



Inside China

The first three essays and the poetry selections in the following special section are being published in collaboration with the College of Chinese Language and Literature, Beijing Normal University, and were edited by Zhang Jian, an expert on Chinese literature and dean of the College of Chinese Language and Literature at BNU. The selection of poems was made by Zhang Qinghua. The authors of the featured poems and essays are well-known poets and critics, and their work represents some prominent aspects of contemporary Chinese literature and culture.

Planning for this issue began in August 2006, when a delegation from Beijing Normal—including Liu Hongtao, Han Bing, and Gao Hong—visited the University of Oklahoma campus to inaugurate the Confucius Institute of Chinese-language studies at OU. Our conversation that day with Paul Bell, dean of OU's College of Arts & Sciences, and Liu Hongtao, deputy dean of BNU's College of Chinese Language and Literature, inspired us to tap into the remarkable synergy that exists between our institutions. Locally, our editorial efforts were supported by Professors Peter Gries (Political Science), Ming Chao Gui (Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics), and Jonathan Stalling (English) as well as Yongan Wu (instructor of Chinese in MLL) and graduate students Cong Zhang and Ning Liu. Cong Zhang also created the original graphic art that illustrates the section. Off campus, we were fortunate to rely on the expertise of Lucas Klein, Michelle Yeh, and Yingjin Zhang. We're exceptionally grateful to everyone at OU, BNU, and beyond for their support, guidance, and invaluable contributions.

Looking back, readers are encouraged to consult our July 2006 cover feature on Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Project, our Summer 1991 special issue on Chinese literature, and the Winter 2001 issue featuring Gao Xingjian, laureate of the 2000 Nobel Prize in Literature. Looking ahead, we'll devote an issue of *WLT* to Bei Dao, the featured writer of the 2008 Puterbaugh Conference on World Literature, who will visit the University of Oklahoma next spring. As Peter Gries notes in his essay in this issue, although many fear that China and the United States will become increasingly antagonistic toward each other in the twenty-first century, we hope this special issue will "raise awareness of our common humanity [and] serve as a vital counterweight to the discourses of difference that undermine U.S.-China relations."

Daniel Simon