(Inter)National Feminism and China

This series of talks is drawn from published and forthcoming papers and book chapters, and raises a series of related questions. The questions circulate around the historicity and distribution of feminisms. The papers raise related questions about the subjects of feminisms, the nationalities and genders of feminisms, the intellectual roots of feminisms, the periodization of feminisms, and what I am calling the problem of historical catechism in feminism. In all the talks suggest that it may be necessary to carefully reconstruct feminist historical frameworks each time a feminism is invoked to serve a new purpose. Such an interminable task of political deconstruction is acute under present conditions of rapid commercial capitalist economic globalization and the ever-present burdens of colonialism and neocolonialism that are historically encoded in the Enlightenment project of feminisms.

1. **Why is “Western feminism” a misnomer?** (“Spheres of Debt and Feminist Ghosts in Area Studies of Women in China” (forthcoming, Traces in Japanese translation.)

Billie Melman, *Women’s Orients* (pp. X-XIX and 306-317)

Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (pp. 3-50)


Primary questions: what are the spectral or ideological elements inhabiting national/international feminisms including so-called “western feminism” inside so-called “Chinese feminism”? How can “feminism” be “western” if its origins presuppose the non-West?

2. **What is a subject of non-national (or regional) feminism?** (“’green blade in the act of being grazed’: Late Capital, Flexible Bodies, Critical Intelligibility” (differences 10:3, 1998 [2000]).

Li Xiaojiang, Huang Ping, Lin Chun and Tani Barlow contributions to a *Signs* roundtable for the special issue on “Gender and Globalization” (forthcoming manuscript pages)

Xie Fei, “Woman of the Lake of Scented Souls” (Xiang hun nü), 1993 film cassette

Primary questions: What might be a subject “women” in a feminist discourse that is not national in an uncomplicated way yet is indeed “historical” in the Benjaminian terms, a subject “blasted out” of the continuum of bourgeois historiography? What irreducible elements are at work in the subject “women in transition” that are not particularities?


Primary question: How do the subjects of feminisms become comprehensible as "women" in a given matrices and what are the conditions for the availability of subjects women?

4. **How should we read international questions of female subjectivity, citizenship, eugenics and race improvement, "sexuality" and anthropology during the historical moment of colonial modernity.** ("The question of ‘women’ in Chinese colonial modernity” (unpublished manuscript prepared in honor of Stanley Spector and delivered at Washington University, St. Louis, 2000).

Diane Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction: Ms.en Abyme* (chapter)

Primary questions: In what ways can the eugenic and chauvinist roots of some colonial modernist feminism (e.g., Sanger, Key, Gao, Ward, etc.) be considered in light of postcolonial feminist objectives? What are the ideological conditions for the knowledge of gender difference in colonial modernity?
5. **What is (post)socialist modernity and what is its relation to “Chinese” feminism?**


   Primary questions: What is the relation of feminisms and other prevailing “cultural logics”? What relation will feminisms have to nonfeminist thought and ideology at any given time? How does periodization work in the genealogy of feminisms?


   Gayatri C. Spivak, “Subaltern Studies, Deconstructing Historiography”

   Lily Ling, “Hyper-masculinity and Asia,” and Yukiko Hanawa, “queer ‘n asian,” both in *positions*.


   Sun Ge, “How Does ‘Asia’ Mean?” in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 1:1, April 2000.

   Primary questions: How can the term ‘historical catechresis’ be used here? Is it useful for thinking about the connection of writing and its others? How is “zero degree of history” useful to genealogists? How is reregionalization in the post-Cold War era transforming area studies and consequently the way knowledge about others is codified?