

Introduction: Women's Journals as Multigeneric Artefacts

Joan Judge, Barbara Mittler, and Michel Hockx

Chinese women's journals offer unparalleled access to the intricacies of China's gendered past.¹ Their value as a source lies in their inherent complexity as multigeneric artefacts – repositories of fiction and poetry, of photographs and cover art, of advertisements, essays, and letters. Unlike single-authored texts, these multivocal, multigeneric, and multiregistered materials create spaces of experimentation – testing grounds for new cultural forms, scientific ideas, and – our focus in this volume – gender roles. Defined by their serialized temporality, they are both fleeting and continuous. As discrete publications with finite runs, they capture the actors, issues, and publishing practices of particular historical moments. As participants in broader conversations within a worldwide web of periodicals, they illuminate the ways Chinese gender concerns were inextricably linked to the knowledge, perceptions, or imaginings of the world at large. They are porous documents that bring historical actors to life: transforming readers into writers in interactive columns and viewers into photographed subjects in illustrative sections. As sites into which the self and family extend, the state may intrude, and global norms and images are introduced, they create rich amalgams of ever-shifting identities.

Over half a century ago, Raymond Williams declared that periodicals provide access to “actual culture” and demand careful study.² A discrete field, “Periodical Studies,” has, however, only recently begun to come into its own. Scholars of various disciplines and geographic areas are no longer merely instrumentally using periodicals to serve other research agendas, but identifying them as valid objects of scholarly inquiry in and of themselves. They are increasingly recognizing the remarkable possibilities these materials open up for deepening our understanding of history, literature, art, commerce, science, and the intersections among them.

In the “Introduction” to *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies*, launched in 2010, two prominent scholars in this emerging field, Sean Latham and

¹ See Beetham's Preface to this volume for reflections on the ability of periodicals to “open up the complexities of the past.”

² Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 70.

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Mark S. Morrison, note that mass culture first dawned not in film nor on the radio but on the newspaper stands and bookstalls that operated in the “golden age of print culture”: the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While these bookstalls offered readers novels and books, their hottest-selling commodities were magazines. The periodicals published between 1880 and 1950 were both pervasive and deeply influential. In Latham and Morrison’s words, they shaped modernity, in deep but still unexplored ways.³

This volume endorses Latham and Morrison’s claim, while complicating their conception of modernity by stressing the relationship between the Chinese periodical press and a global modernity, or “modernity in common.”⁴ A grammar with different inflections rather than a single model with national alternatives, this modernity is a process of change that has developed and resulted in important commonalities worldwide. These commonalities include two phenomena that are the focus of this volume: the rise of the periodical press, on the one hand, and the advancement of women, on the other. Our focus is on one important and heretofore underexplored aspect of the (women’s) periodical press: the coincidence of its rise with the dawn of global communications.

Global Contexts

The period generally designated as the beginning of “modern” Chinese history is inextricably tied to two monumental developments: the intensification of China’s encounters with foreign powers both within and outside of East Asia, and a radical media transformation comparable in its impact to the current Internet age. This globally mediated transformation of Chinese print culture began with the introduction of the missionary press into China in the early nineteenth century, and led to the adoption of letterpress printing and lithography by the end of the century.⁵ China’s first Chinese-language daily newspaper was founded by a British tea merchant in 1872, and by 1937 some 1,500 newspapers – dailies, weeklies, and monthlies – had been published in Shanghai alone.⁶ Similarly, the number of periodicals increased exponentially

³ Latham and Morrison, “Introduction.”

⁴ Carol Gluck has elaborated on this concept, urging us to place particular histories in their global context – in the context of “modernity in common.” She notes, “Just as the modern history of a society cannot be explained in isolation from the world, it is also possible to explore the history of the modern world from the vantage point of any particular place in the existing ‘globe’ of modernities.” [Each particular place] shares commonalities and connections with other modern societies, [offering] the opportunity to think about the ‘modern’ on empirical bases different from the European experiences that underlay earlier theories of modernity.” Gluck, “Modernity in Common.”

⁵ On the missionary press see Zhang, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Press*; Kurtz, “Messenger of the Sacred Heart.” On the adoption of letterpress and lithography, see Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai*.

⁶ See Jia Shumei, *Shanghai xinwenzhi*, 236–63.

over the early years of the twentieth century. Considering Chinese women's journals alone, an estimated forty-four were published in China and Japan between 1898 and 1911, another thirty appeared between 1912 and 1915, and close to 250 more by the late 1930s.⁷ These media changes marked a radical transformation in terms of the quantity of available information, the range of usable print forms, and the expansion of opportunities for readers to participate in public culture. They also signaled the globalization of the Chinese print world.

From its inception in the late nineteenth century, the Chinese periodical press was the direct product of global interactions. The majority of journal editors, contributors, and illustrators had been exposed to Japanese and Western publications and models while studying abroad (most often in Japan) or at foreign-run institutions in Shanghai (such as the Jesuit Tushanwan Art Studio). The format of Chinese journals often mirrors those of Japanese or Western publications, and the cover art references foreign visuals and styles. At the same time, a large part of the content of the journals was taken directly from foreign sources. This includes the photographs of, for example, Japanese or Javanese women that opened the journals and the translations of a range of materials that filled their pages: from German scientific articles and British fiction to biographies of such diverse cultural icons as Joan of Arc and Clara Bow.⁸ In addition to direct translations, references to foreign heroes, practices, and events appear in all of the journals, and conceptions of women's new roles are foreign-influenced. Western lawyers, engineers, and teachers serve as prototypes for imagined professional Chinese women, and Hollywood celebrities as models for Chinese film stars. Of critical importance as well, the very language of the journals was a highly hybridized amalgam of Japanese loan words, Western names and terminology, and newly imported grammatical forms.

While much has been written about popular women's magazines in specific national and cultural contexts, an approach that takes a transcultural perspective and thus emphasizes the dynamics of cultural flows rather than focusing on static "receiver" and "sender" relations is still rare.⁹ There are very few substantial enquiries into how women's magazines in different countries engage one another and how ideas and concepts move from one place and context to another. In this book, in contrast, we examine these flows and connections, disruptions and disconnections in the production, dissemination, and consumption of China's gendered journals. While all of the chapters are concerned with women's magazines in China, the authors discuss the transit of ideas, images,

⁷ Maeyama, "Chûgoku no josei muke teiki kankôbutsu ni tsuite," "Fu 3."

⁸ See Xia, Bailey, and Mittler in this volume and Judge, *Republican Lens*, Chapter 3.

⁹ See, for example, Moeran, "On Entering the World of Women's Magazines"; Frith, "Portrayals of Women in Global Women's Magazines in China"; Fahad and Karande, "A Content Analysis"; Skalli, *Through a Local Prism*.

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Edited by Michel Hockx, Joan Judge, Barbara Mittler

Excerpt

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and thoughts across the globe and through the medium of the gendered magazine, often attempting to trace the particular routes of these exchanges. Thus, engaging with the world of Chinese women's journals in a global context, we are also able to offer a perspective on what one could call a female modernity in common.

The book is further punctuated by reflections by scholars who are experts on periodicals outside of China, beginning with Beetham's preface. These transdisciplinary interventions emphasize general points to be made about women's reading and writing in the periodical press in the context of the twentieth century's shared modernity.

An Emerging Field

Scholars of China have made important, if as-yet unacknowledged, contributions to the emerging research field of "Periodical Studies."¹⁰ Numerous monographs on particular Chinese newspapers and journals have been published over the last decade and a half, and a journal entitled *East Asian Publishing and Society* was launched in 2011.¹¹

Periodical studies have an even longer history in Chinese-language scholarship. To date, most emphasis has been on periodicals that played a role in the New Culture Movement of the late 1910s and early 1920s, a movement that has been deemed a historical watershed and a crucial precursor to the 1949 Communist Revolution. Indeed, one single magazine, *Xin qingnian* (New youth), published at Peking University, is traditionally credited with having raised virtually all significant questions underlying Chinese modernity, including "the woman question" (*funü wenti*). Periodicals were also considered the main drivers of the anti-imperialist "May Fourth Movement," which grew out of the New Culture Movement. A standard three-volume textbook on "May Fourth" journals was edited in 1979 by the same Party office that translated and edited the works of Marx, Lenin, Engels, and Stalin.¹² Introductions to periodicals linked to other revolutionary moments, most particularly the 1911 Revolution, were also published at approximately the same time.¹³

¹⁰ As noted above, this development culminated in the foundation of the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* in 2010.

¹¹ For scholarship in English on Chinese newspapers, see Judge, *Print and Politics*; Mittler, *A Newspaper*; Wagner, *Joining the Global*. On literary journals, see Gimpel, *Lost Voices of Modernity*; Hockx, *Questions of Style*. On entertainment journals, see Wang, *Merry Laughter*. On pictorials, see Ye Xiaoping, *The Dianshizhai Pictorial*; Pickowicz et al. on *Liangyou huabao*. The journal *East Asian Publishing and Society*, edited by Peter Kornicki, is not exclusively concerned with the periodical press, but is a new journal dedicated to the study of the publishing of texts and images in East Asia, from the earliest times up to the present.

¹² Zhonggong, *Wu si shiqi qikan*. ¹³ For instance, Ding Shouhe, *Xinhai geming shiqi qikan*.

Throughout the 1980s, Chinese libraries rapidly expanded access to a much wider variety of pre-1949 periodicals, including many not directly linked to the revolutionary movement. This led to increased scholarly interest in the late Qing period (1850–1911), as well as the urban popular culture of the Republican era (1912–1949). Many important periodicals from these eras were reprinted in the 1980s and 1990s, and large reference works listing all available journals in a specific field were subsequently published.¹⁴ More recently, large-scale digitization projects have reduced the need for publication of such printed reference works. The Shanghai Library, which has the most extensive holdings of periodicals in the country, has made scans of over 25,000 of the pre-1949 periodicals in its collection available, linking the digitized versions to an earlier electronic index of tables of contents.¹⁵ The National Library in Beijing is engaged in similar efforts. Some newspapers, most notably *Shenbao* (Shanghai journal), have also been made available in full text.

An important number of landmark cultural and historical studies by Chinese scholars, including Professor Xia Xiaohong from Peking University, whose work is included in this volume, have been based predominantly on periodical materials. These scholars also include the study of periodicals in their basic training of Chinese graduate students. Professor Xia's work has inspired many of the other contributors to this volume with her wide-ranging studies of periodical culture of the Late Qing period, including a number of publications dealing with women.¹⁶

Much relevant scholarship has also been produced by scholars in Taiwan, as evidenced by the contributions to this volume by Siao-chen Hu, Jin-Chu Huang, and Rachel Hsu. Taiwan has produced reprints of significant overseas student, general interest, and women's journals as well.¹⁷ A recent Japanese–Taiwanese project on one of the seminal Chinese women's journals, *Funü zazhi* – *The Ladies' Journal* (1915–1931), which several authors discuss in their contributions to this collection, produced both a series of scholarly essays and a detailed print and online catalogue of the journal.¹⁸

¹⁴ Reprints published in China include *Tuhua ribao*, *Beiyang huabao* and *Liangyou*. Reference works in the field of literature include Liu Zengren's study of literary periodicals, which provides a complete list of all available literary journals of the 1919–1949 period. Several other publications provide complete lists of tables of contents. Cf. Liu Zengren, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue qikan*. See also Tang Yuan, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue qikan*, and Wu Jun, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue qikan*. A more general collection of journal content tables is Shanghai tushuguan, *Zhongguo jindai qikan bianmu*.

¹⁵ Shanghai tushuguan, *Quanguo baokan suoyin*.

¹⁶ For instance, Xia Xiaohong, *Wan-Qing nüxing yu jindai Zhongguo*.

¹⁷ Taiwanese reprints of overseas student journals published by the Zhongguo guomindang, Zhongyang weiyuan hui, Dangshi shiliao bianzuan weiyuan hui, all in 1968. They include *Hubei*; *Hansheng*; and *Jiangsu*. Taiwan reprints of women's journals include *Zhongguo xin nüjie zazhi*.

¹⁸ Special issue: *Jindai Zhongguo funü shi yanjiu*; Murata Yūjirō, “*Fujo zazshi*”; “*Fujo zazshi*” *sōmokuroku*.

A Gendered Genre

This volume builds on recent work on Chinese periodicals in East Asia, North America, and Europe over the past decade and a half and has greatly benefited from recent East Asian reprinting and digital remediation projects. It marks an important step towards the consolidation of a subfield focused on the study of Chinese periodicals. It comes directly out of an ongoing international collaborative project on early Chinese periodicals, which has three principal aims: to advance intensive research on specific periodicals, to develop new methodological approaches to the study of periodicals, and to create an “intelligent” electronic archive of important periodicals. This comprehensive database offers exhaustive data and metadata on the full contents of specific periodicals – including not only their articles, but their cover art, photographs, and advertisements.¹⁹ A crucial instrument for facilitating our methodology and advancing our research, the database has been used by a number of authors in this collection.

This volume marks the culmination of the first phase of this project, which has focused on women’s journals. The women’s press constitutes an important subfield within the field of Western periodical studies, and we are honored to have the doyenne of this field, Margaret Beetham, as the author of the preface to our volume.²⁰ Scholarly studies of Western women’s magazines in different countries began several decades ago with feminist approaches focused on representations of women in the 1970s and 1980s.²¹ More recently, the emphasis has shifted towards questions derived from sociology and media studies. Scholars have increasingly analyzed women’s magazines as consumer objects central to processes of ideology and identity formation.²² The field continues to thrive,

¹⁹ Funding for the first phase was provided by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and by the Humboldt Foundation’s TransCOOP program. The database can be accessed at <http://womag.uni-hd.de/>. Funding for the second phase has been provided by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation. For a description of the database see Sun and Arnold, “TS Tools”; Sung, Sun, and Arnold, “The Birth of a Database of Historical Periodicals.”

²⁰ Cf. Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own*; Beetham and Kay, *Victorian Women’s Magazines*.

²¹ Braithwaite, *The Business of Women’s Magazines*; Christmann and Leppert, “Das Bild der Frau in den deutschen Frauenzeitschriften”; Eskridge, *How the Psychology of Women Is Presented in Women’s Magazines*; Hüntemann, “Der schöne Schein in der Massenkommunikation”; Keller, “Mothers and Work as Represented in Popular American Magazines”; Linden, “Media Images of Women and Social Change”; Millum, *Images of Woman*; Probst, “Frauenzeitschriften”; Röser, *Frauenzeitschriften und weiblicher Lebenszusammenhang*; Suleiman, “Changing Attitudes towards Women in Egypt”; White, *Women’s Magazines*; Winship, *Woman Becomes an Individual*.

²² Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman*; Baron, “Readers and the Women’s Press”; Clark, “Ms. Magazine”; Endres, *Women’s Periodicals in the United States*; Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women’s Magazines*; Johansson, “Chinese Women and Consumer Culture”; Skalli, *Through a Local Prism*; Whitethorne, *Cosmo Woman*.

as recent international conferences and the ongoing publication of monographs attest.²³

The chapters in this volume contribute to this body of scholarship in examining the women's periodical press as a space for the implicit expression and explicit articulation of fundamental moral, cultural, and political concerns at key moments in China's long twentieth century. The collection's focus is on the first three decades of the century, but it also traces manifestations of women's engagement in the periodical press through and beyond the Mao era (1949–1976). Without claiming to be exhaustive either chronologically or thematically, the volume has two central objectives. The first is to develop and show-case methodologies that approach women's journals as complex material and historical objects. Comprising different genres of textual and visual media, they are deeply embedded in both distinctive print cultures and specific historical and political conjunctures (Part I and throughout the volume). The second objective is to use women's journals to explore key issues in Chinese women's history. These include the unprecedented public expression of female subjectivities in the full range of genres featured in women's journals: poetry, painting, fiction, essays, and letters (Part II). They also include the crucial role of foreign concepts and images, i.e., the global context, in the constitution of these emerging female subjectivities (Part III).

Our overriding aim in developing new methodologies and exploring new manifestations of female subjectivity on the pages of China's women's magazines is to enrich, nuance, or challenge conventional historical narratives. While the early twentieth century has been recognized as a formative period in Chinese history, scholars have emphasized intellectual, institutional, and political changes: efforts at thoroughgoing administrative reform from 1901, the abolition of the civil service examination system in 1904/1905, and the demise of the imperial order in 1911. Our focus on the emergence of women on the public pages of the periodical press reflects an equally fundamental shift. Integral to the unprecedented movement of women towards work and study outside the home, women's engagement with the periodical press was central to what Susan Mann has characterized as “the most significant and sweeping change in China's sex–gender system in centuries.”²⁴

²³ A conference on “Women in Magazines: Research, Representation, Production and Consumption” was held at Kingston University, London, in June 2012, for example, and recent publications among the many that focus on women's journals include DiCenzo, Delap, and Ryan, *Feminist Media History*; Chapman and Mills, *Treacherous Texts*. For China, see articles in this volume by Qian, Xia, Mittler, and Judge. See also Judge, *Republican Lens*. Mittler is finishing a manuscript on women's magazines in China's long twentieth century, entitled *Portrait of a Trope*. One volume that is a survey of Chinese women's journals is Ma, *Women Journalists and Feminism in China*.

²⁴ Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, xvii.

In creating “A Space of Their Own,” women’s magazines not only documented but advanced and mediated changes in the realm of women’s work and most particularly in the sphere of women’s education. The first Chinese women’s journal was founded in conjunction with the first Chinese-run women’s school in 1898, and subsequent early women’s journals were staffed by educators, featured writings by female students, published investigations of various schools, offered descriptions of female students and teachers, and promoted the institutional development of women’s education.²⁵ The government heeded these early demands in 1907 when it finally sanctioned formal public education for women. According to incomplete statistics, the number of female students increased almost twelvefold over the next five years: from 11,936 female students in 391 schools in 1907 to 141,130 students in 1912 to 1913. Over the course of the next decade that number would nearly triple again: by 1923, there would be 417,820 female students attending school.²⁶ For the young female students who attended these schools over the course of the twentieth century, women’s journals constituted a new public space serving the unprecedented unfolding of the long-sequestered world of women’s culture, the open discussion of women’s bodies and sexuality, and encounters with Japanese, Western, and non-Western Others in texts, images, and advertisements.

The multivalent nature of women’s encounters with the foreign in the periodical press highlights the multigeneric and multiregistered quality of the medium. The study of these textually, visually, and materially complex materials requires an approach that is both flexible enough to accommodate their layered content and rigorous enough to make sense of it. One of the prime objectives of our international collaborative project was to move beyond existing approaches to the periodical press by refining a methodology that would mobilize good scholarly practices to address the complexities of the periodical medium specifically. The chapters in this volume provide various examples of this methodology in practice, and the three papers in Part I highlight key components of our approach.

To address the complexity of the materials at hand, we engage in four different (and more or less established) modes of reading the journals: “horizontal,” “vertical,” “integrated,” and “situated.”²⁷ The first, a horizontal reading, is

²⁵ On the first women’s journal see Qian in this volume; for more on the journal and this school, see Qian, *Politics, Poetics, and Gender*. Women’s schools had been founded by missionaries in China since 1844.

²⁶ These numbers are compiled from Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 84–85; The Chinese National Association, “Bulletins on Chinese Education,” 6. On the distribution of girls’ schools by *xian*, see The Chinese National Association, “Bulletins on Chinese Education,” 7, and by province see Bailey, *Gender and Education*, 86–90.

²⁷ The concept of “horizontal reading” was first introduced by Michel Hockx in *Questions of Style*. This method is further explicated and applied in Judge, *Republican Lens*.

based on the premise that a journal is much greater than the sum of its parts, and that what journals do is much more complex than what they declare they will do. A horizontal reading involves a close examination of all materials (texts, images, advertisements) included in one issue of a particular journal. We read cover art in relation to textual columns and photographs in conjunction with readers' letters; we place classical lyric poems in conversation with polemical essays, and advertisements with treatises on health. This arguably brings us closer to the reading experiences of the historical readers of these magazines. It also encourages novel interpretations of texts and images through unusual juxtapositions of material traditionally considered to belong to different genres or categories. The horizontal approach is complementary to a more common scholarly practice that we call vertical reading – and that several authors in the volume use in conjunction with other approaches. A vertical reading traces a particular genre or theme over time in one journal, without necessarily taking other parts of the contents into account (for instance, reading all the fiction in a particular journal but ignoring the poetry).

In an effort to reconstitute the immediate cultural context in which these journals and their contemporary audience were located, we further engage in what we call “integrated readings.” Such readings examine women's journals as part of a wider print culture, holding them up against contemporary periodicals and other publications. These include their commercial competitors and “sibling” works published within the “families” of journals that were commonly produced by publishers in twentieth-century China. This approach allows us to see how particular tropes or images were differently purposed within the same print moment. It also highlights networks of authors and readers, by, for example, allowing us to map the various publications to which a certain author contributed, or the various journals to which a reader submitted her photograph.

Another facet of our approach is situated reading. In the new historicist manner, such a reading extends the study of a particular journal to other source materials that informed its broader context. These materials could include official documents, biographies, memoirs, films, and literature, as well as artistic and material objects. In conducting a situated reading, we view the journals as nodes of broader networks of cultural critics, educators, readers, writers, editors, artists, illustrators, and photographers. This approach allows us to better understand the dissemination and impact of specific topics, tropes, and ideas and to observe discourse formation in the making.

In adopting and combining these different reading strategies, we are able to capture the individual reading experience of the historical reader flipping through a magazine (horizontal reading), to trace the sedimentation of discursive ideas in cultural memory (vertical reading), to map the parameters of the readerly and writerly communities of journals (integrated reading),

and to deepen our knowledge of particular journals' sociohistorical context (situated reading). Deploying these various reading strategies, we are ultimately better able to understand the multilayered historical act of perusing a periodical.

The Chapters

The authors of the chapters in this volume apply this methodology variously. Most combine at least two kinds of readings, depending on the type of argument they are making and the nature of the specific women's journals they are analyzing. In their totality, the chapters demonstrate the ways in which this stratified approach can maximize the potentiality for reading women's journals as valuable historical sources.

The volume is structured around the notion of women's journals as a multipurpose space, a laboratory for the exploration of gender ideas, the assertion of gendered identities, and the investigation of both historical and more recent foreign and Chinese gender norms. Few of the journals examined here were actually edited by women. As a result, a number of these male-edited and female-focused publications became a site where, as Joan Judge notes in her paper, "the once sequestered female figure could become an object of public discussion, public spectacle, public commerce, and public scrutiny." At the same time, however, even male-driven journals made space for women's textual and visual contributions, and, as several authors suggest, these contributions often extended this newly created space in unanticipated ways.

Part I of the volume, *Methodologies: Framing, Constituting, and Regulating the Space of the Women's Journal*, highlights different methodological approaches to the women's periodical press. The three chapters provide examples of the methodology developed throughout the book. Each demonstrates the ways a particular reading (or combination thereof) – horizontal, vertical, integrated, or situated – deepens our understanding of how the journals functioned in their particular visual, historical, print, and political contexts.

Julia F. Andrews's chapter, "Persuading with Pictures: Cover Art and *The Ladies' Journal* (1915–1931)," explores the ways the space of the woman's journal, and most specifically, of the influential *Ladies' Journal*, was visually framed. Covering the entire history of this long-running journal, Andrews reads the cover images, some created by male artists and others painted by women themselves, against the journal's changing content and shifting editorial objectives. Combining this horizontal method of reading with a vertical reading, to emphasize the complexity not only of the covers but of the genre of women's journals themselves, and across time, Andrews highlights the disjunctions between the aims and capabilities of commercial artists, their publishers, and their prospective public.