

The Influence of Rabindranath Tagore on Modern Chinese Writers*

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Chou Tso-jen (周作人) wrote in 1922 saying, "The Chinese New Poetry has been influenced by Europe in all respects but the *hsiao-shih* (Little Verse) is an exception. The origin of the latter is from the East. There are two streams: India and Japan".¹ As a matter of fact, the Little Verse of Japan, i.e. the *haiku*, was only a single flower transplanted to the garden of modern Chinese poetry from China's eastern neighbor. It soon withered. Some of Tagore's poetical works, however, did exert considerable influence on the Little Verse Movement in China though the Movement itself lasted only a few years, roughly from 1921 to 1924, and not everybody would call it a movement at all.

Before we deal with the poets significantly involved in the writing of Little Verse, we will first focus our attention on Kuo Mo-jo (郭沫若) for the sake of chronological convenience.

According to Kuo himself, he went to Japan for the study of medicine early in 1914 when Tagore was soaring into popularity there. He stumbled upon a few poems by the Indian Nobel Prize winner in September that year and was at once deeply and emotionally impressed by the peculiar "fresh and tranquil flavor" of those poems which struck him as something entirely different from their Chinese or English counterparts. He bought a volume of Tagore's *Crescent Moon* the next year; then in 1915 and 1916, he went on to devour almost all the early poems and plays by Tagore. He became a

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worshipper of the Indian sage and the outcome was his writing unrhymed English verse in imitation of Tagore before he composed in Chinese.²

David T. Roy has stated that many of Kuo's early poems "were inspired by Tomiko and composed under the influence of Tagore."³ If Roy meant Kuo's "early poems" by the poet's published works, his statement would need some modification. For insofar as we know, Kuo put all his worthy early poems in the volume *Nü-shen* (女神, The Goddess) which on the whole was not Tagorean in tone or spirit with the exception of three pieces, i.e. "Ming-ch'an" (鳴蟬, The Singing Cicada), "Wan-pu" (晚步, An Evening Walk) and "Ch'en-hsing" (晨醒, Early Rising). But as Kuo was "intoxicated with Tagore for two to three years,"⁴ he must have produced more than three Tagorean poems during that period. Most probably most of the early efforts were later obliterated on account of their immaturity and that was why Kuo said he had "aimed at a simple and lucid style in my [his] early verses but the result was negligible."⁵

The event leading to Kuo's parting company with Tagore was dramatic. He in the height of literary intoxication compiled a *T'ai-ko-erh shih-hsüan* (泰戈爾詩選, Selected Poems of Tagore) from the Indian poet's *Crescent Moon*, *Gardener*, and *Gitanjali* in 1917. However, his labor was not duly recognized as no publishing company in China would accept it. Kuo's hope of gaining some extra dollars to subsidize his meagre scholarship was dashed. Disappointed, he directed his resentment at Tagore, dropped him, and called him an aristocrat who would not suit humble commoners, Kuo being unfortunately one of them.⁶ He also discarded the poetic "fresh and tranquil flavor" which had once overwhelmed him. He soon assumed a boisterous voice. The new mentor was Walt Whitman. However, Kuo still paid some tribute to Tagore for the beauty of internal rhythm in his poetry as late as 1921.⁷

During Tagore's visit to China in 1924, Kuo, having declared himself a Marxist, joined other leftists in denouncing Tagore's philosophical thought. In poetry, he singled out Tagore's *Stray Birds* and branded it as something trite and frivolous.⁸

By the time Kuo had abandoned Indian tranquility for American clamor, Ping Hsin (冰心) emerged as the second follower of Tagore among the Chinese writers. This poetess first read Tagore with full appreciation in the fall of 1919.⁹ A few months later she wrote an essay — "Yao-chi Yin-tu che-jen T'ai-ko-erh" (遙致印度哲人泰戈爾, To the Indian Philosopher

Tagore from Afar) in which she expressed her thanks:

Your absolute belief — the belief of 'a great harmony of the universe and the individual soul'; your poetry which preserves and expresses the 'aesthetic feeling' about nature — all have soaked into my brains and merged with my silent thought and become combined strings which produce a tuneless and soundless music that is remote and wonderful. Tagore! Thank you for your ethereal and exquisite poetic feeling which has cured my inborn sorrow, and thank you for your superior philosophy which has assuaged my loneliness.¹⁰

After a few weeks in another essay entitled "Wu-hsien chih sheng ti chieh-hsien" (無限之生的界線, The Line of Infinite Life) she expounded Tagore's view on life and death.¹¹ In her argument, which was presented in the form of dialogue between her and a deceased friend, she maintained that there was no such thing as death, for death was one side of the "infinite life" just as life was the other side of it, and that human beings were united with one another and also with all animate and inanimate beings of the universe. Indeed, although Ping Hsin professed to be a Christian, she was fundamentally a Tagorean pantheist. She said, ". . . my religious thought came entirely from the aesthetic feeling about nature."¹²

Ping Hsin confessed that after perusing Tagore's *Stray Birds* she was inspired to jot down her "random thoughts" in its poetic form. And she produced two volumes of poems: *Fan-hsing* (繁星, The Numerous Stars) and *Ch'un-shui* (春水, Spring Water).¹³

No one among the modern Chinese poets had written more Tagorean verses than Ping Hsin and none was more influential than she in terms of the Little Verse Movement. However, referring to the *Numerous Stars* and *Spring Water* she pleaded for herself thus: "*Numerous Stars* and *Spring Water* are not poetry. At least I did not intend to write poetry at that time."¹⁴ In spite of her denial, *Numerous Stars* and *Spring Water* are considered nothing but poetry by both the reader and the critic. The free verse form, the abstract and sometimes religious overtones, and the epigrammatic lines are unabashedly Tagorean, and many of the common images in Tagore abound in Ping Hsin, for example, the sea, moon, stars, flowers, human heart and soul, and small and humble objects like children, grass, leaves of trees, grains of sand and so on; and whenever the setting of time exists, it is often the evening or the night rather than the day. Obviously, the night

is more congenial to the mysticism which pervades Tagore's works.

Numerous Stars and *Spring Water* were instant successes. They prompted many people, poets or no poets, to manufacture short verses in the manner of Ping Hsin; thus the spontaneous Little Verse Movement came to acquire a pretty big voice in literary circles. Commenting on this vogue, Liang Shih-ch'iu (梁實秋) grunted: "Now the whole group of modern writers and critics have just flocked to it."¹⁵ Hsü Chih-mo (徐志摩) also said something to the same effect when he wrote in 1923 about Tagore's "tremendous influence" on modern Chinese poetry.¹⁶ This phenomenon was understandable. Since scribbling a few lines was no labor, many poetasters took it as a short-cut to literary fame. They could crown themselves poets simply by publishing some short verses which carried a whiff of aphorism or "philosophy." This trend in the development of modern Chinese poetry alarmed some critics. Liang Shih-ch'iu voiced his protest and admonition in a critique of Ping Hsin. He affirmed that the Tagorean verse, being replete with abstract ideas and devoid of emotion, was not at all poetry, and that the vogue created with the publication of *Numerous Stars* and *Spring Water* was deplorable.¹⁷ As to Ping Hsin, she did not continue to write poetry after *Numerous Stars* and *Spring Water* in spite of their popularity. Later, when Tagore was visiting China in 1924, she did not join in the chorus of praise accorded the distinguished Indian guest by such celebrities as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (梁啟超) and Hsü chih-mo. One might argue that it was because of her being in the United States then. But the admirer who composed "To the Indian Philosopher Tagore from Afar" in China while Tagore was in India could easily have written another eulogizing essay of a similar title "from afar" to welcome the Indian poet. However, she was silent. Obviously, Ping Hsin was no longer a disciple of Tagore at that time. Of course Liang Shih-ch'iu's attack launched in the previous year might have had some stunning effect on her whose delicate nerves could not sustain the burden of critical remarks.

But there were in China other poets who continued to promote Little Verse, and, intentionally or otherwise, broaden the Tagorean influence. Hsü Yü-no (徐玉諾) was one of them. He wrote many little pieces which were short and glutted with little objects: little worms, little birds, little leaves, little stars, little lamps, little children, little twigs . . . An almost endless list!¹⁸ But this particular Tagorean craze was not shared by another Little Verse poet, Tsung Pai-hua (宗白華) who on one occasion in retro-

spection of his poetic career wrote:

Later on I came to like writing little verses. It could be regarded as an influence from the T'ang poets of the quatrains. It had nothing to do with the Japanese *haiku*; neither was Tagore's influence significant. But [it came from the fact that] my friend Tso Shun-sheng often recited Huang Chung-su's translation of Tagore's *Gardener* . . . His tone was melancholy and subdued with deep emotion; it aroused in me a pensive feeling that is a universal and remote love.¹⁹

Tsung Pai-hua was known for his pantheism. His volume of *Little Verse — Liu-yün hsiao-shih* (流雲小詩, Little Verses of the Drifting Clouds) was Tagorean both in its title and in its form. As to the content, it was the product of a mood which was the mixture of, in his own words,

many remote thoughts . . . seemingly dejected; seemingly happy; seemingly enlightening; seemingly intangible. Infinite melancholy feelings were mixed with infinite passionate ones. It appeared that this humble little mind together with the remote Nature and the vast mankind opened up a deep, mystical and dark underground tunnel in the absolute silence, to establish the closest contact with nature and life.²⁰

Judging from his own confessions, it is strange that Tsung should acknowledge his debt to Tagore and yet play down Tagore's influence on his verse writing. In the thirties when the name of Tagore had lost most of its lustre in China and other countries, Tsung might have intended to associate more closely with the T'ang ancients than the modern Indian. But whatever his intention, the poem quoted below, typical of Tsung's works, reminds us of Tagore both in form and content rather than of any T'ang poet:

The tree of life
Had a flower wilting,
She dropped into my bosom;
I pressed her against my heart.
She touched its music,
And transformed itself into a little verse.²¹

生命的樹上
凋了一枝花

謝落在我的懷裏，
我輕輕的壓在心上。
她接觸了我心中的音樂
化成小詩一朵。

The appearance of the *Little Verses of the Drifting Clouds* (Dec. 1923) marked the end of the Little Verse Movement in that the general interest just declined; and it was at most lukewarm when Tagore visited China a few months later. Of course Tagore might have been able to instil some new life into the dying Little Verse Movement while in China, but he on the whole shunned literary topics in his talks and was only anxious to sell his "revival of the Eastern civilization." Most people, especially the younger ones, having drunk deep in leftist propaganda, were opposed to his Indian philosophy of submission and weakness. Many vigorous literary fists were raised against him. Mao Tun (茅盾) called him a swindler. Kuo Mo-jo treated his spiritual thought as morphine to the common people.²² Wen I-to (聞一多) lashed his poetry as being too cold, emotionless, insipid and formless to be poetry at all; he alerted Chinese writers to the curse of this baneful influence.²³ Although Lu Hsün (魯迅) and Chou Tso-jen did not have much to say about Tagore, the little they had uttered was anything but appreciation and warm welcome. And even Cheng Chen-to (鄭振鐸), a translator and enthusiast of Tagore before his arrival, was quiet about Tagore's literary achievements after the Indian poet had hammered away at the great value and significance of the Eastern civilization, or rather, Indian civilization which was then contemptuously labeled as the "philosophy of the people whose country has lost its sovereignty."²⁴ However, amidst the din of condemnation raised by the self-styled progressives even after Tagore's visit, T'ien Han (田漢), the playwright, surprised both his friends and foes with the following message:

At that time Tagore was in China, but the literary people were not unanimous in their attitude toward him. The rightist group extended him a warm welcome but the leftist group rose in protest . . . I am of the opinion that Tagore's art can stand on its own value, and no opposition should be launched against him because of his being not revolutionary. I think they [the leftist group] are far from being able to appreciate him.²⁵

T'ien Han was speaking in defence of Tagore and in fact also of himself.

He had a good reason to do so. He had received his further education in Japan in the same period as Kuo Mo-jo and was likewise enamoured of Tagore's poetry. His early literary products, mainly dramatic writings, reflected a strong Tagorean lyricism that larded a considerable part of the dialogue. He considered this singular feature a manifestation of dramatic technique. He wrought it into his works with a view to "stirring up a fresh, poignant and fragrant atmosphere of art."²⁶

Wang T'ung-chao (王統照) was one of the supporters of Tagore and acted as his translator and companion on one or two occasions during Tagore's stay in China. He revered the Indian sage for "his exceedingly great character and sublime spirit"; his admiration was mixed with a good deal of awe.²⁷ His early poetry and prose sang, though sometimes only softly and subtly, a praise of love and beauty which was Tagorean in style.

Turning our focus on Wang T'ung-chao's friend Hsü Chih-mo in the examination of Tagore's literary influence on Chinese writers, we have a rather unusual story to tell. Hsü, a votary of Tagore, was his chief translator and companion during the Indian sage's China visit. However, his comments on Tagore's poetry smack of negation. In "T'ai-ko-erh lai hua" (泰戈爾來華, Tagore coming to China), an essay of his, he had the following to say,

As to what position he [Tagore] holds in world literature . . . and whether his poetry can be counted an independent contribution . . . we have no answer. . . . So in terms of his visit to China, the greatest hope of mine does not lie in extending the influence of his poetic art, nor in propagating his religious philosophy or mysticism, but in stressing his lovable character.²⁸

The above statement would seem to indicate that Hsü had vaulted over a political fence and assembled in the group of Mao Tun, Kuo Mo-jo and Wen I-to who depreciated Tagore's poetry. Truly, Hsü had no passion for writing little verses or advancing the Little Verse Movement, neither was he intensely interested in the poetic form (free verse) which Tagore adopted in writing his poetry in English or translating his Bengali works. But Hsü privately did lavish commendation on Tagore's poetry in 1923,²⁹ and Wang P'i-chiang (汪辟疆) in his reminiscences recorded how Hsü chih-mo enjoyed reading Tagore's *Stray Birds* even before he first met Tagore in 1924.³⁰ Five years later, Hsü was still able to quote offhandedly part of *Stray Birds*.³¹

In view of those facts, it would be unthinkable that he should condemn Tagore's poetry even though he might not have had a high regard for its form or the absence of it. It would seem that his singing more or less in unison with other writers in the criticism of Tagore's poetry was due to his wish to draw public attention to Tagore's character, which in his opinion was more significant than his poetry.

Chu Hsiang (朱湘) asserted that one third of *Chih-mo ti shih* (志摩的詩, The Poems of Chih-mo), Hsü's first collection of poetry published in 1925, was "philosophical poetry" in which Hsü himself took pride and which "possessed Tagore's superficiality but not Tagore's subtlety."³² Admittedly, some of Hsü's poems were written under the influence of Tagore. Both the master and the disciple were immersed in meditation on life and death. However, the older man had already derived a satisfactory answer for himself from his own religious experience and arrived at a state of fearlessness,³³ but the younger man was still floundering in the mire of perplexity. Hsu was troubled by the question of life and death almost all his life. A believer in Nietzsche at the outset, he became disenchanted with the Superman a couple of years after returning to China from Europe and began to feel the need of probing into the origin of man almost in a religious way when he wrote "Tsai-p'ou" (再剖, A Second Dissection) in 1926.³⁴ Chao Ching-shen (趙景深) discussing Hsü's third collection of poems *Meng-hu chi* (猛虎集, The Fierce Tiger) emphasized Hsü's "religious piety,"³⁵ which was indeed redolent of a Tagorean flavor. As far as religion is concerned, two passages in Hsü's longest poem, "Ai ti ling-kan" (愛的靈感, The Inspiration of Love), completed shortly before his death, are worth noting:

I think I'll die and convert
 My secrets into the kindly wind and rain;
 Into a long rainbow of hope,
 Into moss on stones, with a fresh green
 To drown their obstinacy; into
 The dancing of wings in the dark; into
 Birds' songs in the season for farming;
 Into fine writing on water; into waves
 To proclaim Universe's intellect without end;
 Into a melancholy green to
 Darken the color in every sleeping child's dream;
 Into the sweet music of the planets. . . .³⁶

Now I

can in actual fact die; I want you
Thus embrace me until I am gone,
Until my eyes never again open,
Until I fly, fly, fly to the space,
Disolving into sand, into light, into wind.
O pain, but pain is only for a while,
Being transient; happiness is for long;
Love never dies . . . ³⁷

我想我死去再將我的
秘密化成仁慈的風雨，
化成指點希望的長虹，
化成石上的苔蘚，蔥翠
淹沒它們的冥頑；化成
黑暗中翅膀的舞，化成
農時的鳥歌；化成水面
錦繡的文章；化成波濤
永遠宣揚宇宙的靈通；
化成月的慘綠在每個
睡孩的夢上添深顏色；
化成系星間的妙樂……

現在我
真真可以死了，我要你
這樣抱着我直到我去，
直到我的眼再不睜開，
直到我飛，飛，飛去太空，
散成沙，散成光，散成風，
啊苦痛，但苦痛是短的，
是暫時的；快樂是長的，
愛是不死的…

The lines cited above publish the gospel that life and death are but different forms of existence, albeit death dissolves everything into small particles, or atoms. Another late poem of Hsü, "Ch'iu-yüeh" (秋月, The Autumn Moon), ends with:

In the vast expanse of this long autumn night
in an autumn field,
The might of metamorphosis
In the depths of every fiber
Unfold
The smiles of a babe. ³⁸

在這曩絕的秋夜與秋野的
蒼茫中，
「解化」的偉大
在一切纖微的深處
展開了
嬰兒的微笑！

In this way the process of mutation forever goes on, and there is also the subtle revelation that *samsara* (the cycle of births and deaths) is a permanent phenomenon of the universe. Such thoughts owe their origin to the great fountain of Indian philosophy, the *Upanishads* which had been transmitted to Hsü through Tagore.

Hsü should be grateful to his Indian mentor; for in the light of "The Inspiration of Love" and "The Autumn Moon" Hsü seemed to have solved the problem of life and death before his days on earth ended. Even if he had not come to an absolute solution, the problem which had worried him in the beginning of his intellectual awakening did not appear to agonize him before his death.

Further, Tagore's belief that small, humble things are precious, great and praiseworthy is increasingly perceptible in Hsü's poetry after 1924. His poems "Pai-hsien" (拜獻, Worship and Dedication), "K'uo ti hai" (濶的海, The Wide Sea) and "Ch'e-shang" (車上, On Board A Train) are evidences. There what is generally supposed to be great and sublime is implicitly disparaged. But a close examination of this idea will reveal that Hsü's exaltation of the little things is not divorced from an aspiration to ultimate greatness. In "The Wide Sea," for instance, the "crevice" is an "undying crevice" and therefore the implication is of immortality, which is even greater than greatness. By extension, the "one minute" and the "one tiny light" are not the ordinary minute or light but the immortal time and immortal light. The concept of the immortal minute is also expressed in an early work "To-hsieh t'ien wo ti hsin yu i-tu ti t'iao-tang" (多謝天！我的心又一次的跳盪, Thank Heaven, My Heart Leaps Up Once Again) and that of the immortal light is further advanced in the "Ch'ien-yen" (前言, Introductory Remarks) of the first issue of the *Shih-k'an* (詩刊, Poetry Magazine) published in 1931 in Shanghai. Likewise, in "On Board A Train," joy is brought to all the passengers by the song of a little girl who, a "soloist," brightens every inch of the long, dull journey by her singing. Whether the poem is based on facts is unimportant; what interests us is that the whole

description is symbolic. It would seem reasonable to take the passengers for all the people of the world who, in the stream of time, i.e., the journey on the train, are all weary of life; what gladdens and refreshes them is not from something great but from something small which springs spontaneously from a loving heart, namely, the song sung by the little girl. Again, in "T'a yen li yu ni" (他眼裏有你, His Eyes Have Thee), God, the greatest and mightiest, does not exist in great Heavens or the vast underworld but in the little eyes of a little child.³⁹ The idea of reaching through littleness to greatness, being analogous to the Christian doctrine of humility leading to glory, is evident in the later works of Hsü. But Hsü, however, certainly did not acquire such teachings from the Christian church but from Tagore. This influence from the Indian poet also to some extent mellowed Hsü's character in the last stage of his life. Comparing "Ying shang ch'ien ch'ü" (迎上前去, Going Forward)⁴⁰ with "Introductory Remarks" in the *Poetry Magazine* (Shanghai)⁴¹ for instance, the reader will see a zealous bragging young man grow into a much more humble person of early middle age. Although Hsü in his last years still aspired to greatness, he would only make attempts on the basis of small, or at least smaller words, not grandiloquence. Threads of humbleness had been woven into the fabric of his life. For that he had another reason to be grateful to Tagore.

Early in his Cambridge days Hsü was already attracted to mysticism and its associate, the night. Two years before he came into personal contact with the Indian poet, he was already selling such literary merchandise as "beautiful mysteries and mysterious beauties."⁴² Hsü who wrote

It is one of the most mysterious experiences of mine in Cambridge to listen, in a starlit night, to the sound of water, to the curfew of the neighboring villages, and to the weary cattle chewing the cud by the riverside.⁴³

and "I desire that depth, and that quiet [of the night]"⁴⁴ defended mysticism when quoting William Blake in an essay whose theme was the woman writer Katherine Mansfield.⁴⁵ His inclination for mysticism intensified after his making a personal acquaintance with Tagore, though at first he was indifferent to Tagore's religious thought because of his own inadequate knowledge of the Indian culture.

Judging from his close relationship with Tagore after 1924,⁴⁶ Hsü's Indian philosophy came from nobody but his Indian mentor. But he did not actually enter into the spiritual world of which Tagore was a permanent

resident. He died too young to be able to proceed to the very end of his spiritual journey.

Although Tagore's spiritual influence was strong on Hsü, it was not powerful enough to propel him to spend at least a few years in Tagore's Visva Bharati University in Santiniketan, West Bengal, India both to teach (Chinese language and culture) and to study (Bengali literature) for the interchange of Chinese and Indian scholarship which was one of Tagore's great dreams before and after his visit to China.⁴⁷ However, Hsü was irresistibly drawn to Tagore's rural reconstruction work in India. For a period of time he was wishing fervently for the establishment of a practical rural reconstruction program in China in imitation of the one set up by Tagore and L. K. Elmhirst in Sriniketan, India.⁴⁸ Fundamentally, Hsü's social and political thoughts bore much affinity with Tagore's. His denunciation of colonialism, imperialism, violence, and regimentation of thought by government, and his promotion of love, sympathy, idealism, cooperation and nature worship were also regular themes in Tagore's writings. Although it would go too far to point to Tagore as the only influence on Hsü in this respect since Hsü had already written on them before he met Tagore, it is not rash to conclude that Tagore at least reinforced those convictions which Hsü had first formed in Europe.

A peculiar influence on Hsü from Tagore was the term "Crescent Moon" which was the title of *one of* Tagore's collections of poems as mentioned earlier. When Hsü organized a club for himself and his friends in 1922 in Peking, he named it "Hsin-yüeh she" (新月社, The Crescent Moon Society). Five years later, he established first a bookstore — *Hsin-yüeh shu-tien* (新月書店, Crescent Moon Bookstore) and then a magazine *Hsin-yüeh yüeh-k'an* (新月月刊, Crescent Moon Monthly) in Shanghai with a number of friends. Whatever he handled seemed to have been transmuted into "Crescent Moon" and to appear Tagorean! Being well aware of his own prepossession, he offered an explanation:

We can hardly abandon the name Crescent Moon. For though it is not a particularly strong and powerful symbol, its slender shape clearly implies and indicates a future perfection.⁴⁹

To embrace an ideal, however "slender"; to look forward to a bright and full future, however remote; to do one's mundane job, however humble . . . all these are banners of Tagore's philosophy of life. Hsü Chih-mo kept hoisting them by sticking to the term "Crescent Moon."

In the history of modern Chinese literature "Crescent Moon" has become well-known. *Hsin-yüeh p'ai* (新月派, Crescent Moon School, Group, or Clique) is used to denote whatever is connected with Hsü Chih-mo and his associates. In the writings of the leftist critics especially, it is a dirty term synonymous with decadence, levity, frivolity, bourgeois democracy, etc. But for others it symbolizes the only towering beacon in the twenties when the field of literature is darkened by the gathering storm of communist propaganda.

Even if we should skip the several passages cited in the preceding pages, we should still be able to perceive Tagore's influence on Hsü simply by reading the following:

His [Tagore's] magnanimous and tender soul, I am confident, will forever be a miracle in human memory. His infinite imagination and wide sympathy remind us of Whitman. His gospel of love and his zeal to promote it remind us of Tolstoy. His strong will power and artistic talents remind us of Michelangelo who created the statue of Moses. His humor and wisdom remind us of Socrates and Lao Tzu. The harmony and grace of his personality remind us of Goethe in his old age. His hands (whose touch conveys benevolence and pure love), his persistent work for humanity and his great and far-reaching voice sometimes even invoke from us the image of the Savior; his radiance, his music and his sublimity make us think of the great gods of Olympia . . . 50

The glowing words were written by Hsü Chih-mo in 1924. To him, Tagore had assumed the image of father, hero, Savior, God . . . since that year.

Tagore was certainly popular in the Chinese literary circles in the early twenties. Ch'en Tu-hsiu (陳獨秀), later a communist leader, was most probably the first man to translate Tagore into classical Chinese as early as 1915, but he apparently excited little public interest.⁵¹ Ch'en was followed by Liu Fu (劉復, Liu Pan-nung [劉半農]) who three years later used modern Chinese (白話, *pai-hua*) to render two poems of Tagore.⁵² Thereafter more and more translations of Tagore were published.⁵³ *Stray Birds* especially was the Chinese favorite. But all the translations were not high in quality and very often they were only selections rather than complete works. After 1924 Tagore's fame in China began to wane, chiefly because of the ascendancy of the leftist literary movement. In spite of Hsü Chih-mo's efforts to bolster up Tagore as a "literary revolutionary" on the basis of the Indian poet's achievements in breaking age-old traditions in his literary ventures,

Tagore was stigmatized, politically, as a villainous traditionalist, a futile pacifist, and an evil reactionary by many educated young Chinese who had been swayed by the leftists.⁵⁴ Even if politics had not reared its head in literature, Tagore's fame would have declined in China all the same after 1924, as Europe had been less enthusiastic about him since the late twenties and the Chinese were susceptible to European opinions. Secondly, alongside the leftist trend in modern Chinese poetry then, there was another trend which made mundane passionate love more prominent than the Tagorean religious meditation or fleeting emotions; the latter, especially, made little impression on poets and readers after 1924. Lastly, those Chinese poets bent on experimenting with poetic forms would have appreciated Tagore if they had had the knowledge of Bengali; but as they could only read Tagore's works translated in free verse, they would naturally dismiss Tagore's poetry as being "formless." The younger poets, whether heading for western symbolism, modernism or Soviet communism, would even go so far as to term Tagore's poetry "sentimental rubbish," as W. B. Yeats did in the thirties.⁵⁵

The communists in Mainland China seemed to tolerate Tagore in the fifties as they permitted at least the re-printing of Cheng Chen-to's old translation of Tagore's *Crescent Moon*.⁵⁶ But they must have denounced him during the Cultural Revolution just as they did many other literary figures, living or dead, local or foreign. Now with the downfall of the "Gang of Four" and the rise of the pragmatic leaders, Tagore, like Shakespeare, Goethe and other great writers has been duly rehabilitated though there is no telling what their future fate may be since everything there hangs precariously on the policy of the ruling communist party.⁵⁷ In the Republic of China, however, Tagore always seems to engage some interest. His literary influence may not be easily calculable, but new translations of his works and writings on him do greet the reading public occasionally.⁵⁸ Will Tagore once again influence Chinese writers in future as he did in the early twenties? This question only Time the omniscient can answer.

Notes

1. Chou Tso-jen, *Tzu-chi ti yüan-ti* (自己的園地 , One's Own Garden), Shanghai, Pei-hsin shu-chü, 1929, 12th imp., p. 50.
2. See Kuo Mo-jo, *Ko-ming ch'un-ch'iu* (革命春秋 , The Spring and Autumn of Revolution), 1953, Shanghai, Hsin wen-i ch'u-pan she, p. 62; also *Mo-jo wen-chi*

- (沫若文集, Collected Works of Kuo Mo-jo), Peking, Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1957, p. 147.
3. David T. Roy, *Kuo Mo-jo, the Early Years*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 6 f, Tomiko being Kuo's Japanese common law wife.
 4. Kuo Mo-jo, *Fei-keng chi* (沸羹集, Hubbub of Voices), Shanghai, Hsin wen-i ch'u-pan she, 1951, p. 142.
 5. Kuo Mo-jo, *Ch'uang-tsaio shih-nien* (創造十年, The Ten Years of the Creation Society), Shanghai, Hsien-tai shu-chü, 1933, p. 93 f.
 6. See Kuo Mo-jo, *Wen-i lun chi* (文藝論集, Essays on Literature), Shanghai, Kuang-hua shu-chü, 1932, 6th imp., p. 196 f.
 7. See Kuo Mo-jo, *Wen-i lun-wen hstian* (文藝論文選, Selected Essays on Literature), Hong Kong, Wan-yüan t'u-shu kung-ssu, 1978 (?), p. 106 f; p. 111 f.
 8. See Kuo mo-jo, "T'ai-ko-erh lai hua chih wo chien" (泰戈爾來華之我見, My Opinion about Tagore's Visit to China), in his *Wen-i lun chi*.
 9. See Ping Hsin, *Ping Hsin san-wen chi* (冰心散文集, Collected Essays by Ping Hsin), Shanghai, K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1949, 9th imp., p. 1.
 10. Ibid.
 11. Ibid., pp. 3-8.
 12. Ibid., p. 159.
 13. See "Tzu-hsu" (自序, Preface), *ibid.*, p. 12 f.
 14. Ibid., p. 12.
 15. Liang Shih-ch'iu, "Fan-hsing yü Ch'un-shui" (繁星與春水, The Numerous Stars and Spring Water), in *Ch'uang-tsaio chou-pao* (創造週報, Creation Weekly), No. 12, July, 1923, pp. 4-9.
 16. See Chiang Fu-ts'ung (蔣復璁) and Liang Shih-ch'iu (eds.), *Hsiü Chih-mo ch'üan-chi* (徐志摩全集, Complete Works of Hsiü Chih-mo), Taipei, Chuan-chi wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1969, Vol. 6, p. 463.
 17. See Liang Shih-ch'iu, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
 18. See Hsü Yü-no, *Chiang-lai ti hua-yüan* (將來的花園, The Future Garden), Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1922; or see Chao Chia-pi (趙家璧) (ed.), *Chung-kuo hsin wen-hsüeh ta-hsi* (中國新文學大系, Compendium of Modern Chinese Literature), Shanghai, Liang-yü t'u-shu yin-shua kung-ssu, 1936, 3rd, imp. vol. 8, pp. 214-218. Compare Tagore's *Gitanjali, Crescent Moon and Stray Birds*.
 19. Tsung Pai-hua, "Wo ho shih" (我和詩, I and Poetry), in *Wen-hsüeh* (文學, Literature), vol. 8, No. 1, 1937, p. 261.
 20. Ibid., p. 263.
 21. From Chao Chia-pi, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 300.
 22. See Stephen N. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 201.
 23. See Chu Tzu-ch'ing et al (eds.), *Wen I-to ch'üan-chi* (聞一多全集, Complete Works of Wen I-to), Shanghai, K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1949, *Ting-chi* (丁集), pp. 275-280.
 24. Cheng Chen-to published a considerable number of essays written by different writers on Tagore before Tagore's arrival in China in *Hsiao-shuo yüeh-pao* (小說月

- 報, Short Story Monthly) which he edited; see for example vol. 14, Nos. 9 and 10; vol. 15, No. 4 and other issues in 1923 and 1924. See also Stephen N. Hay, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
25. Quoted from Wang Yao (王瑤), *Chung-kuo hsin wen-hstieh shih kao* (中國新文學史稿, A Draft History of Modern Chinese Literature), Shanghai, Hsin wen-i ch'u-pan she, 1953, p. 108.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
 27. See Wang's report about Tagore's arrival in Shanghai in *Pei-ching ch'en-pao* (北京晨報, Peking Morning Post), Apr. 23, 1924, p. 6.
 28. Chiang Fu-ts'ung and Liang Shih-ch'iu (eds.), *op. cit.*, vol. 6, p. 466.
 29. See Hsü's letter to Tagore dated Dec. 27, 1923. The original is kept in Records Office, Dartington Hall, S. Devon, England. A reprint with Chinese translation can be found in Liang Hsi-hua (梁錫華), *Hsü Chih-mo ying-wen shu-hsin chi* (徐志摩英文書信集, Hsü Chih-mo's Letters in English) Lien Ching Publishing Co. Ltd., Taipei, 1979, pp. 100-103.
 30. See Wang P'i-chiang, "Wo so jen-shih ti Hsü Chih-mo" (我所認識的徐志摩) in *Tu-shu tsa-chih* (讀書雜誌, Readers' Magazine), vol. 2, No. 9, 1932, p. 5.
 31. See Hsü's letter to L. K. Elmhirst dated March 5, 1929, Liang Hsi-hua, *op. cit.* pp. 56-61.
 32. Chu Hsiang, "P'ing Hsü chün 'Chih-mo ti Shih'" (評徐君志摩的詩, A Critique of Chih-mo's Poems), in *Hsiao-shuo yüeh-pao* vol. 17, No. 1, 1926, p. 3.
 33. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958, 5th imp., p. 107 f.
 34. Chiang and Liang (ed.), *op. cit.* vol. 3, p. 412 f.
 35. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 433.
 36. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 570 f.
 37. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 573.
 38. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 429.
 39. The few poems by Hsü mentioned in this passage appear in Chiang and Liang (eds.) *op. cit.* vol. 2.
 40. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 434-444.
 41. See *Shih-k'an* (Poetry Magazine) (Shanghai), No. 1, 1931.
 42. Hsü Chih-mo, "Art and Life", in *Ch'uang-tsaio chi-k'an* (創造季刊, Creation Quarterly), vol. 1, No. 2, 1922, pp. 1-15.
 43. Chiang and Liang (eds.), *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 247.
 44. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 425.
 45. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 180.
 46. For more information about relations between Hsü and Tagore see Liang Hsi-hua *op. cit.* and Liang Hsi-hua, *Hsü Chih-mo hsin-chuan* (徐志摩新傳, A New Biography of Hsü Chih-mo), Lien Ching Publishing Co. Ltd., Taipei, 1979. It may be noted in passing that Tagore's publication *Talks in China* (Santiniketan, Visva Bharati University Press, 1925) was dedicated to Hsü.
 47. Instead of Hsü, Tagore succeeded in getting T'an Yun-shan (譚雲山) to India in

- 1928, and Prof. T'an has been with Visva Bharati University, or Tagore's International University, since then.
48. For details see Liang Hsi-hua, "Shen-lin chih meng, T'ai-ko-erh yü Hsü Chih-mo ti Chung-kuo nung-ts'un chi-hua" (森林之夢, 泰戈爾與徐志摩的中國農村計劃, The Dream of the Forest, the Rural Reconstruction Plan of Tagore and Hsü Chih-mo), in *Lien-ho pao fu-k'an* (聯合報副刊, The Supplement, United Daily News), Feb. 2 & 3, 1979.
 49. Chiang & Liang (eds.), *op. cit.*, vol. p. 277.
 50. Hsü Chih-mo, "T'ai-ko-erh" (Tagore), in *Ch'en pao fu-k'an* (The Supplement, Peking Morning Post), May 19, 1924.
 51. See Ch'en Tu-hsiu (tr.), "Tsan-ko" (讚歌, Hymns), in *Hsin ch'ing-nien* (新青年, The New Youth), vol. 1, No. 2 1915. The translation covers four stanzas from *Gitanjali*.
 52. See Liu Pan-nung (tr.), "T'ai-ko-erh shih erh chang" (泰戈爾詩二章, Two Passages from Tagore), in *Hsin ch'ing-nien*, vol. 5, No. 2, 1918. Liu's translations were "The Authorship" and "The Wicked Postman" from the *Crescent Moon*.
 53. Translations by such people as Cheng Chen-to, Hsü Ti-shan, Ch'ü Shih-ying, Ch'en Chu-ying, Chao Ching-shen and Ku Chün-cheng appeared in *Hsiao-shuo yüeh-pao* and also in *Wen-hsüeh chou-ipo* (文學週報, Literature Weekly); Chao Chia-pi (ed.) *op. cit.*, vol. 10 provides useful information about the translations. According to Stephen N. Hay (see Note No. 22), *Chung-wen tsa-chih so-yin* (中文雜誌索引, Index to Chinese Periodicals) (462-464), compiled by Lingnan University Library, Canton in 1935, and *Wen-hsüeh lun-wen so-yin* (文學論文索引, Index to Literary Essays) (1932-36) have the titles of all the translations of Tagore in article form before 1936. See Hay, *op. cit.*, p. 379, Note No. 17. Translations of Tagore in book form were done by writers like Cheng Chen-to, Ch'ü Shih-ying, Shen Yen-ping (Mao Tun), Wang Tu-ch'ing et al. See *Tung-fang tsa-chih* (東方雜誌, The Eastern Miscellany) vol. 21, No. 7, 1924, T'ien, p. 702, and Kao T'ao, "Wu-sü yün-tung yü Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh" (五四運動與中國文學, The May Fourth Movement and Chinese Literature), in *Wen-hsüeh*, vol. 2, No. 6, 1934, pp. 1236-1250.
 54. See Stephen N. Hay, *op. cit.*, p. 226 for the anti-Tagore campaign instigated by Ch'en Tu-hsiu in 1924.
 55. See Buddhadeva Bose, "Tagore in Translation," in *Yearbook of Comparative Literature and General Literature*, No. 12, 1963, p. 22.
 56. See Cheng Chen-to (tr.) *Hsin Yüeh-chi* (Crescent Moon), first published in China in 1923 as a translation of 31 from the original 40 poems. It was again published in China in 1954 as a complete translation of 40 poems. The volume available to me was published in Hong Kong in 1954 by Chung-liu ch'u-pan she as a reprint of the latest China edition.
 57. There appears a picture of the poetess Ping Hsin reciting Tagore in English in *Ta-Kung-Pao* (大公報), Hong Kong, 16 May 1979, p. 7. In recent months many new books on and translations of great writers of the world have been

published in Mainland China. "Bourgeois writings" are no longer dirt and sin.

58. The following are some translations of Tagore published in Taiwan: Wu Li-fu (伍蠡甫) et al, *Yin-tu tuan-p'ien hsiao-shuo chi* (印度短篇小說集, Collection of Short Stories of India) (1967); Chou Huai-kuo (周懷國) *T'ai-ko-erh shu-ch'ing shih hsian* (泰戈爾抒情詩選, Selections of Lyrics by Tagore) (1968); Ts'ai Chung-chang (蔡仲章), *T'ai-ko-erh lun-wen hsian* (泰戈爾論文選, Selections of Critical essays by Tagore) (1974); and [translator(s) unknown], *T'ai-ko-erh tuan-p'ien hsiao-shuo chi* (泰戈爾短篇小說集, Collection of Short Stories by Tagore) (1979). Articles on Tagore and his works are not listed here.