



# The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism (Next Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies)

By Tani E. Barlow

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*The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* is a history of thinking about the subject of women in twentieth-century China. Tani E. Barlow illustrates the theories and conceptual categories that Enlightenment Chinese intellectuals have developed to describe the collectivity of women. Demonstrating how generations of these theorists have engaged with international debates over eugenics, gender, sexuality, and the psyche, Barlow argues that as an Enlightenment project, feminist debate in China is at once Chinese and international. She reads social theory, psychoanalytic thought, literary criticism, ethics, and revolutionary political ideologies to illustrate the range and scope of Chinese feminist theory's preoccupation with the problem of gender inequality. She reveals how, throughout the cataclysms of colonial modernity, revolutionary modernization, and market socialism, prominent Chinese feminists have gathered up the remainders of the past and formed them into social and ethical arguments, categories, and political positions, ceaselessly reshaping progressive Enlightenment sexual liberation theory.

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#### Review

“Placing feminist thought within a continuum that defines human life in eugenic terms, Tani E. Barlow shows how Chinese feminism is not simply an inheritance of western ideas but is absolutely central to modernity and its emphasis on the sexed human being. *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* will spark controversy and will eventually stand as a model of scholarship for all of us to follow.”—Wendy Larson, author of *Women and Writing in Modern China*

“Tani E. Barlow breaks original ground. Her book has a theoretical reach and sophistication very rare in the China field, drawing its analytical tools from history, literature, feminist studies, psychoanalysis, and film criticism.”—Gail Hershatter, author of *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*

“*The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* is an exciting and provocative journey through Chinese feminism and its theoretical permutations throughout the twentieth century.”—Lisa Rofel, author of *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism*

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#### About the Author

Tani E. Barlow is a historian of modern China teaching in the Women’s Studies Department at the University of Washington, Seattle. She is the editor of many books, including *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* and *New Asian Marxisms*, both published by Duke University Press. Barlow is the founding senior editor of *positions: east asia cultures critique*, also published by Duke University Press.

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