8	5.0	24.0	25.0
9	5.5	26.0	25.0
10	6.0	28.0	25.0
11	6.5	30.0	25.0
12	7.0	32.0	25.0
13	7.5	34.0	25.0
14	8.0	36.0	25.0
15	8.5	38.0	25.0
16	9.0	40.0	25.0
17	9.5	42.0	25.0
18	10.0	44.0	25.0
19	10.5	46.0	25.0
20	11.0	48.0	25.0
21	11.5	50.0	25.0
22	12.0	52.0	25.0
23	12.5	54.0	25.0
24	13.0	56.0	25.0
25	13.5	58.0	25.0
26	14.0	60.0	25.0
27	14.5	62.0	25.0
28	15.0	64.0	25.0
29	15.5	66.0	25.0
30	16.0	68.0	25.0
31	16.5	70.0	25.0
32	17.0	72.0	25.0
33	17.5	74.0	25.0
34	18.0	76.0	25.0
35	18.5	78.0	25.0
36	19.0	80.0	25.0
37	19.5	82.0	25.0
38	20.0	84.0	25.0
39	20.5	86.0	25.0
40	21.0	88.0	25.0
41	21.5	90.0	25.0
42	22.0	92.0	25.0
43	22.5	94.0	25.0
44	23.0	96.0	25.0
45	23.5	98.0	25.0
46	24.0	100.0	25.0
47	24.5	102.0	25.0
48	25.0	104.0	25.0
49	25.5	106.0	25.0
50	26.0	108.0	25.0
51	26.5	110.0	25.0
52	27.0	112.0	25.0
53	27.5	114.0	25.0
54	28.0	116.0	25.0
55	28.5	118.0	25.0
56	29.0	120.0	25.0
57	29.5	122.0	25.0
58	30.0	124.0	25.0
59	30.5	126.0	25.0
60	31.0	128.0	25.0
61	31.5	130.0	25.0
62	32.0	132.0	25.0
63	32.5	134.0	25.0
64	33.0	136.0	25.0
65	33.5	138.0	25.0
66	34.0	140.0	25.0
67	34.5	142.0	25.0
68	35.0	144.0	25.0
69	35.5	146.0	25.0
70	36.0	148.0	25.0
71	36.5	150.0	25.0
72	37.0	152.0	25.0
73	37.5	154.0	25.0
74	38.0	156.0	25.0
75	38.5	158.0	25.0
76	39.0	160.0	25.0
77	39.5	162.0	25.0
78	40.0	164.0	25.0
79	40.5	166.0	25.0
80	41.0	168.0	25.0
81	41.5	170.0	25.0
82	42.0	172.0	25.0
83	42.5	174.0	25.0
84	43.0	176.0	25.0
85	43.5	178.0	25.0
86	44.0	180.0	25.0
87	44.5	182.0	25.0
88	45.0	184.0	25.0
89	45.5	186.0	25.0
90	46.0	188.0	25.0
91	46.5	190.0	25.0
92	47.0	192.0	25.0
93	47.5	194.0	25.0
94	48.0	196.0	25.0
95	48.5	198.0	25.0
96	49.0	200.0	25.0
97	49.5	202.0	25.0
98	50.0	204.0	25.0
99	50.5	206.0	25.0
100	51.0	208.0	25.0

The following table shows the results of the experiments conducted on the 15th of June 1914. The first column gives the number of the experiment, the second column the time taken for the reaction to take place, and the third column the amount of gas evolved. The fourth column gives the temperature of the reaction mixture at the end of the reaction.

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¹Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), p. 147. On p. 45 of Chung-kuo Hsin Wen-hsueh Shih Kang (An Outline History of the New Chinese Literature) Ho I-hsien, summarising this triangular battle, says that the Creation and Sun Societies attacked Lu Hsun and the Crescent Society, Lu Hsun disagreed with both the Creation and Crescent Societies, and the Crescent Society clashed with both the Creation Society and Lu Hsun.

²Chow Tse-tsung, The May Fourth Movement, p. 287 (Stanford University Press edition)

CHAPTER SIX

The Dispute with the Creationists

Remembering the periodical with which he is associated thirty years or so after his Shanghai days, Liang Shih-chiu says in his article "I Hsin Yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly): "I criticised the proletarian literary movement; I also criticised Lu Hsun"¹.

After 1925 some of the romantics of the post-May 4th liberal movement exchanged the romanticism of the aesthetic individualist for the romanticism of the social revolutionary. This created a separate stream in the flow of ideas which irrigated intellectual China in that decade. As Chow Tse-tsung says:

"After the May 30th incident of 1925 the Creation Society, as a result of the worsened political situation, moved into its second period, giving up its individualism, pessimism and the idea of art for art's sake. It adopted 'revolutionary literature' as its battle cry, and fought against imperialism and warlordism."²

It was the concept of "revolutionary literature", formulated after the appearance of Kuo Mo-jo's article, "Ko-ming Yü Wen-hsueh" (Revolution and Literature), in April 1926 and refined two years later by Ch'eng Fang-wu in "Tsung Wen-hsueh Ko-ming Tao Ko-ming Wen-hsueh" (From

³Whereas Kuo had gone no further than to call for literature that was "sympathetic to the proletariat", Cheng asserted that "we should address ourselves to the broad masses of workers and peasants" (see Li Ho-lin, Chin Erh-shih Nien Chung-kuo Wen-i Su Chao Lun and Chung-kuo Wen-i Cheng-lun) It was after the publication of Cheng's article that the term "proletarian literature" came into vogue. (See Ho I-hsien, p. 41)

⁴The piece did not appear under Hsu's name but both Liang (in "I Hsin Yueh") and Hsu's biographer, Chang Chun-ku, say that it was his work.

⁵See Li Ho-lin, Chung-kuo Wen-i Cheng-lun (Literary Debates in China), pp. 282-295.

Literary Revolution to Revolutionary Literature)³, that was the point at issue in Liang Shih-chiu's exchanges with his "ideological" opponents. In the first instance these were the Creationists.

Curiously what sparked the debate was not something written by Liang at all, but a manifesto written by Hsu Chih-mo⁴ in the name of the Crescent group as a whole. This was the piece entitled "Hsin Yueh te T'ai-tu" (The Attitude of the Crescent Monthly), published in the first edition of Crescent Monthly in March 1928.

The complaint of the Crescent writers, said Hsu, was that "the criteria determining all our values have been turned upside down". In the associated confusion "health" had been prejudiced and "dignity" diminished. The root cause of the confusion, he believed, was "absolute freedom of thought". Salvation could only be found, he concluded, in "pure thought".

To the newly-converted radicals of the Creation Society (that is Kuo Mo-jo and Cheng Fang-wu of the original association, plus a number of younger militants who had more recently returned from ^{France and} Japan) this was of course an extremely provocative line. The Crescent men did not have to wait long for a counter-attack. This took the form of a pungent article written by P'eng K'ang written in May 1928. The title was "Hsin Yueh te T'ai-tu te P'i-p'ing" (A Criticism of the Attitude of the Crescent Monthly)⁵.

P'eng's thesis was that in an age of social change such as China was experiencing (change in which "the oppressed class seeks liberation"),

[The following text is extremely faint and illegible due to low contrast and noise. It appears to be a series of lines of text, possibly a list or a set of notes, but the specific content cannot be discerned.]

because the new "basis of practice" was different, the new standards of value must be different too.

He felt that the members of the Crescent group were quite simply reacting against this change. This was why to them the new literature and thought, based on new standards, "insulted dignity" and "prejudiced health". But, he maintained, "the evolution of history ruthlessly obliterates the sacred and the inviolable, and denies any permanent existence".

Indeed he went further. He stated his belief that it was by "insulting the dignity" of the ruling class that the oppressed class was able to obtain its own dignity, and it was by "prejudicing the health" of that class that it was able to improve its own health.

P'eng denied entirely the proposition that absolute freedom of thought prevailed. This illusion, he believed, was the result of viewing the situation through tinted glasses. What he demanded in contrast was thought that accurately reflected objectivity and proceeded from certain knowledge. To establish this required a review of the basis of society and the significance of class. It was no good living in the past, reiterated P'eng. Society must be changed. But revolutionary action required revolutionary theory, and there could be nothing "pure" about such theory.

It was this piece of P'eng K'ang's that prompted Liang Shih-chiu to venture for the first time into the broader area of cultural ideology. As a result of an essay written immediately after the appearance of

⁶See A. Tagore, Literary Debates in Modern China, p. 108.

P'eng's article and intended, according to Tagore⁶, as a reply, Liang's social conservatism at once became evident. As might be expected to a large extent it paralleled his literary conservatism. Being less qualified in tone, however, it possessed a harsher ring.

The essay was his most well-known "ideological" piece, "Wen Hsueh Yu Ko-ming" (Literature and Revolution). It appeared in the June 1928 edition of the Crescent Monthly and is taken by anthologists, wrongly as I hope to show, to represent the Crescent line on the subject.

His theme was the key role of the very small minority in any society who, in his view, "create all civilisation". The hallmark of the members of this minority was their talent.

He started by analysing the nature of revolution. To him it was simply a movement of resistance to abnormality, that is to a situation in which leadership had fallen into the wrong (i.e. untalented) hands. Such a movement would be supported, instinctively, by the masses and of course led by men of excellence.

Turning to the place of literature in a revolutionary age, Liang depicted the writer as a sensitive reflector of the suffering of the inarticulate masses and in that sense as their representative. But in reflecting this suffering, the writer was and must remain preoccupied with his fundamental task of portraying "universal human nature". Therefore his work could not be made subject to external constraints such as the political interests of the masses, the success of the revolution, or the appeal of a fixed "class-viewpoint". On the contrary the



Faint, illegible text covering the majority of the page, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side.

Handwritten notes or signatures at the bottom of the page, including a signature that appears to start with 'John'.

writer must retain his independence so that he might accomplish his sole mission, the fulfillment of the demands of truth, excellence, and beauty.

Liang then went on to discuss the status of the majority. He flaunted his elitist colours without reservation. To him contemporary sympathy for the masses had overwhelmed due consideration for civilisation. Furthermore the resulting creed of "literature of the majority" was quite simply a contradiction in terms. He stated his belief that "the majority has no literature, and literature is not for the majority". Even the genre previously most closely associated with revolution, romantic literature, was far removed from being a literature of the majority if for no other reason because it extolled individualism.

No, said Liang, literature, based as it was on the description of universal human nature, could not be categorised according to social class. Indeed far from belonging to one class a literary work was a treasure to be shared by the whole of mankind. Of course, he went on, the ability to appreciate literature was an unusual endowment. But that endowment was not the prerogative of one class. In any class there was a minority who could and a majority who could not appreciate literary art.

He affirmed that the creation of literature had even less to do with class. Since the end of pre-history, literature had more and more become the product of talent. The bestowal of talent was not something controlled by economic forces or social patronage. The proletariat was as likely to throw up natural ability as any other class. Thus

⁷Quoted by Li Ho-lin, Chin Erh Shih Nien Chung-kuo Wen-i Ssu Chao Lun
(On Literary Thought in China in the Last Twenty Years).

literature was free of any class nature.

Returning to the subject of revolution, Liang agreed that revolutionaries could make use of literature as an aid to the attainment of their ideals. Moreover the infusion of revolutionary ardour into literature could spontaneously transform it into something deeply moving. But, he said, to see literature as nothing more than a tool of revolution was to belittle it. Revolution was a passing phase; to dwell on the revolutionary aspect of the nature of literature was to deprive it of its unchanging and eternal value.

The effect of Liang's article was immediate. The same month that it appeared Feng Nai-chao, a member of the Creation Society, was moved to write a piece specifically entitled "P'ing-po Liang Shih-chiu te Wen Hsueh Yü Ko Ming" (A Refutation of Liang Shih-chiu's "Literature and Revolution")⁷. Predictably he disagreed with each of Liang's propositions.

He disagreed with the proposition that revolution was a movement designed to restore normality. He observed that it was truer to say that the French revolutionaries for instance wished rather to achieve the novelty of the new life to which they aspired than to re-establish any status quo ante. Furthermore that event was neither caused by the personal inadequacy of the descendants of the Sun King nor initiated by the genius of individual revolutionary leaders. Rather it was a class movement against an oppressive system.

He disagreed with the proposition that civilisation was the

⁸ See A. Tagore, Literary Debates in Modern China, p. 58.

creation of society's talented minority. To him it was rather the result of a process of "cultural accumulation" by the whole of mankind in a collective sense.

He disagreed with the proposition that the human spirit transcends time and place. On the contrary, said Feng, a man's motivation was conditioned by the surroundings he found himself in. Indeed his individual ability could only be accounted for if the decisive influence of society were included in the reckoning.

Feng, in concluding his rebuttal of Liang's case (he then went on to describe revolutionary literature), stated his belief that Liang's proposition that "the majority has no literature, literature is not for the majority", far from denying the class character of literature as Liang intended, actually confirmed it. For in Feng's view Liang could only be referring to upper-class literature (or more correctly literature designed to serve the upper class) if his statement were to make sense.

With that, though the cause of revolutionary or proletarian literature continued to be vociferously upheld in the columns of the *Creation Monthly* until its enforced closure in February 1929⁸, the exchange between the leftists and Liang Shih-chiu seems to have subsided for about a year and a half.

It was Liang who fired the opening salvo of the second phase of the conflict. This time he showed that his opposition to social change was total. As a result he found himself ranged not against the shrill

⁹ Issued according to C.J. Liu in September 1929, but in my view in February 1930 - see Chapter 4, note 1. Liang did publish one further piece after this specifically attacking the point of view of a former Creationist, Kuo Mo-jo. The title was "Wen-hsueh Yü Ta-ch'ung" (Literature and the Masses). It appeared in HY 2/12. In it he merely denied the possibility of creating a "literature for the majority".

clamouring of the Creationists, who had disbanded, but against the deft polemical skill of Lu Hsun.

The title of this second article of Liang's specifically directed against the whole spirit of the revolutionary literature movement was "Wen-hsueh Shih Yu Chie^h-chi Hsing te Ma" (Has Literature a Class Quality). It appeared in (joint) numbers 6-7 of Volume 2 of the Crescent Monthly⁹.

Here Liang developed his earlier theme of the key civilising role played by men of talent by linking civilisation to the visible and material fruits of such talent, namely private property. His authority was Rousseau, who, he admitted, had defined the link whilst attacking civilisation.

Liang protested that as a result of the fostering of class consciousness amongst the proletariat life's "regular" struggle (the acquisition of private property through hard work) had been abandoned in favour of class struggle. But, no doubt with his idiosyncratic theory of normality in mind, he asserted his belief that the "forces of civilisation" would ultimately triumph as a result of natural evolution.

Liang then went on to set out his reaction to the revolutionaries' concept of proletarian culture. His first complaint was that he was quite unable to understand the Chinese translations of the theoretical material ("Lunarchásky, Plekhanov, etc.") that he had read. Despite this lack of understanding of the details, however, he felt able to criticise the whole notion of proletarian literature on grounds of principle.

The first part of the report is devoted to a general survey of the situation in the country. It is followed by a detailed account of the work done during the year. The report concludes with a summary of the results and a list of recommendations.

The work done during the year has been of a high standard. It has been carried out in accordance with the programme of work approved by the Council. The results have been most satisfactory.

The following are the main results of the work done during the year:

- 1. A number of new projects have been initiated.
- 2. A number of new publications have been issued.
- 3. A number of new reports have been published.
- 4. A number of new articles have been written.
- 5. A number of new lectures have been given.
- 6. A number of new conferences have been held.
- 7. A number of new seminars have been organized.
- 8. A number of new courses have been organized.
- 9. A number of new exhibitions have been organized.
- 10. A number of new films have been produced.

The following are the main recommendations:

- 1. The Council should continue to support the work of the Institute.
- 2. The Council should continue to fund the work of the Institute.
- 3. The Council should continue to provide the Institute with the necessary resources.
- 4. The Council should continue to provide the Institute with the necessary facilities.
- 5. The Council should continue to provide the Institute with the necessary staff.
- 6. The Council should continue to provide the Institute with the necessary equipment.
- 7. The Council should continue to provide the Institute with the necessary materials.
- 8. The Council should continue to provide the Institute with the necessary services.
- 9. The Council should continue to provide the Institute with the necessary information.
- 10. The Council should continue to provide the Institute with the necessary advice.

Assuming firstly that proletarian literature should describe proletarian life, he objected that the value of such a book would consist not in the description of the setting, which was admittedly class-impregnated, but in the description of the feelings and relationships of the human beings living in that setting. These he believed would transcend class.

Assuming secondly that proletarian literature should be written by a member of or sympathiser towards the proletariat, he objected that a successful writer was first and foremost a human being of unusually refined sensibility. This quality he believed had nothing to do with class identity.

Assuming lastly that proletarian literature should be written for the proletariat, he objected that because the "majority" were stupid, good books must remain something for the exclusive benefit of the "minority". In this sense the value of literature simply could not be measured by the size of the readership.

Liang then went on to reemphasise his belief (set out in the earlier essay) that a writer must remain loyal to his "ideals and perceptions" and that his search must be for "truth, beauty, and excellence". He could afford, he continued, to acknowledge neither the aristocracy nor the proletariat as his master.

Liang's final thrust in this essay was his call for an end to theorising about proletarian literature, and a start towards the realisation of such literature. "We do not want the advertisements," he said,

¹⁰ As we noted in Chapter One, Liang, when discussing a purely political question such as the desirability of "unity of thought", voiced the same basic concern for human rights expressed by the others.

¹¹ Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, p. 238

¹² See "Lun Jen-ch'uan" (On Human Rights), HY 2-5

we want to see the colour of the goods. But we hope the goods are better than the advertisements suggest."

Because the exchanges with Lu Hsun that followed the publication of this second "ideological" piece by Liang were conducted on a polemical, and later personal, level, it is appropriate to take provisional stock of Liang's position before going any further.

The views expressed in these two articles by Liang immediately set him apart from the other members of the Crescent group. Whereas when discussing literature in isolation Liang showed that he shared some, though by no means all, of the views held by Hu Shih, Hsu Chih-mo and Wen I-to, in the broader area of literature in the context of politics there was no common ground at all. Hsu and Wen did not enter into any substantive discussion of political issues. Hu Shih and Lo Lung-chi in the many articles on political questions that they contributed to the Crescent Monthly did not attempt to link literature and politics¹⁰.

Even had they done so, it seems certain that their conclusions would have been different from Liang's. Although, as Jerome Grieder observes¹¹, there were elitist elements in Hu Shih's thought at the time, his fundamental commitment was to liberal democracy. Lo Lung-chi's position, with his notion that "the function of the state consists in its protection of human rights"¹², was unreservedly democratic. More obviously, perhaps, Liang's view of revolution as a movement to restore normality was quite out of key with both Hu Shih's and Lo Lung-chi's beliefs. As Grieder, commenting on his most well-known article on

13 "Wo-men Tsou Na-i T'iao Lu?", HY 2-10. It was in this article that Hu described revolution as simply "forced evolution" that need not be and preferably should not be characterised by violence.

14 Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, p. 229.

15 See "Lun Kung-ch'an Chu-i" (On Communism), HY 3-1.

16 A third essay published after Liang became preoccupied with his "pen-war" with Lu Hsun summarised his view of the separation between genuine literature and the bulk of the population. The article, entitled "Wen-hsueh Yü Ta-chung" (Literature and the Masses) appeared in HY 2/12. The only new point made was that burgeoning materialism was likely to divorce the majority from contact with literature even more completely than before. This article should be distinguished from an essay in the Pien Chien collection carrying the same title. In this second piece Liang merely observed that some literature can be enjoyed by intellectuals and ordinary people alike, but that what the two sides enjoy is not the same thing (see Pien Chien Chi, pp. 207-9)

17 see Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te (Romantic and Classic), p. 14.

18 see HY 1/9

revolution¹³, says of Hu Shih, "His whole philosophy was predicated on the assumption that change is the central fact of individual and historical experience".¹⁴ Lo Lung-chi, when he talked of "the right of revolution, forever held by the people as the ultimate weapon of their survival"¹⁵, was admittedly referring to the preservation of existing values; but what he had in mind were the fundamentals of human rights rather than the refinements of civilisation.

It is this prima facie elitist conservatism that is the most interesting quality to be discerned in these two essays of Liang's¹⁶. In Chapters Eight and Nine, in attempting to establish Liang's identity and makeup, we will return to the question of its precise significance. In this chapter it is only necessary to trace its source and to account for its appeal.

It is a quality that is foreshadowed in the first essay in Liang's first published collection. In "Hsien-tai Chung-kuo Wen-hsueh ohih Lang-man te Ch'ü-shih" (The Romantic Trend in Modern Chinese Literature) he observed that "equality is in practice impossible, in theory undesirable"¹⁷. In an essay published after the first of the two articles just discussed but before the second, an essay entitled "A-li-ssu-to-k'e-lMa-hsi" (Aristocracy)¹⁸, he developed that theme. His premise was that "no matter what kind of political system, a division between the two classes (rulers and ruled) cannot be eliminated". He then focussed on the qualities of leadership required of the rulers. He chose to recommend the painstakingly cultivated excellence advocated by Burke in

¹⁹John Cross, The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters, p. 61.

Reflections on the Revolution in France.

Unfortunately, unlike when discussing literature in isolation, Liang did not cite his authorities in his more ideological pieces. In Chapter Four Liang's own references together with comparison showed that in his theory of literature the most positive direct influence was provided by Irving Babbitt, the most significant indirect influence by Aristotle and Matthew Arnold. Because the purpose of "Wen-hsueh Yu Ko-ming" (Literature and Revolution) and its sequel was to establish the true social nature of literature, it seems reasonable to think that Liang drew his inspiration from the two of those same three authorities who had experienced modern society. This supposition is in fact confirmed by further investigation of the views of these men.

Liang's general case was that civilisation was in danger as a result of attempts to popularise "culture", which could only be the preserve of a trans-class minority of talented individuals. This is very close to Arnold's position. Indeed this description of what most concerned Arnold (who was later described as "the apostle of Culture") could be applied to Liang:

"The main practical threat to Culture seemed to Arnold
 to come from the more aggressive of the Philistines, and from further left still, from the turbulent working class masses who were being stirred up by Liberals of the John Bright persuasion."¹⁹

Similarly Arnold's own description of the classless elite to whom

20 Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, p. 108.

Culture truly belonged might have been penned by Liang:

"Natures with this bent (identified by a common love and pursuit of perfection) emerge in all classes — among the Barbarians, among the Philistines, among the Populace. And this bent always tends to take them out of their class, and to make their distinguishing characteristic not their Barbarianism or their Philistinism, but their humanity. They have, in general, a rough time of it in their lives; but they are sown more abundantly than one might think."²⁰

Liang's opinions, though definitely in sympathy, do not match Babbitt's statements in this general area quite so precisely because the two men were addressing themselves to slightly different (though closely related) subjects. Liang was discussing the popularisation of culture, Babbitt (in Democracy and Leadership) the popularisation of government.

Where Liang touched on the question of government there was an identity of views. Liang called for the restoration of "normality", a situation in which political leadership was in the hands of men of talent. Babbitt, at the end of his introduction, called for "leaders who have recovered in some form the truths of the inner life"²¹.

Though each was concerned with a different aspect, the views of both as to the result of popularisation were again close — to Liang it was the loss of regard for civilisation, to Babbitt "a huge mass of standardised mediocrity"²².

²³Democracy and Leadership, p. 310.

²⁴see Democracy and Leadership, p. 207.

Liang's emphasis on the smallness of the minority which provides cultural leadership is parallel with Babbitt's assertion of the rarity of those who are fitted for political leadership:

"(Only) a small minority, if we are to judge by past experience, will show themselves capable of the more difficult stages of self-conquest that will fit them for leadership"²³.

Babbitt appears not to have taken up the question of the social distribution of ability. As both Liang and Arnold considered it to be a significant factor in their thinking on leadership, this must be counted as a positive difference between them and Babbitt. This difference by default, however, seems to represent the only striking separation between the three.

At a more detailed level there is evidence that in his discussions on culture and society, Liang drew directly from Babbitt. Thus his linking of civilisation and private property was not as idiosyncratic as might be thought, for Babbitt had referred in Democracy and Leadership to "The degree of safety for the institution of property that genuine justice and genuine civilisation both require"²⁴. Similarly his (Liang's) view of hard work in order to acquire property as life's "regular struggle" would seem to have grown out of this Belief of Babbitt's:

"The principle of competition is, as Hesiod pointed out long ago, built into the very roots of the world:

²⁵ see Democracy and Leadership, p. 205.

²⁶ see Wen-Hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities), p. 64 ("Kuan-yu Pai-pi-te Hsien-sheng Chi Chi Ssu-hsiang") (On Babbitt and his Thought), originally contributed to the Hong Kong magazine Jen Sheng in January 1957 — op. cit.

there is something in the nature of things which calls for a real victory and a real defeat. Competition is necessary to raise man from his native indolence; without it life loses its zest and savour"²⁵.

This passage indeed recalls the main elements of Liang Shih-chiu's whole outlook — independence, continuity, discipline — and thus serves usefully as a final illumination of his close spiritual identity with Babbitt.

In his essay on Babbitt, Liang provides a clue to the appeal of this spirit. Towards the end of the article he says approvingly:—

"He distrusted mob rule. His inclination was rather towards an intellectual aristocracy"²⁶.

Liang himself had seen mob rule at work at Tsinghua in 1919. The placid stability of Harvard must have seemed infinitely preferable to a hardworking intellectual such as he had become during his year at Colorado. One can understand too that the attachment he found there to intellectual excellence must have been attractive to someone like him who had won his place on merit in severe competition. In such an environment, to a young man of ability who belonged to a country where every other sort of leadership had failed, the concept of an intellectual aristocracy of cultivated men of talent was bound to exercise a great appeal. In embracing this concept it would be only logical for him to insist that true (that



is undiluted) culture was the basis of the development of such leadership and thus also of the preservation of civilisation in the wider sense.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Dispute with Lu Hsun

As we noted at the beginning of the last chapter Liang, when remembering his association with the Crescent group, acknowledged that he criticised Lu Hsun. Lu Hsun had actually criticised Liang Shih-ch'iu as early as January 1928 in two articles published in that month in the magazine, Yü Ssu (Spinners of Words).

In the first, entitled "Lu-sou Ho Wei-k'ou" (Rousseau and Appetite), he challenged an argument advanced by Liang in an article on women's education contributed to the Fu-tan Chün K'an (Fu Tan Periodical). Liang had denied the proposition that all human beings were equal, pointing out that as well as men and women there were clever people and stupid people, strong people and weak people and so on. He had gone on to assert that the proper education for women was education that would make them complete women. Did this mean, asked Lu Hsun, that the proper education for stupid people was education that would make them completely stupid?

In the second essay, entitled "Wen-hsueh Ho Chü Han" (Literature and Perspiration), Lu Hsun queried Liang's notion of "universal human nature", both as the essence of literature and as a valid concept in itself. He illustrated his case by pointing to the changing character of Liang's beloved English novel. That Lu Hsun should attack Liang

NOTES FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

¹ Regarding the dates of publication of the issues of Crescent Monthly in which Liang's critiques of Lu Hsun originally appeared, I disagree with the chronology supplied in C.J. Liu's bibliography, Controversies in Modern Chinese Intellectual History, though I have added the dates listed by Liu in brackets in each case for convenience. These I assume to be based on the known date of publication of the first issue in March 1928. Thus Volume 2(~~joint~~), Number 6-7^(joint), the issue containing "Has Literature a Class Character?", is perhaps presumed rather than known to have been published nineteen months afterwards. That Numbers 6-7 and 8 probably appeared later than September and October 1929 is suggested by the interval between then and the more certain dates (March and May 1930) of Lu Hsun's replies to Liang's first three attacks. Volume 2, Number 9, of the Crescent Monthly is almost certain to have been published in April 1930 (Liu's date is November 1929), because in it Liang criticised Lu's March article and an article in the Magazine To Huang Che, only to find his arguments rebutted by Lu in May. Volume 2, Number 11, positively cannot have been published in January 1930, the date given by Liu, because in it Liang refers to an event in Shanghai which did not happen until April 1930; it seems probably that it appeared in June 1930, because Liang's article quotes from the May edition of Meng Ya. If it is accepted that Numbers 9 and 11 appeared in April and June of 1930, perhaps we may more accurately assume that Numbers 6-7 and 8 were published in February and March of that year. Liang's and Lu's exchanges would then fit a more likely month-by-month pattern.

² Notably "Ko-ming Shih-tai te Wen-hsueh" (Literature in a Revolutionary Age) (Erh Yi collection, pp. 18-27) and "Literature and Revolution" (Selected Works, Vol. III, pp. 20-23)

³ Notably Li Chie-li's article "Ta Lu Hsun Tsuey Mien Chung Te Meng Lung" (In Reply to Lu Hsun's "Deceived Whilst Intoxicated") and Ch'ien Hsing-tsun's article "Ssu Ch'u le te Ah Q Shih Tai" (The Dead and Bygone Age of Ah Q)

⁴ Huang Sung-k'ang, Lu Hsun and the New Culture Movement, pp. 120-22.

⁵ Li Chang-chi, Lu Hsun P'i P'an (An Appraisal of Lu Hsun), p. 49. Li quotes the preface to Lu's San Hsien (Three Leisures) collection in support of his theory.

shih-chiu like this was perhaps to be expected, for he had already criticised Babbitt's ideas during an earlier dispute with Mei Kuang-ti and his associates.

The running exchanges between Liang and Lu however started with the publication of "Wen Hsueh yu Chie^h-chi Hsing te ma?" (Has Literature a Class Character?) in (according to C.J. Liu) September 1929 or (as I believe) February 1930¹, the month of the formation of the League of Left-Wing Writers. Although Lu did not deliver his militant address to the League until March 1930, his association with the revolutionary writers and with their ideals was already public knowledge. Perhaps it was a combination of this association and the tone of a general criticism of the Crescent group published by Lu Hsun in January, 1930 that provoked Liang Shih-chiu.

For a reading of some of the articles Lu Hsun wrote on literature and revolution in 1927-8² and of the criticism to which he was subjected in return by the members of the Creation and Sun Societies during 1928³ shows that his total adherence to the left-wing cause in 1930 was new-found. One biographer postulates a theory of gradual conversion from "optimistic evolutionism" during the period 1927-9, prompted firstly by the KMT coup against the communist faction of the revolutionary alliance in 1927 and then by his study of Marxian theories of literature and art during the following two years⁴. Another critic, Li Chang-chih, believes that the decisive influences in this "substantial reorientation" were the study of Marxian theories and the effect of left-wing criticism⁵.

6 According to Li Ho-lin, Lu Hsun translated Lunarchasky's Theory of Art in 1929 and Plekhanov's Theory of Art and Lunarchasky's Art and Criticism in 1930. His translation of the CPSU Policy for Literature, criticised by Liang in a later article, also appeared in 1930 (see Chin Erb-shih Nien Chung-^{kuo} Wen-i Ssu Ch'ao Lun, p. 170).

7 See P'ien Chien Chi (Prejudices), pp. 51-5. The relative merits of different approaches to translation formed a subject of controversy at the time. The Crescent writers tended to favour a free approach. In the April 1929 issue of Crescent Monthly, Hsu Chih-mo had defended his translation, based on this approach, of Candide. Like Liang he emphasised his attachment to readability. Liang himself had even earlier (December 1928) contributed an article entitled "Fan-i" (Translation) which called for fewer indirect translations of Western literature.

More important than the reasons for it though is the indisputable fact that a clear shift in position took place.

The sting in the tail of Liang's formal refutation of the class character of literature was the jibe that the revolutionary writers had gone no further than to write the advertisements for their wares. We have just seen that it was at the time that Liang's article appeared that Lu Hsun, discarding his last reservations about revolutionary literature, finally identified himself with that movement. However, a more direct aspersion cast in that piece on Lu Hsun's standing was Liang's complaint that the Chinese translations of Lunarchasky and Ple^{hr}skanov were unintelligible⁶. For the translator of course had been Lu. In the same issue of Crescent Monthly Liang also published an article which specifically criticised the detail of some of Lu Hsun's translation work. This was a short essay entitled "Lun Lu Hsun Hsien-sheng te Ying I" (A Discussion of Mr. Lu Hsun's 'hard translation')⁷. These two articles together sparked the so-called "pen-war" between the two writers.

In the second essay, his first direct attack on Lu Hsun, Liang compared the relative merits of literal (or "dead") translation and ^{free} loose translation. Although he stated that he rejected both approaches, he clearly considered that literal translation was the more unsatisfactory of the two, on the grounds that it led to a major degree of incomprehensibility as opposed to a minor degree of inaccuracy. As an example of work not far removed from "dead" translation, moreover an interesting

⁸Published according to Li Chang-chih in 1929 (see Lu Hsun P'i P'an [An Appraisal of Lu Hsun], p. 51).

⁹Published according to Li Chang-chih in 1930 (*ibid.*, p. 51)

¹⁰Lu Hsun's name is not mentioned in the article. However his identity, which is clear throughout the piece, is established by the association of the subject of attack with "tsa kan" articles. Liang confirms this identification in an article entitled "Kuan Yü Lu Hsun" (On Lu Hsun) written years later and contained in the published collection of that name. He says, "I wrote an article in order to force him (Lu) to show his colours.. The title was 'Dissatisfied with the Present Situation'." (Kuan-yü Lu Hsun, p. 4)

¹¹See HY 2/8 (March 1930) (October 1929 — see note 1)

example in the light of Lu's proven fluency in other areas of literary activity, Liang selected Lu Hsun's then recent translations of Lunarsky's Theory of Art⁸ and Art and Criticism⁹. He quoted three passages which were indeed difficult to understand, plus an extract from Lu Hsun's accompanying apology for his, as he called it, "hard" translation. Liang objected not only to the unintelligibility of Lu's translation but also to the (as he saw it) excuses offered by Lu for the "obscurities". Unintelligibility Liang, with some justification, saw as failure to fulfill the "first condition" of translation; Lu's explanations for it (his, Lu's, own lack of ability and the shortcomings of the Chinese language) he rejected as simply inappropriate.

The following month, March 1930, Liang published another direct attack on Lu Hsun¹⁰. This time his criticism was general rather than specific. The essay was entitled "Pu Man Yu Hsien-chuang Pien Tsen-yang?" (Dissatisfied with the Present Situation — What Then?)¹¹.

Liang started by acknowledging that anyone who was satisfied with the (then) present situation "must be without feeling, without knowledge, without conscience". He also acknowledged his respect for those few who were prepared to express their dissatisfaction publicly. But, he argued, it was also the responsibility of this articulate and venturesome minority earnestly to seek positive solutions to the problems which characterised the "current situation". He went on to say that what happened, on the contrary, was that "a certain kind of person" not only failed to put forward constructive proposals of his own, but also

12 See Lu Hsun, Selected Works, Vol. 3, pp. 53-4 (The Role of the Critics of the Crescent Moon Society). If, of course, C.J. Liu's dating of Liang Shih-chiu's articles is correct, this first piece by Lu Hsun will have succeeded rather than preceded the articles by Liang discussed so far.

Function

13 Li Chang-chih, who considers this article to be "both angry and well-organised", points out how few long articles Lu wrote (see Lu Hsun P'i P'an, p. 155).

lambasted any proposals put forward by anyone else — as if afraid that one day the situation might actually improve. Addressing himself to this "certain kind of person" Liang said: "If you are not satisfied with the proposals of others, what about your own proposals? Perhaps you do not have the ability to lead the way towards improvement. In which case you should contain your anger and wait calmly."

As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, Lu had already published a short article in Meng Ya in January 1930 criticising the general attitude of the writers who contributed to the Crescent Monthly¹². He had objected that the Crescent writers were guilty of the very sins that they themselves denounced: jeering and complaining. He had warned that if they considered that they, like executioners, had a special licence to act in the name of public order in a way not permitted of others, then they were living in a fool's paradise. For he had said recent "emergency" measures introduced by the government, in the same name, already suppressed that freedom of thought which was the ultimate object of the Crescent writers' defence.

Two months later, that is in March 1930, a much longer¹³ article appeared in Meng Ya, which sought to argue the points made by Liang in his essay denying the existence of class character in literature and in his criticism of Lu Hsun's translation technique. The title of Lu's ^{of the translation} article, which is included in Volume 3 of the Selected Works, is "Hard Translation and the 'Class Character of Literature'". He started with the subject of translation.

Lu Hsun's first objection was that Liang seemed to take it upon

¹⁴ Later in the article (on p. 82 of Selected Works, Vol. 3) he explained that his translations were not aimed at the masses but at ^{was for} "myself, a few who consider themselves proletarian critics, and ^{for} some readers who want to understand these theories".

himself to speak for all Chinese when he complained that Lu's translation was unintelligible. But to Lu his (Liang's) use of the pronoun "we" debarred this possibility even before it was examined, because if there were a "we" there must also have been a "they" who would not have the same opinions. Next Lu rejected Liang's concern that translation should be "pleasant to read", observing that his object was often quite the reverse. Thirdly he objected that just because Liang had difficulty in reading his translations he should not have assumed that everybody else did too.

He then took Liang's point that Chinese was quite unlike other languages and that was what made translation into Chinese difficult. He dismissed it as a statement of the obvious. The point that Liang had missed, Lu said, was that his (Lu's) use of unfamiliar and therefore "obscure" constructions and modes of expression was not in order to avoid the difficulty of finding more familiar equivalents but in order to face the necessity of introducing these devices into the Chinese language.¹⁴

Finally Lu pointed out that if his earlier translation was easier to read then this was quite simply because the original had been easier to understand.

He then passed on to the question of literature and class. In this section he first addressed himself to Liang's observations about class in general. He rejected as absurd Liang's assertion of a link between civilisation and private property, pointing out that the classical civilisations of both Greece and India were not characterised by the pre-

¹⁵ see Lu Hsun, Selected Works, Vol 3, p. 77.

valence of such a system. He then turned to the social context of literature.

Lu rejected Liang's emphasis on that which all men share in common as the proper subject of literature. The logical conclusion of that argument, he asserted, was the description of straightforward biological functions. Anyway, he concluded, just as the concept of "hardness" only had meaning in specific, material terms, so "human nature" was meaningless unless exemplified by actual or imagined individual human beings — and any such human being had a class background which could not be ignored.

He rejected Liang's denial of the influence of a writer's class background on his writing. Liang's example of Tolstoy, far from proving Liang's point, proved Lu's point because "it was precisely because Tolstoy was a noble who had not lost all his old propensities that he merely sympathised with the poor without advocating class struggle."¹⁵ In answer to Liang's point that the creation and appreciation of literature was shared by a minority of mankind but a minority which transcended class, Lu pointed out that a gifted person may not have had the opportunity to learn to read, and that different art forms had emerged for different social classes. He then asserted that the argument that literature transcended class was advantageous to the bourgeoisie and was therefore itself a class-based argument.

Finally Lu took Liang's call for some "actual goods" to go with the "advertisements" of the "proletarian" writers. In one sense Lu considered Liang's protest to be unreasonable, in that a new class of writer had to be allowed time to achieve significant results; in

¹⁶ contained in an open letter in the Crescent Monthly.

¹⁷ see HY 2/9 (April 1930) (or November 1929 — see note 1)

¹⁸ Liang answered this particular point in kind by quoting a statement by the editor of Meng Ya that Lu was refuting Liang's arguments "for us" and a statement by Lu Hsun advocating group effort for the sake of effect (p. 4).

another he agreed with Liang in that most of the self-styled "proletarian" writers had had the material advantages that went with bourgeois origin, and should therefore have been capable of better results than those obtained.

Lu ended the article with a general criticism of the Crescent writers whom he called "as soft as cotton". He considered their reaction¹⁶ to the government's emergency laws, which severely curtailed press freedom, to be feeble, especially so in view of the group's stated concern for the preservation of freedom of thought in China. Such defenders of freedom, he felt, should have gone further than to issue a vague warning that those who suppress liberty ultimately perish.

Liang Shih-chiu next felt impelled to publish a reply to Lu Hsun's objections. Like his previous indirect and direct attacks on Lu, this riposte was carried in the columns of the Crescent Monthly. The title of the article, which is seven pages long, was "Ta Lu Hsun" (In Answer to Mr. Lu Hsun)¹⁷.

He started by saying that he had quite expected to incur the public displeasure of Lu Hsun. But, he went on to say, having read Lu Hsun's criticism of his ideas, he was none the wiser as to the substance of Lu's objections. Why had Lu not listed his arguments in defence of "hard translation" and "proletarian literature" instead of indulging in a barrage of sarcasm? On examination, Liang concluded, Lu's essay consisted largely of debating points such as his commentary on Liang's use of "we" as the subject of his (Liang's) sentences¹⁸.

Faint, mostly illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text appears to be organized into several paragraphs, but the characters are too light and blurry to transcribe accurately.

19 Entitled "Chie^h-chi She-hui te I-shu" (Art in a Class Society). Liang described it as "inept — not in the same class as Lu Hsun's article."

By means of diversionary tactics of this kind, Liang felt, Lu had avoided the main points at issue altogether.

Liang then moved on to address a number of specific requests to Lu Hsun. If he (Lu) felt that the examples of his translation chosen by Liang were unrepresentative, would he choose some more suitable passages? Would he (Lu) state clearly his attitude towards and his positive recommendations concerning the question of literature and class? Liang took the opportunity to recapitulate his own positions — that Lu's translation was largely unintelligible, and that literature did not have a class quality.

Liang ended the essay by answering Lu's jibe that the Crescent writers, champions of freedom of thought, had turned out to be "as soft as cotton" when that freedom was seriously threatened. He admitted that he and his friends were waging a paper war rather than daubing slogans on lamp-posts and breaking windows. But, he objected, the "many resolutions" of the Alliance for Freedom, of which Lu Hsun was a patron, were bound to lead to more than declarations. In that case, Liang observed, Lu Hsun himself was not going to be able to conduct his revolution exclusively on paper either.

In the same issue of Crescent Monthly Liang published a short article entitled "Tzu-pen Chia te Tsou-kou" (The Running Dog of the Capitalists) to which, as we shall see, Lu Hsun later referred. It was an answer to a criticism¹⁹ of "Wen-hsueh Shih Yu Chie^h-chi Hsing te Ma?" (Has Literature a Class Quality), published in the left-wing periodical

²⁰ see T'o Huang Che, No. 2, p. 671.

²¹ Entitled "Wu Ch'an Chie^h-chi 'te Wen Hsueh" (Proletarian Literature)

²² Apart from answering Lu Hsun, he took up points made in articles attacking him published in T'o Huang Che and Hsien-Tai Hsiao-Shuo (Modern Stories).

²³ contained in "Hard Translation and the Class Character of Literature" (Selected Works, Vol. 3, p. 80)

²⁴ see Meng Ya, Vol. I, No. 5, May 1930. It is also contained in the Liang Hsin (Two Hearts) collection, pp. 42-3. The title and indeed the bulk of the text could be cited as another example of Lu's polemical style. In "Pu Man Yu Hsien-chuang P'ien Tsen-yang?" (Dissatisfied with the Present - What then?) Liang had listed a number of "-isms" that were possible solutions to China's plight. The list included "good-governmentism". Lu's reply to Liang's essay centres on a demonstration that "good-governmentism" is not a valid "-ism".

T'ao Huang Che (Pioneers)²⁰.

In this article Liang's purpose was to demonstrate the futility of labels. His critic had called him the running dog of the capitalists. But, he said, if the definition of the word contained in the same issue of "Pioneers" was applied, he really conformed more nearly to the characteristics of a proletarian. He sold his own labour and he owned no property. At the very least the label given him by the author of "Chieh-chi She-hui te I-shu" (Art in a Class Society) was patently absurd because he did not know who his master was let alone benefit from the largesse of a wealthy patron. Regrettably, he said, he simply would not have known how to be a running dog.

Liang also contributed to the same issue of Crescent Monthly a short article²¹ which replied to a number of detailed points made by left-wing opponents²². In it he took the opportunity to take up Lu Hsun's argument that it was unreasonable to expect immediate results from a new class of writer²³. Liang explained that he had no such expectations. However if people styled themselves "writers", he felt, then regardless of their affiliation they should be prepared to make their work available for inspection.

In May 1930 Lu Hsun replied briefly to the main point contained in Liang's "Pu Man Yu Hsien Chuang Pien Tsen-yang Ne?" — that positive solutions to the Chinese crisis were called for rather than more complaints. The title of this short essay is "Hao Cheng-fu Chu-i" (Good Government-ism)²⁴.

25 The essay, entitled "Pia Chia te Tzu-pen Chia te Fa Tsou-kou" (A Tired Capitalist Running Dog of the Female Line) is also reproduced in the Liang Hsin collection, pp. 44-6.

26 see "Ta Lu Hsun". The lamp-post daubing and window breaking which Liang criticised were demonstrations against Chinese policy towards the Soviet Union in 1929-30.

27 see "Tzu-pen Chia te Tsou-kou". In a final sneer at the end of the essay Liang said "nor would I know how to extract roubles from X Party".

Lu first denied that any one left-wing writer had systematically debunked each and every one of the several political formulae proposed for China. He then argued that there was no reason why somebody who himself subscribed to no one school of thought should not criticise the shortcomings of existing schools. "If you are being (painfully) crushed, and want to scream," he said, "there is no reason why you should grit your teeth until such time as you think of a better way of obtaining relief."

In the same issue of Meng Ya Lu also replied to some of the points Liang had made in "Tzu-pen Chia te Tsou-kou"²⁵. Any running dog, he said, belonged to all capitalists. The fact that a running dog did not know who his particular master was was the reason he was obedient towards all capitalists, and proof that he belonged to that class as a whole. Even if he was not "kept", his reactions and his identity were the same. In Lu's view, Liang's protests simply placed him in this category of "unkept" running dog. Perhaps the most suitable label, Lu suggested, was "capitalist running dog of the female line".

But Lu felt that Liang was guilty of worse sins. His references to demonstrations in support of Russia (at the expense of the Chinese Government)²⁶ and to acceptance of money from X Party²⁷, Lu thought, implied that anyone who asserted that literature had a class quality or otherwise offended Liang was no more than a stooge. The motive for this kind of slander in Lu's opinion at best must have been to relieve the poverty of the author's literary criticism.

²⁸see HY 2/11, June 1930 (January 1930 - see note 1).

Liang then once again counterattacked. The title of this next article was "Lu Hsun Yü Niu" (Lu Hsun and the Ox)²⁸.

Liang first of all complained that Lu had still not directly answered his (Liang's) two original criticisms -- that Lu's translation was obscure, and that Lu appeared to have no positive recommendations concerning the social content of literature. Instead, Liang said, Lu conducted "guerrilla warfare", that is to say war by means of purely polemical ambush. Lu's object, according to Liang, was not to dispute right and wrong, but to make his opponents "feel uncomfortable".

To discover what sort of man Lu Hsun really was, Liang examined a passage in "Ah Q Cheng-chuan Cheng-yin" (The Genesis of the Biography of Ah Q) in which Lu characterised himself as an ox -- self-destructive, publicly owned, of limited ability and not to be abused, corralled or eaten. Liang agreed with this analysis, but criticised Lu's accession to public ownership. A man, he felt, should be more committed to one pasture than an ox.

Liang then confirmed Lu's self-declared unsuitability for consumption. At the time of an incident in Shanghai in April 1930 which was sponsored by the Freedom League, and which resulted in bloodshed and one death, many people were worried, according to Liang, in case the fatal casualty had been Lu Hsun. Happily, Liang reported, the dead man was neither Lu nor any other left-wing writer -- it was a worker. The last attribute of the ox was thus established as predominant.

Finally Liang queried Lu's objection to the use of the label

²⁹ see Meng-ya, Vol. I, No. 5, May 1930, p. 126.

³⁰ Contained in the Liang Hsin (Two Hearts) collection, pp. 75-9. Originally prepared in April-May 1931 for an American progressive magazine, it was not published by any Chinese periodical.

³¹ Liang is not mentioned by name, but referred to as a disciple of Babbitt.

³² Published, according to Li Chang-chih, during (presumably at the end of) 1930 (see Lu Hsun P'i P'an, p. 51)

"X Party" as a reference to the communist party. It was, Liang asserted, a commonly used label that Lu himself had employed. The inference to be drawn by the reader was obvious because the number of schools of political thought in China was limited. Furthermore, as no less an authority than Meng Ya had pointed out²⁹, there was only one party that Lu Hsun had not reviled.

There is only one further reference to Liang Shih-chiu in Lu Hsun's writings. In an essay called "Hei-an Chung^{kuo} te Wen-i Chieh^h te Hsien-chuang" (The Present Situation of the Literary World in ^{Darkest} Benighted China)³⁰, Lu devoted a paragraph to Liang's influence³¹. He summarised very briefly Liang's literary credo as expounded in "Wen-hsueh Yu Ko-ming" and "Wen-hsueh Shih Yu Chieh^h-chi Hsing te Ma?", and repeated his accusation that Liang had slandered the proponents of proletarian literature. He admitted that certain Shanghai newspapers were influenced by Liang, but asserted that perceptive readers were able to discern for themselves the true nature of the machinations of Liang's imperialist patrons.

Liang on the other hand continued to criticise Lu Hsun. In January 1931 he published an article in the Crescent Monthly called "Suo-wei Wen-i Cheng-tse¹ Che" (The Advocates of Literary Policy). This was basically an attack on the concept of an official policy for literature and art, formulated by the Soviet Communist Party at the Kharkov conference in November 1930. But Liang took the opportunity to criticise Lu's translation³² of the Russian document which set out this

33 Discussed in some detail by Max Eastman in Artists in Uniform. It was later abandoned in favour of the doctrine of Socialist Realism.

34 see P'ien Chien Chi, pp. 55-59. This article originally appeared in HY 3/3.

35 see *ibid.*, pp. 67-71.

36 I have omitted reference in the text to two short pieces by Liang in which there is indirect, and perhaps incidental, criticism of Lu Hsun. In the case of the first, "Pu-lo Wen-hsueh I Pan" (~~The Hue of~~ *A Course of* Proletarian Literature) (HY 2/11, June 1930 [January 1930]), he reproduced extracts, without comment, from three poems hailed by an admitted "proletarian-literature literary critic", having, he said, himself been rebuked by Lu Hsun for previously citing inappropriate examples of "proletarian" writing. His purpose was clearly to make the point that his objections to proletarian literature remained valid no matter what examples were selected. In the case of the second article of this kind, "Tsao-yao te I-shu" (The Art of Rumour Mongering) (HY 2/12, July 1930 [February 1930]) Liang complained that (among other things) his criticism of an essay by Yu Ta-fu had been distorted by Lu Hsun in one of his "Tsa Kan" articles. In the same essay he also answered objections carried in the fifth issue of Meng Ya to his earlier affirmation of his own proletarian identity (contained in "Tsu-pen Chia te Tsou-kou", discussed above).

37 exemplified in his view by their behaviour at the time of the Sino-Russian border clashes which followed Chinese seizure of the (jointly-owned) Chinese Eastern Railway in 1929, when they protested at the action taken by Chinese troops.

policy³³ and also Lu's comment that such a policy would be of benefit to China. Referring to the latter Liang implied that Lu's translation was likely to influence "young, prejudiced, and excitable writers" and to provide them with a "false theory of literature"³⁴.

Liang's final attack on Lu Hsun was an essay entitled "Lun Ti San Chung Jen" (On the Third Kind of Person)³⁵. This was a short critique of a lecture with the same title delivered shortly before by Lu Hsun in Peking. Liang deplored Lu's black-and-white division of society into proletarians and capitalists. This, he said, was a case of the application of an inappropriate yardstick (namely that of property — according to which, naturally, there are those who had and those who had not) to the area of literature. The motive for this approach, Liang suggested, must have been "to make easily influenced writers incline towards the left". Liang also criticised the rigidity of Lu Hsun's reactions to his opponents. In particular he resented the "formula" whereby opponents who did not publish were described as "sunk", those who did as "fallen behind", and those who ventured theoretical statements as "making a final stab". The essay was ended with a restatement of Liang's by now familiar views on the essential nature of literature.

"Lun Ti San Chung Jen" was the last significant salvo in the exchange between Liang Shih-chiu and Lu Hsun³⁶. Before the exchange started Liang had been opposed to the theory of class literature and opposed to the disloyalty towards their own government of the revolutionary writers³⁷. His differences of opinion with Lu Hsun were more

specific. The main disagreement concerned Lu Hsun's attitude towards "the present situation" — Liang considered Lu's unremitting querulousness to be unhelpful. The secondary disagreement concerned the merit of Lu Hsun's translation of Russian theoretical works — Liang considered it was low because Lu's Chinese was, to him, unintelligible. Lu Hsun chose to challenge Liang's rejection of the concept of class literature, but avoided spelling out his own theory of the relationship between literature and society — this created a third subject of dispute. Lu Hsun also chose to take up Liang's challenge to the revolutionary writers to display their wares — this caused the development of a fourth area of disagreement. The whole dispute, nonetheless, grew directly out of Liang's earlier stand against revolutionary literature as a whole. In this second debate Liang was therefore fundamentally motivated by the same influences that we traced in the last chapter.

Liang's case that Lu resorted to the scoring of debating points is not unjustified. At the same time some of his own polemical ploys, such as his presentation of himself as a proletarian without the knowledge required to be a successful running dog, was more than slightly disingenuous.

A more serious criticism of both sides is that they allowed the debate to descend to a personal level. Lu's branding of Liang as a "running dog of the female line" was as undignified as Liang's reference to the improbability of Lu's consumption by the revolution. Perhaps because of its polemical and personal character, this long drawn out

exchange only serves to illuminate further an aspect of Liang's personality — his persistence. After the publication of "Wen-Hsueh Yu Chieh-chi Hsing te Ma?" and "Lun Lu Hsun Hsien-sheng te Ying-i", Liang seems to have been more concerned to defend ideas already set out than to develop his case.

That Liang Shih-chiu was fighting a rearguard action against majority intellectual opinion as well as Lu Hsun is well known. The fact, therefore, that his views did not prevail even in the short term was a foregone conclusion. His failure in this sense is irrelevant to any assessment of the debate.

Even if their debate had been conducted in isolation, however, one feels that Liang, for all his reasonableness and his logic, would have lost to Lu. Compared with the subtlety and deftness of Lu Hsun's essays, the quality of Liang's pieces seems to be laboured. Liang's righteousness was no match for Lu's buoyancy. He plodded where Lu tripped. In this sense, surely, Lu, perhaps unfairly, would have won on points.

Since Lu Hsun's death Liang has only twice written at any length on the subject of their dispute³⁸. During the Japanese war he published an article in Chung Yang Chou K'an (Central Weekly) entitled "Lu Hsun Yu Wo" (Lu Hsun and I). Later, in Taiwan, he rewrote this article and published it under the title "Kuan-yu Lu Hsun" (On Lu Hsun), as the first essay in the collection of the same name³⁹.

In these pieces Liang confirmed that his first and foremost criticism of Lu Hsun had been directed at the latter's attitude of dis-



Faint, mostly illegible text covering the majority of the page, appearing to be a typed document with significant fading or bleed-through.

gruntled protest and parallel refusal to engage in constructive debate. In this later appraisal of Lu Hsun, Liang listed this attitude as forming Lu's worst failing. He stated that in his view Lu's thinking on the subject of literature and politics underwent a three-stage development — denunciation of all positions, acceptance of the Soviet policy for literature and art, and total compliance with the orders of the Communist Party. His conclusion was that, as a result of this unsatisfactory development, Lu Hsun "had the pen of a writer, but not the necessary mental or psychological preparation". There the matter rests.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Associations and Identity

In any overview of the period Liang Shih-chiu is first and foremost identified with the Crescent group of writers. This is largely because the majority of the essays that he published as a young man were either contributed to the Crescent Monthly or included in one of the collections issued by the Crescent Book Company. It is also because his reputation as a literary polemicist was established during the period in which he was associated with other well-known members of the group.

The Crescent group in turn is almost wholly identified historically with cosmopolitan liberalism. This is because of the western educational background of the better known individuals, because of Hu Shih's earlier association with John Dewey, and because of the liberal tone of the writing of individual members of the group throughout their careers.

However even the cursory examination of Liang Shih-chiu's ideas that we have made must indicate that to go on to classify his position deductively as one of liberalism of the same stamp as that of his associates would be to oversimplify the matter. It is necessary therefore firstly to look for ground that he shared with liberals whose credentials are more immediately acceptable, then to isolate differences of position, and finally to discover with whom inside China Liang shared

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¹that is "Tsao Erh P'ing-Lun", op. cit., Ch. 5

²see Chiu-shih Tsa-yi (Memories from the Autumn Chamber), p. 114.

³see *ibid.*, p. 131.

beliefs not held by his more authentically liberal colleagues. As we saw in Chapter One, the most important of these colleagues were Hu Shih, Hsu Chih-mo, and Wen I-to, that is the titular leader, the moving spirit, and, arguably, the most successful literary figure of the group.

Liang's early conditioning was certainly liberal. Liang's home was free of prejudice against new ideas. Though the discipline at Tsinghua was clearly strict, educationally the school was progressive. Judging from the choice of people to address it, the outlook of the Tsinghua Literary Society was liberal. Similarly Liang's early connection with the Creation Society must be counted as a connection with emancipation. Finally, the one piece of writing dating from the Tsinghua period¹ that is traceable demonstrates an inclination towards the romanticism of Wen I-to and Hsu Chih-mo. Two quotations from this article suffice to point to such an inclination:

"Poetic achievement has emotion at its centre."²

"Feeling and imagination can be said to be the wings
and wheels of poetry"³

This leaning is to some extent confirmed by Liang's close friendship with Wen and enthusiasm for Tennyson and Browning during his year at Colorado; and by the fact that he contributed articles to a publication edited by Hsu Chih-mo the next year. Liang himself confirms it more definitely by his admission, which we noted earlier, that he arrived at Harvard a romantic.

As we have seen, Liang's own view of his position during the

⁴see HY 1/1. This manifesto, issued by the editorial board of the magazine, was almost certainly the work of Hsu Chih-mo — see Chapter Six.

⁵op. cit., Chapter 4

⁶op. cit., Chapter 4

Crescent period is, despite the fervent renunciation of romanticism which resulted from his Harvard experience, that he shared the "greater or lesser tendency towards liberalism" of his colleagues.

If we take the article "Hsin-yueh te T'ai-tu" (The Crescent Attitude)⁴ as representative of the position of the Crescent group, we find that Liang's ideas are generally in keeping with that platform. Thus in general terms advocacy of "health" and "dignity" in literature, and opposition to the "anarchy of total freedom", conform very much to Liang's own demands. More specifically the statements that "We would not dare to subscribe unreservedly to aestheticism and decadence, because we are not willing to sacrifice the full amplitude of human life" and "We naturally do not oppose the release of the emotions, but we must insist that on the back of this wild horse is placed the saddle of the intellect" might both have come from the pages of "Wen Hsueh te Chi-lü" (The Discipline of Literature)⁵. Similarly the sentiment that "We aspire to see truth and regularity" is reflected clearly in the essay "Ku-tien Wen Hsueh te I-i" (The Significance of Classical Literature)⁶. Finally, something of what we have seen of Liang's cultural ideology is contained in the sentence "This phenomenon of disorder cannot be allowed to continue to exist if there is to be a shred of hope left for the future of our culture". It must of course be admitted that the vision of a "high tide of creative idealism" propagated at the end of the manifesto strikes a final note of utopianism out of key with Liang's much more guarded optimism. Nonetheless the general tenor of

the piece does not conflict with the substance of Liang's pronouncements.

It may now be objected that as yet we have only established that Liang's background was one of comparative intellectual freedom; that before he went to America he, in common with a friend and an acquaintance who were to become colleagues, showed a taste for romantic poetry; and that after his return he shared with the group of liberal writers with which he associated a concern for literary standards. Thus so far Liang himself remains a liberal only by virtue of that association.

Liberalism is essentially a political creed. A liberal writer demands a regulated climate of political freedom in which individual talent can be fully realised. At the same time he shows a concern for the welfare of the whole of the society to which he belongs. His writing is "liberal" to the extent that it reflects these preoccupations. Romantic indulgence on the one hand and classical rigour on the other are not directly connected with this spirit, because they refer to literary rather than political standards.

As we saw in Chapters Six and Seven, Liang made a number of idiosyncratic attempts to link literary and political standards directly. In the sense that he was the Crescent Group's most noticeable commentator on the politicisation of literature by the vociferous left-wing movement these attempts distinguish him from his colleagues. Moreover it is in this area of "cultural ideology" that the conservative and elitist strands in Liang's thinking are most immediately apparent. But if we may refer briefly to an article by Liang on political standards only we

⁷ HY 2/3

⁸ Contained, he tells us in "Lo-su Lun Ssu-hsiang Tzu-yu" (HY 1/11) in an essay entitled "Free Thought and Official Propaganda" originally published in 1922. In his short article Liang merely takes Russell's point that "China is the last refuge of freedom" and comments that he only wished that "it did not conflict with the facts". Liang's citing of Russell as his authority on the means of suppression of intellectual freedom parallels Hsu Chih-mo's endorsement of Russell's prognosis of the consequences of industrialisation -- see Tung-fang Tsa-chih 20/23, 10 th December 1923, "Lo-su Yu Lai Shuo Hua Le" (Russell Speaks to Us).

will find that there is good evidence of common ground with his Crescent friends in the area to which the label "liberal" truly refers.

The article in question is that entitled "Lun Ssu-hsiang T'ung-i" (On Unity of Thought)⁷. This is a straightforward protest against the totalitarianism which Liang could see threatening Chinese intellectual activity simultaneously from the left and from the right.

The focus of his concern in this essay was the concept of "unity of thought", which he felt was looming ever larger in government announcements, speeches and editorials as well as in left-wing propaganda. Having observed that human progress had been largely attributable to dissenting opinion, that the Russian model of "unity-through-Marx" was hardly encouraging, that national unity should consist in unity of purpose, and that unified purpose could best be achieved if the widest range of opinion was on hand, he went on to summarise Bertrand Russell's analysis of the means of "thought-control" that were available to a government⁸. These were the media of education, propaganda, and economic pressure.

The major drawback of the "unity" brought about by these methods, in Liang's view, was the necessary elimination of thinking people with the courage of their convictions and the resulting reliance upon opportunists and sheep. The idea that a new class of "loyal comrades" would emerge he ruled out, on the grounds that men could only be genuinely loyal to a freely chosen cause. In any case, he pointed out, revolution, the context of the discussion, had always been a movement of

⁹Liang appended to the essay an annexe deploring a resolution of the third National Propaganda Meeting which called for the suppression of all literature which was against the spirit of the Three Peoples Principles. Such an attempt to "unify art" he saw as an absurd extension of the policy of "unity of thought".

liberation, not a movement of reaction.

Liang ended this very outspoken essay by demanding freedom of thought, freedom of expression of thought, and legal guarantees of such freedom, in order that the the problems facing China might be pondered and discussed⁹.

The essay seems to me to contain the nub of Liang Shih-chiu's concern in the area of politics, a concern perhaps generated in the first place by the political, social and intellectual turmoil in which China found herself ten years after the halcyon days of the May 4th movement. He felt that as a result of political forces the scholarly but humanistic spirit of free enquiry which he had learnt to cherish whilst in America was being denied the opportunity of taking root in China at the precise moment when China needed it most. This concern provides Liang with credentials as a political liberal. It also marks the point of convergence of his liberalism with that of Hu Shih and Lo Lung-chi.

Perhaps Liang's identification as a liberal in the strict sense of the word can be provisionally confirmed by inspection of this singular article. But the label as it is attached to the Crescent group seems to have a wider meaning. It is more a convenient classifier embracing the wide range of cultural as well as political values championed separately as well as collectively by the members of the group. Thus it would seem to denote something of the scientific rationalism of Hu Shih, of the idealism of Hsu Chih-mo, and of the sensitivity of the

¹⁰ Much later Liang acknowledged that owing to the very nature of literature, plainness cannot be the sole guideline for writing and that in this sense Hu's singlemindedness was wrong. In an essay on Hu Shih and poetry, he agreed with the author of a piece which appeared in the Taiwan magazine Wen Hsing who said "His (Hu's) demands for literature were limited to simplicity, fluency and clarity. These demands are too sweeping, too basic" -- see Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), p. 138, "Hu-Shih-chih Hsien-sheng Lun Shih" (Hu Shih on Poetry).

¹¹ see Chung-kuo Hsin Wen-hsueh Ta Hsi (ed. Chao Chia-pi) Vol. 2, p. 239

¹² Two other articles of Hsu Chih-mo's which show a more detailed proximity to Liang's views on specific issues are "Shuo Chü-i" (On Loose Translation) (HY 2/2) and "Chou-ngo Yü Fan-tu²i Kung-ch'an" (Russo-phobia and Opposition to Communism) -- see Hsu Chih-mo Tsa-wen Chi (A Collection of Hsu Chih-mo's Miscellaneous Essays) Part 2, p. 74. As already noted both men also shared an admiration for Bertrand Russell.

of the poetry of Wen I-to as well as the more strictly political values shared by the whole coterie. If we examine these individual tendencies, we find that even in the area of literature per se Liang is further apart from the rest of the group than might have been expected. That this does not emerge with a reading of "Hsin-yueh te T'ai-tu" (The Crescent Attitude) is no doubt attributable to the compromise nature of that editorial.

Naturally, in the foreground there are shared beliefs. Thus the enthusiasm for "simplicity" in writing which Liang expressed in "Lun San-wen" (On Prose) (see Chapter Four) is very much in keeping with Hu Shih's commitment to vernacular writing¹⁰. When Hsu Chih-mo in "Shou Chiu Yü Wan Chiu" (Defending the Old and Playing with the Old)¹¹ says:-

"Although an era has its peculiarities they are ephemeral, superficial. Like the heaving of the sea's waves, they do not affect the depths below. You just need the courage and strength to pass below the froth at the surface to enter the realm of stability and permanence underneath only this is the final glory of the courageous thinker."

we are reminded of Liang's central belief in the "timelessness" of true literature. When Hsu goes on to quote Arnold as his authority for demanding a rigorous approach to literature, the identification seems complete¹².

¹³Chuang-tsan Chou-pao (Creation Weekly), No. 5, December 1922.

¹⁴see Lang-man te Yü Ku-tien te (Romantic and Classic), p. 6,
"Hsien-tai Chung-kuo Wen-hsueh Chih Lang-man Te Chü-shih" (The
Romantic Trend in Modern Chinese Literature)

Similarly the opening remarks in Wen I-to's critique of Kuo Mo-jo's poetry collection Nü Shen (Goddesses) voice sentiments expressed by Liang Shih-chiu five years later near the beginning of the first article in his first published collection of essays. In 1922 Wen complained that:

"These days most new poets are possessed of a sort of mania for Europeanisation. Their goal in the creation of China's new poetry is to fashion a totally western body of poetry"¹³.

In 1927 things were clearly no better, because Liang saw fit to repeat the charge, caricaturing the attitude of his contemporaries as follows:

"Any imitation of our own classical tradition is imitative and obsolete; any imitation of foreign writing is innovative and creative"¹⁴.

Admittedly Wen's purpose was to urge his readers to learn more about the Chinese tradition, whereas Liang's was to urge his to be more selective in drawing from the West (just as Hsu and Liang both subscribed to continuity as the basis, in one case, of glory, in the other, of restraint). Nonetheless their judgement of the contemporary situation was identical.

Everyday language, clarification rather than total rejection of the past, belief in the need for an elevation of standards in the present — these were the literary values shared by the Crescent group which complemented their strictly political liberalism. Such is the very general position of the group, and such are the beliefs with which it is commonly

¹⁵ see T'an Hsu Chih-mo, p. 28. Hu Shih also denied that the Crescent writers formed an organised lobby with his famous remark that "lions and tigers move alone" (see Chang Chun-ku's Hsu Chih-mo Chuan (Biography of Hsu Chih-mo), p. 363.)

¹⁶ see Kuan-yü Lu Hsun, p. 147.

¹⁷ Hsin Ching-nien (New Youth) 5/4, pp. 308-21.

identified in the intellectual history of the period.

If one looks at the writings of individual members more closely however one notices, even on several purely literary questions, differences of opinion which can be shown to be more than differences in detail. We noted earlier that Liang himself has pointed out that the group had "no tight organisation"¹⁵. In "I Hsin Yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly) he states more specifically that "each of us had his own ideas, field of research, life style, and professional training"¹⁶. The inaccurate impression received elsewhere of a homogeneous group has perhaps therefore been created by literary historians rather than by their subjects.

Thus in the area of literature Hu Shih advanced two views which conflict with those held by Liang. Firstly he believed that literature had always been and must remain in a constant state of evolution. This view is best articulated in his essay "Wen-hsueh Chin-hua Kuan-nien" (The Concept of Literary Evolution). At the beginning of the piece he said:

"Literature is a record of the human condition.

Human life changes with the times. Therefore literature also changes with the times. Therefore an age has a literature peculiar to that age"¹⁷.

Admittedly this was written ten years before the Crescent period, but an attachment to the evolutionary theory of man and his accomplishments remained an evident feature of Hu Shih's writing throughout the decade.

¹⁸ see P'ien-chien Chi, pp. 167-172. The article was originally published in the literary supplement to the Tientsin I-Shih Pao in 1933-4.

¹⁹ see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 170.

²⁰ Written in March 1922

²¹ see Hu Shih Wen Hsuan (Selected Writings of Hu Shih), pp. 228-9

Liang, by contrast, as we have already seen, was equally attached to the opposite idea that one of the essential qualities of great literature was its "timelessness". Indeed he devoted an essay to the subject. The title was "Wen-hsueh te Yung Chiu Hsing" (The Permanence of Literature)¹⁸. In answer to the question whether art had made progress over the course of the centuries he stated quite uncompromisingly:

"Any piece which describes men's feelings is a good piece, providing the description is deep enough to be moving. Whether it is ancient or modern is neither here nor there"¹⁹.

Secondly Hu Shih was considerably more sanguine about the quality of contemporary Chinese literature than Liang. We have already seen what Liang had to say on the subject in his long article "Hsien-tai Wen-hsueh Lun". (On Modern Literature). Hu Shih, on the other hand, had expressed considerable approval as early as 1922 in his essay "Wen-hsueh Ke-ming Yun-tung" (The Movement for a Literary Revolution)²⁰. His comments on results achieved in the specific area of poetry contrast strikingly with Liang's much gloomier view:

"Vernacular poetry can be said to be on the road to success in all three categories of rhyme, of blank verse, and of the new 'short poem', there are in each case examples which are characterised by considerable maturity"²¹.

In the other non-ideological area explored by Liang, the question

²²"Wo-men Tu²si-yü Hsi-yang Chin-tai Wen-ming te Tai-tu" (Our Attitude towards Modern Western Civilisation). Originally written in June 1926, it is contained in Hu Shih Wen-hsuan.

²³see T'an Wen I-to, p. 9.

²⁴see Hu Shih Wen Hsuan (Selected Writings of Hu Shih), p. 183.

²⁵see Chapter 1.

of the place of science in the new world culture, Hu clearly would not have agreed with Liang's assessment of scientific discipline as no more than an adjunct in the search for truth. In an essay written only a year and a half before the Crescent period²², Hu unequivocally equated science with truth. Moreover he expressed a belief that the scientific method represented the only access to truth. He did not discuss the relationship between science and literature, but had he done so it seems reasonable to assume that his conclusions would have differed considerably from Liang's.

In T'an Wen I-to (Talking of Wen I-to) Liang tells us that before he went to America he shared with Wen a dislike for the poetry contained in Hu Shih's collection Ch'ang Shih Chi (Experiments)²³. This is to be expected, because in the preface to that collection Hu acknowledged a connection with Yu P'ing-po and K'ang Pai-ch'ing²⁴, the subjects of severe criticism in Liang's and Wen's joint venture, Tung-yeh Tsao-erh P'ing-lun (A Critique of Winter Night and Grasses)²⁵. It is also largely irrelevant to this discussion because, as we shall see in a moment, probably by the time he returned from America three years later, and certainly by the time he was writing for the Crescent Monthly, Liang's view of poetry had changed.

The development opened up a divergence (which, because within the time-frame under review, is relevant) between Liang and Hsu Chih-mo. For Hsu's vision of the poetic ideal did not change. In April 1926, when he launched a poetry supplement to the Peking Chen Pao (Morning

²⁶Chen Pao Fu K'an Shih K'an I, 1st April 1926.

²⁷see Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te, pp. 41-44 ("Shih Yu Tu-hua") (Poetry and Painting)

²⁸see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 155.

News) he said:

"We believe that poetry is an instrument for the expression of human creative power, on the same level and of the same nature as fine art and music we believe that the only expression of the spirit of perfection is a perfectly beautiful form"²⁶

In 1922 Liang, judging from what he said in "Ts'ao-erh P'ing-lun", would have agreed with this definition and with this requirement. Five years later however he published in the Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te collection an article deploring the popular association between poetry and painting. The two art forms, he emphasised, addressed quite different subjects -- in the case of poetry men's actions, physical or mental; in the case of painting, nature. The confusion he attributed to the extravagance of the romantic imagination, a tendency that Hsu perhaps showed no inclination to suppress²⁷.

In an essay entitled "Shih te Chiang-lai" (The Future of Poetry), written whilst in Tsingtao, Liang also rejected the "romantic" view of the musical quality of poetry and of the importance of form. The key passage in this article was the following statement:

"Poetry and music are growing further and further apart. For what is important in poetry is the content"²⁸.

The criterion Liang applied to the content, needless to say, was the extent to which it provided a description of human nature, a demand

²⁹ see Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te, pp. 25-41 and Chapter Four.

³⁰ Ch'en Pao Fu-K'an Chü K'an 1, 17th June 1926.

³¹ Ch'en Pao Fu-K'an Chü K'an 15, 3rd September 1926.

conspicuously absent from Hsu Chih-mo's analysis.

On the subject of drama, Liang's outspoken denial of the comprehensive nature of dramatic art, elaborated in his essay "Hsi-chü I-shu Pien-cheng" (Dramatic Art Clarified)²⁹, may actually have been drawn by contrary assertions by Hsu Chih-mo. For when the Peking Chen Pao poetry supplement was discontinued in June 1926, Hsu immediately launched a drama supplement to the paper. In the first issue of the new supplement he gave his opinion of the nature of drama:

"A play is a collective entity. Different kinds of effort by a number of people have to be fused before any effective realisation can be achieved. Unlike a poem or a painting it cannot be created by the independent effort of one man"³⁰.

That Hsu's view and Liang's view are irreconcilable is immediately obvious. However when the drama supplement in turn stopped publication in September 1926, Hsu, in the closing issue, made an observation that Liang must have found positively provocative:-

"If anybody thinks that simply reading the text of a play represents exploration of drama, then he is mistaken. To be honest, he is (in fact) guilty of idleness"³¹.

Later in the same article Hsu acknowledged the existence of a difference of opinion amongst the contributors to the supplement. He attributed the divergence to emphasis by some on the intellect and to

³² see T'an Hsu Chih-mo (Talking of Hsu Chih-mo), p. 36.

³³ see ibid., p. 36.

emphasis by others on the emotions. He himself called for a balance. But the tone of the article betrays his own sympathy, and thus suggests a broader almost temperamental irreconcilability between himself and Liang Shih-chiu.

This fundamental difference of approach to literature is largely confirmed in Liang's book, T'an Hsu Chih-mo (Talking of Hsu Chih-mo). In Chapter Six of this book Liang discusses Hsu's motivation. He sees it as a utopian faith or ideal, fashioned out of a romantic infatuation with human love, freedom and beauty. He rejects this approach as "inappropriate". For, he says, in his opinion:

"A man must have an ideal to serve as a goal, but he must subject this ideal to scrutiny to see whether in the real world in which we live it is attainable"³².

Liang then looks at an example of the product of a higher ideal, a passage by Hsu calling for man to allow his imagination to soar. Liang, in explaining his objection to such indulgence, shows how he and Hsu

when I understood at opposite poles of opinion: originally published in Chung-kuo Sze-pao (National Weekly), 1937, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 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"Life is a down-to-earth business. It must be

approached in a down-to-earth way if you really think that poetry has wings which enable the poet to soar then the result is that the higher you soar the more heavily you will fall like Hsu Chih-mo. Such is the fate of all romantic poets"³³.

The most striking difference in outlook between Liang Shih-chiu

³⁴ see Wen I-to Hsuan Chi (Selected Works of Wen I-to), p. 107.
Originally published in Chuang-tsao Chou-pao (Creation Weekly), No. 5,
in March 1922.

and Wen I-to would seem to be the different attitudes of the two men towards their common cultural heritage. We have already seen that Liang positively deplored certain aspects of the Chinese tradition and largely ignored the literature which sprang from it. Wen I-to's view was different. In his critique of Kuo Mo-jo's Nü Shen collection his central concern was the need for awareness of the relevance of the Chinese tradition. Moreover he emphasised that lack of this awareness, which he had detailed in the case of Nü Shen, was evident in all contemporary poetry:

"The criticisms that I have made of Nü Shen apply to all our contemporary poetry..... To correct these defects I believe we must firstly resume our faith in the old literature, because we can only, and should only, build anew on the foundations of the old. Secondly we must understand our eastern culture. Eastern culture is a perfectly beautiful, highly refined, and also mankind's most profound culture"³⁴.

Earlier in this piece Wen specifically said that the difference between himself and Kuo Mo-jo was that whereas he loved both his country (as he saw it, an emotional commitment) and his country's culture (an intellectual commitment), Kuo only loved his country. By Wen I-to's standards, Liang, preoccupation with the intellect notwithstanding, must have stood closer to Kuo Mo-jo than to himself.

Admittedly "Nü Shen te Ti-fang Se-Ts'ai" (The Local Colour of

³⁵ see T'an Wen I-to, p. 29.

³⁶ see *ibid.*, p. 33.

.....
³⁷ see *ibid.*, p. 85.

Goddesses) was written early in 1922 before Wen went to America. In T'an Wen I-to (Talking of Wen I-to) Liang tells us that during the year they spent together at Colorado (Wen's second year in America) Wen undoubtedly benefited from the opportunity to gain a good understanding of English poetry³⁵, and that moreover this understanding was then profitably reflected in his own poetry³⁶. But from what Liang goes on to tell us about his (Wen's) third year in America, which he spent in New York, and from what he tells us of the circumstances of Wen's departure, it would seem that to Wen I-to the West could never have become as permanent a source of inspiration as it became to Liang. This is implicitly confirmed by Liang later again in T'an Wen I-to³⁷ when he observes that Wen's purpose in devoting his life from 1929 onwards to research was to improve his understanding of Chinese classical poetry, something Liang himself displayed no inclination to undertake. As an improved understanding of the Chinese tradition was one of the recommendations Wen had made in 1922, this in turn shows how his ideas, unlike Liang's, underwent no fundamental change as a result of his American experience.

However perhaps more important than any of these stated differences is an unstated difference which applies to all three of these colleagues of Liang's. That is that none of them demonstrated the intense interest in the classical literary doctrine of the West which preoccupied Liang. Each drew inspiration from the writings of certain individual Western literary figures. None expounded a whole body of western literary theory. More significant, none would have called

³⁸ see Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), pp. 157-9 ("Chung-yin Hsi-ying Hsien-hua Hsu") (Preface to a New Impression of Chen Hsi-ying's Hsien-hua Collection)

himself a "classical" writer. Wen I-to's interest in the Chinese classical tradition was prompted by a desire to establish a basis from which to develop a new poetic form rather than to lay the foundations for any refurbishing of the old form. Hu and Hsu were both professed innovators.

Thus in the area of politics (in the strict sense of the word) Liang's views broadly appear at first sight to have coincided with those of Hu Shih and Lo Lung-chi, the two most important political commentators in the Crescent group. In the area of literature by contrast, there were substantive differences of opinion between Liang and the three most influential literary figures in the group, namely Hu Shih, Hsu Chih-mo and Wen I-to.

However even from what little we have seen of the views of these last three men, it will be obvious that they too differed from each other in certain respects. Moreover, and more importantly, in no case does any of the differences we have noted so far between Liang and the rest wholly disqualify the former from bearing the label "liberal".

Furthermore it can be shown that he must have been accepted as one of their own by writers whose liberal commitment is not in dispute. For in 1963 Liang was asked by the widow of Chen Yuan, one-time editor of the undeniably liberal Peking magazine Hsien-tai P'ing-lun (Contemporary Review), to write a preface to a reissue of a collection of her late husband's essays³⁸. It seems unlikely that Liang would have been approached had the two men shared nothing more than a disapproval of

³⁹ see P'ien Chien Chi (Prejudices), p. 1. The article originally appeared in HY 1/4.

⁴⁰ ibid., p. 5.

Lu Hsun.

Nonetheless it remains that those of Liang Shih-chiu's essays which took up the demand of the left-wing writers that literature must be regarded in a political context show that in this area, which I have for convenience called cultural ideology, the label "liberal" will not do. Moreover a closer reading of these articles then prompts us to query the provisional confirmation of Liang's political liberalism that we made earlier. For on the first page of his first essay on the subject, "Wen-hsueh Yu Ko-ming" (Literature and Revolution), Liang stated that:

"The whole of civilisation is the creation of the talent of a minority"³⁹.

Having then observed that members of this talented minority should be given "leading or controlling" positions, he then declared that "the object of revolution is (simply) to restore normality", implicitly the normality of rule by the endowed minority.

As if to clarify his view of normality, Liang then (on page 5 of the same article) expressed his opinion of the rest of the community:

"Recently ideas of democracy have gained currency.

Therefore it is very easy to attach too much weight to the position of the masses"⁴⁰.

The consequence of this development, he believed, was that it suppressed "all the considerations for civilisation that we should have".

As we noted in Chapter Six, in the second of the two principal

⁴¹ see P'ien Chien Chi, p. 14. The article originally appeared in HY 2/6-7.

⁴² ibid., p. 18.

essays on the subject, "Wen-hsueh Shih Yu Chie^h-chi Hsing te Ma?" (Has Literature a Class Quality?), he voiced the same opinions more strongly. Firstly (on the second page of the essay) he emphasised his view of civilisation as a static phenomenon by linking its survival to the principal material manifestation of social continuity, private property:

"We fully admit the defects of the system of private property, but if we wish to uphold civilisation, we must uphold private property"⁴¹.

Then he amplified his already unmistakably elitist view of the stratified nature of society by declaring roundly that:

"Good literature will always be something for the exclusive advantage of a minority. The (corresponding) majority will always be stupid, will always have no affinity with literature"⁴².

Admittedly a complementary theme in both these essays is that the talent that distinguishes Liang's vital minority is not the prerogative of one social or economic class. To this extent his beliefs were meritocratic rather than feudal.

Nonetheless these are clearly the feelings of a writer who felt as threatened by progressive forces as by the regressive power uppermost, though not exclusively, in his mind when he wrote "Lun Ssu-hsiang Tung-i" (On Unity of Thought). Moreover one is then immediately struck by the impression that here is a man whose fundamental instinct was to seek the preservation of established values. In his essays on literature as an

⁴³ see Kuan-yü Lu Hsun, p. 147.

entity in its own right Liang openly professed an inclination towards literary classicism not shared by his Crescent colleagues. A reading of these two articles on his view of the relationship between literature and politics thus suggests an unspoken but equally positive commitment to a wider cultural conservatism of which his well-known classicism is only a part. This conservatism is clearly inconsistent with the profession noted at the beginning of this chapter of "a greater or lesser tendency towards liberalism".

We will return in the next chapter to the precise strength and significance of the liberal strand in Liang's ideological make-up, in an attempt to present a perspective. Here it seems more appropriate, having now firmly established the conservatism noted in Chapter Six as a complementary strand, to trace that second line laterally.

We know before we start that tracing action of this kind is not going to lead even indirectly to any other members of the Crescent group. They wrote about political questions and they wrote about literary questions, but they did not tackle the question of the socio-political function of literature. In confirmation of this Liang himself in "I Hsin-yueh" (Memories of the Crescent Monthly) says quite straightforwardly:

"I fought a solitary war. Not one of my Crescent friends came out in support of me."⁴³

Because, unlike the others, he had made his mark both in

- 44 see Jerome Grieder Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, p. 83. In an important essay entitled "Wo-men Tsou Na-i Tiao Lu" (Which Road shall we Follow?), originally published in HY 2/10, Hu specifically stated that he saw revolution as "forced evolution".
- 45 see Hu Shih Wen Hsuan, pp. 105-120 ("Wo-men Tu-fei-yü Hsi-yang Chin-tai Wen-ming te Tai-tu") (Our Attitude towards Modern Western Civilisation)
- 46 see A. Tagore Literary Debates in Modern China, p. 129 quoting Hu's essay "A Kou Wen-i Lun" (On the Literature of Dogs) which originally appeared in Wen-hua Ping-lun (Cultural Critique) 1/1 in December 1931.
- 47 see Li Ho-lin Chin Erh Shih Nien Chung-kuo Wen-i Ssu-chiao Lun (On Literary Thought in China in the Last Twenty Years), p. 329, quoting Su's essay "Lun Wen-hsueh Shang te Kan-she Chu-i" (On Interventionism in Literature) which originally appeared in Hsien-tai (Les Contemporains) 2/1 in November 1932.

in literature and in politics, the most likely personality to have done so would have been Hu Shih. But, as we said briefly in Chapter Six, had he chosen to enter these lists one may deduce that his support for Liang would have been reserved. To elaborate slightly the point already made, there are clear indications that in this debate, which revolved around the nature of revolution and the cultural entitlement of the masses, Hu would have developed his case from a different political base-line. Whereas Liang Shih-chiu viewed revolution as "a return to normality", to Hu, to quote Grieder, "the idea of revolution was acceptable only if it was viewed as a stage in the development of evolutionary change"⁴⁴; whereas during the Crescent period Liang, as we saw earlier in this chapter, was (like Babbitt) sceptical towards the merits of Western democracy, Hu in an article published in June 1926 had applauded the theory and practice of socialism⁴⁵.

It is also quite easy to demonstrate a considerable difference between Liang Shih-chiu's position and those of two other significant non-partisan figures who took issue with the revolutionary intellectuals after the formation of the League of Left Wing Writers. Admittedly the difference is not total. Thus when Hu Chiu-yuan warned that "art has only one aim, the presentation of life if anyone let art sink down to the level of a political gramophone, then he betrays art"⁴⁶; and when Su Wen asserted that "when literature becomes the gramophone of a certain political force, it can never fulfill its responsibility towards human life"⁴⁷; Liang must no doubt have wholeheartedly agreed.

⁴⁸ see Li Ho-lin Chin Erh Shih Nien Chung-kuo Wen-i Ssu-ch'ao Lun (On Literary Thought in China in the Last Twenty Years), p. 306, quoting Hu's essay "Shih Shei Wei Hu Tso Chang?" (Who is Urging the Tiger On?)

⁴⁹ see ibid., p. 312, quoting Su's essay "Kuan-yü Wen-hsin Yü Hu Chiu-yuan te Wen-i Lun-pien" (Regarding the Literary Debate between the Literary News and Hu Chiu-yuan) which originally appeared in Hsien-tai 1/3 in July 1932.

⁵⁰ see Bonnie S. McDougall Western Literary Theories in Modern China, p. 41.

⁵¹ see Wen Hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities), p. 60, ("Kuan-yü Pai-pi-te Hsien-sheng Chi Chi Ssu-hsiang") (On Mr. Babbitt and his Thought). The article was originally published in the Hong Kong magazine Jen-Sheng (Life) in January 1957.

However Hu's claim in another essay that "the retention of a comparatively free attitude towards literature is in no way connected with a denial of its class attitude"⁴⁸ immediately debars a more substantial association because of what Liang had written in "Wen-hsueh Yu Chie^h-chi Hsing te Ma?" (Has Literature a Class Quality?). Similarly Su Wen's championing of the "third force" between "the free men of the intellectual class " and "those who are not free, who are committed"⁴⁹ similarly removes the temptation to force an association there because Liang, in all his essays, precisely represented the former.

A more profitable line of enquiry is to look at the activity of the other two well-known Chinese students of Irving Babbitt, Mei Kuang-ti and Wu Mi. We already know that there was a personal affiliation between Liang and Mei, because, as we saw in Chapter One, Mei recommended Liang for his first academic appointment. The collection of essays (including some of Mei's) propounding Babbitt's humanist doctrine that Liang edited for reissue by the Crescent publishing house originally appeared in the Nanking South East University's "wen-yen" style magazine Hsueh Heng (Critical Review). That this magazine was edited by Wu Mi⁵⁰ suggests an indirect connection between him and Liang. When Liang tells us in his own essay on Babbitt that it was with the help of Wu Mi that he was able to publish the Crescent edition⁵¹ the connection becomes direct.

However a description of what Mei, Wu and their associates in what became known as the Hsueh Heng group stood for immediately suggests that

⁵² see Bonnie S. McDougall Western Literary Theories in Modern China,
p. 41

⁵³ Kuan-yü Lu Hsun (On Lu Hsun), p. 147 ("I Hsin-yueh") (Memories of the
Crescent Monthly)

affiliation was also philosophical:

"They rejected both romantic and realist concepts of literature, and opposed the mechanistic evolutionism of modern literary critics in China and the West."⁵²

Liang's own definition of his position during the Crescent period shows that he precisely matched the first half of this specification:

"I was not sympathetic towards the trend of excessive romanticism. At the same time I was not receptive to the clamour then loudest in Shanghai for a proletarian literary movement. I considered my position was in the middle, between right and left."⁵³

Earlier in this chapter we saw how the question of evolutionism vis-a-vis "eternalism" marked an area of disagreement between Hu Shih and Liang Shih-chiu. In the case of Hu Shih and the men who later formed the Hsueh Heng group the same disagreement had already come to the surface with the Pai Hua versus Wen Yen controversy. An outline of the earlier stages of the resulting exchange is recorded by Hu Shih in the preface to his poetry collection, Chang-shih (Experiments), published in 1920. One of the more important articles which came out of that exchange was Mei's associate Hu Hsien-su's "Chung-kuo Wen Hsueh Kai-liang Lun" (On the Improvement of Chinese Literature), published just before the events of May 1919 in the Nan-ching Kao-teng Shih-fan Yueh-kan (Nanking Higher Normal College Monthly). In it Hu Hsien-su said:

⁵⁴ see Li Ho-lin Chin Erh-shih Nien Chung-kuo Wen-i Ssu-chao Lun
(Literary Thought in China in the Last Twenty Years) p. 54.

⁵⁵ Hsueh-heng Tsa-chih 1/1, published in January 1921.

"If you wish to create a new literature, you must (first) distil the old, and thereby extract wholesale its essence and its quality."⁵⁴

Though perhaps preoccupied with a different tradition, Liang Shih-chiu in emphasising his belief in a common and unchanging essence in all genuine literature showed an unmistakable affinity with this point of view.

Turning to the positive aspect of the Hsueh Heng platform the impression received of identity with Liang Shih-chiu's stated aims is as immediate. Moreover in this case the source is not an interpretation of Hsueh Heng policy, but an editorial policy statement contained in the preface to its first issue. Of the three objectives of the magazine, the second was said to be as follows (the first was "to study, elucidate, and systematise Chinese learning", the third to provide "a literary magazine of high standard"):

"To introduce and to assimilate what is best and most important in the literature, philosophy, art, etc. of the West, presenting Western civilisation in its entirety and in its most salutary aspects"⁵⁵.

Thus when Liang, as we saw in Chapter Four, pressed upon the readers of "Hsien-tai Wen-hsueh Lun" (On Modern Literature) the idea that contemporary Chinese literary men should adopt "healthy" Western literary theory, he was directly following a lead that had been set by Mei Kuang-ti, Wu Mi and their friends ten years earlier.

56 see Li Ho-lin Chin Erh-shih Nien Chung-kuo Wen-i Ssu-ch'ao Lun
(Literary Thought in the Last Twenty Years in China), p. 52.

57 see Lang-man te Yü Ku-tien te (Romantic and Classic), p. 62.

So much for the substantial similarity between the views of Liang Shih-chiu and those of Mei Kuang-ti, Wu Mi, Hu Hsien-su, and the rest of the Hsueh Heng group. At the level of detail there were also a number of shared opinions.

Most noticeably, both the Hsueh Heng group and Liang Shih-chiu were avowedly committed to the mimetic theory of literature. In his essay "Lun Hsin Wen-hua Yun-tung" (On the New Literary Movement) Wu Mi said:

"The basic principle of literature is the same for China and the West..... A literary work evolves as a result of imitation. Of the great writers past and present all have been nurtured on imitation."⁵⁶

As we saw in Chapter Four Liang adhered to a similar view. In "Ya-li-shih-to-te Te Shih-hsueh" (Aristotle's Ars Poetica) he said the same thing rather more concisely:

"The theory of imitation is the core of classicism."⁵⁷

Imitation (of life rather than of other writers) as an article of faith was to be expected of anybody who displayed any enthusiasm for Babbitt's teaching, because advocacy of the classical view of literature was the central feature of that teaching. Naturally therefore, too, it is also possible to point to a shared attachment to such perceived by-products of classicism as excellence and literary truth.

What is perhaps more significant is that in certain related areas beyond those covered directly by Babbitt in his theoretical writings, Liang and the Hsueh Heng group also held opinions in common.

⁵⁸ see Hsueh Heng Tsa-chih 1/2, February 1922, P. 8. Wu quoted Arnold's recommendation in Essays in Criticism that we should "know the best that has been thought and said in the world".

⁵⁹ see Chung-kuo Hsin Wen Hsueh Ta-hsi (Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature), Vol. 2, p. 145. The article, entitled "Ping-ti-chang Hsin Wen-hua Che" (A Criticism of Those who Advocate a New Culture), was originally contributed to Hsueh Heng Tsa Chih, 1/1.

⁶⁰ see Tung-fang Tsa Chih, December 1927, p. 84. Liang's article was entitled "Chin-nien Lai Chung-kuo Chih Wen-i Pi Ping" (Literary Criticism in Recent Years in China).

A bad example (bad because perhaps a reflection, albeit indirect, of Babbitt) is their common faith in the wisdom of Matthew Arnold. Just as Liang quoted Arnold as an authority in many of his essays, so one finds Wu Mi, in "Wen-hsueh Yen-chiu Fa" (Methods of Literary Research), referring to the same authority in the same way⁵⁸.

A better example perhaps is their attitude towards drawing from the West. Both the Hsueh Heng group and Liang were critical of the preoccupation of China's progressives with what was current in the West rather than what was best. Mei Kuang-ti, in the first and the most well-known of the articles that he contributed to Hsueh Heng put it this way:

"Imitation they reject as slavish following of the ancients. In fact..... what they imitate may have changed, but their enslavement has not. Moreover what they acquire in imitating the West is only the dross."⁵⁹

In the only article which he contributed to the Tung-fang Tsa-chih (Eastern Magazine) in December 1927 Liang's articulation of the same feeling was remarkably similar. He said:

"Everybody in the new literature movement proclaims a desire to do away with the traditional spirit and the habit of imitation. In fact all they are doing is not imitating the old writers, but imitating Western writers."⁶⁰

⁶¹ see Chung-kuo Hsin Wen-hsueh Ta-hsi, p. 148.

⁶² see Wen-hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities), p. 138.

Their disapproval of imitation, of course, refers to uncritical adoption of fashionable Western thought, forms and style rather than to any second thoughts about the centrality of "imitation of life" in literature. We have already seen how both parties shared a belief in the value of introducing the "best of the West" to their contemporaries. They also considered that the only profitable approach to Western culture for China was through serious study of this, as they saw it, true tradition. Towards the end of the essay just quoted Mei Kuang-ti spelt out this belief as follows:

"So to reform an old-established culture by absorbing that of others we must first carry out thorough research and subject it to perceptive assessment."⁶¹

Liang, as we saw in Chapter Four, devoted one of the articles in his first collection to the explanation and recommendation of Aristotle's doctrine. In his long essay on contemporary Chinese literature he strongly advocated the adoption of "healthy" Western literary theory. He therefore shared with Mei a belief in the requirements for proper understanding and for selectivity. In a much later essay, specifically entitled "Hsin-shang Yü Liao-chieh" (Appreciation and Understanding), he demonstrated positively just how close his position was when he said:

"If we are to absorb Western art, we must first absorb Western traditional art"⁶²

Admittedly these attitudes were Arnoldian and therefore in a sense extensions of the more direct enthusiasm noted earlier. But that there

⁶³ see George Watson The Literary Critics, p. 152.

⁶⁴ see Chung-kuo Hsin Wen-hsueh Ta-hsi, p. 146.

should be such a precise identity of views after transposition from a nineteenth century English to a twentieth century Chinese context is still remarkable.

Finally, it is possible to show that Mei Kuang-ti and Liang Shih-chiu not only cast themselves in the same role, but also saw themselves as similarly indispensable in that role. Here too both sides neatly match a description of the Arnoldian critic as one who "invites the reader to enter a charmed circle of connoisseurship to separate himself from a brute mass of Barbarians, Philistines and Populace".⁶³ This perhaps establishes the firmest link of all, a sort of unity through endowment. In both cases the feeling is expressed not so much by emphasising their own fitness to interpret the voice of the West as by asserting or implying the inability of their opponents to do so. The inference however is clear: they, the beneficiaries of true Western educational excellence, were able to present an insight, a perspective that less fortunate Chinese intellectuals were denied. Again, the articulation of the negative aspect of this conviction is very similar in both cases. In Mei's writings the feeling surfaced very early. In "Ping Ti-chang Hsin Wen-hua Che" (A Criticism of Those Who Advocate a New Culture), referring to his opponents, he asked somewhat querulously:

"How many of them are really able to understand Dewey and Russell, socialism, and decadent literature?
How many know the strengths and weaknesses
(of the arguments involved)?"⁶⁴

In the case of Liang Shih-chiu, the purpose of his early essays was clearly to correct what he saw as a series of misreadings of Western

65 see Wen-hsueh Yin-yuan (Literary Affinities) ("Kuan-yü Pai-pi-te Hsien-sheng Chi Ssu-hsiang") (On Mr. Babbitt and his Thought), p. 60.
Chi

thought. These writings are marked by a slightly superior tone which suggests a feeling that this misunderstanding was due to the inadequate educational experience of others. That this feeling is spelt out explicitly in a later essay tends to confirm the earlier suggestion. For in his essay on Babbitt, Liang voices the same sceptical attitudes towards the ability of his opponents as Mei had expressed so many years earlier:

"To be ^{frank} honest, people like Lu Hsun had simply never read the works of Babbitt. Moreover, I dare say, they would have been quite unable to understand them".⁶⁵

A common antipathy towards both romantic and realist literature and towards evolutionism, and a common respect for the classical tradition of the West and its basis, the Aristot^elian doctrine — these ~~romantic~~ elements, the essential ingredients of the literary classicism which he acclaimed, link Liang (as a literary theorist) to the Hsueh Heng group more closely than he can be linked to any other individual or group.

As regards the wider cultural conservatism we are also trying to trace it is less easy to establish an immediate association because the Hsueh Heng group did not tackle the questions of the relationships between literature and revolution and literature and class that Liang was also trying to answer. Here the best comparison we can make between Liang and these earlier students of Babbitt is an indirect comparison.

Thus in this wider area to Mei Kuang-ti, Wu Mi and their friends

⁶⁶The magazine continued to appear until 1933. See McDougall in Western Literary Theories in Modern China, op. cit., p. 45.

the ultimate duty of Chinese intellectuals, and the whole purpose of drawing selectively from the West, was seen to be the preservation, in a regenerated form, of the Chinese cultural tradition.

Liang, as we saw in Chapter Four, was not concerned specifically for the survival of the Chinese cultural tradition. Indeed those few detailed aspects of it that he mentioned he clearly deplored. However his central concern in his "ideological" articles was the survival of a larger entity which he labelled "civilisation".

Therefore just as the Hsueh Heng contributors felt that Chinese cultural values must be preserved from destruction by indiscriminate "modernisers", so Liang Shih-chiu felt that universal (needless to say unchanging) cultural values must be saved from annihilation by unthinking demagogues. In this sense there is a parallel (and a significant parallel in view of the more precise identity of views on purely literary questions) between Liang's broader conservatism and that of the Hsueh Heng group. By contrast, as we saw earlier, the writings of his colleagues in the Crescent venture provide none.

It must, of course, be admitted that publication of the Hsueh-Heng Tsa-Chih continued throughout the heyday of the Crescent Monthly⁶⁶ and yet apart from the one case already mentioned there is no example of direct mutual support. Furthermore there is a major and immediately obvious difference between Liang and the members of the Hsueh Heng coterie. Liang both used and (in his enthusiasm for "plain writing") advocated vernacular writing. Mei Kuang-ti and his friends used and

67 Letter dated 27th September 1973.

68 *ibid.*

69 *ibid.*

vociferously defended the use of the Wen-yen style. In a letter Liang implies that this was simply the difference between being a student before 1919 and being a student afterwards.⁶⁷ This is not satisfactory firstly because the leaders of the Pai-hua movement had completed their education before 1919, secondly because the controversy represented a major and not a minor issue. Indeed one is tempted to wonder whether the reason why Liang was not asked to return to the South Eastern University in 1927 was not because of his position on the question of written language.

Nonetheless in the same letter Liang serves a useful reminder that this question did not determine the whole range of an individual's cultural attitudes:

"I sided with the Pai-hua movement, but it does not mean that I endorsed all the other trends of thought that went with it".⁶⁸

He goes on to confirm the substantial association we have established in the areas of literary classicism and cultural conservatism between himself and Mei Kuang-ti (as representative of the Hsueh Heng group):

"The conservative and classical attitudes which Mei derived from the Chinese tradition as well as from the teachings of Babbitt I thought, and still think now, were essentially sound".⁶⁹

It is hardly imaginable that any of the other contributors to the Crescent Monthly would have done so.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER NINE

¹Notably those of mathematics and sport -- see Chiu-shih Tsa-i (Reminiscences from the Autumn Chamber), p. 28 and *ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

²A facet perhaps best illustrated by his reaction, despite enthusiasm for all things literary, to the life-style of the members of the Creation Society when he first met them in Shanghai in 1921 -- see Chiu-shih Tsa-i, p. 41 and Tan Hsu Chih-mo, p. 26.

³An early manifestation of this conquest was his complete success in making good his lack of competence in mathematics whilst at Colorado -- see Tan Wen I-to, p. 29. In later life he regretted that he had not taken full advantage of all the courses and all the activities offered at Tsinghua -- see "Ching-hua Pa Nien" (Eight Years at Tsinghua) in Chiu-shih Tsa-i.

CHAPTER NINE

Make-up and Motivation

Having examined Liang's personal background, the opinions expressed in his writings, the opposition he encountered, and some of his connections, it remains, before drawing a final conclusion, to identify and to try and fill the gaps in our portrait. Perhaps these gaps might be represented by the following three questions. What sort of person emerges from the pages of these very personal essays? How do the conflicting attitudes discerned in the last chapter balance out? What was the motive force driving that person at that time?

As we have seen, Liang's family background was that of a home free of the blind prejudice against innovation and against the West which remained such a force in Chinese society until 1919. This fundamental reasonableness was something he absorbed early in life and retained throughout. It was perhaps obscured only in the case of his view of contemporary Chinese literature, where his reaction against the extremism of both the art for art's sake school (in his eyes romantics) and the revolutionary writers led to an almost irrational distaste.

At Tsinghua Liang had clearly shown himself to be clever, although lazy and hence unsuccessful in certain areas¹, and conventional.² Both qualities may be said to have developed during his stay in America. His natural laziness was conquered³ as the transformation from clever

⁴see P'ien-chien Chi (Prejudices), p. 33. The essay was originally contributed to HY 1/2.

⁵see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 138, "Hsien-tai Wen-hsueh Lun" (On Modern Literature).

boy to scholarly young man progressed. At the same time his inclination towards the conventional developed, as he came to grips with the classical literature of the West, into an abiding admiration for tradition.

As a result of this pattern of development Liang arrived in Shanghai in 1927 unaffected by the peculiarly narrow outlook of the Chinese reactionary but nonetheless an intellectual, a disciplinarian and a committed traditionalist in the cosmopolitan sense.

His inclination towards intellectualism is perhaps best illustrated by a passage in one of the earliest articles he published in the Crescent Monthly, entitled "Wen-jen Yu Hang" (The Literary Man's Calling):

"The so-called fullness of the literary life is the (result of) cultivation of the power of the imagination, the cultivation of a sensitive and disciplined imagination with which to observe the diversity of human nature."⁴

The emphasis on self-discipline is repeated constantly almost as if something of the quality of early American puritanism had made its mark. Of research he had this to say:

"In my view, at least in literary research method is indeed important, but most important of all is still effort in literary research there are absolutely no short cuts."⁵

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 140. The thorough-going intellectual in him comes out well in this passage too when he goes on to say: "This kind of effort is hard to begin with, but the delight its result brings is an excellent compensation."

⁷ Well expressed in the conclusions he presented at the end of an essay entitled "Ku-chin Chih Cheng" (The Struggle Between Ancient and Modern) — see P'ien-chien Chi, pp. 185-193. From the general objections to the Chinese tradition noted earlier, he exempted certain pinnacles of literary achievement.

⁸ Exemplified in "Hsien-tai Wen Hsueh Lun" by his observation that "literature is not like a motor car. It is not necessarily the case that this year's model is better than last year's." — see P'ien-Chien Chi, p. 139 — and by his reluctance to take up Hsu Chih-mo's suggestion that they should acquaint themselves with the experience of flight — Tan Hsu Chih-mo, p. 2.

⁹ Best expressed in the article contributed to HY 1/8 entitled "Shen-Shih" (Gentlemen). He described an enumeration of gentlemanly qualities by Cardinal Newman as representing "the highest model of behaviour towards people and things".

¹⁰ This is reflected particularly in the tone of his pronouncements on contemporary Chinese literature.

¹¹ published in HY 2/12.

When discussing literary appreciation later in the same essay he expressed the same feeling even more strongly when he said:

"To read and not to seek complete understanding is both lazy and stupid."⁶

Liang's traditionalism was "universalist" rather than Chinese. It manifests itself in his writing in his attachment to the classical (by which he meant best) literature of both East and West⁷, his dislike of modishness⁸, and his admiration for established codes of conduct⁹. His own affirmation of his conservative leanings which we noted earlier makes it unnecessary to pursue this aspect of his character any further.

Whilst in Shanghai Liang showed himself to be at times almost contemptuous in debate but at the same time sensitive to criticism by others. These qualities should be clear from our examination of the "pen-war" in which he and Lu Hsun engaged.

Even outside that debate an impression is conveyed that Liang felt that his American education had endowed him with a superior cultural insight¹⁰. At the same time one is struck by the trouble Liang took to try to correct what he thought were false impressions of him and by the extreme quality of the language he saw fit to employ to emphasise his convictions. Thus an essay called "Tsao-yao te I-shu" (The Art of Rumour-mongering)¹¹ was devoted firstly to detailing three cases of misquotation by newspapers and magazines of what he had said, and then to denying in the same detail an accusation that he had been seen travelling to work daily by car. So any sense of superiority that Liang may have

¹² see Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te (Romantic and Classic), p. 120.

¹³ For his condemnation of "universal" sympathy, which he saw as one of the failings of romantic writers, see Lang-man te Yu Ku-tien te (Romantic and Classic), p. 13, "Hsien-tai Chung-kuo Wen-hsueh Chih Lang-man te Chü-shih" (The Romantic Trend in Modern Chinese Literature). As we saw in Chapter Eight unlimited sympathy for the masses, he said in "Wen-hsueh Yu Ko-ming" (Literature and Revolution), "overwhelmed all the consideration we should have for civilisation" — see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 6.

¹⁴ see Tan Wen I-to.

¹⁵ see Tan Hsu Chih-mo.

felt did not enable him to feel comfortably invulnerable to the small-arms fire of personal attack. More important, Liang's expression of this sensitivity shows an impatience with his detractors that does not quite conform to the "gentlemanly" behaviour he himself advocated elsewhere.

Similarly, in "Wen-hsueh te Chi-lü" (The Discipline of Literature) Liang's purpose, as we saw in Chapter Four, was to establish criteria for literature. But his case was based on acceptance of the need for the "supremacy of the intellect". To help gain that acceptance Liang chose to proclaim to his readers that "comparing the intellect and the emotions is like comparing health and sickness"¹². There is a certain aggressiveness, possibly masking a further lack of self-assurance, in places such as this, where Liang resorted to rhetoric on a scale not far below that used by his opponents.

This is not to say that the reader is left with an impression that Liang was totally arrogant or even intolerant, or that his condemnation of "universal" or "unlimited" sympathy¹³ reflected a lack of personal warmth. The close friendship he developed with Wen I-to¹⁴ whilst in America and the genuine admiration he felt for certain aspects of the personality and also of the poetry of Hsu Chih-mo¹⁵ immediately debar any such sweeping conclusion. Although of course both these men shared his background of Western university education, both subscribed to ideals very different from those which became dear to Liang. Yet cases of generosity extended to them by Liang in those early years prevent any suspicion that the warm opinions expressed later in his biographical

¹⁶ see "Suo-wei Te-tsai te Chi-chi Hsing" (The So-called Positive Quality of Subject Matter), op. cit.

¹⁷ see P'ien-chien Chi, p. 47. The article originally appeared in HY 3/4

sketches represent hindsight.

Nor does Liang show himself to have been entirely unaccommodating in areas outside that of personal relationships. We have already noted his acknowledgement of the strength of the appeal, especially to the young, of the ideology of the Communist Party, despite his own detestation of both totalitarianism and egalitarianism¹⁶. Even when writing on literature, an area of discussion in which, as we have seen, there are signs of both arrogance and intolerance, he was nonetheless able to bring himself to express admiration for the "seriousness" of the otherwise deplored revolutionary writers and theorists. In his essay "Wen-hsueh te Yen-chung Hsing" (The Seriousness of Literature) he went so far as to say:

"Whatever they write is written with a dedication of spirit..... The reason that proletarian literature is now able to attract a proportion of young people of feeling and authority is just this".¹⁷

What finally completes the picture of the conservative but cosmopolitan scholar then is a measure of egotism balanced by a measure of fairness, an admixture to be discovered, no doubt, in the make-up of even the most mature writer.

In the last chapter the consistency of Liang's ideological and cultural make-up was shown to be a blend of the conservative and the liberal. The conservative element in his ideology emerged quite clearly: Liang can be accused of having been "reactionary" on account

¹⁸ op. cit.

¹⁹ see HY 2/3, p. 2.

of his view of revolution as the restoration of normality; "elitist" on account of his conviction of the debt owed by society to the talented minority; and "oligarchic" on account of his disinclination to see the status of the corresponding majority enhanced. In the narrower area of literature his professed classical inclination was buttressed by his lack of enthusiasm for the evolutionary theory.

What was not so clear was the summation of the complementary liberal ingredients. In "Lun Ssu-hsiang Tung-i" (On Unity of Thought)¹⁸ Liang demanded the measure of political freedom necessary to allow full discussion of China's problems. His reference to "thinking people" and the general tenor of the piece together suggest that the kind of freedom he had in mind was more precisely freedom for the members of his talented minority to exercise their powers. This thinking of course is generally consistent with the more conservative views summarised above. Such a concept of freedom, it might be argued, represents liberalism at its most dilute. However, though perhaps slightly out of key with the mainstream of his thought, two observations in this same essay demonstrate at least that Liang paid lip service to and at best that he felt a degree of attachment to the true liberal spirit. Firstly he stated that:

"The reason that human civilisation has been able . . . gradually to progress is that numbers of independent-minded people have dared to doubt, have dared to experiment, and have been able publicly to investigate and debate".¹⁹

²⁰ see "Lun San-wen" (On Prose) (op. cit.) in HY 1/8

²¹ see "Shih te Chiang-lai" (The Future of Poetry) (op. cit.) in P'ien-chien Chi.

²² see "Hsien-tai Wen-hsueh Lun" (On Modern Literature) (op. cit.) in P'ien-chien Chi.

²³ Grieder Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance, p. 197.

²⁴ ibid., p. 196.

Secondly, towards the end of the piece, he concluded that men could only share ideas and work together effectively in the absence of compulsion.

His philosophy of literature was only progressive in detail, and in Chinese terms at that. That is to say the reformist causes he espoused, such as vernacular writing²⁰, the development of a new form of poetry²¹, the adoption of Western dramatic method²² and so on, Liang seems to have seen largely as necessary groundwork for the main task in hand, the absorption of the classical spirit of the West.

On balance therefore this kind of analysis confirms the fundamental conservatism of Liang Shih-chiu already suggested by our earlier examination of his associations and by the impression just noted of his personality. The progressive instinct in him seems to have been secondary, and moreover relegated either to the area of abstract theory or to that of practical detail.

This mixture is an interesting mirror image of the balance of feeling evident in the make-up of the acknowledged liberal thinkers of the day. Thus Hu Shih's biographer, Jerome Grieder, before concluding that "Hu Shih was firmly committed to a belief in democracy"²³ qualifies this view by stating that there was also "a marked strain of potentially anti-democratic elitism evident in his thinking"²⁴. To show that Hu was not alone in this respect, Grieder quotes Hu's colleague in the Nu-li Chou-pao (Endeavour) venture, Ting Wen-chiang, who believed that the root cause of China's political confusion was that "the minority

25. Quoted from Ting's article "Shao-shu-jen te Tse-jen" (The Responsibility of the Minority), originally published in Nu-li Chou-pao on 12th August, 1923.

lacks a sense of responsibility"²⁵: Perhaps Liang was a conservative with some of the liberal's sensibility, whereas the liberals were progressives with some of the conservative's sense of discipline. At any rate amongst his colleagues Liang's elitism was unique in degree rather than in entirety.

It could be argued that his concept of a talented minority, his enthusiasm for the maintenance of normality, and the hierarchic social philosophy implicit in his opposition to mass democracy together mark him ideologically as much as a Confucian traditionalist as a Western conservative. His rejection of the Confucian literary tradition does not disprove such an assertion because of the specific nature of that rejection. However the label does seem unsuitable because his ideas, though not far removed from the principles of traditional Chinese social doctrine, were rooted in and developed from Western thought. In the chapter of Democracy and Leadership entitled "Europe and Asia", the principal provider of that thought actually expressed considerable admiration for the Confucian ethical system on account of its closeness to his own model, the philosophy of Aristotle. Liang noted this admiration in the essay on Babbitt discussed in Chapter Three, but did not himself emphasise the connection in his other writings. This perhaps confirms that any duality in his thinking was more apparent than real.

The ambivalence of Liang Shih-chiu therefore largely reduces from simultaneous endorsement of Western conservatism and Western liberalism, through the Confucian dilemma and the apparent contradiction of literary

²⁶ see P'ien-chien Chi (Prejudices), P. 112.

²⁷ see P'ien-chien Chi (Prejudices), p. 108.

traditionalism vis-a-vis literary progressivism, to a simple paradox — his expressed admiration for the Western literary tradition coupled with his implied dismissal of the Chinese literary tradition. This can only be accounted for by the combined effect of the orientation of the education he received and the peculiarity of the time at which he received it. Leaving aside this paradox, Liang can otherwise be shown to have been generally consistent in his emphasis on the fundamental importance of tradition.

Moreover not only was he broadly consistent in his positive recommendations. Those things which he denounced can also be linked. If these are taken to be firstly western romanticism, secondly the Chinese Taoist tradition ("the unhealthy obstruction in Chinese literature"²⁶), and thirdly the concept of revolutionary literature, the link between the first two is, as we saw in Chapter Four, explicitly spelt out by Liang himself ("Our Taoist literary thought closely resembles the most extreme romanticism of the West"²⁷).

The link between the first and third of his targets of attack is not any communality of purpose or similarity of effect; rather it is a qualitative association, a diffuse sympathy of spirit. That is to say there is an idealistic quality pervading the early Chinese revolutionary novels which is close in flavour, despite the difference in aim, to that of the work of the writers who were committed to "art for art's sake".

Liang's attack was directed towards the proposals of the revolutionary writers rather than towards the literature they created. Indeed

28 published in 1928. Admittedly Pa Chin was neither a member of the Creation Society nor a confessed communist, but the revolutionary theme of his first novel is unconcealed.

29 published in 1932, weaker than its ^{predecessor} precursor, but a continuation of the same theme.

as we saw one of his complaints was that their literary output was negligible. A certain idealism shines through the rhetoric of even the most militant polemical piece published by the Creation Society to provide a parallel with the utopian quality of Chinese romantic writing. But if one goes further to look at the first successful example of revolutionary fiction, Pa Chin's Mieh Wang (Annihilation)²⁸, and its sequel Hsin Sheng (New Life)²⁹, one is immediately struck by a spirit which overlaps to a considerable extent that of the confessed romantics. Naturally there are both thematic and expressive differences, but the motive force, a desperate idealism born of high sensitivity, is common. Having established this definite link, if one then back-tracks to the leftist theoretical writings criticised by Liang the parallel noted earlier becomes less mistakeable.

Of course none of this is as unexpected as it seems at first sight, because of the simple fact of the commitment to romanticism of many of the revolutionary writers before the change of course of the Creation Society referred to in Chapter Six. Nonetheless it illuminates a continuation of the thread with which Liang himself connected Taoism and romanticism, a continuation which admittedly becomes a little tenuous as it passes through the confusion of left-wing literary polemics, but which resumes its full substance on arrival in the realm of left-wing creative literature. To sum up rather more safely as well as concisely, whatever the specific target of his attack, Liang was objecting to much the same thing — idealism.

³⁰ see Y.C. Wang Chinese Intellectuals and the West, p. 111.

Just as he was objecting to the same thing in his criticism of both romantic writing and revolutionary writing, so the reason for his objection was the same in each case. He felt that their idealism led both the romantic and the revolutionary to disregard that which should be treasured by men above all else -- civilisation. As we saw in Chapter Four, Liang believed that the romantic, in his preoccupation with escape from reality, neglected civilisation. As we saw in Chapter Six, he believed that the revolutionary, in his quest for a new order, was all too ready to risk its destruction. This fundamental concern, which manifested itself in his primary attachment to tradition, led Liang to his emphasis on the seriousness of literature, a topic to which we know he devoted a whole essay. Thus because of the irreplaceability of what was at stake, he saw literature as too important to be allowed to become a plaything of dilettantes, and as too valuable to be allowed to become a tool of militant reformers. The need he felt for responsible custodians of high civilisation, and of its main manifestation, literary excellence, in particular, surely underlay Liang's almost strident elitism. The jarring self-assurance with which he asserted his elitist beliefs was in turn perhaps underpinned by the knowledge that he himself, as a member of the tiny ($5\frac{1}{2}$) per centage of all Tsinghua graduates who studied the humanities in America in the twenty years after 1909³⁰, belonged to the elite of an elite.

Broadly, therefore, Liang was consistent in his recommendations and unilaterally prompted in his denunciations. The prompting we have

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data.

In the second section, the author outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze the data. These include direct observation, interviews with key personnel, and the use of specialized software tools. Each method has its own strengths and limitations, and they are often used in combination to provide a comprehensive view of the situation.

The third section details the findings of the study. It shows that there are significant discrepancies between the reported figures and the actual data. These discrepancies are often due to human error or intentional manipulation of records. The author provides specific examples and explains the reasons behind these errors.

Finally, the document concludes with a series of recommendations. It suggests that the organization should implement stricter controls over its record-keeping processes. This includes regular audits, improved training for staff, and the use of more secure and reliable data management systems. The goal is to prevent such issues from recurring and to ensure the integrity of the organization's financial and operational data.

just discerned tells us a good deal about his whole motivation. It remains only to complete that scheme by explaining why he should have seen the forces he deplored as such real threats to the survival of civilisation at that particular time. Perhaps a brief summary of the chronology of events preceding the launching of the Crescent venture provides the best clue.

The May 30th incident of 1925, which perhaps marked the beginning of the large-scale leftwards movement which took place in the Chinese intellectual milieu in the late 'twenties, occurred whilst Liang was in America. Shortly before he returned there appeared, in April 1926, Kuo Mo-jo's essay, "Ko-ming Yu Wen-hsueh" (Revolution and Literature), the first significant formulation of the new literary standpoint which resulted from this shift. Liang arrived in Peking in July 1926, at the precise moment of the departure of the combined KMT-CCP Northern expedition, on which so many idealistic hopes were pinned.

The year 1927 saw an almost kaleidoscopic sequence of political events. The coalition government centred at Wuhan was established in January, the rival one-party Nanking government, after Chiang Kai-shek's bloody anti-communist purge, in April. The remainder of the CCP leadership was expelled from the Wuhan government in July, two months before the formal reconciliation of the rival factions of the KMT. The result at the end of the year was a thoroughly reactionary government conducting open warfare against its erstwhile political allies whose support had been traded for that of the Great Powers. The grand hope

³¹ see Literary Debates in Modern China, p. 58. Li's article was originally published in Wen-hua Pi-pan (Cultural Critique) 1/2.

that the Northern Expedition represented the beginning of the regeneration of a united, independent, self-respecting China had come to nothing.

This further disillusionment with the Western political model intensified the search by intellectuals for new formulae. The attention of writers became focussed during 1928 on Cheng Fang-wu's "Tsung Wen-hsueh Ko-ming Tao Ko-ming Wen-hsueh" (From Literary Revolution to Revolutionary Literature), already discussed, and Li Ch'u-li's "Tsen-yang Te Chien-she Ko-ming Wen-hsueh" (How to Establish Revolutionary Literature) which A. Tagore says "created a terrific furore in literary circles"³¹.

The intellectual climate in China at the time of the first appearance of the Crescent Monthly was thus highly charged. External accommodation and internal conciliation had failed. The resulting cynicism and polarisation were together generating a growing leftist extremism amongst the majority of intellectuals in reaction to the increasingly oppressive and at the same time debilitating authoritarianism of the KMT.

In this situation one can guess that Liang saw great danger. He clearly saw the wholesale breaking of contact with the past advocated by the revolutionaries as a break in the thread of continuity of civilisation and thus as a total disaster for the future of mankind. The faute de mieux attractiveness of the revolutionaries' case must have made such a break seem a real and imminent possibility. At the same time he discerned in those writers as yet uncommitted to the leftist politicisation of literature an unawareness or apathy that was equally disastrous on account of the strength of the leftwards set of the tide.

As we saw in Chapter Eight he tells us in "I Hsin-yueh" that he considered his position to have been "in the middle, between right and left". The context of that observation however makes it clear that he was referring to his position with respect to romanticism on the one hand and revolutionary literature on the other. But the Chinese romantics were surely no more rightist than they were leftist. They were largely apolitical and therefore only identifiable in literary terms. Hence Liang's critique of romanticism was non-ideological, and only more than personal when considered in the context of the more active threat posed by the revolutionaries. Nonetheless his observation is helpful because it tells us why, apart from reasons of personal friendship, Liang should have joined a group with which he could not have been wholly in sympathy. Because he rejected what he chose to call (deceptively) right and left, he, like Lu Hsun and the League of Left-Wing Writers if Liang's accusations are to be believed, had nowhere else to go. Only the Crescent Monthly could provide a platform for his anti-romantic and anti-revolutionary, and at the same time politically independent, ideas.

To a certain extent the Crescent writers did represent a third force in strictly political terms, as we saw from Liang's essay "Lun Ssu-hsiang Tung-i" (On Unity of Thought) and as is demonstrable from Hu Shih's stand against both KMT and CCP. But what we have seen of Liang Shih-chiu's position suggests that he at least adopted a generally "rightist" stance in making his case in order to provide a fundamental alternative to the active "leftism" of the revolutionaries. It was

clearly the press of events and the, as he saw it, insidious appeal of the revolutionary point of view at such a time that together made him see this leftism as very much more than a theoretical menace. This perhaps was how he was moved to adopt the singular orientation we commented on in Chapters Six and Eight.

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CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

Finally an assessment is required. This would seem most appropriately to take the form of an answer to a last question — what was the size and significance of Liang's contribution to Chinese literary ideas during the period when he lived in Shanghai and Tsingtao?

In his essays on literature and literary theory Liang Shih-chiu was basically considering the question of the regeneration of Chinese letters. When discussing romanticism his concern was the effect of the associated spirit on contemporary writing rather than the demerits of the original romantic movement. In Liang's usage "romantic" was thus more a label of convenience than a truly descriptive adjective. When recommending "classicism" Liang was really presenting a simple anti-thesis. Admittedly it was based on Western classical doctrine as traditionally interpreted, but its exclusiveness diminished this alternative offering to the same conventional level. When criticising contemporary Chinese writing, Liang's comments were generalisations. If his demands were reasonable, his expectations, at the time, were perhaps not.

Liang's essays on criticism were extensions of his theoretical articles in the sense that he applied what he had had to say in general terms to that more specific area. Similarly when himself reviewing the theoretical works of others, his central concern seems more to have been

to defend this same general case than to seek merit in the book under examination.

His essays on revolutionary literature show that his literary classicism was symptomatic of an overall (though cosmopolitan rather than nationalistic) cultural conservatism. This is especially well illuminated by the priority he attached to the preservation of "civilisation" — by which he meant traditional (and universal) artistic standards — above all else. His popular identification with liberal enlightenment is further invalidated by the distaste for idealism that can be discerned in all his writings.

This in turn places Liang closer to the thinking of the earlier Hsueh Heng group of writers than to that of his colleagues in the Crescent venture, despite his "modernist" position on the question of literary style and his comparative disregard for the Chinese literary tradition. The connection is formalised by the enthusiasm he shared with the Hsueh Heng writers for the precepts declaimed by Irving Babbitt.

Because these earlier writers had introduced Babbitt to Chinese intellectuals six years before the appearance of the first issue of the Crescent Monthly (and indeed four years before Liang's return from America), Liang's presentation of Babbitt-style humanism was not original. However Liang's application of this singular cultural philosophy to the contemporary Chinese situation was perhaps more thoroughgoing.

For what nobody else did was firstly to use Babbitt's theory as a

reference for a comparatively detailed commentary on contemporary Chinese creative writing in the round; then to develop it into a basis for an open and uncompromising attack firstly on the assertiveness of the Creation Society, then on the authority of the prestigious League of Left-Wing Writers as personified by its spiritual leader, Lu Hsun.

We have seen how this teaching of Babbitt's on the centrality of "universal human nature" in art provided Liang with a basis for his thinking on literature as an entity in its own right, on literature in a socio-political context, and on the technical aspects of literary criticism. We have discovered how Liang rationalised this line of thought to form the argument by which he sought to refute the other popular theories of literature as simply a vehicle for the imagination and literature as the reflection of contemporary class experience. There is no doubt that if modern Chinese literature is taken in isolation, this adds up to an original contribution.

This however is merely to delineate Liang's contribution to the intellectual life of his time. To move on to weigh its significance it is necessary to take account of the supervening historical reality which made inevitable the rapid and perhaps final defeat of the humanistic point of view in China.

By 1928 cosmopolitan liberalism with which Liang was mistakenly associated had been shown to be a political model that was inappropriate to China's circumstances. The May 30th movement of 1925 had shown that such a world view was inadequate as a basis for handling China's inter-

NOTES FOR CHAPTER TEN

¹Joseph R. Levenson Confucian China and its Modern Fate, Vol. 1, p. 141

²Professor Li Huei-ying of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In a conversation held on 26th January, 1973, he said that differences of opinion on Chinese affairs did not affect Liang's relations with his students because Liang taught the quite unrelated subject of English literature. His remarks about the general impression students had of the Crescent writers were made in a second conversation held on the 13th April, 1973.

³Liang's own explanation for the lack of appeal of the views he himself advanced is simply that at the time intellectuals were obsessed with novelty — see "Kuan-yü Pai-pi-te Hsien-sheng Chi Chi Ssu-hsiang" (On Mr. Babbitt and his Thought) originally published in Jen Sheng 148, January 1957, currently published in the Wen Hsueh Yin Yuan collection, pp. 57-64.

national relations. The KMT-CCP schism of 1927 had shown that a harsher formula was required for China's domestic salvation.

As important perhaps was the growing awareness that the Western tradition as a whole (with which Liang is more correctly associated) was also an inappropriate cultural model. As Joseph Levenson has said, "These critiques (of Western-educated intellectuals) might be represented as mere surrender to western cultural aggression, the counterpart of imperialism"¹. For this reason, perhaps, the left-wing writers' call for what Levenson describes as "a synthesis to displace the western antithesis to the rejected Confucian thesis" proved as irresistible as the CCP call for a further political revolution.

This impression of the inappropriateness of what the Crescent writers stood for was borne out in the recollections of one of Liang's former students at the China National Institute². He said that the feeling amongst the young was that the detachment, the elitism, the fastidiousness, and the intellectualism of these cultivated men of letters were out of keeping with the times. Moreover, he said, there was the suspicion, reinforced by left-wing accusations, that there was a connection between the Crescent Group and the KMT government, despite the charges laid against Hu Shih by the Shanghai party committee in August 1929 and the formal reprimand he received from the Ministry of Education the following month³.

History was of course to show that the model for the rebirth of China was indeed to be that of Marx and not that of Babbitt. History

⁴see Culture and Anarchy, p. 70.

has also demonstrated the efficacy of the Marxist design as a blueprint for a politically strong and self-respecting China. The quality of social and intellectual life in China is a matter for debate. A non-marxist would argue that absence of the kind of intellectual freedom prized by both Liang Shih-chiu and Hu Shih stifles genuine creativity and impoverishes life as a whole. A communist would argue that on the contrary only with the banishment of such individualism can art-for-art's-sake and intellectualism-for-intellectualism's-sake be prevented from asserting themselves in the areas of art, thought, and education. Such a debate seems academic because the reality we mentioned earlier, which was beginning to make itself felt at the end of the 'twenties, has come to pass exclusively. In this sense the attempt by the Crescent writers to keep alive what they saw as the flame of enlightenment was futile. What distinguished Liang from the rest of that group, his fierce devotion to culture in the Arnoldian sense of "the best that has been thought and known in the world"⁴, was perhaps even more obviously doomed to rejection than the more authentically liberal ideas of his colleagues. But if the beacon lit by these men was finally snuffed out within ten years, some latent energy from it has perhaps lingered within the Chinese consciousness. In this second sense, possibly illustrated by the continuing denunciation of individualism in China today, it may be that the Crescent writers, including Liang Shih-chiu, made some faint mark that has endured.

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