

New Perspectives on the History of East Asian Education

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**Chinese Students Educated in the
United States and the Emergence of Chinese
Orientalism in the Early Twentieth Century**

**二十世紀初期的中國留美學生與
中國東方主義的興起**

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Abstract

Chinese students educated in the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century were at once the most Americanized and the most culturally conservative cohort of all the American educated Chinese during the twentieth century. Whether driven by a sense of mission or acting as native informants, this generation of American educated often made sweeping and glowing generalizations about the Chinese national character, status of women, family structure, and political culture. While glowing generalizations, they were nonetheless orientalist in that they reified, essentialized, and a-historicized the Chinese tradition. This was done in a manner that, as Edward Said argued against in his seminal work on Orientalism, suggested the Chinese could be “defined on the basis of some religion, culture, or racial essence proper to that geographical space.” That orientalism has flourished in China, with or without imperialism and Western orientalism, can be seen in the continued invocations, inversions, and re-deployments of the orientalist discourse on China by Chinese conservatives as well as liberals, nationalists, Marxists, the opposition, and the regimes in power.

As the most Americanized of all American-educated Chinese in twentieth-century China, they were also the most scrutinized, perhaps because they were the first cohort to appear on the scene in significant numbers. For the Chinese critics, deracination on the part of the American educated made them foreigners in their own country. Western critics also criticized the American-educated Chinese for what they perceived as their uncritical acceptance of Western models. These Western critics imputed a crisis that was moral in character and civilizational in magnitude in the excessive Americanization of the American-educated Chinese. The more strident critics looked askance at the American-educated Chinese for their ludicrous excess in their doomed mimicry to resemble the whites. For the Chinese to attempt to step beyond the “authorized version of otherness” deemed appropriate for them was, in their view, to transgress. As Homi Bhabha has aptly characterized, to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English. Most of the American-educated Chinese reeled back from such attacks. Some flushed with pride through seemingly laudatory orientalist pronouncements about China, its tradition, and its people. The most perceptive among them were, however, able to expose the pretension on the part of the Western critics to speak for China and to challenge their orientalist premises.

摘要

二十世紀初期的留美學生，是所有近代中國留美學生裡美國化最深的一群。然而，不管是基於他們以中國的傳統文化為榮，或者是他們自認為是中國文化的代言人，留美學生當中仍有不少人會以溢美之詞，來概括綜論中國人的性格、中國婦女的地位、家庭制度、及其政治文化。這些概括性的綜論，完全符合於薩伊德（Edward Said）所批判的東方主義的觀點，因為它們把中國的傳統本質化，並從歷史中抽離了出來。即使是帝國主義不再、西方的東方主義者不再論及，然而東方主義在中國近代史上，還是活力無窮，不論是保守或自由主義者、當道的國民黨或共產黨徒，東方主義的假定一直持續地被徵引、重組、甚至倒裝運用著。

二十世紀的留美學生是最受到批判的一群人。中國人視他們為在自己國家裡的外國人。而當時的外國人也對他們作出更激烈的批評，甚至挖苦這批留美學生東施效顰地模仿白人；對他們而言，中國人企圖想起出「他者的樣版」，等於是侯米巴巴（Homi Bhabha）所說的：有些人雖然英國化了，但怎麼看就不像是英國人。大部分的留美學生都受不了這樣的批評，因之有些人轉而熱烈地擁抱西方人推崇中國、中國傳統、以及中國人的論點，即使那些推崇是屬於東方主義式的。然而見識較深的留美學生，則會去揭穿西方人士的驕傲與輕妄，挑戰他們所持論的東方主義。

Splendid China

Orientalism, argues Arif Dirlik, far from being an autochthonous product of the West, is a process that non-Europeans have from the beginning participated in constructing. He locates the process of the production of orientalism at what Mary Pratt has termed the “contact zone,” “the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.”¹ Dirlik identifies nationalism as an impetus that provoked modern Chinese to engage in the construction of images or traits that were emblematic of the Chinese nation. Whether Confucianism, despotism, bureaucratism, or familism, all these traits are “traceable to orientalist representations, or to an unchanging ‘feudal’ or ‘Asiatic’ society, in a Marxist version of orientalism.”² As Dirlik perceptively observes, the Confucian revival of the 1980s in which some Chinese scholars touted Confucianism as a conducive force to capitalist modernization in East Asia is but an “articulation of differences within a global modernity as Asian societies emerge as dynamic participants in a global capitalism.” The self-orientalization thus manifested does not challenge Western hegemony, however. As Dirlik points out, self-orientalization “consolidates ‘Western’ ideological hegemony by internalizing the historical assumptions of orientalism. At the same time, it contributes to internal hegemony by suppressing differences within the nation.”³

What deserves refinement, however, is Dirlik’s argument that self-orientalization on the part of the Asians is more a product than precondition of colonial contacts. He contends that the Asian traditions, or rather “invented” Asian “traditions,” may be “the products rather than the preconditions of contact between Asians and Europeans” and “may owe more to orientalist perceptions of Asia than the self-perceptions of Asians at the point of contact.”⁴ One problem of this otherwise astute observation is that when pushed too far, it runs the dan-

¹ Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

² Arif Dirlik, “Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism,” *History and Theory*, 35.4 (December, 1996), pp. 106-107.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

ger of falling into the fallacy of ascribing a timeless tradition to Asia before the advent of European colonialism, the same fallacy into which orientalism falls.

Moreover, while self-orientalization is the center piece of Dirlik's argument, there is a curious lack of precision and contextualization in how he charts its trajectory. He characterizes the Confucian revival in the 1980s as representing an assertive mode of self-orientalization, which reflects "a newfound sense of power that has accompanied the economic success of East Asian societies who now reassert themselves against an earlier Euro-American domination."⁵ Without having mapped its trajectory in the first place, Dirlik provides his readers with little to interpret the significance of this assertive mode of self-orientalization. One is left wondering whether the reference he makes earlier in his essay to a quote from a leading Chinese historian in the late 1930s deprecating modern China's lackluster achievement is meant to illustrate an earlier, negative phase of Chinese self-orientalization at a time when China occupied a powerless position vis-à-vis the West. If this conjecture is accurate, Dirlik's analysis serves to undermine his own contention that "the question of power nevertheless should be separated analytically from the construction of orientalism."⁶ This is particularly so because he attributes the negative and assertive modes of the self-orientalization on the part of the Chinese to China's or East Asia's changing power relationship to the West. This attribution, however, presumes too facile a relationship between power and self-orientalization.

Without distracting from Said's insight on the imbrication between power and orientalism,⁷ I suggest that we can problematize Dirlik's argument on self-orientalization by considering how cultural pride or ethnocentrism could mitigate or refract the sense of powerlessness the Chinese during the early twentieth century might have felt about the perilous state China was reduced to when confronted by the powerful West. Thus, as long as the American-educated Chinese remained confident with their own culture and tradition, they could engage in affirmative self-orientalization by invoking the values that have throughout history been taken by the Chinese to be unique to the Chinese culture.

Furthermore, following Dirlik's insight on the pivotal role played by nationalism, I suggest that affirmative self-orientalization was prompted by an urge

⁵ Arif Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," p. 113.

⁶ Ibid., p. 96, 25.

⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

on the part of the Chinese to defend their tradition from what they perceived as misunderstanding and misrepresentations by Western observers and critics. As such, affirmative self-orientalization began as a discourse for foreign consumption. Constructed initially in the English mode, it tended to be assertive, hyperbolic, and even polemical in tone and in posture. It juxtaposed China and the Chinese civilization in relation and in contrast to the West, which resulted in two opposite modes of discourse: one to celebrate the affinities between China and the West and the other to pose a binary opposition between a spiritual China and a materialistic West. In time, self-orientalization would become so saturated in popular as well as academic discourses that it would become common sense for most of the Chinese.

As the first generation of China's own orientalists, the American educated under study were remarkably unproblematic with their own cultural identity. That this generation was the most Americanized of all the twentieth-century American-educated Chinese did not lead them to question their Chinese identity. The Exclusion Act in the United States that barred the immigration and naturalization of Chinese foreclosed a potential outlet for them to opt for a different nationality and cultural identity. The entrenched elitism both on their part and in China, furthermore, allowed them to expect elite and privileged status upon their return. Their elitism, together with their expectation of leadership positions, prompted them to assume a conservative political identity, which in turn helped them maintain an equilibrium in their cultural identity. In his analysis of the collapse of the Confucian value system in modern China, Joseph Levenson posited a disjunction between history and value in the minds of modern Chinese intellectuals, who were purportedly intellectually alienated from the Chinese tradition but still emotionally tied to it.⁸ Studies of the Chinese intellectuals who reached maturity in the 1890s, such as Liang Qichao, challenged Levenson's argument.⁹ Our story of the most Americanized Chinese of the early twentieth century further casts doubt on Levenson's classic formulation.

Of the affirmative self-orientalization by these American-educated Chinese, the most salient and enduring was the moral or ethical superiority of the Chinese civilization over that of the West. This belief could be traced back to the Spring

⁸ Joseph Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 1.

⁹ See, for example, Hao Chang, *Liang-Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 112-114.

and Autumn period (722-481 B.C.C.) when the Chinese had already started to invoke their superior morality and ethical system in order to distinguish themselves from the barbarians. What is the most striking in this Chinese construction of the barbaric Other in contrast to the moral Chinese is its tenacious hold on the Chinese elite consciousness in spite or because of defeats and foreign conquests throughout history. The modern Europeans became the latest and most dangerous barbaric Other for the Chinese. As late as the 1870s, notwithstanding the military and technological prowess the Europeans repeatedly demonstrated in wars that resulted in China's defeat, the conservative Chinese elite clung to their judgment that the Europeans were worse than the beasts for purportedly lacking the capacity for filial piety and basic morals. When Guo Songtao (1818-1891) accepted the appointment as minister to Britain in 1875, he was ridiculed by his fellow literati for leaving the land of the sages to serve the foreign devils. His townsmen, ashamed of him, tried to destroy his house.¹⁰

Such an extreme image of the Western barbaric Other could not sustain itself as more Chinese intellectuals gained a deeper understanding of the modern West toward the end of the nineteenth century. None of the American-educated Chinese, needless to say, harbored such a negative image of the Americans. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that even among them, the belief died hard that Chinese adhered to moral and ethical values more than the Americans. The game had changed, however. Along with military defeats, the Chinese had lost the power to construct the Other. Instead, they became the barbaric, intractable, or phlegmatic Other in the dominant Americans and Europeans discourse on civilization and progress. After having been in the position to imagine and produce the Other for more than a millennium, the Chinese now found themselves on the defensive. Whether driven by nationalism or a genuine sense of cultural pride, many chose to fight back and dispel what they considered outrageous misrepresentations or stereotypes of the Chinese or Chinese civilization. In so doing, they claimed to present what China and the Chinese were really like. Whether they assumed an objective or polemical posture, they tended to reify, essentialize, and a-historicize, in other words, to orientalize, the Chinese tradition. The cluster of

¹⁰ See Hao Yen-p'ing and Wang Erh-min, "Changing Chinese Views of Western Relations," in John K. Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, Late Ch'ing, 1900-1911, Part 2, pp. 181-186.

cultural values that most American-educated Chinese held to be unique to China and superior to the West was associated with women and the family.

One of the earliest expounders of the unique and superior Chinese cultural values related to women and the family was Jin Yamei. A physician and a medical school and hospital administrator, she was also an accomplished public speaker, who made at least one speaking tour to the United States. In an essay published in 1907, she effortlessly wove in quotes and references from Shakespeare, Milton, John Stuart Mill, and the various Confucian classics. Entitled "As We See Ourselves," this was an unusual piece of writing because it contained a number of assertions about China and the Chinese civilization that would become some of the core arguments in self-orientalization by the Chinese to this day.¹¹ She acknowledged readily China's "glaring need for reform," but insisted on the need to have "a right understanding of the base from which to work." She made it clear that she was writing to counter the Other-izing of the Chinese by the Westerners. "We have been looked at from an outside point of view for a long time," she contended, "sweeping statements made by early observers founded on one or two occurrences are handed down with a truly Chinese persistency from one generation to another; and we are dissected by ready writers with more wit than insight, in all styles, from the column and a half of the flitting newspaper correspondent, to the fat volumes of the twenty years' resident." Jin Yamei made it clear that Chinese women had a lot to learn from the modern West and that the Chinese family system was by no means perfect. Foot binding topped her list of hurtful customs for eradication. Modern education was, furthermore, essential to fit women to perform their roles in the modern family or in careers outside of the home. She, however, rejected talks by Westerners of the so-called "degradation of the Oriental woman" as hypocritical when what happened in their slums were far worse. She contended that "public sentiment does not permit the spectacle of a woman lying drunk in the street, or stupefied with opium, if one chooses to call that our national vice, even in the lowest slums of the dirtiest Chinese city." By contrast, "in the great metropolis

¹¹ The following analysis, together with citations, of Jin Ya-mei's ideas is based on King Ya-mei [Jin Ya-mei], "As We See Ourselves," in three installments in *The World's Chinese Students' Journal*, I.3 (December 1, 1906), pp. 9-17, *ibid.*, I.4 (January and February, 1907), pp. 12-19, and *ibid.*, I.5-6 (March-June, 1907), pp. 36-42. For a succinct analysis of Jin's career, see Ye Wei-li, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name: Chinese Students in the United States, 1900-1927* (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 116-129.

of London in certain districts it is of almost daily occurrence, within easy distance of the palatial homes of the great, rich, learned and generous, who know about as little of some of the conditions of their own land as if they lived on another planet, and who travel abroad to be properly horrified.”

Chinese women enjoyed more power than the Westerners, who were apt to jump to conclusion by surveying the façade, could ever tell. The Chinese men, particularly the upper classes, were the most henpecked men of all.

[B]etween wife and mother the Chinese man is really the most henpecked of all men, though he is not aware of it, nor would his masculine dignity like to admit the fact. In my personal observation I have found that much of the lofty disdain with which men speak of women in public is apt to be a salve for the numerous affronts that his dignity has received in private, especially in the case of the official classes, who flee from the wrath, righteous or otherwise, of a Ch'i [the wife] to seek consolation of a Chieh [the concubine], which is but adding to the elements of family discord, and forging another link in the chains that already fetter his free action. Very few foreigners, if any, realize how many times they are not dealing with the man who confronts them, but with some woman, of whose existence they are not aware.

(13)

The “peasant and the middle classes,” according to Jin, “have lived a monogamous life, though probably it has been more due to difficulties of living than inclination.” Thus, in the scholarly families in which there was no more than one legal wife, men “live as clean ethical lives as one will see anywhere.” More important, even the most destitute peasant women were spared of the worst indignities that were often thrown upon their counterparts in Europe, who were like treated slaves. “Our peasant women work beside the men in the fields, but they are never harnessed with the donkey or dogs, drawing the produce to market, pushing the wheel-barrow, or carrying burdens.” Nor were they as physically abused as their counterparts in the West, for she alleged that “no coolie dares to inflict such bruises on his spouse as can be seen in the wife-beating cases that come up from time to time in any police court of the large cities, though it is no excuse for us that because wife-beating exists in the West it may do so here.”

The saving grace of the Chinese patriarchal system, for Jin Yamei, lay in the restraint it exercised in not casting the wife out of the house when she lost the love of her husband to a concubine.

“The patriarchal system now existing in China, it must be remembered, is not polygamy in the Mormon sense. Not more than one legal wife at a time is permitted, though the man who has no heir or will not be restrained, may have what were called handmaids in the times of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which at least makes a man protect and rear his children, keeps the mother up to some standard of ethics, instead of sending her adrift with every force against her, so that there is no recourse but to plunge yet deeper into the world of demimonde.”
(14)

Jin Yamei's defense of the traditional Chinese family system and the women's position in it was echoed in a different vein in the writings of young Hu Shi. As the most eminent leader of the iconoclastic May Fourth New Culture movement and a relentless critic of the Chinese tradition, Hu Shi would seem to be a most unlikely defender of the traditional Chinese family system. Chou Chih-p'ing, who has written extensively on Hu Shi, argues that while Hu could bluntly lash out at China's tradition when speaking or writing in Chinese, he could turn into an apologist concealing China's failings when he wrote in English. He attributes Hu's apologist posture when functioning in English to what he characterizes as Hu's "China complex," which clearly plays on the Levensonian thesis which casts Hu as intellectually alienated from and yet emotionally attached to China.¹²

What seems to be indisputable is that young Hu Shi spoke both his mind and his heart when he defended the Chinese customs and practices during his student days in the United States. Like Jin Yamei, Hu Shi was troubled by the fact that most Americans were ignorant of China and the Chinese people. As he put it in a letter to his mother, "in the minds of the average people here, all Chinese are coolies and laundrymen. They have absolutely no idea what true Chi-

¹² Chou argues that ultimately Hu's defense of the arranged marriage system was nothing but a defense mechanism, for he had to rationalize why he submitted to an old-fashioned marriage arranged by his mother. Chou Chih-p'ing, "Guojie yu shifei" [Country and Right or Wrong], in Geng Yunzhi, ed., *Hu Shi yanjiu congkan* [Hu Shi Studies Journal], no. 1 (1995), pp. 44-64.

nese civilization is like.”¹³ He saw it as his mission to dispel the ignorance and misunderstanding most Americans harbored about China and the Chinese through public speeches, essays, and letters to newspaper editors. As early as October 1912, he had thought about writing a book to combat misinformation about China. In a diary entry of that month, he recorded an inspiration he had to write a book entitled “In Defense of the Chinese Social Institutions.” He envisioned this book to be a critical review of books and essays written by foreigners about Chinese customs and institutions, and would be his endeavor to “defend the fatherland.” He listed the subjects for the ten chapters planned for the book: ancestral worship, family system, marriage, conservatism, position of women, social ethics, the Confucian ethical philosophy, the Chinese language and literature, and the New China.¹⁴

We unfortunately have no way of knowing how young Hu Shi would articulate his arguments in defense of the Chinese social institutions, for he apparently did not write this book. Judging from a diary entry in which he proposed to “analyze their strengths and weaknesses,” he had in mind a critical reassessment of the Chinese tradition from a modern perspective. Fortunately, we have a speech he gave in January 1914 on the traditional Chinese marriage system, which gives us a glimpse of the way he made a Chinese social institution look good. “Marriage Customs in China,” which appeared in the *Cornell Era* in June 1914, was Hu Shi statement about the “rationality” of the arranged marriage system in China.¹⁵ The Chinese boy and girl are betrothed at age thirteen or fifteen. This is arranged by the parents with or without their consent. This early betrothal has two advantages: First, it “assures the young man and young woman of their life companions, hence they need not worry about the all-important task of seeking a helpmate, which constantly confronts the young people of the Western world.” Second, “it imposes upon the young people a duty to be constant, faithful, and pure.”

¹³ Hu Shi to mother, March 22, 1915, in Du Chunhe comp., *Hu Shi jia shu* [Hu Shi’s Family Correspondence] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1996), p. 68.

¹⁴ Hu Shi, *Hu Shi liuxue riji* [Hu Shi’s Diary Kept While a Student Abroad] (Taipei: Shangwu, 1980), November 21, 1912 entry, pp. 103-104.

¹⁵ The following discussion of Hu’s analysis of the traditional Chinese marriage system are taken from Suh Hu [Hu Shi], “Marriage Customs in China,” in *Cornell Era* (June 1914), pp. 610-611, “The Hu Shih Papers at Cornell: 1910-1963,” deposited at the Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University.

After staking out his claims for the advantages of the practice of early betrothal arranged by the parents, Hu proceeds to present four major reasons to explain why it is a thoroughly rational system. First, it would be disastrous to entrust young men and women at fifteen or thirteen to make a free choice. Parents who have more experience “in the school of life” and who have the best interests of their children in mind would “exercise their best judgment in a matter so essential to the welfare of their children.” Second, “this system also relieves the young people from the terrible ordeal of proposing for marriage, which I imagine, must be awfully embarrassing.” Third, “the parental arrangement preserves the dignity, the chastity, and the modesty of womanhood. She is not exposed to the marriage market. She is protected from the mercilessness of the men with whom her occidental sister may be thrown into contact, and out of whom she is to choose her future husband. She does not have to please, flirt, or to hunt for a husband.” Finally, the most important fact is that the married couple does not start a new family. Instead, the son brings his wife to live under the parental roof. Thus, the wife “is alone the life companion of her husband, but is also the helper and comforter of her parents-in-law.” As a result, “it is to the interest of the family that the daughter-in-law should be not only the person whom her husband loves, but also one with whom his parents can live peacefully.” In comparison with the eugenic movement in the West, Hu argues that the Chinese system achieved essentially the same aim with far less tyrannical intervention by society.

Young Hu Shi’s defense of the arranged marriage system was at once more straightforward and more complicated than the psychological interpretation advanced by Chou Chih-p’ing. It was not rationalization. Nor, was it an attempt on his part to justify to an American audience a social practice that was otherwise repulsive to him. Hu Shi was simply fleshing out an argument that he had first presented six years before when he was a middle school student in Shanghai. In an editorial published in 1908, entitled “On Marriage,” Hu Shi argued against the grain of the emerging new orthodoxy among the young and the avant-garde that decried the Chinese marriage system for being too rigid and repressive.¹⁶ Far from being too tyrannical and dictatorial, he argued that Chinese parents

¹⁶ Tie’er [Hu Shi], “Editorial: Hunyin pian,” [On Marriage] in two installments, *Jinye xunbao* [The Struggle Thrice Monthly], no. 24 (August 17, 1908), pp. 1-5 and no. 25 (August 27, 1908), pp. 1-5.

were in fact too negligent and irresponsible. Instead of selecting carefully by themselves the life mates for their children, a decision that had profound implications for the well-being of their children and family as well for society, they entrusted this task to wicked matchmakers and consulted with blind and deformed fortunetellers and worthless idols. The remedy was not free choice in marriage as advocated by the young and the avant-garde, but rather parental matchmaking with consent by their children.

It is significant that Hu Shi was critical of the Chinese parents for failing to play their role responsibly. His rationale for parents to make spousal choices for their children was that parents were more likely to make wiser choices than children who could easily give in to their ignorance and youthful passion. This was the same argument that he would make later in his essay published in the *Cornell Era* where he surmised how courtship in the United States must have been a “terrible ordeal” in which young women were made to “please, flirt, or to hunt for a husband” in what he derided as the “marriage market.” Equally consistent was his argument that marriage was by no means “an individual affair, but has a social import.” This explains why he made references to the eugenic movement in the West. Hu Shi indeed had a tendency to highlight different aspects of traditional arranged marriage system depending on who his audience was. Thus while he chose to showcase the “rationality” of traditional arranged marriage system when writing in English, he dwelled on its abuses in practice when writing in Chinese. While he wrote according to his audience, he did not sacrifice the integrity or consistency of his underlying argument and position.

As an effort to combat misinformation about China, young Hu Shi’s self-orientalization of the traditional arranged marriage system was restrained and prudent. He adopted the posture of an urbane and sensible native informer. In his essay, he stayed focused on his theme on the “rationality” of the arranged marriage system. When he argued that the Chinese system was compatible or even superior to courtship in the United States, he remained measured in his comparison and did not make sweeping assertions, as some would, about the superiority of the Chinese system and, by extension, the Chinese civilization, over that of the West.

One such person was C. H. Lowe. In an essay written for an English assignment entitled “The Spirit of the Chinese Family,” Lowe made extravagant

claims about the superiority of the Chinese family system.¹⁷ Like Hu Shi, Lowe was struck by the contrast between Chinese and Western ideals of marriage. The former focus on its harmonious integration into the parents' family while the latter on romantic love and individual fulfillment of the couple involved. In an argument strikingly similar to Hu Shi's, he claimed that "the philosophic Orient strengthens the inviolability of the institution of marriage by developing a true inner binding sanction which, as every Chinese knows or ought to know, is the sense of Honor and Duty."

Unlike Hu Shi who stayed astutely focused on the "rationality" of the arranged marriage system, Lowe held up the Chinese marriage as a model for the West to emulate. "Marriage in China," he boasted, "has a sense of permanence which we seek in vain in the West." "Its purpose is not merely the seeking of physical pleasure or material gain, but also, and essentially, the perpetuation or development of the race." By contrast, the Western ideal of marriage was no more than a search for the fulfillment of the personal ends of two individuals with total disregard for their responsibilities to the needs of other family members. Such selfishness and irresponsibility spawned behaviors manifested in elopements, desertions, and divorces, which he claimed were almost none existent in China and which threatened to tear Western society asunder. Lowe likened the Chinese home to the church and the school in the West. He claimed that it was able to provide a more wholesome environment and better instructions for imparting virtue to and molding character of the young than church and school. The church in the West failed in its mission because it preached prescribed rituals and forms to its congregation without really instilling a sense of piety and morality. The school in the West, by which Lowe meant the United States, was "no more than an organization of 'flappers,' formed for special instruction in athletics, for playing what we may call 'college politics,' and for enjoying social life." By contrast, the Chinese home educated its young through examples. "By constant association with the good surroundings of the family, by the daily speeches and lessons of the parents, by the force of examples set by the elders, and by the repetition of all these impressions, the child naturally develops an

¹⁷ Gorshom C. H. Lowe, "The Spirit of the Chinese Family," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, XVIII.3 (January, 1923), pp. 31-37; C. H. Lowe, *Facing Adversities with a Smile: Highlights of My 82-Year Odyssey from China to California* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center Publications, 1984), pp. 23-24. Citations in the following paragraphs are taken from these two sources.

inspiration to do good, and follow the rules of moral conduct.” As a result of the edifying influence of the home, China was spared of the need to have juvenile courts, for it was “fortunate in not having much juvenile misconduct.” Furthermore, Chinese society did not need to maintain any “Home for the Aged.” For “we respectfully take care of our parents and elders in our happy homes, thus making them feel that old age is a glorious period of ripe content and reward.”

Lowe’s adulation of the Chinese home in contrast to his castigation of the spiritually impoverished church and intellectually barren school in the United States was part of his larger argument. China could serve as a model for the West, which was, in his view, suffering from spiritual deprivation. “Is it not manifest,” he asked, “that the East has a stronger basis of civilization? Can you not see that China is more than a market for your goods, more than a place for your political aggrandizement and economic exploitation? Has she not something to give you, something which you lack so pitifully in the West?”

What Lowe posited was a binary opposition between a spiritual China and the materialistic West, an opposition that became an article of faith for many Chinese since the late 1910s. This is the second major theme in the affirmative self-orientalization by the American educated.

Prior to his departure for education in the United States in September 1920, Lowe may have been exposed to the Chinese debates on the spiritual Eastern and materialistic Western civilizations in the aftermath of WWI.¹⁸ As pointed out earlier, the belief in China’s moral and spiritual superiority over other civilizations had a long history. It is conceivable that, on his own, Lowe developed his conviction in China’s moral superiority over the West. Jin Yamei, for example, developed a similar argument independently. She saw Confucianism as the basis of Chinese civilization. Confucianism was the doctrine handed down since “the days of Mencius, who taught again the truth expounded by Confucius, that, man’s nature was from Heaven, and bade the people with a trumpet call to live up to their divine heritage.”¹⁹ This divine heritage was most effectively passed

¹⁸ For analyses of these debates, see Jerome Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance* (Replica Books, 2001), pp. 129-145; Guy Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 82-125; and Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 327-332; Charlotte Furth, *Ting Wen-chiang: Science and China’s New Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 94-135.

¹⁹ King Ya-mei [Jin Yamei], “As We See Ourselves,” *The World’s Chinese Students’ Journal*, 1.4,

down through generations by the two related practices of filial piety and ancestral worship. Ancestral worship was so closely connected to filial piety that, argued Jin Yamei, "it does not now make any difference, whether it is the root or the result of filial piety."²⁰ Both of these two practices could continue to serve China well with but slight adjustment to make them fit modern conditions. For filial piety, Jin Yamei believed that modern Chinese should also emphasize the reverse side of it, that is, the duty of parents to children. Considering how Chinese viewed officials as the "fathers and mothers" of the people, she was convinced that this modern notion of filial piety would have a salutary effect not only on the family, but also on society at large. For, "it will add gratitude to the present affection between father and son and both gratitude and trust to the relations of government and people, which elements are necessary to the smooth running of government machinery." As for the ancestral worship, when stripped of its elements of "hoary" superstitions and "degraded" terrors, it could serve as the strongest bond to bind the Chinese people together, and, by extension, as a basis to form a brotherhood of humanity for all the peoples in the world.

Jin Yamei's exposition of the Confucian communion was likewise predicated on a binary opposition between a spiritual China and a materialistic West. While she believed that China had a lot to learn from the modern West, she beseeched her compatriots that "we should not forget that the foundation of our civilization is ethical, and growth must be along the lines natural to us." The Chinese had no reason to make a Faustian bargain and be condemned "to shiver forlorn on the peak of stoical materialism, caring for nothing but the things of the sense and touch" when they could look forward to building a better and richer civilization on the basis of a modernized version of the Confucian communion.

Once China's moral and spiritual superiority came to be embraced by the Chinese as common sense, such affirmative self-orientalization then spawned other extravagant claims for Chinese civilization, both for its historical achievements and its future mission. One of the most widely accepted claims about the historical achievements of the Chinese civilization was its precocious ancient origin and longevity. Ying Shangde's essay published in *The Chinese Students'*

p. 12.

²⁰ Ibid, I.5-6, pp. 36-42.

Monthly in 1910 presented a classic argument for this claim.²¹ “When all other peoples of the world were yet savages, our forefathers were sailing their Ship of State on the flood of prosperity,” he crooned. “Ere the Greeks and Romans knew anything about the art of building there were already in existence in our country grand roads and canals, magnificent temples and monuments, splendid palaces and other buildings, some of which still remain almost untouched in the present day.”

C. H. Lowe, in another essay, claimed that Chinese civilization was the oldest in the world. Like Ying Shangde, he too reiterated, as if it were common sense, that China had made precocious achievements when Europe was in its infancy. More pertinent to our argument about self-orientalization’s appropriation of cultural clichés within the tradition is his invocation, as if it were history, of the myth Chinese handed down from generation to generation about the founding of the Chinese nation. Lowe claimed:

When Europe was in the stage of barbarism, the Chinese Empire was already founded on the northern bank of the Yellow River by the great conqueror Huang Ti [the Yellow Emperor] (2697 B.C.). Huang Ti ruled the country for 100 years—a century of advancement and enlightenment. Besides the invention of the compass, he is commonly believed to be the inventor of boats, carts, arrows, bows, and bamboo musical instruments. He constructed the first mint for the coinage of copper currency; fixed standard weights and measures; introduced a uniform land tax system; gave a calendar to the people; devised the new means of reckoning time, known as the “sexagenary cycles” which has been handed down to our day; and taught his people how to make utensils of wood, pottery, and metal. Lastly, he made a wonderful contribution to Chinese medical science in several treatises which attest the gifted talent of the sovereign.²²

Less widely held and yet fervently promoted by some was the claim that the Chinese people had lived since antiquity in a democracy in practice if not in

²¹ Chas. Zaung Teh Ing [Ying Shang-de], “Chinese Civilization,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, vol.6 (April 1910), pp. 386, 387.

²² Gorshom C. H. Lowe, “The Characteristics of Chinese Civilization,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XVIII.1 (November, 1922), p. 29.

name. This is the final theme of self-orientalization to be analyzed. This is a particularly intriguing facet of the affirmative self-orientalization by the Chinese, for it sheds light on how they appropriated a Western concept to reinterpret and thus re-affirm the Chinese tradition. Among the advocates who claimed that China had its own indigenous democratic tradition, young Hu Shi was an ardent early representative. While Hu Shi would never revisit the same subject during his mature years, as a youth he was unequivocal in articulating his belief that the Chinese were ready for democracy because of the democratic tradition in which they had always lived. In a *Cornell Era* essay published shortly after the outbreak of the 1911 Revolution, when the outcome of the revolution was uncertain and rumors of intervention by the Powers in favor of the monarchists were rampant, Hu presented his argument for the republican cause. Entitled "A Republic for China," Hu's essay opened with a note of indignation at the world not only for its hesitation to join "China's sons" in their "voices of rapture and gratification" in the revolution, but also for the added insults the world heaped upon China by "sneers and laughter at the idea of a republic for China."²³ "The world seems to have the misconception that democracy is entirely a new thing to the Chinese," lamented Hu. "I call it a misconception because, though China has been under monarchical government for thousands of years, still, behind the monarchs and the aristocrats there has been dominating in China a quiet, peaceful, oriental form of democracy."

Hu produced two passages from the Confucian classics to support his argument about the "oriental form of democracy" in China. The first was from the Book of History: "The people should be cherished,/And should not be down-trodden./The people are the root of a nation:/If the root be firm the nation is safe." The other passage was from Mencius, whom Hu referred to as the Montesquieu of the Orient: "The people are to be regarded most; the sovereign, the least. He who gains the favor of an emperor may become a feudal prince; but he who wins the hearts of the people is the son of heaven, that is, the emperor." The well being of the people was thus the *raison d'être* of the state and was invoked to justify revolutions throughout Chinese history. "That the people are to be regarded most has been the essence of the laws of China. Most founders of the

²³ Su Hu [Hu Shi], "A Republic for China," *Cornell Era* (January 1912), pp. 240-24, "The Hu Shih Papers at Cornell: 1910-1963," deposited at the Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University.

dynasties were men who won, not conquered, the people. ‘Neglect of the people’ has always been a pretext in every declaration of the numerous revolutions which terminated old dynasties and established new ones.” Heeding the counsels of the sages, Hu believed that Chinese monarchs learned to rule with restraint.

The power of Chinese rulers has always been limited, not so much by constitutionalism as by the ethical teachings of sages. Sovereigns observed that a ruler, as defined by the sages, was “one who shepherds the people.” Very few rulers in Chinese history have dared to indulge in such extravagancies and brutal cruelty as are described in English and French history. There were ministers and censors to censure, and revolts were dreaded. Such was Chinese despotism; such was democracy or “people’s strength” in China. (pp. 240-241)

Hu Shi’s argument about China’s democratic tradition was echoed by other American-educated Chinese. Not only were their arguments similar, but the beliefs and institutions from the Chinese tradition they chose to highlight were often identical as well. Thus, Cai Xiong invoked exactly the same *loci classici* in his prize oration at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania that touted Confucian democracy as one of the legacies bequeathed by Confucius.²⁴ Yang Baoling on his part characterized the system of government during the Song dynasty as “an imperial democracy.” It was a democracy because the selection of officials was based upon what he referred to as “universal suffrage” and competitive examination. “The heads of towns and villages,” he alleged, “were elected by the entire population. Every man had a right to vote and held office in his own district.” In addition, all officials, up to the prime minister, were selected by competitive examinations.²⁵ Ying Shangde similarly portrayed China’s democratic traditions:

[T]here are no other people who enjoy more freedom of action under the individual restraints of law or more privilege in the matters of security of life and property than the people of China. Our government,

²⁴ Hsiung Tsai [Cai Xiong], “Confucianism,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XIII.7 (May 1918), pp. 390-394.

²⁵ P. L. Yang [Yang Bao-ling], “Chinese Socialism,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, IV.6 (April 1909), pp. 395-399.

a democratic under monocratic, is the result from the evolution of the patriarchal idea and molded after the natural constitution of the family. The people regard the sovereign as the father of a great family with all paternal rights and power, but they also require him to rule in accordance with the published laws of the land. Until recently all the civil officers were selected by the general government through a system of competitive examination, which itself is a democratic element. Besides, there is a Board of Review or Censorate, the members of which are empowered to inspect the conduct of all officers, from the humblest of them even to the emperor upon the throne.²⁶

As a discourse on Chinese tradition, affirmative self-orientalization by Chinese was never simply a historical project. Rather, its concern was with the future. In reinventing the Chinese tradition in relation and in contrast to the dominant West, China's self-orientalists did not stop at proving that Chinese civilization was comparable or superior to the West. Their ultimate goal was to project and celebrate the Chinese mission to help create a superior world civilization infused and enriched by Chinese civilization.

Jin Yamei, for example, envisioned the leadership role the Chinese would play. The "widening and reviving of Confucian ideals" would prepare China for a higher mission to lead other Asian countries to meet the challenges posed by the West, a conviction entertained by many Chinese. According to Jin Yamei, India would not fill the bill, for it was the mystic of Asia. Russia was preoccupied by an anachronistic struggle waged by its people against their autocratic rulers. Even Japan, the "splendid example" in Asia that had "assimilated the Westerner's pet science of warfare with marvelous rapidity and thoroughness," was not equal to the task. For, "nations live by peace and not war." More important, "neither in industry nor commerce, as laborer or merchants," were the Japanese the equals of the Chinese; "nor are they in physical and intellectual vigor or the traits that go to make up what is called character." "It devolves on China," Jin Yamei continued, "which is neither mystic nor warrior, but with its great body of skilful farmer, artisan, merchant, unpicturesque, and often uninter-

²⁶ Chas. Zaung Teh Ing [Ying Shang-de], "Chinese Civilization," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, vol. 6 (April 1910), pp. 388-389.

esting as his British congener in Europe, to solve the practical problems of Asiatic life.”²⁷

Some American educated went further than Jin Yamei to put the Chinese civilization at the future center of the world. Like the cultural conservatives referred to above, they predicted that Chinese civilization would serve as the foundation for a new world culture. Lin Hemin, chair of the English Department of the Beijing Normal University during the 1920s, described the solemn mission that history had assigned to the Chinese:

On the one hand we see one race after another that has succumbed to the ordeal in the arena of the world. The fact that each and every non-Caucasian race, excepting ours, has failed makes it necessary that we succeed. Just as we are expected to succeed as the only independent nation, so we are expected to succeed as the only independent non-European race. On the other hand we see the Caucasian races, who have developed an Occidental civilization to a marvelous degree but who have scarcely appreciated the good factors in the Oriental civilization. They are indeed anxious to add to their civilization elements from the East but, because of the spectacles of Occidentalism through which they must look, much that is most valuable in our civilization escapes their notice. The same thing is true and even truer with the East, as to the West. If the world should ever have a complete, unified civilization, we the most Occidental of Oriental races, must make contributions to the West, while at the same time introducing the West to the East. But what if we as a race should also fail? Then the world's [beginning p. 34] civilization must indeed remain forever incomplete.²⁸

C. H. Lowe too predicted that the Chinese people would become “the building material for world civilization.” His reasoning was as follows:

Chinese civilization, moreover, comprises an unusual power of

²⁷ King Ya-mei [Jin Ya-mei], “As We See Ourselves,” *The World's Chinese Students' Journal*, 1.5-6 (March-June, 1907), p. 41.

²⁸ Lin Ho-min, “Critical Period of Chinese History,” *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, XII.1 (November, 1916), pp. 31-34.

adaptability and flexibility; and, above all, it harmonizes the antagonistic elements of human activity, for instance, materialism and spiritualism. Now Westernization, as I see it, represents a continuous warfare of these divided interests which, left as separate entities, have become more remote and irreconcilable. Consequently it is disorderly and chaotic. On the other hand, the Chinese have always laid emphasis on the reconciliation, of these two aspects of life. Indeed, we may safely declare that it is the conquest of spirit over matter.²⁹

It goes without saying that not all the American-educated Chinese were self-orientalists, nor were all self-orientalists cultural conservatives, as evidenced by young Hu Shi who would go on to become modern China's most eminent iconoclast. Contrary to the common perception, to which many American educated themselves subscribed, American sojourn and education did not make them think and act alike. They went to the United States as impressionable young adults differing in personality, family upbringing, and schooling. They returned as mature individuals who differed from each other by their disparate experiences informed by the schools they attended, by the academic subjects they studied, and by the teachers and friends with whom they came into contact. As a group, however, they were culturally as well as politically conservative. Indicative of their cultural conservatism was the overwhelmingly critical, if not hostile, attitude toward the May Fourth New Culture Movement. Few Chinese students in the United States responded to the New Culture Movement. Among those who did, scornful and scathing critics outnumbered supporters. In criticizing the New Culture Movement, the culturally conservative American educated did not reject the West per se. Like the cultural conservatives back home, they were part of the Euro-American idealistic or conservative reaction against positivism and modernism. They found certain strains, rather than others, within the Western philosophical tradition that were more congenial. Conservative or not, all the American-educated Chinese who engaged in self-orientalization quoted Western authors who made laudatory comments on the Chinese and Chinese civilization.

Self-orientalization represents but only one strategy the American-educated Chinese employed in their construction of the Chinese tradition in relation and in

²⁹ Gorshom C. H. Lowe, "The Characteristics of Chinese Civilization," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, XVIII.1 (November, 1922), pp. 32-33.

contrast to the West. They freely appropriated laudatory pronouncements made by Euro-American authors which essentialized and a-historicized the Chinese and Chinese civilization. Just as nationalism spurred their efforts in self-orientation, it made them particularly sensitive to critiques that they perceived as deprecations of the Chinese and Chinese civilization. Thus, as analyzed in the following section, the same nationalistic instinct that made many American-educated Chinese eager self-orientalist also made many of them forceful critics of unfavorable orientalism.

The fact that they were American educated renders them at once congenial and repugnant in the eyes of Euro-American orientalists. That they were Chinese in blood and color who were trying their best to affect a flawless American diction and mannerisms could incite a visceral reaction on the part of the Euro-American orientalists. A reaction as dark and primordial as the revulsion against miscegenation. While the American educated believed that their Western education made them particularly qualified to interpret China and the Chinese tradition to the West, they were considered suspect in the eyes of the Euro-American orientalists for precisely the same reason in their claim to represent what was “authentically” Chinese.

What was ultimately at stake was the power to speak authoritatively and “authentically” for China: the American-educated Chinese or the Euro-American orientalists?

Mimicry and the Critique of Orientalism

As Arif Dirlik has pointed out, orientalism is not “an autochthonous product of a European modernity,” but rather one produced by Euro-American and Asian intellectuals at the “contact zones.”³⁰ These “contact zones” can be located either in the metropolis or the colonies. Many American-educated Chinese engaged in self-orientation while they were students in the United States, as demonstrated in our analyses in the previous section. China was an abstraction when analyzed from afar. The Chinese tradition was eternal and wise and they were its suave, modern-educated interpreters. Upon their return to China, they found themselves bound up with China in its concrete reality—poverty, quagmire, and anarchy. No longer could they affect the posture as China’s interpret-

³⁰ Arif Dirlik, “Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism,” p. 96, p. 112.

ers or spokespersons. Like it or not, they were seen as a part of modern China's problems by both their compatriots and by foreign visitors and sojourners in China. It was primarily in the "contact zones" along the China coast where the American-educated Chinese encountered their harshest foreign critics. They were often put on the defensive, having to defend China and, along with it, themselves.

In contrast to the affirmative self-orientalization they engaged in while in the United States, they found themselves now combating negative orientalist pronouncements about China by the Euro-American orientalists. While Chinese and foreign critics alike faulted the American-educated Chinese for their Westernization or, worse, deracination, it was often the Euro-American orientalists who questioned most insistently their claims to Chineseness. It was a charge that cut the American-educated from both ends, casting doubt on their Chinese authenticity while at the same time reminding them of their doomed efforts to attempt to resemble the whites. Those efforts would always fall short for what Homi Bhabha aptly describes as "almost the same, but not quite," or, more to the point, "almost the same, but not white."³¹

The charge of Westernization or deracination constitutes one of the major critiques of the American-educated Chinese during the early twentieth century. Y. C. Wang's *Chinese Intellectuals and the West, 1872-1949*, which, builds on the critique in China in the 1920s, offers a classic statement of this subject. The problem with this critique is not that it is false. It is true inasmuch as it exposes the excesses in the acculturated behaviors on the part of the American-educated. Deracination is not a productive concept that is capable of eliciting new questions for inquiry. Bhabha's notion of mimicry provides us with a useful tool to get out of this conceptual impasse or blind alley. Mimicry is particularly useful for exposing the colonial mentality that lurked behind the critiques by Westerners of the Westernization of the American-educated Chinese. In Bhabha's analysis it is "the sign of a double articulation." On the one hand, mimicry in the colonial Indian context was "a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other." These mimic men were colonialism's authorized versions of otherness who were "English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" and yet "Indian in blood and color." They were the "ef-

³¹ Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 89.

fect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English.” On the other hand, the ever-present possibility of slippage—from mimicry into mockery—renders mimicry at once resemblance and menace. As menace or subversion, mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, a difference or recalcitrance that poses a “threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers.”³²

Bhabha’s theory of mimicry can be applied fruitfully to analyze the foreign visitors and expatriates in China who joined in the chorus of critiques against the Western-educated Chinese, or, the “returned students.”—students who had returned from education abroad—in contemporary parlance translated directly from Chinese. These foreign critics who decried the Western-educated Chinese represented a wide ideological spectrum and displayed varying degrees of cultural sensibilities: from John Dewey and Frank Goodnow among the more famous; to the now lesser known, such as Selskar Gunn, vice-president of the Rockefeller Foundation; Robert McElroy, professor at Princeton and first exchange professor to Qinghua University in 1917; Nathaniel Peffer, correspondent in China and, later, professor of international relations at Columbia University; to Michael Borodin, Soviet Union’s envoy to China during the 1920s; and to J. O. Bland, who is a case study for the issue at hand in this section. These critique propounded by visitors from the West who supposedly were in a position to tell good Westernization from preposterous imposture, were taken as definitive condemnation of the excesses of the American-educated.

From the left, Michael Borodin was reputed to have quipped, “Every Chinese bandit who turns into a militarist can hire enough returned students to equip a government.”³³ More tactful, sympathetic, and therefore palatable to those on the receiving end, were the critiques pronounced by Dewey, for example. In 1922, a year after he and Mrs. Dewey had spent two years teaching and lecturing in China, Dewey published an article in *The New Republic* in which he faulted the missionary colleges in China for being largely responsible for the woes of Western education in the country. He charged that “American missionary colleges in China had largely simply transplanted the American college curriculum

³² Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” pp. 86-88. See also Diana Fuss, “Interior Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Identification,” *Diacritics*, 24.2/3 (Summer-Autumn, 1994), pp. 19-42.

³³ Kwei Chen, “Thoughts of the Editor,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XXIII.1 (November, 1927), p. 62.

and American conceptions of ‘disciplines.’” Instead of preparing their students to become leaders of industries in China, they “had turned out men who when they went into industry took subordinate positions in foreign managed industries, because of their training especially in the English language.” Worse, Dewey charged that missionary colleges fostered “the dependent, the slavish, mind and character.”³⁴ Dewey’s critique echoed the critiques made by the Chinese since the iconoclastic May Fourth New Culture movement and culminated in the movements against Christian education during the 1920s.³⁵

By attributing the deracination of the Chinese students to the missionary colleges that educated them, Dewey was taking a public stand against vociferous attacks on the Western-educated Chinese that were most acerbically and persistently unleashed by J. O. P. Bland. Dewey mocked him as the Bland School and pointedly cast him as one who “if not important in himself is important as the spokesman of a definite class of foreigners in China who have been the most influential in purveying information and forming foreign opinion about China.”³⁶ In this sense, Dewey was as sympathetic to the Western-educated Chinese as was Bertrand Russell, who from his experience of living in China from 1920-1921 said that it was “customary for Europeans to speak ill of returned students, for no good reason.”³⁷ Less emotionally invested was the “realist” political scientist Frank Goodnow, president of Johns Hopkins University and Yuan Shikai’s constitutional adviser. Goodnow saw denationalization as a result the pitfall of sending students of impressionable age to be educated. He said that it was “not wise to subject those who are expected to be the leaders in Chinese life to the danger of becoming denationalized, of losing their reverence and respect for all that is good in China because of their admiration, often not discriminating, for the new civilization to which they are introduced and under whose spell, due to its present power and efficiency, they are likely to fall.” He believed that the foreign educated would always labor at a disadvantage when he returned to his own country, for “the conditions to which he has become accustomed are totally different from those which he has to encounter.”³⁸

³⁴ John Dewey, “America and Chinese Education,” *The New Republic* (March 1, 1922), pp. 15-17.

³⁵ Jessie Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950* (NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 204-270.

³⁶ John Dewey, p. 16.

³⁷ Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China* (New York: The Century Co., 1922), p. 232.

³⁸ Frank Goodnow, “Reform in China,” *The American Political Science Review*, IX.2, pp. 218-219.

Other Western critics were not as sympathetic or tactful. In 1923, Robert McElory, then serving as the Managing Director of the China Society of America in New York, observed in a talk that he thought the Chinese students in America were being denationalized. The fact that many Western-educated Chinese were not successful in their chosen professions was, he reasoned, due to their ignorance of the peculiar conditions of their own country.³⁹ Selskar Gunn in his report to the Rockefeller Foundation of his visit to China in 1931 similarly faulted the Western-educated Chinese for their blind wholesale importation of Western theories. Using social science research in China as an example, he said that both “Chinese and foreign observers are outspoken in their criticism of the plans for research outlined by returned students. Their chief weakness lies in the fact that such plans are based too much on the theories and methods used in foreign countries and which are not applicable to China.”⁴⁰

More scathing was Nathaniel Peffer. Resting his case on what he claimed to have been “intimate contacts with a wide circle of foreign educated Chinese” during his five years in China, Peffer declared that he was “profoundly irritated by their glibness, their vocal patriotism, their mental thinness and, above all, their self-complacency.”⁴¹ Writing about the same time as Dewey, Peffer also referred to J. O. P. Bland. He found himself for once in a rare agreement with Bland on the subject of the foreign-educated Chinese. Bluntly he declared that “[a]s my admiration for the ‘inarticulate’ masses of China has steadily risen until I believe them the racial equals of any people in the world, so has my regard for the over-articulate foreign-educated declined.” He was particularly critical of their lack of moral qualm in taking the plunge into the corrupted officialdom that they had self-righteously denounced prior to their return to China:

They talk freely and severely here now of “corrupt officials.” Do they know how many of the returned students are among those corrupt officials, among the worst of them? Do they realize how many Chinese students who, having similarly prated easily here in America, went

³⁹ [C. S. Kwei], “Editorial: The Denationalization of the Chinese,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XVIII.6 (April, 1923), p. 4.

⁴⁰ Selskar Gunn, “Report on Visit to China, June 9th to July 30th, 1931,” pp. 1, 17, RAC RG1.1 601-12-129, deposited at the Rockefeller Archives Center, North Tarrytown, New York.

⁴¹ Nathaniel Peffer, “The Returned Students,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XVII.6 (April, 1922), p. 498.

back to China, fluttered tamely against conditions that confronted them at home, held out a fleeting while against temptation, compromised first a little, then a lot, went finally into official life and now are playing the same old mandarin game as it is played by those who never saw a foreign institution are tainted with the age-old mandarin taint? Go over the roster of returned students. Check off the names of Peking officialdom. How many of those students are now in the Peking yamens, holding concurrently three jobs, four jobs, five jobs, doing little in any of them except wait for their salaries—and maybe squeeze? Examine some of the most callous betrayals in recent years, and see what part returned students have played in them.⁴²

Harsh as McElroy and, particularly, Peffer were, they were no more blistering than the harshest contemporary Chinese critics, who warned that the Western-educated could ruin the country (*wang guo*) by their power hunger, avaricious careerism, social irresponsibility, and deracination.⁴³ Peffer's article criticizing the Western-educated Chinese was published in *The Chinese Students' Monthly*. It is significant that the few articles that responded to Peffer's critique all claim to agree with his argument. The *Monthly* editorialized in the same issue in which Peffer's article appeared saying, "Mr. Peffer launches a relentless attack on the returned students. His facts are true; his charges undeniable."⁴⁴ A letter to the editor expressed the writer's fundamental agreement with Peffer by enclosing a quote from a fellow American-educated who asked rhetorically, "How can we expect students of such despicable type to regenerate our beloved country? It is without doubt true that the students who are in a position to come across to pursue some branch of learning belong to the privileged class of the whole Chinese population. If they who have this wonderful opportunity are not to place the burden on their shoulders, whose business it is to deliver China from corruption and illiteracy?"⁴⁵

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 498-499.

⁴³ See a summary of this indictment in Shu Xin-cheng, *Jindai Zhongguo liuxueshi* (A History of Foreign Education in Modern China) (Shanghai, 1927), pp. 211-273.

⁴⁴ [Telly H. Koo], "Editorials: The Returned Student," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, XVII.6 (April, 1922), pp. 493-494.

⁴⁵ Y. Y. Tsur [Zhu Youyu], "Chinese Students Abroad," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, XVII.8 (June, 1922), pp. 716-718.

In their own defense, some American-educated Chinese argued that such sweeping critique of them as a group bespoke not only unrealistic expectations for the American-educated, but also exaggerated claims for the benefit of Western education. As an editor of the *Monthly* put it, "It would be ridiculous to assume that every returned student in China is a person of exceptional ability who is destined to be nothing less than a leader in his walk of life. A returned student, let us remember, is only a human being with human limitations some of which cannot be overcome even with an American academic or professional education."⁴⁶ A well-respected American-educated granted that Peffer had a point in his "relentless attacks" and called upon his fellow American-educated to endeavor "to avoid being the type of 'Returned Student' that Mr. Peffer rails at." Yet, he pointed out that Peffer "and other critics like him seem to have an inflated conception of the efficacy of Western education. They seem to think that an educational trip to a western college for a Chinese student is like a visit to Mount Olympus and a feast of the Wellsian Food of the Gods, so that in three, four, five years, he is transformed from a being of common clay to a giant, morally as well as intellectually."⁴⁷

This critique of the Western-educated for the failure to lift the nation out of the morass of anarchy, moral bankruptcy, and intellectual torpor was curiously bound up with another critique that condemned them for being excessively Westernized. The ostentatious display by the Western-educated of their acquired Western mannerisms did not serve to endear them to their critics, Chinese or Western. Mei Huaquan, the Cantonese lawyer in Shanghai who was educated at Columbia University, was unapologetic in being American in tastes as well as in intellect. "A young Chinese," rhapsodized he, "who has absented himself from China from four to ten years, and in that time living the life, wearing the dress, sharing the amusements, and speaking the language of foreigners cannot, I submit, even in half a year's time, get accustomed to the ways of home folks, the discommoding conditions, and the mentally depressing atmosphere of China."⁴⁸ Mei's unabashed celebration of Americanism among the American-educated

⁴⁶ [C. S. Kwei], "Editorial: The Denationalization of the Chinese," p. 4.

⁴⁷ Y. Y. Tsur [Zhu Youyu], "Chinese Students Abroad," p. 716.

⁴⁸ Hua-Chuen Mei, "The Returned Students in China," *The Chinese Recorder* (March 1917), pp. 166-167.

may have been extreme. Yet he had a point on the indelible imprint a prolonged sojourn in a foreign country would inevitably put on a person.

In this sense, the American-educated were caught in a double bind. As an editor of the *Monthly* put it, “We speak the American language, we wear American attire, [and] we even learn to dance American way.” “In Rome we do as the Romans do,” he continued, “or else our insistence on Chinese mode of living would be construed as manifesting our inability to adapt ourselves to immediate surroundings—a shortcoming of which many Chinese residents in America, refused all social contact, have often been accused in the past.”⁴⁹

The more perceptive among the American-educated saw through what we today would characterize as the colonial, Orientalist nature of the double bind in which they found themselves. For the Chinese to do as the Romans do while in Rome was no different from what the missionaries in China did. “We are no more denationalized than are the missionaries in China who dress and conduct themselves like the Chinese,” protested the editor of the *Monthly* referred to earlier.⁵⁰

At issue was a colonial power hierarchy in which “transgression” of racial boundaries was permitted in one direction only. The American-educated Chinese was a colonial mimic man in Bhabha’s terms, who, in spite of his “living the life, wearing the dress, sharing the amusements, and speaking the language of foreigners,” was “the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English.” His attempt to transgress the racial boundaries was doomed, for, as Chinese in blood and color, he could affect a performance that was at best “almost the same, but not white.” The harder he tried to be “almost the same,” the more preposterous and repulsive he was to the whites.

Conversely, in dressing and conducting themselves like the Chinese, the white missionaries in China enjoyed the freedom to indulge in what Gail Ching-Liang Low characterizes as the fantasy of cross-cultural dressing. It is beside the point whether their cross-cultural dressing was prompted by a utilitarian move designed to aid proselytization or an “innocent” gesture of “going native.” As Low perceptively observes, “The primary attraction of the cross-cultural dress is the promise of ‘transgressive’ pleasure without the penalties of actual

⁴⁹ [C. S. Kwei], “Editorial: The Denationalization of the Chinese,” p. 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

change”⁵¹—a clever inversion of Frantz Fanon’s formulation in his *Black Skin/White Masks*. Whereas the American-educated Chinese would always betray their “native” identity through their not-quite-right white masks, missionaries could cast off their Chinese dress to return to their white identities.

None among the Western critics was as malicious and vitriolic as J. O. P. Bland in his dogged attempts to strip the American-educated Chinese of their white masks. Bland (1863-1945) was an Irish man who went to China in 1883 to join the Chinese Customs Service under Robert Hart (1835-1911) and remained in the service until 1895. From 1896 to 1906, he served as secretary of the Municipal Council of the Shanghai International Settlement. He was also *The Times* correspondent in Shanghai and, later, Beijing, from 1896 to 1910. In 1906, he signed on to become an agent of the British and Chinese Corporation to pursue its railway investment interests in China. He settled back to England in 1916 and continued with his prolific output in journalistic writing. A fluent writer with a lively style, Bland was widely recognized as an authoritative China watcher. According to Hugh Trevor-Roper, Bland was a “friend of China,” who believed in the old Open Door policy and was “morally disgusted” by the brutality of imperialist powers engaging in vicious contests over the spoils of China.” He was lifelong Tory with a deep sympathy for tradition. Trevor-Roper asserts that Bland believed “westernisation would fail, that China must and would reassert its independence, must rediscover its historic identity and reform itself on that base.”⁵²

The truth of the matter is that Bland was a self-styled “watch-dog of the Raj,” who was bent on asserting Great Britain’s claim in the Far East in general and its special sphere of influence in the Yangzi valley in particular.⁵³ To do justice to Bland’s copious writings on China would take us far afield. Suffice it here to say that Bland was a quintessential Orientalist, in addition to being a zealous advocate of British imperial glory in China and elsewhere. The fundamental cause underlying all of China’s problems, according to Bland, was of

⁵¹ Gail Ching-Liang Low, “White Skins/Black Masks: The Pleasure and Politics of Imperialism,” *New Formations*, 9 (Winter 1989), p. 93. For Fanon’s book, see *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

⁵² Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Hermit of Peking: The Hidden Life of Sir Edmund Backhouse* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1986), pp. 30-33.

⁵³ J. O. P. Bland, “Memoirs: Chapter 12,” in *J. O. P. Bland Papers*, vol. 27 (Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library: University of Toronto), p. 1 and p. 5.

historical and biological nature. China was like a gigantic “man-breeding and man-feeding” machine with “blind obedience to the procreative instinct,” which explained why China was perennially locked in the Malthusian trap, with its attending consequences of pestilence, famine, and civil strife. The composure with which the Chinese faced the calamities that befell them, the “Oriental fatalism” as Bland called it, was “bred in the bone” with the Confucian system: the sacredness of the family institutions, ancestor worship, and the paramount duty to labor. In conflating the “historical” with the “biological” to explain for “the Chinese racial temperament,” or their “philoprogenerative instinct at all cost,” Bland was making an argument to justify foreign intervention in China. As long as they were left alone to breed, he alleged that the Chinese did not care who ruled over them, Chinese or foreign rulers. He faulted the United States for indulging in sentimental humanitarianism toward China. The only way to save China from its misrule and civil strife was a benevolent intervention by friendly powers led by the United States and Great Britain. “While yielding to no man in the matter of sympathy for the unfortunate Chinese people,” Bland crooned, “I was compelled to believe, on historical and biological grounds, that without the help and guidance of the friendly powers China could not hope to initiate or impose the reforms essential to a real economic and military reorganization, sufficient to enable the country to oppose the aggression of its powerful neighbors.”⁵⁴

In harping on his theme of the historical and biological traits of the Chinese race, Bland used it as a whip to flog the Western-educated Chinese. Critiques of the Western-educated Chinese were in themselves nothing extraordinary. What set Bland’s tirade apart from other Western critics’ were the colonialist and orientalist arguments he consistently invoked. Calling them collectively with his sardonic epithet, “Young China,” he ridiculed the Western-educated Chinese as “bursting with the pride of Western Learning, and freed from the restraints of Confucianism, full of the new wine of Democracy, and without the steadying influence of a philosophy that has preserved the nation through countless dangers and tribulations.”⁵⁵ He dismissed the Western-educated as merely the “froth

⁵⁴ J. O. P. Bland, “Population and Food Supply,” *Edinburgh Review* (April, 1918), p. 244 pp. 232-252. Edward Marshall, “China Not Really A Republic But Autocracy,” *The New York Times* (December 8, 1912), p. SM4, C6, and J. O. P. Bland, “The Old Weaknesses of China,” *Asia* (July, 1938), pp. 398-399.

⁵⁵ J. O. P. Bland, “The Causes of Chinese Unrest,” *The Edinburgh Review*, no. 441 (July 1912), pp.

and foam” floating ephemerally above “the soul of a people, steeped in the philosophical traditions of Confucianism, of seriousness and common sense, and these may save it from the perils of change.”⁵⁶

Like the British colonials who felt threatened by the Indian middle class, Bland’s comment about the “rapidly increasing” number of “Young China” bespoke a lament on his part for the disappearance of the colonial rights and privileges he had enjoyed. Bland explained in his memoirs why he resigned from the Municipal Council of the Shanghai International Settlement and became an agent for British and Chinese Corporation in 1906. “My own inclinations to seek a change of profession were partly influenced by the feeling that the political changes foreshadowed by Young China’s newly proclaimed Nationalism were likely to make Shanghai a less desirable place of residence in years to come than it had been hitherto.”⁵⁷ It became clear that Bland’s complaint about “a Young China that wears the strange garments of the Europeans,” was merely a smoke screen. What he found troubling about “the modern student class, products of English and American colleges” was their “unreasonable hostility to the foreigner.” It was not the strange European garments they wore, but rather their refusal to grant his colonial rights and privileges, that irked him.

The more Bland professed his admiration and affection for the Chinese people, the more transparent it became that he was using them merely as a foil to expose what he considered to be the absurdity and presumption on the part of the Western-educated Chinese to attempt to step out of their racial mode. In one breath, he could affect a show of sympathy for them and denounced the “procreative recklessness” that was in their bone. “The brooding soul of the Asiatic,” he declared, “would continue to take its time-honoured way through this valley of illusion.” Nor was Bland the Tory any more respectful of the Chinese tradition, in spite or because of his pious talks about how it was racially marked to be Chinese. He spoke with forked tongue when he admonished Young China not to “sell her moral and cultural birthright for any mess of foreign pottage,” for hers’ was “the world’s oldest and wisest civilization.”⁵⁸ Commenting on his and the

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⁵⁶ Our Correspondent [J. O. P. Bland], “China: Education and Western Literature,” *The Times* (February 6, 1908).

⁵⁷ J. O. P. Bland, “Memoirs,” Chapter 13: In the House of Mammon, p. 1.

⁵⁸ J. O. P. Bland, “China: Quo Vadis?” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XVII.3 (January, 1922), p. 178.

average Europeans' decision not to go beyond learning just enough Chinese characters for the ordinary needs of a business career, he declared that "there was nothing in Chinese literature, ancient or modern, likely to compensate any normal individual for the vast amount of labour involved in studying it."

As spiteful as Bland was to the Western-educated Chinese, the Chinese race as a whole, and the entire Chinese civilization, not all Western-educated Chinese responded in kind to him. A few were fooled by his forked tongue. To be sure, all of them were incensed by his public ridicule of China as a republic in name only and his insistent call for foreign intervention and control of China. For example, Bland stirred up an angry storm among the Chinese students in the United States with the Lowell Lecture he gave in Boston and the subsequent lecture tour in the country in November 1912. The theme he peddled was that the Chinese republic that was declared after the Revolution of 1911 was not a republic. He called on the United States government to withhold recognition from the Chinese republic. According to the account given by Hu Shi, then a student at Cornell University, Bland's talk at Cornell on November 21, 1912 was entitled, "The Unrest of China." At the question and answer period, Hu Shi asked Bland to explain why he was opposed to the recognition by the United States of the new republican government in China. Bland responded, "We cannot recognize a Republic which has not been recognized by the people concerned." When Hu challenged Bland to produce proof that the Chinese people had yet to recognize the republic, Bland denied that he had ever made that statement. When Hu expressed his surprise that Bland could forget what he had just said, he answered that Hu had heard him wrong. Hu reported that after the talk, Chinese students as well as the Americans in the audience corroborated that they too heard Bland made the statement in question.⁵⁹

Beyond a common indignation at Bland's call for foreign intervention to save China from the chaos of its own making, the Western-educated seldom probed deeper to address the colonial and Orientalist discourse that permeated his diatribes. Some in fact mimicked his language, diction, and argument even as they were vehemently opposed to his conclusions. One case in point was the essay entitled "The Eclipse of Young China," written probably by the London University-educated John Wong-Quincey. This was an editorial of the first and

⁵⁹ Hu Shi, *Hu Shi liuxue riji* [Hu Shi's Diary Kept While a Student Abroad] (Taipei: Shangwu, 1980), November 21, 1912 entry, I.126-127.

only issue of *The Chinese Review* edited by Wong and published in London in April 1914, a magazine launched to promote the conservative cause. After the Revolution of 1911 broke out, it took the Chinese Students' Alliance of the United States of America three months to take an official stand to support the revolutionaries. The majority of the Chinese students, however, did so only after Yuan Shikai had withdrawn his support for the Manchus and made a deal with the revolutionaries. They supported Yuan Shikai not only because they saw in him the strongman who was capable of maintaining peace and order in China, but also because they were never enamored by Sun Yat-sen and his revolutionaries. When Sun Yat-sen and his followers staged the Second Revolution in 1913 to challenge Yuan Shikai's autocratic rule, they condemned the revolutionaries and applauded their speedy defeat by Yuan. They endorsed Yuan's drive to amend the constitution to assure the executive supremacy in spring 1914. This was the political context in which *The Chinese Review* was launched in London.

"The Eclipse of Young China" was reprinted in the June 1914 issue of *The Chinese Students' Monthly*. Wei Wenbin, the conservative editor-in-chief of the *Monthly*, explained in his editorial that he reprinted this piece because it "so fits in with our views and convictions" and expressed his wish that "thoughtful readers" would pay special attention to it. It is significant that in praising the piece and *The Chinese Review* as informative and well edited, Wei took a jab at "J. O. P. Bland and his like," saying that they "may think otherwise."⁶⁰ The fact is that "The Eclipse of Young China" was written à la Bland's style—from the diction and the argument, to the very term "Young China" whose connotation he had poisoned. This *Chinese Review* editorial declared, "The Young China party, glibly so-called, has now disappeared from the political scene, to the relief and satisfaction, if the truth is to be told, of the majority of the more serious minded members of the Young China party itself." Following Bland's argument to the hilt, attributed to the fall of "Young China" to its willful disregard of China's time-honored tradition and to its disconnection to the masses who embodied the timeless Orientalist Chinese tradition. Thus, "Young China" was said to have "had underestimated the strength, the vitality and beauty of the conservative spirit in China." It had "forfeited the sympathy" of the masses, to whom "theo-

⁶⁰ [Wei Wenbin], "Editorials: The Chinese Review," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, IX.8 (June 10, 1914), p. 570.

retical questions of government were, without qualification, unintelligible” and to whom all they wanted was “peace in which to resume their daily calling.”⁶¹

There is no question that neither the author of “The Eclipse of Young China” nor the editor-in-chief of *The Chinese Students’ Monthly* who reprinted the article would have agreed to Bland’s call for foreign intervention in China. In their view, the Chinese were undergoing a serious crisis in their history; “if they do not deserve the intelligent sympathy of the West, they beg at least to be left alone.” Their critique of “Young China” was based on two assumptions. First, “Europe, through the medium of its governments and financiers, was unanimous in its support of President Yuan.” Second, “Young China,” with its obsession with the “exotic form of constitutional minutiae” that led to internecine strife, was undermining “the safety and future of the State.” In celebrating the eclipse of “Young China,” a clear reference to their defeat by Yuan at the Second Revolution, they were reaffirming their belief in the supremacy of the executive power. There is also no question that they were calling on all educated Chinese to “sweep away the universal corruption prevailing among all parties, republican, let it be admitted, as well as autocratic.” It was, however, to “Young China” alone that they called to “repudiate the insinuation and charge of self-interest, and prove to the world the mettle of a race which has outlived a thousand changes.” Nevertheless, even though they were vehemently opposed to Bland’s conclusions, in mimicking his language and argument, they served to perpetuate his essentialist and Orientalist views of the Chinese and their traditions.

To the more credulous, Bland’s forked tongue moved them to tears. To them, Bland’s tirades against “Young China” could be attributed to his genuine love for Chinese tradition. That a lover of the Chinese tradition would call for foreign intervention of China they found paradoxical. Some believed that he had bartered his soul for riches by serving as an agent for British railway and, later, banking consortium. Reacting to Bland’s ridicule of the Revolution of 1911, Mei Huaquan insinuated that Bland was nostalgic about the honor and privileges bestowed on him by the Manchu ancien régime. Mei called him an English Manchu,⁶² for Bland reportedly was decorated by the Manchu government with

⁶¹ “The Eclipse of Young China,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, IX.8 (June 10, 1914), pp. 582-586.

⁶² Hua-Chuen Mei, “Cavils of An English Manchu at the Republic of China: An Analysis,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, VIII.3 (January 10, 1913), pp. 171-188.

the Order of the Imperial Double Dragon. Chang Hsin-hai, who would become a professor at Qinghua and, later, a diplomat, believed that Bland himself clung to the old China while the new China by passed him. Bland, according to Chang, was “a sincere admirer of Chinese culture” who was a lone voice in the wilderness admonishing the Chinese not to barter away China’s moral and intellectual beauty for all the materialism of the West. Bland had become too sentimental. “The whole series of panegyrics which he has so worthily bestowed upon a civilization which he genuinely loves,” Chang surmised, was “the result of rich and varied experiences which he has acquired through intimate contact with the people for a long period.” But that was in the realm of history. Bland’s problem, Chang suggested, was that he was either incapable or unwilling to leave the cocoon of history to understand why new China behaved the way it did due to it’s efforts to survive in a predatory international environment. Thus, the contradiction in Bland derived from his refusal to separate history from politics. As a result, “although his views on the product of Chinese history are generally sound, they are in utter discord with his views on China’s present-day politics.”⁶³

The more perceptive among the American-educated were, however, able to see through Bland’s honeyed words to unmask his sinister discourse. Mei Guangdi, the cultural conservative associated with *The Critical Review* (*Xue-heng*) group at the National Southeastern University in Nanjing, offered a case in point. In his book review of Bland’s biography of Li Hongzhang, Mei exposed Bland’s essentialist and a-historical discourse on the Chinese. “According to Mr. Bland,” Mei observed,

it seems that Li Hung-chang [Li Hongzhang] was addicted to such vices as peculation, nepotism, and make-believe, simply because he was a born Chinese. Li Hung-chang could not help being greedy and hypocritical, just as his hair could not help being black or his skin yellow. The fate and conduct of all the sons of China were prescribed more than two thousand years ago by Confucius, and none of them has ever succeeded in being and doing otherwise.⁶⁴

⁶³ Chang Hsin-hai, “The Ideas of Mr. J. O. P. Bland,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XVII.4 (February, 1922), pp. 286-291.

⁶⁴ K. T. Mei [Mei Guang-di], “Book Review of Li Hung-chang, by J. O. P. Bland,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XIII.6 (April, 1918), p. 346.

What irked Mei the most was Bland's identification of Confucianism with mandarinism and of Li Hongzhang with "a Confucianist scholar and a true believer of the Canons of the Sages." Mei was fighting his own battle for the conservative movement, which Bland's false identification grievously maligned. To him, Confucianism, or what he, following the conservative Gu Hongming, called the Chinese Oxford Movement, was the true conservatism. By contrast, the mandarinism represented by Li Hongzhang was modernism of the worst type.⁶⁵ Regardless of his conservative agenda and the validity of his argument, Mei laid bare, as no other American-educated had, Bland's Orientalist premises.

The most sinister effect of Bland's discourse was that it could become common sense when repeated often enough. As political division and chaos continued unabated in China, it gave credence to Bland's call for foreign intervention. The Orientalist discourse so permeated Western thinking about China that even analyses of China that were not inspired by Orientalist premises were liable to be so construed. This was exactly how Hu Shi criticized Frank Goodnow for lending his prestige and authority to give credibility to Chinese reactionism, his reference to Yuan Shikai's monarchical movement in 1915. To Hu, whether or not Goodnow had not personally endorsed Yuan's monarchical movement was beside the point. "It seems to the present writer," Hu argued, "that Dr. Goodnow has only himself to blame for having thus been made to appear as the spokesman of the Chinese reactionary movement. It is he, together with a number of other constitutional authorities of the world, who has supplied Chinese reactionism with a political philosophy which speaks with authority."⁶⁶

Hu singled out two premises, which he called prejudices, that underpinned Goodnow's case that China was not yet ready for democracy. The first was Goodnow's advocacy for a strong executive branch of government. "Goodnow's stress upon executive supremacy is," Hu contended, "in perfect accord with the present American revolt against the 18th century idea of political checks and balances." What China needed, by contrast, was to curtail the "arbitrary powers of the rulers." Second, Goodnow applied what Hu characterized as "a fallacious

⁶⁵ K. T. Mei [Mei Guang-di], "Book Review of Li Hung-chang, by J. O. P. Bland," p. 348. For Gu's essay that inspired Mei, see Ku Hung-Ming, *The Story of a Chinese Oxford Movement* (Shanghai, Shanghai Mercury, 1912).

⁶⁶ The following discussion is based on Suh Hu [Hu Shi], "A philosopher of Chinese Reactionism," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, XI.1 (November, 1915), pp. 16-19.

application of the historical point of view” by equating China with pre-modern England, with the corollary that “what suited European conditions of former days may suit Chinese conditions of the present day.” Regardless of whether the conditions prevailed in China resembled that of pre-modern England, Hu argued that Goodnow lost sight of the fact that China “had access to the intellectual inspiration and practical experience of the democracies of modern Europe and America.” The fallacy of Goodnow’s “historical method” lay in his insistence that China retrace the trajectory of development in Europe as if history offered no lessons. To illustrate the absurdity of Goodnow’s argument, Hu offered an analogy, “Just as more than a hundred years of achievement in the science of electricity has enabled the modern student to avoid repeating the crudities of such early electricians as Gilbert, Franklin, or Cavendish, so will many centuries of political experience, and historical study and general progress be able to prevent a modern nation like China from repeating the archaic systems of the past.”

Goodnow’s fallacious “historical method” had an even more baneful, if unintended, consequence, that is, the perpetuation of the Orientalist discourse. By invoking Goodnow’s historical argument that the “fundamental law of a nation must be based upon the history and tradition of that nation,” the Chinese reactionaries traced the tradition all the way back to “the historical example of Emperor Yao who selected Emperor Shun to succeed himself.” It was self-orientalization of a histrionic scale, for, as Hu mockingly acclaimed, “Emperor Yao reigned in the 24th century B.C., that is, more than 4,200 years ago!” Just as the Chinese reactionaries indulged in self-orientalization, the Americans perpetuated in Orientalizing the Chinese. Hu was taken aback by the following passage from an editorial published in *The Outlook*, reputed to be a progressive forum which Hu read regularly and to which Hu himself had contributed articles:

The change [from old political ideals into modernism] certainly did not seem typical of those passive virtues which have distinguished a people whose most cherished possession has been their cult of ancestors, and who have found their most powerful cohesion in their sentiment of duty to the dead. Starting with this as a foundation, a patriarchal-monarchical system of government has seemed perfectly logical.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Hu Shi, “A Philosopher of Chinese Reactionism,” *The Chinese Students’ Monthly*, XI.1 (No-

While the language and the argument in this editorial read suspiciously like Bland's, Hu believed that Goodnow helped entrench them in the American perceptions of China. Hu would have called Goodnow's "historical point of view" Orientalist if the term and the concept had been available to him. In his own way and with his own words, however, Hu said just as much when he declared, "He who holds the historical point of view and at the same time denies a nation's possibility of change and revolution under the influence of new ideas and ideals, has not understood the true meaning of history."