

Chinatown's Tourist Terrain: Representation and Racialization in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco

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From the moment when you crossed the golden, dimpling bay . . . from the moment when you sailed between those brown-and-green headlands which guarded the Gate to San Francisco, you always heard of Chinatown. It was the first thing which the guides offered to show. Whenever, in any channel of the Seven Seas, two world-wanderers met and talked about the City of Many Adventures, Chinatown ran like a thread through their reminiscences.

—Will Irwin, 1908¹

Chinatown existed as the most distinctly bounded ethnic enclave in nineteenth-century San Francisco—a product of virulent discrimination against and racism towards Chinese immigrants. Yet Chinatown functioned not just as a place where Chinese people made their homes. As Will Irwin suggested, Chinatown also became a popular tourist destination for the city's visitors and a local place of amusement for its residents. For the growing population of largely male laborers who lived in Chinatown, the neighborhood's community offered a relatively safe haven as well as networks of familiar people, institutions, goods, and services. Among the white middle-class men and women who made up the

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bulk of Chinatown's tourists, its appeal combined a number of overlapping impulses—the desire to see the exotic; the pull of an encounter with a different culture; the draw of slumming; and the attraction of experiencing, from a safe distance or with a police guide, racially charged urban dangers.

As a result of this widespread curiosity, an expansive array of tourist literature emerged. It constructed and dispersed representations of the Chinese in Chinatown through a fairly standardized tourist itinerary that included such sites as restaurants, joss houses, opium dens, and theaters. These representations were shaped by perceptions of the Chinese and Chinatown that were taken in by various urban adventurers—often led by guides well versed in the tropes of the Chinatown experience—during forays into the neighborhood. In a circular relationship, for many visitors, their perceptions and experiences were filtered through the tourist literature they consumed prior to their Chinatown excursion.²

The particular images of Chinatown that nineteenth-century tourists read about, reported upon, often expected to see, and as a result often saw reflected and shaped the very idea of what “Chinese” meant in San Francisco. Tourist literature's representations racialized the Chinese in terms of their unassimilability, their proclivity towards vice, the risks they posed to public health, and the threat they presented to free white labor. These representations dovetailed with the logic of a racial hierarchy that placed the Chinese on the lowest rung. Across class lines, whites positioned the Chinese below San Francisco's small population of blacks, the group typically positioned at the bottom of the racial ladder throughout much of the rest of the nation. As a result, “Chinese” and “white” rather than “black” and “white” emerged as the most potent racial opposites in the city, configuring its most highly charged racial divide. The way this process worked in San Francisco set important precedents for the nation as it was one of the first major American cities to incorporate a large Asian minority population. As a site in which key components of San Francisco's racial order were articulated and solidified, Chinatown—especially through tourism and the literature that accompanied it—emerged as a cultural arena that wielded a substantial amount of social power. As a tourist site, Chinatown worked in tandem with larger legal and political developments, providing a space where whites and Chinese came face-to-face and from which many whites came away with what they believed were social truths about this new immigrant group.³

While tourist literature's representations had particular significance within San Francisco, they also circulated and gave images of Chinatown and Chinese immigrants nationally and internationally. Through these images, Chinese immigrants entered the racial imagination even in places where they had not settled and where people may have never actually seen an Asian person. As growing hostility in the West led increasing numbers of Chinese to settle and create Chinatowns in cities such as New York and Boston, tourist literature generated templates of meaning that framed the way these developments would be received. Frequently

operating through nineteenth-century America's nascent brand of Orientalism, such representations promoted a disdain for resident Asians but also a prurient fascination with a certain, often manufactured, brand of Asian culture. They also self-consciously intersected with larger policy debates about Chinese immigration and the place of the Chinese in the American body politic.⁴

Although representations of Chinatown more often than not worked to create a sense of distance between Chinese and whites, the very presence of white tourists in Chinatown meant that on the ground real encounters between the two groups were taking place in ways that sometimes disrupted this dominant story and at other times confirmed it. While Chinatown operated as a segregated space set apart from the rest of the city, its visitors and residents constantly negotiated a complicated dance of white social power and Chinese local knowledge that allowed both the tourist enterprise and the transgression of the racial boundaries that Chinatown represented to occur.

Structuring the Chinatown Experience: The Literature of Chinatown Tourism and the Practices of Chinatown Guides

On May 18, 1886, a teen-age girl identified only as E.G.H. arrived in San Francisco—one of many destinations on her trip through the West, perhaps with a Raymond Excursion Party that had begun in Boston and included stops in Chicago, Kansas City, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Yosemite, and Mariposa. That day, from her “wonderful” accommodations at the city’s luxurious Palace Hotel she wrote to her “dear” Jay: “I am looking forward to my visit to Chinatown, where we are hoping to go in a day or two.” Over the course of the next two weeks, E.G. H. made at least three trips into Chinatown, telling one recipient of her letters that she had “given as much time as possible to Chinatown” and was “fairly infatuated with the place.”⁵

E.G.H.’s first foray into the neighborhood took place on her second evening in the city when she joined a “large party . . . made up to visit Chinatown.” Upon reaching a certain corner the group was “suddenly joined by a Chinamen” named Chin Jun who—whether by accident or design—became their guide. Wearing the “costume of his country” including “a long pigtail hanging almost to his heels, with red silk braided in his hair,” Chin Jun led this group of middle-class white American tourists “up a dark alley way to a Joss House,” to the Chinese theater where they watched part of a play from seats in the gallery, and to a Chinese restaurant where they were “served with tea and sweetmeats, in true Celestial style.” Although E.G.H. and her group “especially wanted” to see an opium den, Chin Jun refused, telling the group that it was simply too large. He spoke English “reasonably well,” met their many questions with “a lovely smile,” shared tea with E.G.H., and wrote his name for her in both English and Chinese as a souvenir. When Chin Jun was not leading white tourists around Chinatown,

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he worked as a clerk in a shop selling “fancy articles and curios” to tourists. E.G.H. would encounter him again in this context and “make splendid bargains with him.” In a letter relating her first Chinatown visit she declared, “I have lost my heart to Chin Jun.”⁶

On her second visit, E.G.H. was accompanied by a woman she identified only as Mrs. Law, a resident of the city that she had been introduced to and who assured her that “she need not be afraid to go through Chinatown with her alone.” Mrs. Law both knew the area and frequented it because of her association with friends doing missionary work in the neighborhood. Since E.G.H. was “quite ready to make any number of visits” to what she saw as a “curious and interesting place” she did not hesitate to accept Mrs. Law’s offer and the two set off together. On their way they “passed through several dark and dirty alley ways, where men swarmed and stared” and as they traversed Chinatown’s streets they “stopped to look at the curious things displayed in the markets.” E.G.H. reflected that, “As you walk through the streets of Chinatown you hardly realize yourself in America.” During their excursion, E.G.H. paid another visit to a joss house where she learned more about Chinese religious practices than she had from Chin Jun, saw a woman with bound feet, heard tales of hidden gambling dens that made police raids so difficult, and went shopping, stopping at Chin Jun’s store to purchase two Chinese musical instruments. Although E.G.H. noted that she “enjoyed this visit very much” she also indicated that she would “not be satisfied” until she had been to the opium dens.⁷

A few days later, E.G.H. and four others “hired a detective” to take them “through Chinatown, and to the opium dens.” Their guide took them “through streets and alley ways” and “down, down, along passageways, two feet wide, down another flight of stairs, along a narrow alley with doors opening into rooms not more than six feet square.” In some of the rooms they passed they saw opium smokers reclining, in others they saw “Chinamen . . . eating their supper with chopsticks.” At each encounter, the tourists nodded and said “Hello.” At one point, the guide kicked open a door and led the group into a den “decorated with pictures and flowers” and occupied by “a Chinaman, with his pipe in hand.” Although “somewhat under the influence of opium already” he greeted the tourists “pleasantly” and, at their request, provided a demonstration of the process of preparing and smoking opium. The group still desired to see “worse dens” so thanked the smoker and continued on, groping their way “through the filth and smell, upstairs, and then down again.” It was not long before their guide forced open another door and the group was faced with a malodorous room crowded with people and animals. This sight prompted E.G.H. to reflect, “What is to be done with these Chinese is certainly a serious question. Forty-three thousand souls living in seven blocks!”⁸

When E.G.H.’s letters were published in 1887, a year after her trip, they joined a rapidly expanding body of literature generated to feed the appetite of a reading public fascinated by San Francisco’s Chinese population and eager either

to play the armchair tourist or to use writings about Chinatown to make preparations for a visit of their own. Tourism boomed during the second half of the nineteenth century as developments in transportation and communication made travel easier and a middle class emerged flush with the financial resources, leisure time, and inclination to explore America. Organized tours, like the one that steered E.G.H. through the West, responded to this demand and established itineraries of specific sites such as Chinatown, Yosemite, and Santa Fe through which tourists came to understand the nation as well as their place in it. Whereas natural wonders and places of historical significance allowed tourists to define who they were and what they were a part of, the various peoples that became part of the tourist terrain—Mormons, Indians, Mexicans, and Chinese—were generally displayed and consumed in such a way as to reinforce their difference from and inferiority to the tourists who gazed upon them.⁹

Chinatown tourist literature constituted part of an urban exploration genre that generated popular and often luridly descriptive guides to nineteenth-century cities. Usually written from the point of view of a white, typically male spectator—the quintessential *flâneur*—who traversed the urban terrain and recorded his voyeuristic observations with the kind of detached yet possessive authority that similarly characterized the consuming gaze of the typical tourist. It also intersected stylistically with the reports of social reformers and policy makers, the studies of anthropologists and sociologists, as well as emergent forms of exposé journalism, none of which were averse to using their work as a platform for voicing their opinions on pressing social issues. E.G.H.'s detailed descriptions of vice and crowding in Chinatown followed by a pronouncement about the Chinese question, in this context, were hardly unusual.¹⁰

Writings about Chinatown took a wide variety of forms. They could be found in small travel guides devoted exclusively to the Chinatown experience, sections about Chinatown in larger guides of the city or state, articles in magazines published nationally as well as in England, local newspaper stories, books about the Chinese in California that included chapters on Chinatown, and reminiscences that recalled Old Chinatown just after the earthquake and fire of 1906. Both women and men authored this literature and both seemed to have been equally comfortable taking on the tourist gaze in their narrations of the standard tropes of the Chinatown experience. Writers included San Francisco residents who frequented Chinatown, journalists and tourists, and religious men whose missionary impulses brought them to Chinatown.

While some writers explored Chinatown on their own, many like E.G.H. frequently relied on guides to protect them from overly dangerous encounters and to provide the kind of experience of Chinatown necessary for writing a piece that would satisfy both their own and their readers' desires for thoroughness and authenticity. Although Chinatown tourists frequently wanted to view an itinerary of predetermined sites, they did not necessarily seek out pre-packaged experiences. Wandering through restaurants and joss houses, for example, they

often encountered Chinese going about their everyday activities and many of what seemed like the most staged experiences often involved barging in on people and catching them unprepared for the tourist gaze.¹¹ Hired guides—whether drawn from the ranks of the city’s police force, white men who had gone into business for themselves, or Chinese entrepreneurs—facilitated these experiences. They were not only widely available, but some advertised their services and much of the tourist literature encouraged their use.¹²

The demand for Chinatown guides was fueled in part by tourist literature’s frequent emphasis, often in quite dramatic language, of the risks of exploring Chinatown alone, especially at night. Whether it was truly dangerous, a ploy designed to pump up business, or a by-product of the salaciousness of the urban exploration genre, the discourse was ubiquitous. W.H. Gleadell, in a piece written originally for *Gentleman’s Magazine* and republished in the digest, *Eclectic Magazine*, characteristically intoned, “Many places there are in this miniature China of San Francisco . . . to which no European has ever been admitted, or, if admitted, he has never survived to return to the world.” Gleadell’s recent tourist experience did allow him to concede that there were “certain parts” of Chinatown “which, at his own risk, the white man is free to traverse” but insisted that “in no case is it prudent to visit even these without the escort of a properly armed police officer well known on the Chinatown beat.” Of salience for women adventurers, tourist literature refrained from casting Chinatown danger in sexualized terms. Characterizations of Chinese men as either objects of white women’s desire or as lascivious predators that Chinatown fiction sometimes developed were absent from this ostensibly more realistic genre. In general, tourist literature tended to desexualize Chinese men in ways that opened the possibility for white women to hire them as guides and feel safe traversing the neighborhood with them.¹³

While many Chinatown guides were white men, some were local Chinese, like Chin Jun. Just as he seemed to have appeared out of nowhere, the product of a chance encounter, other writers also described a similar dynamic at work in their hiring of a Chinese guide. For example, while white guides tended to be arranged by appointment, local writer Will Irwin described being led through Chinatown’s legendary labyrinthine passages by a Chinese guide who simply announced both his presence and his intentions with the statement, ‘I take you.’ Another San Francisco resident, guidebook author William Bode, explained this tendency of white tourists to simply stumble upon Chinese guides in a way that suggested that participating in this nascent yet burgeoning tourist economy was a money-making opportunity not lost on local Chinese. He explained that, “Solicitations are made, at every crossing, to guide and conduct you to the various shrines and objects of curiosity, which abound here.”¹⁴

Employing a Chinese guide meant having an experience of Chinatown that was markedly different than simply wandering through Chinatown and gazing upon its inhabitants. It required engaging in a relationship with a Chinese person. Such a relationship was financial—the guide was hired to perform a service. It

involved communication and conversation, positioned the guide as the local expert, and implied a certain amount of trust given that the guide was leading the tourist into ostensibly dangerous areas. Granted, few tourists developed the kind of fondness for their guide that E.G.H. expressed for Chin Jun, but her experience presented one point on a continuum of possibility. Eleanor B. Caldwell's experience, captured in a piece that circulated in at least two national periodicals in the 1890s offered another. She related that at the end of a long day touring Chinatown she stood on the balcony of a Chinese restaurant after taking a meal while her guide confided to her party "in a debonair way, and with remarkable English, his views of life and of his own career, the belief that he, 'John Chinaman,' might make a political leader if like Boss Buckley, he but owned a fine trade in the saloon line!" Caldwell scoffed at her guide's ambitions to become a player in local Democratic politics—highlighting in her tone as well as in the use of the derogatory "John Chinaman" the ridiculousness of such a proposition—and it was possible that her guide was making a joke by claiming for himself a completely absurd goal given the climate created by the Chinese Exclusion Act. Nevertheless, the two engaged in a conversation in which a Chinese man conveyed to a white woman his desire for a civic identity. Not only did this represent a level of discourse considerably beyond that required to explain Chinatown's sites to a party of tourists but it also presented a Chinese man as having aspirations like any other man—even if they were both belittled and denied.¹⁵

In gathering information for their joint effort of 1898, *Ten Drawings in Chinatown*, Ernest C. Peixotto and Robert Howe Fletcher also employed a Chinese guide. Although both men were San Francisco residents and Peixotto was a well-known illustrator of Chinatown scenes, the two found themselves "making inappropriate inquiries in all sorts of strange places" during their "search through Chinatown for information and bric-a-brac." "It was in this way," they informed their readers, "while asking for silk in a tea store, that we accidentally made the acquaintance of Wong Sue." Wong Sue, one of a number of men in the shop, eventually came to the aid of Peixotto and Fletcher by acting as a translator for the two who were struggling to communicate with the Chinese shopkeeper in English. Despite Wong Sue's initial hesitance, Fletcher recorded that, "His aid once having been tendered he proved very obliging and after explaining to us the nature of the shop we were in, volunteered to lead us to another where we could procure what we desired." The two white men, self-described as "Author and Artist" then proceeded to explain their purpose to Wong Sue. "We told him how Chinatown and the Chinese interested us and how odd and amusing many of their customs seemed to us . . . that we proposed to tell what was bad as well as good." Wong Sue listened silently, and then said: "I think maybe you tell the truth, that will be very good." So, Peixotto and Fletcher "started out to find the artistic truth of Chinatown under the guidance of the wise Wong Sue."¹⁶

From the start, Wong Sue's very willingness to serve as their guide—however initially reluctant he may have been—flew in the face of Peixotto and Fletcher's

notions of the “Chinese character.” “As a rule,” they informed their readers, “the inhabitants of Chinatown are reserved, secretive, irresponsible and impenetrable in the presence of strangers. Each seems to have erected a little Chinese wall around his personality.” But Peixotto and Fletcher did not see this reticence as entirely out of line given “the surveillance under which they live, the constant apprehension that the friendly stranger may at any moment throw open his coat and display a silver star, that dreaded emblem of law totally at variance with all their traditions and whose workings they do not comprehend.” While dealing with an often hostile and corrupt police presence was an unfortunate fact of life in Chinatown, the notion that the Chinese in Chinatown were so bound to foreign tradition that they were unable to understand the procedures of American law enforcement was shown to be facetious when Wong Sue revealed a previously hidden facet of his identity. During their travels in Chinatown, Peixotto and Fletcher related to their readers that they “almost invariably enjoyed the distinction of being taken for country detectives.” They knew that “every city detective and police officer” was known to the inhabitants of Chinatown but they also noticed that Wong Sue “seemed well known to the police.” Images of Chinese criminals began to dance in their heads and they “began to wonder if our amiable guide was a ‘high-binder’ or professional murderer in disguise.” Finally, Peixotto divulged their suspicions, “point blank.” “‘What makes you think so?’” asked Wong Sue calmly. Peixotto “explained that he seemed suspiciously well known to the officers of the law.” “‘That,’ replied Wong Sue, ‘is because I’m a policeman, myself.’ And opening his blouse, sure enough, there was the star.”¹⁷

In the tale they wove, Peixotto and Fletcher’s encounter with Wong Sue effectively upended a number of their stereotypes about the Chinese. On one level, at least, they stood corrected. On another, however, their story further inscribed racializing stereotypes by making Wong Sue the exception that proved the rule. This double-edged quality, reveling in some stereotypes about the Chinese even as they overturned others, also ran through Peixotto and Fletcher’s clever inversion that gave Wong Sue access to a major source of power in Chinatown—the police—and made him part of the apparatus of surveillance rather than simply one of the regularly surveyed. The surprise of his revelation that he was an officer of the law only made sense in a context in which that would seem as out of the ordinary as Eleanor B. Caldwell’s guide aspiring to be the machine politician, “Boss Buckley.” Yet, while all of these encounters revealed prevailing prejudices, at the base of each was that a middle-class white person and a Chinese person had spent the better part of a day conversing and roaming around together, something that was unlikely to happen outside the bounds of Chinatown tourism.

While Peixotto and Fletcher’s account revealed the limits of their understanding of the “Chinese Character,” they thoroughly succeeded in capturing the reality of the police presence in Chinatown. White visitors’ use of police guides added another level of surveillance to the police presence already

in the area. Tourists, after all, often chose police guides not just because of safety concerns but also for the knowledge of and access to Chinatown they could provide—a by-product of their constant presence in the area. When tourist J.W. Ames visited Chinatown one evening in the company of a police guide, he described for readers in the article he wrote for *Lippincott's* the kind of rapport this Chinese-speaking officer had with the local community as they strolled down Jackson Street, effectively capturing both familiarity and a kind of deference that could just as likely be born of fear as admiration. “The sidewalks are thronged with passers, who all seem to know the officer,” he wrote, “for they jump aside and bow with unfeigned respect. The officer now and then hails one, and sometimes pauses to carry on a short conversation.” *Bancroft's Tourist Guide* also hinted at the inequality that permeated the tourist enterprise when it recommended a particular officer as a guide precisely because “his long experience” among the Chinese has “acquainted them with him to such a degree, that they allow him to enter and pass through their houses and rooms whence another might be shut out.” That policemen were “allowed” into Chinese living spaces might have been part of a bargain struck between the guide and the objects of the tour in which each took a share of the profits or it might have been more baldly a product of police domination of the neighborhood. An account in London's *Cornhill Magazine* leaned bluntly toward the latter explanation, explaining that the Chinese had been “so thoroughly . . . cowed by the San Francisco police” that they were unable “to utter the faintest exclamation of annoyance.” Even if reality tended toward some combination of Chinese agency and police power, the prevalence of these kinds of intrusions and the use of police guides meant that the power relations that existed between the police and the Chinese community framed this aspect of the tourist experience of Chinatown.¹⁸

Police guides, moreover, were known for deploying quite brutal, invasive, and generally disrespectful tactics that included kicking doors open, forcing their way into private living quarters, waking people from sleep, and shining bright lights into people's faces. Whether these encounters were staged or not, they made violence an expected part of the tourist experience in Chinatown. Local photographers capitalized on these expectations and sold souvenir photographs that claimed to “show the Chinaman taken by surprise, as the flash light illuminates his den.” Photographer Henry R. Knapp, packaged a series of such images in a three-inch square booklet which made them easily portable and well-suited for carrying in one's pocket or purse. The scenes he captured and captioned included the expected, “Opium Den” and “Filling Opium Pipe” but the inclusion of “Old Blind Chinese Woman” and “Trimming His Corns” disclosed tourists' appetite for being let into private moments, not just vicious ones. [See Figs. 1-4].¹⁹

Long-time San Franciscan Charles Warren Stoddard told a story of how when his “special,” by the authority vested in him” demanded admittance to a



Filling Opium Pipe.

Figure 1: “Filling opium pipe,” Henry R. Knapp, *Chinatown*, 1889. This item is reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California*.



Old Blind Chinese Woman, aged 77.

Figure 2: “Old blind Chinese woman,” Henry R. Knapp, *Chinatown*, 1889. This item is reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California*.



Opium Den.

Figure 3: "Opium den," Henry R. Knapp, *Chinatown*, 1889. This item is reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California*.



Trimming his Corns.

Figure 4: "Trimming his corns," Henry R. Knapp, *Chinatown*, 1889. This item is reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California*.

particular closed door, “a group of coolies” who lived in the vicinity and had followed the tourists tried to divert his attention by assuring him that the place was vacant. The officer refused to leave, decided to employ force to open the door, and when he did, succeeded in revealing four sleeping men, “packed” into what Stoddard described as an “air-tight compartment” and “insensible” to the “hearty greeting” the tourists offered. W.H. Gleadell related the living quarters of an impoverished Chinese couple—upon his police guide’s instruction—in order to be able to take in such a scene firsthand. The officer enticed him with the statement, “Now, if you would really wish to see how some of the lower class of Chinese live, this is not a bad place for the purpose. Go down that stair, push open the door at the foot, and walk right in.” Armed with his guide’s permission and his own sense of entitlement, Gleadell persevered. He came upon a room in which he was “just able to stand upright” and “with the exception of a stove in one corner” and some straw matting that “answered the purpose of a bed” was “quite destitute of furniture.” At “one end crouched a man, while a woman sat in the centre, and a wretched little cur grovelled between them.” Then, “after a general survey,” complete with commentary on the “loathsome squalor” of Chinatown that was so typical of the tourist literature, Gleadell inquired, “Who lives here?” The man replied simply, “Me, wife, and little dog.”²⁰

These two scenarios captured a series of extraordinarily revealing moments. In the first, Chinatown residents unsuccessfully tried to foil police efforts to gain entry into Chinese living quarters. A police guide used force to open a door and woke several sleeping Chinese men. The tourists he was leading then offered these men a greeting. In the second, a tourist under the direction of a police guide barged into the residence of a Chinese couple, made observations, and asked the occupants questions. And it is easy enough to add a third by revisiting E.G.H.’s final Chinatown visit in which her guide kicked open one door to reveal an opium smoker and forced open another to present a view of crowding and squalor, providing her with a very different kind of experience than her day with Chin Jun, who had refused to take her party to the opium dens. Although gazing upon other people and landscapes was part of any tourist experience, not all tourist experiences involved this kind of evaluation of a subordinate group by a dominant group. The violent invasions of the police guides, the boldness of a tourist like Gleadell, and the ways tourists scrutinized and spoke to the Chinese could only be considered acceptable in a situation in which tourists viewed the toured upon as their inferiors.

In visiting Chinatown, tourists, led by police guides and local Chinese and on their own, participated in a range of activities that put them in different relationships with and proximities to Chinatown and its inhabitants. E.G.H. was not alone in being able to forge the kind of relationship with a Chinese person required to engage a Chinese guide, then to later be led around by a police officer who broke down the doors of local Chinese, and at other times to stroll

and explore essentially on her own. Each way of taking in Chinatown brought with it varied experiences from which different meanings could be made about the place and its inhabitants. Yet as varied as the activities and ways of seeing were, they were powerfully framed by the literature of Chinatown tourism and the practices of Chinatown guides, which not only identified particular sights for tourists to see, but informed them what they were supposed to mean.

The Tourist Terrain: Restaurants, Joss Houses, Opium Dens, and Theaters

E.G.H.'s account of her visits to Chinatown captured an incredibly wide range of the experiences available to and sought after by Chinatown tourists. She made sure to visit the four key sites of Chinatown's tourist terrain (restaurants, joss houses, opium dens, and theaters) and also took in some other popular, but nonetheless secondary, sights (women with bound feet, gambling dens, and shops). That no trip to Chinatown was complete without stops at its restaurants, joss houses, opium dens, and theaters was made clear by the practices of Chinatown guides and the literature of Chinatown tourism which made these spaces the centerpieces of the Chinatown experience. Yet the way these places were represented by and for the tourist did more than just convey information about where to go and what to see. They also transmitted important lessons about the racialization of Chinese immigrants, their position in San Francisco's emergent racial order, and their subsequent status in the American body politic.

In the tourist literature, Chinese restaurants, for example, were portrayed as violating norms of public health as well as various food taboos; opium dens were used to conjure images of Chinese as particularly prone to vice; joss houses were described in ways that emphasized unassimilability and difference in the form of heathenism; and theaters were employed to illuminate issues about Chinese laborers and the supposedly unassimilable backwardness of Chinese culture. The overall picture fortified the image of Chinese immigrants as utterly alien and from a culture that was considerably less evolutionarily elevated than that found in nineteenth-century America. As Robert Lee has shown, the themes of unassimilability, public health, labor competition, and vice were nodes around which the nineteenth-century image of "the Oriental" was structured in the dominant culture's imagination. Rather than constructing completely novel images of Chinese immigrants, tourist literature mobilized and elaborated upon themes already in circulation. As Lee points out, the Chinese immigrants who had come to the United States in the decades prior to the Gold Rush primarily settled on the Eastern seaboard and "were viewed primarily as curiosities embodying the exotic difference of the Orient." The unprecedented numbers of Chinese immigrants that arrived in San Francisco prior to the Exclusion Act, however, "undermined that definition of Oriental difference, which relied on distance" and necessitated its displacement by a construction of "the Oriental"

that was informed by representations of the Chinese as present and thus threatening and alien. “Unlike the Chinese visitor,” writes Lee, “the Chinese settler could not be contained within the category of the Oriental in the order of commerce and empire but had to be assigned a new position as a person of color in the racial state.”²¹

Given Lee’s formulation, it is especially significant that one of the main ways Chinatown was represented in the tourist literature was as a foreign place. As early as 1859, Reverend J. C. Holbrook observed that there were “parts of two or three streets” in San Francisco where one could “get a very good idea of Canton.” On her trip in 1886, E.G.H. had reflected that, “As you walk through the streets of Chinatown, you hardly realize yourself in America.” Emphasizing that the Chinese community was in America, but not of America reinforced notions of the Chinese as an unassimilable and alien people. Moreover, while representations of Chinatown as a foreign place sometimes mobilized images associated with an exotic Orient, they lacked the comfort provided by distance. Whatever similarities authors of travel literature chose to draw, Chinatown was not Peking or Canton—a foreign land filled with foreign people visited briefly by the Euro-American tourist. Rather, Chinatown, as many accounts pointed out, was a segregated space located in the heart of an American city and the Chinese who inhabited it were not colorful foreigners “over there” but menacing aliens “over here.”²²

Layered on top of the representation of Chinatown as a foreign place, and just as prevalent, were unfavorable descriptions of its public health. These focused particular attention on its overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, malodorousness as well as its dark alleys and legendary underground passages in which it was imagined that all sorts of dirt and vice were hidden away. G.B. Densmore, author of the anti-immigration tract *The Chinese in California*, announced, both simply and typically: “The Chinese Quarter is very filthy. They have in the alleys and around their houses . . . old rags, slop-holes, excrement, and vile refuse animal matter. They are compelled by the police to clean up, or they would be buried in their own filth.” That the crowding and lack of public sanitation in Chinatown were in large measure products of the poverty of its residents coupled with the denial of basic municipal services was of little interest. The discussions of the quality of public health in Chinatown found in the tourist literature were not exposés designed to bring middle-class aid to the neighborhood. Instead, the representations of Chinatown as a foreign place that was teeming, filthy, squalid, and smelly worked to racialize Chinese immigrants as literal pollutants—the social and cultural opposites of clean, virtuous, civilized white Americans. For many tourists, being an eyewitness to aspects of life in Chinatown that supported this representation of Chinese immigrants was not an accidental occurrence or something to be endured but actually a sought after component of the tourist experience. When one journalist for the *Chronicle*, for example, paid a second visit to “the dens . . . located in the vicinity of Cooper’s

alley" in the company of "officer Woodruff" he seemed to revel in revealing that, "The place seems even more disgusting than on our first visit; the stench more intolerable; the rough board flooring more uncertain and dangerous."²³

While it might seem a little odd that after an enumeration of the dangerous public health conditions that existed in Chinatown, visitors would then be directed to go there and eat, this was, in many respects, precisely the point. Many accounts tended to stress the strangeness and difference of Chinese food and customs. In doing so, they often further developed the idea of the Chinese as dangerous alien contaminants by representing the Chinese diet as filled with polluted foods—or at least those unpalatable to Anglo-American tastes. In this configuration the Chinese were literally what they ate. "They eat things," Joseph Carey told readers of his guide, "which would be most repulsive to the epicurean taste of the Anglo-Saxon. Even lizards and rats and young dogs they will not refuse." Reverend Otis Gibson noted that many Chinese dishes "taste of rancid oil or strong butter" and local writer Josephine Clifford reported to her readers that while she did not want to "say anything mean against the Chinese" she did believe that "the funny little things . . . at the bottom of a deep earthen jar were rat's tails skinned." Both Carey and Clifford also stressed that appearances could be deceiving and that tourists, if they were not careful, might be misled into consuming polluted foods. Clifford, for example, rather incongruously noted that despite the supposedly unsavory products from which they were made, various Chinese edibles "came out as tempting morsels, square, round, diamond-shaped, octagonal, all covered with coating and icing in gay colors, and so tastefully laid out that had we seen them at a confectioner's on Market or Kearny street, we could not have resisted the wish to devour them." Nevertheless, while they may have been forewarned to the point of being terrified by the time they got there, tourists flocked to Chinatown's restaurants. As *Disturnell's Strangers' Guide* succinctly put it, Chinese restaurants were "often visited out of curiosity by white persons."²⁴

There were several different kinds of activities, involving varying levels of participation, that a tourist could engage in when it came to visiting a Chinese restaurant. Many tourists, like E.G.H., were fairly cautious and limited their consumption to tea and sweetmeats—"some small bean-meal cookies, a saucer of lichee nut, some salted almonds . . . candied strips of cocoonut, melon-rind and like delicacies"—which represented a sort of middle-ground between actually eating a full meal and simply watching Chinese people eat, two other popular alternatives. This allowed the tourists to partake of some food and drink and to observe a tea-making process which, given how frequently it was described and commented upon, they found fascinating in its elaborateness. They also generally found the tea produced by this ritual to be delicious.²⁵

More adventurous tourists went beyond just having tea and sweetmeats and partook of a full meal in a Chinese restaurant. Mabel Craft, who described Chinese cuisine "appetizing after you have overcome your first repugnance"

told readers that, “If you want a regular Chinese dinner and give notice, a wonderful meal will be prepared.” She cautioned, however, that, “No one should try it except those of good digestion, for at first it is just a little trying” since the menu included such unfamiliar items as “varnished pig, shark’s fins, Bird’s nest soup, pickled duck’s head, tea, and Sham-Shu or rice brandy.” For these braver few, it was not just the food that would present a challenge but unfamiliar rules of etiquette as well. Reverend Otis Gibson provided his readers with some practical tips and general information to aid in navigating a meal at a Chinese restaurant. “The principal dishes,” he told them, “are prepared and placed on the table within easy reach of all. Then each one drives his own chopsticks into the common dish and carries a piece to his mouth. This requires considerable skill and practice. Americans generally find ‘many a slip between the cup and the lip.’” “If you get a bone in your mouth after getting all the meat off,” he added, “just turn your head and drop the bone on the floor.” For the less adept, Gibson noted, that the “high-toned restaurants” which tourists frequented also kept on hand “knives, forks, plates, table-cloths, and napkins.”²⁶

Gibson also related to his readers his own experience of dining in a Chinese restaurant with out of town visitors—an experience familiar to many San Franciscans before and since. “In company with the Rev. Dr. Newman, Mrs. Newman, and Rev. Dr. Sutherland, of Washington City, and Dr. J. T. M’Lean, of San Francisco,” he explained, “I once took a Chinese dinner at the restaurant on Jackson Street.” He then described how members of his very respectable party liked their meal and gave some hint as to how each approached the novel event. “Dr. Newman took hold and ate like a hungry man, and when I thought he must be about filled, he astonished me by saying that the meats were excellent, and were it not that he had to deliver a lecture that evening, he would take hold and eat a good hardy dinner. Dr. Sutherland did not seem to relish things quite so well.” His description that followed of Mrs. Newman’s flexibility and resourcefulness was particularly striking given that middle-class women were so strongly associated with upholding proper etiquette. “Mrs. Newman,” he wrote, “relishing some of the meats, and failing to get the pieces to her mouth with the chopsticks, wisely threw aside all conventional notions, used her fingers instead of chopsticks and, as the Californians would say, ‘ate a square meal.’”²⁷

Now, if on a symbolic level, the Chinese were what they ate, what did it mean when white visitors to Chinese restaurants ate Chinese food? While not every account went so far as to suggest that rats and dogs were being served at Chinese restaurants, the idea that many strange, unknown and possibly taboo and polluting things were served up in Chinese cooking was pervasive. Given that for nineteenth-century elites and middle classes, restaurants and public dining were freighted with concerns about social purity and mixture, this was a highly charged arena. Food, food-tastes, and the rituals surrounding the consumption of food in both public and private were intricately connected to, on both material and symbolic levels, the articulation of social hierarchies. For white San

Franciscans, eating French food, for example, carried with it the connotation of refinement, taste, and civility, while the eating of Chinese food resonated with very different kinds of social meanings. Eating in a Chinese restaurant might have been experienced by some as furthering cultural understanding and softening the social lines that congealed around racial differences. But even in the best of circumstances or with the best of intentions, taking in or simply observing food that was unfamiliar and sometimes unpalatable also often reinforced the otherness of the Chinese and the whiteness of the patrons that was at the core of anti-Chinese sentiment. In effect, the frequent wariness—if not revulsion—with which whites approached consuming Chinese food echoed and reinforced the prevailing distaste for incorporating Chinese immigrants into the American fold.²⁸

Joss houses—or Chinese temples—were, like restaurants, routine stops on the Chinatown tourist's itinerary. Joss houses were mentioned as early as 1860 as sites of potential interest for whites curious about Chinese religious practices. Almost forty years later, William Doxey informed readers of his guide that, "To many visitors, the joss-houses of Chinatown are the most interesting sights this oriental section of an occidental city includes." "The word joss," he went on to explain, "is a corruption of the Portuguese word deos (God); hence, idol." E.G.H. was interested enough in Chinese religious practices to visit joss houses twice, once in the company of Chin Jun, and once with Mrs. Law. Writing in the early 1880s, Disturnell revealed there were a number of joss houses for a tourist to choose from and explore. "One of the largest and most expensively fitted up," he explained, is the Kong Chow, 512 Pine Street. . . . Other gorgeously fitted up temples are the Hop Wo, 751 Clay Street; Ning Yong, 230 Montgomery Avenue; Yeong Wo, 730 Sacramento Street; Yan Wo, St. Louis Alley; Tong Wah Meu, Jackson Street near Stockton; and two, the Sam Yup and Tin How Meu, on Waverly Place between Clay and Washington Streets."²⁹

As white visitors encountered these places of worship, they fixated upon several components of Chinese religious practices as potent registers of the social, and often racial, differences between whites and Chinese—frequently drawing stark contrasts between what they saw as civilized, Euro-American Christianity and the barbarous heathenism of the Chinese. This often began with descriptions of the interior spaces of Chinese places of worship that stressed the ways in which, in the words of Mabel Craft, joss houses were "superb in a garish way but to the last degree unchurchly according to occidental standards." Some of tourist literature's favorite words for describing what was found in the interiors of joss houses were "dingy," "grotesque," and "hideous."³⁰

The contrasts drawn between Chinese and Christian religion did not stop with observations about the differences in places of worship. Specific religious practices and tendencies also came under scrutiny. What was viewed as the stereotypically pervasive greed and venality of the Chinese that sullied their religion was seen as especially egregious. When a writer for *Cornhill Magazine* explained to his readers that "pious" Chinese were "expected, at certain periods,

to feed 'Joss' by liberal offerings of food and drink" he also noted, conveniently overlooking the prevalence of the Christian collection plate, that these "of course, ultimately go to the priests." This writer further related that when he asked why the drinks were sold in glasses which held "little more than a thimbleful" this question elicited what he called, "the truly Confucian reply, 'Fillee often, payee often.'" J.W. Ames informed his readers that he had a hard time discerning whether the man he encountered in a joss house was "priest or proprietor." Although he was aware that the priests supported themselves and their establishments through the sale of votive candles, incense, and other articles required by worshippers, he declared that from what he saw he believed the religion of the Chinese was "simply a mercantile venture throughout."³¹

Within this formulation of the corruption of Chinese religious virtue by pecuniary impulses, the irony that it was the white tourists who were some of the liveliest participants in joss house commerce seemed lost on most observers. Even when it was not, however, the Chinese, not the tourists, bore the brunt of the criticism. The tourists might have been silly, but the Chinese—especially the priests—were represented as dangerously dishonest. J.W. Ames, so thoroughly convinced of the commercial nature of Chinese religion, told his readers that "if you like, barbarian as you are, you may purchase the whole establishment, idols, giants, screens, sacred bells and all"—the "shrewd old priestly fraud will gladly sell if you only offer enough." D.E. Kessler disclosed that to tourists—especially a "giggling coterie of ladies accompanied by an official white guide"—"joss sticks will be sold, prayers will be made for certain dollars, 'good luck' fetishes may be secured, [and] the future will be divulged . . . by the crafty, repellent priests in charge." While Kessler, like Ames, reserved greater criticism for the inclinations of the priests than the tourists, both also tapped into an undercurrent of hostility that they believed ran through these encounters. Ames referred to white tourists as "barbarians"—the term whites often used to refer to the way they believed the Chinese saw them. Kessler represented the Chinese priests as "the oily despisers of 'white devils'" who separated "the foreigner and his dollars" with "an inward glee and an outward subservience."³²

For Craft, Ames, and Kessler as well as many other observers, the meanings they took away from such religious practices correlated directly to certain social and racial traits of the Chinese. "The religion of the Chinese is individualistic and intensely practical," Craft concluded, "like everything else about him."³³ Joseph Carey summed up the core thrust of white observations in joss houses when he wrote, "it is in religious services and ceremonies and beliefs that we get a true knowledge of a race or nation." According to his observations, the Chinese religion showed that the Chinese as a race were primitive, barbaric, and child-like when compared with American Christians. To drive this point home, Carey described an encounter with a joss house attendant "who was selling small, slender incense sticks," and who told him that "you could burn them to

drive away the devil” and that they also happened to be “good to keep moths away.” “Doubtless in the Chinese mind,” he then told his readers, “there is a connection between moths and evil spirits.” But, he explained, such “puerilities” belonged “to the childhood of the world and not to the beginning of the twentieth century.” Perhaps if Carey had asked Mabel Craft to interpret this scenario, she would have attributed the use of incense to ward off either evil spirits or moths as further evidence of Chinese practicality rather than puerility.³⁴

For men like Carey who had a special interest in spreading Christianity among the Chinese—he was a Doctor of Divinity—and others who worked directly among the Chinese and had made conversion their mission, the very existence of joss houses was a constant reminder that the missionaries’ efforts had been largely unsuccessful and served as yet another sign of the supposed unassimilability of the Chinese to American ways. Chin Jun’s reply to E.G.H. when she asked if he was a Christian—thinking perhaps that his reticence in answering her questions about Chinese religious practices had to do with the fact that he no longer performed them—was telling. Chin Jun “had been one for a month, but then gave it up.” The stubbornness of Chinese to convert to Christianity seems to have bred a certain amount of anxiety about reverse-conversions—in which Christian places and sometimes people were converted to Chinese ways. Some writers, in a strange twist on emergent yellow peril logic that conjured up images of the growing threat to the nation posed by ever expanding numbers of Chinese immigrants, went so far as to express their fears that the strange religious practices of the Chinese would actually degrade the progress of Christianity or even worse, Christian civilization itself. G.B. Densmore related his dismay—and what was nonetheless a patently false claim—that, “Where we have converted one Chinaman to Christianity, their influence has degraded ten white men to practical heathenism.” Reverend Otis Gibson, a missionary to the Chinese in San Francisco, decried the fact that, “The Chinese have opened their heathen temples, and set up their heathen idols and altars in this Christian land; and instead of our converting their temples into Christian churches, they have absolutely changed one of the first Protestant churches of this city into a habitation for the heathen.”³⁵

The Chinese Theater, like the restaurant and the joss house, was another frequent destination for Chinatown tourists. Like the church, the theater was a familiar institution to most Americans as it was an extremely popular form of amusement. This made it easy for white tourists, when they visited the Chinese theater, to draw comparisons between the style, content, and audiences of Chinese and American venues. In the tourist literature, these comparisons resulted in reviews of Chinese theatrical performances that did not find much to recommend them and also generally concluded that a culture that produced such retarded theater had to be barbaric and antiquated itself. However, a trip to the theater was about much more than seeing the show on the stage. Like visiting a restaurant or a joss house—going to the theater provided tourists with another opportunity

to observe the Chinese. But, whereas at a restaurant a tourist might observe a few diners or at a joss house see several worshippers coming and going, at the theater on a busy night, tourists shared the place with hundreds of Chinese. As Joseph Carey explained, "Here you see the Celestials *en masse*."³⁶

Since tourist literature provided a wealth of practical information about where theaters were located, how much they cost, and the times of performances, it was not difficult for tourists to find these places whether they went on their own or with a guide. *Disturnell's Strangers' Guide* informed its readers that, "There are two theaters—Tan Sung Fun, 623 Jackson Street; and the Bow Wah Ying, at 814 Washington Street. They are open every day from 2 o'clock P.M. until midnight. Price of admission fifty cents, boxes two dollars and a half." Local writer E.M. Green described a scenario that suggested that tourists were not only drawn to the Chinese theater but also to some degree encouraged to attend, if not welcomed. When he and his companions—who claimed they were "not sight-seers" and actually wanted to distance themselves from "the personally conducted"—entered one theater they were initially both startled and repelled by a "huge white sheet bearing the legend 'Welcome Shriners.'" Why tourists were welcomed may have had something to do with the money that theater-owners could make from them, especially since, as one account noted, theater revenues decreased along with Chinatown's population in the years after the Exclusion Act. For Chinese theater-goers, the price of admission at the opening of a performance was "half a dollar" but was gradually reduced as the evening advanced so that the late spectator paid for exactly as much as he saw. Many white theater-goers saw "over the box a notice in plain English, 'Admission fifty cents'" with no offer of a decreasing scale calibrated to the time of admission.³⁷

In addition to providing general logistical information to help tourists navigate the Chinese Theater experience, tourist literature also gave its readers a very clear picture of what to expect in terms of the performances that allowed them to arrive with an evaluative framework already in place for what they were about to see. Local writer B.E. Lloyd was not alone in being less than impressed with the Chinese theater and, like many others, was not the least bit shy about conveying this to his readers. "Viewing it from an American standpoint," he wrote, "the Chinese drama is in a very crude state." "The plays," W.H. Gleadell declared, "appear more than ludicrous to the uninitiated observer." "A Chinese play at its best," explained missionary Frederic Masters, D.D., "possesses few charms." Echoing the boredom, lack of interest, and inability to follow the plot reported by many tourists, Otis Gibson uncharitably remarked that, "Judged from an American stand-point, those who attend a Chinese theater ought to receive a *good salary paid in advance*."³⁸

Since tourists so rarely ever reported that these performances were enjoyable or even understandable, it seems likely that they went to the Chinese theater more to learn about Chinese culture than for entertainment. As E.M. Green noted,

the “amusements of a people are great indicators.” For many tourists, what they took away from the Chinese Theater were lessons about Chinese qualities that were often cast in racial terms. Although Green discovered “a public as intelligent as their amusement” when he turned his attention to the audience, his favorable appraisal was unusual. More typical was journalist Henry Burden McDowell’s article for *Century Magazine* which not only provided detailed information about how to interpret events on stage, but also revealed some of the ways a night at the Chinese Theater could translate into a racializing experience. According to McDowell, the “peculiar difference of manners, feeling, and national history” which kept “the Chinese people apart from the civilized world” resulted in a theatrical culture that bore “the unmistakable stamp of an arrested civilization.” He then went on to suggest how this lack of development translated into Chinese racial traits that imbued them with moral qualities at odds with those of American society, believed to be at the height of the civilization process, evolutionarily speaking. McDowell explained, for example, that although “the Hong-Koi, or Chivalry plays might not be about chivalry as Americans understood it,” the Chinese “were entitled” to use such terminology because of “the extreme rarity of the occasions on which one Chinaman helps another.” The Chinese were not chivalrous, according to his thinking, because the “inherent selfishness as well as the superstition of the Chinese character excludes from it the active feeling of philanthropy.” These qualities correlated with his interpretation of “the Hong Koi” which stressed that they dealt primarily with what he called, “negative chivalry; not doing a man an injury when you might, and doing him a kindness when it is no very great inconvenience to yourself.”³⁹

Although white visitors to the Chinese theater were not terribly appreciative of its productions, they were very interested in observing its Chinese audience. Observations of the audience, like the interpretations of Chinese theatrical performances, conveyed that prevailing racial logic played a role in how tourists understood what they were seeing. At the theater, tourists encountered the culture of Chinese laborers, who made up the bulk of the audiences, and whose image as a threat to the wages of white working men was a central component of anti-Chinese sentiment. Most accounts emphasized that the Chinese watched the performances in a state of inscrutable silence. The racialization of the Chinese as seemingly emotionless and thus unreadable was common in nineteenth-century America and, it appears, rather maddening to Euro-Americans desperate to ‘know’ what these ‘strange’ immigrants were about. As a writer for *Cornhill Magazine* explained, “No Chinese auditor ever exhibits any emotion. Neither pleasure nor disapprobation is ever expressed. For all apparent effect the actor produces he might be playing to an audience of ghosts.” “During the most exciting performances on the stage,” B.E. Lloyd explained, “there may be an occasional deep drawn sigh or a slight murmur of satisfaction in the audience; but however intense the interest in the play may be, there is never a burst of applause, commingled with the stamping of feet and clapping of hands.” Josephine Clifford,

in agreement with her fellow writers about the lack of response on the part of the audience, gave voice to what some may have feared lurked behind these unreadable countenances. She relayed that her police guide told her that if a performance deviated “from long established custom” the members of the audience would “set up the most vigorous yells, jump on the stage, beat the actors, pull up the benches, and destroy the gas-fixtures.” Clifford remarked that, “Sitting there so perfectly still and impassive, with their ‘Melican’ hats jammed tight on their heads, no one would suspect the amount of fight and bloodthirstiness in the ugly souls of these Chinamen.”⁴⁰

Now, while many white tourists were busy evaluating the Chinese they saw—both on stage and off—the Chinese, by often seating tourists on the theater’s stage, positioned them in such a way that they were being observed as well. Chairs or campstools were provided for the visitors and from the descriptions in the tourist literature it was clear that at times the stage got a little crowded. A travel writer for *Outing* noted on the night of his visit, “A row of Americans extend on either side from the rear wall to the front of the stage.” Joseph Carey and his party “felt quite at home on the stage at once” since “seated on either side . . . were many of our friends lay and clerical, men and women.” A.E. Browne recalled that “after remaining about half an hour” she and her party “moved off to give place to another party of visitors”—suggesting that at times tourists had to queue up for a seat.⁴¹

While the tourist literature avoided guessing how the Chinese in the audience might have evaluated the tourists on the stage, several did record the way some Chinese responded to the presence of tourists. E.G.H. had revealed that a Chinese man came over to her group and volunteered to help them understand the play. But her account was unusual in the level of interaction that it recorded since most of the time what went on could best be described as mutual gazing, if that. Many tourists found that theater-goers, like restaurant patrons, evinced what they interpreted as an attitude of indifference—sometimes tinged with hostility, sometimes thoroughly benign. It was Mabel Craft’s opinion that “the white spectator on the stage” did not “annoy his yellow brother in the least.” To Joseph Carey it was “quite remarkable” that the Chinese “seemed to have neither ears nor eyes for their visitors.” Yet he believed that although they “paid no attention to” the tourists, they nevertheless beheld them “with an indifference that almost bordered on contempt.” W.H. Gleadell, however, detected neither “curiosity or resentment on the part of either the artistes or the spectators” from his seat “on the left hand side of the stage.”⁴²

Opium dens were undoubtedly the most sensational destinations on Chinatown’s tourist terrain. While tourist literature’s representations of them drew heavily on notions of a Chinese proclivity for vice, images of opium dens also suggested a kind of naughty deviance in that a visit put tourists in tempting proximity to a forbidden pleasure. Unlike restaurants, another arena of tourist consumption, in which visitors frequently recoiled—at least initially—at the

food proffered, in opium dens it was the smokers who were disgusting, not the opium itself. Since the impulse to see Chinese opium smokers and their dens came from the desire to be both disgusted and tempted, such sights were simultaneously both repulsive and alluring to white middle-class sensibilities. On one level, representations of opium dens worked to differentiate the Chinese from white Americans. Because the tourist literature represented the Chinese as regular users of opium, it effectively configured them as lacking the kind of self-control of mind and body that the nineteenth-century white middle class, in theory, was identified with and organized around. According to the *Chronicle*, for example, the “habit of opium smoking” was so prevalent among the Chinese that “the fumes of the insidious narcotic” poured forth throughout Chinatown “from basement and upper floor, from shop and office, from business house and private apartment.” Yet while the idea that opium use set the Chinese apart was pervasive, on another level the tourist literature also revealed that it actually brought whites and Chinese together, both through the tourist enterprise and in their shared used of the drug.⁴³

A desire to see the racially abject—the epitome of which was the opium smoker in his lair—compelled many tourists to seek out opium dens as part of their Chinatown excursion. Although E.G.H.’s guide, Chin Jun, claimed that the high number of people in her party prohibited him from taking them all to the dens, E.G.H. surmised that he “did not want to expose his countrymen” to their scrutiny. Given that the kind of violent invasions commonly used by police guides were part and parcel of many opium den forays and given the way many tourists wrote about such experiences, Chin Jun had every reason to be reticent. Descriptions of opium dens tended to be organized around depictions of Chinese viciousness as well as Chinatown’s crowding and filthiness. Tourist literature instructed tourists in advance that a visit to an opium den would allow them to venture into and behold some of Chinatown’s most repellent sights. According to B.E. Lloyd, while a visitor to Chinatown “may have had his senses shocked by the savage noises that are heard in passing through the reeking alleys and lanes” he would not have “seen the most disgusting characteristic of the Chinese ‘quarter’” until he was “within a well patronized opium den, and recovered from the shock experienced upon first entering.” Iza Hardy, like many other writers, described the opium den her police guide led her to as “unlit, unventilated, very like the steerage cabin of an emigrant steamer, equally evil-odorous.”⁴⁴

For many tourists, however, just taking in the scene at an opium den was not enough. They also wanted to observe the den’s inhabitants smoking opium. Josephine Clifford wrote about a performance of opium-smoking that was encouraged by the strong-arm tactics of her police guide. Her guide “commanded” one of the denizens, “Hurry up . . . now we want to see you fill that pipe.” This man, referred to generically as “John” replied “apologetically,” “Opium no belly good . . . but me fixem pipe.” With that, Clifford explained, “he drew a fat little jar toward him, of paste-like content” and “three or four

whiffs” finished the pipeful. W.H. Gleadell wrote of entering one opium den just as “a smoker was . . . commencing operations.” He not only observed the method and ritual of opium smoking but also, in vivid detail, recorded the process for his readers. Gleadell related that the smoker, after “composing himself in a comfortable position on one of several couches . . . took up the long wooden pipe provided by the establishment and carefully examined it.” Next, “taking up a long needle-like piece of steel” he “inserted it in the ivory box and drew therefrom a small quantity of prepared opium.” Then, he “held this over the flame of the lamp”—because, as Gleadell explained, “the drug must be dried before it can be inhaled”—“carefully twisting and turning it about until the heat had frizzled it up.” Iza Hardy related watching opium smokers “take a pinch of the dark jelly-like substance on a wire and melt it over the lamp, then smear it over the aperture in the pipe, and draw it with great deep breaths into the lungs.”⁴⁵

The intricate details of some of these descriptions suggest that they may have not only functioned as one component of the lurid construction of a vicious Chinatown but also as instructional devices for the most adventurous. The temptation to tourists was, at times, very real. W.H. Gleadell reported that he not only began “to feel the effects of the opium-laden atmosphere” as he watched the performance of opium smoking that he so carefully recorded for his readers but that he and his companions were “very much pressed to try a pipe ourselves.” They “unanimously declined” and Gleadell reflected that they were “deterred as much . . . by the fear of our surroundings as by the sight of the white, sickly faces and glassy eyes of the smokers around us.” Eleanor Caldwell was also invited to smoke opium. Her Chinese guide, who may have been the same man she would later converse with about life and politics on a restaurant balcony, “twisted the opium on a little stick, burned it lovingly in a lamp, and depositing it [sic] in its receptacle at the side of the long wooden tube, smoked a few whiffs, as exemplification.” When the pipe was passed in her direction, she and her companions did not decline. Instead they “carefully wiped the mouth, and each took an inhalation.” Caldwell was well aware that her behavior was both transgressive and a little dangerous. She recalled that as she smoked, she saw “a Poe-like cat sitting on the edge of the shelf” who “curved his back, as though the devil were expressing sympathy.”⁴⁶

While some Chinatown tourists who trekked down to the opium dens received offers to partake of the drug, others prompted different reactions from the people they saw and interacted with there. Eleanor Caldwell, in addition to being offered a smoke, reported that the men she observed were “lying in a trance, curled up” some with their backs toward her. One responded to her presence by leaning up on his elbow and looking at her in what she called “a dead-and-alive way . . . vacant of any comprehension.” When she came upon another group of smokers in yet another den, her presence engendered a more hostile response. She described these men as “unhumanized beings, lolling in pale and imbecile torpor, or glaringly, gauntly resentful.” Charles Warren Stoddard recalled not getting as much of a response as he would have liked

from the smokers he encountered. When he initially addressed them he was “smiled at by delirious eyes.” But as the drug took effect the smokers’ heads sank “upon the pillows” and they no longer responded to his appeals, “even by a glance.” A writer for *Cornhill Magazine*, however, reported a much livelier and sociable scenario in the opium den he entered in order “to purchase a pipe and smoking outfit” for his “curiosity case.” Before he “had been in the place two minutes not an inch of standing room was unoccupied” and “every one who was able to speak any English volunteered advice and information” about what kind of pipe he should purchase.⁴⁷

Chinese opium smokers clearly encountered more white tourists than they probably would have liked in the dens they frequented even if the displays of vice and depravity they presented were rewarded with money or drugs. Yet although tourist literature generally represented the typical opium smoker as Chinese and the typical white visitor as a tourist, a number also acknowledged that the Chinese were not the only opium smokers in Chinatown. Aside from the kind of incident in which Eleanor Caldwell and her friends each took a puff from an opium pipe, there were other white people, not tourists in the traditional sense, who frequented the dens. In many respects, because of the kind of social mixture and transgression of racial boundaries these white smokers represented, their activities far outweighed those of the Chinese in their scandalousness. B.E. Lloyd explained to readers of his guide that “in some of the more secluded opium dens, and those kept under strict privacy by the proprietors” one would “find a number of young men and women—not *Chinese*—distributed about the room on lounges and beds in miscellaneous confusion, all under the influence of the drug.” According to Lloyd, most of the women were of “the disreputable class,” but the young men were “our respectable sons and brothers, who move in good society, and are of ‘good repute.’” E.W. Wood, another San Franciscan “acquainted with the ins and outs” of Chinatown, testified that he discovered both “the sons and daughters of the wealthiest and most refined families . . . laying on the filthiest covered bunks along side of cracked and broken layouts, smoking and sleeping their lives away.” An article in the *Chronicle* claimed, however, that the “most serious phase of the opium habit” in the city was the hold it had secured “upon the lower and more depraved classes of whites”—suggesting, when placed alongside the accounts of Lloyd and Wood, that opium use was a pastime that crossed class lines. As J. Connor Torrey sensationally put it, “Five thousand white slaves to the oriental drug in San Francisco, and the majority own to having taken the initial whiff in ‘Chinatown.’”⁴⁸

For whites interested in ingesting opium, neither finding the drug or a place to consume it was particularly difficult. The enforcement of laws prohibiting “public opium-houses” was lax at best and private smoking among the Chinese was commonplace enough that white guests in Chinese homes or businesses, or white tourists, like Eleanor Caldwell, in an opium den, were frequently invited to smoke. According to a story in the *Chronicle*, that many of Chinatown’s opium

dens “were in the habit of providing the pipe for white people,” was confirmed by one white visitor who, upon entering two different dens, was asked, “You wanchee smokee?” In one resort, this visitor “drew the fellow on so far as to induce him to bring a pipe and prepare to weigh 25 cents’ worth of opium.” The writer of this account also reported witnessing “an earthen-faced and haggard-looking young white man” approach “the basement of Wing Hing, 746 Commercial street” where there was “a great flaming advertisement in Chinese calling attention to the place as a smoking resort.” The young man “cast furtive glances on each side and then dashed down the steps.” As one young woman, an actress and opium-user purportedly put it, “Then some one suggests a trip to Chinatown, and the opium-house obtains another customer. That’s the way I drifted into them, and I must confess, I am not sorry for it either. It’s a deal better than whiskey, and I had my choice of one or the other.” If an interested party was not keen on visiting an opium den, a number of accounts pointed out that it was neither uncommon for retail stores in Chinatown to sell opium nor “to see young men and women stealing into Chinatown at night, entering an opium shop, and procuring half a dollar’s worth of the lethal drug.” Making this particularly easy were the exposés of the San Francisco press that published huge lists of the names and addresses of both dens and retail outlets.⁴⁹

Authors of Chinatown literature, in tandem with the practices of Chinatown guides, deftly charted paths that facilitated the navigation of Chinatown’s tourist terrain in ways that linked a visitor’s experience to an understanding of the Chinese as filthy, unassimilable, vicious, and barbaric. They also often ventured a step further and used their depictions as vehicles for articulating the morality and merits of the most pressing social issue that pertained to their work: the “Chinese Question.” Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Chinese immigration was a hotly debated issue in San Francisco and beyond. Most often, authors of Chinatown tourist literature answered the “Chinese Question” in the negative. The not so subtle subtext of their arguments generally centered on whether or not Chinese immigrants were compatible with the American body politic and revolved around issues of assimilability, public health, labor competition, and vice—the same themes that were used to construct the “Oriental” in the popular imagination and which pervaded analyses of tourist sites. The author of an article that ran in *Scribner’s* put it bluntly but typically, mobilizing themes of unassimilability and social pollution. “While immigration is the life-blood of young nations,” this writer explained, “there is such a thing as blood-poisoning, and this is frequently occasioned by the presence of some foreign substance.” In this writer’s opinion, “John” was “that substance” because he was “utterly devoid of any quality of assimilation.” A journalist who penned an article in *Outing* expressed his hostility to Chinese immigration through his articulation of what had become widely held beliefs about the threats the Chinese posed to free white labor. He explained, “The Chinese, with their great cunning, oust American labor. They work at what would be starving wages to a white man, for a few years, then leave for home with their hoarded earnings.”

Expressing his fears about the risks Chinatown and Chinese immigrants posed to public health, J. Torrey Connor warned that “when smallpox and other infectious diseases that germinate in the filth of that malodorous quarter are raging, then, indeed do we come to a full realization of the undesirability of our Mongolian neighbors.” Summing up tourist literature’s overall sentiments, he added, “Unlike other foreigners who come to our shores, the material from which ‘good citizens’ are made is not be found in this alien race.”⁵⁰

The literature of Chinatown tourism and the practices of Chinatown guides conveyed important lessons to the tourists it led around—both literally and figuratively. On one level, it presented a Chinatown in which police guides routinely kicked in the doors of Chinese abodes; restaurants represented a host of food taboos; the vice embodied by opium dens set the Chinese apart from whites; religious differences seen in joss houses translated into racial differences; and theaters exhibited the artistic short-comings of an inferior culture. On another level, however, tourist literature offered glimpses of a slightly different kind of Chinatown experience that spoke more to cultural sharing than to the bolstering of social and racial differences. This Chinatown was one in which white tourists spent hours conversing and traipsing around with Chinese guides; partook of new kinds of food and drink; sometimes tried a new drug; learned about non-Christian religious practices and non-Western dramatic performances; and interacted with Chinese people as they visited Chinatown’s various venues. But even in the moments when this alternative Chinatown came into view, it always co-existed with racializing discourses that seeped in to frame the overall experience. Chinatown nevertheless remained a segregated space where much of the social and cultural work needed to maintain whites and Chinese as racial opposites took place.

Notes

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1. Will Irwin, ed., *Old Chinatown: A Book of Pictures by Arnold Genthe* (New York: Mitchell and Kennerly, 1908), 7.

2. San Francisco’s Chinatown is the oldest and largest Chinese community in the United States. It has remained a popular tourist attraction for visitors as well as an essential component in the city’s tourist industry. In the early 1990s, for example, Chalsa Loo estimated that 5,000 tourists visited Chinatown every day and that “three out of every four of the three million visitors to San Francisco each year visit Chinatown.” See Chalsa M. Loo, *Chinatown: Most Time, Hard Time* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 3-21. Loo asserts that the name “Chinatown” came into use in the twentieth century and that the area occupied by the San Francisco’s Chinese community in the nineteenth century was called the “Chinese Quarter.” See Loo, *Chinatown*, 16. My research indicates, however, that both terms were used interchangeably in the nineteenth century and I will use both terms here.

3. The process of racialization is delineated in Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1986). See also Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Faultlines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994);

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Paul Spickard and G. Reginald Daniel, eds. *Racial Thinking in the United States: Uncompleted Independence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004). For histories of Chinese American communities and the struggles of Chinese Americans against racism and discrimination see, for example, Sucheng Chan, ed., *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994) and *Common Ground: Reimagining American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989); Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991); Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); and Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

4. Several recent works have drawn on the work of Edward Said to explore American variants of Orientalism. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Robert G. Lee, *Oriental: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999); John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Anthony Lee, *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); and David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

5. E.G.H., *Surprise Land: A Girl's Letters from the West* (Boston: Cupples, Upham & Co, 1887), 75 and 94.

6. *Ibid.*, 76-80.

7. *Ibid.*, 83.

8. *Ibid.*, 96-99.

9. In many respects, Chinatown tourism defined tourists as "American" and "citizens" and the Chinese as squarely outside the bounds of those categories. For a discussion of the way tourism has functioned "as a ritual of citizenship" for white Americans see Margeurite S. Schaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 225. See also David Wrobel and Patrick T. Long, eds., *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2001) and Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001). For discussions of international tourism in post-colonial and colonial contexts that have relevance for the tourist-toured upon relationship in the internal colony of Chinatown, see Malcolm Crick, "Representations of International Tourism in the Social Sciences: Sun, Sex, Sights, Savings, and Servility," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 18 (1989), 307-344 and Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

10. My understanding of the literature of urban exploration is informed primarily by the discussion of "urban spectatorship" in Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 15-39. Both guides who led tourists around and the tourist literature that prepared tourists for what to expect to see facilitated the "collection of signs" that made up the detached, differentiating "tourist gaze" that tourists deployed in their consumption of Chinatown. See John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 3 and *Consuming Places* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). Chinatown tourism, however, was less about pleasure and leisure than many of the sites Urry identifies but the gaze itself was similarly objectifying. For a compelling discussion of the way a "collection of signs" in the form of objects can manifest more claims on what is real than they actually possess see, Eric Gable, Richard Handler, and Anna Lawson, "On the Uses of Relativism; Fact, Conjecture, and Black and White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg," *American Ethnologist*, 19 (November 1992), 791-805.

11. For the classic discussion of "staged authenticity" see Dean MacCanell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976). See also Raymond Rast, "Staging Chinatown: The Place of the Chinese in San Francisco's Tourist Industry," (unpublished paper in author's possession).

12. For works advocating or referring to the use of guides see, for example, Isaiah West Taber, *Hints to Strangers* (San Francisco, 188-), 3; *Disturnell's Strangers' Guide to San Francisco and Vicinity: A Complete and Reliable Book of Reference for Tourists and Other Strangers Visiting the Metropolis of the Pacific* (San Francisco: W.C. Disturnell Publisher, 1883), 108-109; "Seeing the Sights," *Century Illustrated Magazine* LXV (April 1903), 101; B.E. Lloyd, *Lights and Shades in San Francisco* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1876), 262-263; "San Francisco's Chinatown" in *Seen by the Spectator; Being a Selection of Rambling Papers First Published in the Outlook, Under the Title The Spectator* (New York: The Outlook Company, 1902); D.E. Kessler, "An Evening In Chinatown," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* XLIX (May 1907), 445; Eleanor B. Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown" *Arthur's Home Magazine* 65 (August 1895), 653 and *New Petersen Magazine* IV (July 1894), 595; Stoddard, Charles Warren, *A Bit of Old China* (San Francisco: A.M. Robertson, 1912) as excerpted from *In the Footprints of the Padres* (San Francisco, CA: A.M. Robertson, 1901); and *Bancroft's Tourist Guide* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Co, 1871). While a number of sources suggest that there was some sort of legitimizing licensing procedure for guides, the details of that system have not revealed themselves. See for example Joseph Carey, D.D., *By the Golden Gate or San Francisco, the Queen City of the Pacific Coast, with Scenes and Incidents Characteristic of Its Life* (Albany: New York: The Albany Diocesan Press, 1902), 138-140; William Bode, *Lights and Shadows of Chinatown* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1896) and Helen Throop Purdy, *San Francisco As It Was, As It Is, And How To See It* (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Company, 1912).

13. W.H. Gleadell, "Night Scenes in Chinatown," *Eclectic Magazine*, September 1895, 378-383, quote from 379. For examples of other cautionary tales about what could happen if one ventured off the beaten path in Chinatown see, Rudyard Kipling, *Rudyard Kipling's Letters from San Francisco* (San Francisco: Colt Press, 1949), 31-32; Frank Norris, *The Third Circle* (New York: John Lane Company, 1909) and Emma Frances Dawson, "The Dramatic In My Destiny," *Californian* 1 (January 1880), 1-11. For ways Chinese men were sexualized in relation to white women see Lee, *Orientalists*, 83-105.

14. Irwin, *Old Chinatown*, 154-155; Bode, *Lights and Shadows*, npn. Writers have disagreed about the existence or at least, extent, of Chinatown's underground labyrinths. For example, Louis Stelman contended that, "As for the human rabbit warrens supposed to exist under Chinatown, the great fire of 1906 utterly disproved this canard. Chinatown was entirely razed by the flames—laid completely open for many months to the eyes of the casual observer. Neither they nor the wreckers who cleared out the debris of the Chinese quarter prior to its rebuilding could find anything but a few minor passageways underground, such as might reasonably be expected to exist in any similar locality." See Louis J. Stelman, *Chinatown: A Pictorial Souvenir and Guide* (manuscript, 1917), 31 as well as Helen Throop Purdy, *San Francisco As It Was, As It Is, And How To See It* (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Company, 1912), 137-138. Will Irwin, however, argued that, "The underground passages of Chinatown have appealed mightily to the imagination. . . . Although some declare them a myth, those passageways . . . did really exist at one time. Their end antedated the great fire. In the late nineties, a Board of Health . . . forestalled epidemics by going through the Quarter with warrant and deputy. Against the diplomacies and concealments of the Chinese, the inspectors closed up cellar after cellar, filled in passage after passage. A few . . . remained to the end. Still those who knew of Chinatown marveled, when they looked into the gaping cellars left by the fire, to see how little of this mole-work remained." See, Irwin, *Old Chinatown*, 153-55.

15. Eleanor B. Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown" *Arthur's Home Magazine* 65 (August 1895), 662 and *New Petersen Magazine* IV (July 1894), 595.

16. Peixotto, Ernest C., *Ten Drawings in Chinatown With Certain Observations by Robert Howe Fletcher* (San Francisco: A.M. Robertson, 1898), 1-2.

17. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

18. J.W. Ames, "A Day In Chinatown", *Lippincott's Magazine* (October 1875), 499; *Bancroft's Tourist Guide*, 215; "'China Town' in San Francisco, By Day & By Night," *Cornhill Magazine*, July 1886, 56.

19. These kind of displays of Chinese bodies both authenticated and naturalized social and racial differences and offered contact with them. For a brilliant discussion of the way the staged touristic presentations of the physical body construct difference see Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Quotation and Figs 1-4 are from a booklet of Chinatown photos titled, *Chinatown*, published by Henry R. Knapp, San Francisco, 1889. These same photos were pasted into A.E. Browne's unpublished, hand-written travel journal to illustrate her experiences. A.E. Browne, *A Trip to California, Alaska, and the Yellowstone Park*, (Unpublished travel journal, ca. 1891, V. 1). *Harper's* featured photographs with a similar pedigree as an accompaniment to an 1888 article about the "Chinese Question." "By the aid of powerful calcium lights photographs were taken of some of the lowest dens in Chinatown. The miserable occupants had never seen their own filth before. The light dazzled and blinded them. They hid their heads while the bright rays searched

out every nook and corner, and photographed the scenes that it is impossible for pen to describe." See "The Labor Question on the Pacific Coast," *Harper's*, 1888, 778.

20. Stoddard, Charles Warren, *A Bit of Old China*; Gleadell, "Night Scenes In Chinatown," 381. See also, B.E. Lloyd, *Lights and Shades in San Francisco* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1876), 262-263.

21. Lee, *Oriental*, 8-9, 27-28 and 32. Lee identifies four aspects of the "Oriental" in nineteenth-century American culture—the pollutant, the coolie, the deviant, and the yellow peril—which are constructed around issues of unassimilability, public health and sanitation, labor competition, and vice.

22. Rev. J. C. Holbrook, "Chinadom in California," *Hutchings' Illustrated California Magazine*, 4 (1859-60), 130. For reference to the foreign-ness of Chinatown, see also, Carey, *By the Golden Gate*, 136-7; Bode, *Lights and Shadows of Chinatown*, n.pn; Lucien Biart, *My Rambles in the New World*, translated by Mary de Hauteville (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1877), 83-4. G.B. Densmore, *The Chinese in California: Description of Chinese Life in San Francisco, Their Habits, Morals, and Manners* (San Francisco: Pettit & Russ), 1880, 21; William Doxey, *Doxey's Guide to San Francisco and the Pleasure Resorts of California* (San Francisco: At The Sign of the Lark, 1897), 116-117; "Chinese Highbinders," *Harper's Weekly*, February 13, 1890, 103; C. Baldwin, "A Celestial Colony," *Lippincott's Magazine*, February 1881, 123; "China Town" in San Francisco, *By Day & By Night*, 50; Gleadell, "Night Scenes in Chinatown," 1895, 379; "The Chinese in San Francisco," *Harper's*, 1880, 182; "Lenz's World Tour," *Outing, An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Recreation* 22 (August 1893), 363; J. Torrey Connor, "A Western View of the Chinese in the United States," *The Chautauquan: A Weekly Newsmagazine* 32 (January 1901), 374; D.E. Kessler, "An Evening In Chinatown," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* XLIX (May 1907), 445; Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown," *Arthur's Home Magazine*, 653; Will Brooks, "A Fragment of China," *Californian* VI (July 1882), 2; *New California Tourists' Guide to San Francisco and Vicinity* (San Francisco: Samuel Carson & Co, 1886), 59.

23. For an extended analysis of the way public health and race came together in Chinatown see Nyan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001). See also, Susan Craddock, *City of Plagues: Disease, Poverty, and Deviance in San Francisco* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). G.B. Densmore, *The Chinese in California*, 1880. Also, Rev. Otis Gibson, A.M., *The Chinese in America* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock & Walden, 1877), 63-4; Willard B. Farwell, *The Chinese At Home And Abroad: Together With The Report of the Special Committee of the Board of Supervisors of San Francisco on the Condition of the Chinese Quarter of That City* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft, 1885), 53-4 and 59; "Chinadom by Day and Night," *Chronicle*, December 5, 1869.

24. Carey, *By the Golden Gate*, 196; Gibson, *The Chinese in America*, 71; Josephine Clifford, "Chinatown," *Potter's American Monthly*, May 1880, 354-54; *Doxey's Guide*, 118. It is worth noting as well that much of Gibson's description was reprinted in "The Chinese in San Francisco," *Harper's*, 1880, 182. For further description of the polluted quality of Chinese food see also Ames, "A Day In Chinatown," 500; A.E. Browne, *A Trip to California, Alaska, and the Yellowstone Park*, (Unpublished travel journal, ca. 1891, V. 1); D.E. Kessler, "An Evening In Chinatown," 445; Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown," 657. Brooks, "A Fragment of China," 4 also noted the possibilities for deception. Robert Lee has shown that "minstrel songs paid great attention to Chinese foodways." He also has pointed out that "you are, symbolically at least, what you eat" and in minstrelsy the Chinese were "identified with eating dogs and cats, animals that are domesticated but not raised for food" and with "eating mice and rats, animals considered filthy and disease-carrying and therefore dangerous and polluting." Lee, *Oriental*, 38-9.

25. Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," *The National Magazine*, November 1897, 102-103; E.G.H., *Surprise Land*, 80. See also, Brooks, "A Fragment of China," 1882, 3-4. "China Town" in San Francisco: *By Day & By Night*, 52; Frank Norris, *Blix* (New York: Doubleday & McClure, 1899); *Doxey's Guide to San Francisco*, 1897, 118.

26. Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," 102-103. *Doxey's Guide to San Francisco*, 118 also mentioned arranging a meal in advance in suspiciously similar language. Gibson, *The Chinese in America*, 1877, 70-1.

27. Gibson, *The Chinese in America*, 1877, 71-2.

28. As Mary Douglas has shown, the specific ways people feed their physical bodies disclose and shed light on the needs and fears of the social body. Thus, the choices individuals or groups make or the constraints they face about food and eating are political, in the broad sense of the word, and rehearse some of the most basic ways in which order and value are maintained in a society. See Mary Douglas, ed., *Food in the Social Order: Studies of Food and Festivities in Three American Communities* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984) and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966). John Kasson likewise asserts that "the distinctive ways in which peoples eat express their

attitudes toward their physical bodies, their social relationships, and their sense of the larger cultural order. See John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1990), 182.

29. Holbrook, "Chinadom in California," 131. *Doxey's Guide to San Francisco*, 118; *Disturnell's Strangers' Guide*, 107-108; Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," 104 also provides the same explanation for the etymology of the term 'joss.'

30. Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," 104-5; Iza Duffus Hardy, "In Chinatown," *Belgravia: An Illustrated London Magazine* (January 1881), 221; Kessler, "An Evening In Chinatown," 446-447; A.E. Browne, *A Trip to California* (99). For similar description see also, Clifford, "Chinatown," 362; W.H. Gleadell, "Night Scenes In Chinatown," 380; Charles Keeler, *San Francisco and Thereabouts* (San Francisco: The California Promotional Committee, 1903), 66; A. Morris, "A Glimpse of San Francisco," *Lippincott's Magazine* (June 1870), 647; J. Torrey Connor, "A Western View of Chinese in the United States," 373; L.A. Littleton, "Chinese Mythology in San Francisco," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* 1 (June 1883), 615; Stoddard, *A Bit of Old China*, 2; Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown," 653; "A Chinese Miracle. A Strange Scene in a Joss House—A Reporter Takes a Peep Behind the Scenes," undated article from the *San Francisco Chronicle* in *The Chinese Invasion: Revealing the Habits, Manners, and Customs of the Chinese, Political Social and Religious, on the Pacific Coast, Coming in Contact with the Free and Enlightened Citizens of America; Containing Careful Selections from the San Francisco Press*, compiled by H.J. West (San Francisco: Excelsior Office, Bacon & Company Printers, 1873, 89.

31. "'China Town' in San Francisco: By Day & By Night," 52; Ames, "A Day In Chinatown," 498-99. See also Hittell, *A History of the City of San Francisco and Incidentally of the State of California* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1878), 45-46.

32. Ames, "A Day In Chinatown," 499. D.E. Kessler, "An Evening In Chinatown," 446-7. See also Hittell, *A History of the City of San Francisco*, 45-46.

33. Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," 104-5.

34. Carey, *By the Golden Gate*, 206, 210 and 214-5.

35. Densmore, *The Chinese in California*, 61; Gibson, *The Chinese in America*, 71-3.

36. Regarding the significance of the theater in nineteenth-century American culture, see Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). Carey, *By the Golden Gate*, 199.

37. *Disturnell's Strangers' Guide*, 107-108; "Chinatown in San Francisco: By Day & By Night," 58. For general information about location, times, and prices see also, *Doxey's Guide to San Francisco*, 127; Gibson, *The Chinese in America*, 74 and 80-1; J.W. Ames, "A Day In Chinatown," 501; Josephine Clifford, "Chinatown," 362. Although over the years writers of travel literature differed on the exact hours of operation, they agreed that theaters opened in the afternoon and closed late at night. E.M. Green, "The Chinese Theater," *Overland Monthly* XLI 2nd Series, (February 1903), 119. Regarding decreasing attendance at the theater among the Chinese post Exclusion Act see, Frederic J. Masters, D.D., "The Chinese Drama," *The Chautauquan: A Weekly Newsmagazine*, July 1895, 436. For different prices for whites and Chinese see, Green, "The Chinese Theater," 119; Masters, "The Chinese Drama," 439.

38. Lloyd, *Lights and Shades in San Francisco*, 264; Gleadell, "Night Scenes in Chinatown," 382; Masters, "The Chinese Drama," 440; Gibson, *The Chinese in America*, 78-9. See also Keeler, *San Francisco and Thereabouts*, 65-66; Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," 102-103; Densmore, *The Chinese in California*, 54-58; Biart, *My Rambles in the New World*, 80; and E.G.H., *Surprise Land*, 78.

39. Henry Burden McDowell, "The Chinese Theater," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, November 1884, 27-44; quotes from 31 and 35.

40. "'China Town' in San Francisco: By Day & By Night," 58-9; Lloyd, *Lights and Shades*, 264-265; Clifford, "Chinatown," 364. See also, *Doxey's Guide to San Francisco*, 127; Gibson, *The Chinese in America*, 80-81; Ames, "A Day In Chinatown," 501; Keeler, *San Francisco and Thereabouts*, 65-66; and Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," 102-103.

41. "Lenz's World Tour," 363; Carey, *By the Golden Gate*, 202; Browne, *A Trip to California*, 104. For other accounts of tourists seated on the stage see, *Doxey's Guide to San Francisco*, 127; Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," 102-103; W.H. Gleadell, "Night Scenes In Chinatown," 382-3; Keeler, *San Francisco and Thereabouts*, 65; Masters, "The Chinese Drama," 125; and Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown," 660.

42. Craft, "Some Days and Nights in Little China," 102; Carey, *By the Golden Gate*, 201; Gleadell, "Night Scenes In Chinatown," 382 and 379.

43. As Robert Lee has noted, "The joy and pain of addiction to pleasure is also a central trope of the Orientalist construction of the sensual; thus the opium den is central to descriptions of Chinatowns by virtually every commentator on the Oriental from Charles Nordhoff through Sax Rohmer." Lee, *Orientalists*, 124. *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 18, 1894.

44. Lloyd, *Lights and Shades in San Francisco*, 260-1; Hardy, "In Chinatown," 217; Keeler, *San Francisco and Thereabouts*, 65; For similar descriptions, see also Ames, "A Day In Chinatown,"

500; W.H. Gleadell, "Night Scenes in Chinatown," 381-382; Clifford, "Chinatown," 355; "Lenz's World Tour," 362; A.E. Browne, *A Trip to California*, 104-105; Stoddard, *A Bit of Old China*, 11; and Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown," 660-1

45. Clifford, "Chinatown," 355; W.H. Gleadell, "Night Scenes in Chinatown," 381-382; Hardy, "In Chinatown," 217. For similar descriptions see also, Carey, *By the Golden Gate*, 173-179; J.W. Ames, "A Day in Chinatown," 500; Stoddard, *A Bit of Old China*, 11; Morris, *A Pacific Coast Vacation*, 176; and E.G.H., *Surprise Land*, 99.

46. Gleadell, "Night Scenes in Chinatown," 381-2; Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown," 661.

47. Eleanor B. Caldwell, "The Picturesque In Chinatown," 661; Stoddard, *A Bit of Old China*, 12; "China Town' in San Francisco: By Day and By Night, 52-53.

48. Lloyd, *Lights and Shades in San Francisco*, 262; Wood, *Life and Experience of Prof. E. W. Wood Appertaining to the Opium Habit of the Chinese*, npn; Connor, "A Western View of the Chinese in the United States," 378. See also Carey, *By the Golden Gate*, 179.

49. For the illegality of opium smoking in public but not private in San Francisco see, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 18, 1894 and C.P. Holden, "The Opium Industry in America," *Scientific American* LXXXVII (March 5, 1898), 147. For the common use of opium among the Chinese see *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 18 and 19, 1894. *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 18, 1894; "Hitting the Pipe," *The National Police Gazette* XXXVIII (August 20, 1881), 6; *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 19, 1894.

50. "John Chinaman in San Francisco," *Scribner's Monthly* XVII (October 1876), 871; "Lenz's World Tour," 363; Connor, "A Western View of the Chinese in the United States," 375. See also, for example, Lloyd, *Lights and Shades in San Francisco*, 213-217; Gleadell, "Night Scenes in Chinatown," 378; Densmore, *The Chinese in California*, 1 and 117; "The Chinese At Home and Abroad," *Hutchings' Illustrated California Magazine*, 5 (1860-1), 324-330; George Hamlin Fitch, "The City By the Golden Gate," *The Chautauquan*, September 1896, 659-668; Baldwin, "A Celestial Colony, 128-129; Hardy, "In Chinatown," 226; Holbrook, "Chinadom in California, 129-132 and 173-178; and *Bancroft's Tourist Guide*, 217.