

## For Me, Only Twenty-eight Years

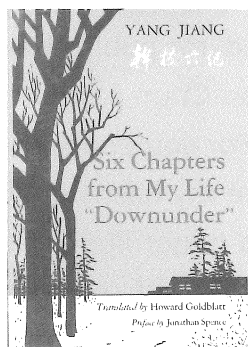
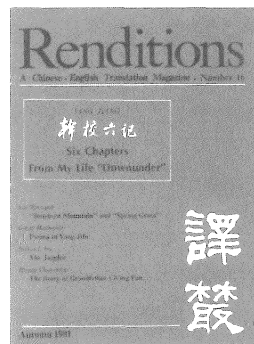
### Howard Goldblatt

is currently Research Professor at the University of Indiana. He has been a translator for *Renditions* since 1975 and a member of its Editorial Committee since 1985.



Howard Goldblatt (standing second right) on a visit to Taipei with the Editors of *Renditions*.

In a recent essay I wrote that my first published translation appeared in an early issue of *The Chinese PEN*, a quarterly published in Taiwan; it was the summer of 1974. True enough. What I didn't mention, however, was that the first of my translations to be 'accepted' for publication was the story 'Goats' 羊 by Xiao Jun 蕭軍 (spelled Hsiao Chun at the time), which appeared in *Renditions* No. 4, Spring 1975. For someone who had just begun his academic career, it was a thrill to see my name appear in what everyone knew was on its way to becoming a major literary outlet for Chinese writing in translation. So to my list of early-career benefactors I must add the names of C.T. Hsia, who recommended the translation—executed (in re-reading it now, I might add 'as soon as possible'!) in conjunction with a seminar paper for Professor Wu-chi Liu at Indiana University—and George Kao, the first *Renditions* Editor, who accepted it in all its rawness and then edited it into much better form.



More than a quarter of a century has passed; copies of *Renditions*, along with a magnificent selection of Renditions books, fill an entire bookshelf; another half dozen of my translations have appeared in the magazine; and I am now included as a member of the magazine's Editorial Committee, a nod to staying power, if nothing else.

If there is an upside to approaching the end of one's career, it is in looking back, not so much at accomplishments (those are too fleeting and always subject to re-evaluation), but in the associations, the people and institutions with whom and which one has developed close and rewarding relationships and active collaboration. The magazine whose thirtieth anniversary we celebrate here is high on my list on both counts. Having known and worked with, and learned from, colleagues and editors such as George Kao, Stephen Soong, John Minford, Eva Hung, Chu Chiyu, and David Pollard has been, and continues to be, one of the highlights of the past thirty years of my professional and personal life. The opportunity to take up temporary residence on several occasions (including the winter of 1986-87, when I managed to escape from the frozen tundra of Harbin for a couple of balmy months), overlooking the carp pool in the Institute of Chinese Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, where the magazine and books are produced, has presented me with the most idyllic working conditions I've known. Finally, helping to edit a special issue of the magazine, working on a day-to-day basis with a variety of students and colleagues, and associating with many of the poets and writers, translators and scholars who have passed through the Institute over the years have brought me considerable satisfaction.

Certainly one of my most compelling memories involves the translation of the Cultural Revolution memoir by Yang Jiang, 'Six Chapters from My Life "Downunder"', which I was asked to undertake by Stephen Soong, a close friend of the author and her husband, Qian Zhongshu. The finished product, which was later published in book form by the University of Washington Press (one of at least three renderings of the work), was a true and truly remarkable collaborative effort, involving not only the author, Mr Soong, and me, but George Kao, who supplied the title, as well. My folder of correspondence is an inch and a half thick, and a source of pride, embarrassment, and, from time to time, bewilderment. The meticulous editing, for which the magazine has always been known, produced a finished translation that has pleased many and infuriated others, but which has made available, even a quarter of a century later, one of the literary masterpieces of modern Chinese belles-lettres. Thanks, *Renditions!* ☒

