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历史的背影：一代女知识分子的教育记忆. [*In the Shadow of History: Memories of the May 4th Generation of Women Intellectuals*]. Jiang, Lijing. Beijing: Educational Science Publishing House, 2012. 420pp, ¥62. ISBN 978-7-5041-6047-8

The emergence of intellectuals and the disappearance of traditional scholars might be seen as a significant turning point in modern China's move beyond traditional society. In this process, the establishment of a modern university system played a crucial role in spreading new academic values, and forming a new professional basis for the life of intellectuals. While there has been some awareness of this transition it has never been analyzed in detail. In addition, due to the constraints of traditional Chinese ideas on gender, female intellectuals experienced a different process of development than that of male scholars going through the transformation in status from traditional scholars to modern intellectuals. Unfortunately, there has been even less discussion of this issue. The primary contribution of this book lies in the way it addresses this gap in the literature.

In a review of the educational experiences and academic lives of Feng Yuanjun, Lu Ying, and Cheng Junying, the first three women students at Peking Women's Normal College, which was in turn the first institution of higher education for women established by Chinese themselves the connections between them and their institution become clear. The book shows another angle on the emergence of "Post-May-Fourth" intellectuals and challenges earlier conclusions about modern intellectuals in the relevant studies of intellectual history. It also reveals the highly complicated connections among society, academy and education, especially between the development of modern higher education for women and female intellectuals, enriching and deepening our understanding of modern education.

It should be pointed out that research on Chinese education has encountered

theoretical problems in the late 20th century. Neither a scientific approach to research nor various humanistic approaches have effectively explored the complexity and rich meaning of educational experience. Given this situation, the author has set aside widely used theoretical frameworks, in favor of the narrative turn which has been adopted in some recent research on education. This enables her to depict the relationship among different events themselves. The whole book consists of five independent yet inter-connected parts. Beginning with “the Inside and Outside of the *Red House*,”¹ the first chapter, “Loose Border,” depicts campus life in Peking Women’s Normal College and the inherent tension between the new and the old during the boom period of the New Culture Movement in 1917. The second chapter, “Diverse Traditions,” describes the early life and educational experience of the three women students through a flashback, which reveals various traditions of female education in China as well as the ways in which they became linked with new education in the West, and foreshadowed the female consciousness. “Education Images in Academic Conflict” in the third chapter and “Seeking and Establishment of the New Identity” in the fourth chapter respectively focus on the campus of “Peking Women’s Normal College” and the transformation of female individuals through academic conflict during the “May Fourth” Period. They “thoroughly describe” not only the conflicts and shifts between the modern academy and new education as well as the traditional women’s academy and women’s education, but also how women rejected or accepted the new and the old identities. The fifth chapter, “Scholars and the Academy”, describes how, after the three women graduated from college, they regarded the production and transmission of knowledge as the focal point in the pursuit of their lifelong careers. Finally, “Memories of the Educators in the *Red House*” corresponds with the educational imprints that the “Women’s Normal College” left on those women. We may say that the employment of narrative in this book not only opens up new and vivid ways of understanding, but, more importantly, is of major methodological significance nowadays when new approaches to pedagogy are changing and transforming China.

In addition, the author also explores numerous memoirs, autobiographies, letters, archives, poetry and other rare materials, showing the wealth of historical materials that can be drawn upon in research on the history of education.

However, there may be some debate over the way a gender perspective is employed in this book. As the writer tries to make up for the fact that most gender studies pay attention to the differences between the genders but neglect their similarities, this book focuses on parallels in the experience of male and female intellectuals, possibly, over-simplifying gender differences. This may

¹ The italic words symbolize the world of women in traditional China.

result in an awkward situation: researching a gender problem from a “de-sexualized” perspective, and giving inadequate attention to the special circumstances surrounding the development of women intellectuals. This may have weakened the edge that should be there in gender research. The book also lacks unity in its narrative style and fails to provide an adequate interpretation and explanation of the significance behind events.

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