

SILVIA POZZI

**'Individualized' Writing: Women Writers Blooming in China
The Art of Flying and Lin Bai**

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO 'INDIVIDUALIZED' WRITING

In the 1990s a new, wide phenomenon, polymorphous in essence, definitively broke into the Chinese literary world: 'pluralism' (*duoyuanhua* 多元化). This refers to a complex situation where different elements, such as the increasing economic opening of China, the influence of Western literary experiences and theories as well as a rapid commercialization and urbanization, mix together and give way to manifold artistic interpretations. Literary experimentation fully develops, as for instance the works by Can Xue 残雪 and Ma Yuan 马原.

The pluralistic context of the 1990s has been fertile soil for the flourishing and blooming of a new and fresh literary tendency run by women. Some women writers, most born either late in the 1950s or at the very beginning of the 1960s, represent this original trend: Chen Ran 陈染 (born in Peking in 1962), Lin Bai 林白 (born in Guangxi Province in 1958), Hai Nan 海男 (born in Yunnan Province in 1962), and Xu Xiaobin 徐小斌 (born in Peking in 1953). They embody the core of the so-called 'Individualized' Writing. However, other women writers can be placed, on the basis of some existing analogies, side by side with them, that is, Hong Ying 虹影 (born in 1962 in Chongqing), Xu Kun 徐坤 (born in 1965 in Liaoning Province), and Tie Ning 铁凝 (born in 1957 in Peking). All these writers have come to success in the 1990s, the only exception being Xu Xiaobin, who had already gained notoriety in 1985 with her short story 'Inquiry about a Woman Suffering Mental Disease'.¹

The literary production of these women writers is plentiful, ranging from fiction (including both *duanpian xiaoshuo* 短篇小说, *zhongpian xiaoshuo* 中篇小说 and novels), to non-fiction (*sanwen* 散文 and *suibi* 随笔), as well as to poetry (Hai Nan and Lin Bai, alternating narrative works with po-

¹ *Dui yi ge jingshenbing de huanzhe diaocha* 对一个精神病的患者调查, in Xu Xiaobin (1998: IV, 3-76).

etic activity, particularly devote themselves to poetry).

It should be emphasized that none of these writers considers herself as sharing any literary or poetical aim with the others, since there are no mutual purposes or common ideals. A literary manifesto has never been written or sketched. Yet, there are strong analogies among them on different levels, with reference to typology, style, and contents of narration.

Chinese literary critics have given different names to this new trend in literature. One of their definitions is Private Writing (*sirenhua xiezuo* 私人化写作), most likely because it stresses writers' inclination to 'self-referring' narrative topics: they tend to investigate women's private lives and to analyze their inner worlds by breaking it into bits and reassembling it again like a jigsaw puzzle. The definition springs from the title of a novel published by Chen Ran in 1995, 'Private Life' (Chen Ran 1996), commonly viewed as the most successful fulfillment of so-called Private Writing.

Then there are general and indefinite categories, such as Women's Literature (*nüxing wenxue* 女性文学) or Women's Literature of the Nineties (*jiushinian-dai nüxing wenxue* 九十年代女性文学). However, they focus on two key-aspects: all these writers belong to the 'second sex' and, above all, reached the great achievement of disclosing women's inner world and private life to the highest degree.

A further categorization is Minor Literature or Not Main-stream Literature (*feizhuliu wenxue* 非主流文学), since it neglects the major social questions and concentrates on the trifling matters of the individual. However, as stated by Chen Ran (1998: 209) in her brief essay 'My Individualism' (*Wo de "gerenhua"* 我的"个人化"):

反映人类面临的一种困境，它就不再是小的了，而是非常大的东西。

Representing straits that mankind happens to face, it is no longer something small, but something really big.

The works by these women writers are considered to be marginal also because they deal with topics generally seen as taboos, i.e. the 'shameful secrets of women' (*nüxing yinsi* 女性隐私). This is a kind of literature displaying women's intimacy, the privacy of a woman sitting in front of a mirror in the secret of her room, with curtains drawn.

'Individualized' Writing (*gerenhua xiezuo* 个人化写作) is likely to be the definition that women writers are more inclined to accept.² It allows less

² On this topic, see the essays by Chen Ran 'Writer's Individualism' (*Zuojia de "gerenhua"* 作家的"个人化") and 'My Individualism' (1998: 161-63; 206-9); Chen Ran's 1995 interview with Xiao Gang 萧钢 entitled 'Another Door Opened' (*Ling yishan kaiqide men* 另一扇开启的门; Chen Ran 1996: 249-50); Lin Bai's essay (1996d) 'Memory and Individualized Writing' and her interview with Pozzi (1999-2000: 238). In her interview with Dai Jinhua (1998: 119), Xu Xiaobin goes further in saying that an even more suitable description for her writing would be a kind of writing 'written in blood instead of ink' (*yi xue zuo mo*

rigid boundaries to their works, simply pointing out their originality and their belonging exclusively to the author. On this account, I will refer to this literary trend as 'Individualized' Writing.

This variety of views reveals, on the one hand, the non-existence of a common project and, on the other hand, the complexity of the phenomenon. Still, the various definitions proposed by critics to confine and define these women writers' works have an instrumental value. They give information on the main aspects of their production, useful for an initial attempt at understanding the writers and their works or, at least, at shedding some light on them. Yet I want to emphasize that the same categories can be approximate and narrow and that the writers have refused them as a whole.

The novelty behind 'Individualized' Writing is basically related to two main features. First of all – in the new context of pluralism – novelty is to be found in a strong assertion of individualism, shared by all the writers, in sharp contraposition with Chinese cultural tradition, in which culture and ideology had to be monolithic and unitary (*yiyuanhua* 一元化). In the second place, it is related to the full ripening of women writers' consciousness of their own gender. 'Individualized' Writing represents women's definitive shift from being the object of narration to acting as its subject.³ What I am discussing in this essay is simply a form of expression or, better, an art of expression. Even considering the deep connection between society and literature, it is hardly possible to draw a relief map of Chinese women's culture by investigating women's literature. What should be noted is that up to the 1990s, women's inner worlds were wrapped in mystery, covered by the veil of the silence in taboos (*shenmigan* 神秘感). Now, thanks to the works of writers such as Chen Ran and Lin Bai, the chance to understand female intimacy and personality and the possibility to enter the world of this mysterious object (*shenmi duixiang* 神秘对象) have gradually become concrete. At last women analyze themselves and bring themselves into focus, finally narrating the world as it comes to their eyes.

Some critics, like Wang Gan (Wang Gan and Dai Jinhua 1996: 61-63), have

以血作墨), a statement much appreciated by other women writers as well.

³ Women writers quest for self-consciousness during the last century already made appreciable steps. Starting from the May Fourth Movement (1919) such writers as Ding Ling 丁玲, and then Bing Xin 冰心 and Zhang Ailing 张爱玲 already began to write literary works, the central position in society as well as in the domain of literature still belonging, however, to men (*nanren zhongxin* 男人中心). Women's self-consciousness did not exist and women writers wrote in a language codified by a long tradition of man's centralism. After 1949, economical and political equality was recognized to women. Still, in a country where thought was supposed to be unitary and literature to act as the amplifier of ideology, there was no room for pluralism. The voice arising from literature is one and only one, having perhaps no sex, but still unable to disclose the 'women's mystery'. Women's literature in the 1980s starts, once again, from an interest in major social questions (as in the case, to some extent, of the women's literature of the 1920s), but the works of writers like Can Xue and Wang Anyi 王安忆 immediately reveal a good deal of self-consciousness, showing, as well, the quest of a language of their own.

introduced a further definition for the writers generally included in 'Individualized' Writing, that of 'witches' (*wu* 巫). This definition is imbued with linguistic chauvinism, exhibiting men's (both readers and critics) uneasiness with regard to this literary trend. They actually feel like

...进入了一个陌生的领域。

... entering an alien domain (Wang Guangming and Huang Lin 1997: 83).

However, this apparently offensive definition has been well accepted by writers of 'Individualized' Writing. In some way it embodies the desire by women writers for self-assertion as something mysterious and fascinating, according to criteria different from those of rationality, which can be seen as the prerogative of men. Besides, the image of the witch turns out to be topical in the pages of this literary trend. It will suffice to remember 'The Flying Witch' (*Bentao de nüyao* 奔逃的女妖; Chen Ran et al. 1997: I, 265-348), a story published in 1993 by Hai Nan, or the short story 'The Witch and the Door in Her Dreams' by Chen Ran (1993). In both stories the two main characters, defined as witches in the title, have, as a matter of fact, nothing to do with witchcraft. Nevertheless, their nature, which is evanescent and witchingly feminine, can provide an explanation. Conversely, Lin Bai's characters are real witches. An emblematic example is Liao 廖 in 'The Bullet across the Apple':⁴ a woman who, like many other of Lin Bai's characters, knows well the practice of magical arts and divination, appears silently and magically in the pages of the story, then enigmatically disappears.

All the writers belonging to 'Individualized' Writing propose an alternative approach to and a different interpretation of literary creation, with the clear purpose of differentiating their production from that of the literary tradition. We can try to generalize their positions and peculiarities, analyzing them on the following levels:

Content

Great importance is attached to memory; what is narrated is, most times, part of the narrator's past (either the real past of the writer or a completely invented fantasy). The tendency to make narration an act of remembering is typical. In the same way, the narrator's own body plays a leading role; there is a frequent return of detailed descriptions of the body, of its changes arising from sensations, feelings, and the course of time. Memory and body belong to the narrator, but narrator and author often identify with each other. Memory and body act as the fundamental basis on which the narrative frame is built up. These writers write down pages made of their own essence, imbued

⁴ *Zidan chuanguo pingguo* 子弹穿过苹果, first published in 1990, in Lin Bai (1995b: 311-50).

with what belongs only to them: i.e., what they have experienced (the memory) and the physical instrument of their experiences (the body). In this way, using blood where tradition used ink, they succeed in finding a way of writing that is their own.

There is also the exposure of an abundance of topics viewed as taboos by orthodox morality; this serves as a means to assert the freedom of the woman-individual and her originality. Such extreme experiences as taking drugs or the hallucinating process of a woman committing suicide are described in detail. What is more, there is an inclination to the unconstrained and accurate treatment of one's sexuality, an incredible outspokenness not only about sexual intercourse between men and women, but also about shameful, 'immoral' questions such as masturbation, lesbianism, and narcissism.

The female characters in 'Individualized' Writing are often seeking safety by escaping from the world, or, more precisely, from a world that is ruled by, and fit for, men. Their escape symbolizes a criticism – sometimes sharp, sometimes veiled – against a society where women have no chance. Flight never ends, or if it does the end is tragic: suicide.⁵ The heroines find shelter in their own intimacy, shutting themselves up in their room, withdrawing from the world. They look at themselves in the mirror, mumbling on the past and reinventing it, or devote themselves to self-communion. In the safety of this room they indulge in masturbation and self-admiration and, finally, find solace from their anxieties in writing. For both writers and their characters, writing is the only channel of communication with the outside world.

The balance in interpersonal relationships appears to be ruinously compromised: the main characters are almost always lonely women morbidly withdrawn into themselves, bearing the heavy awareness of their diversity and incapability of communication with the world. They are all victims of a wretched childhood, their mothers away from home and their fathers as violent losers. Male figures to appeal to are at the least disappointing: merciless fathers, foster-fathers, and hard-hearted teachers. This situation leads to such degenerating outcomes as incest and parricide.

There is an attentive analysis to the fundamental stages in women's life: childhood, relationships with relatives and other people, puberty, motherhood, old age. Nothing is neglected. Attention is addressed, in particular, to the psychological implications and bodily changes in these stages.

Style

A key-aspect of most works is the fragmentary character of the narration. A real plan is generally missing, the stories often lacking any logical succes-

⁵ As is known, women's suicide has many precedents in literature; enough to recall French and Russian novels of the nineteenth century.

sion, so that the reader finds it difficult to keep the thread of the story. The plot turns into an amalgam of the narrator's thoughts, feelings, and memories, where reality and fiction are intermingled. Most times writers of 'Individualized' Writing use the first person⁶ and the narrator is a woman. The majority of the main characters are women, often artists or writers. This creates a sort of pre-arranged confusion in the reader: because of the identification between author and characters, reality and fiction clash and converge at the same time.

The reader is directly involved in the process of narration, with the author addressing questions to him/her or inviting him/her to read some other work of hers (the latter is a literary device utilized mainly by Hong Ying and Lin Bai). Besides, the work's fragmentary nature urges the reader to take part, to a certain extent, to its creation, with the task of inferring connections among the fragments of the story and even guessing its end.

The literary devices most frequently used are stream of consciousness, the diary, the insertion of letters, flashback, to resort to memory as a way of re-reading reality and narrating it.

Clearly, a tendency to autobiographism is emerging. These writers consider their experiences as an endless source of inspiration. Not only have some of them written their own autobiography (see Hong Ying 1998; Lin Bai 1994), what is astonishing is that they mingle their lives and experiences with fictional themes.

Also, the insertion of poems and passages in a lyrical style is common (that is particularly evident in Hai Nan and Lin Bai, poetry being one of the genres chosen for self-expression). Poetic descriptions create an atmosphere of vagueness that goes together with another topos of this literature: the dream.

The Role of the Writer

The 'I' overbrimming texts is not a capital letter, but gives voice to the individual's experience and narrates her inner desires. The writers do not feel to be the bearers of a mission or a social role. They take full possession of writing, creating literature as if drafting their own diaries.

What urges the writer is the need for self-expression. The real motive-power of narration is a stimulus to express one's own way of perceiving reality and, above all, one's inner experiences. And this without any relation with society, politics, or humankind, apart from a strong quest of a medium to communicate with them.

⁶ A device largely used by Twentieth Century's literature, both Western and Chinese.

LIN BAI

Lin Bai's polymorphous works provide a vivid illustration of the genre's complexity, since all her stories and novels can be variously interpreted. I will analyze this enchanting writer's works on the basis of different clues, with the purpose of introducing her to the attention of the reader and arousing interest towards 'Individualized' Writing in general.

Regionalism

A large portion of Lin Bai's works can be read as a monologue in which she expresses herself and her inner world. Under the pretext of narrating the stories of fictional characters, she tells her own story and sensations, to the point of identifying them with herself.⁷ It can be maintained that in Lin Bai there is a complex dialectics between subjectivity and objectivity. Lin Bai's monologue, however, is also complicated by other dualisms: in the sphere of time there is a contraposition between present (the time of reality) and past (the time of idealization), and in the sphere of space there is a contraposition between Peking (the place of reality) and Shajie 沙街 (the place of idealization).

Peking is the town where the writer lives at present, the place where she abandons herself to the flow of emotions, thoughts and memories and where she physically writes her works. It represents society, an alien world that swarms, just out of the window, with injustice and oppression towards women, and where, quoting the title of a novel published in 1995, women spend their 'years staring into space'.⁸ Shajie, on the other hand, is a quarter of

⁷ In some stories the main characters have the same name of the writer, like in 1992 'Requiem to Shajie' (*Anhun Shajie* 安魂沙街; Lin Bai 1996b: 147-55), in 1993 'The Gallery Seat' (id. 1996e) and in her famous novel 'A One-Person War' (id. 1997c) first published in 1994. It is rather common to find analogies or even identities between the childhood of the characters and that of the writer; see, for example, 'From the River to the Bank' (id. 1986), 'A One-Person War', 'The Eye on the Wall' (*Qiang shang de yanjing* 墙上的眼睛) of the same year (id. 1996b: 1-10), and the novel 'Years to Stare into Space' (*Shouwang kongxin suiyue* 守望空心岁月), published in 1995 (id. 1997a: IV, 1-233). Also, the setting is often the same as that where Lin Bai grew up, i.e., the small town of Beiliu; see, for instance, 'Don't Leave Your Lovers' (*Tongxin aizhe bu neng fenshou* 同心爱者不能分手, 1989; id. 1996b: 26-58), 'Requiem to Shajie', 'About the Musk and the Train' (*Qingtai yu huoche xushi* 青苔与火车叙事, 1994; *ibid.*: 313-48), and 'Musk' (id. 1995a), a novel published in 1995. Moreover, the main characters' jobs are often those performed by Lin Bai herself in her life: there is a librarian in 1993 'The Water in the Bottle' (id. 1996f), a scenarist in 'A One-Person War', a journalist in 'The Gallery Seat' and a writer in her recent novel 'Speak up, Room' (id. 1997b). The identification between author and characters is further emphasized by the use of the first person: the reader fails to distinguish the one from the other, and eventually is induced to renounce any attempt to do so.

⁸ I.e. 'Years to Stare into Space'.

the writer's hometown, Beiliu 北流, in Guangxi Province, a wild land in the south, bordering Vietnam, humid with never-ending rains. In order to describe her deep feeling towards Guangxi, she writes (Lin Bai 1998: 148):

广西虽然是我现在已经离开的地方，但我发现这种离开反而把它更近的拉向我的内心。

I realized that, even if Guangxi is a place I've left behind, yet this separation dragged it even nearer to the bottom of my heart.⁹

Shajie is the physical projection of the writer's inwardness and, consequently, of woman's inner world. Quoting Huang Lin (1997: 171),

"沙街"表面上以作家的故乡为背景，但这个故乡是"女性世界"，确切的说，是作家精神的乡，女性的精神故乡。"沙街"上生活着全是美丽动人，欲望灼灼，命运莫测的女人...

'Shajie', on the surface, is the writer's home-town that acts as background, but this home-town is 'women's world' too; more precisely, it is the land of the writer's soul, the home-town of women's soul; all the women living in 'Shajie' are of enchanting beauty, burning with desire, their destiny is unfathomable...

In Shajie, Lin Bai's characters are mysterious queens, free to reign over their own body and soul, although only for the brief duration of the story. But Shajie is not just the fictional reign for queens destined to perish as they come in touch with the cruelty of reality (Peking), nor the projection of Lin Bai's inner, secret desire for freedom. In her works, there is a real and vivid Shajie as well, with detailed descriptions of every aspect of Guangxi's old traditions, popular habits, and luxuriant nature. To a certain extent, dimly and discontinuously, we can recognize a fresh outbreak of the *Xungen Wenxue* 寻根文学 (Seeking Roots' Literature),¹⁰ a pallid vein of regionalism (Chen Xiaoming 1996: 355).

Still, this is only one of the clues leading to the comprehension of Lin Bai's works, which cannot be read univocally, since regionalism is present along with individualism, lyricism, magicism, realism, and, above all, her own feminine way to approach narrative creation.

However, her attachment to her native country, her inclination to crystallize its past and its traditions on the written page – in short, the narration of an alternative China – do loom out of some digressions in her stories, of-

⁹ The title of the essay is 'Leaving and Arriving' (*Likai yu dida* 离开与抵达).

¹⁰ This literary phenomenon stems from an article by the Hunan writer Han Shaogong 韩少功 written in 1985 and entitled 'The Roots of Literature', marking the return of tradition to the consciousness of Chinese writers. 'Literature has roots. The roots should be deeply planted in the soil of the nation. If the roots are not deep the leaves will not flourish. Therefore the young writers of Hunan face the problem of searching for the roots' (Han Shaogong 1994: 14). Other outstanding writers of the trend are Acheng 阿城 and Wang Anyi.

ten in relation to her grandmother's character. She was a woman combining wisdom and magic, Guangxi personified. As an example of her regionalism, we recall the *gu*'s 蛊 legend¹¹ in 'The Gallery Seat',¹² or some essays such as 'The Red Soil's Dance' (*Hong tu zhi wu* 红土之舞; Lin Bai 1998: 68-69) or 'In the Mountains' (*Shan naban* 山那边; *ibid.*: 70-75), where she depicts the habits and traditions of the minorities of her region.

The most intense evidence of Lin Bai's nativism is the first chapter of the novel 'Musk' (Lin Bai 1995a), entitled 'Shajie', where the writer, through realistic narration and powerful and colourful language, draws a vivid picture of her native land. There is nothing missing: the description of subtropical landscapes and Shajie (the park luxuriant with exotics, the Gui 圭 River with its pier and its floating village, teahouses and inner courtyards filled with *zhijia* flowers, stalls and shops), the depiction of this little town swarming with activities (the early morning washing of old women by the river, the growing of all kinds of vegetables – Lin Bai jots down all their strange names –, roots picking and worms drying process for traditional medicine preparations), and the long-lasting rainy season.

The Myth of the Moon

Lin Bai's works have often been compared to Latin-American 'Magical Realism' and, in particular, to Gabriel García Márquez.

Lin Bai denies any direct influence on her style and inspiration, but she admits of having been breathing Magical Realism's atmosphere; this literary phenomenon had a large echo and diffusion in China.¹³ As an actual fact, the constant search for scenes imbued with mystery and weird effects in her works, as well as the typology of all her main characters (i.e., women as enchanted and enchanting as fairies, women who live in the subtropical forest as if in their own element and destined to perish as soon as they get in touch with the logic of a world governed by men, heavenly beings destined to die, ethereal beauties flying to find shelter in the safety of their own room, so far but so near to all what they are escaping from) do have some common features with those of Magical Realism. Yet, Lin Bai, draws inspiration from her homeland's suggestions, carrying out at the same time a precise narrative choice, that is to represent feminine psychology as something mysterious.

The writer is practically unaware of western feminist theories and thus there is not even a shadow of feminism in her writing, although she is per-

¹¹ *Gu* is a magical potion prepared with rare insects or uncommon herbs to bewitch people. Lin Bai abruptly interrupts the course of the main story to tell in detail the legend of a widow who obliges a stranger not to leave her by poisoning him with this potion (Lin Bai 1996e: 167-69).

¹² For the Italian translation of this story, see Pozzi (1999-2000: 189-221).

¹³ See the interview with Lin Bai in Pozzi (1999-2000: 230).

factly conscious of her gender; her self-consciousness permeates all her works. The atmosphere and the characters destined to disappear that she created, together with her poetical language and the fragmentary frame of her stories are a kind of original and feminine writing. Moreover, her works are an outspoken criticism against men.

The women floating in her works, ethereal and still carnal, divine and yet morbid, lead the reader into a charming atmosphere. What one feels is enchantment and unsettling. The deep affection of the writer for her creatures is easily verifiable, both in the dreamy descriptions of their bodies and in the precious names¹⁴ chosen for them. What makes the character of these women even more supernatural is the writer's abundant use of the semantic sphere of white: hands are as glittering as the moon, skins are as pale as jade, faces are snow-white, clothes are made of white silk, transparent and impalpable. Most scenes take place during the night, when the only vague light is that of a silver moon.¹⁵

Especially in the domain of the unconscious, the moon symbolizes feminine nature and the sun represents masculinity. The symbol of the moon belongs to common consciousness and is present in worldwide literatures, both contemporary and classical, with the same allusive power. Lin Bai goes further in making a real myth of the moon, which almost becomes the sign of a matriarchal society which has never existed and yet is desperately longed for (Ding Fan and Qi Hong 1994).

Other women writers, such as Tie Ning, Wang Anyi and Zhang Jie 张洁, have the great merit of having spoken out women's grievances and desires. They have written about real women, originating from dust and destined to dust. Lin Bai's deities, on the other hand, are silent and remote, detached from reality. They suddenly disappear, most likely committing suicide, but even their end remains mysterious, as the writer, after dreamily describing their self-murder, declares the groundlessness of everything.¹⁶ What is certain is only that these disappearances are the outcome of the women's will.

¹⁴ The main character of 'The Gallery Seat' is named Zhu Liang 朱凉, *zhu* meaning 'vermillion' and *liang* 'icy, chilly'; in the story published in 1991, 'At Noon' (*Ri wu* 日午; Lin Bai 1996b: 59-67), there is Yao Qiong 姚琼, *yao* meaning both 'beautiful' and 'remote', *qiong* being a refined kind of 'jade'; the central figure in 'The Past's Vagueness' (*Wangshi yinxian* 往事隐现), a story of 1992 (id. 1995b: 247-64), is named Shao Ruoyu 邵若玉, the family name being homophonous to *shao* 邵 'beautiful' and *ruo yu* meaning 'like jade'.

¹⁵ The moon is the symbol of femininity, an inner relationship existing between it and Lin Bai's beauties.

¹⁶ Only supposed suicides are scattered in many stories; see, for instance, 'Don't Leave your Lovers', in which the mysterious 'woman dressed in white silk' disappears in a big fire, or Zhu Liang, in 'The Gallery Seat', who is supposed to have drowned herself in the Mekong River, or also the evanescent Liao, in 'The Bullet across the Apple', who disappears in the thick of the forest, most likely drowned in a pond. They all leave few traces (the former a scarf, the latter a golden earring) and nothing else, their corpses never to be found.

In comparison with women, men are represented as trivial and marginal. They are simply cruel and material, their psychology lacking the complexity of women's, boringly unswerving and never capable of entering women's world. Men awkwardly bust about a closed door concealing contradictions and mysteries, that is, a silent woman in the twilight and a mirror reflecting her. Men, even when not evil, like Zhang Mengda 章孟达 in 'The Gallery Seat', are always of secondary importance. Quoting Lin Bai:

... 在我的小说中，确实有对我们生存现实中的男性的失望。

... in my works there is disappointment in respect of men living in our reality (Lin Zhou and Qi Hong 1996: 130).

The writer's critical aim is evident and is emphasized by her characters' extreme choices. Still the attention is mainly focused on the analysis of women's inner world. Lin Bai's weird queens embody the idealization that women make of their inner self. Thus women's most unavowable secret is revealed.

Feizhuliu

Chinese literary critics acknowledge that Lin Bai has the great merit to have thoroughly disclosed a segment of society kept in a low profile for a long time: women's psychology (Chen Xiaoming 1993; Huang Lin 1997; Wang Guangming and Huang Lin 1997; Chen Sihe 1998). She dared to bring to light the most secret recesses of women's privacy. This is her conquest and, simultaneously, her limit.

Her outspokenness induces male readers to feel like voyeurs caught in the act. Her works sometimes make men feel uneasy. She goes far beyond what is generally conceived as moral, being almost offensive to customs and transgressing the rules of common sense. She speaks, in brief, about taboos, to the point that her works have been considered pornographic.¹⁷ But in my opinion there is not even a hint of the pornographic or the erotic in her stories. She simply narrates in detail women's private life and/or hers own, including dreams, desires, disappointments, and fears. She does not conceal anything in her quest to communicate how she and/or her characters feel inside, and this by means of a poetical and original style. She opens wide a door locked for centuries, that of women's private and secret inner-life.

The great majority of Chinese literary critics stresses the novelty of her output. They praise her lyrical and womanly style, but deny her a place in first-class literature. Chen Xiaoming (1993: 143) says:

¹⁷ On Lin Bai's alleged 'pornography' see 'Wang Xiaobo and I' (*Wo yu Wang Xiaobo 我与王小波*) in Lin Bai (1998: 178-79) and Wang Xiaobo (1998).

这种非常个人化的写作，非常独特的心理自传也如“瓶中之水”，它封存于自我指涉的狭窄世界。我设想的女性写作应该有着更为宽阔的现实背景和更强的穿透力，女性欲望的话语可以包括更多的意义。

This kind of extremely individualized writing, such a unique psychological autobiography, is like ‘the water in the bottle’,¹⁸ that is to say that they are shut up in a narrow self-referring world. Women’s literature, as I conceive it, should have a wider background and a stronger incisiveness, the discourse of women’s desire could include more meanings.

The works of Lin Bai, therefore, even if her style is valuable and the psychological analysis of women’s inner-world unprecedented, are thought to have reached a dead end. This conclusion has much to do with the positions of traditional Chinese critics, i.e., with a concept of literature seen as an ideological medium or, in any case, as a social mission. It is no wonder that her work has been defined as *feizhuliu*, marginal.¹⁹ She can be considered as such also with regard to her works’ circulation. Her public is formed by a rather small number of people (mostly young women), which most likely has conditioned the critics’ evaluation. But as Chen Ran (1998: 162) maintains:

我并不以为文学中的“个人”比较起“群体”是一种“大”与“小”的关系，“一百个人”与“一个人”并不能说什么，这只是一个“量”的问题，而不是“质”的问题。

I do not think that, in the field of literature, between ‘individual’ and ‘group’ there is the same relation existing between ‘small’ and ‘big’; to say ‘one hundred persons’ and ‘one person’ does not mean much, it is only a question of ‘measure’, not of ‘nature’.

Since the role of literature is not the object of this article, I will not discuss this thorny question. I will only add that some of Lin Bai’s more recent works, such as the novel ‘Speak up, Room’ (Lin Bai 1997b), about the ups and downs of two women both betrayed by men, or the story ‘The Rice Jar’ (id. 1999), a family account published in 1999, show a more realistic approach and a trend to analyze women under further viewpoints. The background widens: no more only private rooms and forest’s depths, but also Peking’s streets and offices. Lin Bai does not renounce women’s inner monologue, but starts as well a dialogue with the outside world, debating social problems like unemployment as well as daily life. Chen Sihe (1998: 111) replies to Chen Xiaoming’s critique on Lin Bai:

¹⁸ Chen Xiaoming alludes to a story entitled ‘The Water in the Bottle’ (Lin Bai 1996f), about a lesbian love that the two main characters are not able to carry forward. In the story, Yiping 意萍 and Erpa 二帕 cannot help keeping their own feelings and desire inside them, just like water in a bottle.

¹⁹ Li Jiefei (1997) and Chen Sihe (1998) represent a countertendency to this rather widespread critical opinion.

我想林白是勇敢的，她扛着宣言“以血代墨”的旗帜，固执地走出了自我设置的困境，走向了个人主义的社会批判。「说吧，房间」也许正是一个良好的开端。

I consider Lin Bai to be brave. Holding a banner bearing the slogan 'Blood in the Place of Ink', she tenaciously came out of the difficult situation created by herself, and this walking towards an individualistic criticism of society. 'Speak up, Room' is likely a good starting point.

If her works have been considered both pornographic and feminine, it is mainly because she deals with topics like lesbianism and narcissism. These are themes that have never entered literature before, as maintained by Hong Ying (1999: 156):

If sexual love between women has actually always been widespread (e.g. among nuns, concubines, maids of big households), then this is entirely a matter of nature. It has nothing to do with culture.

Hong Ying (1999: 155) also observes that there has not even been a term to define sexual love between women in Chinese tradition, the only exception being the expression 'eating face to face' (*duishi* 对食). In my opinion this is a starting point to shed some light on Lin Bai's interpretation of lesbianism, as the expression *duishi* only suggests the existence of a relationship that goes beyond simple friendship, without declaring it. The writer does the same, often keeping the reader from understanding the true nature of a relationship between two women. The reader is left in ambiguity. In the 1996 poem entitled 'Course' (*Guocheng* 过程; Lin Bai 1997a: IV, 289), which draws the entire course (from the very beginning to the tragic ending) of a lesbian love in few lines, we read:

五月我们对面坐着犹如梦中。

In May we sat face to face as in a dream.

And in a paragraph of 'The Water in the Bottle' (Lin Bai 1996f: 201):

... 然后和二帕在宾馆的酒吧里坐到深夜。她们坐在最尽头的座位上，二帕喝一种绿色的薄荷酒，意萍喝黑色的酒。两人面对面坐着 ...

... then she [Yiping] and Erpa sat in the hotel's bar until the dead of night. They sat in the rear seats, Erpa drinking a mint green liquor and Yiping a black wine. The two women sat face to face ...

Both situations describe the climax of lesbian love, their bodily closeness generating a kind of intimacy that drives the women to uneasiness. Lin Bai's characters are incapable of admitting their love; they intensely feel it and then escape. There are two different ways to approach the subject. In some stories, like for example 'The Gallery Seat' or 'At Noon', the writer only alludes to the

possible existence of a sexual relationship between two women. Elsewhere, like in 'The Water in the Bottle' or in 'The Time of Mao's Passions',²⁰ falling in love and sexual attraction are dealt with an outspokenness to the point of making an explicit declaration of lesbianism, although an actual relationship comes to be impossible and the characters die or escape with fear. Lin Bai (1997c: 37) through the voice of Lin Duomi 林多米 in 'A One-Person War' says:

... 在与女性的关系中，我全部的感觉只是欣赏她们的美，肉体的欲望几乎等于零，也许偶然有，也许被我的羞耻之心挡住了，使我看不到它。我希望得出这样的结论：在一个同性恋与一个女性崇拜者之间，我是后者而不是前者。

... In relationships with women, all what I feel is just the pleasure of their beauty; sexual desire is nearly equal to zero, maybe it is present by accident or maybe it is constricted by my sense of shame, so that I am not able to figure it out. I wish I drew such a conclusion: between a homosexual and a women's worshipper, I am the latter and not the former.

Actually, lesbianism is deeply connected with her harsh criticism against men and society, her characters symbolizing her rejection of a world shaped by men. This leads Lin Bai's women to find shelter in themselves, creating an unprecedented sisterhood. She devotes her works to women, extolling their beauty and psychology. Even in the domain of sex, she maintains that, as regards the issue of women's self-identification, it is not necessary to seek confirmation within a male chauvinist framework. Women are totally independent.

Not only is the taboo of lesbianism broken, but many others are explored, such as narcissism (having many points in common with lesbianism, as it is another way to worship women), the detailed description of women's naked bodies and even the precise account of female masturbation (see, for instance, Lin Bai 1997c: 225). The writer does not show any uneasiness in dealing with these topics, and she is successful in transforming women's sex and sexuality into poetry. Such linguistic ease characterizes the description of other private and generally unmentionable events such as menstruation, disappointing sexual intercourse with a man, or sexual excitement. In this regard the writer often insists on describing the physical sensations and the associations of ideas that the women's ego lives in these secret moments.

Not a single event occurring in a woman's existence is neglected, starting from childhood, which is viewed as one's life fundamental period for the formation of one's character and its consequences on the whole life, up to puberty, adulthood, and the fear of growing old. Lin Bai also speaks in detail of abortion, nearly an obsession in her pages, where more than once²¹ she gives

²⁰ *Mao de jiqing shidai* 毛的激情时代, first published in 1995, in Lin Bai (1996b: 308-12).

²¹ See for example Lin Bai (1997b: 67-68) and 'The Private Clinic' (*Siren zhensuo* 私人诊所) in Lin Bai (1998: 11-14).

all the possible definitions²² for it in the Chinese language and repeats the operation's dreariness step by step.

It should be mentioned that another burning question is present in these works: drugs.²³ It is not possible to figure out whether the writer has ever taken drugs; still, with her usual ease, she dreamily depicts the hallucinating effects of smoking hemp, without condemning this illegal experience. This is a further example of Lin Bai's outspokenness.

Lyricism and Aestheticism

Lin Bai was born as a poet, her first poems dating from 1975. Her poetical production can be divided into two main periods: the first dating back to the 1980s, when she was still living in Guangxi and unknown, the second starting from the 1990s, her more mature season.²⁴ Her poems are generally brief and in blank verse.

Those of the first period are rather descriptive, and depict a blooming, cruel nature populated by eternal spirits and charming nymphs. The colours are violent and bright: dark blues, all shades of greens, and brilliant yellows. No matter what the content is, the background is always South China's subtropical forest: the rushing course of the Gui River, a scorching sun, the pelting down of never-ending rains, the tunes of the Immortals or impenetrable silences. In the background there is eternity, with mankind just a transitory detail.

The poems of the second period are more introspective. Death and fate are still present, but the wide spaces of nature are far away and ousted by the four walls of one's own room. Lin Bai's attention is no longer devoted only to what is eternal; trifling human matters receive more attention. These are poems about human sensations and emotions. And the human is womanly. They are poems on fleeting impressions or the grievances of a woman's soul: her breasts in the night, the shadows in her room, or the loss of her lover. Possible hues decrease, colors become more symbolical; wherever there is death there is black.

Many themes are in common with those of her novels, such as death, the oneiric world, the importance of sensations, women always resembling goddesses, roaming about the deep of the forest or pining away in front of a mirror. The key-features are the same: rivers and forests, mirrors and roses, rains and silences. The correspondences are really numerous: the two genres, each with its own approach, explore the same topics.

²² I.e. *zuodiao* 做掉, *rengong liuchan* 人工流产, *duotai* 堕胎.

²³ See for example 'Guessing Hemp' (*Caixiang dama* 猜想大麻) in Lin Bai (1998: 56-59) and a passage in 'Years to Stare into Space' (id. 1997a: IV, 123-29).

²⁴ This division is debatable, especially because it is based on the analysis of a small number of poems, i.e. the published ones, amounting to only twenty-one.

Nowadays she devotes herself to both poetry and fiction, and is writing non-fiction as well. Lin Bai as a poet is not well known to critics and readers, mainly because her poems are even more 'private' than her stories and she herself is not too inclined to publish them. Her poems are an outlet for her soul's torments, often written on impulse and lacking refinement. Allusion prevails over description, intuition over deduction, just like in her stories. In this sense lyricism is a fundamental key to understanding the writer. In 'Art and Medium' (*Yishu yu zhongjie* 艺术与中介; Lin Bai 1998: 231-32) she says:

我有理由认为自己的创作是一种包括了诗性的创作。我的叙述理想是一种诗性叙述。

I have reason to think that my works are a kind of creations involving poetry. My narrative ideal is a kind of poetical narration.

Her stories are crammed full of terminology belonging to the semantic sphere of doubt, such as 'perhaps', 'I can't remember', 'I don't know'; most features (memories, thoughts, sensations) are vague, and several scenes take place at night or in semi-darkness. A 'poetics of vagueness' is thus created.

In thorough relation with lyricism, what emerges can be defined as 'linguistic aestheticism', that is, Lin Bai's obsession for the charm and power of words. She often interrupts the course of events to talk at length about feelings or analogies spurred by a certain word. We read, for example:

... 自爱真是一个无比美好的词，就像一种奇妙的精神大麻 (适量的大麻在我的感觉中是褒义词)...

... self-love is really an incomparably beautiful expression, it's like a kind of marvelous drug for the soul (in my perception to say a dose of drug means something positive) (Lin Bai 1997b: 212).

She also writes:

小小年纪这个词使我想起了电影《卖花姑娘》...

The expression 'tender age' makes me think of the movie 'My Fair Lady'... (Lin Bai 1997c: 64).

She devotes whole paragraphs to the analysis of words...²⁵ Her attention to the use of language lets the disparity between major (*da* 大) and minor (*xiao* 小) themes (so often emphasized by Chinese critics to despise 'Individualized' Writing) have no great importance anymore. What is important is the art of writing itself, and not the contents. No more what to write, but how to write.

²⁵ For some further examples see Lin Bai (1996b: 77, 326; 1997c: 144, 182).

Lin Bai's Symbology

Lin Bai's works are characterized by an expansible frame lacking linearity, letting each single detail acquire importance according with the writer's will: the sensation of one moment or the sudden memory of another moment can be described at length, to the disadvantage of the plot.²⁶ To the reader's even greater confusion, she has the same characters appearing in different works,²⁷ so that one gets the impression of facing one single large literary framing, of moving in a fictional labyrinth. To the acquainted reader, the recurring analogies between narrated events and the author's life and the odd repetition of identical passages in different works²⁸ enormously amplify this 'labyrinth-effect'.

In Lin Bai's imagery there are some symbols that can be used as landmarks. They are obsessively scattered in the text, no matter if the writer is describing Yiping and Erpa's lesbian love (Lin Bai 1996f), Lin Duomi's ups and downs (id. 1997c), or Qiye watching over Zhu Liang's sleep (id. 1996e). These symbols, to a certain extent, combine all Lin Bai's major themes.

The River

The river is an autobiographical reference, a mark of childhood spent on the banks of the Gui River. There are other symbols recalling the writer's childhood, such as the mosquito-curtain (a micro-shelter from the world outside, the prototype of the room) or the garret (the realm of ghosts and spirits, the physical place of imagination and magic), but none as revealing as the river. It symbolizes the untamable nature and life in its fated course. The stories often start on the riverbanks²⁹ and end in its waters.³⁰ This symbol is

²⁶ To cite one example, in Lin Bai (1996e: 176-78), the narrator all of a sudden interrupts the course of the story, making an excursus about her own experience of public baths when she was at the university. The characters of the main story happen to be completely set aside: the central quasi-homosexual relationship between Zhu Liang and her maid Qiye, the intriguing vicissitudes of counterrevolutionary Zhang Mengda as well as the setting of the story (a far away village on Mekong's banks), are cast aside as if another story is told.

²⁷ For example Lao Hei 老黑, who is a secondary character in 'A One-Person War' (Lin Bai 1997c) and 'About the Musk and the Train' (id. 1996b: 313-48), becomes the main character in 'Speak up, Room' (id. 1997b). Bei Nuo 北诺 appears for the first time in 'A One-Person War', then is the main character in 'Fatal Flight' (*Zhiming de feixiang* 致命的飞翔; id. 1996b: 68-106), first published in 1995.

²⁸ For example cf. Lin Bai (1994) and (1997c: 3 ff.); id. (1996b: 38-40) and (1997c: 212-13); id. (1996b: 148-55) and (1997c: 15-18).

²⁹ See for instance Lin Bai (1986; 1987; 1996e) and 'Desperate Weeping' (*Dasheng kuqi* 大声哭泣), in id. (1996b: 266-73), first published in 1990. This is available in an Italian translation in Pozzi (1999-2000: 181-88).

³⁰ Like in 'The Gallery Seat' (Lin Bai 1996e).

closely connected with water, which is an explicit representation of women's sexual desire (in 'The Water in the Bottle'. The imprisoned water symbolizes lesbian desire caged in the inner self, and in other works³¹ the transformation of women into water is a metaphor of the pleasure of masturbation), as well as of womanliness. In fact, rivers' waters are restless, turbid, unforeseeable, and even destructive, and it is not by chance that the writer's autobiography is entitled 'Lin Bai, Flowing Water' (Lin Bai 1994).

The Room

The room with drawn curtains replaces in adulthood the mosquito-curtain of childhood. It is a shelter against the aggressions, injustices, and hardships of the outside world, acting also as a metaphor of women's inner self, of their closed and obscure reign, unfathomable to men. Men cannot help being shut out to spy upon, just like the child in the story 'A Known Love' (Lin Bai 1995c), who spies upon her music teacher's room. Even in the rare circumstances when men are allowed to enter, they cannot avoid acting clumsily and awkwardly, like, for instance, the young teacher in 'Don't Leave Your Lovers',³² who is a ridiculous toy in the hands of the alluring 'woman dressed in white silk'. The room stands for solitude, but also freedom. It is the place where one can freely devote oneself to recall the past, daydream, and make up a different and private existence. It is the place of writing, of sexual intercourse, a place to sleep, a place to die.³³ And the room's symbol obviously reminds us of 'A Room of One's Own' (1929) by Virginia Woolf:

a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction (Woolf 1998: 4).

The Mirror

There is no room without a mirror, the most frequent image in Lin Bai's works. In front of it there is almost always a woman examining her naked body and questioning herself. This scene represents the huge blueness of loneliness and rejection of the world, symbolizing the way to soothe the disappointment of the real world suggested by the writer: taking shelter in narcissism and seeking comfort in the inner-self.

³¹ Like, for example, in 'Don't Leave your Lovers' (Lin Bai 1996b: 26-58) and 'A One-Person War' (id. 1997c).

³² For an Italian translation see Pozzi (1999-2000: 148-80).

³³ In 'Fatal Flight' Bei Nuo hangs herself in her room, and in 'Don't Leave Your Lovers', the 'woman dressed in white silk' is also supposed to die in a fire in her room.

The Eye

In some works the childhood of the main characters is troubled and spied upon by an eye. In 'The Eye on the Wall' (Lin Bai 1996b: 1-10) it is drawn by the narrator herself on a white wall; in 'Desperate Weeping' there is an imaginary and horrifying fish's eye that by night spies upon the girl from the window, and in 'A One-Person War' there is a burning on the inner courtyard's musk, which has the shape of an eye (this burning is all that has been left to Lin Duomi by her father, who before his death had burned all his books and diaries).

Wherever the eye's symbol is set, it is in relation to a father-daughter relationship. The eye comes to represent the stare of the hated father, and is also, in a broader sense, a symbol of all men.

The Moon

Night settings are recurring, with numerous references to the moon to be found everywhere; women are frequently compared to its whiteness. The moon is another symbol of femininity (see above).

Death

Death is a constant feature. Most women characters die under mysterious circumstances, so that it would be more exact to speak of disappearance than death (see above). Still, there are exceptions: although Bei Nuo in 'Fatal Flight' hangs herself and Mao 毛 in 'The Time of Mao's Passions' is shot, their death, or rather, disappearance (even Mao's), is the consequence of the will for self-destruction. Women characters' suicide is the symbol of a complete rejection of society.

The Art of Flying

写作使我从一天的不如意中走出来，它是我精神的安抚剂。

Writing gives me the chance to go out of a whole day's dissatisfaction, it is my soul's tranquilizer.³⁴

Writing is undoubtedly a way to fly away from daily life, an individual space to re-create one's reality, and, above all, a realistic illusion of freedom in a world in which

生存是这样，它给我的自由度几乎等于零。

³⁴ From the essay 'Soliloquy' (*Duyu* 独语), in Lin Bai (1996c: 146).

Life is like that, the degree of freedom it has granted to me is practically equal to zero (Lin Bai 1996a: 30).

Freedom is a concept closely connected to the idea of flying, of rising in the air. There is, here and there, a massive use of vocabulary belonging to the semantic sphere of flight,³⁵ with terms referring to lightness and the insubstantiality of matter. Characters dressed up in transparent and flimsy clothes enigmatically appear and disappear. Bodies float, sway, wander, and so do memories and thoughts. Words swarm like bees, and gestures are as swift as lightning. There are plenty of titles correlated with flight, such as 'Fatal Flight' or 'Floating'.³⁶ A chapter of 'A One-Person War' is entitled 'Flying and Falling' (*Feixiang yu xiazhui* 飞翔与下坠), and the title of a chapter of 'Years to Stare into Space' is 'The Sensation of Flying' (*Fei de ganjue* 飞的感觉).

It can be maintained that Lin Bai's work is a consistent monument to the search for freedom, with writing just one of the ways to reach it. Lin Bai (1998: 245) writes:

写作是一种飞翔, 做梦是一种飞翔, 欣赏艺术是一种飞翔, 吸大麻是一种飞翔, 做爱是一种飞翔, 不守纪律是一种飞翔, 超越道德是一种飞翔。

Writing is flying, dreaming is flying, art's appreciation is flying, smoking hemp is flying, making love is flying, violating the rules is flying, going beyond common morality is flying.³⁷

³⁵ One could even think of a relation with Erica Jong's 'Fear of Flying', but Lin Bai maintains to have no points of reference in feminist literature.

³⁶ *Piaosan* 飘散, first published in 1993, in Lin Bai (1996b: 228-65).

³⁷ From the essay 'The Course of Choices and Memory' (*Xuanze de guocheng yu zhuyi* 选择的过程与追忆; Lin Bai 1998: 240-45).

REFERENCES

- Chen Ran 陈染 (1993) Wunü yu ta de meng zhong zhi men 巫女与她的梦中之门 (The Witch and the Door in Her Dreams). *Huacheng* 5, 125-33. Guangzhou.
- (1996) *Siren shenghuo* 私人生活 (Private Life). Beijing.
- (1998) *Duzi zai jia* 独自在家 (Alone at Home). Xi'an.
- Chen Ran et al. (1997) *Mihuan huayuan* 迷幻花园 (The Illusory Garden), 2 vols. Beijing.
- Chen Sihe 陈思和 (1998) Lin Bai lun 林白论 (On Lin Bai). *Zuojia* 5, 107-11. Changchun.
- Chen Xiaoming 陈晓明 (1993) Yuwang ru shui: xingbie de shenhua 欲望如水：性别的神话 Desire like Water: The Gender's Myth). *Zhongshan* 4, 137-43. Nanjing.
- (1996) Ji yi yu huanxiang jixian 记忆与幻想极限 (Memory and Fantasy's Limit), in Lin Bai (1996b), 354-61.
- Dai Jinhua 戴锦华 (1998) Yidian zhi guang – Xu Xiaobin fangtanlu 伊甸之光 – 徐小斌访谈录 (The Eden's Light – Interview with Xu Xiaobin). *Huacheng* 5, 118-25. Guangzhou.
- Ding Fan 丁凡 and Qi Hong 齐红 (1994) Yueliang de shenhua 月亮的神话 (The Myth of the Moon). *Zhongguo xiandai dangdai wenxue yanjiu* 7, 180-83. Beijing.
- Han Shaogong 韩少功 (1994) Wenxue de "gen" 文学的"根" (The Roots of Literature), in id., *Yexingzhe mengyu. Han Shaogong suibi* 夜行者梦语. 韩少功随笔 (Han Shaogong's Somniloquy in the Night – Essays). Shanghai.
- Hong Ying 虹影 (1998) *Figlia del fiume* (trans. F. Passi). Milano.
- (1999) *A Lipstick Called Red Pepper* (trans. H. Zhao et al.). Bochum.
- Huang Lin 荒林 (1997) Lin Bai xiaoshuo: nüxing yu wang de xushi 林白小说：女性欲望的叙事 (Lin Bai's Fiction: The Narration of Women's Desire). *Zhongguo xiandai dangdai wenxue yanjiu* 1, 168-74. Beijing.
- Li Jiefei 李洁非 (1997) "Tamen" de xiaoshuo "她们"的小说 ("Their" Fiction). *Zhongguo xiandai dangdai wenxue yanjiu* 11, 89-104. Beijing.
- Lin Bai 林白 (1986) Cong he bian dao an shang 从河边到岸上 (From the River to the Bank). *Renmin wenxue* 5, 83-86. Beijing.
- (1987) Liuru na he 流入那河 (Entering the River). *Guangxi wenxue* 2, 54-58. Nanning.
- (1994) Liushui Lin Bai 流水林白 (Lin Bai, Flowing Water). *Zuojia* 4, 20-24. Changchun.
- (1995a) *Qingtai* 青苔 (Musk). Beijing.
- (1995b) *Zidan chuanguo pingguo* 子弹穿过苹果 (The Bullet across the Apple). Shijiazhuang.
- (1995c) Siceng xiangshi de aiqing 似曾相识的爱情 (A Known Love). *Shanghai wenxue* 12, 37-43. Shanghai.
- (1996a) Ling du ziyou 零度自由 (Zero Degrees' Freedom). *Wenxue ziyou tan* 1, 29-30. Tianjin.
- (1996b) *Zhiming de feixiang* 致命的飞翔 (Fatal Flight). Wuhan.
- (1996c) *Sichou yu suiyue* 丝绸与岁月 (Silk and Years). Beijing.
- (1996d) Ji yi yu gerenhua xiezuo 记忆与个人化写作 (Memory and Individualized Writing). *Huacheng* 5, 124-25. Guangzhou.
- (1996e) *Huilang zhi yi* 画廊之椅 (The Gallery Seat), in id. (1996b), 156-87.
- (1996f) *Ping zhong zhi shui* 瓶中之水 (The Water in the Bottle), in id. (1996b), 188-227.
- (1997a) *Lin Bai wenji* 林白文集 (Collected Works), 4 vols. Nanjing.
- (1997b) *Shuo ba, fangjian* 说吧, 房间 (Speak up, Room). Yangzhong.
- (1997c) *Yi ge ren de zhanzheng* 一个人的战争 (A One-Person War), in id. (1997a), II, 1-225.
- (1998) *Xiang gui yi yang miren* 像鬼一样迷人 (Enchanting like a Ghost). Xi'an.
- (1999) *Mi gang mi cang* 米缸 (The Rice Jar). *Huacheng* 3, 4-28. Guangzhou.

- Lin Zhou 林舟 and Qi Hong 齐红 (1996) *Xinling de shouwang yu shixing de feixiang* – Lin Bai fangtanlu 心灵的守望与诗性的飞翔 – 林白访谈录 (Keeping Watch the Spirit and the Poetic Flight – Interview with Lin Bai). *Huacheng* 5, 126-32. Guangzhou.
- Pozzi, S. (1999-2000) *Lin Bai: una donna che sposa se stessa* (Degree thesis, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Istituto Universitario Orientale). Napoli.
- Wang Gan 王干 and Dai Jinhua 戴锦华 (1996) *Nüxing wenxue yu gerenhua xiezuo* 女性文学与个人化写作 (Women's Literature and Individualized Writing). *Zhongguo xiandai dangdai wenxue yanjiu* 9, 61-71. Beijing.
- Wang Guangming 王光明 and Huang Lin 荒林 (1997) *Liang xing duihua: Zhongguo nüxing wenxue shiwunian* 两性对话：中国女性文学十五年 (Dialogue between Genders: Fifteen Years of Chinese Women's Literature). *Zhongguo xiandai dangdai wenxue yanjiu* 11, 81-88. Beijing.
- Wang Xiaobo 王小波 (1998) *Yishu yu guanhuai ruoshi qunti* 艺术与关怀弱势群体 (Art and the Care for the Weak), in id., *Chenmo de daduoshu* 沉默的大多数 (The Silent Great Majority), 463-65. Beijing.
- Woolf, V. (1998) *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*. Oxford.
- Xu Xiaobin 徐小斌 (1998) *Xu Xiaobin wenji* 徐小斌文学 (Collected Works), 5 vols. Beijing.