

Translation and Reception of Chinese Poetry in the West

Muriel Detrie

ABSTRACT

This essay demonstrates that early sinologists tended to view collections of Chinese poetry as mere social documents, and thus emphasized the poems as sources of information (for example, regarding Chinese attitudes toward filial piety), rather than as works having intrinsic aesthetic and poetic value; this view of Chinese poetry or course influenced the styles of translation. Representative of early (18th-20th century) Western translators are the three French translators-writers, Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys (1832-1892), Judith Gautier (1845-1917) and Louis Bouilhet (1822-1869). The first translator, Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys (in his *Poesies de l'epoque des Thang*, 1862) is presented as an influential example of the extreme type of translator who mechanically gets the meaning, but neglects the unique spirit and stylistics of the work being translated. Judith Gautier (*Livre de Jade*, 1867) is discussed as an example of a translator who goes in the other direction — one who emphasizes the lyrical quality of Chinese poems (and translates them as “poemes en prose”). The last, Bouilhet (*Dernieres Chansons*), attempted to adapt Chinese verse forms when writing poetry in French, and also indulged in fanciful etymology a la Pound-Fenellosa. More recent, 20th century, translators such as Waley and Pound showed genuine interest in Chinese poetry *qua* poetry, and have taken care to render both content and form. It is suggested that poets are perhaps better translators than professional sinologists.

KEY WORDS

Jesuits
poetry
translation
sinologist
French poetry

influence
poetics
Marquis d'Hervey Saint-Denys
Judith Gautier
Louis Bouilhet

The Jesuits, who were the first sinologists in the West, paid very little attention to Chinese poetry of which they translated only a few pieces. Today, anthologies of Chinese poems translated into European languages are countless, and so are the scholars for whom this poetry has become an essential reference. From the 18th century until the 20th, the ways of approaching, translating and appreciating this poetry changed greatly. It would be interesting to write the history of the translation and the reception of Chinese poetry in the West, but lack of time prevents me from doing so. Hence I shall restrict myself to an outline, focusing on three main figures, all from the same period: Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys (1823-1892), Judith Gautier (1845-1917) and Louis Bouilhet (1822-1869). They are not writers of the first rank, but they are important historical figures and they seem to me to be representative of three attitudes toward Chinese poetry which prevailed one after the other from the 18th century to the 20th.

When Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys published his anthology of *Poésies de l'époque des Thang* (Chinese title: *Tang shí*) in 1862, the publication was hailed by the press because it was the first book to appear in the West offering an extensive anthology of the poets of the Golden Age of Chinese poetry as well as an historical survey of its poetics in a hundred pages (under the title "The poetics and the prosody of the Chinese"). Until then, Chinese poetry had received but scant attention from Western translators, and only a few sinologists had tried to render some pieces. During the 18th century, the Jesuits had yet introduced to European readers some historical or philosophical masterpieces of Chinese literature like the *Shujing* or the *Book of Documents*, the *Xiaojing* or the *Book of Filial Piety*, and so on, but they had almost completely ignored poetry.¹ In the *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, which was compiled by the Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Du Halde and published in 4 volumes in 1735, and in the *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois*, of which 16 volumes appeared from 1776 to 1814, we can find only forty poems, some of which appear in both books. Most of these poems are from the *Shijing*, or they are anonymous folk-songs.

We must also take into account drama and the novel, since in China they are literary genres characterized by a blending of prose and poetry.² But the Jesuits were ignorant of them, except for Father Joseph de Premare who in 1731 translated a Yuan play into French: *Tchao chi cau ell au le Petit arphelin de la maison de Tchao*.³ But he rendered only the prose dialogue

and omitted all the lyrics (*qu*), for the reason that "these songs are difficult to understand, especially for Europeans, because they are full of allusions to things unknown to us, and of figures of speech very difficult for us to grasp."⁴ The English sinologist John Francis Davis would invoke the same reason when publishing several renderings of Chinese plays without their songs at the beginning of the 19th century.⁵

It is true that one of the greatest difficulties of translating Chinese poetry lies in its highly cultural aspect, that is to say, a poem cannot be well understood nor appreciated without a thorough knowledge of all the literary production that preceded it and to which it refers by means of allusions, quotations, hints, imitations, and so on. Moreover Chinese poetry uses a special language with double meaning that allows various interpretations but can discourage the best translators. And poets make use of all the resources of Chinese idiom such as assonance, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, parallelism, tones, and of the visual aspect of characters too, so as to convey the most varied effects. This is why Father Cibot, in a "Note sur la cadence des phrases" including three poems from the *Shijing*, admitted: "I rendered those songs as if I were copying a miniature with a piece of charcoal."⁶

And yet, paradoxically, it was because of their supposed ethnographic interest that a few pieces were translated by the Jesuits and introduced into their great encyclopedic compilations. In fact, they considered Chinese poems, just like any document, as a source of information about the morals and customs of the Chinese, as if they were written in a simple and direct language. Thus Chinese poems appear among texts of a merely informative interest: for instance, in the fourth volume of the *Mémoires*, of which all the first part is devoted to an account of "the ancient and modern doctrine of filial piety in China," fourteen poems are quoted just after extracts from the *Liji* and the *Xiaojing*, two Confucian classics; and in the "Avertissement" to these poems, it is made clear that they were not chosen because of their aesthetic value nor because they are works of great poets, but merely because "they give a good understanding of how the doctrine of filial piety was taught throughout the centuries to citizens of all classes." (p. 168) Elsewhere, in the thirteenth volume of the same *Mémoires*, a "Translation of some Chinese poems into French," by Father Cibot, is published between notices and letters dealing with miscellaneous subjects such as the life of bees or the beneficial properties of rhubarb. So these poems are not given special treatment: in most cases they are rendered into French or Latin prose, such dull prose that it is generally impossible to get from it the slightest idea of their

original form and aesthetic value.

After the Jesuits gave up their activities in China at the end of the 18th century when the Society of Jesus was dissolved (1775), some European sinologists made an attempt to translate Chinese poetry in the earlier part of the 19th century: the French sinologue Stanislas Julien published five poems in his volume of Indian novels called *Avadanas*, and he and his disciple Bazin published several plays of the Yuan and Ming drama, of which they rendered all the songs.⁷ And, to give a last example, in 1824 Peter Perring Thoms published a verse idyll under the title *Chinese Courtship*. But for these scholars as well as for the missionaries, whether they translated poetry, drama and novel, or historical, philosophical and technical works, their primary concern was always to supply Europe with information about this remote Cathay which seemed more mysterious and inaccessible than ever since it closed its door to Westerners in the last part of the 18th century.

Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys represents the outcome of this tendency to consider Chinese poems as social documents and for that reason to ignore their aesthetic and poetical value. In his essay "On the poetics and prosody of the Chinese" preceding his anthology, he seems almost to apologize for daring to translate a kind of literature which was hitherto supposed to be highly untranslatable, and he appeals to the authority of the great scholar Edouard Biot who, in his commentary on Father Lacharme's Latin translation of the *Book of Verse*, emphasized "the special kind of interest attached to the reading of the *Chi-king* as a study of the ancient customs of the Chinese."⁸ Because he was fully aware of the difficulties of translating Chinese poetry — "the task is dangerous, irksome too, he wrote, when we see true beauties that could not be rendered into any European idiom."⁹ — the sinologist asks his reader "not to consider (his renderings) one by one," but "to look principally for an overall view." On this point, the choice he made among the wide range of Tang poems is rather significant: though the great names like Li Bo and Du Fu were selected, d'Hervey-Saint-Denys gave preference to those of their poems that were especially rich in realistic details about Chinese customs but that often have little poetic value, judged by Chinese standards. This tendency is reinforced by the numerous notes and commentaries following each poem. To give an example, Li Bo's poem "Le Retour des beaux jours" is a court poem, not lacking in flattery, which was composed during the time when Li Bo was in the service of Emperor Xuanzong. It is neither a masterpiece nor a representative piece, nonconformity being the most striking feature of this poet's style. But the translator judged it

interesting because it is full of information about the court, the surroundings and the way of life of the Emperor, the ideal conception of the sovereign, and so on. All these data are but allusions in the original, but the translator wrote detailed notes on each of them. As to his method of translating, it is distinguished, like that of the Jesuits, by a complete lack of poetic qualities: d'Hervey-Saint-Denys translated line by line in a very prosaic way, without the slightest concern about meter, rhythm, rhyme, euphony, and so on.

Who then could wonder at the fact that Chinese poetry as such did not exert any influence on Western poetic creation of that time? In the 18th century, André Chénied was the only European reader of the Jesuits to guess that Chinese poetry could be for Western poets a source of inspiration and renewal. But, because of the lack of reliable informants, his knowledge of this poetry remained so limited that he could derive from it nothing more than "some beautiful details" apt to feed his poetic vein.¹⁰ Furthermore, the German Friedrich Rückert was the only poet in the first part of the 19th century to pay attention to Father Lacharme's translation of the *Shijing*, published in 1830 by Julius Mohl: he turned this Latin prose version into German verse, in such a personal and romantic way that his work ought to be viewed as a kind of re-creation rather than a translation.¹¹ But generally speaking, if we except both Chénied's and Rückert's cases, until the 1860s Chinese poetry only provided European writers with a few details about the Chinese way of life, some elements of scenery like the willow or the plum-flower, and some other stereotyped images that can be found in all the "Chinese poems," like the two "Chinoiseries" one by Théophile Gautier and the other by his friend Claudius Popelin. But it must be added that the Chinese colour of those poems was more often derived from novels and dramas translated by French or English sinologists in the first part of the 19th century or from the iconography of articles imported from China, than from the Chinese poems themselves which were not as easily accessible as the former. However, only a few years after the publishing of *Poésies de l'époque des Thang*, Chinese poetry was going to begin to represent for European poets a genuine source of inspiration, thanks to the daughter of the poet himself who wrote thirty years earlier:

Celle que j'aime, à présent, est en Chine;
Elle demeure avec ses vieux parents,
Dans une tour de porcelaine fine,
Au fleuve Jaune où sont les cormorans.¹²

In 1863, through his close friend Clermont-Ganneau, Théophile Gautier became acquainted with a Chinese man of letters, Tin-Tun-Ling, a rather mysterious person who found himself by accident on the street in Paris, out of work and without means of support.¹³ This singular encounter was to have a decisive effect on the life of the poet's daughter, Judith, who was then only eighteen years old. In order to help his new protégé, Theophile Gautier decided to engage him as a Chinese teacher for both his daughters. Estelle did not seem to be particularly impressed by her father's new whim, but the passionate Judith immediately launched herself into the study of the Chinese language. And probably under the influence of the work of Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys to whom she would later pay tribute, she soon became enthusiastic about Chinese poetry which she discovered in its original form in the Chinese books of what was then the Imperial Library. With the help of her teacher, she tried to decipher and render into French the most beautiful poems of China, and in 1867, just after marrying the Parnassian poet Catulle Mendès, she published the *Livre de Jade* (Chinese title: *Baiyu shishu*), under the pseudonym of Judith Walter. This unpretentious little collection was to impress several generations of translators and poets much more than the scholarly *Poésies de l'époque des Thang*.

Judith Gautier's attitude to Chinese poetry is completely different from that of the sinologists. It first finds expression in the material arrangement of the poems: the book is small in format and pleasant to handle, the poems are nicely spaced out, the presentation is elegant, there are no notes nor commentaries, and the first page of each section is decorated with a line of Chinese characters. Thus, the *Livre de Jade* is above all an aesthetic object, accessible to a wide public, not a scholarly work destined to be read by a few experts. We can see immediately that the poems are treated like genuine literature, not like documents. This aesthetic side is reinforced by the choice of Chinese poems Judith Gautier made: as d'Hervey-Saint-Denys did, she gave preference to Tang poets like Li Bo and Du Fu (but she selected some Song poems too, and even some poems from contemporaries like Lin-Tun-Ling). But while the former dismissed all the poems with too high a poetic value and selected those which were rather long and rich in information about Chinese history, culture and society, the latter turned towards short pieces that were allusive rather than descriptive, suggestive rather than informative. In this connection, the fact that both books have only half a dozen poems in common is quite significant.

If we now compare the way the poems are set out, we see that d'Hervey-Saint-Denys's poems are classified by authors and chronologically — except for Li Bo and Du Fu who appear first because they rank unquestionably above all Tang poets — and each poet is given a biographical presentation which allows us to set his works in their context. On the contrary Judith Gautier ignored the historical background completely and arranged her poems in thematic order. In the first edition (1867), there are six thematic divisions which are: "Lovers," "Moon," "Autumn," "Travellers," "Wine," "War," and last "Poets"; in the second edition, dated 1902, which is revised and enlarged, a seventh division was added: "Court." The generous amount of space attributed to love poems (17 poems in the first edition, 40 in the second) is disproportionate to that which it occupies in Chinese poetry generally but almost all the favourite topics of Chinese poets are represented. These topics are timeless since the anonymous poems of the *Shijing* treat them just as the poets of the late Qing dynasty, therefore Judith Gautier was not interested in placing the poems in their context, nor in situating poets chronologically.¹⁴ Her concern was not to produce a work of scholarship because she was concerned primarily with Chinese exquisite sensitivity to nature, human sufferings, the joys of life, etc., all of which was somewhat hidden under glosses in d'Hervey-Saint-Denys's edition. Finally, if we compare both methods of translation, we again find the same opposite tendencies: the former chose accuracy to the detriment of poetry, while the latter neglected exactness in favour of evocatory power. Proper names, geographical, historical or cultural allusions were all suppressed by Judith Gautier, or generic terms such as "empress," "palace," "river" were substituted to them. Moreover, totally unaware that Chinese poetry is a kind of palimpsest, she erased this aspect completely from her translation. D'Hervey-Saint-Denys had at least attempted to give some idea of this through commentaries. The result is that, if we judge by Judith Gautier's translations, Chinese poetry seems to us as simple and clear as it had seemed obscure and elaborate to Jesuits.

The images which all Chinese poems are so rich in were generally kept by both translators, but d'Hervey-Saint-Denys explained them in lengthy notes (see for instance Li Bo's poem p. 170-171, n.2, where the symbolic value of "the raven cry" is made clear) while Judith Gautier accounted for their symbolic value within the poem itself, by means of adjectives, adverbs, periphrases; thus concrete images are expanded and explained by abstract words, as in Li Bo's poem "L'escalier de jade" (*Vujicyuan*) where the conno-

tations of "autumn moon" are elucidated by the periphrase "triste, et longueusement rêveuse."

As to verse forms, both translators avoided transplanting them into French or finding an equivalent, but unlike d'Hervey-Saint-Denys, Judith Gautier did not neglect the formal side of her renderings. Generally speaking, each verse line of the originals is reproduced into one prose line (in most cases one prose line is made up of one sentence, but sometimes it is made up of two or three short sentences), and its rhythm is carefully calculated. They cannot be called "vers libres," in the French sense, as they are generally mere prose with only the graphic disposition of verse, but if we take into account the overall structure of the poems, they can indeed be called "poèmes en prose." For instance in the short piece "A la plus belle femme du bateau des fleurs," ascribed to Tchang Tsi (Zhang Ji), the unity and cohesion of the poem is achieved by means of the anaphore "Je t'ai chanté . . .", "J'ai composé. . .", "Alors je t'ai donné. . ." Or in Li Bo's previously mentioned poem "L'Escalier de jade", the increasing feeling of sadness and forlornness is conveyed by the growing length of the sentences. To give one more example, in Li Bo's poem entitled "Au bord de la rivière," the translator dismissed some elements, because she considered them unnecessary or perhaps because she did not understand them at all, but she added a final line ("Mais les touffes de nénuphar l'enveloppent.") which echoes the ending of the first line (" . . . elles s'enfoncent dans les touffes de nénuphars."), giving thus a cyclic structure to the poem.

All these devices serve lyricism which is the sole mode of the *Livre de Jade*. The poems embrace the entire range of lyric expression and the public was charmed by the expression of feelings which it found particularly delicate or surprising, such as the young lady's thrill made up of pleasure and of fear, in Lin-Tun-Ling's poem "L'Ombre des feuilles d'oranger," or the sadness and nostalgia generally conveyed by the evocations of the moon. The joys of life, the pleasures of wine and friendship, the sorrow of parting with the beloved, the temptations and the disillusionings of love, the resignation to misfortune and the sufferings of exile, all these feelings and the recurrent metaphors conjuring them up: autumn moon, willow leaves, lotus flowers, plum blossom, jade pearls or wild geese, would remain engraved on the memory of Judith Gautier's readers.

Perhaps then we might recognize in Verlaine or Laforgue something of the odd temperament of Li Bo who so much loved the moon. And is not the whole *Livre de Jade* echoed by Parnassian or Symbolist poets such as

Théodore de Banville, Catulle Mendès, Charles Cros, Jules Tellier, Pierre Louÿs, Marcel Schwob, Albert de Pouvoirville, Francis de Miomandre and so on, not only in those of their poems which happen to deal with China, but also in those apparently unrelated to China and yet borrowing from Chinese poetry a feeling, or a metaphor, or a topic? The influence exerted by the *Livre de Jade* in the last quarter of the 19th century and in the first quarter of the 20th can be judged by the traces it has left in poetic production, but also by the fact that it has gone through four editions (the last one published in 1933), by the numerous articles that were written on it by the greatest names in literature such as Verlaine, Remy de Gourmont, Anatole France,¹⁵ lasting by the fact that it has come to be regarded by some writers as a work of consequence: thus Joris-Karl Huysmans's hero Des Esseintes, in the novel *A Rebours*, is said "to have published, for his personal use, an anthology of 'poèmes en prose'" including, among other works, "some extracts from this delicate *Livre de Jade* in which the exotic fragrance of tea and ginseng is blended with the sweet coolness of water bubbling under moonlight."¹⁶ We may add that translations were made into most European languages such as English, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, etc. Time is lacking for me to be able to quote here even the ones that I could identify as such, but I may say that their influence on the poetry of the country in which they were published was all the more important as they were often in the country in question the only means of access to Chinese poetry. In addition to these second degree renderings, there are French adaptations which are also worthy of notice. For instance the verse versions of the Parnassian poet Emile Blémont, *Poèmes de Chine* (1887), or Paul Claudel's adaptations entitled *Autres poèmes d'après le chinois* (composed in 1937), and mainly Franz Toussaint's adaptations in rhythmic prose, the *Flûte de Jade* that succeeded the *Livre de Jade* in the public's esteem since it has had several editions from 1920 until the present time and has been adapted into various languages. As Franz Tousseint did not think it necessary to acknowledge his debt to Judith Gautier, sometimes the *Livre de Jade* continued to exert its influence indirectly.

Judith Gautier aroused an interest in Chinese poetry among the Western public, by showing it to be full of lyricism and sensitivity, rich in imagery taken from nature, and using a simple and yet refined language. However, she did not pay any attention to the verse-forms of whose variety and complexity Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys had given us a glimpse in his essay "On the

Poetics and prosody of the Chinese". In fact, it fell to a contemporary of both translators, Louis Bouilhet, to be the first to make an attempt at rendering some of these forms into a European language. This close friend of Flaubert had met Tin-Tun-Ling at the Gautier's home and had been given some Chinese lessons by him. Certainly his knowledge of Chinese remained rather superficial, but it was enough to make him aware of the poetic resources of Chinese writing. Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys had already argued that "some characters may convey a whole picture that we may not render except by a periphrase."¹⁷ As to Judith Gautier, there is at least one poem where she tried to render into language the visual aspect of Chinese writing: in Li Bo's "Escalier de jade," we may consider the two relative clauses: "(le store de cristal) qui tombe, comme une cascade, sous laquelle on voit lurie le soleil," a description of both characters that note the word *shuǐjīng* (= rock-crystal) Li Bo used: the first character is a pictograph representing the water while the second one is a compound where the pictograph representing the sun is thrice-copied.

It seems that Judith Gautier did not make a great use of the graphic resources of Chinese writing, but in her memoirs, she recorded that Louis Bouilhet was longing to know "how the characters were composed, so as to decompose them and extract their mystical meaning. For instance, if we put together *woman* and *son*, we get a third sign meaning — *love*; so Bouilhet would say: "love like woman's son." *Heart* and *door*, put together, mean — *sorrow*; he would translate as: "captive heart." The compound — *three*, — *man*, — *sun*, means — *spring*: for him, it was "three men walking toward the light." It is thought he wanted to collect these examples in a small book."¹⁸ In fact, he never did, nor did he exploit his find in his adaptations of Chinese poems, but I mention this find because we shall come across it again in English-speaking translators or adapters at the beginning of the 20th century.

On a more positive note, Louis Bouilhet, as a genuine Parnassian poet always fond of experimenting with new forms, closely read the Introduction to *Poésies de l'époque des Thang*.¹⁹ His poem entitled "Vers Pai-lui-chi" (sic) is directly derived from his reading of d'Hervey-Saint-Denys's commentaries on "verse-form called *pai-liu-chi*" (*pailüshi*). According to the translator, "the poem has a twelve line structure, with six couplets, the second lines of each couplet are the ones which rhyme." (p. 91) And just as for the structure termed *lüshi*, "the poet is allowed to rhyme the first line too." (p. 90) Bouilhet's poem is composed of twelve lines divided into three

quatrains rhymed as follows: aaba bbab aaba. The French poet thus combined the Chinese requirements (to rhyme all the second lines) with the French ones (to rhyme all the lines and to use alternate rhymes, rather than rhymes in couplets). Bouilhet's meter is a heptameter which is typical like pentameter of Tang poetry, two meters little used in French verse until Verlaine.

Another attempt by Bouilhet to adapt Chinese verse-forms can be found in his poem "La Chanson des rames" which is derived from a Chinese poem of emperor Han Wudi. Marquis d'Hervey-Saint-Denys writes that this poem, in its original form, is made up of nine lines "divided into three stanzas of which the number of lines is lessening." (p. 75) The meter is heptameter, with a caesura after the fourth foot which is always the same particle, *hy!* It is not blank verse since the first four lines are rhymed couplets and the other five have the same rhyme. D'Hervey-Saint-Denys made a phonetic transcription so as to show the Chinese pattern, but his translation into French was in prose and rendered the meaning only. That is why Louis Bouilhet made an attempt at adapting both meaning and form into French. As the French language is not monosyllabic like Chinese, he was compelled to give up a good part of the content, but the verse-form was faithfully rendered (nine heptameters, divided into three stanzas of four, three and two lines, with the repetition of the particle *sh!* in the fourth foot), but his rhymed pattern was more elaborate since it was: aabb aab ab instead of aabb ccc cc. In another poem whose inspiration also comes from Chinese poetry, "L'Héritier de Yang-Ti", Bouilhet used the same rhymed pattern but his meter was alexandrine and he did not make the fourth foot rhyme. One last poem is worthy of notice: it is "Le Vieillard libre" which is derived from an old Chinese song: according to d'Hervey-Saint-Denys, it is composed of four tetrameters, of which the second and the fourth rhyme, and a single line which is a heptameter. In Bouilhet's poem, we have first a quatrain with heptameters and then a single decasyllable, with a rhyme scheme: aaba a.

Louis Bouilhet's attempts at transplanting Chinese verse-forms into French poetry are rather few and far between: only four of the eight "Chinese poems" published in *Dernières Chansons* are derived from them. However, it must be said to his credit that they were the first attempts at a creative use of Chinese poetics in Europe. Limited though his experiments were, they were seized upon by other French poets who were in search of innovative techniques. For instance, in 1872 the young Maupassant, whose talent as a story-teller had not yet been revealed, tried his hand at making

verse using the given pattern called *pailüshi* in his poem "Le Sommeil du mandarin" which reads like a pastiche of Bouilhet's poems. Then there was Emile Blémont, who published an anthology of Chinese poems (*Poèmes de China*) in 1887. Though he did little more than remodel the translations of d'Hervey-Saint-Denys and Judith Gautier in accordance with traditional French poetic patterns, he nevertheless made an attempt at using Chinese verse-forms such as *lüshi* in "Exil", *pailüshi* in "Chanson sur le fleuve," or stanzas with a diminishing number of lines as in "La Chanson des rames."

Generally speaking, the influence that Chinese poetics exerted on French poetics was rather limited and the French poets' experiments short-lived. Nor were French sinologists prompted to translate Chinese poetry as genuine poetry. But Bouilhet's interest in Chinese poetics reappeared at the beginning of the 20th century thanks to Anglo-saxons translators and adapters such as Arthur Waley, Ezra Pound and Florence Ayscough. It is not possible for me to speak in any detail here of such important books as Pound's *Cathay* (1915), Waley's *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (1918) or *Chinese Poems* (1946), Florence Ayscough's *Fir Flower Tablets* (1921, in collaboration with Amy Lowell) and *Tu Fu, The Autobiography of a Chinese Poet* (1929). I can simply note that all these books share a common interest in Chinese poetics and develop some of Bouilhet's intuitions such as:

First, the idea that poetry must be rendered into poetry and that the experience of translating poetry may represent for the poet-translator a means of giving new life to his own poetics. However, English-speaking adapters did not attempt to imitate Chinese verse-forms as Bouilhet did²⁰ but, convinced as they were that imagery was the essence of poetry, they tried to find equivalents of Chinese forms allowing the translator to render the whole content: Ezra Pound was the first to experiment with a metric pattern which took no account of the tones and rhymes of Chinese poems, but which followed closely Chinese syntax and the order of words and images. After him, Arthur Waley experimented with what Gerard Manley Hopkins called "sprung rhythm": according to the translator himself, "each character in the Chinese is represented by a stress in the English; but between the stresses, unstressed syllables are of course interposed."²¹

Second, the idea that Chinese writing, because it is ideogrammatic, is rich in poetic resources which European phonetic languages do not possess, but of which it is possible to find equivalents. Everyone knows Pound's fascination for Chinese writing such as revealed to him by Ernest Fenollosa's short essay on *The Chinese written Character as a Medium for Poetry* which

was published in 1918. The poet had not taken into account the structure of Chinese characters in *Cathay* since this work was already published in 1918, but in his *Cantos* he made great use of what he called the "ideogrammatic principle" derived from Chinese writing. Amy Lowell, in her English adaptations of Florence Ayscough's translations, published under the title *Fir Flower Tablets*, made an attempt at rendering into language the graphic aspect of Chinese characters. According to Florence Ayscough, she "found that frequently an analysis of an ideograph, rendered by a phrase instead of by a single word, made the meaning of a line far more vivid."²² However, she scarcely used this new technique because it lengthens the poem and does not allow the translator to respect the original syntax.

This survey of the Western attitudes to Chinese poetry is necessarily limited and superficial, but I hope it shows what a long way we have come since the 18th century when Chinese poetry discouraged translators and was considered a mere source of information about China, to the beginning of the 20th when translators and adapters took a genuine interest in it as poetry, and made numerous attempts at rendering both content and form. This evolution may be explained by the great strides sinology made throughout the 20th century. But the personality and the talent of some translators and adapters who were perhaps not true sinologists, but were certainly poets, played a prominent part in this evolution. Among other determining factors, I feel it would be necessary to take into account the evolution of the idea of literature itself.

Notes

1. Alexandre Lacharme, S.J., had translated the *Shijing* or the *Book of Verse* into latin prose in the 1730s, but his translation remained unpublished and even completely unknown during a whole century. It was published at last in 1830 by the German Julius Mohl under the title: *Confucii Chi - king sive Liber carminum*.
2. I do not take into account the poems attributed to emperor Qian Long like "Eloge de la ville de Mouken et de ses environs" (translated by Father Amiot) an studied here by A. Owen Aldridge because we are not quite sure they belong to poetry; judging by their French translation, they seem to me to be *fu* rather than *shi*.
3. It was published in 1735 in *Description de la Chine*, vol. III
4. in: J.-B. Du Halde, *Description de la Chine*, vol. III, Paris: Lemercier, 1735, p. 342 (our translation).
5. J.F. Davis also published an essay *On the Poetry of the Chinese - Poesseos Sinensis Comentarium* (J.L. Cox, 1829) but due to its shortness, its dubious accuracy and the fact that its sources are popular plays or novels rather than classical poetry, it

- cannot be compared with d'Hervey-Saint-Denys's anthology.
6. in: *Memoires...*, vol. VIII, p. 212.
 7. As to this question of the translation of Chinese drama into European languages, see my paper "Traductions et réception du théâtre chinois en Occident", in: *Actes du colloque Champs Littéraires – Tours déc. 1989*, Paris: Vrin, Coll. "L'Oiseau Lyre" (forthcoming), and my paper at the Tianjin Conference, July 1990, of which a digest was translated into Chinese and published in: *Zhangguo bijiao wenxue tongxun / Chinese Comparative Literature Bulletin*, 1991/1, pp. 16-18, under the title "Faguoren dui Zhongguo xiju de renwei".
 8. Quoted by d'Hervey-Saint-Denys, *Poésies de l'époque des Theng*, Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1977, p. 17.
 9. *Op. cit.*, p. 109 (our translation).
 10. See Louis Levionnois, "André Chénier et la poésie chinoise", *Cahiers Roucher – André Chénier*, n°9, 1989, pp. 29-41.
 11. Friedrich Rückert, *Schi-king, Chinesiscties Liederbuch, dem Deutschen angeeignet*, Altona, 1833. See Elizabeth Selden's study, *China in German Poetry from 1773 to 1833*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1942.
 12. Théophile Gautier, "Chinoiserie", *Poésies diverses 1835-1838*.
 13. For further details see Judith Gautier's memoirs, *Le Collier des jours*, T.II, Paris: Félix Juven, pp. 159-160, and see also my study, "Le Livre de Jade de Judith Gautier: un livre pionnier", *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, n°3, 1989, pp. 301-324.
 14. This fact explains why Lin-Tun-Ling was placed by the side of the greatest poets of the Tang epoch and why he became a Tang poet, born in 772 and dead in 845 (!) in Franz Toussaint's *Flûte de jade* which was greatly derived from the *Livre de jade*.
 15. On the other hand, sinologists judged it with a very critical eye. For instance, see Arthur Waley, *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*, London: Constable & Company Ltd, 1918, "Bibliographical Notes", n. 3, p. 21; or Basile Alexéiev, *La Littérature chinoise. Six Conférences su Collège de France et su Musée Guimet*, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1937, pp. 110-111.
 16. Joris-Karl Huysmans, *A Rebours*, Paris: U.G.E., Coll. 10X18, 1975, p. 304 (our translation).
 17. *Op. cit.*, p. 108 (our translation).
 18. *Le Collier des Jours. Souvenirs de me vie*. T.II, *Le Second Rang du Collier*, Paris: Félix Juven, p. 209 (our translation).
 19. In 1858, Louis Bouilhet published an anthology of his poems under the title *Festons et Astragales*. But the poems mentioned below were published only after his untimely death, by his friend Gustave Flaubert, under the title *Dernières Chansons* (1872).
 20. I consciously neglect to take into account Herbert Allen Giles's *Chinese Poetry in English Verse* (1898) because the translator only remodels Chinese verse in accordance with English rhymed iambic verse.
 21. Arthur Waley, *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*, London: Constable & Company Ltd. 1918, p. 19.
 22. *Tu Fu, The Autobiography of a Chinese Poet*, London: Jonathan Cape, Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929, Preface, p. 10.

