

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURE
Annual Report 2011-2012

To: The Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

The Senate Committee on the Faculty Research Lecture (CFRL) enthusiastically nominates Professor Gail Hershatter of the Department of History to deliver the 2012-2013 lecture.

Gail Hershatter is a specialist in Modern Chinese social and cultural history, who has pioneered field research and oral history among Chinese women, and has made major contributions to women's history, the history of sexuality, and labor history. She has also helped develop feminist theory, paid particular attention to the memory of poor rural women, and advanced World History. During her 21 years of affiliation with UCSC, 4 of them as Distinguished Professor, she has promoted research in the Humanities through the co-direction of the Center for Cultural Studies, for 11 years, and the inaugural direction of the Institute for Humanities Research.

Gail Hershatter received her B.A. from Hampshire College, where she was a member of its inaugural class. She went to Princeton to pursue her interest in East Asian Studies. She spent a year at Nankin University in Tianjin, China, and she obtained her M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Stanford University. She taught for nine years at Williams College, first as an Assistant Professor, then as an Associate Professor. She joined the faculty of UCSC as a Full Professor in 1991 and has been with us ever since, except during the periods when she has been conducting research in the archives and in the fields of China. She currently chairs our Department of History.

Her first book, *The Workers of Tianjin, 1900-1949*, traced the formation of the industrial working class in Tianjin, in northern China. The historical period she examines precedes the establishment of the People's Chinese Republic, and is therefore of considerable interest in shedding light on whether, and how, the workers of China's second largest treaty port developed a group consciousness that could be the embryo of a self-conscious working class, which could eventually turn revolutionary.

As befits her commitment to Feminism and its program of transforming the modalities of academic work, Gail Hershatter's next three books were exercises in collaborative research. They sought to give voice to the women of China, but most of all they altered the vision of China that had prevailed in the scholarship of the so-called "Old China Hands" of the Cold War era. Their titles speak for themselves: *Remapping China*; *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*; *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980s*. At a time when China was perceived and presented as billion-member mass of undistinguishable blue-clad clones, to evoke the very possibility of personal voices was shattering (her-shattering!). The study of China would never be the same, and UCSC played a major role in this transformation since a number of Gail's collaborators on these projects were, and indeed still are, members of our faculty.

But it is her next solo book publication that would draw world attention to Gail Hershatter, her 1997 six hundred page study entitled *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in*

Twentieth-Century Shanghai. Shanghai prostitution had become something of a myth in writing on China or on prostitution, but aside from anecdotes, very little was known about it. Gail Hershatter changed the way such studies would be conducted henceforth by painstakingly assembling an exemplary archive ranging from guidebooks to gossip columns, and including memoirs, interviews, court and medical records, social workers' surveys, relief agency documents, and many other sources. She examines all these documents and shows us how to hear the voices of the sexual workers in them, their strategies for survival and their perception of themselves and of their environment. She literally brings this suppressed world to life and teaches us how to analyze it and how to interpret it. Saluted as an exemplary historical accomplishment, *Dangerous Pleasures* has become a work of reference for contemporary historians.

In her most recent published book, *The Gender of Memory*—another five hundred page volume, Gail Hershatter sets out to show us how the construction of socialism took place in China in the fifties and sixties. But unlike most accounts of this process, she does not analyze party and government documents and proclamations. She focuses on the lived experience of a group of seventy-two women in a rural area of China. As she recounts the lives of these women through their memories of these years, we see the transformations they are experiencing, from gender and family relations, to the nature of work, but most of all to their sense of themselves as emergent agents of history. Consciousness and self-consciousness were already the object of her first book, and they are still at the center of her latest one, but this time it is the consciousness, or even the coming into consciousness, of a group of now elderly rural women.

Gail Hershatter's many scholarly articles, her reviews, and her consulting work on documentary films on the Cultural Revolution or on the events of Tiananmen Square, can only be mentioned here. As is her remarkable work as a public intellectual, participating in debates and forums at the rate of over a dozen a year.

Her work has received ample recognition. She is the recipient of the Joan Kelly Memorial Prize in Women's History. She has held fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, from the American Association of University Women, from the American Council of Learned Societies. She has received grants from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation (for a project at our Center for Cultural Studies), and from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She was awarded the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship, and she has been a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences. Her peers have elected her first Vice-President, and then President of the Association for Asian Studies. She is also one of our most remarkable teachers: the UCSC Alumni Association granted her its Favorite Teacher Award, and she has also received the Dizikes Teaching Award from the Division of Humanities.

In sum, Gail Hershatter has profoundly affected her chosen fields of study, giving them a true humanistic orientation by recovering the voices of those who were silenced, listening to those who were ignored, and teaching all of us how much there is to gain in understanding and appreciation, by learning to be better listeners.

Therefore, in recognition of Professor Hershatter's outstanding research accomplishments, the Committee recommends that we all listen to her and that she be invited to deliver the 2012-2013 Faculty Research lecture to the UCSC and Santa Cruz communities.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMITTEE ON FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURE

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