



China Perspectives

50 | november- december 2003
Varia

Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, eds., Chinese Femininities and Chinese Masculinities

Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002, 460 p.

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/785>
ISSN: 1996-4617

Publisher

Centre d'étude français sur la Chine contemporaine

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 December 2003
ISSN: 2070-3449

Electronic reference

Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce, « Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, eds., Chinese Femininities and Chinese Masculinities », *China Perspectives* [Online], 50 | november- december 2003, Online since 20 April 2007, connection on 28 October 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/785>

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- 1 This is an extremely interesting and detailed collection of essays on how femininities and masculinities have been defined from the Qing era to present-day China. It attempts to look at how gender has been defined from a variety of angles: from the legal perspective to the lens of literary critics and ethnographic case studies. This collection is divided into eight parts; each part contains two chapters dealing with one theme, one on Chinese women and the other on Chinese men, thus forming a binary pair.
- 2 Part One looks at how gender was defined by Qing law and how the law regulated the behaviour of men and women from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The notion of women's chastity, sexuality and virtue were explored in the Ming courtroom and women who failed to uphold chastity and virtue or were seen as overtly sexual were penalised within the legal system. In the same vein, men's masculinity was also bound within Qing law where the social deviants and those at the margins, such as the vagabonds, bandits, Buddhist monks and Daoist priests were considered to be dangerous as they were seen as unable to regulate their sexuality.
- 3 Part Two explores the definition of women and men within marriage and the family system from the mid-Qing to the early Republican era. Here, the chapter offers us a glimpse into how girls and daughters were trained to become brides and wives from the Confucian order. Contrasting with this article is another article on how Chinese youths viewed the role of family as a hindering block to individual self-realisation and self-actualisation in the 1920s. Here, the traditional family structure with patriarchy at

its helm was seen as a suffocating institution by young Chinese men, who advocated the abolition of the traditional arranged marriage and nuclear family.

- 4 Part Three looks at the role of women and men in Chinese literature. It explores the influence of female writers in expressing the female self and how the authors position themselves within the literary tradition. To a certain degree, the authors attempt to negotiate their role as writers and embedded individuals within the traditional patriarchy structure and their attempt to move out of it. On the flip side, Larson discusses the continued dominance of male writers within the Chinese literary world where they are termed as “connoisseurs”.
- 5 Part Four examines marginal women and men in Chinese society. Hershatter explores the Shanghai prostitutes in the early twentieth century while Ownby looks at male banditry. Both groups were social deviants who did not fit into the existing social structure. The status of the prostitutes experienced a decline through the decades from urbane courtesans to streetwalkers. On the other hand, Ownby argues that various literary works portrayed the bandits differently—those with negative images portrayed them as perverse rebels while the positive images portrayed them as romantic heroes. They were often seen as frustrated bachelors by their vagabond nature, and not suited to married life.
- 6 Part Five moves to the more contemporary aspects of gender redefinition in the Communist era. During the Cultural Revolution, women became extremely visible, vocal and violent as seen from their actions during the Cultural Revolution. Such a change in the female characteristic was accompanied by the changing fashion where women dressed in trousers and Mao suits to portray a more masculine image instead of the feminine figure. In contrast with this is the paper on the male worker rebels in Shanghai. Young male workers were actively involved in the labour movements in search of their identities. However, there were also a group of social misfits who expressed their identity through acts of gangster machismo.
- 7 Part Six explores the gendered body, exploring the male and female body from the perspective of medical anthropology. Here, Chinese understanding of menstruation, blood and energy, *qi* are analysed in relation to reproduction, fertility and power associated with women. Specifically Furth explores the medicalisations of female blood in China and identified various types of bloods for various purposes. Thus, plain blood, menstrual blood and placental blood all performed different functions. Likewise, *qi* is also associated with masculinity. *Qigong* is often regarded as energy with healing powers and those in possession of *qigong* skills are seen as highly masculine. Thus, the popularisation of *qigong* as an important form of martial art has resulted in the proliferation of *qigong* masters who are seen as highly masculine.
- 8 Part Seven explores gender and sexual identity in contemporary China from the 1980s onwards. Evans traces the changing roles of women as wives since the start of Communist takeover to the present while Jankowiak looks at men and women relationship within the family and parental-child bond and argues that in contemporary urban China, a supportive environment results in closer father-child relationships.
- 9 Part Eight examines gender and sexuality among the ethnic minorities in China. Schein explores how the women have been constructed to be different from the Han majority and argues for internal orientalism and that the ethnic elites and leaders facilitated this process in creating an exotic image for Han consumption. In the next chapter,

Litzinger looks at ethnic Yao men and their sociality as well as his interaction with them. Litzinger attempts to answer the differences between the activities and behaviour of these Yao men from the dominant representation put forth by the official view.

- 10 Taken as a whole, this book provides us with rich information regarding the numerous aspects of female and male representations in mainland China.
- 11 However, it is a pity that the collection does not contain more chapters on the changing representations on femininities and masculinities in contemporary China, particularly after the Reform era and especially from the 1990s onwards. As China has opened up, rapid modernisation and development coupled with globalisation has resulted in vast changes in all aspects of life, including how men and women look at themselves, respond to their identity, sexuality, family and marriage. For example, consumer products such as readily available cosmetics and beauty products must have impacted on the redefinition of the feminine and masculine ideal in recent days. Likewise, modern Chinese literary works also portray a different breed of men and women and their representations. It would have been good for the book to incorporate some chapters on the changing profiles of Chinese men and women and their representation. Maybe this could be the follow-up project.