

Bai Juyi's (772-846) Poems on Women: A Narratological Approach

by

Qichen Zhong

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We acknowledge and respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, Supervisor
Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

Dr. Cody Poulton, Departmental Member
Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the image of women in Bai Juyi's (772-846) poetry with a narratological approach. It selects 108 of Bai's poems about women as the research objects and divides them into two main categories: the poems written in a male voice and those written in a female voice. A total of 24 poems are examined as examples. Chapter one serves as a general introduction to the research background, providing information about the poet and the tradition of Chinese poetry. Chapter two outlines two narrative concepts, "narrator" and "focalization". Also, it explores the image of women in the 14 example poems written in a male voice. Chapter three includes 10 example poems written in a female voice, investigating the differences between the image of women created in the male and female voices. This study finds that the use of the female voice presents the female characters' thoughts and feelings to the reader and allows the reader to empathize with them easily.

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Introduction

This thesis aims to examine the image of women in Bai Juyi's (772-846) poetry. It will discuss the differences between the image of women described in the male voice and the female voice in Bai's poetry about women. This thesis argues that compared with the poems written in a male voice, the reader can empathize with the female characters and accept their points of view more easily when reading the poems written in a female voice. For the poems written in a male voice, the narrator "I" can be regarded as the poet Bai. Bai describes the external features of the female characters, for example, their appearance, clothing, actions, and surroundings. Thus, the reader has less access to the female characters' thoughts and feelings. In contrast, the female character is the narrator for the poems written in a female voice. They speak about their emotions, thoughts, and memories directly to the reader. Thus, the distance between the reader and the female characters is closer, and the reader can better understand and empathize with the characters.

As one of the most well-represented poets in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Bai has more than 2800 existing poems, which makes him the most productive poet among all the poets in the Tang Dynasty.¹ In addition, his literary works are influential. The profound influence of Bai's works is not confined to China but extends to neighbouring countries such as Japan and Korea.² What is more, the impact of his works is not limited to the Tang Dynasty but continues to this day. More surprisingly, from the Mid-Tang era (766-

¹ Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, vol.1. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 343.

² Chang and Owen, 344.

853) to modern times (the 20th century), over a thousand years, more than 3200 poets and critics have mentioned Bai and his poetic works over 8000 times.³ The above information provides strong evidence that Bai was highly recognized by poets and poetry critics of subsequent ages and had a great influence on the poets of later periods.

Bai has drawn the attention of scholars in the past 100 years, but his poems about women are not well-researched. Chinese-language research on Bai started in the first half of the 20th century, mainly focusing on Bai's family life, ideological and political inclinations, poetry theory and creation, and versions of his collections.⁴ In addition, English studies on Bai are relatively marginal, and most are journal articles and degree theses. In both languages, research on Bai's poetry is mainly concerned with his political criticism and personal life, whereas the study of Bai's poems about women has lagged behind and needs further exploration.

This thesis strives to fill this gap and selects 108 poems about women as the research objects. Bai keeps his own identity as a male poet in most of the poems, which means they are written in a male voice. Bai describes female figures in these poems and writes poems for specific women, such as his wife and daughters, to express his thoughts and feelings about life. In contrast, some poems are composed in a female voice, in which Bai conceals himself and lets the female characters "speak". Thus, Bai uses two kinds of voices. This paper explores the differences between the image of women created in the

³ Chen Caizhi 陳才智, *Bai Juyi Zi Liao Xin Bian* 白居易資料新編 [The New Compilation of Data of Bai Juyi], 10 vols (Beijing: Zhongguo she hui ke xue chu ban she, 2021).

⁴ Li Dan 李丹 and Shang Yongliang 尚永亮, 'Bai Juyi Bai Nian Yan Jiu Shu Lun' 白居易百年研究述 [A Review of Research on Bai Juyi over a Hundred Years], *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou*, no. 3 (2006), 216-220.

male voice and the female voice, examining the diverse reading experience they present to the reader. Two narrative concepts, narrator and focalization, are adopted for close reading and analysis. The adoption of narrative theory contributes to an in-depth understanding of the poetry and the image of women in the poems.

There are three chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the background of the study, including Bai's historical background, life experience, poetry, and the use of the female voice in the Chinese poetic tradition. Chapter two explains the theoretical framework of narrative and explores the image of women created in the male voice, including poems containing clear female figures and poems written to or for specific targets. Chapter three examines poems written in a female voice, including poems in which the female characters talk about themselves, as well as poems written on behalf of women.

Chapter 1: Research Background

1.1 Bai Juyi

This section is an introduction to Bai Juyi. Based on the literary background of Bai's era in the first part, the Tang poetry, this section further discusses Bai's life experience and the features of his poetry in the following two parts.

1.1.1 The Tang Poetry

The Tang Dynasty (618-907) was a prosperous dynasty having a strong influence on people throughout history. For instance, "Chinatown" is "Tang ren jie" (唐人街) in Chinese, which means the street of Tang people. Over its 289 years, the Tang Dynasty maintained an active cultural environment, which fostered the development of literature, education, and art.⁵ In terms of literature, poetry reached its first peak of development. Thus, poetry became the representation of literature in the Tang Dynasty, and the Tang Dynasty also became the representative era of poetry. The Tang Dynasty was best known for its poetry, "Tang Poetry" (tang shi 唐詩).

During the Tang Dynasty, the most remarkable change in the literature was that it was no longer restricted to the imperial court.⁶ This feature can also apply to Tang

⁵ Liu Dajie 劉大杰, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Fa Zhan Shi* 中國文學發展史 [A Developmental History of Chinese Literature], 1st ed. (Tianjin: Bai hua wen yi chu ban she, 2007), 184-185.

⁶ Chang and Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 286. According to Stephen Owen, the cultural Tang (from 650s to the first decades of the eleventh century) is different from the political Tang dynasty (618-907).

Poetry. Heretofore, emperors and nobility were the leading creators of poetry.⁷ Poetry became popular in the Tang Dynasty as a crucial part of civil service examinations, and many literati were involved in poetry composition.⁸ While those literati might work in the government and be active in the court, they had more experience about what a folk life was like than the emperors and the nobility. Many famous poets were common people and had experienced life without much money.⁹ Poetry composition was not limited to the literati groups. People with other identities, such as monks, nuns, and courtesans, also wrote poems. Thus, poetry became a common literary genre in the Tang Dynasty.¹⁰ For this reason, the content of Tang Poetry was more diverse, which touched on the life of the poets and various aspects of social life, including different topics such as nature, war, trading, imperial court, politics, history, etc.¹¹ In addition to the poet's identity and the poem's content, the numbers of poets and their works were astonishing.¹² What is more, there were numerous outstanding poets.¹³ People who had the ability and skills to compose excellent poems would gain fame either at the time or in later periods, regardless of whether they could succeed as civil servants or not. Being a "poet" became

⁷ Liu 劉, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Fa Zhan Shi* 中國文學發展史 [A Developmental History of Chinese Literature], 187.

⁸ Zong-qi Cai, *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 161.

⁹ Liu 劉, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Fa Zhan Shi* 中國文學發展史 [A Developmental History of Chinese Literature], 187.

¹⁰ Liu 劉, 185.

¹¹ Liu 劉, 187.

¹² Cai, *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology*, 161. *Quan Tang shi* (Complete Shi Poetry of the Tang) collected nearly 49,000 poems composed by 2,200 poets.

¹³ Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Shi* 中國文學史 [History of Chinese Literature], 1st ed., vol. 2 (Beijing: Gao deng jiao yu chu ban she, 2003), 226.

part of their identity or one of their many identities. Bai Juyi was one of the poets with the identity of a civil servant.

1.1.2 Bai Juyi's Personal Life Experience

Although Bai claimed that he was from Taiyuan (太原) because that was where his ancestors were from, he was born in 772 in Xinzheng (新鄭) in current Henan (河南) Province, China. He came from a good socioeconomic background. His father and grandfather (father's father) were both government officials, and his mother was educated.¹⁴ However, he was born in a time of social disorder and political conflict. Some local political groups were unwilling to be ruled by the central government, which led to continuous wars.¹⁵ Being affected by warfare, Bai lived an unstable life and had to move several times in his childhood. To avoid the chaos caused by war, at the age of 12, he had to flee from where he had lived with his family.¹⁶ In the subsequent years, Bai lived around southern China and went back to his home at Fuli (符離), Xuzhou (徐州) at around the age of 20.¹⁷ Despite the turmoil, he had access to education. As Bai mentioned in a letter to his friend, he was extraordinarily intelligent as a kid. When he was only six

¹⁴ Bai Juyi 白居易, *Bai Juyi Ji* 白居易集 [Anthology of Bai Juyi], ed. Gu Xuejie 顧學頴, 4 vols (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 1999), 984. In “Xiangzhou bie jia fu jun shi zhuang” (襄州別駕府君事狀), Bai wrote about his father's biography and mentioned his mother. When his father passed away, his brothers were still young. His mother was the one who taught his young brothers to read.

¹⁵ Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i, 772-846 A.D.*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1970), 11.

¹⁶ Wang Shiyi 王拾遺, *Bai Juyi Sheng Huo Xi Nian* 白居易生活系年 [Chronology of Bai Juyi's Life] (Ningxia: Ningxia ren min chu ban she, 1981), 20. Ancient Chinese would use nominal age to count their ages. People would be one year old when they were born and would become one year older after the lunar new year. The nominal age usually would be one or two years older than the actual age.

¹⁷ Wang 王, 30.

or seven months old, and even though he was not able to speak, he could recognize Chinese characters. He started learning how to write poetry around the age of five. Bai was not only intelligent but diligent. He started to study hard to prepare for the civil service examination at the age of 15 or 16. He studied through the day and night without rest and got loose teeth, grey hair, and dim eyesight at a young age.¹⁸ In 794, when Bai was 23, his father passed away.¹⁹ Bai and his family seem to have had a hard time during the following several years.²⁰ After a delay caused by poverty and filial mourning (ding you 丁憂),²¹ he finally got the chance to take the civil service examination at 28.

There have been many records about Bai's life from different people, including Bai himself, his friends, and later intelligentsia. While some discrepancies remained in the details, these records provide an outline of Bai's life. Generally speaking, the following life experiences have been quite significant since Bai started the journey of his civil service examination.

In 800, the 29-year-old Bai passed the Jinshi (進士) examination. The Jinshi examination was the highest imperial examination, and the successful examinees would wait about three years to get an official position according to the regulations. Therefore, two years later, Bai took the “shu pan ba cui ke” (書判拔萃科) examination, which was

¹⁸ Bai Juyi 白居易, *Bai Juyi Ji* 白居易集 [Anthology of Bai Juyi], 962. A letter to Yuan Jiu (Yu Yuan Jiu shu 與元九書).

¹⁹ Zhu Jincheng 朱金城, *Bai Juyi Nian Pu* 白居易年譜 [Chronology of Bai Juyi] (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1982), 16.

²⁰ Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i, 772-846 A.D.*, 15.

²¹ Wang 王, *Bai Juyi Sheng Huo Xi Nian* 白居易生活系年 [Chronology of Bai Juyi's Life], 36. Ding you (丁憂) means a period of mourning for a parent's death, observing mourning for the parent without any entertainment. During that period, literati cannot take the civil service examination, and government officials should be suspended from office. The period lasted for 25 months at Bai's time.

one of the two most difficult examinations at that time. Only three out of a hundred people could be selected, and they could get official positions after the examination.²² Bai was selected and got the position of “mi shu sheng jiao shu lang” (秘書省校書郎) in 803, a petty official position as a proof-reader in the imperial library. Although it was a basic level position, it was considered an important beginning of scholars’ official careers in the Tang Dynasty. As Bai passed those examinations and was appointed to the position, it stands to reason that he was an outstanding scholar. In 808, Bai was 37 years old and had been promoted from the basic level civil servant to the middle level.²³ It was also this year that he married his wife, Miss Yang, and it can be said that both his career and life went smoothly. As a government official, Bai actively expressed his political opinions and wrote many poems reflecting ordinary people’s lives.

In 811, Bai’s mother passed away, and he was suspended from office to observe the period of mourning. In the same year, his firstborn daughter, Jinluanzi (金鑾子), died of illness. Bai was back in his career in 814. Affected by the political struggle within the government, he was demoted to Jiangzhou (江州) the following year.²⁴ After arriving in Jiangzhou, Bai compiled his poems into an anthology for the first time, with a total of 15 volumes and about 800 poems. Later, he put forward his opinion of poetry composition, pointing out that “articles and poems should reflect the current affairs and social

²² Lai Ruihe 賴瑞和, *Tang Dai Ji Ceng Wen Guan* 唐代基層文官 [Basic Level Civil Servants of the Tang Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2008), 3.

²³ Lai Ruihe 賴瑞和, *Tang Dai Zhong Ceng Wen Guan* 唐代中層文官 [Middle Level Civil Servants of the Tang Dynasty] (Taibei: Lian jing chu ban shi ye gu fen you xian gong si, 2008), 119.

²⁴ Zhu 朱, *Bai Juyi Nian Pu* 白居易年譜 [Chronology of Bai Juyi], 16-60.

reality.”²⁵ Bai left Jiang Zhou in 818 and got a high-level position in Zhongzhou (忠州).²⁶ In the following two decades, Bai travelled to many places and took different official positions in different areas, and most of them were high-level positions with guaranteed income. Finally, his service stopped in 841 when he was 70, and then he retired. He lived in Luoyang (洛陽) after retiring and passed away in 846, at the age of 75.

From the age of 32 to 70, Bai spent most of his life as a government official. He was a civil servant, a literatus, and a poet. Bai learned how to write poems from around five years old and never stopped poetry composition until the end of his life. In his retirement, he even started an association of “honour the elders” (shang chi zhi hui 尚齒之會), inviting old retired civil servants to his house to have a party of eating, drinking, and writing poems. Poetry composition played a significant role in Bai’s life. He recorded his experiences and expressed all of his joys and sorrows in his poems throughout his lifetime.

1.1.3 Features and Significance of Bai Juyi’s Poetry

Bai Juyi attached importance to his poetry composition. He did not stop writing poems even when he was making every effort to prepare for his examinations. By the time he officially served in the government in 803, the number of poems he had

²⁵ Bai Juyi 白居易, *Bai Juyi Ji* 白居易集 [Anthology of Bai Juyi], 962. “A letter to Yuan Jiu” (“Yu Yuan Jiu shu” 與元九書), “歌詩合為事而作.”

²⁶ Lai 賴, *Tang Dai Zhong Ceng Wen Guan* 唐代中層文官 [Middle Level Civil Servants of the Tang Dynasty], 4.

composed was up to three or four hundred.²⁷ Moreover, Bai attached importance to the compilation and preservation of his anthology. He edited his articles and poems several times and compiled them into an anthology of 75 volumes, including 3840 poems. In order to ensure that his anthology would be handed down to later generations, Bai made five copies and put them in five different places.²⁸ Thanks to the circumspection of Bai, present readers have the chance to read most of his works. The current collection of Bai's works contains 71 volumes, and 37 of them are poems. The 37 volumes have been compiled into a poetry anthology, with a total of 2804 poems, and some poems or verses might not be composed by Bai.²⁹

More than 2800 existing poems have made Bai the most productive poet in the Tang Dynasty. Along with many poems, Bai's poetry also had a great impact on poetry composition at that time and for later generations. The influence of Bai's poetry is mainly reflected in the following three aspects. First, his narrative poems draw sources from real life, so they are lifelike and detailed but also plain and easy to understand, even for children. This creative style influenced later narrative poems. Some of his poems have become the source of novels and dramas and are still popular to this day.³⁰ Second, he put forward a new theory of poems of social criticism and composed many poems to make his theory practical. Since then, political criticism has become an indispensable topic of

²⁷ Bai Juyi 白居易, *Bai Juyi Ji* 白居易集 [Anthology of Bai Juyi], 962. A letter to Yuan Jiu (“Yu Yuan Jiu shu” 與元九書).

²⁸ Wang 王, *Bai Juyi Sheng Huo Xi Nian* 白居易生活系年 [Chronology of Bai Juyi's Life], 811.

²⁹ Bai Juyi 白居易, *Bai Juyi Shi Ji Jiao Zhu* 白居易詩集校注 [Poetry Anthology of Bai Juyi with Annotation], ed. Xie Siwei 謝思煒, 6 vols (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2006).

³⁰ Bai 白, *Bai Juyi Shi Ji Jiao Zhu* 白居易詩集校注 [Poetry Anthology of Bai Juyi with Annotation], 3.

Chinese poetry composition.³¹ Influenced by the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) and the *yuefu* (“Music Bureau” 樂府) poetry and the previous poets, Bai believed that poetry composition should reflect the real world, thereby impacting politics.³² Third, Bai attached great importance to the poet’s self-cultivation. He expressed his attitude towards life through his poems about his personal daily life and daily trivia, such as waking up late in the morning. This not only affected the poetry composition of later generations but also had a great impact on the mental life of the poets.³³

The above three aspects can also show features of Bai’s poetry. In terms of the content of poetry, Bai paid attention to the description of real life. In terms of poetry’s function, Bai focused on poetry’s role in society and expected to convey ordinary people’s living conditions to the rulers through poetry. Last, Bai believed that the language of poetry needs to be easy to understand.³⁴

Moreover, Bai wrote about many women in his poems. There are 147 such poems and various female figures, such as his wife and daughters, dancing girls, court ladies, and abandoned women.³⁵ Chinese poetry creation is inseparable from the poetic tradition. To better understand the image of women in Bai’s poetry, it is necessary to apprehend the image of women in the Chinese poetic tradition.

³¹ Bai 白, 4.

³² Yuan 袁, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Shi* 中國文學史 [History of Chinese Literature], vol. 2, 358.

³³ Bai 白, *Bai Juyi Shi Ji Jiao Zhu* 白居易詩集校注 [Poetry Anthology of Bai Juyi with Annotation], 4.

³⁴ Yuan 袁, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Shi* 中國文學史 [History of Chinese Literature], vol. 2, 367.

³⁵ Xiaohua Liu, ‘Bai Juyi’s Poems about Women’ (master’s thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2009), 37-43.

1.2 Conventional Images of Women in Chinese Poetry

From the origins of Chinese poetry, this section discusses the use of the female voice in the Chinese poetic tradition and reviews the images of women in poetry before the Tang Dynasty.

Authorship was unknown at the beginning of Chinese poetry, and so was the gender of the poets. Nonetheless, there were poems about women from the very beginning. For example, poems about the love of man and woman. Those poems adopted both male and female voices and created various female figures.

1.2.1 Unknown Authors and the Use of Female Voice

As the first Chinese poetry collection, the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) collected more than 300 poems from the 11th century BCE to the 6th century BCE, over 500 years. As Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200) mentioned in his commentary, “the poetry of Wei (衛) is the statement of men who please women, while the poetry of Zheng (鄭) is full of the words of women who confuse men.”³⁶ Regardless of the purpose of this commentary, it clearly shows that in the *Classic of Poetry*, some poems express men’s affection for women in a male voice. In the meantime, some poems use a female voice to state women’s emotions for men. Although the author of these poems is anonymous,³⁷ it is confirmed that there is more than one author, and the poems in the anthology have

³⁶ Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Shi Ji Zhuan* 詩集傳 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 2011), 72. “衛猶為男悅女之詞，而鄭皆為女惑男之語”。

³⁷ Chang and Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 18.

been collected and edited several times.³⁸ This raises an interesting question: for what reason did the collectors and editors choose to preserve or utilize those male and female voices? Whatever the answer might be, this writing method provides an exemplar for the later poets, initiating a poetic convention of expressing women's emotions in a female voice.

The *Classic of Poetry* comprises poems written in both voices and portrays different female figures. In general, these poems depict women in love and women in marriage, expressing their love and depression.³⁹ Accordingly, the woman who pines for her beloved (pining women, sifu 思婦) and the wife who is abandoned by her husband (abandoned women, qifu 棄婦) become the two representative images of women.⁴⁰ Take, for example, the poem “Meng” (氓), in which a female character tells her life story about how she falls in love and gets married to a man (Meng), but her husband does not treat her well.⁴¹

Regardless of the unknown identities of the creators and editors, the women-related poems in the *Classic of Poetry* offer a model for later poets. The “pining women” and “abandoned women” develop into poetic themes. In addition, writing in a female voice becomes a method of poetic creation, which Chinese poets continually implement.

³⁸ Yuan 袁, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Shi* 中國文學史 [History of Chinese Literature], vol.1, 64-65.

³⁹ Robin Wang, *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture: Writings from the Pre-Qin Period to the Song Dynasty* (Cambridge [UK]; Indianapolis [IN]: Hackett Pub. Co., 2003), 4-24.

⁴⁰ Kang Zhengguo 康正果, *Feng Sao Yu Yan Qing* 風騷與艷情 (Zhengzhou: He nan ren min chu ban she, 1988), 38-48.

⁴¹ Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 96-97.

1.2.2 Images of Women in the Writings of Female Poets

Some authors of the *Classic of Poetry* can be female, but there is no conclusive evidence. Female poets with definite identities date from the 1st century BCE and are often talented but unfortunate. The female poets state their experiences and express their feelings through poetry, lamenting their sorrow or lovesickness.⁴² The earliest records are Ban jieyu and Cai Yan.

Ban jieyu (班婕妤, 48-6 BCE) was a concubine of the Emperor Cheng of the Han (Han cheng di 漢成帝), who demonstrated strong moral character but lost the favour of the emperor.⁴³ Her poem “Song of Resentment” (“Yuan ge xing” 怨歌行) is about a fan, fancy but shelved due to the arrival of autumn. The last stanza, “and his love will be cut off midcourse” (恩情中道絕), shows that Ban compares herself to the fan; both are deserted.⁴⁴ Hence, two images of women, “the court lady without emperor’s favour” and “the lonely court lady,” develop into a theme of “palace complaint” (gongyuan 宮怨), and poets of later generations write about this poetic theme constantly.

Another influential female poet, Cai Yan (蔡琰, 176? - early third century), was incredibly talented but led an unsettled life because of the sociopolitical unrest.⁴⁵ Cai Yan’s poems record her tragic experiences and the hardships of war, which has gotten a lot of attention. However, many later scholars questioned Cai Yan’s authorship and

⁴² Kang-i Sun Chang, Haun Saussy, and Charles Kwong, *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 17-38.

⁴³ Chang, 17-18. See also Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*, (Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 77-82.

⁴⁴ Chang, Saussy, and Kwong, 18-19.

⁴⁵ Chang, Saussy, and Kwong, 22.

reckoned that the poems were written by some anonymous poets using Cai Yan's voice.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the doubts about the authorship make no difference to "the direct, passionately expressed identity of the woman's voice."⁴⁷ It indicates that it is an accepted writing technique for poets to utilize other people's identities and write in their voices. Cai Yan's life tragedy resonates with other poets, contributing to the images of "woman who lost her husband" and "woman with a miserable destiny" in later poetry. Moreover, due to the dominance of male poets in Chinese poetry, their writings created a "ready-made feminine voice," which even brought difficulties for female poets to enter the literary arena.⁴⁸ In this case, how did the male poets form the tradition of "male-authored poetry written in a female voice,"⁴⁹ and what images of women were generated?

1.2.3 Male Poets and the Use of Female Voices

In addition to the *Classic of Poetry*, the *Verses of Chu* (*Chuci* 楚辭) is another origin of Chinese poetry. "Chuci" mainly refers to the poetic works with local characteristics of the state of Chu during the Warring States period (fifth-third centuries BCE), which were assembled into the book *Verses of Chu* in the late Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE-8CE). Most of the works were attributed to Qu Yuan (屈原, ca 340-278 BCE), the first male poet with a concrete biography in the history of Chinese

⁴⁶ Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*, 112-127.

⁴⁷ Chang, Saussy, and Kwong, *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, 23.

⁴⁸ Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*, 2.

⁴⁹ Idema and Grant, 2.

poetry.⁵⁰ It is indeterminate whether these works were created or adapted by Qu Yuan, but the image of “the poet Qu Yuan” embarked on the tradition of male poets writing in a female voice.

Like the *Classic of Poetry*, the poems related to women in the *Verses of Chu* influenced later poets and became part of the writing tradition. The verses were deeply impacted by the southern shaman (wu 巫) culture,⁵¹ and many of them were related to the religious sacrifice (jisi 祭祀) to the cosmic deities of Chu.⁵² For example, some of the verses in the “Nine Songs” (Jiuge 九歌) were written in the voice of the goddess, with the “dialogue” between the male god and the goddess.⁵³ This kind of sacrifice is presented as a performance with song, dance, and music, attracting the deities with love between men and women. The shamans are the “performers”, and the verses are the lyrics of the songs that they sing. The male shaman is responsible for greeting the goddess, while the female shaman welcomes the male god.⁵⁴ Therefore, in the male shaman’s performance, the “voice of the male god” is the “voice of the male shaman”. Man intervenes in the relationships of deities, thus triggering emotional communication between human beings and the deities. “Xiang jun” (湘君) and “Xiang furen” (湘夫人) are two of the pieces in the “Nine Songs”. Owen believes that both are “speaking in the voice of a male shaman,” expressing the shaman’s aspiration to meet with the goddess.

⁵⁰ Chang and Owen, *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 78. See also Yuan 袁, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Shi* 中國文學史 [History of Chinese Literature], vol.1, 145-146.

⁵¹ The wu 巫 culture is a culture that people believe the shaman, worship the deities and ghosts, and value the religious sacrifice 祭祀.

⁵² Chang and Owen, 81.

⁵³ Yuan 袁, *Zhong Guo Wen Xue Shi* 中國文學史 [History of Chinese Literature], vol.1, 154.

⁵⁴ Yuan 袁, 151-154.

Although Owen's translation of "Xiang jun" is "Lady of the Xiang",⁵⁵ there has been controversy over whether "Xiang jun" is a male or female deity, from the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). For instance, one of the many opinions is that the verses in "Xiang jun" are the lyrics of the female shaman who performs as "Xiang furen", expressing the affection for "Xiangjun" in a female voice.⁵⁶ This writing practice led to a poetic theme of the "goddess" (shen nü 神女), from which the image of "goddesses" in poetry also developed.

At the same time, Qu Yuan produced a poetic image of "beauty" (meiren 美人).⁵⁷ The relationship between men and women is a metaphor for the relationship between the king and the king's subjects. The "beauty" refers to the poet, the king to whom the poet is loyal, and the poet's ideal political pursuit. Overall, the beauty of a woman is paralleled with the talent and virtue of a man. When a woman is deserted by a man, it suggests that the courtier is abandoned by the king. Besides, a man's pursuit of the fair lady represents the courtier's yearning for a wise king.⁵⁸ This concept has impacted later poets in two aspects. First, the "beauty" in the poems can be the poet or a virtuous man. Second, the

⁵⁵ Cai's translation of "Xiang jun" is "The Lord of the Xiang River," and "Xiang furen" is translated as "The Lady of the Xiang River." Thus, contemporary translators have different interpretations of the two poems. See Cai, *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology*, 38-41.

⁵⁶ Jin Kaicheng 金開誠, Dong Hongli 董洪利, and Gao Luming 高路明, eds., *Qu Yuan Ji Jiao Zhu 屈原集校注* [Anthology of Qu Yuan with Annotation], vol.1 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 1996), 202-203.

⁵⁷ The book *Verses of Chu* is compiled in the late Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE-8CE). Thus, its vocabulary might be affected by the literature at that time. For example, Sima Xiangru (司馬相如, 179-117 BCE) wrote about a beautiful lady in his poetic exposition (*fu*), "Meiren fu" (美人賦). The word "meiren" also shows up in the *Classic of Poetry*, "Jian xi" (簡兮). In Waley's translation, "Of whom do I think? Of a fairy lady from the West." (雲誰之思? 西方美人.) See Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry*, 221. On the other hand, the "meiren" in this poem can also refer to the male dancer. Cai translates "meiren" as "fairest" and "fair one" to show its "ambiguous in gender." See Cai, *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology*, 43.

⁵⁸ Kang 康, *Feng Sao Yu Yan Qing 風騷與艷情*, 71-74.

poets equate the relationship of husband and wife with the relationship between the king and the king's subjects.

As a result, it is completely acceptable for male poets to write in female voices in poetry creation, which has been categorized into three types. First, substitution (dai 代), which means the poet uses a woman's identity or voice to write, and this identity can be real or fictional. Second, imitation (ni 擬), is to imitate the works of other poets, including both male and female poets. Third, delegation (tuo 托), which uses a woman's identity or voice and seems related to the woman, but in fact, conveys the poet's feelings and aspirations.⁵⁹

After the *Classic of Poetry* and the *Verses of Chu*, during the four hundred years from the Han Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty in which Bai Juyi lived, women have always been a theme of Chinese poetry. Many images of women have been described in poetry, such as the sick mother, the capable wife, the pretty dancing girls, the women picking mulberry leaves, etc. Meanwhile, some subject matters of poetry have been developed, such as the poem for wife (zengnei shi 贈內詩), the poem of marriage (hun shi 婚詩), and the mourning poem for wife (daowang shi 悼亡詩).⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Zhang Xiaomei 張曉梅, *Nanzi Zuo Guiyin - Zhongguo Gudian Wenxue Zhong de Nan Ban Nü Zhuang Xianxiang Yanjiu* 男子作閨音——中國古典文學中的男扮女裝現象研究 (Beijing: Ren min chu ban she, 2008), 24-37.

⁶⁰ Zhou E 周峨, 'Tang Qian Nü Xing Ti Cai Shi Ge Yan Jiu' 唐前女性題材詩歌研究 [The Female Theme Poems in the Period before the Tang Dynasty] (PhD diss., Fudan University, 2007).

Chapter Two: The Image of Women in Bai Juyi's Male Voice

Writings about women in poetry were further developed in the Tang Dynasty, and Bai Juyi's writing was an important part of it. Yang Zhaozhi (楊肇祉, active 17th century, compiler) in the Ming Dynasty collected a number of Tang poems depicting women and compiled them into a book named *Tang Shi Yan Yi Pin* (唐詩艷逸品, the Rank of the Beauty and Elegance in the Tang Poetry).⁶¹ This collection divided the poems into four categories: ming yuan (名媛, renowned ladies), xiang lian (香奩, a small box for fragrant makeup), guan ji (觀妓, observing or appreciating the female entertainers or courtesans), ming hua (名花, renowned flowers). The first collection, “ming yuan”, contains 91 poems, including poems about ming fei (名妃, emperors' consorts or concubines), shu ji (淑姬, noble lady, gentlewoman), sheng ji (聲妓, courtesans with nice voices or talents), and nie qie (孽妾, concubines of low status).⁶² There are 105 poems in the “xiang lian” collection, mainly poems describing beautiful women's body shapes and charm, and most women characters are unnamed. The “guan ji” collection has 66 poems, depicting the singing and dancing of the courtesans. The last section includes 107 poems about flowers, writing about the beauty, elegance, fragrance, and colour of the flowers. Among the 262 poems related to women, 15 are Bai's poetry, making Bai the poet whose poems are collected the second most in this collection. On the one hand, this shows that

⁶¹ 'Tang Shi Yan Yi Pin; Tang Shi Si Zhong; 唐詩艷逸品; 唐詩四種', Chinese Rare Books, n.d., <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/curiosity/chinese-rare-books/49-990081029940203941>.

⁶² Qu Jingyi 曲景毅 and Wang Zhitian 王治田, eds., *Tangshi Yan Yi Pin* 唐詩艷逸品 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2019).

Bai's poems about women play a significant role in similar writings during the Tang period and are still attractive to readers in later generations. On the other hand, it is worth noting that Bai's writing is not limited to this collection, and the female characters created in Bai's poetry are not limited to the four categories.

This chapter first introduces narrative theory as the theoretical framework and then uses this theory as a tool to analyze the image of women in Bai's poetry in a male voice. The poems are divided into two parts. First, 47 poems contain clear female figures, and nine of them will be examined as examples. Additionally, 27 poems that Bai wrote for specific targets, and five of them will be examples.

2.1 Narrative Theory

Considering the aim of this study is to examine the differences between the image of women described in the male and the female voices, this thesis mainly uses two narrative concepts to read and examine the poems: narrator and focalization.

Poetry is not usually regarded as a narrative text. However, many poems demonstrate the characteristics of the narrative text, and it is impossible to define "a fixed corpus."⁶³ As Mieke Bal points out:

"We can use the theory to describe segments of non-narrative texts as well as the narrative aspects of any given text, such as, for example, [a] poem by Eliot."⁶⁴

⁶³ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Fourth, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 9. The terms in Bal's theory of narrative are more simplified than Gérard Genette's. For how to apply Gérard Genette's narrative theory to classical Chinese poetry, see Tsung-Cheng Lin, 'Time and Narration: A Study of Sequential Structure in Chinese Narrative Verse' (PhD diss., Canada, The University of British Columbia, 2006).

⁶⁴ Bal, 9.

Therefore, it is feasible to use narrative theory to analyze the “narrative aspect” of poetry.⁶⁵ The analysis of “narrator” and “focalization” helps the reader to better understand the presentation of images of women in Bai’s poetry. Examining the poems with the idea of “narrator” helps the thesis to distinguish the female voice from the male voice. If the narrator is also a female character in the poem, it is easy to tell that the poem is written in a female voice. Also, the concept of “focalization” helps this study to investigate what has been presented in the poems, i.e., how the image of women has been presented.

This section uses the first two stanzas of Bai’s “Ancient Tomb Fox” (“gu zhong hu” 古冢狐)⁶⁶ as an example to expound upon the concepts of narrator and focalization:

古冢狐，妖且老，	Ancient tomb fox, haggish and old,
化為婦人顏色好。	Turns into a woman face colour is good.

In short, “the haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman.”

2.1.1 Narrator

⁶⁵ Hühn and Kiefer have adopted narrative theory to analyze lyric poetry, see Peter Hühn and Jens Kiefer, *The Narratological Analysis of Lyric Poetry: Studies in English Poetry from the 16th to the 20th Century*, trans. Alastair Matthews (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005). Considering the main purpose of this thesis is to examine the image of women in Bai’s poetry, it is not necessary to differentiate lyric poetry from narrative poetry. Another benefit of not making this distinction is to maintain the same analytical approach and terminology consistently. Furthermore, lyric and narrative expressions in Chinese poetry “interpenetrate”, “the distinctions between lyric and narrative genres” in the European traditions “do not exist” in Chinese literature. See Dore Jesse Levy, *Chinese Narrative Poetry: The Late Han through T’ang Dynasties*, (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1988), 3-5.

⁶⁶ Bai 白, *Bai Juyi Shi Ji Jiao Zhu* 白居易詩集校注 [Poetry Anthology of Bai Juyi with Annotation], 432. The vertical bar “|” in the English translation indicates the pause in the original Chinese poems. Therefore, the meanings and orders of the Chinese characters can be best presented.

Mieke Bal recommends a three-layer distinction of the narrative texts: text, story, and fabula.⁶⁷ In this thesis, “text” refers to the poetry, including the original poems in Chinese characters, as well as the English translation.⁶⁸ “Story” is the content of the poem.⁶⁹ “Fabula” refers to what has happened logically and chronologically in a poem.⁷⁰

Bai Juyi is the author of the poems but not the narrator. The narrator, i.e., “who is doing the narrating,” is a “fictitious spokesman” utilized by the author,⁷¹ and “that agent which utters the (linguistic or other) signs which constitute the text.”⁷² If this agent is also in the story, it is called a “character.” In the study of fabula, this agent is an “actor.”⁷³ As a narrative agent, the narrator is a function instead of a person. Based on this concept, this thesis uses the pronoun “it” to refer to the narrator.⁷⁴

The narrator of the poem is always “I” in this study.⁷⁵ There are two types of the narrator “I”s. Compare the following examples:

⁶⁷ Bal, 5-6.

⁶⁸ Bal, 5. “A narrative text is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee (‘tells’ the reader, viewer, or listener) a story in a medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof.”

⁶⁹ Bal 5. “A story is the content of that text and produces a particular manifestation, inflection, and ‘colouring’ of a fabula.”

⁷⁰ Bal 5. “A fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.” This definition of fabula comprises two other terms: “event” and “actor”. Event is “the transition from one state to another state.” Can also refer to Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Rev., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), P28, “An event can be an ACTION or ACT (when the change is brought about by an agent: ‘Mary opened the window’) or a HAPPENING (when the change is not brought about by an agent: ‘the rain started to fall’).” The events in Bai’s poetry contain both action and happening. Actor refers to “agents that perform actions. They are not necessarily human.” Events, actors, time, and location are the four elements of fabula. These elements work together to form a story. Also, these elements are presented through different points of view, which is focalization. See Bal, P7.

⁷¹ Bal, 8.

⁷² Bal, 1. Some sentences in the narrative texts may not be “narrative” and may not present any events, so the texts can be “narrative”, “descriptive”, or “argumentative.” Details are in page 23-27, “Non-Narrative Comments” and “Description”.

⁷³ Bal, 8.

⁷⁴ Bal, 11.

⁷⁵ Bal, 13. “As soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject. From a grammatical point of

- 1) (I say:) The haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman.
- 2) (I say:) I turn into a beautiful woman.

In example one, “I” talks about what happened to the fox. The reader cannot tell the identity of the narrator “I”. As a narrative agent, it does not show up in the poem as a character, nor as an actor in the fabula. Thus, it is an external narrator, or EN for short. Specifically, the narrator “I” talks about other people but not itself, which is similar to the traditional third-person narrative. Conversely, in example two, “I” speaks about itself. The reader can identify that the narrator is a character in the poem, which is the fox. It is a character-bound narrator, denoted as CN.⁷⁶ The difference between the two lies in the “narrative rhetoric of truth.”⁷⁷ The event, the fox turning into a woman, is blatantly unbelievable. Whether or not the reader believes this is a fact, the adoption of the character-bound narrator (CN) in example two indicates that the fox is telling true facts about itself, with “a rhetoric of veracity.”⁷⁸ Therefore, the narrator in example two is more convincing than the narrator in example one.

At the same time, the narrators can be in different “levels of narration.” When “the narrator of the first level” stops talking and the character starts speaking, this character temporarily becomes the speaker, also known as the “second level character-bound narrator,” namely, CN2.⁷⁹ For example:

view, this narrating subject is always a ‘first person.’” As a result, there is no difference between the traditional “first person” and “third person” narratives. The narrator is always “I”.

⁷⁶ Bal, 13.

⁷⁷ Bal, 13.

⁷⁸ Bal, 13-16.

⁷⁹ Bal, 36. “Declarative verbs” indicate that someone is going to speak, which are signs of the change in the narrative level. In poetry, declarative verbs do not necessarily appear, and the readers can tell if the speaker has changed through the change of personal pronouns.

3) (I say:) I turn into a beautiful woman, the fox says.

Still, there is an unidentifiable first-level narrator “I” (EN1). “I” temporarily stops speaking, and the fox becomes the speaker (CN2). One obvious difference between the first and second levels is the time. The first-level narrator is in a “narrative ‘now,’” and it can only speak after what has happened.⁸⁰ In other words, the first-level narrator “I” cites what the fox said in the past. In addition, the quotes on the second level can be what the character says or thinks. The former is perceptible, and the latter is non-perceptible.

Compare the following example with example three:

4) (I say:) I turn into a beautiful woman, the fox thinks.

“I” (EN1) quotes the thought of the fox (CN2), which is non-perceptible. If “I” is a character in the story (for instance, a passerby who sees the fox), it is impossible for “I” (CN) to know the fox’s thoughts. Hence, if “I” (CN) narrates the thoughts of the fox or other characters, then that is the signal of fictionality.⁸¹ Moreover, when the first-level narrator quotes the fox’s thoughts, other characters in the story cannot “hear” the thoughts, but the reader can receive the information. Thus, readers may have some particular expectations for the characters. For instance, readers may expect the fox to turn into a woman. And if the fox turns into a beautiful woman who fascinates the passersby (other characters who do not know the fox’s thoughts), readers may expect the passersby to know that this beautiful woman is actually a fox spirit. To conclude, the non-

⁸⁰ Bal, 37.

⁸¹ Bal, 38-39.

perceptible “utterance” is a sign of fictionality, which can also affect the readers’ perception of the characters.⁸²

All in all, analyzing the poems with the concept of the narrator can help the reader to recognize who the speaker is and who speaks what. The narrator and focalization decide the narrative situation.⁸³ The next section is an introduction to focalization.

2.1.2 Focalization

This section discusses three important aspects of focalization: the focalizer, the focalized object, and levels of focalization.

Focalization is “the relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are presented”⁸⁴ and “the relationship between the vision, the agent that sees, and that which is seen,” which is in the layer of the story.⁸⁵ In other words, focalization shows how the elements of events, actors, time, and locations are presented through different points of view.⁸⁶ The subject of focalization is the focalizer, which “is the point from which the elements are viewed.”⁸⁷

There are two types of focalizers according to their relationships with the character. Compare the following examples:

- 1) The haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman.
- 2) The passerby sees that the haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman.

⁸² Bal, 38-39.

⁸³ Bal, 12.

⁸⁴ Bal, 133.

⁸⁵ Bal, 135.

⁸⁶ Bal, 7. See also note 55.

⁸⁷ Bal, 135. See also Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, 32.

Both examples state the same event that the fox turns into a woman. In example one, the reader cannot identify who sees the event. There is “an anonymous agent, situated outside the fabula, is functioning as focalizer,”⁸⁸ which is the external, non-character-bound focalizer (EF). Correspondingly, in example two, the character (the passerby) is the focalizer. The passerby is also an actor in fabula, and the focalization is an internal focalization. In this case, the story is presented from the perspective of the character (the passerby), and the focalizer is a character-bound focalizer (CF).⁸⁹ Also, the character-bound focalizer has “an advantage over other characters” because “the reader watches with the character’s eyes and will,” and it will be easier for the reader to accept this character’s vision.⁹⁰ In other words, in example two, the reader watches with the passerby’s eyes and will, and the passerby has an advantage over the fox.

In addition to the focalizer, another important concept of focalization is the focalized object, which can be “all of the elements.”⁹¹ The focalized objects can be landscapes or something that all characters can see, which are perceptible. For instance, “the haggish old fox” and “a beautiful woman” in example one. The focalized objects can also be a character’s dreams, thoughts, or feelings, which are impossible to be perceived by other characters, i.e., non-perceptible objects.⁹² For example:

3) The passerby sees that the haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman and feels scared.

⁸⁸ Bal, 136.

⁸⁹ Bal, 135-136.

⁹⁰ Bal, 135-136.

⁹¹ Bal, 137.

⁹² Bal, 140.

The reader perceives the non-perceptible object, the passerby's feeling of fright, so the passerby has an advantage over the fox. The reader knows the passerby's fear and takes the passerby's side against the fox. However, in example four, when the non-perceptible object changes:

4) The passerby sees that the haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman. The fox feels scared.

In this case, the reader might worry about the fox. The fox has an advantage over the passerby because the reader knows its fright. Consequently, focalization can manipulate the reader's perception of the characters.⁹³

The third important aspect of focalization is the levels of focalization. Compare example five with example two:

2) The passerby sees that the haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman.

5) I see that the haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman.

The focalization is complex in both examples. In example two, the passerby (CF) is on the second level, labelled as CF2. Meanwhile, there is an unknown first-level external focalizer (EF1) that focalizes the passerby (CF2). The focalization on the second level is "an embedded focalization."⁹⁴ Similarly, in example five, there is also a first-level external focalizer that focalizes the character "I", but the reader can identify this focalizer as the character "I". This "I" focalizes what it has experienced in the past on the first level. Thus, in the discussion on focalization, there is no difference between the "first-

⁹³ Bal, 141.

⁹⁴ Bal, 141-143.

person narrative” and “third-person narrative.”⁹⁵ “All verbs that communicate perception,” for example, “see” and “hear”, are signs of the change in the levels.⁹⁶ The levels are not always distinguishable from one to another. The EF can also “watch along” with a CF.⁹⁷ When EF1 and CF2 focalize together, it is a “double focalization,” denoted as EF1+CF2. If it is difficult to tell who is focalizing; it is an “ambiguous focalization,” denoted as EF1/CF2.⁹⁸ In example six:

6) The passerby sees that the haggish old fox turns into a beautiful woman. The woman walks slowly.

It is hard to tell who sees the scene that “the woman walks slowly.” It seems like the passerby but can also be an unknown first-level external focalizer. Thus, the focalization is ambiguous.

This distinction can provide a better reading experience for the reader.⁹⁹ The focalization can help the reader to discern “who allows whom to watch whom?”¹⁰⁰ As a result, the reader can better understand what has been presented in the poem and how they are presented. The concepts of narrator and focalization can help explain why the reader easily empathizes with the female characters when a poem is written in a female voice. In the following sections, this thesis will adopt the concepts of narrator and focalization to interpret and examine the selected poems.

⁹⁵ Bal, 143.

⁹⁶ Bal, 143.

⁹⁷ Bal, 144.

⁹⁸ Bal, 144.

⁹⁹ Bal, 146.

¹⁰⁰ Bal, 143.

2.2 The Image of Women in the Poems Containing Specific Female Figures

The section studies poems that contain explicit female figures. Bai Juyi described a variety of women in these poems, such as the beautiful woman with virtue, the palace lady, the female fox spirit, nuns, and courtesans. In other words, the female figures are the objects of Bai's writing. Hence, Bai maintains his own identity as a male poet during his writing and writes in his "male voice". Among the 47 poems, 18 of them have an external narrator (EN), and 29 have a character-bound narrator (CN), which shows that poems with a character-bound narrator (CN) have an advantage. As a result, there are more poems with the "rhetoric of veracity." Narrations from the CN shorten the distance between the reader and the characters. Thus, the reader can understand and appreciate the story that the character narrates more closely. In other words, the character-bound narrator promotes the reader's perception of the story.

In these poems, Bai usually portrays women by depicting their appearance, clothing, accessories, and actions. The "Ancient Tomb Fox" ("gu zhong hu" 古冢狐)¹⁰¹ is the only poem that describes the female fox spirit in detail:

古冢狐，妖且老，	1	Ancient tomb fox, haggish and old,
化為婦人顏色好。		Turns into a woman face colour is good.
頭變雲鬢面變妝，		Head changes into cloud-like hair face into makeup,
大尾曳作長紅裳。		Big tail drags as the long red skirt.
徐徐行傍荒村路，	5	Slowly slowly walks along the deserted village road,
日欲暮時人靜處。		When the sunset comes where people are quiet.

¹⁰¹ Bai 白, *Bai Juyi Shi Ji Jiao Zhu* 白居易詩集校注 [Poetry Anthology of Bai Juyi with Annotation], 432. The vertical bar "|" in the English translation indicates the pause in the original Chinese poems. Therefore, the meanings and orders of the Chinese characters can be best presented.

或歌或舞或悲啼，	At times sings dances sadly cries,
翠眉不舉花顏低。	Emerald eyebrows do not rise flower face is down.
忽然一笑千萬態，	Suddenly smiles incomparably graceful,
見者十人八九迷。 10	Ten people see that eight or nine are fascinated.
假色迷人猶若是，	Fake beauty fascinates people already as such,
真色迷人應過此。	True beauty fascinates people should exceed this.
彼真此假俱迷人，	That is true this is fake both fascinate people,
人心惡假貴重真。	People's hearts dislike fake value true.
狐假女妖害猶淺， 15	Fake fox female spirit the harm is less,
一朝一夕迷人眼。	A morning a night fascinates people's eyes.
女為狐媚害即深，	Women become foxy the harm is more,
日長月長溺人心。	Long day long month drown people's hearts.
何況褒姒之色善蠱惑，	Moreover Bao and Da's beauty adept in bewitchment, ¹⁰²
能喪人家覆人國。 20	Can lose people's homes destroy people's kingdom.
君看為害淺深間，	You see the harm less and more,
豈將假色同真色？	How could fake beauty be equal to true beauty?

The initial ten lines of the poem tell the story of a fox transforming into a beautiful lady to attract people, and the rest of the verses are the author's comments on this story. There are several major events in the fabula:

- 1) An old fox turns into a beautiful woman.
- 2) The fox spirit (or the beautiful woman) walks slowly on the road, singing for a while, dancing for a while, and crying for a while.

¹⁰² Bao is Baosi (褒姒). Da is Daji (妲己). Both are beautiful ladies with a bad reputation in Chinese history. They were favoured by the kings, and both kings lost their reigns.

3) The woman shows a beautiful smile, and 80 or 90 percent of the people who see the smile are fascinated.

The location of the events is a “deserted village road,” and the time is when the sun is going down. The actors, or the characters in the story, are the fox spirit and the passersby. Narrator “I” is not an actor in the fabula. Therefore, it is an external narrator (EN).

Correspondingly, in terms of the focalization, there is an anonymous, external focalizer (EF) outside of fabula. This focalizer is not a character in the story and “borrows” the vision of the narrator “I”. The focalized objects are the characters and surroundings of the story, which are perceptible. The eyes of “I” fall upon the fox spirit at the very beginning, focalizing it as “haggish and old.” Additionally, “I” (EF) pays attention to the changing process of the fox. “Haggish” and “old” have changed to a face with good colour, which is the extreme opposite. The fox’s head becomes the thick hair of the woman, the fox’s face becomes a face with makeup, and the fox’s tail becomes a long red dress. Then, the horizon expands. “I” focalizes the actions of the woman and the surroundings. “Slowly slowly” (徐徐) indicates that she walks very slowly, and the way she walks can be elegant. The woman walks in a desolate village. The sun is going down, so the sunlight is getting dim, and it is very quiet. As she walks, her actions change: she sings, dances, and cries. Next, the vision of “I” (EF) zooms in and falls on the eyebrows and face. After this series of changes of visual distance (near - far - near), “I” finally sees the most important focalized object: the woman’s face. At this moment, the woman “suddenly smiles,” showing an incomparably attractive smile, and the passersby on the side are immediately fascinated. Ultimately, the focalization successfully shows the fox

spirit's capacity to enchant people, creating an image of “women with enchanting beauty”. It follows logically that the poet starts to comment from line 11, warning people not to be infatuated by the beauty.

This image of women in the “Ancient Tomb Fox” is rare in Bai's poetry. The “Song of Jianjian” (“Jianjian Yin” 簡簡吟)¹⁰³ shows a completely different female figure:

蘇家小女名簡簡，	1	Su family's little girl name is Jianjian,
芙蓉花腮柳葉眼。		Lotus-flower cheeks willow-leaf eyes.
十一把鏡學點妝，		Eleven (years old) holds mirror learns putting on makeup,
十二抽針能繡裳。		Twelve (years old) takes needle can embroider the cloth.
十三行坐事調品，	5	Thirteen (years old) all the time practices the instruments,
不肯迷頭白地藏。		Not willing to confuse the mind groundless concealment. ¹⁰⁴
玲瓏雲髻生菜樣，		Exquisite cloud-like hair shape of fresh leaves,
飄飄風袖薔薇香。		Floating wind sleeves rose fragrance.
殊姿異態不可狀，		Special posture unusual gesture beyond description,
忽忽轉動如有光。	10	Suddenly turns as if shimmering.
二月繁霜殺桃李，		February's heavy frost kills the peach and plum,
明年欲嫁今年死。		Next year to marry this year (she) dies.
丈人阿母勿悲啼，		Father and mother (of Jianjian) do not sadly cry,

¹⁰³ Bai 白, 970. English translations in the brackets are not in the original Chinese text but are added by me to better understand the meaning of the Chinese text. For another version of translation, see Juyi Bai, Howard S. Levy, and Henry Willis Wells, *Translations from Po Chü-i's Collected Works*, vol. 2, (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, 1971), 130, “Singing of Simple-Simple”.

¹⁰⁴ Another possible explanation for this stanza is that Jianjian is unwilling to cover her head to play the children's game, which shows that Jianjian is different from other children. See Bai 白, 971. “Mi tou 迷頭” means “covering the head”. “Bai di cang 白地藏” refers to a children's game.

此女不是凡夫妻。	This girl is not the mortal husband and wife.
恐是天仙謫人世， 15	Supposedly (she) is a heavenly immortal relegated to the human world,
只合人間十三歲。	Only in the human world for thirteen years.
大都好物不堅牢，	Mostly what is fine is not sturdy,
彩雲易散琉璃脆。	Iridescent clouds easily disperse colourful glasses are fragile.

The poem tells the story of Su Jianjian's early death. The first ten lines are a description of Jianjian, and the last six lines are the author's comments. The vital event appears in line 12: Jianjian dies. The external narrator "I" seems to be a person who is familiar with Jianjian, recounting Jianjian's life for three years before her decease.

The focalization of "I" (EF) begins with Jianjian's countenance, comparing her face to the flower and her eyes to the willow's leaves. Then, the focalized objects shift to the time and the skills Jianjian has learned. The rapid transition of the three numbers (11, 12, and 13) represents that the day moves forward, which also implies that Jianjian learns fast. During these three years, Jianjian has learned how to use makeup, make clothes, and play musical instruments, which are all perceptible focalized objects. Line six is the focalizer's impression of Jianjian, showing that she is intelligent and not willing to confuse herself. Eventually, all these skills accomplish the thirteen-year-old Jianjian, and the vision of "I" (EF) shifts back to the "whole" Jianjian. The visual distance between "I" (the focalizer) and Jianjian (the character) changes during the "looking" process. The gaze of "I" shifts from Jianjian's hair to her sleeves, and then the scent and her indescribable beauty. At this point, "I" (EF) is looking at Jianjian from head to toe, and it

seems that she is glowing. This change in the visual distance makes Jianjian the centre of the focalization. This is a gorgeous moment both in Jianjian’s life and in the readers’ eyes, and Jianjian also disappears at this moment. The subsequent comments point out the main idea of this poem: beautiful things are always fragile. This poem is a lament of Jianjian, showing an image of a “beautiful, intelligent young lady who passes away untimely”.

Describing women’s makeup, costumes, and actions is a common way of expressing women’s beauty in Chinese poetry.¹⁰⁵ Bai uses the same method in his poetry. Whereas in the poem “Feelings about the Deceased Zhang Pushe’s Courtesans” (“Gan gu Zhang pushe zhu ji” 感故張僕射諸妓),¹⁰⁶ Bai describes little of the courtesans’ appearance but presents the image of “expensive and beautiful courtesans” by telling the experience of Zhang pushe:

黃金不惜買蛾眉，	Yellow gold at all costs (Zhang) buys the arched brows, ¹⁰⁷
揀得如花三四枝。	Picks and gets (the courtesans who are) like the flowers three or four branches.

¹⁰⁵ According to the discussions in Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin’s class, PAAS 353: Survey of Classical Chinese Literature. Some examples are “A Splendid Woman” (“Shuo ren” 碩人), “The Officer of the Guard” (“Yu lin lang” 羽林郎), and “Southeast the Peacock Flies” (“Kongque dongnan fei” 孔雀東南飛). For instance, in “Southeast the Peacock Flies”, the female character is described as: “On her feet she wore a pair of silk shoes, on her head tortoise-shell combs shone.” (足下躡絲履，頭上玳瑁光。) See Lin, ‘Time and Narration: A Study of Sequential Structure in Chinese Narrative Verse’, 22.

¹⁰⁶ Bai 白, 1035-1036. “Pushe” is an official title. Zhang push refers to Zhang Yin (張愔). Some later scholars believed that Bai wrote this poem for Zhang’s favoured courtesan Guan Panpan (關盼盼) to satirize that Guan didn’t die along with Zhang. There have been a lot of contentions on this topic, and the records are inconsistent in details. See Bai 白, 1208-1210. With the narratological approach, the analysis in this thesis is based on the text, i.e., what the readers can see from the text in front of them. No evidence in the title and the content of the poem can prove that this poem is written for a specific courtesan or Guan panpan. Thus, this poem is classified into this section but not the next section (2.3).

¹⁰⁷ “E 蛾” means the moth, which means that the eyebrows are like the moth’s feelers, long and arched.

歌舞教成心力盡，	Song and dance the teaching is accomplished (mental and physical) efforts exhaust,
一朝身去不相隨。	Once (Zhang) passes away (the courtesans) do not follow.

It tells a simple story. Zhang pushed spent a lot of money to buy three or four beautiful courtesans and spent a lot of effort on them. After they finally learned to sing and dance, Zhang passed away. There are two main events in fabula:

- 1) Zhang buys three or four courtesans.
- 2) Zhang dies.

The characters in the story (or actors in the fabula) are Zhang and the three or four courtesans. Narrator “I” is not an actor in the fabula, so it is an external narrator. Readers can perceive from the text that this is a narrator who sympathizes with Zhang’s misfortunes.

In terms of focalization, the focalizer is an external focalizer (EF) and can be regarded as “I”. The first object “I” focalizes is not the main character Zhang, but the “yellow gold” (huang jin 黃金). The gold is an element that connects the characters in the story: Zhang purchases the courtesans with the gold. Without this essential element, Zhang will not have had interactions with the courtesans. Meanwhile, the gold indicates the expensiveness of these courtesans, which is the central feature of the image of the courtesans. They are kinds of merchandise that can be traded with gold, but not free human beings.

Another important element is Zhang’s cautious attitude: he is picky. Zhang only picks three or four who “are like the flowers.” The descriptions of the female characters’

appearance are relatively simple. The “arched brows” (e mei 蛾眉) represent the courtesans, and the word “flower” (hua 花) expresses their beauty. There is no description of clothing or action, but the image of an “expensive and beautiful courtesan” has been successfully revealed. Next, “I” (EF) focalizes the results of this incident. The teaching of the song and dance is “accomplished” (cheng 成), and Zhang’s mental and physical strength is “exhausted” (jin 盡). The “appearance” of the song and dance and the “disappearance” of Zhang’s mental and physical strength generate a confrontation. This confrontation can make the reader presume that the appearance of the song and dance has caused the disappearance of Zhang’s strength, or it is the disappeared strength that has contributed to the development of the song and dance. Furthermore, it is an implication of time. The action of “accomplish teaching” (jiao cheng 教成) takes time, and the courtesans need time to learn how to sing and dance. Considering the efforts that Zhang has spent on teaching, it can be a lengthy period, maybe several months or even years. In contrast, “I” focalizes Zhang’s death in the last stanza. “Once”, or “yi zhao” (一朝) in Chinese, is a very short period of time, and death happens in a moment. This shift of focalization from a long period to a short one reflects a cruel contrast. Zhang spares no expense and painstakingly cultivates the courtesans, and at the second of his death, they are away from him. By recounting Zhang’s misfortunes and expressing a kind of regret in life, the poet also creates a distinctive image of the courtesans. As the title shows, this poem conveys the “feelings” (gan 感) of the poet, and the reader cannot know the feelings of the characters.

Another example is the focalization of the natural environment and the facial details. In “The Pining Woman’s Brows” (“sifu mei”思婦眉),¹⁰⁸ Bai depicts a melancholy woman through the portrayal of her brows:

春風搖蕩自東來，	Spring wind sways comes from the east,
折盡櫻桃綻盡梅。	Pulls all the cherry and peach (blossoms) blooms all the plum (blossoms).
唯餘思婦愁眉結，	Only the pining woman is left worried brows’ knot,
無限春風吹不開。	Infinite spring wind (can) not blow (the knot) open.

This poem does not contain a specific story but two clear events:

- 1) The spring wind comes, and many flowers have blossomed.
- 2) The spring wind cannot unknot the knotted brows.

The elements of the events are the spring wind, flowers, and the pining woman (the actors in the fabula). The external narrator “I” (EN) seems to be a person who is enjoying the flowers and unintentionally sees the woman.

Therefore, an external focalizer, “I” (EF), focalizes the “spring wind”, and the changes the wind brings. Because of the spring breeze, the flowers are blooming. The word “all” in the second stanza, or “jin” (盡) in Chinese, shows the power of the spring wind: all flowers have bloomed. The field of vision of “I” is wide. It covers the waving wind from the east and all the blooming flowers. Next, the woman’s eyebrows attract the attention of “I” (EF), and the vision shifts from the sea of flowers to one single point: the “worried brows’ knot” (chou mei jie 愁眉結). The woman’s smile is often likened to a

¹⁰⁸ Bai 白, 1569.

flower. Thus, if there is no smile on a woman's face, there is no "flower". Moreover, the focalized object here is the knotted eyebrows, which can trigger the reader to think of the buds of the flowers – that is, flowers that have not yet bloomed. Therefore, there is a confrontation between the mighty power of the spring wind and the sorrow of the woman. Spring comes with its incomparably powerful force of nature, and all the flowers bloom, with one exception. The woman's tightly frowning eyebrows stand out amid the blooming flowers. At this point, "I" once again focalizes the "infinite spring wind." However, even the infinite spring wind cannot make the woman smile, and the "knot" (結) is not "open" (kai 開). The vision of "I" moves back and forth between the wind and the eyebrows, which reminds the reader of the confrontation between the two objects.¹⁰⁹ As a result, the wife's longing for her husband and the sorrows that arise from it exceed the spring wind, presenting an image of the pining woman with "intense yearning and infinite sorrows" to the reader.

In the above four poems, the narrator "I" is not a character in the story and can be regarded as the poet. It seems to the reader that the poet is just recording a story about some other people. For example, the poem "Feelings about the Deceased Zhang Pushe's Courtesans" recounts the experience of Zhang, someone Bai knows in his life. But still, the reader does not have any evidence to confirm if the poet indeed "sees" what has happened. In other words, Bai cannot prove that he was "present" when the events in the

¹⁰⁹ In PAAS 353: Survey of Classical Chinese Literature, Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin discusses Liu Zongyuan's (柳宗元, 773-819) poem "River Snow" ("Jiang xue" 江雪), in which the focalization is similar. "This poem's narrative focus zooms in from a thousand hills, to ten thousand paths, and then to the lone boat... and finally to the tiny point of a fishing line that touches a piece of snow on the river." See also Tsung-Cheng Lin, 'Yuan Mei's (1716-1798) Narrative Verse', *Monumenta Serica* 53 (2005), 88. This focalization helps the reader "perceive the description as an integral whole."

poem happened. Thus, it is possible that Bai hears the story from others, or it can be his imagination. Correspondingly, in the following five examples, the narrator “I” is a character in the story with “a rhetoric of veracity.”¹¹⁰ The character-bound narrator (CN) can also be regarded as the poet. It seems to the reader that the poet recounts his own experiences and depicts various images of women. Accordingly, the reader is “listening” to the character speaking about themselves, so the distance between the reader and the character is closer. Also, this character has an advantage over other characters because the reader can easily accept the character’s point of view.

For example, there are two character-bound narrators in “The Salt Merchant’s Wife” (“Yanshang fu” 鹽商婦).¹¹¹ The characters talk about their own experience, which can persuade the reader that the characters are speaking true facts about themselves:

鹽商婦，多金帛，	The salt merchant’s wife (has) lots of gold and silk,
不事田農與蠶績。	Not working in the field and (not raising) silkworms (and not) spinning.
南北東西不失家，	South north east west does not lose home,
風水為鄉船作宅。	Wind and water make the hometown the boat is the house.
本是揚州小家女， 5	(She) is the daughter of a small family in Yangzhou,
嫁得西江大商客。	Marries the major merchant from Jiangxi.
綠鬟富去金釵多，	Shinning rich hair gold hairpins are many,
皓腕肥來銀釧窄。	White chubby wrist the silver bracelet is narrow.
前呼蒼頭後叱婢，	At front call the servants at back shout at the maids,
問爾因何得如此？ 10	Ask you why it is this way?
婿作鹽商十五年，	(My) husband has been the salt merchant for fifteen years,

¹¹⁰ Bal, 13-16.

¹¹¹ Bai 白, 412.

不屬州縣屬天子。	Not belong to the counties (but) belong to the emperor.
每年鹽利入官時，	Every year when the profit of salt comes in,
少入官家多入私。	Less into the feudal official more into the private (family).
官家利薄私家厚， 15	The official profits are less private profits are more,
鹽鐵尚書遠不知。	The salt and iron officials are far from knowing.
何況江頭魚米賤，	Not to mention by the river fish and rice are cheap,
紅膾黃橙香稻飯。	Red meat yellow orange fragrant rice.
飽食濃妝倚柁樓，	Eat (her) fill thick makeup lean on the cabin,
兩朵紅腮花欲綻。 20	Two red cheeks the flowers are about to bloom.
鹽商婦，有幸嫁鹽商。	The salt merchant's wife has the luck to marry the salt merchant.
終朝美飯食，	All day nice food,
終歲好衣裳。	All year fine clothes.
好衣美食有來處，	Fine clothes and nice food have their origins,
亦須慚愧桑弘羊。 25	Must also be ashamed (facing) Sang Hongyang. ¹¹²
桑弘羊，死已久，	Sang Hongyang, dead for a long time,
不獨漢時今亦有。	Not just the Han dynasty now there are (people like Sang Hongyang) as well.

There are two main characters in the story: “I” and the salt merchant’s wife. The story takes place on the boat where the salt merchant’s wife lives when she is eating. The main events are:

1) “I” sees that the salt merchant’s wife does not have to work but lives a comfortable life.

¹¹² Sang Hongyang 桑弘羊 was a civil servant in the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE-8 CE) who was in charge of finance, including the trading of salt and iron.

2) “I” asks the reason.

3) The salt merchant’s wife answers.

There are two character-bound narrators. “I” (CN1) is on the first level, and the salt merchant’s wife (CN2) is on the second level. “I” quotes from the merchant’s wife from lines 11 to 18. Based on the text, the reader can speculate that “I” might be eating with the merchant’s wife and learning about her life through observation and conversation.

The character “I” is also a character-bound focalizer (CF) who “sees” everything. The reader follows the vision of “I” and can only know what “I” has seen and heard, so it is easy for the reader to accept the points of view that are presented by the character “I”. For instance, in the initial nine lines, “I” (CF) focalizes another character in the story, the salt merchant’s wife. “I” first notices that she “has a lot of gold and silk” (duo jin bo 多金帛) and does not have to work, then starts to “witness” the details of her life.

Simultaneously, the reader sees what “I” sees and finds out that the woman lives on the boat and that her husband is a major salt merchant. Perceiving the gold hairpins, silver bracelet, and the hordes of servants, at this point, the reader is as curious as “I” does: why can she live a life like this? Then, the reader and “I” hear the answer from the woman, from lines 11 to 18. After the answer, “I” sees the woman sitting on the boat with heavy makeup, and the eyes of “I” fall upon her red cheeks.

Different from the external focalizer who “sees” every aspect of the story, this character-bound focalizer (“I”) is just a listener or a recorder when the merchant’s wife (CN2) speaks. In other words, the readers may feel that they are next to the character “I”,

standing in front of the woman and listening to her recounting. The distance between the reader and the character shortens. This method allows the reader to face the characters directly, getting more involved in the story or what has happened to the speakers. Thus, the reader can have a more lifelike reading experience.

On the other hand, as Bal mentions, a character-bound focalizer “brings about bias and limitation.”¹¹³ The last few lines are the comments on the story, or what “I” feels after hearing the woman’s answer. Reading lines 21-23, the reader may suppose that the narrator “I” is someone who envies the life of the salt merchant’s wife. But lines 24-27 reveal the narrator’s dissatisfaction with the salt and iron policy. Therefore, the reader can speculate that the narrator “I” can be a government official who disagrees with the current policy. This explains the bias and limitation of the focalizer “I”. “I” constantly focalizes the comfortable life of the woman and her account of the profits of salt trading, without mentioning any other aspects such as the woman’s emotions or love story. The reader ends up with the image of a woman who “lives a comfy life without working”. Besides, from the author’s perspective, the bias and limitation of the character-bound focalizer can also be the reason to write with this method. Bai allows the characters to speak about themselves with their constraints, for the purpose of truly reflecting on the people’s thoughts and circumstances at his times and providing a lifelike reading experience to the reader.

Bai highlights the female character’s identity and life in “The Salt Merchant’s Wife”. An opposite example is the female singer in “The Night Hearing the Singer (Stay

¹¹³ Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 135.

in Ezhou)” (“Ye wen ge zhe [Su Ezhou]” 夜聞歌者 [宿鄂州]).¹¹⁴ The reader is completely unaware of the singer’s identity but deeply understands her emotions. In the poem, “I” (CN) recounts an experience when passing by the Parrot Islet (yingwu zhou 鸚鵡洲):

夜泊鸚鵡洲，	1	Night mooring at the Parrot Islet,
秋江月澄澈。		Autumn river bright moon.
鄰船有歌者，		The neighbouring boat there is a singer,
發詞堪愁絕。		The lyrics (she) sings are extremely sad.
歌罷繼以泣，	5	The song stops the sob follows,
泣聲通復咽。		The sound of sobs becomes weeping again.
尋聲見其人，		Follow the sound see that person,
有婦顏如雪。		There is a woman face is like the snow.
獨倚帆檣立，		Leaning alone on the mast standing,
娉婷十七八。	10	Graceful gestures (looks like) seventeen or eighteen.
夜淚似真珠，		Night tears are like the pearls,
雙雙墮明月。		Both fall (in the) bright moon.
借問誰家婦，		Ask who this woman is,
歌泣何淒切。		Song and sobs why so plaintive.
一問一霑襟，	15	One (question) asks (tears) wet the shirts once,
低眉終不說。		Lowered eyebrows after all (she) does not speak.

The story takes place on an autumn night in the Parrot Islet, and the characters are “I” and the singer. The fabula contains the following main events:

¹¹⁴ Bai 白, 820. See also Bai, Levy, and Wells, *Translations from Po Chü-i's Collected Works*, vol.2, 132-133.

- 1) “I” passes by the parrot islet and hears the singer’s song.
- 2) The singer starts crying after singing.
- 3) “I” follows the sobs and finds the singer.
- 4) “I” asks the singer why she is sad.

The character “I” is also the narrator. It is a witness who faithfully records everything it sees.

The story has a complex focalization. In line 7, the verb “see” (jian 見) communicates perception, indicating that “I” (CF2) is on the second level. Thus, this is a “double focalization” (EF1+CF2), which can be regarded as the character “I” recalling its own experience. On the first-level focalization, “I” (EF1) is an “older myself”, focalizing the events that “I” (CF2) has experienced in the past. The character focalizer “I” (CF2), who is focalizing on the second level, can be seen as a “younger myself”, and the focalizations of the two coincide. Both focalizers are “I”, but not the same “I”.

Taking the second-level focalization as the example. At the beginning of the story, the character “I” is looking at the moon by the river. The “autumn river” (qiu jiang 秋江) generates a feeling of coldness. In addition, a “river” is a stretch of water, and the “moon” is a single point above the water, but the coverage of the “bright” (chengche 澄澈) moonlight can be infinite. The focalization of the night, the river and the moon construct a quiet, empty, and vast space with moonlight. Next, “I” (CF2) hears the singer’s song, noticing the melancholy in the lyrics. This is followed by the voice of the singer’s cries and sobs. The additions of the sounds trigger the reader’s curiosity: who is crying? Therefore, the sounds from the singer become the pull, which brings the

character “I” to the singer. While the distance between “I” and the singer gets closer, the gaze of “I” (CF2) naturally falls on the crying person. The singer is a woman with a pale face, alone, leaning against the mast with a nice posture, and she seems like 17 or 18 years old. Then the sight zooms in and shifts to the singer’s tears: tears in the moonlight, which are round and bright like pearls. The tears merge into the moonlight, and the singer’s sadness seems to spread with the moonlight as well. Every time “I” asks, I can see the singer’s tears fall and wet the clothes. But why is she so sad? All “I” can see are her low-hanging eyebrows. The singer’s choice of silence (bu shuo 不說) further emphasizes the intensity of her grief. There is no way to say it out, so the singer can only express her sorrow through the song and her tears. No one knows the reason for the grief, and no one can doubt the authenticity of the sadness. Bai combines the visual sense and the auditory sense to create the image of the “sad female singer”.

The adoption of the character-bound narrator can make the reader believe that Bai is telling true facts about himself. It seems to the reader that Bai indeed saw the singer and then wrote about what happened between them.

Just as “The Night Hearing the Singer (Stay in Ezhou)” shows, Bai adopts different methods in his writing, depicting various women’s appearance and experiences. In the poem “The Neighboring Lady” (“Lin nü”鄰女),¹¹⁵ Bai depicts a beautiful lady through the focalization of voice:

¹¹⁵ Bai 白, 1572. “Lin nü” (鄰女) can refer to a young girl, or the girl next door. The lady in the poem is usually regarded as Xiangling 湘靈, Bai’s beloved in his early years. They loved each other for many years but didn’t end up together. This poem is written during 816-822, so it can be Bai’s reminiscence of Xiangling. But again, since no evidence in the text can prove that this poem is written for Xiangling, this poem is classified into this section but not the next section (2.3).

娉婷十五勝天仙，	Graceful gesture fifteen (years old) (her beauty) surpass the heavenly immortals,
白日姮娥旱地蓮。	Daytime Heng'e lotus on the land. ¹¹⁶
何處閒教鸚鵡語，	Where (does she) idly teach the parrot to speak,
碧紗窗下繡牀前。	Under the green gauze window in front of the embroidering bed.

The first two lines are descriptions of the lady's age and beauty. The third line is the transition from the lady's appearance to her voice, i.e., the transition from the visual sense to the auditory sense. The last stanza shows the location of the voice and also where the lady is. There are two events in the fabula:

- 1) "I" hears voices.
- 2) The lady teaches the parrot to speak.

The characters are "I" and the neighbouring lady (lin nü 鄰女). Although the character "I" does not show up in the poem, the title "neighbouring lady" and the voices in the poem already imply that the character "I" is in the story. In addition, "where" (he chu 何處) is the thought of "I", which is non-perceptible unless "I" articulates it out. Thus, there is a second-level character-bound narrator "I" (CN2). The locations of the story are the homes of "I" and the lady next door, and the reader can speculate that the two characters are separated by a wall. Hence, the characters cannot see each other. The descriptions of the lady's beauty can be seen as the lady's appearance in the memory of

¹¹⁶ Heng'e (姮娥), also known as Chang'e, is a beautiful fairy living on the moon in the myth. Han di lian 旱地蓮 is nasturtium, and literarily means the lotus on the ground. It can also refer to the peony (mu dan 牡丹) in classical Chinese poetry. In general, Chinese poets use flowers to represent the beauty of the women.

the character “I”, namely, “I” (EF1) focalizes what “I” (CF2) saw in the past. It is noticeable that the focalization here is not a specific depiction of the woman’s face or clothing but just a general description. The female character is a beautiful 15-year-old girl who is more beautiful than the fairy, as beautiful as Heng’e, and as beautiful as a flower. This vague description suggests that “I” is not looking at the lady at the moment, so “I” does not have any details. It is also an implication of the shadowy memory, indicating that “I” does not see the lady often. And just as the reader tries to figure out this inexplicit beauty, the voice of the lady appears. The owner of this voice is leisurely teaching a parrot to speak.

In chronological and logical order, the lady must speak first, then “I” can hear her voice. But the order of the events in the text is reversed. Accordingly, the first thing the reader sees is that “I” is wondering where the sound comes from. Then “I” recognizes that it is the voice of the neighbouring lady and realizes that she is teaching the parrot to speak. Such an arrangement can hint at the low volume of the voice, which supports the reader’s speculation that the lady is next door because the sound from the next door feels different than the sound from one’s own home. At this point, the sound is the only thing that “I” can perceive, and the sound is also the only focalized object. Thus, “I” further focalizes the “content” of the sound, noticing a feeling of leisure in the sound (xian jiao 閒教), and the voice is teaching the parrot to speak. This motivates an imagination of the location, and the reader then sees the imaginary vision of “the green gauze window” (bi sha chuang 碧紗窗) and “the embroidering bed” (xiu chuang 繡牀). The focalization of the voice, the window, and the bed make the beauty of the lady more concrete to the

reader, and the reader can also imagine the lady's beauty based on the information "I" provides. It is possible that the whole story is out of the imagination of "I", but the perception of the sound can make the reader believes that "I" speaks about a true experience. Finally, the reader perceives an image of "a beautiful and laid-back" young lady.

In addition to the above images of women, Bai also wrote about many courtesans in his poems. In these poems, Bai is often the person watching a performance, or it indicates in the title that Bai is attending a banquet. Thus, the narrator "I" is a character-bound narrator (CN) speaking about the performance or the banquet. Moreover, other characters, i.e., the female figures in the poems, do not "speak", so the reader cannot know their emotions or thoughts. Therefore, the character "I" has an advantage over other characters, and these images of women can be similar to each other. For example, in the poem "Zhezhi Courtesan" ("Zhezhi ji" 柘枝妓)¹¹⁷:

平鋪一合錦筵開，	(The stage) spreads out encloses fancy feast starts,
連擊三聲畫鼓催。	Consecutive beats three sounds painted drum urges.
紅蠟燭移桃葉起，	Red candle shifts Taoye rises, ¹¹⁸
紫羅衫動柘枝來。	Purple fine gauze clothes move Zhezhi comes.
帶垂鈿胯花腰重，	Draped streamer decorated crotch flower waist heavy,
帽轉金鈴雪面迴。	Hat turns golden bell snowy face rotates.
看即曲終留不住，	Soon the music is over cannot stay,
雲飄雨送向陽臺。	Clouds float rain farewells towards the Yangtai. ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Bai 白, 1823. Zhezhi (柘枝) is the name of a folk dance.

¹¹⁸ Taoye (桃葉) is the name of a courtesan. Both Taoye and Zhezhi in the poem represent the dancer.

¹¹⁹ Bai 白, 1823, Yangtai 陽臺 is an allusion of the goddess of Gaotang (高唐).

In the poem, “I” (CF2) focalizes the Zhezhi courtesan, and almost every stanza contains an event. “I” first sees the background of the banquet, “spread out” (pingpu 平鋪) indicates that the stage is ready, and the word “start” (kai 開) announces the beginning of the banquet. Then “I” hears the three drumbeats and sees that the red candles and violet dancing dress begin to move. The word “rise” (qi 起) declares the beginning of the dance, and “come” (lai 來) shows that the dancer is moving from far to near. After the dance starts, “I” totally focuses on the dancer. The vision of “I” shifts from the dancer’s streamer to the crotch decoration and then to the waist. Next, “I” looks up at the dancer’s rotating hat and the golden bell on it and finally stares at her face.¹²⁰ At the same time, “red” (hong 紅), “purple” (zi 紫), “golden” (jin 金), and “snowy” (xue 雪) produce a contrast of the colours, which also shows the attractiveness of the dance. In the end, the music ends, and the dancer leaves. “I” wishes that the dancer could stay, comparing the dancer to the goddess and hoping to see her again. Through the focalization of the sounds, colours, costumes, and actions, Bai outlines the image of a dancer with exquisite dance skills.

Similarly, “The Joyful Joint Feast with the Niu Family Courtesans on a Rainy Night” (“Yu niu jia ji le yu ye he yan” 與牛家妓樂雨夜合宴)¹²¹ presents a grand banquet of music and dance:

¹²⁰ According to the discussions in Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin’s PAAS 353: Survey of Classical Chinese Literature, this is a traditional way to describe the beauty of women in classical Chinese poetry. For example, in the poem “Southeast the Peacock Flies” (“Kongque dongnan fei” 孔雀東南飛), the poet describes the female character’s feet, shoes, head, waist, ears, fingers, lips, and her steps.

¹²¹ Bai 白, 2605. See also Juyi Bai, Howard S. Levy, and Henry Willis Wells, *Translations from Po Chü-i’s Collected Works*, vol. 4, (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, 1978), 85.

玉管清絃聲旖旎，	Jade pipe clear strings the sounds are charming,
翠釵紅袖坐參差。	Green hairpins red sleeves sitting unevenly.
兩家合奏洞房夜，	Two families play (the instruments) together the wedding night,
八月連陰秋雨時。	The eighth month continuously cloudy the time of the autumn rain.
歌臉有情凝睇久，	Singer's face have emotions staring for a long time,
舞腰無力轉裙遲。	Dancer's waist without strength turning the skirt slow.
人間歡樂無過此，	The human world's joy not more than this,
上界西方即不知。	The upper realm in the West does not know.

Readers can learn from the title that this poem is about a joint feast that Bai attends on a rainy night. The characters in the poem are “I” and the courtesans of the Niu family. There are no descriptions of other guests, just the telling of what “I” sees and how “I” feels. Meanwhile, the reader is watching the performance along with the character “I”. The last two lines reveal the idea of “I” (CN2), believing that such a banquet is the most joyful thing on earth. This is also how it differs from the “Zhezhi Courtesan”. The purpose of telling is no longer a pure appreciation of the performance but to express the joy of attending the banquet. Still, there is no doubt that the courtesans’ playing of instruments, singing, and dancing is the key to this happiness. Similarly, “I” portrays the courtesans’ performance through the focalization of what they wear and their actions. Readers follow the vision of “I” and see what “I” sees. The poet “guides” the reader to see what he wants to present.

The analysis of this section shows that in the poems with clear female figures, most poems have a character-bound narrator who coincides with the poet. Thus, the

reader can consider that the poet is speaking about his true experiences in the poem. In addition, most of these poems contain descriptions of the appearance, accessories, clothes, and actions of the female characters (perceptible) and are rarely involved in their inner thoughts and emotions (non-perceptible). The reader perceives the thoughts and feelings of the narrator “I” but not the female characters. As a result, the reader empathizes more easily with the poet than with the female characters during the reading process.

2.3 Poems Written to Specific Targets

This section is a study of the poems that Bai wrote to specific women, with a total of 27 poems. There are seven poems written for Bai’s wife, eight for his daughters, one for his granddaughter, three for his beloved in his early years, and the remaining eight for different courtesans. Some poems do not contain explicit female figures, but Bai wrote them for his female family members and acquaintances. Thus, these poems have a special research significance and help with exploring the images of women in Bai’s life.

Most of the poems written for Bai’s wife describe Bai’s own life experiences and express his hope of living a simple life. “My Wife Gets Her First Title” (“Qi chu shou yihao gaoshen” 妻初授邑號告身)¹²² is slightly different:

弘農舊縣受新封，	Hongnong old county gets a new title,
鈿軸金泥告一通。	Decorated scroll golden inkpad a piece of document.
我轉官階常自愧，	(When) I change the rank of official often (feel) ashamed,
君加邑號有何功？	You get the title what contribution (do you) have?

¹²² Bai 白, 1532.

花牋印了排窠濕， 5	Flower paper with stamp neat seals are wet,
錦幃裝來耀手紅。	Brocade signs contain shining red.
倚得身名便慵墮，	Lean on the fame then get lazy,
日高猶睡綠窗中。	The sun is up high still asleep in the green window.

The poem records the story of the wife of “I”, who gets her first title.¹²³ The fabula contains three main events:

- 1) The wife gets the title.
- 2) The reaction of “I” or “I” asks a question to the wife.
- 3) The wife stays in bed late.

The narrator is the character “I”. Line 3-4 contain two personal pronouns, “I” and “You”, and can be seen as a direct quote. Thus, the “I” (CN1) quotes the “I” (CN2). This quote can be the words that “I” speaks out, which is perceptible. Also, it can be the thoughts of “I”, which is non-perceptible and can make the reader have certain expectations for the “wife” (qi 妻).¹²⁴ However, it is difficult for the reader to judge whether “I” speaks it out or not because the wife’s answer does not appear in the text. But soon, the reader discovers that it does not matter if this quote is perceptible or not. The wife is sleeping and cannot hear it anyway. Thus, the quote in lines 3-4 is perceptible to the reader and the character “I” but non-perceptible to the wife. Therefore, the reader may wonder with “I”: What is the wife’s contribution? How did she get the title? The reality is that both the reader and “I” know that the wife obtains the title because her husband (“I”)

¹²³ Bai 白, 1533. In the Tang Dynasty, the mother and wife of the fifth rank officials can get the title of “xian jun” (縣君).

¹²⁴ Bai, 38-39.

has got promoted. At this point, the reader may expect the wife to do something to prove that she “deserves” the title. However, the focalization of the wife frustrates the reader’s expectation. The wife becomes lazy after getting the title. The sun is already high in the sky, and the wife is still sleeping. The image of “an official’s wife who stays in bed late” is created.

Significantly, “I” is the only focalizer in the story, and the reader can only see what “I” sees and takes the side of “I” against the wife. The reader cannot know whether the wife has the contribution, how the wife feels about getting the title for the first time, and what is the wife’s opinion on this matter because “I” does not “see” them. The reader learns everything through the “eyes” of “I”. Most poems in this section are like this one. These poems are like the letters that are sent out by Bai. The purpose of writing is to express Bai’s opinions or feelings, not to describe the female characters.

Among the nine poems that Bai composed for his daughters and granddaughter, three were written for his daughter A Luo (阿羅) and five for his daughter Jinluanzi (金鸞子), who passed away prematurely. These poems are more inclined to express Bai’s feelings and pains about life, but there are also some descriptions of his daughters’ intelligence and cuteness. “My Kid” (“Wu chu” 吾雛)¹²⁵ is the one with the most detailed descriptions:

吾雛字阿羅，	My kid named A Luo,
阿羅纔七齡。	A Luo is just seven years old.
嗟吾不生子，	Sigh that I do not have sons,

¹²⁵ Bai 白, 689. See also Juyi Bai, Howard S. Levy, and Henry Willis Wells, *Translations from Po Chü-i’s Collected Works*, vol. 3, (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp, 1976), 71-73.

憐汝無弟兄。	Pity that you have no brothers.
撫養雖驕駭， 5	Raising up although naive,
性識頗聰明。	The nature is pretty smart.
學母畫眉樣，	Learn (from your) mother the way to draw the eyebrow,
效吾詠詩聲。	Imitate me the sound of reciting poems.
我齒今欲墮，	My teeth now are about to fall,
汝齒昨始生。 10	Your teeth yesterday just came out.
我頭髮盡落，	My head all hair falls,
汝頂髻初成。	Your top the bun just forms.
老幼不相待，	The old and youth do not wait for each other,
父衰汝孩嬰。	Father ages you are a baby child,
緬想古人心， 15	Think about the ancient people's hearts,
慈愛亦不輕。	The love is also not light.
蔡邕念文姬，	Cai Yong thought of Wenji, ¹²⁶
于公歎緹縈。	Yu Gong said Tiying,
敢求得汝力，	(How do I) dare to ask get your strength,
但未忘父情。 20	But not yet forget the father's emotions.

Lines 3-4 describe A Luo's innocence and cleverness. "I" focalizes A Luo's actions. A Luo imitates her mother and father, showing the image of a naive and intelligent little girl. Meanwhile, the focalization in lines 9-12 is the most distinctive. The focalized object constantly shifts between the character "I" and A Luo. The "old" (lao 老) of "I" and the "young" (you 幼) of A Luo develop a stark contrast. The reader follows the

¹²⁶ Cai Yong (蔡邕) and Wenji (文姬), Yu Gong 于公 and Tiying (緹縈) are fathers and daughters in the history.

gaze of “I”, and first looks at the teeth of “I”: they are falling off. Then, “I” looks at A Luo’s teeth: her teeth just grew out yesterday. Then the vision shifts from A Luo’s teeth to the narrator’s hair: “all hair” had fallen out. Again, “I” looks at A Luo’s hair: A Luo’s hair is getting longer. As a result, “I” expresses feelings about the time: A Luo is still a child, but “I” is already old. The last six lines can be regarded as comments on the father-daughter relationship, and “I” hopes A Luo will not forget the father’s love. The reader perceives the poet’s sentiment of getting old and the father’s love for his daughter and does not know A Luo’s thoughts or feelings.

The expression of feelings is more prominent in “Sending to Xiangling” (“Ji Xiangling” 寄湘靈)¹²⁷:

淚眼凌寒凍不流，	The tearful eyes facing the coldness frozen not to move,
每經高處即迴頭。	Every time pass by the high places at once look back.
遙知別後西樓上，	Far away (I) know after the departure on the west building,
應凭欄干獨自愁。	(You) should lean against the railing worry alone.

Xiangling was Bai’s beloved when he was young.¹²⁸ The poem shows that “I” misses Xiangling very much. The fabula contains two events:

- 1) The tears of “I” are frozen.
- 2) “I” looks back every time passing by high ground.

¹²⁷ Bai 白, 1057.

¹²⁸ Bai 白, 1035.

The last two stanzas are the imagination of “I”. There is no specific location or time. Although the reader can know that the place where the event occurs is the high ground (gao chu 高處), due to the limitation of “every time” (mei jing 每經), this location has countless possibilities. Every high ground, the one “I” is passing by, the ones that “I” has passed by and will pass by, has become the location for the event “look back” (hui tou 迴頭). This arrangement makes the narrator’s affection for Xiangling become unlimited: “I” misses Xiangling anytime and anywhere.

“I” (CF) first focalizes the tears and the cold of the environment. The cold that can freeze the tears makes “I” unable to shed the tears, so it becomes more difficult to express the emotion. Besides, the action of looking back at a high ground level produces a broad field of vision. However, even if “I” stands on the high ground and can look farther, it is impossible to see Xiangling. Finally, “I” has to focalize the imagination, imagining the scene of Xiangling after the separation. The poem expresses Bai’s deep longing for Xiangling and creates the image of a woman “missing her beloved alone”. The reader identifies the poet’s feelings and the image of the woman through the poet’s point of view.

Nevertheless, five out of the eight poems written for the courtesans are exceptions, which are no longer limited to Bai’s own opinions and feelings. These five poems are answering (da 答) or matching poems (he 和) between Bai and three other contemporary poets. That is, Bai reads their poems first and then writes a poem as a reply based on the content of their poems. Take “Matching Liu Langzhong’s Lament of Eji”

(“He Liu langzhong shang Eji” 和劉郎中傷鄂姬)¹²⁹ as an example. Bai replies to the two poems of Liu langzhong (Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 772-842) named “Have Some Lamentations” (“You suo jie” 有所嗟).¹³⁰ Liu wrote the poems for his deceased concubine Eji (鄂姬). The “jie” (嗟) in the title is a sigh, also a tone of sadness. In the poems, Liu recalls his first encounter with Eji and imagines that Eji’s spirit transforms into a mandarin duck.¹³¹

Bai responds to Liu’s grief in the poem:

不獨君嗟我亦嗟，	Not only you sigh I also sigh,
西風北雪殺南花。	The west wind and north snow kill the south flower.
不知月夜魂歸處，	Do not know the moon night where the spirit returns,
鸚鵡洲頭第幾家。	At the Parrot Islet which family (the spirit will go).

“You” (jun 君) refers to Liu Yuxi, and “the south flower” (nan hua 南花) refers to Eji. The first “sigh” (jie 嗟) appearing in the poem refers to Liu’s two poems, and the second one refers to this poem. Thus, the events in fabula are:

1) Eji dies; 2) Liu sighs; 3) “I” sighs.

However, “jie” (嗟) can also be regarded as the “declarative verb”, so in the following stanza, “the west wind and north snow kill the south flower” is a phrase that speaks out by the two characters, “jun” and “I”, which is on the second level of the

¹²⁹ Bai 白, 1985.

¹³⁰ Bai 白, 1985.

¹³¹ Bai 白, 1985. The first poem is: When we first met in the Yuling building, your waist was like the willow of Wuchang. The meeting and the smiles of each other are like a dream, and I don’t know now if you were the rain or the clouds. (庾令樓中初見時，武昌春柳鬥腰肢。相逢相笑盡如夢，為雨為雲今不知). The send poem is: It is misty and rainy in E zhu, and the lady’s spirit chases the clouds of twilight and comes back. It should only stay at the Hanyang ferry, turn into a mandarin duck and fly. (鄂渚濛濛煙雨微，女郎魂逐暮雲歸。只應長在漢陽渡，化作鴛鴦一隻飛).

narrative. The first-level narrator “I” quotes the “jun” and “I” on the second level, presenting the regret of “jun” and “I”.

Moreover, for the readers, especially the readers in ancient China, the text they read may also include the two poems of Liu. These three poems are a kind of “dialogue” between Bai and Liu, as well as Bai’s comfort to Liu.

Other examples concerned with the emotions of others are the “Three Poems of the Swallow Building” (“Yanzi lou san shou” 燕子樓三首)¹³². Bai writes a preface of 192 Chinese characters to the three poems in the same title, explaining the reasons for his writing. Twelve years ago, Bai attended Zhang shangshu’s banquet and had the chance to meet with a courtesan named Mianmian (眇眇, also known as Panpan 盼盼), who got Zhang’s favour.¹³³ Twelve years later, the poet Zhang Zhongsu (張仲素) visited Bai with some of his newly written poems. Bai read Zhang Zhongsu’s three poems with the title of “Swallow Building” (“Yanzi lou” 燕子樓) and learned that after Zhang’s death, Panpan was unwilling to leave and marry someone else. There was a small building named “Swallow Building” in Zhang’s old house, and Panpan had been living in the building for more than ten years. Bai was very fond of the three poems, so he wrote three poems as responses to Zhang Zhongsu’s poems. The six poems, “Swallow Building”, were all written for Panpan and express feelings of Panpan.

¹³² Bai 白, 1208. See also Bai, Levy, and Wells, *Translations from Po Chü-i’s Collected Works*, vol.2, 128-129.

¹³³ See also note 106. Shangshu is a high-level official title. It is believed that both Zhang shangshu and Zhang push refer to Zhang Yin (張愔). Mianmian (眇眇) and Panpan (盼盼) refer to the same courtesan. This thesis will use the name Panpan for consistency.

Among the three groups of poems, the second group contains the most specific image of women. Zhang Zhongsu's poem writes about Panpan's longing for Zhang Shangshu after his death. Panpan stops singing, and it has been ten years. Bai replies:

鈿暈羅衫色似煙，	Accessories glow fine gauze clothes colour is like smoke,
幾回欲著即潸然。	Several times about to wear at once tears drop.
自從不舞霓裳曲，	Since not dancing the song of Nichang,
疊在空箱十一年。	Folded in the empty box for eleven years.

The character depicted in the poem is Panpan, and the events in the fabula are:

- 1) Panpan stops dancing, and her dancing dress has been folded in the box for eleven years.
- 2) Panpan wants to put on the dancing dress several times.
- 3) Panpan sheds tears.

There is an anonymous external focalizer “looks” from the outside of the fabula, i.e., an anonymous “I”. “I” first focalizes the accessories and clothes, then the focalized objects shift to the character's actions. Panpan “is about to” (yu 欲) put on the dancing dress but cannot control her tears. The reader can only see the actions of Panpan's attempt and does not know the reasons behind those actions. The reader can speculate that perhaps Panpan has the intent to dance again or walk out of the Swallow Building, but she must give up because there is no way to control her sad emotions. In the second stanza, readers can see Panpan's attempt and hesitation and further understand her feelings. Finally, “I” (EF) looks at the clothes in the box again and emphasizes that the box is empty. Therefore, the reader can presume that Panpan does not have any other

dancing clothes. The poem does not explain the reason why Panpan has stopped dancing for eleven years, but the reader already knows the answer from Zhang Zhongsu's poem and the preface. The narrator "I" did not let Panpan "speak", nor did it talk about Panpan's emotions. "I" simply depicts Panpan's actions to let the reader see an image of a woman who is grief-stricken because of the loss of her beloved.

There is no doubt that this poem is from Bai's imagination after reading Zhang Zhongsu's poems. Nevertheless, in terms of the emotions expressed in the poem, it seems that this poem can also have been written by Panpan. In other words, Bai borrows the voice of Panpan and writes the poem in her voice. The reason for this ambiguity is the absence of explicit personal pronouns. For instance, if the verse becomes "I, several times, am about to wear" or "she, several times, is about to wear," then there is no doubt about the identity of the narrator. Considering that this poem is Bai's response to Zhang Zhongsu, and it was written for Panpan, it is categorized into this section.

Overall, for the poems written in Bai's male voice, Bai mainly describes the external features of the female characters, including their appearance, clothing, actions, voice, and surroundings, but their non-perceptible emotions and thoughts are less mentioned. Besides, the narrator "I" in these poems is very close to Bai or can be regarded as Bai. Thus, in many poems with the character-bound narrator, readers can feel that Bai is writing about his own experiences, stating his emotions and thoughts. Therefore, the reader can easily empathize with the poet, and the distance between the reader and the female characters gets closer. In terms of the female figures, although the reader can apprehend their emotions through their actions or the surrounding environments, they are less advantaged compared with the narrator "I" because they do

not speak. If the female characters in the story speak out their non-perceptible emotions and thoughts, the reader can better understand the characters and appreciate the stories they narrate. Chapter three will discuss such poems.

Chapter Three: Images of Women in the Female Voice in Bai Juyi's Poetry

This chapter, which contains two parts, examines 34 poems written by Bai in a female voice. The poems in the first part have explicit female figures, and these figures appear in the text as character-bound narrators (CN). There are 24 such poems, and six of them will be discussed as examples. Additionally, there are ten poems in the second part, which were composed by Bai “on behalf of” (dai 代) female figures. The identity of the narrator “I” is relatively vague in these poems. Considering that Bai explicitly states in the titles that he borrows the women’s identities, this thesis agrees that the poems are written in a female voice. Four poems will be taken as examples.

3.1 The Female Characters Speak about Themselves

This section examines 24 poems in which the female characters speak about their own experiences or moods. Some of the poems are similar to the “Swallow Building” in the previous chapter and do not contain a clear personal pronoun “I”. But from the reader’s reading experience, the narrator “I” is speaking about its own experience and emotion, so it is a character-bound narrator (CN). In terms of focalization, for most of the poems, there is an unknown first-level focalizer outside of the fabula (F1) that focalizes the second-level character-bound focalizer “I” (CF2). In other words, the focalizer “I” is looking at what happened to itself in the past. In terms of Bai’s purpose of writing, some poems express the sorrow of female characters in the hope of attracting social attention; Some poems reflect the relationship between the king and the king’s subjects through the

depictions of the female figures or to express the author's political opinion in an indirect way. Regardless of the purposes, these poems contain distinct images of women.

“Mother Leaves Sons” (“Mu bie zi” 母別子)¹³⁴ tells the story of a mother who is forced to separate from her children:

母別子，子別母， 1	Mother leaves sons; sons leave mother,
白日無光哭聲苦。	Daytime no light the sound of weeping is bitter.
關西驃騎大將軍，	Guanxi Piaoqi the senior general, ¹³⁵
去年破虜新策勳。	Last year defeated the enemy made a new contribution.
敕賜金錢二百萬， 5	Prize from the emperor gold and money two million,
洛陽迎得如花人。	At Luoyang welcome and marry the flowerlike person.
新人迎來舊人棄，	The new person comes the old person is abandoned,
掌上蓮花眼中刺。	(She is the) lotus in the palms (I am the) thorn in the eyes.
迎新棄舊未足悲，	Welcome the new abandon the old is not enough sorrow,
悲在君家留兩兒。 10	(My) sorrow is at your home leaves two sons.
一始扶行一初坐，	One starts walking with the help one just learned sitting,
坐啼行哭牽人衣。	Sitting and wailing walking and crying holding people's clothes.
以汝夫婦新嫵婉，	Because you couples newly got married,
使我母子生別離。	Me and my sons have to separate.
不如林中烏與鵲， 15	Not as good as in the woods the crows and magpies,
母不失雛雄伴雌。	The mother does not lose the fledgling the male accompanies the female.
應似園中桃李樹，	(We) should be like in the garden the peach and plum trees,

¹³⁴ Bai 白, 396.

¹³⁵ Guanxi (關西) is the name of the place. Piaoqi (驃騎) is the title of the general.

花落隨風子在枝。	Flowers fall with the wind fruits are on the branches.
新人新人聽我語，	New person new person listen to my words,
洛陽無限紅樓女。 20	In Luoyang infinite red-chamber ladies.
但願將軍重立功，	Wish the general to make the contribution again,
更有新人勝於汝。	There will be a new person better than you.

The fabula contains the following main events:

- 1) The general (husband) is rewarded for his meritorious contribution.
- 2) The general marries a new wife (the new person) and abandons “I” (the old person).
- 3) “I” and the two sons are separated.
- 4) “I” and the children cry bitterly.

The characters in the story are “I” (the mother and the general’s former wife), the general, the new wife, and the two sons. The story happens at the time when the mother and the sons are separated. Lines 3-8 are the memory of “I” since “last year” (qu nian 去年). Lines 9-18 are the thoughts of “I” (non-perceptible), which can also be regarded as the words that “I” says to the general (perceptible). Lines 19-22 are the words that “I” says to the new wife (perceptible), where the “I” (CN1) quotes the “I” (CN2) on the second level, namely, “I” (CN1) is repeating what “I” (CN2) said to the new wife in the past. “I” expresses the thoughts and feelings clearly. Unfortunately, the “listeners” of these words do not appear in the text, and the reader cannot know whether the general and the new wife have heard what “I” has said to them. In fact, the absence of the “listeners” is already the answer. No one in the text hears the sorrow of “I”, and no one

cares. Meanwhile, the reader knows what “I” thinks and is likely to sympathize with the narrator’s plight, expecting the general to make some changes, such as not separating the children from the mother.

The focalization is complex. The focalizer “I” (EF1, which can be seen as an older “I”) on the first level focalizes the “I” (CF2, which can be seen as a younger “I”) on the second level. Thus, the reader can only see what “I” sees, and “I” has an advantage over other characters. The first two focalized objects are two events: “the mother leaves the sons” and “the sons leave the mother.” The two events are about the same thing, but the impacts on the characters are different. “Mother leaves sons” (mu bie zi 母別子) presents the mother who has to leave her children. “Sons leave mother” (zi bie mu 子別母) presents the sons who have to be separated from their mother. “Daytime, no light” (bairi wu guang 白日無光) is a description of the environment, which can also be a description of the feeling of “I”. Why is there no light in the daytime? From the perspective of the reader’s life experiences, it is possible that the clouds obscure the sun. From the perspective of the character, it is possible that “I” cries too much so that “I” cannot sense the light. On the other hand, this is also a metaphor. The child is the “light” of the mother. Leaving the children means that the mother has lost the light in her life. The focalization quickly shifts from the visual sense to the sound of crying, and the reader feels two kinds of sorrow: the sorrow of the mother who must leave her children and the sorrow of the children who have to leave their mother.

By this point, the reader already knows the outcome of the story: a sad mother and sad children. But what has caused this result? The focalization shifts to the memory of

“I”, focalizing the other two characters. It is the actions of the two characters that have caused the tragedy of “I”. The general has a new wife, and “I” becomes the thorn in his eyes. The story is over at this point because the reader already knows what has caused it and what the results are. But the narrative is not over, and the focalization continues. “I” begins to tell the reader about her inner world. Although being abandoned by the husband is sad, it is even sadder to leave the two children. “I” (CF2) specifically focalizes the actions of the two sons, indicating that they are too young to leave their mother. Then “I” “looks” at the scenes where the mother bird accompanies the baby bird, and the petals are blown off by the wind. In fact, it may only take a moment for the mother to complete the action of “departing” (bie 别), but such a focalization method makes the moment of “leaving” elongate infinitely, and the sorrow caused by the separation is enormously magnified. Finally, the focalization shifts back to the new wife, who is also the direct cause of this tragedy. “I” warns the new wife, hoping that one day the new wife will also experience the pain that “I” has suffered.

This poem does not depict any appearance or clothing. Readers do not know how old the mother is or what accessories or clothes she wears but can thoroughly understand her inner world and sorrow. “Mother Leaves Sons” recounts the pain of the moment when the mother and her children are separated. In contrast, “Woman in the Mausoleum” (“Lingyuan qie” 陵園妾)¹³⁶ tells a lifelong tragedy of a court lady:

陵園妾，	1	Woman in the mausoleum,
顏色如花命如葉。		Face is like the flower fate is like the leaf.

¹³⁶ Bai 白, 408.

命如葉薄將奈何？		Fate is as thin as a leaf what to do?
一奉寢宮年月多。		Served in the mausoleum for many years and months.
年月多，	5	Many years and months,
春愁秋思知何限。		Spring sorrow and autumn thoughts how much.
青絲發落鬢髮疏，		Black hair fall off dense hair is loose,
紅玉膚銷繫裙縵。		Red jade skin disappears tie the skirt.
憶昔宮中被妬猜，		Remember the past in the palace be envied,
因讒得罪配陵來。	10	Because of the slander be convicted be banished to the mausoleum.
老母啼呼趁車別，		Old mother cried out running after the carriage,
中官監送鎖門迴。		The eunuch guards and sends (me) locks the door goes back.
山宮一閉無開日，		The mountain palace once closed will not open,
未死此身不令出。		If not die this body will not be let out.
松門到曉月徘徊，	15	In the mausoleum till the dawn the moon lingers, ¹³⁷
柏城盡日風蕭瑟。		In the mausoleum all day the wind is bleak.
松門柏城幽閉深，		In the mausoleum confined and deep,
聞蟬聽燕感光陰。		Hear the cicada listen to the swallow feel the time.
眼看菊蕊重陽淚，		Eyes look centre of chrysanthemum tears in Chongyang,
手把梨花寒食心。	20	Hands hold pear blossoms heart of Hanshi. ¹³⁸
把花掩淚無人見，		Holding flowers covering tears no one sees,
綠蕪牆繞青苔院。		The walls with green grass surround the mossy courtyard.
四季徒支妝粉錢，		Four seasons in vain getting the makeup money,

¹³⁷ Songmen (松門) means the cemetery. Bocheng (柏城) means the imperial burial place. Both refer to the mausoleum (Lingyuan 陵園) in the poem.

¹³⁸ Chongyang (重陽) is the Double Ninth Festival, on the ninth day of the ninth year on the lunar calendar. Hanshi (寒食) is the Cold Food Festival, usually one or two days before the Qingming Festival in early April.

三朝不識君王面。	Three reigns do not know the face of the emperors.
遙想六宮奉至尊， 25	Think far away six palaces serving the emperor,
宣徽雪夜浴堂春。	Xuanwei Palace's snowing night Yutang Palace's spring.
雨露之恩不及者，	Those who didn't have the emperor's favour,
猶聞不啻三千人。	(I) heard that it is more than three thousand people.
三千人，	Three thousand people,
我爾君恩何厚薄。 30	I and you the king's favour how thick and thin.
願令輪轉直陵園，	Wish to have (the three thousand people) take turns serve in the mausoleum,
三歲一來均苦樂。	Three years a turn balance the sorrow and joy.

The protagonist of the story, “I”, is a court lady who “serves” the dead emperors at the emperors’ mausoleum. The main events in the fabula are:

- 1) “I” is convicted and sent to the mausoleum.
- 2) “I” is separated from her mother.
- 3) “I” is locked in the mausoleum.
- 4) “I” gets old.

Lines 1-6 of the poem are the protagonist’s summary of her fate. Lines 7-8 are a description of “now”. Lines 9-14 are the lady’s memories. Lines 15-24 are descriptions of life in the mausoleum, and lines 25-32 are the lady’s imagination. Readers can only see what “I” sees and are able to learn what “I” has in mind.

The first thing that comes into focus is the character’s fate and helplessness. “I” is a beautiful but unfortunate lady who has been staying in the mausoleum for many years. The sorrow is endless, but “I” cannot do anything about it. One of the most obvious

changes is the protagonist's appearance: dark hair falls, and ruddy skin disappears. At this point, "I" begins to recall, remembering the reason for all of this. The focalized objects shift to the other two characters, the old mother (laomu 老母) and the eunuch (zhongguan 中官). The focalization of the mother is on her age, voice, and actions. "I" (CF) looks at her elderly mother, who is crying and chasing the carriage that "I" stays in. "I" moves with the carriage, getting farther and farther away from the mother and, at the same time, getting closer and closer to the mausoleum. The focalization of the eunuch lies in his two actions: "lock" (suo 鎖) and "go back" (hui 迴). The word "lock" confirms the fact that the protagonist is imprisoned, while the action "go back" indicates that "I" is gazing at the eunuch. At this moment, "I" has been locked in the mausoleum and can only stand still and watch the eunuch leaving. Moreover, the key that can unlock the lock and set the court lady free also leaves with the eunuch. Both focalizations show a change in the visual distance, but the effects they bring to the character "I" are completely different. However, the results of the two are the same. "I" (the court lady) will never see her mother again, nor will "I" see the key that unlocks the lock.

The focalization then shifts to the life of "I" in the mausoleum, focalizing the time and the environment primarily. First, the focalization of time shifts progressively from a short period to a longer one. "I" sees the moon at dawn, implying that "I" cannot sleep at night or wakes up early in the morning. The wind blows all day, and the mausoleum is very quiet. The passage of time can only be felt from the sounds of cicadas and swallows. The Chongyang Festival is in autumn, and the Cold Food Festival is in late spring. "Four seasons" (siji 四季), "I" gets the money for makeup, but it is of no use because there have

been three emperors (san chao 三朝), and “I” has never seen one. Morning – a day – autumn – spring – the four seasons – the three reigns, this special way of focalization illustrates the passage of time and highlights the fact that the time “I” stays in the mausoleum is getting longer and longer. Meanwhile, it also suggests that “I” has lost the perception of time. Although the beginning of this poem (lines 4 and 5) already mentions “many years and months” (nian yue duo 年月多), how many years and months exactly? “I” did not say. All “I” can feel is that the moon is out, a day has passed, spring has gone, summer has come... Many years have passed, and two emperors have been changed. But how many years have passed exactly? This question, which the reader may be curious about, is meaningless to the character. “I” knows that “I” can only stay in the mausoleum until the day of death. Therefore, “I” loses track of time.

In addition to the focalization of time, “I” also focalizes the natural environment of the mausoleum. The focalization of the environment, as opposed to the time, shifts gradually from a wide scope to a small one. The first thing “I” sees is the moon, which is a broad visual field, and the distance between the moon (the focalized object) and “I” (the focalizer) is the farthest. The second thing “I” sees is the wind, which is closer to “I” than the moon. The moon and the wind are always present in nature, and animals and plants appear with the change of seasons and are more restricted. Cicadas only show up in the summer, and swallows only come in the spring. Chrysanthemums only bloom in the autumn, while pear blossoms just show up in the spring. Moreover, the cicadas and swallows are farther away from “I” than the flowers. Cicadas and swallows can fly away, while “I” and the flowers can only stay in the mausoleum. Finally, the visual scope of “I”

is getting smaller and smaller, the distance between the focalized objects and “I” is getting closer and closer, and the freedom “I” has is getting less and less. No one sees how “I” weep to the flower, so the flowers are also meaningless to “I”. The eyes of “I” eventually fall on the grass on the walls and the moss in the yard, and this is also where “I” is locked up. No matter how the surroundings may change, “I” is always locked up in this courtyard. This focalization method shows that with the passage of time, “I” gradually loses the “vision” on freedom. At the same time, this also indicates that the space in which “I” is located is getting smaller and smaller, and the spatial boundary around “I” is gradually shrinking from the “moon” to the “walls of the enclosed yard,” which is an emphasis on the loss of freedom.

Nevertheless, in lines 25-32, “I” gains freedom in the imagination. “I” “looks” at the palaces where the emperor stays, and the “three thousand people” (sanqian ren 三千人) who are not favoured by the emperor. However, it is a fantasy after all. In fact, under the title of this poem, there are two versions of the “prologue”.¹³⁹ One is “pity for those who are confined” (憐幽閉也). That is, the poet feels sorry for the court ladies who are locked up. The other one is “writing of who is confined as a metaphor of who are slandered and deposed” (託幽閉喻被讒遭黜也), which shows that the poet uses the image of the court lady to refer to the government officials who have been deposed for slanders. No matter what the purpose is, Bai profoundly demonstrates the tragic fate of the woman in the mausoleum through the transformations of the focalized objects. In this poem, although the author briefly mentions the woman’s hair and skin and describes her

¹³⁹ Bai 白, 409.

feelings, this “woman in the mausoleum” is more of a representative of the image of women. This woman can be any of the court ladies who are locked in the mausoleum and can only passively accept the tragic fate without their own individualities. In comparison, the poem “Pulling the Silver Bottle from the Bottom of the Well” (Jingdi yin yinping 井底引銀瓶)¹⁴⁰ creates a beautiful female character with personal characteristics:

井底引銀瓶，	1	The bottom of the well pull the silver bottle,
銀瓶欲上絲繩絕。		The silver bottle is about to rise the silk rope breaks.
石上磨玉簪，		On the stone grind the jade hairpin,
玉簪欲成中央折。		The hairpin is about to complete breaks from the centre.
瓶沈簪折知奈何，	5	The bottle falls the hairpin breaks what to do,
似妾今朝與君別。		It is like I today leave you.
憶昔在家爲女時，		Remember when I was at home as a daughter,
人言舉動有殊姿。		People said (my) behaviours have nice gestures.
嬋娟兩鬢秋蟬翼，		Lovely two sideburns autumn cicada’s wings,
宛轉雙蛾遠山色。	10	Pretty two moths (brows) the colour of far mountains.
笑隨戲伴後園中，		Laughing with playing companions in the back garden,
此時與君未相識。		At this time (I) didn’t know you.
妾弄青梅憑短牆，		I played with the green plums beside the short walls,
君騎白馬傍垂楊。		You rode on the white horse next to the falling willows.
牆頭馬上遙相顧，	15	On the wall on the horse looked at each other from far,
一見知君即斷腸。		Once (I) saw knew you soon heartbroken.
知君斷腸共君語，		Knew you heartbroken talked with you,
君指南山松柏樹。		You pointed to the south mountain the pines and cedars trees.

¹⁴⁰ Bai 白, 419.

感君松柏化爲心，	Moved by your pines and cedars became the heart,
暗合雙鬢逐君去。 20	Secretly put the two buns together went with you.
到君家舍五六年，	Arrive at your house five or six years,
君家大人頻有言。	Your parents often have words (to say).
聘則爲妻奔是妾，	Betrothed is the wife eloped is the concubine,
不堪主祀奉蘋蘩。	Not worthy of hosting the sacrifice serving the offerings.
終知君家不可住， 25	Finally (I) know you house cannot live,
其奈出門無去處。	However go out no place to go.
豈無父母在高堂，	Do not (I) have parents at the hall,
亦有親情滿故鄉。	Also have relatives full of hometown.
潛來更不通消息，	Since the elope no more messages,
今日悲羞歸不得。 30	Today sad and ashamed cannot go back.
爲君一日恩，	For you one day's favour,
悞妾百年身。	Hinder my a hundred year (life).
寄言癡小人家女，	Words to the naive young girls,
慎勿將身輕許人。	Do not marry someone easily.

The poem tells the story of an elopement. The main events in fabula are:

- 1) "I" meets the man.
- 2) "I" and the man fall in love.
- 3) "I" elopes with the man.
- 4) The man's parents are dissatisfied with "I".
- 5) "I" leaves the man.

The main characters are "I" and the man. The story takes place "today" (jinzhao 今朝), the day "I" leaves the man's house. Lines 7-22 are the memories of "I".

“I” (EF1) focalizes the “I” (CF2). The first focalized object is the action of “I”. Nothing “I” wants to do has succeeded. The bottle sinks to the bottom of the well, and the hairpin breaks, just like the separation of “I” and the man. Next, “I” focalizes the memories. The content of the recollection can be divided into three parts: 1) lines 7-12, before “I” meets the man; 2) lines 13-20, “I” and “Jun” meet and elope; 3) lines 21-24, after “I” elopes to the man’s house.

“I” focalizes the beauty and joy of “I” in the first recollection and carefully describes the hair and eyebrows. In the second part, “I” mainly focalizes the man. Meanwhile, the man (CF2) also focalizes “I”, namely, the man and “I” are looking at each other. For example, in line 15, “I” and the man are originally two strangers, one is on top of the wall, and one is on the horse. This momentary look, that is, “I” and the man focalize each other, making the lives of the two characters intersect. However, the man’s focalization is limited to this one. In line 16, the verb “saw” (jian 見) communicates perception, and “heartbroken” (duanchang 斷腸) is also a non-perceptible emotion, so the focalizer shifts back to “I” (CF2) again. Thus, the reader can reckon that “I” is dominant in the relationship and makes a series of important decisions. The moment “I” sees the man, “I” realizes my affection for him and tells him right away. The man responds, and “I” confirms the man’s “heart” (xin 心) in lines 18-19. As a result, “I” makes the decision, changes the hairstyle, and flees with the man. The reader has no way of knowing the time duration of these events, i.e., if they happen during a day or a month. But the rapid transition from one event to another makes the reader feel how quickly the

events are happening. It seems that “I” elopes with the man immediately after first sight. This seemingly impossible arrangement shows the boldness and determination of “I”.

In the third part, the speed of time becomes faster. The five or six years “I” spends in the man’s house are summed up in one sentence in line 22: the man’s parents keep complaining. “I” does not “see” anything else, not even the man in this part of the memory. This suggests that in the years of living with the man, “I” has only felt the dissatisfaction of the man’s parents. Line 23-24 can be seen as a joint focalization of “I” and the man’s parents. They are the “words” (yan 言) that the man’s parents often say to “I”, showing their unwillingness to have “I” as the man’s wife. After all these years of living together and listening to those words, “I” finally agrees with them: “I” is not the man’s wife but his concubine. This is also the reason why “I” decides to leave.

From line 25, the recollection stops. “I” decides to leave, but there is nowhere to go. Lines 27-34 show what “I” has in mind again. “I” cannot return to her hometown because of sadness and shame. The man has not shown up since line 21, nor does he have any reactions to the departure of the “I”, as if the departure is just the decision of “I”. On the one hand, this shows the decisiveness of “I”. “I” does not care about the man’s idea, or that “I” is tired of this relationship. On the other hand, the man’s inaction can also be one of the reasons that make “I” leave. Finally, through personal experiences, “I” understands the unfairness between men and women and warns the young girls.

In this poem, Bai not only shows the beauty and feelings of the female character but also shows her personality characteristics of being bold and decisive. This follows the tradition of *yuefu* poetry.¹⁴¹

The above three poems are relatively long, and the stories are quite complicated. There are nine poems like this. The remaining 15 poems are short, mostly writings about the conventional images of the pining women (*sifu* 思婦) and the abandoned women (*qifu* 棄婦), for example, poems about women's sorrow in the boudoir (*guiyuan* 閨怨) or the palace (*gong yuan* 宮怨). Readers can judge from the title that there are female characters in the poem. These poems usually express some strong emotions.

“Sorrow in a Cold Boudoir” (“Hangui yuan” 寒閨怨)¹⁴² describes the cold of the boudoir:

寒月沈沈洞房靜，	Cold moon sinking the room is quiet, ¹⁴³
真珠簾外梧桐影。	Pearl curtain outside the sycamore's shadow.
秋霜欲下手先知，	Autumn frost is about to fall the hands know first,
燈底裁縫剪刀冷。	Under the light tailor and sew scissors are cold.

There are two events in the fabula:

- 1) “I” tailors and sews.
- 2) The autumn frost is about to fall.

¹⁴¹ According to the discussions in Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin's class, PAAS 353: Survey of Classical Chinese Literature. Some examples are “Mulberries by the Path” (“Mo shang sang” 陌上桑) and “The Officer of the Guard” (“Yu lin lang” 羽林郎). In both poems, the female character bravely rejects the man's inappropriate behaviours.

¹⁴² Bai 白, 1570.

¹⁴³ Dongfang (洞房) can be an inner room or the newlyweds' room.

It is a cold night in the room. “Cold” (leng 冷) is non-perceptible, so “I” (EF1) focalizes the “I” (CF2). The first two stanzas are descriptions of the surroundings. The vision of “I” shifts from the outside to the inside and then from the inside to the outside.

“I” first looks at the “cold moon” (han yue 寒月). The “cold moon” is a “lonely” moon, indicating that there are no stars around the moon. “Cold” is also a perception of temperature. However, the moon does not have a temperature and does not feel lonely. It is “I” who looks at the moon and feels lonely and cold. In other words, cold and lonely are the reflections of “I”. “Sinking” (chenchen 沈沈) indicates that the moon is falling to the west, and it is already late. “I” looks out at the moon and feels the silence in the room. This silence pulls the focalization back into the room. “I” feels only the silence in the room, implying that “I” is the only person in the room, which also illustrates the loneliness of the character. This silence pushes “I” to look out over the pearl curtain. The pearl curtain is a precious decoration, and the reader can speculate that there might be other valuable decorations in the room, which somehow hints at the family background of “I”. “I” sits inside the room and looks to the outside, which shows that “I” is expecting the arrival of the husband.

In the last two stanzas, “I” (EF1) focalizes the actions and feelings of “I” (CF2). Logically, the event of “tailor and sew” (cai feng 裁縫) must happen first. “I” feels the cold of the scissors, then realizes that the “autumn frost is about to fall.” However, the second event appears in the text first. This means that “I” cares more about the “autumn frost” (qiu shuang 秋霜) than the cold of the scissors. Readers can speculate that “I” is making clothes for her husband with the hope that he can wear them before the weather

gets colder. Therefore, “I” is more concerned about the autumn frost and if it is getting cold. And the change of the weather is also the reason why “I” is making the clothes. The focalization of the actions, “tailor and sew”, represent the character’s care and longing for her husband. The last focalized object is the coldness of the scissors, which explains the cold felt by the character’s hands and the loneliness “I” feels, because the character’s husband is not around. The image of a “lonely wife who cares about her husband” is presented to the reader.

The poem “Sorrow in a Cold Boudoir” is mainly a description of the environment and feelings of the character and does not mention her appearance. In contrast, the poem “Woman in the Boudoir” (“Guifu” 閨婦)¹⁴⁴ describes the appearance of the character:

斜凭繡牀愁不動，	Lean on the embroidery bed the sorrow does not move,
紅銷帶緩綠鬟低。	The red disappears belt is loose black hair is low.
遼陽春盡無消息，	Liaoyang’s spring is over no messages,
夜合花前日又西。	In front of the albizia flower the sun again (falls to) west.

“Liaoyang” refers to the battlefield where the husband is located. The events in the fabula are:

- 1) Spring is over.
- 2) “I” does not receive any message from the husband.
- 3) The sun sets again.

“Sorrow” (chou 愁) is non-perceptible, so still, “I” (EF1) focalizes the “I” (CF2).

The first two verses describe the actions and moods of “I”. The melancholy “I” leans on

¹⁴⁴ Bai 白, 1572.

the bed and does not move. “I” does not move, and nor does the sorrow of “I”. It is also this sorrow that makes “I” lean on the bed and not want to move. Then, the focalized object shifts from the mood to the appearance of the character. The rosiness on her face disappears, the belt widens, and the hair bun falls. The change of appearance indicates that “I” has become haggard and is not in the mood to dress up. This change is also because of the sorrow. This focalization arouses the reader’s curiosity: what makes “I” so sad? Next, the focalization shifts to the events and uncovers the cause.

In addition to the focalization of events, in the last two verses, “I” also focalizes the time. The event of “spring is over” (chunjin 春盡) means that “I” has been waiting for messages from her husband during the whole spring, indicating how long “I” has been waiting. The albizia flower, also known as “he huan” (合歡), has the meaning of “family joy”, symbolizing loving couples. This focalization shows that “I” hopes to reunite with her husband. On the other hand, the albizia flowers bloom in June and July, which means that it is now summer. This is the change of season. Meanwhile, the sun sinking to the west indicates that a day has passed, but the word “again” (you 又) in the text declares the repetitiveness of this event. This is not the character’s first time watching the sun going down like this. This kind of focalization presents the reader with the illusion that “I” leans against the bed every day and looks out the window, waiting for the news from her husband. The sunset represents the end of the day, showing that “today” it is impossible to receive the message, which also expresses the character’s disappointment. The next day, however, “I” continues waiting until the sun goes down. In the continuous waiting and constant disappointment, spring becomes summer, and “I” is not inclined to

tidy up her hair and gradually loses weight. The image of a “sorrowful wife waiting for news from her husband” is presented.

Another particular example is the description of historical figures. “Two Poems of Wang Zhaojun” (“Wang Zhaojun er shou” 王昭君二首)¹⁴⁵ are writings of the historical figure, Wang Zhaojun. Wang Zhaojun is known as one of the four beauties in Chinese history and was once elected to the palace of the Emperor Yuan of Han (漢元帝, 75-33 BCE). Zhaojun stayed in the palace for several years and did not get the chance to see the emperor, so she asked to marry Huhanye (呼韓邪), the leader of Xiongnu (匈奴). Later, Huhanye died. The son he had with his former wife became the new leader and wanted to marry Zhaojun. Zhaojun submitted a written statement to the Emperor Cheng of Han (漢成帝, 51-7 BCE) and hoped to return home. However, the emperor asked her to follow the local customs and marry the new leader.¹⁴⁶ Zhaojun’s tortuous encounters made her the subject of writing for generations of literati, and her story has evolved into many versions. Both the author and the reader, when creating and reading literary works related to Zhaojun, are within the framework of an already-exist image of Zhaojun. Bai’s poems are also based on this framework. In the first poem, Bai describes Zhaojun’s hard life in Xiongnu, showing that she is no longer beautiful. In the second poem, Bai adopts Zhaojun’s voice to tell the story of “I”, who is asking the Han envoy (han shi 漢使) to bring a message to the emperor:

¹⁴⁵ Bai 白, 1147.

¹⁴⁶ Bai 白, 1148.

漢使卻迴憑寄語，	The envoy of Han is about to return pass the message (for me),
黃金何日贖蛾眉？	Yellow gold which day redeem the arched eyebrows? ¹⁴⁷
君王若問妾顏色，	If the king asks about my face colour (beauty),
莫道不如宮裏時。	Do not say not as good as when (I was) in the palace.

Obviously, the story took place when Zhaojun wrote to ask for her return. There are two main events in the fabula:

- 1) The Han envoy is about to go back.
- 2) “I” asks the envoy to pass the message for her to the emperor.

The last two stanzas are the imagination of “I”. The focalization of time is striking in this poem.

At the beginning of the story, “I” is asking the envoy to pass a message for her. The second stanza is the message that “I” wants the envoy to convey to the emperor. Thus, it is the focalization of the future when the envoy goes back and meets the emperor. At the same time, the word “which day” (he ri 何日) refers to the time when Zhaojun returns home, which is the “future of the future” and also the future furthest away from the “present” in the story. Both the poet and reader know that Zhaojun never gets the chance to return home, and “this day” has never come true. Subsequently, after the envoy delivers the message to the emperor, “I” imagines that the emperor might be concerned

¹⁴⁷ E mei (蛾眉), see also note 107, means that the eyebrows are like the moth’s feelers, long and arched. Here it refers to Zhaojun.

about her appearance, so “I” tells the envoy how to answer this question. The fourth stanza itself is what “I” says to the envoy “now”, and it is what “I” asks the envoy not to say when he sees the emperor “in the future”. But at the same time, the focalized object in the fourth stanza is “when I was in the palace” (gong li shi 宮裏時), which refers to the past when “I” was in the palace of the Emperor Yuan of Han. The repeated focalization of the present, past, and future reflects that “I” focuses on the time and the character’s strong desire to return home as soon as possible.

To conclude, compared with the poems written in a male voice, these poems written in a female voice have fewer depictions of the female characters’ appearance and are more inclined to describe their non-perceptible emotions and thoughts. Poems written in both voices are concerned with the actions of the characters. In addition, for poems in this section, the focalization of the environment and time plays a significant role in shaping the image of the characters, and the distance between the focalizer and the focalized object keeps changing.

3.2 Poems Composed on Behalf of the Woman

This section explores ten poems that Bai writes on behalf of women. “Substitution” (dai 代), or on behalf, means that Bai uses other people’s identities to write. It is stated in the title that it was written “on behalf of” someone. Among the ten poems, three are written on behalf of Bai’s friend’s wife, two are on behalf of Bai’s wife, four are on behalf of courtesans, and one is on behalf of an unknown wood-selling woman.

The most special ones are the three written on behalf of Yuan Zhen's wife, Wei Cong (葦叢). Yuan Zhen (元稹, 779-831) is a good friend of Bai, who is also a civil servant and poet. Bai states in the preface of the first poem that he is affected by Yuan's poems about mourning the deceased Wei Cong, so Bai writes the three poems on behalf of Wei Cong as responses.¹⁴⁸ All three poems are responses to Yuan's poems, written in the voice of Wei Cong. Precisely, in the voice of Wei Cong's ghost.

Take Yuan's "Writing on the Empty House" ("Kong wu ti"空屋題)¹⁴⁹ as an example:

朝從空屋裏，	Morning from the inside of the empty house,
騎馬入空臺。	Ride on the horse into the empty platform.
盡日推閒事，	All day push away the idle things,
還歸空屋來。	Still return to the empty house.
月明穿暗隙，	The moon is bright pierces through the dark gap,
燈盡落殘灰。	The lamp went out and the rest ashes fell.
更想鹹陽道，	Further think the Xianyang road,
魂車昨夜迴。	The soul carriage returned last night.

"The soul carriage" (hun che 魂車) is the carriage used by the deceased when they are buried. Wei Cong was buried in Xianyang (鹹陽), and at the time of the burial, Yuan was in Luoyang (洛陽) and unable to attend Wei's funeral due to his official duties.¹⁵⁰ In the poem, Yuan uses "emptiness" (kong 空) to express the pain of losing his wife, and his

¹⁴⁸ Bai 白, 1110.

¹⁴⁹ Bai 白, 1111.

¹⁵⁰ Bai 白, 1112.

world seems to be empty. Although Yuan did not attend the funeral, he kept it in mind and thought about it. Bai replies in “Reply to Riding the Horse into the Empty Platform”

(“Da qima ru kong tai” 答騎馬入空臺):¹⁵¹

君入空臺去，	You went into the empty platform,
朝往暮還來。	Went in the morning still came back at twilight.
我入泉臺去，	I went into the grave, ¹⁵²
泉門無復開。	The gate of the grave did not open again.
鰥夫仍繫職，	The widower still in the office,
稚女未勝哀。	The young daughter still has not overcome the sorrow.
寂寞咸陽道，	Lonely Xianyang road,
家人覆墓迴。	The families returned to the tomb and (then went) back. ¹⁵³

There are two main events in Fabula:

- 1) “I” enters the grave.
- 2) The families leave.

“I” is the ghost of Wei Cong and the character-bound focalizer. “You” (jun 君) refers to Yuan Zhen, who is also “the widower” (guanfu 鰥夫). “I” first focalizes the actions of Yuan. Yuan went out in the morning and came back in the evening. However, those actions are completely impossible for “I”. In terms of the same action of “went into” (ru 入), Yuan went into the platform and can still come out, whereas “I” went into the grave and can no longer come out. In this contrast, “I” is obviously more miserable

¹⁵¹ Bai 白, 1111.

¹⁵² Quan tai (泉臺) refers to the tomb, or the underworld (hades).

¹⁵³ Fu mu (覆墓), literally means “cover the tomb”, is a convention that the families return to the cemetery three days after the burial to check the situation.

and less free than Yuan. Next, “I” (CF) looks at the husband who has lost his wife and the young daughter who has lost her mother. No matter how sad the families are, they will go back once the funeral ceremony is completed. On the contrary, “I” can only stay in the cemetery, staring at the back of the families when they are leaving. “Lonely” (jimo 寂寞) means the road is desolate, but still, it can be regarded as a reflection of the emotion of “I”. “I” is locked up in the cemetery, which is in contrast to the action “go back” (hui 迴) of the families. Through the focalization of the environment and actions, Bai depicts the image of a “lonely wife after death”.

Nonetheless, in these poems, Bai does not necessarily use a female voice. Most of the poems do not have a clear personal pronoun, “I”, and the identity of the “speaker” can only be judged from the title. For example, in one of the “Two Poems of Yang Liu Shangshu Newly Promoted to Dongchuan Jiedushi on Behalf of My Wife Playfully Congratulate Brother and Sister-in-Law” (“Yangliu shangshu xin shou dongchuan jiedushi dai qi xi he xionsao erjue” 楊六尚書新授東川節度使代妻戲賀兄嫂二絕):¹⁵⁴

劉綱與婦共升仙，	Liu Gang and his wife together ascended to immortality,
弄玉隨夫亦上天。	Mong Yu followed her husband also went to heaven.
何似沙哥領崔嫂，	Just like Sha Ge leading Cui Sister-in-law, ¹⁵⁵
碧油幢引向東川。	The green curtain leads (the way) to Dongchuan.

¹⁵⁴ Bai 白, 2540. Shangshu (尚書) is a high-level official position in ancient China. Yangliu Shangshu (楊六尚書) refers to Yang Rushi (楊汝士), who is the older brother of Bai’s wife. Dongchuan (東川) is the name of a place. Jiedushi (節度使) is also an official position.

¹⁵⁵ Shage (沙哥) is Yang Rushi’s nickname.

Yang Rushi got promoted, so Bai wrote the poem on behalf of his wife to congratulate Yang and Yang's wife. It is hard to tell if the two poems are written in the voice of Bai's wife. Considering the two poems are “playful congratulations” (xi he 戲賀), it seems that there is no difference between Bai's own voice and his wife's voice. The poem tells the story of two wives who follow their husbands and become immortal, comparing Yang's promotion to “immortality” (shengxian 升仙). Although the character “sister-in-law” is mentioned, there are no detailed depictions.

The four poems written on behalf of the courtesans are also similar. They are more like playful writings by Bai to his friends. For example, “Drunken on the Lake on Behalf of the Courtesans Send to Yan Langzhong” (“Hushang zui zhong dai zhuji ji Yan langzhong” 湖上醉中代諸妓寄嚴郎中):¹⁵⁶

笙歌杯酒正歡娛，	Instrument and song wine cup be having fun,
忽憶仙郎望帝都。	Suddenly remember Xian lang look at the capital. ¹⁵⁷
借問連宵直南省，	Asking work several nights in Nansheng, ¹⁵⁸
何如盡日醉西湖？	How compare all day drunk on the west like?
蛾眉別久心知否，	Arched eyebrows depart long (do you) know,
雞舌含多口厭無？	Clove in the mouth a lot is the mouth tiring? ¹⁵⁹
還有些些惆悵事，	Still have some sad things,
春來山路見靡蕪。	Spring comes mountain road see the miwu. ¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Bai 白, 1646. Langzhong (郎中) is the official position.

¹⁵⁷ Xian lang (仙郎) refers to Yan.

¹⁵⁸ Nansheng (南省) is Shangshu sheng (尚書省), the Department of Stated Affairs. Here it refers to Yan Xiu fu's official duties in Chang'an.

¹⁵⁹ Jishe (雞舌) is the clove. Shangshu keeps it in the mouth when speaking to the emperor.

¹⁶⁰ Bai 白, 1647. Miwu (靡蕪) is a plant. It is an allusion to an abandoned wife who meets her husband and asks him about his new wife. Here it implies that Yan has “someone new” in Chang'an. It's more like a joke.

Yan langzhong is Yan Xiufu (嚴休復), who is a friend of Bai, also a civil servant and a poet. Bai has several poems written to him.¹⁶¹ At the time of writing this poem, Bai was an official in Hangzhou, and Yan was in Chang'an. Yan also serves as an official in Hangzhou before going to Chang'an, so Yan probably knows the courtesans in Hangzhou. In this poem, Bai suddenly remembered Yan when he was drinking and listening to music with the courtesans, so he wrote this poem on behalf of the courtesans. This poem still does not contain a clear female voice. It is more like Bai borrows the courtesan's voice to express the happy life in Hangzhou. The feelings expressed in the poem are also more inclined to Bai's own feelings. Moreover, Bai is writing on behalf of the "courtesans", not a specific courtesan. Nevertheless, the reader can assume that the identity of the narrator is one of the courtesans or the group of courtesans in Hangzhou.

There are three main events in the fabula:

- 1) "I" thinks of Yan.
- 2) "I" looks at the imperial capital.
- 3) "I" sees the miwu.

Lines 4-6 are the questions that "I" asks Yan. The "remember" (yi 憶) in line 2 and the "sad things" (chou chang shi 惆悵事) are non-perceptible, so the first-level focalizer "I" (EF1) focalizes the second-level "I" (CF2) in this poem.

"I" first focalizes the joy of listening to music and drinking. The focalization then shifts to the memory, and "I" remembers Yan. Then, "I" asks a series of questions to

¹⁶¹ Bai 白, 694-695.

express the pleasure in Hangzhou and the boredom in Chang'an, and at the same time, explains that "I" and Yan have been separated for a long time. These questions seem to reflect that "I" is a frank and outspoken person. Finally, "I" focalizes the inner sorrow and explains the reason. The readers seem to be able to see a happy and straightforward courtesan with some sad emotions. However, the image of this courtesan is vague, and it seems like this character is speaking in Bai's voice. Meanwhile, this also shows that Bai borrows the courtesans' identities to communicate in poetry with his contemporary poet friends.

Among these poems, "On Behalf of the Wood-Selling Woman to the Courtesans" ("Dai maixin nü zeng zhuji" 代賣薪女贈諸妓)¹⁶² presents the most explicit image of women:

亂蓬爲鬢布爲巾，	Messy grass are the sideburns cloth as the headscarf,
曉踏寒山自負薪。	At dawn step on the cold mountain I carry the wood.
一種錢塘江畔女，	The same women (at) Qiantang river's side,
著紅騎馬是何人？	Wearing red riding on horses who are they?

The events in the fabula are:

- 1) "I" steps on the mountain.
- 2) "I" carries the wood.
- 3) Women ride on horses.

¹⁶² Bai 白, 1634. See also Bai, Levy, and Wells, *Translations from Po Chü-i's Collected Works*, vol.3, 537.

The last stanza is the question “I” asks and the thought of “I”. If “I” does not say it out, it cannot be perceptible. The focalizer is the “I” (CF2) on the second level, and the appearance, actions, and thoughts of “I” are focalized objects.

“I” first describes her messy hair, which is simply wrapped in cloth, indicating that “I” is not dressed up with any accessories. The focalization then shifts to the time and location: the cold mountain at dawn. The action of “I” is to carry the wood, and the word “I” (zi 自) emphasizes that “I” is the person who does this action. This shows that “I” needs to do the hard work. While “I” works hard to carry the wood, “I” focalizes the confusion in her heart. “I” sees one, or more “unknown” women who live in the same place as “I”. Similarly, “I” looks at their appearance and actions. They dress in red and ride on horses. This is contrasted by the narrator’s messy hair and the wood on her back, making “I” wonder about the women’s identities. Meanwhile, this also reflects the limitations of “I” as the character-bound focalizer. “I” can only see “their” appearance and actions and does not know their identities. But both the author and the reader know that who “I” sees are courtesans. Such a limitation also makes the reader feel that “I” has insufficient knowledge about the world in which “I” lives. “I” only knows what life is like for the “wood-selling women” and does not know the lives of other people or other women. While accepting the point of view of “I”, the reader also sees the aspects that “I” cannot see and has a deeper understanding of the character “I”.

To sum up, compared with the poems in Chapter two, the poems in Chapter three are written in a female voice. The narrator “I” coincides with the female character in the poem instead of the poet. The reader “listens” to the female characters speaking about their thoughts and feelings, and the distance between the reader and the female character

becomes closer. Thus, it is easy for the reader to accept their points of view and empathize with them. Also, the female characters bring about bias and limitation, but the reader can appreciate the characters beyond their limitation. Hence, the reader's perception of the female characters is promoted.

Conclusion

Chapter one provides a research background for the thesis, with a brief introduction to the poet Bai Juyi and the use of the female voice in the Chinese poetic tradition. Chapter two introduces the framework of the narrative theory that is adopted in this research, including the narrator and focalization, and uses 14 poems as examples to analyze the female characters created by Bai Juyi in a male voice. Studies have shown that most of the narrators in the poems are also the characters in the story. Thus, the distance between the reader and the narrator is close, and the reader can feel that the narrators speak about themselves and have a more lifelike reading experience. Moreover, the focalized objects are mostly perceptible, such as the costumes and actions of the female characters. Chapter three takes ten poems as examples and examines Bai's creation in a female voice with the same narratological approach. In these poems, the female characters are the narrators, and the distance between the reader and the female character is the closest. Hence, the reader can better appreciate the characters. Also, these poems contain more non-perceptible focalized objects, for instance, the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Additionally, the focalization of time and surroundings in Chapter three is more complicated than in Chapter two. This complexity plays an important role in shaping the images of women. Moreover, the writings of Bai and his contemporaries can interact with each other. They can depict the same female figure together through their answering poems. Finally, with the narratological approach, this thesis concludes that it is easy for the reader to empathize with the female characters when reading poems written in a female voice.

This thesis is a good attempt to adopt narrative theory to explore the image of women in Bai Juyi's poetry. It demonstrates that using narrative concepts for analysis can help the reader discover some unique aspects that cannot be revealed by simply close reading, such as the change of distance between the focalizer and the focalized objects. Such an analysis helps the reader better understand the text and thus have an enhanced reading experience. Similarly, the implementation of narrative theory in this thesis can also be used as a tool to help the reader with analyses of other texts. Unfortunately, this research only adopts two narrative concepts for analysis. Other narrative concepts, such as sequential ordering, frequency, and the rhetoric of description, can also be practical and helpful for exploring different aspects of the texts.

In addition, this research can serve as a basis to help future research explore the image of women in Tang Poetry. Studies have shown that the poetry exchange between Bai Juyi and his contemporaries can affect the image of women in poetry. Moreover, courtesans frequently appear in Bai's poetry. The image of courtesans in Bai's poetry or Tang Poetry can be further explored. At the same time, future research can further analyze the image of women in poetry before the Tang Dynasty, at Bai times, and after the Tang Dynasty from the perspectives of the narrator and focalization to explore Bai's contribution to the poetic tradition and his influence on contemporary and future poets.

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