The Great (Surrogate) Mother of the West: The Genealogy of Masculinity in Yung Wing's *My Life in China and America*

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ABSTRACT

Yung Wing (1828–1912) was the first Chinese national to graduate from an American institute of higher education. His autobiography, *My Life in China and America* (1909), has continued to provoke controversy regarding its political and cultural significance. Although most Chinese scholars consider it the record of a pioneering patriot in the promotion of Western education for Chinese modernization, Chinese-Americans have often derided it as a "fake" success story devoid of racial consciousness. Here I will analyze Yung's strategy of adopting, from a marginalized position, a 19th-century New England middle-class masculinity to gain political and moral capital. Yung created his own genealogy, one showing how he moved from dependence on a "naïve, weak, and passive" natural mother to dependence on "scientific, independent, and progressive" surrogate American parents. However, his uncritical adoption of an "American Protestant masculinity" contributed to his marginalization in late-Qing Chinese society, and ultimately a failed political career. Yung attempted to transplant American gender stereotypes in China, but failed to address traditional Chinese gender politics. This new (Westernized, Christianized) masculinity asserted by his autobiography is finally ambivalent if not unintelligible, when set in a cultural context that could not absorb it. Yung's invented genealogy of masculinity ultimately rendered him blind and impotent within a cultural matrix founded on a different kind of gender politics.

KEY WORDS

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autobiography
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An 1854 graduate of Yale College (renamed Yale University in 1887), Yung Wing (Rong Hong, 1828–1912) is generally considered to be the first Chinese national to have graduated from a U.S. institute of higher education. Yet, despite the singularity of this distinction, his attempts at self-description in his autobiography, *My Life in China and America* (1909), fail to provide us with a coherent ground against which to reconcile the varied and even contradictory evaluations of his personality and historical significance. Scholars from Mainland China for the most part validate his autobiography as an important historical document, claiming that it is the record of the life of an early modern patriot who pioneered the use of Western education in the enterprise of Chinese modernization. U.S. scholars, although more cautious in their praise due to his personal biases and the impracticality of his reform plans, nonetheless generally credit him with being the first to propose an immersion-style educational mission to the United States. Given these positive assessments by both Chinese and American historians, it is perhaps surprising to encounter vehement denunciations of Yung Wing's autobiography by most Asian American literary critics. Some condemn it as a "fake" success story representing a "mission-schoolboy['s] . . . white fantasy" (Chin 11). Others, although less vituperative in tone, still dismiss his autobiography as an inferior literary product completely lacking "awareness of the interior self" (Ling 85).

However, I would argue that the significance of Yung's autobiography does not lie in its apparent failure to live up to the standards of contemporary Chinese American literature. Nor need we justify his autobiography by alleging it to be a defense of Chinese American character and Chinese national dignity (Cheung 1999, 171–

92). Rather than retroactively imposing contemporary criteria on the historical figure and his work, it would be far more fruitful to investigate the interaction between Yung's literary endeavor and its historical and cultural context. Furthermore, for in-between subjects such as Yung Wing, it is most important to examine the configuration of gender, class, and race in the attempts at self-representation. Therefore, in this essay I will examine Yung's autobiography to show how his adoption of a 19th-century New England middle-class model of masculinity affects his on-going negotiation for political and moral capital from a marginalized position.

During Yung's lifetime, the male Chinese elite witnessed the military, economic, and cultural invasion of China by Western powers and the onset of the erosion of its ethico-moral foundation: Confucianism. The dominant and enduring model of elite Chinese masculinity—what Kam Louie calls the "*wen-wu*" matrix (7–21), or, the civil versus the martial dynamics that prescribed a set of ideal masculine characteristics and hierarchies for educated Chinese males in premodern Chinese society—had already started to fracture under unprecedented historical and psychological burdens. However, perhaps more problematic for Yung was his educational background: he was the product of a Christian mission school system that disseminated radically different ethical and cultural values. Thus he was not even able to claim a share in the grand national tragedy of the collapse of an ancient ethico-moral system under both external pressures and internal corruption. Nor could he stand on absolutely solid ground when promoting his version of the late 19th-century New England middle-class white Protestant cultural model that he had absorbed through his own American education. The Chinese Exclusion Acts, a series of anti-Chinese-immigration laws passed by the U.S. Congress starting around 1881 (Tsai 43–103), symbolically and effectively prevented him from adopting the U.S. as his second motherland; in 1898 he even temporarily lost his American citizenship as a consequence of these laws (Wong 30). Yung's autobiography, produced in the shadow of American Exclusionism, was therefore haunted by a feeling of being stranded between two cultures, unable to

lay a clear claim to either of them. Therefore, in scrutinizing Yung's autobiography I will not only make clear his impotence and ultimate failure but also shed some light on two very different cultural landscapes at an important moment in both modern Chinese and American histories.

Before entering into a detailed discussion of Yung Wing's autobiography, let me briefly summarize his background. Yung was born into a poor peasant family in Guangdong province in 1828. When he was barely seven, his father took him to Macau to enroll as one of the few boys admitted to Mrs. K. F. A. Gutzlaff's Girls' School, a mission school sponsored by the London Missionary Society. Around 1840 Yung enrolled in the Morrison Education School under the charge of Rev. Samuel Robins Brown, a graduate of Yale College (Class of 1832). Brown brought three Chinese students with him when he returned to the US for family reasons, Yung Wing among them. Yung arrived in the US on April 12, 1847. He first studied at the Monson Academy, a preparatory school located in Monson, Massachusetts. In 1850 he enrolled in Yale College and graduated in 1854. Although he was the first Chinese to receive an American college degree, his career after his return to China hardly lived up to his ambitions. After a series of false starts and uneven progress in his various ventures, he finally managed to gain entry into Chinese politics through the help of some friends on the private staff (*mufu*) of the powerful Qing statesman and general Zeng Guofan (1811–1872). Moreover, his pet project, an overseas educational program for Chinese youth that he had been dreaming of for years, did not come to fruition until almost two decades after his graduation from Yale, despite his own unremitting efforts and those of powerful allies such as Zeng Guofan.

In 1872, the Qing (1644–1912) government finally agreed to sponsor a group of thirty Chinese male pupils to study in the U.S. Yung had selected Hartford, Connecticut as the mission headquarters and on their arrival distributed the boys among local American families where they were to live while attending primary or secondary schools. The initial plan was to send annually a group of thirty boys

between the ages of twelve and sixteen to study in the U.S. After fifteen years of study, they would then return to China with the expectation that they would use what they had learned in the U.S. to strengthen China's national defense. However, after only four such groups had been sent, the Qing government reversed its position on the mission. Out of fear that these boys would be tainted by an American education and completely neglect their Confucian heritage, and furthermore as a public show of dissatisfaction with the Chinese Exclusion Act passed by the U.S. Congress in that year, the Qing government in 1881 issued a recall for all Chinese students and officials connected with the Education Mission. Yung's subsequent lobbying attempts to extend the life of the mission all failed, and he soon followed his students back to China. His later involvement in reformist schemes collapsed in a more spectacular fashion, and in 1898 he had to flee China as a blacklisted reformist in the aftermath of failed constitutional reform (*Wuxu bianfa*). Yung Wing spent his last years in the U.S., dying in 1912 just after the foundation of the Republic of China. *My Life in China and America*, written in English for an American audience, had been published a few years earlier, in 1909.

Yung's fortunes underwent many reversals in his lifetime, but his posthumous evaluation has proven to be even more tortuous. Rather than joining in the clamor of those who have argued about the nature of the man himself, calling him variously a patriot, a cultural missionary, a "cultural broker" (Wong 22) or just a fraud, I would like to particularly focus on his ingenious invention of his own genealogy to accommodate and make sense of the contradictory inclusions and exclusions that characterized his cultural and gender identities. According to this fictional genealogy the young Yung changed mothers, moving from a "naïve, weak, and passive" natural mother to "scientific, independent, and progressive" surrogate American parents. I want to argue that Yung here adopts gender stereotypes then prevalent in the middle-class, white New England society and transplants them in late imperial Chinese society, in order to validate his anomalous status in both cultures. However, his ultimate failure as

both career politician and educator—a source of everlasting mystification and bitterness—shows the resistance of existing gender norms in China to such transplantation and the resultant impracticality of such an interpretive praxis. In this way Yung serves as a precursor of 20th-century shifts in gender and cultural thinking in China.

In *My Life in China and America* Yung plots the course of his life along a teleological trajectory. Although generally privileging descriptions of his life in China over those of his life in America, he significantly provides little detail of his early years as a humble peasant boy and mission pupil in Guangdong. He summarizes the first 18 years of his life in China in only two chapters, while depicting his adult life as a Western-educated man in painstaking detail. In contrast to his relative reticence about his humble origins, Yung allocates a full ten chapters to the description of his various business and political ventures in China, however trivial or ill-fated they may have proved to be. This peculiar focus of his autobiography is intriguing not just because Yung Wing wrote this book in English, for an American audience presumably interested in the exotic details of everyday life in distant China; it also reveals that he took great pains to emphasize for his American audience that his first birth was far less important than his second birth in the "reproductive" process of a foreign education system. For Yung, this was an experience that profoundly changed his social positioning and disposition, but he claimed that it strengthened rather than weakened his sense of loyalty to the Chinese homeland.

Indeed, Yung claimed that it was his deep patriotic feelings for China that determined the structure of his autobiography:

> The succeeding chapters of my book [from Chapter Six to the end] will be found to be devoted to the working out of my educational scheme, as an expression of my undying love for China, and as the most feasible method to my mind, of reformation and regeneration for her. (iii-iv)

Here he asserts that the design, execution and eventual failure of his educational mission so absorbed all his attention and passion that

he was unable to dwell on any other aspect of his life. However, I feel that Yung designed the tempo of his autobiography in this way—"fast-forwarding" past his childhood and early years to more quickly reach the business enterprises and political struggles of later years—in order to present a public image of himself as not only a patriotic Chinese man empowered by a first-class American education but also a capable, self-made American man who possessed both the resources and the courage to pursue his own dreams. Such an attempt at straddling two cultures should alert us to the problem inherent in his type of patriotism. It is interesting to note that Yung wishes to reproduce his own educational experiences as an expression of his "love for China," or more exactly his love for a "Hartford-China" that can only exist in his fantasy. But more importantly, he in effect applies to the Manchu Qing dynasty a specifically 19th-century American idea of patriotism. Such a position perhaps enabled him to form temporary alliances with constitutional reformers such as Kang Youwei (1858–1927) but it also differed greatly from that of the more radical revolutionaries of later years. The particular kind of devotion to the concept of nation-state that Western patriotism espouses was alien to a premodern Chinese society that always promoted loyalty to the emperor and father, as prescribed by Confucianism. Although earlier reformers such as Kang Youwei advocated nation-wide reforms, they still very much upheld loyalty to the Manchu emperor Guangxu (1871–1908), who in their eyes personified the Chinese nation. In contrast, while the later modernizers, such as Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), did not negate the link between national modernization, technological expertise, and entrepreneurial spirit that Yung Wing's American-style patriotism promoted, they actively fostered and utilized anti-Manchu sentiment to increase the solidarity of different interest groups who shared the same Han ethnicity, as the first step towards the construction of a modern Chinese nation. These different Chinese definitions and performances of "patriotism" perhaps suggest that Yung's swearing of loyalty to China in American terms already damned his project from the beginning. But more importantly, his assertion of Chinese patriotism in the Preface of his *Autobiography*

foreshadows his penchant to consistently define his (masculine) gender identity in American terms throughout this work.

Significantly, then, Yung preferred to describe the execution of his plan and the actualization of his educational potential rather than either his humble Chinese beginnings or the development of his abilities and skills at school. In thus focusing on himself as an agent rather than a product of his upbringing, he followed a model of white, middle-class, Protestant masculinity that he had imbibed in New England. This was the masculinity of a young capitalist America with its Protestant work ethic: a combination of physical aggressiveness and practical rationalism which embodies the idea that hard work and application will lead to success. As such, Yung also surreptitiously invokes the meta-narrative of the American pioneer who breaks with the past (and the mother) in order to fashion himself in the mold of a man of action and vision, rather than a mere reflection of his times and background. It is perhaps no surprise to us that Yung Wing's plans ultimately came to naught despite his fervent advocacy of, and unshakeable optimism about, the prospects of the educational mission, since he not only based his self-representation on the New England model but also allowed his assessment of late imperial Chinese society to be shaped by the standards which that model implied. By juxtaposing this self-image with his eventual bitter failure, he perhaps managed to cast himself in the light of a tragic hero who had tried and failed in his Herculean labors, a variation on the "manly" man familiar to his American audience. However, even as such a narrative strategy worked to gain a readership for his English-language autobiography, it simultaneously flouted the masculine norms of *wen*, or "cultivation," prescribed for elite Chinese males by Confucian teachings. As will be shown in the analysis below, Yung in fact sneered at the "genteel, refined qualities that were associated with literary and artistic pursuits of the classical scholars" (Louie 14) as unmanly, and instead fervently identified with the more "rugged" New England model of Christian masculinity.

Yung utilized various narrative devices for the construction of this type of masculine self-representation. In addition to manipulating

the tempo of his autobiography in order to cast himself as a self-made man, he also marked off each stage of his "hero's progress" with the introduction or disposal, as the case may be, of various figures who played important roles in his life. In this way, the author constructed a metaphorical genealogy that traced and supported his autobiographical trajectory from the feminine-inflected ignorance, injustice, and corruption that he associates with China (the land for which he professes "undying love") toward the masculine-inflected enlightenment, justice, and integrity that the United States symbolizes for him. This is particularly evident in his account of his educational experience, in which he constantly invokes the figure of the exemplary (Western) woman, both as feminine other and masculine model, in order to legitimize the manufacture of his masculine identity.

While depicting his Chinese childhood in a relatively perfunctory fashion and hardly mentioning his biological mother, Yung claims that his first mission teacher, the Englishwoman Mrs. Gutzlaff, won him over "through her kindness and sympathy" (4) and that he came to "look upon her more like a mother" (4). This expression of "filial" sentiment is striking in light of his first meeting with Mrs. Gutzlaff and his subsequent abortive plan to escape from the mission school. Yung says Mrs. Gutzlaff filled him with terror at first sight: "I actually trembled all over with fear at her imposing proportions—having never in my life seen such a peculiar and odd fashion [i.e., her Western-style dress]" (4). Later, Yung managed to convince some of his female classmates to attempt an escape from the school with him, but Mrs. Gutzlaff caught the group and made them march in front of the whole school. As she deliberately handed out oranges and other rare treats to all the other students, Yung was forced to stand before them, wearing a placard bearing the inscription "Head of the Runaways" (6). Of course, we can regard this episode as an attempt on Yung's part at "presenting his childhood as evidence of nascent, albeit not entirely principled, authority" (Cheung, "kingdoms" 177). However, Yung's own strongly expressed sense of humiliation and injury prefigures an "otherness" that was to follow him all his life.

He said, "I never felt so humiliated in my life as I did when I was undergoing that ordeal" (7), and the whole scene eerily echoes that of Jane Eyre's ordeal in the orphanage. Paradoxically, Yung also uses his narration to convert this feeling of being "almost but not quite" into a sense of his identity with a group that excludes him. We can see his attempts at assimilation and affiliation in his "adoption" of Mrs. Gutzlaff as his surrogate Western mother. More ingeniously, he also links himself to a form of "Christian masculinity" through this woman, thus initiating his own pilgrimage to manhood.

Yung Wing later attributed his parents' decision to send him to Mrs. Gutzlaff's school, along with all the consequences following from this vital move, to God's will at work in a world "governed by a complete system of divine laws of antecedents and consequents, or of cause and effect" (8). However, in Yung Wing's autobiography, Mrs. Gutzlaff not only functioned as an instrument of divine will but also impressed upon Yung's young mind the force of her masculinized personality. Almost seventy years later, Yung still vividly recalled Mrs. Gutzlaff's awe-inspiring image:

> [S]he was somewhat tall and well-built. She had prominent features which were strong and assertive; her eyes were of clear blue luster, somewhat deep set. She had thin lips, supported by a square chin—both indicative of firmness and authority. She had flaxen hair and eyebrows somewhat heavy. Her features taken collectively indicated great determination and will power. (3)

Therefore, when Yung claims to "look upon her more like a mother" (4), he is actually affiliating himself with a form of Christian masculinity that this Western mother represented rather than finding in her the maternal nurturing that his biological mother had provided. In this sense the runaway episode not only represents the moment at which he begins to replace his biological, Chinese mother with his Western surrogate mother but also symbolizes a failed (and thus possibly repressed or rechanneled) attempt to return home to the Chinese mother(land). Yung's masculinization of Mrs. Gutzlaff

reveals, after all, her surrogate status and its concomitant difficulties. The gender-and-cultural "difference" she embodies seems to direct the young Yung Wing into a public, homosocial economy which obscures or replaces any clear familial and gender identity. The homosocial ideology of the "self-made man" to which Mrs. Gutzlaff is linked through her foreignness further complicates the figure of the mother-as-origin, since according to this ideology it is an origin that must be overcome. Thus Yung's relationship with Mrs. Gutzlaff only presents a more dramatic version of his withdrawal from his natural mother.

Yung's gender displacement becomes even more convoluted in his relationship with his Chinese mother. Although enthusiastically advocating the 19th-century feminine ideal of wifely virtue epitomized in the figure of the "Angel in the Kitchen," Yung locates its embodiment solely in such American women as Mr. Brown's mother and mother-in-law and Mrs. Bartlett. Yung describes Mrs. Bartlett as " . . . always cheerful. A smile lighted up her features nearly all the time and for everyone she had a kind and cheerful word, while the sweet tone of her voice always carried with it cheerfulness and good will" (26). Similarly, he praises Phoebe Brown's "calm spirit of contentment and resignation" demonstrated in a hymn that she authored (30). Given that Phoebe Brown, at whose house he boarded during his years at the Monson Academy, was another woman who served as a surrogate mother to him, we must note that the Victorian child-rearing techniques Mrs. Brown employed placed considerable importance on maternal influence in the formation of a budding Christian masculinity: "The mother was enjoined to create a sheltering home environment where the nurturing power of maternal affection could most effectively instill moral conscience and self-control. For boys, this early nurture would be followed by the paternal influence of strong male role models who should inspire them to action and noble ambitions" (Harris 90). Therefore, although Yung's surrogate American mothers apparently presented a more feminine picture than the English woman Mrs. Gutzlaff, they proved to be no less effective in molding Yung's Christian character: it is no real surprise to learn that Yung converted to Christianity while at preparatory school (a fact

not recorded in his autobiography).

In contrast to his respect for, and admiration of, his Western surrogate mothers, Yung finds in his biological mother only an amplified and negatively coded femininity: she is portrayed as naïve, passive, and peripheral to his own life. Reunited with her on his return to China after graduation from Yale, he dismissed as naïve her practical concerns regarding his ability to secure gainful employment, boasting to her instead about the value of his Yale degree in terms of both money and prestige. Not only did Yung fail to show respect for his mother in his words, but he also neglected the Confucian duties of filial piety that he owed to her in his deeds. His marriage at the age of 47 to an American woman, though a fulfillment of one of his own "daydreams" (24), clearly was not calculated to satisfy his mother's expectation that he would marry a Chinese woman and give her grandchildren before she was too old. Furthermore, though claiming to have provided her with adequate financial support, Yung set up residence in Shanghai while leaving his mother behind in Guangdong. Nor was he even present at his mother's deathbed; he had to be called home for her funeral, only barely fulfilling this fundamental ritual requirement of Confucian ethics.

Whether or not Yung was a filial son by Chinese standards is perhaps not an issue essential to the present discussion, but his relationship with his biological mother does illustrate that he had absorbed the American model of mother-son relationship—demonstrated to him by such examples as the relationship between Mr. Brown's own nuclear family and his mother—and its values to such a degree that he not only violated Chinese conventions but also saw nothing wrong in his behavior towards his mother. For instance, returning to China after nearly eight years' absence, he put off his reunion with his mother in order to seek out Andrew Shortrede, a newspaper editor in Hong Kong who had provided financial support for his study at Yale for a year. And then at his belated reunion with his mother he pompously lectured her: "Knowledge is power, and power is greater than riches. I am the first Chinese to graduate from Yale College, and that being the case, you have the honor of being the

first and only mother out of the countless millions of mothers in China at this time who can claim the honor of having a son who is the first Chinese graduate of a first-class American college" (50–51). Although he claims that he fulfilled his filial duty by earning fame for the family, he is actually trying to redefine his mother according to his terms. More importantly, his boast that his Yale degree elevated his mother's social status and bestowed on her singular honors would no doubt find more resonance with his American audience than with his Chinese mother, who expressed much more immediate, concrete, practical concerns about his future employment. In assessing her response to the rosy picture he has painted, Yung further makes clear his distance from his mother's emotions and way of thinking with the repeated use of such phrases as "she seemed" and "she looked" (51), designating her as an object to be interpreted rather than understood and sympathized with. This reunion scene is an intriguing narrative gesture, signaling that Yung identifies more with the values and thinking process of his American audience than with those of his Chinese mother. Yung's pompous lecturing of Mother symbolizes his pompous lecturing of his Motherland; his repeated extolling of Yale, his *alma mater* (*fostering mother* in Latin), shows that his warm embrace of this pedagogical "wet nurse" has enabled him to break away from and supplant his "real" (biological and national-cultural) mothers.

In light of Yung Wing's emotional and cultural estrangement from his Chinese mother and his willed association with his Western surrogate mother, and by extension his identification with his American audience rather than with a Chinese one, it is not surprising to see a similar tendency in his interactions with Western and Chinese men. To be sure, Yung also criticizes the intemperance and blasphemy that he saw among Western sailors, but that is only a performance of the class position that he has taken up during the period of his American education. His acquired American biases are more obvious and more interesting in his assessment of the male cultural elites of China and the U.S. at the turn of the century.

Paul Harris's insightful study of Yung's educational experience

in the U.S. reveals that the prevalent pedagogical goal of the era was to instill in the student a Protestant New England "character," which meant to associate "the useful knowledge and progressive dynamism of Western education with the spirit of Christian Manhood" (91). According to Harris, meeting this pedagogical goal "entailed not only classroom instruction but also an emerging pattern of Victorian child-rearing techniques" (90). These included emphasizing male/masculine role models and keeping the students in domestic isolation, inundated with Christian teachings of meekness and submission (92). More important for the development of his identification with American "Christian masculinity," he entered the Yale of the 1850s, described by Harris as a "college of mental discipline," where it was held that "One approach to accommodating science and tradition was to define science in teleological rather than methodological terms. The name of science was bestowed on any system of 'truth' which could reveal God's designs in the same complete manner as theology or moral philosophy" (94). Therefore, having absorbed this ideology during his long sojourn in the United States, Yung emerged from his American education not so much the practical, scientific man he claimed to be as one armed with the values and assumptions of a Christian masculinity of the upper-middle-class American variety.

It is thus no surprise to see the influence of his American educational experience in Yung's assessment of both American and Chinese men. Yung typically presents his evaluation of character as a series of emotionally intense proclamations, at times even bordering on eulogies or personal attacks. To him, Mr. Brown, the American Congregational minister who headed the Morrison School in Hong Kong and later brought him to the U.S., was a "self-made man," "cool in temperament, versatile in the adaptation of means to ends, gentlemanly and agreeable, and somewhat optimistic. He found no difficulty in endearing himself to his pupils. . . . He knew how to manage boys, because he knew boys' nature well" (16–17). The label of "self-made man" deserves our attention here; Yung Wing often uses it to express his profound admiration for the kind of masculine heroic figures he found in American society, including Charles

Hammond, the principal of his preparatory school in Massachusetts, and the U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt (who had, incidentally, deplored the lack of "manly and adventurous qualities" in the nation of China and its citizens [qtd. Cheung 1999, 144]). More importantly, Brown embodied the kind of masculine characteristics that Yung both sought to develop in himself and use as a standard by which to judge his Chinese compatriots: rationality, practicality, and, not least, a penetrating understanding of human nature.

With such criteria firmly in mind, we can see why Yung most admired Zeng Guofan among all the elite male Chinese he had met. "Tsang [Zeng] . . . kept the escutcheon of his official career untarnished and left a name and character honored and revered for probity, patriotism and purity. He had great talents, but he was modest. He had a liberal mind, but he was conservative. He was a perfect gentleman and a nobleman of the highest type" (142). Interestingly, although he normally only describes the physical appearance of Western women (as with Mrs. Gutzluff and Brown's mother-in-law), Yung provides a portrait of Zeng in his autobiography, and thus arguably aligns in some subtle way this most admirable Chinese man with Western femininity. As with his Western surrogate mothers, Yung uses the portrait of Zeng as a mirror to reflect his own subjectivity and thus inscribe himself in the text:

> Tsang Kwoh Fan (Zeng Guofan), as he appeared in 1863, was over sixty years of age, in the very prime of life. He was five feet, eight or nine inches tall, strongly built and well-knitted [*sic*] together and in fine proportion. He had a broad chest and square shoulders surmounted by a large symmetrical head. He had a broad and high forehead; his eyes were set on a straight line under triangular-shaped eyelids, free from that obliquity so characteristic of the Mongolian type of countenance usually accompanied by high cheek bones, which is another feature peculiar to the Chinese physiognomy. His face was straight and somewhat hairy. He allowed his side whiskers their full growth; they hung down with his full beard which swept across a broad

> chest and added dignity to a commanding appearance. His eyes thou [*sic*] not large were keen and penetrating. They were of a clear hazel color. His mouth was large but well compressed with thin lips which showed a strong will and a high purpose. (145–46)

We are struck not only by Yung's enthusiastic praise of Zeng's commanding presence and distinguished physiognomy, but also by his eagerness to identify Zeng as somewhat "un-Chinese" in appearance. He not only mentions Zeng's clear, penetrating eyes that he claims to have saved Zeng's appearance from the regular "obliquity so characteristic of the Mongolian type of countenance" (146)—and, of course, from the "slant-eyed" sinister look that the Exclusionists of this period thought typical of Chinese immigrants in the U.S.—but also the Chinese statesman's strong will and penetrating judgment of character. This recalls his admiring depictions of his former teachers, Mrs. Gutzluff and Mr. Brown; echoing his assessment of Mr. Brown's character, Yung also describes Zeng as "a self-made man" (146). Furthermore, Yung's description of Zeng's eyes calls to mind his earlier portrait of Mrs. Gutzlaff, and thus arguably belies, once again, a certain discomfort with such a "masculine" gaze. During his interview with Zeng, Yung frequently feels "quite uneasy" because the general's "keen eyes scanned [him] over from head to foot," and finally the general also "took a steady look into [his] eyes" (144). The object of his scrutiny thus (as subject) turns his gaze back at the writer, forcing him to come to grips with his deployment of an Other as mirror image to reflect his own un-Chinese and ambivalently masculine characteristics. Yung's consistent unease with such masculine authority and its gaze, be it "Chinese" or "Western," could suggest his inability to either totally "become Western" or to return to his lost roots.

Whether or not his interview with the Chinese statesman reminded him of his years as a pupil of Mrs. Gutzlaff, Yung was undoubtedly impressed with not only Zeng's leadership but also his "character," "his great virtues": "his pure, unselfish patriotism, his

deep and far-sighted statesmanship, and the purity of his official career" (147–48). His tendency to associate "virtues" such as integrity, unselfishness, and strong will with masculinity can also be seen in a contrasting example. Although also a strong supporter of his educational mission, General Li Hongzhang, a former protégé of Zeng Guofan, incurs Yung's criticism as a man of "excitable and nervous temperament, capricious and impulsive, susceptible to flattery and praise. . . . As a statesman he was far inferior to Tsang [Zeng]; as a patriot and politician, his character could not stand a moment before the searchlight of cold and impartial history" (187–88). It is striking that traditional "feminine" descriptors such as "excitable, nervous, impulsive," adjectives often associated with the social and clinical discourse on hysteria in the 19th and 20th centuries, are aligned with a lack of high moral purpose and political capability in Yung's estimate. Yung even misinterprets, if not intentionally distorts, the temperament of historical figures in order to emphasize his own masculine probity.

His colleague in the Educational Mission, a Qing official by the name of Chen Lanbin, is described thus: "in his habit he was very retiring, but very scholarly. In his disposition he was kindly and pleasant, but very timid and afraid of responsibilities of even a feather's weight" (182). Yung's dismissal of Chen as effeminate and timid clearly clashes with the Chinese masculine ideal of *wen*, the "mental or civil" veneer every elite male Chinese needed to possess in order to demonstrate his embrace of the great cultural tradition of Confucianism (Louie 11). The concept of *wen*, embodied by the person of Confucius, refers to the male Chinese elite's literary and cultural self-cultivation that not only adorns but also anchors a set of "gentlemanly" (*junzi*) qualities such as loyalty (*zhong*), filiality (*xiao*), humanity (*ren*), and righteousness (*yi*). Although *wen* was often compared to the pattern on a piece of colorful silk or the pelt of a tiger, it by no means only functioned as an extraneous adornment. Rather, it worked as an external indictor that enabled the *junzi* or gentlemen to distinguish themselves from persons of lesser moral fiber and literary achievement. Since *wen* "encompasses all the qualities that sublimate nature into culture" (Louie 44), a person lacking *wen* would be called

"*ye*," vulgar and unrefined, naturally disqualifying him for membership in the charmed circle of *junzi*. Furthermore, although the ideal masculine image achieves a harmony between *wen* and *wu*—the more physical, martial, heroic qualities of the elite Chinese male—*wen* gradually gained primacy over *wu* in premodern Chinese society as *wu* became more associated with brutal force and non-elite masculinities (Louie 17–18). Therefore, we see that Yung Wing's complacent self-advertisement of his own adventurous spirit and willingness to physically work with—rather than lead—his subordinates, although fulfilling the masculine requirements of the "self-made man," actually condemned him by Confucian standards for his lack of *wen* and marked him as an "other," an outsider to the circle of gentlemanly scholar-officials. Even if we can excuse Yung's simplistic interpretation of his Chinese colleague Chen Lanbin's behavior towards him, taking account of his possible unfamiliarity with the etiquette between officials well-versed in Confucian classics, we cannot be so sympathetic toward Yung's misrepresentation of Chen's career history; Yung claimed that Chen "had never filled a government position in any other capacity in his life, nor did he show any practical experience in the world of business and hard facts" (182). In fact, Chen was one of the first Chinese officials to study English on his own, and was also deeply interested in learning about Western science and technology. In his anxiety to portray himself as a hardheaded and capable businessman as well as a devoted patriot, and thus as "masculine" (at least in the Western sense), Yung is not above tampering with the biographies of male Chinese historical figures.

From the above analysis of how Yung incorporated these historical figures into his autobiographical account, we can clearly see the consequences of assimilation for the autobiographer as both a cultural agent and an individual. The masculine model of a "self-made man" in control of his own destiny no doubt proved highly attractive to Yung Wing, whose "compromised" origin and background plagued him all his life. Yet, even as his ingenious transplantation of gender stereotypes for purposes of self-representation enabled him to ingratiate himself with his American audience, it reveals the blind

spots in his dealings with Chinese officials and peers. Yung uprooted American gender stereotypes from their own historical and cultural context in order to evaluate situations in which he found himself in China, only to miss the mark time and again. The genealogy of masculinity he worked so hard to cultivate for himself, therefore, ultimately rendered him blind and impotent within a cultural matrix based on a different kind of gender politics.

Seen in retrospect, the educational mission that Yung promoted was a way for him not just to gain credit and fame in China, but also to "reproduce" his hybrid subjectivity, that is, produce more in-between subjects like himself. It was a sign of both egoistic superiority and loneliness that he sought to play out in his educational mission the trajectory of his own obsessively-told life story: the transformation from a passive, feminized China and Chinese masculinity, through the assimilation of Western cultural values, into a more forceful, "masculine" national persona. Yung's autobiography reveals the conflict between his assertions of his new, different identity and the basic unintelligibility of that identity in cultural contexts that could not absorb it. That the locus of his speech and his self-definition was (or was projected as being) not so much an American one as an American-Chinese one; Yung needed to imagine a unified Chinese-American locus in which he could somehow neutralize the problem of self-other relations and therefore make sense of his own ambivalent identity, and perhaps of his failures back home in China. Perhaps after all a China constructed in American terms could be his only true homeland. Seen in this light, we can also regard Yung's autobiography as a sort of *cri de coeur*: his introspective and emotional reminiscences of his Chinese and American "parents" express his need for sympathy and understanding in a culture that ultimately marginalized him.

The collapse of Yung Wing's career in a late imperial Chinese society was not only a personal tragedy; it also urges us to explore the ramifications of transplanting gender paradigms in the larger context of Chinese cultural modernization. Approximately the same time that Yung Wing died, the May Fourth generation of modern Chinese

intellectuals attacked even more violently the Confucian system and the masculine ideal of *wen* that it had perpetuated. Kam Louie suggests that the radical male intellectuals of this movement in fact promoted a "superior" Western masculinity in order to convey the social Darwinist message that the old Confucian values no longer suited the needs of China's progress, its self-strengthening in the modern era (123). A forerunner of the New Culture Movement of early twentieth-century China, then, Yung's own bitter failure foreshadowed the risks and side effects of later attempts at overhauling a deeply entrenched gender paradigm. His example demonstrated that ignorance and willful disregard of the entrenched gender cultures of traditional China would not only produce personal suffering but also restrict the progress of any political changes sought on such a basis. Yet the later modernizers did utilize the clearer precedents set by Yung's experience to carry out a textual revolution. Since the May Fourth generation for the most part did not internalize Western ideologies as thoroughly as Yung had, they found that the mechanism of appropriation underlying their own modernization efforts meant that the new ideology they promoted was forced to coexist with the old, and that in a way the new both depended on the old and was always threatened with being swallowed up by it. Ultimately, *My Life in China and America* not only produces a new "binational" persona in the image of Yung Wing; it can also help us to contemplate the benefits and disadvantages of the immersion-style Western education so eagerly promoted by Yung for the enterprise of Chinese modernization.

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