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Embodied counter discourse: negotiating the limits of pink feminism in chinese digital feminist resistance

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates how digital feminist actors in contemporary China strategically subvert and resignify nationalist and patriarchal discourses, repurposing state-sanctioned idioms to expose their gendered contradictions and carve out spaces for critique under authoritarian constraints. Employing a discourse—historical approach of two emblematic cases, the study traces discursive mechanisms such as intertextual irony, parody, and recontextualised appropriation that destabilise official narratives linking women's sexuality and menstruation to national morality and legitimacy. These interventions position the female body as a discursive battleground: marginalized in regulatory frameworks yet symbolically overloaded with nationalist imperatives. While entangled with pink feminism's adaptive alignments, such practices generate semantic ruptures that elevate embodied experiences as sites of dignity and justice. Conceptually, the paper introduces embodied counter-discourse to frame these subversive iterations, where corporeality serves as both analytical lens and resistive medium, extending beyond pink feminism's conciliatory bounds to foster centrifugal critique.

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Introduction

In contemporary China, feminist actors navigate a tightly regulated digital landscape by strategically subverting and resignifying dominant discourses, repurposing the very idioms of state nationalism and patriarchal control to expose their internal contradictions and forge spaces for critique. Drawing on Judith Butler's (1997) framework of performative iteration, where injurious speech gains force through repetitive citation yet remains excitable for subversive redirection, these practices transform hegemonic narratives into sites of ironic destabilisation and affective resistance. This discursive manoeuvring is particularly acute under authoritarian constraints, where overt confrontation risks erasure, prompting feminists to employ intertextual play, parody, and appropriation to “talk back” within the degraded speech situations of censored platforms (Tingting Hui 2021). Amid

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these dynamics, pink feminism has crystallised as an adaptive strategy, blending gender justice with patriotic rhetoric to secure visibility while often diluting its radical edge (Ling Han and Yue Liu 2024; Jingxue Zhang and Charlie Yi Zhang 2024). Yet, such accommodations coexist with more centrifugal interventions that exceed pink feminism's conciliatory bounds, generating ruptures that politicise lived experiences and challenge the symbolic architectures of power.

To interrogate this tension, this study undertakes a comparison of two emblematic digital incidents: the Guoge Incident and the ABC Sanitary Pads Boycott Movement. The term Guoge literally means national dignity or national honour. Unfolding in mid-2025, the former ignited when Dalian Polytechnic University invoked elevated rhetoric of "damaging gouge and the university's reputation" to publicly shame and expel a female student for "improper relations with foreigners" (BBC 2025). Online responses mobilised citation and parody to redirect this nationalist moralism, exposing its selective application to women's sexuality while redirecting outrage toward male criminality and institutional double standards.

The latter, erupting in late 2024 on Xiaohongshu, originated from consumer fury over ABC-brand sanitary pads sold shorter than advertised, compounded by the company's curt dismissal: "If you cannot accept the length difference, you can choose not to purchase" (BBC 2024). What began as product grievances escalated into a politicised boycott, highlighting regulatory absurdities, such as Category C safety standards aligning pads with curtains and a 13% VAT mirroring cigarette taxes and leveraging memes, hashtags, and satire to reframe menstrual neglect as systemic gendered erasure (Siyuan Huang 2022; Han and Liu 2024; Harold Thibault 2024; Zhang and; Zhang 2024).

Juxtaposing the Guoge and ABC Sanitary Pads cases, one centred on moral disciplining, the other on material disregard, this article traces how feminist resignifications disrupt official idioms through intertextual irony and recontextualised appropriation, analysed through the Discourse Historical Approach (Ruth Wodak 2015a). Theoretically, such resistance operates through subversive resignification and appropriation, negotiating recognition, intelligibility, and discursive authority rather than relying solely on opposition (Nancy Fraser 1995, 2000). Empirical evidence from Chinese digital activism shows how state slogans, propaganda, and popular symbols are strategically appropriated to articulate critique, forge collective identity, and cultivate covert solidarity under censorship (Yushuang Yang 2023; Zhang and; Zhang 2024). Building on these insights, this article conceptualises these practices as embodied counter-discourse, in which corporeality functions not merely as a thematic reference but as a structuring force that amplifies discursive instability and transforms fragmentary critiques into counter-archives of politicised affect (Sara Ahmed 2014; Butler 1997; Ann. Laura Stoler 2009). It examines how online participants appropriate and recontextualise nationalist discourse to contest the symbolic mobilisation of women's bodies, and how these embodied counter-discourses reinterpret, disrupt, and exceed the discursive constraints of pink feminism.

Literature review

Pink feminism as an emerging feminist discourse and practice

In contemporary China, feminist activism operates within a highly constrained political and digital environment, where rights-based organising, NGO networks and confrontational advocacy have been systematically curtailed since the mid-2010s (Han Bao 2019;

Wang Zheng 2010). The suppression of the Feminist Five, heightened surveillance, and tightened regulation of online platforms have progressively narrowed the space for overt feminist mobilisation (Leta. Hong Fincher 2018; Bin Wang and Catherine Driscoll 2019). Within these restrictions, feminists have developed innovative discursive strategies to sustain visibility while mitigating political risk.

Pink feminism emerges within this terrain as a parallel and adaptive feminist formation. It addresses the same structures of state-mediated gender regulation but does so through accommodation, reframing and reappropriation rather than overt resistance (Zhang and Zhang 2024). While counter discourses stretch or refuse normative scripts of womanhood, pink feminism reworks these scripts from within nationalist discourse, crafting a form of feminist expression that achieves visibility precisely by aligning with patriotic sentiment (ka Fei 2021; Zhang 2024).

Pink feminism synthesises feminist principles with the affective and moral language of Chinese nationalism (Kecheng Fang and Maria Repnikova 2018; Fei 2021). Han and Liu (2024) conceptualise this phenomenon as a synergisation of digital feminism and cyber nationalism, where young women use patriotic sentiment as a protective discursive shield. Instead of framing gender injustice as the result of structural patriarchy or state policy, pink feminism discourse recasts gender equality as a patriotic contribution that supports national development, social harmony and China's global rise.

A core strategy is framing gender equality as a patriotic duty, aligning feminist goals with state interests in national development. Pink feminist discourse argues that genuine national rejuvenation requires gender justice, drawing on indigenous historical figures, revolutionary heroines, and reinterpretations of Chinese history to claim feminism as part of the patriotic tradition (Han and Liu 2024). Another key strategy is the reappropriation of nationalist symbols and language to promote feminist ideals. State propaganda terms are reinterpreted through feminist lenses. Similarly, responses to transnational controversies, pink feminism discourse condemned misogynistic practices while simultaneously framing domestic outrage as the defence of Chinese womanhood against foreign insult (Zhengyu Yang and Zhongxiao Hu 2025). These hybrid reactions illustrate how nationalist pride and feminist anger intertwine to produce a distinctive form of counter discourse.

Despite its strategic innovation, pink feminism remains politically ambivalent. Scholars argue that its close alignment with state discourse risks reinforcing authoritarian power structures and diluting feminism's transformative potential (Han and Liu 2024). By avoiding critiques of systemic patriarchy or state institutions, pink feminism can inadvertently reproduce the nationalist hierarchies it seeks to reshape. Its anti-Western rhetoric can stigmatise other feminists, particularly liberal and rights-based activists, who are accused of foreign influence or betrayal (Fincher 2018; Jing Xiong and Dušica Ristivojević 2021). This dynamic widens internal divisions within Chinese feminism, granting the state discursive leverage.

Subversive resignification and appropriation within feminist resistance

Feminist resistance operates not only through overt opposition but also through struggles over recognition, legitimacy, and discursive authority. Fraser (1995, 2000) conceptualises resistance as unfolding within structured fields of recognition, where subordinated groups must negotiate the norms that determine whose claims are intelligible and whose grievances

count. Resistance may therefore take different strategic orientations. It may seek transformation by exposing the hierarchies embedded in dominant value systems or pursue strategic accommodation by translating claims into culturally and institutionally legible forms. Fraser also emphasises the role of counter publics, discursive arenas in which marginalised actors generate alternative interpretive resources capable of challenging dominant meanings.

Within this broader framework, subversive resignification and appropriation emerge as key discursive mechanisms of feminist resistance. Judith Butler (1990) conceptualises gender as performatively constituted through the reiteration of regulatory norms, rendering it open to disruption through resignification. Because meaning is produced through citation, repetition always carries the possibility of displacement. Butler (1997, 15) therefore characterises injurious language as both constraining and “excitable:” its force depends on iterability, which also allows terms to be recontextualised and redirected. Resignification becomes a form of “talking back” that destabilises the authority of dominant discourse from within rather than from an external position.

Hui extends this account by foregrounding the unequal conditions under which resignification becomes possible. In “the degraded speech situations” (Butler 1997, 86), where speakers are already marked as linguistically illegitimate, attempts to restage dominant language may be dismissed as incoherent or ineffective (Hui 2021). Resignification is thus not merely a performative act but a struggle over intelligibility itself. Linguistic vulnerability is socially structured, and the capacity to transform meaning depends on access to discursive recognition. This intervention is particularly salient in non-Western contexts, where political regulation and cultural marginalisation shape the conditions of speech.

These dynamics are especially visible in digitally mediated feminist activism in China. Under conditions of surveillance and censorship, feminist actors frequently appropriate state rhetoric, propaganda imagery, or popular cultural symbols to articulate critique while maintaining discursive plausibility. Zhang and Zhang (2024) show how pan-feminist communities cite official gender-equality slogans to expose ideological contradictions and build covert solidarity. Yang (2023) demonstrates how activists repurpose propaganda symbols and references to youth culture to construct collective identity through social media circulation. Appropriated symbols function simultaneously as vehicles of critique, affective anchors, and resources for networked identification. Taken together, these perspectives conceptualise resignification and appropriation as practices situated at the intersection of discursive instability, unequal recognisability, and strategic negotiation with dominant norms. Feminist resistance emerges not simply through opposition, but through the reworking of authoritative language under conditions that both enable and constrain transformation.

Methodology

Drawing on the Discourse—Historical Approach (DHA), the analysis examines how feminist meanings are produced, circulated, and contested through intertextuality, recontextualisation, and the socio-political embeddedness of digital discourse (Wodak 2015a). Following the DHA framework (Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer 2015), the analysis identifies key discursive topics and examines how they are constructed through nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation, and intensification or mitigation, realised through linguistic devices

including lexical choice, metaphor, irony, parody, and semantic condensation across textual, interdiscursive, and broader socio-historical contexts.

The material consists of user-generated posts from Xiaohongshu, a platform with a predominantly young, female user base and a strong orientation toward lifestyle mediation, affective expression and everyday feminist identity work (R. M. M. D Pemarathna 2019). The two selected events generated substantial feminist debate and exemplify divergent orientations between pink feminist discourse and more confrontational counter discourses.

Given platform filtering and Chinese digital censorship (King-wa Fu, Cuanghong Chan and Michael Chau 2013), a broadened keyword strategy was adopted to capture both explicit and euphemistic references. Searches used both pinyin and Chinese-character forms of “Guoge,” together with multiple keywords referring to the ABC sanitary pad controversy, including the euphemistic expressions tafang and baolei, which users commonly employ to discuss scandals while avoiding content moderation.

Data were collected between October 2024 and September 2025. Search results were ranked by the number of likes, as engagement metrics on Xiaohongshu function as indicators of visibility and circulation within the platform’s algorithmic ecology. Within DHA, highly engaged posts are more likely to be reiterated, appropriated, and recontextualised, making them analytically significant sites for tracing dominant and counter-discourses (Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl 2001; Wodak 2015a).

The initial corpus comprised 151 posts concerning the Guoge controversy and 121 posts addressing the ABC sanitary pad boycott. Following corpus screening, posts consisting primarily of commercial advertising, news reposts, or content unrelated to the two controversies were excluded, resulting in a final analytical corpus of 104 Guoge posts and 105 ABC posts. The most-liked Guoge post received over 39,000 likes (minimum 75), while the most-liked ABC post exceeded 50,000 likes (minimum 103). As only posts that remained retrievable within Xiaohongshu’s algorithmically filtered environment could be collected, the corpus represents observable rather than exhaustive platform discourse.

Consistent with critical discourse analysis, this study adopts a reflexive stance that recognises interpretation as situated within relations of knowledge and power (Norman Fairclough 1995; Wodak 2015a). The author’s partial insider—outsider position (Sonya Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L Buckle 2009), together with a transnational feminist perspective (Donna Haraway 1988), facilitates sensitivity to contextual nuance while recognising that interpretations are shaped by discourse, embodiment, and platform mediation (Zizi Papacharissi 2016) and prioritise patterned discursive regularities over isolated utterances (Teun A. T. A Van Dijk 1993).

Finding

Across the online discussions surrounding the two incidents, a process of semantic rupture can be observed, in which the original official meanings attached to key terms were disrupted and rendered unstable. Such ruptures emerge when hegemonic discourses lose their taken-for-granted coherence and become open to contestation, particularly under conditions of intensified public scrutiny (Ruth Wodak 2015b; Fairclough 1995).

To systematically trace how this rupture unfolded across the corpus, the analysis followed the procedures of the Discourse Historical Approach, which emphasises contextualisation, discursive strategy identification, and the reconstruction of meaning

transformation across communicative events (Ruth Wodak 2009). The coding results are summarised in Table 1, which identifies recurrent patterns of intertextual irony, recontextualised appropriation, bodily metaphorisation, and nationalist reframing across the two case studies. The nine discursive strategies presented in Table 1 operate at a different analytical level from the five DHA strategies. Whereas the DHA strategies provide the analytical framework, the nine discursive strategies identify recurrent empirical configurations through which these broader strategies and their linguistic realisations combine in the corpus. Their relationship is specified in the column of Table 1, which identifies the corresponding DHA strategies and linguistic devices associated with each discursive strategy.

Within the national dignity corpus, almost one third of posts equated national dignity with female genitalia (28.8%) or reworked nationalist slogans into menstrual metaphors (29.8%), while approximately one quarter redirected accusations of “damaging national dignity” toward male criminality (26.0%). A comparable diversification of strategies appears in the ABC sanitary pad boycott corpus. Posts mobilised exaggerated infertility claims (21.9%) and parodic performances of traditional womanhood (22.9%) to produce ironic semantic overload. Others appropriated corporate branding (27.6%), reworked nationalist icons through iterative feminist recontextualisation (13.3%), or invoked embodied experience to challenge institutional product classification standards (14.3%).

Table 1. The thematic and strategic distributions.

Event/ Corpus	Thematic focus	Discursive strategy	DHA strategy/ies and device	Frequency	Proportion
Guoge (<i>n</i> = 104)	Redirecting national dignity toward male criminality	Intertextual irony through moral reallocation	Argumentation (reductio ad absurdum), Predication- Irony	27	26.0%
	Equating national dignity with female genitalia	Semantic hijacking and corporeal reanchoring	Nomination, Predication- Metaphor, semantic condensation	30	28.8%
	Nationalist slogans reworked into menstrual metaphors	Homophonic punning and embodied resignification	Predication- Metaphor, semantic condensation (phonetic)	31	29.8%
	Lesbian signalling through nationalist language	Recontextualised appropriation expanding discursive legibility	Perspectivisation- Parody, intertextuality	16	15.4%
ABC Sanitary Pad Boycott (<i>n</i> = 105)	Infertility claims linked to sanitary pad quality	Hyperbolic ironic causality	Argumentation - Irony, hyperbole	23	21.9%
	Parody of traditional womanhood narratives	Intertextual exaggeration of patriarchal scripts	Argumentation, Perspectivisation - Parody, irony	24	22.9%
	Appropriation of corporate branding	Embodied participation and form counter archive	Nomination, semantic condensation	29	27.6%
	Reappropriation of nationalist icon	Iterative feminist recontextualisation	Argumentation- Intertextuality	14	13.3%
	Critique of institutional product classification standards	Embodied experience is mobilised for enforcing accountability	Predication, Intensification - Lexical choice	15	14.3%

Taken together, these distributions demonstrate that semantic rupture did not remain at the level of negation but unfolded through patterned processes of re-signification. During this reiterative process, two discursive mechanisms became especially salient. The first is intertextual irony, whereby online participants invoked state-sanctioned or mainstream nationalist expressions only to invert their moral or political valence, through semantic hijacking exemplifying the reworking of authoritative language through parody and inversion (Mikhail Bakhtin 1981). The second is recontextualised appropriation, through which fragments of institutional discourse were detached from their original settings and embedded within vernacular, affective and often bodily narratives (Wodak 2009). As these mechanisms circulated and intensified within the networked space, they gave rise to forms of counter discourse that foregrounded lived experience, gendered vulnerability and corporeal agency, generating biopolitical friction (Judith Butler 1993). Importantly, these counter-discourses were not homogeneous. While some aligned with pink feminist narratives by articulating women's bodily value through nationally legible frames, others more directly deconstructed state discourse. Their coexistence reveals an ongoing tension between accommodation and critique, through which more deconstructive interventions gradually coalesced into a feminist counter-archive that transformed dispersed embodied experiences into collective political claims (Ahmed 2014; Stoler 2009).

Appropriation within nationalist moral frameworks

Renomination "Guoge:" from women's sexuality to male criminality

The central discursive topic in the National Dignity incident is the moralisation of women's sexuality through the invocation of "Guoge." Conventionally, "Guoge" denotes the honour, dignity, and international standing of the state, most frequently mobilised in the context of foreign affairs and external sovereignty (Modern Chinese Dictionary 2016, 496). Its application to an individual woman's intimate conduct by Dalian Polytechnic University thus constitutes a significant discursive shift, extending nationalist moral authority into the regulation of private life. This move exemplifies a broader social problem in which women's bodies are rendered symbolic carriers of national morality, while institutional power remains largely insulated from scrutiny.

Within online feminist responses, a key discursive strategy involves the re-nomination of social actors associated with "damaging gouge." Rather than rejecting the category outright, online participants strategically redirect it. Posts repeatedly nominate male criminality. Several widely circulated posts, which received over fifty thousand likes (Figures 1 and 2).

The reference to "Jiao" or "Uncle Hong" alludes to a widely reported criminal case involving a thirty-eight-year-old man surnamed Jiao, who disguised himself as a woman under the online persona "Red Uncle," allegedly lured men into his residence in Nanjing, secretly recorded sexual encounters, and distributed the videos online (Reuters 2025). Those posts redirected the charge of "damaging guoge" away from women's consensual sexual conduct and towards male criminality. Through predication strategies, women's consensual sexual behaviour is implicitly recharacterised as morally inconsequential, while male sexual violence is explicitly framed as socially harmful, criminal, and genuinely degrading to national dignity.

This evaluative contrast exposes the asymmetrical moral logic of institutional discourse: while the female student is condemned despite the absence of criminal harm, Jiao's actions

支持公开焦力峰房客名单

事情已经发酵到国际上，有辱国格，国家还不做出抉择，不要让正常人生活在水深火热之中。

I support making the tenant list of Jiao public. The matter has already fermented internationally and has damaged “Gouge”. Why has the state not made a decision yet. Do not let ordinary people continue to live in misery. Public order and morality must be upheld.

Figure 1. Re-nomination of social actors associated with damaging gouge.

彰显国格的另有其人

做交换生时加的巴西妹妹，前段时间突然给我发消息玩红大爷的梗

在 ins 上第一次教人中文，竟是“来都来了”这个词

The real person demonstrating national dignity is apparently someone else entirely.

A Brazilian girl I met during my exchange programme suddenly messaged me recently, using memes about “Uncle Hong.”

The first Chinese phrase I ever taught someone on Instagram turned out to be “lái dōu lái le” (‘since you’re already here’)

Figure 2. Re-nomination of social actors associated with damaging gouge.

are framed as genuinely dangerous and criminal. The contrast reveals how nationalist discourse disproportionately targets women’s sexuality while downplaying male violence.

The dominant argumentation strategy underpinning this redirection is intertextual irony. Online participants deliberately cite the elevated and formulaic language of official nationalist discourse, reproducing its moral tone with exaggerated fidelity. Statements such as calls to publicise Jiao’s “tenant list” explicitly mimic the language used to justify the punishment of the female student. By extending the same logic to a case of male criminality, the argument unfolds through internal consistency rather than external opposition (Bakhtin 1981).

This form of irony functions as a *reductio ad absurdum*, a recognised argumentation strategy in the Discourse Historical Approach, whereby dominant moral premises are extended to their logical conclusion to expose internal contradiction (Wodak and Reisigl 2001; Wodak 2015a). If women’s consensual sexuality is construed as damaging national

dignity, then deception, coercion, and sexual violence should, by the same logic, constitute a greater moral threat. By extending nationalist reasoning to its logical conclusion, the irony exposes the incoherence of applying “Guoge” to women’s sexuality and allows contradiction to emerge from within the discourse itself (Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak 2009).

From a DHA perspective, this intertextual irony operates through recontextualisation, a core analytical concept that captures how discursive elements are displaced from one social or institutional setting and re-embedded in another, while retaining traces of their earlier meanings and normative force (Wodak 2009; Wodak and Meyer 2015). A term historically anchored in state sovereignty and diplomatic honour is first relocated into the institutional governance of women’s bodies, and subsequently re-embedded within vernacular digital discourse as an object of ridicule and contestation. Each recontextualisation activates the authority sedimented in prior usages, enabling feminist actors to appropriate nationalist language while simultaneously hollowing out its moral coherence (Bakhtin 1981; Wodak 2015b).

This process must be situated within the broader historical expansion of nationalist morality into intimate domains. The mobilisation of a vague yet elevated nationalist narrative to discipline an individual woman’s private conduct reflects a long-standing patriarchal logic that subjects female sexuality to disproportionate moral surveillance, while also resonating with the extension of nationalist sentiment into everyday and intimate life (Harriet Evans 1997; Kecheng Fang and Maria Repnikova 2018; Jieyu Liu 2017; Wodak 2015b). It is precisely this discursive overreach and inflation of symbolic authority that triggers widespread intertextual irony in online discussions. National dignity, once positioned as an abstract collective value, becomes entangled with questions of bodily autonomy, gendered surveillance, and institutional hypocrisy, revealing the contingent and politically selective nature of nationalist moral authority (Wodak 2015b; Nira Yuval-Davis 1997).

Embodied irony through implausible attribution

In the ABC Sanitary Pads Boycott Movement, 21.9% posts mobilised intertextual irony by reworking familiar patriarchal and pronatalist scripts in order to criticise substandard sanitary products. Typical examples include claims such as “The substandard national standards for sanitary pads have led to women’s infertility,” alongside highly exaggerated narratives that mimic conservative gender norms, see [Figures 3–5](#):

By applying the figure of poor-quality sanitary pads as an ironic discursive vehicle, these posts render intelligible and temporarily legitimate three social positions that are often marginalised or stigmatised in Chinese mainstream discourse: non heterosexual identity, anxieties surrounding declining fertility, and resistance to conventional marriage economies, such as bride price (Weiei Li and Yuchuan Zhou 2025; Jinfang Ma 2024; Toby Miles-Johnson and Yurong Wang 2018). The sanitary pad becomes a symbolic trigger that activates a chain of exaggerated moral and demographic consequences, allowing feminist speakers to stage critique indirectly. The shifts from “liked men” to “no longer like men,” from aspiring to have children to fearing childbirth, and from rejecting bride price to demanding an excessive one are not presented as literal causal claims but as satirical

用 ABC 前，我是个传统的好女人！！！！在这之前我特别喜欢男人，喜欢小孩，我的梦想是生 6 个孩子，三男三女，伺候老公孩子，孝敬公公婆婆，也不想彩礼。但是自从用了国产劣质卫生巾，就不喜欢男人了，还想要天价彩礼，还害怕生孩子，都是劣质卫生巾害的！！！！

Before using poor-quality sanitary pads, I was a traditional, good woman. I liked men, liked children, and my dream was to give birth to six kids, including three boys and three girls, to serve my husband and children, respect my parents-in-law, and I did not even want a bride price. But ever since I used domestically produced low-quality sanitary pads, I no longer like men, I demand an exorbitant bride price, and I am afraid of childbirth. It is all the fault of those poor-quality sanitary pads.

Figure 3. Mimic conservative gender norms.

天哪我也是，劣质卫生巾害惨了我本来我都想生 5 个男孩的

Oh my god, same here. Those terrible sanitary pads ruined me. I originally wanted to have five sons.

Figure 4. Mimic conservative gender norms.

exaggerations of dominant narratives surrounding female virtue, heterosexuality, reproduction, and family. This formulation works through intertextual irony by deliberately invoking and exaggerating hegemonic discourses of female virtue, heterosexual desire, reproductive obligation and familial self-sacrifice.

The speaker simultaneously adopts the persona of the “traditional good woman” (Figure 3), strategically inhabiting a recognisable patriarchal identity to expose its internal contradictions. By presenting herself as a compliant, heterosexual, family-oriented woman, she establishes an ironic baseline grounded in hegemonic gender norms.

From a DHA perspective, the dominant argumentation strategy is embodied intertextual irony. The ironic force of the post emerges precisely from the disjunction between the borrowed patriarchal script and its implausible attribution to sanitary pad quality (Linda Hutcheon 1994), a tension that invites readers to question not only the material neglect of women’s bodily needs but also the ideological expectations governing women’s sexuality and reproduction.

真的以前真的对男的见一个爱一个，现在估计是劣质卫生巾改变了我的激素什么的，
得了一种看见男的就想吐的病!! 我真的好痛苦啊谁来救救我 5555

I genuinely used to fall for every man I met, but now I think those low-quality sanitary pads
must have altered my hormones or something, because I've developed a condition where I
feel sick whenever I see a man!! I'm seriously suffering. Someone, save me!

Figure 5. Mimic conservative gender norms.

More specifically, irony emerges from the incongruity between bodily harm and moral consequence (John. Allen Paulos 1982). While poor-quality sanitary pads are conventionally associated with physical discomfort, the posts rhetorically attribute them to changes in women's sexuality, reproductive choices, and marital attitudes. Hutcheon (1994) emphasises that meaning emerges from the tension between an inherited discourse and its failure to function coherently in a new context, where this semantic displacement exposes the contradictions of patriarchal and nationalist expectations, as material injury is transformed into moral and demographic anxiety. By forcing biopolitical narratives to confront women's embodied experiences, intertextual irony simultaneously critiques consumer injustice and destabilises the gendered moral logics through which women's suffering is normalised (Sarah Banet-Weiser 2018).

Situated within the broader social context of demographic anxiety, declining birth rates and intensified nationalist governance, these ironic practices create space for feminist resistance while remaining partially embedded within the nationalist and biopolitical frameworks they seek to contest (Lin Yidie, Zhang Baiyang, Hu Meijing, Yao Qiang, Jiang Min and Zhu Cairong 2024; Zhang and; Zhang 2024).

In both cases, critique operates primarily through the redistribution of moral blame rather than through a fundamental dismantling of the moral framework itself. In the "Guoge" discourse, although national dignity is redirected from women to men, the underlying assumption that national dignity ought to be tethered to individuals' private sexual lives remains largely intact. Calls to publicise Jiao's sexual partner list implicitly reproduce the same logic of moral surveillance that initially targeted the female student, merely shifting its object without questioning its legitimacy. A comparable limitation emerges in the sanitary pad discourse. Claims such as "poor quality sanitary pads cause infertility" tacitly reaffirm a reproductive imaginary in which women are understood primarily as biological carriers of fertility. Even when articulated ironically, this framing continues to position women's bodies as instruments of demographic reproduction, rendering infertility a form of loss or damage rather than interrogating the normative expectation of reproduction itself.

These interventions remain situated within the terrain of pink feminism. Rather than rejecting nationalist discourse outright, they translate gendered grievances into

nationally legible claims, reflecting what Nancy Fraser (2000) describes as strategic accommodation within an existing field of recognition (Han and Liu 2024; Zhang and; Zhang 2024). Consequently, intertextual irony functions simultaneously as critique and constraint: it exposes gendered asymmetries while remaining partially embedded in the moral frameworks it seeks to challenge.

Embodied recontextualised appropriation as feminist resistance

Embodied semantic rupture: collapsing gouge into the feminised body

In the discourse surrounding the “Youru Guoge” (insulting national dignity) incident on Xiaohongshu, 28.8% posts explicitly equated “Gouge” with “Yindao” (vagina), thereby redirecting a highly elevated nationalist signifier into the feminised body, see Figures 6–11.

Through ironic semantic displacement, “Guoge” ceased to function solely as an abstract symbol of national morality and instead became embedded within the corporeal, sexual, and reproductive dimensions of women’s bodies.

In official discourse surrounding the incident, “guoge” (national dignity) was repeatedly linked to the normative behaviour of Chinese women, particularly the expectation that women’s sexuality should remain disciplined in order to preserve the collective national image. Within this moral framework, women’s bodies functioned as symbolic containers of national honour. However, the posts analysed here radically concretise this abstraction by collapsing “guoge” directly into the female body itself, specifically the vagina. One representative post declares (Figure 6): “I’m going to finger my national dignity.” Here, “national dignity” is no longer an elevated moral abstraction but an object of female sexual self-possession and bodily pleasure. The phrase “finger the national dignity” transforms national dignity from a sacred nationalist signifier into an intimate corporeal site subject to erotic agency and self-control.

This semantic shift is significant because it strips nationalist discourse of its transcendental aura. Through masturbation, a practice conventionally coded as private and vulgar, the grandeur of nationalist morality collapses into an ordinary bodily act. Yet this reduction is not merely comedic vulgarity. Rather, it constitutes a discursive reappropriation of bodily sovereignty. The speaker’s sexual self-stimulation does not degrade the female body. Instead, it repositions female sexuality as autonomous, pleasurable, and self-directed, thereby undermining the patriarchal logic through which women’s bodies are mobilised as passive vessels of national morality. Through this predication shift, “Guoge” becomes corporeal, permeable, and sexually accessible, qualities fundamentally incompatible with its conventional construction as morally inviolable.

被自己美得有点忍不住了，晚上要扣一下国格

I'm getting a bit overwhelmed by how beautiful I look. Tonight I'm going to finger my national dignity.

Figure 6. Redirecting a highly elevated nationalist signifier into the feminised body.

国格只上交中国女人

国潮走国道 国格当自强

Guoge only submits to Chinese women.

Guochao flows the national way; Guoge should be self-reliant.

Figure 7. Redirecting a highly elevated nationalist signifier into the feminised body.

国格待遇就这样吗... 我的国格如此尊贵，那么补助在哪里... 还又被爆出卫生巾里有致癌物了，卫生巾国标也是时隔 20 年才迟迟更新，都贵为国格了能不能待遇好点

So this is what national dignity treatment looks like...? If my national dignity is supposedly so precious, then where are the benefits and protections for us...? And now it's been revealed again that sanitary pads may contain carcinogenic substances. The national standards for sanitary pads were only finally updated after twenty years. If women are supposedly as valuable as national dignity, could we at least be treated a bit better?

Figure 8. Redirecting a highly elevated nationalist signifier into the feminised body.

笑死

又有新名称了

不叫浦西叫国格了

This is killing me.

There's a new nickname again.

It's no longer called Puxi (Pussy) now, it's called national dignity.

Figure 9. Redirecting a highly elevated nationalist signifier into the feminised body.

出事浦西是国格

那我来国潮的卫生巾有毒怎么还不管

When the Puxi (Pussy) scandal happened, suddenly it became an issue of national dignity.

But when guochao domestic sanitary pads turn out to be toxic, nobody seems to care.

Figure 10. Redirecting a highly elevated nationalist signifier into the feminised body.

国产卫生巾是不是要进步一下

不然有损国格怎么办

Shouldn't domestic sanitary pads improve a bit?

Otherwise what if they damage the national dignity?

Figure 11. Redirecting a highly elevated nationalist signifier into the feminised body.

This embodied semantic rupture is further intensified through the circulation of menstrual product discourse. Crucially, the reappropriation of “Guochao” and its ironic slippage into “Jingchao” (menstrual flow) becomes possible only after “Guoge” has already been semantically collapsed into the vagina. Once “national dignity” is redefined through vaginal embodiment, nationalist vocabulary becomes transferable into broader reproductive and menstrual registers. Posts shown in [Figures 8–11](#) therefore extend the earlier semantic chain linking “Guoge,” the vagina, and bodily autonomy into the domain of menstrual consumption and feminine hygiene. Here, “Guochao,” conventionally associated with patriotic consumption and domestic cultural branding, is resignified through its phonetic and semantic proximity to menstrual “flow.” Nationalist market discourse thus becomes intertwined with reproductive bodily vulnerability, collapsing the distance between abstract patriotic symbolism and the neglected material realities of women’s bodies.

The critique here does not emerge through explicit rejection of nationalism itself. Instead, it exposes the contradiction between the symbolic glorification of women as bearers of “national dignity” and the structural neglect of women’s bodily wellbeing. This contradiction is articulated directly in the sarcastic complaint: “If my national dignity is supposedly so precious, then where are the benefits and protections for us?” ([Figure 8](#))

Here, nationalist discourse is forced into confrontation with infrastructural inequality. The irony lies precisely in the asymmetry between symbolic exaltation and material abandonment. Women are discursively elevated as embodiments of civilisation and national image, while simultaneously denied adequate protections concerning menstrual health and bodily safety.

Predication further intensifies this embodied turn. “Guoge” is repeatedly represented as something that “submits,” “flows,” “can be contaminated,” and requires “self-reliance,” predicates conventionally associated with bodily processes rather than sovereign transcendence. One post declares (Figure 7): “Guoge only submits to Chinese women. Guochao flows the national way, Guoge should be self-reliant.” Importantly, the speaker identifies herself as female and includes a personal selfie with the post. In this context, “Guoge” becomes partially detached from heterosexual nationalist reproduction and reoriented toward female intimacy and bodily autonomy. Under the semantic condition in which “Guoge” already equals the vagina, the declaration that it “only submits to Chinese women” introduces an implicit lesbian or homoerotic dimension into nationalist language itself.

Here, national dignity ceases to function as a patriarchal symbol requiring women’s sexual discipline for male national honour. Instead, it becomes a symbolic totem legitimising female bodily intimacy outside heteronormative reproductive frameworks. Non-normative desire, typically excluded from nationalist imaginaries organised around demographic reproduction and heterosexual family structures, becomes partially intelligible through the ironic appropriation of nationalist vocabulary. Rather than openly opposing heteronormativity, the discourse folds queer possibility into nationalist language itself, exploiting the authority of patriotic discourse in order to shelter deviant meanings beneath its surface.

From a DHA perspective, the dominant argumentative strategy operating here is subversive resignification through embodied semantic rupture. Rather than rejecting nationalist discourse externally, these posts inhabit its language and redirect its affective force toward bodily, menstrual, and sexual registers. Drawing on Butler’s (1997) theory of performativity, the discourse exploits the citational nature of ideological signifiers, whose authority depends upon continual repetition across time. However, repetition here functions parodically rather than normatively. By repeatedly attaching “Guoge” to masturbation, menstruation, sanitary pads, and vaginal slang, the discourse interrupts the citational chain through which national dignity acquires moral gravity.

Rather than simply negating nationalism, this embodied resignification destabilises the meaning of “Guoge” by redirecting nationalist moralism towards its own gendered assumptions. Through repeated associations with masturbation, menstruation, and vaginal imagery, “Guoge” is recontextualised from a transcendent national signifier into a contested bodily one. As these posts circulate through reposts, comments, and intertextual repetition, their meanings are collectively reinforced, illustrating what DHA conceptualises as interdiscursive co-construction (Wodak and Meyer 2015). Within Xiaohongshu’s platform ecology, these embodied appropriations accumulate into a feminist counter-discourse that renders visible the gendered foundations of nationalist morality.

Situated within a broader context of resurgent nationalism, demographic anxiety, and intensified moral governance, this embodied semantic rupture reveals the extent to which nationalist discourse relies upon the continual disavowal of its gendered foundations. By collapsing “Guoge” into feminised bodily references, the discourse exposes the

contradiction between the symbolic elevation of women's bodies as bearers of national dignity and their continued material regulation and neglect (Gail Hershatter 1997).

Embodied experience as intervention and anti-archive

Within the ABC sanitary pad boycott, 27.6% of the posts explicitly called for embodied participation, marking a shift from symbolic critique to forms of discursive practice that mobilise women's bodily experience as intervention and anti-archive. These posts constitute a distinct discursive formation in which everyday corporeal practices are recontextualised as politically consequential acts, grounded in a broader socio-historical context of the systematic marginalisation of women's reproductive and menstrual needs within state regulation and market governance (Chris Bobel 2019; Wodak and Meyer 2015).

At the level of discursive topics, these posts centre on corporate neglect, misogynistic branding, and institutional indifference to women's bodily care. Through nomination strategies, brands such as ABC are explicitly named and stabilised as agents of gendered harm, while online participants are interpellated through addresses such as "for our own sake" (Figure 12) and kinship-based addresses such as "sisters" (Figure 14), producing a collective feminist subject grounded in shared embodied vulnerability. Predication strategies further

希望更多人看到。最近曝出来众多卫生巾商家欺骗消费者，偷工减料标虚假长度，夸张的标长 290 实际 240，严重偷工减料。对此 ABC 等商家回应：爱买不买。因为卫生巾是女性刚需所以肆无忌惮。而且现行卫生巾合格标准非常低，甚至 pH 是 c 类标准，和窗帘一个档次...使用卫生巾瘙痒甚至过敏不是体质问题，是卫生巾 pH 过高，而女性私处 pH 值通常是 3.8~4.2 左右，长期接触可能会导致各种发炎妇科疾病 我们并不是拿他们毫无办法，以前是不知道，现在我们需要改变。为了我们自己 目前知道的办法：
①新的 #卫生巾国标 正在起草，这里有详细步骤和整理好的建议，每个人都可以去推动改变。②拒绝购买 ABC 等最嚣张的商家产品，杀鸡儆猴

I hope more people will see this. Recently, numerous sanitary pad brands have been exposed for deceiving consumers through cost-cutting and falsely labelled lengths. Products advertised as 290mm were only around 240mm, reflecting serious material reductions. In response, brands such as ABC reportedly reacted with an attitude of "buy it or do not buy it". Because sanitary pads are considered an essential necessity for women, these companies behave with impunity.

Moreover, the current quality standards for sanitary pads are extremely low. Their pH standard is reportedly equivalent to Category C, the same category applied to curtains. Itching or allergic reactions associated with sanitary pad use are therefore not simply matters of personal sensitivity but may relate to excessively high pH levels in the products. The normal pH value of the female intimate area is generally around 3.8 to 4.2, and prolonged exposure to unsuitable products may potentially contribute to inflammation or gynaecological illnesses.

We are not completely powerless against these companies. Previously, people simply did not know. Now, change is necessary, for our own sake. Current approaches include: 1. A new national sanitary pad standard is currently being drafted. Detailed procedures and compiled suggestions are available, and everyone can participate in pushing for reform. 2. Refuse to purchase products from the most arrogant brands, such as ABC, to make an example of them and pressure the wider industry.

Figure 12. Urging online participants to take actions.

一些辱女避雷品牌（更新至 12.15）

1. 优普爱湿巾

2. 妇炎洁

3. 全棉时代

（这个比较久了找不到图大致就是说如果你深夜被人尾随用全棉时代的卸妆湿巾卸妆之后尾随的男人就对你没兴趣了 呵呵）

4. 宝洁

5. 711 的擦边广告

6. 润百颜（顺带拉黑这个厌女博主）

7. 益禾堂（广告语侮辱女性都是 X 交易待选品）

Some misogynistic brands to avoid (updated to 15 December)

1. Youpuai wet wipes

2. Fuyanjie

3. Quanmianshidai

(This one is quite old, so I cannot find the original image anymore, but the rough idea was that if you were being followed late at night, using Quanmianshidai's makeup remover wipes to remove your makeup would make the man following you lose interest in you. How ridiculous.)

4. Baojie

5. 7 11's sexually suggestive advertisement

6. Runbaiyan

(Also block this misogynistic blogger while you are following it.)

7. Yihe Tang

(Their advertising slogan insulted women by portraying them as "products" for sexual transactions.)

Figure 13. Urging online participants to take actions.

attribute shamelessness, exploitation and moral indifference to corporate actors, constructing resistance not as excess or irrational anger but as a justified response to structural harm (Fairclough 1995).

A key discursive practice involves the circulation of boycott warning lists, often framed as "some misogynistic brands to avoid" (Figure 13). These lists document brand names alongside specific reasons for boycott, such as advertising slogans that insult or trivialise women. From a DHA perspective, such practices function as counter-archives by recontextualising dispersed and ephemeral instances of symbolic violence into a collectively accessible record, directly challenging the normalisation and erasure of gendered harm in commercial discourse (Wodak 2015a). Women's embodied experience is thus elevated as a legitimate epistemic resource (Ahmed 2014).

Beyond documentation, 14.3% posts articulated explicit calls for material and economic intervention, grounded in argumentation strategies structured around a pragmatic topos of cause and effect.

呼吁姐妹们使劲买 ABC，然后等他们一发货就直接退，一方面会让商家产量增加导致爆仓，腾出时间和钱召回快递，另一方面没有退货邮费，只有切实影响到商家利益，他们才会改。再加一条，以后买卫生巾一律差评，差评也会影响商店评分，商家需要多交钱的。师夷长技以制夷，要像男人一样不要脸才会被重视。搞 ABC，用假地址，别暴露个人信息，复制随意，大搞特搞！

I call on sisters to aggressively buy ABC products, and once they ship them, immediately return them. This will increase the merchant's output and cause inventory overload, forcing them to spend time and money recalling parcels. There is no return shipping fee. Only by genuinely affecting the merchant's interests will they change. In addition, from now on, always leave negative reviews when buying sanitary pads. Negative reviews affect store ratings and force merchants to pay more. Learn from the enemy to defeat the enemy. You have to be shameless like men to be taken seriously. Target ABC. Use fake addresses, do not expose personal information. Copy freely. Do it on a large scale."

Figure 14. Urging online participants to coordinate refund practices.

As one post argued: "I call on sisters to aggressively buy ABC products, and once they ship them, immediately return them. This will increase the merchant's output and cause inventory overload." (Figure 14) Another post mentioned: "Other things may fade with time, but menstruation comes every month, so it cannot simply be forgotten. When your period arrives, when you experience menstrual pain, when you feel depressed, go buy ABC to 'relieve' it." (Figure 15) Here, menstruation is discursively transformed from a private bodily process into a recurring mechanism of political memory. The cyclical temporality of menstruation becomes a form of embodied remembrance that prevents the controversy from disappearing within the accelerated attention economy of digital platforms. Rather than locating activism in exceptional political moments, the discourse ties resistance to the repetitive rhythms of corporeal experience itself, reflecting the political force of affective repetition (Ahmed 2014).

These illustrate how embodied experience is mobilised not merely as grievance but as a discursive resource for enforcing accountability. The argument advanced is that under conditions of platform capitalism and weak regulatory protection, symbolic protest alone

大家就把买 ABC 退 ABC 当日常，只要 ABC 不倒闭就可以天天干，其他事都能随时间遗忘，月经可是月月来，总不能忘了吧？月经一来，肚子痛了，心情沮丧了，就去买 ABC 缓解下，平时被狗比领导，客户气到了，就去买 ABC 缓解下，死道友不死贫道，何况是有十大美德的 ABC 呢

People should just treat buying and then returning ABC products as part of everyday life. As long as ABC does not go bankrupt, people can keep doing it indefinitely. Other things may fade with time, but menstruation comes every month, so it cannot simply be forgotten. When your period arrives, when you experience menstrual pain, when you feel depressed, go buy ABC to “relieve” it. When you are angered by some awful boss or difficult clients, go buy ABC to “relieve” it again. Better that someone else suffers than oneself, especially when ABC supposedly possesses its “ten virtues”.

Figure 15. Urging online participants to coordinate refund practices.

is insufficient. Only by translating embodied outrage into material economic consequences can corporate actors be compelled to respond. In DHA terms, this represents a reconfiguration of responsibility, whereby accountability is enacted through everyday bodily participation in market mechanisms rather than deferred to abstract institutional authority (Wodak and Reisigl 2001).

At the level of discursive practice, boycott lists, refund campaigns, and coordinated review bombing constitute an embodied anti-archive that preserves and politicises women’s lived experiences of institutional neglect. Rather than merely documenting misogynistic branding and regulatory failure, these practices transform embodied experience into collective evidence and political intervention.

The controversy also gave rise to a parallel practice of deconstructing and reappropriating state promotional rhetoric. One post is particularly revealing: “Jiangshanjiao, do you menstruate?” (Figure 16) The figure of Jiangshanjiao was originally introduced in 2020 as a virtual idol by the Communist Youth League of China. Her name derives from Mao Zedong’s well-known line “The rivers and mountains are so beautiful” (Jiangshan ruci duo jiao), and she was designed to mobilise youthful patriotism and nationalist affect, especially during the early phase of the Covid pandemic (Shirley. Xue Yang and Bowen Zhang 2021).

Feminist recontextualisation redirected this figure through a series of seemingly simple yet politically charged questions: “Jiangshanjiao, do you menstruate?” “Has your husband ever beaten you?” “Would you shave your head for the nation?” These questions juxtaposed the idealised nationalist body with the everyday vulnerabilities faced by Chinese women, forcing abstract virtue to confront embodied risk. The rapid deletion of these posts by official accounts did not halt their circulation. Instead, Jiangshanjiao re-emerged

江山娇，你来月经吗

Jiangshanjiao, do you menstruate?

Figure 16. Deconstructing and reappropriating state promotional rhetoric.

through remix videos and memes, accruing new layers of meaning as a proxy for structural gender inequality, including son preference, labour discrimination and sexual harassment (Fan Xiao and Yue Huang 2024).

From a DHA perspective, Jiangshanjiao exemplifies recontextualised appropriation. Detached from its original propagandistic context and re-embedded within feminist discourse, the figure shifts from an idealised nationalist icon to a proxy for women's embodied experiences. During the ABC controversy, repeated references such as "Jiangshanjiao, do you menstruate?" recontextualised nationalist symbolism within debates over menstrual health, bodily care, and institutional neglect. This repositioning forces abstract nationalist ideals to confront the material realities they obscure, illustrating how feminist actors appropriate rather than reject authoritative discourse. Similar ironic references to the C-grade classification of sanitary pads further expose institutional disregard for women's bodily needs, using embodied experience to destabilise nationalist rhetoric.

Through repeated feminist circulation, Jiangshanjiao's meaning is continually reactivated and extended across different controversies. Rather than a singular act of resignification, this iterative recontextualisation accumulates new meanings through collective circulation and affective memory, producing a mobile feminist symbol that remains available for future struggles (Bakhtin 1981; Butler 1997; Fairclough 1995; Zizi Papacharissi 2015).

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that not all bodily rearticulations of nationalist language operate in the same political direction. While both the reallocation of "Guoge" to male criminality and infertility narratives surrounding substandard sanitary pads and the embodied resignification of "Guoge," "Guochao," and Jiangshanjiao mobilise corporeal references, they differ in the political work performed by the body.

In the former, bodily harm and sexuality become politically legible insofar as they are linked to national dignity or demographic survival. The nation remains the primary evaluative horizon, reflecting Pink Feminism's strategy of translating gendered grievances into nationally intelligible claims. By contrast, the embodied resignification of nationalist symbols no longer seeks recognition within the existing moral order. Instead, nationalist language is repeatedly recontextualised through menstruation, vaginal imagery, and embodied vulnerability, producing semantic instability rather than moral legitimacy. It is this latter configuration that this study conceptualises as embodied counter-discourse.

Embodied counter-discourse operates through the iterative reattachment of nationalist signifiers to women's corporeal experience. Rather than rejecting hegemonic discourse externally, repeated recontextualisation gradually destabilises its meanings. Consistent with Butler's (1997) account of performative repetition, the findings suggest that reiteration becomes especially disruptive when anchored in embodied experience, as abstract nationalist language is repeatedly confronted with the material realities it seeks to regulate. Embodiment functions not merely as thematic content but as a mechanism of semantic transformation.

Digital circulation further intensifies this process. Through memes, reposts, and affective amplification, embodied experiences become collectively shared and repeatedly recontextualised, producing cumulative semantic change rather than isolated acts of resistance (Sheena J. Sheen Vachhani 2024). Embodied counter-discourse thus represents

a distinctive mode of feminist resistance that is reiterative, materially grounded, digitally mediated, and cumulatively destabilising.

The relationship between embodied counter-discourse and Pink Feminism highlights two distinct modes of engaging with nationalist discourse. Consistent with Fraser (1995, 2000) distinction between recognition and strategic accommodation, Pink Feminism seeks recognition by aligning gendered grievances with nationalist and biopolitical priorities, translating women's embodied experiences into nationally intelligible concerns. Repetition here functions centripetally, stabilising feminist claims within existing moral frameworks. By contrast, embodied counter-discourse mobilises the same symbolic resources to expose the contradictions of nationalist moral language. Through the embodied resignification of national dignity, demographic anxiety, and reproductive discourse, repetition becomes excessive and ironic, overloading nationalist signifiers and producing semantic instability rather than recognition. Although both mobilise nationalist affect and bodily reference, they pursue different political projects: one stabilises feminist claims within nationally intelligible frameworks, while the other seeks transformation through semantic destabilisation.

Conclusion

By analysing the discursive struggles surrounding the Guoge incident and the ABC sanitary pads boycott, this article has identified how resistance unfolds within structured fields of recognition through reiterative resignification, intertextual appropriation, and the embodied rearticulation of nationalist signifiers. Most importantly, it demonstrates that resistance becomes qualitatively different when meaning is repeatedly forced to confront bodily vulnerability. Under digitally networked conditions, this confrontation becomes cumulative, affectively amplified, and collectively experienced.

Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performative resignification and Nancy Fraser's account of resistance within structured regimes of recognition, this study proposes the concept of embodied counter-discourse. Embodied counter-discourse refers to a mode of resistance in which bodily narratives do not merely represent experience but intervene in the very conditions of intelligibility, displacing abstract nationalist signifiers with corporeal claims that unsettle established criteria of recognition.

Yet this form of resistance also generates a structural tension with pink feminist discourse. Whereas pink feminism often rearticulates women's value within nationalist frameworks, embodied counter-discourse unsettles those very symbolic foundations by foregrounding vulnerability, harm, and material injustice. At the same time, grounding politics in shared bodily experience can narrow participation. When claims are anchored primarily in gendered corporeality, discursive space may become implicitly limited to women's experiences, restricting broader alliances and complicating entry points for other marginalised groups whose positionalities do not align with the dominant bodily narrative. Moreover, because this embodied counter-discourse operates through a far more radical destabilisation of nationalist signifiers than pink feminist discourse, it may also be more vulnerable to censorship, deletion, or algorithmic suppression within heavily regulated digital environments. This suggests that future research should pay greater attention not only to visible discursive production, but also to the forms of platform governance, invisibility, and selective circulation that shape which feminist counter-discourses remain publicly legible online.

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