

# In League with Gentlemen: Junzi Masculinity and the Chinese Nation in Cultural Nationalist Discourses

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## Introduction

On a cold November day in Beijing in 1914, in a fragile Republic of China not yet two years old, the prominent reformist scholar and journalist Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929) delivered a speech at Tsinghua School 清华学堂 (later to become Tsinghua University 清华大学) urging the Chinese people to strengthen the nation through the ancient model of the *junzi* 君子 (Confucian gentleman).<sup>1</sup> In his talk, Liang drew attention to the central role that the gentlemanly ideal played in the education systems of powerful and prosperous Britain and America. By setting the *junzi* as its standard, he argued that China could similarly raise up the “personality of the Chinese people” (*guomin zhi ren’ge* 国民之人格).<sup>2</sup> Quoting the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易经), Liang said: “As heaven maintains vigor through movements, a *junzi* should constantly strive for self-perfection; as earth’s condition is receptive devotion, a *junzi* should hold the outer world with broad mind.” Liang’s talk made such an impact that Tsinghua School abbreviated these phrases and adopted them as the school motto, translated succinctly

into English as “Self-Discipline and Social Commitment.” In 1917 the abbreviated phrases were engraved in large characters on a school crest set into the stage in the main assembly hall as an encouragement to students.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1: Tsinghua University Motto. Derived from the Book of Change’s description of a *junzi*, the Tsinghua University motto is "自強不息 厚德載物" (Self-Discipline and Social Commitment). (Image source: Wikipedia)

Notwithstanding the endorsements of Liang Qichao and Tsinghua School, many reformist scholars and writers in following generations attacked the *junzi* ideal because they believed that Confucian dogma had “nurtured a ‘national character’ (*guominxing* 国民性) detrimental to China’s modernization.”<sup>4</sup> National salvation was held to depend in no small measure on the rejection of Confucian “scholar-official” (*shidafu* 士大夫) masculinity and the adoption of Western business and lifestyle practices: “the scholar of old was considered unsuited to the modern world.”<sup>5</sup> The new middle class that emerged in Shanghai in the 1920s and ‘30s similarly turned towards Western commercial masculinities and away from embedded Chinese models of manhood.<sup>6</sup>

After the Communist victory in 1949, some scholars advocated the relevance of certain Confucian principles to socialism, including the *junzi* model, but anti-Confucian, class-based, socialist perspectives came to dominate discourse on Confucianism during the Cultural Revolution towards the end of the Mao era.<sup>7</sup> The reintroduction of capitalism to China in the 1980s and ‘90s spurred the emergence of the “new *junzi*”: professionals and businessmen who legitimized their quest for material wealth by reinterpreting Confucianism as an ethical system compatible with doing business.<sup>8</sup> More recently, *junzi* masculinity has been further boosted by

the proliferation of Confucian ideas in television programs, self-help books, popular philosophy guides, online articles, “national studies” (*guoxue* 国学) university degrees, and ethics classes in private schools.

Drawing on the concept of cultural nationalism, I argue in this paper that the promotion of the *junzi* ideal is a form of political, social and cultural identity-making that seeks to “validate and moralize” a particular view of national culture.<sup>9</sup> In particular, I argue that the masculine figure of the *junzi* has become a significant touchstone in the educated elite’s cultural nationalist reimaginings of China’s society and polity.<sup>10</sup> Intellectuals and professionals are keen to associate themselves with reinvigorated *junzi* masculinity in order to enhance their status inside and beyond China in the context of increasing globalization and marketization. This paper contributes to existing literature by showing how highly educated Chinese men are reworking the figure of the *junzi* in their quest to shape cultural nationalist discourses in their gender and class interests.

The new *junzi* masculinity does not simply act to legitimize educated men’s participation in the business world, it also offers a reassuringly well-anchored Chinese identity in fast-changing transnational environments, as well as privileged class status in China’s ongoing large-scale socioeconomic transformations. Middle-class men wish to distinguish themselves not only from migrant workers, farmers, and the urban working classes, but also from the coarse *baofahu* 暴发户 (nouveau riche) and the wealthy but corrupt *heiling* 黑领 (black collars).<sup>11</sup> Claiming the moral high ground through Confucian values and *suzhi gao* 素质高 (high quality) behavior positions highly educated men as heirs to the long Chinese tradition of elite masculinity, which distinguishes them from other groups of men within and beyond China. Fitting a global pattern in the emerging middle classes, it also enables them to reconcile the material and the moral by portraying themselves, their lifestyles and their methods of earning money as morally respectable.<sup>12</sup>

With a focus on *junzi* masculinity in texts and subjectivity formation, this paper examines recently published major works on the *junzi* by prominent public intellectuals associated with the promulgation of “traditional cultural values”,<sup>13</sup> as well as the ways in which middle-class professional Chinese men negotiate the *junzi* ideal as part of their cultural identity. The paper explores the significance of the *junzi* revival for contemporary class, gender and transcultural relations, and contributes to understandings of elite cultural nationalism in China.

## The post-Mao Confucian resurgence and cultural nationalism

The post-Mao new *junzi* view that “moral management” justifies the pursuit of wealth has its antecedents in earlier arguments by Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) “Confucian merchants” (*rushang* 儒商), who positioned “righteousness” (*yi* 义) and “profit” (*li* 利) as equals in harmony with one another. When the latter years of the Ming Dynasty saw substantial population and economic growth but no commensurate expansion in the number of officials, increasing numbers of scholars turned to commerce as a means to support themselves.<sup>14</sup> The Confucian merchants reinterpreted the relationship of righteousness and profit

from one of opposition to one of duality, although their revision did not at that time displace mainstream Confucian ideological disapproval of the pursuit of profit through business. In the post-Mao era, many intellectuals and scholars have joined others in “entering the sea (of business)” (*xiahai* 下海) to make money for themselves. The infusion of morally elevated elements into the contemporary business sphere legitimizes profitmaking in the eyes of a Chinese cultural elite traditionally hostile to commerce, and has become a salient feature of pro-business discourse in the post-Mao era.<sup>15</sup>

The revitalization of the *junzi* ideal and Confucianism in recent years has become evident across multiple spheres of life in China, not just in business discourses. During the 1990s, the Confucian revival grew in intensity as intellectuals engaged in a post-Tiananmen “national studies fever” (*guoxue re* 国学热).<sup>16</sup> Prominent examples include the popular TV programs and best-selling books of Beijing academic Yu Dan 于丹 (1965–), in which she promotes Confucian concepts as psychological aids for attaining peace of mind in today’s stressful world; the proliferation of national studies curricula across all stages of state education; and the establishment of thousands of private schools throughout China teaching Confucian classics, ethics and associated activities such as calligraphy to all ages of students.<sup>17</sup> Marc Moskowitz provides an instance of the uptake of *junzi* ideas in everyday life in his ethnography of *weiqi* 围棋 (Go) players in Beijing. He shows that middle-class, university-educated *weiqi* players, whom he found to be overwhelmingly male, are explicitly drawing on historical, idealized notions of the *junzi* in their performance of a gentlemanly *weiqi* masculinity, which even extends to how they hold themselves as they walk.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 2: Men playing Weiqi in Shanghai. The game of Weiqi is said to inculcate the qualities of a *junzi*. In China it is played mostly by men. (Image Source: J.A.G.A., “Men playing Go,” flickr.com)

Historically, the *junzi* was gendered male in normative discourse; and the kinds of activities associated with the *junzi*, such as *weiqi*, were beyond the realm of women’s possible pursuits.<sup>19</sup> Some contemporary voices maintain that the *junzi* should remain a male preserve, and that the equivalent term for women is *shunü* 淑女 (virtuous woman).<sup>20</sup> However, high-profile commentators such as Yu Dan tend to present the *junzi* ideal in gender-neutral terms, as a potential aspiration for anybody. Nonetheless, regardless of the emergence of gender-equitable rhetoric in *junzi* discourse, Moskowitz’s ethnographic findings suggest that in contemporary everyday life in China it is men who are overwhelmingly likely to identify with *junzi* characteristics. The *junzi* ideal therefore appears destined to continue its historical trajectory as a predominantly masculine model of cultivation.

The concept of cultural nationalism offers a productive way of understanding current reworkings of the *junzi* ideal, as well as Confucianism more broadly and other aspects of “traditional culture.” Kosaku Yoshino defines cultural nationalism as the belief that a distinctive “cultural community” with its own unique history and characteristics is the “essence of a nation,” and argues that cultural nationalists seek to “regenerate” a nation’s cultural identity when it is perceived to be weak or under threat.<sup>21</sup> Yingjie Guo identifies “historical narratives, commemorative ceremonies, arts and literature, and collective memory” as important sites of cultural nationalist identity-making, drawing from Richard Madsen’s suggestions on the fora through which scholars can examine how community actors as well as the state produce ideas and contest concepts.<sup>22</sup> Cultural nationalism can be implicitly or explicitly linked to ethnic nationalism, in that particular cultural values may be associated with a certain “people,” which can therefore be used to police who belongs and who does not to a particular ethnic identity.<sup>23</sup> This kind of ethno-cultural nationalism is manifestly predicated on “othering” and exclusion. The activities and concepts promoted in ethno-culturalist discourses are manifold, and can include practices that may be treated as mundane in most cultures, such as bathing customs, which as Lesley Wynn shows, have come to be considered a definitive component of national identity in Japan.<sup>24</sup>

In early twentieth-century China, Liang Qichao was a seminal proponent of ideas of race and nation, which he understood in terms of the Darwinian sociology of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). If Chinese people did not rally around the idea of the national unity of China, then the country was doomed to be destroyed by peoples with a stronger sense of themselves as a nation. In his influential series of essays written between 1902 and 1906 titled “On a New People,” Liang advocated a new kind of moral relationship between individual and country.<sup>25</sup> To provide a conceptual vocabulary for this, he introduced the Japanese term *minzu* 民族 into Chinese as the term for “nation,” inspired by its use from the start of Japan’s modernizing program in the 1860s.<sup>26</sup> Liang promoted the expression *Zhonghua minzu* 中华民族 (“Chinese nation”), which was enthusiastically taken up by Kuomintang 国民党 nationalists Sun Yatsen 孙中山 (1866–1925) and then Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石 (1887–1975) before falling from favor in Mao-era political discourse.<sup>27</sup> In recent years, however, the Chinese authorities have reinvoked the concept of *Zhonghua minzu* as a singular national peoplehood to serve as a unitary cultural

nationalist identity in contrast to the framework of fifty-six diverse nationalities within one socialist China created during the Mao era. The term *Zhonghua minzu* subsumes Tibetan, Uighur, Mongolian, Miao and the other ethnicities as defined by Mao-era scholars within one overarching, Han-dominated, Chinese cultural nation, and is projected back thousands of years into the past.<sup>28</sup>

Cultural nationalism in China since the 1990s has been characterized as both anti-Western (especially anti-US) and anti-Marxist.<sup>29</sup> It has taken shape in a context of rising self-confidence in China's cultural traditions among intellectuals as a result of China's rapid economic development, and of suspicion towards perceived cultural overreach of the US in processes of globalization processes.<sup>30</sup> Since 1991, the Chinese government's program of Patriotic Education has created ideal breeding grounds for exclusory ethnic and cultural nationalism. The willingness of China's intellectual class in recent decades to engage with Western political and cultural theories might be seen as an ameliorating factor, yet this does not necessarily produce pro-Western viewpoints or liberalization teleologies, since theories developed in the West, such as postcolonialism and orientalism, can be used against the West.<sup>31</sup> Western theories are not necessarily deployed to undermine cultural nationalist reimaginings of the *junzi*: as my analysis of Chinese public intellectuals' works below shows, they are by contrast used to render reworked *junzi* models more convincing.

## Methodology

My focus in this paper is the way in which the model of the *junzi* has been reformulated in contemporary cultural nationalist texts by public intellectuals. As such, it takes a broadly Foucauldian approach to discourse, with the understanding that discourses act to produce/construct particular identities. Taking up Yingjie Guo's approach that looks beyond statist formulations of cultural nationalism, it principally examines two recent works that stand out in the increasing volume of writing on the *junzi*, and the responses of a professional Chinese man in London to the concept of the *junzi* that relate to cultural nationalist tenets. Three characteristics underpin the selection of the texts: Firstly, the foregrounding of the concept of the *junzi* in book-length projects; secondly, the wide market reach of the books; and thirdly, the prominence of the authors, who are both well-known public intellectuals. A third work by a less well-known author is also subsequently discussed due to its very explicit positioning of the *junzi* within a racialized cultural nationalist framework. I critically analyze the texts with a view to building a picture of their multi-faceted constructions of cultural nationalist *junzi* masculinity. At the same time, the analysis also confirms the cultural nationalist characteristics of the texts, in line with the above discussion on cultural nationalism.

The professional Chinese whose responses I examine below was interviewed as part of a larger research project conducted in 2014/15 on the masculine subjectivities of Chinese professional men in London. The project involved narrative interviews with ten highly-educated professional Chinese men who had come to the UK to study or work. Two of the participants aspired to emulate the *junzi* model of masculinity, and four others expressed strong attachment to conventional Confucian virtues such as filial piety, familial responsibility and self-control. Participants were recruited through bilingual advertisements in Chinese and English circulated by community organizations, friends and associates. I carried out recorded individual interviews

with all the participants for between one and two hours, and had more informal follow-up discussions with five of the participants. Data collection and analysis were conducted according to narrative research methods.<sup>32</sup> In common with much qualitative research writing, my approach recognizes that individual subjectivities are created through everyday processes of negotiation and contestation of discursive identities. And further, that accounts of personal experiences and understandings elicited in interviews are not pre-formed, but are co-created in the “social encounter” between the interviewer and research participant.<sup>33</sup>

## ***Junzi* as Jungian archetype**

Yu Qiuyu 余秋雨 (1946–) is a Chinese scholar, writer and commentator whose views on Chinese culture have been influential since the early 1990s when he published *Wenhua ku lü* 文化苦旅 (*A bitter journey through culture*, 1992), which includes essays lamenting the historical neglect of China’s cultural heritage that have become set texts in Chinese secondary schools.<sup>34</sup> In his recent book, *junzi zhi dao* 君子之道 (*Way of the gentleman*, 2014), Yu argues that the *junzi* is the key to Chinese culture. Echoing Liang Qichao, he makes the concept of personality central to his argument. He anoints the *junzi* as the “collective personality of Chinese culture” (*Zhonghua wenhua de jiti renge* 中华文化的集体人格) in order to bring clarity, as he sees it, to debates about the fundamental nature of the Chinese people.<sup>35</sup> The logic underpinning Yu’s argument runs thus: if “personality” (*ren’ge* 人格) is the “ultimate achievement of culture” (*wenhua de zhongji chengguo* 文化的终极成果),<sup>36</sup> then the ultimate achievement of Chinese culture is “Chinese people’s collective personality” (*Zhongguoren de jiti ren’ge* 中国人的集体人格), and it therefore follows that the “rejuvenation of Chinese culture” (*fuxing Zhonghua wenhua* 复兴中华文化) requires the search for and “optimization” (*youhua* 优化) of Chinese people’s collective personality.<sup>37</sup> Yu espouses and promotes a cultural form of nationalism, yet is at the same time a cosmopolitan writer: he refers widely to Western authors and their concepts in order to support his arguments about the *junzi*, and particularly draws from the notions of the collective unconscious and collective personality that Jung derived from Freud’s work on the unconscious/subconscious. In his book on *junzi*, rather than deploying postmodernism and other theories against the West, Yu’s strategy is to mine the Western academy for conceptual frameworks that can bolster his positioning of the *junzi* at the forefront of a Chinese cultural nationalist paradigm.

And yet Yu is quick to denounce the use of Western theories when he feels they are being used to critique the traditional Chinese canon. As Yu relates in his book, in the mid-1930s Jung met Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962), the reformist philosopher and prominent figure in the May Fourth and New Culture movements of the 1910s and ‘20s. During the ensuing conversation, Jung asked Hu about his feelings towards the *Book of Changes*, the very text from which Liang Qichao plucked the *junzi* quotations that became the Tsinghua motto. In his response to Jung, Hu disparaged the *Book of Changes* as a form of magic and amulet. Yu is infuriated by this, claiming that Hu’s comments were “sloppy” (*caoshuai* 草率) and an inappropriate application of “Western modern scientific thinking” (*xifang jindai kexue siwei* 西方近代科学思维).<sup>38</sup> Yu contrasts Hu’s attitude to the *Book of Changes* with Jung’s, who, in his introduction to Richard Wilhem’s 1923 German translation, sets out reasons for taking it seriously.<sup>39</sup> Yu approves of

Jung's starting point, which is that the personalities of Western and Chinese people are different. For Yu, the personality of the saint (*shengtu ren'ge* 圣徒人格) and the personality of the gentleman (*shenshi ren'ge* 绅士人格) are the salient examples of collective personality in the West, but, as mentioned above, the collective Chinese personality is the *junzi*.<sup>40</sup> This idea aligns neatly with Liang Qichao's argument in his Tsinghua speech one hundred years previously that the *junzi* model is most suited to the task of "raising up the personality" of the Chinese people.

Yu sees the *junzi* as the most profound "personality mode" (*ren'ge moshi* 人格模式) to have emerged from early Chinese culture.<sup>41</sup> Drawing on Jung, he claims China as the "homeland" (*guxiang* 故乡) of the *junzi*, and, argues that over time the concept of the *junzi* has become a deeply buried "archetype" (*yuanxing* 原型) in the collective unconscious of the Chinese people.<sup>42</sup> He describes how Confucians turned it into a "personality ideal" (*ren'ge lixiang* 人格理想), into which, he believes, all of Chinese culture's "high points" (*liangdian* 亮点) have been absorbed.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Confucian, can be concisely summarized as the way of the *junzi*, according to Yu, and as such, the *junzi* is the *sine qua non* of Chinese culture: if there are *junzi*, Yu states, then all can be had; but without *junzi*, everything is futile.<sup>44</sup> Yu firmly links the *junzi* personality with being Chinese, suggesting it is the cultural aspiration of all Chinese: "to be a *junzi* is to be the most qualified, most ideal Chinese person."<sup>45</sup> He even goes as far as to claim that it is solely the existence of *junzi* that prevents the dying off of Chinese culture, because the *junzi* provides such a strong model personality.

This suggests Yu understands "culture" as a kind of high form of ideals and practices that are generated, transmitted, and protected by a highly educated elite. This differs from the approach of populist Confucianists like Yu Dan, who try to integrate Confucianism into everyday mass culture, turning it into a kind of self-help Confucianism-lite for daily use. This latter approach presupposes a more postmodern, consumerist take on cultural practices, and lacks the sustained, lifelong self-cultivation that Yu Qiuyu advocates. It appears that Yu Qiuyu is writing for an audience that wishes to reflect more deeply on the significance of the *junzi* model for Chinese culture: those, one might assume, that Yu believes have the potential to become *junzi*.

Confucians have often approached the attributes of the *junzi* through defining the *junzi*'s opposite: the *xiaoren* 小人 (small person).<sup>46</sup> Without the *xiaoren* as the *junzi*'s Other, it could be argued that the *junzi* cannot exist. In Yu's words, "the divide between the *junzi* and the *xiaoren* makes the *junzi*, this ideal personality, more solid."<sup>47</sup> Yu relates that in ancient times, *xiaoren* was not necessarily a derogatory term: it referred to those with low social status. Eventually, however, he argues that the difference between the two concepts came to be defined as one of personality or "moral character" (*renpin* 人品).<sup>48</sup> By framing the difference as a matter of morality, Yu avoids the common characterization of the *junzi* as attached to righteousness and the *xiaoren* as attached to profit. Yu's shift of emphasis away from associating money making with a *xiaoren* mentality is in line with post-Mao (and antecedent) efforts to reconcile Confucianism, and the *junzi*, with commercial activities.

Within one group of people, even within one person, Yu argues, there can be a contest between *junzi* and *xiaoren* components.<sup>49</sup> To support this point, Yu cites Tang dynasty historian



Wu Jing's 吴兢 (670–749) concise formulation: “the *junzi* does good deeds; the *xiaoren* does evil deeds” (*xing shanshi ze wei junzi, xing eshi ze wei xiaoren* 行善事则为君子，行恶事则为小人).<sup>50</sup> Thus, for Yu, the difference between the *junzi* and the *xiaoren* is not a difference between two stable social groups, but that exhibited by “a momentary slip in our innermost being” (*neixin de yi nian zhi cha* 内心的一念之差); in other words, between the good or bad behavior of individuals.<sup>51</sup> Yu thus deftly psychologizes the *junzi/xiaoren* dichotomy in a way that could be used to deflect critiques of the *junzi* as socially divisive or reminiscent of feudal hierarchies. Yu argues that the only thing anyone has any real control over is himself or herself. Cultivating one's moral character is thus the kernel of Confucian teaching, as it is not possible to be fully successful in managing family affairs, ruling the country and bringing peace to all under heaven, as the traditional Confucian formula sets out. Through a focus on cherishing virtue for his own benefit, in Yu's view, the *junzi* can go forth to benefit others, and, indeed, to benefit the whole world.<sup>52</sup> Yu's approach speaks to multiple modern notions of personhood, to middle-class concerns about their own moral standards, and to contemporary feelings among professional and intellectual men of a loss of control and influence in the family and beyond.

A final salient point to note about Yu's reformulation of the *junzi* as collective personality ideal of the Chinese nation is his integration into the *junzi* model of elements of Buddhism. For Yu, Buddhism is a core component of China's cultural heritage. Buddhist tenets complement the way of the *junzi*, and the *junzi* should keep close to Buddhism. Yu is concerned that during the practice of self-cultivation there is a danger that the practitioner will become too self-centered; Buddhist texts and concepts, such as the notion of “emptiness” (*kong* 空) set out in the Heart Sutra, can help overcome this potential weakness in the practice of *junzi* self-cultivation.<sup>53</sup> The potential for Buddhism to act to some extent in tandem with Confucianism in endorsing the worth of self-cultivation and filial piety is clearly demonstrated in the characteristics of the remarkable Buddhist renaissance in Taiwan in recent decades.<sup>54</sup> It is no coincidence, therefore, that Yu has taken special efforts to promote his book on the *junzi* to Taiwanese Buddhist audiences.<sup>55</sup>

To some, Yu Qiuyu's views may appeal as a timely reworking of the neglected historical concept of the *junzi* as a counterweight to the encroachment of Western models of personality in China. Yet viewed from another angle, Yu's enthusiastic promotion of the *junzi* as the collective personality ideal for the Chinese nation demonstrates a desire among Chinese intellectuals and China's highly-educated professionals to renegotiate more favorably their fragile status in an increasingly commercialized Chinese society, and to better place themselves as the guardians and paragons of a national Chinese culture in what could be described as an intensely competitive global “soft power” marketplace.<sup>56</sup> In short, by drawing on China's deeply significant Confucian historical tradition to promote the *junzi* role as the essence of Chinese culture, highly-educated Chinese men like Yu are attempting to solidify and enhance their social status and political power in today's fast-changing world.

## Calling for a “*junzi* nation”

Yao Zhongqiu 姚中秋 (1966–) is a Confucian scholar, economist, public intellectual, and President of the Unirule Institute of Economics (*Beijing tianze jingji yanjiusuo* 北京天则经济研

究所). The Unirule Institute is a Beijing social sciences think tank committed to promoting market economics, founded in 1993 by Mao Yushi 茅于軾 (1929–), a champion of economic liberalization and deregulation who is reviled by the Chinese left. Yao's 2012 book *Meide; junzi; fengsu* 美德君子风俗 (“Virtue; *junzi*; social customs”) proposes the *junzi* ideal as the foundation on which he believes Chinese society should build its future. In his book, Yao critiques three paradigms of governance: what he calls “system determinism” (*zhidu juedinglun* 制度决定论), which enforces conformity with a dominant system (it is likely that Yao has socialism in his sights here); “cultural determinism” (*wenhua juedinglun* 文化决定论), especially in the form that holds that Western cultural values need to be adopted in China to change society for the better, because as a Confucian he does not agree that culture is wholly responsible for all change; and “civil society construction doctrine” (*gongmin shehui jianshelun* 公民社会建设论), which holds that through marketization, urbanization and the expansion of the middle class, people are trained into being better citizens. Yao criticizes this last doctrine because in his view it neglects the training of “private citizens” (*simin* 私民), without which he argues there cannot be “public citizens” (*gongmin* 公民).<sup>57</sup>

In this book, Yao puts forward a Confucian theory for building society, which he describes as using Confucian doctrines of human nature as its cornerstone, putting the *junzi* at the center, and taking social customs as its means.<sup>58</sup> With an unashamedly elitist tenor, Yao defines the *junzi* as “people with outstanding moral conduct” (*dexing chuzhongzhe* 德行出众者), the opposite of whom he calls “ordinary people” (*fanren* 凡人), although he also refers at times to *xiaoren*.<sup>59</sup> For Yao, *junzi* are particularly strongly disposed towards being supportive of others, are skilled in such endeavors, and are therefore the people who set up, organize and lead groups, and who produce and allocate public goods. In Yao's vision of a *junzi*-led society, ordinary people also learn the necessary basic morality and conduct for the maintenance of social order, and through participating in public affairs develop from “private citizens” into “public citizens.”<sup>60</sup> In this way, a social fabric is gradually developed that has the *junzi* at the center, surrounded in ever-increasing circles by family, community, workplace, region, country, and ultimately the whole world, and which maintains a social order that is “diverse yet harmonious” (*he er bu tong* 和而不同).<sup>61</sup>

Yao is aware that his emphasis on the *junzi* may incite the accusation that he is endorsing social inequality. But he strongly believes, in a very similar way to Yu Qiuyu, that the presuppositions of contemporary (Western) mainstream social science are inappropriate and inaccurate when it comes to understanding China's history and reality.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, Yao argues provocatively that the fields of Chinese humanities and social sciences have been and continue to be warped by what he sees as their word-for-word copying of the outside world, whether Soviet, German, Japanese, British or American, a world of which he argues Chinese intellectuals only have a superficial understanding. For Yao, Confucian thinking, by contrast, can lead people to “more aptly and accurately understand theoretical paradigms for human nature, society, and order in contemporary China.”<sup>63</sup>

As with Yu Qiuyu, Yao Zhongqiu harbors no doubts about the benefits of the *junzi* for Chinese culture and society and the importance of the *junzi* for the fate of the nation. Yet Yao also goes further than Yu by including an urgent requirement to build a “*junzi* community” (*junzi*

*qunti* 君子群体), arguing that for China to rebuild a “superior social order” (*youliang zhixu* 优良秩序) and to undertake its “mission in world history” (*shijie lishi zhi shiming* 世界历史之使命), the cultivation of a *junzi* community is a pressing task.”<sup>64</sup> His desire to build such a community fits Yoshino’s paradigm, described above, in which cultural nationalists define a particular “cultural community” as the core of the nation. Yao goes as far as to assert that China’s future civilization and strength depend ultimately on the cultivation of a certain scale of *junzi* community.<sup>65</sup> Making the bold claim that without *junzi* there can be no governance, Yao argues that the words and actions of the *junzi* are the fundamental mechanisms for shaping the moral, rational and good behavior of the future Chinese citizenry.<sup>66</sup> As was the case in premodern China, Yao argues for scholar politicians, summing up his notion of the *junzi*’s role in one simple term: “scholar official” (*shidafu*): the very figure that the early twentieth century New Culture Movement intellectuals were keen to eradicate.<sup>67</sup>

Yet, for Yao, as with Yu, the *junzi* of today is not a simple replica of the *junzi* of old. At the heart of Yao’s conceptualization of the contemporary *junzi* lies a class distinction predicated on moral quality. Even if contemporary society aims for gender, education and wage equality, Yao argues, there are still differences in people’s natural capacities, which can be physical, mental and moral. Yao embraces a purer notion of *junzi*-hood than Yu, seeing the capacities of individuals in more clear-cut terms than Yu. For Yao argues that people can be categorized as possessing either high or low “moral conduct” (*dexing* 德行), hence the division between the *junzi* and *xiaoren*.<sup>68</sup> However, as with Yu Qiuyu, Yao stresses this division in terms of moral character and self-cultivation, rather than the historical dichotomy of righteousness-profit. Yao argues that as with the aristocracies of Western countries an emphasis on equality does not render the *junzi* superfluous, but merely transforms the justification of his role as guardian of the social order from birthright to his elevated personal “quality” (*pinzhi* 品质).<sup>69</sup>

A morally elevated *junzi* stratum must therefore govern the *xiaoren*, Yao argues, as the latter, being less cultivated, are captives of their material desires. There is public appetite for the society-wide promulgation of *junzi* attributes, Yao claims, citing a 2012 opinion poll in the *China Youth Daily* in which 71% of respondents believed that *junzi* moral integrity could help rebuild Chinese citizens’ morality and values, and 87% hoped that *junzi* education would be strengthened.<sup>70</sup> Yao’s cultural nationalism manifests very clearly in his use of the term “*junzi* nation” (*junzi zhi bang* 君子之邦), expressing his hope for a Chinese future in which “*junzi*-style” (*junzi shi* 君子式) businessmen, lawyers, politicians and scholars will utilize the “way of the *junzi*” to enable China to harmonize its relations with all nations and to “display a world-leading role appropriate to China’s size.”<sup>71</sup>

Despite his dismissal of Western academia’s inappropriateness for understanding Chinese society, Yao, like Yu, is quick to use Western theories when he feels that they strengthen his arguments. For example, Yao is strongly influenced by the Austrian classical liberal economist Friedrich Hayek (1899–1992). Yao relates that after the 1940s Hayek took Scottish moral philosophy as his basis for thinking through self-cognition, society, the market, law, politics and so on, and argues that while Scottish moral philosophy is the ethics of the (British) gentleman, Confucian philosophy is the ethics of the *junzi*.<sup>72</sup> Developing this idea, Yao states that the basis of society should be woven around the *junzi* and the gentleman. The moral conduct of the *junzi* or gentleman naturally forms a *junzi* or gentleman-centered social order, which is the foundation

of the government. Politics, then, is the bridge between the *junzi* or gentleman-centered social order and the government.<sup>73</sup> Yao draws from eighteenth century Ulster-Scots philosopher Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) to bolster his claim that government should be composed of people with *junzi* virtues, approvingly citing Hutcheson’s notion that ordinary people naturally put their trust in highly able, courageous, moral, wise, benevolent and social ethics-oriented people, believing them to be responsible public officials and having confidence in their ability to manage social affairs.<sup>74</sup>

Yao’s predilection for the free-market oriented Austrian School of economics leads him to align the *junzi* or gentleman with what he calls the Austrian School’s “rule-making entrepreneur” (*lifa qiyejia* 立法企业家), which he derives from studies of the formation of institutions by Carl Menger (1840–1921), the founder of the Austrian School.<sup>75</sup> Yao suggests these *junzi* entrepreneurs could compete with each other to come up with programs for the authorities. Further influenced by Hayek’s notion of spontaneous order, Yao argues that although the setting up of a constitution which has a *junzi*-centered social order is a man-made artifice, it also belongs to Hayek’s spontaneous social order, as everyone is allowed—in theory—to put forward their opinions.<sup>76</sup> It is likely that Yao is trying here to distinguish his vision from top-down systems like socialism. Yao holds that the mix of constitutional politics and conventions in his *junzi*-centered spontaneous order, which he likens to the “gentry constitutionalism” of the UK and the USA (the two countries whose gentlemanly education Liang Qichao praised), creates stability and robustness in a country.<sup>77</sup> In this way, Yao believes that Hayek’s Scottish moral philosophy-founded insights provide a preferable alternative to the Hobbesian view of politics as calculated self-interest, which Yao laments is currently dominant in China.<sup>78</sup>

Using *shenshi* 绅士, a term for gentleman associated with the historical gentry class in China, Yao postulates that there are already some gentlemen amid contemporary Chinese entrepreneurs, but very few. He argues they are the contemporary re-generation of the gentry merchants tradition. Their idea of public ethics is not fully formed, Yao states, nor are there broad enough channels for the expression of public ethics. These gentry merchant gentlemen are thus not strong enough to pull against the corruption of the entire mass of entrepreneurs.<sup>79</sup> In Yao’s view, entrepreneurs are the most important managers and leaders of a “normal” country’s system of social governance, and he condemns entrepreneurs in China for conspiring with officials to exploit the weakest people in society. Again with similarities to Yu’s position, Yao argues that only traditional religion or quasi-traditional religion can shake them out of that corrupt state.<sup>80</sup> Thus he lauds the increasing number of entrepreneurs who have turned to Buddhism and Confucianism in the last ten years.<sup>81</sup>

Putting this increasing interest in religion in the context of a global revival in religion since the 1980s, Yao writes that with regard to Christianity in China, experts have identified two new groups of Christian followers: “boss Christians” (*laoye jidutu* 老爸基督徒), composed of owners and directors of private enterprises; and “big city white-collar employees” (*da chengshi de bailing* 大城市的白领), which includes teachers, university students, doctors, lawyers, artists etc. Boss Christians establish churches and use their wealth for charitable purposes, and many businessmen believe in Buddhism and Daoism and enthusiastically support the revival of Confucianism, because religion enables them to leave materialism and their inner binds behind.<sup>82</sup> Yao refers to research that shows that religious businessmen are less likely to engage in immoral

and illegal behavior, and that their values encourage people to buy their products. With a view to religion's emphasis away from the self, as with Yu, Yao writes that some entrepreneurs have already broken free from the trap of egoism, and have started to be concerned about their staff's difficulties, their customers' feedback, the hardships of vulnerable groups, and the good and the bad in the social order.<sup>83</sup> This leads them to use their resources to promote "cultural reconstruction" (*wenhua chongjian* 文化重建), and it is in this way that they can become Confucian *junzi*.<sup>84</sup> Yao concludes that the more entrepreneurs become such *junzi* or even gentry businessmen, the more they can effectively assume public responsibilities. In Yao's view, this is good for them as individuals and for Chinese society as a whole.

Besides entrepreneurs, Yao is also keen for middle-class professionals to aspire to become *junzi*. Professionals in general play an important role in today's society because of the knowledge they possess, Yao states, which gives them a certain power and autonomy that he believes can be used as to balance the power of governments, the economy, and popular opinion. According to Yao, the development of the knowledge and autonomy of professionals in the Chinese context relies on them raising themselves up to be *junzi*, and only those who become *junzi* can organize other professionals into coherent groups and gradually shape professional ethical standards, through appropriate and prudent relations with the government and the people.<sup>85</sup> Yao maintains that it is only through professional communities that professionals can raise their self-awareness, come to understand the power they hold, and fulfill their social duty.<sup>86</sup> Of all today's professionals, legal professionals are most engaged with *junzi*-like behavior, in Yao's view, and by self-cultivating as *junzi* legal professionals can truly delimit "justice" (*yi*) (the same word that is used for "righteousness") by identifying appropriate and inappropriate behavior."<sup>87</sup> Doctors and teachers are also prime candidates for *junzi* self-cultivation. Yao argues that the commercialization and bureaucratization of healthcare provision can only be overcome if doctors use their autonomy to achieve an ethical re-awakening, and that teachers must become *junzi*, because it takes a *junzi* to foster a *junzi*.<sup>88</sup>

Ultimately, Yao acknowledges that, generally speaking, the *junzi* are each and every field's "elite" (*jingying* 精英). As elite exemplars, he argues that the *junzi* in each field possess the following attributes: high moral conduct, an authoritative presence, and the desire and skill to participate in public affairs. But when politicians, businessmen and scholars go astray, they become corrupt, show off their riches, overindulge in drink and sex, and lose concern for the people and public affairs.<sup>89</sup> A key step in reconstructing Chinese culture, therefore, is to "tame the elite" (*xunhua jingying* 驯化精英). This entails every CCP school, every civil service college, legal college, commercial college, etc., teaching the Confucian classics so that students can develop their individual moral qualities, such as sincerity, and go on to run the country with wisdom.<sup>90</sup> Interestingly, Yao's sense that the elite's excesses need to be "tamed" is also projected in the hugely popular online novel *Huiguo xun huo ji* 回国驯火记 (Taming the Chinese Fire), written in installments by a rich Chinese returnee businessman from the US since 2003, which regales its readers with tales of a successful Chinese businessman and investor who returns to China from America to live a life of "consumerism and hedonism without bounds."<sup>91</sup> Although the novel has not been completed, Louie argues that a moral ending to the story is suggested, given the already provided downbeat title of the final unwritten chapter, and its intimations of the historical conventions of Chinese literary fiction, in which the protagonist realizes that he can only truly achieve happiness by abstaining from debauchery and hedonism.<sup>92</sup> As such, Yao's

objective to tame the out-of-control elite through moral cultivation runs true to a deeply embedded paradigm in historical Chinese thinking.

In sum, Yao's vision for a *junzi* nation mixes Confucian social and political ethics with Hayekian economic (neo)liberalism. Yao dreams of a dynamic, liberal market economy, powered by ethically outstanding *junzi* entrepreneurs and *junzi* professionals. In doing so, he provides a more developed model than Yu for the reconfiguration of the pursuit of material wealth within a Confucian moral framework. His attention to middle-class professionals highlights their importance as a moral cornerstone in the project of Yao and other intellectuals to re-Confucianize China. While undoubtedly innovative, Yao's reliance on the *junzi* as the only figure who can make China great again—as such his program stands as an attempt, like Yu's, to enhance the influence of China's intellectual class, who find their status diminished in comparison to their forerunners, due to the post-Mao reach of financial capital and global markets.

## **“Life is about self-cultivation”: a Chinese professional's responses to *junzi* discourses**

Kosaku Yoshino, a theorist of cultural nationalism, writes:

*Two groups are normally prominent in the development of cultural nationalism: intellectuals (or thinking elites), who formulate ideas and ideals of the nation's cultural identity, and intelligentsia (or social groups with higher and further education), who respond to such ideas and ideals and relate them to their own social, economic, political and other activities.*<sup>93</sup>

In this section, in order to explore how highly educated Chinese men are responding to the ideas and ideals of intellectuals of the *junzi*, I discuss the case of Bradley, a young Chinese professional man whom, as mentioned above, I interviewed as part of larger project on the masculine subjectivities of men from China working in London. Bradley was one of the two project participants who explicitly cited the *junzi* ideal among the six who stated adherence to typical Confucian values. Of these two, I have chosen to focus on Bradley because he specifically referenced Yu Qiuyu as a major influence on his thinking, neatly illustrating the link between intellectual discourse and the practices of the highly educated outlined by Yoshino.<sup>94</sup>

The son of officials, in his mid-twenties and a design professional, Bradley had moved to the UK from east China for his high school education. When we met for the interview, he told me his relocation to the UK had forced him to reconsider his notions of China and Chinese culture. In the first place, through reading Mencius (372-289 BCE), he had come to the realization that “life is about self-cultivation.” He pinpointed two important dimensions to this: the cultivation of Confucian morals, and the Buddhist cultivation of personal happiness, both of which he felt were important. His mix of Confucian and Buddhist methods of self-cultivation resonated with Yu Qiuyu's approach, and indeed he told me that he had read Yu's work on the *junzi*: “Yu Qiuyu says the *junzi* is the cultural ideal of Chinese culture, like the samurai is for the Japanese. China needs more self-cultivation to be taught.” Bradley was particularly concerned that consumerism without a moral framing results in poor development of moral subjecthood.

With regard to what he saw as the problematic consequence of this, he said: “the attention paid to creams, designer clothes, hairstyles, doesn’t make for interesting character. What’s missing is that self-cultivation is not being taught.” In this regard, his desire to insert a moral dimension into materialist lifestyles accords very strongly with the programs of both Yu Qiuyu and Yao Zhongqiu.

For Bradley, the issue of self-cultivation raised interesting questions about the nature and exercise of the power wielded by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). He expressed his disappointment with the CCP’s Patriotic Education program, which he felt lacked a moral dimension. Bradley expressed in his comments a tension between a narrow, insufficient CCP patriotism and his desire for a more fulfilling engagement with Chinese cultural identity. Moreover, for Bradley, the promotion of a masculinity founded on Confucian self-cultivation was not simply desirable, but was vital for China’s political system, which he emphasized does not have the checks and balances of Western political systems: “I guess the Chinese way is harsher, more strict. Because Confucian self-cultivation cultivates one towards power, like a man who can hold so much power without being corrupt—that’s a much higher standard.” He argued that Western institutional structures prevented leaders amassing the same amount of power as the Chinese leader could, which necessitated the Chinese leader cultivating exemplary moral rectitude: “you will never give a man that much power, therefore there is no need for one single character to have such high moral standards as Xi Jinping 习近平 (1953–) or Wen Jiabao 温家宝 (1942–).” Nevertheless, despite Bradley’s disagreement with the narrowness of CCP historical narratives, he did not reject the Party itself, the survival of which he argued depended precisely on the moral self-cultivation of its officials. Exhilarated by Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption drive, he talked of the Party staying in power for two or three hundred years, like a dynasty of old, if its leaders successfully fostered a *junzi* mentality. His vision, therefore, exhibited clear parallels with Yao Zhongqiu’s call for *junzi* political leadership and *junzi* public officials.

When I asked Bradley to give an example of someone who embodied *junzi* qualities, Bradley named the nineteenth-century general Zeng Guofan 曾国藩 (1811–1872), who in Bradley’s view incorporated both Confucian and Daoist principles into his performance of cultivated masculinity. Bradley’s choice was no doubt influenced by the vociferous lauding of Zeng by cultural nationalists that has taken place since the 1980s in books, TV series and republications of his writings.<sup>95</sup> Zeng has been hailed as a seminal modernizer of industry and education, and yet at the same time “an exemplary Confucian man of literary and professional achievements and moral excellence.”<sup>96</sup> Zeng was a hero of Liang Qichao, Chiang Kai-Shek and other Confucian nationalists in the first half of the twentieth century due to the major role he played in bringing a degree of stability to China through the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion (1851–64).<sup>97</sup> Liang Qichao even believed that Zeng could have rescued China from its weak condition at the end of the nineteenth century had he been alive then.<sup>98</sup> However, Zeng became a taboo figure during the Mao years, when for the very same actions he was portrayed as a reactionary killer of progressive peasants and criticized for his Confucian values.<sup>99</sup> Bradley most appreciated what he considered to be Zeng’s strength of moral character, reflecting the predominant way he has been presented in the post-Mao era as encapsulating “the four principal ideals of the Confucian man (achieving self-perfection, managing the family, governing the empire, and bringing order to all under heaven).”<sup>100</sup>

Bradley also approvingly mentioned the Qing Dynasty *Jinshang* 晋商, morally minded Confucian merchants from Shanxi, whose extensive trading required the development of more sophisticated financial institutions. The *Jinshang* are one of the groups of merchants associated with premodern attempts to reposition Confucianism vis-à-vis the pursuit of wealth. Bradley's mentioning the *Jinshang* reflects the prominence of several films, TV dramas and documentaries about them since the 1990s, which have helped cement the idea of a late-imperial, morally sound "Confucian business culture" (*rushang wenhua* 儒商文化) that created wealth and generated taxes in responsible ways and helped the less well-off.<sup>101</sup> Influenced by this recently popularized understanding of Confucian-infused historical business practices in China, Bradley legitimized his own sense of himself as a moral man of business.

## **A darker side of cultural nationalist use of the *junzi***

Werner Meissner suggests that it is possible that "anti-Western ideology in China will become an amalgam consisting of Confucian elements, combined with set pieces of Party ideology, anti-Western, non-liberal philosophy, and based on an ethnic, or even, racist identity."<sup>102</sup> He argues that the CCP could use this kind of ideology to encompass non-Han ethnic groups and Sinophone populations beyond China within one Chinese national identity, with the Chinese leadership as the core of the "Chinese nation."<sup>103</sup> In the light of Meissner's comments, one can see how Yu's "collective *junzi* personality," Yao's "*junzi* nation", and Bradley's enthusiasm for Yu Qiuyu's *junzi* cultural archetype and his own expression of the "Chinese way" of self-cultivation all easily fit the category of cultural nationalism and even potentially racialized nationalism, as their imputation of particular attributes to Chineseness and the Chinese nation excludes non-Chinese from possessing them. If everyone or every society or culture in the world had the potential to possess these attributes, they would cease to be defining features of Chineseness.

A clear example of racialized nationalist use of the *junzi* concept can be found in the work of author Gao Xitian 高喜田 (1956–), who has written a book entitled *Way of the junzi: Chinese people's philosophy for conducting themselves in society* (*Junzi zhi dao: Zhongguoren de chushi zhexue* 君子之道: 中国人的处世哲学). A quotation from Gao initiates an account of an interview with him in a 2012 article in the *China Youth Daily*:

*Even if peasants lived deep in the mountains for ages and ages without books or education, they would still understand the basis for being a junzi and not a xiaoren, and would guide their offspring to follow benevolence and righteousness and not offend Heaven and Earth. This precisely permeates the Chinese cultural genes in our nation's blood (minzu xueyezhong de Zhonghua wenhua jiyin 民族血液中的中华文化基因).*<sup>104</sup>

Gao directly acknowledges Liang Qichao's speech promoting the personality of the *junzi* personality at Tsinghua University in 1914 as his inspiration. Yet he describes how thinking of Liang's speech fills him with both excitement and sorrow. Although Gao strongly admires Liang's diligent and tireless pursuit of *junzi*-hood, he feels despondent that in the market economy of today's China the guiding light of the *junzi* ideal is becoming fainter and fainter.<sup>105</sup>



Culturalist/racialized sentiments similar to Gao's are found in the preface of his book, which was written by Ji Baocheng 纪宝成 (1944–), a previous Principal of Beijing's renowned Renmin University, where China's first "National Studies College" (*guoxue yuan* 国学院) was founded in 2005. Ji states in the preface: "There is no nation in the world like the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*): our cultural traditions grow without end, are continuous and uninterrupted, and the moral concepts and values formed thousands of years ago are still actively playing a role today.<sup>106</sup> Gao anticipates the ideas of Yu Qiuyu when he proposes the personality of the *junzi* as "the ideal personality of the Chinese nation" (*Zhonghua minzu de lixiang ren'ge* 中华民族的理想人格) and "the ideal model of a perfect personality" (*wanmei ren'ge de lixiang moxing* 完美人格的理想模型).<sup>107</sup> Ji also echoed these sentiments in his preface.<sup>108</sup> It is through the concept of the "Chinese nation" that racializing nationalists subsume China's ethnic and cultural differences under a Han-dominated national identity. This kind of cultural and racialized nationalism inevitably benefits the Han as the existing hegemonic group in China.<sup>109</sup>

## Conclusion

Bradley's ethical self-makings via the appropriation of the *junzi* ideal are creative and transformative responses to the circumstances he has encountered as a transnational, well-educated Chinese man. As an educated Chinese man living and working in a world in which Western power is hegemonic, he has striven to embrace a cultural nationalist reworking of *junzi* masculinity against a historical background in which Chinese masculinity has been undermined, challenged and erased. His refashioning of his identity seeks to link his masculinity with Chinese nationhood and culture in ways that thwart the ever-present potential undoing of his manhood. He enfoldes ideas of *junzi*-hood into his own subjectivity, invoking the *junzi* in inventive ways to imagine a more moral, less consumerist China, to promulgate a patriotism rooted in historical culture rather than CCP interests, and to reconcile Chinese intellectuals with marketplace economics. The increasing manifestation of the *junzi* model in internet blogs, current affairs magazines, TV programs and recently published books show that many other educated professional men are also invoking this model of masculinity in their own particular trajectories of identity-making. Indeed, despite an increasingly gender-neutral framing, including by Bradley and in the texts I have analyzed, the culturally nationalist *junzi* model remains in everyday life mostly a preoccupation of men, and thus a masculine ideal. In terms of social status and privilege, the classed and gendered implications of *junzi*-type cultural nationalism particularly privilege highly-educated middle-class men, who, unsurprisingly, form the vast majority of those promulgating the Confucian/*junzi* revival. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that the *junzi* is just one among many masculinities jostling for attention in today's relatively pluralistic China; and that while interest in *junzi* cultivation is clearly growing, a large-scale study is needed to get a clearer picture of its prevalence.

The resurgence of "traditional" Chinese cultural pursuits and identities in everyday activities, with the state's acquiescence and even support in many instances, fits a global trend, towards the expression of identity in cultural and religious terms, due in part to increasing doubts across the world as to whether secular liberal or socialist approaches are necessarily the only possibilities for building well-grounded and stable modern societies.<sup>110</sup> This trend has particularly intensified since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union

between 1989 and 1991 dealt the death knell to a viable socialist alternative to capitalism. As emerging economies have grown in wealth and confidence since the 1990s, in some cases leaving colonial era shadows further behind them, they have also felt free to discard notions that modernization is synonymous with Westernization. Intellectuals such as Yao Zhongqiu and Yu Qiuyu are pushing Confucianism and the *junzi* ideal to shape a cultural nationalist revisioning of China's future that they believe will raise their status. Using Confucianism as their foundational philosophy provides them with a usefully indirect way of critiquing the Communist authorities. Yu has proven particularly successful at criticizing current norms without ever falling into taboo territory.<sup>111</sup> The same is true for Yao's promotion of Confucianism.

Of particular note is the way that Yao and others address today's Chinese professionals in their promotion of *junzi* masculinity. For Yao, today's professionals, with their specialized knowledge and focus on mental work, must take on the mantle of cultivating themselves to become contemporary *junzi*. Such efforts are not without effect, as the example of Bradley shows. This negotiation of social status in a commercializing and globalizing China is complemented by a simultaneous negotiation of status globally. Chinese intellectual voices are urging the promotion of Confucian values across the world. Guan Shijie 关世杰, Director of the International and Intercultural Communication Program at Beijing University, has stated that "the time has come for the West to learn from the East... The Confucian concept of universal harmony will be dominant during the next century."<sup>112</sup> However, the potential danger of such approaches is the homogenization of China's plurality of cultures to service a racialized Chinese nationhood.

Although not explicitly racial, Yu Qiuyu's use of notions like "collective personality" (*jiti ren'ge* 集体人格) and "*junzi* personality" (*junzi ren'ge* 君子人格) furnish a "Grand View of Culture," according to Haomin Gong, which Yu uses to deflect criticism of his scholarship. When Yu has been challenged in the past over the accuracy of details of his writings, he has brushed them aside, and has brought the focus back to these big ideas.<sup>113</sup> Yu, and Yao, promulgate new grand narratives of the nation and national culture. But the only means that they have of influencing many people with their ideas is paradoxically through the very mass commercial culture that they condemn as immoral and deleterious.<sup>114</sup> It may be that the current hegemonic confluence of socialism and market economics in China will prove impossible to tame, and will continue to appropriate, and regulate, *junzi* visions, including those of Yu and Yao, for its own aims. Yet if more professional men like Bradley are won over, the realisation of Liang Qichao's gentlemanly ideal will be a step closer. Yu, Yao and their fellow travellers know their only chance is to embed the *junzi* in nationalist sentiment. Yet, if they succeed, they may find, as Meissner warns, that they have helped create a rather more unpleasant regime than the one that they envisaged.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The *junzi* ideal was one element in Liang's overall vision for strong Chinese manhood. Inspired by his experiences in early twentieth century Japan, he also vigorously advocated the need for a cultural nationalism founded on the mythical "way of the warrior" (*wushidao* 武士道) in order to foster the Chinese people's "martial spirit" (*shangwu* 尚武). See Oleg Benesch, "The Samurai

Next Door: Chinese Examinations of the Japanese Martial Spirit,” *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 38 (2014): 138–42. I am grateful to Professor Kam Louie for highlighting this point in comments on my presentation of an earlier version of this paper at University of San Francisco, November 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Liang Qichao, “*Junzi*” [Gentlemen], November 5, 1914, accessed March 21, 2017, [Tsinghua University](#)

<sup>3</sup> “Influencing Tsinghua: Mr. Liang Qichao’s speech ‘Gentleman,’” July 21, 2014, accessed March 13, 2017, [Tsinghua University: "Influencing Tsinghua"](#). The abbreviated phrases are *zhiqiang buxi* 自强不息 and *houde zaiwu* 厚德载物.

<sup>4</sup> Wei-ming Tu, “Cultural China,” in *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*, ed. Wei-ming Tu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 27.

<sup>5</sup> Kam Louie, *Chinese Masculinities in a Globalizing World* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 116.

<sup>6</sup> Bret Hinsch, *Masculinities in Chinese History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 9. Valentina Boretti has shown how the connections between modernization, nation building, Western commerce, and masculinities can be seen in how toys were marketed to Chinese “new” children, who were often coded as masculine despite comprising both genders. By the 1920s, “modern,” “patriotic” toys were seen as crucial tools for the appropriate education of the minds and bodies of “new” children. See Valentina Boretti, “Small Things of Great Importance: Toy Advertising in China, 1910s-1930s,” *Asia Pacific Perspectives* 13, no. 2 (2015–16): 7, and *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50; Kam Louie, “Confucius the Chameleon: Dubious Envoy for ‘Brand China’,” *Boundary 2* 38, no. 1 (2011): 80–83.

<sup>8</sup> Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, 54–7.

<sup>9</sup> See Prasenjit Duara, “Provincial narratives of the nation: centralism and federalism in Republican China,” in *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, ed. Harumi Befu (Institute of East Asian Studies Research Papers and Policy Studies 39) (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 9; see also Yingjie Guo, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity under Reform* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2–4. including notes]y formation, this papers of elite cultural nationalism in China, an inserterns, including:

<sup>10</sup> Discourses of masculinity and nationalism are often closely associated, in China and beyond. See Geng Song and Derek Hird, *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary China* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 11–12, 34–54; and Joane Nagel, “Masculinity and nationalism: Gender and sexuality in the making of nations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (1998): 242–69.

- <sup>11</sup> Song and Hird, *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary China*, 64, 124–5.
- <sup>12</sup> Mark Liechty, “Middle-class Deja Vu: Conditions of Possibility, From Victorian England to Contemporary Kathmandu,” in *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing through Ethnography*, ed. Rachel Heiman et al (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2012), 280.
- <sup>13</sup> Since 1989, an increasingly vocal neo-Confucian movement in China has argued for the promotion of traditional Confucian values as an alternative to or even replacement for the CCP’s Marxist ideology, and for a ruling class of virtuous Confucians who embody *junzi* characteristics. This culturalist movement, which is dominated by men, has energized historical masculine ideals such as the *junzi*. See Heike Holbig and Bruce Gilley, “In Search of Legitimacy in Post-revolutionary China: Bringing Ideology and Governance Back In,” Legitimacy and Efficiency of Political Systems Research Program Working Paper no. 127, German Institute of Global and Area Studies (March 2010): 22.
- <sup>14</sup> Tak Sing Cheung and Ambrose Yeo-chi King, “Righteousness and Profitableness: The Moral Choices of Contemporary Confucian Entrepreneurs,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 54, no. 3 (2004): 247.
- <sup>15</sup> Louie, *Chinese Masculinity*, 53–7.
- <sup>16</sup> Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-state by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 149.
- <sup>17</sup> Daniel A. Bell, *China’s New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 163–74; Louie, “Confucius the Chameleon”, 96–7; Wang Yan, “National Studies,” *China Report* 27 (2015), 16–25.
- <sup>18</sup> Marc L. Moskowitz, *Go Nation: Chinese Masculinities and the Game of Weiqi in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 74, and passim.
- <sup>19</sup> Joanne D. Birdwhistell, *Mencius and Masculinities: Dynamics of Power, Morality, and Maternal Thinking* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 147, note “子就指男生吗? keyi cheng junzi ma? ai -identification, but it is clearly a growing 5; Karyn Lai, “Close Personal Relationships and the Situated Self: The Confucian Analects and Feminist Philosophy,” in Ann A. Pang-White, ed, *The Bloomsbury Research Handbook of Chinese Philosophy and Gender* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 120.
- <sup>20</sup> Baidu zhidao, “Junzi jiu zhi nansheng ma? Nüsheng keyi cheng junzima?” [Does *junzi* just refer to men? Can women be called *junzi*?], accessed August 3, 2017, [baidu.com](http://baidu.com).
- <sup>21</sup> Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Guo, *Cultural Nationalism*, 4; Richard Madsen, “The Public Sphere, Civil Society and Moral Community: A Research Agenda for Contemporary China Studies,” *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (1993): 183-98.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Shulman, “Challenging the Civic/Ethnic and West/East Dichotomies in the Study of Nationalism,” *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 5 (2002): 561-2.

<sup>24</sup> Lesley Wynn, “Self-Reflection in the Tub: Japanese Bathing Culture, Identity, and Cultural Nationalism,” *Asia Pacific Perspectives* 12, no. 2 (2014): 61-78.

<sup>25</sup> Henrietta Harrison, *Inventing the Nation: China* (London: Arnold, 2001), 104.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Guoxue.com, “‘Zhonghua minzu’ de youlai,” [The origins of “the Chinese nation”], accessed April 7, 2017, [guoxue.com](http://guoxue.com). Jonathan Lipman argues that *minzu* should be translated as “race,” because he believes it still holds the sense of racial difference that was prevalent at the time of the term’s invention at the turn of the twentieth century. See Jonathan Lipman, “How Many Minzu in a Nation? Modern Travellers Meet China’s Frontier Peoples,” *Inner Asia* 4 (2002): 113-30.

<sup>28</sup> Alisa Jones, “Politics and History Curriculum Reform in Post-Mao China,” *International Journal of Educational Research* 37 (2002): 549.

<sup>29</sup> Qin Pang, “The Rise of Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Main Content and Causes,” *Elixir Social Science* 36 (2011): 3361-2.

<sup>30</sup> Zhao, *A Nation-state by Construction*, 148.

<sup>31</sup> Meissner, “Cultural and National Identity,” 16; Zhao, *A Nation-state by Construction*, 149-51.

<sup>32</sup> In particular, I drew my research methods from Michael Murray and Anneke Sools, “Narrative Research,” in Poul Rohleder and Antonia C. Lyons, eds., *Qualitative Research in Clinical and Health Psychology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 133-54.

<sup>33</sup> Cigdem Esin, Mastoureh Fathi and Corinne Squire, “Narrative Analysis: The Constructionist Approach,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, ed. Uwe Flick (London: Sage, 2014), 204-5; Kenneth J. Gergen, “The Social Construction of Self,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*, ed. Shaun Gallagher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 644-50. For a more comprehensive account of the methodological considerations underlying my data collection and analysis methods in this project, see Derek Hird, “Moral Masculinities: Ethical Self-fashionings of Professional Chinese Men in London,” *Nan Nü* 18 (2016): 119-22.

<sup>34</sup> Paper Republic, “*Wenhua ku li*” [A bitter journey through culture], accessed 7 April, 2017, [Paper Republic, Chinese Literature in Translation: "A Bitter Journey through Culture"](http://paper-republic.com). For a discussion of some of the cultural nationalist aspects of this work, see Haomin Gong,

“Popularization of Traditional Culture in Postsocialist China: a study of the Yu Qiuyu Phenomenon,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 69 (2011): 349-51.

<sup>35</sup> Qiuyu Yu, *Junzi zhi dao* [The Way of the Gentleman] (Beijing: Beijing lianhe chuban gongsi, 2014), 1–2.

<sup>36</sup> Yu adds the English word “personality” in brackets, adumbrating an Anglophone/Western dimension to his argument.

<sup>37</sup> Yu, *Junzi zhi dao*, 3–4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 5–6.

<sup>39</sup> Available at [Foreword to the I Ching - By C. G. Jung](#).

<sup>40</sup> Yu, *junzi zhi dao*, 8–9.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 133–49; Miao Kai, “Yu Qiuyu Taiwan kaijiang: zhenzheng de da *junzi* yiding qinjin fojiao” [Yu Qiuyu lectures in Taiwan: the truly great *junzi* certainly gets close to Buddhism], accessed April 7, 2017, [fo.ifeng.com](#).

<sup>54</sup> C. Julia Huang, *Charisma and Compassion: Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Miao Kai, “Yu Qiuyu Taiwan kaijiang.”

<sup>56</sup> See Gong, *Popularization of Traditional Culture*, for a similar argument in relation to Yu’s “cultural prose.”

<sup>57</sup> Yao Zhongqiu, *Meide; junzi; fengsu* [“Virtue; junzi; social customs”] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue

chubanshe, 2012), 1–2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. Yao’s use of *he er bu tong* comes from a saying of Confucius in the *Lunyu* (Analects of Confucius): *junzi he er bu tong, xiaoren tong er bu he* 君子和而不同，小人同而不和, which can be glossed as: “the *junzi* maintains harmonious and friendly relations with others, but does not blindly agree with them; the *xiaoren* panders to and parrots the opinions of others, but does not harbor a harmonious and friendly attitude towards them in his heart.” See Baidu baike, “*Junzi he er bu tong*,” accessed April 7, 2017, [baidu.com](http://baidu.com).

<sup>62</sup> Yao, *Meide; junzi; fengsu*, 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–9.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>75</sup> Yao Zhongqiu, “Lifa qiyejia zhidu shengcheng: Men’geer zhidu lilun chongshu” [The Rule-Making Entrepreneur and Institutional Formation: Re-examining the Institutional Theory of Carl Menger], *Journal of Guangdong University of Business Studies* 3 (2009): 28–36, 59.

<sup>76</sup> Yao, Meide; *junzi*; fengsu, 103.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 186–7.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 211-13.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>91</sup> Kam Louie, “Globe-Trotting Chinese Masculinity: Wealthy, Worldly, and Worthy,” in *Diasporic Chineseness after the Rise of China: Communities and Cultural Production*, ed. Julia Kuehn et al, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 59.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 66.



- <sup>93</sup> Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, 1.
- <sup>94</sup> For an extended discussion of the ethical dimensions to the subjectivities of Bradley and the other participant who aspired to *junzi* masculinity, see Derek Hird, “Moral Masculinities: Ethical Self-fashionings of Professional Chinese Men in London,” *Nan Nü* 18 (2016): 115–47.
- <sup>95</sup> Guo, *Cultural Nationalism*, 49.
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; Pang, “The Rise of Cultural Nationalism,” 3362.
- <sup>98</sup> Guo, *Cultural Nationalism*, 51.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 52. Pang, “The Rise of Cultural Nationalism,” 3362.
- <sup>100</sup> Guo, *Cultural Nationalism*, 62.
- <sup>101</sup> Shuyu Kong, “Cultural Propaganda in the Age of Economic Reform: Popular Media and the Social Construction of Shanxi Merchants in Contemporary China,” *The China Journal* 63 (2010): 79–99.
- <sup>102</sup> Werner Meissner, “China's Search for Cultural and National Identity from the Nineteenth Century to the Present,” *China Perspectives* 68 (2006): 16, accessed April 7, 2017, [China Perspectives: "China's Search for Cultural and National Identity from the Nineteenth Century to the Present"](#).
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>104</sup> Chong Huang, “Women shehui yao chuangxin yizhong jizhi rang *junzi* geng rongyi chengong” [Our society must create a kind of mechanism to allow *junzi* to gain success more easily], *Zhongguo qingnian bao* [China Youth Daily], January 19, 2012, 7, accessed April 7, 2017, [cyol.com](#).
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>108</sup> Baocheng Ji, “Guoxue nai wenhua zhi gen, minzu zhi hun” [National Studies is the root of culture and the soul of the nation], accessed April 7, 2017, [cul.china.com.cn](#).
- <sup>109</sup> Cheng (2011) argues that the discourse of patriotic nationalism in China is characterised by a hegemonic Han racial chauvinism that excludes non-Han ethnicities from the scope of the term *Zhonghua minzu*. Rae and Wang’s survey of over 1000 respondents from eighteen universities in

China found that on the question of national identity “Han identity was often fused with the larger Chinese identity . . . leading to Han chauvinism that remains problematic for non-Han people today.” (2016, 487)

<sup>110</sup> Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>111</sup> Gong, “Traditional Culture in Postsocialist China,” 348.

<sup>112</sup> Pang, “The Rise of Cultural Nationalism,” 3362.

<sup>113</sup> Gong, “Traditional Culture in Postsocialist China,” 355.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

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