

# **The Total Translation: Zeng Pu and the Creation of the Human**

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In lamenting the invisibility of the translator in the literary process, Lawrence Venuti has in mind a cultural view of translation as a form of labor with no agency. As such, the translator merely facilitates reception, but does not consciously impact the audience. From this point of view, a politically-motivated translator would be a paradox, yet in the tradition of early 20th century Chinese letters, this was precisely the case. Far from being transparent to a critically-informed reading public, the late Qing translator was responsible for producing the reading public itself. The writer/translator Zeng Pu (1872-1935), in his 1912 translation of Victor Hugo's *Quatre Vingt Treize*, presented translation as a mimetic process, one that could quite literally create the ideal human subject through its manifestation of both political and personal change, the former in the translated text and the latter in the voice of the translator in that text. Zeng's project thus demonstrates the material nature of translation by situating its final product within the actual lives of the readers.