

Feminist Sinologies: An Introduction

For the closing speech of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China in 2013, the newly elected president Xi Jinping selected an autodeconstructive slogan for China's future: "push[ing] forward the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and . . . the dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."¹ As the reactions on China's Twitter, Weibo, showed, the China Dream slogan points proleptically to the inchoate narratives of China's past and present. Contemporary China is in a moment of compressed temporality; that is, at least four layers of dreams of modernity, cultivated over the past century, are now compressed together, operating over a mutating palimpsest of pre-modern discourses. In the past century and a half, China has witnessed the emergence of at least four major dreams: first, the late nineteenth-century dream of a modern nation-state after the Qing empire's defeats in the Opium War of 1840 and the Sino-Japanese War of 1895; second, the dream of a communist society inspired by the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and stimulated by disillusionment with the Western powers when they redrew the world map in 1919 and allocated a German colony in China to Japan rather than returning it to China; third, the American dream of capitalist consumerism when the Chinese Communist Party merged China with global capitalism in the late twentieth century; and fourth, the twenty-first-century imperial dream of a harmonious Confucian society that may allow China to retrieve its historical glory as the center kingdom of the universe with modern but "Chinese characteristics." At this particular historical moment, these layers of dreams exist simultaneously; they overlap, though with unequal force and disproportionate numbers of dreamers. The multiplicity of modernity dreams in China creates a muddy and shifting political ground that defies stable positionality and demands multiple theorizing efforts. We choose this image of loosely hinged and noncohesive China dreams to propose the need for a feminist

We would like to thank the University of Michigan and the Center for Chinese Studies for funding the project that led to this collaborative publication. We would also like to thank the editors and anonymous reviewers at *Signs* for their invaluable critical input and editorial work.

¹ For a partial transcript of that speech in news reporting, see *Xinhua News* (2013).

sinologies, an interdiscursive and interdisciplinary platform for studying the palimpsestic nature of modern China. Feminist China studies and Chinese women's and gender studies are both robust fields from whence we take our bearings, but in this thematic cluster we argue for the urgency of re-prising and refitting feminist theory to the new arenas of sinological world-making. The multiplication of discursive Chinas—more keenly felt now that they tend to come with a “rise-of-China” rhetoric that is hard to ignore—and its intersections with feminisms will prove singularly instructive to scholars working within embedded globalizations.

If feminist scholarship deconstructs the entangled relationships between power and representation, underscoring the “dream” part of the China Dream, it can help us study a China that is largely reflective of transnational critical discourse and whose aspirational or hegemonic storytelling already takes into consideration historical sinologies. In the example of Xi's China Dream, the state-sponsored rise-of-China rhetoric shows clear signs of having long internalized historical discourses of China from the West—so much so that it pointedly emphasizes the “Chinese characteristics” in this new modernity so as to avoid ceding rejuvenation and reform to an external source.

We privilege feminism in this redoubled look at the ongoing crisis of China and the world's representation of China's past and present, but not because we seek to accumulate more of the counterhistories and histories of marginalized subjects with which feminism is stereotypically associated. Rather, feminism's storied encounters with China and feminism's persistent interest in the clash of epistemic knowledge and misalignments between narratives and outlooks offer, where nothing else can, an interface for the tricky arena of China studies—institutional or otherwise. Sinology, that deeply problematic term historically associated with the Western imperial gaze and its self-serving constructions of what China is (or what it lacks)—is repurposed here to bring attention to the ongoing nature of situated and instrumental knowledge production about China in China, in the West, and in the hybrid spaces in between. When it seems as though we should have left behind the arcane and colonial concept of sinology for good—in US institutions, for example, sinology has been replaced by China studies—we argue that sinology remains important to the field and helps us see anew the multiple, discontinuous, and sedimented narratives of “China” and their recurring specters in global forums. Just as the categories of the sinophone and sinograph have been deployed to examine more diasporic or transnationally constituted notions of Chinese writing and speech, so we hope that sino-logy can stand in for the long history of transnational epistemologies of China (Hayot, Saussy, and Yao

2007; Shi, Tsai, and Bernards 2013).² Insofar as sinology, in both its positive and negative forms, connotes the study of the study of China, the metadiscursive undercurrents in China studies today have preserved sinology as a site of reflection and theoretical mining. By pluralizing sinology into sinologies, we tap into places where “China” is being defined and imagined inside and outside of China studies, we emphasize the structural inability of China studies to encompass all constructions of China, and we show the necessity of bringing the rhizomatic nature of China-centered epistemologies into view.

What is the state of feminist scholarship in China studies, and how does feminist sinologies depart from this field? Two decades ago, a group of feminist scholars in China studies staged a pioneering event. The conference on Engendering China hosted at Harvard University was a historical breakthrough in the field in that it has generated significant transformative effects on knowledge production of China. The organizers, Christian Gilmartin, Gail Hershatter, Lisa Rofel, and Tyrene White, presented a clear vision of transforming the field of China studies with feminist theories and methods and interrogating Western-based feminist theories with feminist knowledge from China studies. On the twentieth anniversary of that historical landmark, commemorating the death of Gilmartin, we can say that in many ways China studies has answered her call for “engenderment,” especially internalizing her idea that “the word engendering conveys the sense that new knowledge is being created” (Gilmartin et al. 1994, 2). At the Feminist Sinologies conference sponsored by the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan in October 2012, we turned Gilmartin, Hershatter, Rofel, and White’s proposal into a given: “China viewed through the lens of gender is not just more inclusive; it is different. Research on women and gender does not rest in a corner of sinological endeavors, but revises the most basic categories through which we strive to apprehend Chinese social relations, institutions, and cultural productions” (1994, 2). China studies has increasingly been attuned to the problems of terminology and periodization entailed in feminist historicization, and frequently engages with questions of identity, subject positionality, counterhistoricity, and what motivates feminist scholarship.

Due to its heavy emphasis on the investigation of epistemes and epistemic production, the 1992 watershed Engendering China conference

² To wit: sino-phone studies takes as its object aural and oral Chinese outside of the nation-state, sino-graph studies takes as its object Chinese writing that isn’t necessarily sinicist, sino-logy can be redefined as study of the making of knowledge (logy) of China that also occurs in and outside of China.

has also helped to sinologize feminist studies. For instance, the question of women in China has inspired Tani Barlow to intervene in some of the most fundamental assumptions of new historicism. Barlow uses the concept of the future anterior mode to describe the dissonance between historical reality and historical figures' "politics of claiming" and to stave off the assumption that people historically have known "where in human time they were located when they acted" (2004, 16). Chinese feminisms from within China have tremendously influenced feminist reworkings of historiography and historicism, enriching our terminologies for ahistorical histories. Feminism's collaborations with China studies have also resulted in more nondismissive academic studies of "native" feminist projects in China today (even if they are state/party sponsored) and in China's past. In the most recent decade, scholars working at the intersections of China studies and feminism have pushed to redefine feminism through the China example, asking for recognition not only of China's historical women's movement (which catalyzed large swathes of international feminism) but also of contemporary women's movements, which are not neoliberal and which might actually be pro-state.

The monopoly on feminist studies of China was amply debated and debunked at a conference hosted by the University of Michigan and Fudan University in 2004. "Feminism in China since *The Women's Bell*" facilitated conversations that addressed the recurring mistake of portraying the history of feminism in China not just as a history of China's responses to Western feminism. Beyond the task of correction, scholars at and since this conference have pushed for a more (rightfully) prominent international role for Chinese feminisms prior to the "introduction" of feminism to China. In an astute review of that conference, Sasha Su-Ling Welland offered this distillation of its major interventions: "Feminism's centrality to the imagining of the modern Chinese state, by both male and female intellectuals, is in fact one of the reasons the Chinese case is so compelling and important for understanding feminism as a modern mode of thought with no singular origin but born of deeply linked international conditions" (2006, 944).

Historically, there has been an amnesiac rhetoric that once and again portrays China as a newcomer and a wary receiver of feminism.³ Scholars have since recovered Chinese feminism's constitutive roles in the global feminist movement since its beginnings. The groundbreaking volume *The*

³ Such was the rhetoric at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, for example (see Welland 2006). This type of amnesia comes from the assumption that not only feminism but modern China falls under the provenance of the West.

Birth of Chinese Feminism, edited by Lydia Liu, Rebecca Karl, and Dorothy Ko (2013), argues that turn-of-the-century Chinese thinkers like He Yin Zhen, Jin Tianhe, and Liang Qichao developed feminisms both distinct from Western feminisms and vital to China's state formation. The recovery of their voices, specifically the worldviews, economic critiques, and rhetorical problematics embedded in their writings on women's struggles, is crucial to the study of global feminisms. One of the things that transnational studies has enabled us to see is that the West is no longer the sole author of sinologies or, indeed, of feminisms.

Current feminist hermeneutics such as intersectionality, queer temporality, network and assemblage, potentiality theory, and so forth give us fresh frameworks with which to approach the ever-knottier production of knowledge of China beyond those aspects that only pertain to Chinese women or even Chinese feminism. These frameworks give us more precise enunciations vis-à-vis contemporary China. Feminism is still one of the most, if not the most, powerful tools for uncovering the ideological undercurrents of any kind of storytelling on China—the most recognizable ones in studies of China's historical trajectory and destiny, Chinese modernity, and Chinese “essence”—from which feminist studies of China are not exempt, as we will show. Updating the field goes beyond taking stock of changed moments, figures, and locations with new tools. For us, it means first a systematic and revamped study of the entangled relationships between the study of China and feminism. A self-aware interrogation of global knowledge production concerning China involves a prophetic look forward as well as a redoubled look backward. As a critical term, “feminist sinologies” formally articulates the dialectical relationship between the two fields (so that we may also call “feminist sinologies” “sinological feminisms”). Standing at a critical distance from both fields, the essays in this cluster account for the strange and sometimes hegemonic uses of feminisms in sinologies, and vice versa, and show the convergences and divergences between the feminist and sinological logics at different historical junctures up to the present. This cluster and the project from whence it emerges are not soliciting feminist approaches to China studies, which already has a long institutional history. Rather, we examine feminism as it interacts with sinology—henceforth simply taken to mean the production of knowledge about China—and the paradoxical formations resulting thereof as a powerful analytical tool not only for the self-apprehended rise of China—both geopolitically and in academia—but to other disciplinary studies unrelated to China.

One of the most interesting facets of these cross-pollinations and co-dependences is that China studies and feminist studies have already made

deeply problematic epistemological claims on the other. Over the past two decades, feminist scholars have urged the consideration of the politics of location as part of feminist inquiry and its baggage (Grewal and Kaplan 1994; McCann and Kim 2003). What Lata Mani calls “the politics of intellectual work in neo/post-colonial contexts” (2003, 365) is exacerbated in the case of China, as major intellectual movements in the West, from the seventeenth century through the twentieth, derived legitimacy and inspiration from sinological fallacies. Of course we are not yoking all Chinese women’s history to sinological history. A recent anthology project on Chinese gendered writing has tried to steer away from debates about East-West commensurability and the politics of defining what is Chinese against what isn’t (Liu 2002).⁴ And yet, in that volume there is still a hard reminder about the practice of historiography and the fashioning of a representative female tradition in Chinese literature. In her contribution to the volume, Lydia Liu suggests that because feminism is a historically situated, interventionist discourse, the consolidation of a history of women’s writing in China intended to approach the tables of feminist comparison on equal grounds is “no less a potent form of historical intervention than it is an invention” (2002, 169). Chinese feminism (even in the tame form of canon formation) understands itself as requiring some storytelling. “To what extent,” Liu asks, “are we all implicated in the making of particular histories?” (169). The implicatedness of the historian-researcher is a leitmotif of feminist China studies and, at the same time, an important part of its critical thrust. At this point we wish to spend a few paragraphs orienting the reader to some of the key complications in this field. We hope to show how competing views of China, or multiple sinologies, proliferate in response to feminism, which, curiously, both produces and uncovers the problematic narratives of modern China.

Historically, feminist critiques from the West have tended to come with vicious sinologizing that inadvertently colludes with Chinese nationalist propaganda and the rewriting of history; attempts to straighten out China’s history and modernity from both nineteenth-century Anglo-European projections and twentieth-century nationalist teleologies tend to ignore or mischaracterize Chinese feminism. For example, Julia Kristeva’s *About*

⁴ Much of what has driven feminist China studies recently has been the creation of a commensurable (if not commensurate) history and body of women’s and gendered writing in China. Examples include Susan Mann’s *Precious Records* (1997) and anthologies of native feminist texts and women’s writings such as Mann and Yu-Yin Cheng’s *Under Confucian Eyes* (2001) or Liu, Karl, and Ko’s *The Birth of Chinese Feminism* (2013), though there is still quite a bit of metadiscussion there about the Republican period and China’s transnational modernity.

Chinese Women (1977), a feminist endorsement of Maoism that, like many intellectual projects by poststructuralists like Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan, required the mythologization of Chinese language, history, and culture. There are, as Zhang Longxi, Lydia Liu, Rey Chow, and countless others have pointed out, many strands of thought in Western intellectualism that depend on the “extreme generalizability of China” (Liu 2012, 78).⁵ Just as poststructuralists romanticized Chinese writing as the philosophical antidote to the malaises of Western modernity, so Kristeva found in Chinese conceptions of gender something inscrutable, magical, and contrapuntal to Western “monotheistic capitalism”: a “logic unique to [China] that no exoticism can account for” in its monolithic tradition of “at least two thousand years” (1977, 14, 12). For Kristeva and her contemporaries, “China becomes a figure for anti-foundationalism and antihumanism in poststructural theory, insofar as the invocation of ‘Chinese’ concepts of the human is assumed to have the ability to disrupt the fantasy of the universal Eurocentric Project” (Liu 2012, 77). To borrow further from Petrus Liu, Kristeva “construct[ed] a wild fantasy about an alternative matrilineal social space” (77) in her essentializing historiography of Communism’s overthrow of patriarchal Confucianism. Although Kristeva does draw attention to the imagined part of her identification with what is really an incommensurate revolution by casting Chinese female agency as in the realm of the symbolic, her instrumentalization of Chinese feminism has to be rendered somewhat unusable because of her sinological projections, even though, for China, socialist feminisms are as urgent today as they ever will be.

Feminism and sinology can be said to show each other’s clockwork. The hard problems they pose for each other are sometimes engineered but sometimes structural. Rapidly shifting hegemonic political discourses give rise to different politics of representation. In the wake of cultural pluralism, which views culture as identitarian and representative, feminist studies of China must also consider moments when gender identity meant anachronistically and dangerously defining Chinese “cultural essence.”⁶ Rey Chow, who has studied the fate of China in the rise of Western post-

⁵ See, e.g., Zhang’s “The *Tao* and the *Logos*” (1985), Chow’s “How (the) Inscrutable Chinese Led to Globalized Theory” (2001), and Liu’s *Translingual Practice* (1995).

⁶ Zhong Xueping, for example, studies just such phenomena. Her book *Masculinity Besieged?* (2000) employs feminist psychoanalysis to examine the connections between crises resulting from shifts in conceptions of gender, specifically masculinity, and China’s *wenhua fansi* (rethinking and reexamining culture). Zhong shows how, circling back to the legacies of sinologies by claiming a precontact cultural essence, male cultural elites have tried to recuperate a masculine identity from “the ‘glorious past’ of Chinese culture” (155).

structural theory and leftist ideology, as well as the co-optation of the figure of the Chinese woman in nationalist art and media, has shown that politicized feminism requires a sustained, racializing myth of China's past and present for its fuel and upkeep (Chow 1995, 2001).⁷ Historically, sinological nation building has had no problem appropriating paint-by-numbers feminist tableaux. China, for its part, has gradually acculturated and internalized the West's projections of China as a history of subaltern overcomings during the early periods of its national modernity. As Dorothy Ko writes in her field-changing monograph *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, "the image of the victimized feudal woman was vested with such powerful nationalist sentiments that it assumed the mantle of unassailable historical truth" (1995, 2). What Lydia Liu might call the "self-colonizing project[s]" (1995, 235) of the May Fourth movement created a historiographic vocabulary for Chinese women, one that corroborated polemical narratives of struggle and liberation. At the time of Ko's writing, "Western feminist scholarship [was] a mere accomplice to more persuasive Chinese nationalist concerns" (1995, 3). Armchair sinology is part of this collaboration of Eastern and Western analytics to invent "an ahistorical 'Chinese tradition' that is feudal, patriarchal and oppressive" (1995, 3). Ko's target, therefore, was a hegemonic discourse of Chinese women's liberation promoted by the Chinese Communist Party, a feminism entangled with nationalism that reflected a Western gaze. When the political scientist Lin Chun made her contribution to the scholarship on China and feminism, that once-hegemonic discourse that Ko critiqued rapidly became marginalized in the age of China's merge with global capitalism, a process in which socialist feminist endeavors were erased and forgotten. Lin thus criticizes the "recent revisionist trend in scholarship and politics that makes 'women's liberation' under socialism seem nothing more than an ideological narrative of the past, to be ridiculed, discarded and disgraced" (Lin 2001, 1282). The problematics of revisionism lie in the enduring problematics of periodizing China's modernity.

Feminism's meeting with sinologies is as thought provoking in its fault lines as in its intellectual accretions and synergies. Addressing the perils of

⁷ Haiyan Lee (2010) has explored this structural contradiction from another angle in her essay on Ang Lee's film *Lust, Caution*. The same move that restores female agency in Chinese history by looking at one woman's heroic tragedy as spy/seductress also uses a nationalist version of history and "bedroom calisthenics" (646) to draw attention away from the fact that her body had to be broken in by Chinese nationalists before it could be serviceable to the cause. Though the movie contains a critique of nationalism, the critique turns on the romanticized impossibility of choice for a woman torn between love and country, not the practical degradation of her body and spirit behind the scenes.

Chinese history and gender analysis, Gail Hershatler and Wang Zheng argue that “because the birth of women’s history in modern China was entangled in nationalist discourse in which women’s liberation figured prominently as a sign of modernity, it is a tricky business to launch a critique of nationalism” (2008, 1420). For Hershatler and Wang, however, there is a strip of potential to be reclaimed in co-opted feminisms, such as Chinese male elites who “elaborated” the “nan/nü (man/woman)” binary and installed a history of Chinese women’s writing as part of their own sinological nation-building (1412). Understanding these unexpected alliances has payoffs not just for historians of gender in China but for historians of China qua China. “Global circulation of feminist scholarship,” they argue, “could well enable the emergence of a critical examination of the construction of nationalism in modern China” (2008, 1420). Feminist sinologies takes seriously Hershatler and Wang’s suggestion and uses feminism’s odd operations concerning China’s past to critically examine not only the construction of nationalism in modern China but the open-ended constructions of China. Feminist sinologies embraces the “tricky business” in which the reformist and nominalist language of gendered historiography encounters the politics of historical feminisms.

Drawing attention to the researcher’s politics of location, Lisa Rofel once asked that we “decente[r] the interlocutor” (1994, 230). Rofel was situating her challenge against “a history of Euro-American feminism and its representations of Chinese women as our political others” (230). For her, “decentering the interlocutor” involved stripping the field of privileged positions from whence Western feminists can project onto China their own insecurities and worldviews. Since the time of Rofel’s writing, however, it is no longer just Euro-American feminism that works and reworks definitions and narratives of Chineseness and its evidentiary value. We are all making particular histories, as Lydia Liu (2002) suggests. The political and intellectual maneuvers for realignment and reconfiguration in China’s merger into global capitalism have become clear as feminist critiques have been situated and implicated in the large political process of replacing socialism with neoliberalism. Debates on gender since the mid-1980s have been an inseparable part of Chinese elites’ class maneuvers. The ascendance of gender as an analytical category expressed Chinese feminists’ efforts to pursue social justice in China’s turn to capitalism while it simultaneously worked to gloss over many other viable critical concepts, most prominently, class. The fluidity of an embedded globalization also calls into question conceptual binaries of West/non-West, first world/second world/third world, and North/South. With the Chinese ruling class aspiring to make China the center of the universe, the feminist agenda

to decenter the United States and Europe may be rapidly losing appeal in the face of a need to deconstruct the centering aspirations of the Chinese elite. But Rofel's provocation remains an urgent one. Decentering the interlocutor means at least two things that we hope to continue with feminist sinologies: first, the fact that we must take into consideration the "genealog[ies] of past representations" (1994, 233) of both China and Chinese womanhood; and second, that we need to heed the politics of location in knowledge production as a principle in understanding narratives of gender equality in China's pursuit of modernity and socialist revolution—that is, the sinological narratives produced by the "subjects" of Western feminist analysis.

Diana Elam once argued that feminist studies knows no boundaries, having relinquished its "disciplinary territory" to become a "space of interminable investigation" (1994, 15). Feminist sinologies—as a practice and a metadiscursive theory—also wishes to reach across the disciplines. The mainstays of intellectual inquiry today, such as the turn to transnational studies or new media, stand to benefit from an understanding of feminism's run-ins with sinologies, though not because China is a privileged space or because it enjoys an exceptionalist status. Feminist sinologies does not wish to buoy the (in no small part market-driven) discursive rise of China in academia. In fact, several of the essays in this cluster expose the soft colonialisms and microviolences of modern sino-transnationalisms. In theory and in praxis, feminist sinologies has much to offer to the humanities, where feminist-inflected studies of geopolitical entities (a nation, a culture, or a group of people) have to contend with the ways in which the same institutions of thought that fostered said feminisms have chronically cast and figured those very entities.

One of the alternative, and perhaps universalizable, methodologies offered up by feminist sinologies is its constant reflection on the catch-22s of cross-discursive studies. How do we study feminisms caught up in the narratives of sovereignty and legitimacy? Feminisms whose ideological critiques always also reprise histories of national myth-making? How do we analyze a modern state that understands and even capitalizes on these dynamics? We hope that the answers given in this cluster will speak to scholars whose interest in China and Chinese feminism is tangential or in passing only, or those who work at the interstices of other disciplinary concerns. Feminist sinologies will be useful to those who are studying political entities that proclaim themselves to be no longer third world and to be postfeminist (with "post" taken to mean "in light of the knowledge of," not "having rendered obsolete"). In the current global moment, transnational feminism always already implies a metadiscursive turn to the way countries and peoples have been studied and projected. We now have

to account for feminisms falling in and out of favor for nationalist or imperialist designs while also burdening those selfsame geopolitical entities with unshakable constructions and teleologies. Critically, this symposium does not look at these developments in the usual places (i.e., the international forums of debate) but in literary-aesthetic domains: in the minutiae of the everyday and the understated passages of intellectual critique, in poesy and religious texts, in fiction and film. Paying particular attention to the relays between ideology, materiality, and language, this cluster of articles will be especially useful for scholars interested in the intervening and transformative roles of text, translation, and new media in the clash of discourses.

The essays collected here represent the work of established feminist China studies scholars and young scholars alike. Taken together, they speak across many different fields, including women's studies, history, film studies, religious studies, political science, Chinese and comparative literature, and Southeast Asian studies. The politics of location is no less a consideration here since the knowledge production in this cluster occurs outside the national borders of China (though the circulation of such knowledge is not limited by national boundaries). Although the contributors are established in North American institutions, their papers are by no means "Western" feminist treatments of Chinese topics, nor are they held back by the old unfamiliarity with Chinese history and language and China's changing geopolitics. Our enterprise is unique in its ability to pull from a wide array of intellectual trends and archives. In our efforts to reconnoiter the field and open it up to a wider audience, we have found that we need better theoretical and methodological bridges between the canonical sites of feminist China studies and disciplines that have heretofore almost been completely sealed off from this body of research.

How do the everyday maneuvers of new media change our view of founding moments of sinology and feminism? In the opening essay, "Sinology, Feminist History, and Everydayness in the Early Republican Periodical Press," Joan Judge (2015) enables us to consider how formative discourses are lived and processed from day to day. Judge opens a small window into a paradigm shift and, unprecedentedly, examines what it means to take one's cues for womanhood and one's perception of China from the disjunctive and incoherent pages of print media. She reads the origins of feminist sinologies through media theory, identifying the ways that new media shuttles the public between newness and ordinariness. Therefore, her essay camps out in the well-combed-over territory of China's early Republican print culture—for many the ground zero of historicizing China's transnational modernity—and yet offers an adjusted history. China-studies theorists who want to complicate the narrative of China's modernity

nowadays look back to exactly this period for the “epic nationalist discourse” (569). Crucially, Judge avoids the modernist (*xiandai* writers), the translation of Western literature, and treaties and foreign policy texts that dominate this body of work. Instead, she painstakingly reads the female-directed advertisements in women’s journals and the conversations and personal anecdotes they produced, finding agency in both the ads and the subjects hailed by those ads. Judge’s deconstruction of everydayness disrupts the grand *récit* of sinology, which casts a teleology on the early Republican period, when Chineseness and Chinese “backwardness” were being fashioned and contested. What it meant to be a Chinese republican lady was trained across the pages of materials that reflexively assumed that these concepts were already in place. It is the tautologies and disjunctions across the advertising page that allowed for the training of “new discourses on the body in old cosmologies” (583). Challenging a coming-of-age narrative of the emergence of the “modern Chinese” woman (565) and the Westernization of China, Judge locates in the *techné* of print “feminism’s skepticism of all-encompassing narratives and attentiveness to the multiple and circuitous routes through which knowledge is produced” (564).

Feminist sinologies must be contextualized against available or emergent social practices, which in turn are shaped by available and emergent media forms. In her contribution “Wang Ping and Women’s Cinema in Socialist China: Institutional Practice, Feminist Cultures, and Embedded Authorship” (2015), Lingzhen Wang asks us to consider these reciprocal effects. Wang argues that, for a long time, English-language academic approaches to socialist China and Chinese women’s cinema were determined by the ideology and aesthetics of taste characteristic of the Cold War in the United States. By way of a nuanced and thoughtful survey of the collusion of Cold War ideology and liberal feminism in the 1980s, Wang complicates settled assumptions about Chinese socialist feminism through a study of Chinese women’s multidimensional engagement with cultural production, namely cinema. In a most detailed history of the rise and maturation of women’s socialist cinema, Wang shows how film production and experimentation labored under directives distinct from Western feminism and yet also (at many points) distinct from the state, which was itself undergoing constant change. Wang focuses on the female director Wang Ping, whose work helped to interpolate the feminist proletarian subject and create public forums for female authorship within the socialist state. Far from simply serving as a weapon of social control, Chinese women’s socialist cinema reveals intricate negotiations of gender as well as women’s multiple social, political, and creative roles in the formation of the modern state.

National identity and gender identity are interconnected at the micro level and, as Judith Butler (1990, 2004) avers, gender is a congealing rather than an elective process, a result of repeated decisions and reactions in the bid for social and cultural intelligibility. In the essay that follows, “Religious Women and Modern Men: Intersections of Ethnicity and Gender in the Tale of Woman Huang” (2015), Megan Bryson uses intersectional analysis to show the slipperiness of gender work and negotiations in the new landscapes of modern China where such bidding takes place. Combining ethnographic fieldwork, twentieth-century Chinese history, and literary analysis, Bryson posits that in order to understand a religious text found among the Bai people in Yunnan, we have to understand it within the complexity of Chinese gender roles created after the 1954 Ethnic Classification Project (which named and cataloged the fifty-six Chinese minorities as ethnicities instead of nationalities). An analysis of the adaptation, reception, and anthologization of the Bai narrative “The Tale of the Woman Huang” reveals much about the gendered politics of ethnic demarcations in China. Bryson carefully tracks how the Bai sidestep nationalist labels and their hegemonic assignation of gender to ethnic minority status while at the same time reserving for the text a politically useful gendered valence. Intersectional analysis reveals what happens when “ethnic minorities” perceive sinicization in the handling of literary texts, and when they exploit the porousness of gender and identity in modern China to furnish their own sinologies for the history and future of the non-Han majority. Bryson underscores the multifarious uses of gender identification in the production of alternative sinologies (or visions and constructed histories of Chineseness) that remain unrecognized. Her contribution is therefore an important supplement and counterpoint to Thomas Mullaney’s landmark study *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (2011), which surveys the complications that arose in China’s normativizing turn to the nation-state model. For Bryson, feminist analysis in cultural-religious contexts provides an alternative avenue for comprehending the bargaining between ethnic identity and the state that goes on today and that remains underarticulated by current scholarship on China.

What is the relationship between China’s current world-making and feminist theory? Sharon R. Wesoky’s essay, “Bringing the *Jia* Back into *Guojia*: Engendering Chinese Intellectual Politics” (2015), demonstrates how we might engender current “critical” theories of China’s modernity in national public culture against the marginalization of women’s issues that began in the post-Mao era. Wesoky argues that current proposals for Chinese alternatives to Western modernities from male intellectuals have problems and limitations that would be alleviated by a return to their un-

acknowledged feminist origins. This engendering process is not an imported one, since gender-based critical philosophies have always attended China's transnational modernity. Reading early twentieth-century feminist thinkers from Liu, Karl, and Ko's anthology *The Birth of Chinese Feminism* (2013), Wesoky shows how early visions of Chinese modernity based on gender equality became entangled in Chinese wariness over liberalism and individualism (and Westernization in general), and finally overshadowed by the class-based, socialist nationalisms that it helped shape. Wesoky traces this complex history of discursive feminisms in China to its current iteration in the writings of Wang Hui and Zhao Tingyang. Despite the occlusion of gender discourse in Wang and Zhao's works, their endorsements of interconnectedness and relationality as alternative models of modern subjectivity speak back, if unintentionally, to the tenets of their feminist predecessors. The deep influence of feminist theory on modern articulations of the "China model," while elided, offers possibilities for orienting that model to its liberatory potentials.

In the next essay, Nan Z. Da (2015) conceptualizes contemporary Chinese feminism as a critical and belletristic approach to transnational formation. Da's essay, "On the Decipherment of Modern China and Spurned Lovers: Zhai Yongming's *Most Tactful Phrases*," studies a form of feminist protest that is based neither in socialism nor in liberalism but in poetics. Da reads the poems in Zhai Yongming's *Most Tactful Verses* as exercises in intersectional knowledge—ways of training the reader's attention to the nuances of transnational formation from the nineteenth century to the media-saturated present day. These nuances include the microviolences of translation, performative globalism, and even feminist outrage. Zhai's poetics tries to figure out how best to engage a modern reader to decipher these nuances, splicing pop culture with premodern Chinese culture to reformat the female complaint. As readers take on the poems' invitations to decipherment, often coaxed through vignettes of love gone awry, they simultaneously help to revive the overshadowed and underappreciated historical female poet and to make familiar new terrains of power and violence. In Zhai's poetry, feminism takes the form of a universalized close reading, and lyrical flourishing becomes the precondition for a feminist reimagining of modern China.

The last essay, by Tamara C. Ho (2015), represents our effort to bring feminist sinologies into dialogue with Asian American and Southeast Asian studies and the new frontiers of sinological imperialism. In her essay, "Border Crossing: Feminist Sinologies through a Southeast Asian Lens," Ho nominates feminist sinologies as a critical hermeneutic for analyzing Wendy Law-Yone's *The Road to Wanting*. The study of transnational

women's writings of Southeast Asia requires, Ho argues, an understanding of the problems of Chinese nationality and its relationship to Burma. Feminist sinologies helps us see other kinds of imperialisms besides Anglo-American/global capital/postcolonial ones that are part of the lived reality of Law-Yone's literary subjects. Further, Ho argues, it is not only that China's geopolitics affects the way we read feminist Asian American novels but that feminist Asian American writers like Law-Yone change the way we understand "Chineseness" and its linguistic and gender confusions at the border that Chinese studies cannot fully grasp. Ho meticulously analyzes the double and triple entendres in *The Road to Wanting's* lingual universe to underscore the complexity of identity and nationality, hooking the plight and agency of women into the historically problematic site of the sinophone/sinograph. Traditional sinological study (and its fixation with the genealogies of language) hits a wall in the in-between zones of modern Southeast Asia and can benefit from being supplemented with Asian American studies. Asian American studies, in turn, needs to broaden and rethink the way it currently categorizes Asian American women writers and what literary landscapes they can and should inhabit. Ho's dynamic reading of Law-Yone fundamentally changes our view of what constitutes China studies and Asian-American writing—breaking the mold in both arenas.

Aside from broadening the spectrum of what constitutes sinological research and widening the domain of feminist China studies, we insist that many areas of study traditionally unrelated to Chinese women's studies be co-considered in the future of feminist sinologies. Though intermittent, there has been scholarship on Chinese feminism or feminisms in China as a "mode of thought . . . with linked international conditions," to reprise Welland's assessment (2006, 944).⁸ Increasingly, scholars working on race, class, and gender in other fields have ventured to incorporate the intersectional and transnational origins of feminism in China.⁹ Over

⁸ Liu, Karl, and Ko's recent volume (2013) is one example of the new direction taken by feminist China studies since the 2004 conference. It recuperates the works of the late nineteenth-century, early twentieth-century Chinese female intellectual He-Yin Zhen, whose "feminist struggle was not to be subordinated to struggles that advanced the nationalist, ethnocentric or capitalist modernization agendas" (1) and whose writings, though forged in transnationalism, shatter the familiar narrative of Western-influenced Chinese modernity.

⁹ Two outstanding examples that come to mind are Richard Jean So's (2010) study of the roles that feminist literary voices played in early Chinese communism and, subsequently, American literary naturalism and Laura Wexler's (2000) study of the Progressive era's newly enfranchised white women and their racializing discourses of the Chinese that helped to naturalize myths about China in the Atlantic circuits.

the past two decades, there has been productive dialogue between sinology and traditionally Anglo-American studies, though the studies have largely focused on exposing the complicities between Western feminism and the soft colonialism of the cultural, linguistic, ideological variety. This cluster encourages the continuation of these studies while urging investigations into other forms of cross-pollination. While feminist methodologies have long been imported to China studies, the productive paradoxes arising from the intersection of the two have not yet been applied to fields usually unassociated with either.

As this cluster illustrates, “feminist sinologies” means something more conceptually, something more capacious than the study of Chinese women, past and present. It describes subjectivities and political outlooks whose relationships to their political moments cannot be cleanly articulated. It describes the problematics of transnational formation and the transnational application of critical theory. It therefore suggests itself as a useful model for probing the contemporary politics of knowledge production. In today’s world, Western institutions have become increasingly engaged in China studies and China-US campus collaborations. Many new positions have been created for those trained in sinology in departments historically uninterested in East Asian studies. Confucius Institutes are proliferating across the globe, gaining in institutional clout. Feminist sinologies wants to harness the new tools for discourse analysis and historical mapping made available by these developments and at the same time asks that we view them cautiously. The future of China studies assumes this Janus position. Feminist theory, adapted and adapting, will remain a key consideration in the layered, contradictory, and proliferating versions of what China was and is and will be—now generated not only by the West but everywhere and by everyone.

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