

## (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 catechresis 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)

(Neil Diamant, "Reexamining the Impact of the 1950 Marriage Law: State Improvisation, Local Initiative and Rural Family Change," China Quarterly, 2000.)

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?

3. **How would a history of women be extricated out of the remains of social events, shifting language use, political contingencies and nationalist, anti-colonial development strategies.** ("Theorizing Woman: Funü, Guojia, Jiating (Chinese Woman, Chinese State, Chinese Family) in Angela Zito and Tani Barlow, ed., Body, Subject and Power in China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)

Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran," in Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., Re-making Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 91-125.

Abu-Lughod, "Introduction: Feminist Longings and Postcolonial Conditions," pp. 5-31.  
Mrinalini Sinha, "Gender in the Critiques of Colonialism and Nationalism: Locating the 'Indian Woman' in Joan Scott, ed., Feminism and History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 477-504.

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 Abyrne (chapter)

Antoinette Burton, ed., "Introduction," Gender, Sexualities and Colonial Modernity (London: Routledge, 1999).

Tani Barlow, ed., "Introduction," Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 1-20.

Sumiko Otsubo, "Feminist Maternal Eugenics in Wartime Japan," U.S. Japan Women's Journal, English Supplement, no. 17.

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?**  
“Woman at the Close of the Maoist Era in the Polemics of Li Xiaojiang and her Associates,” in Lowe and Lloyd, ed., The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital (Durham: Duke University Press,, 1997).

Li Xiaojiang and Xiaodong Zhang, “Chinese Women’s Studies,” Signs, 20:1, pp. 137-151, 1994

Gayatri C. Spivak, “More on Power/Knowledge,” (1992) in Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, ed., The Spivak Reader (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Cho Haejoang, “Feminist Intervention in the Rise of ‘Asian’ Discourse” Asian Journal of Women’s Studies (AJWS), 3:3.

Kim Eun-shil, “The Cultural Logic of the Korean Modernization Project and its Gender Politics,” AJWS, 6:2.

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?

6. **What challenges face universal “post-western” feminist history writing in the shift from nation to region (so-called globalization)?** (“Zero Degree of History,” forthcoming in Comparative Literature March 2001)

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

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

Tani Barlow, “Founding positions,” in Postcolonial Studies, 1999.

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?