

## "SMALL TALK"

The "words of a small-talk artist" (小說家言)—so the Chinese traditionally regard the product of the novelist's art—are fit only for whiling away the time "after tea and wine". Of course, following the modern view, Chinese fiction has also been made the subject of serious appreciation and study. This issue of *Renditions* provides a sampling of this fiction, though no more than a random selection from a rich heritage and only a chapter or two of each longer work represented.

Of the works included none appeared before the sixteenth century, though the tradition of Chinese storytelling dates back to earlier times; nor are there any novels or short stories translated here that have appeared later than Chiang Kuei's *The Whirlwind*, published in 1957. In terms of content, this Special Issue covers an even shorter span, most of the stories being set in what may be termed the China of "only yesterday", from the late Ch'ing period of Li Po-yuan down to the 1930's. This limitation in scope is more by necessity than design: *Renditions* in its first year of publication is as yet in no position to plan and assign translations, following any kind of pre-conceived editorial scheme. Rather, we have been largely content to work with such manuscripts as are available to us.

Within these confines we have managed to assemble what would appear to be a wide range of writers, who have created a variety of characters and situations, and not without certain common themes. They have woven for us a fabric of life with the strands of "sorrow and joy, parting and union" that represent the Chinese concept of a good tale.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To Prof. C.T. Hsia, authority on Chinese fiction past and present, who not only was instrumental in our finding three of the translations, but also contributed a story on which he worked jointly with one of his students.

Already, in this second issue of "A Chinese-English Translation Magazine", younger talents are in evidence side by side with the more established practitioners of the art. Not a few of the translations were done by graduate students, or when the translators were students, in fulfillment of some academic requirement. We are delighted that this is so, though it has meant many hours of painstaking checking against the original to improve and polish what are basically sound translations. We hope that many more among our budding translators will contribute to *Renditions*—and will do so with the help and guidance of their teachers.

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—G.K.