

A "tender beir" to "bear his memory" - Shakespeare's Sonnets in Taiwan<br>by Alexander C. Y. Huang

The first poem in Shake-spares Sonnets (1609), a sonnet cycle that has been regarded "ethically complex and narratively diffuse," boldly declares: "From fairest creatures we desire increase / That thereby beauty's rose might never die."' The convention of extolling idealized chaste women established by Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser in the previous decade was appropriated to urge a young aristocratic man to "pity the world" and procreate so that his "tender heir" would "bear his memory" and carry on his beauty beyond the cruelty of time. Liang Shiqiu (1903-87), a renowned essayist, translator and lexicographer, echoed the general sentiment of procreation for the sake of beauty when he took on the project to render in Chinese Shakespeare's sonnets which, in his mind, represented "the best poetry in the world that has withstood the test of time." He drew on the metaphor that if one wishes to drink anything at all, one should "drink only first rate tea and wine," and if one wishes to read anything, one would do well to read only the classics. ${ }^{2}$ His view of the literary canon bordered on Matthew Arnoid's pronouncement in 1869 that great works of art embody "the best which has been thought and said in the world., ${ }^{3}$

Meanwhile, Liang was intent on enriching the Chinese written vernacular - a new literary medium he was promoting - through the translation of the sonnets. In an essay on the sonnet, he championed the unproblematic connections between Shakespeare's sonnets and his intentions, and between vernacular literature and the sonnet, by quoting from William Wordsworth's ("an advocate of vernacular literature") sonnet in praise of sonnet:

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frown'd,
Mindless of its just honours; with this key

[^0]Shakespeare unlock'd his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound. ${ }^{4}$
Liang viewed translation not only as an intellectual experience but also a necessary form of cross-cultural labor that would extend the life of Shakespeare's sonnets. A translator's role is to select the best poetry (Shakespeare's Sonnets) and reproduce its beauty, for literature is the product of "a few geniuses" rather than the masses. ${ }^{5}$ This pattern is consistent with his idea of literature. One of Irving Babbitt's students at Harvard University, Liang was influenced by Babbit's New Humanism. In an article in the June 1928 issue of Crescent Moon, a literary magazine that he co-founded, Liang went against the grain and popular class-based view of literature of his time to contend that "human nature" should be "the sole standard for measuring literature." As a humanist, Liang was interested in the universal literary experience and its artistic rather than political function.

As Umberto Eco surmises, literary translation's capacity to "modernize the source to some extent" has more to do with the interpretation of a text in different languages than with compatibilities between languages. ${ }^{7}$ Liang produced a copiously annotated translation of the sonnets in The Oxford Shakespeare edited by W. J. Craig in 1943, enhanced by reproduced illustrations from Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke's nineteenth-century edition. Some notes provide criticism and interpretation, while others unpack words or expressions to supply meanings the translation is unable to contain. For instance, in the note to the first sonnet, Liang assumes the role of a commentator:

Sonnets 1-17 form a self-contained unit dedicated to a young man. The sonnets revolve around the nartator's plea to the young man to get married and have offsprings to carry on his beauty. This thought is not unusual, for any middle-aged person -- having seen the contingency of life

- will realize that only procreation will extend one's blood line. ${ }^{8}$
${ }^{4}$ Liang Shiqiu, "On the sonnet [Tan shisi hang shi]," in Liang Shiqiu, Prejudices [Pangian $\left.j\right]$ (Tapei: Wenxing shudian, 1964), 197.
${ }^{5}$ Liang, $A$ Cottager's Seetchbook, 2; 204-205.
${ }^{6}$ Liang Shiqiu, "Literature and Revolution [Wenxue yu geming]," Crscent Moon [Xinywe] (June 1928); Kirk Denton, ed. Modern Chinese Literary Thougbt: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 310.
${ }^{7}$ Umberto Eco, Experiences in Translation, trans. Alastair McEwen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 22
${ }^{\text {B }}$ The Complete Wores of Shakespeare [Sbashinya quanji], trans. Liang Shiqiu, 12 vols. Vol. 12 (Taipei Yuandong tushu, 1985), 182.

Liang brushes aside the question of a male speaker asking a young man to reproduce and the allegory of poetry as a vehicle for immortality, and instead attempts to rationalize the literal meaning of the sequence. Notes also supplement what could not be adequately translated without risking the rhythmic flow of the lines or for lack of better words in the target language. In a note on "conquest" in the last line of sonnet 6 ("Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair / To be death's conquest [translated as qiangzhan, acquisition by force] and make worms thine heir."), Liang explains that "conquest does not refer to taking possession by force" (which is what the Chinese reader would assume from his translation) but instead, as the Oxford English Dictionary states, to "the personal acquisition of real property otherwise than by inheritance." Annotations remain a staple feature of Liang's version, as other Chinese translations offer no or far fewer notes.
By all measures, he has succeeded in producing a "tender hair" of Shakespeare's sonnets and bringing him to a Taiwanese readership. Widely known in the Chi-nese-speaking world as a pioneer and the only poet to have single-handedly translated and annotated all of Shakespeare's works in Chinese so far, Liang has made a major contribution to world literature. The processes of translating Shakespeare were complex and spanned several decades, a monumental task that occupied Liang from 1930 to 1967.

Liang's role as a translator should also be understood historically. The translation and reception of Shakespeare in Taiwan epitomize the island's history of immigration and art patronage. An island off the southeast coast of China, Taiwan has had complex relationships with the dominant "motherland" across the strait and with Japan to the north. It was colonized by the Dutch (1624-1661), governed from 1661-1683 by the Chinese Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong (known as Koxinga in Europe), and ruled by the Chinese Qing imperial court (1683-1895) and the Japanese colonial government (1895-1945). After China's defeat in the SinoJapanese War in 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan for fifty years. Chiang Kai-shek lost the civil war to the Mao Zedong army and moved the central government of Republic of China to Taipei in 1949. The principal languages spoken on the island are Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hakka. Liang was born in Beijing in 1903 and moved to Taiwan in 1949 after being fiercely attacked by leftist mainland Chinese writers such as Lu Xun (1881-1936), an influential writer and critic whose writings were misappropriated by Mao Zedong for political purposes. ${ }^{10}$ Liang completed his Chinese translation of the Complete Works of Wil-

## ${ }^{9}$ Ibid,

${ }^{10}$ For a succinct account of Mao Zedong, Lu Xun and others' criticism of the bourgeois and elitist tendency of Liang Shiqiu and the Crescent Moon Society, see the section "Crescent Moon Group as Target of Attack" in Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, "Lions and Tigers in Groups: The Crescent
liam Shakespeare in 1967 in the relatively stable environment of Taiwan, including the sonnets; the decade-long Chinese Cultural Revolution on the mainland started in 1966.
Though Mandarin performance of Shakespeare did not emerge until February 1949, when the Experimental Theater of Taipei staged Clouds of Doubt (Othello) in spoken drama (huaju) format, residents of Taiwan were exposed to Shakespeare in the first half of the twentieth century through tours of Japan's allfemale Takarazuka revues. Liang's translation provided an important foundation for subsequent performances and the study of Shakespeare. Wang Sheng-shan (1921-2003) played an important role in popularizing Shakespeare on stage through numerous productions he directed in the 1970s, which laid the groundwork for more innovative rewritings of Shakespeare in subsequent decades. Since the 1980s, Shakespeare's plays have been widely performed on the island in Chinese, Taiwanese, English, Hakka, or combinations of these languages, in a wide spectrum of styles and genres ranging from Taiwanese opera to parody. Some of the stage productions have toured extensively and gained international recognition. ${ }^{11}$
Shakespeare's Sonnets have not been as popular as his tragedies and comedies in Taiwan. Despite the island's multicultural history and the recent emergence of Taiwanese-language translations and performances of his plays, the sonnets are only available in Mandarin Chinese translations. Frequent performances by professional groups and college students helped to popularize Shakespeare's plays. By contrast, the sonnets have not been included in the curriculum. Further, as Liang himself readily acknowledged as an experienced translator, there were few satisfactory translations of the sonnets. "Among the genres of poetry, essay, novel, and drama," said Liang, "poetry is the most difficult to translate, especially from English into a language as distant as Chinese." He reasoned that because "the language of poetry is refined, allusive, subtle, and elusive, it is very hard to reproduce all of the aspects that constitute the experience of poetry." One cannot translate suggestive language into crude explicit declatations of intents, and one has to attend to rhyme, rhythm, and form. ${ }^{12}$ Chinese prosody is based on changes in pitch as well as in accent of the written character. Therefore, it is challenging to attend to all of these features and the poem in its original language.

[^1]A crucial decision had to be made about the poetic form in translation. That the genre of sonnet is commonly known in Chinese as "fourteen-lined poetry" (shisi hang shi) says something suggestive about the formalistic choices translators make. The term draws attention to the genre's formalistic feature above all else. Liang decided to use rhymed prose imitating the metric form of Shakespearean sonnet (abab / cdcd / efef / gg), while others such as Yu Erchang (1903-1984), another Chinese scholar of English literature who moved to Taiwan in 1949 and exerted a great deal of influence on Taiwan's Shakespeare studies, translated the sonnets using the seven-syllabic poetic format (qiyan shi). Liang believed it is more efficient and accurate to translate the sonnets in thymed prose with jagged line, but Yu insisted on fidelity to the original form. Yu used the seven-syllabic format which was perceived to hold the same cachet and prestige in the Chinese literary tradition as the sonnet did in the Renaissance. Yu's translation features fourteen lines with the same number of written characters (seven in each line) and the same thyming scheme as the original. In contrast to Liang's emphasis on intelligibility and developing the written vernacular, Yu preferred classical Chinese diction and allusions. He started out on the simple assumption that the translation should read like a poem, and contended that most Chinese translations of the sonnets no longer feel poetic, as "they are at most prose interpretations of the sonnets and read like essays, which has done great injustice to Shakespeare." ${ }^{13}$ In 1961, Yu completed his translation of the sonnets from the Arden edition and published it in an English-Chinese facing-page bilingual edition.
Liang's decision to pursue a different route was dictated by his investment in the merits of the written vernacular (baihua) and patronage and literary friendship with Hu Shi. Liang recalled: "I would not have been able to complete the translation were it not for Mr Hu's support and mentorship."'14 Further, Liang stated that "even though Mr Hu did not possess in-depth knowledge about Shakespeare, he knew the importance of translating Shakespeare and made all the arrangements [as a patron]. Wiithout his enthusiastic advocacy and support, I would not have taken the path less traveled by to translate Shakespeare."15
Indeed a useful way to understand Liang's work is to reconstruct the process of translation through the conditions of literary production, rather than carry out a textually-oriented close reading of his translations. Liang's translation project in-

[^2]volved support from patrons and scholars in both China and Taiwan, including playwright Yu Shangyuan, philosopher Hu Shi (a major contributor to the vernacular movement), China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture (founded in 1924), and most notably, Taiwan's National Bureau for Compilation and Translation (founded in 1932 and moved from China to Taiwan in 1949). ${ }^{16}$ As Marjorie Garber recently theorized, artists and poets have always worked within a closely-knit network of relationships to patrons, friends, and funding bodies. As much as these relationships support cultural production, they can also be detrimental to the integrity of artistic creation, leaving artists patronized and condescended to. ${ }^{17}$ Liang's relationship with Hu was more productive, though his interactions with other literary societies were not. Because of his preference for 'non-revolutionary' genres detached from contemporary social realities and his fundamental rejection of literary utilitarianism, Liang was ostracized from the mainland Chinese literary circle. The attacks brought Liang and Hu closer.
Together with Hu Shi, Xu Zhimo, and Shen Congwen, Liang Shiqiu founded the Crescent Moon Society (taking a cue from Rabindranath Tagore's poetry collection Crescent Moon) in 1923 in Beijing, one of many literary societies of the time where members gathered for weekend dinners at clubhouses to build up influences and solidify literary, social or political affiliations. In 1930, Hu, the chair of the translation committee of the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture, invited five poets and scholars - Liang Shiqiu, Wen Yiduo, Xu Zhimo, Ye Gongchao, and Chen Tongbo - to undertake the ambitious project to translate all of Shakespeare's works and produce a "definitive edition" (dingben). Detailed plans were made by Hu, including style ("we shall experiment with verse and prose before deciding on the best approach to translate the texts") and compensation ("the highest possible stipend will be offered, because this collection will sell"). ${ }^{18}$ By 1931, it had been decided that only the written vernacular would be used in the translation, that annotations should be added where necessary, and that all proper names should be transliterated into Chinese characters following standard Mandarin pronunciations (Shakespeare as Shashibiya) rather than translated semantically (Mistress Overdone as Gan Guotou [Trying Too Hard]). The unforeseen drawback is that Anglo-European personal names can become long
${ }^{16}$ Yang Cuihua, "A brief introduction to the archive of the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture [Zhonghua jiaoyu wenhua jijin dongshihui dang'an jianje]," Newsletter of the Study of Modern Chinese History [Indai Zhonggho shi yanjus tongxun] (Taipei) 6 (September 1988); 154 159.
${ }^{17}$ Marjorie Garber, Patronizing the Arts (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1-41.
${ }^{18}$ Liang, "On Translating Shakespeare," 94.
and unwieldy in Chinese, because Chinese names are commonly only two to three characters (syllables) in length. Since Chinese is a monosyllabic language, a name of six syllables (first and last names) will require at least six characters.
Hu was Liang's patron in every sense of the word, as he influenced Liang's ideological position, provided financial support, and elevated his social status by bringing him into a prestigious community. As it turned out, because of ongoing wars, Liang was the sole person among the group to work with Hu and eventually complete the project. Liang shared Hu's view of literary translation, and had no problem internalizing his patron's philosophy of translation. His decision to add numerous annotations was also directly influenced by Hu. ${ }^{19}$ Significantly Liang reiterated some of these principals in a later essay entitled "A Translator's Tenet" that concentrated heavily on annotations:

A good translator should avoid awkward expressions or patterns in the target language. Avoid literal translation (yiyi) at all cost. Annotate all allusions and difficult phrases. Provide sources of citations from authoritative studies in the notes. ${ }^{20}$

In his prefatory notes to The Complete Works of Shakespeare in Chinese, Liang outlined his principals of translation, which coincided with Hu's ideas of superior literary translation. Liang focuses on a notion of faithfulness to the original articulated through copious annotations. ${ }^{21}$
An example of how Liang put these principals into practice is his translation of the "eye of heaven" in sonnet 18. In his pursuit of semantic accuracy, Liang translated "the eye of heaven" as the sun (taiyang) instead of a giant eye in the sky (tiankong zhi juyan) as Cao Minglun did or heavenly eye (tianyan) as Ruan Kun did in his recent version. ${ }^{22}$ These differences bring to light the pleasure of producing and reading the sonnets in translation which lies in the alternating revelation and concealment of the shifting and multilayered meanings of poetry.

[^3]
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## Antbology

The poems below（with the exception of the first and the third）showcase Liang Shiqiu＇s translations，－without his scholarly footnotes．To provide a point of contrast，samples of Yu Erchang＇s translation（66）and Liang Zongdai（1）are provided．
66
睹此一切求永息，聪明才智生为甹，庸思昏聩金玉饰，信誓真诚受战害，黄金光荣冠错戴，处子之市遭辱凌，正直无瑕遭眨废，跛使健者成无能，文章畏势口不开，愚尞统治夸才学，质朴真诚诋为呆，

善良为奴侍元恶；
厌此一切愿长辞，
惟遗我友不胜悲。（Yu Erchang）
1
願最美的人能多多生育，
使青春美貌的花朵永久不朽，
成熟的到時候總要死去，
他的幼嗣可以総續他的風流：
但是你，只看中你自己的亮眼睛，
用自身做燃料培養那眼裡的火焰
在豐收之際造成了䬻饉的災情，
與自己為敵，對自己未免過于凶殘。
你是當今世界之鮮艶的装飾品，
是爛縵春光之無比的一朵奇葩，
你竟在自己蓓蕾埋葬你的子孫，
吝嗇鬼，你越是括不得你是越糟蹋。
橉憫這世界罷，否則你便是個髺䬸的人，
你獨身而死，你吞食了這世界應得的一份。（Liang Shiqiix）
1
對天生的尤物我們要求蕃盛，
以便美的玫瑰永遠不會枯死，
但開透的花杂既要及時调零，
就應把記憶交給嬌嫩的后嗣；
但你，只和你自己的明睟定情，
把自己當燃料银養眼中的火焰，
和自己作對，待自己末免太狠，
把一片潄沃的土地變成荒田。
你現在是大地的清新的點䎐，
又是錦繡陽春的唯一的前鋒，
為什塺把富源葬送在嫩苾里，
溫柔的鄙夫，要吝㙼，反而浪用？
可憐這個世界吧，要不然，貪夫，
就吞噬世界的份，由你和墳墓。（Liang Zongdau）

四十個冬天圍攻你的容顏，在你美貌平原上挖掘壕溝的時侯，你的青春盛裝，如今被人艶義，將變成不値一顧的襤縷破舊：那時有人要問，你的美貌現在何地，你青春時代的寶藏都在什麼地方，你若回答說，在你深陷的眼坑裡，那將是自承貣婪，對浪費的讚揚。拿你的美貌去投資生息豈不更好，你可這樣回答：＂我這孩子多塺漂亮，他將為我結賬，彌補我的衰老＂；他的美貌和你的是一模一樣！造就好像你衰老之後又重新翻造一遍，你覺得血已冰椧又再度覺得溫暖。（LiangSbigiu）

40
把我愛的都拿去，愛人，都拿去；在你以前所有的之外還能有什䳸增加？
你準去的愛不會是真實的情意—
你奪得這個之前，我的一切都镯你啦。
如果你為了愛我而接收我的愛人，
我不怪你和我的愛人繾縘，一
可是還要怪你，如果你紆貴屈尊，
和一個你所不愛的女人胡纒。
我寬恕你的劫奪，風流強盜，
雖然你奪了我僅有的這一點點：
不過情場中人都會知曉
忍受愛的委曲比恨的創傷更為悲惨。
放蕩的公子，你顯露了一切的少跡，
你儘管辱我殺我，我們不可成為仇敵。（Liang Sbiqiu）

## 70

你受責備，榜不是你的缺失，
因為流言總是以美貌做箭靶；
遭嫉乃是美貌的一項裝飾，
有如晴空萬里飛過—隻鳥鴉。

只消你潔身自好，毀謗只能證明
你的人品高，為大罣所喜愛；
罪惡有如害蟲鑽入最香的蓓蕾之中，
而你正在天真無邪的青春時代：
你已經躲過青春時代的埋伏，
沒受到誘惑，或已戰勝了誘惑；
可是這讚美不能長久的縛住
那永無遮攔的嫉妒的口舌：
如果你的儀表沒有蒙上惡意的猜忌，
你便是天下無雙，萬眾歸心於你。（Liang Shiqiu）
71
你聽到或鍾沉重的響起
通告世人我已經離開
䢗萬惡世界去和蛆蟲同居，
你就不要再為我而悲哀：
不，你若讀到此詩，不要懷想
寫詩的人，因為我愛你太深，
我情願被人所遺志，
如果想起我來你太傷心。
如果我已和泥土混在一起，
你偶然看到這首小詩，
請連我的名字都不必再提，
讓你的愛和我的生命一起消逝；
否則世人要追問你憂傷的原故，
使你在我死後和我一同受到侮辱。（LiangSbiaiu）
108
䐉子裡有什䳸可以形諸筆墨的東西
而沒有向你表達我的忠貞精神？
有什麼新的可說，有什麼可記載的，
來表示我的愛或你的優美的身分？
沒有，親愛的孩子；但是像對神祈暷，
我必須每天把同樣的話再說一掘；
你是我的，我是你的，老調不嫌其老，
敐如我初次獻詩給你的時候一般。
因此永恆的愛便可萬古長新，

不介意人世的塵勞和葴月的傷害，也不屈服於那無可避免的舄紋，而把老年永遠當做僮僕看待，
時間與外表宣告愛將死亡之際，
最初相戀的熱情又復重新燃起。（Liang Shiqiu）
116
我不承認兩顆心真心相戀
會遭遇阴撓：愛不算是愛，
如果發現情形改變就跟著改變，
或看到對方變心就打算走開。
啊，不！愛是永遠堅定的明燈，
面對著風暴而永不搖畼；
愛是指引飄流船隻的明星，
其高度可測，其奧秘不可衡量。
愛不是「時間」的玩物，雖然朱唇粉煩
逃不脫他彎彎鐮刀的割芝；
愛不跟隨流轉的韶光而起變化，
愛抵抗「時間」到世界末日的盡端。
假如遣話不對，而且引我為證，
我算是沒寫過詩，沒人有過愛情。（Liang Sbiquiu）

## 130

我情人的眼睛和太陽不能比；
珊瑚遠比她的嘴唇紅得多：
如果雪是白的，她的奶就是黑的；
如果髮是金緮，她頭上是一片烏黑：
我見過粉紅色玫瑰，又白又紅，
但在她腮上我看不見逗樣的玫瑰；
有些香水的香氣之濃
勝過我情人口裡吐出的氣味：
我愛聽她說話，但是我心裡有數，
音樂有遠為悅耳的聲響；
我承認沒有見過天仙走路，一
我的情人走路是踏在地上。
但是，天啊，我的愛人之美麗
正不下於被人妄相比擬的任何婦女。（LiangSbiqiu）

153
邱比得放下火把睡著了：
戴安娜的一位侍女有機可乘，
多勿把他點嘫愛情的火把浸泡
在那地方的一個冷泉當中；
泉水從這聖潔的愛情之火
獲得永無盡期的熱，永久不冷，
於是筱成沸滾的溫泉一座，
以後大家認為能治疑難雑症。
但我愛人眼裡燃起新的愛情火把，
那孩子一定要在我胸上試驗一番；
我立即病倒，想藉溫泉治療一下，
跑到那邊，心情苦惱，狼狽不堪，
但是發現無效：能救治我的溫泉
乃是邱比得點燃新火的地方，我愛人的雙眼。（Liang Sbiqiu）
154
小愛神有一次在打萾睡，
把點燃愛情的火把放在身邊，
這時誓守貞操的小仙一隊
輕輕的走來；最美的一位小仙
把那曾經點燃過無數
心頭愛情的火把拿在手上，
於是這位熱情的霸主
在睡中被一位貞女解除了武裝。
她把這火把往附近冷泉裡浸泡，
泉水由愛火獲得永久的熱力，
變成了溫泉，而且能夠治療
人們的疾病。但是我，我愛人的奴隸，
走到那裡治療；只得到這䤤的證明：
愛火可以燃燒了水，水不能冷卻愛情。（Liang Shiqiu）

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# William Shakespeare's Sonnets 

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(with a DVD)

Edited by Manfred Pfister and Jürgen Gutsch

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