

Editor's Page

Events in the last six months – since the publication of *Renditions* No.31 in May 1989 – have brought high hopes and bitter disappointment to all those who care about China, among whom must be numbered the readers of *Renditions*. It is now with great sadness that we look back at the contents of our last issue, which included the long poem “Ape Herd” by Mang Ke and the play “The Retrial of Wei Jingsheng” by Wang Keping. In the context of recent events both works seem as much prophetic as they are realistic, and we are doubly saddened by the reports of Mang Ke’s arrest* and the prosecution of writers and intellectuals who had called for the release of Wei Jingsheng in March this year. Many writers, including most of the “Today” poets, have been forced into exile, and it may be a long time before China will see such daring and fruitful literary experiments as those which have taken place in the last decade. The fiction section in the present issue of *Renditions*, though limited in scope, is perhaps a fitting reminder of the development of Chinese fiction in the past century.

Tribute to the Grand Old Lady of Modern Chinese Literature

The word “grand” may not be the most appropriate to describe Bing Xin, for to generations of readers she has been the subject of love and affection rather than awe. Nevertheless its use betokens the respect due to a writer whose career spans the better half of this century, from the budding stage of the New Literature Movement to the 1980s. The journey from shy young poet uncertain of herself and her chosen genre to her present “grandma” status has been a long one, but Bing Xin has emerged from it as pure in heart and spirit as the girl who started writing in the early 1920s. To some critics the homogeneity of her writings may indicate a want of sophistication and a lack of development, but it may also be taken as evidence of self-knowledge: She found and kept to a style that suited her and satisfied her readers. Of all modern Chinese writers she is probably the one who has enjoyed the most constant and faithful following in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Though never a political activist, Bing Xin has made some decisions which have been politically significant, and one of the most decisive was that to return to China with her husband in 1951. More recently she was one of the thirty-three signatories to the original open letter calling for Wei Jingsheng’s release (though this led to

some controversy in April), and during the student hunger strikes in May she visited the students in Tian'anmen Square and wrote an open letter to the Chinese authorities appealing to them to "Save Our Children". However, such actions were not taken to support any particular political persuasion, for like so many of the writers of her generation, she is essentially a patriot and a humanist: This is apparent in her earliest writings such as "Spring Water" 春水 and "A Maze of Stars" 繁星. In publishing a special section on Bing Xin *Renditions* pays tribute to one of the most endearing and enduring literary figures in twentieth century China.

Special thanks is due to Mr C. H. Kwock, a dedicated translator of classical poetry, for sending us Bing Xin's translations of Li Qingzhao's poems. Thanks is also due to Mr Tang Jinteng of the Fine Arts Department, Chinese University of Hong Kong, whose calligraphy graces the special section on Bing Xin and the back cover of this issue.

Renditions Workshop Fellowship

The generosity of George Kao and Stephen Soong, founding editors of *Renditions*, has enabled the Research Centre for Translation to establish a visiting fellowship which will allow translators of world renown to visit the Chinese University of Hong Kong and work on projects of their choice. *Renditions* is pleased to announce that the first Workshop Fellow will be Burton Watson. He will join the Research Centre for Translation for six months starting from January, 1990.

At the same time, the Research Centre for Translation is also launching a junior fellowship, tenable for three to four months, for Ph.D. candidates studying Chinese literature to work at *Renditions*. Enquiries may be sent to the Managing Editor.

E.H.

*After four days in detention Mang Ke was released and is now under some sort of house arrest.