

How *Renditions* Changed My Life (and My Name)

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In July 1994, I sent four translations I had made of Chinese poems to *Renditions*. However, at the time I sent these first translations, I was rather nervous about it, because I was not sure how accurate they were. That was also the reason that I decided to send them to *Renditions*—I thought it was time to subject my work to serious critical evaluation by experts in Chinese literature. Since I did not speak or read Chinese myself, and did not know any Chinese scholars, I had to rely upon published, literal, word-for-character translations as the basis for my own renderings. I tried to make up for my lack of knowledge as best I could by reading biographies of poets, books on Chinese history and culture, and as many English translations as I could find for comparison.

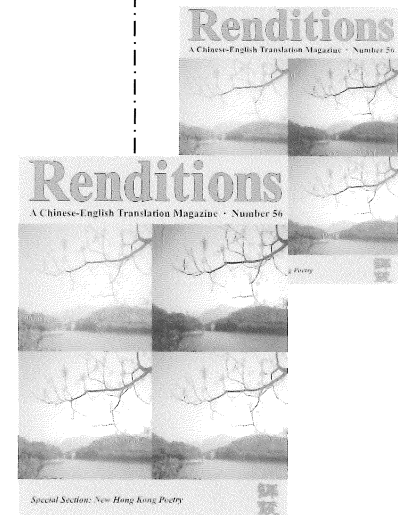
I had been fascinated by the challenge of translating poetry ever since I first attempted to translate some French poems as an undergraduate. It was also at that time that I first began to read Chinese poetry in the translations of Arthur Waley and Ezra Pound. I found it refreshingly different from Western poetry and

very intriguing, but I certainly never anticipated trying to translate it myself.

Now, thirty years later, here I was doing it, and with some success, in terms of publication. Quite a few of my translations had been accepted by editors of magazines in the US who liked them as poems in English, but like myself, they did not know Chinese and could not judge their faithfulness to the original. It was time to put them to the test, and correct whatever errors I had been making.

Off went a group of poems to *Renditions*. When Dr Eva Hung wrote back to accept two of them, she said that they were 'very well done'! I was thrilled and relieved, but Dr Hung also asked if I had studied Chinese formally. I was embarrassed to have to explain that I did not know Chinese and was more of a 'retranslator' than a translator, and that my only qualification for the job was that I was a poet. Nonetheless, this was the beginning of a relationship with the editor and staff of *Renditions*, which has been of enormous value to me. The translations I have published there since were greatly improved as a result of critical commentaries and suggestions by the *Renditions* staff.

In November 2001 Dr Alice Cheang wrote saying that she was putting together an anthology of *ci* poetry in English translation, to be titled *A Silver Treasury of Chinese Lyrics*, and that Dr Hung had suggested me as a possible contributor. I answered saying that I would love to participate, but that someone would have to provide literal English versions for me to work with. Soon afterward I heard from Dr Teresa Yu, and two months later from Dr Mary M.Y. Fung, both of whom were interested in having me work with them on the project. A bit later Audrey Heijns asked me to work with her on some poems of



Qiu Jin 秋瑾. These collaborations have not only been great fun but wonderful learning experiences. I am a much better translator as a result of them. Better yet, I have some delightful new friends. I was lucky enough to be able to meet Mary and her husband in person last summer, and I hope to meet my other friends soon.

On top of all this, Mary has translated three of my own poems into Chinese and published them in *Poetry Network* 詩網絡, and last month Alice and Mary decided that I should have a Chinese name, and Mary created the name Lun Daiwei 倫戴維 for me. I feel greatly honoured by this, and by being accepted into the *Renditions* family.

Now I guess I had better learn Chinese. ☒

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Hande". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal tail stroke.