

## A Merry-Go-Round

### Karen Kingsbury

is currently an associate professor at Tunghai University, Taiwan. She was a major contributor to the *Renditions* special issue on Eileen Chang.

In the spring of 1997, not long after I'd finished some translations for *Renditions*, I had a chance to visit Hong Kong. Naturally, I made a point of going to the *Renditions* offices to meet Eva Hung and the others with whom I'd been corresponding. Eva, David Pollard, Janice Wickeri, and another colleague—I think it was Oliver Stunt—treated me to an afternoon of deep cordiality and good conversation.

At one point we were gathered around a table, seminar-style, telling translator's tales. Someone mentioned the troubles caused by English prepositions, and a chuckle went rippling around the room. Apparently the staff had several times circulated drafts in which the prepositions took a trip on a merry-go-round: an American would replace 'in' with 'at', a Britisher change 'at' to 'of', an Australian turn 'of' into 'for', and a Canadian change 'for' to 'in' again. We all laughed, and marvelled too, at the variousness of English. That laughter loosened, ever so slightly, my own attachment to ingrained grammatical habit, and helped open my mind to the varieties of English used around the world. In my work as an English teacher in Taiwan, I still correct errors, prepositional and otherwise, but I do so with a bit more humility and humour, thanks to that brief but memorable encounter with a roomful of translation experts all laughing about 'of', 'to', and 'for'. ❧

