

唐永泰公主墓壁畫
侍女圖



Reproduction of Dunhuang mural by Chang Shana

senting women's interests between all Chinese women and the party. They publish *Women of China*, a Chinese language magazine, and are currently launching a newspaper.

Women's Mysteries

As I leave the office three women stand on the cement steps, chatting and waving good-bye until I turn out of the courtyard and onto the street. I cannot understand what it might mean to work for the state without choice. I cannot understand what these women have lived behind the language of their ideologies. But as I wave

good-bye I feel their genuine warmth in Beijing. I have felt their community.

The Struggle Ahead

In the report from the Fifth National Congress, concerns and goals were voiced: sex discrimination, the conflict between women's traditional home roles and their duties in the workplace, violation of women's and children's rights, women's freedom of choice in marriage. The Congress noted that seventy percent of China's 235 million illiterates were women and that educational, scientific and technological levels of most Chinese

women were relatively low.

Silk route, Mayflower, bound feet, unbound, our paths converge and separate and cross once again as we walk forward.

Language

I sit down to learn my pronouns. *Wa* means I. *Ni* means you. *Ta* means he or she. A most clever trickster must have silently presided over Babel. *Tamen* means they or them. *Nimen* means you-plural. *Women* means we or us.

Always-Arriving

I walk the streets of Beijing and smell China. I watch and wait. It has been my experience that the more profoundly we penetrate that which is Other, the more profoundly we discover our own sources. Slowly, painfully, with moments of exhilaration. By attempting to understand difference we stretch our own boundaries so that we are always-arriving. The women of China have reached out to other women around the world. The women of China are stretching boundaries. While we wait and listen we join in the always-arriving.

Kim Echlin is currently teaching in China. She is interested in mythology and is presently researching the roles of women in Canadian Indian mythology.

nameless
passing our scandals
mother to daughter
(woman to woman to
woman to woman).

one fills books with sky pictures.
the other lets her kid run wild.
this one likes caterpillars and moths.
that one will not give birth.
one climbs trees.
the other took a woman lover
("oh, what shall we ever do?")
the black haired one will not pluck her
eyebrows.
the gray haired one lives out of her
knapsack.

in our wills we will will our daughters
our recklessness, our daring.
(my child, one day all this will be
yours.)

Clara Valverde
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