

For Immediate Release:

October 25, 2012

52 Weeks of Walt Whitman: A Multimedia Gallery of "Song of Myself" in 9 Languages

IOWA CITY, IA—This week the International Writing Program (IWP) will launch Whitman Web, an innovative web gallery which, over the course of the next year, will publish Walt Whitman's most celebrated poem, "Song of Myself," in 52 short weekly installments. Each installment will present one section of the 52-part poem in English alongside translations in eight other languages, including the first-ever translation into Persian, accompanied by photographs, commentary, discussion questions, and recordings.

"If you think you know Walt Whitman, think again," IWP Director Christopher Merrill says of the new web gallery.

Rising to the Challenge: Bringing "America's Poet" to Readers around the Globe via Internet

"I am large, I contain multitudes," Whitman wrote, and now scholars and translators have collaborated to centralize, update, expand, and enrich existing translations as well as produce new ones, making the multimedia gallery of "Song of Myself" available in nine languages: English, Chinese, French, German, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Ukrainian.

"Whitman's idea of a modern self, expansive and capacious, has attracted readers from surprisingly many different languages and literary cultures," says editor Nataša Ďurovičová, who oversaw the design and coordination of the gallery. "'Song of Myself' is challenging to translate because it is a vernacular poem, its language both colloquial and exalted; it speaks to so many people because the first-person-singular voice bursting forth is so imaginative and cerebral yet also coming out of a tangible, material body and the physical world it inhabits. This is poetry one can't resist reading out loud."

Each installment of the poem will be accompanied by commentaries from distinguished Whitman scholar and University of Iowa professor Ed Folsom, who co-directs the Walt Whitman Archive (<http://www.whitmanarchive.org/>), and poet, writer, and translator Christopher Merrill, director of the IWP. These commentaries, designed to orient, inspire, and challenge readers, will be translated into Persian and Russian, with translations into Chinese and other languages forthcoming. Whitman Web plans to further enhance the website with additional translations of the poem and commentaries as they become available. Readers will also be able to listen to a new section of the poem read aloud each week in English by University of Iowa professor of acting Eric Forsythe, and in Persian by the poem's co-translator, Iran-born Los-Angeles-based poet Sholeh Wolpe. Photographs from the vast Walt Whitman Archive will trace Whitman through his adulthood so that, by the end of the poem, readers will see him in old age. Weekly discussion questions will be distributed via Facebook, Twitter, and other social media networks.

A Forum for Global Conversation and Exchange

With WhitmanWeb, the International Writing Program and the Walt Whitman Archive have realized a long-held idea of opening a forum for conversation and exchange around Whitman's magnum opus. The gallery invites readers everywhere to explore this seminal text of American poetry.

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