

## ***Renditions*—a Good Thirty Years**

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is currently an associate professor in the Department of Chinese at the University of Hong Kong. She was on the staff of *Renditions* from 1973 to 1976, and later served on its Editorial Committee.

From 1973 to 1976 I worked under George Kao and helped put out the first six issues of the magazine. It was the time when Stephen Soong and George Kao ran the show and when T.C. Lai also came around quite a bit. I can still remember Stephen Soong ecstasizing over the films of King Hu 胡金銓 and George Kao showing me his caricatures which I secretly thought were as good as James Thurber's. It was the age of the manual typewriter and I remember the days of work going over George Kao's big fat handwriting scrawled in red over typed manuscripts and checking the translations against cryptic Chinese passages and then, usually after the third or fourth draft, finally letting Fanny, our faithful secretary, produce the perfect copy. It was a time when one was allowed and encouraged to read and learn and appreciate things without being told when to stop unless, of course, the formidable deadline called for a rush of cutting, pasting and paginating activities.

After I left *Renditions* I realized, on looking back, how much more sophisticated the collective consciousness of Hong Kong had become since 1972 when the Government declared Chinese an official language together with English. *Renditions* was born at the right time when our Chinese literary mind, with

its inexhaustible store of linguistic expressions, was clamouring for an international audience through English, our other language. Chinese has always been the language of literature, of art appreciation, of poetry, of philosophy, and what a task it must be for the translator to deliver all that to the other shore! Rambling into other areas of translation did not make me forget this although at the same time I believed there were other aspects of Chinese, equally important, that had to be reckoned with. Then much later, around 1997 when I was making an English translation of Xi Xi's novel *Flying Carpet* and labouring to bring English sense to flying carpets and flying saucers in that real and surreal world of the author's fantasy, I began again to recall Stephen Soong's dedicated efforts in discovering young talent (for it was he who gave Xi Xi the highest ratings) and George Kao's masterly touch in giving even mundane writings that mark of insight and durable readability. Is there a real distinction between literary translation and non-literary translation? I may not know the answer to this yet, but I do know that in true *Renditions* fashion fine literature will always be exalted as the greatest prize.

With thirty years of publishing history, *Renditions* is now vintage translation. Its subtle influence is felt by many readers—in my case decades later. This, in an age when more and more things are being published and less and less are read, is surely no small wonder. ❖

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Diana Yue (left) and Rebecca Young, members of the first editorial team.