Urbanizing Woman and Her Sisters: The Ethics of Gender in Chinese Television Dramas

HAIPING YAN

In the autumn of 1997 the World Bank issued 'China 2020', a seven-volume report on the key issues and challenges that 'China must face over the next two decades'.[1] The opening passage reads:

> China is in the throes of two transitions: from a command economy to a market-based one and from a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial one. So far, both transitions have been spectacularly successful. China is the fastest growing economy in the world, with *per capita* incomes more than quadrupling since 1978, achieving in two generations what took other countries centuries.[2]

After this epochal defining passage about 'achievements', though, the narrative takes a sharp turn and presents a long list of 'challenges': employment insecurity, growing inequality, stubborn poverty, rising costs of food self-sufficiency, mounting environmental pressures, and periods of macro-economic instability. China must meet these challenges to sustain its development by furthering reforms in three related areas: 'the spread of market forces must be encouraged; the government must begin serving markets; and integration with the world economy must be deepened'.[3] The 1997 World Bank report maps out the fluid conditions of contemporary China with a blueprint for its reconfiguration in the twenty-first century.

Among the issues that remain outside the focus of this blueprint for a future China is, most conspicuously, 'the Woman Question'. How could it be that 'the woman'—as a vital social category and material presence of human lives who constitute half the world's population—holds no serious attention in this comprehensive mapping of the changing landscape of Chinese culture and society, then, is a question in the light of which the World Bank's design for China's 'further modernization' appears peculiarly limited. Such a limited design of modernity, aggressively permeating the discourses of the Chinese public culture over the past two decades, has been constantly troubled by the limit-challenging performances of Chinese women, both in their daily lives and their much contested cultural representations. The performative narrations by and/or about women in a process of being structurally 'reformed' are critical sites for tracing various entanglements of contradictory desires, movements of women's conflicting experiences, and competing forms of a nation caught in the throes of modernizing drives of a global proportion. In this analysis of several Chinese television dramas popular in the 1990s, I intend to delineate aspects of such conflicting experiences, contradictory desires, and competing forms, as well as their significations.

I. Rural women in urbanization: the gender of a modernizing ethics

One of the major features that many of the popular television dramas of the 1990s have shared is a narrative that moves across multiple locations of human geography with unprece-

dented scope, recasting the established boundaries between the urban and rural, the metropolis and the provinces, the national and the international, while sustaining such a multidimensional mobility with certain unifying ethical impulses. *Braving Shanghai*, a seventeen-episode television drama written by two playwrights, Zhang Xian and Fu Xin, brings such a multidimensional spatiality with a unifying ethic into a visually colourful dramatization.[4]

The story is simple: as the Chinese reform, which began in the late 1970s, develops into the 1990s, young and middle-aged men and women from the rural areas are flooding into large urban centres such as Shanghai, searching for ways of improving their standards of living. Such an 'urbanization' is invested with an explicit hope for individual betterment, the process of which, as dramatized, presents opportunities for brave, talented, and hard-working men and women from the rural areas to cross various established boundaries (economic, legal, and psycho-cultural), and become successful business owners in the metropolis.

Embodying such an ideal of entrepreneurship, the leading character, Mr He Wenchang, goes through a long struggle and succeeds in establishing his prosperous company. Paralleling this business struggle is his emotional battle to win a beautiful rural woman, Xiaowan, from her privileged but class-biased and male-chauvinist urban lover. As Mr He is shown to be honest and fair with others when he achieves economic success and, more importantly, plans to extend his business to his home-village, an abandoned and emotionally traumatized Xiaowan recognizes his genuine love for her, leaves her urban lover, and accepts his offer to join him in developing their rural home-villages with their hard-earned urban capital. Mr He's success in transplanting himself into urban centres and joining the rank of metropolitan capital owners is hence validated not only through his business achievement but also thanks to his emotional victory in his competition with the privileged urbanites. Such an emotional validation, signified through his relationship with Xiaowan, turns Mr He's economic enterprise of individual empowerment into a social and symbolic enterprise for collective urbanization which promises happiness to the underprivileged including, par-

ticularly, the rural women. This is a social validation that designates a formative ethical system which is emerging in the public discourses in China.

Such a system of ethics is spatialized by a dramatic display of a variety of human lives across the boundaries between the urban and the rural. Often privileging the rural as a site of material scarcity but ethical imagination in relation to the urban affluence, the boundary-crossing multiplicity of the space and its meanings enacted in this drama conveys in effect a simple proposition: a desirable urbanization should be combined with an ethical system which shapes and sustains mutually beneficial partnerships rather than contradictions between the urban and the rural, the metropolitan and the provincial, the developed and the developing, capital and labour, and male and female. A recent review of this drama series that calls for a social campaign to 'learn from those hard- working rural people in Shanghai who have contributed so much to the city' is another narrative instance of such ethical formation and articulation.[5]

In some ways, this ethic of harmonious competition and human unity appears to be another version of traditional Confucian values about good and evil, right and wrong, in 'human relations', through which China's dynastic cultural history and its moral teachings find possible reincarnations. It appears to be a persisting impulse of the value-system of 'New China' that insists upon the dependency of individual interests on the collective well-being, through which China's twentieth-century history of socialist movements and their moral teachings reinvent themselves.[6] In the eyes of an audience whose lives have become increasingly market-defined and market-driven, however, such a system of ethics appears peculiarly idealistic, if not manipulatively delusive. When the economic gaps between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in Chinese society are widening, when materialist drives begin to dominate the social environment and deconstruct its human fabric, and conflicts between the workers and their managers are taking place everywhere, Mr He and Xiaowan, capable of simultaneously winning the business battles with human dignity, realizing their personal happiness with romantic love, and transcending the profit-centred

logic of the market with ethical standards, appear alluringly sublime and desperately desirable.[7]

The key element that makes this story emotionally effective is the resonance that Xiaowan stirs in the public sentiments. Caught in a traumatic process of being urbanized while maintaining her innocence, diligence, and love, Xiaowan defines the ethical system dramatized in the series with a gender-specific textuality. As a figure of the rural woman, she is evoked as an embodiment of desires and measurements for urbanization where the journey of *Braving Shanghai* gains its moving and motivating forces and its symbolic legitimation. Compared to earlier images of women in Chinese performing arts, such a figure and its signification designates several structural shifts in the categorizations of 'women' in contemporary Chinese context: first, it is a site where the Marxist principles that defined 'women' into economic classes are displaced into categories that emphasize their gendered identity in their structural relocation from the rural to the urban. Second, such gendered relocation is shown to be inflected with the emotional tensions between the rural and the urban, replacing the class alliance much advocated in pre-reform era between women workers and peasant women in a 'socialist state'. Third, registering and harmonizing conflictual social forces through its representational function, such a figure of the rural women in urbanization provides gender-specific explanations, legitimations, and sublimations of the conflict-ridden modernizing activities in contemporary China. It is she who ultimately resolves the urban-rural tensions by validating the underprivileged rural people who build their urban lives with true human love and hard-working ethics. She embodies the ethics of material urbanization.

Such figures of ethics that can conjure up a transcendental unity among conflictual social activities, one may argue, registers nothing very new in modern history: it is a literary image or narrative trope of the desires shared by many cultural critics throughout the history of modernity for an ethical coding to explain, regulate, alleviate, or legitimate the human 'throes' of modernization—a form of modernist ideology. What is specific in the case of contemporary China, however, is the gendered features of such coding: the mode of its formation and expression is constituted with gendered imageries and their embodied materiality. As those gender-specific imageries are rendered into signifiers for modernist ideology, their irreducible materiality doubles such rendering with possibilities of differential signification. Intended to be a trope for transcendental human unity in a conflict-ridden process of urbanizing, Xiaowan's signifying function has to be enacted with her material embodiment whose specific economic, social, cultural, and historical content cannot simply be exhausted by her intended abstract function, but, in effect, constantly works through it. The figure of the rural women, while serving as a tropological ideology of modernist drives, also carries a material existence into her assigned discursive function and renders herself into a gendered troping of particular complexity.

One may argue that such a gendered troping of a Third-World nation desiring for a unity with itself (which is masculine in its impulse) and with the world at large (which is patriarchal in its structure) through modernizing motions empties the form and content of women's struggles for empowerment and liberation.[8] Much scholarly writing on constructions of women in contemporary China have articulated as much.[9] However, such a gendered troping of a much desired ethics is much more than a discursive variant of the all-powerful 'masculine' and 'patriarchal' ideology, and it registers one of the compelling conditions of modern Chinese society created by the Chinese women's revolution of the twentieth century and its political, sociocultural, and institutional legacy. Reflected in the author's careful choice to locate an explanatory, legitimizing, and sublimating ethics in figures of women and in the economically most vulnerable sector of women, is the relentlessly observing gaze of Chinese women with their century-long history of literary movements and social revolutions for gender equality, participatory citizenship, economic democracy, and cultural emancipation.[10] The fact that figures of women are most often evoked in contemporary Chinese performing culture as signifying processes in which modernist conflicts between the rural and the

urban, capital and labour, male and female are somehow transcended, testifies dialectically to contemporary Chinese women's ineradicable presence in China's modernizing motions and their effect, however mediated, on the changing relations of forces in such motions.

In *Braving Shanghai*'s consciously invested 'women-friendly' rhetoric of modernity, one sees how cultural explanations of the reform and its redefinition of social relations cannot skirt but are constantly checked upon by 'the Woman Question'. The historicity and materiality of this large question is one of the key forces that drive much of the present formations of a unifying ethics in China, and fundamentally conditions all the anxious searches for such ethics that saturate the public discourses of this rapidly changing country. Any legitimizing system of ethics, to put it simply, has to gain its own legitimation granted through the material and symbolic measurements of 'women's happiness'. The gendered ethical coding that *Braving Shanghai* enacts for contemporary Chinese capitalism and capitalist subjectivity in the making can also be read as their socially conditioned and discursively intrinsic critiques. The project of modernizing can be great news for China only if it is defined and sustained by a women-friendly value system, only if it offers rural women economic and emotional opportunities to urban happiness. One may identify such an urban-aspiring female figure of ethics as a form of modernist ideology, or one may view it as the 'utopian impulse' that critics like Fredric Jameson take as their point of engagement with the dialectic logic of cultural production in modern capitalism. One may also recognize—in and through its gender, class, and location-in-transition specific complex—the material conditions created and lived by Chinese women that both engage and contest such modernist ideology, and that both historicize and substantiate such utopian impulses.

II. 'Urban[izing] Woman' and her others: the ethics of gender projects

'Urban[izing] woman' with her embodied ethics, therefore, designates a multidimensional project in contemporary China that refuses linear readings. Its heavily invested presence in the cultural currencies of a country that has seventy per cent of its population in the rural areas even though urban industrial production constitutes seventy per cent of its national economic output, indicates its function to express boundary-crossing desires and struggles for women-friendly urbanization as much as its power to delimit the differential contents of such desires and struggles. The limiting effect of such a delimitation can be partially seen in the fact that women who have acquired higher education, aspiring women professionals and women managers have featured in a larger percentage of the television repertoire with great appeal to the public.[11]

In the light of such a privileged display of upwardly mobile 'urban' women, another influential television drama produced in Shanghai and broadcast nationwide in 1996 deserves critical attention. Written by Bai Zhi, this eight-episode television drama entitled *Sisters* is about redundant women workers in Shanghai. As has long been the case, the public and state-owned factories in China have been struggling with their internal organizational problems as much as their external structural disadvantages since the mid-1980s.[12] Burdened by their historically developed structural ineffectiveness, pressured by mounting competition from private enterprises encouraged by the state policies since the mid-80s, and pushed by the systemic arrival of transnational capital in China since 1993, those public and state-owned factories reached crisis point in 1996. According to official records, currently there are twelve million workers who have lost their jobs as their factories go bankrupt, and sixty-five per cent of them are women. This downward process affecting urban working women and men shows no sign of subsiding.[13] Based on the experience of women workers from Shanghai Number Two Silk Textile Factory during such a process of losing their factory, their jobs, and their individual and collective identity, *Sisters* shows how the factory team leaders reorganize the women workers and themselves in fighting for alternative ways of re-making their lives and their identities under rapidly changing social and economic conditions.

The complexity of such a reorganization is dramatized mainly through the struggles of

three women team leaders. In the opening scene, Dingke, the party secretary, and Guan Linlin and Xu Hong, two leading members of the administration of the factory, are confronted by a group of deeply distressed workers who have just learnt that the factory is to be closed. Being rendered jobless like all other workers, these women team leaders announce with tears in their eyes that they will not abandon their responsibilities for 'the working unit until everyone from this unit is relocated into a new position'.[14] While workers and their families continue to view Ding, Guan, and Xu as their team leaders and the municipal government recognizes that they are still important voices thanks to their long established institutional influence and their popular support, these women have in effect turned into individuals who must improvise during this process of social transformation and act upon their own chosen values. As they continue to perform their 'duties' without their previous institutional status, they find themselves making strenuous efforts in reshaping the bonds between women workers beyond the established but now receding social networks, contesting the public discourses of the reform with critical awareness about their effects on working women, and struggling to negotiate with an owner's economic environment on behalf of the laid off workers. Insisting on the public rhetorics of a government that still pledges its allegiance to workers' and women's interests, they enact essentially a drama of individual ethics that takes the values of 'mutual help' among members of a society as the organizing principle of human economic and social relations. 'Without such mutual help and what it means', the author of the drama asserts, 'our reform will lose its initial vision and final goal, namely, the happiness of all our citizens.'[15]

Such an ethics embodied by individual actions, as the drama series shows, is constituted with profound historical ambivalence. While sharing the structural displacements of other workers, the team leaders appear to serve the displaced working women as much as the forces that displace them. Their efforts to help the laid off workers, while being made with time and energy that could have been spent on pursuing their own interests and opportunities,

also appear to be regulatory processes in which the workers in need of 'help' are coached by their 'helpers' into accepting the loss of their state-guaranteed benefits, their new temporary status, and discrimination. As an essay on the drama series sharply puts it: 'Working so hard to re-educate their old-fashioned, laid off workers, Dingke and her colleagues have produced the best and cheapest and most respectful employees for the Chinese and foreign employers of modern enterprises.'[16] Such a critique gains its particular historical weight when one considers the fact that, as millions of rural women and men flood into urban centres since the mid-80s, a large proportion of the Chinese industrial working class across the country has been gradually replaced by this massive army of migrant labour that takes up jobs with neither historical memories nor institutional claims of urban workers, who had enjoyed state-guaranteed benefits such as medical care, housing, education, and job security. In the largely hidden but structurally significant relations between women like Xiaowan in *Braving Shanghai* and women workers in *Sisters* lies one of the most complex and challenging issues for the contemporary Chinese social, political, and ethical theories.

The ambivalence and contradictions in the ethical consciousness and actions of these women team leaders in *Sisters* testify to the double feature of their ethical impulses that may be defined as both problematic and significant. While their problematic dimensions generate critiques, their significance invites further historically informed analyses. As students and scholars of the Chinese women's movement in the twentieth century know, the term 'sisters' (*xiao jiemei*) evokes, in the Chinese sociocultural memory, one of the organizing forms that the radical women in the 1920s and the 1930s used to improve the working conditions of women workers in Japanese and British owned textile factories in Shanghai; the rituals of the 'sworn-sisters' among co-workers were very powerful in those organized protesting, negotiating, and contesting activities.[17] A translation of such a vital organizing form in the Chinese women's revolution into a post-revolutionary China, the conceptual and social resonance and importance of the 'sisters' can hardly be

overemphasized, so are the structural differences between the 'sisters' of the 1930s and of the 1990s. The former consciously stood as the oppositional forces to the governing body politic, while the latter have considerable—albeit increasingly diminished—presence in the institutional traditions and public discourses that, once sufficiently mobilized, could grant or deny the legitimacy of new or old government policies. Such a presence is much evidenced in numerous writings on women's lives published in various journals and newspapers;[18] it is certainly evidenced in the anxious efforts currently made by the Chinese reform policy makers to 'mobilize the entire society to create job opportunities for the laid off workers',[19] asserting repeatedly that the equality between women and men is a fundamental policy of the Chinese state.[20]

It is in the light of this increasingly eclipsed and yet persisting collective presence that the enactment of the individual ethics in *Sisters*, ambivalent and contradictory, could be further understood. It is in the light of the historical materiality and significance of such presence that a remark by Guan Linlin deserves careful attention. In episode five, Dingke's husband, the star Chief Executive Officer of a joint-venture corporation, threatens to leave her because she insists upon staying with her former fellow-workers to fight their way into a market that has displaced and disqualified them, rather than leaving her fellow-workers and accepting a well-paid job in another joint-venture company arranged by him. Upon learning of this crisis between Dingke and her husband, Guan walks into the man's elaborately decorated headquarters, forces him out of his office, and announces that, on behalf of all the workers, she wants to let him know that his decision to leave Dingke is wrong and he should reconsider such a 'wrong decision'. When the angry husband dismisses her by saying that 'your factory is no longer there, how can you still have team leaders "on behalf of" anything?' Guan answers: 'Where the working women are, where our organizing team is and always will be. This has been the tradition of our revolution. You, more than anyone else, certainly understand this?'[21]

This seemingly simple reiteration of an 'old political cliché' of the Chinese revolution, uttered by a woman who has been structurally 'reformed' from a leading member of a state-owned factory into one of the twelve million unemployed workers, articulates in effect extremely complex needs for women to reconstitute and reorganize themselves at every level of their lives, designates certain new historical imperatives for literary writings and social praxis by and for Chinese working women in their century-long history of struggle for independence, equality, and emancipation. Guan's articulation of such needs and imperatives, moreover, conveys a firm conviction which, in its core, is feminist and ethical: the compelling principles of any human organization and the normative rules of any human conduct, Guan is asserting, will be measured by their effects on the lives of the working women. It is upon the massive lives of working women that any social ruling depends for its political and cultural legitimation. The figure of the 'upwardly mobile urban woman' that Dingke's husband expects his wife to turn into is fundamentally flawed if it requires Dingke to abandon her historically developed and personally upheld ethics that insists upon the mutually constitutive connections between the advancement of the individuals and the well-being of all citizens. The current social and discursive constructions of the 'Urban Woman' ideal, Guan maintains, are deeply unethical if they marginalize the many and privilege the few. The much invested upwardly mobile 'Urban Woman' is hereby questioned and contested by her socially produced, individually lived, and ethically articulated Others. Rather than taking the figure of the urbanizing female as the privileged site for ethical resources as *Braving Shanghai* does, *Sisters* registers the problematic discourses of the upwardly mobile 'Urban (and urbanizing) Woman' and the presence of her Others. As the former takes the female gender—with a specific class and a specific historical location in structural transformation—as a site for generating a much desired ethics of Chinese modernity, the latter shows the multiple forces at work in Chinese society that constitute the ethical contentions in the process of 'reforming' the female gender and reorganizing the relations of forces within and

around the Woman Question. The forms and contents of the 'Urban[izing] Woman' and her Others in transitional contentions dramatized in *Braving Shanghai* and *Sisters*, as in many other cases in contemporary Chinese performing culture, intimates an unfolding chapter of the gender politics and women's struggles in Chinese history. The profound complexity and creativity of this new and yet-to-be explored chapter, one would believe, can neither be ignored nor erased by any human projects—planned by the World Bank or any other power institutions—that intend to shape and reshape the human landscape of the modern world.[22]

Notes

1. The World Bank, *China 2020* (Washington: World Bank Publications, 1997).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Zhang Xian & Fu Xin, *Chuang Shanghai* (Braving Shanghai), produced by Shanghai Television and Film Corporation, broadcast in November 1998.

5. 'Shanghairen, nuli!' ('Shanghainese, Make Efforts!'), *Jiefang ribao* (The Liberation Daily), Shanghai, 29 November 1998.

6. The scholarly discussion of neo-Confucianism has been one of the major cultural features of contemporary China particularly since the late 1980s. Li Zehou, the leading philosopher during the reform era, has recently published *New Interpretations of Confucius* (Hong Kong: Tiandi Tushu Publishing House, 1998), indicating the important degree of the differential efforts made in such a rediscovery of Confucius and his moral philosophy in China.

7. In the city of Chendu of Sichuan Province, for instance, within the first ten days after the Chinese spring festival of 1994, there were seven incidents of workers' unrest caused by a management decision to prolong working hours and intensify their workload. See 'The Voice of Women Workers', *Chinese Women's Movement* (Beijing: All China Women's Federation), April 1997, p. 31.

8. In the established discourses of 'three-world' theories, China has often been defined as a member of the 'Second World'. I, however, respect the many scholars who place China among 'Third-World' nations in that it has shared much of the historical struggles of the 'Third-World' nations in modern world history.

9. See, for instance, Tani Barlow, 'Theorizing Woman: Funu, Guojia, Jiating', in Angela Zito & Tani Barlow, eds., *Body, Subject, & Power in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 253–89.

10. See Elizabeth Crol, *Feminism and Socialism in China* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), Bobby Sui, *Women of China: Imperialism and Women's Resistance 1900–1949* (London: Zed Press, 1982), and Chritina Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

11. The highest rated drama broadcast by the Chinese Central Television Station in the first three months of 1998 for instance, was an eight-episode series entitled *Women Bankers*. See 'Listing of Ratings on CCTV programs', *Television Studies* (Beijing: the Chinese Central Television Station), April 1998, p. 64.

12. For some empirically informative and analytically sustained discussions on this topic, see, for instance, Maurice Meisner, *Deng Xiaoping Era* (New York: Hall & Wang Publishers, 1997).

13. Liu Yida, 'Looking into the "Lay-off" Situation', *Beijing Evening News*, 21 February 1998, p. 4.

14. Bai Zhi, *Sisters*, produced by Shanghai Yongle Television and Film Cooperation, broadcast in 1996.

15. From an interview with Bai Zhi, Shanghai, December 12, 1997.

16. Liu Qinli, 'Why Must They Help You?', *Jingji cankao wenzhai* (China Economic Reference), 26 April 1998.

17. Emily Honig's *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919–1949* (Stanford University Press, 1986) offers valuable information and insights on this subject. Also see Bobby Sui, *Women of China* (London: Zed Press, 1982), particularly pp. 151–171.

18. There are numerous women's magazines presently circulating in China with substantial readerships. *Nüzi yuekan* (Women's Monthly) by Beijing Women's Federation, *Nüzi* (Ms.) by Tianjing Women's Federation, *Xiandai jiating* (Modern Family) by Shanghai Women's Federation, *Nübao* (Women's Report) by Shenzhen Women's Federation, *Nüzi shijie* (Women's World) and *Fünü shenhuo* (Women's Lives) by the Provincial Women's Federations in Hebei and Henan, *Nüyou* (Women Friends) by Harebin Publishing House, *Zhongwai fünü wenzhai* (Chinese and Foreign Women's Digest) by the Women and Children Publishing House in Neimengu, *Nüxing wenxue* (Women's Literature) by Gaikan Publishing in Hebei, and *Fünü yanjiu* (Women's Studies) by Beijing Women's Centre for Critical Theories, are among the most noted. *Zhongguo fuyun* (Chinese Women's Movement) by All China Women's Federation, while consciously remaining in lines with the changing rhetorics of the changing policy-makers during the reform era, communicates significant information on women's individual and collective activities, struggles, and movements that are much more complex than the official rhetoric of the reform—contested and full of contradictions in itself—could contain.

19. See, for instance, *Wenhui bao* (Wenhui Daily), Shanghai, January-June, 1998; *Beijing ribao* (Beijing Daily), January-June, 1998; *Zhejiang ribao* (Zhejiang Daily), January-June 1998.

20. For instance, the concerted actions taken in May 1997 by all provincial governors and other leading officials to publish their positional papers on the 'Woman Question', asserting that they all take the principle of gender equality as one of their guiding policies in administration, and they all believe that women's social, economic, and cultural emancipation is an intrinsic part of China's modernization. See *The Special Issue on Enforcing the State Policy on the Equality Between Men and Women, Chinese Women's Movement* (Beijing, May 1997), pp. 2–25.

21. Bai Zhi, *Sisters*, typed manuscript, Book Two, p. 12.

22. The ground for such a belief can be partially seen in

the current debates about the crisis in global finance among the World Bank (led by its chief economist, Joseph Stiglitz), the International Monetary Fund (led by its Managing Director, Michel Camdessus and the Asia-Pacific Director, Hubert Neiss), and the US Treasury (see, for instance, reports in the *New York Times* and *The Financial Times* on 3 December 1998). Triggered by the Asian economic crisis, such debates indicate a growing awareness across the world about the structural problematics of what Fredric Jameson calls 'late capitalism' of which the Woman Question has been a vital indicator.