Acknowledgments

This book began as a dissertation project, and I have been blessed with much loving, caring company on my way—people who have made this a journey full of joy, inspiration, excitement, and gratitude. Valerie Raoul has been nourishing me for my intellectual and personal growth with her generous and constant commitment, and she mentored me well after her retirement. She introduced me to the field of feminist narrative studies, and through her intellectual guidance and dedication, I have learned to be a feminist scholar and teacher. I have benefited tremendously from her critical and challenging comments that always push me to think further, as well as her patient, meticulous reading of my dissertation. While I was in Canada as an international student, Valerie also generously provided me a home away from home, inviting me to join her family on all kinds of special occasions; these are my most treasured memories of my years in Vancouver. I also thank Tim Cheek, who guided me in the field of China studies. He provided a democratic and respectful, challenging and supportive intellectual environment for my intellectual growth. I deeply appreciate how he trusts and encourages me to explore and find my own way, free to pursue my own answers, while providing insights, inspirations, and constructive criticisms along the way. He is a caring and nourishing mentor, who constantly introduces me to new people, providing me with valuable comments, thoughtful advice, and endless encouragement, making sure I have every opportunity to better my academic and social life. I am deeply touched by Dr. Cheek’s caring for his students, even going so far as to read my chapters while he was briefly in hospital. I thank Amy Hanser for being very kind and supportive throughout my PhD years, including reading through my draft during her maternity leave. Her many important and critical questions helped shape the contours of this book, and the crucial and most up-to-date literature sources she provided broadened the depth and scale of my inquiry. I especially thank Sneja Gunew, who has
been a critical and stimulating mentor during my PhD study and beyond. She provided general guidance, inspiration, and support for my intellectual and scholarly development. I thank Lisa Rofel for her careful reading of my dissertation plus her insights, constructive comments, and suggestions for revising it into a book. Many friends and colleagues read the dissertation and/or the book manuscript, made valuable critiques and comments that contribute to the intellectual development reflected herein. I have benefited greatly from participating in the China Study Group of faculty and graduate students at University of British Columbia (UBC), which provided an inspirational and supportive intellectual community and became an important part of my graduate studies life. I thank all the members of the China Study Group; their work has greatly inspired my own, and their comments on my dissertation improved it enormously. I thank my fellow graduate students at the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice and members of Wanshe (the China studies graduate students study group) at UBC, for their friendship, many invigorating conversations, and entertaining get-togethers. I especially thank Naomi Lloyd for her treasured friendship, intellectual stimulation, and critical comments on my work. I thank the members of the writing group at University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee—Gwynne Kennedy, Cheryl Kader, and Casey O’Brien—who read through every draft chapter of this book, providing not only valuable criticisms and suggestions but also a supportive and stimulating intellectual home during the book revision.

Funding for the research and writing time that went into this book came from a graduate scholarship at UBC; research assistant fellowships provided by Wendy Frisby, Tim Cheek, Valerie Raoul, Yuan Miu Chung, and Sneja Gunew; and teaching relief from my current home institute, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. I am grateful for the East Asian Council of Canadian Asian Studies Association for recognition and awarding of my dissertation (on which this book is based) as the Best Canadian Dissertation on East Asia in 2010.

I thank Merry Weisner-Hanks for generously providing funding to cover the printing cost of the color illustrations and indexing for this book. I thank Beth Bouloukos, my editor at State University of New York Press, for her terrific support and patience. Many thanks to the peer reviewers of this book for their very detailed and extremely helpful suggestions. I thank my production editor Dana Foote and copy editor Laura Poole for their support, patience, and meticulous reading and correction.

I owe my deepest debts to the fourteen research participants of this project who generously shared their life stories, many of which were intimate. I thank them for trusting me to retell and interpret some of their
stories here. I thank many friends (and friends of friends) in China who helped and supported me during my fieldwork in Beijing in 2006–2007.

My deepest gratitude goes to my partner, Timothy Bult, for his love and unconditional support for my study and work and for his quiet companionship (when I need to work) and lively conversation. I also thank Timothy for being my first reader, with straightforward comments and up-front challenges.

Last, I want to thank my mother, an extraordinary Maoist funü, who motivates me to always go further. Because of the inspiration and legacy she passed on to me, I chose to write this book. I dedicate this book to her, with deepest love and respect.