

Dramatic Elements in the Narrative Poetry of Bo Juyi (772-846) and Yuan Zhen (779-831)

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As the two most important *Yuefu* 樂府 poets of the Mid-Tang period (766-835), Bo Juyi and Yuan Zhen are both celebrated for their achievements in narrative poetry. Their poetic styles are unique and some of their literary views became significant issues for later writers and critics to address. Simplicity of language and clarity of meaning characterize the Yuan-Bo school's works, and undoubtedly account for the great popularity of their poetry. However, because traditional Chinese literary criticism is relatively taciturn when it comes to analyzing narrative poetry, many aspects of Bo's and Yuan's creative effort in poetry remain unexplored. Their achievement in the sphere of narrative poetry has been largely ignored by most literary critics who appraise their poetry with superficial dismissal such as that Yuan's poetry is "frivolous" or that Bo's is "vulgar" 元輕白俗.

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While narrative poetry constitutes a significant category of Tang literature, preceding the Tang period, poetry which already employed a descriptive mode of presentation did not form an independent genre on the basis of their "narrative" characteristics. ① Following the established poetic tradition of *Fu*, *Yuefu* and *Gutishi* (ancient-style poetry), Bo and Yuan made innovations on traditional forms and created the so-called "New *Yuefu*" (*Xin Yuefu*)② which provided immediate legacy to their pursuit of narrative poetry. As leaders of the Yuanhe school, Bo and Yuan not only devoted themselves to new literary ideal but also strove for the realization of their lofty goal by experimental creative writing. My point of departure is thus to examine

- ① Among the traditional Chinese literary genres, the *Fu* form employs a descriptive mode of presentation. Although we now often speak of *Fu* as poetry, in the traditional Chinese literary view, a clear distinction exists between *Shi* (poetry) and *Fu*. According to Liu Xie's *Wenxin Diaolong* (*The Literary Mind*), the word *fu* means "display" (*pu 鋪*), and is applied to rhymed compositions of a descriptive nature on given themes, in contrast to the spontaneous lyrical pieces. The *Fu* of the Han dynasty is formally similar to the *Sao* (song of the south), but some later writings also identified as *Fu* are prose. It is therefore best not to take the *Fu* as a verse form but as a literary genre. See Liu Xie, *Wenxin Diaolong*, trans., ed., Vincent Yu-Chung Shih (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1983), p. 61.
- ② Hans Frankel, in his essay on *Yuefu* poetry gives as his definition of the "New *Yuefu*" of the Tang dynasty poets: "Some Tang poets of the eighth and ninth century, such as Yuan Jie, Bo Juyi, and Yuan Zhen used the term "*Xin Yuefu*" (New *Yuefu* poems") for their social criticism. These were written, like some of the oldest *Yuefu* poems, in lines of uneven length; otherwise they were rather different from earlier *Yuefu* poetry in their titles, content and style. They were not set to music." See Hans H. Frankel, "Yuefu Poetry," in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, ed. Cyril Birch (Berkeley: Los Angeles and London, 1974), pp. 69-107.

Yuan's and Bo's theoretic and practical contribution to the development of narrative mode in Chinese poetry. Because dramatic elements in Bo's and Yuan's works originate in their narrative poetry, before going on to explore their dramatic aspects separately, I will begin by analyzing their descriptive techniques in *Yuefu* which is relevant to the emergence of narrative-dramatic interest in their poetry.

I. The "New *Yuefu*" and the Narrative Mode

The most famous statement of Bo's and Yuan's literary views comes from Bo Juyi's well-known letter to Yuan Zhen (*"Yu Yuanjiu shu"* 與元九書), in which he says "Literary compositions should be written to serve one's generation, and poems and songs to influence public affairs" 文章合爲時而著，歌詩合爲事而作。^③ Bo and Yuan maintain that poetry should be addressed to rulers, ministers, and the people; and that it should discuss contemporary affairs of social and political content in didactic manner. Poetry with clear aesthetic appeal could also be used to satirize the court, criticize defects in government, and expose the evil deeds of those in power. Above all, Yuan and Bo held in highest esteem those poems "written with the strongest emotional intensity and with blunt, unminced words after the satirical tradition of the *Shijing*."^④

③ See Bo Juyi, *Bo Juyi ji*, ed. Gu Xuejie (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), juan 3, p. 962.

④ See Yuan Zhen, *Yuan Zhen ji*, ed. Ji Qin (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), juan 60, p. 632.

A manifesto of Bo's advocacy of the literature of social realism, the above statement upheld the traditional Confucian view of the function of poetry: that rather than merely serving as an emotional outlet or idle pastime, poetry must reveal a serious purpose. A pragmatic scholar steeped in the Confucian tradition, Bo firmly believed that poetry could be used to effect social and political change. According to Bo, an ideal poem must possess an edifying message along with pleasurable attributes. Bo's critical attitude on the development of Chinese literature is consistent with his belief in the utilitarian function of poetry. The following excerpt from Bo's letter to Yuan, provides a thumbnail sketch of the history of Chinese poetry from the point of view of the Six Principles 六義 of the *Shijing*, indicating clearly the social realistic tendency of the author's views.

By the fall of the Zhou and rise of the Qin, the office in charge of collecting and selecting songs [of the people] had disappeared, so that those above did not use poetry to correct and examine the current government, and those below did not use songs to reveal and point out their human emotions. Thus it happened that a style of baseless flattery arose, in which the way of correcting failings was lacking. At this time the Six Principles began to be diminished.

The "Airs of the States" changed to become the Songs of Chu, and the pentasyllabic meter began with Su Wu and Li Ling. Su Wu, Li Ling, and the Li Sao poet [Qu Yuan] were all unfortunate men; each followed out his intent and expressed it in writing.....

Yet since they were not far removed in time from Shijing, they still retained its general principles. Thus to stimulate (xing) parting one introduced the pair of wild ducks and lone wild goose as analogies, and to remonstrate with the ruler and inferior men one introduced fragrant plants and noxious birds as comparisons. Although the Six Principles were not all employed, still these poets attained about twenty to thirty percent of what the authors of the Shijing did. At this time the Six Principles began to break down. ⑤

According to Bo, the decline of the Six Principles led to poetry's becoming the vehicle of individual rather than of social grievances, in this way reducing the art of allegory. From the Jin and Song dynasties onward, there arose a generation of poets, for example, Xie Lingyun and Tao Qian, whose abstruseness and loftiness were weakened by their fondness for the landscape and the pastoral. In the sixth century A. D., poetry became mere "sporting with wind and snow, toying with grasses and flowers,"⑥ and nothing but appealing verbal effects were emphasized.

In the above letter, Bo Juyi holds high the banner of "Shijiao" 詩教 (Teaching of *Shijing*), and discloses his distaste of the poetic practices from the Jin and Song dynasties down to the Qi and Liang

⑤ See Bo Juyi, juan 45, pp.960-961. Translation taken from Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987), p.178.

⑥ *ibid.*, p.961.

dynasties. Strongly influenced by the trend of "returning to antiquity" movement in the early Tang, Bo Juyi's views do not differ greatly from Li Bo's statements in his fifty nine "Ancient Airs" ("Gufeng" 古風). Bo Juyi, however, intentionally depreciates Li Bo, an appraisal certainly related to his divergent opinion of the poetic criterion established in the preface to the *Shijing*. Bo Juyi's and Li Bo's evaluation of the various poets in fact differs greatly, especially in their reading of the *Sao* poetry. While Li Bo also claims that *Chu Sao* (Song of Chu) is inferior to the *Shijing*, he does not assume that "following out one's intent and expressing it in writing" is incongruous to the Six Principles. Having much less regard for literature focused on individual emotion and intent, Bo Juyi uses a full fledged "social perspective" to view the tradition of the *Shijing*. This prejudice leads Bo Juyi to the aforementioned statement, "Literary compositions should be written to serve one's generation, and poems and songs to influence public affairs." While prose is a convenient tool for a writer to elaborate his opinions about political affairs, not suitable for direct comment, poetry needs to employ the technique of "narration" for admonition. What Bo called "affairs" (*shi* 事) does not point to personal activities in an individual's life, but to the political affairs that influence the people's livelihood. This emphasis of the political and social function of literature becomes the basis of the whole development of Yuan's and Bo's narrative poetry.

Bo and Yuan preferred to write poetry professing a serious, didactic purpose in the "ancient style," and more specifically, in the

Yuefu style. There is, however, an essential difference between the *Yuefu* poetry of the early Tang poets like Li Bo and Chen Zi'ang, and that of Bo and Yuan. The former utilized the formal aspects of *Yuefu*, such as title, style in the use of uneven lines, and a disregard for tonal euphony. The latter revived the spirit of the early *Yuefu* by consciously employing a popular folk idiom, thereby bridging the gap that existed between folk songs and the high poetry of the literary classes.

Termed as "*Xin Yuefu*" 新樂府 ("New *Yuefu*"), these *Yuefu* poems figure in poetic reforms attributable to Bo and Yuan. In Bo's usage of the "New *Yuefu*," the term refers to not only those *Yuefu* poems written for contemporary affairs with new titles and old *Yuefu* titles, but also "ancient-style" poetry written for satirical purpose.^⑦ Focusing on actual events, Bo and Yuan's New *Yuefu* on the whole build upon and expand the tradition of narrative Han *Yuefu*. A revival of classical poetry, *Yuefu* poetry is by nature suitable for the direct expression of emotion, the complete portrayal of a scene, and the narration of events. While it develops meaning through direct or indirect metaphors, more often than not a *Yuefu* poem tends to present "succinctly and inclusively a mood, a landscape, or a story" without resorting to "excessive, digressive figure of speech."^⑧ As the employment of narrative makes

⑦ cf. Cheng Fuwang, *Zhongguo wenxue lilun shi* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1991), Vol. 2, p. 143.

⑧ cf. Ching-hsien Wang, "The Nature of Narrative in Tang Poetry," in *The Vitality of the Lyrical Voice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 227.

simple versification and simple diction sufficient, and therefore excellent, the *Yuefu* poetry has much less intensity of thought and feeling than the lyric poetry. By relating events, the poem moves fast through many stanzas; and in the interest of keeping the story clear, the stanzas are usually constructed in regularly alternating verse rhymes. Everything is designed to get on with the story. While the Han poets restricted themselves to relating events, Bo often manages to bring out the significance that transcends the individual events. Due to their conscious attempts to liberate poetry from the rigid and confining rules of prosody practiced by most of their contemporaries, Bo and Yuan deliberately exploit the popular meters of the folk lyrics and the common idioms of their own day to elevate the folk songs of the populace to the level of respectable literature. With trained and growing skill the poets elaborated their poems to embrace a wider scene, more complicated events, involving more than one set of agents. The resultant form was the long narrative poems like Bo's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" (*Changhenge*) or Yuan's "Lianchang Palace" (*Lianchanggong ci*).

Bo and Yuan both have a strong sense of "returning to antiquity" (*fugu* 復古) in their discussion of the function and purpose of poetry. Their treatment of the "New *Yuefu*" form, especially that of Bo Juyi, is inherited from the *Shijing*, as Bo declares in his "Preface to the New *Yuefu*:"

In these poems while the length and number of the lines are not scheduled, meaning is paramount and diction is secondary. The

opening line of each poem states its subject, the final lines bring home its import. This is in fact the principle of the Shijing.^⑨

Emphasizing the priority of meaning over form in poetry, Bo's and Yuan's New *Yuefu* contains strong and explicit thematic consciousness. Following the poetic tradition of *Shijing*, the so-called "statement and explanation of the subject" 標其目 indicate that the expression of meaning in poetry should "satirize and allegorize" 諷喻 current events, directly encountering social reality with an artistic capacity by way of straight description and epigrammatic appraisal. While inspired by the preceding Tang poets' experiment, such as Du Fu's "The War Chariot" (*Bingju xing*), Bo and Yuan tend to emphasize a more plain and straightforward technique of expression than Du Fu who was famous for formulating new phonic pattern, diction, and structure. Lucid statement of import as it is, the so-called "Preface" to the *Shijing*, however, is appended through the interpretation and judgement of the *Shijing* scholars of later generations.^⑩ Without the "Preface," the distinction between the narrative and the allegorical parts in the original *Shijing* poems indeed is quite ambiguous.

What Bo declares in his general preface to "New *Yuefu*" indeed recapitulates his new techniques in poetry writing:

⑨ See Bo Juyi, p. 52.

⑩ About the author of the "Preface" to *Shijing*, cf. Qian Mu, "Du *Shijing*" in *Zhongguo xueshu sixiangshi luncong* (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 134-136. See also Pei Puxian, "*Shijing jige jiben wenti de jianshu*" in *Shijing yandu zhidao* (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1977), pp. 22-27.

In these poems, I chose to make my words plain, straightforward, and to the point so that the reader would understand them easily and the listener would be warned by their content. My narration is honest so that those who adopt it can transmit the truth. With smooth and flowing style, these poems can be circulated with music and song. ①

The phrase “*zhi er jing*” (質而徑, plain and straightforward) indicates that the expression of the language itself should avoid metaphorical technique; and “*zhi er qie*” (直而切, direct and to the point) designates that the relationship between language and theme should not be circuitous. By “*he er shi*” (覈而實, honest and close to the fact), Bo maintains that poetry’s rhetorical characteristics should not lie in exaggerated, emotional agitation, while “*shun er si*” (順而肆, smooth and easy) refers to the harmony of the sound and the smoothness of the rhythm which make the poem easily set to music. A declaration of the requirements of form, language, style and content of the New *Yuefu*, the above statement represents Yuan-Bo school’s aesthetic view of poetry. On the one hand, they emphasize truthful content, unadorned style and flowing continuity in poetry writing. On the other hand, while the New *Yuefu* is centered on an event, the event is not always presented through the objective delineation of any plot. Rather than undertaking the sequential unfolding of a tale in detail, following the principle of “*zhi er qie*” (direct and to the point), Bo and Yuan select

① See Bo Juyi, juan 3, p. 52.

and generalize the most momentous aspect of the event, exhausting all its artistic possibilities. In order to highlight the subject, they employ the technique of "one title for one event" 一題詠一事, so that the import of the poem will be the focus of composition.^⑫ Since the poem is concentrated on the import, its meaning is fully elaborated and it can deeply move the reader. By the highlighting of subject and theme, the poets are devoted to the concrete, vivid and minute delineation of the event, thus intensifying the dramatic effect of immediacy and authenticity.

This same feature extends to Bo's and Yuan's "narrative poetry," a similarity which represents the main characteristics and aim of their poetic effort. The real significance and power of Bo Juyi and Yuan Zhen in Chinese literary history rests upon their creation of the narrative technique of the *Shi* style. Bo's basic literary views—"plain and straightforward," "direct and to the point", "honest and close to the fact," and "easy and smooth"—point out the progress made in descriptive technique. In "plain and straightforward" ("*zhi er jing*") delineation, the use of allusions must primarily be avoided. In Chinese poetry, whether allusions are used to reveal a similarity or a contrast,^⑬ they can effectively and economically embody certain feelings and situations, evoke various association and extend the terms of reference

^⑫ cf. Chen Yinke, *Yuan Bo shi jianzhenggao* (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1982), p. 122-123.

^⑬ See Yu-kung Kao and Tsu-lin Mei, "Meaning, Metaphor and Allusion in Tang Poetry," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. 38.2 (Dec., 1978), p. 328.

of the poem. Consequently, it is the “universal or archetypal aspect of history,” not “the concrete details” that engages the reader’s attention.^⑭ When pursuing the poetry’s narrative potential, Bo and Yuan wished to create “stimulating” rather than “exaggerated” emotional influence through direct inspiration. Besides “using allusion,” they thought that the allegorical mode of the *Chuci* must also be avoided. As an essential mode for blending the narrative and the lyrical, “direct description” itself is aimed at the “stimulating” function. The “miunteness,” which makes Bo’s and Yuan’s poetry effectively march off to “narrativity,” therefore becomes the new criterion for depiction. This dwelling on each action gives even the most familiar events—journeying, battle, love, dying—a new form. The descriptive technique arrests one movement of history while another flows on. Such descriptive expansions are just what give the long *Yuefu* poem its vitality. It is this special use of sensuous images and enumerated procedures, rather than the fact that there are genuine contemporary courses of action, that produces the effect of a fabric, instead of a thread, of narrative.

II. The Emergence of Story Interest: A New Emphasis on Description and Plot in Narrative Poetry

What a poet sets out to create, rather than what he feels or wants to tell us, determines all his practices, and leads to the establishment of literary forms like the lyric, the story, the novel. Taking a stand

^⑭ *ibid.*, p. 333.

of "storytelling" in their poetic expression, Bo Juyi and Yuan Zhen focus on direct and minute description of events in their *Yuefu* poems without unbosoming themselves as most other poets do in Chinese lyric poetry. As we know, the motif of a lyric is usually nothing more than a thought, a vision, a mood, an acrid emotion, which does not offer a very powerful framework for the creation of a piece of narrative. The lyric poet employs every quality of language because he has neither plot nor fictitious characters nor, usually, any intellectual argument to give his poem continuity. The imaginative space that a lyric creates is the occurrence of a living thought, the sweep of an emotion, the intense experience of a mood. As a genuine piece of "subjective history," a lyric is usually a single episode. Therefore, a direct declaration and explanation of the poet's intent and emotional focus in lyric poetry was regarded as "too explicit and too concrete." It was assumed such "statement of purpose" would spoil the author's intention of allowing the readers to "probe gradually" the subtlety of his feelings and the depth of his intent. Contrary to this traditional attitude, Yuan and Bo employed the technique of "stating the subject and import" in their *Yuefu Poems*. As Chen Hong points out in his "Story of Everlasting Sorrow," Bo's motivation and his intention for composing the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" ("*Changhenge*") was not only "to express his feelings for the event," but also "to punish the bewitching female and obstruct the causes of chaos, setting an example for posterity."¹⁵

¹⁵ See Bo Juyi, p. 238.

However, even though Yuan and Bo did write with a solemn edifying message, so that “those who have knowledge of this will not do the same; and those who behaved in the same way will not be deluded,”^⑩ their narrative-dramatic interest has already obscured their serious intent. While in appearance Bo’s and Yuan’s long *Yuefu* poems state their theme in all earnest, in terms of poetry’s length and descriptive techniques, they developed divergently from the short New *Yuefu*.

The primal origin of Tang narrative poetry can be traced back to the “comprehensive and forthright” style of the *Shijing*: characterized by the technique of *Fu* 賦 (direct description) in contrast to *Bi* 比 (comparison) or *Xing* 興 (stimulation). In the Chinese poetic tradition, before the Tang dynasty, the techniques of *Bi*, *Xing* and *Fu* usually were mostly employed alternately in a poem. All three technical principles can be presented in a single composition, and commentators occasionally ascribe to their appearance a single poem.^⑪ Beginning with the commentary of Mao Heng (Second century B. C.), critics applied the terminology from the Six Principles to categorize the poems of the *Shijing* for analysis, and applied the term *Fu* to poems which bore no generic resemblance to poems of the *Fu* genre. While the term *Fu* was employed in *Shijing* scholarship ever since the “Great Preface” 詩大序 was formulated, it was initially used as an arbiter of poetic

^⑩ See Yuan Zhen, p. 677.

^⑪ Mao no. 35, “*Gu feng*,” is regarded as representing all three principles in action. See Zhu Xi, *Shijizhuan*, (rpt. Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua Shuju, 1969), pp. 21-22.

technique to describe the rhetorical style of *Shijing* poems in Zhu Xi's (1130–1200) *Shijizhuan*.^⑱ In his classification of poems according to the varieties of technique, Zhu Xi follows the view of Kong Yingda (574–678). While Kong Yingda comments on particular phrases or lines which he regards as characteristic of certain given techniques, Zhu Xi assumes that the characteristics of a particular passage apply to the poem as a whole. Treating the term *Fu* in a broader sense in *Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龍, Liu Xie (ca. 465–523) not only defines *Fu* as a technique “descriptive of things and expressive of intent,” (“*tiwu xiezhi*” 體物寫志)^⑲ but also discusses the development of *Fu* as a literary genre traditionally rooted in the art of description. Since in Chinese critical terminology the complex, elaborate, descriptive compositions in the *Fu* genre may be linked by the “Principle of *Fu*” of *Shijing*, I suggest the translation of “direct description” for the term *Fu*.^⑳ Prose is of course an appropriate form for direct description.

⑱ *ibid.* pp. 3–4.

⑲ See Liu Xie, *Wenxin diaolong zhu*, ed. & annotated by Fan Wenlan (Taipei: Weiyi shuye zhongxin, 1975), “*Quan Fu*,” p. 134.

⑳ In modern studies of the term *Fu*, most definitions and translations reflect the confusion between the principle and the genre. James Legge, for instance, in his translations of the poems of the *Shijing* and Zhu Xi's commentaries, uses the term “narrative” for the principle *Fu*. cf. James Legge, *The Shi King*, “Prolegomena,” p. 35. In “The *Shih King*,” Chen Shih-hsiang suggests the term “narrations.” See Chen Shi-hsiang, “The *Shijing*” in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, Cyril Birch ed. (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1974), p. 17. Chen's intention is to affirm Kong Yingda's observation that, of the “Six Principles,” *Fu* is a term of “poetic usages” (*Shi zhi suo yong*), or “poetic techniques,” as opposed to the terms of “poetic corporality” (*Shi zhi cheng*

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And direct and intensified techniques for creating striking literary effects have already been developed in prose.

The *Fu* of the Han dynasty possessed its special features. As a literary genre, Han *Fu* draws upon the direct description of *Shijig* and the dynamic narrative of *Chuci* to develop a grandiose, erudite mood which expands on rhapsodic composition. This genre may utilize discourse, depiction, lamentation, or eulogization to fulfill the purpose of admonition inherent in the name *Fu*. While Bo Juyi and Yuan Zhen employ direct technique of description in their poetic writings, the *Fu* genre purports to "remonstrate," wherein "exaggeration and ornateness" become its tools of persuasion. The import of Bo's and Yuan's narrative poetry is to "satirize and allegorize," and the intention of their poetry must be implied in their writing, "to be honest and close to the fact" ("*he er shi*") so that their theory of composition becomes the new criterion for narrative poetry.

By emphasizing the descriptive mode of presentation, the imagistic *Xing* and the associative *Bi* become much harder to be interlaced with

xing), or "forms or subgenres." James Liu maintains that we should define the *Fu* "roughly as descriptions or expositions, usually lengthy and elaborate, in verse or in prose, on given subject." See James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 34. Yeh Chia-ying and Jan Walls translate the term *Fu* as "direct description:" "Description is the direct recounting of events and the depiction of objects through words." See Yeh Chia-ying & Jan Walls, "Theory, Standards and Practice of Criticizing Poetry in Zhong Hong's *Shi Pin*" in Ronald C. Miao, ed., *Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Chinese Material Center, Inc., 1978), pp. 43-80; p. 52.

the descriptive *Fu* in the progression of plot in Bo's and Yuan's long narrative poetry, wherein the length of the poem acquires unprecedented significance. Bo and Yuan advocate the free style of the *Gutishi* (ancient-style poetry) which has no regulation of the length and number of the lines. In comparison with the modern-style poetry, the ancient-style appears to be more inclined to narrativity. A long poem written in the ancient style is clearly provided with the contrivances necessary to develop a plot and with the other elements required of the narrative. The longer the poem is, the more it can give play to "minute description." Supported by an energetic force to complete the plot, it sometimes takes as its primary goal the display of a plenitude of images. Sometimes it revises the classical models to formulate a story in verse without surpassing its own artistic traits. Consequently, in addition to the first type of short "New *Yuefu*," Bo and Yuan are propelled to compose a second type of long narrative poems.

As soon as they pass from the intensive, small form of lyric to poetry of great compass, they encounter a new dominant element—narrative. This element is not unknown in short lyric verse, but it is fortuitous there. When narrative is treated as the central motif of a composition, as Sussane Langer says, "a new factor is introduced, which is *story interest*."^② This kind of *story interest* changes the entire form of thought which governs Yuan's and Bo's long narrative poems. In their narrative poetry, a course of "impersonal happenings," which

^② See Sussane Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 261.

is a strong framework for making of a "poetic illusion," tends to become the "plot" of the entire piece, affecting and dominating every other means of literary creation. A major organizing device, narrative is the structural basis on which most works are designed. The larger design of the long narrative poetry required stronger means of sustaining the illusion of events and keeping their forms and movements clear than the simple and static display of emotion, scenes and events which the folk *Yuefu* supplied. This brought the well-known art of description into a new and prominent role. The detailed descriptions are, in fact, powerful formal elements; they hold back the narrative and cause the events to appear spread out as in a third dimension, instead of hastening to a conclusion. The story, slowed and broadened by imagery and detail to allow its complex actions to intertwine, produced a new structural factor, the constant relations of characters to each other. It is in such human environments that actions naturally intersect, and events are woven together.

This may explain why Bo's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" and "Song of the Lute" ("*Pipa xing*") become objects for elaboration and initiation of various narrative and dramatic works in subsequent ages. What makes subsequent works of fiction and drama elaborating the same theme powerful and compelling to their audience is the romantic imagination implicit in these works. The reader's "moral consciousness" turns awakened to the real world only after his sentiments are diluted. In Bo's "Song" and Yuan's "*Huizhen shi*" ("Poems on Encountering an Immortal") 會真詩, the development of "dramaticism," the

dominant factor of the later narrative genre, becomes a crucial element hidden beneath the cloak of “the teaching of *Shijing*.”

III. A Definition of the Dramatic Elements

In Chinese literature, the differences between drama and poetry lie not only in their form of expression, but also in their literary content. This difference in content is not directly caused by the aforementioned formalistic difference, rather, by the historical development undergone by drama and poetry. Since Chinese poetry is mainly written to express the poet's subjective feelings, the poetic tradition is lyrical—whether or not the subject matter poeticized hews to the poet's own life experience. Although a few narrative ballads were composed during Northern and Southern dynasties (222–589), if only they were written in the traditional mode, the poems remained a lyrical vehicle for the poets. In Bo's and Yuan's narrative poetry, besides the first type of short “New *Yuefu*” which achieved the traditional purpose of “expressing one's intent” (*yanzhi* 言志), by the technique of direct description, the second type of long *Yuefu* poetry by Yuan and Bo deviated from the Chinese poetic tradition in new narrative expression. Narrative-dramatic interest called their attention from the hidden “thematic consciousness” to the concrete process of “narration” itself. What inspired this irresistible interest in the process of narration was indeed the intrinsic “dramaticism” within the narrative device, which primarily did not belong to the Chinese poetic tradition.

Yuan's and Bo's long Yuefu poems are dramatic in their sequential structure. They shift dramatically in time and space and in concrete situations. Their emotion springs from definite occasions, through which the play of thought and feeling develops rhythmically, rather than being expressed in abstract terms. The poet carefully controls his attitude to each situation, even those involving dramatic shifts, conflicts, and sharp reversals, never allowing the narration to become sentimental or monotonous. This tendency toward "dramaticism," which I will analyze in the following section, makes possible the combination of Chinese poetry and drama; the dramatization of poetry, and the poeticizing of drama.

A>. Dramatic Shift

A real narrative poem must contain a clear sequential line of time and space. In poems composed solely for the purpose of narration, this is a natural criterion in writing, explicit in certain earlier Chinese *Yuefu* ballads like "Southeast the Peacock Flies" ("*Kongque dongnan fei*" 孔雀東南飛) and "Song of Mulan" ("*Mulan ci*" 木蘭辭). However, in the Chinese lyric tradition, "narration" is merely assumed as a means rather than an end. A pure narrative poem therefore is regarded as "poetic" in form but not in its "literary interest." Once the literati began to write narrative poetry, their poems came to be interspersed with "lyrical," "sentimental" and "argumentative" elements. Thus Yuan's and Bo's imitated *Yuefu* poems with new titles and new imports became a new tool for expressing emotion in the Chinese poetic

tradition. However, among Bo's and Yuan's new experiments, especially in their long poems such as the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" ("*Changhenge*" 長恨歌) and "Lianchang Palace" ("*Lianchanggong ci*" 連昌宮詞), poetic lines are combined in accordance with the narrative-dramatic plot consequently leading to a dramatic shift in the time and space of their sequence of events. As an essential means of implanting a dramatic impression, the dramatic shift is often presented through a theatrical change of time and space, creating an abrupt switch of mood and atmosphere in some climactic moment.

According to the development of its plot, the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" may be divided into four parts,^② a division which is parallel to the four acts of a play. While the first two parts summarize historical events through the technique of realistic narration, the last two parts give full play to the poet's imagination to amplify the theme of love through a supernatural interpretation of life.

Part One (line 1-32) depicts the enraptured Emperor Ming Huang leading a merry life with his favorite consort, the enchanting Lady Yang. The opening lines of the poem set the dramatic scene and gain their effectiveness through their reliance on the contrasts of the hero and heroine. A Chinese Emperor searches endlessly for a woman of devastating beauty, beauty epitomized in a young girl reared in virginal seclusion in the depths of an inner chamber.

^② See Lin Wenyue, "'Changhenge' dui 'Changhenge zhuan' de yingxiang," in *Shanshui yu gudian* (Taipei: Chunwenxue chubanshe, 1976), pp. 246-247.

*A Chinese Emperor, craving beauty that might shake an empire,
Was on the throne, for many years, searching, never finding,
Till a daughter of the Yang clan, hardly even grown,
Bred in an inner chamber, with no one knowing her,
But with graces granted by heaven and not to be concealed,
At last one day was chosen for the imperial household.* ②

As the kernel of the whole poem, the first line hints at subsequent disaster, for the monarch was looking for one who could “overturn nations.” The poem then develops in dramatic intensity, depicting the brevity of nights consumed in love and the reluctance of the sovereign to rise in the early mornings to attend to court matters that affect the empire.

Part Two (lines 33–50) relates how the love was lost as a consequence of the An Lushan rebellion (755), and how sorrowful the Emperor became when forced to allow Lady Yang’s execution at Mawei-po. Perhaps the strongest dramatic effect in the whole poem lies in the contrast between Parts One and Two, in the abrupt shift from an elaborately sensuous style that builds up an atmosphere of cloying richness to one which catches the very cadences of the sound of drum in an urgent situation. The lines, “War drums, booming from Yuyang, shocked the whole earth/And broke the tunes of The Rainbow Garment Song,” ④ give an inkling of the “everlasting sorrow” which forms

② See Bo Juyi, juan 12., p.238. Translation taken from Cyril Birch ed., in *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p.266.

④ *ibid.*

the turning point between Part One and Part Two. "The Rainbow Garment Song" proceeds leisurely, providing poetic contrast to the rapidity with which the drums break the lingering sensuality engendered by the song. Through the contrast between leisurely music and stirring militant music, the author creates a dramatic and emotional transition to elicit an entirely different atmosphere and mood in Part Three.

In Part Three (lines 51-74) of his song, Bo describes the Emperor's melancholy, bereft in his grief for the late Lady Yang. The lines, "And when heaven and earth resumed their round and the dragon-car faced home, /The Emperor clung to the spot and would not turn away,"²⁵ depict the strong and abrupt shift in situation from Part Two to Part Three. After the Emperor returns to the palace, the temporal transition from spring to autumn is also implied in the antithetical lines: "Peach-trees and plum-trees blossomed, in the winds of spring; /Wutong-foilage fell to the ground, after autumn rains."²⁶ Later, the lines "With the distance between life and death year after year; /And yet no beloved spirit ever visited his dreams;"²⁷ lead us to break earthly confines and soar to the infinities in search of Lady Yang's spirit form in Part Four.

The final section of the poem (lines 76-120) introduces a Taoist who, at the order of the Emperor, searches for Lady Yang's spirit, visits her in a fairyland, and returns with halves of two keepsakes and secret pledges supposedly known to the Emperor and Lady Yang alone.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 239.

²⁷ *ibid.*

ending with the contrast between the finiteness of Heaven and Earth and the infinitude of the lovers' sorrow. To embody the lovers' spiritual contact and transcendence of mortal love, Bo Juyi immortalizes their love by transferring the sorrowful mood of Part Three into the fantastic airs of an immortal world.

But he failed, in either place, to find the one he looked for.

And then he heard accounts of an enchanted isle at sea,

Above, he searched the Green Void, below, the Yellow Spring;

A part of the intangible and incorporeal world.....²⁸

The dramaticism of this poem lies in the sharp contrast generated by the dramatic shift of the situations caused by the An Lushan rebellion. The first half and the second half of this poem deal with wholly different situations, displayed through the contrast of time and space. While the first half describes the felicity the lovers experienced, although "the nights of spring were short and the sun arose too soon,"²⁹ the second half depicts how the lonely Emperor "lengthened the lamp-wick to its end but still could never sleep."³⁰ In the first half of the poem, the lovers had numerous "spring nights warmly spent together in lotus curtains,"³¹ but after Lady Yang's death, the Emperor's "covers of kingfisher-blue felt lonelier and colder."³² In the mortal

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 238.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 239.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 238.

³² *ibid.*, p. 239.

world, Lady Yang is depicted as a matchless beauty who, “If but turned her eyes and smiled, there were cast a hundred spells”;^③ but in the immortal land, she became a lonesome fairy whose “jade countenance was sad-mournful, tears brim-flowing,” like a “lone peach blossom girdled by spring rain.”^④ The contrast between life and death, heaven and earth, and the separation of the tokens of love—the divided golden hairpin and the inlaid ornament case—not only heighten the dramatic effect but also manifest the very notion that life is transient and unpredictable. At the same time, beneath all these dramatized contrasts in appearance, is stressed the changeability of human life, and the power of love which may enable an individual to transcend his or her circumstances as defined by limitation of time and space, the boundary between life and death, and the distance between the mortal and the immortal.

Chen Hong, in his “Story of the Song of Everlasting Sorrow” (*Changhenge zhuan* 長恨歌傳) changes the dramatic shift into an objective and chronological transition which reveals the basic quality of Chen’s “Story”—a “historical biography” (*shizhuan* 史傳):

“Years flew by. Toward the end of the reign, Yang Guozhong, the elder brother of Guifei usurped the position of prime minister by dint of the Emperor’s favor. He played with his influence and led the Emperor’s favor the affairs of state, thus weakening the nation. Dissatisfaction arose among military men as well as civilians.

^③ *ibid.*, p. 238.

^④ *ibid.*, p. 239.

*General An Lushan, who hated Yang Guozhong, dispatched his troops to the capital with the demand to get rid of the “traitor.”*³⁵

In fact, Chen Hong’s insightful revelation, indicates the “Story’s” subordination to Bo’s “Song of Everlasting Sorrow:”

*Zhifu raised his wine cup to Letian (Bo Juyi) and said: “Those rare stories, if not polished by an unrivalled poet, will gradually die out, unknown to the world. Letian is a man skilled at poetry and full of affection. Why don’t you compose a poem to narrate the romance of Emperor Xuanzong and Lady Yang?” Letian therefore composed the poem “Song of Everlasting Sorrow.” …… After the poem was finished, Letian asked me to write a prose version of this episode.*³⁶

From the words “*zhuan yan*” 傳焉 (to write a prose version of the episode), we see why Chen Hong follows Bo’s poem line by line in his “Story of the Song of Everlasting Sorrow,” parallel to the “commentary” to the “text” in the study of Chinese Classics.

However, while thematically the “Song of Everlasting Sorrow” is about love, Chen Hong’s “Story” concerns moral teaching. Bo’s poem is not intended to admonish wanton government, but to lament the loss of love. Being a poem, it is selective in the formulation of plot, concentrated in its treatment of a universal theme, and original in its

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 236.

³⁶ See Bo Juyi, *juan 12*, pp. 235–238. See also Chen Hong, “*Changhenge zhuan*” in *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi*, ed. Wang Meng’ou (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1983), Vol. 1, p. 108.

overall design. This explains why the category to which Bo Juyi assigned the poem is “*ganshang*” 感傷 (sentimental) rather than “*fengyu*” 諷喻 (allegorical or satirical); and why Bo Juyi devoted himself more to the amplification of love than the chronological narration of history. While Chen Hong’s “Story” does not conceal the palace scandal of Lady Yang’s actually being Emperor Ming Huang’s (Xuanzong) daughter-in-law, Bo Juyi refrains from mentioning this scandal in his poem. The last two lines of Bo’s “Song”—“Earth endures, heaven endures; sometime both shall end, /While this unending sorrow goes on and on for ever,”^{②⑦}—demonstrate that Bo Juyi aims to emphasize the theme of love, and thus entrusts multi-faceted meaning to *qing* 情 (love). Conversely, true to the spirit of strict moral teaching in which only “reason” (*li* 理) is stressed, the ending lines of Chen Hong’s “Story” show that his work is meant to “punish the bewitching female, prevent the cause of chaos, and serve as a warning to posterity.”^{②⑧} Though Bo Juyi and Chen Hong adopt the same subject matter, the former, as a poet, takes the eternal love of human beings as his main theme and the rise and fall of the country as secondary, while the latter, following the principle of the historian, sternly remonstrates the indulgence of Emperor Xuanzong and Lady Yang in their personal love which finally led the country to chaos and disaster.

The strength of the “dramaticism” conveyed in Bo’s “Song” demonstrates itself in its influence on the dramatic works of subsequent

^{②⑦} *ibid.*, p. 239.

^{②⑧} *ibid.*, p. 238.

ages. One persuasive example is Hong Sheng's 洪昇 (1645–1704) *chuangi* play *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Changshengdian* 長生殿), whose main plot follows completely the explicit thematic line in Bo's poem. ③ Bo's and Yuan's narrative poetry initiated the exploration of the dramatic interest in a "romantic story."

This new form of "narrative poetry" demands a sufficiently "propelling" and "theatrical" story. In Chinese literature, both religious legends and historical accounts were the most available subject matter for narrative. Romantic love pursued by Tang literati would also become a predominant target of description, as shown in the Tang *chuangi* fiction and the *bianwen*. While Bo Juyi combines history and romance, Yuan Zhen depicts his own romance in the "Story of Yingying" and the "*Huizhen shi*" 會真詩. The fact that both the contents of their works became the dramatic depiction of romantic love manifests Tang audience's prevailing interest in such subject matter.

B>. Dramatic Conflict

A dramatic persona's inner feelings and thoughts, whether directly revealed or not, constitute the core of the reader's or audience's

③ In the preface to *The Palace of Eternal Life*, Hong Sheng stated that the composition of the play was mainly based on Bo's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow." About the further discussion of the association of the plot between these two works, see Zeng Yongyi ed., *Zhongguo gudian xiju xuanzhu* (Taipei: Guojia chubanshe, 1988), pp. 502–510. See also Xu Shuofang, "*Lun Changshengdian*" in his *Lun Tang Xianzu ji qita* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), pp. 313–317.

emotional engagement with the work of art. The audience clings to whatever is disclosed or slightly hinted at to establish a relationship with the dramatic situation as well as to participate in the dramatic conflict, which is the source of the tension and interest of a play. Drama depends for its effect on the elaboration of conflict. Drama deals powerfully with characters in conflict: problems come to a head at a particular time and conflicts occur in a particular place. And if the dramatist places us there, he can show us the final struggle with maximum immediacy and power. Conflict arises from a difference in matters of importance that are very subjective in nature, the clash of personalities, interests, ect. Conflict does not develop into drama unless the conflicting sides are both sufficiently strong in force and in determination so that actions between them become inevitable.

Tragedy portrays the clash between physical or mental forces or both; comedy, the conflict between personalities, between the sexes, or between the individual and society. As Allardyce Nicoll points out, "in tragedy the 'pity and rerror,' to use Aristotle's famous phrase, issue out of this conflict; in comedy the essence of the laughable is derived from the same source."⁴⁰ It is obvious that in tragedy there may be manifold varieties of the principle of conflict manifested not only in different dramas but even in one single play. Generally speaking, there are outward and inward conflicts: an outward conflict is what appeals most in the theater: and the inward conflict is what gives majesty and

⁴⁰ About the dramatic conflict, see Allardyce Nicoll M. A., *The, Theory of Drama* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), pp. 92-98.

distinction to comedy and tragedy. ④ An inner struggle moves alongside an outer conflict, then mingling together, and contributing to the essence of the tragedy.

Bo Juyi's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" portrays explicitly the development of the Emperor's and Lady Yang's emotions. The poem is dramatic because of the concrete situation portrayed and the conflicts in it. On the one hand, there is the surface conflict between the lovers and the complex political situation, which seizes our attention, but beyond that there is the conflict within the lovers' own minds, and the essence of the tragedy lies within the minds of the lovers themselves. This compression, this treatment of a bare conflict divested of all attendant circumstances, is itself a source of tension—the effect of "tightening up." It presents crucial events and demands in us a heightened attention and concern.

The first half of the "Song" focuses on the Emperor's special favor for Lady Yang, a necessary preparation for the description of deeper love in the second half of the poem. The intensity of the depiction of the Mawei event, in which the portrayal of Lady Yang's feelings serves only as a foil, lies in its bringing out the inner conflict within the Emperor. Thus, in the line, "complaisant and yielding, moth eyebrows died under the horses' hoofs" 宛轉蛾眉馬前死, ⑤ the author uses only two words "complaisant and yielding" (*wanzhuan* 宛轉) to

④ *ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

⑤ Bo Juyi, p. 238.

portray the painful and sorrowful Lady Yang at the moment of her death to foreshadow the climax of the Emperor's inner struggle and conflict. At the same time, by the lines, "The Emperor could not save her, he could only cover his face; / And later when he turned to look, blood and tears flowed as one"^④ 君王掩面救不得，廻看血淚相和流，the poet presents the Emperor's emotional fluctuation in material detail. Even as sovereign, he is powerless in saving his beloved. Like a tragic hero who confronts the unpredictable misfortune of his fate, the Emperor's inner affliction and struggle are expressed as "blood and tears" 血淚. The characterization of the Emperor emerges profoundly movingly through this unfolding of his heart-rending conflict.

Like an interlude in drama, lines 43-50 depict the Emperor's grief on his way to Shu, but these eight lines, which focus on "the Emperor's affliction night after night, morn after morn" also elaborate the Emperor's inmost conflict.

Yellow dust scattered drifting, wind mournful cold.

*...At the cleft of the Dagger-Tower Trail they crisscrossed through
a cloud-line*

Under Emei Mountain. The last few came.

Flags and banners lost their color in the fading sunlight...

But as water of Shu are always green and its mountains always blue,

So changeless was his majesty's love and deeper than the days.

He stared at the desolate moon from his temporary palace,

^④ *ibid.*

He heard bell-notes in the evening rain, cutting at his breast.

Dramatically, the scenic descriptions that “yellow dust scattered drifting, wind mournful cold, ” that “flags and banners lost their color in the fading sunlight, ” that “he stared at the desolate moon from his temporary palace, ” and that “he heard bell-notes in the evening rain, cutting at his breast, ”^④ function on two levels to support the action. They set the mood for dramatic conflict; and since they reflect the intents and emotions of the Emperor, they are tightly integrated into the dramatic actions as “psychological scenes” which necessarily imply inner actions. This widely used poetic device is called “scenery mirroring emotions” 以景寫情. The description of scenery here emphasizes the projective mind that delineates its own perceptions. Perception is portrayed as emotional, the camera remains self-referential, though in this narrative poem, the self refers to the Emperor rather than the poet himself. The poetic but objective description achieves dramatic effect because it never departs from the expression of the hero’s impassioned and interpretative subjectivity. The emotional conflict is strengthened by the suggestion that nature itself shares and reflects the Emperor’s bitterness and loneliness, thus providing an effective dramatic background for the situation.

The Emperor’s inner conflict, as we have seen, links the scenes in such a way as to create a continuous dramatic force. Part Three of the poem reaches the climax of his emotional conflict. The Emperor’s

④ *ibid.*, pp. 238-239.

feelings color the scenic description to the extent that self-referential qualities dominate the poem. From spring to winter, day and night, Lady Yang remains incessantly in the Emperor's thought. The "willow" refers to spring, the "lotus" to summer, the "fallen Wutong leaves" remind us of autumn, and the "morning frost" and the "cold kingfisher-blue covers" suggest winter, while the "flower blossoming" and the "leaves falling" refer to the "dragging night-hours" and the "day about to brighten" to the night. These descriptions set off and provide contrast to the Emperor's inner struggle and conflict. "The Lake Taiyi lotus and the Weiyang Palace willow"^{④⑤} originally constitute a picture of flourishing flowers and plants. But the next line—"the lotus was like her face and a willow-leaf her eyebrow"^{④⑥}—reminds the Emperor of his beloved and transforms the happy scene into a tragic one. The "lovebirds tiles" and the "kingfisher coverlet" which remind the Emperor of the past merry times become "cool" and "cold," implying the Emperor's loneliness.

The narration in Part Four is deftly interspersed with the depiction of Lady Yang's inner conflict: "Jade countenance sad-mournful, tears brim-flowing, / Lone peach blossom girdled by spring rain;"^{④⑦} so that the hero's and heroine's emotional contradictions reach the verge of collision. Spring should be full of life and vitality, but a spring of drizzling rain symbolizes sadness and desolation. Up to this

^{④⑤} *ibid.*, p. 239.

^{④⑥} *ibid.*

^{④⑦} *ibid.*

line, the word "spring" as referring to Lady Yang's beauty and blissful life of love has appeared seven times; the bath in early "spring," and the bitterly short "spring" nights warmly spent behind the lotus-curtain monopolized by the mistress of "spring." The depiction of the so-called "rain in spring" reflects Lady Yang's mixed feelings of grief and bliss, and displays her emotional contradictions. That the Taoist priest brought in the Emperor's message delighted her, that "the Emperor's form and voice had been strange to her ever since their parting," and "the happiness had ended at the Zhaoyang Palace," grieved her. ④ Though the Emperor's message brings some light to Lady Yang in the Fairy-Mountain Palace in which "moons and dawns had become long," it also foreshadows her impending suffering. Portraying the tragic beauty of Lady Yang as a fragile blossom "girdled by spring rain," the line adeptly fuses contrasting feelings, scenes, and qualities: vitality and desolation, spring and rain, joy and tears, union and separation. This not only substantiates the outward confrontation between Lady Yang's life and the situation, but also presents Lady Yang's inner conflict and struggle.

With the Taoist priest's visit to the fairy isle, the Emperor's and Lady Yang's complicated feelings begin to interweave with one another. Yet, rather than continuing to describe how the Taoist priest brought the keepakes and message back to the Emperor, the poet imposes a space for the reader's imagination to fill. The poem ends with the

④ *ibid.*

moment when the priest starts to return, a moment that also serves as the focal point for the lovers' emotional conflict. We can imagine mixed feelings that would arise in the Emperor's heart when he saw the halves of the keepsakes and heard the secret message, while in a drama, such a moment would become another climax to heighten the pathetic atmosphere of the story.

In his *Palace of Eternal Life*, for instance, Hong Sheng not only arranges the scene "The Message is Received" ("*Dexin*" 得信) to play up the hero's intermixed bliss and anguish, but also conceives the scene of "The Lovers' Reunion" ("*Chongyuan*" 重圓) so that the lovers are reunited and immortalized in heaven. Drama's characteristic is to give free rein to the depiction of a characters' inner feelings through his confrontation and struggle with other characters. The "Song's" ending with the couplet—"Earth endures, heaven endures; sometimes both shall end, /While this unending sorrow goes on and on forever;"^④—is indeed an interminable closure lingering on the lovers' everlasting grief. Instead of depicting the poet's subjective feelings, the poem dwells on the Emperor's and Lady Yang's fluctuation of emotions. The joy and grief, love and regret in the depth of the lovers' feelings, and the emotional conflict caused by the change of the objective situation are thus vividly presented to the reader.

As a royal lover in Chinese literature known for his passion, Emperor Ming Huang is not alone in his emotional suffering. Bo Juyi

^④ *ibid.*

also wrote a *Yuefu* poem "Lady Li" (*Li furen* 李夫人) to explore the romantic love Emperor Wu of Han felt for his Lady Li. Though the poem was apparently composed not to glorify love but to warn the Emperor about the peril of letting his beloved monopolize his thoughts after her death, when Bo tells of the passion of Emperor Wu of Han for his Lady Li and of the sovereign's efforts to communicate with her spirit, he employs a dramatic mode of presentation to strengthen the dramatic appeal of their romantic love. According to Chen Yinke, this amplification of the romantic and supernatural plot of the "Song" is undoubtedly inspired by, and even transformed from the love story of Emperor Wu and Lady Li. ⑤ The dramaticism of the poem lies in its vivid description and elaboration of Emperor Wu's undying love for Lady Li, whose spirit, though made to descend and "led by the fragrant smoke to the incense-burning place" in an instant, went "back to annihilation without a trace" ⑥ The description of the sovereign's anguish caused by the death of his beloved, and hence their eternal separation, is reminiscent of the emotional suffering of Emperor Ming Huang in the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow."

*When her spirit didn't come His Lord's heart was distressed,
And even when it came he likewise felt low.
Against the lamp light, curtain-separated he could not converse.*

⑤ See Chen Yinke, p. 262.

⑥ See Bo Juyi, juan 4., p. 83., Translation taken from Howard S. Levy, trans., *Translations from Po Chu-I's Collected Works* (New York: Patagon Book Reprint Corp., 1971), Vol. 1, p. 141.

*Of what avail for it to come but then go?
 Broken hearted was not the Emperor Wu of Han alone.
 From then to now they're all like this.
 Haven't you heard how the Prince of Mu three days wept before
 Jade fold Terrace, grieving for Sumptuous Concubine?
 And didn't you see the handful of tears at the Peaceful Tombs,
 Remembering Consort Yang on the Mawei Road?
 Even though girlish elegance and lovely natures become dust-converted,
 The remorse is prolonged in a period without end. ⑤②*

By associating Emperor Wu's affliction with that of Prince of Mu, who was said to have wept three days for a deceased consort, and with that of Emperor Ming Huang who incessantly yearned for his beloved Lady Yang after her death, Bo Juyi has offered us boundless imaginary space to confirm the significance of *qing* (love) in human life. As he elaborated in the ending lines:

*Men aren't made of wood and stone, all of them have feelings.
 Better it is not to encounter city-overturning beauties. ⑤③*

C>. Dramatic Action

Aristotle once stated that: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action." This statement is the root-proposition of his *Poetics*. ⑤④ In imitating

⑤② *ibid.*

⑤③ *ibid.*

⑤④ See Aristotle, trans. Richard Janko., *Poetics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), p. 7.

action, therefore, drama itself becomes the elaboration of an activity, and the activity becomes the plot. In drama, "action" contains a great deal more than physical movement. Action can be used to describe both a single action by a particular figure in a particular situation and the overall action of the whole text. In order to resolve this ambiguity we shall restrict the term "action" to the first interpretation and define the second, in which a number of actions are linked together, as an "action sequence."

Poetry can deal directly with an inward situation; drama requires a more perceptible kind of movement. The dramatist tends to break down abstract generalization into tangible individual experiences. A special poetic mode creating the primary illusion of poetry, drama makes its own basic abstraction, which gives it a way of its own in making the semblance of history. Instead of presenting the finished realities, or "events" like other narrative genres, drama presents the "poetic illusion" through immediate, visible responses of human beings, making its "semblance of life." As Sussane Langer says, drama's basic abstraction is the action, which "springs from the past, and is directed toward the future."⁶⁵ However, in the general sense engaged, all visible or invisible "reactions" are acts; so any illusion of physical or mental activity is here called an "act." and "the total structure of acts is a virtual history in the mode of dramatic

⁶⁵ See Sussane K. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, p. 306.

action.”^{⑤⑥}

In Yuan Zhen's long narrative poem "Lianchang Palace,"^{⑤⑦} the poet conveys a didactic and social message through a sequence of actions, in which Lianchang Palace is singled out as a focus of action and a point of departure. The palace is defined specifically, a backdrop of historical geography on which Yuan Zhen allows the action to unfold. The poet-observer appears to pass in front of Lianchang Palace on a late spring day, when he meets an old peasant who is a native of the area, a survivor of the Tianbao era (742-755) more than half a century before. An eyewitness to the vicissitudes of time, the old man-narrator, acting as the poet's mouthpiece, provides firsthand information on what took place at the palace. The image of the palace itself functions as a symbol of the dynasty, before and after the An Lushan Rebellion. Unlike the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" which enters into the love theme between the tragic pair, in "Lianchang Palace" the royal couple is introduced to serve only a moral purpose—thus achieving a temporal contrast between the glorious past of the Tianbao period and the deplorable state of affairs of the post rebellion era. While both poems pertain to the same incident, the historical scope within which Bo Juyi's imagination and erudition operate is

^{⑤⑥} *ibid.*, p. 307.

^{⑤⑦} Lianchang Palace was built in 658, approximately seventy-six li west of the eastern capital, Luoyang. It was one of several temporary palaces on the route between the two capitals of Luoyang and Chang'an that were used for the comfort and convenience of the Emperors when they made excursions from one capital to another. See Yuan Zhen, *juan 24*, pp. 270-274.

only a framework to study love, as opposed to the desolate circumstances which Yuan Zhen describes as the aftermath of rebellion. Without beforehand giving any delineation of the peasant or setting, the peasant-narrator's personality and image are gradually disclosed as the plot develops. Since narrative becomes a major organizing device in narrative poetry; personal address, for example, which is usually a rhetorical device in lyric writing, becomes an action in the story, as one fictitious person addresses himself to another. Imagery, which is often the chief substance of a lyric poem, is no longer paramount in narrative poetry; it has to serve the needs of the action. The poem "Lianchang Palace" is dramatic because it also grows out of a special tangible occasion, and it is written in the form of dialogue between the poet and the old man, presenting a group of public figures in a series of actions.

Like drama, the history of the prosperity and decline of Lianchang Palace is "performed" or "shown," through a series of "outward actions," occurring from past to present. Once the past glory "fades out", the present decline immediately "fades in." The description of the present is often interspersed with "flashbacks," with which the poet concurrently presents both present and past time. When we read the "Lianchang Palace," we seem to see a "performance" of a historical drama on the rise and fall of the Tianbao period. The poem contains no single plot. It is interwoven with a variety of historical episodes, both long past and present, and a series of emotional, pathetic descriptions of current reality. Alternating with a depiction of the scenery,

the action develops and moves forward, though moving forward, not placidly, but with strain and tension. The action is not only a meaningful action; it has the tensions of active conflict within it. The conflict arises from the sharp contrast between the glorious past and the present desolation on all sides, and is presented through a group of characters and a series of actions. Rather than merely elaborating the grief for the decline of the past in poetic expression, the poet concretizes the sharp contrast in the progression of dramatic actions, which present to us a vivacious historical "flashback" and make us "see," not simply "feel," the tangible characters acting out the conflict.

Most importantly, in the tangible, theatrical presentation of the historical past, we tend to shift from the poet's own unequivocal "message" stated by the poet in the role of historian or moralist, to the overall "meaning" of the events as presented. When the author dramatizes a generalization about the Tianbao period, the meaning tends to shift from the "say-so" of the author as an expert or authority to the meaning of the dramatic structure. Although Yuan Zhen believes that the edifying message, not the poetic sentiments, constitutes the soul and breath of poetry, he speaks not directly but circuitously. He tries not to convince us through logic or his own authority, but offers us a group of events whose meaning we apprehend imaginatively. He selects and arranges the actions and the other materials in which we find significance. When the arrangement and selection are done with sufficient skill and insight, what we see in them will presumably be very close to his artistic apprehension. While we interpret the structure

of actions that constitute the poem, we also participate in them and emotionally respond to them. Thus, the poem accomplishes its dramaticism, as F. O. Matthiessen says, because it has the power "to communicate a sense of real life, a sense of the immediate present—that is, of the full quality of a moment as it is actually felt to consist."⁵⁸ That we can enter imaginatively into the poem immediately accounts for its superior immediacy and power.

In depicting the "prosperity" of the Liangchang Palace, the poet employs a vivid device to demonstrate the different and distinct mien and expressions of the famous public figures of the Tianbao era. We have the scene of the royal couple leaning close to each other in the resplendent and magnificent tower, which illustrates their wonderful old times together:

*The Grand Emperor was in Wangxian Hall,
Taizhen leaned against the railing by his side.
Above the hall and in front, whirled jade and pearls,
Sparkling, reflecting heaven and earth.*⁵⁹

Then to elucidate how the Emperor and Lady Yang enjoy themselves with music and other amusements in Liangchang Palace, the poet presents a progression of dramatic actions which constitute spectacles of remarkable musical performance:

⁵⁸ See F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935), p. 66.

⁵⁹ See Yuan Zhen, p. 270. Translation taken from Angela Jung Palandri, *Yuan Zhen* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 73.

*At midnight when the moon was high, string music was heard
upstairs—*

Master He's pipa made a stir in the hall.

The Eunuch Gao called out the order to find Niannu,

Who was elsewhere entertaining her guests in private.

Soon she was found and urged to hurry;

By special edict, the street were lit with candles.

A scene of spring loveliness, she lay amid red silk;

Tidying her cloud-like hair, she hurriedly dressed.

When she sang her voice soared to the ninth heaven,

Followed by the treble of Prince Pin's flute.

The twanging music of Liangzhou filled palace,

The deeper tunes of Qiuci followed along.

Outside the palace wall, holding his flute,

Li Mo stole several new melodies he overheard. ⑥

Each line in the above passage can be treated as an “action.” The dynamism of its lucid, flowing style generates and sustains the progress of the poem. The exhibition of these actions resembles a series of shots in a movie, as the poet seizes on the very moment of these musicians’ marvelous performance of their specialties. When he describes that Master He “made a stir in the hall” 定場屋, the poet dramatizes the Master’s identity, skill, and status in the palace concert. The remarkable performance of Niannu and Prince Pin is also ani-

⑥ *ibid.*

matedly portrayed through the lines, "When she sang her voice soared to the ninth heaven, /followed by the treble of Prince Pin's flute"⁶¹
 飛上九天歌一聲，二十五郎吹管逐。

If the depiction of the prosperity of Lianchang Palace is focused on the characters, then the portrayal of its decline is concentrated on the scenery. In rendering the scenery, Yuan Zhen does center on the combination of the active and the motionless. The scenery thus becomes not merely static, but also contains human activity. While the desolate scenery is presented, the past activities of music and dance, and traces of the imperial house's unbridle luxury in the past still emerge distinctly before one's eyes, forming a sharp contrast to the current desolation:

*Thorns and brambles thickly clogged the imperial pond,
 Proud foxes and doltish hares capered about among the trees;
 The dance pavilion had collapsed, its foundation still there;
 The ornamented windows were dim, but the screens still green;
 Dust covered the old filigree on painted wall;
 Crows had pecked the wind chimes, scattering pearls and jade.
 The Grand Emperor enjoyed terraced flowers,
 His royal couch still lay aslant above the garden steps.
 Snakes emerged from the swallows' nests and coiled beams;
 Mushrooms grew out of the altar in the central hall. ⑥2*

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 271.

In an exuberant yet succinct presentation of plot, Yuan Zhen's alternation of action-advancing elements with the display of picturesque and emotional moments enriches the texture of the poem. But the scenery is depicted with a sense of strain, which arises from the craving for the glorious past and the regret for its decline, leading to an emotional climax.

In the description of Duanzheng Tower, Lady Yang's attractive figure unanticipatedly appears, taking us to the past. However, after this short "flashback," the camera-eye immediately shifts to the present, altering the focus from the slightly moving curtain to the coral hooks:

Adjoining the royal bedchamber was Duanzheng Tower

Where Taizhen once washed and combed her hair.

In the early dawn the curtains which cast dark shadows—

Even now, are hung by coral hooks, upside down. ⑥③

While we linger on the illusion of this beautiful figure projected indistinctly behind the curtain in the twilight, the forlorn and bleak scene of the present Lianchang Palace awakens us from our imaginings. In order to achieve its dramatic effect with immediacy and grievous power, the old man's sorrowful sigh and tears are interjected into the poem. The once splendid Palace has ironically become a fox's nest:

Pointing out these things to others, I could not but grieve,

My tears continued to fall long after I left the palace.

Since then the palace gate has been closed once more,

⑥③ *ibid.*

Night after night foxes enter the gate and towers. ④

By responding to the poet's question, the old man then becomes the poet's mouth-piece voicing Yuan Zhen's own antimilitary attitudes and questioning the government's responsibility in regard to the causes of war and peace.

*The Kaiyuan period closed with the death of Yao and Song,
Gradually, the imperial consort had her way at court.
Into the palace, she brought An Lushan as her "adopted son;"
The front of Madam Guo's palace was busier than a marketplace.
I have forgotten the names of those powerful ministers
But vaguely remember they were Yang and Li
Who caused turmoil in government that shook the four seas—
For fifty years the nation has groaned from its wounds.
Our present Emperor is wise and the ministers have foresight,
No sooner came the imperial order than Wu and Shu surrendered;
Now government troops have captured Huaixi from the rebels;
When those rebels are caught the world will be at peace.* ⑤

The criticism, however, is veiled, for the poem is set in the historical past, allowing the poet to integrate into the dramatic actions.

D>. Dramatic Voice and Objectivity

While one of the features of lyric poetry is that the point of the poet and that of the speaker of the poem are meant to be the same,

④ *ibid.*

⑤ *ibid.*, pp. 271-272.

there can be no such assumption in the narrative poetry. According to the Chinese critical conventions in lyric poetry, personal voice is conveyed to the reader by an implicit point of view which is meant to be identified, ultimately, with the poet. But in narrative poetry, the point or points of view are made explicit. When a poet decides to adopt an objective narrative-dramatic mode of presentation in his poem, he has to allow not only one persona to be the dramatic focus of the poem but also must reveal and adopt this persona's point of view. Thus, the poet establishes in the poem a public emotive center which focuses the reader's emotional identification.

In the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow," by using a "narrative-dramatic" mode of presentation in the poem, Bo Juyi gives the impression of being restrained and objective. He does not use any device to intrude into and augment the reader's sympathy; he simply lets the pathetic text speak for itself. Thus, he achieves the quality of objectivity which the narrative-dramatic form offers. He does not "play-up" pathos by choosing sensitive personae or design to catch the reader on his soft side. Such a poet therefore belongs to tradition of what Wang Guowei calls an "objective poet" (*keguan shiren* 客觀詩人) who, as a counterpart to the "subjective poet" (*zhuguan shiren* 主觀詩人), depicts the emotion of his hero and heroine through an objective dramatic voice rather than a lyrical one. ⑥

⑥ See Wang Guowei, *Renjian cihua xinzhu*, Teng Huixian ed., (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1981), p. 94. See also Adele Austin Rickett, *Wang Kuo-wei's Jen-chien Tz'u-hua* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University press, 1974), p. 42.

Wang's theory of the "objective poet" also reminds us of T. S. Eliot's "impersonal" theory of poetry. According to Eliot, the creative mind of the poet "may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates."⁶⁷ Eliot's suggestion that a poem "has its own life" acknowledges its resistance to direct control by the poet. So do Eliot's reiterations that all poetry, even a lyric from the Greek anthology, is *dramatic*.⁶⁸ In Eliot's opinion, one simple way of making personal experience impersonal is that of treating a lyrical theme in a more or less "dramatic" way. Another is the use of "objective correlatives: "

*The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative; "in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external fact, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.*⁶⁹

These are all aspects of a dramatic presentation as distinguished from personal expression of the poet. The distinction is crucial, as William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks point out, "once we have dissociated the lyric from the personality of the poet, even the tiniest lyric reveals

⁶⁷ See T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1964), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁸ See T. S. Eliot, "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" in *Selected Essays*, p. 38.

⁶⁹ T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," in *Selected Essays*, pp. 124-125.

itself as *drama*. ”^⑩

The original experiences which Eliot drew upon may either be the chance impressions of life, or carefully sought-for and selected events. The effort of objectification must begin with the choice of subject matter if the reader is to find meaning in the result. The idea or emotion is made concrete, but in another context other than that of the poet's original experience. For instance, the theme of love in the “Song of Everlasting Sorrow” is presented through the narrator's objective point of view. The poet's personality has no relation with the narrator. The Emperor, Lady Yang, the bath, An Lushan rebellion, Mawei event, willow, lotus, rain, the moon, the necromancer, the fairy mountain, the inlaid box and the golden hairpin—none of these objects, images, and activities in the poem are associated with the poet's personal emotion. By choosing subjects apart from his immediate experience the poet can concentrate, not on his own feelings, but entirely on the creation of his poem. Thus everything he has to say about a certain kind of lament for the loss of love or longing for eternal love can be articulated in this objectified transmuted form. The objective, dramatic presentation makes the poet avoid his own personality and sentiments, which are only demonstrated in his choice and interpretation of the subject matter. Such choice and interpretation represent the poet's exploration of the theme and the focus of his idea. And so, in like fashion, Bo Juyi can find through the thoughts

^⑩ See William K. Wimsatt, JR. & Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 675.

of hero and heroine an expression of his most propelling, recurrent themes: the vanity of power, wealth, and love, and regret over the loss of love. Following the objective presentation of the whole story, we also enter into the poet's control over his statement, his choice of the mode of presentation. In this sense, the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" is dramatic because it is selective in the formulation of the plot, concentrated in its treatment of an eternal theme, and objective throughout its overall presentation in voice and its narrative-dramatic mode. When we read the poem, it presents us with "a set of objects, a situation, or a chain of events," which formulate a particular emotion—the lament over love's loss. When the historical, external reality is given, "the emotion is immediately evoked." These objects, situation, or events are objective and can be presented dramatically. Since the emotion is generated by them, and in so far as it is controlled by the selection and rearrangement of these objectified elements, in Eliot's terminology, they may fairly be called the "correlatives" of the emotion.

In the "Lianchang Palace," Yuan Zhen establishes himself as a passive listener-recorder who sets the stage for the peasant to begin his story with a brief description of the neglected palace grounds, and only once does he intrude before the conclusion of the poem. Yuan Zhen's creation of the old peasant as a fictional narrator emerges from his identification with the people, and universalizes the experience, amplifying narrative credibility, and creating an equilibrium of subjective and objective voices in dramatic interaction. Even within the old man's subjective voice yet another degree of objectivity

is maintained as he recounts the history of the prosperity and decline of the palace. As Yuan Zhen maintains complete objectivity in listening to the tale, he has the fictional old man assume a subjective voice to narrate the events he witnessed occurring in the Lianchang Palace and its vicinity. By employing a dramatic voice which was more objective, Yuan Zhen effectively controlled his personal emotions, deftly selecting and rearranging the objectified subject matter.

E>. The Rhythm of Dramatic Action

Prose has its rhythms, but poetry requires language used most rhythmically, for even if there are not a fixed prosody and stanzas, there are lines—units at once aural, visual, and conceptual. Here “rhythm” refers not to vocal expression when reciting poetry, but to the expression of the “tension and ease” which is formed by the intensification and relaxation of the dramatic tension in the progression of the dramatic plot of the whole poem. In Bo’s and Yuan’s long narrative poems, climactic points relate to each other. After each climax there is a relaxation of strain which creates an alternation of moods, or a contrast in mood. Beneath the surface of the narration, the poem moves in an alternating rhythm of heightening and decreasing tension, moving successively through various climaxes. This pattern can be further amplified through the mixture of joyous and sorrowful atmospheres. The poet alternates these moods not only for variety but also to support his basic pattern of relaxing the tension through a light passage after a particularly heavy one, and vice versa. In drama, that which

most affects the rhythm of a play is the “tempo,” the pace or speed at which “dramatic impressions follow one another in a related sequence.”^⑦ Tempo is a quality every dramatist is anxious to command, because it affects greatly “the rhythm of his play and enhances its effect.” When a dramatist orchestrates action in a certain scene, his sense of the rhythm may be his deepest motive for adopting a particular structural arrangement. Every play moves in a pace of some sort. But once a rhythm is felt, then a powerful source of feeling can be invoked. Because poetry, unlike drama, cannot utilize an actor’s concrete performance or dialogue to inspire or stimulate one’s feelings to a climax, a poet must strive to create the effect of “rhythm” in his poetry to produce dramatic climax. Bo Juyi’s and Yuan Zhen’s proposition about the “New Yuefu” that poetry style should be “smooth and flowing” points to the importance of “cadence” in the poetic expression, an element indispensable to poetic musicality.

In order to make a poem more rhythmic, melodious and expressive, long narrative poetry such as the “Song of Everlasting Sorrow” are often written using a technique called, “transferring rhyme” 轉韻. This makes poetic lines connect naturally without being monotonous. As an Ancient Style Seven-Character line poem 七言古體詩 with one hundred and twenty lines, the “Song of Everlasting Sorrow” uses thirty one rhymes. To provide a variety of rhythm, the “Song” not only contains the “alternation of the level rhyme and oblique rhyme” 平仄遞用: even

⑦ About “tempo,” cf. J. L. Styan, *The Elements of Drama*, Rpt. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 141-162.

within each rhyme, the tone at the end of every unrhymed line is coordinated with the tone of the rhyming word through an interchange of level and oblique tones. In the lines ending in a level rhyme, the end of the third, fifth and seventh line will conclude with an oblique tone. In obliquely rhyming lines, unrhymed lines must be in level tones. The alternation of level and oblique tones creates a modulation which enhances the auditory effect of the "Song."

More striking, however, is that no matter whether within one line, or one rhyme, or at the position of "changing rhyme," Bo Juyi most often employs the technique of "repetition" to connect cadences and meanings consecutively in his lines, a technique which becomes crucial to the affective power of the poem. Poetic expression is dramatized by repetition of characters in a line which resembles the recurring musical phrases in drama, such as "'Spring' followed 'spring,' 'night' of play were 'nights' monopolized" 春從春遊夜專夜;^⑭ and "'Shu' River waters jade, 'Shu' mountains green" 蜀江水碧蜀山青. This also occurs within one rhyme, like, "Lotus curtains, 'spring nights' warmly spent./ 'Spring nights' bitterly short, rising with the sun high" 芙蓉帳暖渡春宵, 春宵苦短日高起,^⑮ "Lovely beauties of the rear palace, 'three thousand women.'/'Three thousand' but favored love on her person one" 後宮佳麗三千人, 三千寵愛在一身.^⑯

Following the principle that the rhyme and the meaning should not

^⑭ See Bo Juyi, p. 238.

^⑮ *ibid.*

^⑯ *ibid.*

be transferred simultaneously in the ancient verse and song style poetry, ⑦⑤ Bo Juyi also dexterously utilizes in the transitional point of transferring rhyme the technique of “repetition:” lines like,

*“The lake Taiyi ‘lotus,’ the Weiyang Palace ‘willows;’
But the ‘lotus’ was like her face and a ‘willow’-leaf her eyebrow—”* ⑦⑥

太液芙蓉未央柳，
芙蓉如面柳如眉。

and lines such as,

*“And through his envoy, sent him back an ‘inlaid box,’ and the
gold ‘hairpin,’*

*But kept one branch of the ‘hairpin,’ and one side of the ‘box;’
Breaking the gold of the ‘hairpin,’ breaking the shell of the ‘box;’
“Our souls belong together” she said, “like this ‘gold’ and this ‘shell’—
Somewhere, sometime, on earth or in heaven, we shall surely meet.”* ⑦⑦

鈿合金釵寄將去。
釵留一股合一扇，
釵擘黃金合分鈿。
但令心似金鈿堅，
天上人間會相見。

are examples of transferring the rhyme without changing the meaning, or vice versa. The poem thus contains continuous, flowing expression

⑦⑤ See Wang Fuzhi, *Jiangzhai shihua*, in *Qing shihua* (Taipei: Xi'nan shuju, 1979), juan xia, p. 8.

⑦⑥ See Bo Juyi, p. 239.

⑦⑦ *ibid.*

in sound and meaning which makes the demonstration of relaxation and intensification of mood more easily integrated into the rhythm of the poem.

As has been mentioned above, the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" gains dramatic effect through reliance on contrast. Rhythmic contrast introduces tragic contrast between the characters' emotion and misfortune. This rhythmic alternation is clear in Bo's mind as he wrote:

*War drums booming from Yuyang, shocked the whole earth
And broke the tunes of "The Rainbow Garment."
The Forbidden City, the nine-tiered palace, loomed in the dust
From thousands of horses and chariots headed southwest. ⑧*

漁陽鞞鼓動地來，
驚破霓裳羽衣曲。
九重城闕煙塵生，
千乘萬騎西南行。

Here the frenzy and chaos, the storm of noises and drums, the galloping horses and chariots, are carefully arranged to succeed the wanton, sweet, and leisurely scene of the Emperor and Lady Yang at Li Palace. The lines describing the war drum would be less forceful if not for the preceding scene of leisure and wantonness. These lines in part fix their meaning in the idea of chaos following the reversal of Chinese mores: "She brought to every father, every mother through the empire, / Happiness when a girl was born rather than a boy." To show that

⑧ *ibid.*, p. 238.

things were becoming topsy-turvy in an empire dominated by Lady Yang, Bo simply describes how parental hearts yearned for girls instead of boys.

Tracing the poem's rhythm through its smaller climaxes: the Emperor's complex struggle and inner conflict while Lady Yang lies dying, are balanced by the interlude of the Emperor's escape to Shu and the description of natural scenes which mirrors his affliction. The Emperor's heartbreaking yearning for Lady Yang after he returned to the palace is followed by the Taoist priest's flying to heaven and the underworld to search for Lady Yang, to the extent that "he heard accounts of an enchanted isle at sea, / A part of the intangible and incorporeal world."⁷⁹ Lady Yang's mixed feelings of bliss and grief are marked by the description that "the tear-drops drifting down her sad face were like a rain in spring on the blossom of the pear." Finally the lovers' secret vow is followed by the notion of everlasting sorrow,

Earth endures, heaven endures; sometime both shall end,

*While this unending sorrow goes on and on for ever.*⁸⁰

As sentiment leaps from crest to crest, it carries us from an external situation to an inner tension of feelings. The poem is orchestrated rhythmically, so that the last two lines become not the anticlimax, but the climax of meaning, the lamentation of the loss of love. In the bank created by this counter expectation the reader's participation in these

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 138.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 239.

emotions is assured. We thus empathize with the endlessly grieved Emperor and Lady Yang.

F>. The "Close-up" Effect

In addition to emphasizing the progression of narrative plot, the dramaticism of Bo's and Yuan's poems also lies in their minute delineation of details. This requirement of "minuteness," as we have mentioned before, improves upon a descriptive technique originally used in lyric poetry. However, in lyric poetry, even the minute delineation of an objective scene or the personae's actions, in view of the ultimate lyrical purpose, still must be incorporated into the lyrical theme. The function of the minute delineation therefore lies in its inspiring fabric of associations. The minute and concrete description of scenes and feelings often emerges in a few lines, for excessive description would spoil the lyric purpose in poetry. In Bo Juyi's and Yuan Zhen's narrative poetry, minute delineation becomes an essential tool to dramatize and pictorialize the narrative plot. When portraying people, the poets, by means of only a few lines, touch upon their spirit and charm, presenting them distinctly and vivaciously. If "the continuation and shift of time and space" were similar to the development of dramatic plot in drama, then, "the minute delineation of details" would become the director's camera technique. The effective employment of the "close-up" requires the "long shot" to set off whatever special characteristics the "close-up" might possess. It is in the alternating use of the "long shot" and the "close-up" that dramatic effect is generated.

The use of specific details helps shape a reader's perception of subject matter through a point of view other than the poet's so that the reader feels as though he were participating in the action of the plot. The use of the "close-up" in a narrative mode of expression depends for its dramatic effect on the stimulation of the audience's response to a world outside its immediate context. Thus can the narrative poem shorten the distance between the text and the reader, and create an atmosphere of immediacy. Criticism dealing with Chinese poetry and prose often calls the dramatic effect of close-up as "depicting the mien and mood vividly" ("*wei jin qingtai*," 委盡情態) or "leaping up vividly before the eyes." ("*lili ruzai muqian*," 歷歷如在目前). However, the appreciation for this technique in the past is limited to its rhetorical significance. Descriptions of "minute details" "in Bo's and Yuan's narrative poems contain dramatic effects which can be embodied through the characters' facial expression, physical actions and the scenery in a real dramatic performance.

In the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow," Lady Yang's matchless charm is well depicted in the lines, "If she but turned her eyes and smiled, there were cast a hundred spells,/And the powder and paint of the Six Palaces faded into nothing" 回眸一笑百媚生，六宮粉黛無顏色。^⑧ Through the "close-up" of her charming facial expression, her radiant face intoxicates the reader, her eyes sparkling like twinkling stars, as she casts her glances here and there. Her winsome smile, like the first ray

^⑧ *ibid.*, p. 238.

of spring, fascinates us with endless tenderness and allure.

Bo Juyi then conjures up a sensuous image of the emerging nude from the hot spring:

*It was early spring,
They bathed her in the Huaqing Pool,
Which warmed and smoothed the creamy-tinted crystal of her skin,
And, because of her languor, a maid was lifting her
When first the Emperor noticed her and chose her for his bride.
The cloud of her hair, petal of her cheek, gold ripples of her
crown...^⑧*

Focusing on a woman's demeanor, rather than merely on her physical features, Bo excels in giving a sensuous description which captures the most refined qualities of a woman's beauty. The only two adjectives that crystalize Lady Yang's outward beauty, "bai mei sheng" 百媚生 (there were cast a hundred spells) and "jiao wu li" 嬌無力 (soft and languorous), are integrated immediately with an exhibition of the delicacy of her movement.

In the above scene, the dramatic effect of the "close-up" is further intensified through its interchange by the poet with the "long shot." The "long shot" first shows us the beauty floating like a flower on the rippling spring water. The camera-eye, then sweepingly shifts the focus from the water to Lady Yang's silky skin, closing up on her cloud tresses, flower face and trembling ornament. Through the sensuous

^⑧ *ibid.*

description of Lady Yang's beauty, the moving camera draws near the bath scene, and we see the vivid "close-up" of an enchanting beauty emerging from waters alluringly languid and feminine.

The technique of "close-up" is often used to depict the minute details of people's facial expressions or demeanor through which their inner feelings are spontaneously conveyed. In depicting Lady Yang's grief, solitude and undying love for the Emperor even after her death, Bo Juyi writes,

"Jade countenance sad-mournful, tears brim-flowing,

Lone peach blossom girdled by spring rain.

*But love glowed deep within her eyes when she bade him thank
her liege, ③*

These lines focus on Lady Yang's melancholy face with tears brim-flowing, and her pain-dazed eyes with love overflowing. The merits of descriptions like these derive from their ability to capture specific emotions in lucid form. In these instances the poetic element is dramatized as elevated experience far more intense than the reader's everyday prosaic experience. Functioning as a sounding board, the "close-up" description magnifies and projects human emotion. It is dramatic because it can be easily exploited to transform emotive qualities into readily accessible auditory, visual or other sensory experience.

In Bo Juyi's "A White-Haired Person of Shangyang" (*Shangyang baifa ren* 上陽白髮人), a *Yuefu* poem which describes the plight of a

③ *ibid.*, p. 239.

palace lady who wasted away in the solitude of the imperial harem, bereft of love, family, and mate, the poet also skillfully applies the technique of “close-up” to project the anguished image of an aging beauty. Picked by imperial envoys for their beauty, many palace ladies remained in the palace, doomed to a living death, never to be married or to have a family of their own. This “white-haired” palace maid was but one of thousands of such women who led such useless, frustrated lives. In the poem, when she was first entered the Palace, “her face was like the lotus, bosom like jade” 臉似芙蓉胸似玉。⁸⁴ But before the Emperor noticed her, she had been “glared at askance by Consort Yang”⁸⁵ who jealously ordered her secretly transfer to Shangyang Palace. Now her “rose face aging unawares, white hairs renewed” 紅顏暗老白髮新。⁸⁶ After staying in the harem for so many years, her costume and make-up were still in the fashion of the Tianbao period; “her shoes are pointed, her dress tight-fitting, / her eyebrows somber colored, slender and elongated” 小頭蹊履窄衣裳，青黛點眉眉細長。⁸⁷ The dramatic effect of this poem is intensified by the elaboration of the sharp contrast between the lady’s “lotus-like face” and “jade-like bosom” at sixteen, and her “aging rose face” and “renewed white hair” at sixty. From the “close-up” of the change of her look and her out-of-date make-up and costume, we see the gradual decline of her beauty and

⁸⁴ See Be Juyi, juan 3, p. 59.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

life, and we are moved to sympathize with her. By depicting the change from a jade-like young beauty to a pitiable white-haired woman, the author achieves his objective of emphasizing and embodying her suffering from youth to old age.

IV. Influence on Later Dramatic Tradition

Yuan Zhen and Bo Juyi's accomplishments in narrative poetry enable "poetry" to combine with other narrative forms. One of their great contributions is their influence on the Chinese drama, an artistic form which combines literature, music and dance. I shall discuss this influence from two aspects, the treatment of the romantic plot and the descriptive technique in *Qu* poetry.

Among the Chinese scholar and beauty (*caizi jiaren*) romances, the stories of Lady Yang and Emperor Ming Huang, Yingying and Zhang Junrei have become the most popular. They so captured the public imagination that in later centuries these stories were retold in many forms, frequently in verse and drama. ⑧ These two love stories have

⑧ Taking the "Story of Yingying" as an example, a century or so later, Zhao Lingshi (fl. tenth century) composed a ballad in twelve stanzas retelling the same love story. Among the various poetic versions of the story, the most famous is Dong Xieyuan's (fl. 1190-1220) long narrative poem written in eight juans and over fifty thousand characters. Written in the *Zhugongdiao* (music medley) genre and under the title "Cui Yingying Waiting for the Moon in the Western Chamber" 崔鶯鶯待月西廂下, the originally tragic romance of Yuan Zhen was given a happy ending. Dong's work served as the blueprint for a full-fledged play (in twenty acts) by Wang Shifu (fl. thirteen century) under the title *Xixiangji* 西廂記 (*Romance of the Western Chamber*). More adaptations of the play were made in subsequent centuries, some as recent as the late nineteenth century.

continued to intrigue playwrights and audiences to this day. In terms of the treatment and arrangement of romantic plot, the dramaticism of the plays such as *Wutongyu* 梧桐雨 (*Rain on the Wutong Tree*),⁸⁹ *Palace of Eternal Life* or *Romance of the Western Chamber*, already existed in Bo's and Yuan's works. These plays demonstrate the direct influence of the development of a prototype for the romantic plot in an original poem and fiction on later drama treating the same subject. Thus, to understand the connection of Yuan's and Bo's romantic pattern to the later dramatic tradition, it might help to construct a hypothetical "basic plot" of the Yuan and Ming love drama. In general, there are two foci of the basic plot—the "courtship" in a love relationship and the conflict between the lovers and the obstruction from the force of society. In the majority of Chinese romances such as *Xixiangji*, the romance of "courtship" begins with the lady in a hopelessly obstructed position; the struggle against the social or parental obstruction ennobles the lovers at the same time as it intensifies their love. Another type is a plot begins with the lovers subjected to severe pressure from the forces of society, this pressure leading either to the lovers' conflict with the personification of the society or even death of one of the lovers. This conflict resolves itself in the transcendent course of suicide of the courtly lover, like Zhu Yingtai in *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* 梁山伯與祝英臺, or in the resurrection of the dead, like Lady Yang in *The Palace of Eternal Life* or Du Liniang in *The Peony*

⁸⁹ See Bo Pu, *Wutongyu*, in Yang Jialuo, ed., *Yuanren zaju zhu* (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1968), pp. 79-113.

Pavilion.

The treatment of romantic love in Bo's and Yuan's narrative poetry inspired not only those plays directly dealing with the same subjects, but influenced romantic plot in many other love plays in Chinese drama as well. As the thematic center of the later Chinese love drama, the romantic plot is built upon a sequence of detailed emotive events which are the sequences of events that constitute the development of the love relationships. The sequences of events in later drama that enact the process of the lovers' courtship and their struggles against their encroaching environment were already developed in Bo's and Yuan's works.

The sequences of events in Chinese love drama can be divided into two types. Inspired by romance like *Yingying zhuan*, the first type of sequence focuses on the courting of the lovers before their trespass on social norms and their reconciliation with society afterward. Thus, there is a constant confrontation between romantic love and the social norm of "rituals" (*li* 禮), or "reason" (*li* 理) in the course of the love relationship. These plots often involve disregard or open defiance of the social values as the characters attempt to build a more meaningful personal life.

Influenced by the romance like the "Song of Everlasting Sorrow," the plot in the second type of sequence concentrates on the union or reunion of lovers or married couples. In order to be together forever, the separated lovers must overcome a variety of obstacles, sometimes even that of the barrier between life and death. To this separation,

the fusion of the worldly and the unworldly in Bo's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" and "Lady Li" contributes a great deal. The power that sustains the lovers in transcending these obstacles is *qing* (love), as exemplified in the royal couple's secret vow in the "Song:" "We wished to fly in heaven, two birds with the wings of one,/And to grow together on the earth, two branches of one tree."⁹⁰ Since the supernatural remains the thematic interest, the supernatural helpers like the moon goddess Change, the tutelary god, the Weaving maid and the Cowherd in *The Palace of Eternal Life* are important in this group.

In addition to effecting the transmission of their content, Bo's and Yuan's influence on later dramatic tradition can also be in their language. The art of Chinese drama not only is expressed in poetry, but is actually conceived in terms of poetry. Yet, one of the major differences between dramatic verse in Chinese drama and conventional poetry is that narration remains an inherent function of the former. In Chinese drama, it is undoubtedly true that lyrics form the most prominent means of presentation. Dramatic verse is organically integrated with dramatic action itself. Not only intrinsically derived from action, as verbal actions, it can also advance plot development. That Tang poetry had commonly become a vehicle for narration explains why Bo's and Yuan's narrative poetry influenced the descriptive technique in drama, which was inspired by their valuable contribution to improving the mode of presentation in narrative poetry.

⁹⁰ See Bo Juyi, p. 239. Cyril Birch, p. 269.

One of the best examples is the influence of Bo's "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" on the play *Rain on the Wutong Tree* and *The Palace of Eternal Life*. The dramatists of these plays even incorporated the lines from the "Song" into different *Qu* poems in different scenes. Hong Sheng not only constructs the whole play in accordance with the main structure of Bo's "Song," but also concretizes and dramatizes the poetic description into action. For instance, the scene "The Bath" is inspired by Bo's lines, "It was spring, they bathed her in the Huaqing Pool, / Which warmed and smoothed the creamy-tinted crystal of her skin, / And, because of her languor, a maid was lifting her..."⁹¹ These lines emphasize the sensuous qualities of Lady Yang's beauty with an objective mode of description, which also exemplifies how the *Shi* text may explore "sensuous" details in portraying woman without being "licentious." Concentrating on Lady Yang's delicate demeanor, these depictions evoke Lady Yang's sensuality by enumerating and delineating minute details of her movement. In Hong Sheng's play, through poetic elaboration, the two palace maids and the Emperor's perception and rendering of Lady Yang's physical beauty and alluring demeanor actually serve as dramatic actions, as shown in the following passage from "The Bath: "

Yongxin and Niannu:

*Her slender body is floating like a lotus on the waves,
In all its limpid beauty; there she moves*

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 238.

*Her supple ankles, her smooth, scented arms
And her willowy waist through the translucent water.*

Yongxin:

*Look, how fine-boned she is,
And what snow-white skin!*

Emperor:

*The warm spring leaves one's body fresh and cool,
And my lady looks more beautiful and radiant,
Her dark hair ruffled like the evening clouds
After a shower.*

(Yongxin and Niannu dress them. Lady Yang looks tired and the maids support her.)

Emperor:

*My love, you look tired
And hardly able to support yourself—
Like a drooping willow in the wind
Or flowers weighed down by dew. ②*

Description of this kind tends to stand out of the text and to call attention to its peculiar sensuality. They invite the reader to dwell on the sensuality of the described object by externalizing sensuality through dramatic treatment of the heroine's physical beauty. Similar

② See Hong Sheng, *Changshengdian* in Zeng Yongyi, ed., pp. 651–652. See also Xu Shuofang ed., *Changshengdian* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1988), pp. 113–114; Yang Xianyi & Gladys Yang trans., *The Palace of Eternal Youth* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), pp. 106–108.

attempts to embody the sensual qualities of the described are found in almost all the passages in other Chinese love drama that treat the movement or demeanor of the heroine. That the observing subjectivity remains alienated manifests the influence of the convention of "storytelling" of narrative poetry on the *Qu* genre. That the poetic excellence in Bo's narrative poem is easily integrated into the dramatic action also shows the dramaticism of Bo's narrative poetry.

To give another example, the scene "Hearing the Bell" 聞鈴, in which the anguished Emperor hears the tinkling sound of the rain and the bells in the wind on his way to Chengdu after the death of Lady Yang, is also elaborated from Bo's lines:

*Yellow dust scattered drifting, wind mournful cold.
Suspension bridges in the clouds coiling round,
Below the Emei Mountains few people go.
Flags and banners lost their color in the fading sunlight...
Shu River waters jade, Shu mountains green;
The Holy Ruler afflicted night after night, morn after morn.
At the provisional palace seeing the moon, its heart-hurt color.
In the night rain hearing the bell, its heartbreaking sound.* ③

In the *Palace of Eternal Life*, Hong Sheng resorts to what John Ruskin termed "the pathetic fallacy," and to ascribe human emotional qualities to nature. ④ The image chosen to reflect the Emperor's feeling of sorrow

③ See Bo Juyi, p. 239.

④ Regarding "Pathetic Fallacy," see Alex Preminger et al. *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) p. 606-607.

comes from the sounds of rain and bells which are explicitly inherited from Bo's line: the melancholy tinkling of bells and the dismal drip of rain carrying across the hills and woods.

Tinkling and jangling of bells
And the dismal drip of rain
Make me sick at heart.
These melancholy sounds
Carry across the hills and woods,
Now high, now low, according to the wind.
To mingle with my tears of bitter anguish. ⑤

The images of the sounds of rain and bells, charged as they are with intense feeling, stimulate emotional response even when used primarily for depicting a scene. Though the scenic descriptions, due to their poeticism, are aesthetically important, when scenes become highly emotional, and inner actions command they poetically embody the emotion. The scenic description magnifies emotion, and elevates the scenes from dramatic presentation to the poetic exuberance of pure emotion. Thus, Hong Sheng embodies the process of poeticizing his play and creates a poetic effect, while making it evolve in constant renewal of dramatic interest.

Also inspired by Bo's lines, "Wutong-foliage fell to the ground, after autumn rains;/ The Western and Southern Palaces were littered with late grasses.../Over the throne flew fireflies, while he brooded in

⑤ See Zeng Yongyi, p. 705; Yang Xianyi et. al., p. 152.

the twilight./He would lengthen the lampwick to its end and still could never sleep," ⑥ in the fourth act of *Rain on the Wutong Tree*, Bo Pu creates scene of night rain in which the dripping rain evokes a painful memory for the Emperor in the quiet of the night. After the An Lushan rebellion, the Emperor lives in retirement in the Western Palace. While dreaming of his late consort, he is awakened by the rain beating on the wutong trees under which they have sworn eternal love to each other. Falling drop by drop, the rain resembles the heartbroken Emperor's sad tears. The changing rhythm of the rain reminds the Emperor of many past happy scenes:

Now it is fast,

Like ten thousand pearls drooping on a jade plate;

Then it is loud,

Like several groups of musicians and singers at a banquet;

Now it is clear,

Like a cold spring falling on mossy rocks;

Again it becomes fierce,

Like some battle drums booming under embroidered banners. ⑦

The unceasing rain on the wutong trees, recalling for the Emperor his happier days and accentuating his present loneliness, provides an effective dramatic backdrop for the situation. For more than only serving as a unit in the plot development, these lines call attention to

⑥ See Bo Juyi, p. 239.

⑦ See Yang Jialuoed., p. 109.; Richard F. S. Yang tans., *Four Plays of the Yuan Drama* (Taipei: The China Post, 1972)

their own lyricism. Especially during the emotional climaxes of the play, these lines are bound to exalt lyrically the inner feelings of the Emperor. It is through these moments that the Emperor achieves the grandeur of a “tragic hero”^⑧—possessing the outward conflict of being Emperor in his particular political situation. But real essence of his tragedy lies within the mind of the sorrowful Emperor himself.

Likewise, Yuan Zhen’s poem “Huizhen shi,” a romanticized, poetic description of Chang Junrei’s (the hero of Yuan’s “Yingying zhuan”) personal experience of Yingying’s visit, contains detailed delineation and a smooth unfolding of the dramatic situation. Stylistically, “Huizhen shi” displays the author’s narrative skill in poetic form. One special skill of the narrative-dramatic art already evidenced in Yuan Zhen’s poetry is his attention to minute details. Witness the details given in the following passage describing the erotic scene of the consummation of their love.

*Her face turns to let flow flower snow
As she climbs into bed, silk covers in her arms.
Love birds in a neck-entwining dance;*

⑧ In Aristotle’s opinion, the tragic hero is “a person neither eminently virtuous or just, nor yet, involved in crime by deliberate vice or villainy, but by some reason of human frailty.” The tragic hero must possess noble qualities, but at the same time be capable of indulging in some error, due either to ignorance of affairs beyond his knowledge or human passion. In the sense that the Emperor suffered from a misfortune of fate is due not only to the outward conflict with his subjects and army, but to his self-indulgence and fatuousness which lead the country to chaos, the Emperor is a tragic hero. See Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 19-21.

Kingfishers in a conjugal cage.
Eyebrows, out of shyness, contracted;
Lip rouge, from the warmth, melted.
Her breath is pure: fragrance of orchid buds;
Her skin is smooth: richness of jade flesh.
No strength, too limp to lift a wrist;
Many charms she likes to draw herself together.
Sweat runs: pearls drop by drop;
Hair in disorder: black luxuriance.
Just as they rejoice in the meeting of a lifetime
They suddenly hear the night is over. 99

Here the direct description of Yingying's demure yet ardent demeanor in the act of consummation is a dramatization of its counterpart in the "Story of Yingying." This scene became a precursor to the erotic scene in later Chinese love drama such as Wang Shifu's *Xixiangji*, which is also a dramatized version of Yingying's story. The above passage contains several dramatic elements: a chain of actions occurring in a concrete situation presented in close-up through the delineation of details. 100 The following description of Yingying's physical beauty and the happiness of consummation expressed in Zhang Junrei's voice demonstrates Yuan Zhen's capacity in evoking sensuality from details.

99 Yuan Zhen, "Waiji" juan 6, pp. 671-680; James R. Hightower, trans., "The Story of Yingying" in Y. W. Ma. et. al., *Traditional Chinese Stories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 144.

100 See Wang Shifu, *Xixiangji*, Rpt., (Taipei: Huazheng shuju, 1977), pp. 113-114.

*Under the faint glow of the lamp, I begin to glimpse the swell
of a breast, so pure and full, and below it a waist of willow, soft
and trembling.*

You are so exquisite, I know not where your loveliness begins.

.....

Together on this cloud of bliss,

Unable to hide my happiness,

I tie your belt in a lovers' knot,

This night of love to be not forgot.

*I kiss your sweet fragrant cheeks; and as the heart of the flower
is gently brushed, is*

petals open with the drop of dew.

*And then I began to know the indescribable joy of a fish in a
quivering stream, of a butterfly fluttering in rapture from the
sweet nectar of newly-opened buds.*

How could I anticipate such bliss after all the bitterness and sorrow?®

While the portrayal of Yingying in Yuan's "Huizhen shi" is rendered by an objective narrator, here the description of Yingying's physical beauty conveyed through the hero Chang Junei's voice offers the author opportunities to explore the emotional state of the dramatic persona, simultaneously presenting a vivid dramatic situation. That the persona's emotive state makes this emotive recognition possible calls attention to the hero's mind itself. Though the passage describes the heroine, it

® *ibid.*, p. 113.

capitalizes on its own being to realize the hero's active and passionate mind.

V. Conclusion

We have now seen how, in dramatic shift, dramatic conflict, dramatic action, dramatic voice and objectivity, the rhythm of dramatic action, and the "close-up" effect, the craft of Yuan's and Bo's poetic art represents neither unthinking inheritance from the past, nor an abrupt break with the past; rather, it presents a spectacular renewal and integration of the narrative and dramatic elements in the Chinese poetic tradition. Generally speaking, Bo Juyi's and Yuan Zhen's narrative poetry share a unique style, a style that is mixed with the complementary alternation of narrative details and dramatic qualities. This style lends intensity and charm to most of Bo's and Yuan's best narrative poems, and is accepted by the dramatists of later ages as essential to dramatic art. In my analysis of the dramatic elements of these poems, I have not turned away from their inherent qualities reminiscent of the Chinese poetic tradition, but have regarded them as positive, prominent features that inspire and influence the Chinese drama of subsequent ages.

元白敘事詩中的戲劇成份

王 瓊 玲

提 要

元稹與白居易這兩位中唐最重要的樂府詩人均以擅長敘事詩而著稱於世。然而，由於中國傳統文學批評對敘事詩的寫作及發展一向論述不深，元、白二人在詩歌創作方面的許多貢獻乃隱晦而不彰，他們在敘事詩上的成就亦往往被批評家所謂「元輕白俗」之說所遮掩。雖然敘事詩已是唐代文學體裁中的重要一環，運用描寫式呈現模式 (a descriptive mode of presentation) 的詩歌並未因其敘事特點而形成一獨立文類。依循前人在賦體、樂府及古體詩方面所建立的傳統，元稹與白居易在傳統形式上力求開新，創作所謂的「新樂府」，為其敘事詩之寫作立下最直接而有效的章法。身為「元和」詩派之領袖，元、白不僅致力於新的文學理念之倡導，並藉著實驗性的寫作來體現他們崇高的文學理想。因此本文係以探討元、白對於中國詩歌的敘事模式在理論與實踐上的成就為出發點。由於元、白詩歌中的戲劇成份乃源自於其敘事詩，在各別探討這些詩歌的戲劇特質之前，作者分析了元、白樂府詩中與其敘事、戲劇興味之展現密切相關的描寫技巧。作者並分別就戲劇轉換 (dramatic shift)、戲劇衝突 (dramatic conflict)、戲劇行動 (dramatic action)、戲劇口吻與客觀性 (dramatic voice and objectivity)、戲劇節奏 (the rhythm of dramatic

action)、特寫效果 (the “close-up” effect) 等六項成份，進一步探討元、白詩歌藝術之技巧如何將中國詩歌傳統中的敘事與戲劇特質作一番獨特的整合與開新。易言之，本文對於元、白敘事詩之戲劇成份的分析，並未背離其源自中國詩歌傳統之內在本質，而是賦予並肯定了這些戲劇特質啓發與影響後代中國戲劇的重要意義。

Dramatic Elements in the Narrative Poetry of Bo Juyi (772-846) and Yuan Zhen (779-831)

Wang Ay-ling

As the two most important *Yuefu* poets of the Mid-Tang period (766-835), Bo Juyi and Yuan Zhen are both celebrated for their achievements in narrative poetry. However, because traditional Chinese literary criticism is relatively taciturn when it comes to analyzing narrative poetry, many aspects of Bo's and Yuan's creative effort in poetry remain unexplored. Their achievement in the sphere of narrative poetry has been largely ignored by most literary critics who appraise their poetry with superficial dismissal such as that Yuan's poetry is "frivolous" or that Bo's is "vulgar." While narrative poetry constitutes a significant category of Tang literature, preceding the Tang period, poetry which already employed a descriptive mode of presentation did not form an independent genre on the basis of their "narrative" characteristics. Following the established poetic tradition of *Fu*, *Yuefu* and *Gutishi* (ancient-style poetry), Bo and Yuan made innovations on traditional forms and created the so-called "New *Yuefu*" (*Xin Yuefu*) which provided immediate legacy to their pursuit of narrative poetry. As leaders of the Yuanhe school, Bo and Yuan not only devoted

themselves to new literary ideal but also strove for the realization of their lofty goal by experimental creative writing. My point of departure is thus to examine Yuan's and Bo's theoretic and practical contribution to the development of narrative mode in Chinese poetry. Because dramatic elements in Bo's and Yuan's works originate in their narrative poetry, before going on to explore their dramatic aspects separately, I have analyzed their descriptive techniques in *Yuefu* which is relevant to the emergence of narrative-dramatic interest in their poetry. I have then examined, in dramatic shift, dramatic conflict, dramatic action, dramatic voice and objectivity, the rhythm of dramatic action, and the "close-up" effect, how the craft of Yuan's and Bo's poetic art presents a spectacular renewal and integration of the narrative and dramatic elements in the Chinese poetic tradition. In my analysis of the dramatic elements of these poems, I have not turned away from their inherent qualities reminiscent of the Chinese poetic tradition, but have regarded them as positive, prominent features that inspire and influence the Chinese drama of subsequent ages.