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Review

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The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory. Edited by LYDIA H. LIU, REBECCA E. KARL, and DOROTHY KO. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. xii, 308 pp. \$89.50 (cloth); \$29.50 (paper). doi:10.1017/S0021911813001824

This volume is a collection of first-time translations of foundational Chinese feminist texts by He-Ying Zhen, Liang Qichao, and Jin Tianhe, along with two thought-provoking chapters written by the three editors. The late Qing reformer Liang Qichao's "On Women's Education" (1897) and revolutionary Jin Tianhe's "The Women's Bell" (1903) have been frequently cited by scholars in and outside China as having initiated a feminist discourse in modern China. While the anarchist-leaning Chinese feminist journal *Natural Justice* (1907–08), edited by the preeminent feminist thinker He-Ying Zhen, receives frequent attention in Chinese scholarship, her other works have been obscured in both Chinese and English scholarship. By including six of He-Ying Zhen's works in the volume—"On the Question of Women's Liberation," "On the Question of Women's Labor," "Economic Revolution and Women's Revolution," "On the Revenge of Women," "On Feminist Antimilitarism," and "The Feminist Manifesto"—the editors achieve much more than resuscitating the voice of a Chinese female theorist.

As the editors state, juxtaposing He-Ying Zhen's works with Liang's and Jin's texts "opens up a vast space for a new interpretation of the rise of feminism in China and in the world" (p. 2). Often implying critiques of the two prominent male intellectuals' advocacies for women's rights, He-Ying Zhen articulates a sophisticated feminist theorization of women's liberation that unequivocally rejects a nationalist framework, relentlessly exposes unequal power relations and mechanisms of male domination, critically analyzes limits of European feminist pursuits within the confines of liberalism and parliamentary polity, and soberly explicates the process of reproduction and reiteration of unequal power relations in capitalist modernity. In all these aspects and beyond, He-Ying Zhen illuminates what those progressive and radical male feminists fail to see, thereby significantly complicating our understanding of feminist contentions at the turn of the twentieth century.

In their introduction, the editors stage a theoretical engagement with contemporary Anglophone feminist concepts of gender and intersectionality through an excellent elaboration of two key concepts in He-Ying Zhen's works, *nannü* 男女 (man/woman), and *shengji* 生· (livelihood). The former term, they stress, was a single conceptual mechanism that lay for Zhen at the foundation of all patriarchal abstractions and markings of distinction, and one that has the advantage over "gender" that it is "simultaneously an object of analysis and an analytical category, which confounds the need for 'distinguishing between our analytic vocabulary and the material we want to analyze'" (p. 14).

The editors' discussion of *shengji* (livelihood) postulates a critique of any version of feminism that fails to address "social, national, and global accumulations of capital and wealth underpinned by the system of private property protected by the national state and the international state system" (p. 22). Explicating He-Ying Zhen's vision of a comprehensive feminist revolution that aims at creating conditions for material realization of equality, the editors highlight her concept of labor as an autonomous ontological practice rather than commodity and her critique of capitalist industrialization that enslaved women. While He-Ying Zhen was neglected as a historical figure, her critique of private property and her insistence that "a women's revolution must go hand in hand with an economic revolution" (p. 103) would soon become basic tenets of Chinese socialist feminist theory and practice, which, ironically, have now themselves been forgotten in a post-socialist world.

Although the editors' theoretical focus is on He-Ying Zhen's works, their juxtaposition with related writings of two progressive male intellectuals is also immensely valuable. To say the least, these latter serve as testimony to both a radically transformed gender landscape in today's China (in the sense that many gender barriers they advocated for removing have long been thrown into the dustpan of history), and the continuing workings of the structure and mechanisms of *nannü*. He-Ying Zhen perceptively defines actions by men like Liang and Jin as "men's pursuit of self-distinction in the name of women's liberation" (p. 61). By contrast, Chinese elite men since the 1980s have reverted to practices of maintaining *nannü* differentiation as a means of self-distinction and self-aggrandizement. Regardless of their political orientations, the near universal resistance to feminism among the contemporary mainland Chinese male elite reveals the effects of a history of socialist state feminism and reminds us of the historical contingency of the emergence of a cohort of male feminists like Liang and Jin at the turn of the twentieth century.

Treating the project as a theoretical endeavor to delineate differences between "gender" and "*nannü*," the editors and translators pay tremendous attention to the issue of translating key words. Their thoughtful discussion of the contextualized rendition of *nüxing* and *nanxing* into "character of women" and "character of men," for example, demonstrates their deep awareness of the complexity in translanguaging practices. It is in this context that it looks quite odd that "gender"—a late twentieth-century feminist neologism, appears a few times as a translation for *nannü* in "On the Revenge of Women" (in He-Ying Zhen's original footnote 1 and a few headings added by editors), while *nannü*, the key term that is painstakingly theorized as a major Chinese feminist analytical category in the introduction, rarely appears untranslated in the translated texts. Multiple English renditions of *nannü* perhaps help convey diverse meanings of the original term, but may also perplex English-speaking readers who look for *nannü* as the signifier of a key concept in He-Ying Zhen's texts.

It is hard to predict how this project of enabling global circulation of Chinese feminist analytical categories may actually move transnational feminist theorization onto a new level. What is certain is that the editors' sophisticated elaboration of He-Ying Zhen's theoretical contribution and the availability of her important texts have already raised the level of debates in Chinese feminism and created critical and imaginative space for envisioning a future beyond constraints imposed by the domination of global capitalism.

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Imperial Contagions: Medicine, Hygiene, and Cultures of Planning in Asia.
Edited by ROBERT PECKHAM and DAVID M. POMFRET. Hong Kong: Hong Kong
University Press, 2013. xi, 307 pp. \$25.00 (paper).
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Over the past twenty years, histories of colonial medicine and public health have proliferated across Asia. Mostly, these historical inquiries have traced the boundaries of the nation to come: they constitute a set of proto-national histories, whether of India,