

*Personal Freedom
in Twentieth-Century China:
Reclaiming the Self in Yang Lian's Yi
and Gao Xingjian's Lingshan*

Mabel Lee

A common assumption is that China's traditional culture had no place for the 'self', an awareness of which is critical for the emergence of the notion of personal autonomy and for the generation of demands for the right to personal freedom and the corollaries of social and political equality. The propaganda, including the literature, produced during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) would seem to support such an assumption. However, this paper will argue that such an assumption is incorrect and that while the Chinese notion of 'self' may differ significantly from its Western counterpart, it has had a long history of development and that the period of greatest development has in fact taken place in the present century, during which time Western philosophies with strong resonances in traditional Chinese philosophy have been eclectically embraced. The awakened 'self' and its demand for freedom was then *consciously* put aside because of the perceived need for mass action in patriotic struggles first against Western imperialism, then against Japanese territorial encroachment and finally full-scale invasion in 1937. Such threats to the nation had been clearly removed by the late 1970s and, as Deng Xiaoping's ascendancy to power signalled the end of the Cultural Revolution to a still nervous population, the call for the affirmation of the self resurfaced in the voice of the young Beijing poets during the Democracy Wall Movement, 1978–79.

As China opened to the international world in its push to establish itself as one of the modernised nations of the world, foreign works of literature, philosophy, politics, and economics flooded in alongside the

technological and scientific works. In the first half of the 1980s translations of Western literature were being published at registered publishing houses in vast numbers and despite the periodic singling out for criticism of individual writers, particularly during the 'anti spiritual pollution' campaign (1983–84), the more relaxed political atmosphere of the 1980s made it possible for the resurgence of demands for personal freedom and also the right to personal freedom, and in the first instance to freedom of expression. Such demands escalated with growing momentum in the latter half of the 1980s and culminated in the tragic events of Tiananmen on 4 June 1989. Significantly, the year 1989 was the tenth anniversary of the Democracy Wall Movement as well as the Seventieth Anniversary of the May Fourth Movement of 1915–1919, the latter being the first mass student movement demanding national freedom and equality for China and personal freedom and democracy for the individual.

It was in this political context that the following two literary works, which are clearly explications of the self, were written in China during the 1980s: Yang Lian's collection of sixty-four long poems entitled *Yi*¹ and Gao Xingjian's 81-chapter novel *Lingshan*.² These works, each considered by the respective authors to be his major work to date, are deeply philosophical and represent several years of writing and serious reflection on the self and the place of the self in society, traditional culture, history and in literary creation. Importantly, both works are regarded by the authors as expressions of the self.

As the role of the self is crucial and highly pronounced in creative literature, these two works will serve to demonstrate how both Yang Lian and Gao Xingjian have invented unique constructs and extended the confines of language and literature to reclaim the self as author. Although two different genres are concerned, both writers have employed various artistic strategies to endow the author with more than a single voice. Such strategies have allowed *Yi* and *Lingshan* to successfully reveal several facets of the authorial self.

Before turning to discuss specific aspects of the conceptual framework of *Yi* and *Lingshan* the following comments on the development of the notion of the Chinese self in modern times, its linkages with traditional Chinese philosophy as well as with Western philosophy, will serve as a critical context for understanding the core philosophy of the self of both writers which despite their readings in

Western literature, remains distinctly Chinese. The self portrayed in *Yi* and in *Lingshan* has discernible genealogical ties with the traditional self described below, but it is also identifiably the self of two reflective writers of China pondering on existential issues and the place of the self in society and in the cosmos during the 1980s. In the case of each, the perceptions of the self are enriched by strong intellects, powerful observational skills and imaginations, and highly developed aesthetic visual, auditory and kinetic sensitivities. Wide reading in China's classical and modern literature, philosophy and history as well as in Western literature and history have deepened their critical abilities, as have their individual experiences of personal trauma because of their acute awareness of self and obsession for creative writing. Last but not least both writers are highly skilled in the effective use of language.

Early traditional Chinese notions of an autonomous self have their origins in the Daoist writings attributed to Laozi and Zhuangzi. Embedded in the Daoist tradition is the opposition to restriction on the freedom and autonomy of action of the individual, both to the physical body and to the spiritual self. That the basic premise of human life was the individual's freedom to expression in speech and action, was a dominant feature in the writings of independent thinkers in China's past, and was developed and expounded unambiguously in late pre-modern times by Li Zhi (1527–1602) of the Ming dynasty who fought unrelentingly for the freedom of intellectual enquiry. His critical dissertations on Buddhist, Moist and Daoist texts incurred the wrath of orthodox Confucian scholars who vilified, slandered and silenced him.³ The Confucian scholar bureaucracy of the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties with its strong emphasis on orthodoxy ensured that such heretical ideas were stifled, until some centuries later, when Li Zhi was upheld as an exemplar by modern Chinese anarchists and hailed as China's Bakunin in the early years of the twentieth century.⁴

It was only when the ruling Confucian scholar class clearly perceived its failure to respond effectively to the threat imposed by the modern industrialised West that the authority of orthodox Confucianism was severely and effectively challenged from within. In the late nineteenth century the value and importance of the individual's autonomous self came to be promoted, initially as a construct for national salvation. Pro-Western Confucian scholars such as Wang Tao, Yan Fu and Tan Sitong

in the 1880s and 1890s argued that democratic institutions had made Western nations wealthy and strong because through such institutions each individual was charged with the responsibility for the well-being of the nation.

Yan Fu (1855–1921)⁵ who brought to the Chinese John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and *System of Logic*, and Montesquieu's *L'ésprit des Lois* with his translations of these works, argued perceptively in a series of essays in 1894 that the Chinese civil service examinations since the Song dynasty (960–1279) had made scholars impotent with the possible but uncertain prize of a position in the bureaucracy. The examinations had sapped scholars of intelligence, corrupted their morals and reduced them to a parasitic existence in society. Whereas the people of the West were their own masters those in China were slaves. Could slaves be expected to fend off nations governed by masters? In Yan Fu's view it was the lack of freedom in China which had prevented the development of science and technology in China: personal freedom was feared by the sages of China whereas in the West all laws were aimed at the preservation of personal freedom. Applying Darwin's 'struggle for existence' and 'natural selection' to society and social phenomena, as espoused by Spencer, Yan Fu concluded that if modernisation were to take place in China the Chinese would probably not cope, just like people in poor health cannot cope with strenuous exercise.⁶

At this point it would be relevant to draw attention to Neo-Confucian thought which remains active to this day at the core of Chinese culture, despite the enormous political and social changes which have taken place during the twentieth century. It is in the Neo-Confucian concept of sagehood, that the crucial difference between the individualism of the West and China may be seen most clearly: sagehood, ie. perfection of the self or self-realisation lay in the elimination of differences between the self and others. This is diametrically opposed to the individualism of the West which seeks to emphasise differences between the self and others.⁷

In *An Exposition of Benevolence* (Renxue, 1898), Tan Sitong (1865–1898) indicted traditional Chinese political strategy: rulers exercised authority by keeping the masses ignorant. The institution of an autocratic ruler had brought about moral degeneration in which sycophantic behaviour was an integral part: it was named 'loyalty' by those who joined the ruler in oppressing the common people. Thus the original

intent of Confucius had been progressively eroded over the centuries and his teachings had been reduced to being instruments for preserving the authority of the ruler and the ruling class.⁸

By the early years of the twentieth century Western anarchist thinking was to provide Chinese intellectuals with the vocabulary and conceptual framework for a dynamic modern political and social philosophy which consistently argued that the individual was the most important and basic unit of society. Through the publications of Chinese anarchists grouped in Tokyo and Paris, anarchism was established as a crucial part of Chinese radical thinking and action, and as an integral and powerful voice in revolutionary discourse. The anarchist emphasis on the individual and social concerns, the denigration of all existing past and present traditions and institutions, demanded the transformation of the Chinese psyche through the process of anarchist education: in other words, cultural revolution. Power and authority, epitomised by the government, had resulted in the distortion of the primitive instinct of mutual help in social man. The lust for power had brought about this distortion through the coercion of punishments and the inducement of rewards (money, status, honours and fame). In the Chinese anarchist search for a more noble and meaningful form of human existence, social classes and the lust for power were isolated as the main sources of the contagious hypocritical morality rampant in human society.

Chinese anarchist thinking⁹ was most dramatically expressed and widespread in the New Culture Movement of the May Fourth period, 1915–1919.¹⁰ Then, following the events of the May Fourth Incident in 1919, anarchist thinking filtered into the Chinese communist movement as many former anarchists gradually joined the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) which was established in 1921.¹¹ Important anarchist achievements in the education of labour and the peasantry, mass mobilisation and the strategy of cultural revolution, also, were conveniently appropriated by the CCP. Dirlik perceptively observes that the prevailing mood of the May Fourth period ‘was not reflective discrimination but an euphorious revolutionary eclecticism that could imagine a basic unity in diverse ideas so long as these appeared progressive, democratic and scientific’ and that ‘under the circumstances the ideas anarchists contributed to the New Culture Movement were not easily distinguishable as anarchist ideas, especially since the anarchists did not claim them explicitly for anarchism.’¹² Indeed the

immense amounts of anarchist literature available in Chinese translation at the time together with the writings of Chinese anarchists themselves appeared regularly in mainstream publications by 1919, indicating that certain elements of the anarchist ideal had become widely accepted in China. The works of Kropotkin, Bakunin, Goldman, Tolstoy, Grave, Reclus, Louis Blanc, and Malatesta were available in Chinese at the time and some editions ran to five thousand copies.¹³

The rejection of politics and political alignment inherent within anarchist thinking had turned idealistic youth away from involvement in the blatantly political reality of early Republican China. Many of the younger generation of intellectuals, not only those who had embraced anarchism as a total social philosophy, had internalised those elements of anarchist thinking which extolled the importance and value of the individual. These elements were familiar and found resonances in the traditional culture, particularly in the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi* as well as in the literature influenced by that work.¹⁴ By the second decade of this century the anarchist movement had rapidly declined in the West and the younger generation of Chinese intellectuals who had become committed to the ideals of freedom and autonomy of the individual and the affirmation of the self no longer acknowledged their anarchist sources. However, the work of the anarchists had prepared the minds of Chinese youth so that they passionately embraced Nietzsche's pronouncement 'God is dead!' which concisely summed up their aspirations for personal freedom by ending with one stroke all authority external to the individual self.

In this period Chinese creative writers moved to the vanguard as the heroes of the May Fourth movement.¹⁵ The new literature of the period, written in the vernacular language, represented a break with the classical literary traditions of the past and a shift to the issues and concerns of the present, but more importantly it represented both a new awareness of the meaning of the creative act and the literary process as well as the beginnings of a maturing in the Chinese understanding of the literatures and concerns of other peoples of the world.¹⁶ The May Fourth spirit, with its emphasis on the individual and the self, was consciously established as the tradition for China's modern literature. Although it would not be difficult to substantiate that many of the masterpieces of Chinese literature of the past were pure expressions of the unfettered self, it was Western literature, philosophy and psychology

which in this period provided the language and modern perspective for theoretical discussions of literature. Creative literature was now acknowledged as the expression of the untrammelled self, as possessing an intrinsic worth and as having an existence other than that of simply being a vehicle for transmitting some political teaching or ideology.¹⁷

It is the literary excellence of the *Zhuangzi*, as much as its philosophy of the untrammelled self, which has inspired creative writers for countless generations. Chinese writers of this century have been drawn to Nietzsche's writings for precisely the same reasons. Particularly attractive for Chinese writers, and all Chinese reflective thinkers, was Nietzsche's reinforcement of the importance of the self in the context of the modern industrialised world: his harsh indictment of the dehumanising effects of modern Western civilisation issued a strong warning against uncritical imitation of the West at a time when there were severe pressures for China to modernise. The works of Japanese writers such as Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880–1923) which acted as conduits of Nietzschean thinking to the Chinese added the dimension of immediate relevance by addressing actual problems of the times and his *Symbols of Suffering*, *Out of the Ivory Tower* and *At the Crossroads* were well known from Chinese versions published in the early 1920s.¹⁸ The titles of Kuriyagawa's books speak for themselves: in times of national crisis the eremitism of Daoism was an option for only a few, and for Chinese intellectuals who had largely internalised the Confucian sense of social responsibility,¹⁹ Zarathustra's decision to return to human society was a poignant message. Modern Chinese literature in the May Fourth tradition which accredited the importance of the self in the creative process and embraced the perceptions of contemporary Western literature, emerged first in fiction through the works of powerful writers such as Lu Xun and Yu Dafu, and later in the works of poets such as Guo Moruo, Xu Zhimo, Wen Yiduo, Dai Wangshu, Bian Zhilin and Li Jinfa.²⁰

The events in China's history since the May Fourth period, however, denied all but a tenuous development to a literary tradition where the creative self would play the pivotal role. From the early years of the twentieth century a conscious willingness to deny the self for patriotic reasons had begun to emerge in China alongside anarchism with its emphasis on the self and the individual. This renunciation of the self

was to grow as foreign powers continued to exert their will upon a weak and impoverished nation ruled by an inept and corrupt government. Territorial encroachment and events leading up to the Japanese invasion in 1937 made the denial of 'self' imperative and this was particularly painful for creative writers with ingrained anarchist leanings and a strong commitment to literature of the self.²¹ After the brief civil war which transferred the mantle of government to the CCP in 1949, further demands for 'self' denial were made on individuals. A population conditioned by half a century of 'self' denial, easily succumbed to political tyranny: the denial of an individual's autonomous self was progressively institutionalised by the meticulous implementation of the 'mass line' promoted zealously by party ideologues. An aggressive propaganda machine, with powerful disciplinary and reward mechanisms, effectively silenced dissenting thinkers who dared so much as to voice expressions of the self. Their gradual silence ensured that less independent minds would fall prey to carefully designed propaganda. The Cultural Revolution saw the total denigration of the individual (and of the self) whose role, value and function were reduced to that of being a cog in the socialist machine driven and directed by those in power within the Party. Compelled by socialist public morality the population became accessories to the gross distortion and deletion of basic human instincts. Hypocrisy and deception under the mask of socialist public morality became the established tradition of the times.²²

The extreme self-alienation of the Cultural Revolution was initially externally-induced but the institution of a socialist public morality allowed it to become a perpetually internally-induced self-alienation. The blatant and exaggerated nature of the excesses of hypocrisy and deception exercised during the Cultural Revolution and the resulting distortion of human thinking and behaviour presents a stark lesson for the world. However, the phenomenon of self-alienation is not exclusive to the Cultural Revolution, nor even to China, it exists in all human societies. As described in the poetry of Yang Lian, habit and tradition anaesthetise the pain of lobotomy and castration for unknowing victims but for those who are aware of these operations taking place, and who therefore do not respond to the anaesthetics, there is excruciating agony. It is this perception of human existence which haunts the poems of Yang Lian's *Yi*. Self-alienation is tragic for all human beings but human

Personal Freedom in Twentieth-Century China

society nevertheless continues to perpetuate this process because the instinctive impulse to preserve the species continually results in an obsessive desire to procreate. There are rituals and festivals to glorify the proliferation of the physical self while people who have been reduced to walking corpses remain oblivious to the fact that the spiritual self is being progressively annihilated from the day of birth.²³

The underlying philosophy of Yang Lian's *Yi* is the unity of heaven and man, a dominant feature of traditional Chinese culture. However, Yang Lian's interpretation of that unity is radically different. Whereas man in traditional culture was subservient to heaven and therefore obeyed heaven, for Yang Lian man is an integral part of heaven.

Thus change occurs simultaneously in both man and heaven: as the experiences of the self increase, a richer world is experienced. The unity of heaven and man therefore constitutes ever-changing unities in the world as perceived by the self; poetry is the verbalisation of the self's ever-changing perceptions. This view of the self and the world of the self has its roots in traditional Chinese philosophy: in Daoism and in Neo-Confucianism which incorporated elements of Daoism and Buddhism. In the West it is to be found in the Monadology of the seventeenth-century German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz whose treatise on the monads was in fact developed under the influence of Chinese philosophical works.²⁴

The framework of *Yi* is the *Book of Changes* and its intention is the liberation of the self of the individual from the constraints of tradition-bound perceptions of reality. Yang Lian argues that this ancient shamanistic book was the symbolisation of nature by primitive man. People who have annotated the work through the ages have distorted its meaning to suit their own religious and philosophical viewpoints. What were originally scattered and fragmented divinational signs were linked to form a system for expounding some teaching of a later time. However the *Changes* far excel the later interpretations precisely because they are ineffable in their primitivity and simplicity. The *Changes* are primitive man's emotional responses and summing up of the surrounding natural environment. Heaven, earth, mountain, marsh, water, fire, thunder and wind are the natural features of the Yellow River basin, the birthplace of the Chinese civilisation; these images of nature therefore became the earliest symbols of Chinese civilisation. Hence the *Book of Changes* with its trigrams formed from the Yin

(female) and Yang (male), and the hexagrams formed from the trigrams, did not intend to transmit a 'theory of changes', but simply to depict the environment inhabited by the Chinese people of ancient times, its changes and mankind's increasingly complex observations of these. The poetic sense of the *Changes* is inherent in this interpretation for it imposes no restrictions and refers to direct perceptions.

The *Changes* which symbolise nature, like nature are also free; they are neither tied to fixed definitions nor to ossified temporal or spatial boundaries. Heaven, earth, mountain, marsh, water, fire, thunder, wind, do not specifically symbolise anything yet together symbolise everything. They neither belong to antiquity which documented them nor to the present which has rediscovered them. They are the products of human hands, spatial demarcations of knowledge. They constitute a miniature of the cosmos which changes with time and with the individual. The spirit of poetry is similar: its objective is not to explain, its objective is solely its existence.

Sixty-four is a hypothetical construct. *Yi* is divided into four books, each containing sixteen items. The abstract symbols of the *Changes* are not used but certain images and numbers are indicated to preserve the primitive free symbolisation of the *Changes*, like the forms in nature. The arrangement and pairing of the trigrams to form hexagrams is also free. Each trigram is placed in the top position and in turn are placed Heaven, Earth, Mountain, Marsh, Water, Fire, Thunder, Wind. Through this poetic structure there is a return to the spontaneity and freedom which are basic features of the *Changes*.

In internal structure, Heaven and Wind, Earth and Mountain, Water and Marsh, Fire and Thunder, are used to construct the four books of *Yi*:

1. 'The Untrammelled Man Speaks': Man confronts nature.
2. 'In Symmetry With Death': Man confronts history.
3. 'Living in Seclusion': Man confronts the self.
4. 'The Descent': Man's transcendence.

The four books of *Yi* form an interconnected whole. Each book has its own particular structure, form of language and content: these too are inter-related, deepening in layers as concentric circles. The circles represent the poet's perceptions unfolding at different levels but have the same centre: man's existence. In poetic creation, Yang Lian is conscious of plunging deeper and deeper into the abyss of existence

and, in the process, discovering a 'more profound' language for dialogue with the world. Or, one might say, by sinking deeper and deeper into oneself, man instead envelops the world. This is the path to 'what is beneath the phenomenal, ie. the metaphysical'. For him it is like 'Dante's return to the pure world from Hell or Nietzsche's Zarathustra's going down from the mountain'.²⁵

Although prior to 1978 Yang Lian had written some two hundred classical poems, he did not keep any of these after he had decisively turned to writing Modernist poetry. However despite its modern imagery and use of the Modernist concerns, the music of classical poetry continues to reverberate in his poetry. His training in classical Chinese encourages him instinctively to maximise dynamic emotional effect in his writings through the rigorous choice of words; it also allows him to continue to read widely in the masterpieces of Chinese literature of the past while simultaneously expanding his knowledge of world literature. These experiences of continued heightening of the awareness and sensitivity of the self to the linguistic expressions of the finest minds of the world allows for sharper perceptions of an ever-broadening poetic world.²⁶

Yang Lian's reading of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Anti-Christ*, confirmed and reinforced the Zhuangzian perspective on human existence afforded in classical literature, particularly poetry. There was a Nietzsche craze in China during the May Fourth period when China's modern literary traditions were first established, and another one in the late 1970s and early 1980s when Yang Lian began to establish himself as a poet. Nietzsche was invoked on both occasions to break the shackles of tradition. On the second occasion 'tradition' referred to that of the remote past as well as that of the immediate past. It is interesting to note that whereas Nietzsche was extolled during the May Fourth period by intellectuals in China, in the West he was at the same time being condemned as the perpetrator of an ideology which had brought about the human carnage and suffering of the First World War. The second Nietzsche craze in China during the late 1970s and 1980s coincided with the exoneration of Nietzsche from associations with the Nazi movement and Nietzsche's subsequent influence on Postmodernist thinking in the West.²⁷ From 1978 Yang Lian began greedily to consume world literature, reading vast pages of hand-written rough translations of various Western authors which circulated amongst

like-minded youth who had no interest in reading Chinese authors.²⁸ Recalling his intensive reading of world literature in those times, Yang Lian states that he 'devoured' these works; and of these he expresses special admiration for Dante, Beckett, Eliot, Yeats and Pound. His reading of foreign works dwindled after 1986 as he became totally engrossed with completing *Yi*.²⁹

As mentioned earlier, Western Modernist writings slipped in alongside Western scientific and technological publications as the Cultural Revolution drew to an end with the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. However, as Pollard points out, Modernist writings posed a serious problem because of the standard Chinese understanding of it. 'Modernism was spawned in Europe at a time when European civilisation had collapsed from within.... The First World War then confirmed the end of civilisation. Writers and artists came to see the world as chaos or wasteland, and, mistrustful of or repelled by objective reality, turned in on themselves. The only thing they could be sure of was the subjective truth of what went on in their own heads. Various forms of irrationalism dominated philosophical thought: Nietzsche's 'the world as will and idea', Bergson's vitalism, and Freud's theory of the libido. Hence the works of Modernism are marked by self-aggrandisement, or a sense of vacuity, isolation, gloom and doom, or anarchy. Existentialism, the theatre of the absurd, the French *nouveau roman* were regarded as later broods from the same nest.³⁰

For young Chinese who had been breast-fed on propaganda 'literature' for decades, access during the late 1970s and early 1980s to the masterpieces of world literature, including that of China's past, produced a dynamic effect. Such literature had the effect of affirming the value, worth and integrity of the self, which was essential as a salve for the all but atrophied emotions, imaginations and intellects of the Chinese people in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. The young Beijing poets grouped around the *Today* magazine were sensitised by their reading of Modernist literature and were seized by an obsessive need to self-expression which is essential to the act of all literary, artistic and philosophical creation, and to the lives of all reflective human beings. The poets were first to move into the vanguard for the movement to redefine literature and to speak through their poetry to inspire both young and old. In the first issue of *Today* magazine, the editorial board

boldly invoked the authority of Marx's 'Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction' (1842) to support their rejection of the existing cultural despotism which demanded that all literature produce only black flowers: 'What we need are the unfettered flowers from the depths of people's hearts', the young *Today* poets declared.³¹

The written Chinese language is a unique and extreme form of intellectual and literary repression, yet this very repressiveness enhances the emotional impact of Chinese literary expression. Repression is strongest in the poetic genre and it is interesting that it has been Chinese poetry in the terse classical language which has succeeded in achieving international recognition for almost a century through the translations of Arthur Waley, David Hawkes and A. R. Davis. Even more interesting is the fact that the poetry of writers such as Ezra Pound, which drew inspiration from the imagery of classical Chinese poetry and philosophy, was in the 1980s to provide a strong source of inspiration for young Chinese poets such as Yang Lian. The Beijing poets captured the imaginations and the spirit of the times as their souls spoke out to address the concerns of the self after its virtual annihilation during the Cultural Revolution.

Yang Lian's poetry was barely comprehensible to his critics but his unabashed references to basic human instincts and to parts of the human body, particularly the genitalia, were clearly subversive in China which had for more than half a century nurtured clearly prudish and puritanical traditions. On the publication of *Norlang*³² in the May 1983 issue of *Shanghai Literature*, Yang Lian became a target for criticism as part of the 'anti spiritual pollution' campaign and none of his poems was published in China during the whole of 1984. However, his infamy brought him to the notice of China scholars such as John Minford, Alisa Joyce and Sean Golden, whose translations in the Hong Kong journal *Renditions* in 1983 and 1985 first brought Yang Lian's poetry to international audiences. Yang Lian left China in 1988 to take part in two major Australian literary arts festivals, Spoleto in Melbourne and Carnivale in Sydney. He subsequently travelled to New Zealand in early 1989 and is now a New Zealand citizen. He has continued to write poetry, most of which is published mainly in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Since then Yang Lian's poems have been published in German, English, French, Italian and Swedish. He has read his poems at poetry festivals in various parts of Europe, the USA, England, Australia and

New Zealand. In 1994, while Copeland Fellow at Amherst College he presented readings at Amherst College and Bard College, and was honoured with an invitation to present readings with Derek Walcott, José Balza and Joseph Brodsky at the United Nations for the Twenty First Anniversary Celebration of the Translation Center at Columbia University.

The playwright and novelist Gao Xingjian graduated from the Beijing Foreign Studies Institute majoring in French literature and he had already begun to read widely in foreign literatures before the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Criticism of modern Western literature and those who had associations with it intensified as the Cultural Revolution developed: Gao spent five years working as a peasant in the countryside. Born during the Japanese invasion, fifteen years earlier than Yang Lian, Gao was to suffer for twenty years because of his irrepressible urge to write literature of the self. He persisted in writing even while in the countryside and survived detection only by carefully and ingeniously hiding his manuscripts. However, as the absurd human tragedy of the Cultural Revolution unfolded, anxiety periodically overcame him and he committed to flames some scores of manuscripts. In the more relaxed post-Mao period he suddenly emerged as a controversial figure in the Chinese literary world. In 1981 his book *A Preliminary Discussion of Contemporary Narrative Techniques* provoked much criticism and sparked off a heated debate on Modernism vs Realism.³³ He was not deterred and continued to provoke criticism with his experimental plays and is renowned for having introduced the theatre of the absurd to China. *Warning Signal* was performed at the Beijing People's Art Theatre in 1982 and *Bus Stop* in 1983 to a restricted audience at the same venue before it was closed by the authorities as the 'anti spiritual pollution' campaign came into swing. Gao was prohibited from publishing during the whole of 1984. In 1985 *Wild Man* was performed at the People's Art Theatre again stirring up controversy and in 1986 *Other Shore* was stopped during rehearsal. His plays have not been performed in China since.

Gao Xingjian accepted an invitation to Germany and France in 1987 and subsequently settled in Paris where he continues to write. His novel *Lingshan* which he had started to write in 1982 was completed in Paris in September 1989 and published in 1990 by Lianjing in Taipei. Most

Personal Freedom in Twentieth-Century China

of his plays have been translated into Swedish and several have been performed at the Swedish Royal Theatre. A number of the plays have also been translated into French, English, German, Italian, Hungarian, Polish and Japanese and have also been performed in theatres of Germany, France, Austria, England, USA, Yugoslavia, Australia, Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1992 he received the French award of Chevalier of the prestigious Ordre des Arts et des Lettres for distinguished contribution to the field of the arts and literature.

Gao's *Lingshan* bears the stamp of a mature writer. He is an excellent storyteller and his playful persona permeates the entire eighty-one chapters of the novel despite the serious philosophical and ethical issues addressed in it. A masterly prose writer with unique visual acumen, he captures the spirit of isolated, remote villages and the countryside of the Chinese hinterland in black, white, and greys, as in artistic photography. This is the setting for *Lingshan* but it is not a static setting and the specifics are detailed as he travels, both in fact and in memory, to the many places he had visited in childhood as a refugee, as well as in dream. Gao's creative techniques in drama are effectively transferred to the novel. The space within the various settings is used to maximum effect and allows for the rich portrayal of minor characters from an amazingly wide spectrum of Chinese society both of the past and of the present, and from history, mythology, and literature.

However, *Lingshan* (Spirit/Soul Mountain) is essentially an exploration of the self, of the self in history and specifically the self of Gao Xingjian as a representative of the human species with basic instincts, emotions and the capacity to think and reflect. It would seem that Gao's need to expiate the tension of documenting the history of the Chinese self was precipitated by his stark confrontation with death in 1983. X-rays taken at two separate hospitals on two separate days provided irrefutable evidence for the diagnosis that he had lung cancer and had only a few months to live. Seeming to confirm the diagnosis was the fact that his father had died of the disease a couple of years earlier. The result of a third X-ray some months later brought him back from the brink of physical death only to restore him to the reality of constant criticism and harassment by the authorities for his Modernist views on literature and his dogged persistence in experimenting with theatre of the absurd.

Gao Xingjian left Beijing to avoid the attacks of literary critics and

commenced a long journey lasting five months during which he investigated the remnants of early Chinese civilisation as preserved in the customs and practices of Han, Miao, Yi and Jiang groups living in remote, inaccessible regions of Sichuan and Yunnan. The author with his ever-curious mind captures with artistic sensitivity the fine details of the encroachment of centuries of socialisation (and government) on humanity and on the natural environment alike. The authorial comments are muted and minimalist and challenge the readers to respond. These chapters are related in the first person singular, 'I'. The use of the plural form of the self, 'we/us' is anathema for Gao: he insists on the use of the singular self for to do otherwise would be to compromise the self and perceptions which can only be unique to the self.

However, the author is travelling alone and experiences cold, hunger, and acute loneliness; this leads to the creation of 'you' in the author's own image as the ideal partner for discourse. Then 'you', experiencing the same loneliness, create 'she/her'. The 'you' chapters contain many beautifully executed depictions of the primordial black and grey world of the pre-self erotic consciousness; these are surrealistically conveyed as dream, nightmare and lustful fantasy through the persona of 'you' and 'she'. The technique of creating 'you' and 'she' is one which ingeniously provides the author simultaneously with many lenses for exploring a number of man-woman relationships which are compounded by these two protagonists relating stories about others as well as those of themselves.

Finally 'he' is created in the person of 'you' turning and walking away. 'I' and 'you' are too closely related to allow for objective comments on the self. It is through the creation of the third person 'he' that critical distance is achieved and permits for yet another dimension for the expression of the authorial perceptions of the self.

Literature of the unfettered self, like the work of all creative thinkers, is potentially seditious. Inevitably, under repressive governments, if publication is possible 'seditious elements' are usually more obvious in the works of writers and artists who are subjected to, or are witness to, violent and blatant forms of social or political repression. But after stripping back the surface overlay which is the immediate response of the writer or artist to the violence and repression there should remain an underlying stratum with relevance to broader human concerns.³⁴

Chinese literature under the Cultural Revolution carried the political messages of the dominant political faction of the party. The slogan 'literature should serve politics' was clearly stipulated and the role of the author and reader were totally negated. Only politically chaste and puritanically pure writings could get past the censors: editors who approved the publication of politically unsound writings were held responsible and the labour camps and cadre schools were strong deterrents to write or to publish anything but what was politically safe. As a result the human characters in writings of the period were not unsurprisingly simplistic clear-cut black and white villains and heroes lacking in 'human smell'.³⁵ It may be argued that since the 1980s, the self has been reclaimed in Chinese literature and that generally speaking freedom and autonomy in all aspects of the literary process, to a certain degree, exists in 1990s China much as it does in the various democracies of the world. In fact it would appear that the literature published in 1990s China indeed exudes a positively strong 'human smell'. However, literature of the self is a personal concern and is unaffected by any form of coercion, including that of market forces. Provided that the existing political authority permits a minimal basic level of personal freedom, literature of the self will flourish. However, the attainment of that threshold of personal freedom and the existence of a literature of the self only indicates the freedom and autonomy of individuals engaged in the creative process (writer and readers). The existence of a literature of the self cannot be regarded as an indicator of the achievement of social equality and justice which remain elusive in human society. These lofty ideals have been sought by philosophers in various cultures throughout history but the translation of philosophy into political action and then the establishment of ideologies and institutions have not necessarily brought about the realisation of these ideals: sometimes the result has simply meant greater equality and justice for one or some social group at the expense of others.³⁶

Notes

- 1 Yang Lian (b. 1955). The collection *Yi* is included in Yang Lian and Yu Feng, *Taiyang yu Ren*, Sun and man; Changsha, 1991, and in Yang Lian, *Yi*, Taipei, 1993. Discussions of Yang Lian's *Yi*, as well as selected translations from the collection, are contained in the following works: Mabel Lee, 'The Philosophy of the Self and Yang Lian', Yang Lian, *Masks and Crocodile: A Chinese Poet*

- and *His Poetry*, Sydney, 1990, pp.9–36, ‘Before Tradition: The *Book of Changes*, Yang Lian’s *Yi* and the Affirmation of the Self Through Poetry’, eds Mabel Lee and A. D. Syrokomla-Stefanowska, *Modernization of the Chinese Past*, Sydney, 1993, pp.94–106, and ‘Man Confronts History: Six Poems From Yang Lian’s ‘In Symmetry With Death’, *Ulitarra* 3 (1993): 57–66.
- 2 Gao Xingjian (b. 1940). The novel *Lingshan* was published in Taipei, 1990. Goran Malmqvist’s Swedish translation of the novel, *Andarnasberg*, Stockholm, 1992, and Noel and Liliane Dutrait’s French version, *La Montagne de l’Ame*, Paris, 1995, have received many favourable reviews. See the summary and analysis of *Lingshan* in Torbjorn Loden, ‘World Literature with Chinese Characteristics: On a Novel by Gao Xingjian’, *Stockholm Journal of East Asian Studies* 4 (1993): 17–39, which includes an extensive bibliography on Gao Xingjian’s writings. See also Mabel Lee, ‘Without Politics: Gao Xingjian on Literary Creation’, *Stockholm Journal of East Asian Studies* 6 (1995).
 - 3 Wm Theodore de Bary, ‘Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought’ in Wm Theodore de Bary and the Conference on Ming Thought (eds), *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, New York, 1970, pp.145–247, examines the meaning of ‘individualism’ in traditional Chinese thinking as well as the key elements in the individualism espoused by the late Ming thinkers Wang Yangming, He Xinyin and Li Zhi. See also Mark Elvin, ‘The Double Disavowal: The Attitudes of Radical Thinkers to the Chinese Tradition’, ed. David S. G. Goodman, *China and the West: Ideas and Activists*, Manchester, 1990, pp.5–6, where Elvin warns that it would be a mistake to view the disintegration of ‘the surface structure’ of Chinese tradition in the twentieth century as merely the result of external pressures and stimuli and cites Wang Yangming, He Xinyin and Li Zhi as independent thinkers contributing to this disintegration long before modern times.
 - 4 See Bugong Chou (Enemy of Injustice), ‘Li Zhuowu xiansheng xueshuo’ (On the teachings of Mr Li Zhuowu), *Tianyibao* 1 (Tokyo, 10 June 1907), reprinted in Yang Tianshi, ‘Shehui Zhuyi Jiangxihui ziliao’ (Source materials on the Association for the Discussion and Study of Socialism), *Zhongguo zhaxue* 1 (August 1978): 434–5.
 - 5 Yan Fu’s translations include John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1898) and *System of Logic* (1900), Montesquieu, *L’esprit des Lois* (1900–1905) and E. Jenks, *A History of Politics* (1903). These translations had a powerful effect on Chinese intellectuals who were preoccupied with the quest of discovering the secret to the wealth and power of Western civilization. Yan Fu soon began to feel that he had made a mistake, that he had set in motion the demand for radical changes which he in fact opposed. While he had become a reactionary soon after the turn of the century, his translations were important in forming the ideals of the new generation of Chinese intellectuals who emerged after the abolition in 1906 of the state civil service examination system. See B. I. Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*, Cambridge, Mass., 1964, and Y. C. Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West*, University of North Carolina Press, 1966. It should be noted however that the state civil service examination system had in imperial times given the scholar class access to political power; its abolition meant that the modern Chinese intellectuals were alienated from political power.

Personal Freedom in Twentieth-Century China

- 6 See Wang, *op. cit.*, pp.195–211.
- 7 The Chinese scholar's equating of self-fulfilment with discharging social responsibilities is examined in Thomas A. Metzger, *Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture*, New York, 1977.
- 8 See Chan Sin-wai, trans., *An Exposition of Benevolence: The Jen-hsüeh of T'an Ssu-t'ung*, Hong Kong, 1984. Significantly also, as Elvin points out, Tan's work aimed to fuse Neo-Confucianism and Mahayana Buddhism 'by implicitly equating the achievement of *ren* ('sensitive awareness of all other people') by the totality of mankind, with the collective attaining of nirvana understood not as the total obliteration of the self, but as the stripping away of all the accidental specificities of the self that made it in any way different from any other self.' See Elvin, *op. cit.*, p.7.
- 9 In recent years three excellent definitive studies on Chinese anarchism have been published; they are complementary and invaluable for their contribution to research on the intellectual history of China in the twentieth century: Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, New York, 1990, provides a solid analysis of the indigenous origins of modern Chinese anarchist thinking; Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, Berkeley, 1991, provides an excellent and comprehensive analysis of modern Chinese anarchism in the context of the whole spectrum of revolutionary discourse in the twentieth century; and Ming K. Chan and Arif Dirlik, *Schools into Factories: Anarchists, the Guomindang and the National Labor University in Shanghai, 1927–1932*, (U. S. A.), Durham and London, 1991, provides an examination of the most significant case of political alignment by the Chinese anarchists in establishing the National Labour University in Shanghai.
- 10 See Dirlik, *op. cit.*, chapter 5 and Chow Tse-tzung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Stanford University Press, 1967.
- 11 The politicization of Chinese intellectuals following the May Fourth Incident and the gravitation of large numbers of Chinese intellectuals to communism are detailed in works such as Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, Cambridge, Mass., 1967.
- 12 See Dirlik, *op. cit.*, pp.160–1.
- 13 See Dirlik, *op. cit.*, pp.154–5.
- 14 Studies on various aspects of the impact of Nietzsche in China may be found in works such as David A. Kelly, 'The Highest Chinadom: Nietzsche and the Chinese Mind, 1907–1989' and Chen Guying, 'Zhuang Zi and Nietzsche: Plays of Perspectives', both in Graham Parkes, ed., *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, Chicago, 1991; Yue Daiyun, 'Nietzsche in China', *The Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 20 & 21 (1988–1989): 199–219; Mabel Lee, 'From Chuang-tzu to Nietzsche: On the Individualism of Lu Hsün', *The Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 17 (1985): 21–38.
- 15 Cf. Ezra F. Vogel, 'The Unlikely Heroes: The Social Role of the May Fourth Writers' in Merle Goldman, ed., *Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era*, Cambridge, Mass., 1977, pp.145–160. See also Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers*, Cambridge, Mass., 1973; M. Galik, *Milestones in Sino-Western Literary Confrontation, 1898–1979*,

- Wiesbaden, 1986, which examines the interliterary process of confrontation in Chinese literature in the period 1898–1979, and discusses connections with ancient Greek literature and mythology, Russian, French, English, German, Norwegian, American, Japanese and Bengali literature; and also the selection of articles in M. Galik, ed., *Interliterary and Intraliterary Aspects of the May Fourth Movement 1919 in China*, Bratislava, 1990.
- 16 Western literature was introduced to Chinese intellectuals from the turn of the twentieth century through Chinese translations and through the reading of the works in either the original or in Japanese translation by the vast numbers of young Chinese studying in Japan, France, Germany, England and the United States. See Galik, *op. cit.* (1986).
 - 17 Cf. Liang Qichao's promotion of the political novel to argue the reform cause just a decade earlier, in works e.g. Mabel Lee, 'Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Political Revolution of Late-Ch'ing' in A. R. Davis and A. D. Stefanowska, eds, *Search for Identity: Modern Literature and the Creative Arts in Asia*, Sydney, 1974, pp.203–24, and 'Chinese Women and Social Change: A Theme in Late-Ch'ing Fiction and its Subsequent Development' in Wang Gungwu *et al.*, eds, *Society and the Writer: Essays in Literature in Modern Asia*, Canberra, 1981, pp.128–38. For the development of modern literary theory during the May Fourth period see Bonnie S. McDougall, *The Introduction of Western Literary Theories into Modern China, 1919–1925*, Tokyo, 1971, and Marian Galik, *Mao Dun and Modern Chinese Literary Criticism*, Weisbaden, 1969.
 - 18 These works by Kuriyagawa Hakuson have been summarised in Mabel Lee, 'Suicide of the Creative Self: The Case of Lu Hsün', A. R. Davis and A. D. Syrokomla-Stefanowska, eds, *Austrina: Essays in Commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the Founding of the Oriental Society of Australia*, Sydney, 1982, pp.140–67. See also in Goldman, ed., the following: Ching-mao Cheng, 'The Impact of Japanese Literary Trends on Modern Chinese Writers', pp.63–88, Leo Ou-fan Lee, 'Genesis of a Writer: Notes on Lu Xun's Educational Experience, 1881–1909', pp.161–188, and Harriet C. Mills, 'Lu Xun: Literature and Revolution—from Mara to Marx', pp.189–220.
 - 19 Cf. T. A. Metzger, *op. cit.*
 - 20 For comprehensive studies on Lu Xun in the context of May Fourth writings see Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Voices From the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun*, Indiana University Press, 1987 and *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, Berkeley, 1985. The following studies focus on the anarchist, Zhuangzean and Nietzschean influences on the writings of Lu Xun and Yu Dafu: Mabel Lee, 'Suicide of the Creative Self: the Case of Lu Xun' and 'From Chuang-tzu to Nietzsche: On the Individualism of Lu Hsün'; Beate Rusch, 'Yu Dafu's House of Mirrors: A Few Notes on the Remaking of Self in Yu Dafu's Philosophy of Life and Blue Smoke', M. Galik, ed. *Chinese Literature and European Context*, Bratislava, 1994, pp.55–62.
 - 21 See for example the anguish expressed in Lu Xun's prose-poems written 1924–1927 and published as the collection *Yecao* in *Lu Xun quanji*, Beijing, 1981, Vol. 1, pp. 159–223. He understood the importance of the self to the creative act and his writing of these prose-poems represents a conscious abandonment

Personal Freedom in Twentieth-Century China

- of creative literature as he knew and loved it. See Lee, 'Suicide of the Creative Self'.
- 22 I have examined the concept of tradition with special reference to Yang Lian's treatment of the topic in 'Before Tradition: The Book of Changes, Yang Lian's *Yi* and the Affirmation of the Self Through Poetry'. See also Ginger Li, trans., Yang Lian, 'Tradition and Us', *Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 19 & 20 (1983): 69–73.
 - 23 The following comments have been summarized from Yang Lian, 'Guanyu *Yi*' (About *Yi*; unpublished manuscript written in Auckland, New Zealand, 16 July 1991).
 - 24 See David E. Mungello, *Leibniz and Confucianism: The Search for Accord*, The University Press of Hawaii, 1977.
 - 25 'About *Yi*'.
 - 26 The influence of classical literature on Yang Lian is noted in detail in Lee, 'The Philosophy of the Self and Yang Lian'. Cf. Sean Golden and John Minford, 'Yang Lian and the Chinese Tradition', Howard Goldblatt, ed., *Worlds Apart: Recent Chinese Writings and Its Audiences*, Armonk, N.Y., 1990, pp.119–37, which provides an analysis of Yang Lian's poetry of the late 1970s and early 1980s, drawing attention to specific classical Chinese works as well as historical sites which have directly influenced Yang Lian's early poems. See also the following articles in Jeffrey Kinkley, ed., *After Mao: Chinese Literature and Society 1978–1981*, Cambridge, Mass., 1985, which together provide a detailed description of the literary context in which Yang Lian commenced his writing of modern poetry in the late 1970s: William Tay, "'Obscure Poetry": A Controversy in Post-Mao China', pp.133–57; and Pan Yuan and Pan Jie, 'The Non-Official Magazine *Today* and the Younger Generation's Ideals for a New Literature', pp.193–219.
 - 27 See Graham Parkes, 'The Orientation of the Nietzschean Text', Graham Parkes, ed., *op. cit.*, pp.3–20, which incisively pinpoints the Euro-American bias of Nietzsche studies. Parkes' volume is aimed at rectifying this bias, focussing on the significant impact of Nietzsche on Japanese and Chinese thinkers into present times. Deliberate distortions in the posthumous editing and publication of parts of Nietzsche's writings by his sister in the Nachlass led to Nietzsche's philosophy being associated with both the fascist and Nazi movements. The voluminous research publications of the past decades on this issue have been summarized in Cheung Chiu-ye, 'Lu Xun and Nietzsche: A Comparative Study' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sydney, 1994) which is an exhaustive study of affinities between Lu Xun and Nietzsche. See also Raoul David Findeisen, 'A Sino-German Venture of the 1940s: Fascist Reception of Nietzschean Philosophy and the Zhanguo Group', M. Galik, ed., *Chinese Literature and European Context*, pp.73–81 and Michael Godley, 'Politics From History: Lei Haizong and the *Zhanguo Ce Clique*', *Papers in Far Eastern History* 40 (1989): 95–122, which examine the use of Nietzsche's writings to justify the fascist activities of the Guomindang government during the 1930s.
 - 28 Prior to 1978, foreign literature was the exclusive domain of two publishers in Beijing, People's Literature Publishing House and People's Publishing House, and their provincial branches. In 1978 two major publishing houses specialising

- in foreign literature translation were established to meet growing demands in the more liberal atmosphere of the times: the Shanghai Translation Publishing House with a brief to publish representative works of well-known 'bourgeois' schools and contemporary works reflecting important trends in literature, politics and economics; and the Foreign Literature Publishing House in Beijing to publish exclusively foreign literature in translation or in the original language. From 1980 these two publishers jointly published the *Twentieth Century Foreign Literature Series*. In 1981 there were twenty specialist foreign literature magazines and 437 registered literary magazines with foreign literature columns. Apart from single volumes of foreign authors, several important collections and volumes of foreign literature also appeared from various presses through the country indicating the scope and widespread interest in foreign literature. Important works include: Yuan Kejia, ed., *Selection of Foreign Modernist Writings*, 4 vols, Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House, 1981; Luo Jiashan, ed., *Selection of European and American Modernist Writings*, Yunnan People's Publishing House, 1982; Feng Yidai, *Collected Translations of Modern Foreign Literature*, 3 vols, Guangdong People's Publishing House, 1982; *Collection of Contemporary American Short Stories* and *Collection of Modern and Contemporary English Short Stories*, Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1981; *Selection of Modern World Short Stories*, 4 vols, Anhui People's Publishing House, 1981; *Selection of Modern English and American Poetry*, *Selection of Modern French Poetry*, *Selection of Poetry From Germanic Countries*, Hunan Publishing House, 1982; *Collection of Theatre of the Absurd*, Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1981; *Selection of Black Humour*, Fujian People's Publishing House, 1983. See Zhao Qianyi, 'Western Literary Influences on Contemporary Chinese Literature: With Special Reference to Fiction and Poetry in the 1980s' (MA thesis, University of Sydney, 1994).
- 29 See Lee, 'The Philosophy of Self and Yang Lian', pp.16–17. It was in the rich and stimulating environment of the Beijing literary scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s that Yang Lian read works by authors which were to leave indelible imprints on his poetry. Names like the following immediately sprang to his mind when I questioned him about foreign authors he had read at the time: T. S. Eliot, Dante Alighieri, George Orwell, Dylan Thomas, William Blake, Ezra Pound, Saul Bellow, Walt Whitman, William Golding, Thomas Hardy, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Friedrich Nietzsche, Marcel Proust, Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Charles Baudelaire, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Boris Pasternak, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Milan Kundera, Czeslaw Milosz, Rabindravath Tagore, Octavio Paz and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Cf. Golden and Minford.
- 30 See D. E. Pollard, 'The Controversy Over Modernism, 1979–84', *China Quarterly* 104 (1985): 641–56, for an analysis of the political implications of the introduction of Western modernist writings into China during this period.
- 31 The Editorial Board of *Today*, 'To Our Readers'. See the translation with notes in David S. G. Goodman, *Beijing Street Voices: The Poetry and Politics of China's Democracy Movement*, London, 1981, pp.162–63.
- 32 See Alisa Joyce with John Minford, trans., Yang Lian, 'Concerning Norlang', *Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 23 (1985): 162–63 as well

Personal Freedom in Twentieth-Century China

- as translations of Yang Lian's poems in the same volume.
- 33 Gao Xingjian, *Xiandai xiaoshuo jiqiao chutan*, Guangzhou, 1981. See also the comments, translations and summaries on the debate in *Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 19 & 20 (1983): 41–80; and also Josephine Riley and Michael Gissenwehler, 'The Myth of Gao Xingjian', Josephine Riley and Else Unterrieder, *Berichte des Ludwig-Boltzmann-Instituts für China-und Südostasiens-Forschung Number 27*, Bonn, 1989, pp.129–51.
- 34 Over the past few decades, Marian Galik has published many studies on modern Chinese literature dealing with the impact of a wide range of foreign literary and philosophical influences spanning a century of development until present times. In 'Metamorphosis in Modern Chinese Intellectual (and Philosophical) Consciousness: Musings Over Its "Coming to Be"', *Asian and African Studies* 1.2 (1992): 132–145, Galik examines some theoretical and practical aspects of modern Chinese intellectual history and philosophy from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1980s, analysing the works of Wang Guowei, Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Qu Qiubai and Liang Shuming. He draws attention to the theoretical construct of 'interliterariness', put forward by Dionyz Durisin in *Theory of Literary Comparatistics*, Bratislava, 1984. Durisin indicates that development of thought about literature has led to the endeavour to understand 'not just the work of literature and its constituent parts but also the inner laws of the development of literature, ie. the literary process.' The result has been that 'a characteristic feature of poetics of recent times is the surmounting of the static approaches to the interpretation of the literary phenomenon'. The 'nature of the artistic fact is not merely the summation of those elements and procedures given a constant form by history, but also a living organism subject to transformation by history, showing many-sided affinities to the surrounding historical and social reality, with the cultural background of the artist and society, with the preceding literary traditions, with different branches of art etc.' (p.11). Durisin's comments would support a holistic approach to the study and evaluation of modern Chinese literature in the context of world literature. See also Galik's 'Interliterary and Intraliterary Aspects of the Study of Post-1918 Chinese Literature', Goldblatt, ed., pp.231–45.
- 35 Liu Zaifu, a member of the official literary establishment, joined in supporting the young poets' cause to promote the importance of the self in creative literature; he complained of the lack of 'human smell' in modern Chinese literature. See Mabel Lee, 'Rethinking Literature in the Post-Mao Period: Liu Zaifu's Theory of the Subjectivity of Literature', *The Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 18 & 19 (1986): 101–25.
- 36 This is a revised version of a paper entitled 'The Individual and the Meaning of Personal Freedom in Twentieth Century China: A Century of Development' presented at the Ideas of Freedom in Asia Conference held at the Humanities Research Centre of the Australian National University, Canberra, 4–6 July, 1994.

