Gold Mountain Dreams: Classical-Style Poetry from San Francisco Chinatown

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I. Introduction

It has been noted that poetry has received "much less critical attention" than prose fiction in the study of Chinese American literature, even though a rich poetic output does exist and a separate study would be required to do it justice.[1] The situation of classical-style poetry is worse when compared to poetry in English written by Chinese Americans. It is basically ghettoized in Chinatowns, just as the voices of early Chinese immigrants went unheard and ignored by American society. Apart from the two important corpuses of poems produced by early Chinese immigrants—the Angel Island poems and *Jinshan geji* 金山歌集 (Songs of Gold Mountain), the activities of Chinese traditional poetry societies (*shishe* 詩社) and the vast quantity of classical-style verse published in the United States have yet to be made known and discussed.[2]

A few examples may illustrate the neglect of overseas classical-style poetry. Except for thirteen translated pieces of the Angel Island poems selected for inclusion in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, no apposite publication anthologizes any classical-style poem. *Chinese American Poetry* (unsurprising because only English language poems are selected), and *Haiwai huaren zuojia shixuan* 海外華人作家詩選 (Poetry of overseas Chinese writers), a collection of Chinese vernacular poetry written by writers who immigrated to or once stayed in foreign countries, especially the United States, contain no classical-style poems.[3]

The subject suffers from similar neglect in scholarly studies in both Chinese and English. In the first chapter of Xiao-huang Yin's *Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s*, for instance, only a few pages are about the Angel Island poems.[4] The rest of the book focuses on prose fiction entirely, giving the impression that poetry (either in Chinese or English, classical or vernacular forms) produced by Chinese American writers thereafter is not important.[5] Scholars in Mainland China, like their colleagues in the United States, have also focused much of their attention on fiction produced by Chinese American writers, while their discussion on

classical-style poetry is again limited to the Angel Island poems and the *Songs of Gold Mountain*.[6]

The absence of classical-style poetry from the general scope of Chinese American literature is also apparent in the construction of a modern Chinese literary history in China. The genre has been considered obsolete since the success of the May Fourth Movement and, if studied, is usually allotted to the polemical area called *jindai wenxue* 近代文學 (literature from the late Qing up to about 1930s), even if some of the poems were written beyond that time frame.[7] As I have shown, scholarly studies and the revival of composing classical-style poetry after the Cultural Revolution point to a new interest in the genre.[8] Like a wandering soul, however, it still does not have a place in the pantheon of *xiandai wenxue* 現代文學 (modern literature), which is reserved for vernacular forms only.[9] In any case, the exclusion of the genre from the standard repertoire of Chinese American literature seems to be a reflection of how cultural and literary changes in China have affected literary historians and critics in America.

Readership and language barriers also hinder classical-style poetry from gaining a more important place in Chinese American literature.[10] General Chinese readers either do not have the ability to read Classical Chinese or are not interested. The Angel Island poems and the *Songs of Gold Mountain* are known to scholars because of their significance as the origin of Chinese American literature, and to Anglophone scholars only because they have been translated into English.[11] Other works remain largely unread even if they have been published in local Chinese newspapers and in book form. Furthermore, many of these newspapers are lost, making it difficult for a more thorough study.[12]

Just as the reading of the Angel Island poems and the *Songs of Gold Mountain* can enhance our understanding of the hopes and despairs, life and dreams of early Chinese immigrants in America, the study of classical-style poetry outside these two bodies of work should be able to serve a similar purpose (all of the writers of classical-style poetry within the purview of my research are, like the Angel Island and *Gold Mountain* poets, first-generation immigrants). Moreover, in the process of excavating unexplored documents, one can also perhaps enrich and reshape the general conception of Chinese American literature, and from a dialogical perspective, reconsider the current discourse of the field and the critique of Chinese American writers.

In addition to description and explanation of Chinese experiences in the United States, the search for a cultural and ethnic identity has been always the main concern of Chinese (as well as Asian) American literature since the civil rights movement of the 1960s.[13] This is particularly well-reflected in Chinese-language writing since the 1960s. Its writers are mostly new-

comers to America and still deeply associated with their own roots while attempting to integrate into American society. Their themes and subject matter also set them apart from American-born Chinese writers who write in English. While the latter are said to be more concerned about issues such as generation conflicts and their image as individuals in mainstream America, Chinese-language writers tend to deal more with the hardship and struggle of daily life in their new place and immigrant sensibilities such as "the agony of displacement, the dilemma of assimilation and alienation."[14] These new mid-twentieth-century immigrants also manifest stronger adherence to, or exhibit a sense of pride in, their Chinese heritage, at times using it as a form of literary inspiration and emotional support, while freely commenting on politics and current affairs of China.[15] The classical-style poetry they write similarly embodies these characteristics and at the same time demonstrates its own unique social and cultural attributes that are absent from other types of writing. These can be observed from the genre's literary tradition both in China and in America and the poets' mentality and authorial devices in their descriptions of American society and their life experiences.

This paper attempts to shed light on some characteristics of the genre through the study of classical-style poems published in Chinese newspapers in San Francisco Chinatown.[16] I hope to show that classical-style poetry, although imagined by some as "old-fashioned," was, and still is, written in overseas Chinese communities. For the practitioners, the form is not just a literary pursuit or pastime but also a means of identity construction and cultural expression, a way to demonstrate and preserve their sense of being Chinese on foreign soil. The use of classical language to describe modern, Western society also prompts us to think: how can these two seemingly discordant elements be brought together, and what kind of startling effects or new features would be created by this "clash" of civilizations?

In the following discussion I first provide a historical review of literary activities in San Francisco Chinatown and classical-style poetry written by early Chinese immigrants. Next, based on the newspaper clippings in the Yuk Ow Collection and Him Mark Lai Papers, archived at the Ethnic Studies Library of the University of California at Berkeley, I examine some of the major themes seen in poems published in San Francisco's Chinese newspapers. There are two literary issues that cannot be well-reflected in these archives and must wait for further studies of other source materials. The first is the writing styles of individual poets, or schools of poets if they existed. As the works in the archives do not focus on any particular writers (indeed quite a few of them only use pen names, and many authors' backgrounds cannot be identified), my paper does not explore personal or group collections that contain significant numbers of works by named,

individual poets.

The second issue that cannot be addressed adequately at present is the general historical evolution of classical-style poetry writing within a span of some one hundred years in North America; such a survey can only be achieved by wide-ranging examination of poetry collections and newspapers published in specific periods. That said, my preliminary study of Chinese newspapers shows that classical-style poetry writing in the United States can be divided into four stages. The first is before the Anti-Japanese War, when Chinese immigrant poets mostly considered themselves outsiders in American society. Although disappointment over American life is not difficult to find, there are many other topics one can see in their works, including travel poems and poems about women. The second stage is during the Anti-Japanese War and the following Civil War between the Communists and the Kuomintang. Poetry in this period is marked by a very strong propagandist color, either protesting the Japanese invasion of China, expressing the hope of recovering lost territory, or during the Civil War, accusing the Communists or the Nationalists along with their US government allies depending on the political stance of the writer. Apparently, works in this period are of uneven literary quality, though very passionate in emotion. The third stage is from the Communist takeover in 1949 until the end of Cultural Revolution in 1976, when the number of works in newspapers was greatly reduced. This reduction was perhaps caused by many poets' return to China or by the newspapers' decisions to scale back the publication of classical-style poetry as it was no longer favored by general readers. The content is again highly political, with the left-wing and right-wing poets continuing to lampoon opposite parties. Those who published in right-wing newspapers, like their colleagues in Taiwan, all too often indulged in dreams of recovering the Mainland, or depicting how disastrous it was under Communist rule during the Cultural Revolution. The fourth stage is from the 1980s to the present. Coinciding with the revival of composing classical-style poetry in China and the influx of new immigrants to the United States, several poetry societies took turns to emerge in New York Chinatown. The leaders of these societies were particularly vigorous in calling for submission of poems from all around the world, especially China, to be published in New York's Chinese newspapers regularly. Tens of thousands of poems have since been produced, making New York Chinatown a "center" of classical-style poetry writing, while poetry activities in San Francisco Chinatown have paled in comparison. There are many different types of subject matter written in this period, but the most conspicuous one is perhaps the poems exchanged between poetry societies or fellow society members (*chouzeng shi* 酬贈詩). This type of poetry is rather celebratory and self-contented in tone, perhaps

due to the fact that living conditions of the Chinatown poets were improved and that many of them are retired seniors.

From the works examined in this study, I hope to convey a sense of how some Chinese poets portray American culture and society as well as themselves through traditional poetic form.

II. Historical Review

In the mid-nineteenth century, with the influx of Chinese laborers into California to work as gold miners and in other low-skill professions, together with Chinese merchants, traders and providers of services and supplies, San Francisco (nicknamed "Gold Mountain" by the Chinese) quickly saw the establishment of the first Chinatown in the United States.[17] Since then, this ghettoized community not only had become a haven for Chinese immigrants, where they could find housing, employment, social and educational services and business opportunities, but also developed into a cultural and literary center for Chinese Americans. *Kim Shan Jit San Luk* 金山日新錄 (Golden Hill News), the first Chinese-language weekly newspaper in North America, for example, was founded in San Francisco Chinatown in 1854.[18] In fact, before 1924, the only four Chinese daily newspapers in America, including *Chung Sai Yat Po* 中西日報 (China-West Daily), which is said to have frequently printed literary works such as prose, fiction and poetry, were all published in San Francisco Chinatown.[19] Also found here were Chinese-language schools, bookstores, different types of cultural and literary organizations (including poetry societies) as well as couplet-writing and poetry contests, all showing a highly literate side of Chinatown. This contrasts sharply with the popular stereotype that it was a "den of filth and sin," with gambling, opium, and prostitution frequently cited as its three vices.[20]

It is said that from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, poetry writing in San Francisco Chinatown was as active as in China. Many leaders of *huiguan* 會館 (clan or district associations and social institutions) were well-versed in classical texts and poetry.[21] The arrival of the highly prominent poet Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848-1905), who was appointed Chinese consul general to the United States from 1882 to 1885, further enhanced the literary activities in Chinatown. 1882 was also the year when U.S. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, prohibiting the immigration of Chinese laborers and the naturalization of Chinese residents.[22] Huang shouldered great responsibility to ensure the welfare and safety of Chinese citizens in California, and reportedly his experience dealing with the American government was not a happy one.[23] Yet the toil of his duty did not hamper his enthusiasm in organizing and encouraging "elegant gatherings" (*yaji* 雅集) of poets. A poetry society called *Jinshan lianyu* 金

山聯玉 (Linked Jade of Gold Mountain) was formed, attracting also men of letters from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, to join.[24] This type of literary society, like other forms of social institutions in Chinatown, was a continuation of similar organizations found in China.[25] A dozen poetry societies continued to flourish afterward, including Xiaopeng Shishe 小蓬詩社 (Paradise Poetry Club), Tong Wen She 同文社 (Associates of Letters), and Wen Hua She 文華社 (Literary Splendor Society). On several occasions they composed over one hundred poems, and they frequently mailed invitations to hundreds or even thousands of potential participants from other Chinese communities in North and South America to compete in poetry and couplet-writing contests.[26]

Interestingly, the launch and eventual success of the Literature Revolution in China did not seem to alter the literary scene in San Francisco Chinatown. Classical-style prose and poetry was still preferred to vernacular writing, largely due to the fact that Chinatown's literati "were mostly traditionally educated Cantonese," who had little or no interaction with the non-Cantonese literary reformers. Moreover, as Marlon K. Hom rightly points out, the idea of a "wholesale Westernization" of China proposed by reform leader Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) also went against the Chinatown literati's wish to safeguard Chinese tradition and cultural heritage in which classical-style writing was no doubt an important part. It was not until the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War in the 1930s and the rise of Marxist ideology in China that literary practice in Chinatown gradually began to change.[27] Liu Boji describes the "conservativeness" of the Chinatown residents as follows:

> Before the Anti-Japanese War, though it was a time of economic recession and difficult to make a living, [Chinatown residents] still preserved Chinese literary practice. Kitcheners and coolies could still read and chant poetry; teachers and learned scholars reveled in their own works. Articles in newspapers were all written in classical Chinese. Keen enthusiasm for the rumination of phrases and wordings was common.[28]

Such a full participation in classical literature from different social strata was no exaggeration, as still witnessed in today's poetry societies in San Francisco and New York Chinatowns.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Angel Island poems and the two-volume *Songs of Gold Mountain* not only stand out as the epitome of classical-style poetry produced in San Francisco but have also attained canonical stature in Chinese American literature. Since they have been well studied, I will only point out some of their main features here. The former were

written between the 1910s and1930s by early Chinese immigrants detained on Angel Island, California, and many of the poems have been compiled and translated by Him Mark Lai and his colleagues.[29] These detainees had to go through harsh medical examinations and interrogations before they were allowed to set foot on American soil, and waiting periods could last from weeks to even two years.[30] Segregated and ill-treated in detention barracks, some immigrants, mostly anonymous and perhaps all male, vented their frustrations by inscribing or carving poetry on the walls of the barracks. Imbued with homesickness, resentment, self-pity, anger, and loneliness, the one hundred and thirty pieces now preserved are straightforward in tone and simple in diction, making their messages even more poignant and blunt.[31] Their historical significance lies both in the fact that they are some of the earliest compositions by Chinese immigrants and that they are written in pencil, ink, or carved on the walls like the traditional *tibishi* 題壁詩 (poetry inscribed on walls) or even graffiti, as if to present a monument of the hardship suffered by the immigrants, who were "denied the right to write history."[32] The literary quality of these poems in general is not very high. Many pieces violate the rules of rhyme and tone required in regulated poetry (*gelü shi* 格律詩), and many lack the stylistic sophistication and poetic craftsmanship of an adept writer.[33] Yet, from a different angle, they still serve as strong evidence that, when facing immense challenge and difficulty, classical-style poetry is a convenient and effective tool for ordinary Chinese people to manifest their innermost feelings and ethnic identity. Through the use of shared diction, phrases, and allusions in their works, the immigrant writers, detained on the island at different times, were also able to provide spiritual support to each other in a hostile environment.

The two volumes of the *Songs of Gold Mountain*, consisting of 1,640 pieces in vernacular rhymes in the Cantonese folk song format known as *sishiliu zi ge* 四十六字歌 (forty-six syllable songs), were published in San Francisco Chinatown in 1911 and 1915 respectively. But the songs were not known to academia until Marlon K. Hom selected and translated 220 pieces in 1987. Hom divided these pieces into eleven categories, with emphasis on the authors' lamentations of their unpleasant experiences in America.[34] The language of the songs is a mixture of colloquial expressions and classical poetic diction, and like the Angel Island poems, literary quality varies. The use of the folksong mode also indicates that the authors either were not literarily refined or did not treat their works as seriously as those written in the standard, more prestigious *shi* 詩 or *ci* 詞 poetic genres, which require more stringent prosodic observation.[35] Nevertheless, these songs share similarities with much of *shi* and *ci* poetry in terms of sentiment, subject matter, and style. Besides topics such as the bitterness and disillusionment of immigrant life (which draws most of the attention of literary critics and

historians), one popular theme, found also in the *shi* poetry of San Francisco Chinatown, is the "exoticism" of American life and its influence on new generations of Chinese women. For example, one song criticizes the behavior of Westernized women as follows:

The emancipated women are the most shameful;	醜極自由女
Their mouths are filled with foreign speech.	滿口泰西語
They loiter around with men day and night, everywhere,	日夜同人遊各處
Showing no respect for the husbands they married.	不看良人在眼內
They are out of control.	唔受拘
How can a decent man challenge such a woman?	純夫難抗拒
He can only resort to remonstrating with kind and wise words;	惟有善言來教佢
Pity no shrew can appreciate such kind intent.[36]	惜乎潑婦不知趣

Songs like this may be cited as evidence of the "sojourner mentality" of Chinese immigrants, who remained attached to China and traditional ethical values and were thus criticized as unable to assimilate into American society. The song demonstrates the subordination of women in traditional Chinese society, which would be seen in the eyes of white Americans precisely as evidence of the "backwardness" or "cultural conservatism" of Chinese people.[37] Yet there are also songs that praise the new freedom of women and cherish the American way of life. Perhaps, as Hom remarks, the disapproval of new values in some songs represents merely the author's wish to "balance the change by holding on to the old values they brought with them from China" and their dismay at the "vices" of American culture—the cause of ignorance and discriminatory practices—that had victimized them as immigrants.[38] The same ambivalent attitude toward their new living environment and its practices and values can be also seen in the *shi* and *ci* poetry produced by the San Francisco Chinatown poets.

III. Yuk Ow Collection and Him Mark Lai Papers[39]

It must be pointed out that the poems in these two archives, collected from newspaper clippings, are by no means complete. Browsing through microfilms of the *Sai gai yat po* 世界日報 (Chinese World) and *Jinshan shibao* 金山時報 (Chinese Times), the two San Francisco Chinese newspapers preserved in the Ethnic Studies Library at UC Berkeley shows that a great number of classical-style poems are left unselected.[40] These tend to be poems of personal correspondence between friends with themes such

as parting, birthday celebrations, traditional festivals, and include inscriptions on a friend's painting and works related to and originally printed in China (which implies that the editors of the newspapers had good connections with poets or the publishing industry in their former country). It appears from the themes of the poems collected that Yuk Ow and Him Mark Lai are more interested in those related to the broader society or life in America, as well as the activities of local poetry societies. Incomplete as their collections may be, it is precisely this selective approach that makes these two archives important for the study of Chinese American literature, not to mention the fact that some of the original sources are no longer extant and no other similar projects have been done before.

A. Yuk Ow Collection

Yuk Ow 歐玉 (1915-1982) received his Master's Degree of Library Science from Berkeley. In 1970 he retired from his job as a translator, and since then devoted his time to studying Chinese American history and categorizing the documentary materials he collected over the years. There are seventy-four cartons and several oversized boxes and folders in the Yuk Ow Collection.[41] A sumptuous amount of newspaper clippings and hand copies of classical-style poetry and couplets (also copied from newspapers), consisting of more than two hundred and fifty titles or series, can be found in carton 29 (folders 21-22), carton 31 (folders 11-12), and a few more in carton 60 (folder 1). Years of collection range from the 1800s to 1982. Those before the 1950s are all hand copies. Original sources of the collection are mainly from the *Sai Gai Yat Po* (before 1950s) and the *Jinshan shibao* (after 1950s).

Among the rich variety of works are a significant number of short poems with the title "Bamboo Branch Song" 竹枝詞 or its variants, a traditional imitation of folksong in the form of seven-character quatrain (twenty-eight characters in total) made popular in the Tang dynasty by the exile poet Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842). Poems of this type usually describe the exotic customs of a remote, sometimes uncivilized land and express the writer's attitudes toward them. The provenance of the songs is stated in Liu Yuxi's preface to his own "Bamboo Branch Song,"

> …In the first month of the year [822] I came to Jianping [in present day Chongqing in Sichuan]. Children on the street sang "Bamboo Branch" together. …Although the words are muddled and hard to comprehend, the music contains subtle feelings, having the beauty of the songs from the areas of Qi and Pu [love poems found in the Confucian classic *Shijing* 詩經 (The classic of poetry)]. In the past Qu Yuan was exiled to Yuan and Xiang [rivers

> in Hunan], where he saw that people greeted the gods with songs. The words were mostly uncouth. Hence he composed the "Nine Songs" 九歌, which are still performed in the South to this day. Therefore I also composed nine pieces of "Bamboo Branch Songs" to let those good at singing spread them around. These are attached below. People of later generations who listen to the songs of Sichuan would learn where the songs of the "mutated airs" came from.[42]

This passage brings up two important traditions of Chinese poetry. First, it mentions the Chu loyalist-poet Qu Yuan's 屈原 (ca. 343-277 BCE) refinement of vulgar folksongs, an act that Liu Yuxi seems to approve of in his preface, even if his "Bamboo Branch Songs" are straightforward in tone and simple in language like common folksongs. In fact, inspired by Qu Yuan's example, many Chinese poets expressed their intention to improve the inferior literary quality of folksongs, which they learned in their travels or periods of exile in remote places. At times these modified folksongs may subtly convey an author's disappointment in his public career, but very often they were written to capture local customs and practices—either for fun, for historical interest, or for political purposes, in particular so that rulers and higher officials would be able to deduce from them the social mores (*feng* 風) of a local district and adjust their policies accordingly.

The latter notion of authorial intent is influenced by the second important tradition of classical Chinese poetry suggested in Liu Yuxi's preface: the practice of *caifeng* 采風 (reporting local customs) or *guanfeng* 觀風 (observing local customs). In the *Analects*, Confucius urges his disciples to study the *Shijing*, maintaining that one of the functions of poetry is to serve as a basis of "observation" (*guan* 觀).[43] This idea is further strengthened by Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) in his *Han shu* 漢書 (History of the Han), in which he asserts that the ancient practice of collecting folksongs provided a means for the sovereigns to "observe social mores." Similarly, the collecting of folk ballads (*yuefu* 樂府) in the Han dynasty was precisely for the same purpose.[44] Liu Yuxi does not overtly state that his "Bamboo Branch Songs" are meant to be a record of "social mores," yet at the end of his preface he calls his songs *bianfeng* 變風 ("mutated airs," with *feng* here meaning "air" in the sense of "song" instead of "social mores"), a type of folksong originally collected in the *Shijing* and said to be written when society was in disorder.[45] But there is nothing about social turbulence in Liu's songs. Instead, they are mostly about romantic love or the daily activities of common people in Sichuan, thus not much different from poems that were written to reveal local customs and practices. At any rate, Liu Yuxi does express the wish that, like Qu Yuan's "Nine Songs," his

"Bamboo Branch Songs" would be "spread around" and passed down to posterity, a wish actually shared by many who followed the *guanfeng* practice in their imitation of folksongs.

With the short quatrain form and use of simple diction, Liu Yuxi's "Bamboo Branch Songs" is unquestionably a poetic innovation that allows poets to easily sketch their impressions of a particular place and its people in just a few lines. Its influence was so profound that numerous poets of succeeding dynasties, in addition to adopting the title, followed Liu's folk-like style in their poetic comments on many different places and countries, adding specific toponyms to their titles to differentiate them from the originals. For example, in the Song dynasty, prestigious poets like Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193) and Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206) both composed a number of "Bamboo Branch Songs." In the Ming-Qing periods, the genre flourished even more, with some songs particularly referring to foreign countries, such as You Tong's 尤侗 (1618-1704) one hundred "Bamboo Branch Songs of Foreign Countries" 外國竹枝詞.[46]

The *guanfeng* tradition continues to be written into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in China and other Sinophone spheres. In addition to the various "Bamboo Branch Songs" produced in San Francisco Chinatown, thousands of such poems were also published in the Chinese newspapers of Singapore and Malaysia. These works are now compiled in *Nanyang zhuzhi ci huibian* 南洋竹枝詞匯編 (Collected edition of bamboo branch songs from the southern oceans) by Li Qingnian 李慶年.[47] Many other poems, though not entitled "Bamboo Branch Songs," betray Liu Yuxi's influence in their depictions of exotic scenery and cultures. A notable example is Huang Zunxian's famous *Riben zashi shi* 日本雜事詩 (Poems on miscellaneous subjects from Japan), which also records in the form of seven-character quatrains various political, social, and cultural aspects of Japan under the Meiji Restoration.[48] Huang also composed twelve "Miscellaneous Poems about Singapore" 新嘉坡雜詩 while he was consul general in the British colony from 1891 to 1894. Although this series is written in the five-character regulated form instead of the seven-character quatrain, the way he describes the "outlandish" behaviors of British officers as well as Malay customs and food are much in the vein of "Bamboo Branch Songs."[49] These examples show that when relocating to or visiting foreign lands, it was all too natural for Chinese writers to note down the exotic elements of local society and their feelings in the style of Liu Yuxi's original works.

Returning to the Yuk Ow Collection, there are a number of "Bamboo Branch Songs" series written by Chinese immigrant poets in different periods. Newspapers published these pieces in different issues, but Yuk Ow grouped some of them together, pasting his clippings of "Bamboo Branch

Songs" onto sheets of paper. This shows that he was also aware of the thematic significance of the "Bamboo Branch Songs" or that it was a specific genre. Below is a list of some different titles of this type of song in chronological order:

- Twelve "Bamboo Branch Songs of San Francisco" 三藩市竹枝詞 by Yuyang Lanzi's 余養蘭子, published on May 25, 1910, in *Sai Gai Yat Po*.
- "Bamboo Branch Songs of Flower Events at the Golden Gate" 金門花事竹枝詞, twelve pieces by Baigong 白公, published on October 2, 1911, in *Sai Gai Yat Po*.
- "Bamboo Branch Songs Celebrating the Victory of the First World War" 慶祝戰勝竹枝詞, four pieces by Xiayou 俠遊, published on January 17, 1919, in *Sai Gai Yat Po*.
- "New Bamboo Branch Songs of the Golden Gate" 金門新竹枝詞, six pieces by Liu Lang 劉郎, published on April 27, 1930, in *Sai Gai Yat Po*.
- "New Bamboo Branch Songs of the Golden Gate, Jiaxu (1934)" 甲戌金門新竹枝詞, ten anonymous pieces, published on February 18, 1934, in *Sai Gai Yat Po*.
- "Bamboo Branch Songs of the Golden Gate" 金門竹枝詞 by various writers. The earliest one is five pieces by Lao Ding 老定, published on September 14, 1939, in *Guomin ribao* 國民日報 (Chinese Nationalist Daily).
- "Bamboo Branch Songs of Old Gold Mountain, Eight Pieces" 舊金山竹枝詞八詠, by Tang Donghua 唐東華, published on February 1, 1956, in *Shaonian zhongguo bao* 少年中國報 (Young China).
- "Bamboo Branch Songs of the Overseas Chinese Community" 僑鄉竹枝詞, four pieces by Li Tingxiu 李挺秀, published on January 21, 1968, in *Jinshan shibao*.
- "Bamboo Branch Songs on a Spring Day at the Golden Gate" 金門春日竹枝詞, by various writers, published on January 1, 1977, in *Jinshan shibao*.
- "Bamboo Branch Songs of Gold Mountain" 金山竹枝詞, five pieces by Sun Shuhuan 孫述寰, published on October 30, 1981; and two pieces by Weng Song'an 翁松安, published on February 12, 1982, both in *Jinshan shibao*.[50]

As mentioned, one of the major themes of Liu Yuxi's "Bamboo Branch Songs" is romantic love. This is also frequently imitated by poets of later generations, including Chinese immigrant poets in San Francisco. The

seventh piece of Yuyang Lanzi's "Bamboo Branch Songs of San Francisco," for example, is rich in sexual innuendo:

High and lofty is the white tower in Fremont.	高高斐孟白樓台
A new electric streetcar comes at dusk.	電氣新車向晚來
They all say that in the bedchamber, colorful candles are bright.	爭道洞房花燭艷
I pass the key to the gentleman, and let him open at will.[51]	鎖匙交給任君開

The toponym "Fremont" in the first line clearly indicates that this piece is about San Francisco and not elsewhere, and the adoption of the new diction "electric streetcar" (*dianqi xinche* 電氣新車) in the old poetic form makes the piece look modern. The latter feature was perhaps influenced by the "revolution in the poetic realm (*shijie geming* 詩界革命) advocated by such poets as Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) in China.[52] Yet the ending is rather traditional in the way that it borrows the imagery of a key to euphemize sexual behavior. It is perhaps a piece describing a man visiting a woman (or a prostitute?) in the evening. The erotic expressions and frequent allusions to sexual relationships in songs like this at first seem to stress wantonness on the part of male Chinese. We may explain this as a trademark feature of the secular, romantic tradition of the "Bamboo Branch Songs." But the absence of female partners in Chinese communities in the early twentieth century may also have encouraged sexual fantasy and dreams of married life in poetry writing, as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act had effectively denied the entry of Chinese women, including the wives of Chinese laborers, into the United States to join those Chinese men who were allowed to stay in the country.[53] In her study of Chinese prostitution in nineteenth-century America, especially San Francisco, Lucie Cheng Hirata aptly points out that gender imbalance among the Chinese population, the lack of alternative employment opportunities for women and the considerable profit that could be exploited from sexual workers perpetuated prostitution in Chinese communities.[54] In the *Songs of Gold Mountain*, in which sensual descriptions and rhymes about prostitution are common, such a social vice in Chinatown is further testified.[55]

Baigong's "Bamboo Branch Songs of Flower Events at the Golden Gate" is another salient example of rendezvous between Chinese men and women.[56] Eight pieces in this vivid series are about visiting brothels (*huating* 花廳, literally "flower hall"), and another four about seeing a mistress (*xiangchao* 香巢, literally "fragrant nest," the secret place where a man keeps his mistress). Although they record the generally happy moments of the poet's extramarital affairs, the last two poems (#7 and 8) in

regard to the mistress suggest completely otherwise.

Poem #7 is written in the mistress's voice, which is at first sight indistinguishable from that of a common woman, but the cigarette in the second line seems to betray the woman's real character. The anticlimactic closure suggests even greater disappointment because of her misidentification. This is a typical way to highlight emotional tension in classical Chinese poetry. Yet "washing windows" is apparently a novel action, introduced to achieve the dramatic effect, and is not without some humor.

I could not find my man and feel despondent.	尋郎不遇意蕭然
Sitting quietly by the lamp, cigarette in hand.	默坐燈前捲紙煙
Suddenly I seem to see my sweetheart's shadow,	忽見意中人影到
But it turns out it's the guy washing the window.	怎知渠是抹窗門

The last poem can be read as a general conclusion of the series:

Alas, the Wind Goddess is too jealous of the flower!	無賴封姨太妒花
And the golden bell fails to save the scented petals.	金鈴無力護芳華
How can Peach Root and Peach Leaf not find their master?	桃根桃葉休無主
Go build a new fragrant nest with my step-brother!	別築香巢貯契家

Unable to keep the mistress to himself, the poet expresses his regret and helplessness with stock phrases and common allusions such as "Wind Goddess"—which here may stand for his legal wife[57]—and the "golden bell" (*jinling* 金鈴), which is tied to a flower stem to frighten away birds that may harm the flower. The third line uses the names of two famous concubines from the past, (Tao Gen 桃根 and Tao Ye 桃葉, literally "Peach Root" and "Peach Leaf") to refer to the mistress. Either being generous or considerate, at the end the poet urges the mistress to find another man as her patron, who will then become his "step-brother" (*qijia* 契家).[58]

Such unabashed expression of one's experiences with prostitutes and extramarital affairs may sound awkward or inappropriate to conservative readers. But it was a longstanding theme in classical Chinese poetry and was deemed acceptable and even admirable in male poetic circles. It was seen as collateral evidence of a poet's talents and unbridled demeanor, which supposedly would easily win the hearts of the opposite sex, and

served to vent his frustration in public office. The most notable examples in Chinese literary history of this type of man are Tang dynasty poet Du Mu 杜牧 (803-852) and Song dynasty lyricist Liu Yong 柳永 (fl. 1034), who readily reported close relations with female entertainers and how these women were attracted to them. Elite men thus brought this tradition to overseas Chinese communities, notably San Francisco and Singapore, perhaps partly to show off their attractiveness to women, and partly to prove that their cultural values had resilience—their own "existential value"—in foreign societies. Maintaining a mistress suggests a sound financial condition, and poets like Baigong were not commoners, but men of letters or merchants who enjoyed eminent status in their Chinatowns.

Immigrant poets continued to publicize their interest in women in the "Bamboo Branch Song" mode after the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943, when China had become an ally of the United States against Japan in World War II and more Chinese women were thus allowed to immigrate. An obvious change is that poetry about prostitution and extramarital affairs is rarely seen in newspapers published after the 1940s. Now the Westernized attire, manners, and behavior of Chinese women, as well as the newly developed beauty contest, often drew the gaze of male poets.

The attitudes conveyed in their poems regarding the customs of Western women and their influence on Chinese women are mostly positive compared to those of the early immigrants. For example, Tang Donghua 唐東華 comments on women's basketball in one of his "Bamboo Branch Songs of Old Gold Mountain, Eight Pieces":

A basketball match, better than the men's game.	籃球比賽勝鬚眉
These women champions showed marvelous tactics.	娘子冠軍計出奇
Who says that the tender ones cannot be tough?	莫謂嬌羞非健者
They are like Cai Wenji, playing with great control.[59]	指揮若定蔡文姬

Cai Wenji 蔡文姬 was a talented woman from a prestigious family at the end of the Han dynasty. She was once captured by the northern nomadic tribe Xiongnu and was forced to marry one of its chieftains. Later, Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220), then prime minister of the Han, paid a ransom to have her brought back to China. Here the poet's association of Cai Wenji with women basketball players is quite strange. It is perhaps because of the fact that her name fits the rhyme of the poem, or because like Cai Wenji, these women also lived in a foreign land. At any rate, the poem attempts to show us a new image of Chinese women in America through their participation in

a Western sport. The argument that women are better than men, however, is not new to Chinese readers, as in Chinese history there are many heroines whose heroic deeds made those of their male counterparts pale in significance.[60]

Two pieces of Zhu Feipeng's 朱飛鵬 "Bamboo Branch Songs of the Golden Gate" 金門竹枝詞, published in 1951, focus on the new mentality and appearances of young Chinese women:

A pair of sisters sing the song of freedom.	姊妹雙雙唱自由
They worship the Heavenly Mother and visit the Kong Chow Temple.	參神天后又岡州
With incense sticks in hand they make secret wishes.	心香一瓣酬私願
Women of virtue nowadays can look for good mates.	淑女而今賦好逑
A girl of sixteen, so charming is she.	二八年華絕妙容
Her permed hairdo looks curly and vibrating.	波紋電捲髮鬘鬆
Her modern costume turns a new style,	摩登服式翻新樣
Showing part of her fragrant shoulders, and part of her breasts.[61]	半露香肩半露胸

The first poem praises the freedom to choose one's spouse, describing two sisters paying visits to deities in temples with the hope of finding good husbands. Dedicated to Mazu 媽祖, the ancient goddess who protects fishermen and seafarers (and thus Chinese immigrants as well), the Tin How 天后 (Heavenly Mother) Temple was built in 1852, and a street is named after it in San Francisco Chinatown.[62] The Kong Chow Temple is built to worship the warrior god Guandi 關帝. Built in 1851, it is the oldest Chinese temple in America. In 1854 it also became the Kong Chow Benevolent Association and is still in use now.[63] The second piece is about how a young lady looks in fashionable attire and hairstyle. Particularly erotic is the last line. It seems that the poet is simply admiring the young woman as an object of his voyeuristic gaze.

The beauty pageant is another popular topic for male Chinese immigrant poets. They usually commend the effervescent atmosphere the show brings but also realize that it is often a highly commercialized activity, as the following poem points out:

Year after year, hugely publicized is the beauty contest.	年年選美甚宣揚
And ads have canvassed customers from all	廣告招來客四方

sides.
Not sparing with money, they vie to shop. 不吝金錢爭購物
So the merchants gain much profit and fill up their stores.[64] 商家獲利貯盈倉

This is the third piece in Yida's 宜大 "Bamboo Branch Songs of New Spring" 新春竹枝詞, which originally consisted of four pieces and was published on February 22, 1982, in *Jinshan shibao*. For the poet, the beauty contest is not just about choosing the "most beautiful woman," but is another opportunity for businessmen in Chinatown to profit. In the Yuk Ow Collection, the earliest poem about a beauty contest in San Francisco Chinatown is Li Mingchao's 李銘超 "Inscribing a Poem for the Photo of Miss Li Cuimei" 李翠媚小姐倩影題詞, published on September 12, 1951, in *Jinshan shibao*. According to the long preface to the poem, Li Cuimei was Miss Chinatown that year.[65] In fact, this major Chinatown event can be traced back to as early as 1925. Then in February 1958, the San Francisco Chinese Chamber of Commerce (CCC) expanded this local event to the national "Miss Chinatown USA Pageant," as one of the programs celebrating the Lunar New Year.[66] Though many may regard the beauty pageant a commercialized, gaudy and sexually discriminatory event that promotes a false commercial image of Chinatown and relegates Chinese women to a mere sex commodity, for the organizers and some contestants, in addition to charitable fundraising, the event is "more like a matter of ethnic representations" and "a means for exploring and celebrating ethnic identity," and it can help "reconcile tensions within the Chinese American community and with the broader society."[67] However, most of the immigrant poets do not seem to have such highly ideological hypotheses in mind. In the following "Bamboo Branch Song," for example, a certain Yu Xincun 余辛村 agrees that holding beauty contests may go against concepts of feminism but also claims that the commercial prosperity of Chinatown should be the foremost concern.

Hustling and bustling at the Masonic Centre. 馬龍車水美生堂
People all come to see who will be the Beauty Queen. 都道來看選女皇
They judge female bodies and go against the women's movement. 品足評頭乖婦運
But what's wrong with it if our business is thriving?[68] 繁榮商業又何妨

The poem is dry and in want of literary refinement and may be ideologically incorrect as well. Yet it is an unabashed reflection of Chinatown residents'

dreams and pragmatic mentality: after living in poverty and despair for many years, there is nothing more important than material affluence.

Apart from women and romantic love, lament for the hardships of life and nostalgia for the home country are also distinctive (and perhaps more serious) themes in "Bamboo Branch Songs" that deserve special attention from scholars of Chinese American literature. Li Tingxiu's four-poem series, "Bamboo Branch Songs of the Overseas Chinese Community," is particularly appealing in its description of a separated couple. Here are the second and third poems:

Poem #2

I saw you off to the Old Gold Mountain.	送郎一去舊金山
I saw you off, when will you return?	送郎一去幾時還
Sea waters, vast and indistinct, block my view.	海水茫茫迷望眼
It's easy to part, but hard to meet again.	別時容易見時難

Poem #3

Pick not those wild grass and idle flowers.	野草閒花君莫採
Don't be beguiled by those idle flowers and wild grass.	野草閒花君莫迷
Don't you remember how worried I am about you?	記否為郎盡憔悴
There is also a little boy crying on my back.[69]	背間還有小兒啼

Spoken in the woman's voice, these poems have a very strong folksong effect with the use of repeated phrases in the first two lines. Poem #2 expresses the woman's longing for her husband, who left home for San Francisco. She however realizes that, with a vast ocean lying between them, they may not see each other again, as numerous other Chinese couples in the same situation. The last line is borrowed verbatim from a famous *ci* lyric by Li Yu 李煜 (937-978), the last ruler of the Southern Tang, and is a perfect conclusion of the couple's bitter lot. In Poem #3, the wife asks her husband to stay away from wild grass and idle flowers (*yecao xianhua* 野草閒花), traditional images for mistresses and wanton women, and hopes that he would listen for the sake of her love and their child. But in reality it is difficult for many Chinese men, lonely and disillusioned in a foreign country, to follow their wives' advice, as shown in their considerable amount of poetry about prostitution and womanizing.

How to survive in the United States is the most challenging question for new immigrants of all races. For Chinese Americans lacking

employment skills, Chinatown was and is still the place where they could find a job relatively easy, and the two most common trades for them in the past were hand laundry shop and restaurant.[70] For example, the following regulated verse in five syllable lines, written by Li Zhongyong 李中庸, describes the "sordid" profession of dish washing.

Dish Washing	洗盤碗
My heart is weary, my spirit hard to cheer.	心倦神難振
Bowls in the sink, one foot tall.	碗槽一尺盈
Steaming water sprinkles hot mist.	水蒸揮霧熱
Bubbles revolve like disgorged bright pearls.	泡轉吐珠明
Push and poke, the filthy knives and forks;	推戟刀叉惡
A plate dropped, scattering broken pure jade.	墮盤碎玉清
Next morning I will go back to school.	明朝返學去
Arising from my empty pocket is a feeling of autumn wind.[71]	囊起秋風情

In the old days it was common for Chinese students to wash dishes in Chinatown restaurants to support themselves, but here the author complains that after the hard work he is still penniless ("a feeling of autumn wind"). Yet he is able to comfort himself in the unpleasant working environment with poetic imagination: the soap water produces pearl-like bubbles, and a broken plate has become pieces of "pure jade."

Other than realistic portrayal of the seedier side of life in Chinatown, the classical-style poetry in the Yuk Ow Collection also includes subject matter such as American or Chinese politics, the Anti-Japanese War, travel descriptions of American cities and tourist sites, and a few poems written for friends and relatives. But contrary to the common belief that Chinatown was a filthy and evil place, there are a considerable number of poems that sing the praises of Chinatown life as joyful and prosperous. Many of the "Bamboo Branch Songs" written for Chinese New Year or for traditional festivals are especially ebullient. For example, a poem in a series of ten "Bamboo Branch Songs" by an anonymous poet celebrates the 1934 New Year holiday as follows:

The sounds of firecrackers are deafening, penetrating our ears.	爆竹聲喧徹耳聞
Laborers and merchants are on holiday to enjoy these good days.	工商休假度良辰
Families merrily gather together to welcome the New Year.	各家歡聚迎新歲

Seasons change and flow, scenes and things renew.[72] 時序遷流景物新

Although the poem is lacking in craftsmanship, it nevertheless reveals that, on a special day, Chinatown residents are eager to steal some joy from their hard lives. More interesting is the explanatory note attached to the poem. It tells us that because of a dispute with the municipal government, it was not until nine o'clock on New Year's Eve that San Francisco Chinatown received permission to set off firecrackers. Once they heard the news, residents burst into joy. A poem on the Western New Year, written by Xu Fan 許凡 and published in 1977, shows the harmonious relationship between Chinese and Westerners by this time:

Willow leaves lift their eyebrows, plum flowers bloom. 柳葉舒眉梅蕊開
By the fire stove, young and old imbibe scented wine. 圍爐老幼飲香醅
Westerners have learnt how to speak Chinese, 西人學得華人語
Gongxi is repeated again and again to wish us good fortune.[73] 恭喜聲聲話發財

The first two lines are rather conventional in their descriptions of spring scenery and the joy of family togetherness. Curiously, no location is specified. The jolly communication between Westerners and Chinese, with the former taking the initiative to congratulate the latter, presents to us a lively and congenial atmosphere in Chinatown. The Westerners' simple move surely pleases the Chinese poet: his traditional practice has been validated by members of mainstream society, and the United States is no longer a hostile place but a new home for him.

Feeling at home in a foreign country is a dream that immigrants of all races share. While some may strive to fulfill it by assimilating into the new culture or by fighting for a unique position in the host country, others form a community of their own and even create a "home" through cultural practices and imagination. For many Chinese immigrants in the United States, Chinatown is not just a physical space where their needs of economic survival are provided but also a spiritual haven where they can find comfort and a sense of belonging.[74] It is perhaps for this reason that the ways of life and even the physical appearances of Chinatowns are much the same as in China. Some practitioners of classical-style poetry are fond of presenting Chinatown in positive ways, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century when living conditions improved. Besides the examples cited above, in the Yuk Ow Collection we also find a poem series with the

title "The Lovely Chinatown" 可愛之華埠 and others that similarly celebrate Chinatown life.[75] Lines like "Business and circumstance of the overseas Chinese are nicely handled / We live in peace, work with joy, and feel dignified" 僑務僑情優自處 / 安居樂業覺軒昂, or "Chinatown in San Francisco / A beautiful place whose fame has spread around the world" 三藩市內唐人埠 / 世界名傳美麗鄉 are not uncommon in the collection.[76] Such a phenomenon is seldom seen in other genres of Chinese American literature such as fiction and drama. We may attribute this partly to the classical-style convention of praise and eulogy. But the poets' wish to celebrate a new hometown, modeled after the one they had in China, should also have played a part.

Modern San Francisco Chinatown is, of course, not as perfect as some immigrant poets describe. Criminal organizations called *tong* 堂 (gangs), robbery, gambling, drug trafficking, and different sorts of illegal activities are not uncommon. But immigrant poets of the later generations seldom work these into their classical-style poetry, thus a realistic poem like the following "Bamboo Branch Song" stands out conspicuously:

News stories about robbery are not new.	打劫新聞當舊聞
Mugging in the day, stealing at night—so much disorder.	日搶夜偷亂紛紛
No one knows where the green shirts have gone.	綠衣未悉何處去
A police service like this kills our joy.[77]	警政如此壞氣氛

Instead of blaming the criminals, in the last two lines the poet directs the spearhead at the impotent police force, called "green shirts" (*lüyi* 綠衣), a derogatory term used to describe the police (whose uniform was green in colonial Hong Kong). This borrowing of terminology shows that the poet was astute in adopting, quite appropriately, old diction to the new social environment. The poem was published during the Chinese New Year of 1977. With crime rampant in Chinatown and the police ineffective, no doubt the festive atmosphere was ruined.

Poems in the Yuk Ow Collection were mostly published by individual poets, that is, not through a group of poets or poetry society. However, with the founding of the Jinshan Shishe 金山詩社 (Gold mountain poetry society) in 1961, poetry series began to be published in the name of the society, and the titles of the series, such as some of the "Bamboo Branch Songs," were assigned by the society.[78] A possible reason for this change is that, as Chinese newspapers became more commercialized, space became more limited, and readership of classical-style poetry declined, the chance of publishing individual works was much reduced. But as a group these poets could have a stronger voice in the Chinatown community and even pay the

newspaper to publish their work under the name of the society. This form of publication became dominant after the 1980s, as demonstrated in the newspaper clippings in the Him Mark Lai Papers.

B. Him Mark Lai Papers

The important compiler and translator of the Angel Island poems, Him Mark Lai 麥禮謙 (1925-2009) was professionally trained as a mechanical engineer.[79] Influenced by Yuk Ow, his Chinese school teacher, he developed a deep interest in the study of Chinese American history and had an illustrious scholarly career.[80] The Him Mark Lai Papers are divided into four categories: research files, professional activities, writings, and personal papers. The gigantic collection consists of 130 cartons, 61 boxes and 7 oversize folders. Newspaper clippings of classical-style poetry are found in Carton 87 (folders 1 to 5). The major difference between Lai's clippings and those of the Yuk Ow Collection is that almost all of them are related to activities of poetry societies and their publications instead of individual works. They also complement the Yuk Ow Collection as their dates range from 1976 to 2001, picking up more or less where Yuk Ow leaves off (1982). They provide us a later picture of the poetry community in San Francisco Chinatown. Sources are collected mostly from the *Jinshan shibao*, which was founded in 1924 and sold to the *Singtao Daily News* 星島日報 (San Francisco) in 2004.

News about San Francisco's Dunfeng Wenyishe 敦風文藝社 (Honest custom literature and art society, *dunfeng* meaning "to send forth honest custom") and poetry by the group's members make up almost the entire collection of the classical-style poetry in the Him Mark Lai Papers.[81] Established by the renowned artist and T'ai Chi Ch'uan (*taijiquan* 太極拳) master Zheng Manqing 鄭曼青 (1902-1975) in 1966, the society was originally named Dunfeng Shishe 敦風詩社 (Honest custom poetry society). It changed to the present name in 1977 in order to expand the members' criteria to include painters and calligraphers. Zheng's aim in founding the society, according to him and the editor of the *Tien Shing Weekly* (Tiansheng zhoubao 天聲週報), was to promote Chinese culture and to improve social customs.[82] The society had about one hundred members in 1994, including a few who lived in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and in other American cities.[83] Their works can still be seen in *Singtao Daily News* today.[84] At the beginning, most of the members were pro-Taiwan and anti-Communist, but as time passed and new members joined, the society no longer retained a particular political orientation.[85] Like most traditional poetry societies in China, however, Dunfeng also faces the problem of recruiting younger members, as new generations are not typically interested in traditional poetry. It is therefore no surprise that Dunfeng poets express

doubt about the future of the society.[86]

Newspaper clippings in the folders show that from 1992 to 2002, Dunfeng published its members' work in *Jinshan shibao* at least four times a year in the form of quarterly "elegant gatherings" (*yaji* 雅集). The number of poems is sometimes more than fifty pieces per issue. Most of the members compose in accord with the subject titles set by the society, which are usually associated with the seasons, such as "Welcoming Spring" 迎春, "Autumn Thoughts" 秋興, and "Winter Solstice" 冬至. Thus the content, tone and even style of their poems are highly homogeneous, if not monotonous. In general, the literary quality is mediocre; some works are even clumsy in poetic craftsmanship and expression. With few exceptions, the lamentation and protest of new immigrants as seen in earlier "Bamboo Branch Song" poetry, as well as the "realistic," exotic descriptions of local life and American society are absent. Instead, there is a sense of self-contentment, leisure, and quiet reminiscence of the past as felt by persons seemingly free from the urgency of life.[87] The emotional balance in their poems is perhaps due to the fact that, compared to their predecessors, they find American society much less hostile in the past few decades, as well as the fact that they consider poetry writing an escape from reality and are influenced by the group writing style. Also different from the works of earlier poets is that, rather than writing quatrains (in which most of the "Bamboo Branch Songs" are written), there is an increasing number of seven character regulated verse, which requires more rigorous craftsmanship because of the two antithetical couplets embedded in the form. This change does not necessary mean that the Dunfeng poets are technically more advanced than their predecessors, but may suggest that they have more leisure time to work on their works.

The literary proclivity of the Dunfeng poets can be seen in the works of the summer "elegant gatherings" published in *Jinshan shibao* on June 23, 2000. The issue contains seventy-nine poems (one in vernacular form) written by thirty-one different poets.[88] Thirty-six pieces follow or are related to the assigned title "Expressing Feelings in Summertime" 夏日抒懷 and thirty-one of these are written in seven character regulated form. Personal experiences, memories of the home country, and the joy and leisure of summer pervade these pieces. For example, a poem by Li Buyun 李步雲 expresses his feelings in the following lines:

Gentle and peaceful, a warm breeze makes the early summer cool.	薰風習習夏初涼
Down by the stairs, magnolia flowers fan their special scent.	階下玉蘭飄異香
The cicadas chirp on the high boughs, stirring a	蟬噪高枝撩客夢

traveler's dream;
The pomegranate shines red on the railings, a poetic mind is stirred. 榴紅映檻動詩腸
When leisure comes, only best friends can match my rhymes; 閒來協韻惟知己
When inspiration arrives, I chant a long song like the madman of Chu. 興到長吟學楚狂
Simple and contented, I keep an open mind on this drifting life. 淡薄浮生情豁達
Live in peace, quiet and calm, longevity and good health are with me. 安居恬靜壽而康

This is a typical work written in seven character regulated verse, with the middle four lines forming two antithetical couplets. The madman of Chu is Qu Yuan, the great loyalist-poet who drowned himself because his advice to his king was not taken. The first half of the poem indeed closely observes the seasonal things of summer; all appear to be lovely and cheerful to the poet, perhaps except the chirping of cicadas, which is traditionally linked with the brevity of life and thus sadness and lament. The word *ke* 客 (guest, traveler), frequently seen in the classical-style poetry of American Chinese, reveals that the poet still considers himself a foreigner. The third couplet tells us how he finds poetry writing a delightful practice, and he concludes that he is satisfied with his humble but pleasant condition. Packed with stock phrases and commonplace expressions (the language is indistinguishable from pieces written in China, the source of these expressions), the poem may not be called a masterpiece but it genuinely articulates this group of writers' way of thinking. No matter how they feel about American society, they have decided to spend the rest of their lives in their own way in the new country. Poetry writing obviously has become a significant part of their lives. Besides self-expression, it also helps them establish a unique social network, through which they can meet new *zhiji* 知己 ("bosom friends") and provide spiritual support to each other. Apparently, poetry has become both a pastime and a means of social communication for them.

Other pieces in the same issue include occasional poems, travel poems, poems on external objects (*yongwu shi* 詠物詩), congratulatory poems, and one "untitled" (*wuti* 無題) poem which satirizes Taiwan's former president Chen Shui-bian 陳水扁. Particularly noteworthy is a poem entitled "A Racial Melting Pot" 種族大熔爐 written by Chen Jiayan 陳嘉言. It is a clumsy poem: the diction at times is as dry as propaganda slogans, and the rhyme pattern does not follow the standard scheme. But its reference to American racial policy may speak louder than its aesthetic shortcomings:

Many different races,	種族多元化
Their skin colors are not the same.	膚色各不同
Yellow, brown, red, white, and black,	黃棕紅白黑
Appearances and manners are radiant.	姿彩生輝光
He dresses up in Western attire,	身著西洋服
But his head is wrapped with Indian turban.	頭纏印度裝
Chinese chefs are experts at haute cuisine,	華廚擅美食
Variety and taste: so rich and various.	品味富而豐
While Westerners are great architects,	西裔精建築
Who build lofty mansions exquisite and grand….	崇樓傑構雄
Giving up what we are weak in,	棄我之所短
To imitate others' strengths.	倣彼之所長
We help each other, also complement each other,	相輔亦相成
Together we live in harmony.	相處卻融融
A melting pot such as this,	如斯大熔爐
Will gradually lead to Great Unity.[89]	積漸臻大同

The author is aware of the fact that different races and cultures, including his own, have their special attributes, merits and weaknesses, and at the end he is optimistic about the prospect of racial harmony in the "melting pot." To achieve this goal people have to learn from each other and respect the social practices of others, a viewpoint that is certainly politically correct. Yet one may question if the idealistic tone of the poem simply betrays what is still far from being achieved.

A poem in the winter issue of *Jinshan shibao* published on December 22, 2001, further demonstrates that some Chinatown poets are in solidarity with American people. It was written by Li Shuming 李樹明 for Dunfeng's assignment "Winter Solstice" 冬至:

Another year has lapsed, frost covers the sky.	又是一年霜滿天
Gathering around the stove, we brew wine and enjoy the meal.	圍爐煮酒樂筵前
On battlefields afar, brave men feed on wind and snow,	遠征壯士餐風雪
They cause the dream souls deep in the boudoir to worry in vain.[90]	徒令深閨魂夢牽

The poet expresses his concern for American soldiers, who were sent overseas to fight against terrorists after the World Trade Center attack. It is a modern version of the traditional frontier poetry, *biansai shi* 邊塞詩,

which usually juxtaposes hardship on the battlefield with the pining of loved ones back home: a way to question the justice of war. Here the poet's attitude toward the military mission is ambiguous, but one thing certain is that he is sympathetic with those affected, either at home or abroad.

From the diachronic point of view of a literary historian, stylistic and thematic change or development of a literary genre is not to be missed, but continuity should also be a focal point, which is particularly meaningful if one looks to the past to find its echo in the present. San Francisco classical-style poetry has changed immensely in a span of some one hundred years, yet the legacy of the ancestors cannot be totally erased. The unhappy experiences of early immigrants and the Angel Island story are obviously still living in the memories of some Chinatown poets. For example, Li Shuye 李叔業, a member of the Dunfeng Poetry Society, published a *ci* lyric on December 30, 2000, in the tune pattern "Lin jiang xian" 臨江仙 (Immortal by the river) with the subtitle "Traces of Old Tears of Angel Island" 天使島舊啼痕.

Once the Angel had the vast ocean blocked.	天使曾經滄海沮
Billows by the seashore rolled up traces of tears.	岸濤捲起啼痕
Cleaving the waves, they came as immigrants to find gold.	淘金破浪作移民
And that hero, his valor had no place to show.	英雄無用武
Harsh rules thwarted his ambition.	苛例志難伸
Insulting the Chinese, floggings were applied.	凌虐華僑施楚困
Beyond the iron windows, an autumn moon shone through the gloomy clouds.	鐵窗秋月愁雲
Toils and woes filled the mines and railways of the past.	當年礦築路酸辛
Here, the green hills are still standing.	青山依舊在
I linger around the place, our forefathers on my mind.[91]	徊地仰前人

The "hero" at the end of the first stanza, as the poet states in his footnote, refers to Dr. Sun Yat Sen 孫中山 (1866-1925), who was detained by the U.S. Immigration Bureau on the island in 1904 due to Qing government pressure. Sun was eventually released, thanks to the help of Ng Poon Chew 伍盤照 (1866-1931), the director of *Chung Sai Yat Po* (China-West Daily) and a devout Christian.[92] The poem on the whole reads like a historical narrative of the suffering of early Chinese immigrants. It is in the last two lines that the poet finally stands out in his meditation. Like many poets before him, who had composed in a vein called "poetry about the past"

(*huaigu shi* 懷古詩), the permanence of nature is brought out with "green hills," which have not changed since the day immigrants set foot on the island. What has changed is human affairs. The detainees are no longer there, gone with the miserable history of Chinese immigrants. But they still exist in the poet's memory. When he visits the island, retracing the footsteps of his predecessors, he is reminded of the past by the "green hills," which serve as a mute witness to history. He must be also reminded by the textual record—the poems inscribed in the detention center—and, very likely, it is these early works that inspired his own composition. Through poetic correspondence with these men and women of history, he becomes spiritually connected with them and identifies himself as one of their many successors in the history of Chinese American literature.

IV. Conclusion

Besides Dunfeng, the Him Mark Lai Papers also preserves a few newspaper clippings or documents of other poetry societies in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and Washington, D.C.[93] In *Quanqiu huaqiao shici shihua* 全球華僑詩詞史話 (Worldwide overseas Chinese *shi* and *ci* poetry: A historical narrative) edited by New York's Sihai Shishe 四海詩社 (Worldwide Chinese Poetry Society), there is more information about poetry societies in Los Angeles and Washington D.C.[94] Also unexamined here is the work of individual poets such as Liang Chaojie 梁朝杰 (1877-1958), who is known for his participation in China's Reform Movement of 1898. Eventually he fled to San Francisco after the reform failed and published several of his poetry collections there.[95] In sum, my study of the poetry community in San Francisco Chinatown and other American as well as Canadian cities is still at its preliminary stage, and I believe that new information will continue to be discovered.[96]

One important counterpart to the Chinese classical poetry community in San Francisco is New York Chinatown. Although the latter was developed slightly later, with the earliest extant poems published around the 1920s, it has become especially prolific since the 1980s due to the large influx of immigrants from China, and it has apparently replaced San Francisco as the center of classical Chinese poetry writing in the United States. Ambitious editors in New York have also tried to elevate the reputation and expand the influence of New York poetry societies by publishing poems submitted from around the world and forging relations with poetry societies in other countries. From 1988 to 2000, the Sihai Shishe in New York formed "sister societies" with more than ninety poetry organizations in China, Taiwan, Japan, Southeast Asia, Canada, France, Australia, as well as with others in the United States.[97] About five hundred issues of poetry periodicals have been published as inserts in New York's

Chinese daily newspapers and magazines since the founding of the Sihai Shishe, and these are compiled into nine volumes of poetry collections, reaching the incredible number of two hundred thousand poems.[98] It is tempting, therefore, to extend our study into New York Chinatown, to examine how it simultaneously maintains its local characteristics and operates in a transnational mentality, as well as how its development is related to the revival of classical-style poetry writing in China.

We have examined in some detail how poets in San Francisco Chinatown articulate their dreams, hopes, and despair as well as their perspectives on American society through classical-style poetry writing, and pointed out that in a few cases the historical and social value of their works is higher than their literary value. Seeing that some of the poems are clumsy in technique, and some others lack distinctive voice, their aesthetic quality may disappoint some readers. Be that as it may, it needs to be kept in mind that many of the Chinatown poets, or for that matter even a large number of practitioners of classical-style poetry in both imperial and modern China, did not and do not take poetry as their vocation or treat it as a very "serious" literary art. For them, one of the major functions of poetry, as we mentioned in our discussion of "Bamboo Branch Songs," is to record and observe the social customs in a specific place and time. This approach of "realistic" poetry writing, equipped with the miniature forms of Chinese traditional poetry such as the "Bamboo Branch Songs," often leads to the offhand production of many pieces that resemble short notes or simple sketches. The only difference is that they are written with regular numbers of words and rhymes. Perhaps, in recording their American experiences, many Chinatown poets really took poetry as a form of rhyming notes. Another important function of Chinese poetry writing is that it is seen as a vehicle for both self-expression and social communication, or as a gift token between friends and would-be friends. For this reason, Stephen Owen aptly states that Chinese poetry is "a companionable art, for private and social use" and "becomes a way to create community."[99] In a foreign country like the United States, it becomes even more important for Chinese immigrants to develop a sense of community through which they can either maintain their cultural heritage and way of life, or share their experiences and feelings with each other. Poetry writing is precisely one of the channels to achieve this aim. A typical example is the significant number of poems written in response to the seasonal topics assigned by the Dunfeng Poetry Society. This suggests that, in order to participate in the poetic "chorus," poets are willing to follow the group style and theme in the same voice. With this consideration in mind, the literary value of poetry would be secondary to its social value, although this is not overtly admitted by the poets.

The practice of writing traditional-style poetry in a foreign country is

not new to Chinese literati. As mentioned, thousands of poems have been published in Singapore and Malaysia since the nineteenth century, and Huang Zunxian produced his famous *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects from Japan* while he was a counselor in that country. However, except for Huang's works, the readership of most of these poems is rather low due to the rise of vernacular literature, and most poems have sunk into oblivion along with the newspapers in which they were published. Chinatown poets in the United States also faced and are still facing the same problem. They are not only ignored by mainstream society, but also the readers of their own heritage, a situation they themselves have known too well. The question is: why then do they keep writing?

In addition to establishing a community of their own, one plausible explanation is that, as most of the Chinatown poets are unable to express themselves well in literary English, the technically demanding, time honored classical-style poetry becomes an alternative and effective emotional outlet for them. It also helps them to search out and strengthen their identity as Chinese abroad. Whether ostracized, exiled, unwilling or unable to assimilate into mainstream society, many Chinatown poets maintain strong emotional ties to their native culture and motherland. A preface to the Dunfeng poetry collection even overtly states that, although they are "living in a foreign state, their mind is still with the former country."[100] In fact, this is true for a majority of first-generation Chinese Americans, especially those who have received no formal education in the United States. Language barriers certainly prevent many from assimilation, but the great difference in cultural practice and lifestyle is the fundamental factor. The Chinatown writing of classical-style poetry is a clear manifestation of the "Chineseness" of the poets along with an attempt to find spiritual support from their heritage culture—at once an affirmation of and a search for identity. Just as the Dunfeng member Li Shuye links himself to the Angel Island immigrants through his own poem, many Chinatown poets similarly associate themselves with eminent, virtuous ancient Chinese poets by echoing their poetic styles and voices. With the companionship and support of a very large group of literary friends and ancestral poets, they may comfortably feel that they are no longer alone and adrift in a foreign country.

Endnotes

As always, I would like to express my deepest thanks to Allen Haaheim for his proofreading of my article.

1. Sau-ling Wong, "Chinese American Literature," in King-kok Cheung ed., *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 52.
2. The Angel Island poems were first collected, translated, and published by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung in their *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980). For critical studies on the Angel Island poems, see Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 101-115; Shan Dexing 單德興, *Mingke yu zaixian: Huayi meiguo wenxue yu wenhua lunji* 銘刻與再現: 華裔美國文學與文化論集 (Taipei: Maitian chubanshe, 2000), 31-88. The two volumes of *Songs of Gold Mountain* were first published in San Francisco in 1911 and 1915 respectively. Marlon K. Hom selected and translated some of them in *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987). Sau-ling Wong provides an insightful discussion on Hom's translated volume in "The Politics and Poetics of Folksong Reading: Literary Portrayals of Life under Exclusion," in Sucheng Chan, ed., *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 246-67.
3. See Paul Lauter, ed., *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, 2 vols. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1990), 2:1755-1762. L. Ling-chi Wang and Henry Yiheng Zhao, eds., *Chinese American Poetry: An Anthology* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991); and Wang Yu 王渝, ed., *Haiwai huaren zuojia shixuan* (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1983).
4. Xiao-huang Yin, *Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 35-42.
5. In the section about Chinese-language literature in America, Yin only mentions that verse contests and poetic couplet competitions sponsored by Chinese literary societies in Chinatowns can be found throughout history, and in a later chapter maintains that in the English poetry they

write, Chinese American writers "are now capable of dealing with broad and universal themes." See Yin, *Chinese American Literature*, 159, 234.

6. See Cheng Aimin 程愛民, ed., *Meiguo huayi wenxue yanjiu* 美國華裔文學研究 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2003), 13-14, and Wu Bing 吳冰 and Wang Lili 王立禮, eds., *Huayi meiguo zuojia yanjiu* 華裔美國作家研究 (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2009), 399-409.
7. The term *jindai wenxue* was perhaps first used by Chen Bingkun 陳炳堃 (Chen Zizhan 陳子展) in his *Zhongguo jindai wenxue zhi bianqian* 中國近代文學之變遷 (Shanghai: Shanghai Zhonghua shuju, 1929).
8. See my article, "The Revival of Classical-Style Poetry Writing: A Field Study of Poetry Societies in Guangzhou," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles and Reviews (CLEAR)* 29 (2007): 105-128.
9. Kirk Denton and Michel Hockx also point out that traditional poetry societies have been almost erased from the literary history of Republican China. See Denton and Hockx, eds., *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 11.
10. For the limited readership caused by the language barrier and by American publishers who considered only the Euro-American majority as a commercially worthwhile readership, ignoring immigrant communities, see Jesse Hiraoka, "Asian American Literature," in Hyung-Chan Kim, ed., *Dictionary of Asian American History* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 93-94. Hiraoka argues that a wider and more appreciative audience of Asian American literature requires two major conditions: the development of an identifiable community of readers and the development of a discursive arena where information in various forms by and about Asian Americans could be presented and discussed. See Hiraoka, 94.
11. Sau-ling Wong aptly observes that "unless translated, first-generation works in Chinese are inaccessible to Anglophone scholars." See Wong, "Chinese American Literature," 42.
12. David Leiwei Li points out that Chinese newspapers in America were "wiped out of public consciousness" because they acted as Chinese community's "willful opposition to white suppression of their culture," and "not one Chinese newspaper was mentioned in a survey of nineteenth-century immigrant journalism." See Li, "The Production of Chinese American Tradition: Displacing American Orientalist Discourse," in Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling, eds., *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press,

1992), 311-312.

13. Hiraoka, "Asian American Literature," 93. In the past two decades or so, as King-kok Cheung remarks, "heterogeneity and diaspora" also became a focus of Asian American literary study, and there has been a shift from seeking to "claim America" to forging a connection with original cultures. King-kok Cheung, "Reviewing Asian American Literary Studies," in Cheung, ed., *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, 1.
14. Yin, *Chinese American Literature,* 167. Sau-ling Wong also states that English language works by Chinese American writers "tend to exhibit a firmer sense of belonging and deeper cultural roots in America" than the Chinese language works. See Wong, "The Politics and Poetics of Folksong Reading: Literary Portrayals of Life under Exclusion," in Chan, *Entry Denied*, 264.
15. For this reason, many Chinese-language works are viewed by critics, especially those in China, as "overseas Chinese literature" instead of "Chinese American literature'" This accords with the term "overseas Chinese," which Chinese governments since the late imperial period have used to refer to people who still consider China as their mother country even if they had changed their citizenship. See Sucheng Chan and Madeline Y. Hsu, eds., *Chinese Americans and the Politics of Race and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), xi. Also see Yin, *Chinese American Literature,* 158; Susie Lan Cassel, ed., *The Chinese in America: A History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2002), 13-14.
16. I use the term "Chinatown poets" to refer to practitioners of classical-style poetry collectively. The term is used to suggest that these poets regard Chinatown as the physical and spiritual center of their literary activity. It does not mean that all of them were/are Chinatown residents. In fact quite a number of them, especially in recent years with the continuous growth of Chinese population, live in other parts of the city or the suburbs. Very often poetry societies would have their gatherings and events held in Chinatown, and almost all Chinese newspapers have been published there.
17. Kim, *Dictionary of Asian American History*, 191; Liu Boji 劉伯驥, *Meiguo huaqiaoshi* 美國華僑史 (Taipei: Liming wenhua shiye gongsi, 1976), 99-106; Marlon K. Hom, "An Introduction to Cantonese Vernacular Rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown," in his *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 1-15.

18. Him Mark Lai, "The Chinese-American Press," in Sally M. Miller, ed., *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 27-28. Karl Lo and Him Mark Lai, comps., *Chinese Newspapers Published in North America, 1854-1975* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Chinese Research Materials, 1977), 2-3. Quoted from Yin, *Chinese American Literature,* 157. See also Liu, *Meiguo huaqiaoshi*, 395-397. *Kim Shan Jit San Luk* and *Golden Hill News* represent the romanization and translation used by the newspaper itself (in *pinyin* the title is *Jinshan rixin lu* and the newspaper's original English title is *Gold Mountain Daily News*). *Pinyin* is used in this article to spell the names of Chinese individuals and publications except in cases where particular individuals and publications adopt their own spellings and/or translations.
19. Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 31; Lai, "The Chinese-American Press," 31; Liu Boji, *Meiguo huaqiaoshi xubian* 美國華僑史續編 (hereafter cited as *Xubian*) (Taipei: Liming wenhua shiye gongsi, 1981), 368; L. Eve Armentrout Ma, "Chinatown Organizations and the Anti-Chinese Movement, 1882-1914," in Chan, *Entry Denied*, 152. The Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California, Berkeley, has microfilm collections of *Chung Sai Yat Pao* from 1900-1905 and 1906-1950 respectively.
20. See Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 18-38 for a description of the "low life" and "high life" in San Francisco Chinatown. Also see Liu, *Xubian*, 106-133.
21. Liu, *Meiguo huaqiaoshi*, 404.
22. See Kim, *Dictionary of Asian American History*, 195-196; Jack Chen, *The Chinese of America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 147-148.
23. Huang criticizes the anti-Chinese movement in his long poem "The Exile" 逐客篇, composed after he left America. See Huang Zunxian, *Renjinglu shicao jianzhu* 人境廬詩草箋注 with commentary by Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), vol. 1, 4.350-365. For a description of Huang's duties in San Francisco and a translation and discussion of his American poems, see Jerry D. Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm: The Poetry of Huang Zunxian 1848-1905* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 25-29, 138-142, 242-253.
24. Liu, *Xubian*, 404; Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 32.
25. L. Eve Armentrout Ma points out that the success of these

organizations in Chinatown was largely due to "their ability to meet the challenge of American opposition." See Ma, "Chinatown Organizations and the Anti-Chinese Movement," 147.

26. Liu, *Meiguo huaqiaoshi*, 404-406. For a list of these societies from 1910s to 1950s in San Francisco Chinatown, see Liu, *Xubian*, 404-407. See also Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 33-36.
27. See Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 37-38.
28. Liu, *Xubian*, 4-5.
29. See Lai, Lim, and Yung, *Island*.
30. Lai, Lim, and Yung, *Island*, 22.
31. For a discussion of the themes and content of the poems, see Lai, Lim, and Yung, *Island*, 23-27.
32. For the significance of the *tibishi* inscription, see Shan, *Mingke yu zaixian*, 31-88. Yunte Huang precisely uses the term *tibishi* to refer to these poems, and considers that this type of traditional Chinese form of travel writing can provide "an outlet for the large social sector that is denied the right to write history." He also compares them to graffiti which is "between a form of vandalism to be condemned and a form of historical record to be preserved." See Huang, "The Poetics of Error," in *Transpacific Imaginations*, 102, 110.
33. My evaluation of the literary quality of the poems thus is in contrast with that of Xiaohuang Yin, who regards these as works of "artistic excellence." This is perhaps because he is too eager to prove that the detainees were not "illiterate peasants" as stereotyped by the Americans. See Yin, *Chinese American Literature,* 42. Him Mark Lai and his colleagues are more objective, stating that the quality of the poems varies greatly, and some pieces "can only be characterized as sophomoric attempts." See Lai, *Island*, 25.
34. Hom's selection, as Sau-ling Wong notes, highlights the political and historical aspects of the songs. For example, there are only twenty-one songs about the detention on Angel Island in the original collections, but seventeen are selected. While poems on family separation make up about one-fifth of the 1,640 original verses, such a large proportion is not seen in Hom's selection. See Wong, "The Politics and Poetics of Folksong Reading," 247-250.
35. For a discussion of the literary characteristics of these songs, see Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 52-59, and Wong, "The Politics and Poetics of Folksong Reading," 249, 253.
36. Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 215, with slight modification in the

last couplet.

37. Sau-ling Wong believes that authors who produced such songs "seemed to take secret pleasure at the new freedom of women," and anonymity also allowed them to put aside concern for respectability. See Wong, "The Politics and Poetics of Folksong Reading," 255. For a discussion of the rise of women in Chinese American literature, see Yin, *Chinese American Literature,* 205-219.
38. Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 204-205.
39. I would like to express my gratitude to Wei-chi Poon at the Ethnic Studies Library of the University of California at Berkeley for her kind assistance in using these two collections.
40. According to Hom, the *Chung Sai Yat Po* published many literary works (*Songs of Gold Mountain*, 31), but the newspaper's online issues from 1890-1904 produced by UC Berkeley show that poetry was rarely published.
41. See the online descriptive summary of the Yuk Ow Collection from the Ethnic Studies Library of the University of California at Berkeley, http://eslibrary.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/summary_yukowcollection.pdf, 1.
42. Liu Yuxi, *Liu binke wenji* 劉賓客文集, in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, vol. 1077 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), 27.492.
43. See Yang Bojun 楊伯駿, annotated, *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 185.
44. Ban Gu, *Han shu*, 20 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 6:1708, 1756. For a brief discussion of the concept of *guan* (observation), see Zhang Longxi 張隆溪, "History, Poetry, and the Question of Fictionality," *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry* 3 (2005): 66-68.
45. See Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 47.
46. For a more detailed study of the development of "Bamboo Branch Songs" after the Tang, see Mo Xiuying 莫秀英, "Cong Tangdai dao Qingdai wenren zhuzhi ci ticai neirong de fazhan yanbian" 從唐代到清代文人竹枝詞題材內容的發展演變, *Zhongshan daxue xuebao luncong* 中山大學學報論叢 22.2 (2002): 121-127.
47. See Li Qingnian, *Nanyang zhuzhi ci huibian: zhongguo yiwai weiyi zhuzhi ci huibian* 南洋竹枝詞匯編: 中國以外唯一竹枝詞匯編 (Singapore: Jingu shuhuashe, 2012).
48 See Richard John Lynn, "Early Modern Cross-Cultural Perspectives: the *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects from Japan* of Huang Zunxian

(1848-1905)," *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry* 2 (2002): 1-51.

49. See Qian Zhonglian, annotated, *Renjinglu shicao jianzhu*, 3:1095-1159; 2:587-640.
50. All these can be found in Carton 29 (folder 22), Carton 60 (folder 2), and especially Carton 31 (folder 12) in the Yuk Ow Collection.
51. Hand copy, in Yuk Ow Collection, Carton 31 (folder 12), 133. All poems are my translations except those from Hom's *Songs of Gold Mountain*.
52. For an English discussion of the "revolution in the poetic realm," see Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm*, 47-77.
53. The severe imbalance of the sexes in Chinese communities was relieved after the repeal of all anti-Chinese exclusion laws in 1943. For a history and review of the exclusion of Chinese women from the United States, see Sucheng Chan, "The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1870-1943," in Chan, *Entry Denied*, 94-146. Note that some Chinese men but fewer Chinese women succeeded in entering the United States after the passage of the Exclusion Act because they were the descendants of their Chinese fathers in the United States. Many, mainly men, gained entrance as paper sons. A paper son or daughter posed as the child of an unrelated adult immigrant in order to escape Exclusion Act laws.
54. Hirata, "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 5.1 (1979): 4-8. For the gender imbalance in the Chinese community and the flourishing of Chinese prostitution, see also Stanford M. Lyman, "Marriage and the Family among Chinese Immigrants to America, 1850-1960," *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture* 29.4 (1968): 321-330.
55. See Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain*, 252-68; 308-322.
56. Hand copy, in Yuk Ow Collection, Carton 31 (folder 12), 134.
57. The surname Feng 封 in Feng yi 封姨, literally "Aunt Feng," is a homonym of "wind" in Mandarin Chinese. This is based on a fairy tale found in the Tang dynasty collection *Boyi zhi* 博異志 compiled by Gushenzi 谷神子. See Gushenzi and Xue Yongruo 薛用弱, *Boyi zhi Jiyi ji* 博異志 . 集異記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 8-9.
58. According to Hirata, women who had been transported to Chinatown as prostitutes were housed in temporary quarters to await their distribution. Well-to-do Chinese in San Francisco usually purchased the most attractive ones as concubines or mistresses. But they were transferrable, "one day loaded with jewels, the next day to be stripped

and sold to the highest bidder." See Hirata, "Free, Indentured, Enslaved," 13-14.

59. Number four of eight poems, newspaper clipping, in Carton 29 (folder 21), Yuk Ow Collection. Published in *Shaonian zhongguo bao* 少年中國報 (Young China) on February 1, 1956.
60. Two examples are the legendary folk heroine Mulan 木蘭, and the late Qing revolutionary who took part in the anti-Manchurian movement, Qiujin 秋瑾 (1875-1907).
61. Newspaper clipping, in Carton 29 (folder 21), Yuk Ow Collection, originally published on February 15, 1951, in *Jinshan Shibao*, with five poems in total. These are the second and fifth pieces of the series.
62. See "Tianhou gumiao" 天后古廟 (Tin How Temple), in Chinatownology.com, http://www.chinatownology.com/tin_how_temple.html. In the anonymous ten-poem series "Bamboo Branch Songs of New Spring at the Golden Gate, 1934" 甲戌金門新春竹枝詞, the sixth piece is about Tin How Temple. The series was originally published on February 18, 1934, in *Sai Gai Yat Po*. See Carton 31 (folder 12), Yuk Ow Collection, p. 137.
63. See "Gangzhou zong huiguan" 岡州總會館 (Kong Chow Benevolent Association), in *Wanqu huaren zixunwang* 灣區華人資訊網 (ChineseInSFBay.com), http://www.chineseinsfbay.com/company/task_view/id_15527.html. In the Yuk Ow Collection, there is a couplet produced in 1868 by the Kong Chow Benevolent Association for welcoming the imperial envoy Anson Burlingame 蒲安臣 (1820-1870, he served as the US ambassador in China and the Chinese ambassador in the US respectively) and his entourage from China. See Carton 31 (folder 12), Yuk Ow Collection. "Kong Chow" is the ancient name of present Xinhui 新會 county in Guangdong.
64. Newspaper clipping, in Carton 31 (folder 12), Yuk Ow Collection.
65. See Carton 29 (folder 22), Yuk Ow Collection.
66. See Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay: Representations of Ethnic and Gender Identity in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Beauty Pageant," *Journal of Social History* 31.1 (September 1997): 5-31; see also "Quanmei huabu xiaojie jingxuan" 全美華埠小姐競選, in *Baidu baike* 百度百科, http://baike.baidu.com/view/10117017.htm.
67. See Wu, "Loveliest Daughter," 5, 12.
68. "Jinmen chunri zhuzhi ci" 金門春日竹枝詞, third piece of four, newspaper clipping, in Carton 60 (folder 2), Yuk Ow Collection.

Published on January 1, 1977, in *Jinshan shibao*.

69. Newspaper clipping, in Carton 29 (folder 22), Yuk Ow Collection. Published on January 20, 1968, in *Jinshan shibao*.
70. In his study of New York Chinatown, John Kuo Wei Tchen points out that "until the repeal of exclusionary laws and the advent of home washers and dryers in the 1960s, Chinese hand laundries were to constitute the major occupation of Chinese in New York." This occupation, he maintains, "became both a means of protecting Chinese from the prejudice of the larger society and a constrictive space that kept Chinese disconnected from the world around them." Because of this occupation, they were also "increasingly treated as an undesirable and unassimilable race of people." See Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture 1776-1882* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 252, 259.
71. Newspaper clipping, in Carton 29 (folder 22), Yuk Ow Collection. Published in *Jinshan shibao* on September 6, 1975.
72. Hand copy, no. 3 in "Jiaxu Jinmen xinchun zhuzhi ci" 甲戌金門新春竹枝詞, Carton 31 (folder 12), Yuk Ow Collection. Published in *Sai Gai Yat Po* on February 18, 1934.
73. "Yuandan zhuzhi ci" 元旦竹枝詞, Newspaper clipping, in Carton 60 (folder 2), Yuk Ow Collection. Published in *Jinshan shibao* on January 1, 1977.
74. For the physical and cultural meanings of Chinatown, see Kim, *Dictionary of Asian American History*, 190-91.
75. Written by Huang Shejing 黃社經, "The Lovely Chinatown" series was published in *Jinshan Shibao* on June 1, 1955. Newspaper clipping in Carton 29 (folder 22), Yuk Ow Collection.
76. The first couplet is from the fifth poem in Wang Shejing's "The Lovely Chinatown." The second is from a series of "Bamboo Branch Songs of Springtime in Golden Gate," written by Zeng Xian 曾賢, published on January 1, 1977 in *Jinshan shibao*. See newspaper clipping in Carton 31 (folder 12), Yuk Ow Collection.
77. Lei Meichun 雷梅邨, "Bamboo Branch Songs of the Golden Gate at Springtime" 金門春日竹枝詞, second of four, published in *Jinshan shibao* on February 4, 1977. Newspaper clipping in Carton 31 (folder 12), Yuk Ow Collection.
78. Before the emergence of the Jinshan Shishe, there was a Jinmen Yinshe 金門吟社 (Golden Gate poetry society) formed in 1923.The poetry of its members were collected in the *Jinmen yinshe shiji* 金門吟

社詩集 (Poetry collection of the Golden Gate Poetry Society). At present I cannot locate the poetry collection. After 1931, the society gradually disbanded. The Jinshan Shishe, chaired by Huang Shejing, was founded on the Mid-Autumn Festival (September 14) of 1961. It did not last long. There is a report of its establishment in the *Jinshan shibao*. See newspaper clipping in Carton 29 (folder 22), Yuk Ow Collection. See also Liu, *Xubian*, 407. There was also a Zhongxing 中興 Poetry Society in the 1960s. The *Jinshan shibao* reported on March 4, 1965 that the chairman of the society had won the first prize in a poetry competition organized in Taiwan. See newspaper clipping in Carton 29 (folder 22), Yuk Ow Collection.

79. His original Chinese surname was Mark, but "became Lai in America because his father had entered the country as the paper son of a merchant with the surname Lai." But in Chinese, he put his original surname in front of the adopted surname. Thus, it reads as Mark Lai Him in Chinese. See collection details at the Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California at Berkeley, webpage: http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt7r29q3gq;query=;style=oac4;view=admin.
80. Collection details at the Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library note that "Lai is acknowledged as 'the Dean of Chinese American Studies,'" having fifty-four works in English and Chinese about Chinese Americans published as of 2003, that he was an editor of such important journals as *Chinese America: History and Perspectives* and *Amerasia Journal*, and that "he was also invited to teach Chinese American history courses at San Francisco State University . . . and at the University of California at Berkeley. . . ." See note 79 above for the link to collection details.
81. The society published a group collection in 1967. It consists of the work of sixty-one poets. See *Dunfeng Shishe zhuankan* 敦風詩社專刊 (San Francisco: Dunfeng Shishe, 1967). A copy of the collection can be found in the Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley.
82. See Zheng Manqing, preface to *Dunfeng shishe zhuankan* 敦風詩社專刊 (San Francisco: Dunfung shishe, 1967), 1; Editorial, *Tien Shing Weekly*, published on September 13, 1981. Collected in Carton 87 (folder 5), Him Mark Lai Papers (hereafter HML Papers).
83. See editorial, "Dunfeng Wenyishe shiwu zhounian jinian" 敦風文藝社十五週年紀念, September 13, 1981, *Jinshan Shibao*. Carton 87 (folder 5), HML Papers. Also see "Dunfeng Wenyishe 2011 nian

chunji yaji" 敦風文藝社 2011 年春季雅集, quoted in *Yaxi'an wenyiying* 亞細安文藝營, http://sgcls.zhongwenlink.com/news_read.asp?NewsID=10993, retrieved on July 13, 2011.

84. See Dunfeng Wenyishe jiaxu chunji yaji jisheng" 敦風文藝社甲戌春季雅集紀盛, April 7, 1994, *Singtao Daily News*; and "Dunfeng Wenyishe chengli shiwu zhounian jinian tekan" 敦風文藝社成立十五週年紀念特刊, in *Tien Shing Weekly*, both in Carton 87 (folder 5), HML Papers.
85. In 1999, the society invited the head of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in San Francisco as honored guest to their annual banquet. See "Dunfeng Wenyishe sasan zhounian juxing shengda huadong" 敦風文藝社卅三週年舉行盛大活動, in *Jinshan shibao*, October 7, 1999. Carton 87 (folder 5), HML Papers.
86. Zhao Chengbo 趙澄波, "Dunfeng shiwu zhounian jinian zhiqing" 敦風十五週年紀念誌慶, published in *Tien Shing Weekly* on September 13, 1981. Carton 87 (folder 5), HML Papers.
87. One cannot, however, assume that these poets are all financially better off than their predecessors. For example, Situ Shufen 司徒樹芬 details the hardship of the reputable woman poet Shu Manxia 舒曼霞 (1912-2001), a primary school teacher from Taiwan who left her children in mainland China after 1949 and could barely support them financially before moving to the United States (probably during the 1970s). See *Jinshan shibao*, October 30, 2001. Carton 87 (folder 3), HML Papers.
88. Carton 87 (folder 3), HML Papers.
89. Carton 87 (folder 3), HML Papers.
90. Carton 87 (folder 3), HML Papers. The phrase "frost covers the sky" in line one is borrowed from the famous Tang poem "Fengqiao yebo" 楓橋夜泊 written by Zhang Ji 張繼. See Cao Yin 曹寅, et al., eds., *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 4.6.242.
91. *Jinshan shibao*, December 30, 2000. Newspaper clipping in Carton 87 (folder 3), HML Papers.
92. See He Ping 郝平, *Sun Zhongshan geming yu meiguo* 孫中山革命與美國 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 121-123.
93. See Carton 87 (folders 3 and 4), HML Papers.
94. Zhang Bingzhi 張病知, ed., *Quanqiu huaqiao shici shihua* (*fulu*: *Dangdai quanqiu huaqiao shici xuanji*) 全球華僑詩詞史話 (附錄:當代全球華僑詩詞選集) (New York: Niuyue sihai shishe, 2000), 82-92. I have not yet located the publications of these societies.
95. See Huang Dihua 黃迪華, "Liang Chaojie de shiwen sanpian" 梁朝杰

的詩文三篇, in *Shidai bao* 時代報, August 30, 1986. Carton 87 (folder 1), HML Papers.

96. Thanks to Professor Nancy Yunhwa Rao at Rutgers University, I learned of the Chung Collection at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and of an online edition of *Dahan Gongbao* 大漢公報 (The Chinese Times) published in Victoria from 1915 to 1970. The National Archives in Ottawa may also contain some documents about classical-style poetry written in Canada.
97. See the list in Zhang Bingzhi, *Quanqiu huaqiao shici shihua*, 100-101.
98. Zhang Bingzhi, *Quanqiu huaqiao shici shihua*, 95-96.
99. Stephen Owen, "Poetry in the Chinese Tradition," in Paul Ropp, ed., *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 295-296.
100. 吾曹身託異邦, 心懷故國. See Zhao Minzhi 趙民治, preface to *Dunfeng shishe zhuankan*, 2.