

From Difference to Complementarity: The Interaction of Western and Chinese Studies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to argue that, under the influence of cultural globalization, Western criticism and traditional Chinese studies are becoming two increasingly closely related areas of knowledge. It is important to consider not only their differences but also their complementarity. The author, from a sinological point of view, questions the deliberate overlooking of voluminous publications in gender studies produced by China scholars in different areas. She thinks that there are two possible reasons for such negligence: one is the general belief that, being the cultural "other"—and thus the forever marginal—traditional China can be only of limited use in the study of "universal" women and men. The other assumption is that traditional China, being far removed in time, existed in a world completely different from that of modernity. Due to this cultural imbalance in gender scholarship, cultural globalization has effectively become a "one-way process." But we need a "two-way process" in comparative studies, which might after all lead us to discover that the West and Asia are not mutually exclusive but mutually empowering. Such a two-way process in the transmission of gender criticism could also be applied, then, to other fields in comparative literature.

KEY WORDS

difference
sinology

complementarity
gender studies



Clearly it is impossible here to explore every facet of their interaction and so, as an example of my claim, I shall begin with a discussion of gender theory and its relationship to China (or Chinese) Studies in America. As the renowned sinologist Susan Mann reminds us, "In the United States, feminist studies developed over the past two decades have presented new challenges and new opportunities to historians of Chinese women."¹ Given the astonishing rate at which books and articles on Chinese women are currently being produced, one would naturally assume that this new wave in sinology would already have presented great challenges and even greater opportunities to feminist critics in the West. But, contrary to one's expectations, this has not yet happened and one wonders why.

The problem might be that most of us, Asianists and comparatists alike, are operating on a false premise regarding the study of literature and culture. Our assumption has always been that Euro-American critical theories will offer new perspectives for the study of Chinese literature, never the other way around. Thus, although scholars in China studies have already done extensive research on women and have radically challenged conventional readings of gender relations, their scholarship has rarely drawn the attention of feminist critics in the West. There are two possible reasons for such negligence: one is the general belief that, being the cultural "other"—and thus the forever marginal—traditional China can be only of limited use in the study of "universal" women and men. The other assumption is that traditional China, being far removed in time, existed in a world completely different from the "modern" world.² But these are two unfortunate myths about traditional China that we need to leave behind. Regrettably, even Chinese scholars working in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan today tend uncritically to recycle ideas drawn from Western feminist theories without paying much attention to the new and exciting sinological

studies that are now flourishing in many parts of the world. In my view, it is now time to try to replace such "limited perspectives with more comprehensive ones," to quote Haun Saussy out of context.³

First, "gender studies" has already become an important subfield of sinological studies in the U.S. Especially in recent years, China scholars have constantly found themselves in the midst of a series of lively discussions about the relationship between men and women in traditional China, about Chinese women not only as readers but also as writers, and about the connection between gender concepts and *yin-yang* philosophy. (See also the appendix to this paper: "A Bibliography of Gender Studies on Traditional China"). Initially, it was mainly the conception of "difference" central to Western feminist criticism that inspired the new directions taken by sinological scholarship. But as progress was made, sinologists found that the Chinese sources they had encountered in their research often pointed to very different social contexts, such that they needed to constantly rethink the feminist notion of difference. If anything, the important role that women played in traditional Chinese literature frequently challenged the idea of "difference" as defined by Western academic feminism.

Indeed, the assertion of sexual difference has been one of the most powerful strategies that Western feminist critics have invented to underpin their theoretical groundwork. In this regard Barbara Johnson, who graduated from Yale and is now teaching at Harvard, is a typical example. All three major works of criticism by Barbara Johnson have the word "difference" in their title—*The Critical Difference* (1980), *A World of Difference* (1987), and *The Feminist Difference* (1998).⁴ To Barbara Johnson, "difference" can mean the differential reading strategy she was using to deconstruct the writings of her male mentors at Yale, as may be seen in her seminal essay entitled "Gender Theory and the Yale School."⁵ It can also mean sexual difference in the context of the real world, as Johnson herself explains in the introduction to her book, *A World of Difference*:

It was when I realized that my discussion of such differences was taking place entirely within the sameness of the white

male Euro-American literary, philosophical, psychoanalytical, and critical canon that I began to ask myself what differences I was really talking about. To say, for instance, that the difference *between* man and woman is an illusion created by the repression of differences *within* each may to some extent be true, but it does not account for the historical exclusion of women from the canon.⁶

It should be mentioned that Barbara Johnson, who combines the methodology of deconstruction and feminism, represents the Anglo-American school of feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. But Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar also adopted the strategy of “difference” in interpreting literature. In their reading of 19th-century women writers, Gilbert and Gubar argued that authorship in the Anglo-American tradition had been exclusively male-oriented and thus the “madwoman” writers had to constantly struggle against the canonical male authors.⁷ Obviously their idea of the “anxiety of authorship” regarding women writers took sexual difference as its ground and was thus a direct criticism of Harold Bloom’s all-male “anxiety of influence.”

In the meantime, speaking from a different perspective on “difference,” the so-called “French School” emerged under the influence of post-structuralism and the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan.⁸ Lacan’s female disciples (chief among them H el ene Cixous and Luce Irigaray) began to take an essentialist approach by identifying women categorically with “silence” and “nonspeech,” and with a particular feminine writing that is “unfinished” and “fragmented.”⁹ This whole notion of the silent woman seems to echo the words of the French psycho-analyst Julia Kristeva who once said, “In ‘woman’ I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said [. . .].”¹⁰

This notion of difference, in the sense of both Anglo-American feminism and French psychoanalysis, has become extremely popular with American readers; thus, for instance, Carol Gilligan’s book *In a Different Voice* (first published in 1982) is now in its 34th printing.¹¹ It is interesting to observe that the same idea of difference has also been widely borrowed by Chinese women critics and writers today, espe-

cially by those in Taiwan. It is these contemporary Chinese women critics who have been promoting the image of the "victimized" Chinese women by literally applying the Western idea of "difference," and the impact so far has been overwhelming. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the figure of the oppressed woman has become the predictable conclusion for almost every scholarly paper written in Taiwan that touches on the issue of women. However, it is my contention that such approaches frequently yield unfortunate misreadings of Chinese women, as they are built upon theoretical assumptions that have not taken into consideration the actual context and abilities of traditional Chinese women.

I believe that it is the American sinologists who have begun to overturn the stereotyped image of the "victimized" Chinese woman.¹² In this respect, Dorothy Ko's book, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, represents one of the first important attempts at the rereading of traditional Chinese women. Focusing on the lives and works of upper-class women in South China during the 17th century, Ko demonstrates how communities of educated women formed a literate "women's culture."¹³ She thus criticizes the "deep-seated image of the victimized 'feudal' women" as a groundless myth, a rhetorical figure invented by modern Chinese scholars after the May Fourth Movement. (The basis of Ko's critique is nonetheless rather different from my own standpoint.¹⁴) In a similar way, Susan Mann's recent study demonstrates the centrality of *guixiu* (educated, upper-class women) in the eighteenth-century High Qing literati culture. What Susan Mann did was introduce the various contexts in which the *guixiu* poets promoted their notion of woman's authorship; she also showed how the encouragement of male scholars at the time "further empowered women writers, who were becoming increasingly conscious of their moral authority, grounded [. . .] in the highest, purest forms of learning."¹⁵ Another sinologist, Ellen Widmer, has also introduced the rich social context of women writers in late imperial China.¹⁶ In my own works on Chinese women, I discussed how male editors and compilers during the Ming-Qing used various strategies to "canonize" women's writings by repeatedly associating women's anthologies (which total more than 3,000 titles) with

the classical canon, the *Shijing* (*Book of Songs*), or with the other classical source of poetry, the *Chuci* (*Songs of the South*).¹⁷ It seems to me that there was never a “gender war” in traditional China like the one raging between male authors and women writers in 18th and 19th century England, as described by Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their own*.¹⁸ Even if there had been a “difference” between the male and the female poets in traditional China, it was a difference without hostility or defensiveness.

Another area of research that has had a theoretical impact on American sinology concerns the study of the woman’s voice. Ironically, the primary stimulus for this scholarly interest was Lacan’s psychoanalysis and the concept of a “female language” invented by Lacan’s female disciples. Since, according to the French feminists, the “female language” is characterized by a difference in voice (for it is “non-linear” and “fluid”)¹⁹, sinologists began to ask if there had been a “female language” in the Chinese tradition as well. For scholars working in pre-modern China in the U.S., the earliest important work exploring the relationship between gender and language seems to have come from the discipline of anthropology. A case in point is the Ph. D. dissertation of William Wei Chiang (1991), a Yale graduate student in anthropology who based his doctoral research on a “women’s script” (*nushu*), then newly discovered in Hunan, China.²⁰ This women’s script reveals the existence, since early times, of a long-standing female oral tradition supported by a written language unique to the rural women in one small region of southern China. Unfortunately, few works written in the “women’s script” before the 17th century seem to have survived. Apparently it was customary for these women to burn their songs written in the women’s script, for they believed that poems could thus be carried to the underworld after their death. But even so, many folksongs and ballads in the women’s script are still preserved today, and they are noteworthy for their song-style features.²¹

According to William Chiang, the folklore-and-folksong genre out of which these poems of the *Nushu* emerged is highly significant, as it influenced their style and form; they either originally were or they became song lyrics. According to reliable sources, the village women

in the small town in Hunan regularly sang songs and stories recorded in the Women's Script while they gathered for needlework. There are still no data on the origins of the Women's Script, although there exist several legends that can perhaps explain the social function of this "female language." For example, one legend has it that a Song dynasty woman named Hu Yuxiu invented the Women's Script in order to express her secret, lonely thoughts in song form after becoming a royal concubine of Emperor Song Zhezong. More important than the specific origins of *Nushu*, however, is the question as to whether country women in ancient China were already deeply involved in an oral tradition, even if their songs might not have been written down in script form until later.

In other areas of research, the issue of "women's voice" has also inspired exciting new directions for scholarship in the field of American sinology. One of the new *topoi* is the relationship between women writers and the "literati" (*wenren*) culture during the Ming-Qing period, especially the interaction between the male and female voices in literature. For example, Maureen Robertson has noted how late Imperial Chinese women invented "speaking selves" by emphasizing the subject in their poems; and Wai-yee Li and I have examined the idea of self-invention on the part of Ming-Qing courtesans, exploring the various relationships between courtesan culture and the male literati's notion of the cultural ideal.²² Moreover, Paul Ropp and Grace Fong have addressed the question of the male literati's textualization of talented woman, and explained how this "textualization" affected readership and voice, both male and female.²³ In his article on "male fantasies" and "female realities," Wilt Idema also addressed a similar question: impersonation by the male literati of the woman's voice.²⁴ From this theoretical position I have coined the term "cross-voicing," which of course echoes "cross dressing," to refer to the fluidity of "voices" in Chinese poetry.²⁵ This is not only because it was customary, in the first place, for Chinese male authors to speak in the female voice (though often interpreting it allegorically); women poets also tried to emulate the male voice in their deliberate attempt to free themselves from the feminine style.²⁶ In my article on "Ming-Qing Women Poets and Cul-

tural Androgyny," I further emphasize the cooperation of male literati and women poets, especially their use of a shared language, by which they were able to express a harmonious joining of *yin* and *yang*.²⁷ It is in the sense of this *yin-yang* complementarity and oneness that the term "cultural androgyny" (*androgyny* being a term from Greek, not Chinese) becomes meaningful. Clearly, all this emphasis on the profound interaction between the "voice" of the male literati and that of "talented women" reflects a very unique phenomenon in Chinese literature and culture.

Another closely related issue is that of the body. In this area the most important recent work in American sinology is Charlotte Furth's *A Flourishing Yin*, which provides a useful survey of the Chinese model of the androgynous body.²⁸ From her research on the *Inner Canon*, a canon of Chinese medicine, Furth has found that the "Yellow Emperor's body" (the typical Chinese body) is basically androgynous, "balancing *yin* and *yang* functions in everyone," and thus the very term "sex" used by Westerners to designate the physical difference between males and females is only a "misnomer."²⁹ In other words, according to the Chinese, there are both *yin* and *yang* elements in all male and female bodies. For example, in every body there is blood, which is the *yin* aspect of *qi*, and both semen and menstrual blood are grouped together as *yin*, while other more exposed parts of the body are called *yang*. It is through mutually complementary movement that *yin* and *yang* work in the human body. As Furth puts it:

Throughout, the most important signifiers of bodily gender remained *yin* and *yang*. These interpenetrate in all bodies, and all bodies are microcosmic, resonating with the *yin yang* rhythms of Heaven and Earth manifest in the cycles of nature [. . .]. From one aspect male and female bodies are identical or homologous and gender difference is a relative and flexible aspect of the body [. . .]. Thus *yin* and *yang* come to name masculine or feminine aspects of bodily nature over a range of proportions that vary according to the individual [. . .].³⁰

Here it is obvious that, to the Chinese, the female sex is never a "lack" or the "other." It is the complementary relationship between the *yin* and *yang* that results in harmonious unity in a single person. In her discussion of the Chinese androgynous body, Furth particularly calls our attention to the unique power of the maternal body in traditional China. In this connection, Furth specifically faults the Euro-American "sexual culture" for promoting a kind of sexuality that is divorced from reproduction.³¹ In contrast to this, the Chinese discourse on bodily androgyny was always based on the idea of "gender homology or complementarity," and so "its body of *yin* and *yang* claimed the high ground as a metaphorical representation of the dynamic organicism of a cosmos uniting Heaven, Earth, and Humanity."³² Perhaps one can say that it is the "difference" of the Chinese understanding of the body and its symbolic meanings that has proven so appealing to the sinologists in America. It appears to me that the complementary philosophy of *yin* and *yang* rooted in traditional Chinese culture and thought can be used as one of the solutions to the troubling notion of "difference" in modern Western feminism.

But of course not all Western feminist critics nowadays agree with the idea of "difference." The idea was no doubt useful at first, especially in addressing the problem of gender inequality. However, as time went on, the concept of the binary opposition of male and female as proposed by early feminist critics gradually became an issue of debate. Nina Baym's article, "The Madwoman and Her Language: Why I Don't Do Feminist Literary Theory," stands out as an especially harsh but convincing attack on the issue of difference; it explained that "when you start with a theory of difference, you can't see anything but."³³ Nina Baym is deeply troubled by the idea of sexual difference, for she feels that such a biased position could lead to some serious misreadings of gender relations.³⁴ In her view, it is the desire to maintain an absolute gender difference that has led to the unfortunate invention of the "madwoman" and the "female language" in the first place. Baym's questioning of the idea of "difference" has exercised an enormous impact on the later rereading of Western feminism. However, the real turning point came when the historian Joan W. Scott seriously

cautioned against the fixed categories of “man” and “woman” in her seminal article, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” Scott feels that a reductive reading of gender difference, such as the one constructed by Carol Gilligan, could easily promote a sexual antagonism that would be harmful to today’s society. Thus she openly attacks Gilligan’s theory regarding women’s “different voices”:

It is precisely that opposition, in all its tedium and monotony, that (to return to the Anglo-American side) Carol Gilligan’s work has promoted. Gilligan explained the divergent paths of moral development followed by boys and girls in terms of differences of “experience” (lived reality). It is not surprising that historians of women have picked up her idea and used them to explain the “different voices” their work has enabled them to hear [. . .].³⁵

Joan Scott’s critique of the notion of difference became widely quoted and was thus crucial to the development of the new theoretical position taken up by the younger feminist critics of the 1990s. Judith Butler’s critically acclaimed book, *Gender Trouble*, was in part a contribution to the formation of this new feminism. What Judith Butler did was deconstruct the traditional notion of a fixed gender identity by introducing the notion of gender as performativity. She writes in her chapter entitled “Subversive Bodily Acts”:

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts* [. . .].³⁶

Here we hear an echo, albeit in a different tone, of the kind of androgyny some American sinologists are advocating *via* the Chinese notion of gender. If Judith Butler is the “high theoretical priestess” of the present-day popular culture in the West (as Mary Evans calls her),³⁷ then Charlotte Furth can very well be the “translator” of the Chinese

Yellow Emperor. Despite the great differences in their theoretical approaches, we see in them a similar insistence on the ambiguities of sexual difference and gender identity. In other words, we begin to see not only differences but also a sense of complementarity in the Western and Chinese methods of conceptualization. But as the comparatist Earl Miner has said, "relative likeness is not identity [. . .]. Were literatures identical, there would be nothing to compare."³⁸ Yet in reviewing the main concepts behind these two different approaches, we can see in both the desire to gain a clearer understanding of the many possibilities of the human body, and thus to see gender as an immensely rich source of cultural meanings.

However, whereas China scholars have learned so much from Western feminist criticism and have been able to offer valuable comparative perspectives, the Euro-American critics have unfortunately not been able to take full advantage of the fruits of American sinology in this area.³⁹ For example, one notices that although Furth and other sinologists have used Butler's books as sources for their research,⁴⁰ Butler has not consulted any sinological scholarship in her work on gender and body. I think that, for instance, Furth's articles on the *yin-yang* idea—especially the notion that *yin-yang* does not equate with female-male dualism—could have added important theoretical insights to Butler's work. Moreover, the present proliferation of new works on sexuality and gender in the field of sinology is simply unprecedented, and never before are such publications so easily accessible.⁴¹ In this global age of communication, what we need is a "two-way process"; according to sinologist Emma Teng this would be the best way of reaching a true global understanding:

Western theory must be incorporated into the study of China and research on China must be used to generate particular theories of gender from the ground up, theories that could either inform or challenge general theories of gender [. . .].⁴²

Needless to say, this two-way (East-West, West-East) process in

the transmission of gender criticism could also apply to other fields in comparative literature. Perhaps, after all, we may at last discover that the West and Asia are not mutually exclusive but mutually empowering.

NOTES

¹ Susan Mann, "What Can Feminist Theory Do for the Study of Chinese History? A Brief Review of Scholarship in the U.S.," *Jindai Zhongguo funu shi yanjiu (Research on Women in Modern Chinese History)* 1 (June 6, 1993): 241.

² Jinhua Emma Deng, "The Construction of 'Traditional Chinese Women' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review," *Signs* 22.1 (1996): 134.

³ Haun Saussy, *Group Tours and Happy Mythologies: Adventures in Cultural China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, forthcoming); Manuscript 5.

⁴ Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980); *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987); *The Feminist Difference* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998).

⁵ Barbara Johnson, "Gender Theory and the Yale School," in *Rhetoric and Form: Deconstruction at Yale*, edited by Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1985) 101–12. The essay was later revised and included in Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* 32–41.

⁶ Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* 2.

⁷ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979).

⁸ For a comparison of the Anglo-American School and the French School of Feminism, see Nina Baym, "The Madwoman and Her Languages: Why I Don't Do Feminist Literary Theory," in *Feminisms*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, rev. ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1997) 279–92; See also Wang Ning, "Ershi shiji xifang wenxue bijiao yanjiu" (Western Comparative Literature in the Twen-

tieth Century), in Wang Ning's *Selected Works in Cultural Studies and Criticism* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2000) 2: 45.

⁹ This is, of course, in the words of Christiane Makward. See Christiane Makward, "To Be or Not To Be [. . .] A Feminist Speaker," trans. Marlène Barsoum, Alice Jardine, and Hester Eisenstein, in *The Future of Difference*, ed. Alice Jardine and Hester Eisenstein (Boston: C. K. Hall, 1980) 96. I am indebted to Nina Baym's article for this citation. See Nina Baym, "The Madwoman and Her Languages: Why I Don't Do Feminist Literary Theory" 282, 291.

¹⁰ Julia Kristeva, "Warnings," in *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1981) 136. I am indebted to Mary Evans for this citation. See Mary Evans, *Introducing Contemporary Feminist Thought* 49.

¹¹ Carol Gilligan, "In a Different Voice" (1982; rpt. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996).

¹² See also, Jinhua Emma Teng, "The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy" 133.

¹³ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994) 226–32.

¹⁴ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers* 3.

¹⁵ Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 31.

¹⁶ Ellen Widmer, "The Epistolary World of Female Talent in Seventeenth-Century China," *Late Imperial China* 10.2 (1989): 1–43; "Xiaoqing's Literary Legacy and the Place of the Woman Writer in Late Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 111–55.

¹⁷ Kang-i Sun Chang, "Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and Their Selection Strategies," in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, edited by Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 147–70.

¹⁸ According to Elaine Showalter, there was a gender war between male and female authors in 18th and 19th century England, especially when men began to feel threatened by what they perceived to be a "female literary invasion" in which women novelists seemed to be

“engaged in a kind of aggressive conspiracy to rob men of their markets, steal their subject matter, and snatch away their young lady readers [. . .].” See Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from the Brontës to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 39, 75. See also *A Literature of Their Own*, Expanded Version (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999). In the introduction to this new expanded version, Elaine Showalter writes: “in 1990, as the approaching millennium kindled a new interest in women’s fiction of the 1890s, *A Literature of Their Own* came under attack from a new generation of feminist literary critics. Some complained that I was too dismissive of the artistic importance of women novelists of the 1890s [. . .]” (xxvii). But, as Showalter explains, in the early 1970s she was under the influence of “both the dominant masculine literary tradition and the muted feminine one” (xvi).

¹⁹ See Christiane Makward, “To Be or Not To Be [. . .] A Feminist Speaker,” in *The Future of Difference*, ed. Alice Jardine and Hester Eisenstein 96.

²⁰ William Wei Chiang, “We Two Know the Script”, Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1991. The dissertation was later published as a monograph. See William W. Chiang, *We Two Know the Script; We Have Become Good Friends: Linguistic and Social Aspects of the Women’s Script Literary in Southern Hunan, China* (Lanham: UP of America, 1995).

²¹ GaoYinxian and Yi Nianhua, *Nushu* edited by Gong Zhebing (Taipei: Funu xinzhi jijinhui, 1991).

²² See articles by Maureen Robertson and Wai-ye Li, in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 171–271, 46–73; Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Late Ming Poet Ch’en Tzu-lung: Crises of Love and Loyalty* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991), and “Liu Shih and Hsü Ts’an: Feminine or Feminist?” in *Voice of the Song Lyric in China*, ed. Pauline Yu (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994) 169–87; Clara Wing-Chung Ho, “Encouragement from the Opposite Gender: Male Scholars’ Interests in Women’s Publications in Ch’ing China—A Bibliographical Study,” in *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, ed. Harriet

Zurndorfer 308–53.

²³ Paul S. Ropp, *Banished Immortal: Searching for Shuangqing, China's Peasant Woman Poet* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2001); Grace Fong, "De/Constructing A Feminine Ideal in the Eighteenth Century: Random Records of West-Green and the Story of Shuangqing," in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Widmer and Chang 264–81.

²⁴ Wilt L. Idema, "Male Fantasies and Female Realities: Chu Shu-chen and Chang Yü-niang and Their Biographers," in *Chinese Women in the Imperial Past: New Perspectives*, ed. Harriet Zurndorfer (Leiden: Brill, 1999) 19–52.

²⁵ Kang-i Sun Chang, "What Can Gender Theory Do for the Study of Traditional Chinese Literature?" Paper presented at the conference on "Interpreting Cultures—China Facing the Challenge of the New Millennium," U of Stockholm, May 5–9, 2000 (6).

²⁶ Kang-i Sun Chang, "Gender and Canonicity: Ming-Qing Women Poets in the Eyes of the Male Literati," in *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry*, ed. Grace S. Fong (Montreal: McGill U, Center for East Asian Research, 2001) 1: 8.

²⁷ Kang-i Sun Chang, "Ming-Qing Women Poets and Cultural Androgyny," *Tamkang Review* 30.2 (1999): 15.

²⁸ Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China's Medical History, 960–1665* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999).

²⁹ Furth, *A Flourishing Yin* 46.

³⁰ Furth, *A Flourishing Yin* 46, 48.

³¹ Furth, *A Flourishing Yin* 311.

³² Furth, *A Flourishing Yin* 311.

³³ See Nina Baym's article, in *Feminisms* 284.

³⁴ Nina Baym, "The Madwoman and Her Languages: Why I Don't Do Feminist Literary Theory," in *Feminisms*, edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, rev. ed., 280.

³⁵ Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" 1065.

³⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; rpt. New York: Routledge, 1999) 179.

³⁷ Mary Evans, *Introducing Contemporary Feminist Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1997) 103.

³⁸ Earl Miner, *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990) 225.

³⁹ In a different context, Earl Miner also notices a similar problem: "There is [. . .] a hegemonic presumption that Western practice provides the norm for which we must dig and dig to find some counterpart in another literature, something that will be certain to differ enough as to prove the point that it is inferior" (*Comparative Poetics* 225). Here Earl Miner was speaking from the perspective of "cultural relativism." For the idea of cultural pluralism, see Yue Daiyun, "Plurality of Cultures in the Context of Globalization," *Comparative Literature: East & West* 1 (2000): 34–43.

⁴⁰ Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin*, 321. See also Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001) 318.

⁴¹ See the appendix to this paper: "A Bibliography of Gender Studies on Traditional China."

⁴² Jinhua Emma Teng, "The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy" 143.

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