Paper Citizens and Biometrical Identification: Immigration, Nationality, and Belonging in Chinese America during the Exclusion Era

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Nation-as-Family

There is perhaps no trope that has been mobilized as often in order to evoke a sense of national coherence as the trope of the nation-as-family. At first glance, this trope does not only seem omnipresent in nineteenth- (as well as twentieth-) century thought, it also seems to derive much of its appeal from its simplicity and conclusiveness.[1] The trope's representation of familial and national correspondences evokes a structure of concentric circles: It suggests that every individual belongs to a patriarchal nuclear family, which in turn is framed by the larger order of the nation. In this way, the concepts of family membership and national citizenship become tightly connected by association. This logic of belonging has much to do with the fact that in nineteenth-century America "family was at times used as a synonym for race," as Susan Ryan has pointed out (2000: 756; emphasis in the original). Of course, both terms, "family" and "race," are correlated by their joint reliance on the conceptual repertory of biology: races, like families, are—to draw on the vocabulary of the day—of one blood.

By dint of the association with families and races, the nation could be imagined not only as a patriarchally hierarchized structure, but also as an ethnically homogeneous entity: a contained sphere rather than a rhizome. The concatenation of imageries—family and nation, or, by extension, domesticity

and state—depends upon a spatialized logic of enclosure or inclusion, and its congruent principle of exclusion. "Domestic [sic] has a double meaning that links the space of the familial household to that of the nation by imagining both in opposition to everything outside the geographic and conceptual border of the home," writes Amy Kaplan about this pattern of thought in nineteenth-century American culture (Kaplan 2002: 25). An anonymous reviewer of a popular nineteenth-century medical treatise pins this logic down: UA family is an epitome of a nation. If the heads be in opposition, there will be anarchy. It differs in this. A woman may be chief of it, because domestic duties are the very object of her existence. She cannot be chief of a nation, because nature abhors it" (p. 297).[2]

This usage of the trope of the nation-as-family does not only illustrate the logic at work, but also (and much more interestingly) brings to the fore the tropes liability to run out of control. It is thus significant that the reviewer states the analogies between the family and the nation only to complicate the harmonious picture immediately afterward. He obviously sees the need to curb and qualify the trope as soon as it has been established. And indeed, to conceive of the family as a blueprint for the nation, and of the nation as modeled after a family, is to conjure up ideological implications that are far more difficult to contain than the simple trope suggests at first glance.

The underlying logic of patriarchal hierarchy and biological uniformity which informs the ideal of the nation-state starts to give once one takes into account the multifarious and variegated reality of family relations and family arrangements in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American culture. In what follows I want to show that the imagery of the nation-as-family is fraught with conceptual problems that tend to surface even though (and especially when) they are generally anxiously repressed or denied. The metaphorical components—family, race, nation—which initially seem to harmoniously reflect one another, often enough turn out to stand in awkward juxtaposition. The geometrical figures that ultimately come to mind as illustrations of the familial/national order are not so much concentric circles or contained spheres, but rather uneven intersections—more complicated spatial relations, as it were. In particular, the configurations of inclusion and exclusion turn out to be not so much oppositional but rather entangled in this conceptual scheme.

This complication of the ideological pattern is epitomized in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century debates around Asian—most notably Chinese—immigration. The parallels and breaks between the imageries of familial and national belonging—blood relations and citizenship—gain a heavily loaded significance in the context of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and in the era of Chinese exclusion that followed.

Here the idea of a "foreign" element on the "domestic" front takes center stage. And, furthermore, it was family membership that came to prominently determine the citizenship status of Chinese subjects in America. This is not the place to resume the complex practices and the complicated reasoning around the concept of "paper citizenship" of Chinese Americans in the first half of the twentieth century.[3] Suffice it to point out that the interrogations at the Angel Island detention center which the immigration authorities conducted after 1910 with Chinese immigrants in order to find out whether their claims to American citizenship were true or false revolved around the issue of family membership. Every Chinese who sought admittance to the United States had to prove that he or she belonged to one of the few admissible professional groups, that he or she was a citizen or was related as a spouse, son, or daughter of an American citizen. "Some of the most heavily scrutinized cases were those involving families," writes Erica Lee about the Angel Island interrogations (2003: 209), and Madeline Hsu has shown that while the family relations that immigrants professed were often made up and while there were professional agencies involved in the purchase of fake papers, the organization of paper identities still depended primarily on "networks of kinship and native place" (2000: 87),[4] so that the "ties of Active kinship" (Hsu 2000: 106) interacted with actual family relations and added further layers of complication to the already complicatedly convoluted process of "naturalization."

The efforts of immigration officers to determine the family status and the complex structures of (self-)identification in the lives of the immigrants arriving at Angel Island brought about increasingly complicated techniques of questioning. As a consequence, the "coaching books"—manuals which were originally geared toward immigrants claiming a false citizenship (and family) status and containing all the information that was likely to be asked about the Chinese family background—soon came to be used by travelers with citizenship status as well, because "[m]any simply believed it was humanly impossible to answer [the interrogations] without preparation" (Lee 2003: 217). An interpreter elaborates on this phenomenon in his memories of Angel Island interrogation practices:

> What happened was that in many cases there were not real sons but paper sons, they were so well coached that their testimonies jibed. Whereas in the legitimate cases, they hadn't gone to the trouble of making up coaching books and preparing for it. They were the ones that got the wrong answers, because they thought it was going to be cut and dry.
>
> (Lai 1980: 114)

In the course of these practices, as Erica Lee has elaborated, illegal immigration "became normalized, affecting entire families and communities

regardless of class background and immigration status" (Lee 2003: 216). By extension, one could argue, the very ideas of "family," "nationality," and "belonging" became volatile, detached from personal memories and experiences—part of a performance which needed to be practiced, tested out, enacted, and brought across. Or rather, the concepts bifurcated into a private and a public, a personal and an official, an emotional and a politico-legal line of usage. Increasingly, emotional and political definitions of belonging (to a family or a nation) split apart, or at least came to coexist in awkward tension.[5]

In the case of Chinese families living in America, as the "lines between legal and illegal immigrants became blurred" (Lee 2003: 216), the question of who belonged where on what grounds became increasingly difficult to determine. Legal citizens might have taken recourse to fraud, fake family members by the American definition might be real kin on the basis of Chinese definitions of familial bonds, a "paper son" of the first generation might get his own children into the country and thus establish a genuine genealogy but perpetuate the cycle of deception, and so on. And the concept of the nation as a homogeneous, hierarchically structured, organically grown entity became doubtful, as family structures became subject to reinterpretations and manipulations.

Paper Identities

From today's vantage point, the Chinese practice of forging "paper identities" may be seen as an anticipation of the transnational lifestyles of the current period of globalization.[6] Thus, at times this practice tends to be presented as a strategic turn against repression, as a subversive measure that highlights the very constructedness of the categories of citizenship and nationality. By contrast, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century proponents of immigration restrictions in the United States saw "paper citizenship" as an evidence that both "family values" and a "national order" were being undermined. The Chinese presence in the United States, these critics feared, threatened to hollow out the categories of familial and national belonging even more than African American or Native American claims to equality and full citizenship status.[7] A popular anti-Chinese cartoon of the day, titled "The Last Addition to the Family," illustrates this fear succinctly, showing the United States as a loving mother holding a grotesquely childish Chinaman in her arms (see Figure 4.1).

Both the celebratory and the phobic ascriptions ignore, however, that the paper identities, fake genealogies, and made-up life stories are deeply entangled in a repressive and biased system of immigration restriction and racist discrimination, that they constitute a reaction and not a carefully designed (subversive) action or a succinct, linear, conscious strategy. This fact makes

Figure 4.1 “The Last Addition to the Family”

it so difficult to come to terms with the cultural memory of and around Chinese America. Cultural memory is always intricately entangled in collective fantasies and in processes of repression, reinvention, narrative recycling, and appropriation. Yet the cultural memory of “paper citizenship” is not only formally shaped by the forces of fabrication and narration—fabrication and narration constitute its very subject matter. Therefore, fiction might very well be the appropriate form of representation to come to terms with the ideological and conceptual implications of this phenomenon, for it is the one mode of

representation that focuses most persistently on spheres of experience beyond the outspoken, the rational, the strategic. Hence, throughout this essay, I will alternate between references to historical practice and references to its literary representation, in order to get a grip on the bifurcation of political necessities and emotional needs in Chinese America at the turn of the twentieth century.

As fictional points of reference I will take the stories of the Chinese American author Edith Maud Eaton. I focus on Eaton not because I conceive of her as a representative speaker of the Chinese American community of her days—in fact, I do not;[8] but rather because I believe that her fictional approach and highly stylized form of narration manages to express and highlight ambivalences and paradoxes that tend to get obfuscated in other—more personalized or more analytical—forms of representation or reflection. In particular, Eaton's juggling of registers, her oscillation between the rhetoric of politics and the rhetoric of sentimentality, brings to the fore the intricate complications in the subject matter, as we shall see.

The first story I want to consider is titled "The Smuggling of Tie Co." It is one of the short pieces which Eaton published under her pen name Sui Sin Far between 1898 and 1903 in the magazine Land of Sunshine, edited by the journalist, activist, and amateur ethnographer Charles Lummis. All of these pieces reflect Eatons characteristic mix of ethnographic recording, political critique, and melodramatic narration—"parables for progressives" in Dominika Ferens's words (2002: 81).[9] "The Smuggling of Tie Co" revolves around a Canadian, Jack Fabian, who is engaged in the business of "contrabanding Chinese from Canada into the United States," and one of his pieces of "human goods" (Eaton 1995: 104). Fabian is being pressed out of business by a newly evolving trade:

> Some ingenious lawyers had devised a scheme by which any young Chinaman on payment of a couple of hundred dollars could procure a father which father would swear the young Chinaman was born in America—thus proving him to be an American citizen with the right to breathe United States air. And the Chinese themselves, assisted by some white men, were manufacturing certificates establishing their right to cross the border, and in that way were crossing over in large batches.
>
> (Eaton 1995: 105)

Due to these new practices, Jack Fabian has fallen into dire straits and is only too relieved when a young Chinese, Tie Co, asks him to take him to New York the old way—by means of crossing the border on the sly. On the road, where Tie Co appears "dressed in citizen's clothes" (Eaton 1995: 106), Fabian tries to make conversation, bringing up the seemingly safe and light topic of

his companions family history and domestic background "at home." But this is when their relationship takes a melodramatic turn:

> "Haven't you gotten a nice little wife at home?" [Fabian] continued.
> "I hear you people marry very young."
> "No, I no wife," asserted his companion with a choky little laugh. "I never have no wife."
> "Nonsense," joked Fabian. "Why, Tie Co, think how nice it would be to have a little woman cook your rice and to love you."
> "I not have wife," repeated Tie Co seriously. "I not like woman, I like man."
> "You confirmed old bachelor," ejaculated Fabian.
> "I like you," said Tie Co, his boyish voice sounding clear and sweet in the
> wet woods. "I like you so much that I want to go to New York, so you make fifty dollars. I no fiend in New York."
>
> (Eaton 1995: 107)

From this charged scene in the "wet woods," when the specters of miscegenation and homosexual desire complicate the certainties of familial, racial, and national belonging, things go quickly downhill—Fabian wants Tie Co to return to Canada, Tie Co sees some men coming after them and sacrifices himself by jumping into a river, so that Fabian will not be caught with evidence on his hands.

In this strange story, the theme of deception and deviation abounds: the criminal business of human smuggling is being contrasted not with legal immigration but with the no less criminal business of paper forgery. Tie Co deceives Fabian about his true motives, which seem to be steeped in the deviant desires of homosexuality and miscegenation. The fact that we learn at the very end that Tie Co was not a boy but a girl rescues both men from the suspicion of homosexuality, but adds the dubious practices of cross-dressing and gender masquerade to the list.[10] Eaton presents a world in which "normality"—legal immigration, a patriarchal family order, heterosexuality, and carefully segregated race relations—figures only as a shady horizon. This is a criminal universe and a men's world in which women disappear, feelings need to be hidden, and desires have to be pushed underground. The illegal border crossing thematized here seems to involve not only the geographical and political border between Canada and the United States, but also all kinds of moral borders—after all, Tie Co does not strive for a Chinese family or American citizenship, (s)he wants the white man.

And still, the sentimental narration leaves no doubt that what is to be condemned in this fictional universe are not the practices of deception and deviancy, but the dominant system which makes these practices necessary in the first place. Thus, while deviancy is not condoned by the story, it does

effect a strong critique of the framework of "normality" established by legal institutions, social practice, and moral authorities. The melodramatic dimension of the story comes to the fore most strikingly in scenes such as the one in the woods. The scene unfolds according to the logic of the tableau, and thus makes use of a structure borrowed from stage melodramas which highlight crucial moments by having the action on stage "freeze" "into an arrangement that starkly reveal[s] the dramatic conflict among opposing parties" (Singer 2001: 41-42). In such scenes, a moral order evolves that stands in stark (conceptual and spatial) contradistinction to the dominant order, based upon legal and political parameters—Eaton literally figures forth an illegal and illicit "world apart," which threatens to encroach upon the "known world" of law and order.

We shall see that Eatons story can be read as an indirect commentary on political debates around immigration, immigration fraud, and citizenship in the early twentieth century. But while Eatons moral seems to be that arbitrary borders will be crossed, no matter how anxiously they are guarded, of course the authorities who were concerned with Chinese immigration saw matters differently—and sought ever more intricate and reliable means to solidify borders, avoid deception, and determine identity once and for all.

Detention

In Edith Eaton's story, the "American" order, epitomized by the nuclear family, is no longer visible, but its moral significance is far from defunct.[11] By drawing on the mode of melodrama, Eaton time and again insists that legal and political conditions need to be adjusted to the deeper and more immediate demands of the heart (romantic love, affection for blood relations, sibling solidarity, etc.) (cf. Kelleter/Mayer 2007). Very much in line with the traditions of abolitionist writing, Eaton points to the distortion and violation that the laws of immigration and exclusion bring about by showing the perverting impact of these measures on race and gender relations: where the family is absent, the nation can only be a sham.

In a way, the scenario of a world without women, in which "bachelors" engage in all kinds of suspicious relations and where illegal action abounds, could be seen as an indirect comment on the reality of contemporary Chinatowns and immigration practices. Chinatowns at the turn of the twentieth century were male sites, and Chinese immigration was predominantly a male practice.[12] The setup of the Chinatown as a "transient working-class world [in which] single men lived herded together in bunk-rooms, and the few Chinese women who had immigrated were considered to be prostitutes" gave ample

cause to phobic projections from the sides of anti-immigrationists who contended that these lifestyles "were ... contrary to respectable domesticity and capable of undermining American morality and family life" (Shah 2001: 77). The domestic arrangements of the early Chinatowns did not mirror the larger urban order, but constituted an independent system—a system that was seen as deviant and threatening, as Nayan Shah has shown.

The Chinatown, then, is envisioned and experienced as a world of its own, a closed-off space, part of, yet also apart from, the "homeland." Yet these associations are not unique to the Chinatown; they are even more apparent with regard to the design and the experiences of Angel Island. After all, the detention center was not only close to Alcatraz prison, but had been modeled after it, since its location had been chosen for its escape-proof isolation (Lai 1980: 13). In addition, the one association that comes up most often in the Chinese poems carved into the detention centers walls is precisely that of a prison: "Now on an extended sojourn in jail, I am subject to the ordeals of prison life," as one writer puts it (Lai 1980: 40). "How was anyone to know that my dwelling place would be a prison?" writes another detainee (p. 40). Other inscriptions read: "Up to now, I am still trapped on a lonely island" (p. 42), or "Curled up in an enclosure, my movements are dictated by others" (p. 60). A prison, an island, an enclosure—the people on Angel Island see themselves as having fallen into a liminal space, their goal of entering a new world suddenly out of reach. "Who would have known I would be imprisoned on Island?" (p. 92).

One writer captures the spirit of an enforced time-out which suffuses so many of the writings on the wall by simply listing the sights from the center:

> ... there are watchmen guarding during the night.
>
> I gaze to the south at the hospital,
> And look to the west at the army camp.
> This author says, "What happiness is there in this?"
> (Lai 1980: 70)[13]

The detention center resembles a prison with watchmen controlling the detainees, and the view from the cell shows a world ruled by disciplinary institutions: a military camp and a hospital come into view—sites which like the prison and the detention center aim at normalizing control and surveillance.

The disciplinary project of Angel Island was based upon a concatenation of juridical and political measures and it was geared toward regulating the flow of immigration and securing corrosive borderlines.[14] Yet like so many other

institutions aiming at the erection of clear-cut boundaries and sharply drawn distinctions, Angel Island ended up being highly ambivalent. In a sense, it was unclear where Angel Island belonged since it was neither completely in the country, nor completely outside of it—a territory which seemed "neither quite foreign nor domestic," as Amy Kaplan wrote with respect to the legal category of "Insular Cases" which the Supreme Court established in a series of decisions from 1902 to 1922.[15]

Thus, the detainees on Angel Island are like the characters in Eatons short story—they find themselves in the "wet woods" or in a no-man's-land, maneuvering an uncertain and precarious territory, and epitomizing in this very maneuver the extraordinary (or abnormal) situation at large. For the many immigrants who had to spend an extended period of time in the detention center and who did not see an end to their situation, living in a state of exception began "to become the rule" as Giorgio Agamben wrote with respect to the concept of the camp (1998: 169; emphasis in original). For Agamben, this concept is epitomized in the concentration camp, but it is by no means exhaustively captured in the concentration camps extreme conditions. The "essence of the camp" consists in a demarcated space in which "the normal order is de facto suspended and in which whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign" (p. 174). It is important to consider, though, that the camp is not an extralegal space:

> The camp is a piece of land placed outside the normal juridical order, but it is nevertheless not simply an external space. What is excluded in the camp is, according to the etymological sense of the term "exception" (ex-capere), taken outside, included through its own exclusion. But what is first of all taken into the juridical order is the state of exception itself. ... The camp is thus the structure in which the state of exception—the possibility of deciding on which founds sovereign power—is realized normally.
>
> (Agamben 998: 170; emphases in original)

The state of exception mapped by Agamben demarcates enclaves of the abnormal and extraordinary within the normalized system. These enclaves need to be bracketed off, quarantined, so to speak, so that the overall system can be thought as normal in the first place. By the same token, Angel Island and other "insular cases" in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America constitute a barely repressed evidence that the nation—like the family—cannot be neatly defined on the grounds of an inside and an outside, the domestic and the foreign, the familiar and the alien—since these states and concepts intermingle and condition each other indissolubly.

This is what came to the fore in the patterns of interrogation at Angel Island, which were designed to separate the familiar (and familial or domestic) from the alien (and foreign). They failed to do so because the claims of belonging (to a family or the nation) that were at stake were subject to manipulation and fabrication, and entangled in emotional and political appropriations. The different conceptions and expectations around kinship and family relations in the United States and China together with the flourishing industry of immigration fraud created more ambivalences and uncertainties than the interviews could possibly clarify, as we have seen. As Eatons story exemplifies, the notion of normality was precariously perched on a system which fostered practices of deviation and deception. As a consequence, the authorities in charge of Angel Island and of immigration procedures at large increasingly turned to methods of identification that did not rely upon communication and language. The solution, this logic ran, was to be found in biological measures of identification which would establish unquestionable categories of belonging and exclusion: "One of the essential characteristics of modern biopolitics (which will continue to increase in our century) is its constant need to redefine the threshold in life that distinguishes and separates what is inside from what is outside" (Agamben 1998: 131). One of the crucial sites of this process of distinction or separation is the issue of citizenship—the nexus of "nativity and nationality," as Agamben writes (p. 131; emphasis in original)—an issue that is circumscribed by means of the discourses of politics and biology. Significantly enough, it was precisely in the debates around Chinese immigration or exclusion that the issue of a concatenation of nativity and nationality came up most urgently in the United States16—and in the years to follow in China and the Chinese diaspora just as well.[17]

The Chinese Exclusion Act, writes John Torpey in his history of practices of documentary identification, "constituted the first serious attempt in American history specifically to exclude members of a particular group whose relevant characteristics were knowable only on the basis of documents" (2000: 97). And the project of documentary identification soon came to be informed with biopolitical ambitions, as "eugenics and other race-conscious approaches" took over the field of "population management" (Torpey 2000: 102). The immigrants' "fitness" to be integrated into the American national body (or the family of the nation) was determined by means of medical examinations: "Unlike immigration interrogations that required oral verifications of authentic' life narratives and relied upon the subjective judgment of officers, medical investigation provided seemingly incontrovertible evidence of an individual's fitness for entry based on a normative notion of good health," writes Nayan Shah about the routine examinations conducted on Angel Island (2001: 197). However, the investigative regime of the island did

not only rely upon the idea of biopolitical management; it also aimed at a scientific determination of identity. Erica Lee notes that as late as 1918, medical examiners would conduct extensive "measurements of body parts" in order to determine the age (and thereby the veracity of the life history given in the interrogations) of the immigrants (2003: 211). At this time, the unreliability of this method of measuring was already widely known, but these methods "were nevertheless allowed and even recommended by immigration officials" (p. 211). The method of examination is reminiscent of the much-maligned Bertillon system of identification. This system had been developed by the French researcher and police official Alphonse Bertillon in the nineteenth century for purposes of criminal investigation, and had been introduced to the United States in 1903 in the course of an "internationalization and standardization of police methods" (Sekula 1986: 34) with the goal of ensuring more regularized and reliable standards of selection and rejection in immigration procedures (especially Chinese immigration). The system was based upon biometrical measurements documented by means of photographs and numerical charts, and relied heavily on the insights of modern statistics. In the United States, it had been discontinued in 1906 after protests by the Chinese government over the treatment of immigrants as criminals.

As a consequence of these vehement protests, in the 1910s, anthropometrical practices of identification were no longer foregrounded in immigration procedures. But they were obviously still considered efficient—and their attraction, I argue, consisted in the fact that they relied upon visual and numerical data rather than stories in order to determine a person's identity. The Bertillon system was first promoted as a means of government surveillance in the late nineteenth century in France, in response to the widespread skepticism vis-à-vis working-class mobility: "During the Commune, all city records prior to 1839 had been burned; any Parisian over twenty-two years old was at liberty to invent and reinvent an entirely bogus nativity," writes Allan Sekula in an extensive reflection on the implications of anthropometrical identification (1986: 33-4; see also Torpey 2000: 107-8). The system, which had originally been devised with the goal to "break the professional criminal's mastery of disguises, false identities, multiple biographies, and alibis" (Sekula 1986:27), seemed to lend itself ideally to the purpose of curbing an "extraordinary traffic in false documents" (Sekula 1986: 34; cf. also Cole 2001: 33). The analogies between this original scenario in France and the situation in the United States after the earthquake in San Francisco in 1906 when central municipal buildings and almost all of the city's official records were destroyed are clear. The San Francisco earthquake triggered the paper son system, which in turn led to the establishment of the Angel Island detention center with its tacit reintroduction of biometrical examinations.

Alphonse Bertillon's theories of anthropometrical data gathering were largely forgotten as the less complicated method of identification provided by Francis Galtons system of fingerprinting was being adopted by immigration agencies over the world. The theories rested on different basic assumptions, as Allan Sekula has pointed out (1986: 34), but both share "a new emphasis on the individual criminal body rather than on the generic criminal act," as Simon Cole argued. Of course, this individualization of crime (or the criminal) went hand in hand with a professionalization and standardization of the systems of criminal investigation, the dream of Bertillonage providing "a sort of international language that could transcend national and linguistic boundaries" (Cole 2001: 33). The survival of the biometrical methods of identification "in the operations of the national security state, in the condition of intensive and extensive surveillance that characterizes both everyday life and the geopolitical sphere," as Sekula put it as early as 1986, testifies to the striking and frightening actuality of the measures implemented in France, the United States, and many other countries in the 1880s and 1890s, and thus to the actuality of patterns of thought that also proved central for the organization of Angel Island and the Chinese exclusion laws at large.

It is interesting to see the manifold parallels between the reasoning around biometrics and the melodramatic imagination. The idea of an order underneath all sorts of masks, disguises, false stories, and subterfuges, which needs to be restored, rules supreme in the world of melodrama and in the texts arguing for international cooperation in criminal investigation and immigration management. Alphonse Bertillon himself apparently felt that he had to justify the measures of identification and surveillance with reference to familial rather than political or administrative needs: "Is it not at bottom a problem of this sort that forms the basis of the everlasting popular melodrama about lost, exchanged, and recovered children?" (quoted in Sekula 1986: 34). It seems as if this method of identification was driven from the outset by the simultaneous desire for scientific precision and the longing for a heartfelt, intuitive order: a system of nation-as-family in which the necessity of identification fuses harmoniously with the need for emotional belonging, where self-identification and state classification fall into one. Ironically, of course, on Angel Island and elsewhere, the scientific system of identification was implemented precisely because the rhetoric of national and familial belonging had proven to be vague and unreliable. The system of detention, interrogation, and biometrical examination aimed at getting the family and the nation together again, and to define who belonged where once and for all and without any doubt.

Belonging

Alphonse Bertillon had aimed at establishing a method which would lend scientific solidity to processes of identification. Yet his very own recourse to a melodramatic line of legitimation, imagining his system's use in the healing reunification of families separated by the cruel circumstances of fate, inadvertently points to the limits of his technique. Even though it was quickly appropriated in order to sort criminals "back into general types" (Cole 2001: 57), it does not allow for familial or ethnic classification. Moreover, it is because nativity and nationality do not obviously and unequivocally fall into one that measures such as the ones taken during the French Commune or at Angel Island need to be implemented. The nation, the family, and the individual are not organically related entities, but relational concepts which are predicated on definitions and conceptions subject to change.

The administrators, criminal investigators, and immigration officials at the turn of the twentieth century did not and would not face the consequences of this circumstance. Again it is in a text by Edith Maud Eaton that the para- doxes of the matter at hand are addressed and epitomized. In a short story ironically titled "In the Land of the Free" and first published in 1909, she anticipates the events to come in the period of exclusion—the measures of detention and segregation that Chinese Americans would be subjected to. And this story highlights these events by focusing on the fate of a family in which the conditions of nativity and nationality do not coincide. The story opens with a view on Lae Choo, a Chinese American woman, wife of a merchant and American citizen, who returns to San Francisco from China, where she has given birth to a son. The husband "wished [his] son to be born in [their] country" and his wife "complied with [his] wish" (Eaton 1995: 94), returning to China to give birth, and staying on afterward to take care of the ailing parents of the couple. When she returns to be reunited with her husband and to introduce son and father, they are inadvertently confronted by the customs officers who notice that "there is nothing in the papers that you have shown us—your wife's papers and your own—having any bearing upon the child" (p. 94).

Lae Choo may enter the country, but her son is detained until his identity can be determined, according to the "law of the land" (Eaton 1995: 95) and in disregard of the mothers and the child's pain at being separated. It will take 10 months for mother and son to be reunited and the reunion only comes about through the intervention of a young white lawyer who demands all the family's possessions for his efforts. And when it happens, it is not the happy event the mother was hoping for. The parents are told to pick up their son at the mission nursery school. Dressed in "blue cotton overalls

and white-soled shoes" the little boy reencounters his mother: '"Little One, ah, my Little One!' cried Lae Choo. She fell on her knees and stretched her hungry arms toward her son. But the Little One shrunk from her and tried to hide himself in the folds of the white woman's skirt. 'Go 'way, go 'way!' he bade his mother" (p. 101).

The story's melodramatic ending epitomizes that the discourses of legality and nationality—embodied in the lawyer's economic reasoning—do not coincide with the emotional truth informing family relations. Once it has been determined technically how the melodrama of this "lost... and recovered" child, to use Alphonse Bertillon's words once more, is to be resolved, the child does not feel the family bonds any longer—they have become a mere paper trace. Once more, as in "The Smuggling of Tie Co," Eaton's narration brings to the fore the contradictions that inhere in the political logic of belonging—the fact that identity is not to be determined on the grounds of paperwork and measuring, and that in a world in which such methods abound, fake identities and make-belief autobiographies may very well be more adequate than authenticity and truth.

Here, the mission nursery school represents the place of detention, which becomes, at the same time, a place of forgetting. The "mission woman" that gets Lae Choo's little boy for her explains that he "had been rather difficult to manage at first..., but children so soon forget, and after a month he seemed quite at home" (Eaton 1995: 102). Once the in-between space, the no-man's- land of detention, becomes home, however, and once forgetting replaces the (cultural) memory and the emotional truth of family membership, the very concept of the nation-as-family becomes seriously questionable. At the end of Eaton's story the question whether the little boy is Chinese or American is left precariously pending. Thus, this story's ending resonates strangely with the dilemma formulated in Edith Maud Eaton's autobiographical "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian": "I am different to both of them—a stranger, tho their own child," she writes about her English father and Chinese mother: " 'What are we?' I ask my brother. 'It does not matter, sissy,' he responds. But it does" (p. 222).

"I have no nationality and I am not anxious to claim any. Individuality is stronger than nationality," concluded Edith Maud Eaton bravely in her autobiographical piece (p. 230). The melodramatic ending of "In the Land of the Free" adds a note of doubt to this insight. Individuality, which is forced into relational systems of identification within the modern nation-state, might very well be swallowed up by the powerful rhetoric of nationality and ethnicity, after all (and the very fact that Edith Maud Eaton has been rediscovered as the "Chinese American" author Sui Sin Far is a case in point). While the terms individuality and nationality are hard to reconcile

for Chinese Americans in the early twentieth century, they are just as hard to keep apart, it seems. The politics of exclusion failed, yet the strategies of inclusion were not entirely successful either. Exclusion and inclusion stay in precarious balance, forming a difficult and paradoxical correlation in this history.

Even though the political and the emotional rhetoric and logic of identification refer to and rely upon each other, they are distinctly and differently organized, and—especially in situations that call for a definition of national or familial coherence—clash more often than they coincide harmoniously. Yet these clashes tend to be obscured by the discourses of normalization and regularization that suffuse definitions of nationhood and identity. It is only when the mechanisms of biometrical and "paper" identification are foregrounded and denaturalized (as in Eatons stories) that the logic of concentric circles of belonging—spreading from individual to family to nation—starts to give, and a system of intersections, enclaves, states of exception, and "included exclusion" comes into view which might be so much more adequate to represent the processes of twentieth- (and twenty-first) century (im)migration, nationalization, and identification.

Notes

1. This is exactly how the linguist George Lakoff lays out the trope—for him it works as an immediately accessible figural formation that organizes political thinking to our days unconsciously and almost universally. While I agree that the concepts of family and nation are entangled, especially in an American history of thought, in what follows it will become clear that I understand the trope of the nation-as-family as a much more complicated and ambivalent correlation than Lakoff did, a correlation which raises as many problems as it suggests solutions.
2. On the implications of this logic with respect to a medicalization of gender and sexuality in nineteenth-century thought, see Mayer (1999).
3. For a delineation of this practice see Island, Lai (1980: 8-29), Salyer (1995: 58-68), Hsu (2000: 74-85), and Lee (2003: 189-220).
4. On transnational family arrangements and kinship structures, also see Chen (2000: 145-185).
5. "I did not learn about these things from my own family," writes historian Erica Lee in the introduction to her study on immigration patterns and paper identities, after outlining her own family's intricate involvement in this history (2003: 5). Of course, she is not the only third- or fourth-generation scholar or writer who faced a confusing tangle of fake and true stories—and much silence—when researching her family past. The most famous and popular version of such a search of familial patterns of belonging is doubtlessly laid out in Maxine Hong Kingston's autobiographical novel China Men (1980)—a girl's speculation about

the family background and Americanization of a Chinese father who would not talk.

6. On this dimension of the theme, see Mayer (2005: 123-167). On the modes of transnationality anticipated by the "paper practices," see Ong (1999).
7. On the debates around the other ethnic minorities' challenge to the notion of a uniform and racially homogeneous national family, see, apart from Kaplan (2002), Shklar (1991), Ngai (2004), and the volume Legal Borderlands, Dudziak et al. (2006).
8. Edith Maud Eaton has been cast as a "native informant" in Chinese American research (cf. here Ling 1990; Yin 2006); I will rather regard her as a commentator, somebody who was familiar with certain aspects of the racial politics of the day yet still a linguistic and cultural outsider (Eaton did not speak Chinese and her background differed strongly from average Chinese American immigration histories of her day). For an excellent reflection on Eaton's status and self-fashioning between native informant and reporter, see Ferens (2001: esp. 80-110). Also see White-Parks (1995).
9. Together with the other stories first published in Lummis's magazine, "The Smuggling of Tie Co" was then republished in Edith Maud Eaton's collection of stories, Mrs Spring Fragrance (1995: 11-16).
10. For a reading of the text which focuses on its sexual politics, and goes into a somewhat different direction than my own, see Song (1998).
11. Dominika Ferens has pointed out that "The Smuggling of Tie Co" is one of three thematic exceptions among the stories written by Eaton for Land of Sunshine—and that the general leaning toward more conventional sentimental themes might have had to do with contemporary reader expectations and ascriptions to a writer "using a Chinese byline and specializing in Chinatown ethnography": "Despite her deep interest in interracial relations, in seven of the ten Land of Sunshine stories, Edith represents Chinatown as virtually homogeneous, with barely a hint of the society at large" (2002: 95).
12. "Chinese male outnumbered Chinese female immigrants throughout the exclusion era," writes Erica Lee (2003: 115). This uneven ratio had to do with the sexist tendencies inscribed into the exclusion laws, but was also enforced by the patriarchal Chinese ideology of the day. Also see Chan (1991a).
13. The editors of the collection Island, Lai et al. (1980), point out that the writer seems to have got the directions wrong: "The occupants can see the hospital to the north from windows in the building's north wall. Looking east, the Ft McDowell buildings can be seen. No buildings can be seen from the south wall windows which face the hillside" (70N34).
14. Of course, these structures of surveillance and control were not total and they were countered by Chinese strategies of defiance which attested to the community's agency. These instances of subversive agency anticipate more systematic Chinese American strategies of legal redress, political intervention, lobbying efforts, and other means of protest against discrimination affecting

the Chinese in the United States. Cf. Chen (2000: esp. 186-216), Lee (2003: 111-143), Shah (2001: esp. 120-137), and Salyer (1995: esp. 37-68).

15. Of course, this series of decisions relates to the territories annexed by the United States after the Spanish-American War, and not to Angel Island. But there are clear analogies between the debates around territories " 'belonging to' but 'not a part of the United States', whose inhabitants were neither aliens nor citizens," as Kaplan cites the courts definition of Puerto Rico (Kaplan 2006: 249), and the discussions on the legal grounds of detention or, for that matter, the legal justification for Guantanamo Bay, about which Kaplan writes.
16. On the logic and argumentation of American nativism, see Higham (1988) and Knobel (1996). On this ideology's impact on Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans, see Saxton (1995) and Lee (2003).
17. On the concatenation of nationality and nativity in the emergence of a Chinese nationalist movement, see Goodman (1995); on the ramifications of these developments in the Chinese diaspora in the United States, see Hsu (2000: 124—155) and Chen (2000: 162-185).

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