The Birth of Chinese Feminism

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The Birth of Chinese Feminism

ESSENTIAL TEXTS IN TRANSNATIONAL THEORY

Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl, and Dorothy Ko, editors

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Cover image: Detail from an image of Lin Tianmiao's art installation, Meishenme haowande (known as "There is no fun of it"); white cotton thread, embroidery frame, and one needle, 1998. Courtesy of Lin Tianmiao.
Cover design: Rebecca Lown

References to websites (URLs) were accurate at the time of writing. Neither the author nor Columbia University Press is responsible for URLs that may have expired or changed since the manuscript was prepared.

Contents

Liang Qichao

Jin Tianhe

Acknowledgments

This volume is the culmination of a series of gatherings and discussions among the three editors. In December 2007, a workshop called "Living Texts: Rethinking China and the World in the Late Qing" was organized by Lydia Liu at Columbia University. (In April 2004, a related workshop on "Rethinking the Nineteenth Century: China and the World in Transition" had been held at the Center for Chinese Studies of the University of Michigan.) The Columbia workshop focused on the late-Qing intellectual legacy in modern China. It brought He-Yin Zhen to light again, as if for the first time, leading us to this collective project of translation and theorizing. In the course of the preparation and production of this volume since then, we have incurred, personally and collectively, many debts.

Our work has been collaborative in the most positive and truest sense of that practice: we have worked together by sharing and creating to achieve a goal. The three editors have each other to thank for a most pleasurable process. We also wish to thank our fellow translators, whose hard work and efforts we, and all readers of this volume, must appreciate: Michael Gibbs Hill and Tze-lan D. Sang; Jeremy Tai; Meng Fan and Cynthia Roe; Robert Cole and Wei Peng. The latter four were graduate students in a seminar on He-Yin Zhen and her feminist worlds that the editors co-taught at Columbia University in spring 2010; we are delighted that they wished to translate even after the semester was over. At our request, Michael translated Jin Tianhe, and he did so in a remarkably short amount of time and with a great deal of erudition; Tze-lan generously offered to edit and review that translation. We, the editors of the volume, have gone through all the translations

and endeavored to make them consistent with one another, to the extent possible. Interpretive choices made in the process of translation have been approved by all three coeditors, and we alone are responsible for any errors that may remain.

In the summer of 2009, the three coeditors presented a preliminary version of this project to a conference held at Fudan University in Shanghai. We thank Wang Zheng and Chen Yan for inviting us to organize the session and Gail Hershatter for chairing it. In October 2009, the coeditors held a workshop at Columbia self-servingly organized around our translations of He-Yin Zhen's three major essays as well as Hill's translation of Jin Tianhe's pamphlet. We invited scholars whose specializations included many non-China-related geographical zones and asked each participant to read the translated texts carefully, along with some background materials, and to come to New York prepared for two days of intensive conversation. Everyone in attendance took the invitation seriously and contributed immeasurably to our understanding of He-Yin Zhen's significance, resonance, and importance in transnational feminist and intellectual theorizing. Our participants were Swapna Banerjee, Marilyn Booth, Amy Dooling, Janet Jakobsen, Michael Gibbs Hill, Lila Abu-Lughod, Yukiko Hanawa, Viren Murthy, Mae Ngai, Joyce Liu, Anupama Rao, Neferti Tadiar, and Elizabeth Weed. They will each recognize their contributions to the overall shape of the project. We cannot thank them enough for their seriousness of purpose and for the fun we had discussing, debating, and dining together. A special thanks to our graduate students: Zhang Li for being so helpful with the organizing and Annie Shing for designing a beautiful poster. We especially want to thank Amy for being such a great reader for the press and advising us throughout; the anonymous second reader for the press; Neferti, for reading our introductions and providing commentary; Lisa Rofel, for reading and commenting at the last minute; the Feminist Reading Group at Columbia, for giving the introductions a critical reading; Yukiko Hanawa, for helping track down obscure Japanese sources; and Myra Sun, for her assistance in the research and preparation for the book manuscript. For their encouragement and support, we are deeply grateful, although none of those named herein is responsible ultimately for what we made of their contributions.

In addition, we are full of gratitude to Mr. Wan Shiguo, independent scholar from Yangzhou, who punctuated many of the essays we have translated here, even though he had them published in the collected works of Liu Shipei. Mr. Wan also answered many of our questions. We thank Wang

Fan-sen from the Institute of Philology and History at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan for sending us copies of essays from *Natural Justice* missing from the Japanese facsimile edition of the journal. Our gratitude also goes to Liu Huiying, who made her own and Xia Xiaohong's work available to us and whose lone voice in demanding the reevaluation in Chinese academia of the work of He-Yin Zhen has been inspiring. And to Gabriele von Sivers-Sattler from Heidelberg, we express our admiration for her pioneering work, which confirmed our sense that He-Yin Zhen's preferred name was indeed He-Yin Zhen.

A special note of thanks is due to Li Tuo, who helped resolve many interpretive conundrums with his informed feminist readings of He-Yin Zhen's prose.

Michael Gibbs Hill wishes to thank Tze-lan D. Sang for her many corrections and suggestions for the initial draft of the Jin Tianhe translation and Jie Guo, a colleague at South Carolina, who also helped improve the translated text. He is grateful as well to Colin Barr, Melissa Haynes, Tze-Ki Hon, Mark Kellner, Dorothy Ko, Alexander Ogden, Wang Daw-hwan, and Xia Xiaohong for providing assistance and advice.

Numerous institutional debts were also incurred as this volume took shape. Our workshop, held at Columbia University's Institute for Research on Women and Gender, was funded in large part by a generous grant from the Weatherhead East Asian Institute of Columbia University. A grant from the Middle East Institute of Columbia, facilitated by Lila, allowed us to bring Marilyn Booth from Edinburgh. In addition, we received a much-appreciated publication subvention from Lauren Benton, dean of humanities at NYU, and another from the NYU Humanities Initiative. Finally, Jennifer Crewe and Columbia University Press have been wonderful partners in this project; we thank her and the whole team at the Press for moving efficiently and sensitively through the production of this volume.

The three coeditors have lived on and off with He-Yin Zhen for the past three or more years; as we launch her into the English-speaking world, we hope our readers will find her as astonishingly fresh, consistently challenging, and intellectually stimulating as we have.

List of Chinese Dynasties and a Note on Translation

Dynasties

Many dates for the earlier dynasties are at best approximations. As He-Yin Zhen prolifically references dynastic histories, we provide the following as a rough guide. There are many differentiations within these dynastic spans, as China was often not unified; we have eliminated most of those divisions.

Three Dynasties: Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties (ca. 21st–3rd century B.C.E.)
Zhou dynasty (1046–256 B.C.E.)
Spring and Autumn period (772–476 B.C.E.)
Warring States period (475–221 B.C.E.)
Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.E)
Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.)
Former or Western Han: 202 B.C.E.–24 C.E.; Later or Eastern Han: 25–220 C.E. (We count the Western Han from Liu Bang's founding and include Wang Mang's Xin dynasty to simplify matters.)
Three Kingdoms (220–280 C.E.)
Jin, Western and Eastern (265–439 C.E.)
Northern-Southern dynasties (420–581 C.E.)
Sui dynasty (581–618 C.E.)
Tang dynasty (618–907 C.E.)
Five Dynasties: Liang, Later Tang, Later Jin, Later Han, Later Zhou (907–960 C.E.)

Song dynasty (960–1279 C.E.)
Yuan dynasty (1279–1368 C.E.)
Ming dynasty (1368–1644 C.E.)
Qing dynasty (1644–1911 C.E.)

Note on Translation

Chinese names are ordered surname first, given name last, without a comma in between. Thus, He-Yin Zhen is Ms. He-Yin; Liang Qichao is Mr. Liang; Jin Tianhe is Mr. Jin. We have retained this order in our translations and in our referencing. However, if a Chinese scholar is known by the Western order of his or her name, we have retained that preference.

All references to personal age are by Chinese reckoning, which considers a person one year old when born.

All notes in the translations are original to the text, unless marked "Tr:," which indicates annotations added by the translators. Dates added into the texts by the translators are in parentheses ( ); all other matter not original to the texts is in brackets [ ]. The translators have striven for comprehensibility and readability in English, at the same time retaining the distinctive voices of the originals and the flavor of the usages of that time.

The Birth of Chinese Feminism

Introduction

TOWARD A TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST THEORY

In 1903, Jin Tianhe (aka Jin Yi; male), a liberal educator and political activist, published in Shanghai what historians have commonly called a feminist manifesto entitled *The Women's Bell* (*Nüjie zhong*). In the preface, Jin contrasts his own pathetic existence with that of an imaginary counterpart in Euro-America:

> The muggy rainy season with its endless drizzles is stifling. Lotuses droop in the torpid hot breeze. The trees are listless and the distant hills dormant. On the eastern end of the continent of Asia, in a country that knows no freedom, in a small room that knows no freedom, my breathing is heavy, my mind gone sluggish. I want to let in the fresh air of European civilization, draw it in to restore my body.
>
> I dream of a young, white European man. On this day, at this hour, with a rolled cigarette in his mouth, walking stick in hand, his wife and children by him, he strolls with his head held up high and arms swinging by his sides through the promenades of London, Paris, Washington. Such happiness and ease! I wish I could go there myself.[1]

This extraordinary confession of racial melancholy by a young man is an odd opening to what is touted as the first Chinese feminist manifesto. The desire to emulate an upper-class white European man in his marital bliss reflects the painful situation of Chinese *men* and their psychic struggles in

[1]Jin Tianhe, *The Women's Bell*, translated in this volume, p. 207.

relation to white European men. But what does this have to do with Chinese women and, more important, with feminism? Must racial melancholy mask itself in the image of subjugated gender and civilization? Were women readers of *The Women's Bell* in China troubled by such mental projections?

He-Yin Zhen (1884—ca.1920), a preeminent feminist theorist and founding editor of an anarcho-feminist journal *Natural Justice*, was among the first women readers of Jin Tianhe's manifesto. In 1907–1908, she published a perceptive critique of Jin and other contemporary male feminists in an essay called "On the Question of Women's Liberation." She writes:

> Chinese men worship power and authority. They believe that Europeans, Americans, and the Japanese are civilized nations of the modern world who all grant their women some degree of freedom. By transplanting this system into the lives of their wives and daughters, by prohibiting their practices of footbinding, and by enrolling them in modern schools to receive basic education, these men think that they will be applauded by the whole world for having joined the ranks of civilized nations. . . . I am inclined to think that these men act purely out of a selfish desire to claim women as private property. Were it not so, why would a woman's reputation, good or bad, have anything whatsoever to do with them? The men's original intention is not to liberate women but to treat them as private property. In the past when traditional rituals prevailed, men tried to distinguish themselves by confining women in the boudoir; when the tides turn in favor of Europeanization, they attempt to acquire distinction by promoting women's liberation. This is what I call *men's pursuit of self distinction in the name of women's liberation*.[2]

He-Yin Zhen's attack on the progressive male intellectuals of her time—men who championed women's education, suffrage, and gender equality and who would have been her allies—opens up a vast space for a new interpretation of the rise of feminism in China and in the world. The current volume makes this interpretive space accessible and available to scholars and students of feminism for the first time.

He-Yin Zhen 何殷震 is better known to Chinese historians as He Zhen 何震. In her published works, the author prefers to sign her name He-Yin Zhen so as to include her mother's maiden name in the family name. This was a decision grounded in her theoretical work published in *Natural*

[2]He-Yin Zhen, "On the Question of Women's Liberation," translated in this volume, p. 60.

Justice. As she makes clear in her own "Feminist Manifesto" (translated in this volume), the history and politics of the patrilineal surname were of crucial importance to grasping how a feminist space for activity and practice in the social and political worlds of her time could be claimed and shaped. Out of respect for her decision to attach her maternal surname to her paternal one, we adopt her preferred name He-Yin Zhen throughout this volume.[3]

A long-suppressed intellectual figure in modern Chinese history, He-Yin Zhen is an original thinker and powerful social theorist often identified as an anarcho-feminist. Her writings, some of which were selected for inclusion in this volume, suggest an impressively broad awareness of women's suffrage movements in Europe and in North America. They address not only the oppression of women in China, past and present, but also the conditions of women's livelihood in industrializing Japan as well as the anarchist and socialist struggles around the world. Her objective was to develop a systematic global critique of the political, economic, moral, and ideological bases of patriarchal society in critical response to the social agendas of progressive Chinese men who also promoted women's rights. The strength and richness of her critique, in particular her discovery of the analytic category of *nannü* 男女 (literally, "man and woman" or "male/female"), and its relevance to our own feminist theory making will be elaborated in later discussions in the present introduction.

By initiating this work of translation and reinterpretation of He-Yin Zhen's works, we do not imply that women have a more authentic feminist voice than do men. Rather, we want to resuscitate the voice of a preeminent female theorist who has largely been ignored for as long as a century.[4] The absence of

[3]For a discussion of the naming issue, see Gabriele von Sivers-Sattler, "He Zhens Forderungen zur Namensgebung von Frauen im vorrevolutionären China: Untersuchungen zur anarchistischen Zeitschrift *Tian Yi* („Naturgemäße Rechtlichkeit") (1907–1908)," in *Cheng—In All Sincerity*, ed. Denise Gimpel and Melanie Hanz, 275–284, Festschrift in Honour of Monika Übelhör (Hamburg, Germany: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft, 2001).

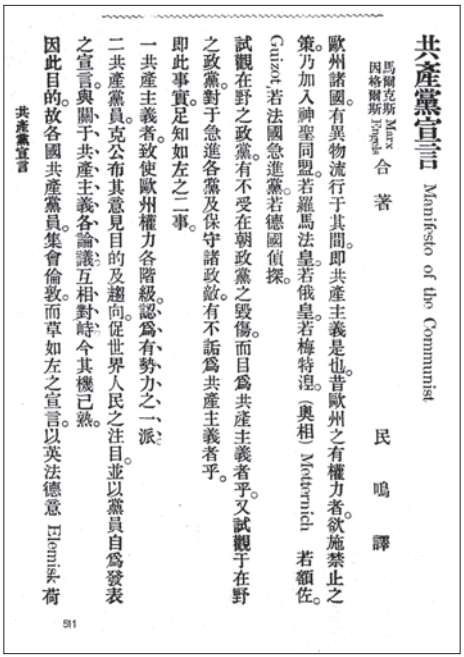
[4]Peter Zarrow's study of He-Yin Zhen (aka He Zhen) is one of the few published studies in English. See his article "He Zhen and Anarcho-Feminism in China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 47, 4 (November 1988): 796–813. See also Liu Huiying, "Feminism: An Organic or Extremist Position? On *Tien Yee* as Represented by He Zhen," *Positions* 11, 3 (Winter 2003): 779–800. He-Yin Zhen is virtually ignored in Chinese scholarship, with the exception of Beijing-based scholars Liu Huiying and Xia Xiaohong. For Liu's attempt to reevaluate her role in early Chinese feminism, see her article "Cong nüquan zhuyi dao wuzhengfu zhuyi—guanyu He Zhen yu Tianyi" [From feminism to anarchism: On He Zhen and *Natural Justice*], *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 2 (2006): 194–213; and Xia Xiaohong, "He Zhen de wuzhengfu zhuyi 'nüjie geming' lun" [On He Zhen's anarchist "Women's Revolution"], *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 83 (2006): 311–350.

He-Yin Zhen's voice in feminist theorizing in and out of China has meant a tremendous loss for feminist movements in general. In this introduction, we outline the rationale and goals of our translations and explain the relevance and significance of He-Yin Zhen, in particular, to the theoretical endeavors of our own time. For a detailed account of the historical context in late-Qing China that gave rise to the texts of He-Yin Zhen, Jin Tianhe (1874–1947), and another important male thinker, Liang Qichao (1873–1929)—whose major feminist texts are included in this volume of translation—we refer our readers to the chapter that immediately follows this introduction.

Early Chinese Feminisms

The birth of Chinese feminism was an event of global proportions that is yet to be properly grasped and analyzed as such. As editors and translators of this volume, we hope that an appreciation of this event will cast new light on the limitations of our current feminist struggles and point us in new directions. Initially, we undertook the translation of the representative works of He-Yin Zhen and those of her male contemporaries Jin Tianhe and Liang Qichao in order to fill a lacuna in the knowledge of Chinese feminism. For few translations or studies of early Chinese feminists and their writings exist in English, and whatever there is of published studies, English or Chinese, has presented little systematic engagement with the possible theoretical contributions of early Chinese feminism to worldwide feminist thought. In making the writings of early Chinese feminists available to the English-speaking world, we are trying not merely to rescue the voice of non-Western feminists—a worthwhile project in itself—but to engage contemporary feminist theoretical discourse in broader terms than the well-known debates over the theoretical priorities of gender, sex, sexuality, sexual difference, identity politics, or intersectionality that have dominated contemporary Euro-American feminist discussion over the past few decades.

Our goal in translating the texts of early Chinese feminist theorists, and in highlighting He-Yin Zhen, is threefold: First, we aim to bring to light—for the first time in English or Chinese—the vital contributions of early Chinese feminists to global feminist thought and theory. *Tien Yee* (*Tianyi bao*) or *Natural Justice*, in which all He-Yin Zhen's extant writings first appeared, was an anarchist-leaning Chinese feminist journal published by the Society for the



共產黨宣言 Manifesto of the Communist

馬爾克斯 Marx
因格爾斯 Engels 合著　民鳴譯

歐州諸國。有異物流行于其間。即共產主義是也。昔歐州之有權力者。欲施禁止之策。乃加入神聖同盟。若羅馬法皇。若俄皇。若梅特涅〔奧相〕Metternich 若顧佐。Guizot 若法國急進黨。若德國偵探。試觀在野之政黨。有不受在朝政黨之毀傷。而目爲共產主義者乎。又試觀于在野之政黨。對于急進各黨及保守諸政敵。有不詬爲共產主義者乎。即此事實。足知左之二事。

一共產主義者。致使歐州權力各階級。認爲有勢力之一派。

二共產黨員。克公布其意見目的及趨向。促世界人民之注目。並以黨員自爲發表之宣言。與關于共產主義各論議。互相對峙。今其機已熟。

因此目的。故各國共產黨員。集會倫敦。而草如左之宣言。以英法德意 Eleni 荷

The first Chinese translation of *The Communist Manifesto,* chapter 1, in *Natural Justice*, 1908.

Restoration of Women's Rights in Tokyo in 1907–1908.[5] Although short-lived, this journal, which He-Yin Zhen edited with the support of her husband, Liu Shipei (1884–1919), has a vital contribution to make to our understanding of the revolutionary and internationalist fermentations of the time in its rejection of the facile opposition of tradition and modernity.[6] The journal offers some rare early feminist critical analyses in Chinese of political economy, capitalism, the modern state, and patriarchal systems; indeed, we cannot go without pointing out that the earliest Chinese translation of *The Communist Manifesto*, the first chapter, was published in *Natural Justice*

[5]Both *Tien Yee* and *Natural Justice* are original titles of the journal; *Tianyi* is a modern rendition of 天義 in the pinyin system. In the first two issues, the qualifier *bao* (meaning "journal" or "newspaper") follows *Tianyi*; it was dropped from the title beginning in the third issue.

[6]The journal itself is well known as an anarchist publication and is frequently cited in Chinese scholarship. What is most often suppressed is that this journal was the official organ of the Society for the Restoration of Women's Rights; hence its feminist origin.

in 1908. The significance of this detail has heretofore been overlooked: it was Chinese feminism that first translated communist thought, among other radical ideas, and introduced it to China (by way of Japan), not the converse.[7]

The second goal of this volume is to reassess the birth of Chinese feminism in a series of global intellectual developments at the turn of the twentieth century that culminated in the publication of Jin Tianhe's *The Women's Bell* in 1903 and in the inauguration of He-Yin Zhen's feminist journal *Natural Justice* in 1907. These developments—spurred on by the accelerated expansion of modern capitalism and imperialism into Asia and elsewhere—involved a simultaneous spread of the ideas of liberalism, Christian evangelism, evolutionism, socialism, anarchism, feminism, and Marxism to Japan, China, and other parts of the world. The arrival of feminism under these historical circumstances raised vital stakes not only for Chinese women but also for Chinese men, and especially for such men of the educated gentry class as Jin Tianhe and Liang Qichao. These progressive thinkers—and educated Asian men in general—were confronted on the one hand with the assault on their self-image as men by the hypermasculinity of the military powers of Western colonialism and imperialism; on the other hand, they were bombarded with accusations of their enslavement of women—footbinding, concubinage, and sati being cited as chief examples—which became one important moral justification for the imperialist assault on societies classified as "barbarous" and "half-civilized."

As the civilizational status of the gentry class—coded "male"—came under increased threat by the superior military and discursive forces of the West, a number of contradictory social conditions began to emerge and prepare the ground for the rise of feminism in China. The movement began with a kind of protofeminist rhetoric and activism led by Chinese men alongside the responses of Chinese women at the turn of the century. The enthusiastic support for women's right to education by male reformers like Kang Youwei (1858–1927), his student Liang Qichao, Jin Tianhe, and Chinese women in the last decades of the Qing dynasty (1890s–1911) must be grasped in that light. Through our translation of the conflicting voices of such pioneering figures as He-Yin Zhen, Jin Tianhe, and Liang Qichao, the

[7]He-Yin's essay "What Women Should Know About Communism" has previously been translated in *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 389–392.

reader will appreciate the important role played by the early feminists, men as well as women, in the advent of Chinese modernity.

Jin Tianhe's *The Women's Bell* was a popular text in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Because of the important role this text played in the history of Chinese feminism, we have chosen to include its first English translation in our volume. We hope to spark discussion among readers who encounter this text along with the texts by He-Yin Zhen. Reprinted in several editions in China and Japan, with expanding numbers of prefaces by prominent feminists and readers, it exerted a significant impact upon the Chinese feminist movement over the next decades.[8] For this reason, the text is taken by some historians to be the beginning of a specifically Chinese-articulated feminism, even though prior to its publication, there had been many discussions in Chinese journals devoted to various aspects of what came to be called "the woman question" by women as well as men. *The Women's Bell* may well have been the first systematic championing of women's rights to education, to suffrage, to employment and livelihood, and to human dignity. Yet, as far as Jin Tianhe was concerned, women's emancipation was part of a larger project of enlightenment and national self-strengthening, coded either "male" or "patriarchal."

For He-Yin, by contrast, the feminist struggle was not to be subordinated to struggles that advanced the nationalist, ethnocentric, or capitalist modernization agendas; rather, it was the beginning and outcome of a total social revolution that would abolish the state and private property to bring about true social equality and the end to all social hierarchies. Thus, by reading He-Yin Zhen alongside and in comparison to Jin Tianhe and Liang Qichao, readers may come to appreciate the plurality of and contradictions within Chinese feminisms, which indicate, reflect, and articulate the diversity of global feminisms at the turn of the twentieth century.

Our third goal in preparing this volume is to reconsider the rise of Chinese feminism in the face of what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has critically termed "the ironclad opposition of West and East" and its inescapable logic.[9]

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[8]Among the first scholars to study this text outside China is Louise Edwards. See her "Chin Sung-ts'en's *A Tocsin for Women*: The Dextrous Merger of Radicalism and Conservatism in Feminism of the Early Twentieth Century," *Research on Women in Modern Chinese History* (Jindai Zhongguo funüshi yanjiu) no. 2 (June 1994): 117–140.

[9]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," *Yale French Studies*, no. 62 (1981): 155.

This opposition and logic prevail in European and American societies but not exclusively there, for they are also accepted by nearly all modern societies, including China. We seek to undo that universal oppositional logic by taking the reader through the numerous counterpoints and often irreconcilable conflicts between the works of Jin Tianhe and Liang Qichao and that of He-Yin Zhen. Neither position can neatly be mapped onto any preconceived ideas of what Chinese feminism was or should have been in opposition to the fiction of a totalized Western feminism.

On the one hand, Jin Tianhe's *The Women's Bell* approaches the question of women's liberation through the lens of enlightenment discourse and a mix of paternalism, liberalism, nationalism, and women's suffrage. He-Yin Zhen's critique of liberalism and capitalism, on the other hand, is partly directed against the programs of the women's suffrage movement endorsed by such progressive men in China as Jin or Liang. She also saw the limitation of such movements in Europe and America and insisted on developing a feminist socioeconomic analysis that illuminated the patriarchal foundation of capitalist modernity and the capitalist extensions of patriarchy. These discursive struggles over the terms through which one may understand women's relationship to the modern state and to the capitalist mode of production while conceptualizing women's liberation suggest that Chinese feminism did not originate from a single standpoint, nor did it form a one-way relationship with women's struggles in Europe and North America.

Ultimately, aside from introducing a little-known feminist theorist to a wider audience, we hope with this volume to initiate a discussion among English-language scholars and students of how He-Yin Zhen's work and concerns can help enrich feminist scholarship and pedagogy in our academic and teaching lives; how, through her, we can link China and the world in the past and the present; and how, with her insights, we can enhance ongoing feminist theoretical engagements with the gendered body, gendered labor, and gendered knowledge.

The Basic Tenets of He-Yin Zhen's Feminist Theory

He-Yin Zhen wrote a series of critical essays about her contemporary world in 1907–1908. These critiques encompassed a spatial and temporal totality through which she understood all hitherto existing social relationships. Her

analytical totalization was utterly unlike that of her male or female contemporaries, whose analyses usually mobilized "woman" to speak to supposedly larger sociopolitical problems, whether these "larger" concerns were economic modernization, nationalism, state rationality, international relations and imperialist imposition, the threatened loss of masculine authority as a result of the diminished political utility of classical scholarship, and so on.

In contrast to many of these analyses (including Jin Tianhe's and Liang Qichao's), one of He-Yin Zhen's major points in her intellectual practice was to elucidate how "woman" as a transhistorical global category—not of subjective identity but of structured unequal social relations—had been constituted through scholarship, ritual, law, and social and labor practices over time, in China as elsewhere. Indeed, not only did He-Yin Zhen lament that categorical constitution in its multiple guises, but she also understood those guises as themselves constitutive of her past and her contemporary moment. In this totalizing way, she arrived at a prescient critique of the world as it appeared to her at that time.

In her long major essay "On the Revenge of Women," as well as in her other writing, He-Yin Zhen made little distinction between China's imperial (pre-nineteenth-century) past and the situation characterizing her more globally integrated imperialist-capitalist present. Rather, she argued that the past and the present formed a constant reiteration of inherent and inexorable injustice. The historicity of injustice was not merely perpetrated upon women by men (the past and the present, in other words, did not uniquely victimize women); instead, in He-Yin Zhen's theoretical idiom, history is formed by a continuously reproduced injustice in the manner of what the Annales school of French historians would come to call the *longue durée*, whose generalized contours of uneven wealth and property as well as its specificities of embodied affect could be made visible through the figure of "woman."

In this analytical mode, "woman"—rendered by He-Yin Zhen in various incommensurable but related semantic forms—was far from a naturalized figure of biological or cultural subordination.[10] Rather, she was the product

[10]The terms we have rendered "women" (or "female") include *nüzi* 女子, *funü* 婦女, *furen* 婦人, and, on occasion, *nüxing* 女性 (see the later discussion in this introduction). In the cases of her essay titles, 女子非軍備主義 ("On Feminist Antimilitarism") and 女子宣告書 ("The Feminist Manifesto"), we gloss *nüzi* 女子 not as "women's" but as "feminist." He-Yin also uses *wunüzi* 吾女子, which we render "we women." The term *nüjie* 女界 is rendered "women," "womanhood," and "women's world." We use "man" or "men" to render *nanzi* 男子 and *zhangfu* 丈夫.

of historical social relations. In that sense, "woman" was a political ontology, or an endlessly reproduced principle of politicized and social practice *in* and *through* time. In her analysis, whereas the form of the injustice could and did shift, the logic of injustice was historically reinscribed and, in that sense, continuous. Defining "woman" through and embedding her into endlessly reproduced historicized social relations, thence to reconceptualize the past and the present in a historical mode, was the principle through which He-Yin Zhen perceived her contemporary world and conceived her own analytical and activist pursuits.

This analytical category is what she named *nannü* (man and woman; male/female), a mostly untranslatable conceptual totality that signifies not only gendered social relations between man and woman but also, more broadly, the relationship of the past to the present, of China to the world, of politics to justice, of law and ritual to gendered forms of knowledge, interaction, and social organization. In short, *nannü* is the category through which He-Yin Zhen understood her world as an always-already gendered time-space of social activity, production, and life. Although the valences of *nannü* changed over time, in its historical connection to another of He-Yin Zhen's key terms, *shengji*, or what we have translated as "livelihood," *nannü* is nevertheless the central logic through which an uneven and unjust world can be perceived and understood. In the sections that follow, we discuss the centrality of *nannü* and *shengji* to her feminist critique of the political economy of her time and analyze the ways in which this intertwined mode of thinking can enrich contemporary feminist discussion of gendered bodies, labor, and social reproduction. *Nannü*, we propose, is a more comprehensive rubric than "sex-gender," whereas *shengji* is a more enabling rubric than "class."

Translating *Nannü* as Analytical Category

Nannü is the most crucial term in Chinese feminist discourses in the twentieth century. The key slogan for the feminist movement throughout the century has been *nannü pingdeng*, the standard translation of which is "gender equality" (in legal status, access to education, right to vote, social benefits, and so on). In this context, the equation of *nannü* with "gender" as a shorthand for male-female is most appropriate. But He-Yin Zhen's use of the term is different and singular. From early on in the translation process,

the editors were struck by how He-Yin's notion of *nannü* exceeds and resists facile rendition into "man and woman," "gender," "male/female," or other familiar English concepts. A brief explanation of our theory and practice of translation is in order here before we go on to explore the potential theoretical contributions of He-Yin Zhen's categories to Anglophone feminist theories in the twenty-first century.

Interpreting *nannü* as a kind of "gender" has the advantage of assimilating He-Yin Zhen's work into the discourse of late-twentieth-century feminism familiar to Anglophone readers. By the same token, it could ensnare us in conceptual traps. Translating *nannü* literally word for word—*nan* for "man" and *nü* for "woman"—into two or several English words, "man and woman" or "male/female," is just as unsatisfactory because the literal translation could contradict He-Yin Zhen's theoretical project, which takes *nannü* as a single conceptual mechanism, used as both noun and adjective, that lies at *the foundation of all patriarchal abstractions and markings of distinction.* These abstractions and markings apply to both men and women but are by no means limited to socially defined men and women. In the end, we decided to leave *nannü* untranslated in some situations, whereas in others we allowed it a full range of semantic mobility when contextually appropriate—"gender," "man and woman," and "male/female." This decision was based on our understanding that the issue here was not so much about the existence or nonexistence of verbal equivalents as it was about the translingual precariousness of analytical categories as they pass or fail to pass through different languages and their conceptual grids.

In this sense, we understand our critical task as translators and scholars as not merely to find an approximate term to render He-Yin's expanded meanings but to make sense of the analytical valences of *nannü* as a category in Chinese *and* English. In the interest of maintaining interpretive openness, we determined it would be wrong to begin by asking if the concept of "gender" or "woman" exists in a non-Western language; neither would it be fruitful to ask if the category of *nannü* exists in English. The issue at stake is not linguistic incommensurability, which could be self-contradictory if we had to rely on English to make an argument of incommensurability through the act of translation.[11] But rather, we understand

[11]In *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), Oyeronke Oyewumi makes such an argument while trying to problematize the category of "gender" in Western feminist discourse.

our challenge to be to put He-Yin Zhen's category in comparative terms and in so doing, to question not only Chinese usage but also theoretical categories used in the English language as well.

This undertaking is a two-pronged process. First, it requires us to focus on the analytical and historical valences of *nannü* in the Chinese language and in He-Yin Zhen's writing. It involves, in particular, taking into account the translingual inventions of neologisms and supersigns in He-Yin Zhen's own time when the Chinese language, yet to be codified into its modern form, was open to exposures to foreign languages.[12] The difficulty we have encountered in trying to translate *nannü* and other key concepts is matched only by the fluidity that He-Yin Zhen's own generation confronted in working with the novel translations and neologisms derived from Japanese, English, and other mediated foreign language sources. At the same time, while wrestling with this slippery semantic slope, a second challenge we face is to be vigilant lest the concept of "gender" catches us unawares as a hidden or naturalized English term of reference in our translations.

The difficulty of making epistemic leaps across languages notwithstanding, we are careful not to reduce an intellectual problem to the incommensurable differences between a Chinese term and an English term, or to a problem of "influence" of the West over China. Far more productive is to tease out the theoretical resonances in the spaces opened up between *nannü* and "gender" or any other such categories in contemporary feminist theories, which have always passed back and forth through a multiplicity of modern languages. To acknowledge linguistic proliferation and discursive multiplicity in the global making of feminist theory is to allow the analytical categories to play against one another and to illuminate the limitations of each term in its historical interconnectedness to other terms.

For this reason, we believe that the historical valences of "gender" as an analytical category in contemporary feminist theory should itself be reevaluated in this comparative light. Joan W. Scott has observed in her classic essay "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" that "gender" was not part of the social theories in Europe in the eighteenth through the early

[12]The concept "supersign" refers not to a self-contained word unit but to a heterocultural signifying chain that cuts across the semantic fields of two or several languages, which makes an impact on the meaning of a native word. It identifies the bonding of heterolinguistic elements through the act of translation that typically renders that process invisible. For a theoretical elaboration in semiotic terms, see Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern Worldmaking* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2004), 12–13.

twentieth centuries. The earlier social theories had drawn on the male and female opposition to build their logic or to discuss the "woman question" or sexual identities, but "gender as a way of talking about systems of social or sexual relations did not appear."[13] When it did appear in the late twentieth century, feminists found the category tremendously useful—albeit fraught with ambiguities and contradictions—for analyzing "social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes" and examining gender as "a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott 1067).

Gender historians, in particular, have allowed the category of "gender" to range across cultural and linguistic divides and across historical time. "Gender" is extended to the study of a historical past in which the category itself is missing while the epistemological distance between the subject and object of analysis is guaranteed. This cannot but pose a series of intellectual as well as political challenges to feminist theorists. Should a category that purports to analyze history remain itself ahistorical? Does its historicity from the time of Latin grammar belong only to our world and not theirs, i.e., the world of the past and that of the foreign? Why are we anxious about maintaining the distance between the subject and the object of knowledge, a distance that feminists have long identified as a patriarchal prerogative that defines the modern subject? He-Yin Zhen's concept of *nannü* is helpful in suggesting ways out of these binds.

Nannü: Beyond the Sex-Gender Problematic

In "On the Question of Women's Liberation" (1907), He-Yin posits that men have created "political and moral institutions, the first priority of which was to separate man from woman (*nannü*). For they considered the differentiation between man and woman (*nannü youbie*) to be one of the major principles in heaven and on earth."[14] This use of *nannü* performs a kind of analysis that the category of gender also does, but it does more. For *nannü* is simultaneously

[13]Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, 5 (1986): 1066.

[14]The mapping of the cosmology of heaven and earth onto a male-female hierarchy was accomplished by Confucian scholars in the Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.). He-Yin Zhen developed a thorough critique of the resulting misogynist tradition in her "On the Revenge of Women."

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."[15] Like all other terms of the vocabulary we inherit from the past, the concept of *nannü* is a historical elaboration and a normative distinction internal to patriarchal discourse itself. He-Yin Zhen identifies this concept as central to and ubiquitous in Chinese patriarchal discourse over the past millennia and treats it as a highly developed philosophical and moral category that has legitimated men's oppression of women.

What, then, can we learn from He-Yin Zhen's approach to the category of *nannü*? Inasmuch as *nannü* is a well-established concept in Chinese philosophical discourse, He-Yin Zhen's method is to turn it inside out and against itself, making the term bear the burden and evidence of its own patriarchal work. Her critique demonstrates that the normative function of *nannü* is not only to create "gendered" identities (which it also does) but also to introduce primary distinctions through socioeconomic abstraction articulated to metaphysical abstractions, such as the external and the internal, or to such cosmic abstractions as yang and yin. He-Yin Zhen sees *nannü* as a mechanism of distinction or marking that has evolved over time, capable of spawning new differences and new social hierarchies across the boundaries of class, age, ethnicity, race, and so on. This is in part why, at the end of her "Feminist Manifesto" (1907), He-Yin argues that "by 'men' (*nanxing*) and 'women' (*nüxing*), we are not speaking of 'nature,' but the outcome of differing social customs and education. If sons and daughters are treated equally, raised and educated in the same manner, then the responsibilities assumed by men and women will surely become equal. When that happens, the nouns *nanxing* and *nüxing* would no longer be necessary."[16] Here, she clearly calls for the end of philosophical dualism and its naming practice, for that practice, she observes, is neither neutral nor innocent but, rather, creates and spawns insidious social hierarchies that make a claim to social truth and historical reality.

Did He-Yin's critique of *nannü* anticipate what poststructuralist feminists of the 1980s–1990s have termed the "social constructivist" view of gender? Yes, and no. Superficial similarities notwithstanding, the problem here is that no fixed biological views of sex or sexual difference existed in the Chinese context with which He-Yin Zhen contended, as it did for

[15]Scott, "Gender," 1065.

[16]See He-Yin Zhen, "The Feminist Manifesto," translated in this volume, p. 184.

Euro-American poststructuralist feminists many decades later. Indeed, as Michel Foucault and many others have shown, the biological concept of the body was also a recent invention in Europe; thus it is important to keep in mind that "the facile mapping of anatomy onto sexual difference, or the conflation of 'sex' and 'gender' was in fact a peculiar dynamic in the formation of the modern rational and individual subject."[17] If the patriarchal discursive tradition critiqued by He-Yin Zhen relied on something other than a biological concept of the body or the sex-gender problematic as we know it today, there was hardly a need for her to advance a counterargument to establish a constructivist view.

Rather, He-Yin constructed her feminist critique from within—and against—the indigenous Confucian tradition, especially its theories of human nature. Specifically, her critique of the dualism of *nanxing* and *nüxing* was two-pronged. It was directed on the one hand at the Confucian concept of *nannü* and on the other at the reinvention of the Confucian concept of *xing* in the late Qing—known variously as *renxing or benxing*—often rendered as "human nature" or "personhood." Both *xing* and *nannü* were highly developed and fundamental philosophical concepts in the millennia-long evolution of the Confucian scholarly and ethical discourses, but it was not until the late nineteenth century that *nanxing* and *nüxing* began to emerge as concepts, first in Japanese and then in Chinese popular media.

In modern Chinese usage, the term *xing* has acquired a new meaning of sex-gender, and even of biological sex. *Nanxing* (man/men) and *nüxing* (woman/women) came to connote a new way of construing male-female differences on the basis of modern understandings of the sexualized human body. These modern meanings were not yet prevalent in He-Yin's time when she was publishing and editing *Natural Justice* in 1907–1908. Although she was among the first to use the terms *nanxing* and *nüxing*, the meanings she imparted to them are neither the modern ones of sex-gender or biological sex nor the classical Confucian one of the nature/character of a person or a thing.[18] To illuminate what He-Yin meant by the

[17]Dorothy Ko, "Gender," in *A Concise Companion to History*, ed. Ulinka Rublack, 203–225 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 221. Katharine Park has argued that in northern Italy in the 1490s, medical treatises began to identify male bodies as surfaces, whereas "the woman is identifiable by a visualizable inside." Katherine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 27.

[18]The classic treatment of the Confucian view of human nature is Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969).

terms, the question we must ask is, When and how did the concept *xing* begin to acquire its new meaning of "sex-gender" in modern Chinese? Our answer is that like numerous other Japanese invented neologisms written in kanji characters, the indigenous concept *xing* began to acquire the connotation of "sex/gender" through a process of roundtrip translation involving Japanese, Chinese, and European languages at the turn of the twentieth century.[19]

In He-Yin Zhen's time, *nanxing* and *nüxing* were still unfamiliar neologisms imported from Meiji Japan when the Japanese had coined the kanji Chinese compounds 男性 and 女性—read *dan-sei* and *jo-sei* in Japanese—to translate European concepts for "man (men)" and "woman (women)." What the neologisms did was to conjoin *nan* and *nü* each to the character *xing* (nature/character) to produce the modern concept "sex-gender" in modern Japanese and Chinese. For this reason, scholar Tani Barlow renders *nüxing* back into English as "female sex," and she dates the invention of this neologism to the 1920s. Although we agree with her analysis of *nüxing* as a unique signifier of Chinese modernity, we should point out that on the evidence of a large number of late-Qing texts and He-Yin Zhen's essays in this volume, the neologisms *nanxing* and *nüxing* began to appear in Chinese publications as early as the turn of the twentieth century and, more importantly, they were not taken to signify "male sex" and "female sex" at that time.[20]

In "On the Question of Women's Liberation" and "The Feminist Manifesto," He-Yin Zhen refers to *nüxing* as something malleable that can be molded and developed with education or distorted with the lack of it, just as one's character or personhood can be developed or underdeveloped in a Confucian sense. To avoid the anachronism of imputing modern meaning to an earlier usage, we decided to render He-Yin's use of *nüxing* as the "character of woman (women)" or "woman (women)" rather than the modern sense of "female sex," "female nature," or "femininity," which was foreign to her. In short, in our interpretive view, *nüxing* was still coded by the Confucian understanding of *xing* in the late Qing although the neologism was

[19]For a study of translingual self-fashioning and the invention of the modern Chinese language, see Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[20]See Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 52.

on its way to becoming something else: "female nature" and later "female sex" (even as the earlier connotations and ambiguities have not disappeared completely from today's usage). The transvaluation of concepts from the late-Qing period to modern Chinese discourse was a lived moment for He-Yin Zhen's generation, and we have striven to capture that moment of change and becoming in our translations.

More central even to He-Yin Zhen's critique of patriarchy and the late-Qing invention of neologisms *nanxing* and *nüxing* is her powerful analysis of the category of *nannü*. What does *nannü* signify? Before translating her use of *nannü* into other terms, we must try to follow its echoes and metamorphosis in the historical unfolding of Chinese patriarchal discourse, as we hope the readers of this volume will do. We will then discover that the specific kinds of marking or distinction He-Yin Zhen identified in the power of *nannü* are both metaphysical and physical—literally physical in the sense of cloistering, corseting, prostituting, punishing, enslaving, maiming, and abusing the body. Poor women, young girls, slaves, and lower-class boys were all susceptible to such marking and exploitation, as she argues in her essay "On Women's Labor." The production of normative heterosexuality is but part of the problem—homosexuality was "tolerated" to a certain extent by traditional Chinese society which would not, however, permit the free movement of its gentry women[21]—and only a symptom of the structure of power she analyzes in her work.

For this and for other reasons, He-Yin Zhen refuses to take the notions of "class" (in the Marxian sense) and *nannü* as separate terms. She asks instead that we approach *nannü* as always already a kind of class making, one that is more originary and primary than any other social distinctions. She coined the concept *nannü jieji*, or "*nannü* class," with which to analyze and critique such a highly integrated and elaborated hierarchal system as the Chinese patriarchal family. This powerful notion of "*nannü* class," which sees *nannü* as an originary and primary category in the division and subdivision of social group and as a primary division in the global political

[21]This situation began to change with the introduction of European sexology and medicine to China, precisely as the Confucian concept of human nature *xing* came to be equated with "sex-gender" in medical discourse. For a historical study, see Tze-lan D. Sang, *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). See also Wenqing Kang, *Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900–1950* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

economy, cannot otherwise be thought in a juxtaposition of gender, class, and race as distinct, parallel, or even intersecting terms, as is common in the contemporary Anglophone discourses of intersectionality.

Beyond Intersectionality

The multidimensionality of marginalized subjects was first articulated as "intersectionality" in the work of legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw.[22] Since the late 1980s, this approach has drawn a great deal of attention amongst feminist social scientists and legal scholars for whom gender, sexuality, and race can no longer be taken as mutually exclusive categories.[23] Crenshaw's work strives to explain how "race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color."[24] Others who share her critique of single-axis studies of gender, sexuality, race, class, and nationality have sought to conceptualize the multidimensionality of social identities in terms of "transnational connectivity" or "co-formation."[25] It is interesting that "women of color" has evolved into a general prototype in many studies informed by intersectional and post-intersectional approaches. This historically inflected politics of identity in the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and other European countries has no doubt animated much progressive thinking on the complexity of contemporary society and its legal problems. This is especially true of the minority and diasporic communities in these countries. However, we cannot help but ask what He-Yin Zhen, who lived a hundred years ago in China

[22]See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Politics and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989*, 139–167.

[23]Michel Foucault's analysis of sexuality and biopolitics has inspired fruitful scholarship on the interrelations of race and sexuality in colonial history that is framed in terms other than "intersectionality." See Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1995).

[24]Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, 6 (1991): 1241–1299.

[25]See Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and Paola Bacchetta, "Sur les spatialités de résistance de lesbiennes 'of color' en France," *Genre, Sexualité & Société* 1 (June 2009): 2–18.

and Japan, would have thought of today's intersectionality or postintersectionality studies and their symptomatic silences.[26]

We imagine her asking, first, if it is true that gender, sexuality, and race intersect to produce "women of color," do the same categories produce "white men" as privileged subjects of the modern liberal state or "white women" as "women" unmarked by race or class?[27] If the answer is yes, then how do the same categories produce simultaneously the oppressor and the oppressed? How do they help us understand the structure of oppression, which seems universal and yet also quite historically specific? Where are the points of intersection among gender, sexuality, and race in the *nannü* structure?

Second, He-Yin Zhen would have been surprised to find that "race" is deemed more fundamental than "class" as an analytical category. She would have doubted that a historically specific and inflected politics of identity, based on gender, race, or national origin, could seriously challenge the systemic roots of oppression that feminists and critical race theorists aim to uproot, insofar as identity-based analyses often, if not always, acquiesce in the liberal-legal conception of the state, its politics, and its preconstituted subjecthood. This conception, He-Yin Zhen would insist, is grounded in capitalist relations, private property ownership, and its political and legal regimes—those very regimes that underpin and reproduce injustice—rather than providing a way out of structuring forms of inequality.

As readers will see in "On the Question of Women's Liberation" and He-Yin's other essays, her critique of *nannü* in patriarchal discourse is a theoretical wager, one that is more thoroughgoing than "gender," "sexuality," or "intersectionality." She allows us to see *nannü* as the originary term of distinction or abstraction, one that is philosophically, philologically, and historically more grounded than anything we can possibly illuminate with "gender" as an analytical category or "intersectionality" as method. The *nannü* distinction is philosophically grounded. It is so grounded because

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[26]For critiques of methodological weaknesses in intersectionality studies, see Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-thinking Intersectionality," *Feminist Review* 89 (2008): 1–15; and Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality" *Signs* 30, 3 (Spring 2005): 1771–1800.

[27]The point here is not whiteness studies but, rather, the continual production and universalizing of modern racial categories. See Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

abstraction wields a tremendous power by inducing a certain conception of ontological difference and incommensurability as uncontestable truth. That is, as if prior to any articulation of social difference, the philosophical abstraction of *nannü* is already justified by cosmic principles or the laws of nature. From He-Yin's standpoint, such abstraction—the ontology of *nannü*—is first and foremost a concretely embodied and constantly reproduced political act that needs to be unpacked and historicized as such.

He-Yin's argument that the *nannü* distinction is also philologically and historically grounded is supported by her debunking of the millennia-long classical textual scholarship and Confucian commentarial traditions as well as legal, ritual, and social institutions in China. In her essays, she takes these traditions and institutions to be chiefly responsible for the sociohistorical ramifications and enduring reiterations of the *nannü* category. Her analysis of the origins of political and social power in that sense leads her to grasp the *nannü* distinction as a more abstract, more fundamental, and more operational category in patriarchal discourse than what we take to be "sex," "gender," "sexuality," or "sexual difference" in English.

Now, what does it mean for her, as well as for us today, to push the *nannü* distinction, rather than "gender" or "sexual difference," as a fundamental analytic rubric for feminist theory? He-Yin Zhen insists that feminists must take *nan* and *nü* together as a single conceptual dividing mechanism rather than focusing on "*nü*-woman" or on "difference" per se. The notion of *nü* cannot possibly be captured outside of the originary structural distinctions introduced by the binary opposition of *nannü*, which produces both *nan* and *nü* as meaningful concepts and social categories. From a structural viewpoint, woman is the problem of man. The articulation of *nannü,* therefore, is not so much about biological or social differences, which can never be settled, as it is about reiterating a distinction that produces historically a political demand for social hierarchy. On this view, we can see that when Jin Tianhe issued his manifesto for women's rights and spoke about women's equality, he did not question the *nannü* category and he failed to see the *nan* side of the *nannü* distinction as operational and central to the philosophical and ideological production and reproduction of social domination. By contrast, He-Yin Zhen's questioning of this category enabled her to identify the sources of that domination and trace the conditions of women's oppression to the category of distinction itself. In this sense, the solution to *nannü* is not for "woman" to become "man," nor for "man" to be the standard against which "woman" and social

justice are measured; rather, the solution is the elimination of this category of distinction as a metaphysical-political principle.

In *Undoing Gender,* Judith Butler does something very interesting to the idea of "sexual difference," which parallels what He-Yin Zhen did nearly a hundred years before to the operational power of *nannü.* Butler writes: "Understood as a border concept, sexual difference has psychic, somatic, and social dimensions that are never quite collapsible into one another but are not for that reason ultimately distinct. . . . Is it, therefore, not a thing, not a fact, not a presupposition, but rather a *demand for rearticulation that never quite vanishes—but also never quite appears?. . .* What does this way of thinking sexual difference do to our understanding of gender?" (Emphasis added.)[28] We must press Butler's questions further by asking, What can the thinking of *nannü* do to our understanding of "sexual difference" as well as "gender"? Does it have something to do with "a demand for rearticulation that never quite vanishes—but also never quite appears?"

The answer lies in He-Yin Zhen's understanding of *nannü*, which, as we have seen, is not about the positive or negative marking of gendered identities but about something more totalizing and foundational. To summarize her main argument: First, the *nannü* category—as elaborated and reinvented by philosophers and scholars in the millennia-long discursive traditions of China—was the foundational material and metaphysical mechanism of power in the organization of social and political life in China. The prestige of that category was reinforced by the Confucian philological exegesis of classical scholarship and by the imperial patriarchal system supported by its ideology. This argument is made in the most concentrated fashion in her long essay "On the Revenge of Women," whose incantatory style will surely strike readers, as it struck us, with its comprehensive erudition and scholarly reach.

Second, as an operational category of distinction, *nannü* is first and foremost political because its function is not only to generate social identities but also to create forms of power and domination based on that distinction. Such domination is reiterated through lived social life by maintaining the divisions of the inner (domestic) and outer (public) in terms of how labor, affect, and the value of human life should be organized. As He-Yin Zhen argues repeatedly, the Chinese written character for "slave" (*nu* 奴) is inflected by the stem-radical *nü* 女, suggesting that the body is *nannü*'ed

[28]Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 186.

and thus "enslaved" in a political-material discursive prison even before it is "sexed." This argument is clearly made in her essay "On the Question of Women's Liberation."

Finally, armed with that insight, she moves on to discern new forms of distinction, discrimination, and domination that have emerged in the capitalist reorganization of life and labor. Her essays "On the Question of Women's Labor" and "Economic Revolution and Women's Revolution" rehearse this argument in full. There, she observes a rearticulation and reiteration of the *nannü* distinction in the modernizing societies of Europe, America, and Japan, which becomes the basis for her vigorous rejection of the liberal argument on behalf of women's suffrage. He-Yin Zhen is thus a feminist theorist in the most fundamental sense of the word.

Shengji: A Critique of the Political Economy of Gender

If *nannü* is a totalistic rubric that names the unevenness and hierarchies in all social relations, including but not limited to that between man and woman, the idea of *shengji* 生計 (livelihood) supports the all-encompassing gendered lens with a radical critique of capitalism, modernity, coloniality, the state, and imperial traditions. As a more enabling category than "class," the concept of *shengji* is the second of He-Yin Zhen's key theoretical innovations that deserves close attention.

He-Yin Zhen takes property relations as the key to social life. She views the legal institution of private property—and women as private property—as the origin of the uneven accumulations of wealth that lead to the perpetration and reproduction of social injustice. In "Economic Revolution and Women's Revolution," she says, "The beginning of the system of women as private property is also the beginning of the system of slavery."[29] The key historical and contemporary questions for feminist struggle, therefore, must revolve around the 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. In this sense, no state could be the guarantor of social justice; it could merely be

[29]See He-Yin Zhen, "Economic Revolution and Women's Revolution," translated in this volume, p. 92.

the guarantor for the reproduction of social hierarchies at local, national, and global scales simultaneously.

For this and other reasons, He-Yin Zhen was uncompromising in her attacks on the state, any state, and on the illusion that the state could be anything but a realm for securing the reproduction of the powerful and the wealthy in society. This stance was a radical departure from that of the majority of Chinese revolutionaries and reform-minded intellectuals who wanted to replace the old dynastic regime with a new republic. For example, in the eyes of Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yatsen), Liang Qichao, and Jin Tianhe, among most others of their generation, freedom, in the liberal sense of national and individual liberty underpinned by the state, had to be the dominant component and goal of any postdynastic social life. For He-Yin Zhen, however, equality and the conditions for its material realization in the world had to form the most important goal of any future social arrangement. In her view, equality could be realized only in a radically reconfigured social and cultural sphere, where *nannü* equality was no longer hierarchically subordinated to any other form of equality but was, rather, the very social and material basis for all equality. For that reason, she was deeply suspicious of the liberal idea of freedom that subordinated women's emancipation to the general logic of the state. This fundamental conflict between women's demand for equality and that for freedom would reverberate throughout the history of feminist struggles in modern China and elsewhere. The conflict could never be resolved as long as the state, liberal or otherwise, served as the sole conceptual framework for progressive politics.

In this sense, anarchism was as important for He-Yin Zhen as was feminism: they were inseparable and intertwined modes of analyzing and thinking history and the present. Unlike most of her contemporaneous compatriots, male or female, He-Yin Zhen's anarcho-feminism tempered any advocacy of statist theory with a huge skepticism toward any and all institutions of social hierarchy. Indeed, the anarchism of her time—discussed in our essay "The Historical Context" following this introduction—targeted for critique not only the tsarist state in Russia and its associated despotism, nor just the Qing state as a dynastic tyranny (irrespective of the fact that the ruling house was the alien Manchu, an ethnic minority).[30]

[30]The contemporaneous anarcho-feminist who comes closest to He-Yin's positions is Emma Goldman, who was being translated into Chinese and Japanese. There is evidence that He-Yin was aware of Goldman and that Goldman knew of He-Yin's journal. See footnote no. 19 in the next essay.

It also took aim at the liberal state *qua* state for its production and reproduction of hierarchical and unjust social relations of property, law, and rule. Unimpressed by the freedom and the limited amount of gender equality attained in liberal societies in Europe and the United States, calling these "false freedom and sham equality," she was also critical of suffrage movements and men's advocacies for women's education as a boost for citizenship of the propertied class, calling them no more than "empty rhetoric of emancipation."

Indeed, Liang Qichao's argument in favor of women's education—translated and included in this volume—may be taken to represent the voice of progressive liberal male Chinese intellectuals at the turn of twentieth century. These men saw women's education and participation in nation building as conducive to the state's welfare and the goal of national survival. For example, Liang points out:

> In China, even if we consider only the men, the number of those who only consume comes to roughly half of those who produce. According to philosophers [of political economy], this situation alone already makes a stable national government impossible, let alone the fact of the nation's two hundred million women, among whom all are consumers and none are producers. Owing to women's inability to support themselves and their dependence on other people, men raise women as livestock or slaves. Thus women cannot but live harsh lives.[31]

Liang attributes the suffering and debasement of women to their economic dependence on men and to women's lack of education and survival skills, a view that male feminists as well as progressive women of his time shared. It was in response to such blatant erasure of women's labor and their poorly understood situation of economic dependency that He-Yin Zhen developed a rigorous feminist analysis of labor, livelihood, and property ownership in "On the Question of Women's Labor" and "Economic Revolution and Women's Revolution."

From the very beginning of her essay "On the Question of Women's Labor," for example, He-Yin Zhen insists that labor must be understood as a basic human activity, or what philosopher Bruno Gulli calls an ontology of

[31]See Liang Qichao, "On Women's Education," translated in this volume, pp. 190–191.

"organic, creative labor."[32] This is not labor as an economic concept: it does not harbor within it a fundamental antagonism, an instrumentalization, or a historical abjection. He-Yin Zhen's concept of labor is a materialist ontology that proposes labor not as an always-already appropriable power for private gain but, rather, as organic to life itself; whereas for classical and neoclassical political economy and the states associated with it, just as for the advocates in the late-nineteenth-century Chinese "Study of Wealth and Power" (*Fuqiang xue*) based upon those principles, labor is a purely economic category in analytical separation from the remainder of human life. He-Yin Zhen's articulation of a distinction between labor as an autonomous ontological practice and labor as an enslaved or commodified form encodes within it her important vision of the possibility for a historical potential to reground labor in a human ontology rather than in human capital.

This vision emerges in her analysis of female-embodied labor, for it is only when women can reclaim their laboring bodies for the basic human ontology of labor that all humankind will have been liberated from the instrumentalization of themselves by the wealthy and the powerful. This is what she calls the problem of *shengji*, the securing of which forms the necessary condition for the liberation not only of women but of humankind. For He-Yin Zhen, then, the point is to explore how the commodification of women's bodies over the long course of Chinese (and human) history has effectively crushed the possibility for any reimagining of the futurity of labor as genuinely free and autonomous. Indeed, it is at the cusp of the final suppression of autonomous labor with the global advent of textile factories and collectivized wage labor that He-Yin Zhen sees the possibility for an alternative to commodified labor slipping away. Hinging her understanding of labor in history on the figure of the subjected and abjected female body—the very body that makes starkly visible the enslaved form of all commodified labor—He-Yin Zhen's is a historical argument about the reiteration of forms of enslavement legally underpinned by the property form of inequality and injustice. It is, thus, only with what she sees as the imminent disappearance of the enduring possibility of autonomous labor that the supremacy of commodified labor appears now to be secured. And this

[32]Bruno Gulli, *Labor of Fire: The Ontology of Labor Between Economy and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 25. Gulli recuperates the theory of labor in early Marx, especially in the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," before Marx's full theorization of the labor theory of value, which, Gulli argues, reduces labor to the problem of value-creation.

supremacy is being secured through the spread of the new form of enslaved labor called industrial waged work as a global form of injustice.

Conclusion

At its birth at the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese feminism in the voice of He-Yin Zhen—responding to and extending the analyses of her contemporary male feminists as represented in this volume by Jin Tianhe and Liang Qichao—achieved a radical and comprehensive critique that in our opinion remains unmatched to this day. It is our hope that her entirely original concepts of *nannü* and *shengji*, in all their complexity, will be taken up by feminists and radical theorists around the world. It is high time, then, that we savor He-Yin Zhen's incisive and uncompromising engagements with her worlds in her own words.

The Historical Context

CHINESE FEMINIST WORLDS AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

From its birth at the turn of the twentieth century, feminism in China was enmeshed and engaged in many worlds simultaneously. As the literary scholar Amy Dooling points out, "[A] narrow definition of feminism as about sexuality and rights (basically, the liberal position) will not be sufficient given the historical framework in which the politics of gender were lived and written about in China at the time."[1] This narrow insufficiency is nowhere better illustrated than through a study of the works of He-Yin Zhen, in juxtaposition to contemporaneous male writers on feminism, Jin Tianhe and Liang Qichao, presented in this volume. This historical introduction locates He-Yin Zhen in her many overlapping worlds by tracing in outline the worlds of her thinking: her textual and linguistic worlds; her domestic and global historical worlds; and her worlds of translation and conceptualization, among others.

By "worlds of thinking" we mean the texts and contexts, including the languages and concepts of the contemporary moment to which He-Yin Zhen was responding, in which she was operating, and through which she understood her own lived experience as a Chinese woman at the turn of the twentieth century. We wish to emphasize the open-ended nature of He-Yin's dialogue with the texts and contexts of her time and of her past.

[1]Amy Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth Century China* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 28. What Dooling and we are pointing to here is a certain strong trend in some scholarship that singles out rights and sexuality as being the privileged content of gender studies and the mapping of that assumption onto China and elsewhere.

In this sense, we avoid speaking of "influence" because that connotes a more mechanical process of interaction and distorts the interpretive processes of intellectual work. By contrast, we stress that He-Yin actively constructed a historical perspective and a reality through and with the texts she encountered. There is a politics to her reading, a very radical politics that we can register only by noting the asymmetry between her theory and her history, as well as by paying attention to her mode of argumentation. Recognizing the historical moment of her knowledge production through her active practice of reading is more important, we feel, than simply tracing the sources she cited. It is for this reason that we evoke "worlds of thinking" rather than the notion of influence.

Late-Qing China in a Global World

The world of late-Qing China (1860s–1911) was suffused by political, economic, cultural, and military crises. Beginning with the Opium Wars in the mid-nineteenth century (1839–1842; 1856–1860), China's historically self-sufficient economy was forced by war and treaty to open to a free flow of commodities manufactured in the burgeoning industrial sites of Britain, France, Prussia, and the United States. Thus although China had traded with foreign countries for many centuries and links with its southern neighbors had become particularly dense by the nineteenth century through immigration and consequent family-entrepreneurial connections, the new forms of commerce and of foreign relations demanded by the incorporation of China into the global capitalist world were now directed into an international system dominated by Euro-America.

From the 1840s onward, China's economy, society, culture, and politics increasingly came under pressure either to submit or to adapt to these new global realities. Internal social rebellions, such as the massive Taiping uprising of 1850–1864, were sparked as much by imported and adapted ideologies as by internal dislocations. Missionaries from various countries flooded into the country along with the gunboats, converting few but creating ideological and social fissures through their translation efforts and promotion of different sociocultural values.

Among the more momentous changes was that in the Chinese language itself, with classical usages giving way and adapting to new vocabularies

and new concepts demanded by the incorporation of China into the interstate capitalist system of trade, governance, and politics. Just as salient were transformations in conceptualizations of domestic and international hierarchies, with racialized understandings of human difference becoming a structuring system of thought. In this new view, not only was the white world of Euro-America pitted against the yellow world of Asia, for example, but also the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1911) came to be designated by Han Chinese revolutionaries as an alien colonizer of China, whereupon their centuries-long rule was rendered illegitimate because of their racialized otherness.

As the pace of change quickened from the mid-nineteenth century onward, successive waves of educated men, many of whom served in the dynastic bureaucracy as officials, tried to think their way through and out the other side of the multisided catastrophes facing China through these decades. Initiating new industrial manufactures, translation bureaus, schools, and institutes where new forms of knowledge were disseminated; going abroad to study the ways of the dominating powers; critiquing the mores and customs of their own society, these educated and sometimes even moneyed men came to understand, in the space of less than a generation, that the old ways of the integrated Chinese sociocultural and political-economic system could not and would not last. When the newly built Chinese navy was summarily destroyed by the Japanese in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895—a war the Chinese humiliatingly lost to their historically weaker neighbor—the sense of accumulated crises came to a climax.

In the heady years of 1895–1898, the critical energies of many concerned and educated men—now joined by an intrepid few educated women, often family members—centered on reforming the dynastic structures of rule so as to allow for a fuller flexibility in political, social, cultural, commercial, and military organization and development. This push culminated in the Hundred Days' Reform period in 1898, during which the young Guangxu emperor was petitioned and agreed to a series of political reforms. His reform-mindedness was soon suppressed by the Empress Dowager Cixi and her faction of conservatives. This last best chance for total dynastic reform soon yielded to a revolutionary movement organized by the Chinese who were now in exile (mostly in Japan, Hong Kong, and the United States). By late 1911, this revolutionary movement succeeded in toppling the Qing dynasty and replacing China's age-old dynastic system with a republican form of government. Full of revolutionary ferment, the first decade of the

twentieth century also witnessed the birth of feminism in modern China, which spoke to and was informed by the sociopolitical upheavals.

From the explosive reform movement of 1898 to the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912, the intertwined foundations of Chinese society, politics, economics, and culture crumbled. Educated elites had to rethink the entire premise of the Chinese civilization, and in a radically new global context.[2] However the rethinking was ordered, whether all the issues separately or in relation to one another, the problem of reimagining China in the world was widely acknowledged as one of *the* great problems of the early twentieth century. For many, China's geographically incomplete but politically and economically disastrous subjugation to foreign powers meant that China had to compete with the rapacious colonizers on the latter's terms, whether militarization, enlightenment thought, or "free market" capitalist-driven industrialization. The pregiven nature of the terms of engagement and competition—forced upon China through wars, unequal treaties, and imperialist-capitalist aggression—led to a simultaneous acceptance and questioning by Chinese elites of the premises dictated by the invading powers. The various types of adaptations and accommodations they espoused generally included the technological, capital, institutional requisites, and labor mobilizations for the beginnings of industrialization. These efforts, called "self-strengthening" in the second half of the nineteenth century, later became known as "modernization" (*jindai/xiandai hua*).

An adequate discussion of the socioeconomic thinking of the late-Qing period falls outside the scope of this introduction; suffice it to say, therefore, that one of the primary schools of thought to emerge to deal with this question was called the "Study of Wealth and Power" (*Fuqiang Xue*). This school in large part derived from the translation and popularization of Herbert Spencer's sociological reworking of Charles Darwin's biological survival of the fittest as then adduced to explain the manifest military and commercial superiorities of the Euro-American powers.[3] It stressed the urgent necessity for technological militarization and institutional-bureaucratic

[2]For an extended discussion of this global context, see Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

[3]James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964); Andrew Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

rationalization, as well as the socioeconomic industrialization of coastal China, or those areas most susceptible to Euro-American and Japanese invasions, colonial territorial concessions, and manufacturing strength. The source of labor to fuel these semipublic or semiprivate endeavors would be the vast population of China's rural interior, whose land, though not expropriated outright, was becoming more and more difficult to cultivate so as to produce for the increasing burdens of landlord surplus extraction and imperial taxation.[4]

Particularly affected by the combination of land squeeze, rural labor intensification, and steady collapse of home-based handicrafts in the face of foreign industrial imports and foreign-owned coastal manufactures were women, whose economic activities had always been—in times and places of plenty as in times and places of scarcity—crucial to household economic viability. No mere "supplement" or "sideline" (as many economists and economic historians continue to call it) to a preexisting supposedly proper male-dominated economy, female-dominated spinning and weaving activity was a central and necessary element of the functioning of any rural household economy.[5] As the self-sufficient rural economy steadily deteriorated through the nineteenth century, there was an accelerating subordination of rural to urban space. In consequence, there formed a lopsided competition in textile production between the rural producers, on the one hand, and, on the other, producers in urban-based, highly capitalized, and foreign-owned industries or foreign-imported manufactures protected

[4]There is debate in the economic history of China about whether there was absolute or even relative rural immiseration through these years. What is clear, despite the disputes, is that intensification of land use was proceeding very rapidly; that the dynastic accommodation with landlords was inimical to rural land adjustments in favor of agricultural labor; that handicraft manufacture, particularly in the realm of the traditional women's work of spinning and weaving, was severely impacted by the industrial competition in silk and cotton from Japan, British-colonized India, and the revival of the American South after the civil war as well as by the recovery of the silk industry in France and Italy after the midcentury silkworm plagues, among others. For example, see Kathy Le-Mons Walker, *Chinese Modernity and the Peasant Path: Semicolonialism in the Northern Yangzi Delta* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Ken Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Philip Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350–1988* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

[5]Hill Gates, *China's Motor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Le-Mons Walker, *Chinese Modernity and the Peasant Path*.

through tariff inequalities maintained by British colonial power. The dynastic state was powerless to ameliorate the livelihoods of the vast majority of China's inhabitants, even had it wanted to try.

Women, whose family livelihoods were being ruined, bore the brunt of the impending crisis: they had to labor more intensely for lower returns within the family; were increasingly subjected to being sold as brides, concubines, servants, or even prostitutes; and were increasingly induced to leave their families either voluntarily (that is, forced by poverty) or in coerced fashion. These women worked long and hard hours in the families of the urban or rural elites, in the factories of the many foreign and few domestic industrialists, and in the streets and byways of the cities, towns, and villages; they were mortgaged to "owners"—whether in the factory and brothel or in families to men who had bought them as servants, brides, or concubines—often for a lifetime. The conditions of these laboring women enraged He-Yin Zhen and formed one important point of departure for the radical feminist critiques translated in this volume and originally published in 1907–1908.

The anarchist He-Yin Zhen was virtually alone in her critiques of labor because for most liberal feminist and other commentators of the late Qing, be they male or female, laboring women and rural economic hardship remained largely invisible.[6] A reading of the male intellectual Liang Qichao's essay "On Women's Education" makes clear that such women did not even enter his field of vision. Indeed, it was not until the late 1910s and into the 1920s that these issues formed a major part of the daily journalistic fare and widespread editorializing as well as causes for organized political activism. Instead, the major part of editorial commentating in the newly founded periodic journals at the turn of the twentieth century revolved around reported news from abroad (diplomatic affairs as well as revolutions and anticolonial uprisings, among others) and around lamenting the decline of the Chinese state; many editorials offered suggestions and opinions on how to forestall the national state's total collapse or total colonization and

[6]As Ming K. Chan and Arif Dirlik point out, "It was . . . Liu Shipei and his associates in Tokyo who first introduced the necessity of labor as an integral component of anarchist revolution." They indicate specifically Liu's 1907 *Natural Justice* essay "On Equalizing Human Labor" (*Renlei junli shuo*). We would note that He-Yin was perhaps far more vigorous in her advocacy for the centrality of labor than even her husband, Liu Shipei. See *Schools Into Fields and Factories: Anarchists, the Guomindang, and the National Labor University in Shanghai, 1927–1932* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 26–27.

domination by Euro-America or Japan. New knowledge derived from new sources along with new practices of citizenship and of economic production were promoted as antidotes to the generalized decline and as methods of saving the state and saving the nation.[7] Education, citizenship involvement, and the rate of statistically measurable economic production became key indicators of the health of the national people and thus of the prospects for the Chinese nation and the state. For example, in "On Women's Education," Liang argues for the benefits of female education in terms of the enhancement of national productivity and nurturing of male citizens in the family.

The problem of suffrage was broached, and various examples of electorates from around the world were promoted. Other than in Finland, Norway, England, and Italy (the examples that He-Yin Zhen cites in "On Women's Liberation"), none advocated women's suffrage and very few advocated universal male suffrage; almost all the global examples had some version of a property and race requirement while also being restricted to men. In China, as in many other places, feminist advocates loudly proclaimed the fitness of elite women to join elite men in the proposed electorate. However, prior to the Republican Revolution of 1911, very few of these advocacies gained much traction, although as elite men made advances into electoral politics at the provincial levels, elite women also staked a claim to fitness for political participation, a claim they continued to press relentlessly through the 1910s and onward.[8]

Meanwhile, issues of education and bodily wholeness also came to the fore. New forms of education were promoted for men, where the emphasis on classical textual analysis, formulaic writing styles, and rote memory started to wane. The prestige of the Confucian canon, which had been used as sanction and guide for the dynastic system through its mobilization as the textual foundation for the civil service exams, also began to falter, particularly after

[7]The very form of the state was a contentious issue that became entangled with efforts to "save" it. Widespread calls for reform of state structures and institutions became an insistent clamor in journals published in China and among overseas Chinese populations in Japan, the South Seas, and the United States. By 1906, even the Qing dynasty itself was tepidly supporting parliamentary elections so as to address rising provincial discontent over dynastic policies and state impotence.

[8]See Louise Edwards, *Gender, Politics, and Democracy: Women's Suffrage in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), for a complete survey of Chinese women's suffrage movements in the early twentieth century.

1905, when the exam system was terminated. Girls' educational institutions were founded alongside boys' schools, first by Euro-American missionaries and then soon enough by Chinese merchants, entrepreneurs, and local educated elites in shifting alliances and espousing shifting priorities. For some of the girls' schools, the effort was said to be about educating women for motherhood and the more efficient raising of sons to be good citizens (the pithy phrase used here was imported from Japan: "good wives, wise mothers"); in others, education was aimed at basic literacy and the beginnings of what soon came to be called home economics or home management.[9] A strong linkage was made between freeing the mind through education and freeing the feet from the constraints of footbinding.[10] These schools and efforts were either urban-based or aimed at the upper elites of rural society. Little if any of this filtered into the larger population.

For the critically minded educated women of the late-Qing period, the problems they perceived within their own elite lives took center stage in their analyses of China's ills and the consequent challenges facing "women." Their concerns, represented then and now as concerns for the analytical totality of women *as such* (*nüzi*), tended to concentrate on such socially reformist solutions to women's and China's problems as educational opportunities, limited marriage freedom, footbinding, social and cultural equality with men, independence from crushing family norms that suppressed "female personhood" (*renge*), and participation in newly emerging forms of governance.[11] These grievances and advocacies filled those journals of the day that specialized in promoting women's issues and/or state reforms.

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[9]For more on the debates over female education of the time, see Joan Judge, "Talent, Virtue and the Nation: Chinese Nationalisms and Female Subjectivities in the Early Twentieth Century," *American Historical Review* 106, 3 (June 2001): 765–803. For home management, see Helen Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2011).

[10]As Dorothy Ko has written in this regard, the "end" of footbinding was a tortured affair, pitting missionaries and state bureaucrats, as well as male and female elites, against the common practice and against the pain of the unbinding process. Ko comments: "In the tug-of-war footbinding shrank in stature. It was not so much outlawed as outmoded; footbinding came to a virtual death when its cultural prestige extinguished. To put it another way, the end came when the practice exhausted all justifications within the existing repertoire of cultural symbols and values." Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 13–14.

[11]Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World* and "The Violence of the Everyday in Early Twentieth-Century China," in *Everyday Modernity in China*, ed. Madeleine Yue Dong and Joshua L. Goldstein, pp. 52–79 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

The most well known of the late-Qing feminists who wrote in this idiom was Qiu Jin (1875–1907), the cross-dressing revolutionary martyr, who left her husband and children behind to seek education in Japan and who, upon her return to China, was executed by the Qing state for her advocacies of dynastic overthrow. In her essays, songs, poetry, and short stories, Qiu tirelessly wrote of the nationalist political need for female emancipation.[12] Although He-Yin Zhen makes no direct reference to Qiu Jin, it is most likely that they knew each other (they both resided in Japan from 1905 to 1907).[13] Whatever the personal case, He-Yin Zhen was clearly familiar with the type of nationalist-feminist analysis exemplified by Qiu Jin in its most revolutionary form; for although a supporter of the nationalist revolution, He-Yin had no illusions that it would bring about women's liberation.

This late-Qing Chinese historical context of national humiliation, global economic unevenness, and nascent nationalist and feminist stirrings as well as revolutionary fervor forms one "world of thinking" to which He-Yin Zhen responded and in which she was deeply embedded.

Textual and Ideological Worlds

In our annotations to He-Yin Zhen's comprehensive critique of the Chinese scholastic tradition, "On the Revenge of Women," and in her shorter essay on feminist antimilitarism, we address more specifically He-Yin Zhen's complicated relationship with the androcentric tradition of Confucian learning. Here, we simply wish to mention that the classical texts that incurred the most concerted attack by He-Yin in her critical essays were those of the New Text Confucian tradition popularized and spread through the revived Han school of learning of nineteenth-century China. Indeed,

[12]For an introduction to Qiu Jin's life and an extended translation of an excerpt from her political story, "Stones of the Jingwei Bird," see Amy Dooling and Kris Torgeson, eds., *Writing Women in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 40–78. Also see Hu Ying, "Writing Qiu Jin's Life: Wu Zhiying and Her Family Learning," *Late Imperial China* 25, 2 (December 2004): 119–160.

[13]Immediately after Qiu Jin's martyrdom, *Natural Justice*, under He-Yin Zhen's editorship, printed Qiu's biography to commemorate her life (no. 5, August 1907). The same issue also included Zhang Taiyan's preface to a posthumous collection of poetry by Qiu Jin that was scheduled to be published.

these were the very texts that such male reformers as Liang Qichao and his teacher Kang Youwei resorted to in an attempt to legitimize their political program for the radical reform of the Qing dynasty.[14] In constructing her critiques, moreover, He-Yin used the precise repetitively citational philological method her male counterparts deployed in their erudite and defensive commentaries. As readers encounter her "On the Revenge of Women," they will find that He-Yin cites fragments of classical texts and submits them to interpretive scrutiny. Her method of recitation—piling on examples—will perhaps strike readers as obsessive, but it is well to remember that textual authority had been cited precisely this way for millennia to argue in defense of the very ritual, social, and political institutions of injustice at which He-Yin Zhen was taking aim.

We might even note here that He-Yin's attack on Confucianism—as textual practice, as a system of ethics and thought, and also as a structure of sociopolitical and economic arrangement—is one of the first such comprehensive attacks in Chinese history, analogous perhaps to Elizabeth Cady Stanton's shocking feminist attack on biblical scholarship in America just a decade before or Simone de Beauvoir's dissection of the antiwoman biases of Western thought in mid-twentieth-century France. In the Chinese case, this type of totalistic rejection might be familiar from the later May Fourth period (1919–1925); He-Yin Zhen was prescient in this and other regards.

In addition to her deep familiarity with the classical heritage, He-Yin was also completely conversant with the newer texts and ideologies circulating in China and among Chinese educated elites at the turn of the twentieth century. This complex textual and ideological context forms another "world of thinking" to which He-Yin Zhen responded and in which she was deeply embedded. We next elaborate on these newer texts and discourses under four broad rubrics: liberalism, statism, anarchism, and socialism.

The conventional view of the birth of Chinese feminism is that it is a by-product of the introduction of liberalism. Many accounts of early Chinese feminism trace the beginnings of its systematic textual articulation to the separate translations by Liang Qichao and Ma Junwu (both men) of sections of J. S. Mill's famous mid-nineteenth-century tract *On the Subjection*

[14]For more on the New Text scholarship in the late Qing, see Benjamin Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

of Women and Herbert Spencer's "The Rights of Women" section of *Social Statics* in the early twentieth century. Liang's translations and commentary on Mill in his 1902 "On the New Citizen" (*Xinmin shuo*) and Ma's commentary on and translation of Spencer in 1903 form the backdrop to a conceptual language for almost all discussions of "women" in China's early twentieth century; indeed, many of the subsequent key male and female texts of Chinese feminism make direct or indirect reference to these foundational texts.

These texts present the scholar of Chinese feminism with several problems. The first is the male and European philosophical origins of early Chinese feminist discussions. In other words, Mill and Spencer are both European men whose language juxtaposing emancipation, independent personhood, and rights against domestic enslavement, dependent play object for men, and servitude widely informed the articulated expression of much early as well as later Chinese feminism, along with most feminisms globally. It was the language and conceptual frame used by most male intellectuals of the early period in China to advocate not only for women but on their own behalf as well (see Liang's essay, translated in this volume). It forms the foundation for the liberal narrative of the origins of Chinese feminism.

The Taiwanese feminist scholar Liu Jen-p'eng summarizes the problem from the vantage of the late 1990s attempt to assert an authentic Chinese female feminism: "The reappearance of so-called 'native feminism,' when placed in the framework of the nation, creates the problem of 'male' origins (as in: Chinese feminism originates in male intellectuals' promotion); yet, placed in the framework of imperialist colonization, then the origins are in 'the West' (as in: Chinese feminism originates in Western feminism). That is to say, if one wants to reconstruct a history of 'native feminism,' then whether in asking questions or posing answers, these inevitably emanate from the 'outside,' regardless of whether that 'outside' is construed as women opposed to men, or China opposed to the West."[15]

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[15]Liu Jen-p'eng, "'Zhongguo de' nüquan, fanyi de yuwang yu Ma Junwu nüquanshuo yijie" ['China's' feminism, translation's desire, and Ma Junwu's translation of feminism], *Jindai zhongguo funüshi yanjiu* [Research on women in modern Chinese history] 7 (August 1999): 1–42; cited on p. 13. Also see Xia Xiaohong, *Wanqing wenren funü guan* [Late-Qing elite views of women] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1995).

This historical and historiographical problem does indeed appear in much scholarship, current and past, on the issue of Chinese feminism. We argue, by contrast, that we can move beyond the Western or male problem of origins by framing He-Yin Zhen's and our own concerns differently. We appeal to such alternative framing not because He-Yin Zhen fails to reference these foundational male European philosophical texts: she does reference them, directly and indirectly and quite critically. But it is crucial to recognize that in He-Yin's analytical strategy, the world cannot be dichotomized into native and nonnative, Chinese and non-Chinese, male and female. For He-Yin, history cannot be seen in such dichotomous terms; the world is Chinese and global at the same time, and it is always already gendered, or *nannü*'ed (see the introduction to this volume).

Indeed, instead of looking to Euro-America or Japan as models for the future of gender equality for China to follow, as many feminists and other critical intellectuals of the time did, He-Yin Zhen saw Euro-America and Japan merely as representing more advanced ways in which newly emerged and now-globalizing forms of oppression—industrial waged labor, democratic polities and female suffrage, enlightenment knowledge—could attach themselves to native forms of subjection, to reconfigure and deepen these extant forms on a larger scale and in less detectable ways. And unlike, for example, Jin Tianhe (see his text, translated in this volume), who marveled at the "ideas shipped in crates across the Pacific," He-Yin Zhen was ambivalent about what she called the "empty rhetoric" of ready-made concepts and terminology from the imperialist metropolitan center. She preferred to conceptualize and think through problems in her own way. In this regard, for He-Yin Zhen, Euro-America functioned not as a hierarchical comparative but, rather, as part of a global conversation on feminism and modernity, a conversation in which she was as fully participant as anyone else. Here, then, the West-versus-China distinction is simply inoperative; it is, rather, entirely insufficient for the purpose of addressing the problem of gender-class (*nannü*) and livelihood (*shengji*) in the world (see the introduction to this volume).

A second, albeit less noted problem presented by the Mill and Spencer "origins" of Chinese feminism is that both Mill and Spencer were responding to and discussing problems encountered by the mid-nineteenth-century liberal state in Britain specifically and Europe more generally. In China, with the crisis in dynastic rule accelerating through the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) and beyond, for many male intellectuals at the turn

of the twentieth century, most prominently for the journalist and political philosopher Liang Qichao as well as his nemesis, the revolutionary Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yatsen, 1866–1925), the liberal state (republican or parliamentary-monarchical) was a paradigm of a not-yet-achieved form of state worth striving for. The liberal state, Liang believed, could be attained through reformist policies aimed at opening governance and institutions of rule to a wider section (yet to be determined) of the populace; meanwhile, Sun advocated the revolutionary overthrow of the Qing dynasty altogether. More the philosopher than Sun, Liang found in Rousseau's concepts of the social contract, general will, and popular sovereignty a possible route away from what he called the Chinese servile character toward a more virile practice of citizenry. He discovered in what he understood to be the natural rights theory promoted by Rousseau and Mill the sanction for educated elites such as himself to oppose their own government peacefully and loyally.

After 1903, however, along with the rise of more radical and revolutionary ideas and actions in the Chinese and global context, Liang turned away from Rousseau's and Mill's natural rights theories toward a far more statist approach to the national collective. Taking on a more explicitly Darwinian conceptualization of society and state as forms in constant political struggle, Liang abandoned liberal theories of individual rights (or of the rights of society against the state), deeming them now too dangerous to indulge; he began strongly to favor German statist thinking, most prominently that promoted by the political theorist and jurist Johann Kaspar Bluntschli.[16]

Aside from statism, there were also two currents of anarchism (both profoundly antistatist, albeit in different ways) that took hold among Chinese intellectual circles in exile at the turn of the twentieth century. One was headquartered in Paris and another in Tokyo. He-Yin Zhen's circle in Tokyo was significantly informed by Japanese author Kemuyama Sentaro's book *Modern Anarchism*.[17] Much of this book was devoted to a discussion of Russian despotism and the revolutionary movement against it. Yet, of

[16]For more on Liang's political thought, see Hao Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

[17]The following account of anarchism among Chinese intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century substantially derives from Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), chap. 2.

most concern to Chinese interpreters of anarchism in Tokyo was the crushing of "natural freedom" (*tianran ziyou*) by institutions of the state, law, religion, and formal education.[18] Broadly critical of institutions of the state and formal social hierarchies, Tokyo anarchists were also aware of the nihilism and violence promoted by some Russian anarchists (particularly by Sofia Perovskaya, one of the assassins of Tsar Alexander II in 1881). This anarchist literature directly informed He-Yin Zhen's critique of state institutions. In her conceptualization, state institutions themselves reproduce social injustice, in large part because of the state's defense of the very system of private property that gives rise to inequality. This perspective lends import to her concept of livelihood (*shengji*) for feminist theory. For, in this perspective, the securing of *shengji*, just as the securing of women's and social liberation, cannot be dependent upon the state; rather, genuine liberation and livelihood would be a new form of social life that eliminated economic and political dependences of all sorts. This view is clearly illuminated in the essays "On Women's Labor" and "Economic Revolution and Women's Revolution," translated in this volume.[19]

By 1906, the Paris-based and Tokyo-based anarchists had diverged in their advocacies. Those in Paris read Peter Kropotkin's work and were becoming more enamored of the futuristic promise of technology to overcome social injustice. Meanwhile, those in Tokyo favored Tolstoy's agrarian utopian work and focused on the nihilism of antitsarist Russians. The Tokyo group was convinced that freedom from the state and all hierarchical social institutions was the only plausible path away from endlessly reproduced social injustice. We could speculate that the violence-inflected version of anarchism popular in the Tokyo circle could be one source for the overt violence of He-Yin Zhen's language, particularly in her "Revenge" essay, whose uncompromising depictions of classical texts call out the brutal truths of social life hidden in plain sight.

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[18]See in particular Ma Xulun, "Ershi shijizhi xin zhuyi" [The new "ism" of the twentieth century], in vol. 1 of *Wuzhengfu zhuyi sixiang ziliao xuan* [Selection of materials on anarchist thought], ed. Ge Maochun et al., 1–13, 2 vols. (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1984). Ma was affiliated with Sun Zhongshan's Revolutionary Alliance.

[19]There is a notice provided in Tianyi bao (#6; January 1, 1907) of Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth* and of her attendance at the World Anarchist Society meeting in Amsterdam. Kotoku Shusui, the Japanese anarchist, was the conduit through which He-Yin received this information. It is thus evident that He-Yin at least knew of Goldman's work, although their perspectives are quite different.

Unlike Sun Zhongshan and other supporters of an antidynastic revolution who specifically targeted the Qing *as Manchus*, for He-Yin Zhen and other anarchists, it made no difference if the rulers were Manchu, Han, Mongol, or any other race or ethnicity. All rulers, just as all states, were equally invested in the preservation of social injustice and its material underpinning—unequal property relations. Despite these ideological differences, she and others made common organizational political cause with Sun Zhongshan for his promotion of a revolutionary movement aimed at toppling the dynastic system of rule in China. He-Yin Zhen stopped short of ever joining the Revolutionary Alliance even though her husband Liu Shipei was a prominent member.

Anarchism was only one of several radical currents of thought among late-Qing Chinese intellectuals that also included embryonic understandings of socialism and Marxism. Indeed, as noted in the introduction to this volume, He-Yin Zhen's journal, *Natural Justice*, was the first to publish in Chinese excerpts from Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*. Pioneering as that was, Marxism was not to receive systematic articulation in China until after the 1911 revolution, and more specifically, until after the 1917 Russian Revolution. It certainly did not attract in the pre-1911 period any sustained interest among Chinese, unlike among Japanese radical circles, where vibrant Marxist study societies were beset by state censorship and police repression. Nevertheless, various socialist or quasi-socialist currents were of some interest to Chinese intellectuals in exile, particularly among those who promoted the importance of the social redistribution of land wealth as a complement to and accompaniment for political revolution. Chinese intellectuals'—including He-Yin Zhen's—personal connections to the political organizations involving Japanese radicals of various political persuasions helped refine and hone understandings of these crucial resources for a critique of China and the world at the turn of the twentieth century.

Most prominent of these currents was Sun Zhongshan's advocacy for socialism as a fulfillment of the promise of republicanism. For Sun, socialism was not inherently in opposition to republicanism; instead, socialism would help to forestall the violence produced by class division in the industrialization process, even as it would help to realize the republican ideals of equality and democracy.[20] Sun's land redistribution advocacies were

[20]See Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, 134–135.

informed not by Marx or even continental European utopian socialists such as Proudhon; rather, they were informed by American social reformer Henry George's promotion of the equalization of land ownership.[21] In George's view, as in Sun's, the premise of individual wealth is in the wealth of society as a collective (unlike in Adam Smith's version, where individual wealth is the premise of the wealth of nations). In the non-Smithian view, the task for the state is to enhance the growth of social wealth, where land is the basis of all wealth-producing activity. In this version of social life, the state's role was thus not the protection of private property as an individual right but, rather, the protection of private property as a collective right and as the premise for the production of national wealth.

These explicitly radical revolutionary or more ameliorist statist political philosophies and social ideologies were of critical importance to He-Yin Zhen and her circles in Tokyo, as well as to those educated critics of the Qing dynastic state who remained in China or traveled elsewhere in the world. They formed a vital world of thinking at the time.

Media Worlds of Thinking

Discursive and organizational interactions among sometimes geographically diffused groups of critics were facilitated by the rise of journals and print media around the turn of the twentieth century. Chinese-language print media sprang up in Tokyo, Paris, China, Hawaii, and elsewhere. Those journals started by critics of the Qing dynasty to promote their critiques were often ephemerally supported by the wealthy family or entrepreneurial connections of individuals who wished to publish their views. This lends the critical journalistic world of the time an unstable yet ubiquitous presence: journals pop up with grand statements of purpose and then suddenly disappear only to reappear several months later under new names with new pseudonyms attached; meanwhile, some journals remained in publication for multiyear runs. Pseudonyms were often needed to evade Japanese and Chinese police censorship, although the use of pen-names was also a time-honored practice among Chinese intellectuals, male and female.

[21]See Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1955), first published in 1880, republished in 1905.

The combination renders the question of who wrote for which journals and who wrote what essays a topic of great contention that has preoccupied scholars ever since the turn of the twentieth century; unraveling the connections, pseudonyms, unfamiliar pen-names, ephemerality of publishing, and the financial disguises of the various critics and their supporters is no simple task. The specifics of that need not detain us, although we should mention that our claims for He-Yin Zhen's authorship of the essay "On Women's Labor" is enmeshed in this type of uncertain contention; suffice it to say that we have established to a degree of certainty that she is indeed the author of that essay, and not her husband, Liu Shipei, who is usually credited with its composition.

More generally, the rise of journalism, and particularly the rise of women's journals, is a crucially important material aspect of the flow and circulation of information and ideas in the late-Qing. Women's journals occupy a vital position in the publishing world of the time, in part because they were a new phenomenon: women writing and publishing for direct circulation in the public sphere fundamentally transformed the earlier history of women writing for circulation by their male kith and kin. But perhaps even more important, women's journals gave late-Qing women access to a medium through which they could directly critique the intertwined patriarchal systems of politics, culture, and social life *at the very moment* those systems were coming to be recognized as sources of oppression. That is, journalistic writing, particularly in its editorial and essay forms, allowed women writers to tease out and articulate, for the first time, the *systemic* sources of gendered life in China at the time. It is through these editorial efforts that a language and a history of gendered oppression were established and popularized among members of the small but disproportionately influential sector of literate female and male society. Aside from the editorial writing, journals also reprinted news from abroad, speeches, educational and didactic materials, anti-footbinding ditties and songs, and encouragements to women wishing to think beyond the horizons of their domestic lives—in addition to advertisements for potions, lotions, and pink-pill medicines that promised miraculous cures and recoveries for putative ailments as well as newly identified modern cosmetic needs of all types. This explosion of incipient capitalist journalism formed a crucial media world of thinking for He-Yin Zhen.

Female writers of essays, political critiques, and editorials (both Chinese and Japanese), into whose discussions He-Yin Zhen's conceptualizations

intervened, were consequently of major importance in helping shape the environment through which He-Yin's sensibilities and writing were contextualized and informed. We mentioned earlier one such famous writer, Qiu Jin. In addition, however, was a host of other female voices bursting into the field of print media at the turn of the twentieth century. On the Japanese side, perhaps most important was the radical political and social figure Fukuda Hideko (1865–1927), whose career spanned the liberal movement of early Meiji Japan (1868–1911) through to the birth of a socialist movement in the early twentieth century and beyond. Editor and publisher of the journal *Women of the World* (Seikai Fujin) from 1907 to 1909, when it was forcibly shut down by Japanese authorities in a general crackdown against socialist voices, Fukuda was committed to women's emancipation, albeit not within the confines of the state. A fierce critic of the Japanese Women's Patriotic Association, Fukuda was also associated with the most famous Japanese literary feminist journal of the early twentieth century, *Bluestocking* (Seito), which began publication in 1911. Although no direct personal relationship between Fukuda and He-Yin Zhen can be established, they operated in the same radical circles in Tokyo and would have known of each other; indeed, in *Women of the World* (number 13, July 1907), for instance, Fukuda reprinted "The Regulations of the Society for the Restoration of Women's Rights" from the first issue of He-Yin's journal, *Natural Justice*.[22] We can also mention one other important Japanese feminist, with whom He-Yin would have been familiar, either personally or by reputation: Kanno Suga (1881–1911), an anarchist and feminist activist who, along with her partner Kotoku Shusui, was executed by the Meiji state in 1911 for political crimes (Kanno was the first woman in modern Japanese history to be dealt with so harshly). Kanno was a frequent author of political essays and editorial commentary, with which He-Yin was most likely familiar.

[22]See Ono Kazuko, *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850–1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 65–66. The Japanese editor appended a commentary to the reprint. It goes: "Among the revolutionary youths from the Qing state who currently reside in Japan, a number of people have recently formed a 'Society for the Restoration of Women's Rights' and are publishing a journal called *Natural Justice*. . . . Although there are some idiosyncrasies, as is often the case with the Chinese (*Shinajin*), and there are some clauses we cannot fully endorse, these [Chinese youth] are incredibly strong-willed and spirited. This is something we ought to have observed more among the Japanese" (*Seikai Fujin*, no. 13 [July 1907]: 100).

Among the host of Chinese female writers for the political press of the time were such prominent figures as Lin Zongsu (1878–1944), Chen Xiefen (1883–1923), and Luo Yanbin (1869–?), writers He-Yin Zhen undoubtedly knew of and whose essays she most probably read. Lin, an early advocate for female political participation, wrote one of the many prefaces to and commentaries on Jin Tianhe's *The Women's Bell* (Lin's work is not translated in this volume),[23] commending it as an exemplary text on the historical oppression of women in China. A founding member of the Fujian Women's Study Society, Lin also was among the first batch of women to join Sun Zhongshan's Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmeng Hui) soon after its establishment in 1905 in Tokyo. After 1911, Lin's was a leading voice for female suffrage. Chen Xiefen, for her part, was the founder of one of the earliest Chinese-language women's journals, *The Woman's Paper* (*Nübao*), originally published as a supplement to her father's radical nationalist paper *Subao* and then resumed, under a different name, as an independent publication after *Subao* was banned by the Qing government and Chen broke with her father over her impending sale as a concubine to a rich merchant. Along with Lin Zongsu and Qiu Jin, Chen Xiefen lived and worked in Tokyo in the first decade of the twentieth century, publishing political essays that promoted the concept of female citizenship based upon opposition both to imperialism and patriarchy. Nationalist in orientation, Chen and Lin (as well as Qiu) insisted on an equal place for (elite) women within a just-evolving notion of national-state social life and governance.[24]

Luo Yanbin, older by a decade than Lin and Chen, was also a vigorous advocate for female citizenship. As the founding editor of the journal *China's New Woman's World* (*Zhongguo Xin Nüjie*), Luo focused more than Lin and Chen on the problem of the paucity of female education, even as her narrative of the history of women's oppression was also different from Chen's and Lin's. Where the latter two argued that women's inequality had been a fact of life since the distant past, Luo insisted that women had been equal to men earlier in history but had been relegated to second-class citizenship somewhere along the line. Her strategic focus, then, was often to argue

[23]Her commentary was published in the journal *Jiangsu* 5 (1903).

[24]See Mizuyo Sudo, "Concepts of Women's Rights in Modern China," trans. Michael Hill, *Gender & History* 18, 3 (November 2006): 472–489. For other women writers, see Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith, eds., *Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

for the *recovery* of lost rights, rather than on the newness of the advocacy for women's rights in the present.[25] With different but compatible perspectives on the problems of women's oppression and on the mechanisms for amelioration, Chen, Luo, and Lin were some of the more influential mainstream voices in the burgeoning world of women's journalistic writing and its articulation of the sources and systems of patriarchal domination.[26]

In addition to the journalistic worlds in which He-Yin Zhen and many other late-Qing educated people were enmeshed was the world of book publishing which took on, among many other things, the task of translating and publicizing works from abroad. In addition to political philosophies, international relations treatises, miscellaneous histories, and hosts of other types of texts, such as didactic children's literature and adult educational books, a huge and influential sector of publishing in the first decade of the twentieth century concentrated on the translation of novels and stories from abroad. In fact, one of the most prolific promoters of foreign fiction of the time, Lin Shu, "translated" from French, German, English, and so on, without knowing a single foreign language, by collaborating with those who knew one of the languages. Lin Shu's classical-Chinese renditions (they are translations only in the loosest sense) of Euro-American works—Shakespeare as well as Dumas, H. Rider Haggard, and Sherlock Holmes and Harriet Beecher Stowe, among many others—took the reading public by storm.

The new plots, romantic twists, semi-independent women, heroic roles, political intrigues, and vast mobility of characters over time and space provoked debates and large-scale rethinking about the role of fiction in sociopolitical life. Previously less valued as a form of writing, fiction in the guise of short stories and novels now became acknowledged as a key popular textual form for promoting new ideas, new senses of community, and new modes of social being in the world. He-Yin Zhen's numerous references to the translated fiction of her time, either in Lin Shu's renditions or in

[25]For the derivation of some of this material, for more on all these figures, and for an extended discussion of each, see Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism*, chap. 1.

[26]We should also note Lü Bicheng (1884–1943), pioneering journalist at Tianjin's *Dagong bao*; like Chen, Luo, and Lin, Lü advocated for female education and equal rights, and she helped raise funds for the founding of Beiyang Women's Public School in 1904. See Grace S. Fong, "Alternative Modernities, or A Classical Woman of Modern China: The Challenging Trajectory of Lü Bicheng (1883–1943): Life and Song Lyrics," *Nan Nü: Men, Women & Gender in Early & Imperial China* 6, 1 (2004): 12–59.

renditions available in Japanese, demonstrate the huge importance of fiction in shaping her understanding of the Euro-American world.

Conclusion

Many overlapping worlds of thinking and of practice informed He-Yin Zhen's historical moment. By 1907, she was joining an increasingly crowded discursive and activist fray, where the question of the modern transformation of political, social, cultural, and economic life in China and the world, as well as the relationship of such transformations to women in general and Chinese women in particular, was just being articulated systematically and systemically for the first time. Although He-Yin Zhen was thus not an isolated case of a woman protesting against injustice, she nevertheless stands out as a unique social and political critic whose basic worldview was gendered from the outset.

It is our contention in publishing this volume of her translated texts in juxtaposition to the texts of two prominent male liberal feminists of her time that He-Yin Zhen's feminist and anarchist radicalism allows us to complicate today's received narrative about the origins of Chinese feminism in a borrowed male liberal worldview. That is, to the extent that the existing narrative of the origins of Chinese feminism, found in contemporary Chinese as well as American scholarship, continues to focus on the "influence" of Euro-American male liberal philosophy on the articulation of feminist concerns in China, the genuinely new analyses of the gendered nature of the modern world offered by He-Yin Zhen will remain buried.

We are confident, therefore, that in the essays that follow, readers will discover new perspectives from He-Yin Zhen's systemic thinking about the historical instantiations of gendered oppression, made with reference to her interpretation of the social totality of the early-twentieth-century world and China, and specifically to the intertwined systems of scholarly knowledge, female bodily subjugation, and juridicopolitical practice. These intertwined systems, she claims, not only had resulted in the subjection of Chinese women in the past but also would continue to provide the basis of women's subjection in the "civilized" present and future. In other words, for He-Yin Zhen, these misogynist practices were not by-products of history but, rather, constitutive of the very stuff of history. Thus, for her, women were

not absent in history, as many feminists have claimed; rather, they were a ubiquitous presence as the very principle of history.

Finally, then, because of the complexity of her overlapping worlds of thinking and yet also because of her radical contestation of those worlds, He-Yin Zhen insisted that all social life needed to be viewed through the lens of *nannü* in conjunction with *shengji*, those two all-important analytical categories (discussed fully in the introduction to this volume) that materially grounded and ideologically shaped for her the forms of domination and of distinction, past and present, through which she lived and to which all critique, she believed, had to answer.