

Mrinalini Sinha, Donna Guy and Angela Woollacott

Feminisms AND *Internationalism*



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Feminisms and Internationalism

Edited by

Mrinalini Sinha, Donna Guy and Angela Woollacott

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Feminisms and Internationalism



ABSTRACTS

An Alternative Imperialism: Isabella Tod, Internationalist and 'Good Liberal Unionist'

HELOISE BROWN

This paper argues that a discourse of conservative imperialism was present during the Irish Home Rule debate of 1886. The arguments of Isabella Tod (1836–96), a feminist who took a conservative imperialist approach, are examined to show how an alternative role was envisioned for Britain within its empire. Her critiques of imperial expansion are contrasted with her support for the maintenance of the Union between Ireland and Britain. It is argued that existing discourses of nationalism and imperialism are insufficient in explaining Tod's identity, and that a re-evaluation of these discourses is necessary in order to accommodate such marginalised perspectives.

'The New Women's Movement' in 1920s Korea: Rethinking the Relationship Between Imperialism and Women

INSOOK KWON

Recently, some feminist scholars' analyses of imperialism have focused on illustrating imperial power as a multi-dimensional hegemonic domination process established by a variety of forms of authority, knowledge and power. However, the perspective focusing on Western hegemonic domination can destroy criteria for evaluating the colonised women's movements which are not closely related to the nationalistic movement and cannot embrace diverse women's interests. In this essay, I attempt to rethink the gendered impact of imperialism by challenging the criteria based on an 'all powerful' Western hegemony and disclosing a more complicated relationship between colonised women and imperialism in the case of the Korean New Women's movement in the 1920s. Korea's New Women were a group of women who challenged the moral system of Confucian patriarchy, on the basis of a new self-identity acquired through modern education, and comprised the first feminist generation in Korea. Through examining the dynamics of how and why the New Women chose certain types of Western feminism, I try to build up new criteria which can inclusively represent diverse women's interests in the colonial or post-colonial context.

Madrinas and Missionaries: Uruguay and the Pan-American Women's Movement

CHRISTINE EHRICK

Despite the rhetoric of internationalism, liberal feminists in the Americas were heavily grounded in their own particular national contexts. Uruguayan liberal feminists, for example, were as concerned about Argentine designs on their movement as they were with US feminists' attempts to dominate Pan-American women's networks. Correspondence between Uruguayan liberal feminist leader Paulina Luisi and her counterparts in Latin America tells the history of Pan-American women's networks from the Latin American perspective, and documents the impact of growing nationalism in the 1920s on liberal feminism in the Pan-American context.

Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's Internationalist Activism in the 1920s–30s

ANGELA WOOLLACOTT

Australian feminists, through the British Commonwealth League founded in London in 1925, forged a Commonwealth feminism that was both more inclusive than and a reconstitution of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperial feminism. At the same time, Australian women's involvement within the Pan-Pacific Women's Association, whose first conference was held in Honolulu in 1928, signalled a geopolitically different field of vision. Based on conference programmes and feminists' writings, my aims in this essay include outlining Australian women's activism in both these organisations in the interwar period, assessing the global politics involved, considering their stances as white British dominion women in international contexts and in terms of Australia's colonisation of Aboriginal people, and historicising their activism in the broader picture of feminist internationalism.

The Politics of Pan-American Cooperation: Maternalist Feminism and the Child Rights Movement, 1913–1960

DONNA J. GUY

Maternalist feminists, those interested in promoting mother–child issues as part of their efforts to expand the rights of women, influenced the Pan-American child welfare movement. Latin American women began in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1913. No US women attended these early meetings, and efforts from 1916 to 1927 by the US Women's Auxiliary Committee to the Second Pan-American Scientific Congress (WAC) created more antagonisms than it promoted Pan-American efforts. In 1927 the Instituto Internacional Interamericano del Niño (International Inter-American Child Institute, IIAPI), founded and controlled by male physicians, took

over the Pan-American Child Congresses. The second phase of the child welfare movement took place from 1927 until 1960. During this era, IIAPI physicians initially refused to cooperate with feminists, but they reversed this policy after meeting feminist US Children's Bureau social workers in the 1920s. Katherine Lenroot, a key US delegate, Chief of the Children's Bureau from 1934 to 1951, served as a catalyst to promote broader mother and child welfare programmes in the Americas by focusing on child rights rather than state intervention. She also helped bring Latin American feminists back into the Pan-American child rights movement.

***Jie Gui* – Connecting the Tracks: Chinese Women's Activism Surrounding the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing**

PING-CHUN HSIUNG AND YUK-LIN RENITA WONG

This paper examines Chinese women's activism surrounding the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing. We show that while women activists in China wanted the Conference to begin to connect local initiatives with global feminist activism, their hopes were compromised by heated exchanges between the CCP state and Western feminist and human rights groups. In effect, the voices of women activists in China were suppressed and marginalised. To uncover and acknowledge Chinese women's agency and subjectivity, we examine Chinese women activists' gender and national identities in the historical context of their liberation. We find that the gender identity of Chinese women activists is not in opposition to their national identity, but, rather, intertwined with it. This finding calls for a conceptualisation of collective selves in the theorisation of agency and subjectivity. It challenges the confrontational paradigm projected in the NGO model that has been advocated by Western feminist/activist groups. It also demands a dialectical approach to the analysis of the relations between the CCP state and Chinese women. On the one hand, our analysis is derived from, and seeks to contribute to, the feminist debate about the way Sinologists present and re-present Chinese women. On the other hand, we seek to shed light on the tension between global and local feminist activism. Our sources are Internet discussion groups and world wide web homepages on the Conference, the CCP's statements and other official documents, and published books and articles.

Unifying Women: Feminist Pasts and Presents in Yemen

MARGOT BADRAN

This article argues that women's cohesive gender activism is a major force in consolidating the unification of the Republic of Yemen, formed out of the former North and South Yemens. Acting as feminists, women contest re/assertions of patriarchal excesses that threaten the new national unity and the equality of citizens fundamental to its declared democratic project. The paper focuses on two recent

events: the high-profile parliamentary elections of 1997 and the simultaneous, hidden attempt to impose a reactionary personal status law. The latter politicised women who rallied together across the political and ideological spectrum to protect their rights and to establish the linkage between the private and public as together constitutive of citizenship and the equal rights for all that this implies.

Some Trajectories of 'Feminism' and 'Imperialism'

ANTOINETTE BURTON

This essay surveys some of the intellectual and institutional contexts out of which scholarly work on women, feminism, and imperialism has been produced in the last two decades. The call to reconstitute both feminist histories and the practices of feminist historiography that was issued largely by women of colour in the 1980s has made new landscapes visible, even as it has raised important and unresolved questions about the subjects of feminism and the availability of 'the nation' as the ground of critically engaged feminist scholarship. Focusing equally on the ways in which recent research has transformed our understanding of colonial *and* metropolitan histories, this review of recent literature tracks some of the trajectories of 'feminism' and 'imperialism' and suggests possible avenues of future inquiry.

Feminisms and Transnationalism

FRANCESCA MILLER

The essay considers new work by feminist scholars addressing the history of women's transnational organising, gender and international relations, and the complex nature of transnational feminist interactions that are at once local and global in the late 1990s. Drawing specific examples from work on women of the Americas, the essay explores the ways in which increasingly subtle understandings of gender inform the new literature, concluding that the wealth of information emerging from the presses of women's documentation centres constitutes a politics of information, creating a new historical record. The need for historical context and analysis is critical to this effort.

Feminisms and International Relations

V. SPIKE PETERSON

A bastion of male practitioners, masculine activities and androcentric constructs, the discipline of International Relations (IR) guards itself well against feminist

theory/practice. In the past decade, however, a small but rapidly expanding community of feminists has 'made a difference' in IR. Four of the most widely read books are reviewed here, to suggest both the historical development and trans-border range of this scholarship.

Feminisms and Development

VALENTINE M. MOGHADAM

The article examines the evolution of the field of women-in-development, and discusses the body of knowledge and field of research currently known as gender and development (GAD). Key works are cited as representing and contributing to the assumptions, concepts, and methods that constitute the GAD framework. Some studies document the effects of various development processes on women. Others focus on gender roles, gender relations, and gender ideologies to reveal their influence on economic policy and development outcomes. Finally, I draw attention to the contradictions of globalisation and to the increasing visibility of women's movements and transnational feminist networks.

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Introduction: Why Feminisms and Internationalism?

MRINALINI SINHA, DONNA J. GUY AND ANGELA WOOLLACOTT

We arrived at the theme for this special issue on 'Feminisms and Internationalism' from a desire to think together, on the one hand, the wide range of different feminisms and women's movements as they have emerged in historically specific sociopolitical contexts,¹ and, on the other, the universalist ideals that have been claimed historically on behalf of feminism.² These ideals appear in some contexts as mere ideology and in others as valuable utopian goads to a better political practice. In either case, moreover, such ideals have had international and transnational implications. The choice of Feminisms and Internationalism, therefore, reflects our own attempt to acknowledge, and to work through, the productive tension between the centrifugal force of discrepant feminist histories and the promising potential of political organising across cultural boundaries. Our approach to the special-issue topic has been informed by the contribution of some recent feminist scholarship that has raised new questions about the relation between the local and the global contexts of women's movements and feminisms world-wide.

We identify several strands of this scholarship as pertinent to our project. Our thinking has been informed, for example, by the valuable critiques that several feminist scholars have made of the use, as if they were self-evident, of such concepts as 'universal sisterhood' and 'global feminism', positing thereby either a bodily identity or a common experience of oppression supposedly shared by women all over the world.³ These claims of universalism on behalf of an international feminist solidarity have been shown, in fact, to rest on an unreflective equation of the 'provincial'⁴ or parochial experience of certain dominant versions of feminism in Western Europe and North America as the paradigmatic form of feminism per se. Thus such paradigms of 'universal sisterhood' inevitably run afoul of the many divisions between women along the lines of class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, First World/Third World, and so on. At the same time, however, we have also learned from a feminist scholarship that has warned against the easy alternative of merely positing a plurality of feminisms organised around some absolute conception of national and/or cultural difference

over and against the universalist project of feminism. For, as Rey Chow cautions:

The attempt to deconstruct the hegemony of *patriarchal* discourses through feminism is itself foreclosed by the emphasis on 'Chinese' as a mark of absolute difference. To my mind, it is when the West's 'other women' are prescribed their 'own' national and ethnic identity in this way that they are most excluded from having a claim to the reality of their existence.⁵

What is becoming clear is that 'woman' needs to be disarticulated from its function as the designated embodiment of culture and that cultures themselves need to be recognised not as fixed products but in terms of historical processes.⁶ The retreat into discrete national or cultural feminisms, moreover, forecloses the analysis of the co-implication of these multiple feminisms in a shared history of the combined, but uneven, evolution of a system whose economic, political and ideological reach has in fact been world-wide for several centuries.

We arrive at the theme for the special issue, therefore, via a recognition that the real challenge for feminisms and internationalism today lies in a historical critique both of a *false* universalism that would subsume the diversity of feminisms within an elite or 'provincial' understanding of feminism and of a relativism that would abandon any universalist claim for feminism in obeisance to reified and absolute conceptions of difference.⁷ Such a project requires both the uncovering of alternative feminist histories that challenge the selective memory of a parochial and univocal history *and* the recognition of the necessary imbrication of such alternative histories in a world-wide social formation fashioned by imperialism and colonialism.

Finally, in choosing this particular theme for the special issue, we have been inspired by the growing examples of the contemporary mobilisations of women and feminists in various women's movements and the new social movements around common 'global' problems. Many of these movements, as Peter Waterman has suggested, are 'less interested in relations between nations than in global problems'; and, as such, they 'tend to "cross borders" in their analyses and demands, whether these borders are those of gender, race, class, or a territorial understanding of the region or world'.⁸ We refer here to such examples as the following: the common bond being forged between women workers in countries of both the North and the South as a result of a growing shift towards more flexible forms of production and structural adjustments associated with a post-Fordist global economy; the growing emphasis in women's movements and the new social movements on problems created by ecological and environmental degradation; the broad alliance of women against various religious chauvinisms and fundamentalisms; and international feminist campaigns for the recognition of women's rights as human rights. These examples of 'globalisation from below',⁹ indeed, reveal existing potential for a new phase in the history of feminisms

and internationalism and for imagining alternative forms of feminist internationalism. It is against this background of both feminist scholarship and practice that we decided to undertake this project of thinking together both the diverse histories of feminisms and the potential for cross-cultural alliances.

We see this special issue as a ground-clearing project for understanding both the problems and the potential of feminist internationalism. The necessary first step in this direction is to explore the subject of feminisms and internationalism historically. Our call for papers thus invited contributions that addressed the theme of the history of internationalism in feminist theory and praxis, possibly including the following topics: the ways in which 'internationalism' has been conceived historically within feminism and women's movements; the nature of and historical shifts within 'imperial' feminisms; changes in the meaning of feminist internationalism both preceding and following the end of most formal empires in the twentieth century; the challenges to, and reformulations of, internationalism within feminism by women of colour and by women from colonised or formerly colonised countries; the fragmentation of internationalism in response to a growing emphasis on local over global contexts of struggle as well as on a variety of different feminisms instead of a singular feminism; and the context for the re-emergence of internationalism within feminisms and women's movements as a result of the new modes of globalisation in the late twentieth century. The contributions chosen for this volume provide a rich inventory of the differing contexts for the connections between feminisms and internationalism historically.

Connecting women and feminisms in different parts of the world means comparing histories, at least implicitly, and in the process identifying a variety of global power dynamics in historical profile. At its broadest, the history of feminisms and internationalism is a lens through which we can view modern world history. Through narratives of women's international organising we can see, for example, the trajectory of the abolitionist movement of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: its eventual absorption, that is, within the imperatives of 'free-trade imperialism' and the emerging science of 'race'. We can see also the ascendancy of European and other empires from the late nineteenth century, and with it Western feminism's imperial roots. We can see the emergence of anti-colonial movements, and with them nationalist feminisms in the twentieth century. We can observe the creation of a self-consciously international women's movement within international socialism; we can trace the growth of the international ideal and international feminism's powerful links first to the League of Nations and then to its successor, the United Nations; and, alongside these developments, we can observe the shift to the more decentred global structures of transnational capitalism. The history of internationalist feminist organising reflects other global dynamics as well: the waning of British power; the emergence of the United States as a superpower with hegemonic

claims to hemispheric 'spheres of influence'; the rise and fall of international socialism; and the massive disruptiveness and destruction wrought by the world wars, which both provoked and curtailed international feminist pacifism. It is possible, moreover, to identify decolonising impulses in the emergence of such regional feminist networks as the following: the Asian and Pan-American women's conferences; Latin American feminist and Pan-Pacific women's networking in the interwar decades; and the later twentieth-century growth of African women's movements for political stability, economic possibilities, and appropriate development assistance. Indeed, women's regional and global networking from the middle decades of the twentieth century needs to be linked to geopolitical realignments during and following the crumbling of European empires. Such are the contexts and ramifications of exploring feminist international histories.

Given the complexities of, and obstacles to, international feminist organising, it is worth asking what impulses have driven women for over a century determinedly to build international channels and bodies. The essays in this issue, as well as any perusal of international feminist conference programmes, testify to the list of causes that have connected women both through time and across racial, cultural, religious, class, national, linguistic and other barriers. The list of shared issues reveals the global resonance of concern about education for girls and women; about women's access to, and rights at, work; about marriage and divorce laws; about married women's citizenship laws; and about a spectrum of health issues, including reproductive rights. The growth of socialism and the emergence of a strong feminist movement within international socialism provided one framework for the development of an international women's movement in the early parts of this century. The International Proletarian Women's Day, authorised by the international socialist women's conference in 1910, became the inspiration for the International Women's Day in March that is celebrated well into our own times.¹⁰ Pacifism drove women to protest war and militarism, from the historic 1915 conference at the Hague, which led to the foundation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; to innumerable resolutions taken at international women's conferences for disarmament in the 1920s and against rearmament in the 1930s; to international anti-nuclear movements in the 1970s and 1980s; to international support for the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina; and to African women's shared concerns about civil wars on that continent in recent decades. Religion and related social reform work have also provided the basis for cross-cultural women's networks from nineteenth-century Christian temperance reforms to such current coalitions as the international network Women Living Under Muslim Laws, which is based in France.

Women's suffrage was a critical motive for international networking from the middle decades of the nineteenth century onwards, with international agitation often seen as a crucial strategy for moving recalcitrant national governments. Since the gradual achievement of women's right to vote in

democratic countries through the early and middle twentieth century, women's access to political office, as well as women's representation at, first, the League of Nations and then the United Nations, have become common issues. Prostitution, and the kidnapping of women into prostitution, have been perennial issues on international feminist agendas since the late nineteenth century.¹¹ Given the international scale of the continuing trade in women and children in many parts of the world, international feminist efforts have been crucial in calling attention to the problem. Institutionalising internationalism itself has been both an issue and a goal, from the moves to found the first international feminist organisations in the 1870s to the United Nations Decade for Women beginning in 1975.¹² With the recent appropriation of various local feminist platforms by international donor agencies and the World Bank, scholars and activists have also begun to raise questions about the corporate agendas being served by the incorporation of feminisms within the institutions of international finance.¹³

It might be argued that, at the end of the twentieth century, the stakes for feminist internationalism have been increased considerably because of the very conditions of contemporary globality in which the tightly integrated nature of the world economy coexists with increasing cultural fragmentation. Both the difficulties in, and the importance of, building broad alliances of progressive forces internationally have been addressed by Algerian feminist-activist Marie-Aimée Helie-Lucas:

I think we should work with Left people and with women, wherever they are. And if we are not satisfied with what they think, we can explain, instead of attacking them, because we don't identify the principal enemy by doing so. We destroy our own possibilities and forces, in the long run.¹⁴

We suggest that understanding the history of feminisms and internationalism has important implications for building the kinds of international alliances that have become so crucial today.

What distinguishes this collection on Feminisms and Internationalism is the attempt to examine the history of feminists' long engagement with internationalism from within a global framework. We have assembled together in this volume the histories of a broad array of feminist episodes and movements that were integrally internationalist. When taken together, these contributions serve to defamiliarise the received history of feminisms and internationalism by manifesting the multiple contexts from which feminists have initiated engagements with internationalism. As such, therefore, this volume is different from other works in the field in two ways. First, this volume extends the discussion of the international women's movement beyond the more familiar histories of the dominant international women's networks. Much of the literature on the international women's movement has focused on these dominant Euro-American women's organisations from the 1880s to 1940. Even here, however, there has been more work available

on liberal-feminist international organisations than on the socialist-feminist international women's movement.¹⁵ The picture of an international women's movement that has emerged has mainly focused on the experiences of those women's groups that were dominant in the movement. The current volume, however, includes the stories of feminist organisations and individual women from several different countries who forged international links beyond the operation of the dominant international networks. This collection, therefore, by retrieving for historical memory the existence of rival international women's networks and their engagement with internationalism, rounds out the picture of internationalism in women's movements.

Second, even though the essays in this collection deal with different region- and country-specific women's movements, they all engage either explicitly or implicitly with their relation to international feminism.¹⁶ This makes this collection different from several others that include diverse histories of women's movements around the world but do not focus steadily on issues of internationalism. The objective of this collection, therefore, has not been to strive for exhaustive 'representation' in, for example, ethnic or national terms. Its objective, instead, has been to uncover the multiplicity of locations from which a writing of the histories of feminist engagements with internationalism must proceed. The contribution of this collection, therefore, lies in a broader refocusing of the lens through which the discussion on feminisms and internationalism has hitherto been framed.

This shift in perspective has several implications for the existing scholarship on organised feminisms. It was held, on the basis of the history of European and North American feminist histories, that organised activism ground to a halt with World War I and tailed off soon thereafter. In powerful contrast to that paradigm, several essays in this volume reveal the decades between the world wars as a crucial and consolidating period of feminist international activism in diverse arenas around the world. Francesca Miller notes in her review essay that, while World War II all but extinguished international feminist organising in Europe, in the Americas it actually spurred feminist activism. The inclusion of other locations in constructing histories of feminist internationalism may, indeed, call not just for different periodisations but also for different paradigms for understanding this history.

This defamiliarisation of the history of feminisms and internationalism also raises new questions about the complex dynamics between local, national, regional and international feminist organising. It has often been assumed that even though national and international consciousness coexisted within the international networks of the women's movement, the important precondition for internationalism lay in the existence of a strong and secure national consciousness. This was, indeed, true of the women's organisations in Western and Northern Europe and North America that held the leadership positions in the dominant international organisations. However, the interaction between national and international consciousness was in reality far more complex. Leila Rupp in her contribution to