Summary

The debate of Lu Xun (1881-1936) and Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987) set out in Shanghai in the late 1920s was by far the most impassionate battle of words in the history of Chinese Literature. Both the frequencies of exchanges and the temporal length it sustained are unrivalled.

Came off against an era where politics was meddling with literature and where the Chinese literati concerned themselves in lifting literature out of a slump, the Lu-Liang debate covered a wide spectrum of topics including the political, cultural and aesthetic option of literature in the new era.

Although this eight-year long debate ended with the death of Lu Xun, the propositions raised in the course have yet to reach a conclusion. Such propositions as the description of human nature and the nature of literature are fundamental motions in literary theories that are worth further exploration till the present days.

Devoted to this debate, the thesis is structured into five chapters. The first chapter is the preface setting out the objectives of the research, giving a review of literature and defining the scope of study and methodology. Looking at the deficiencies found in previous studies and considering the complication involved, this study shall focus only on literary discussions.

Chapter Two relates the different important aspects of the study to the background where the Lu-Liang debate set in. Tracing back to the May Fourth Movement, the chapter defines the role of Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu in the New Literary Movement. It then proceeds to analyse the direction taken by the literary organisations to which Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu joined as members and the literary motions these organisations upheld in relation to the shift towards Left Wing Union Literary movement, thereby establishing the ground that sprang the debate.

Chapter Three reveals, analyses and comments on the stages of the debate under various subject headings highlighting the leads that heightened the tension.

Chapter Four examines the nature of the debate and the arising motions. The thesis dismisses bias conclusions arrived by previous studies such as “personal grudges” and “political struggles.” The thesis attributes the controversies to the differing life philosophies that ultimately shaped the respective literary views of Lu Xun and Liang Shiqiu that was never bridged.

Chapter Five concludes the significance of the debates and the value of the exchanges in the history of Chinese Literature.