

毛主席詩詞
手稿十首

Ten Poems and Lyrics
by Mao Tse-tung

Translation and woodcuts
by Wang Hui-Ming

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For Robert Francis

whose life and poetry
would win the admiration
of Chairman Mao and to
whom I say, "Chatting
with you for one evening
is better than reading for
ten years."

Introduction

This book is based on *Ten Poems and Lyrics* by Chairman Mao, published by Tung Fang Hung Press, Shanghai, in 1969. The character text is the same as in *Chairman Mao's Poems and Lyrics*, published by the People's Literature Press in September 1966. The word "lyric" is used here as a translation of the Chinese character t'zu, a collective term for a particular style of poetry expressly written to fit a melody. These ten poems cover a time span of almost half a century starting in 1922. Each poem is a narrative of a historic incident in the Chinese Revolution. No effort was made to ascertain the exact date of each poem except to translate the date in the colophon whenever it appears in Mao's original calligraphy, which is also included in this book.

Chinese characters were in ancient times picture-ideas, and some characters still are. A Chinese poem has always been a word-painting, be this painting visual or mental. Unlike any other written language, the Chinese character is more than just an action word; its structural elements sometimes relate to each other to form a picture of ideas. By the same token, characters in a poem act graphically to weave an imagined tapestry of poetic situations without relying heavily on grammatical conventions or syntax as long as the visual structure of the poem is in focus. Sound makes the poem a word-picture-time-music. Unfortunately, there is no way to reproduce this music in translation, other than the inadequate method of romanization.

When I make this general observation, I am fully aware of the controversial issues involved in translating Chinese poetry into English, with Fenollosa and Pound on the one side and George Kennedy and other linguists on the other. I respect and understand their views, but I cannot wholly subscribe to all their learned opinions. In art, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Dissecting a character into separate parts to search for the total meaning of a poem in translation is in most cases just as farfetched as a total denial that the basic principle of picture-ideas underlying the structure of Chinese characters has any bearing whatsoever on the selection of characters by the poet. Should I be suspected of borrowing ideas from Fenollosa, this suspicion is skin deep, for our similarity is only in terminology. Art comes from convention and not invention. My sympathy lies with the Chinese convention that there must be painting in poetry and poetry in painting. In other words, I would like to see a poem written with a painter's eyes and a painting painted with a poet's mind.



Chairman Mao as a young poet.

With these points in mind, I shall do the following in the book: (1) romanize the characters in the Wade-Giles system, (2) render the text word by word into an appropriate English equivalent, (3) literally translate the line, and (4) translate the poem as a whole. Hopefully, this will reveal the thinking process of a translator whose native language is Chinese. As for points 2 and 3, some readers may feel that there could be better choices of words for the rendition and literal translation. But I have reasons for doing what I did: to use the most common English words in the rendition to retain the accuracy and simplicity of characters in the original poem; and to translate literally, as close as possible to the Chinese word order, thus revealing the changes from literal to free translation. I do not want to rely on English grammar and syntax to dilute the impact of the original Chinese line. The best way to read Chinese poetry is to try to think Chinese. Translation based on this principle sometimes reads awkwardly, but there is no way to avoid it. For instance, in the poem "Changsha," Mao used *wan shan* ("ten thousand mountains" or "hills") and *ch'ang-k'ung* ("long void" or "endless empty" for the air or the sky). We know the usages here of *wan* and *ch'ang* mean more than just "ten thousand" and "long"; the Chinese have their own way of using numerical characters, and I would like to see the readers have a chance to find out for themselves. In the same poem, Mao used two characters together, *wan* ("ten thousand") and *lei* ("kind" or "sort"); these could be translated as "myriad species," but I prefer to stick to "ten thousand kind," because "kind" is more inclusive, applicable to both animate and inanimate objects in the context of the poem. It is better to translate *wan lei* as "everything," which is accurately vague, as it is in the original.

When a Western student learns Chinese, he learns to read from a book and seldom learns to write with a brush at the same time, as a Chinese pupil does in his early childhood. As a result, while he may be able to read Chinese in printed books, he may not be able to read a handwritten personal letter from his Chinese friend. Since he cannot write with a brush, the full beauty of calligraphy forever eludes him. He knows that he should like calligraphy as a form of art, but he will never be able to feel an emotional affinity with what he calls "the brush work." Mao's calligraphy was evolved from *k'aishu* (regular script), which was in use before the 1949 revolution, and not from the simplified characters as shown in this text, which are currently used throughout China. But a student who has learned to write with a brush and is familiar with the stroke order of any style of *k'aishu* will find no difficulty in tracing the kinship of Mao's calligraphy to either regular style or simplified

k'aishu. Technically speaking, Mao's calligraphy is a combination of *ts'aoshu* (grass writing or cursive script) and *hsingshu* (running writing or script), a beautiful combination in expression of individuality. We shall not go into details about the evolution of Chinese calligraphic styles except to say that both the grass and the running styles are a carefree handwritten style for daily use, and sometimes, at a higher level, they are used for artistic expression. Reference to *ts'aoshu* as grass writing or script is actually an error in translation. *Ts'ao* by itself means "grass," but in the compound, *ts'aoshu*, it means "rough," "hurried," or "carefree"; *shu* by itself means "book" or "writing," but here it means "the way of writing" or "draft." Thus, *ts'aoshu* really means a "rough draft," which is exactly what Mao's calligraphy is. To wit: in line six of the poem "The Long March," Mao squeezed the character for "chain," so, by the side of the word *t'ieh* ("iron") instead of placing it between the words *t'ieh* and *han* as it should be. This indicates that he missed the word so when he first wrote it and subsequently corrected his mistake. But in art, neatness bows to expressiveness; it is not important to squeeze the missing word in proper order. Furthermore, if one looks carefully at the two dots at the bottom of the character *han*, one can see that he wrote the scroll casually with a worn-out brush and with the speed and zest of an action painter but that his expressiveness came from long and arduous practice. The writing bears a studied ease like that of a prima donna in action. It is accurate, free, and spirited and has what master calligraphers call "muscle, bone, blood, and flesh." By "muscle," they mean the correct use of the wrist, which gives posture and poise to the character; "bone" furnishes the structural strength to the writing; "blood" comes from the choice of water; and "flesh" from the correct density of the ink. The movement of the stroke and the vitality of the execution breathe life into the beauty of Mao's calligraphy. Calligraphy stands high among all arts in China. It is direct in action and pure in conception. It is nondescriptive and nonspecific. It cannot be associated with any recognizable object, and it stands by itself. One stroke begins the origin of all existence, and one root forms the roots of all forms.

In Mao's calligraphy, we can see that he is a man of firm determination, unpredictable mood, quick in decision and fast in action—soft yet strong, pliable yet penetrating, sophisticated yet earthy, and delicate yet robust. In short, he is indeed a "simplicated" and "complicated" man. The upward tilt of the right corner of his characters suggests a contempt of conventions. It is reminiscent of the calligraphy by the eccentric poet, essayist, painter, and seal artist Cheng Hsien (1683-1765), who called himself *feng tzu* ("the mad man").

Both men show an unyielding independence in their work, a quality treasured by all and achieved by few in the history of art.

When I read English translations of Chinese poetry, I often wonder how the translator's mind works. Sometimes I feel like a man scratching his back with a shirt on: the itch is not really quenched. My poetic itch is covered by the shirt of translation. Then I realize that what the translator did was to translate what he thought the poet meant rather than what the poet said. For instance, in the last line of the first stanza in the poem "Changsha," the words *ch'en* ("to sink") and *fu* ("to float") have been translated as "fate," "destiny," or even "nature." Any of these may be what Mao meant, but they are not what he said. He actually said, "I ask the awesome great earth who masters [or determines] the sinking and floating." Now, suppose we know a young poet standing by a riverside, near a lake, looking at a magnificent landscape with hundreds of boats racing on the water, with a burning desire for revolution running high in his blood, asking, "Who is to determine the sinking and floating?" How could he mean anything but the "fate" of man or the "destiny" of a nation? But why should the translator interpret what he said into abstract words such as "fate" and "destiny," rather than faithfully translate his action words, *ch'en* and *fu*, into "sinking" and "floating?" This would not only be unfaithful to the poet but would also insult the intelligence of the reader. At the other extreme, we have translators who forget that poetic translation is for poetry and not for dictionary definition. When I translated *wan hu hou* into "the lords of the land," I was accused of inaccuracy, and one of the mushrooming scholars in "Chinese Studies" suggested that I should have stuck to the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) term, "the marquis of ten thousand families." In the first place, the title "marquis," the man in charge of the marches on border regions, which was first bestowed in England in 1386, is at best a very rough equivalent of the ancient Han term *hou*, a feudal prince, "the man who was first in rank." A Chinese man who was first in rank (*hou*) preceded an English man who controlled the border patrol (marquis) by approximately one thousand years in time and heaven knows how many steps in rank. Secondly, when Mao wrote the poem in 1926, China had been a republic for more than a decade and those glorious "marquises" had been dead more than two thousand years. "Lords of the land" was quite fitting to the situation in China, which at that time was infested with villainous warlords and big land owners with private armies who lorded over the people. I tried to avoid using the clumsy mouthful, "marquises of ten thousand families." Some sinologists tend to forget that what is good for the dictionary is not necessarily good for

poetry. In other cases, when Mao used a simple and accurate word, some translators would substitute a fancier word with connotations they thought would fit their concept of Oriental art. For instance, the Chinese word *ou* means "bowl," and when Mao used a broken "golden bowl" to symbolize war-torn China, it became a "golden vase" in the hands of certain translators. The word "bowl" carries an unwritten allusion to rice and by extension to land, whereas the word "vase" suggests the lustrous decorative Ming porcelain which was enjoyed only by rich landlords and decadent mandarins. Would the great revolutionary poet Mao use an art object from the controlling class to symbolize the war-torn and starving country? When the history-conscious Mao wrote his own lines, he must have remembered the statement made by Emperor Wu (A.D.420-23 of the Sung dynasty House of Liu) in *The History of South*, "My country is strong and solid like a golden bowl, there is not a single crack or flaw in it," and the line, "my country is fully plenteous like a golden bowl" in a poem by Sung Chiung. In the same poem, Mao wrote, *fen t'ien fen ti* (to "share field and land"); in translation the phrase became "redistribution of land." "Redistribution" does not cover the whole gamut of connotations in the history of Chinese peasant rebellions and attempted land reforms, such as the ancient "well field system," the Taiping Rebellion in the nineteenth century, and the 1906 insurrection in Mao's native province Hunan led by his fellow Hunanese, Huang Hsing, whom he had greatly admired when he arrived at Changsha in September, a month before the 1911 revolution, the revolution that changed China from an empire into a republic. On the banners of these uprisings were the words, *fen t'ien* or *fen ti*. Here the word *fen* not only means "division" and "redistribution" of the land but also means "sharing" the labor, the harvest, the hopes and despairs, and all the other ups and downs that go with collective farming. The ownership of the land in this context does not even seem to be important. To redistribute may be more "scientific," current, and legalistic, but to "share" is more moral and human. This is what the Chinese Revolution is about.

Most Chinese poetry is written in simple characters, and one does not need a large vocabulary to appreciate it. After all, there are only somewhat more than a thousand characters in the great *Tao Te Ching*, and most of them are common characters. A student in elementary Chinese can read Chinese poetry without difficulty if the poetry is presented to him as a word-picture. In fact, he will enjoy it more and learn faster if he begins his reading in poetry and writing with a brush instead of learning Chinese as a tool to learn other things Chinese later, as commonly practiced today in universities. The very attitude

if learning a language as a tool dulls the sense of wonder and diminishes the pleasure of learning. The following is an example of the way I would like to see Chinese poetry presented to the students:

Ch'ü nien chin jih tz'u men chung

去年今日此門中

Gone/year/to-/day/this/door/in

Last year today in this door

ren mien t'ao hua hsiang ying hung

人面桃花相映紅

Human/face/peach/flower/mutual, reciprocal/shine, reflect/red

Human face peach flower mutual shine red

ren mien pu chih ho ch'u ch'ü

人面不知何處去

Human/face/not/know/what/place/go

Human face not know where go

t'ao hua i,yi chiu hsiao ch'un feng

桃花依歸笑春風

Peach/flower/as/old/smile/spring/wind

Peach flower as before smile spring wind

A year ago today in this gate,

Her face, like the peach blossom, ruddied radiance

I know not where she has gone, but

Peach flowers as always smile in the spring breeze.

If I recall correctly, this is probably one of Ts'ui Hu's (active c. 796) early poems. Ts'ui Hu was a romantic, hot-tempered, witty, and generous poet who could express the deepest feeling with simplest words. And he formed, in his precocious adolescence, a lifelong habit of "asking for flowers and seeking for willows" (chasing beautiful women). This poem was about his annual trip to

the countryside on Ching Ming Day (a spring festival, celebrated by flying kites, strolling in the countryside, and sniffing wild flowers). That was the reason he used exact time words in the first line. Why did I choose the word "gate" rather than "door" for the Chinese character *men*, which in most cases is translated as "door"? Because the Chinese village is usually surrounded by a mud wall with a thatched-roof-covered gate facing the road, and the poet wanted readers to know that the girl was out of her house, about to come out of the gate, and unexpectedly met the glance of a handsome stranger who "flirted with her with his eyes." Do I stretch my imagination too far? Not if we know the colloquial expression, *t'iao pang tzu*, in Ts'ui Hu's native place. *T'iao pang tzu* (flirtation with eyes) is slang, a little obscure in origin but poetic in meaning, used to describe the expressions in the eyes of young lovers at their first meeting, before they speak to each other. All this unsaid poetry is implied in the word *men*, which in this case could be translated only as "gate," not "door." If she were inside a door, he could not have seen her through the mud wall. For Chinese readers, *men* would be good enough to convey the thought-picture; we do not have to make a distinction between a door and a gate. The key characters in this poem are *hsiang* ("mutual, reciprocal"), *ying* ("shine, reflect"), and *hung* ("red"); the action word is *ying*. Together they form a thought of "shining red mutually with the peach blossom." Would an English line, "Her face ruddied radiance like the peach blossom," be adequate to express this complicated thought? I leave the reader to judge. How exciting it would be if a student could have a chance to better this translation with his own English by following the same thinking process. He learns poetry and Chinese at the same time.

Being neither a student of language nor a poet, I claim no erudition in linguistic niceties or poetic preciosities. I say what I have to say as a painter and calligrapher who loves Chinese poetry and sees it as a graphic presentation of a poetic situation. The presence of this poetic-graphic situation (word-painting) is a necessary ingredient in translation. When Robert Frost quipped that poetry is what disappears in translation, could he have meant the absence of this poetic-graphic situation?

I realize that it is less sinful to write bad poems than to translate good ones badly. If Mao's poetry comes through my translation, credit must go to him as a good poet. If readers find flaws, no one but I am to blame. Finally, I must thank Mrs. Franklin W. Houn for her bravery in checking my romanization.

Wang Hui-Ming

Ch'ung Yang

重阳

Double Yang

Jen sheng i,yi lao t'ien nan lao

人生易老天难老，

Man/grow/easy/old/heaven, time/difficulty/old
Man grows old easily but time never

Sui sui ch'ung yang

岁岁重阳。

Year/year/double/yang

Every year a day of double yang

Chin yu ch'ung yang

今又重阳，

Today/again/double/yang

Today is double yang day again

Chan ti huang hua fen wai hsiang

战地黄花分外香。

War/ground/yellow/flower/share/outside/fragrant

In the battlefield the yellow flowers are exceptionally fragrant

I,yi nien i,yi tu ch'iu feng ching

一年一度秋风劲，

One/year/one/time/autumn/wind/strong

Once a year the autumn wind lashes fiercely

Pu szu ch'un kuang

不似春光。

Not/like/spring/light

It is not like the spring season

Sheng szu ch'un kuang

胜似春光，

Better/like/spring/light

It is better than spring

Liao-k'uo Chiang t'ien wan li shuang

寥廓江天万里霜。

Firmament/river/sky/10,000/miles/frost

Clear sky, water, and 10,000 miles of frost

Double Yang

Man ages easily, but time never.

And there is one day of double yang every year.

Today that day comes again,

The yellow flower in the battlefield

Is more fragrant than anywhere else.

Once a year autumn winds lash fiercely.

It is not like spring, but

It is better than spring.

Under the clear sky lie

Ten thousand miles of frost and water.

Chinese numbers were conventionally divided into *yin* and *yang* (even and odd). In the old Chinese calendar, the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, a "double nine" day, is the double yang day. It is a day of great festivity, celebrated by climbing hills, feasting on persimmons, and showing off chrysanthemums.

Liao-k'uo, in the last line, is a classic compound meaning "vast expanse," "dome of heaven," or "clear expanse of sky."

In classical Chinese, the terms hundred, thousand, or ten thousand are all commonly used to denote large numbers. *Wan* ("ten thousand") *li* could be translated "ten thousand leagues" or "ten thousand miles"—since *li*, like league and mile, in everyday usage is an inexact measurement for a great distance.

人言方名
天不假年
汝城名物
公又年物
對地年物
今之如年
至一度秋
風雨如年
年名如年
州年如年
寧東年物
江天如年
五六。

Yu Yung

游泳

Swimming

Ts'ai yin ch'ang-sha shui

才饮长沙水，

Just/drink/Ch'angsha/water

Just drank Changsha water

Yu shih wu-ch'ang yü

又食武昌鱼。

Again/eat/Wuchang/fish

Again eat Wuchang fish

Wan li ch'ang chiang heng tu

万里长江横渡，

Ten thousand/mile/long/river/crosswise/ferry

Ferry across ten thousand mile long river

Chi mu ch'u t'ien shu

极目楚天舒。

To reach end of/eye/Hunan/sky/stretch out

The southern sky stretches out as far as eyes can see

Pu kuan feng ch'ui lang ta

不管风吹浪打，

Don't/care/wind/blow/wave/strike
Don't care the wind blows and waves strike

Sheng szu hsien t'ing hsin pu

胜似闲庭信步，

Better/like/leisure/courtyard/easy of mind/step
Better than a stroll in a courtyard

Chin-jih te k'uan yü

今日得宽馥。

Today/gain/wide/surplus
Today gain wide space

Tzu tsai ch'uan shang yüeh

子在川上曰：

Master/at/river/upon/said
The Master said by a riverbank

Shih-che ju szu fu

逝者如斯夫！

That which passed away/as/this (a final particle)
That which passed away is like this (what is flowing on)

Feng ch'iang tung

风樯动，

Wind/mast/move
The wind moves the sail

Kuei she ching

龟蛇静，

Turtle/Snake/still
The Turtle and the Snake (hills) still

Ch'i hung t'u

起宏图。

Arise/grand/plan
Great plans come up

Yi ch'iao fei chia nan pei

一桥飞架南北，

One/bridge/fly/support/south/north
A bridge flies across the south and the north

T'ien ch'ien pien t'ung t'u

天堑变通途。

Sky, nature/barrier/change/through/road
Nature's barrier changes/into a thoroughfare

Keng li hsi Chiang shih pi

更立西江石壁，

Again/stand/west/river/rock/cliff, wall
Build a dam to the west of the river

Chieh tuan wu shan yün yü

截断巫山云雨，

Obstruct/break/Wu/mountain/cloud/rain
Block the rainfall from the Wu Mountain

Kao hsia ch'u p'ing hu

高峡出平湖。

High/gorge/come out/smooth/lake
High gorge comes into calm lake

Shen-nü ying wu yang

神女应无恙，

Goddess/should/no/harm
No harm done to goddess

Tang ching shih-chieh shu

当惊世界殊。

Ought to/surprise/world/different
Ought to be surprised by the changing world

62

Swimming

Having just swallowed Changsha water,
I am now tasting Wuchang fish.
While I am swimming across the ten-thousand-mile long Yangtze River,
The southern sky stretches out as far as my eyes can see.
I don't care how the winds blow and waves strike.
This is better than strolling in a courtyard.
Today I feel free in this wide space.
Standing by the river, the Master said,
"What has passed by was like this."

The wind moves the sail.
Tortoise Mountain and Snake Hill stand still.
Great projects are planned for here.
A bridge flies across the river from north to south,
Nature's barrier becomes a throughway.
Build a dam upstream in the west,
It will hold the rainfall from the mountain region of Wu,
Torrents from high gorges will empty into calm lakes.
These projects should not harm the goddess, but
She will certainly be surprised by the changing world.

December 5, 1956

The second line of the poem refers to Mao's famous swim across the Yangtze River in May 1956, when he was sixty-two years old. The calligraphic version is dated December 5, 1956.

Ch'u sky: during the period of the Three Warring States (474-221 B.C.), the kingdom of Ch'u was in what is now Hunan Province. To swim across the Yangtze River from Hankow to Wuchang, as Mao did, one has to face south toward Ch'u. Ch'u sky is therefore freely translated as "southern sky."

The Master referred to at the end of the first stanza is Confucius (551-479 B.C.), and the quotation is from the Analects. An interpretation of the line would be, "Life flows into the past like the river."

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水調歌頭

游泳

才飲黃沙水，五岳盡為魚。
滄里長江橫渡，極目楚天
舒。不管風吹浪打，自是以
剩在佳處。步今日得寬
舒。子在川上曰：逝者如斯
夫！風播弄動於地
靜故宏圖。一橋飛架

南北，天無之矣。通途。交
立西江石壁，截流蘇山
重雨，高峽出平湖。神女
應無恙，青崖彩雲，世界
殊。

毛澤東

一九五六年
七月五日