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A Preliminary Study of Early Chinese-Canadian Literature (1882–1966)

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Abstract: Drawing on literary historical materials discovered over the past decade, this article undertakes a dual investigation utilizing both theoretical and textual research to explore the origins of Chinese-language literature in Canada, clarifying shortcomings and misinterpretations in previous studies on this topic. By examining Chinese literary works published in newspapers and community periodicals over nearly eighty years (1882-1966) along with related community contexts and literary activities of key figures, this study outlines a relatively comprehensive trajectory of Chinese language literary development in Canada. On this basis, it seeks to construct an academic framework for the study of early Chinese-language literature, thereby addressing the current state of conflicting opinions on early Chinese-Canadian literature. Notably, the discovery and analysis of the literary characteristics in *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* provide fresh perspectives on several key issues, including the timeline pertaining to the origins of early Chinese-Canadian literature, the “Non-Siyi”(Four Counties of Guangdong) background of its authorship, and the diary’s reflection of the historical era of railway construction. Furthermore, the logical analysis of Chinese wall poetry corrects long-standing misunderstandings concerning the origins of early Chinese-Canadian literature. Finally, through its analytical positioning across multiple dimensions and genres of Chinese-Canadian literary production, the study opens up a new yet clearly defined path for research on early Chinese-Canadian literature.

Keywords: A Preliminary Exploration of the Origins of Chinese-Canadian Literature; *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*; *Sun Bo*; *The Chinese Times*; Literary Sections

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题目：早期加拿大华文文学初探（1882-1966）

摘要：本文运用近十年发现的文学史料，对加拿大华文文学的缘起做了学术理论和文本研究的双重探讨，辨析了以往华文文学缘起研究的缺失与误读。并通过将近八十年（1882-1966）历史时期刊登在华文报刊和社区刊物上的华文文学作品以及相关的社区、人物的文学活动，勾勒出较为全面的加拿大华文文学发展轨迹，并试图据此建构早期华文文学研究的学术范畴，从而改变迄今为止众说纷纭的加拿大早期华文文学研究的现状。值得注意的是，本文对黄笃生日记的文学特性的发现和挖掘，给早期加华文学起源的时间点、作者身份的“非广东四邑特征”、日记反映的修铁路大时代等问题，带来了崭新的观察点；而本文对华人壁诗的逻辑辨析，纠正了早期加华文学缘起问题的长期误读；最后，本文对涉及加华文学众多层面和作品类别的学术分析定位，为早期加华文学研究开辟了全新但相当清晰的路径。

关键词：加华文学起源初探；黄笃生日记；《新报》；《大汉公报》；文学版面

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Introduction

Research on Chinese-language literature in Canada has a relatively short history, and considerable disagreement remains regarding the definition of its academic scope. This is due to several factors: the scarcity of historical materials, limited number of outstanding works, diverse origins of authors, and difficulty of establishing consistent academic standards. At its core, however, literature is a study of the human experience and reflects human nature. Therefore, the arrival of early Chinese laborers who formed communities in Canada and brought with them the Chinese language allowed the inherent possibility of Chinese literature.

Looking at Canadian history as a whole, prior to the arrival of European groups and the influx of immigrants afterwards, the Indigenous peoples had already lived on this land for thousands of years. Although they left no written records, their orally transmitted historical narratives contain numerous literary elements. Today, many Indigenous communities are in the process of compiling these oral traditions to establish their own unique cultural identities. Within this culture, literature naturally occupies an important role.

Similarly, when we trace the early history of immigrants, especially Chinese laborers, we find that most of the young workers who toiled under harsh conditions during the gold rushes and the construction of the railways came from China's Pearl River Delta, particularly the "Sanyi" (Three Counties) and "Siyi" (Four Counties) regions of Guangdong. Their distinctive experiences laid the foundation for the century-long continuity of Chinese communities in Canada. Although most were illiterate and did not leave behind literary works capable of being passed down through generations, it is reasonable to believe that, as migrants from a civilization with a deep literary tradition, their orally transmitted stories contained rich literary elements. A careful examination of the many family letters left by these Chinese laborers may allow scholars to trace the origins of early Chinese-language literature in the era of the Chinese laborers.

Moreover, research into early Chinese Canadian history has revealed that a number of educated individuals who had received rigorous traditional education and possessed strong literary skills also became "laborers" for various reasons, and crossed the ocean to Canada in pursuit of the "Gold Mountain dream". These individuals may have left behind a considerable number of literary works and reflections on the changing times, their turbulent lives, and the profound shocks of encountering a different culture throughout their diaries and family letters. Such materials constitute a rich resource for the study of early Chinese-language literature, awaiting excavation by later scholars.

The Chinese community in Canada took shape soon after the arrival of early immigrants especially Chinese laborers, reflecting the deep social conditioning of an ancient empire that was long embedded in their habits of life and social organization. At the same time, the vigorous process of modernization in Western society introduced elements quite distinct from those of China into the formation of Chinese communities in Canada. Together, these factors laid the social foundations for the early development of Chinese-language literature in Canada. For example, clan and district associations, Chinese-language schools, and Chinese newspapers that emerged within Chinese communities transcended private forms of writing such as family letters and diaries, providing a public arena and institutional space for the emergence and growth of Chinese-language literature. Meanwhile, the lived experiences of Chinese communities, including social conditions, historical atmosphere, and even the harsh realities of discrimination offered rich and varied material for Chinese-language literary creation.

Among the many struggles faced by overseas Chinese in Canada, a severely imbalanced gender ratio and the absence of family life led to emotional deprivation and spiritual isolation. Additionally, many faced discrimination and segregation in social, economic, political, and educational spheres, furthering the difficulty and harsh conditions of their lives. Yet despite these struggles, they continued to aspire to a better life and refused to abandon their spiritual pursuits. Since literature serves as a crucial vehicle for spiritual life, many individuals wrote Chinese-language plays, composed classical-style poetry and couplets infused with Canadian elements, organized competitions in Chinese couplets and poetry, and established literary supplements in Chinese newspapers to publish literary works by overseas Chinese. They also opened Chinese bookstores and reading rooms, organized lectures on classical learning, and worked to enhance the cultural and literary literacy of their communities. Over time, the literary works written by Chinese Canadians evolved in step with the times. Writings opposing racial discrimination and

supporting the Second World War and China's War of Resistance against Japan continually emerged. At the same time, enduring themes such as nostalgia for the homeland, immigrant life, and the East-West cultural encounter were repeatedly explored.

Using a chronological timeline, it examines the literature through two lenses: the social backgrounds of the authors and the formal characteristics of their writing. It also examines the literary experiences of Chinese communities on the eve of the major expansion of Chinese-Canadian literature that followed the change in Canada's immigration policy in 1967, when successive waves of immigration arrived. In doing so, the study seeks to establish an empirical foundation for positivist research on early Chinese-Canadian literature.

Characteristics of Early Chinese-Canadian Literature

Early Chinese-Canadian literature displays three salient characteristics. First, it lacked well-known writers and canonical works. Literary activity was largely folk-based, and the forms of writing were mostly limited to couplets and classical poetry, with some instances of exchange and poetic response. Among these, the poetic exchanges involving figures such as the diplomat Huang Zunxian 黄遵宪 were particularly significant. Second, the origin of authors were constrained by the regional origins of early Chinese laborers, notably the Province of Guangdong which was where most writers originated from. This naturally emphasized Guangdong regional characteristics in early Chinese literature. It is worth noting, however, that some Chinese laborers and merchants from northern China possessed stronger literary training and writing skills than those of the average Guangdong-born authors. Among these, *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* (黄笃生日记) stands out as a particular example. Third, a considerable number of Chinese-language works appeared in Chinese-language newspapers, indicating that newspapers served as the institutional cradle for early Chinese-Canadian literature.

From the perspective of authors' geographic origins, the sources of Chinese-language writers largely overlapped with those of early Chinese laborers, with the former emerging from the latter. After the start of the gold rush in 1858, Chinese migrants arrived successively in two British colonies in North America: the Colony of Vancouver Island and the Colony of British Columbia. In 1866, the two colonies were merged into a single entity, the United Colony of British Columbia. In 1871, this united colony formally joined the Canadian Confederation and became the Province of British Columbia (BC). From 1858 until the introduction of exclusionary legislation barring Chinese immigration in 1923, the majority of overseas Chinese resided in British Columbia (see Table 1).

Table 1 Chinese Population in Canada and British Columbia(1881–1921)

Census Year	British Columbia	Canada	Percentage of National Total (%)
1881	4350	4383	99.2
1891	8910	9129	97.6
1901	14885	17312	86.0
1911	19568	27831	70.5
1921	23533	39587	59.4

Source: *Census of Canada, 1881-1921*.

During this historical period, the Sanyi and Siyi regions of Guangdong, China constituted the principal places of origin for overseas Chinese in Canada (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2 Distribution of Places of Origin of Chinese Residents in British Columbia(1884-1885)

Total	Taishan	Kaipin	Xinhu	Enpin	Heshan	Panyu	Zengcheng	Zhongshan	Other Counties
5046	1158	939	615	491	302	798	195	111	437

Source: Ticket stubs from the Victoria Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, 1884–1885.

Table 3 Number of Donors to the Victoria Chinese Hospital(1892–1915)

County / Region	Number of Donors	Percentage of Total (%)
Siyi	4464	72.5
Sanyi	671	10.8
Other Counties	1020	16.7
Total	6155	100.0

Source: Compiled from 104 booklets of Victoria Chinese hospital donation receipt stubs, dated 1892-1915.

It is worth noting that prior to the enactment of *the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923*, unemployment and waves of anti-Chinese sentiment had already prompted an eastward migration of Chinese residents from British Columbia. As a result, Chinese-language literary activities naturally followed the movement of the Chinese population, shifting with varying degrees toward the prairie provinces in central Canada and Ontario and Quebec in eastern Canada. This movement introduced a measure of regional variation into Chinese-language literary production, although the mainstream of such activity remained centered in British Columbia (see Table 4).

Table 4 Distribution of the Chinese Population by Province, 1921

Province	Chinese Population
British Columbia	23533
Ontario	5625
Alberta	3581
Quebec	2335
Saskatchewan	2667
Manitoba	1331
Other provinces or territories	515
Canada (Total)	39587

Source: *Census of Canada*, 1921.

As time passed and second-generation Chinese Canadians were born, Chinese-language literature also began to exhibit patterns of intergenerational transmission. Figures who exemplify

these changing characteristics include Lin Libin 林礼斌, Situ Mao 司徒旄, and Xu Zile 徐子乐, all of whom were born in Victoria, British Columbia.

After the Second World War, with the repeal of *the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923*, the Chinese population gradually increased and became distributed across Canada as a whole (see Table 5). At the same time, Chinese-language newspapers and other literary forums expanded nationwide. Consequently, Chinese-language literature moved beyond its earlier situation of being concentrated almost exclusively in British Columbia and became a literary phenomenon shared by Chinese communities across the country.

Table 5 Chinese Population by Province and Region in Canada(1951- 1961)

Province / Region	1951	1961
British Columbia	15933	24227
Ontario	6997	15155
Alberta	3451	6937
Saskatchewan	2144	3660
Quebec	1904	4749
Manitoba	1175	1936
Nova Scotia	516	637
Newfoundland	186	445
New Brunswick	146	274
Yukon	37	100
Prince Edward Island	35	43
Northwest Territories	4	34
Total	32528	58197

Source: *Census of Canada, 1951*, Volume 1, p.32-2.; *Census of Canada, 1961*, Series 1.2, p.35-2.

As noted above, the foundation for the nationwide development of Chinese-language literature in Canada lay in the spread of the Chinese population and its writers across the country. For example, Ma Jinghu 马镜湖, who resided in Ontario. Writers based in British Columbia included Lin Honggong 林洪公, Yan Zhiya 颜志炎, Lin Xiaotang 林筱唐, Huang Hunan 黄笏南, Luo Zhongyue 骆仲约, and Lei Jipan 雷基磐. Some figures were active across provincial boundaries, such as Reverend Fong Dewen 冯德文, whose activities extended across Alberta and British Columbia. In addition, there were writers such as Dakuan 黄宽达, who lived in Calgary, Alberta; Cao Yudou 曹禹斗, who resided in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Situ Shunong 司徒树浓, who lived in Ottawa, Ontario.

It is also worth noting that after the repeal of *the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923* in 1947, the number of Chinese immigrants from various parts of the world gradually increased. This influx encouraged the immigration of Chinese-language writers to Canada, raising the overall standard of Chinese-language literary production to a level far higher than that of the early Chinese laborer period, and giving rise to well-known writers and literary works. For instance, writers who came

to Canada from Asia, such as Feng Feng 冯冯 and Ge Yifan 葛逸凡, possessed a relatively high level of literary training. The works they produced in Canada differed markedly from those written by earlier generations of overseas Chinese in terms of style, form, content, and language. However, because the readership for Chinese-language literature in Canada remained limited, most of these writers' works were published in Asia rather than in Canada.

A Preliminary Exploration of the Origins of Chinese-Canadian Literature and Selected Literary Events

Tracing the early origins of Chinese-Canadian literature is challenging, for the simple reason that representative works and writers are scarce. Thus, the academic scope of Chinese-Canadian literature has been difficult to establish. In other words, while theories about its origins have long conflicted, no definitive study has yet reconciled these competing interpretations. As noted above, the broad conception of Chinese-Canadian literature is grounded in "folk literature": wherever sizeable Chinese communities and social circles existed, literary activity was an indispensable element embedded in community life, even though its forms were highly diverse and could manifest themselves in something as commonplace as New Year couplets displayed on doorways.

When addressing the origins of Chinese-Canadian literature, two basic criteria are generally considered. First, the time period must be early, and second, there must be identifiable works and authors. From this perspective, the present study seeks to locate the origins of Chinese-Canadian literature from two directions. The first is traditional literary works produced within the lives of early Chinese communities (including writers and diplomats residing temporarily in North America). The second is the literary experiences and written records that emerged from the distinctive living environments of early Chinese in Canada, including gold mining and railway construction. In fact, early Chinese-language literature in Canada reveals two primary characteristics: first, an extension of traditional forms driven by nostalgia for the homeland; and second, an adaptation of those same forms to document the lived experiences of immigrants in Canada.

The author has identified an important work and writer that exemplify the literary experiences and textual records of early Chinese in Canada's distinctive living environments—namely, *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*. At present, the earliest and most substantial representative example of traditional literary works reflecting the lives of early North American Chinese communities (including writers and diplomats residing in North America) can be found in *Jinshan Lianyu*, compiled in the mid-1880s by the diplomat Huang Zunxian in San Francisco. Because Huang Zunxian's diplomatic and literary activities in the United States involved numerous Chinese communities and literary works in Canada, his contributions are considered part of the origins of Chinese-Canadian literature. Related literary materials within this category include poetic and couplet exchanges among North American literati, couplets inscribed on ceremonial archways erected by Chinese communities, congratulatory couplets composed for the founding of Chinese associations, and Chinese wall poems written at the Victoria quarantine station, among others.

The Diary of Dukasang Wong

The Diary of Dukasang Wong is a private journal written by Huang Dusheng 黄笃生 (Dukasang Wong, Huang Shizhe 又名黄世哲), a Chinese laborer who participated in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Composed over a span of sixty years and across two geographic spaces—China and North America—the diary possesses a dual character as both a firsthand historical witness and a work with distinct literary qualities. While providing detailed personal accounts of the great era of railway construction by Chinese laborers in Canada, it also opens up new possibilities for tracing the origins of Chinese-Canadian literature. Notably, Huang Dusheng lived successively in both China and Canada, endowing his diary with rich testimony to Sino-Western cultural encounters and the psychological fluctuations accompanying such experiences.

What deserves particular attention is that although Huang Dusheng came to North America, he was originally from the Beijing area and had received a formal traditional education in China, even having worked as a private tutor himself.(McIlwraith, 2020).In other words, his writing differs from the predominantly “Lingnan” (Guangdong) coloration of early Chinese-Canadian literature and instead bears a stronger connection to the traditions of the Central Plains. Especially remarkable is the fact that *The Diary of Dukasang Wong* contains exceptionally rich psychological descriptions and reflections on life, along with detailed and nuanced comparisons between Eastern and Western cultures. As a result, the diary is imbued with a distinct literary appeal that makes it engaging to read and, in many respects, comparable to orthodox literary works that aim to “convey moral principles through writing” and to “express emotion through poetic reflection.”

For these reasons, the emergence of *The Diary of Dukasang Wong* effectively resolves the long-standing difficulty in tracing the origins of Chinese-Canadian literature, providing a solid foundation for such inquiry by fulfilling the essential scholarly criteria required to establish literary origins: a work (the diary) and an author (Huang Dusheng). Moreover, the earliest Canadian sections of the diary coincide with the great era of Canadian Pacific Railway construction, and the historical elements it presents constitute precisely the kind of distinctive temporal background and atmosphere that are central to literary works. In other words, as the earliest work currently identifiable in Chinese-Canadian literature, *The Diary of Dukasang Wong* possesses scholarly and literary significance that far exceeds that of Chinese laborer wall poems, traditional literati exchanges, and the composition of couplets and parallel inscriptions that have previously been classified as early Chinese-Canadian literature. Even more importantly, from the perspective of tracing literary origins, *The Diary of Dukasang Wong* writing after his arrival in Canada pushes the starting point of Chinese-Canadian literature substantially earlier than has been suggested in previous research and scholarship.

However, *The Diary of Dukasang Wong*—spanning sixty years and comprising seven substantial volumes—did not escape the fate that so often befalls precious historical documents and literary materials: it was destroyed in a fire. Fortunately(McIlwraith, 2020), while studying at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Huang Dusheng’s granddaughter translated dozens of her grandfather’s diary entries into English for an academic paper, thereby preserving part of this invaluable historical record.(McIlwraith, 2020)This has proven to be a stroke of good fortune for research into the early origins of Chinese-Canadian literature.

A close reading of the surviving diary entries shows that, while they retain the diary's inherent functions of record-keeping and practical documentation, they can also be understood when viewed through the theoretical lens of "great historical moments giving rise to literature" as texts that record, from the perspective of personal history and the history of the inner self, the psychological journey of a young man living at the moment of dynastic collapse, facing sudden upheavals in his family, and confronting major choices for his own survival. They trace his adventure from a traditional Eastern cultural world to the unknown "Gold Mountain" of Canada, and his striving for a freer life. In this way, a diary concerned with seemingly minor personal and familial matters becomes linked to a form of nonfiction writing imbued with multiple aesthetic dimensions. What begins as an intimate, private mode of writing centered on personal observation thus naturally evolves into a rare literary landscape set against the vast historical backdrop of the mass migration of Chinese laborers from the nineteenth to the twentieth century?

The following section presents only a few excerpts from *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*. These passages have undergone repeated translation and therefore cannot fully convey the original textual impact of the diary. Nevertheless, they offer readers a sense of the literary resonance that extends beyond the diary's purely documentary function.

"My soul cries out. I wish I had never experienced such bad days as those in which we now live. Many of our people have been so very ill for such a long time, and there has been no medicine nor good food to give them. Even the strongest of us are weak without medicine to fight against these diseases, which spread very rapidly. It is such a sorrowful sight. The white doctor has told us the illnesses come from lack of fresh food, but we cannot grow any fresh food, as all of us, including the white people, are moving constantly with the work we have to do. The good doctor has gone to the larger town in search of better food for the very ill, but I am afraid that medicines will not arrive here to these poor gutter-shelters. I would have liked to accompany him, but my body does not have the strength or desire.

These are troubled times for us Chinese. There has been word among the employing company that we are not good workers and do not work enough for the schedules and plans of the railway owners. How does anyone work when so ill? Many are killed when such words are spoken, and we are becoming more like dogs biting at one another. My meagre attempts at talking about being humble and waiting for better days are senseless. My words mean less than nothing. I am of so little help to everyone."(McIlwraith, 2020, p. 59-60)

Even from the brief diary excerpts presented here, one can already discern the rich historical documentation and literary resonance embedded in *The Diary of Dukesang Wong*: an extraordinary life buffeted by the turbulence of a great historical era; the collision of Eastern and Western cultures across the Pacific; complex and deeply layered psychological struggles; humane insights gained through suffering and displacement; and a Confucian sensibility marked by compassion for humanity. Such expansive literary elements, imbued with a strong sense of their historical moment, flow naturally and seamlessly within the seemingly simple medium of a factual diary. They invite repeated reflection, possess considerable archival value, and inevitably inspire admiration.

As noted earlier, Dukesang Wong was not from the Siyi region of Guangdong, but rather came to North America via counties in the vicinity of Beijing. Owing to the perspectives and breadth of vision shaped by his “cultural capital” and life experiences, he quickly rose from the ranks of ordinary Chinese laborers to become a successful merchant and community leader (“承受生意股份广告”，1924; Index of death of Duke Sang Wong, 1931; McIlwraith, 2020)—an achievement that was relatively rare among Chinese laborers of the time.

If *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* can be regarded as an “organic,” or unmediated, work of Chinese-Canadian literature, then *Jinshan Yulian* created by Huang Zunxian represents a form of Chinese-language literature in which traditional Chinese literary practices were “grafted onto” North American soil.

As a diplomat of the Qing dynasty, Huang Zunxian’s literary activities, strictly within the academic framework of Chinese-Canadian literature, should not be considered part of the literary production of North American Chinese immigrant communities. Rather, they constitute an overseas extension of literary activity originating in China itself. However, given Huang Zunxian’s close ties with literati and merchants in North American Chinese communities, his significant leadership role, and the substantial presence of North American elements in some of his literary works, many scholarly studies have nonetheless included him within the scope of North American Chinese-language literary activity. That said, it must be clearly recognized that, because of his status as a diplomatic official, neither Huang Zunxian nor his literary works can be classified as part of North American Chinese immigrant literature.

***Jinshan Lianyu*, also known as *Linked Couplets from Golden Mountain* 金山联玉**

Huang Zunxian 黄遵宪 was a quintessential traditional literature within the diplomatic and political circles of the late Qing dynasty. Composing poetry and prose was an inseparable part of his daily life. Whenever he was stationed overseas, local literati would naturally gather around him, and literary activities in the form of poetic composition and exchange frequently took place. These activities also became part of his efforts to strengthen ties between the Qing government and overseas Chinese communities and to promote what might be termed “informal diplomacy.” During his postings in North America, Huang expanded such poetic exchanges into a broader form of Chinese-language literary activity, through which he also gained insight into the issues confronting Chinese communities abroad. It can thus be said that, amid the decline of the late Qing state, Huang Zunxian was still able to make meaningful diplomatic contributions to overseas Chinese communities. The crucial factor lay not in his official rank, but in his humanistic sensibility: by building bridges through Chinese-language literature and by harnessing the emotional bonds unique to literary expression, he was able to speak with, empathize with, and resonate deeply alongside North American Chinese communities.

Here, only examples directly related to Chinese-Canadian literary activity are cited. In the mid-1880s, Huang Zunxian, together with figures such as Liu Yunqiao 刘云樵, jointly devised topics requiring North American literati to compose couplets using specific characters prescribed by the topic setters. This activity came to be known as *Jinshan Lianyu*. A number of Canadian

literati participated in this undertaking. ³Selected works by Canadian writers, including Lin Zhanqing 林赞卿, are presented below.

“Commentary by Teacher Huang Yucun 黄雨邨

Title: Long 长○○○○○○

○○○○○○City 城

By Lin Zhanqing

From Master Ma’s tent, I explore the halls of literature. 长从马帐探文府

A modest trial of the butcher’s knife to govern the martial city. 小试牛刀宰武城”(嶺海山人, 1925, p. 151)

“Commentary by Teacher Lin Jiqing 林纪卿

Title: Far 远○○○○○○

○○○○○○Mountain 山

By Xu Weisan 徐畏三

Distant border plans relied on Chongguo’s wisdom. 远筹边略资充国

Misplaced trust in vassals brought disaster through Lushan 禄山. 错付藩权误禄山”(嶺海山人, 1925, p. 151)

Chinese Couplets

Couplets constitute a long-established form of folk literature, yet outstanding examples can also attain the status of refined literary works. Within Chinese communities in Canada, couplets have not only been Chinese-language literary creations appreciated by both the learned and the popular alike, but have also served as standard cultural features for welcoming distinguished guests and celebrating major occasions.

On September 20, 1882, in order to welcome Canada’s fourth Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne 洛恩, and his wife, Princess Louise, the Chinese community erected a large ceremonial archway on the south side between Government Street and Store Street in Victoria’s Chinatown. On the face of the archway toward Government Street, following the Chinese and English inscriptions “Great Qing Empire 大清国” and “God Save the Queen,” two poetic lines were written from left to right: “jiu ri zhan yun, qi feng teng jiao 就日瞻云，起风腾蛟”. On the reverse side of the archway, the three large characters “Great Qing Empire” were also written at the center, with the lines “shi he mei jing, sui yi chong xia 时和美景，绥夷崇夏” inscribed below. On the front and back pillars of the archway, couplets were written on both the left and right sides, although unfortunately the characters are no longer legible in surviving photographs. (Chinese arch on Store Street, Victoria, 1882; Li, 1982; “The State of the Preparations,” 1882)

In 1896, the Qing dynasty statesman Li Hongzhang 李鸿章 travelled to Canada from the United States, visiting Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Banff, and Vancouver. To welcome him, Chinese

³Zunxian Huang served as the Chinese Consul General in San Francisco from 1882 to 1885. His interactions with Canadian literati most likely occurred after 1884, because it was only after the establishment of the Victoria Chinese Benevolent Association that he had more extensive contact with the Chinese community in Canada.

communities in western Canada erected a ceremonial archway on Howe Street in Vancouver. The structure featured a large central arch flanked by two symmetrical smaller arches. (“The Chinese Viceroy”, 1896). On both the front and back of the archway were two short couplets and two long vertical couplets, while within the archway hung a horizontal inscription reading “Guang zhao si hai Illuminating the Four Seas 光昭四海”. Two of the long vertical couplets were composed by Lin Zhanqing, a literatus who had emigrated from Xinning (modern-day Taishan) in China to Canada. These two long couplets were displayed on the front and rear sides of the archway.

“From distant lands the honored elder comes —wherever he goes, his presence brings honor and lifts esteem. 幸元老之遥临到处增光崇物望”

“Sent by the Emperor’s command he travels far — to foster neighborly friendship and secure a lasting peace for the realm. 奉上皇而远出睦邻修好定邦交”

Displayed on the other side of the ceremonial archway was:

“Across the seas he rides the winds, his great minister’s grace lingers in distant lands. 登鳌海而快乘风异地尚留元宰泽”

Back to the palace steps he joyfully returns, where the Emperor shall commend this loyal elder’s merits. 返凤撵而欣覲日上皇应奖老臣功”

When Li Hongzhang passed beneath the archway and saw these lines, he was greatly delighted. (“Canadian Gossip of Li’s Visit”, 1896; “Photograph of the archway built by the Chinese community in 1896 to welcome Li Hongzhang”, 1896; 吴尚鹰, 1963; “文献与专载”, 1960) The few examples cited above are sufficient to offer a glimpse into the literary atmosphere of the time.

Lantern Riddles

Although the majority of Chinese laborers were illiterate, their identification with traditional Chinese culture and the habits shaped by it remained strong. Consequently, even so, amid the hardships of life in a foreign land, many practices rooted in traditional culture continued to accompany them. One such practice was the guessing of lantern riddles. This most grassroots form of traditional cultural entertainment permeated daily life in Chinese communities across Canada. It also served as a means by which culturally minded members of the community promoted traditional Chinese culture and, in doing so, constituted an integral part of the folk activities of Chinese-Canadian literature.

1. “The sky is high, yet higher still than the sky, 天高还有高过天”
“ten women together till half a mu of land. 十女同耕半亩天”
(A riddle for two characters; answer: 夫妻 — husband and wife) (字二, 夫妻)
2. “Three horizontals and three verticals, 横三三直三三”
“two people rise together, two kings dwell in one state. 二人同齐上, 二王住一国”
(A riddle for one character; answer: 田 — field) (字一, 田) (*Hongmen Riddle Books in Canada*, 1890–1910, pp. 1-5)

Note: These riddles rely on the visual structure of Chinese characters and on symbolic associations, a typical feature of traditional lantern riddles.

Most of these lantern riddles were drawn from the everyday lives of overseas Chinese, while some were adapted from classical Chinese works. Although they were commonplace forms of folk literary activity, within Chinese communities in Canada they functioned as Chinese-language literary practices that transcended social hierarchies and were accessible to all ages, embedding literary expression in entertainment. As such, they played a significant role in the transmission and preservation of Chinese culture.

Chinese Wall Poetry

As the saying goes, anger gives rise to poets. Because the content of Chinese wall poems often encompasses literary elements such as anger, protest, outcry, resistance to discrimination, the turbulence of the times, and a sense of national or familial concern, some scholars have regarded them as the point of origin of Chinese-Canadian literature. (金惠俊, 2018) This view, however, is a clear misunderstanding. The root of the problem lies in the absence of an established academic framework and set of criteria for Chinese-Canadian literature. As a result, research in this field has at times resembled a “market basket”: anything related to Chinese-language writing or Chinese people can be placed into it and labeled as part of Chinese-Canadian literature, or even as its origin. In fact, this is not the case.

Judging solely from the environment in which wall poems were produced, the border quarantine stations that detained Chinese people (who at that point could not yet be called “overseas Chinese”) functioned in effect as a boundary line between China and Canada. If an individual successfully passed through the quarantine station and “entered” Canada, he became an overseas Chinese and began life in Canada. Conversely, if he failed to leave the quarantine station and was repatriated, he remained a Chinese national whose attempt at migration had failed. For the wall poems discovered on the walls of the Victoria quarantine station, historical sources do not clearly indicate whether their authors successfully entered Canada. Since it is impossible to determine whether an author was an “overseas Chinese” or a “repatriated Chinese,” it is therefore inappropriate to classify such wall poems as part of Chinese-Canadian literature, let alone to regard them as the origin of Chinese-language literature in Canada.

That said, given that the majority of those detained in quarantine stations were ultimately able to enter Canada and become overseas Chinese or Chinese Canadians, the authors of the wall poems may well have been among them and may have continued their “literary creation” after acquiring overseas Chinese status. On this basis, wall poems can be included—albeit with some reservation—within the broader framework of Chinese-language literature. They cannot, however, be considered an important component of Chinese-Canadian literature, and from a chronological perspective they also postdate the writings found in *The Diary of Dukesang Wong* by a considerable margin.

Here we may briefly review the historical context in which Chinese wall poetry emerged. In 1908, the federal government, which was responsible for immigration inspection and landing procedures, established an immigration quarantine facility at the intersection of Dallas Road and Ontario Street in the city of Victoria on Canada’s west coast, specifically at 15 Ontario

Street. (“Immigration Building Is Now in Use.”, 1909; “New Immigration Building Here.”, 1907) The purpose of this facility was to conduct physical examinations of arriving Chinese migrants in order to prevent those carrying infectious diseases from entering the country. The quarantine station officially opened on November 13, 1909. (“Immigration Building Is Now in Use.”, 1909; “New Immigration Building Here.”, 1907) At that time, all Chinese arrivals on the west coast were required to be taken to this facility, where they underwent medical examinations, were interrogated by immigration officers, and were required to pay a head tax of 500 Canadian dollars.

Because of the large number of Chinese arrivals, most were detained in the quarantine station while awaiting the completion of procedures. If officials discovered that an individual had an infectious disease, had answered questions dishonestly, or lacked the full 500 dollars required for the head tax, that person would continue to be detained, either to be repatriated on the next available ship or to wait until relatives or friends could pay the full head tax on his behalf before entry was permitted. This process could take several days or even weeks. During this period, to prevent escape, detainees were confined in rooms fitted with iron-barred windows and iron gates, resembling a prison and completely cut off from the outside world. Under such conditions, some individuals carved poems onto the walls to vent their anger, confusion, fear, and homesickness. For example, one of the wall poems reads as follows:

“With a single-minded longing for Gold Mountain, 一心走金山者
 One abandons parents, wife, and children, 弃父母与妻儿
 All because the family is poor. 只因家贫
 Remembering the moment of departure, 忆昔临行
 Parents and wife and children offered their earnest exhortations. 父母妻儿叮嘱
 Through every possible means, more than a thousand were scraped together, As support, 千方万
 计成千余, 资助
 Only then to reach the shore in safety. 乃得安然上岸
 Who could have expected trouble to arise, 何意事生
 Endless eye inspections, 验眼多端
 Clothes stripped away, trousers removed,
 The body exposed, subjected to every kind of humiliation, 脱衫除裤, 露身, 百般刑辱
 All because the nation is weak and the family is poor. 皆因国弱家贫

Thinking back on one’s parents, 追忆父母
 I urge my fellow countrymen, 劝同胞
 Turn back and return home, 回头返乡
 And work to strengthen the ancestral land. 兴祖国”

Note: This poem powerfully conveys the humiliation, despair, and patriotic awakening experienced by Chinese detainees at the immigration quarantine station, blending personal suffering with a broader consciousness of national weakness.

If the wall poem cited above can be regarded as an original composition, there were also instances of copied poems on the walls, written in response to personal emotion. In 1977, when the quarantine station was about to be demolished, (黎全恩, 2006) Li Quanen, then a professor at the University of Victoria, discovered on its weathered walls a poem of which only the opening line and fragments of the remaining three lines survived, each containing only two or three characters: “人话外洋那样好 People say life overseas is so good; enduring wind and frost XXX; 至今 to this day XXXXX; 辛 bitterness XXXX.”

Later, in the third issue of *XinNing Magazine* (2000), Professor Lai found that Huang Zhongji 黄仲辑 had published a poem titled “Thinking of My Beloved 想郎歌,” which included a Hakka folk song that closely matched the fragmentary lines found on the quarantine station wall:

“People say life overseas is so good, 人话外洋那样好
Enduring wind and frost for forty autumns 风霜捱尽四十秋
To this day, white-haired, I return to my native place, 至今白发回故里,
Bitter tears flow down with my lapels. 心酸泪水随襟流”(黎全恩, 2008, p. 18)

This poem confirms that a Hakka man from China had once been detained at the Victoria quarantine station. Deeply longing for his hometown and family, he carved this Hakka folk song from China onto the wall.

Literary Works in Newspapers and Periodicals

If early Chinese Canadian literature lacked well-known representative writers and canonical works, and instead existed primarily as a form of community-based literary activity, then Chinese-language newspapers and periodicals were the vital soil that nourished and gave rise to this flourishing of literary expression. Although the tradition of literary supplements in Chinese-language newspapers in Canada did not differ greatly from that of newspapers in the Asian homelands, most literary contributors to Canadian Chinese-language newspapers were sojourners who used various literary forms to express homesickness and longing for family, often through spontaneous and emotionally driven pieces. This was closely related to the fact that the readership of these newspapers consisted largely of lower- and middle-class Chinese laborers and small merchants. Moreover, since the vast majority of Chinese immigrants at the time were from Guangdong, the literary content published—alongside general fiction, poetry, and couplets—often prominently featured Yue folk songs or Yue ou 粤讴, which carried strong regional characteristics.

Of particular note is that after Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and other scholars, thinkers, and reformists established the Chinese Empire Reform Association in Canada, (“M. W. Fiffe”, 1899; 李福基, 1909; 康有为, 1992) the Chinese-language newspapers developed under the association’s sponsorship naturally exhibited a stronger humanistic orientation and a more pronounced literary character. In 1905, the Vancouver headquarters of the Chinese Empire Reform Association began preparations to publish a new newspaper.

On January 7, 1908, the Chinese Empire Reform Association formally began publishing the Chinese-language newspaper *Sun Bo* 新报. (“New Chinese Paper Is Issued Today”, 1908; “本

报广告”，1908）In the same year, the paper already carried literary works such as fiction 小说, humorous anecdotes or xiaolin 笑林, ballads 歌谣, satirical prose 谐文, miscellaneous notes 杂记, and Yue folk songs. (“短篇小说”，1908；“歌谣”，1908) This is a relatively new finding. One example is given below.

Humor Column

Title: *Mistaking One's Father for a Thief* 认父作贼 (“认贼作父”，1908)

“There was a father and son living together in a household of considerable wealth, yet both were extremely afraid of thieves. Every night, whether father or son, one of them would always go to a dark corner to keep watch, fearing that thieves might come to steal their property. One night, around the third watch, the father had already gone to bed, while the son was still lying in ambush near the doorway. Suddenly, he saw a dark figure moving from inside to outside. The son was overjoyed and thought to himself, ‘What a foolish thief—today you are surely caught in my net!’ Upon closer inspection, he sprang up, seized the figure, threw him to the ground, and began punching and kicking him. The person on the ground cried out, ‘Don’t hit me, it’s me, it’s me!’ The son shouted back, ‘Of course I know it’s you—I’m hitting you! You stupid thief, today you’ve finally been caught by me!’ Just as he was exerting himself with all his strength, the person on the ground, exhausted and hoarse, cried out loudly, ‘Have you gone blind? You’re beating your own father!’ Hearing these words, the son suddenly felt the voice sounded very familiar and was greatly alarmed. He released his grip and looked closely—it was indeed his father. As it turned out, after falling asleep, the father had urgently needed to use the toilet. After finishing, he feared that a thief might come, so he quietly slipped back toward the doorway to check—never expecting that his son would mistake him for an intruding thief.”

Among early Chinese-language newspapers in Canada, *The Chinese Daily News* and *The Chinese Times* remained the papers with the richest literary sections, largely because of their scale, which placed them at the forefront of Chinese-language newspapers in Canada. During the 1910s, *The Chinese Times* featured literary pages such as “Dahan Miscellany 大汉杂录” (renamed “Voice of Han 汉声” in 1920), as well as “Garden of Letters 文苑”. (“文苑”，1917) These literary sections included columns titled “Poetry Circle 诗界”, “Yue Folk Songs”, “Banben 班本”, “小说 Fiction”, “联语 Couplets”, “寓言 Fables”, and “歌谣 Ballads”, publishing classical poetry and other types of literary works.

Poetry and Poetry Solicitation Activities

In principle, the laboring and immigrant experience should have provided excellent material for literary creation. However, the harsh realities of early immigrant life left little leisure for reading and writing. Moreover, writers with genuine literary training and cultural cultivation were exceedingly rare. Even those who had attended traditional private academies or modern schools were preoccupied with making a living and found it difficult to devote sustained time to creative work. As a result, concise and tightly structured forms of traditional poetry became the most favored modes of literary expression. Consequently, poetry—mostly in classical Chinese forms—

and related activities such as poetic exchanges and poetry solicitation contests appeared most frequently in the literary pages of Chinese-language newspapers.

The literary pages of *The Chinese Times* regularly featured columns such as “Poetry Circle” and “Han Voice.” Among the literary works published, classical poetry predominated. These poems were rooted in traditional Chinese cultural themes, yet they also incorporated many elements drawn from life in Canada. In terms of content, they expressed nostalgia for the homeland, sorrowful reflections, and records of partings with friends, among other sentiments. The following example illustrates this trend.

On May 8, 1918, *The Chinese Times* published a poem by Lin Xiaotang entitled “Evening View of Victoria”:

“Evening View of Victoria 维城晚望

Wind and rain sigh, enclosing Victoria town 萧萧风雨锁维城
A slant of sunset—its form no longer clear 一抹斜阳看不清
Green waters fill the river, reflections vain 绿水满江空有影
Prosperity fallen to earth, all sound stilled 繁华落地寂无声
Streets crisscrossed with people coming and going 纵横街道人来往
Tall and low buildings—lights extinguished or lit 高矮楼台火灭明
Scenes once ordinary, places of passing delight 光景寻常行乐处
The sight of prosperity stirs homesick longing 繁华杳触故乡情”（林筱唐，1918）

After the Chinese Immigration Act excluding Chinese immigrants came into force in 1923, the absence of new arrivals, together with illness and death among the aging Chinese population, led to a gradual decline in the Chinese population in Canada. Chinese Canadians faced a dual challenge: on the one hand, families gazed across the Pacific, unable to reunite, with separation often turning into permanent farewell; on the other hand, waves of discrimination surged, and Chinatowns became isolated enclaves on which Chinese survival depended. Moreover, the outbreak of the Japanese invasion of China (1931–1945) added fresh anguish to homesickness, bringing with it fears of national ruin and family destruction. As a result, the content of Chinese Canadian folk literature became more diverse and layered, encompassing deep nostalgia for the homeland, cries against discrimination, and calls to support the War of Resistance. In terms of form, literary expression expanded beyond traditional poetry to include new spoken drama and other genres.

Two brief examples may illustrate this. On June 21, 1924, the literary page “Poetry Circle” of *The Chinese Times* published poems by an author using the pen name Silang 四郎. One of the poems reads as follows:

Two Quatrains Composed Casually at a Banquet

“Two Weeks before July First 七一前二星期席中偶咏二绝（四郎，1924）

National humiliation—how many times recalled 国耻由来纪念多
Come July First again, how shame is renewed 重逢七一辱如何
Raising the cup, I drink in pain, soon to be drunk 把杯痛饮卿将醉
Drawing my sword, I chant wildly, turning grief into a heroic song 拔剑狂吟作浩歌”

On May 12, 1938, the literary page “Poetry Circle” of *The Chinese Times* published a poem by the author Liu Xixiu 刘希秀, entitled *Reflections on National Affairs*:

“Reflections on National Affairs 国事感怀（刘希秀，1938）

Gazing eastward toward my native land, my exile’s heart trembles 故国东望客心惊
Troops mass like gathering clouds, forming camps in readiness 将士云屯校作营
Though I never cast aside my brush in youth to join the ranks 少小虽非投笔吏
In old age I yet would grasp the long-bannered spear 老来还欲请长缨
What need to grudge a shroud of horsehide 裹尸马革何须惜
Better shattered bones on desert sands than life without honor 碎骨沙场不共生
Should war descend upon southern Shandong, we shall stand guard 有事鲁南应戍守
At Tai’er we rout the foe and sound the opening victory 台儿克敌振先声”

It is worth noting that although the Chinese were among the builders of Canada, they were ungratefully cast aside by mainstream society and deprived of the civil status they rightly deserved. Consequently, Canada Day (July 1) brought them not joy but deep resentment and melancholy. Chinese communities not only refrained from celebrating Canada Day, but even regarded it as a “Day of National Humiliation.”（“华侨七一纪念之详情”，1924；李权恩，1924；“侨耻纪念情形”，1925；“域埠中华会馆纪念侨耻”，1930）This phenomenon shows that Chinese Canadian literature moved beyond its long-standing emphasis on homesickness and nostalgia, incorporating a strong emotional engagement with local politics. In doing so, it broadened the scope of Chinese Canadian literature as a form of Diaspora Literature.

As another example, on October 2, 1963, the “Poetry Circle” page of *The Chinese Times* published a poem by Ma Libang, entitled *Admiring the Mid-Autumn Moon in Cloud City* 云城赏中秋月

“Admiring the Mid-Autumn Moon in Cloud City

On Mid-Autumn night, the heavens release their radiant glow 中秋天上放光明
Across ten thousand miles, the Milky Way appears especially clear 万里云河份外清
Electric lights blanket the hills like daylight 满岭电灯同白昼
High-rise buildings line up, forming a city among the clouds 高楼大厦列云城
People stream to and fro across Lion’s Gate like swarming fish 狮门来往人入鲫

Undersea tunnels are completed, roads neatly laid 海底通车路砌成
Gathered to admire the moon, we chant poems and celebrate together 赏月联吟群庆祝
Yet Chang'e herself is nowhere to be seen, nor does she reveal her true form 嫦娥未见露真形”
(马立邦, 1963)

This poem vividly captures the modern urban landscape of Vancouver—its electric illumination, bridges, high-rise buildings, and tunnels—while blending traditional Mid-Autumn imagery and classical poetic diction. It exemplifies how Chinese Canadian poetry in the mid-20th century increasingly incorporated local Canadian settings and modernity into traditional Chinese literary forms, marking a further evolution of Chinese Canadian literature beyond nostalgia alone.

After the Second World War, no particularly prominent new Chinese-language writers emerged. The authors most familiar to newspaper readers were still largely intellectuals and teachers who had been active in the community for many years before the war, including Huang Kongzhao 黄孔昭, Situ Mao, Yan Zhiyan, Lin Xiaotang, Xu Zile, SuTuShunong, and Huang Kuanda.

Xu Zile returned to China with his father at a young age and received a traditional Chinese cultural education before later returning to Canada. He was especially skilled in classical poetry. In addition to founding courses in traditional Chinese studies, he also organized poetry and couplet competitions and served as a judge. (“征联揭晓” , 1957; “哀悼徐子乐老师” , 1970; “次韵答俭傅先生” , 1963)

One poem by Xu Zile is as follows:

Eight Miscellaneous Poems Dedicated to the Joint Commemorative Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Victoria Chinese Benevolent Association and the 60th Anniversary of the Chinese Public School 为祝维城中华会馆成立七十五周年暨华侨学校成立六十周年联合纪念庆典杂咏八章奉献

“The Chinese Benevolent Association stands firm and dignified 中华会馆固堂堂
Its charter clearly recording public benefit and public rights 公利公权著约章
With grand vision, it plans and shapes national policies 大手经纶治国策
With shared compassion, it advances measures to aid the times 同情振展济时方
In the spirit of the Medicine King, a hospital was founded in mercy 药王悲愿开医院
With the Bodhisattva's compassion, a burial ground was established 大士慈心建墓场
Seeking righteous return at life's end, caring for mortal remains 谋正首丘归蛻髀
Many more good deeds unfold, displaying a broad and noble vision 还多善举展宏纲”(“诗与词” , 1960, p. 21)

Huang Dakuan, who resided in Calgary, often wrote poems and song lyrics. On June 26, 1956, he published the following lyric in *The Chinese Times*, entitled “*Seeing Mr. Huang Wenpu 黄文甫 Off on His Return to Cloud City 送黄文甫君复归云城*” (to the tune of Huan xi Sha 调寄浣溪沙):

“The bright moon spans the sky, the scene serene and clear 明月横空景色清,
Reluctantly we break willow branches to see you on your way 依依折柳送君行,
Parting brings a sorrow too deep to bear 分携惆怅不胜情.

Our joyful gathering over flowing cups feels like only yesterday 欢聚倾尊犹记昨,
Deeply honored by your generous guidance and kindness 厚蒙指导倍恩荣,
Now the farewell song suddenly rises, stirring lonely grief 骊歌忽唱感零丁.” (卡城黄宽达, 1956)

The entire piece conveys the author’s intimate affection for the person he is seeing off—a relationship marked by mutual nourishment, both as teacher and as friend.

Situ Shunong resided in Ottawa and frequently published literary works in *The Chinese Times*. He also engaged in poetic exchanges with Xu Zile in the newspaper’s literary column. (司徒树浓, 1964; 1970) One of his poems reads as follows:

“Living in the Countryside 村居

A clear stream and drooping willows frame a land of water and cloud 清溪垂柳水云乡
The sound of spring water over stones reaches my thatched hall 漱石泉声入草堂
To shun the vulgar world—why mind that the cottage is small 避俗何妨茅屋小
Wildflowers brush my face, releasing a pure fragrance 野花扑面发清香” (司徒树浓, 1964)

In 1966, Situ Shunong published a collection of poetry titled *Verses Written While Sojourning in Canada 旅加吟草*. (司徒树浓, 1966) In this volume, he depicts Canada’s landscapes, customs, and everyday life through classical verse. The hurried restlessness typical of earlier sojourners is rarely seen; instead, he “takes a foreign land as his homeland,” revealing a calm sense of rootedness and quiet settlement.

It is worth noting that many of the literary works published in newspapers appeared under pen names and were mostly short pieces. This indicates that, at that time, Chinese-Canadian literature had yet to produce writers of significant influence.

It should be noted that the engraving and printing of poetry collections has, since ancient times in China, been a customary way for literati to circulate their works among the public. Chinese literati in Canadian communities naturally continued this tradition. Moreover, in an English-speaking society—especially one in which Chinese people faced severe discrimination—it was impossible for the government to collect and publish Chinese-language poetry. As a result,

private compilation and printing became the only viable means.

What is particularly commendable is that *Collected Poems and Lyrics* (*Shi ci Hui ke*, 《诗词汇刻》), a volume compiled and engraved through the collective efforts of Chinese literati, was ceremoniously published by the Chinese Times Press in 1957. (《诗词汇刻》, 1957) This collection contains many works depicting life in North America, historical events, and poetic exchanges among literati. The vast majority of its contributors came from Chinese communities in Canada and the United States. Canadian contributors included Yan Zhiyan, Situ Mao, Xu Zile, Li Yaohua 李瑶华, and Liu Rangxue 刘穰学, and the preface was written by the well-known British Columbia literatus Xu Zile. Two examples are cited below.

Presented to Mr. Zhou Baoshan 周宝山, Following the Original Rhyme of “Reflections”
By Yan Zhiyan

“After the rain, the garden glistens with flowing green 雨后园林翠欲流
Late spring in May as chill as autumn 春深五月冷如秋
Living apart in distant lands, I grieve for those I miss 分居远地怀人恨
And in poverty, I question Heaven for the reasons why 穷向苍天问事由
Border wars bring suffering to conscripted soldiers 关塞烽烟征戍苦
While a divided land breeds sorrow through the ages 江山割据古今愁
The cadence of Cantonese songs follows Master Zhao’s style 粤讴格调师招子
Your renowned works endure within the overseas community 侨界驰名大作留” (《诗词汇刻》, 1957, p. 9)

“On Metaphysics 谈玄
By Situ Mao

The Great Clod’s prose embodies both force and sound 大块文章力与声
In emptiness we face each other, then meet again 空时相对复相迎
What regret could there be in the shifting of Heaven and humanity 天人异动曾何憾
When self and things are forgotten, deeper feeling emerges 物我皆忘更有情
The universe cycles on through cause and effect 宇宙周行因是果
Sages come and go, pledged first to the Way 圣贤出入道先盟
Who can concern himself with gains and losses of fowl and insects 鸡虫得失谁能管
Among all beings, who is not treated with impartiality 万类无私孰不平” (《诗词汇刻》, 1957, p. 24)

Naturally, such a major publishing endeavor as The *Chinese Times*’ engraved poetry collection was exceedingly rare. More commonly, members of the overseas Chinese literary community privately engraved and printed their own poetry selections, circulating them among

fellow enthusiasts and within families. For example, in 1963, Vancouver literatus Lei Jipan 雷基磐 published his poetry collection *Shenyuan Yin Cao* 莘园吟草, for which renowned figures such as Ye Gongchuo 叶恭绰 and Pan Boying 潘伯鹰, along with members of the Canadian Chinese community including Situ Mao, provided calligraphic inscriptions. (雷基磐, 1963)

Couplet Writing

Couplets have long been an important component of Chinese folk cultural activities. They are, of course, linguistic and literary forms appreciated by both the refined and the popular. Whether couplets should be fully admitted into the canon of “literature” may be open to debate, but there is no doubt that they are among the most common cultural practices in Canadian Chinese communities. As such, they naturally form part of Chinese-Canadian literature, or at least occupy a peripheral position within it.

Beyond their appearance during the Lunar New Year, the founding of associations, weddings, and funerals, Chinese-language newspapers also served as organizers of couplet-writing competitions and as platforms for publishing outstanding entries. Through the attention and promotion provided by the press, couplets were elevated into a category of “literary activity” involving public participation and appreciation.

Notices for couplet competitions frequently appeared in *The Chinese Daily News* and *The Chinese Times*, often becoming topics of lively discussion throughout Chinese neighborhoods. They could even be regarded as the newspapers’ most effective form of “literary advertising.” For example, on August 1, 1914, the Guangyin Society of Vancouver announced a couplet competition in *The Chinese Daily News*, using a traditional rhetorical known as the *loulou* (rotating) structure (“云高华埠广吟社第四会对题求” , 1914) :

“Dream / Feeling Sea / Sky Moon / Clouds 月云 海天 梦情
Feeling / Dream Sky / Sea Clouds / Moon 云月 天海 情梦”

Single-line entry 单比

“Moon-gazing is most fitting for refined chanting. 月赏正宜联雅咏”

The prize for first place was twenty dollars, with judging conducted by Mr. Li Chunhua 李春华. The final results of this literary contest saw winners from Vancouver, Victoria, and Nanaimo. The championship couplet was awarded to Li Yiwu 李以五 of Vancouver, whose entry read:

“On Han soil, new sun and moon are reborn 汉土重开新日月
In Europe, turbulent clouds of evil surge 欧洲剧拥 (涌) 恶风云”

The single-line championship went to Jiang Shoushi 蒋寿石 of Vancouver, whose line was:

“Will the revival of the Han come to pass? Recall the death of Xilin 汉兴否念锡麟亡” (“兹将李春华先生评定第四会前列之联先布” , 1914)

The former alluded to the Xinhai Revolution 辛亥革命 in China and the outbreak of the First World War in Europe, while the latter commemorated the revolutionary Xu Xilin 徐锡麟, who had died in the struggle against the Qing dynasty, raising the poignant question of whether a Han Chinese polity (China) could yet be revived. Both works convey expansive and elevated imagery, reflecting the deep concern of Canadian Chinese for their homeland and for world affairs. This demonstrates the significant and positive role that Chinese-language literary activities played in sustaining the spiritual life of the Chinese community in Canada.

On June 16, 1915, The *Chinese Daily News* published an advertisement calling for the submission of fine poetry. It specified that the topic for the first round was “The Chinese Situation 中国现象” and that for the second round was “The Plight of Overseas Chinese 华侨苦况” with the works to be evaluated by Feng Ziyou 冯自由, a former editor of The *Chinese Daily News*. The first-prize award for this poetry competition was fifteen dollars. The call for submissions was initiated by the Chinese Zhiguan Association in the United States and, through Canadian newspapers, invited entries from overseas Chinese in both Canada and the United States. (“请看征诗” , 1915)

The choice of these themes further demonstrates that Chinese-language literary activities were closely intertwined with the historical circumstances in which Chinese communities found themselves. Any evaluation of Chinese-Canadian literature must therefore be made in relation to its engagement with the broader historical context of the era in which overseas Chinese lived.

From the historical materials discussed above, it is clear that couplet-writing competitions within Chinese communities were conducted on a considerable scale, with a substantial number of contributors. This indicates that the writing of couplets constituted an important form of “collective activity” in Chinese-language literature within the community, reflecting the popular and participatory nature of Chinese-Canadian literature. To some extent, this mass participation compensated for the relative scarcity of well-known writers and canonical works, and it helped shape the distinctly popular character of early Chinese-Canadian literature.

Fables, Yue folk songs, Banben, and Fiction

Early Chinese-language newspapers did not limit themselves to publishing poetry and organizing couplet competitions. In order to attract a broader readership, they also carried fables, Cantonese ballads (*yue'ou*), scripted storytelling or performance texts (*ban ben*), and fiction. These works exhibit four main characteristics:

1. the gradual emergence of new literary forms;
2. a strong regional flavor rooted in Guangdong culture;
3. a greater incorporation of everyday Chinese immigrant life into literary writing; and
4. the influx of literary works from Hong Kong into Chinese-Canadian communities.

A few examples illustrate these points.

In 1912, He Zhuojing 何卓竞, editor-in-chief of *Sun Bo* in Canada, wrote the play “*the humiliation of our homeland*” (*Gu Guo chi*, 顾国耻), which premiered in Vancouver. (“Drama

Written in This City Presented at Chinese Theatre on Saturday Night.”, 1912) The play was intended as a work of historical education and political enlightenment. As the political situation remained turbulent, three years later, on March 13, 1915, the Xingqunzhong Opera Troupe staged a charity performance of *Remembering National Humiliation* at the Chinese Theatre in Nanaimo . (“戏剧感人之速力” , 1915; “醒群社为救亡会筹常费” , 1915)

Notably, Yue folk songs which represent a distinctive Guangdong cultural element in Chinese-Canadian literature, were not merely “singing hometown songs in a foreign land.” Rather, writers used this folk-literary form to reflect the lived realities of Chinese communities in Canada. One example is a Yue folk songs piece entitled “*Disaster Relief* 赈灾”, published in the September 1914 issue of *The Chinese Times*, written by an author using the pen name San Lang 三郎:

“I wish to contribute to disaster relief 我要助赈, I pawn my gold hairpin, that precious adornment 党左个股金钗. Bracelets and rings alike are all pawned away 约指珠环, Ornaments are but matters of ceremony 一律当埋. Jewelry is merely a formality; it is not necessary to wear it. 首饰本是仪文, 唔系是必要戴. Even if all our clothing were pawned 就算衣裳当尽, it would still be what righteousness demands 亦系义所应该. (sung to the Ye Bei tune 叶北音) Since ancient times disasters have struck 亘古灾临, yet none as vast as today 难及今日浩大. Look—countless corpses drift homeless 睇下不少流尸漂泊, along the Han and Huai rivers 汝汉江淮...” (三郎, 1914)

This example shows how traditional Cantonese folk forms were adapted to express contemporary concerns and social realities within Chinese communities in Canada.

Naturally, cultural shock and cultural difference were common themes in Chinese-Canadian folk literature, often serving as literary prompts for self-reflection on one’s own culture. The following example illustrates this point.

In October 1914, *The Chinese Daily News* published a fable entitled “The Donkey and the Dog Compete in Jealousy 驴犬争妒”:

“In Western countries, people delight in keeping dogs. They often place them on their laps, doting on them as if teasing small children. One day, a donkey saw this and became jealous. He thought to himself: ‘The dog and I are both animals, If it can flatter its master, why can’t I?’ So the donkey raised its two front legs and placed them upon the mistress, attempting to curry favor as well. Unexpectedly, the master saw this and ordered the groom to whip the donkey and drive it away, This donkey truly did not know its own measure.

In the world of men, those with power may be tolerated, even when they have minor faults. But for those of lower status, a single mistake invites anger and reproach, One must therefore know one’s own place.” (“驴犬争妒” , 1914)

On June 21, 1924, *The Chinese Daily News* published a Yue folk songs by an author using the pen name Yin, entitled “*July 1st Commemoration* 七一纪念”. (印, 1924)

“July First commemoration—truly it breaks the heart.
Before I even speak, my heart is already torn,
This matter of commemoration is unlike any other,
speaking of it, I wish to discuss it with you all.
First, we must unite and raise the people’s morale.
Second, we must use the written word to advocate—this is the best method.
Third, we must hold large public lectures and speak at length,
to stir hearts and rouse spirits—why fear that oppressive forces grow ever stronger?
Speaking of how those harsh laws treat us,
it truly fills our hearts with deep resentment,
Alas, there is little more to say: as human beings we must strive upward.
I only hope that my fellow countrymen, from this point on,
will rouse themselves and work hard to grow strong.”

This piece clearly carries a political message aimed at mobilizing public sentiment—urging people to rise from passive endurance to collective action against the discriminatory exclusion laws. It reads very much like a form of grassroots political mobilization expressed through folk literature.

It cannot be denied that the literary lineage of Chinese-Canadian literature lies in the ancestral homeland. From an early stage, Chinese-language newspapers in Canada introduced literary works from mainland China. Although these works are not themselves “texts” of Chinese-Canadian literature, they functioned as a kind of “warming agent,” playing an important nurturing and catalytic role in cultivating literary readers and writers within Chinese communities. For this reason, they deserve an important place in the historical narrative of Chinese-Canadian literature.

For example, among the works published in the *Han Sheng* literary supplement of *The Chinese Time*, many were serialized pieces written by authors from mainland China and Hong Kong. In 1922, the novel “The Chivalrous Thief” (*Dao zhi Xia*, 盗之侠) was serialized, (无俚, 1922) and in 1931 the novel “Turning Back Again” (*Zai Hui Tou*, 再回头) appeared in serial form in the same literary supplement. (哀蝉, 1931; 黄昆仑, 1935)

From a literary perspective, the pressures of a turbulent era—anger provoked by suffering and oppression, and reflections on life brought about by war—often give rise to strong literary works. However, within Chinese communities in Canada, because of racial discrimination and other factors, the population consisted mainly of laborers and merchants, with relatively few intellectuals and literary figures. Added to this were the hardships of daily life and the narrowness of the literary market, which made it even more difficult for time-consuming, large-scale works to emerge. As a result, Chinese-Canadian literary output was largely confined to poetic exchanges among a small number of community literati, the writing of couplets, and some creative work in Cantonese regional opera. There was no large-scale production of major literary works, nor the emergence of professional writers.

In the postwar period of peace, although material prosperity was just beginning and literature gained more room to develop, Chinese-Canadian literature was still instage of gestation and preparation p. Notably, after the war, the number of Chinese-language newspapers and other

community magazines increased, and literary supplements expanded significantly. This brought about two major changes. First, amateur literary enthusiasts within the Chinese community gained more opportunities to publish their work. Second, large numbers of popular writers and works from Hong Kong and Taiwan flowed into Chinese communities in Canada. Long novels such as Ling Xiaosheng 灵箫生's "*Intoxicated in the World of Silk and Rouge*" (*Chen ZuiRuan Hong Qun*, 沉醉软红裙) and Jin Yong 金庸's "*The Legend of the Condor Heroes*" (*She Diao Ying Xiong Zhuan*, 射雕英雄传) circulated widely among Chinese Canadian. These new-era vernacular literary works replaced the semi-vernacular fiction of the prewar period and exerted a noticeable influence on the writing styles of Chinese-Canadian writers and literary enthusiasts.

Literary Works in Periodicals

From the perspective of literary history, literary magazines have often served as the foundation on which young or previously unknown writers suddenly rise to prominence in the literary world. In the history of Chinese-language literature in Canada, however—at least before the 1950s—no such dazzling literary magazines emerged, or, more precisely, no standard, specialized literary journals came into being. The periodicals referred to here were mostly all-purpose, “literary-magazine-type” publications produced by certain community associations or groups, or simply special issues published by particular organizations.

These publications did contain some works that can be considered part of Chinese-Canadian literature, but they were mostly short pieces such as essays, sketches, poetry, and couplets. They may be seen as an extension of the literary supplements of Chinese-language newspapers and as part of the popular literature of the overseas Chinese community. Although the literary works in these periodicals were not grand or monumental, they nonetheless reflected the joys and sorrows of everyday Chinese life, showing how Chinese immigrants expressed homesickness through writing, transmitted their culture through words, and affirmed their Chinese identity. Several more prominent examples are outlined below.

Yue Sheng Monthly 禺声月刊, founded in Vancouver by the Yue Shan Society during China's War of Resistance against Japan (1939–1947), was one of the earlier periodicals to appear in the Chinese-Canadian community. Naturally, it contained many works reflecting the spirit and concerns of that era. (*Yu Sheng Monthly*, 1939–1947; “*Historic Study of the Society Buildings in Chinatown*”, 2005)

Another example is the *Yue Shan School Journal* 禺山校刊, published by the Student Self-Government Association of Yue Shan School in Victoria. Some of its content displays a more youthful and lively student character. For instance, in the April 4, 1948 issue edited by the student association, the journal published a variety of literary pieces, including short stories, short essays, poetry, Cantonese ballads (*yue'ou*), *fu* (rhapsodies), Cantonese operatic lyrics, and humorous fiction. These included both student works and contributions by adults. Examples include student Xu Likui's “An Awakening of Pain” and “Voices at Midnight,” as well as Xu Bingzhang's “Cutting Four Inches”(徐丽葵, 1948) —all concise, engaging literary vignettes marked by clarity and charm.

Among adult contributors, poetry in traditional forms and regional lyrical compositions still predominated. Here are two examples: “*Spring Reflections*” by an author using the pen name Yueshan Old Commoner 禺山老民, and “*Lamenting Spring*” by Ming Xin 铭新.

“Spring Reflections 春感

Light clouds, gentle breeze—warm spring once more 云淡风轻又暖春
Again and again, in wistful dreams, I see her face 几番惆怅梦伊人
Today I gaze only upon the crimson silk kerchief 今朝只视绯绫帕
All that remains is rouge upon lips, mingled with tears 只剩唇脂拌泪痕” (*Yu Sheng Monthly*, 1939–1947; “*Historic Study of the Society Buildings in Chinatown*”, 2005)

“Lamenting Spring 伤春

Cold snow melts away, after the lantern blossoms fade, 冷雪消溶，灯花过后
Once more chill mist veils the emerald willows 又是寒烟迷翠柳，
Mandarin ducks play upon clear rippling waters 池鸳戏水逐清波，
In the deep courtyard, peach blossoms are still as red as ever 见深院桃红依旧。

I brood over lovesick red beans 怅怀红豆，
Afraid to watch the purple swallows fly in pairs 怕看紫燕双飞溜，
How can I bear this loneliness, leaning on vermilion rails 怎堪寂寞依朱栏？
Writing in the air, I mutter in sorrow, drinking with my grief 书空咄咄愁和酒。”（铭新，1948, p. 41）

In 1960, the Chinese Benevolent Association of Victoria and the Overseas Chinese School jointly published the “*Commemorative Special Issue for the 75th Anniversary of the Chinese Benevolent Association of Victoria and the 60th Anniversary of the Chinese Public School*”, The volume included dedicatory essays and forums, historical documents and special features, inscriptions and photographs, scholarly writings, miscellaneous essays, and poetry. Although it was not a purely literary periodical, it contained more than forty poems by local literati such as Xu Zile, Situ Mao, Lin Libin, and Li Donghai, as well as posthumous poetic manuscripts left by earlier pioneers.

“Posthumous Poems of an Early Pioneer 先侨诗词遗墨

Author: Li Danyu 李澹愚

My frail body at times still worries over gathering firewood 偶尔微躯忧采薪
In idle moments I delight in a brief stay amid lake and clouds 闲中小住爱湖云

Since our parting days ago, the autumn winds have grown strong 别来几日秋风健

Rare indeed is such courteous kindness from you gentlemen 难得群公礼数殷

We shift our talk beneath the trees, gazing at the water's hues 树下移谈看水色

By the rocks we sit apart, noting the moss-veined patterns 石边分做带苔纹

Knowing my lungs are parched and yearn for sweet dew 知予肺渴思甘露

You rub your hands as the scent of oranges fills the dusk 搓手橙香正夕曛”（“先侨遗墨：著述”，1960，p. 35）

Literary Groups and Community-Based Literary Activities

While sustaining a hard life overseas, Chinese immigrants continued the traditions of their homeland, retaining a fondness for writing and literary pursuits. Some even formed collegial poetry societies to enrich what might otherwise have been a long and monotonous life abroad. In the early twentieth century, groups such as the Guangyin Society, Lianyin Society, Liansao Society, and the Tai Hon Poetry Society emerged. Around the late Qing and early Republican period, Victoria also had organizations such as the Huang Mei Poetry Society. （“注意云高华埠广吟社特别第八会对题求教”，1914；“联骚社出世广告”，1915；“联吟社征联特启”，1920；“征联广告”，1935；李瑶华，1951；李东海，1967） All of these groups attracted a circle of literary enthusiasts who regularly submitted classical-style poetry. Most of these poets were based in Canada. These poetry societies also organized poetry and couplet competitions, sometimes even holding them simultaneously across Chinese communities in the United States and Canada.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, however, Chinese-language literature in Canada began to move beyond the stage of amateur poetic exchanges among a small group of literati. Signs of literary creation approaching professional standards started to emerge. The platforms that nurtured these early developments were literary groups founded by second- and third-generation Canadian Chinese. One example is the Hai Fung Association 海峰会, established in Vancouver in 1957, which brought together literature, sports, and the arts within a single organization. （“海丰会庆节目新颖”，1972；Paul Yee, 2006）

When examining different periods of immigration, more concentrated displays of Chinese Canadian (Sino-Canadian) literature often appeared in newspapers, magazines, and in various essay- and writing-competitions organized by companies or community associations. These activities provided fertile ground for the growth of Chinese Canadian literature.

In addition to essay contests, poetry competitions, and couplet solicitations, literary creation in the form of poetry and lyric composition also took place through inter-community gatherings. Larger-scale, one-off collective literary activities such as the writing of poems, lyrics, and rhymed prose often occurred on celebratory occasions, for example when a new hall was completed or when a business opened. One such example may be cited here.

In 1951, upon the completion of renovations to the Vancouver Chinese Benevolent Association building, the Wong Kong Har Tong (Huang Jiangxia Hall) presented a congratulatory inscription written on white silk, more than two *zhang* in length. At the top appeared the phrase

“The Foundation of the Nation,” followed by a congratulatory text composed by Hung Jisheng 黄寄生. It reads:

“Magnificent and splendid, like birds in flight with brilliant plumage.
Reflecting on this institution, it is the support upon which the overseas community relies.
The directors stand in orderly ranks, tirelessly serving the public good.
They fulfill their duties with reverence and dignity.
Their words are upright and forthright—who else can grasp the larger vision?
They resolve difficulties and mediate disputes, rising to the task whenever challenges arise.
Fearless before power, unwavering in discerning right from wrong.
Alas, we Chinese sojourners are scattered and weak in strength;
External insults arrive in profusion, danger lurking at every turn.
How shall we secure harmony within? By cherishing unity and mutual affection.
How shall we face the outside world? By upholding justice and principle.
With wholehearted commitment and moral integrity, success may yet be achieved.
Let all gentlemen take this as a mirror and a lesson.” (“本会馆现貌” , 1952, p. 10)

This example illustrates how communal celebrations served not only as social milestones but also as important occasions for collective literary expression within the Chinese Canadian community.

Reading Societies and Lectures on Classical Learning

As noted earlier, an important characteristic of Chinese Canadian literature is its popular and community-based nature. One extension of this characteristic was the rise of reading societies within Chinese communities across Canada. Although these societies were not themselves literary creations, they served as platforms for the dissemination of Chinese language literature. They played a catalytic role in the development of Chinese Canadian literature and greatly facilitated the circulation and popularization of Chinese-language newspapers, which in turn provided outlets for literary publication.

In the absence of formal libraries within Chinese communities, reading societies functioned as “mini-libraries,” contributing to the spiritual and cultural advancement of the community. Reading newspapers and books together was a common form of social gathering among Chinese communities in the first half of the twentieth century. One purpose was to allow members to borrow newspapers; another was that designated readers would read aloud and explain the content to those who were illiterate, thereby promoting political awareness and mobilization. This also served as an important means for Chinese immigrants to stay informed about news from both Canada and their homeland.

Several large organizations established their own reading societies, including the Min Sing Reading Society of the Vancouver Min Sing Association etc. (“民星阅书报社鸣谢” , 1943; “民星阅书报总社举行纪念盛况” , 1961)

It is also worth noting that, beyond reading newspapers, literary journals, and books, Chinese communities consistently maintained a demand for practicing poetry and prose writing, as well as for learning about developments in China. Some literati therefore began to engage in teaching activities. In January 1927, Huang Kongzhao, a well-known scholar who had lived in Vancouver

for twenty years, took the lead in founding the Ming Lun School 明伦学校's Chinese correspondence program. (“明伦学校中文函授科广告” , 1927) Vancouver's correspondence academy for classical Chinese learning was staffed by the poet Xu Zile as an instructor, offering courses in poetry, *ci* lyrics, and couplets. (“国学函授书院招生” , 1936)

In February 1927, the Vancouver Freemason Public Lecture Society announced its establishment. It held meetings every Saturday evening, inviting knowledgeable members of the community as well as prominent figures visiting from China

to give lectures. Huang Kongzhao and others were among those invited to speak. (“洪门宣讲社成立会盛况” , 1927; “洪门演说社纪盛” , 1927) The emergence of these schools and lecture programs played a significant role in nurturing the early growth of Chinese-language literature within the Chinese Canadian community.

Conclusion

In summary, the development of early Chinese-language literature in Canada was interdependent with the development of Chinese communities themselves. The rise and decline of these communities directly or indirectly shaped the rise and decline of Chinese Canadian literature. It can even be said that the spiritual influence generated by Chinese-language literature provided an important means of resilience and stress relief for Chinese communities that endured numerous hardships.

In terms of resistance, whether in the face of discrimination or exclusionary policies, various forms of Chinese-language literature became vehicles through which Chinese Canadian writers voiced protest and struggle. They allowed readers' anger to be released and gave protest a textual outlet. In terms of relief, the Chinese Exclusion Act and the world wars separated Chinese families across oceans, making reunions impossible and return to the homeland difficult. Writing and reading Chinese-language literature thus became one of the most effective ways for Chinese people striving within the “islands” of Chinatowns to ease the pain of homesickness and separation from loved ones.

More importantly, in the process of striving to survive in a foreign land, Chinese-language literature became a crucial marker through which Chinese Canadians transmitted their ethnic culture and affirmed their self-identity. This is clearly reflected in the strong emphasis on traditional Chinese poetry and regional operatic forms in early Chinese Canadian literature. The widespread practice of composing couplets further drew Chinese Canadians into a form of “participatory literature,” characterized by broad public involvement. These features together fulfilled all the essential functions of literature: understanding society, understanding the self, moral cultivation and aesthetic appreciation, and literary engagement with reality.

However, strengths often contain inherent weaknesses. The limitations of early Chinese Canadian literature are also evident. Its “popular” character resulted in a scarcity of outstanding writers and widely influential works. Moreover, the harsh living conditions faced by Chinese communities and the narrow range of immigrants' places of origin made it difficult for major works, especially long novels, to emerge, thereby weakening the broader social impact of Chinese-language literature's artistic power within Chinese communities in Canada. That said, the

discovery of *The Diary of Dukasang Wong* has opened up new perspectives for scholars seeking to trace the footprints of early Chinese Canadian literature and to broaden the historical significance of its works.

With the introduction of Canada's "universal immigration policy" in 1967 and the implementation of a points-based system that emphasized fairness in immigrant selection, a steady flow of independent immigrants, including professional writers, arrived in Canada. The development of Chinese Canadian literature thus entered an entirely new stage. The shortcomings of early Chinese-language literature were gradually overcome, ushering Chinese Canadian literature into an era of "normal" literary development.

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