

Liu Hongtao. *Xu Zhimo and the University of Cambridge*. Beijing: The Commercial Press. 2011. ISBN 9787100083737. 262 pp.

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The relation between Xu Zhimo and the University of Cambridge has always been a fascinating topic, for Xu Zhimo's poem "Saying Goodbye to Cambridge Again" is so renowned that all of Xu's readers know that he had a deep love for Cambridge. From 2004 to 2005, the author of this volume, Professor Liu Hongtao, stayed at Cambridge as a visiting scholar, and as a Comparative Literature scholar whose research interests include early twentieth-century Chinese literature, Professor Liu was keen to explore Xu Zhimo's life at Cambridge. During his stay, Professor Liu investigated the reason why Xu Zhimo came to Cambridge and why he became a poet there, as well as how he communicated with British writers and scholars. This volume is the first study that explicates Xu Zhimo's creation of Cambridge poems with the factual evidence discovered at Cambridge, and its discussion on the previously unpublished correspondences between Xu and Charles Kay Ogden complements current studies on the relation between Xu Zhimo and the Bloomsbury Group.

The first chapter looks at the reasons for Xu Zhimo's move to the UK and his enrolment in Cambridge. One significant contribution of this chapter is that it proposes a more profound elucidation of Xu's move to the UK than the one mentioned in "The Cambridge that I know"—it was in order to follow Bertrand Russell that Xu Zhimo gave up the opportunity to pursue PhD studies in the US and moved to the UK (Xu 232). According to Professor Liu, a more credible reason might be that Xu Zhimo wished to study with Harold Joseph Laski, and Professor Liu provides a detailed account of events to rationalize this idea. Speaking of why Xu Zhimo later transferred to Cambridge, Professor Liu points out that this might be the result of his vexing love life. To ask for Lin Huiyin's hand in marriage, Xu had to divorce Zhang Youyi, who had an influential family, and he was greatly distressed by this situation. Therefore, when Dickinson asked him whether he wanted to transfer to Cambridge, Xu Zhimo immediately seized this opportunity,

wishing to dispel his anxiety in a new environment.

In the second chapter, Professor Liu offers a detailed description of Xu Zhimo's favorite places and scenic spots at Cambridge. As an auditing student, Xu was not put under the pressures of tasks and exams, so he had enough time to enjoy the sights of Cambridge. This chapter not only introduces the views around the River Cam, but also provides a vivid account of the way that Xu Zhimo observed the Backs, one of his favorite places at Cambridge. It needs to be highlighted that Professor Liu investigated almost all the Cambridge sights illustrated in Xu Zhimo's "The Cambridge that I know" and "Rainbow after the Rain." The record of Professor Liu's investigation and the pictures provided in this chapter clearly explain what Xu Zhimo saw at Cambridge and what motivated him to compose these two works. Cambridge's charming sights were significant for Xu Zhimo, who firmly believed in the healing and inspiring power of nature. Therefore, Professor Liu's depiction of Cambridge's sights also paves the way for the reader's comprehension of the arousal of Xu Zhimo's affection towards Romantic literature and his creation of Cambridge poems.

Chapter Three investigates the cultivation of Xu Zhimo's interest in English literature at Cambridge. Professor Liu points out that Cambridge's collegiate system and Xu Zhimo's non-utilitarian way of reading played important roles in promoting Xu to search for his own interests and take the literary path, and this argument provides an insight into why Xu Zhimo switched his major to English literature at Cambridge. In Lyons' work, Xu Zhimo's curriculum at Cambridge is offered to show that he developed a strong interest in Romantic and modernist literature (9-14); whereas in this volume, Professor Liu discusses Xu Zhimo's understanding of the works and thoughts of Romantic poets and modernist writers in detail, with special attention directed to Xu's unique view on Thomas Hardy, Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf.

Xu Zhimo's fourteen Cambridge poems are the research objects of Chapter Four. Unlike *Xu Zhimo in Cambridge: Life and Poetry*, where Xu's poems are sequenced according to the time of composition (Lyons 34), this volume discusses Xu's Cambridge poems with respect to their themes. Professor Liu argues that the topics of these Cambridge poems can be divided into three major categories—the functions of poems and poets, love, as well as Xu Zhimo's political and social views. Influenced by Romanticism, Xu Zhimo was eager to describe the poets' creative and imaginative power and the ideal of the poetic world in his early attempts at poetry. Professor Liu's analyses on Xu's "Dewdrops on the Grass" and "Night" clearly explain how Xu expresses his ambition of being a poet in his

early works. As for Xu Zhimo's love poems, despite the generally acknowledged supposition that the main subject is Xu's love life, Professor Liu proposes that Xu Zhimo has also tried to examine the kernel of love in works like "Liebstch" and "The Origin of Species," and this discussion lends a fresh perspective on Xu Zhimo's love poems. Among these fourteen works, a small number of poems were written by Xu Zhimo to encourage himself and other youngsters to overcome pessimism and achieve their dreams.

In addition to these fourteen works, Xu Zhimo has also created six poems to illustrate Cambridge's natural landscape. Professor Liu's discussion on Xu Zhimo's domestication of exotic sceneries in these poems stands out as a highlight of this volume, and his analysis of "Saying Goodbye to Cambridge Again" deserves special attention. Based on his exploration of Cambridge's landscape, Professor Liu contrasts the factual details with Xu's depictions and identifies to what extent Xu domesticates exotic elements in his poems. Professor Liu is the first scholar who uncovers Xu's intentional substitution of foreign imagery with imagery frequently employed in classical Chinese poems in "Saying Goodbye to Cambridge Again." According to Professor Liu, Xu's domestication not only enables him to arouse the reader's imagination of the beauty of Cambridge, but also helps the reader to develop a feeling of empathy for Xu's nostalgia for Cambridge while reading a poem set in an exotic environment.

Chapter Five examines Xu Zhimo's social interactions at Cambridge, especially his friendship with Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, Roger Fry, the Russell couple, Eileen Power, and Charles Kay Ogden. Stuart Lyons has also introduced Xu Zhimo's associations at Cambridge in his work, but his introduction mainly focuses on Xu's closeness to Dickinson and Roger Fry (24-26). This chapter gives readers a more detailed account of Xu's social circles at Cambridge, and it explains clearly the various influences that Xu Zhimo was exposed to. One of the key contributions of this chapter is Professor Liu's discovery of the six letters Xu Zhimo wrote to Ogden, as these letters have never been examined before. All these letters and their Chinese translations are provided in this volume, together with an analysis on the contexts of these letters. The discovery of these letters not only confirms the friendship between Xu Zhimo and Ogden, but also reveals Xu Zhimo's role as the medium of intercultural communications, for these letters record Xu Zhimo's introduction of Chinese scholars and their works to British publishers and his plan to bring foreign books into the Songpo library.

This volume ends with a discussion on Cambridge academics' recognition of Xu Zhimo's contribution to bridging British and Chinese culture. According to

Professor Liu, Cambridge scholars like I. A. Richards and Arthur David Waley spoke highly of Xu Zhimo's introduction of Chinese scholars' way of perceiving arts and literature as well as the inspirations Xu Zhimo brought to them. This volume is also the first study to reveal the record of Xu Zhimo's hard work in facilitating the association between the Bloomsbury Group and Chinese writers, poets and intellectuals in *A Literary History of Cambridge*.

Xu Zhimo and the University of Cambridge is a volume characterized by richness in terms of primary texts, namely Xu Zhimo's letters, essays and poems, and penetrating analyses. It begins with the reasons behind Xu Zhimo's transference to Cambridge to his appreciation of Cambridge's landscape. It then moves to the cultivation of Xu Zhimo's literary interest and his poetic creation at Cambridge, before concluding with Xu's contribution to intercultural communications. The examination of Xu Zhimo's letters to Ogden and the discovery of the academic record of Xu Zhimo in *A Literary History of Cambridge* certainly enrich current studies on Xu Zhimo. This volume allows readers to gain a greater insight into how the experience of studying at Cambridge shaped Xu Zhimo and how he facilitated exchanges between British and Chinese scholars after he returned to China.

Works Cited:

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