

IN SUM, all Chinese poetry is concinnate, polished, vivid, formal, forceful, dramatic and rhetorical. As mentioned above, I mean rhetorical in the Chinese sense of the word; that is, the art of elegant diction. The well-known lines of Gautier (who apparently knew something of Chinese poetry and admired it):

*Oui, l'oeuvre sort plus belle  
D'une forme au travail  
Rebelle:  
Vers, marbre, onyx, émail*

might well be chosen as a motto or emblem for the splendid eras of Chinese poetry this anthology attempts to represent.

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#### *Where Translators Disagree*

When she wrote her translation course project paper for The Chinese University Extramural Department, Mrs. Lo Wong Chun-chee (羅黃振池) counted a total of ten English translations of *The Song of Enduring Woe* by Po Chü-i. These renderings—in rough chronological order, the works of Su Man-shu (蘇曼殊); W. J. Fletcher; Witter Bynner; Herbert A. Giles; L. Cranmer-Byng; Soame Jenyns; Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (楊憲益夫婦); Chan Wai Wen (陳慧文); Jen Tai (任泰) and John Turner, the last of which is printed in the following pages—all attempt, in various verse forms, to approximate the narrative and lyricism of this celebrated masterpiece. A random quoting of some versions of the poem's first line, *han-huang chung se ssu ch'ing-kuo* 漢皇重色思傾國, shows how interpretation and the feel for words can differ from translator to translator:-

His Imperial Majesty, a slave to beauty  
longed for a "subverter of empires"; . . .  
—HERBERT A. GILES trans.: "The Everlasting Wrong"

China's Emperor, craving beauty that might shake an empire, . . .  
—WITTER BYNNER trans.: "A Song of Unending Sorrow"

The Han King loved beauty and longed for a beauty rare, . . .  
—JEN TAI trans.: "The Everlasting Woe"

Such variations aside, Mrs. Lo points out that "none of the translators had succeeded in bringing out the comparison between the Han Emperor Wu-ti's romance with Madame Li [see *Renditions* No. 1, "Two Imperial Ladies of Han"] and the T'ang Emperor Hsuan Tsung's romance with Yang Kuei-fei, which the original subtly implied." Also, *ch'ing-kuo* 傾國, which in general usage only means "rare beauty", should not be translated literally in similar manner to "the face that launched a thousand ships". In this light, then, it would be doubly interesting to note that Howard Levy has "A Chinese king esteemed sex" in his "Lament Everlasting" (*Translations from Po Chü-i's Collected Works*).