

represents in order to win readers for the poet in the People's Republic.

Appropriate to the genre of democratic ' literature, the language used in this translation is vernacular Chinese, with facile idiom and simple expressions. Characteristic of Chinese literature produced under the Communist regime, the simplified written characters are adopted in lieu of the traditional form.' Rendering poetry from one language into another is extremely difficult—especially so when

the Chinese language is used for translation. Many great poems of the West have turned commonplace in Chinese simply because of limitations of Chinese poetical forms. For, while the traditional classical poetic form is too restricted in rhyme and meter to allow free expressions of the original work, free verse is apt to liquefy all poetry into prose of chopped-up lines. With Whitman, however, the free verse adopted by the translator is the only possible form. Though prosaic and clumsy at times, it lends itself readily to the poet's own style, which is often half prose and half verse.

On the whole this translation is faithful to both the form and content of the original, that is, as faithful as the grammar and syntax of the Chinese language permits. There is, however, one glaring discrepancy, which, I believe, is consciously contrived for political reasons. The line in *Years of the Modern*,

I see not America only, not only Liberty's nation but other nations
preparing,

reads literally in the translation,

I not only see America, (I) see Liberty's nation and (I) see other
nations also preparing.

It is certainly not required by Chinese syntax to have the predicate 'see' repeated thus. Nor is it due to the translator's lack of comprehension of the English text, as no similar blunders are found elsewhere. The distortion would be more explicit if he had rendered the line as

I see not only America, I see Liberty's nation and other nations also
preparing;

but by throwing in 'I see' before other nations' as well as before Liberty's nation' he creates a certain ambiguity in Chinese which can be vaguely interpreted in both ways: i. e. Liberty's nation' as an apposition of America, or as an independent statement.

If the translator acts too cautiously to avoid controversy and antagonism in his instance, he shows no such precaution in his selections of Whitman's work. Among the selections we find lines in praise of Americans and America without disguise, such as
Americanos! conquerors! marches humanitarian! ' (Starting from Paumanok); and

Chinese writing has been considerably simplified since the 'Liberation' by reducing the stroke number of the complex written characters.

WHITMAN IN RED CHINA

Selections from Whitman's 'Leaves of Grass.' Translated and Selected by T'u-nan Ch'u. Peking: People's Literary Publishing Society, 1955. 324 pp.

In spite of the anti-American feelings fermenting on the mainland of China, an exquisitely bound, silk-covered volume of Whitman's poems in translation was published in Peking in 1955. This Chinese translation contains 58 poems, representing each of the twelve sections of the *Leaves of Grass*. The poems selected follow closely the consecutive order of the original version, beginning with *To Foreign Lands* of the *Inscriptions* and ending with *Years of the Modern* of the *Songs of Parting*. The portrait of the poet in working man's clothes from the first edition of the *Leaves of Grass* is also reprinted here—probably to suggest the class of people Whitman

And thou America,
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its reality,
For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived. . . .
The measur'd faiths of other lands, the grandeurs of the past,
Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own. . . .

Poems dedicated to President Lincoln, as well as many praising liberty and individualism are included.

Before questioning the translator's moral integrity, we should know a little more of his motives. Since the Translator's Note ' (dated 1 August 1955) in the volume tells us these, I feel it worth reproducing in full:

I began translating Whitman's poems shortly after 1930. During that period of a fugitive existence, I sent out the rendered pieces, a few at a time, to the periodicals that would accept them. Later they were collected and published in book form. The quality of this translated work would be far from satisfactory, appraised in the light of today. For this reason I made no attempt to have it reprinted after the Liberation. However, in response to the exhortion of the World Peace Committee in comemoration of this most outstanding poet of America, I asked Comrade Min-yan Wang to edit it for re-publication.

Whitman (1819-1892) witnessed the budding and ripening of American capitalism, and the great strife and victory of the Anti-Slavery Struggle (the Civil War) . His poems are thus full of optimism and zeal for the new era. He also created a new verse form and a vigorous style to sing of Nature, the seas, and the newly flourishing cities. He praised peace, labor, and creativity; he hailed man's equality and dignity; he sang of the hope of mankind's perfection, and of its glorious future.

In Whitman's poems, as in all the great masters of the world, are the most elevated and sublime thought and emotions of man. The most obvious examples of these are his strong opposition to slavery, his aversion to racial prejudice, his great admiration for the men of labor, and his deep sympathy for the underprivileged and the oppressed. Furthermore, even during the 1890's, he seemed to begin to recognize the fraudulency and dishonesty of capitalistic democracy, and he rejoiced at the formidable strength and courage of the proletariat in their class struggles. Whitman is indeed the most distinguished poet of realism and of democracy. His poetry serves not only as a warning flare to ward off the American ruling reactionary groups in their military expansion, racial prejudice, and abuse of human rights, but it also serves as a shining banner guiding all the peoples, including the American people, who strive for real democracy that leads to world peace and progress.

Though sketchy, this note sheds some light on certain facts. The translator's interest in Whitman has been a long one. If his translation predated the Liberation,' some editing may be necessary to suit the spirit of the new era. May we infer, therefore, that the ambiguous translation of the line in Years of the Modern ' and his portrayal of Whitman as a visionary poet of the proletarian revolution are devices used to make Whitman acceptable in present-day China? Whether or not Mr Ch`u believes in what he advocates of the poet is of no great importance to us. The significant fact is that an American poet, an individualistic and patriotic one at that, has made his appearance in a regimented totalitarian state.

As we have no way of finding out how this translation has been received, since literature from Red China is hard to come by, let

us hope that the seeds of freedom and democracy of the *Leaves of Grass* may be sown in the heart of Chinese readers and bear fruit eventually.

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