Beautiful-and-Bad Woman: 
Media Feminism and the 
Politics of Its 
Construction

Fang-chih Irene Yang

Virtuous women belong to history. Women of the present are independent and 
beautiful. . . . Some men say that they do not love women who are not bad.

—"Bad Girls," Marie Claire, May 2000

In shampoo commercials, national best-sellers, MTV, and 
women's magazines, the image of a beautiful-and-bad woman, as 
described above, has been touted as the spokeswoman of the new femi-
nism in twenty-first century Taiwan. Bazaar's 2001 portrayal of Chang 
Hsiao-hung, a well-known Taiwanese feminist activist, offered an 
emblematic example of the way this feminist image is used in popular 
culture. In an unsigned Bazaar piece, "Out of the Closet: Chang Hsiao-
hung's View on Fashion," featured three black-and-white photos of 
Chang, demonstrating her elegant appearance and her lifestyle (with 
bookcases in the background). The article begins with this introduction: 
"Inside our body there exists an unconscious passion for fashion. . . . 
Dressed in white shirt, long black skirt, and a green scarf, Chang joyfully 
talks about 'women's irrational passion for fashion.'" In the article, Chang 
was quoted as saying: "It is a good thing to like fashion because it brings 
me a lot of pleasure. I am not going to feel guilty about it because I am 
worth it." As for sexual politics, "men who wear Armani take on a more 
feminine aura and women, more masculine. A kind of androgynous

Feminist Studies 33, no. 2 (Summer 2007). © 2007 by Feminist Studies, Inc.

361
ambiguity is born when one wears Armani.” Here, “coming out of the
closet” evokes not gay politics but rather consumption—the consumption
of very expensive Western clothing brands as a tool for fighting strict
gender boundaries.¹

Chang stands for the beautiful-and-bad feminist—beautiful, because
she cares about her appearance; bad, because through Armani, she asserts
her autonomy by breaking gender boundaries. This feminism, with its
emphasis on individualism and consumerism, is built upon the premise
that, as Chen Li-ling in the United Daily News (Taiwan) put it in 1999,
“women have achieved equality in the new times . . . there is no need to
fight against male power.” This kind of “new times” mentality was echoed
in a Corolla ad in Non-no magazine in April 1996, which claimed to end the
gender wars: “Men have freedom and women have independence; they
now live happily hereafter.” In other words, the beautiful-and-bad femi-
nist uses consumption as a way of achieving harmonious female-male
relationships.²

The figure of the beautiful-and-bad woman as feminist is grounded in
a particular vision of history that celebrates the end of patriarchy and
women’s coming of age. This “feminist” image has emerged out of the
media’s construction of women’s rights movements over the past twenty
years. Through their coverage of feminist movements worldwide, inter-
national women’s magazines have played a significant role in shaping
popular knowledge about feminism in Taiwan. However, as these maga-
zines focus on women as consumers, the kind of feminism that is con-
structed is necessarily constrained by the logic of global capital. In this
essay, I aim to examine the politics of this construction through the image
of the beautiful-and-bad woman. The material under analysis is mostly
from the Taiwanese editions of international women’s magazines from
1985 to 2002, including Non-no, Elle, Marie Claire, Cosmopolitan, Vogue,
and Bazaar. Supported by advertisers, they are composed mostly of fashion
spreads, self-help and informative articles, and advertisements. I analyze
those that explicitly engage with feminism or women’s movements. I also
supplement my analysis with a discussion of such best-selling books, in
Taiwan, as Beautiful and Bad Women’s Key to Success, A Manual for Women Who
Want to Be Beautiful and Bad, and Everybody Loves Bad Girls plus articles from the
“Women’s Page,” a supplementary section of the United Daily News, one of the most widely circulated daily newspapers in Taiwan. The “Women’s Page” deals with the know-how of consumption and family management. All these texts are designed to help women manage their everyday lives, including how to attract men, achieve career success, and look fashionable and pretty.

My argument is that the media in Taiwan have promoted two images of feminists and feminism: the beautiful and the bad. Beautiful feminism is grounded in feminine difference while bad feminism is located within a discourse of sameness. These seemingly contradictory rhetorical strategies together construct a female subject to support global production and consumption. Forms of difference other than gender are ignored. Thus, the image of the beautiful-and-bad woman makes use of certain elements from liberal feminism and cultural feminism from the U.S. Second Wave while labeling its undesirable parts as the Other, or “the Western Second Wave.” This selective appropriation of Western feminism has to be explained within the larger context of neocolonialism, which sells the Western lifestyle as local women’s redemption from patriarchal oppression and defines feminism as a personal lifestyle choice, rather than a political practice. It thus limits feminist politics to the personal sphere and ignores the heterogeneity of women’s movements.

The first part of this article offers a history of the relationship between women’s movements and women’s magazines in Taiwan. Here, I emphasize the way global capital through international women’s magazines has given rise to the fantasy of the beautiful-and-bad feminist subject. In the second part, I discuss Joan Scott’s notion of fantasy to underscore that identity is constructed through ideological exclusion. The third part of the article investigates how media feminism is formed along the two axes of sexual difference and sameness through appropriations from liberal feminism and cultural feminism. The fourth part uses the translation of “postfeminism” in Taiwan to illustrate the mechanism of ideological inclusion/exclusion in constructing a beautiful-and-bad feminist fantasy. The fifth part investigates the excluded Other of the fantasy, the “Western Second Wave.” The creation and elimination of this Other justifies the legitimacy of a man-loving lifestyle feminism conducive to global capitalism. In the final part, I
discuss the politics of this lifestyle feminism and argue that media feminism in Taiwan needs to be theorized within the context of neocolonialism.

**Historical Background:**

**Women's Magazines and Women's Movements**

The lifting of martial law in 1987 as well as other factors such as the formation of a service economy with women entering into the workplace en masse, the liberalizing of the economy that opened Taiwan's domestic market to foreign goods, the lifting of restrictions on foreign-owned advertising companies, and the enforcement of intellectual property law made it possible for international women's magazines to come to Taiwan, changing Taiwan's women's magazine market as well as the content of the magazines. Before then, the political climate was authoritarian and repressive. Women's magazines were either supported by the state or censored to promote state ideology. However, despite strict censorship, (underground) magazine publishing allowed a space for democratic movements to flourish. For example, in the early 1980s, the feminist and democratic Awakening group used magazines to spread their ideas and raise women's consciousness, despite the fact that their publishing house was constantly raided by the police.

The liberalization policy adopted in the 1980s as a response to U.S. pressure to open up Taiwan's market for foreign (mostly U.S.) goods allowed Western ad agencies such as Ogilvy & Mather, J. Walter Thompson, and Saatchi & Saatchi to take over the market for advertising in Taiwan. These ad agencies used international women's magazines as forums to sell Western goods to women, with one-third to one-half of these magazines filled with advertisements from Christian Dior, Lancôme, Estée Lauder, and so on. The power of women as consumers in Taiwan meant that it was a lucrative market, and Chinese-language versions of *Cosmopolitan, Elle, Marie Claire,* and *Bazaar* all started to appear in bookstores and on newsstands, targeting high school and college-educated, urban, and 20- to 35-year-old young women with consuming power as their readers. Feminists used these magazines as an outlet for their activism, writing columns and feature articles or appearing in them as interviewees.
As a particular form of global capital, international women's magazines needed to abide by the "international" spirit as set up in the West; but they also needed to localize in order to appeal to Taiwan's readers. As such, most of the articles were translated from Western (mostly U.S.) editions, with minor adaptations or moderations that provided local information and context (such as interviewing Taiwanese women on how they think about sex). These articles were supported by advertisements that emphasized consumption.

Three statements from the launching issue of Taiwan's *Cosmopolitan* best capture the essence of these magazines: "Our readers are women who desire to actualize their potentials. . . . We emphasize that a woman needs to have a career and romantic love to be truly happy. . . .," and "Our Chinese edition emphasizes the energetic, active, individualistic, and independent spirit of the American *Cosmopolitan*." Negotiating the space between the local and the global, international women's magazines in Taiwan constructed their target readers as young, urban women with consuming power who "love men, children, work, and themselves" and whose main principle in life is to "keep their youth and beauty forever." As such, international women's magazines engaged with issues such as women's independence, individuality, and their search for romantic love and lifestyle—all of which, the magazines suggested, can be obtained through consumption, particularly consumption of Western goods. The emphasis on consumerism meant that women's magazines defined feminism in a way that stressed women's individuality, independence, romantic love, and lifestyle.

Informed by U.S. Second Wave and Western liberal feminism, the Awakening group adopted strategies that emphasized, on the one hand, key Western feminist ideas by introducing Western texts to the general public as a form of consciousness raising; on the other, lobbying for legal reforms. Sociologist Fan Yun has pointed out that the early members' backgrounds affected their adoption of these two strategies. Most of the members came from the elite and upper-middle class and were well-educated, with many of them having received a Western education. This background also limited their ability to organize grassroots movements as most of them were unable to communicate with the majority of women.
This emphasis reflected the particular history of feminist movements in Taiwan, beginning with the publication of Lu Hsiu-lien’s *New Feminism* in the 1970s and the organizing of the Awakening group by Lee Yuan-chen in the early 1980s.7

The emphasis on legal reforms has since become a major focus of Taiwan’s women’s movements. Lacking a critique of how the institution of heterosexuality structures inequality in every sphere of women’s social existence, the liberal rhetoric of independence and equality in the workplace espoused by many Taiwanese feminists intersected with the magazines’ need to sell products to women with consuming power, usually working women. Because commercial products for women are closely linked to the culture of romance, romantic love became one of the main themes of women’s magazines. The complicity of liberal feminism with the institution of heterosexuality enabled women’s magazines to talk about feminism in a male-friendly manner. In discussing feminism and feminist issues, Taiwan’s women’s magazines always invited male celebrities to join the discussion. In this context, to launch a systematic critique of the institution of compulsory heterosexuality becomes almost impossible.

In the 1990s, many feminist groups with objectives and politics very different from the Awakening group emerged. The younger generation’s engagement with sexual politics, particularly lesbianism, and later, sexual liberation, led to the “implosion/explosion” of the Awakening group. This conflict within women’s movements can be framed as a debate over the significance of gender politics versus sexual politics. The sexual liberationists saw sexual repression as the root of patriarchy and therefore aimed to eliminate sexual hierarchy and fight against the anti-sex conservatism that represses sexual expression, while liberal feminists insisted on the priority of gender politics over sexual politics in protecting women’s rights in education, property distribution, politics, and the workplace.8

The sexual liberation movements in Taiwan were intimately connected with the media. For example, when a 1994 rally against sexual harassment made women’s orgasms a feminist issue, newspapers and women’s magazines enthusiastically engaged with this “feminist orgasm,” erasing other feminist agendas such as rights to education.9 International women’s magazines adopted a discourse of sexual pleasure to talk about
women's autonomy and individuality and used it to sell sexual parapher-
nalia to women. They promoted the ideology that power for women can
be obtained through sexual satisfaction for both women and men, which
in turn can be acquired through consumer goods.10

As a result of the lack of engagement with gender politics, the sexual
liberation movement was easily appropriated for the consumerism that
women's magazines advocated. Women's magazines kept on telling
women that to practice a beautiful-woman feminism meant to be tender,
feminine, and to dress fashionably for men, while to practice a bad-
woman feminism meant holding on to individuality, autonomy, and
independence. Both, however, were shaped by the idea of romantic love.

Fantasy
As “feminist” identity, this beautiful-and-bad feminist subject is a fantasy
constructed through the ideological filter of global capital. From a post-
structuralist perspective, “woman” as an identity category is not rooted in
biology, but is strategically and repeatedly constructed. Similarly, “femi-
nist” as an identity category is also fabricated over and again by feminists,
and the writing of feminist history plays an important role in constructing
this category. In emphasizing the role of history in political mobilization,
Scott proposed that feminist identity is “not so much a self-evident fact of
history as it was evidence—from particular and discrete moments in time—of
someone's, some group’s, effort to identify and thereby mobilize a collectiv-
ity.” The history of feminism is “a story of discontinuity that was repeatedly
sutured by feminist activists . . . into a vision of uninterrupted linear succes-
sion.” Operating as narrative, this ideological fantasy rearranges contradic-
tory, incoherent elements diachronically, making them seem like causes
and effects. It “extracts coherence from confusion, reduces multiplicity into
singularity, and reconciles illicit desire with the law.” Hence, history should
be seen as “a fantasized narrative that imposes sequential order on other-
wise chaotic and contingent occurrences,” and it is in the writing of a
fantastic history that identity is partially grounded.11

The “Other” is central to the constitution of this social ideological fan-
tasy. Conceptualizing feminist history as written by women's magazines as a
form of fantasy allows us not only to illuminate the narrative specificity of
this Other, but to situate it within the ideological machine of the media. Feminist activism that did not fit into the ideological needs of women's magazines in Taiwan was allocated to a different place (such as "Western" feminism) and time (such as "tradition"). This facilitated the fabrication of a unified, consistent feminist history as the identity base for the new beautiful-and-bad woman. In the next section, I analyze the concept of the beautiful-and-bad woman as it is constructed in international women's magazines to illustrate the politics involved in the process of fantasy construction.

**Liberal Feminism and the Bad Woman**

The bad-woman feminism that women's magazines constructed had its roots in the liberal notion of sameness. It advocates that women are human beings and uses this rhetoric to demand the rights that were previously denied to women. The central concern of liberal feminism is women's right to participation in the public sphere, and liberal feminists in Taiwan have largely directed their efforts to legal reforms and equal rights in the workplace. In the late 1980s and 1990s, feminist groups drafted revisions in family law and law for equal rights in the workplace and have successfully lobbied for their passage and implementation. International women's magazines, because they were designed for career women, also focused on public issues such as sexual harassment in the workplace, an equal rights amendment for the workplace, and women's political participation. One message that was emphasized in the magazines is that equal opportunity in the workplace is the key to gender equality: "The only access for women to gain independence and hence, to equality between men and women is to fight for their rights in the workplace."\(^{12}\)

Women were also advised to "liberate themselves from the burden of tradition" and claim their "rights to autonomy and individuality." To be equal to men, "women need to be independent both mentally and economically."\(^{13}\) In other words, bad-woman feminism referred to women who "learn men's rules of game in the workplace," meaning, women who adopt traits that are traditionally assigned to men, such as active, expressive, ambitious, competitive, individualistic, rational, goal-oriented, and calculative.\(^{14}\) For the bad-woman feminist, these traits were to be applied not only in the workplace but also in the realm of love. For example, the
bad girls' “manual,” Everybody Loves Bad Girls, emphasized the significance of winning the man you want through deliberate strategies, not through the heart or out of love, but for your own power and pleasure. All these ideas were legitimated through the liberal rhetoric of gender equality and human rights.

Despite liberal feminism’s avoidance of a politics of sexuality, women’s magazines adopted the liberal rhetoric of human rights (equal rights) to sell sex and sexiness. This strategy reflected the emphasis of some branches of the women’s movement in Taiwan. For example, at the anti-sexual harassment rally organized by Taiwan’s feminists in 1994, one feminist, Josephine Ho, proclaimed, “We want orgasms, not sexual harassment,” which immediately drew the attention of the media, making this slogan the metonymic figure for feminism in popular culture. Ho also wrote articles in women’s magazines, arguing for a kind of feminism that enabled women and men to share power through sexual liberation, emphasizing that women’s sexual liberation does not encourage men to take advantage of women, rather “men get satisfaction and women get pleasure; they are on equal terms.” Women’s magazines made use of this liberal rhetoric of equality as human rights and extended the notion of the right to actively seek sexual pleasure. A typical example of this use of liberal rhetoric to argue for women’s right to actively seek sexual pleasure was an article in Marie Claire in 1993, “Who Decides How to Eat a Cake?” In this article, Cheng Sing-wei and Chen Chao defined patriarchy as “men on top, women at the bottom.” Because “women’s body is the site of feminist practice,” women should “take over the decision-making power when having sex” and practice “women on top” in order to achieve gender equality: “Simply said, seeking sexual pleasure is no longer men’s privilege only.” As conceived in liberal feminism—women, like men, are also human beings—women now have the right to actively seek and enjoy sexual pleasure.

Appropriating the liberal rhetoric of equal rights, women’s magazines constructed a bad-woman feminist subject with masculine traits such as being active, expressive, and competitive; these traits were to be expressed not only in the workplace, but also in the domain of love and sexuality. However, the use of these traits in the domain of sexuality and love, ironi-
cally, leads the feminist subject back to heterosexual romance. “Bad” women take on male traits in order to get or keep their men, as evidenced by the titles for best-selling books on “bad girls,” “Men Do Not Love Women Who Are Not Bad,” “In Love with Bad Women,” “Everybody Loves Bad Girls,” and “Men Are Desperately in Love with Bad Women.”

Cultural Feminism and Beautiful Woman
Cultural feminism emphasizes the differences between women and men (either grounded in biology or in culture) in an effort to revalorize undervalued female traits. Cultural feminist theories and politics are founded on the concept of the essential female. They are characterized by “denigration of masculinity rather than male roles or practices, by their valorization of female traits, and by their commitment to preserve rather than diminish gender differences.” Because of the emphasis on gaining legal rights in Taiwan’s women’s movements, cultural feminism has not been popular there; however, Taiwanese liberal feminists’ conciliatory acknowledgment of women’s nature as tender and caring in the private sphere allowed women’s magazines to appropriate from cultural feminism the notion of femininity as power. Although the aim of cultural feminism in the West is often to create a woman-centered culture free of patriarchal oppression, it can also be used to promote harmonious female-male relationships. The beautiful-woman feminism constructed in both Taiwanese and Western popular media stressed the significance of women’s feminine traits— their tenderness and beauty, for example—and maintained that, as different from and complementary to men, women should love men in order to create peaceful and harmonious relationships. For example, in 1986 in “Let Men Be Your Working Companions,” published in Non-no, the unsigned article stated: “Women should make an effort to re-establish a new value system; that is, we are different from men but we are as important; we have to change our system to fit us.” In this article, feminists such as Mayfair Yang, Lee Yuan-chen, and Hu Mei-li were presented as transforming themselves from “angry feminists” to feminists who cared about “how to get along with men peacefully.”

This beautiful woman is distinct from the “androgy nous” feminist of the 1980s. Rather than assimilate herself to a male model, she is feminine.
In a 1997 special issue on “Woman Power” published in *Elle*, Hu Hui-ming defined feminism as follows: “I think a true feminist should accentuate her femininity because her feminine traits provide a better vision for the future and are far more superior and precious; hence, they are better equipped for the new times.” Moreover, woman power is flexible enough to be “strong and tender at the same time.”

This emphasis on both femininity and feminism was not only taken up in media’s definition of feminism, but also in advertisements that used feminine power to sell products associated with the “feminist lifestyle.” An ad for Left Bank coffee illustrated this point well:

She is leaving Paris again,
(People say women should not travel alone)
She brings with her an unfinished book
(Sitting in a café by herself)
This is a kind of écriture feminine
(She drinks latte... coffee and milk, 1:1)
Sweetly telling us that the second sex does not exist
(The fragrance of coffee flows from her to me, and more...)
This is the first day in 1908, women have become the first sex.
(She is Simone de Beauvoir. We are both travelers, encountering each other on the Left Bank).23

Despite Beauvoir’s conceptualization of masculinity/rationality/transcendence as an ideal, this ad constructed Beauvoir as a cultural feminist celebrating femininity as power. Through latte, which functions as the symbol of femininity and woman power (“1:1” is an expression of her denial of her secondary status), this ad constructed feminism as a particular lifestyle. The emphasis on her femininity and feminine power allowed the media to play with her romantic relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre, as in another ad for Left Bank coffee on a CD cover: “In the beginning of the 20th century, Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir developed their love here; in the beginning of the 21st century, you and I meet here under the shadow and light of the river bank.”24

Women’s magazines introduced Beauvoir as “the foremother of feminism in the world” whose major contribution in *The Second Sex* was to claim that “men and women are equal, women should not be men’s slaves.”
However, as a 1986 editorial in *Non-no* claimed, “it was Sartre who enlightened her to these ideas and made her into an independent woman.”\(^{25}\) The understanding of Beauvoir as a feminist who is indebted to men, with an emphasis on her romantic relationship with Sartre, enabled many advertisers to construct her as the representative of a “feminist” lifestyle—a coffee drinker, a literary figure, and in particular, a lover and a traveler. She is seen as the embodiment of “Paris”—the city of “fashion,” “arts, literature, and culture,” “romance,” and “leisure” in Taiwan’s society.\(^{26}\) As such, Left Bank Coffee ads, along with many others, used Beauvoir to sell “feminist” aspirations—to travel to Paris (hence, breaking away from local patriarchy) for enlightenment on feminism and romantic love. These advertisements, placed largely in women’s magazines as well as other media, presented feminism as a particular lifestyle rather than as a form of political activism. Thus, liberal feminism and cultural feminism in the Taiwanese media were linked through a shared emphasis on heterosexual romance. The beautiful-and-bad woman is at the same time strong, competitive, and active, but also feminine, beautiful, and tender. Her power in the workplace and in bed comes from her femininity, which requires the consumption of fashion and cosmetics. The “and” in beautiful-and-bad woman suggests that women are different from, but also equal to, men as human beings; hence, they love men but are not subordinated to them.

**Translating Postfeminism**

The production of the image of the beautiful-and-bad feminist was achieved through the creation and masking of the Other. I will use the example of postfeminism as it appeared in Taiwanese culture to illustrate how an “ideologically correct” postfeminism was made legitimate through a process of devaluation and exclusion of the Other, in this case, “the Western Second Wave.” The term “postfeminism” has been used to mean different things in the contemporary context. The three most commonly used definitions are: (1) “The era after second-wave feminism, that is, the 1980s and particularly the 1990s—in other words, our present context”; (2) “Postfeminism signifies the backlash against feminism”; particularly referring to the phenomenon that many young women believe that there is no need for feminism because women have achieved
equality; and (3) "A useful conceptual frame of reference encompassing the intersection of feminism with a number of other anti-foundationalist movements including postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism (following L.S. Kim)." Here, I adopt the second definition when talking about postfeminism.

In the early 1990s, popular media in the United States proclaimed the death of feminism and the coming of an age of "postfeminism" with the publication of Rene Denfeld's *The New Victorians* (1995) and Christina Hoff Sommers's *Who Stole Feminism?* (1994). These two books were written by young, white, well-educated women who positioned themselves within feminist movements and sought to resolve a perceived crisis in feminism. In promoting the translated versions of these books, Taiwanese women's magazines and major newspapers not only published excerpts but also reviewed these books. Excerpts from *The New Victorians* and *Who Stole Feminism?* in women’s magazines are especially useful for examining the politics of translation.

An excerpt from *Who Stole Feminism?* was published in Taiwan in the February issue of *Marie Claire*, 1996. The title reads: "Women Who Are Paranoid: Who Are Provoking Women to Hate Men?" and the lead-in reads:

Feminism is not a bad thing, but when a group of fanatical women claiming to represent all women are promoting the idea that men are persecuting women, then there's a problem. . . . Sommers wishes to do away with the distorted image of women as victims; she wants to reshape and re-balance a harmonious men-women relationship.

In the excerpt, Sommers accuses feminists from the Second Wave such as Gloria Steinem and Naomi Wolf of using false statistics to construct a myth of female victims and male oppressors. She claims that these "angry and hateful" gender feminists have alienated women from feminism because of their anti-male attitude.

Similarly, in July 1995, *Elle* introduced Denfeld's *The New Victorians* to its readers, pointing out that the victim myth and "anti-men" feminism are to be confined to the past. In July 1997, *Marie Claire* used the title "Can Feminists Love Men?" to introduce excerpts from *The New Victorians*. These excerpts make the same point: that Second Wave feminists have practiced
anti-male sexism in the name of feminism; that “fake feminists,” such as Catharine MacKinnon, are promoting separatism in claiming that heterosexuality is the cause of oppression in our society; and that this kind of man-hating feminism can only make women feel estranged from the movement. 

Both of the excerpts that these magazines published caricature the 1960s and 1970s women’s movements as an out-of-date, separatist, man-hating feminism that is not relevant to modern Taiwan. After all, women’s magazines claimed, women are still women; in addition to gender equality, women still want to be good wives and good mothers. However, it was only through a process of exclusion, over-simplification, and misreading that the Western Second Wave could be constructed as “old” and “separatist.” As Debora Siegel argued, through a “rhetoric of repossession” these post-feminists obstruct any dialogue by first dichotomizing feminism into two camps—such as equality feminism versus gender feminism and power feminism versus victim feminism—and then by claiming that they themselves are on the “good” side of feminism. This dichotomizing requires postfeminists to construct “feminist history as the story of a product rather than that of a process” and to adopt a “metonymic view of the second wave, in which a part of second wave activity is substituted for the whole.”

After all, there is no one feminism, but feminisms, and they are marked by contradictions and different voices. In theorizing heterosexuality, Denfeld is right to point out that there are some radical feminists who see heterosexuality as a tool of patriarchy. Such feminists in the United States have conceptualized heterosexuality as an institution sustained and reproduced, in Chris Weedon’s words, “through the expropriation of women’s sexuality and their procreative and labor power,” and they have argued that heterosexuality is systematically imposed on women via wide-ranging forms of mental and physical violence. This view, however, is also challenged by many feminists, who disagree with the view that heterosexual women are colonized subjects, pointing out that such a position leaves little room for positive engagements with heterosexuality. These other feminists hold a more productive, in my opinion, position, positing a notion of heterosexuality as an institution that points to the social nature of heterosexuality, enabling many femi-
nists to analyze how heterosexuality is materially produced through a variety of discursive practices. These different positions and complex ways of analyzing heterosexuality are erased in postfeminism's bifurcation of feminism into new and old. However, in the context of a sensationalist media, their views are constructed, marketed, and received as representative of the views of the entire younger generation in the West, and through a profit-driven publishing system these postfeminist views, along with their stereotypes about the Second Wave, are translated into Taiwan's context.

In *The Scandal of Translation*, Lawrence Venuti pointed out that translation is domestication. In order for local readers to understand a foreign text, translators are required to use languages and concepts that their readers are already familiar with; they even have to invoke stereotypical images to rewrite the translated texts. Consequently, texts, in the process of translation, are decontextualized to conform to domestic ideology. Hence, translation involves selection and exclusion, and in this process, it also constructs a subject that matches the demands of the dominant society. The translation of postfeminism in the Taiwanese context, with its repudiation of anti-male, victim feminism, conforms to the ideology of beautiful-and-bad-woman feminism that women's magazines promote—a feminism that privileges women's desire for independence, power, and romance. The process of selection excludes any Second Wavers' views that might threaten the institution of heterosexuality as well as Third Wavers' critiques of the depoliticization of postfeminism. Despite the proliferation of multiple voices from the younger generation engaging with the Second Wave in the West, their voices are absent from Taiwan's media. Postfeminists' fear of man-hating, victim feminism appeals to majority feelings about feminism in Taiwan. As such, postfeminism is constructed as the most appropriate feminism for Taiwan: "we do not need revolutionary theory. . . . Through postfeminism, we only need to be conscientious and constantly adjust our individual lifestyles."

**Feminism's Other**

This Taiwanese postfeminism, however, depends on a man-hating stereotype of the Western Second Wave, as the Other constructed in Taiwan's
popular imagination since the translation of feminism to Taiwan in the 1970s. Edward Said’s notion of “a structure of reference and attitude” provides a way to detect the Other of this Taiwanese feminist fantasy. Said pointed out that the image of a distanced Other can be traced across different texts. This image is sometimes carefully and sometimes ambiguously constructed, but it is grounded in shared attitudes and structures. Stereotypes in the U.S. media of Second Wave feminists as “bra-burners” and “man-haters” who are “sexually deviant” and “against family values,” which were circulating in Taiwan in the 1970s, challenged even Lu to claim a “local” character for her “new feminism,” despite the fact that New Feminism was influenced by many key Western liberal thinkers. Unlike Western feminism, Lu claimed, Taiwan’s “new feminism” promoted family harmony and was against sexual promiscuity. And in the 1990s, women’s magazines and other forms of media invoked “the Western Second Wave,” as a geographically distanced Other and assigned it to the past to justify the creation of a beautiful-and-bad-woman feminism in Taiwan, despite their borrowing from cultural feminism and liberal feminism—both of them part of the U.S. Second Wave—in articulating a beautiful-and-bad feminist subject, for example, in statements such as this: “In order to maintain harmonious, cooperative relationships with men, some feminists have changed from their anti-chauvinist, ‘opposition for opposition’s sake’ feminist attitudes to fighting for equality. This new kind of feminism is more relevant to our society and our times.”

The construction of a Western Other should be seen as a negotiation between the local site and global capitalism, as global capital penetrates the local. Although women’s magazines appropriate elements from the Western Second Wave in articulating a “local” beautiful-and-bad feminist subject, only its unwanted elements are identified as coming from the West. This selective appropriation, with its creation and elimination of man-hating feminism as its Other, reflects global capitalism’s need to use heterosexual romance to facilitate consumption.

The need for consumerism directs women’s magazines to focus on individual images within a male-friendly framework when talking about feminism without getting into feminist politics or practices. For example, an interview with Chang Yi-yun, a feminist legal scholar, which was
published in *Marie Claire* in February 1996, was entitled: “Will Smart Women Scare Men Away?” And in a 1995 special issue on the history of feminist activism, *Marie Claire* interviewed male celebrities to talk about their ideas of what feminists look like and caricatured them into different types. In another article in the same issue, the magazine used the title: “Who Says They Are All Bitches?” Of course, they also featured beautiful pictures of feminists such as Lee Yuan-chen and Chang Hsiao-hung to prove that not all feminists look like “bitches.”

The imperative for consumption that governs the contents of women’s magazines means that many feminist events are erased from view. One significant piece of feminist history, which gets erased in women’s magazines, is the labor movement—for example, the protest organized by sex workers that took place in Taiwan in 1997. Faced with the city government’s sudden decision to outlaw prostitution, many sex workers, with the support of the Female Workers Alliance Assembly Line, Pink Collar Alliance, and sexual liberationists, came forward and protested, demanding their rights to work and live free from police harassment and exploitation. This protest marked an important chapter in the history of feminist activism in Taiwan, with many feminists engaging with this issue in major newspaper forums as well as in academic journals and books. In fact, this event highlighted the division of Taiwanese women’s movements into two camps—the pro-prostitution camp (the sexual liberationists) and the anti-prostitution camp (the liberal feminists)—with lots of bad feelings involved. Even now, this issue still takes up a significant amount of scholarly attention in feminist work in Taiwan. However, unlike the issue of sexual harassment, which is treated in women’s magazines as a lifestyle issue—that is, it can be eliminated through a change of dress and interpersonal behavior—the subject of sex work has never been discussed on a “woman’s page” in newspapers, but is treated as a social problem. And of course, it is absent from women’s magazines. This absence has a lot to do with the fact that prostitutes (those who have a license to do sex work) and their demands for work do not conform to women’s magazines’ attempts to sell a middle-class lifestyle. The sex workers whose lives were most affected by the outlawing of prostitution were women in their forties and fifties with little education, who used sex work to support their children or
pay off family debts. Although the decriminalization of sex work does support women's magazines' endorsement of sexual liberation, the images of the sex workers as poor, lower-class, hard-working women—their faces covered with rural-style scarves and farmers' hats and their bodies dressed in plain clothes—deviated from the glamorous lifestyle that the magazines aim to sell. Moreover, this protest was articulated in terms of class antagonism and struggle. The city government's outlawing of prostitution was seen as part of the project of building Taipei into a global, middle-class city through the imposition of middle-class sexual/moral standards. Feminists who supported outlawing prostitution were labeled middle-class feminists, as opposed to sexual liberationists who stood with oppressed workers. The protest's emphases on class antagonism and on sex work as work did not fit into women's magazines' need for glamorous consumerism; as such, they were eliminated from the beautiful-and-bad feminist fantasy.

This silence on labor practices in international women's magazines echoes what Carol Stabile observed in her case study on Nike. She argued that the rhetoric of social responsibility in advertising conceals exploitative labor practices at the site of production in order to persuade consumers that consumption is an ideal means for them to experience their identities as liberal, socially responsible citizens. In the same way, women's magazines' erasure of sites of production and exploitation allows them to construct a liberal, independent, pleasure-seeking feminist figure whose ultimate aim is empowerment through consumption.

This media feminism turns feminist politics into lifestyle politics and transforms the meaning of the feminist slogan, "the personal is political," into "the political is personal." As Bonnie Dow commented, "The political is personal, it tells us, as a set of political ideas is transformed into a set of attitudes and personal lifestyle, in turn, is defined by appearance, by job, by marital status and by personality, not by political belief or political practice." When feminist politics is conflated with lifestyle, the focus of feminist activism is shifted to the notion of choice. To choose to be a feminist or not has come to mean whether a woman wants to adopt the lifestyle that a feminist is supposed to have, not whether she engages in feminist politics or practices.
MONEY, SEX, AND POWER

This lifestyle feminism, as articulated through the figure of the beautiful-and-bad woman, echoes Rita Felski’s analysis of the “money, sex, and power” fiction genre. Felski pointed out that the “money, sex, and power” novel always uses a beautiful and sexy woman as the protagonist and describes how she consumes men and name-brand commodities, thus achieving career success. In connecting women’s power with her consuming practices, this genre subverts the devaluation traditionally attached to women and consumption. Women’s skills in consumption become essential resources for her economic success. The “cultural feminization of work,” that is, the emphasis on feminine aesthetics and feminine skills in the workplace, is linked to the refashioning of gender and should be seen as having positive implications for changing gender relations for women.

Although Felski is hesitant in claiming that women gain agency through the consumption of brand-name commodities, she does point out that the gender hybridity promoted in the “money, sex, and power” genre should be situated within previous representations of femininity as well as within the increasing feminization/aestheticization of culture and workplace in late capitalism. First World feminists who are sympathetic to postfeminism point out that it is important for feminists to acknowledge the improving economic situation in which the younger generation grew up and, hence, the change in their attitudes toward gender relations. However, rereading the empirical data collected by Linda McDowell, Lisa Adkins argues that the cultural feminization of work does not necessarily bring about the breakdown of traditional gender relations. Rather, it “concerns the emergence of a new ideal worker figured in terms of mobility and flexibility in relation to gender performance at work.” Contrary to Felski’s conclusion that the new economy offers “money, sex, and power” for women, Adkins points out that it is men who can be more flexible in their gender performances and, therefore, are offered better opportunities in the workplace. For women, playing “masculine” is usually not an option; the traditional meanings of femininity still limit women in terms of their flexibility in gender performances. Moreover, a woman worker’s feminine performance is not recognized as performance or effort but as her
natural feminine skills. The misrecognition of her feminine performance as natural decreases the possibility of her advances in work.

The Armani feminism or latte feminism advocated in Taiwan's international women's magazines also has to be contextualized within neocolonialism in which global capital (embodied in multinational advertising agencies and international women's magazines), with the help of (U.S.) state power, dissolves national boundaries in search of global subjects of consumption. The fascination with Western commodities as a tool to liberation, especially liberation from local/traditional patriarchy, has its roots in imperialism. According to Radhika Parameswaran’s analysis of global media’s representations of globalization, global media such as *National Geographic* and, I would add, international women’s magazines are constructed as “benevolent participants” in the modernization of the Third World:

In *Geographic’s* canvas on global culture, multinationals . . . are conjoined to progressive agendas of non-Western women’s empowerment. The logic underlying *Geographic’s* vision of corporate America as agents of Asian women’s liberation from their oppression by domestic Indian corporations morphs into a modern manifestation of colonial discourses that also projected the ideology of Western culture as the savior of non-Western women who endured the abuses of their “barbaric culture.”

Situating Armani feminism within the context of neocolonialism—as articulated in Gayatri Spivak’s “white men saving brown women from brown men”—provides insight into the unequal relationships between the West and the East, and it further points to the ways in which media feminism in the periphery should be theorized. The articulation of the West as advanced, modern, and civilized and the East as primitive, traditional, and barbaric assigns the distanced Other to another place, in the past. Women’s magazines in Taiwan largely rely on this discourse to articulate their new media feminism.

However, because of the need of global media to localize, Western feminism is translated in quite contradictory ways in Taiwan. As my analysis shows, the Second Wave in the West is stereotyped to show its inappropriateness for Taiwan’s culture and is simultaneously relegated to the past. This rhetoric is similar to postfeminist rhetoric in popular media
in the United States. Through international women’s magazines, this postfeminism also is presented in Taiwan as “good Western feminism” and hence, “our feminism.” However, this appreciation and appropriation of a “good” Western feminism—a feminism that aims to promote the consumption of global commodities—should be situated within a neocolonial context, a context in which, as the previous discussion shows, Taiwan is forced to open up its market to foreign goods, and international women’s magazines, with the support of multinational ad agencies, become agents in fulfilling the mission of shaping a female subject of consumption needed by global capital.

NOTES
The author wishes to thank the National Science Council for funding this project. She expresses her gratitude to the Feminist Studies collective and the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable comments as well as Naifei Ding, Teri Silvio, and in particular, Peter Kang, for their generosity and intellectual input.

and Taiwan’s Women’s Movements from the Perspectives of the New Social Movements,” *Chung Wai Literary Monthly* 26, no. 2 (1997): 75-97.
10. For more on this topic, see my “International Women’s Magazines and the Production of Sexuality in Taiwan,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 37, no. 3 (2004): 544-69.
33. Siegel, “Reading between the Waves,” 65.
40. Female Workers Alliance Assembly Line and Pink Collar Alliance, “The Middle Class that Looks Down upon the Poor and the Prostitutes: The Taipei City Government that Persecutes the Poor and the Prostitutes,” in Sex Work: From the Perspectives of Sex Workers Rights, ed. Josephine Ho (Taipei: Jui-liu Publication, 2000), 183-87.