

Analysis on Bai Juyi's New Yue-fu Poetry of "Feng-Ya-Bi-Xing"*

Shufan Wang

Kunming University of Science and Technology
Kunming, China 650093

Abstract—In early Tang dynasty, Chen Zi'ang proposed "Xing-Ji" theory. It is the important poetry theory in Tang dynasty, and has had a profound impact on the formation of Bai Juyi's realistic literary viewpoint and "Feng-Ya-Bi-Xing" poetry artistic style in middle Tang dynasty. In particular, the poet's allegory poetry is more mysterious, and has more deeply meanings, that is named "MeiCi-BiXing". In the study of poetry, poetry theory and poetry should be linked to each other, revealing the relationship between the theory of poetry and the poet style formation.

Keywords—Bai Juyi; new Yue-fu poetry; "Bi-Xing"; "Xing-Ji"

I. INTRODUCTION

Bai Juyi is the representative of poetry theory of realism in the middle period of Tang Dynasty, and he follows "Xing-Ji" theory of Chen Ziang for his poetry theory. He is influenced by the traditional Confucianism theory, so he carries forward and intensifies the viewpoint that poetry should have the basic connotation of realistic value, and the relative systematic realistic "Xing-Ji" poetry theory is formed. His poetry theory is mainly seen in the works such as "Celin · Yiwenzhang", "Celin · Caishi", Preface of New Yue-Fu, A Letter to Yuan Jiu and Cai Shi Guan, Ji Tang Sheng, Shang Tang Qu and Feeling after Reading Old Yue-Fu of Zhang Ji.

II. BASIC LITERATURE VIEW AND POETIC VIEW OF BAI JUYI

In the opinion of Bai Juyi, poetry is one of human's mental activities and can reflect social politics faithfully, "observe the advantages and disadvantages of current politics, express the public's feelings", having an immeasurable intervention effect on politics. Thus, his basic literary thoughts that literature serves politics. One outstanding feature of this thinking is connecting literature and politics, poetry and politics closely, emphasizing the mutual communication and mutual interaction between the two. Poetry is to report the feelings of common people to higher authorities or from the higher authorities to common people. The communication between governor and the governed enables the goal of harmonious society development to be realized. As for the management of ruling

*Fund Project: Scientific Research Project for Studying in China from 2018 to 2019 (China Association for International Education, CAFSA for short)

"Research on Chinese International Education and Sino-Thai Cultural Identity" (Project No. 2018-2019Y040)

class toward common people, the enlightenment significance of poetry is emphasized; with respect to the political interference from lower level to higher level, the poetry's rule of examining the politics is stressed. The poetry creation of new Yue-Fu movement performed on the basis of the poet's basic literary thoughts is also aimed to promote political reform.

Under the guidance of basic thoughts that literature serves politics, the realistic poetry creation theory of "articles should be for the times, poems should be the current affairs" of Bai Juyi is formed, and the main viewpoints can be seen in the articles of A Letter to Yuan Jiu and Celin. It stresses that under the guidance of basic thoughts literature serving politics, Bai Juyi puts forward the realistic poetry creation theory "articles should be for the times, poems should be the current affairs", and further reveals the realistic creation norm "feeling in affairs, moving in emotion, forming in poetry". We have discussed many times that the origin of "Bi-Xing" thinking is "theory of Wugan", which expresses feelings on natural scene and differences of social reality. Bai's poetry creation thinking belongs to the latter. To be exact, the political life in real society motivates the creation inspiration and impulsion of the poet, solidifying and forming a kind of social feeling in the mind of poet. Such social emotion is closely related to political life and is referred as "be concerned about politics" and "harmony between emotion and politics", meaning that it is generated by having feelings on politics and current affairs, have special feelings of social value. The rule of writing is created on the basis of that, the poetry's essential features "feeling is its foundation, language is its leaves, sound is its flower, thought is its fruit" is concluded. "Feeling is its foundation" refers to that "feeling" is the source of poetry creation, namely the foundation of poetry is to express the thoughts and feelings with social value; "thought is its fruit" stresses that the stance of poetry is practical significance. It can be seen that the thought of realism runs through the poetry creation process, having feelings in real life, stimulating social value emotion and producing poetry creation impulsion for poetry creation, and ultimately realizing political examination of real world by poetry, and completing the creation ideal of "articles should be for the times, poems should be the current affairs".

III. INHERITANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF BAI JUYI'S "XING-JI" THEORY

There is hardly any dispute about the poetic style of Bai Juyi, which is defined as "plain and popular" and determined by the poet's realistic poetic theory. We have discussed "Xing-Ji" under the guidance of realistic poetic theory of Bai Juyi. Here, we will explore the relationship between "Xing-Ji" theory and poet, poetic style by virtue of the "plain and popular" poetic style in poetry expression. At the time of accepting "Xing-Ji" theory, Bai Juyi expanded the connotation of social realistic value of "Xing-Ji" theory due to the influence of realistic literary thought and creation theory, and directly regarded "Xing-Ji" as equal to "allegorical Mei-Ci" ideological content, and even regarded "Bi-Xing" as equal to "allegorical Mei-Ci", which confused the difference between artistic method and ideological contents of "Xing-Ji" theory. Some scholars have already pointed out their views about the defect of Bai's "Xing-Ji" theory, for example, On "Mei-Ci Bi-Xing" Theory of Bai Juyi (recorded in the first series of Study on Ancient Literary Theory) of Mr. Mei Yunsheng, History of Chinese Aesthetic Thought of Mr. Min Ze and History of Chinese Culture of Mr. Cai Zhong Xiang, thinking that the viewpoint "Bi-Xing" "actually is Mei-Ci" of Bai Juyi has confused the two while neglecting its "Bi-Xing" artistic method. Bai's "Xing-Ji" theory advocates "to integrate six meanings into one" and generally uses "Mei-Ci Bi-Xing", "Feng-Sao Bi-Xing" and "Feng-Ya Bi-Xing", which aims to stress social realistic value of "Xing-Ji".

A. Realistic Critical Value of "Xing-Ji"

"Feng, Ya, Song, Fu, Bi, Xing" are the "six meanings" of poetry, and it is the origin of "Xing-Ji" theory of Tang Dynasty. "Xing-Ji" theory includes three aspects of connotation characteristics, namely the realistic contents of "allegorical Mei-Ci", "Bi-Xing" artistic thinking and methods, aesthetic value of "there's an end to the words, but not to the message". In the middle period of Tang Dynasty, "Xing-Ji" theory of Bai Juyi makes one-sided emphasis on the social value of "allegorical Mei-Ci", and integrates the three connotation characteristics of "Xing-Ji" into one, which is the "Xing-Ji" theory formed with the influence of the basic literature thoughts of literature serving politics, and realistic creation theory. According to Bai's realistic literature thoughts, poetic creation should eulogize (Mei) or criticize (Ci) the political gain and loss, so the basic spirit of "Xing-Ji" is "allegorical Mei-Ci". As a result, "Feng-Ya Bi-Xing", "Feng-Sao Bi-Xing" are all equal to the ideological contents of "allegorical Mei-Ci".

Bai's "plain and popular" artistic style is formed due to the one-sided poetry ideological contents of "Xing-Ji", advocating that content outweigh form. In "Celin · Yiweizhang", the traditional Confucian teaching of poetry is highly praised, and the "plain and popular" viewpoint is clearly put forward. The purpose of poetry creation is to correct the current error, and to perform political intervention. The poem is written "for the emperor, officials, people, objects and affairs, but not for articles". Bai's realistic poetry theory stresses that content determines form and purpose stipulates means, therefore, "emphasizing on essence completely" is the best expression method of this kind of poetry. With respect to "emphasizing on

essence completely", it refers to that the core of poetry creation is to express the ideological contents, with clear and definite purpose, distinct pertinence and tendency. As for the structure, it is required that "its purpose should be marked in the first paragraph, and its will should be signed in the last paragraph", "sign one matter in one song", "the way of allegory is better than stimulation" (Preface of Bai Juyi's Changqing Collection by Yuan Zhen). And it should come straight to the point with highlighted key idea and simple clue, bring out the theme at the beginning, and conclude the theme at the end, to make the beginning and the end response to each other. As for the language, it is required to "Ci Zhi Er Jing", meaning simple and straightforward expression; "Yan Zhi Er Qie", meaning direct writing of its affairs and being close to the reason; "Shi He Er Shi", meaning true contents with records for examination; "Ti Shun Er Si", meaning smooth text, easy for singing. "Plain and popular" is the unique artistic style of realistic poetry, aiming to be "easy" for readers, make the connotation of "allegorical Mei-Ci" simple and clear, so as to "warn" the governor and intervene the politics.

However, the poetry without aesthetic value does not conform to the essential rule of poetry as it stresses the "Xing-Ji" theory of poetry "allegorical Mei-Ci" realistic value too much while neglecting poetry artistic form. Bao-Juyi also realized this problem in his later years, and he adjusted his poetry theory, paying attention to the implicit and mild aesthetic value of poetry. He felt deeply that his works "has too deep and too thorough meaning and reason", "it is the advantage and also the disadvantage." He indicated that he should "delete the complicated contents and make the meaning obscure" (Preface of He Da Shi Shi Shou). In the later years, or more accurately, after being demoted as Sima of Jiangzhou, Bai Juyi also changed his literary thoughts a lot due to failure in political career. His poetry style is changed to the aesthetic pursuit of "self-perfection" and "delicate, implicit and mild" from "consideration to others" and "plain and popular". Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen are best friends, and later he regards Liu Yuxi as his bosom friend, adoring Liu more than Yuan, and he is called as "Shi Hao". I share the same ideas with you, only I know your articles are delicate and implicit (Ku Liu Shangshu Mengde). "Delicate and implicit" become another pursuit of Bai Juyi for his poetry style. The poetry creation of Liu Yuxi is deep in thought with intense feelings, applying anger in implication for artistic expression and pursuing the aesthetic realm of "Jing coming from exterior of Xiang".¹ Poetry is implicit, isn't it? Generally, the ideological contents are obtained while language style is lost, so being delicate and implicit is valuable; the realm beyond image is essence and rarely is the same (Wuling Collection of Dong's). The poetry theory and poetry creation of Bai Juyi in his later period experiences some changes under the influence. Reviewing the ancient and current poetry, for the poetries of hundreds of poets after The Book of Songs, such as Su Wu, Li Ling, Bao Zhao, Xie Tiao, and Li Bai, Du Fu, most are written due to injustice, exiling, traveling, birth, death, illness, death and parting, with emotion coming from interior and becoming articles for the external form. Nine out of ten of the ancient and

¹ (Tang) Liu Yuxi, noted by Qu Tuiyuan. Notes of Liu Yuxi Collection [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1989 (1): 517.

current articles are written due to the worried, indignant and sad feelings) (Tang Bai Juyi Xuluo Shi). The poetic view of “feelings coming from interior and poems forming in the exterior” indicates that Bai Juyi is transforming his one-sided realistic poetry theory of ideological contents to the mature “Xing-Ji” theory unifying content and form. He creates a series of poetry works using “Xing-Ji” artistic method, placing profound ideological contents, and revealing the “implicit and mild” aesthetic artistic conception. For instance, Spring Outing on Qiantang Lake, Asking Liu Shijiu, Mu Jiang Fu, Chou Yangjiuhongzhen Chang'an Bingzhong Jianji, Shouxia Tong Zhu Jiao Zheng You Kaiyuanguan, Yin Su Wan Yue, Zao Song Ren Ru Shi, Sitting Alone in Official Pavilion, Yang Zhuo, To Li Shiyi, Qian Huai, Sui Mu, Visiting Tao Gong Zhai, Zhao Wang Zhi Fu, Ti Yuquan Si, Ci Neng Qi Lun, Two Poems of Being Three Years of Cishi. The delicate and implicit “Bi-Xing” technique in the poem is better in philosophy and speculation, expresses realistic ideological contents and integrates the poet’s social emotion into natural scene, so as to realize the aesthetic realm of fusing feelings with the natural setting. For instance, in the poem Guan Jia, the sentence “饱食无所劳, 何殊卫人鹤(Bǎo shí wú suǒ láo, hé shū wèi rén hè)” is to regard the aristocratic stratum who reap without sowing as crane raised by Duke Ling of Wei, and compare with the working people “who are often exhausted due to laboring in the field, but with it is still hard for them to satisfy cloth and food”, so as to attack the social reality of cruel exploitation on people by the ruling class; Composed upon Shu River to the Mouth of Dongting Lake reflects the poet’s sense of historical responsibility, indicates he ideal and strong desire of benefiting the people, and places his pursuit of perfect personality and political ideal. The poetry creation of Bai Juyi is of social practical significance, and reveals poet’s cultured, restrained, implicit and profound artistic state, which become the masterpiece of “Xing-Ji” poetry in the middle period of Tang Dynasty.

B. Aesthetic Artistic Value of “Xing-Ji”

In the “Xing-Ji” theory of Bai Juyi, although he regards “Bi-Xing” as the ideological contents of “allegorical Mei-Ci”, he does not reject “Bi-Xing” artistic method completely. His regarding of “Bi-Xing” as “allegorical Mei-Ci” just reflects his poetry thought of unifying content and form. Bai Juyi classifies his more than 1300 poems written before 51 years old as four categories: allegorical, leisurely and comfortable, sentimental, irregular verse. Among the four categories, the one with highest value and his most attention is allegorical poem, containing more than 170 poems, of which 50 from New Yue-Fu. The use of large amount of “Bi-Xing” technique in these New Yue-Fu allegorical poems has verified this point. “Bi-Xing” artistic method serves the ideological content of “allegorical Mei-Ci”, while the expression of ideological content of “allegorical Mei-Ci” often cannot be separated from “Bi-Xing” artistic method. Just as his comment on Xie Lingyun’s poem in Reading Xie Lingyun’s Poem that “often place his emotions on natural scenes, but does not forget Xing Yu.”

(As a result, we use two wild ducks and one goose to make simile of departure; use vanilla and evil bird to make satire of

villain; though the metaphor is not specific, it is affected by the allegory in The Book of Songs. Six meanings are lost since The Book of Songs, wind, snow; flower and grass are the metaphor which cannot be abandoned in The Book of Songs. For instance, the cold north wind is a simile of tyranny; rain and snow is the simile of tyranny and corvee; “the blossom of shadblush” is a satire of brothers. And beautiful grass is a metaphor of happiness. All of them start Xing in one thing and dwell its meaning in another one, aren’t they?)² (A Letter to Yuan Jiu)

In the above paragraph, Bai Juyi explains “Bi-Xing” from the perspective of artistic methods, “so to make Xing of departure, two wild ducks and one goose are quoted as the metaphor; to make satire of villain, the vanilla and evil bird are made as comparison; apparently, the poet regards “Bi-Xing” as the rhetorical device of metaphor and personification, accepting its significance of being artistic method. On the other hand, “cold north wind”, “rain and snow”, “blossom of shadblush”, “beautiful grass” in The Book of Songs are quoted as examples, thinking that they are not merely “ridicule of wind or moon, fiddling with flowers and grasses”, but “start Xing in one thing while dwelling its meaning in another”, making clear that “Bi-Xing” is of the aesthetic value of “implication”. It is obvious that Bai’s “Xing-Ji” theory does not neglect “Bi-Xing” artistic method and the aesthetic value of “Xing-Ji” by starting Xing in one thing while placing emotion on another one. It is nothing but the poet believes that the application of “Bi-Xing” method should contain profound political and moral implication. If we regard his realistic poetry theory as the one-sided emphasis of “Feng-Ya, Mei-Ci” blindly without aesthetic value and artistic quality, then it does not meet Bai’s poetry creation reality at all. Wang Ruoxu of Jin Dynasty points out in Notes of Hunan Collection that “the poems of Letian are of temperament and interest, going into the mind of people, shaping according to the shape of objects, being full where it is, and being dangerous by interacting with vitality. As for the long ones with great rhyme, they contain hundreds of thousands words while obedience is appropriate, and all the sentences are uniform without disputing.” Ye Xie of Qing Dynasty once pointed out that Bai Juyi is good at using Bi-Xing, Xing-Ji in his poetry, “it is said that the poems of Bai Juyi can be understood by the old women, and I refer this as that the meaning of his words is not end. Viewing his collection today, many can be read out easily. Su Shi says Bai is limited by the shallow things, and its style cannot be changed, so we are easily to be tired by reading his poems. ... Nevertheless, he places his meaning on the things further. For instance, Zhong Fu, Zhi Shi, Shang You and Shang Zhai and others, have shallow words and significant meaning, which is the particular abilities of the poet.” (Yuan Shi). It can be seen that it is hard for the poet to classify his creations as poetry if he writes completely according to the purpose of realistic utility, but the poet has to write political comment and memorial to the throne with verse, then it’s unworthy for the literature history to list Bai Juyi as one of the greatest poets in Tang Dynasty.

² (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1): 424.

IV. CONCLUSION

The “plain and popular” realistic poetry of Bai Juyi and the “Bi-Xing” artistic method in his poetry stress the close relation of “Bi-Xing” aesthetic value. The purpose of “plain and popular” is to make the general public be pleased to accept the teaching through lively activities, and apply it in the specific poetry creation, namely the vivid artistic expression method, while Bi-Xing artistic method is just the perfect reflection of this method. It is pointed out in A Letter to Yuan Jiu the creation principle of “protecting ourselves when we are in poverty and trying to let others be benefited when we are in success” (the ambition lies in relieving the world, the behavior lies in paying attention to our own; pursuing it from beginning to end is the principle, and it becomes the poetry once it is spoken out. The allegorical poem is the poem written for relieving the world and for paying attention to one’s own). Bai Juyi realizes the dual functional value of poetry when discussing the characteristics of poetry, namely the political and educational function and realistic value of reflecting social reality and intervening politics; the pleasure function and aesthetic value which can express the joy and pleasure, as well as the leisurely and comfortable feeling of poet. In A Letter to Yuan Jiu, it puts forward “being friend of Yuan Zhen, we take poem for exhorting, advising and comforting, and regarding writing poem as the pleasure for us to getting along with each other”. In Reading Old Yue-Fu of Zhang Ji, it is said that “your Xue Xian can be made a satire of fatuous king; your Dong Gong can be made a satire of greedy official; your Shang Nv can touch the shrew; your Qi Qin can be used to advise and encourage husband. It can perform cultivation and relieve all the people for the upper lever, and it is reasonable for self-cultivation as for the lower level”. Poetry can “make up cultivation” for the upper level and react on the reality; but also can “sort out one’s emotion”, to observe individual physical and mental feelings, having certain social function and aesthetic function. The duality of Bai’s poetry theory seems to be contradictory, but actually it is not. This is exactly the comprehensive, systematic and complete explanation of poetry by the poet, which gives equal consideration to poetry’s realistic significance and aesthetic value with a balance point between the two, and conforms to the connotation characteristics of “Xing-Ji” theory in Tang Dynasty, namely paying attention to realistic value while stress the aesthetic realm. As a result, the practice of allegorically poetry creation under the guidance of realistic “Xing-Ji” poetry theory is of ideological contents, political interference and other realistic value, but also reflects aesthetic value of poetry itself.

REFERENCES

- [1] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):12. (in Chinese)
- [2] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):64. (in Chinese)
- [3] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):424. (in Chinese)
- [4] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):726. (in Chinese)
- [5] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):425. (in Chinese)
- [6] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):423. (in Chinese)
- [7] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):722. (in Chinese)
- [8] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):726-727. (in Chinese)
- [9] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):424-425. (in Chinese)
- [10] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):425. (in Chinese)
- [11] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):1147. (in Chinese)
- [12] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):2. (in Chinese)
- [13] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):12. (in Chinese)
- [14] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):41. (in Chinese)
- [15] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):428. (in Chinese)
- [16] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):413. (in Chinese)
- [17] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):726. (in Chinese)
- [18] (Tang) Liu Yuxi, noted by Qu Tuiyuan. Notes of Liu Yuxi Collection [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1989(1):517. (in Chinese)
- [19] (Tang) Bai Juyi. Collection of Bai Juyi [M]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1992(1):424. (in Chinese)