

- 142 Native-borns call each other brother and sister.
 They live in the American way.
 Holding hands, they say they're off to a picture
 show.
 Actually, they're going to a hotel!
 Enjoying their longings and desires,
 So what if people gossip;
 The two of them entwined in deep passion;
 She may become pregnant, but that's nothing strange!

(一) 土產：土生
 (二) 攬埋：擁抱在一起
 土產稱兄弟。俗例效花旗。
 相同携手話睇戲。實係行去旅館住。
 悅心痴。唔怕人論恥。
 兩家攬埋爽入味。雖然大肚不為奇。

JSGJ II.23a

SEVEN

Nuptial Rhapsodies

According to Cantonese folklore, a man's highest achievement is *dang fo* (*deng ke*), meaning "advancement to the honor roll." Specifically, a man had two opportunities in life to *dang fo*. The first is the *daai dang fo* ("major advancement"), in which he successfully passed the highest level of the imperial examination and was proclaimed the best scholar in the imperial honor roll. This could be achieved only through intellectual pursuits. The other, *siu dang fo* ("minor advancement"), happened on the wedding night, when the groom would finally meet his bride to consummate their marriage. "Major advancement" was a man's top honor in the Confucian society, bringing great prestige and glory to the family name, but few could attain it. "Minor advancement" was more accessible. To the family, it was equally significant, because for a man to continue the family line was an important responsibility. Every man could achieve his "minor advancement" when he got married. The marriage was treated as the most important event

of his life, and it would be duly recorded in the family registry.

Through the social institution of marriage, a man's masculinity was publicly acknowledged and his manhood recognized. Thus, Cantonese folklore places emphasis on man's sexuality, which represents not just his social responsibility to the family but also his transition from son to husband, from childhood to manhood. The wedding night is the testimony of this ascension to manhood.

These Chinatown rhymes on nuptial bliss are an interesting group of writings, given the reality that many of the Chinese immigrants were married but lived without their wives in the United States. In these compositions, the immigrants act out their sexual and marital fantasies through writing, in Western terms, using creative writing as a form of sublimation. By indulging in fantasies about his sexuality on the wedding night, the man is making a declaration of his manhood, despite being deprived of his normal sexual relationship with his wife during his American sojourn. Furthermore, the assumption of a feminine persona in some of the rhymes serves merely to affirm a man's erotic and sexual desires in a marital relationship. However, a few rhymes on this theme contain statements about the practice of polygamy that show a modern Western influence, and recognize marriage as an equal relationship between man and woman.

- 143 Seeing the moon is but an added vexation.
 A full moon brings back memories:
 The Moon Festival, a clamorous celebration;*
 The moon, round and clear, is at its best this evening.
 To the moon I pray:
 Where is the Old Man from the Moon?†
 I have yet to meet a woman of moon-faced charm.
 In a solitary window, the bright moonlight—my spirit
 sinks all the more.

望月添煩惱。月圓就想到。
 期逢賞月聲嘈嘈。皎皎月輪斯宵好。
 對月告。憑誰爲月老。
 月貌佳人唔得倒。^(一)孤窗明月倍神勞。

(一) 唔得倒：不能獲得

JSGJ I.49b

*That is, the "Mid-autumn Festival," the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, a festival of love and reunions. Cf. song 92.

†"Old Man from the Moon" is a mythical deity, a matchmaker.

- 144 Beside the Peony Pavilion,*
 By chance I met a lady visitor.
 Her charm and grace, all beyond pen's description;
 Her dress, white as snowflakes.
 So unique and special.
 I am aroused thinking of her all the time.
 Constantly yearning for her, with passionate
 admiration,
 O, I can't let go of the thought of her; I just can't
 let it go!

牡丹亭畔側。曾見一女客。
 媚娜娉婷難筆畫。衣裳穿着雪花白。
 甚奇特。惹予常思索。
 情殷愛慕無時刻。唔舍得^(一)分唔舍得^(二)。
 (一) 舍得：作「捨得」
 (二) 唔：作「唔」

JSGJ L43b

*A reference to the famous Ming dynasty drama *Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting*) by Tang Xianzu (1550-1616), about the meeting and secret rendezvous of a scholar and a young woman.

- 145 I was hooked by that woman dressed in white.
 My spirit held captive, as if intoxicated.
 At home, sitting by the window, the more I think
 of her, the more captivated I am.
 O, I've fallen in love and can't share with her my
 admiration.
 I constantly think of her,
 I can't sleep the whole night.
 I only wish to meet her again in the garden,*
 Where we will sing happily together in the
 moonlight.

掛住白衣女。令我神如醉。
 歸窓越想越痴愚。爲姐相思難解語。
 記緊佢。一夜唔曾睡。^(一)
 只望花園能復遇。共娘月下樂侶隨。^(二)
 (一) 唔曾：沒有
 (二) 倡：作「唱」

JSGJ L43b

*In Tang Xianzu's *Peony Pavilion* (see song 144), there is a scene entitled "A Sudden Dream in the Garden" in which the young heroine, in her dream, meets the young scholar and they have a pre-marital relationship.

- 146 I am at the age of waiting for a marriage proposal.
Naturally I desire a fine man.
To start, I write a message on a red leaf,* and
enjoin the matchmaker:
My heart admires not just any young dandy, be he
smart and handsome.
Please, set your mind to the task.
Take your time, check him out to total satisfaction.
If he is talented, well versed in the classics and
histories,
I could care less about his appearance.

(一) 靚仔：參看歌#26
(二) 唔拘：不管

僕年將待字。當求美丈夫。
先傳紅葉囑媒婆。靚仔非奴心所慕。
着意做。慢慢查到妥。
倘有英雄深經史。恁時唔拘像如何。

JSGJ II.38b

* "Red leaf" is a symbol used in marriage proposal rituals. It originated in a Tang dynasty tale in which a palace maid wrote a message on a red (maple?) leaf expressing her desire to be married. The leaf floated down the palace canal and was picked up by a young man, who later became her husband.

- 147 A handsome lad, though fair and fine,
Does not compare to a man of talent.
With good looks but no skills, life is nothing but
toil.
But if he is fluent in Chinese speech and American
ways,
And has high ambition,
He can make a living in commerce or government.
His works will win everyone's praises.
Why then judge a man by his hair and skin at such a
moment?

(一) 靚仔：參看歌#26
(二) 番道：西方的風俗及做事方式
(三) 撈：交易來往
(四) 贊：作「讚」

靚仔雖則好。莫如才子高。
有貌無能週世勞。若曉唐文和番道。
志氣。直同官商撈。
假手做來人贊好。恁時何必論皮毛。

JSGJ II.38a

- 148 Finally, we are wed.
 Never before have I shared a word with my man.*
 A stealthy glance at my groom, dazed and delighted;
 O, how I wonder about tonight's happy moment.
 I must be a complete fool—
 Not following the emancipated women,
 Not sharing a bed sooner with my handsome man,
 To wait until today for this paired arrangement!

(一)
 贊：笨

之子始于歸。未曾通一語。
 偷看新郎痴似醉。不知今晚樂何如。
 真係贊。唔學自由女。
 早與佳兒同衾睡。等到今日始成對。

JSGJ I.42a

*In traditional China, newlyweds met each other for the first time after completing the public wedding ceremony. They were often total strangers before that moment since their marriage was arranged by parents through a matchmaker.

- 149 The young man, in joyous song of the peach,*
 The bride's charm radiates under the glow of
 wedding candles.
 Happy their first meeting in the bedroom.
 Tenderly they talk, sharing their hearts.
 The beautiful woman's wish:
 Smilingly, softly, she speaks—
 At midnight, our union is consummated with utmost
 delight;
 Inside the hibiscus tent, my regret is to have waited
 so long to marry.†

桃夭賦之子。花燭艷嬌姿。
 蘭房初會樂怡怡。細把素心談彼此。
 美人意。含笑輕啓齒。
 半夜合歡歡不已。芙蓉帳裡恨歸遲。

JSGJ I.26b

*“Peach” alludes to courtship and nuptial bliss. This usage originates from the Confucian classic *Shi jing*, the first anthology of Chinese poetry.

†“Hibiscus tent” implies the act of love and sexual intimacy, as seen in the Tang narrative poem “Chang hen ge” (“Everlasting Sorrow”) by Bo Juyi (772–846), which depicts the romance of Emperor Ming of Tang (Xuanzong) and his consort Yang Guifei. See song 60.

- 150 Tenderly I share words with Husband,
Pleasantly enjoying the various delights.
The hibiscus tent is filled with happy moments;*
O, why didn't the nuptial bliss take place sooner?
I am as intoxicated as an apple blossom.
In our castle, we sleep entwined.
In union at night, deep in passion, lips meeting
lips,
O, this young woman regrets the belated match.

(一)
着也：爲何

共郎細解語。含笑別樣趣。
芙蓉帳裡樂歡娛。着也。桃夭唔早遇。
海棠醉。紫薇交頸睡。
夜合情濃咀合咀。美人還悔慢成對。

JSGJ 1.42a

*"Hibiscus tent," see song 149.

- 151 A lovely woman, sheltered in a gilded mansion.
A nuptial union, celebrated under the bright lights
of wedding candles.
Furtively, his hands fondle her breasts;
Modestly, she steals a glance at her groom.
Their eyes come together.
Fondly attracted, they loosen their clothes.
Together they sleep, sharing pillow and bed—
O, this is what I want to have; this is truly what I
I want to have!

(一)
格局：儀態外貌

阿嬌藏金屋。洞房鬧花燭。
安排手弄鷄頭肉。淑女偷看郎格局。
兩闌目。機投解衣服。
雙雙共枕同床宿。心所欲兮心所欲。

JSGJ 1.26a

- 152 A beautiful woman, sheltered in a gilded mansion.
 A nuptial union, celebrated under the bright lights
 of wedding candles.
 Together we'd sleep, sharing pillow and bed.
 To my heart's content, I'd caress her tender breasts.
 O, moments such as this--
 I just don't know this joy that I can get.
 Instead I came to live alone in the West
 And betrayed sixteen years of my youthful best.

阿嬌藏金屋。洞房鬧花燭。
 雙雙共枕同床宿。任爾手弄鷄頭肉。
 當此局。都唔嚕納福。
 情願西來單寡獨。負了青春一十六。

JSGJ II.25b

- 153 Of all the joys in life,
 The happiest is the nuptial hymn.
 A young couple, man and wife, consummate their
 conjugal tie.
 A pair of lovebirds, sleeping together, necks
 entwined.
 Eyes meet--
 Neither is accustomed to the dew of clouds and
 rain.*
 She is willing, yet shy; his spirit soars and dances.
 A handsome man with a charming woman, O, what
 would that joy be like?

(一)
 羅：作「羅」

人生歡喜事。最好桃夭賦。
 青年夫婦結絲羅。一對鴛鴦交頸臥。
 眼顧顧。未慣雲雨露。
 欲就還推神飛舞。嬌娘才子樂如何。

JSGJ I.25b

*"Clouds and rain," see song 42.

- 154 Such sensations are second to none:
 Husband and wife indulging in each other's passion.
 Celebrating the marvelous moment in the nuptial
 chamber, under bright wedding candles,
 Shyly she releases the gilded tent-hooks, sharing
 the brocade quilt.
 They act out a new play,
 Truly fascinated.
 The fifth watch strikes at early dawn, hurrying them
 to rise.*
 O, how can the entwined lovebirds ever separate?

風流世莫比。夫妻兩美痴。
 洞房花燭鬧佳期。羞解金扣同錦被。
 演新戲。果然真趣味。
 五鼓相催思早起。鴛鴦交頸也難離。

JSGJ 1.25b

*A night in China was divided into five watches.
 First watch: 7-9 P.M.; second watch: 9-11 P.M.; third
 watch: 11 P.M. to 1 A.M.; fourth watch: 1-3 A.M.; fifth
 watch: 3-5 A.M.

- 155 A nuptial union is a song of joy.
 For the first time I met my blossom of the
 wedding chamber.
 A consummation at night, more exquisite than the most
 gorgeous sight.
 Her smiling profile, so refined.
 O, sweet sixteen.
 Inside the tent, the hibiscus is in full bloom.*
 She sleeps, an apple blossom tired by spring passion.
 At fifth watch she puts on her rouge and magnolia
 cream.†

桃夭歌樂也。初賞洞房花。
 雙雙夜合賽容華。半面含笑真大雅。
 喜破瓜。帳裡芙蓉要。
 春睡海棠情欲罷。玉蘭脂粉五更搽。

JSGJ 1.26b

*"Hibiscus tent," see song 149.

†"Fifth watch," see song 154.

- 156 Clouds and rain meet in the scented bedroom;*
 Immense pleasure, the evening union.
 The nuptial bliss, as chanted in the *Songs*, is the
 utmost joy;†
 A good man and a virtuous wife—perfect harmony.
 It's sheer intoxication;
 Lovebirds begin to open their hearts.
 The apple blossom sleeps well on a warm spring
 day.
 Happy is the song of conjugal harmony within
 the hibiscus tent.‡

蘭房雲雨遇。夜合多情趣。
 桃夭詩詠極歡娛。君子好逑諧淑女。
 素心醉。鴛鴦初解語。
 日暖海棠春足睡。芙蓉帳裡樂唱隨。

JSGJ L25b

*"Clouds and rain," see song 42.

†"That is, the Confucian classic *Shi jing*; its first section consists of folk songs of courtship and marriage.

‡"Hibiscus tent," see song 149.

- 157 Under painted wedding candles, the bride and
 groom unite.
 Of all delights, this is the best.
 Like rain clouds after a prolonged drought;
 Young and strong the groom, lovely and tender
 the bride.
 Within the nuptial chamber,
 Better than a thousand in gold is their wedding bliss.
 With untiring passion, the phoenix turns, the dragon
 whirls.*
 A word to the neighbor's rooster: don't crow too
 early in the morning!

花燭諧伉儷。襟懷最暢快。
 恰如久旱見雲霓。男也丁年女少艾。
 洞房際。風流千金抵。
 倒鳳顛鸞情弗懈。囑語鄰鷄勿早啼。

(一)
抵：值

JSGJ L26a

*Dragon and phoenix represent groom and bride in Cantonese wedding phrases.

- 158 Smiling, we sing to our nuptial union.
 It begins with a poem written on a red leaf.*
 The bliss of love, like fish in water, reaches up to
 the brows;†
 Inside the hibiscus tent, unrestrained is our passion.‡
 A song of the peach.§
 I am in harmony with two delights in the fragrant
 bedroom:
 Tonight, I've finally tasted the scent of rouge and
 blossoms;
 Next year, we will give birth to a son!

含笑歌燕爾。紅葉始題詩。
 合歡魚水樂齊眉。芙蓉帳裏情難已。
 賦桃之。蘭房諧兩美。
 今夕初嘗花粉味。他年預卜產麟兒。

JSGJ I.26b

* "Red leaf," see song 146.

† "Fish and water," see song 130.

‡ "Hibiscus tent," see song 149.

§ "Song of the peach," see song 149.

- 159 Speaking of the fun of having wives:
 You should have at least three or four—
 The slender Feiyin on the left, the plump Yukwaan
 on the right,*
 O, that would be heavenly, even better than
 immortal life.
 Then, most provoking—
 Suddenly a jealous wind starts to blow:
 Number One refuses to take you in; and Number Two
 ignores you.
 It's a hell of a long night in solitary.

講到老婆味。至少要三四。
 左邊燕瘦右環肥。個的風流仙莫比。
 最激氣。酸風立地起。
 大不收留二不理。那時長夜嘆淒其。

(一個的：那般)

JSGJ I.44a

* Allusions to Chinese beauties: Feiyin (Zhao Fei-yan) was a classic slender beauty; Yukwaan (Yang Yuhuan, or consort Yang Guifei) was her plump counterpart.

- 160 I've examined the marriage laws:
 The Western practice is the most civil.
 One man with one woman: happiness and harmony.
 Why in the world do Chinese men take in concubines
 And redeem their favorite prostitutes?
 Lust and greed are an insatiable lot.
 When concubines all fight to butter up the First Wife,
 They'll throw out the husband to sleep with only his
 pillow until the rooster crows.

嘗致婚姻例。最合是泰西。
 一男一女樂和諧。何事華人娶二奶。
 贖老契。貪淫無了賴。
 大小不停爭寵大。拋郎孤枕過鴛啼。

JSGJ L.44b

(一) 二奶：妾
 (二) 老契：姘頭妓女

- 161 One man paired with one woman,
 Love, not jealousy, will prevail.
 For peace and quiet at home, this is the only way.
 If you insist like a tyrant on taking a concubine,
 And indulging in pretty young women,
 How can you avoid your wife's lioness roar? *
 You'll have to put up with her and suffer the pain.
 Had you known what would happen today, how you
 would have regretted your behavior.

一公配一婆。恩愛無嫉妒。
 家室和平要如此。若恃強權娶妾婦。
 小艾慕。難免河東獅。
 斯時忍氣甘受苦。早知今日悔當初。

JSGJ L.44b

* "Lioness roar," see song 129.