conversation perhaps not yet acceptable on its own terms. One must write the oppositional term, one must write femininity, to get at masculinity. This imperative, I think, is much of what the dynamic of the woman question is about, now and eighty years ago" (p 307-8). In this Booth points the way to a new area of scholarly inquiry that has not been addressed in Middle East studies, but is one awaiting further exploration.

*May Her Likes Be Multiplied* is a fascinating window into the relationship between gender, biography and politics. Unfortunately, the book is somewhat marred by its extensive use of literary critical and cultural theory jargon, which makes it incomprehensible for anyone not versed in this language. In addition, Booth uses Arabic phrases occasionally without a translation or adequate explanation of the terms, forcing the non-Arabic speaker to guess at some of the meanings of the terms. Nevertheless, *May Her Likes Be Multiplied* will be of interest to scholars and students of gender studies, comparative literature, and the history of the Middle East.

**Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities:**

*Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*


Review by KAZ ROSS, University of Melbourne

One of the most exciting trends in China Studies over the last fifteen years has been an increase in interesting and sophisticated works dealing with gender, sexuality, and feminism in China. Unfortunately, these works have tended to remain within the specialised world of Sinology and have not made as deep an impact on the wider fields of Western feminist and gender studies as it might have. Brownell and Wasserstrom's *Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* aims to counteract this situation.

The main theoretical underpinning of the collection is that gender is a cultural construct which can best be under-
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Chinese Masculinities: A

ning of the collection is
which can best be under-
stood through an examination of lived experience. Neither
masculinity nor femininity have fixed definitions but can only
be understood within specific contexts and in reference to
each other. For the editors, charting gender in this manner is
important as it expands gender from “a collection of roles,
symbols and behaviours to an important organizing principle
of an entire worldview.” The specific contexts discussed in
Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities are predomi-
nantly historical; the bulk of the essays deal with the Qing dy-
asty (1644 – 1911) and the Republic era (1912 – 1949).

The essays are arranged chronologically. The first sec-
tion begins with a discussion of gender and the law during
the mid-Qing period. Janet Theiss demonstrates the cen-
trality of virtue to femininity through an examination of the of-
icial cult of chastity for widows (in which the state commemor-
ated virtuous widows who refused to remarry or who committed
suicide). Using stories and court records, Theiss shows how
some women managed to use the discourse of chastity for
their own purposes. As Matthew Sommer goes on to discuss,
male sexual practice was also regulated during the Qing with
important consequences for notions of normative masculinity.
During this period, males outnumbered females and the state
was very concerned about controlling the perceived threat to
the heterosexual patriarchal family from the dangerous rogue
male at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder.

The renewal of the Confucian family ideal during this
period is discussed by Susan Mann in Section Two. This re-
val focused on class, mobility, marriage and wives. Mar-
riage was a contract that was aimed at reproducing class
structures, yet as the state loosened class distinctions Confu-
cian morality was employed in an attempt to maintain the
status quo. This approach to marriage remained in place until
the New Culture Movement (1915 – 1923). Through journals
such as Family Research ("Jiating yanjiu") the young men of
this movement blamed the patriarchal family structure for lim-
iting their access to an occupation and thus participation in
the developing new industrialized economy. They wanted to
establish nuclear families based on free choice, compatibility, and economic independence. Marriage and the family were still an important component of masculinity and male identity; yet what these meant changed over time.

The third section breaks with the chronological sequence by discussing the possibilities of female and male traditions in modern Chinese literature. Lydia Liu shows how linking women’s writing in the current period with women’s work from the New Culture Movement challenges male-centred literary criticism by contesting the claims of the state and ‘official’ feminism. Wendy Larson’s essay takes up the question of a male tradition in modern Chinese literature. Unlike the women writers discussed by Liu, male writers have not had to struggle to produce a collective identity as the Chinese literary tradition is male.

The notions of masculinity and femininity discussed here contrast with the dangerous men and women discussed in Section Four. Gail Hershatter reprises her interesting work on changes in perceptions of prostitution. After Western ideas of nationalism and modernization spread through China in the first three decades of the twentieth century, courtesans were no longer seen as sophisticated and urbane. Instead, they were considered a diseased sign of China’s national weakness. The section concludes with a discussion of Chinese bandits in which bandits are aligned with prostitutes as liminal figures. David Ownby examines competing masculinities in images of bandits and concludes that although bandits had been seen as uncivilized, frustrated bachelors and violent rebels through the Qing, during the twentieth century both Communist and Nationalist groups saw them as potential revolutionaries.

Revolutionaries of a different kind are the object of study in Section Five. Contrary to dominant understandings, the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) was not a time of androgyny but rather of masculinization for female Red Guards. In a chilling account, Emily Honig relates stories of violence and brutality by all-female Red Guard groups which show
that to behave as a woman was to risk being considered a ‘backward element.’ In contrast, as Perry and Dillon argue, workers’ groups during this period were less strictly segregated according to gender than the Red Guards, who modelled themselves on the People’s Liberation Army. Instead, rebel workers’ groups took the fraternity of secret societies (the ‘band of brothers’) as their model in their quest for political inclusion.

There is another break in logic with the next section. Both essays focus on medical representations and understanding of the body. In the first, Charlotte Furth traces how traditional Chinese medicine understood health and vitality in terms of blood and qi, a difficult to translate term best approximated as ‘breath.’ As a result, menstruation rendered women weak and in danger of depletion. In contrast to Daoist notions of inexhaustible female vitality, and to the classical cosmology of yin and yang, the medical model in operation through most of the Qing dynasty positioned women as sickly. By the 1980s, qi had again become a topic of conversation, with a revival of qigong, the practice of cultivating qi through breath work. Nancy Chen details how the qigong groups which flourished during the 1980s and 1990s were dominated by male masters.

The final two sections of *Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities* are the most interesting. Harriet Evans’ essay on the changing images of the ideal wife since 1949 discusses how representations of women are shifting rapidly in contemporary China. The image of the sexy urbanite is replacing the portrayals of women as collectively-spirited, androgynous and selfless from an earlier era. Yet the beautifully dressed and elegant young wife or girlfriend is presented as a trophy of success under the economic reforms which were set in train at the start of the 1980s. Assumptions regarding masculinity are central to these portrayals of femininity. These depictions of the modern women are more than just cultural signs of global capitalism, argues Evans. Rather, earlier assumptions regarding gender distinctions and sexuality
were policed by the state and ensured that women were seen as the key agent of sexual and marital harmony even as the Communist government after 1949 held campaigns to reform feudal institutions such as marriage. Recent debates about divorce, adultery, and sexuality have revealed that women are now challenging male attempts by the husband, the state, or the market to appropriate them. For men, the shift to an open market economy has heightened anxiety and confusion, according to Jankowiak. Masculinity which centred on competence, control and achievement is put under threat once economic reform opens up possible avenues of success. The marketplace takes over from government position or educational achievement as the most important area in which a man must succeed.

Litzinger's research on the ethnic minority people the Yao shows that this process of contestation centres on notions of civility. For the 54 national minorities that are not Han, civility is the quintessential marker of progress and national belonging. As a result, cultural policing of acceptable masculine behaviour means that Yao people sometimes redefine Yao masculinity in contrast to Han masculinity in order to emphasise civility. Litzinger's research only makes full sense, however, when considered in the context provided by Louisa Schein's influential essay 'Gender and Internal orientalism in China.' Schein's contribution is a reprint of this 1997 essay reporting on research on an ethnic minority group in China, the Miao, that shows how ethnic minority women are represented as 'colorful flowers' and as erotic objects for the dominant Han society. This process of internal orientalism both 'others' minority women and incorporates them as objects of desire, as cultural commodities, and as bearers of a reinvented ethnic tradition. Schein, however, challenges the orientalist paradigm offered by Edward Said by noting that minority self-representation constitutes a distinguishable voice despite its subsumption, appropriation and appearance of complicity by the mainstream. The 'Other' is not silenced by a singular
red that women were seen as instrumental in harmony even as the campaigns to reform were held. Recent debates about gender reveal that women are by the husband, the state, and society. For men, the shift to an era of anxiety and confusion, a state which centred on control, is put under threat once more avenues of success are opened.

Recent debates about gender reveal that women are seen as objects for the dominant discourse. There is no simple dichotomy between the minorities as represented and the Han majority as the representers. For Schein, the impact of Western patterns of consumption has resulted in the emergence of a specifically Chinese approach to 'othering' which is still highly resonant with that of the West.

Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities: A Reader is notable for the absence of research being carried out on gender from within China by Chinese scholars. The scholars here are all located within the British or American academies. Eminent Chinese scholars such as Li Yinhe have not been included. The highly specific nature of some of the essays is another limitation for the non-specialist audience. For this reason, the introductions to each section are crucial for the development of an understanding of the complexity of gender construction in China. Although the aim of the editors in pairing essays to ensure a balance of work on masculinity and femininity is laudable, the pairing at times seems forced, with essays sometimes having only a superficial resonance with each other. However, a number of the essays presented are important classics within their fields and it is a boon to have them reproduced together here. For all these faults, Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities: A Reader will prove a useful resource for those wanting to explore the field of gender in China.

BOOK NOTES


This anthology explores how African women negotiated the complex social, political and economic forces of European colonialism. In the editor's words, the thirteen essays contained in this book "... undermine any image of African women as hapless victims", seeking instead to present the