

- 117 I've returned to Hong Kong from America,
 With one hundred thousand dollars securely
 wrapped around my waist.
 My hair is long, my face dirty, like a beggar;
 My denim mule clothes are like a net, all torn and
 tattered.*
 I went up to King Fong Restaurant.
 The maître d'hôtel ignored me.
 Then a gentleman in a long gown came over and sized
 me up;
 After tea and tobacco, they even offered me betel nuts.

由美返香港。腰纏十萬方。
 髮長面垢似花郎。(一)穿件騾布如爛網。
 上瓊芳。公廳問唔講。(二)
 長衫客來着眼望。茶煙奉罷又檳榔。
 (一)花：作「化」，化郎：叫化子
 (二)唔講：不說話

JSGJ I.10a

*"Mule clothes" refers to the workingman's garb made famous by the mule-and-spade label of the Levi Strauss Company.

SIX

*Songs of Western Influence
 and the American-borns*

For early Chinese immigrants, immigration to the United States ultimately meant a challenging new life. They had to leave something behind, give up something old, and accept many new things. It was not possible for them to continue to live a pre-immigration existence, no matter how they tried. When time and place change, people naturally change accordingly as a matter of evolution and adaptation.

Although the early immigrants established what they called the "Canton of the West," Chinatown was never the Canton of China. Non-Chinese visitors there found that for all its exotic Asian flavor, there was a familiar American accent to almost everything in Chinatown. Chinese visitors to Chinatown perceived it as an American invention, camouflaged in quasi-Chinese colors. Familiar yet different, Chinatown was authentic to neither culture, because Chinatown was (and is) an American ethnic community, the home of Chinese immigrants, not just a replica of some city in China. As a

community, it has made numerous adjustments in its way of life and cultural perceptions, and has emerged with its own unique identity, and its residents, with their own perspective on matters surrounding them.

The rhymes in this chapter illustrate the early Chinese immigrants' responses to and interpretations of life in their new home. They were eager to experiment with the new world and to re-evaluate the old one. The sensibility and perspective on life that emerged do not represent a melting pot mentality—a mere combination of the old and new. Instead, theirs was the product of a continuous fusion of the East and West—a brand-new, independent viewpoint based on the experiences gained from living in America among a variety of ethnic groups. These rhymes address the many cross-cultural matters that challenged them as immigrants and reveal a characteristic Chinatown perspective on the issues. Their views on personal wealth, family lineage responsibilities, and other ethical obligations are a re-examination of their own traditional cultural heritage in the light of living in a new environment, punctuated with a new priority of values. Their opinions regarding the issues of equal rights for women and freedom of love and marriage show a recognition of the issues from both sides. They were able to see what they considered as flaws in both cultures' outlooks. More importantly, their viewpoints on the issue of Westernization dramatized the significance of the issue of identity to the Chinatown community. Chinese Americans recognized the importance of accepting the new, because it was their newly acquired identity. At the same time, they also wanted to balance the change by holding on to the old values they brought with them from China.

Many immigrants were alarmed and disheartened, however, when they witnessed the extremes of the younger generation's new pattern of behavior. Their criticism of the younger generation was not so much a display of anti-Western sentiment as dismay that the younger generation was so influenced by what they perceived as vices of the American culture. To the immigrant generation, these vices represented the ignorant, uncivilized side of the Western lifestyle. Ignorance and incivility were the causes of numerous discriminatory practices in America which had victimized them as immigrants. Seeing such vices in the younger generation, the immigrants voiced their disapproval by recalling the values of the old country.

- 118 Since I left South China,
I have changed my clothes to the Western style.
I seek praise for being neat and fashionable
Though I have yet to speak with an American
tongue.
Smart in appearance—
Who dares to call me an ignorant fool?
A loose gown with wide sleeves brings only
scurrilous remarks
And it gets you nowhere, even if you are modern
in education.

(一)花語：花旗話，即英語
(二)未噲：還不會
(三)光：光鮮
(四)雲態：土氣傻瓜
(五)收庄：不能作主持

自從離兩廣。服色轉西裝。
爭贊齊整兼在行。花語雖然未噲講。
週身光。誰敢話雲態。
闊袖長袍招排謗。縱深新學亦收庄。

JSGJ L11a

- 119 Before your social status is revealed,
You are first judged by the brilliance of your
clothes.
No need to boast about whatever talents you might
have—
Nowadays, in any situation, the exterior is what
counts the most.
My fellow countrymen:
One day we might celebrate a happy occasion.
But if you don't have something presentable to cover
your birthday suit,
Who will choose you to propose a toast in front of
everyone?

未識身貴賤。首辨服媿妍。
遑論胸中何本領。皮相如今到處然。
同鄉井。或時有喜慶。
若無楚楚來蓋面。飲酒誰推汝在前。

JSGJ L11a

- 120 With a mere glance at the fur coat,
 Courtesy and hospitality are accorded in earnest,
 Regardless of one's vulgarity or sophistication;
 So what if you are learned and civil?
 Who is to know?
 A blue garb is simply despicable.
 So, even if you face poverty and an empty rice bowl,
 You must by all means put up a front with a few
 items of smart apparel.

(一) 睇下：放眼一看
 (二) 看唔起：看不起
 (三) 冲：作「充」；參看歌*113
 (四) 光棍皮：光鮮外表(衣服)

睇下副皮鼠。接待禮頻施。
 不分庸與濁清奇。縱使談書和識理。
 有誰知。藍襖看唔起。
 寧可抵窮無米煮。要冲幾件光棍皮。

JSGJ I.10b

- 121 Spring returns to the continent.
 Soothing is the misty scenery.
 Flowers by the hundreds in red, by the thousands in
 purple, all noble and rich;
 Everywhere, towers and terraces, all decorated with
 brilliant lanterns.*
 It's a delight to the heart.
 I sightsee in the Golden City,[†]
 Eyes darting around, spirit dashing about, what
 genuine joy—
 Entertaining myself, I have forgotten about going
 home.

(一) 金城：金門城，即舊金山

春回大陸地。烟景堪人宜。
 萬紫千紅花富貴。處處樓臺燈色美。
 爽心機。看遍金城裡。
 游目騁懷真趣味。風光娛我却忘歸。

JSGJ I.32a

*The Lantern Festival is the fifteenth day of the first lunar month; it concludes the Lunar New Year Festival.

[†]"Golden City" is short for Golden Gate City, i.e., San Francisco.

- 122 I have a bellyful of grudges and frustrations.
Where can I go to unwind?
I have heard about the many scenic spots in the park;
Leisurely, I stroll along the path that lies before me
Looking around.
Indeed this makes me forget all my troubles.
They say running amidst flowers is not a proper
thing to do;
But you can get rid of your worries only by
having fun.

牢騷裝滿肚。何處可消磨。
聞道園林景色多。盡向前途聊散步。
首四顧。能忘心事苦。
漫謂尋芳非正務。釋憂須在樂中圖。

JSGJ II.16a

- 123 A cool breeze, a warm day,
A leisurely walk around the New Garden.*
Willows green, peaches red, all are marvelous
sights;
I don't mind the fragrant paths leading a
distance away.
All the more delighted,
I wander along, to the east, to the west.
Each blade of grass and every blooming flower
can cheer a troubled mind.
O, why not take it easy and enjoy everything all
over again?

臨風和日暖。舉履步新園。^(一)
柳綠桃紅色好觀。逐漸不嫌芳徑遠。
益喜歡。東隨西蕩轉。
草草花花能解悶。無妨輪復子細看。^(二)

(一) 新園：新公園，即金門公園
(二) 子：作「仔」

JSGJ I.31a

*“New Garden”—a term for Golden Gate Park used by the Chinese in San Francisco during the 1900s.

- 124 School lets out for the summer.
 No need to go home right away.
 Bustling are the parks and museums;
 So, hurry and rent a bicycle*
 Just to ride around.
 Start pedaling, roll down the streets!
 It's soothing and pleasing to the soul, a truly
 dashing experience.
 But my companions tease me about what a big
 show-off I am.

學堂放暑假。未可遽回家。
 公園博物院幾繁華。快倩自由車一架。
 即管駕。動機隨街下。
 淑性陶情真消灑。同人漫笑我爲沙。^(一)

(一) 沙：沙塵；炫耀自己

JSGJ II.16b

*The bicycle is called a "foot-pedaled free vehicle" (*geukdaap jiyauche*) and the automobile, "engine-propelled free vehicle" (*geidung jiyauche*). Since the original gives simply *jiyauche*, it could be either a bicycle or an automobile. The subjects here are students, so bicycle appears to be a more suitable rendition.

- 125 A son is not totally dependable,
 The toil of raising him is all but futile.
 Blood kin becoming strangers in the streets
 is not at all a strange sight;
 That's the practice, especially in Europe and
 America.
 Each one flies his own way.
 Liberty is not concerned with filial piety.
 You should save enough for later while you're
 still able;
 Spare yourself from suffering cold and hunger
 when you are old.

男兒不足恃。劬勞膜外置。
 途人骨肉不爲奇。風氣何況尤歐美。
 各自飛。自由忘孝義。
 當逞及時壽私己。免至臨老抵寒飢。

JSGJ I.45b

- 126 American ways are very extreme.
 This worn writing brush cannot reveal them
 all.
 Just let me show you one ridiculous example
 in brief,
 And I must warn you, gentlemen, before you
 die of shock from hearing this news:
 There was a lawless shrew—
 She bullied and humiliated her inept husband;
 She divorced him, seized and sold the family
 property;
 Then, she openly found and married another man!

(一) 細：作「晒」；唔晒：不完

歐美風俗厲。禿筆寫唔細。
 舉彼荒唐事略提。恐令男界聞驚斃。
 不法妻。欺凌愚拙婿。
 分拆還佔家產賣。公然另擇別郎婦。

JSGJ 11.30a

- 127 The emancipated women are the most shameful;
 Their mouths are filled with foreign speech.
 They loiter around with men day and night,
 everywhere,
 Showing no respect for the husbands they married.
 They are out of control.
 How can a decent man challenge such a woman?
 He resorts to remonstrating with kind and wise
 words;
 Pity no shrews can appreciate such kind intent.

(一) 同人：跟別人
 (二) 唔受拘：不受約束

醜極自由女。滿口泰西語。
 日夜同人遊各處。不看良人在眼內。
 唔受拘。純夫難抗拒。
 惟有善言來教作。惜乎潑婦不知趣。

JSGJ 1.37b

- 128 Morality is despised: too stiff and confining.
 The charming girl is spoiled beyond control.
 She soars high, wanting to be equal to man,
 Casting away chastity, treating propriety with
 contempt.
 If two hearts are in agreement,
 She will consent to marry a man.
 She claims to be civilized, following the Western
 ways.
 Well, we may as well forget about eating the roasted
 pig.*

道德嫌拘泥。嬌娃縱莫制。
 雌飛直欲與雄齊。守貞翻嗤循古禮。
 兩心契。便許婚為婿。
 謬託文明遵西例。燒豬吃否不須提。

JSGJ II.1a

*In Cantonese wedding customs, the roasted pig symbolizes the bride's virginity. After the marriage is consummated, the groom's family sends a roasted pig to the bride's family in recognition of her virginity. Otherwise, the bride's chastity is in doubt and disputes follow.

- 129 I married an emancipated woman,
 Who flexes her tigress might.
 What can I do about harmony in the bedroom?
 She has no fear of lectures from the pillow side.
 For her, they are so much wind.
 She talks back all the more.
 It's a repeat of the lioness roaring at the eastern
 riverbank.*
 O, how did that Gwaiseung ever have any fun?†

娶着自由女。拓張脂虎威。
 蘭房不睦若何如。角枕教訓毫不懼。
 當作吹。還重口嘴嘴。
 獅吼河東再復過。季常那有樂歡娛。

(一) 口嘴嘴：頂撞多說話

JSGJ II.35a

*"Lioness' roar at the eastern riverbank" alludes to a wife's outrage at and domination over her husband, usually seen as negative in the man's viewpoint.

†Gwaiseung (Chen Jichang) is a legendary henpecked husband who lived in fear under the ruthless dictates of his wife.

- 130 A Chinese woman follows Western ways,
 Accepting none of her husband's remonstrations,
 O, how can there be the conjugal harmony of fish
 and water?*
- She absolutely disdains the Three Classics and
 the Six Rites.[†]
 Flexing her status and her might,
 Ignoring her notorious reputation,
 She puts on strange and colorful clothes, acting
 cute and charming;
 She would trade her flesh to make a living.

華婦行西例。概不受夫制。
 怎能魚水得和諧。絕念三書和六禮。
 倚權勢。弗顧名聲壞。
 服色異裝賽俏儷。甘將皮肉作生涯。

JSGJ II.23a

*"Fish and water" alludes to a perfect marital relationship.

[†]The "Three Classics" were the three major classics for Chinese women to cultivate a virtuous womanhood: *Nü jie* (Regulations for Women), *Nü lunyu* (Woman's Analects), and *Neixun* (Domestic Lectures); the "Six Rites" were the six proper steps to follow in a traditional marriage arrangement, from initial proposal to wedding ceremony.

- 131 These young women, with their rouge-darkened
 brows,
 At last, they're all freed from their confining boudoirs.
 No longer needing matchmakers to arrange their
 marriages;
 They go out together, hand-in-hand, seeking out
 handsome men.
 They are all lovely,
 Endowed with sensuous charms.
 From afar, I thought they were *peipa* girls;*
 Who would have guessed they are actually fine
 maidens!

這樣紅粉黛。深閨特別開。
 終身大事不須媒。攜手同行尋覓仔。
 令人愛。大有風情在。
 遠觀疑是琵琶妹。
 (一) 覷仔：參看歌第
 (二) 琵琶妹：歌妓、指妓女

JSGJ II.3a

*A *peipa* (*pipa*) girl is a song girl for hire, an entertainer. Usually the term refers to a prostitute trained to play the stringed musical instrument to entertain her patrons.

- 132 The oppression of women has been around for a long, long time.
 So many women live in sorrow.
 Progress and civilization are gradually removing the restrictions.
 So, let's stretch out and free our minds; no more suffocation!
 Wisdom unfolds,
 - Acquiring knowledge of East and West through education.
 Equality has been won, and must be maintained.
 How can we tolerate the confines of those dated moral conventions?

閨閣專制耐。多少美人哀。
 進化文明遂撤裁。舒暢胸懷靡窒碍。
 智慧開。學堂通中外。
 博得平權態度在。不堪閹範守從來。

JSGJ II.3a

- 133 We are all charming and refined;
 We don't submit ourselves to oppression.
 Sisters, let's have a good time together;
 Who'll dare criticize us for wearing different and colorful clothes?
 What's there to fear?
 Let's hang around here and there, everywhere.
 We'll ignore the street gossip and slanderous remarks;
 We are all as pure as white jade, without a blemish whatsoever.

我等嬌姿雅。專制不從他。
 何妨姊妹共繁華。服色異裝誰敢話。
 怕也呀。縱橫到處要。
 弗管街談謗毀也。儂如白璧本無瑕。

(一) 話：批評斥責
 (二) 怕也：怕什麼

JSGJ II.3a

- 134 In all earnestness, I speak to all my sisters:
 Why be so easily discouraged?
 From now on, superior talents will arise among
 us women;
 Men and women will have equal rights, and that
 will not change!
 Won't that be wonderful?
 A life without oppression!
 We can choose our own mate, be he a wise man
 or a fool.
 Even our parents can't interfere with us anymore!

(一)
 阻唔來：阻止不了

敬告衆姊妹。何必心先灰。
 從今巾幗起高才。男婦平權無更改。
 得意哉。身處專制外。
 夫婿智愚隨我採。縱然爹媽阻唔來。
 (一)

JSGJ II.2a

- 135 Following the practice of the Western countries,
 I am free to make my marriage choice.
 I cheer that the obsolete rituals are abolished.
 No longer can matchmakers manipulate our lives.
 It's a brand new world.
 I am married in a civilized way.
 I have found a good husband on my own, as I have
 wished.
 Our hearts and views are at one, our brows beam
 with joy.

(一)
 儼：作「儼」

取法泰西例。隨我結夫妻。
 革除古禮實歡懷。免使媒婆來舞弊。
 新世界。文明諧伉儷。
 在己如意迷佳婿。同心同德樂眉齊。

JSGJ II.2b

- 136 Living in this Flowery Flag Nation,
 Marriage is by our own decision.
 The laws don't let even our parents break us
 apart—
 A pair of mandarin ducks or two entwined trees.*
 Remember this firmly:
 We have secretly vowed our matrimony.
 Someday, as we sing in harmony in our bedroom,
 We'll laugh that we were way ahead of our time.

身旅花旗地。婚姻自主持。
 例非父母可折離。比翼鴛鴦連理樹。
 記復記：秦晉私定矣。
 他日唱隨綉閣裡。解嘲同話早知機。

JSGJ II.32b

* "Mandarin ducks" and "entwined trees" allude to conjugal happiness.

- 137 What a batch of lousy broads,
 All without proper upbringing.
 They hustle in the doorways, their gold teeth on
 parade;
 Day and night, always going to the picture show.
 They are fearless.
 They laugh with lust and speak the barbarian tongue.
 With men, they are experts at fooling around.
 Alas, their dissipation is shameful to our China.

(一) 爛辰：淫賤女子；責罵女性的
 粗俗台山方言
 (二) 乜唔怕：什麼也不怕
 (三) 番話：外國語，指英語

佢班爛辰^(一)。概不入教化。
 門前賣俏演金牙。朝夕時常睇影畫。
 乜唔怕^(二)。淫笑講番話^(三)。
 專與男人去遊耍。荒唐羞辱我中華。

JSGJ II.1a

- 138 The beautiful lass, an American-born,
 A barbaric little princess.
 She follows the Western example and lives the
 American way;
 She doesn't accept her parents' strict discipline.
 Harboring high ideals,
 She chooses her own mate.
 Falling in love with one who shares her likes,
 She agrees to have sex with him before picking out
 the wedding day.

佳人生在美。便作小蠻姬。
 倚爲西例效花旗。不受爹娘嚴管理。
 立志氣。選擇從自己。
 愛個相行情與義。約同交合訂婚期。

JSGJ II.1b

- 139 A gorgeous girl, of marriageable age, waiting for a
 proposal,
 Pretending to believe in Jesus' gospel.
 She falls head over heels for a pretty-faced young
 lad;
 They stroll together, hand-in-hand; their infatuation
 is mutual.
 Imitating the barbarian women,
 She plays house with him at her pleasure.
 Her parents might be furious, but what does she
 care;
 She wants a dandy, not her parents to interfere.

阿嬌年待字。假話信耶穌。
 情牽靚仔好頭顱。攜手同行相愛慕。
 效蠻姑。隨意做夫婦。
 縱有爹娘由佢怒。專制唔受搵登徒。

JSGJ II.2a

- 140 My heart belongs to a handsome young lad.
 We exchange messages in English letters.
 Sixteen is a peach blossom that's just about to bud;
 O, how I long to share his pillow!
 Lips meeting,
 Like the union of Cowherd and Weaving Maid.*
 The passion of clouds and rain is thick as glue.[†]
 We make another date to meet in the evening after
 an interlude.

(一)
 番信：英文書信

靚仔奴心遂。番信寄通語。
 二八桃花初開蕊。但得與他同枕睡。
 咀合咀。儼然牛女會。
 雲雨情濃如膠水。約定黃昏再復回。

JSGJ II.32b

*In Chinese mythology, the Heavenly Queen Mother separated the celestial couple, the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid, because their infatuation interfered with their jobs. They were given the opportunity to have a reunion once a year at the Milky Way, on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month.

[†]"Clouds and rain," see song 42.

- 141 All dolled up, strolling along the street.
 She's so elegant and sweet!
 She dresses half Chinese, half American,
 She ties her loose temple hair with a bright silk
 ribbon.
 She shows her fashion expertise,
 Not her feminine disposition.
 Women nowadays are different from those in the past;
 They follow their own preferences now in choosing a
 husband.

(一) 扮靚：打扮漂亮
 (二) 的當：適合潮流

扮靚遊街巷。娉婷的有當。
 半成華派半西裝。鬢尾鬆鬆綢艷綁。
 演在行。坤儀全不講。
 綉閣世風今異往。任隨己意選檀郎。

JSGJ II.1a

- 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) 土產稱兄弟。俗例效花旗。
 相同攜手話睇戲。實係行去旅館住。
 悅心痴。唔怕人論恥。
 兩家攬埋夾入味。雖然大肚不為奇。

(二) 土產：土生
 攬埋：擁抱在一起

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