

urging that the novel should not be considered solely as erotica. His contention that women are constantly denigrated and yet are equated with food seems to run counter to the laudatory view of food which is the main thrust of these essays, though it is not difficult to see how both are treated as consumables. The final paper “Eating and Drinking in a Red Chambered Dream” by Louise Edwards is an exploration of the role of food in distinguishing purity and corruption in the Qing-dynasty *Hong Lou Meng* 紅樓夢. What seems at first to be a simplistic association of pure/female, corrupt/male is quickly dispelled, and the analysis is deeper and more complex while reassuringly accessible, as befits a treatment of China’s greatest novel.

The editors and authors of this slim collection make no claim to a definitive or comprehensive coverage of their theme, indeed other than the broad focus on food in literature there is no great homogeneity, overall structure or inclusiveness in the essays. That this is so does not seem to be particularly important, and the over-weighting with regard to drink referred to above cannot therefore be of great importance either. The book is nicely produced, marred only by a small number of infelicities of English in chapters 1, 2, 4, and 7 betraying less than fully mindful copy-editing by the publisher, who must be aware of the near impossibility of anyone’s writing flawlessly in a language not their own. Again, this is not a major criticism.

What shines through every one of the eight papers is a loving commitment to the subject of food and drink in literature, and the result is a charming and readable volume which punches above its weight in giving pleasure to the reader regardless of the extent of his/her own knowledge of the field. To misquote Elia: “Food is all neighbours’ fare.”

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The First Chinese American: The Remarkable Life of Wong Chin Foo. By Scott D. Seligman. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013. Pp. xxxii + 364. \$50.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

When Mary R. Coolidge of Stanford University published in 1909 her classic, *Chinese Immigration*, a 531-page study on the first fifty years of Chinese immigration to the United States, she acknowledged in the Preface her indebtedness to several individuals, all of whom were white American scholars and diplomats, for the help they had given her, a routine custom by grateful writers. However, it must have

struck her as being rather odd that she could cite no major Chinese sources, identify no Chinese playing any significant role in the national debate over the passage of three devastating Chinese exclusion laws enacted in 1882, 1888, and 1892, and name and profile no Chinese for acknowledgement in such a monumental study. So, she concluded the Preface with this peculiar sentence: “Nor can I omit a word of thanks to those *many nameless Chinamen* whose courtesy has made it possible for a foreigner and a woman to understand and reproduce something of their life in this country” (p. viii). Since then and for the next fifty-five years, no significant attempts were made to study the same subject until the second half of the twentieth century, when in 1964, Gunther Barth of Berkeley wrote, *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850–1870*, a history widely considered a major, but controversial contribution for understanding the causes of anti-Chinese movements in nineteenth-century America. He too could cite no major Chinese players in the anti-Chinese debates and movements and no Chinese-language sources for his history because, “illiterate or poorly educated, the [Chinese] sojourners left few written records of their experience” (p. 223). This meant Chinese in the United States in the nineteenth century must remain nameless, faceless, and silent during the most violent anti-Chinese movements and repeated enactments of the most racist and undemocratic laws against them.

How is it possible that histories of this oppressed racial minority in the United States could be written without their faces, voices, and above all their feelings and responses? Did they not have any reaction or anything to say about what was happening to them individually and collectively? Did they offer no resistance in either Chinese or English? Did *anyone* speak out in defence of their rights, other than the Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association, an umbrella organization supposedly representative of the voice and will of all Chinese in the U.S.? Did Chinese Americans suffer exclusion in silence during their encounter with American democracy in the nineteenth century and, endure exclusion or erasure, again, in history-writing in the twenty-first century? These are troubling questions begging for answers.

Scott D. Seligman is the first historian to give an in-depth answer to the question whether *any* Chinese American spoke out against forces of oppression during the period covered by Coolidge and Barth. He did so in a meticulously researched biography of Wong Chin Foo 王清福, whose most outspoken and prolific years spanned the most politically volatile period of anti-Chinese movement, 1870s to 1890s. The biography he gave us provides a comprehensive portrait of a visionary, determined, articulate, and literate Chinese American who tirelessly took on the nation, through writings and public speaking tours in defence of Chinese immigrants’ rights not only to be in the U.S., like immigrants from countries throughout the world, but also to be citizens of the United States. He spoke in flawless, eloquent, and at times, biting and sarcastic English. He also showed a high degree of political

sophistication rare in his days among Chinese in the United States. Just as rare was his media-savvy and uncanny ability to have his estimated 3,000 pieces of writings appear in national newspapers and magazines and in local newspapers from coast to coast and from north to south. For thirty years, he spoke out on large and small issues and engaged in all kinds of disputes with Chinese and non-Chinese alike. His travel across the nation was closely followed and dutifully reported by his admirers and detractors in the media. He was, in short, a Chinese American defender, advocate, and celebrity *par excellence*.

Unlike almost all Chinese in the United States who were Cantonese from the Zhujiang 珠江 delta counties in Guangdong province in the second half of the nineteenth century, Wong Chin Foo was born in 1847 in Jimo 即墨, Shandong in the north-eastern part of China. Stricken by poverty after the Taiping Rebellion, 1850–1871, he was given up by his destitute father for adoption. Southern Baptist missionary Rev. J. Landrum Holmes and his wife Sallie in Zhifu 芝罘, now Yantai 烟台, Shandong adopted him in 1861 at the age of thirteen. Not long after, Rev. Holmes was murdered by bandits. In the following year, the widow moved to Dengzhou 登州, Penglai 蓬萊 today, Shandong with her new-born baby and Wong. Here she worked as a missionary for twenty years. It was also here that Wong received his education and was baptized in 1867.

He must have mastered English well because in 1868, he was sent to schools for further education in Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania. After two years, he abruptly returned to Shandong and married Liu Yushan 劉雨山 in 1871 and began working as an interpreter in the Imperial Chinese Maritime Customs Service first in Shanghai and not long after, in nearby Zhenjiang 鎮江, Jiangsu. In 1873, Wong Foo Sheng 王復生, his only child, was born. But before long, he became one of the suspects in a plot to subvert or overthrow the Manchu government by force and had to flee China in a hurry for the United States, leaving his wife and son unattended for twenty-five years. At about the same time, he was inexplicably excommunicated from his Baptist church, allegedly on account of his “dissolute life” style. Unable to hold any job for long, getting into trouble, and having to flee for his life became the pattern for the rest of his life.

During his long stay in the United States, he was restless and adventurous, politically engaged and provocatively out-spoken. It did not take long for him to earn a reputation of being an outspoken critic of anti-Chinese racism and American hypocrisy. For example, in an interview with the *Grand Rapids Daily Eagle* (Michigan), he said, “The Republicans are intellectual heathens; the Democrats are confounded barbarians” (p. 86). He never walked away from a fight against injustice. In fact, he thrived in verbal confrontations with critics of China and Chinese immigrants. For example, in 1874, in the midst of the mounting anti-Chinese movement and widespread denunciation of Chinese as godless, amoral heathens doomed

to eternal damnation, he proclaimed himself not as a Christian missionary to China, as his benefactor, Sallie Holmes, had hoped, but as China's first "reverse missionary" to and itinerate preacher of Confucianism in Christian America (p. 58). His aim was to change the American perception of China and to convert Americans to Confucianism. In a widely publicized and reprinted article, entitled, "Why Am I a Heathen?" published in the *North American Review* in 1887, he sharply criticized Christian missionaries, accusing them of demonizing China and the Chinese people. He boldly compared the teachings of Jesus to Confucius, such as the Golden Rule, and met head on accusations of Chinese idolatry. He said, "The Chinese no more worship idols than the Catholics who bow to a cross with an image on it. So in China the temples are filled with images which represent to their minds a certain idea, as the idea of a cross represents the sufferings of Christ. Depend upon it, my friends, no form of any kind can save a man" (p. 59). In fact, later in 1896, he even tried to build a Confucian Temple for Americans in Chicago with him serving as its "high priest," a scheme that received extensive, front-page coverage by the *Chicago Tribune* on December 13 (p. 248). The project, like several of Wong's grandiose, but half-baked schemes, turned out to be a farce and fizzled.

His approach to anti-Chinese immigration was just as contentious and uncompromising. For example, on July 18, 1883, he publicly challenged anti-Chinese demagogue Denis Kearney on his visit to New York to a public debate. In his letter to Kearney, he wrote, "If you fail to offer me a chance to combat the puerile vituperation you intend to heap on my people, I shall post you as an empty bladder, afraid of being punctured and relieved of the fetid wind it contains" (p. 115). He also released a letter to the press, commenting, "If he had any courage or honesty he would meet me in some way and I should demolish him, for he is ignorant and childish, as well as cowardly. As it is, if he pretends to disdain me and pay me no attention, I shall drive him back to his sand lots with his tail between his legs" (p. 116). This was an obvious reference to Kearney's anti-Chinese rallies in the sand lot next to the San Francisco city hall in the 1870s. Kearney declined the challenge and did so only verbally rather than in writing. Wong promptly assumed that his opponent must be illiterate and challenged him to a duel, declaring, "I would give him his choice of chopsticks, Irish potatoes or Krupp guns" (ibid.). Even though the dual never took place, the media basically concluded that he would be no match with Wong. The *Chicago Tribune* observed, "The joke of all this is that Kearney finds a Chinaman quite equal to his own style of warfare, and actually threatening to drive him out of New York. Wong Chin Foo succeeds at least in making the sand-lots agitator look ridiculous" (ibid.). Eventually, the two had a debate much like an uneventful boxing-match on October 18, 1887 during which Wong won hands down, according to news reports.

Trying to convert Americans to Confucianism was just one of his many pre-occupations. More important to him was his life-long fight for racial equality and

justice for Chinese in the U.S. Reading this biography is like going on a campaign trail with him, crisscrossing the United States, promoting equality and justice for Chinese immigrants. It is not clear how he decided to claim America and become the leading voice of Chinese America. On April 3, 1874, Wong Chin Foo filed a Declaration of Intention to become an American citizen in the Kent County Circuit Court in Grand Rapid, Michigan and on the same day, he was granted citizenship. He had fled to Michigan possibly because he was wanted by the Manchu government and by one of the tongs in San Francisco Chinatown for his role in rescuing a group of Chinese prostitutes. Perhaps he thought it was safer for him to come under the protection of U.S. laws. From then on he was on tour, lecturing on various aspects of Chinese history and culture and speaking out against anti-Chinese agitation and exclusion.

Wong Chin Foo clearly understood the power of the media and he made clever use of them. Not only was he known nationwide as a great speaker and a forceful advocate of Chinese immigrants in the mainstream newspapers and magazines across the U.S., he also repeatedly published Chinese-language newspapers in various Chinatowns to inform, advance, and mobilize Chinese community support of his fight. A year after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, on February 3, 1883, he founded, published, and edited the *Chinese American*, *Hua Mei Xin Bao* 華美新報, literally, the *New Chinese American News*. For the first time in the history of Chinese in the U.S., the term “Chinese America” was used. The newspaper was housed in a store on Mott Street in New York’s Chinatown. Unfortunately, the paper ceased publication in September the same year for reasons unknown. This was to be the first of four similar papers he published in New York and Chicago, all of which did not last long, but each came into being with a media splash, a trade mark virtually synonymous with Wong Chin Foo.

Wong seemed to know what it would take to get his message to the American public and politicians. Not only was he skilful in handling the press and publishing his own newspapers, he also understood the importance of political mobilization and lobbying. Throughout his fights for Chinese immigrant rights, he founded civic organizations for like-minded people, Chinese and non-Chinese alike, to engage the public and to lobby elected officials to advance his civil rights agenda. For example, in 1883, he founded an organization of “naturalized Chinamen in New York to promote Chinese American voting rights.” Other civil and political rights organizations he established included Chinese Citizens’ Union in New York in 1888, Chinese Equal Rights League in New York in 1892, American Liberty Party in 1896, and Chinese Equal Rights League of America in 1897. The objective of the American Liberty Party was to promote the repeal of the Chinese exclusion laws, following the refusal of both the Republican and Democratic Parties to consider his proposal. In addition, he also organized a mass rally and national convention in Chicago in 1897

and yes, even a planned Chinese American march on Washington, D.C. to demand the passage of a bill to make Chinese males in the U.S. eligible for naturalization.

Wong Chin Foo adopted and lay claim on America just like all immigrants from European countries. As a citizen of the United States, he demanded equal treatment for all Chinese immigrants under the Constitution. It was an unprecedented bold vision. He audaciously acted on his vision with well-conceived plans, including his clever use of the media, political organizations, op-ed pieces, and mass rallies, all of which are still essential tools for righting wrongs through the political processes to this day. His political courage was unmatched. In this regard, he was decades ahead of his time, as Seligman correctly pointed out in his judicious "Afterward." Unfortunately, neither the Chinese community nor mainstream America understood or heeded his message and followed his lead.

Disappointed or even disgusted after a string of political setbacks and personal business failures across the U.S., the last of which was a small franchise at Omaha's Trans-Mississippi International Exposition in 1898, he decided to return, by way of Hong Kong, to his wife and son in Shandong for the first time in twenty-five years. Adding insult to injury, his U.S. passport, which could possibly offer him some protection from the Manchu authority in China, was confiscated and cancelled by the American Consul-General in Hong Kong. By then he was seriously ill, losing some twenty pounds. He decided to risk his life by returning to Shandong where he had "an emotional reunion" in July. As he anticipated, he had to flee again from the Manchus authority to Weihai 威海, Shandong, then under British authority. On September 13, 1898, he died "in peace," according to the family. What his final thoughts were we will never know. One thing we do know: he fought a good fight and he died with the knowledge that he had lived like a good American and had tried to make America live up to its ideals.

Mary R. Coolidge began writing her *magna opus* on Chinese immigration after the passage of the 1892 Geary Act that stripped Chinese immigrants of the rights guaranteed under the Bills of Rights. In other words, she wrote the classic while Wong Chin Foo was tirelessly waging a war against racism and legislative and judicial repression. Even though both had the same objective of repealing the unjust exclusion laws, inexplicably there is no evidence the two ever met. To Coolidge, Wong remained one of "the nameless Chinamen." Was this an accident or a deliberate omission on her part?

We owe Seligman a debt of gratitude for rescuing Wong Chin Foo from anonymity and amnesia. He unearthed massive documents from the dustbin of history and produced a well-documented, readable, and indeed, inspiring biography through which we finally heard an authentic voice from Chinese America. This is a gift not just to Chinese America but to America as well. Hopefully, this will not be the only

biography. Past fighters like Norman Assing 袁生, Ng Poon Chew 伍盤照, and Walter U. Lum 林華耀 and others deserve to be recognized and remembered as well.

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The Lius of Shanghai. By Sherman Cochran and Andrew Hsieh. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013. Pp. xiii + 431. \$39.95/£25.0.

In his heydays before 1949, Liu Hongsheng 劉鴻生 (1888–1956) was a household name in Shanghai as one of the city's most eminent and successful industrialists. Tall, hardworking, and fluent in English, he married up, through family arrangement, at the age of nineteen to Ye Suzhen 葉素貞 (1888–1960), the wealthy granddaughter of a leading Ningbo merchant. The couple professed love on first sight, and proceeded to raise a family of twelve children (nine boys and three girls) in the next two decades. The sons grew up to earn engineering and business degrees from prestigious institutions (Cambridge, Harvard Business School, Wharton, MIT, Tokyo Institute of Technology, St. John's in Shanghai, and so forth). They also built lives as senior executives in Liu's various enterprises. The daughters went to college and worked on marriage alliances. In the midst of all this family planning, the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) intervened. Liu Hongsheng fled, unannounced even to Ye Suzhen, first to Hong Kong then to Chongqing, where assisted by two sons he built new enterprises. Left behind in Shanghai, Ye and the eldest sons nonetheless carried on the family's businesses under the collaboration regimes of Wang Jingwei 汪精衛 and the Japanese occupation forces. Then the war ended, and the long years of separation were over. All returned; the family reunited in Shanghai, inclusive of the extramarital members that Liu had acquired. The Lius had survived the war, one might say, unscathed. During that time one son had secretly joined the Communist Party. The rest of the family had strengthened their ties with the Nationalist secret service and gained invaluable access to state-controlled commodities. By 1947, Liu and Ye, who had married without the patronage of a father on either side, had successfully built, over four decades, a large and prosperous family. But there was no escape from the upheavals. The Liu-Ye joint enterprise unravelled in the final decade of their lives, thanks both to the presence of a younger woman who had given Liu a new son during the war, and the rise of the Chinese Communist Party that was poised to rewrite the rules of doing business in China.

Liu Hongsheng is no stranger to Western readers who have followed Cochran's earlier research on Liu's business networks and career as a producer of matches,