

# Expanding the Feminine /National Imaginary: Social and Martial Heroines in Late Qing Women's Journals \*

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## Abstract

Chinese women's journals opened up a radically new public space at the turn of the twentieth century without signaling a total rupture with the past. The depth and significance of historical resonances in the new discursive field of the women's press is salient in a variety of columns devoted to the genre of female

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biography.

By the time Chinese women's journals were founded, the biographical narrative form had served for at least two millennia as one of the prime modes of regulating and imagining feminine subjecthood: as a technology of the female self. This article focuses on the evolving uses of this technology in the revaluation and globalization of Chinese culture in late Qing women's journals. These journals widely featured the stories of both historical Chinese and modern Western heroines. Editors, authors, and translators variously used these dramatic tales to introduce their readers to new global realities and to encourage new modes of female social and political engagement.

The main distinction in these biographical narratives was not between Chinese and Western exemplars. Rather, it was between *modes of representing* indigenous or foreign canonical figures, a crucial ideological and cultural task performed by the parabiography—the material surrounding the biography through which an editor or compiler directs the reader's understanding. The two modes of female representation most prevalent in late Qing women's journals were of social heroines and martial warriors. Tensions between the tales of these two kinds of heroines expose fissures in—and ultimately the limited scope of—approaches to the Chinese woman question. They further reveal divergent understandings of the turn-of-the-century nationalist project.

**Key Words:** female biography, social heroines, martial heroines, Western exemplars

Chinese women's journals opened up a radically new public space at the turn of the twentieth century. Within this new medium male and female writers debated the increasingly pressing “woman question” (nüzi wenti 女子問題 or funü wenti 婦女問題) — the question of how, or whether, to redefine female

domestic obligations, intellectual needs, and political roles within the modern world order.<sup>1</sup> All of their discussions — whether of marriage practices, public schooling, or social reform — were framed by the two most prominent issues of the day: China's national survival and the role of Western models in securing it.

A close examination of the journals' contents reveals that despite the newness of their political concerns and textual form, this new medium did not signal a total rupture with the past. The depth and significance of historical resonances in the discursive field of the women's press is most salient in certain parts of the journals including the literary or poetry section, and in a variety of columns devoted to the genre of female biography — the focus of this article.

By the time the first Chinese women's journals were founded, biography had served for at least two millennia as one of the prime modes of regulating and imagining feminine subjecthood: as a technology of the female self.<sup>2</sup> Collections of exemplary biographies in the form of the Ur-text in this tradition, Liu Xiang's 劉向 (79-8 B.C.E.) *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (Arrayed traditions of women's lives), together with didactic texts, dynastic histories, and local gazetteers had codified female norms and prescribed female behavior from the Han dynasty through the end of the Qing. While the values and ritual principles these texts had long sought to inculcate were often unceremoniously

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- 1 On the late Qing woman question and the journals which aired it, see Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming, 2008).
  - 2 Although my use of "technology of the self" resonates with Foucault's "technologies of the self" in that it is related to the ways the self is formed (through the reading of biographies) and becomes an object of knowledge (through the writing of biographies), he is most interested in the relationship between interdictions and the self (in pagan and early Christian practices), rather than models for the self. See Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), pp. 16-49.

rejected at the turn of the twentieth century, the efficacy of the biographical narrative form was never challenged. Authors who declared the *Lienü zhuan* obsolete in one breath, reappropriated the stories of Liu Xiang's key protagonists in the next. Critics of old books, old thinking, and old ways promoted the new by radically resignifying the stories of historical Chinese exemplars and by adding highly sinified accounts of foreign heroines to the existing exemplar repertoire. Nowhere is the enduring power of female biography more evident than in the pages of the women's press.

This article briefly explores the function of biography in the Chinese tradition before focusing on its evolving role in the revaluation and globalization of Chinese culture in late Qing women's journals. A cursory glance at the biographies published in these journals indicates that both Chinese and Western women were represented and that all served to encourage new modes of female social and political engagement. A closer reading reveals, however, that these texts — and by extension, this period — cannot be understood in terms of distinct orders of past, present, Chinese and Western values. Foreign models who served as carriers of new ideas and practices were often imbued with Chinese feminine qualities just as historical Chinese woman warriors were endowed with modern political aspirations. The main distinction in biographical narratives of this period was not between Chinese and Western exemplars but between *modes of representing* — indigenous or foreign — canonical figures. For biography — like all technologies — does not have an inherent significance, nor do tales of specific biographical subjects have a fixed or intrinsic meaning. It is the parabiography — the material surrounding the biography through which an editor or compiler directs the reader's understanding — that does the crucial ideological and cultural work.<sup>3</sup>

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3 I have adapted the idea of parabiography from Gérard Genette's idea of the paratext. See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

The two modes of female representation most prevalent in late Qing women's journals were of social heroines and martial warriors. Certain journals including *Beijing nübao* 北京女報 (Beijing women's journal), *Zhongguo xin nüjie zazhi* 中國新女界雜誌 (Magazine of the new Chinese woman), and *Funü shibao* 婦女時報 (The women's eastern times), generally celebrated social heroines, while others — *Nüxue bao* 女學報 (Journal of women's learning), *Nüzi shijie* 女子世界 (Women's world), and *Nübao* 女報 (The national women's journal) almost exclusively featured martial warriors. These loose typologies of female icons and women's journals were linked to competing, if overlapping, visions of Chinese womanhood and nationhood at the turn of the twentieth century. Representations of exemplary social and martial heroines expose fissures in — and the ultimately limited scope of — approaches to the Chinese woman question. They further reveal divergent understandings of the turn-of-the-century nationalist project.

## Biography: A Chinese Technology of the Self

In the Confucian cultural tradition both female and male biography functioned not only as a means of commemoration but as a technology of the self. Individuals were enjoined to seek moral improvement not by following the rites but by following the example of former paragons.<sup>4</sup> The same ancient exemplars, whether from Sima Qian's (145-c.a. 86 B.C.E.) *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi ji* 史記), Liu Xiang's *Arrayed Traditions*, or the dynastic histories, were repeatedly invoked throughout later history. While the core of

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4 Huang Chun-chieh, "'Time' and 'Supertime' in Chinese Historical Thinking," in Huang Chun-chieh and John B. Henderson eds., *Notions of Time in Chinese Historical Thinking* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press of Hong Kong, 2006), p. 34; Arthur F. Wright, "Values, Roles, and Personalities," eds. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1962), p. 9.

these canonical tales may have been preserved in their integrity in subsequent editions, their meaning repeatedly shifted as new parabiographical elements were introduced — including changes in textual form, new accompanying illustrations or, most importantly, appended commentaries. Like palimpsests, historical life narratives acquired new layers of significance as subsequent generations repeatedly grafted new “hypertexts” onto existing biographical “hypotexts.”<sup>5</sup> Later readers thus encountered a Han dynasty paragon or a heroine of the Northern and Southern Dynasties through levels of sedimented meanings and centuries of textual transformations.

Mutability had, therefore, long been a feature of Chinese biographical writing. The practice of overwriting biographical texts greatly intensified at the turn of the twentieth century, however, as writers for new media promoted their own visions of gender and historical change through the biographical narrative form. Acutely aware of China’s political crisis, these authors broadened the moral purpose of extant women’s life stories in order to make them instruments of the new women’s education and tools of national transformation. Attentive to new global imperatives that increasingly trumped the sanctity of the past, they aggressively invested historical stories with novel cultural meanings. Committed to creating a new future, they altered once authoritative texts and stripped away later semantic accretions.

The shifting geopolitical realities which inspired these radical rewritings, compelled contributors to the women’s press to not only resignify biographies in the existing repertoire but to expand that repertoire to include new Western models. As they absorbed the dramatic tales of European and American

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5 By definition, a palimpsest is “a written document, usually on vellum or parchment [the hypotext], that has been written upon several times [by hypertexts], often with remnants of erased writing still visible.” Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

women — including Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96), and Joan of Arc (1412-31) — into the Chinese canon, the more radical among them attempted to alter biography's basic function and temporal thrust. Encouraging their female readers to *use* biography as a technology of self-creation rather than *submit* to it as a tool of regulation, new-style authors shifted the emphasis in the reader/biography encounter from the virtuous, self-sacrificing model of the past to the heroic, self-constituting subject of the future.

Readers of the women's press thus encountered a variety of Chinese and Western models and a range of future possibilities. They could be called upon to assume the qualities of (Western) social heroines devoted to such causes as public health reform and racial equality or of (Western and Chinese) martial heroines who served as women warriors, assassins, and anarchists. Framed with familiar tropes of love, nurturing, and service, accounts of social heroines encouraged young women to extend familiar feminine roles into the public and national spheres. In contrast, representations of martial heroines excised almost all relational references and privileged the woman's autonomous and often bloody entrée into world history.

## Social Heroines

Chinese exemplars were revered in historical didactic texts for private actions that had, at best, *indirect* public ramifications. Western social heroines, in contrast, were celebrated in late Qing women's journals for *direct* public actions that had often profound global ramifications. This difference is manifest in the biographies and further underlined in parabiographies which directly relate the foreign heroines' stories to China's current situation. Whereas accounts of Chinese paragons had, from the time of Liu Xiang, ended with citations from the ancients that drew the reader deeper into the world of

Confucian values, the codas to biographies of foreign heroines lamented China's inferior status in the international arena and exhorted Chinese women to join the national struggle.

Turn-of-the-twentieth-century authors for women's journals used an array of Western female social reformers to galvanize their female compatriots. Most prominent among them are the British nurse and public health reformer Florence Nightingale (Niejike'er 涅幾柯兒, Nandingge'er 南丁格爾) and three American women: the social reformer, Francis Willard (Fulanzhisi 扶蘭志斯, Weinade 維納德, 1839-98), the abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe (Picha 批茶, Siduo Biqi 斯多婢棲), and the educator, Mary Lyon (Lihen 黎痕, 1797-1849).

Nightingale was one of the most renowned Western heroines in China at the turn of the twentieth century. A hospital nurse who eased the suffering of British soldiers in the Crimean War in the early 1850s, she had spearheaded public health reform in Britain thereafter. Authors used her story to foster a global humanitarian vision, to encourage young Chinese women to serve as politically engaged nurses, and to enlighten them about international organizations.

In late Qing journals Nightingale's name became synonymous with the International Red Cross, an organization that reform-minded Chinese lamented their country had yet to join.<sup>6</sup> A biography in the *Magazine of the New Chinese Woman* presents her as the founder of an arm of the Red Cross. It encourages Chinese women to volunteer as nurses in conflict-ridden early-twentieth-century China and emulate Florence's loving care of the wounded at the time of the Crimean War.<sup>7</sup> A certain Gan Hui 乾慧, who freely

6 See, for example, "Nü xuesheng shang Zhen beizi shu" 女學生上振貝子書 (Female students offer a petition to the Manchu noble [Zai] Zhen), *Hubei xuesheng jie* 湖北學生界 (Students of Hubei), 5 (May 27, 1903), pp. 136-38 [728-30].

7 "Chuangshe wanguo Hongshizi kanhufuduizhe Natingge'er furen zhuan" 創設萬國紅



translated an account of Nightingale's life in the *Journal of Women's Learning*, used her example to criticize Chinese ignorance of international protocols. He announced in his commentary that Westerners had reprimanded Chinese members of a Beijing relief society (*jiuji shanhui* 救濟善會) for misappropriating the Red Cross banner at the time of the Boxer Uprising in 1900.<sup>8</sup>

Authors used the example of the American social reformer and founder of the National Women's Temperance Union, Francis Willard, as they used Nightingale's story, to expose China's international seclusion and rouse Chinese women to patriotic action. The Temperance Union which Willard established in the early 1870s with a broad social mandate to promote anti-drinking policies, reform prostitution, and aid recently released prisoners, was internationalized from 1883. Branches were established in Europe and union leaders began to disseminate its message in various corners of Asia.<sup>9</sup> A biography that appeared in the *Beijing Women's Journal* highlighted the global dimensions of Willard's work and criticized China's international isolation. Of all the nations Temperance Union delegates had visited, the biography bemoaned, China alone had been unresponsive to Willard's message. While "customs and hearts were transformed all over the world" in accordance with Willard's principles, Chinese women were still "deep in slumber." As long as they remained unawakened, China's future was hopelessly bleak.<sup>10</sup>

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十字看護婦隊者奈挺格爾夫人傳 (A biography of the founder of the International Red Cross Nurse's Team, Mrs. Nightingale), *XNJZZ* 1, 2 (February 5, March 5, 1907), pp. 59-64; 71-74.

8 "Yingguo nüjie Niejike'er zhuan" 英國女傑涅幾柯兒傳 (Biography of Florence Nightingale), freely translated by Gan Hui 乾慧, recorded by Zhi Du 智度, *NXB* 2: 4 (November 1903), p. 41.

9 Edward T. James ed., *Notable American Women 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), Vol. 3, p. 617.

10 "Yanshuo Fulanzhisi" 演說扶蘭志斯 (Frances), *BJNB* (May 2, 3, reprinted December 12, 13 1908). This biography was derived from a popular textbook of the period, Yang Qianli 楊千里, *Nüzi xin duben* 女子新讀本 (New reader for girls and women) (Shanghai:

Harriet Beecher Stowe, the American abolitionist and author of the renowned anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was a model of a different kind of social action in the late Qing social imaginary. While Chinese authors used Willard's and Nightingale's achievements to raise awareness of specific humanitarian organizations, they invoked Beecher Stowe's example to underline the principle of global equality. Whether their priority was to liberate their country from its dual "slavery" to the ruling Manchus and foreign imperialists, or to improve China's international stature by alleviating inequities within their own society, they appropriated Beecher Stowe's abolitionist message.

The writer and poet Jiang Zhiyou 蔣智由 (1865-1929) freely translated the most influential biography of Beecher Stowe in this period. Published in *Xuanbao* 選報 (Digest magazine) in 1902, this biography was reprinted in both the *Journal of Women's Learning* and Liang Qichao's *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 (New People's Miscellany) in July of that same year.<sup>11</sup> In a speech that was also recorded in the *Journal of Women's Learning*, Jiang proclaimed that Beecher Stowe was a greater exemplar than either the celebrated Chinese woman warrior Hua Mulan 花木蘭 (ca. 500) or the renowned French patriot Joan of Arc. While Mulan was merely an exemplar of familism (*shenjia zhuyi*), and Joan a paragon of nationalism (*guojia zhuyi*), Beecher Stowe was a symbol of cosmopolitanism (*shijie zhuyi*).<sup>12</sup> According to Jiang's biography,

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Wenming shuju, 1905), II: 9b-11b. See also, Xia Xiaohong 夏曉虹, "Wan-Qing nüxing dianfan de duoyuan jingguan — cong Zhongwai nüjie zhuan dao nübao zhuanji lan" 晚清女性典範的多元景觀 — 從中外女傑傳到女報傳記 (The richly varied landscape of female models in the late Qing: from biographies of Chinese and Western heroines to biography columns in women's journals). *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 中國現代文學研究叢刊 110: 3 (2006), p. 40.

11 I am using the *Xinmin congbao* version as I have been unable to locate the *NXB* version. Jiang Zhiyou 蔣智由, "Wuyue hua" 五月花 (The flower of May ["The Mayflower"]), *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 12 (July 1902), pp. 8-10.

12 Jiang Zhiyou 蔣智由, "Aiguo Nü Xuexiao kaixiao yanshuo" 愛國女學校開校演說

the source of Beecher Stowe's cosmopolitan power was her abolitionist writing. Jiang states that her famous anti-slavery work circulated in over one million copies, was translated into nine languages, and published in 21 editions.<sup>13</sup> While these claims are largely true, Jiang identifies this famous novel not as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but as *The Mayflower* — a series of vignettes Beecher Stowe wrote on New England life — rendered as *Flower of May* [Wuyue hua] in Chinese.<sup>14</sup>

Beecher Stowe's message of human liberation and dignity — however attributed — was resonant in late Qing China when, as the biographies of Willard and Nightingale demonstrate, sensitivities about China's subordinate status in the international arena ran high. Writers further used her message to highlight gross domestic inequities that were viewed as one of the causes of China's global inferiority. In a speech recorded in the press in late 1902, the woman Du Qingchi 杜清池 (fl. 1902) stated that the widespread mistreatment of domestic servants by their mistresses signified China's underdevelopment. If the Chinese were to overcome the current “barbarian stage” of social evolution as Americans had when they abolished slavery, they would have to follow the example of *Flower of May*.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the authors of regulations for the Xiangshan Girl's School (Xiangshan nü xuexiao 香山女學校) in Guangzhou in 1904 used Beecher Stowe's example to admonish young women against abusing their female servants.<sup>16</sup>

As the Xiangshan school example suggests, late Qing journalists believed

(Speech at the opening of the Patriotic Girls' School), *Nübao* 女報 9 (December 1902), pp. 1b-2a.

13 [Jiang Zhiyou], “Wuyue.”

14 [Jiang Zhiyou], “Wuyue.”

15 “Nüshi Du Qingchi disici yanshuo gao” 女士杜清池第四次演說稿 (Transcript of Ms. Du Qinchí's fourth lecture), *Shuntian shibao* (November 25, 1902).

16 “Xiangshan nü xuexiao shiban jianzhang” 香山女學校試辦簡章 (Provisional regulations for the Xiangshan Girls' School), *NZSJ* 7 (July 1904), p. 74 [650].

female education would both end the debilitating narrow-mindedness of Chinese women and enhance China's international stature. While they rarely translated the many accounts of Western women novelists, painters, or poets available to them in Japanese sources — considering them inappropriate models for Chinese womanhood and nationhood — they widely appropriated the life story of Mary Lyon, the doyenne of Western women's education, in turn-of-the-twentieth-century East Asian materials.<sup>17</sup>

A biography of Lyon published in the *Magazine of the New Chinese Woman* in 1907 offers details about Lyon's background, her character, and her accomplishments. It describes how she helped her widowed mother during her [Image 1. "Photograph of the Great American Educator, Mary Lyon." *XNJZZ* 2 (March 5, 1907).]



17 Lyon was often the single educator among ten to twenty women with various accomplishments featured in Japanese collections of Western heroines.

childhood in Massachusetts while always remaining focused on her studies. Having taught in local schools from the age of seventeen, she founded Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1834. Her teachings were transformative for her students, for American womanhood, and for the American nation.<sup>18</sup>

Writers for the women's press tempered the determination and ambition of these various Western social heroines by infusing their stories with familiar Chinese tropes of feminine virtue. They often tied the foreign women's *public* achievements to *private* female impulses to mother and nurture. Although the journalists never presented Westerners as exemplary *biological* mothers — a sacrosanct status reserved for Chinese models — they did represent them as *social* mothers whose reassuring maternal qualities were metaphorically, rather than biologically inscribed.<sup>19</sup> *Magazine of the New Chinese Woman* biographies represent both Mary Lyon and Florence Nightingale as “loving mothers” (*cimu* 慈母) who were driven by a deep sense of universal love — the global corollary of maternal sentiment.<sup>20</sup> A ballad praises Harriet Beecher Stowe as a Western bodhisattva whose love extends to all of humanity.<sup>21</sup> A journal article hails Willard as the mother of civilization, the mother of the mothers of great heroes, and honored by all wise mothers.<sup>22</sup> At the same time,

18 Lingxi 靈希, “Meiguo da jiaoyujia Lihen nüshi zhuan” 美國大教育家黎痕女傳 (Biography of the great American educator, Ms. [Mary] Lyon). *XNJZZ* 2 (March 5, 1907), pp. 65-70.

19 I am not referring here to the biological/social distinction between mothers who bore/raised children, but to the distinction between mothers who raised — biological or non-biological sons — for the patriline, and women who were metaphorical “mothers” of social movements.

20 “Chuangshe wanguo,” p. 71; Lingxi, pp. 67-68.

21 Cited in Xia Xiaohong, “Ms Picha and Mrs Stowe,” in David Pollard ed., *Translation and Creation: Readings of Western Literature in Early Modern China, 1840-1918* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1998), p. 246.

22 Liu Gengzao 劉廣藻, trans., “Wuguan nüdi Weinade” 無冠女帝維納德 (The uncrowned queen [Francis] Willard), *Xinyi jie* 新譯界 2 (December 16, 1906). Reprinted in Li Yu-ning 李又寧 and Chang Yü-fa 張玉法 eds., *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao: 1842-1911* 近代中國女權運動史料 1842-1911 (Historical materials on the

these social heroines' bold extra-domestic initiatives are often depicted as dependent on the mediation of men — a remnant of the principle of thrice following (*sancong* 三從) according to which only men led while women followed. In Jiang's account of Beecher Stowe's life the visionary abolitionist feels compelled to seek the assistance of her husband and former teacher, Calvin Ellis Stowe (1802-86), in formulating her anti-slavery message. Although she does ultimately write her anti-slavery treatise herself, this initial self-deprecating assessment of her own abilities was deemed a necessary private preface to her book's resounding public impact.<sup>23</sup> Similarly in the *Magazine of the New Chinese Woman* biography of Lyon, the Reverend Edward Hitchcock, with whom Lyon had studied briefly in 1821, is portrayed as playing an instrumental role in the founding of Mount Holyoke in 1837.<sup>24</sup>

There is however, often an uneasy tension in turn-of-the-century journalistic materials, between keeping social heroines lodged in real or metaphorical webs of familial relations and emphasizing heroic independence generally associated with more forthright martial heroines. This tension is salient in biographies of Mary Lyon. The pseudonymous "Shoujuan" 瘦鵑 declared that she had been inspired to translate an account of the famous American's life in the *Women's Eastern Times* not because of Lyon's pseudo-maternal qualities but because of her determination to remain single (*shou dushen zhuyi* 守獨身主義) and develop women's education. Lyon's example would serve, Shoujuan hoped, as a mirror for her own Chinese female compatriots.<sup>25</sup>

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modern Chinese women's rights movement: 1842-1911) (Taipei: Taipei zhuanji wenxue she, 1975), Vol. 1, p. 344.

23 [Jiang Zhiyou], "Wuyue," p. 9.

24 Lingxi, p. 66, 68. On Lyon's life see James, Vol. 2, p. 444.

25 Shoujuan 瘦鵑, "Meiguo nü jiaoyujia Lihen nüshi yihua" 美國女教育家麗痕女士逸話 (An anecdotal account of the female American educator, [Mary] Lyon), *FNSB* 3 (May 13, 1911), pp. 47-49.

This tension is even more tangible when we read a translated biography of Lyon's life in the *Magazine of the New Chinese Woman* against the translator's own parabiography. Lingxi 靈希, the translator, faithfully renders the account from her Japanese source — Nemoto Shō's 根本正 *Ō-Bei joshi risshin den* 欧米女子立身伝 (“Famous Women” [Biographies of successful European and American women]) — including the description of Lyon as a loving mother cited above. The lesson she ultimately encourages her audience to derive from Lyon's life story in her own concluding commentary diverges radically from Nemoto's, however.<sup>26</sup> In Nemoto's excised Japanese conclusion, he makes Lyon's accomplishments compatible with East Asian familial norms, lauding her for nurturing good wives and wise mothers (*ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母) through her educational work.<sup>27</sup> Lingxi, in contrast, uses Lyon's story to underline the importance of social activism. She claims that the great educator had sacrificed her own life so that other American citizens could seek happiness and become enlightened. In Lingxi's retelling, Mary Lyon is not revered as a maternal figure but worshipped as a beloved hero (*jing'ai yingxiong* 敬愛英雄) and immortalized as a hero (*renjie* 人傑).<sup>28</sup>

## Martial Heroines

Biographies of Western social heroines recorded in the women's press offered Chinese women a new technology of subjecthood and nationhood — new ways of imagining their place in Chinese society and China's place in the global order. While most narratives of this type encouraged the cultivation of a

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26 Nemoto Shō (Tadashi) 根本正 trans. *Ō-Bei joshi risshin den* 欧米女子立身伝 (“Famous Women” [Biographies of successful European and American women]) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1906).

27 Nemoto, p. 82.

28 Lingxi, p. 70.

social self devoted to education, community action, or humanitarian work, some tales of Western female activists were resignified, as Lyon's was, to assert female heroic potential. The women who most dramatically fulfilled this potential and most directly inspired Chinese women to political action were, however, martial heroines. These militant exemplars included both historical Chinese women warriors and Western patriots and anarchists.

Chen Yiyi 陳以益 (fl. 1909), editor of the "*The National Women's Journal*" and male fellow traveler of the revolutionary martyr Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907), celebrated the exploits of renowned Chinese women warriors. Their achievements, he declared, belied conservative foreign gender theories that relegated women to constraining social or domestic roles. "According to Westerners," he wrote, "women can only serve their countries indirectly, while, according to [the principles of] Japanese education, a woman's talents can only be used to help her husband in his career, not to advance her own career. The examples of China's [Hua] Mulan and Liang Hongyu 梁紅玉 (ca. 1100-35), forcefully refute" these views.<sup>29</sup>

Hua Mulan, whom Chen so highly praised, was the most widely invoked Chinese woman warrior in the turn-of-the-twentieth-century women's press. Her renown derived from the popular "Ballad of Mulan" which was recorded in the sixth century but set at the turn of the fifth. In this dramatic story the young woman is overcome with anxiety when she sees her father's name on all twelve battle-rolls announcing recent conscripts into the Toba Wei army. Knowing her father was required to answer the emperor's call, she is also painfully aware that he is too old and sick to fight and that her brothers are too

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29 Chen Yiyi 陳以益, "Nanzun nübei yu xianmu liangqi" 男尊女卑與賢母良妻 (The view that males are superior to females and "wise mothers and good wives"), *Nübao* 女報 1: 2 (1909). Reprinted in Zhu Youhuan 朱有璣 ed., *Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao* 中國近代學制史料 (Historical materials on the modern Chinese educational system), *Jiaoyu kexue congshu* 教育科學叢書 (Compendium of sources on education) (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1986), 2: 2, p. 682.



young to replace him. She thus decides to disguise herself as a soldier and enlist in her father's stead. Concealing her beauty and preserving her chastity, she lives and fights for twelve years in the company of men. When the war finally ends and the emperor instructs members of her victorious regiment to name their own reward, Mulan asks only for a camel to take her back to her family. Upon her return, she immediately resumes her female dress and her weaving.<sup>30</sup>

Mid- and late imperial retellings of the Mulan story emphasize her filiality and return to feminine normativity at the battle's end. In sharp contrast, turn-of-the-twentieth-century women's journals de-emphasize Mulan's virtue and trumpet her martial valor in the (wildly anachronistic) language of China's struggle for national survival. Liu Yazhi 柳亞子 (1887-1958) uses Mulan's tale to promote a martial spirit (*shangwu jingshen* 尚武精神), the qualities of a militant citizenry (*junguomin zige* 軍國民資格), and nationalism (*minzu zhuyi* 民族主義) in a *Women's World* biography. He insists that Mulan joined the army not to uphold her family's honor but to "protect our nation" (*bao wo minzu* 保我民族). He has her boldly assert her individual subjecthood and national role. Although a girl, I am also a "citizen" (*guomin yi fenzi* 國民一分子), she states.<sup>31</sup>

Like Chen Yiyi, the pseudonymous "Guardian of Modesty" (Baosu 保素) asserts that Mulan was exceptional on an international scale. She writes in a poem published in the *Magazine of the New Chinese Woman* that all of the "famous beauties of Europe and America" were preoccupied with more trivial matters than joining an army. None could match China's Mulan. The Guardian also directly laments what most contemporary accounts attempted to

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30 The original ballad is featured in a number of late Qing sources including Yang Qianli, I, pp. 4a-b.

31 Yalu 亞盧 [Liu Yazhi 柳亞子], "Zhongguo diyi nü haojie nü junrenjia Hua Mulan zhuan" 中國第一女豪傑女軍人家花木蘭傳, *NZSJ* 3, (March 1904).

occlude — that China's great heroine ultimately relinquished her martial persona and willingly resumed her domestic role. Why, she asks, did Mulan "return to her old adornments" after having achieved such success as a soldier?<sup>32</sup>

As the 1911 revolution approached, journalists increasingly used Mulan's martial success as an instrument of mobilization, invoking her experience on the battlefield to encourage their female compatriots to engage in militant action. An article that reflects on the "Ballad of Mulan" in the *The Women's Eastern Times* asserts that "young women can serve as soldiers" (*jin'guo neng bing* 巾幗能兵) and rallies contemporary Chinese women to join newly formed women's armies.<sup>33</sup>

Liang Hongyu, another great Chinese woman warrior, was often paired with Mulan — as in Chen Yiyi's polemic cited above — in turn-of-the-twentieth-century journals. Liang merited one line in the *Song History* entry on her husband, the great general and patriot Han Shizhong 韓世忠 (1089-1151). "Lady Liang personally held a drum," the biography states, which she beat to galvanize her husband's troops in the struggle against the invading Jurchen forces.<sup>34</sup>

Liang was a particularly apposite model in the late Qing because the Jurchens who she so ardently resisted, were the ethnic forebears of the ruling Manchus. Guardian of Modesty elevates Liang's historical importance and

32 Baosu 保素, "Yongshi shi" 詠史詩 (An ode to history), *XNJZZ* 3 (April 5, 1907), p. 132.

33 See, for example, Xu Xuehua 徐雪華, "Du Mulan ci shuhou" 讀木蘭辭書後 (Written after reading the *Mulan ci*), *FNSB* 1 (May 13, 1911), p. 82; Xu Ce 徐珊, "Mulan ci" 木蘭辭, *FNSB* 2 (July 10, 1911), p. 74. On the uses of Mulan as a galvanizing model for women's military participation, education, employment, and political rights, see Louise Edwards, *Men and Women in Qing China: Gender in The Red Chamber Dream* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p. 89, 112.

34 "Han Shizhong" 韓世忠, in Tuotuo 脫脫 et. al. *Xinjiaoben Song shi bingfubian sanzong* 新校本宋史并附編三種 (Newly compiled version of the *History of the Song Dynasty* with three supplements) (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 364, p. 11361.

asserts her tale's contemporary relevance in her 1907 poem. She credits Liang with the survival of the Southern Song dynasty and bemoans that her critical historical contribution had not been adequately recognized.<sup>35</sup> Liu Yazhi, writing under the female pseudonym Pan Xiaohuang 潘小璜 in the *Women's World*, made the most forthright connection between Liang Hongyu's heroic past and present global struggles. Using current rhetoric to describe her exploits, he claims that "Liang threw herself into the maelstrom of the nationalist war" (*toushen yu minzu zhanzheng zhi panwo* 投身於民族戰爭之盤渦). More alarmingly, he expresses the wish that Chinese women would follow Liang and help him "kill those of other races and protect those of their own race" (*zhu wo sha yizhong bao tongzhong* 助我殺異種保同種).<sup>36</sup>

There are a number of foreign corollaries of Liang and Mulan in late Qing women's journal biographies. One of the most widely celebrated is the "French nationalist" martyr, Joan of Arc (Ru'an 如安, Ruoan 若安, Ruoan Dake 若安達克, Ru'an Dake niang 如安打克孃, 1412-31).

Both a religious visionary and one of Europe's first patriots, Joan led French efforts to repulse the British at the time of the Hundred Years' War (1336-1453). Her success on the battlefield thwarted the British Duke of Bedford's claim to the throne of France for his nephew Henry VI and resulted in the coronation of Charles VII in 1429. The British, who despised Joan as a French patriot, had her tried as a religious heretic after finally capturing her in 1430. Charged with contravening a biblical clothing law by cross-dressing, she

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35 Baosu, p. 132.

36 Pan Xiaohuang 潘小璜 [Liu Yazhi], "Zhongguo minzu zhuyi nü junren Liang Hongyu zhuan" 中國民族主義女軍人梁紅玉 (Biography of Liang Hongyu: a female soldier for Chinese nationalism), *NZSJ* 7 (July 1904), p. 22, 26. Xia Xiaohong ("Wan-Qing nüxing dianfan," 36) convincingly argues that the author of this essay, Pan Xiaohuang, who is described as "a girl from Songling," is Liu Yazhi. Songling is an alternate name for Wujiang county in Jiangsu province where Liu Yazhi was from.

[Image 2. A visual representation of the visionary patriot dressed in armor. “Ruoan Dake Jeanne d’Arc ji” 若安達克 Jeanne d’Arc 記 (Jeanne d’Arc), *FNSB* 4 (October 22, 1911).]



was burned at the stake in 1431 at the age of nineteen. Twenty-four years later Joan’s politically motivated conviction was overturned, and almost 500 years later she was fully redeemed in the eyes of the Catholic Church. She was declared “Venerable” in 1894, beatified in 1909, and canonized in 1920.<sup>37</sup>

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37 On Joan of Arc, see Regine Pernoud, *Joan of Arc by Herself and Her Witnesses*, trans. Edward Hyams (Lanham, NY, London: Scarborough House, 1994); Marina Warner,

Volumes had been written on this remarkable heroine in Western languages by the turn of the twentieth century. Many were translated in the non-Western world, including Meiji Japan, the source of a number of Chinese accounts.<sup>38</sup>

All late Qing journals hail Joan as a national heroine. In an article published in the pro-Manchu *Beijing Women's Journal*, the author uses Joan's ability to mobilize the meager French troops against the more powerful British to inspire loyalty to the Qing dynasty. He is careful to assert his own loyalty at the same time, however, explaining that he was not advocating a sycophantic embrace of all things foreign but the celebration of a woman who fervently loved her own country.<sup>39</sup> Mei Zhu 梅鑄, who freely translated a lengthy biography of Joan in the *Magazine of the New Chinese Woman*, shared none of the *Beijing Women's Journal's* trepidation about celebrating a foreign heroine. She passionately lauds Joan's "pressing sense of patriotism" and asserts that the tragic young heroine had not died in vain: the area north of the Loire River reverted to France shortly after her execution.<sup>40</sup> Qiu Jin also celebrates Joan's heroic achievement in a poem published in her *Zhongguo nübao* 中國女報

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*Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

- 38 On Joan in Egypt, see Marilyn Booth, "The Egyptian Lives of Jeanne d'Arc," in Lila Abu Lughod ed., *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 171-211. In 1866 two biographies of Joan, one clearly a translation, were published in Japan, and others would follow through the early twentieth century. See, for example, Asakura Kaseki 朝倉禾積, ed. *Fukkoku joketsu Joan jitsuden: Jiyū no shinka* 仏国女傑如安実伝一自由の新花 (A true biography of the French heroine Joan: A new flower of freedom) (Tokyo: Chōbōdō, 1886); Janet Tuckey, *Kaiten iseki Fukkoku bidan* 回天偉蹟仏国美談 (The French tale of an extraordinary achievement), trans. Awaya Kan'ichi 粟屋閑一 (Tokyo: Dōmei shobō, 1886).
- 39 "Aiguo nüzi Ruohan Dake de gushi" 愛國女子若安達克的故事 (The story of the patriotic girl, Joan of Arc), *BJNB* (July 21, 1906).
- 40 Mei Zhu 梅鑄, "Faguo jiuwang nüjie Ruohan zhuan" 法國救亡女傑若安傳 (Biography of Joan, the heroic French savior), *XNJZZ* 3 (April 5, 1907), p. 82, 81.

(Chinese women's journal). Qiu embraces Joan as a fellow traveler in the project of restoring China's own national glory.<sup>41</sup>

Joan, nonetheless, posed a number of problems for Chinese authors eager to appropriate her courageous tale to their own political ends. While she was indeed a great patriot, she was a divinely inspired great patriot. Moreover, she was a divinely inspired great patriot burned at the stake in male attire, a heroine who did not make what had long stood in Chinese woman warrior lore as the crucial reversion back to her normative female role. Chinese accounts of her story thus demonstrate how late Qing authors had to adapt the technology of foreign biography in order to render it locally usable. While Mei Zhu, like all late Qing commentators, felt compelled to dismiss Joan's religiosity, she was less troubled than most by the great patriot's gender inversion.

Mei Zhu initially makes some concessions to Joan's religious faith in her "Biography of Joan, the Heroic French Savior." She notes that Joan had a particularly strong belief in the way of the gods (*shendao* 神道).<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, however, she offers a secular interpretation of the story. Disagreeing with those who attribute the actions of great heroes to Heaven or supernatural beings, Mei Zhu states her personal belief that a strong will can move mountains and fill oceans. "Utmost sincerity can move even the gods" (*zhicheng zhi dao keyi ganshen* 至誠之道可以感神), she declares; Joan's will inspired Heaven as much as Heaven inspired her.<sup>43</sup> In her conclusion, Mei Zhu asserts that Joan invoked divine voices to fool the ignorant masses. All great heroes are forced to resort to trickery, she explains; why should Joan have been any different?<sup>44</sup>

41 Jianhu nǚxia 鑑湖女俠 [Qiu Jin 秋瑾], "Mian nǚquan" 勉女權 (Urging women's rights), *Zhongguo nǚbao* 中國女報, 2 (March 4, 1907), p. 47.

42 The use of the term *shendao* suggests that this text drew on a Japanese source as this was the term for the Shinto religion.

43 Mei Zhu, p. 60, 63.

44 Mei Zhu, pp. 81-82.

The second problem Joan posed as a model heroine for Chinese commentators was her gender bending. Having successfully petitioned the king to wear the equipment of a knight, Joan had achieved all of her military successes dressed as a man. The British who feared that her life would be spared if she appeared in the courtroom in women's dress offered her male garments in prison that Joan enthusiastically donned.<sup>45</sup> Mei Zhu notes that Joan was convicted for dressing as a man, but does not disparage her for it.<sup>46</sup> The lens through which she reads Joan's story is more radically secular than the one used in many contemporary biographies of Joan which appeared in, for example, women's textbooks. It not only strips away the Christian elements from Joan's original story but also any Confucian principles of gender normativity that had accrued in its East Asian retellings.

Mei Zhu considers Joan an even greater heroine than Hua Mulan precisely because she was not constrained by Chinese principles of female virtue. Joan could never have led the French against the British if she had been a woman of the inner chambers bound by the rules of gender separation and filial piety. She announces that it was Joan's transgression of feminine norms that made her a celebrated heroine whose global prominence parochial Chinese women should aspire to. "Who in France today does not know her and worship her," Mei Zhu asks. Who beyond France's borders has not heard of the great French patriot Joan of Arc?<sup>47</sup>

While Joan was widely featured in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Chinese materials, certain organs of the women's press focused on more recent heroines who daringly served as assassins, revolutionaries, and anarchists. The

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45 Recent scholarship suggests, however, that Joan was most probably raped in prison and that she resumed male dress either to protect her chastity or because the British provided her with nothing else. On the discussion of Joan's male attire at court, see Pernoud, p. 220.

46 Mei Zhu, p. 81.

47 Mei Zhu, pp. 62, 53-54, 55, 59.

editor of the *Journal of Women's Learning*, Chen Xiefen 陳擷芬 (1883-1923), expressed great enthusiasm for a collection of *Ten World Heroines* (*Shijie shi nüjie* 世界十女傑) which celebrated women of this more radical type.<sup>48</sup> She announced her intention to serially publish a vernacular version of the *Ten* in her *Journal of Women's Learning*.<sup>49</sup> Her objective was to use these biographies to encourage her female compatriots to constitute themselves as national actors. These accounts would, she explains, teach Chinese women to embrace a new heroism unfettered by principles of feminine virtue. Those who imitated the first woman in the collection, the French anarchist Louise Michel (Luyi Meishier 路易美世兒, 1830-1905), would learn to privilege politics over morality and to boldly speak out for righteousness even at the risk of offending others.<sup>50</sup>

Louise Michel, whom Chen and the author of the *Ten World Heroines* so respected, was the daughter of a serving-maid and the son of the house. She received a liberal education from her paternal grandfather and nurtured a passion for helping the underprivileged from a young age. Trained as a teacher, she devoted most of her life to works of charity, and to revolutionary and anarchist politics. Her involvement in the 1871 Paris Commune resulted in her deportation to New Caledonia in 1873. While engaging with other political prisoners and instructing the natives during her seven years of exile, she began to formulate her anarchist position. She remained politically active through the end of her life, giving impassioned speeches in England and France, and spending periods from months to several years in prison for incitement. She died in Marseilles on January 10, 1905 while on a tour to promote anarchism.

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48 *Shijie shi nüjie* 世界十女傑 (Ten world heroines). n.p. [1903].

49 Chunan nüzi 楚南女子 [Chen Xiefen 陳擷芬], "Shijie shi nüjie yanyi" 世界十女傑演義 (Tale from *Ten World Heroines*), *NXB* 4 (November, 1903), p. 55.

50 Chen Xiefen, pp. 55-56. The *Journal of Women's Learning* ceased publication after this first installment of the *Ten World Heroines* appeared.



Michel was generally represented in this period as one of a handful of “female officers of anarchism” in the Western world whose stories were used to explain anarchism to the Chinese audience. The author of the *Ten World Heroines* whose collection Chen drew on used Michel's story not only to present the principles of anarchism, however, but to offer an impassioned defense of them and a heartfelt plea for their implementation in contemporary China. Michel's story demonstrates, he asserts, that anarchism means more than knives, blood, bombs, and cruel and heartless assassination. The source of anarchist violence, death, and destruction is not a private grudge or a callous disregard for life but a heroic sense of mercy that seeks a better world.<sup>51</sup>

Michel who inspired revulsion in some due to her “monstrous ugliness” (*yecha* 夜叉), gave the author of the *Ten* palpitations.<sup>52</sup> He and Chen Xiefen attempt to transmit the passion she aroused in them to their passive compatriots — the most pitiable people on the face of the earth.<sup>53</sup> The privileged themes in their retelling of Michel's life story are freedom and blood. Michel most loved and was willing to fight for freedom: there is no God, she proclaims, only freedom. And freedom could only be won with blood. As in Michel's Europe, the biography powerfully states, blood's redemptive powers alone could destroy evil and save the Chinese nation from peril.<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

Even authors sympathetic with anarchist ideals continued to rely on the two-millennia old technology of female biography in late Qing women's

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51 *Shijie*, pp. 2-3.

52 On Michel's alleged ugliness, see Iwasaki Sodō 岩崎祖堂 and Mikami Kifū 三上寄風, *Shijie shier nüjie* 世界十二女傑 (Twelve world heroines), trans. Zhao Bizhen 趙必振 (Shanghai: Guangzhi shuju, 1903), p. 28, 27; Yang Qianli, II, p. 4a.

53 *Shijie*, p. 8.

54 *Shijie*, pp. 4-6.

journals. They adopted this narrative form because of its inherent adaptability. Although biography had been used for centuries to codify female behavior and regulate how women understood themselves as filial daughters, faithful wives, and instructive mothers, the framing function of parabiography allowed writers to endlessly reshape canonical tales of women's lives. The mutability of life story narratives could thus accommodate personal proclivities, cultural shifts, and political vacillations.

Early twentieth century writers consumed with China's national and cultural crises not only reshaped individual life stories but attempted to transform the function of female biography. They made unprecedented additions to the existing exemplar repertoire by including Western heroines. And they infused the tales of longstanding Chinese paragons with modern and foreign ideological content. Through these changes and through their parabiographical commentaries on both foreign and Chinese life stories they offered their audience new ways of imagining female selfhood that transcended Chinese codes of feminine normativity and often defied Confucian ritual principles. They celebrated historical Chinese and modern Western women for having direct, rather than indirect access to the public and political spheres, and for operating within national and global rather than domestic or local realms.

This new genre of female biography was not univocal, however, as this article has demonstrated. Like past biographies of women that encompassed a range of polarities and tensions, early-twentieth-century accounts expose fissures in approaches to the Chinese woman question and aporias in the Chinese national project. These tensions are salient in representations of social and martial heroines. While the former galvanized women to develop women's education, engage in social action, and advance social and global awareness, they simultaneously reinforced the importance of fundamental feminine norms of nurturing and service. Representations of martial heroines, in contrast,

severed the link with the Chinese regime of feminine virtue and encouraged Chinese women to imagine themselves not as daughters, wives, and mothers but as autonomous heroines who defied patriarchy and were indifferent to social norms. The fundamental point of contention in these texts was not whether Chinese women (or the Chinese nation) should adopt Western ways or join the new global order but how definitively women (and nation) should break with their own past.

Both male and female writers grappled with this question in biographies of social and martial heroines. While the gender of most of the authors using pseudonyms remains obscure, it seems a number of the writers for Yan Bin's 燕斌 (b. 1870) *Magazine of the New Chinese Woman* were female and the identity of other women writers, including Chen Xiefen, is certain. The genre remained, however, dominated by male authors like Chen Yiyi and Liu Yazhi who were avid promoters of their own vision of women's rights. Even women who wrote or translated biographies themselves often followed male prompts: Chen Xiefen's account of Louise Michel was inspired by what is most certainly a male-authored collection, the *Ten World Heroines*.

Whether written by women or men and whether they depicted social or martial heroines, biographies in the women's press ultimately served more as a technology of national than of female subjecthood, just as past biographies had been primarily instruments of Confucian rather than female personhood. Even as some dramatic tales of women warriors emboldened their readers to take a more active role in constituting themselves, the imaginings of the female self the genre fostered were imaginings of the female-in-the-national. This rubric of female selfhood, which was challenged by only a handful of activists and anarchists in the late Qing, would remain predominant throughout the twentieth century.

## Abbreviations Used in Footnotes

- BJNB*, *Beijing nübao* 北京女報 (Beijing women's journal), Beijing, 1905-1909.
- FNSB*, *Funü shibao* 婦女時報 (The women's eastern times), Shanghai, 1911-1917.  
Beijing rpt. Xianzhuang shuju, 2006.
- NQYDSL*, *Jindai Zhongguo nüquan yundong shiliao 1842-1911* 近代中國女權運動史料 1842-1911 (Historical materials on the modern Chinese movement for women's rights, 1842-1911). Eds. Li Yu-ning 李又寧 and Chang Yü-fa 張玉法, 2 vols, Taipei: Taibei zhuanji wenxue she, 1975.
- NXB*, *Nüxue bao* 女學報 (Chen Xiefen's Journal of women's learning), Shanghai, Tokyo, May 1902-February 1903.
- NZSJ*, *Nüzi shijie* 女子世界 (Women's world), Shanghai, January 1904-July 1907.  
Beijing rpt. Xianzhuang shuju, 2006.
- XNJZZ*, *Zhongguo xin nüjie zazhi* 中國新女界雜誌 (Magazine of the new Chinese woman), Tokyo: Zhongguo xin nüjie zazhi she, 1907. Taipei rpt.: Youshi wenhua shiye gongsi, 1977.
- XZSL*, *Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao* 中國近代學制史料 (Historical materials on the modern Chinese educational system), Jiaoyu kexue congshu 教育科學叢書 (Compendium of sources on education). Ed. Zhu Youhuan 朱有璣, 2 vols, Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1983-86.

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# 擴充女性／國族的想像： 晚清婦女期刊中的 社會女英雄及女戰士

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## 摘 要

20世紀初中國婦女期刊開啓了相當新的公共空間，但這並不表示與過去完全的割裂。這種歷史反響的深度與重要性在女性傳記專欄中特別明顯。中國婦女期刊開始出版的時候，中國的傳記敘事形式，已有至少兩千年的歷史，它是一種規範及想像女性臣民性格的主要模態，也是一種建立女性自我的技術。本文的焦點放在晚清中國文化的重新評價及全球化脈絡下，探討婦女期刊中傳記敘事技術的演變。這些期刊廣泛刊登中國及西方歷史上女英雄的故事，編者、作者及譯者各自以這些戲劇性的情節，介紹最新世界實況，並鼓勵婦女對社會及政治參與的新方式。這些傳記敘事的主要差異並不在於中國與西方的典範，而在於再現本土或外國模範人物的方式——圍繞傳記的材料 (parabiography)——其實是建構意識形態及文化的重要工作，透過這些圍繞傳記的材料，編輯者指導著讀者對人事物的理解。晚清婦女期刊中最顯著的兩種再現模式是社會女英雄及女戰士。這兩種女性典範人物的敘事張力，暴露出理解中國婦女問題的裂縫，也將之侷限於某些範圍。它們進一步突顯 19、20 世紀之際，對國族計劃極為多元的理解。

**關鍵詞：**女性傳記、社會女英雄、尚武女英雄、西方模範