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Body and Soul: A View of Bai Juyi's
“Three Quatrains for My Own Amusement”

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Bai Juyi 白居易, a poet in the Mid-Tang 中唐, wrote a series of poems entitled “Three Quatrains for My Own Amusement” 自戲三絕句. Needless to say, they were written bearing in mind Tao Yuanming 陶淵明’s famous trilogy of poems entitled “Substance, Shadow, and Spirit” 形影神. These three poems deal with how we should cope with the finite nature of life: “Spirit” sublates the conflict between “substance” (which insists on earthly pleasure) and “shadow” (which places more value on posthumous fame). On the other hand, in “Three Quatrains for My Own Amusement,” only “body” 身 and “soul” 心 appear, corresponding respectively to “substance” and “spirit”. “Shadow” does not appear because “body” (substance) and “soul” are one thing for Bai Juyi, and “body” and “soul” are frequently depicted as a pair in his poems.

Scholar-officials 士大夫 in the Mid-Tang accepted as an obvious and unavoidable fact that life is finite, and they prepared themselves to exist in this world—that is, in their secular society as government officials with awareness of their social responsibilities, although they were always attracted to the unworldly ways, meaning a life of seclusion. Bai Juyi wrote a number of “leisure po-

ems” 閑適詩 until his later years, not because he had attained peace of mind, but because it was part of his recognition of that way of life, as mentioned above. The poems that deal with “body” and “soul” are most representative of this. It can be said that Bai Juyi is the poet who most consciously gives words to the mentality of scholar-officials in the Mid-Tang and that his mentality appears to lead to that of the scholar-officials after the Song 宋 Dynasty.

The Sounds of Life in the Poetry of Su Shi

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Su Shi 蘇軾 was a poet with a ceaselessly deep interest in life around himself, and he never lost his joyful and optimistic feeling for life no matter how terrible a situation he faced. Furthermore, in the everyday sounds which are seen in the poetry of his banishment period to Huang Zhou 黃州, one can observe the sounds of his heart and his warm thoughts of gratitude towards the people that helped him.

The crystallization of this posture, which were not the themes of previous poems, can be found in these works that express the everyday sounds. For Su Shi, this was not merely background music, but each of the sounds had an irreplaceable profound meaning for his life. For example, we can pick out the sound of the *gujiao* 鼓角 (a type of drum) of Du Fu 杜甫 who used it as the sound representing the misery of war in his poems. However, the use of the *gujiao* by Su Shi is a warm sound symbolizing the daily life spent by Su Shi in Huang Zhou.

The deepened sensibilities cultivated in Huang Zhou never declined, even in the later years of his exile to Ling Nan 嶺南 and Hainan Island 海南島. Professor Tamaki Ogawa 小川環樹 has said, “The praise of Su Shi’s “Overseas Poems” by his disciples and poetic critics of the Southern Song is not only because of a sympathetic feeling of his circumstances. Among his collection of works, the ones created at this time had a remarkable deep brilliance.” It was precisely because he was exiled overseas that he himself was able to pick up the sounds of everyday life that he was wrapped in, and create the poetry that was so loved.

Even in a distant land where humans and animals live side-by-side poems

were composed, and he loved even how the children recited the books in their local dialect. We can observe there the appearance of Su Shi who thoroughly enjoyed his time while listening to the voices of the recitation.

One more notable thing is that Su Shi aimed to lead readers through the music of everyday life to the actual life, while at the same time not letting his own grief tie him down. He did not want to indulge his misfortunes in his poetry. Was it for that reason, did he not reconsider the everyday nature that appeared in the works composed to show quietness, and made the mind routinely return to the work? The snoring of people familiar to him is the sound that he schemed to put in his works.

On his homeward journey from Hainan Island he wrote in a poem entitled, “Ping Sheng” 瓶笙 about how the sound of boiling water in a tea kettle was like a *sheng* 笙 (reed wind musical instrument), and he made the members of who gathered at his farewell party listen to it.

Even at the time when one should be sad from the sorrow of parting from friends, through the wit of daily little sounds, he creates a pleasurable feeling that warmly wraps the gathered people in the keen ambience of Su Shi.

Since the time of banishment to Huang Zhou, by loving the sounds of life amidst the hardship he encountered, he expressed those sounds warmly in his poetry. It seems that the charm of this enchanting poetry which described the sounds of life would direct the eyes of the poets thereafter to everyday sounds as well.

In the Name of Love: Images of Young Women in 20th Century Chinese Fiction

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How did “new women” decide the course of their lives in modern China and how did authors depict them in fiction? This article examines the image of the “intellectual young woman” in 20th Century Chinese literature.

I begin by analyzing studies on images in Japanese modern literature and choosing three points of reference for my study of Chinese literature. First, female students in modern Asia deviated from the norm that expected girls to

marry and bear children as soon as possible. Second, although all-girls schools accelerated the creation of same-sex romantic communities, female students were still expected to conform to heteronormativity after graduation. Third, while intellectual female students attracted modern youth as atypical women to desire, they were also avoided when they were too uninhibited. Ultimately, the educational system expected girls to be faithful to their husbands and not to be too independent.

In ancient China, it was said that “a woman who lacks talent is virtuous”; and daughters’ lives were decided by patriarchs. However, when they started getting access to modern education, many girls started to think that they should or must decide on how they live their life. Additionally, for a young woman, decisions on the course of their life usually meant decisions related to love and marriage. During the Republican period, many heroines declared, “I’m my own mistress,” which implied that they opposed marriages arranged by patriarchs and tried to choose their partner on their own. For example, in Lu Xun’s *Mourning the Dead*, as the May Fourth movement began, male authors appraised brave and attractive young women in their work.

With respect to female authors, the heroine in Feng Yuanjun’s *The Travel*, insists that platonic love is the most supreme mental act, while Ding Ling’s *The Diary of Miss Sophie* dealt with the female narrator’s carnal desire. As the concept of free love became more familiar, works of fiction started to depict the change from sublime love to petty and dull romance. When wives within fiction found themselves confined to the cage of their homes, they could not attribute it to the patriarchs as they had made their decisions on their own.

This unstable concept of free love was ended by the cultural policy of the Communist Party. During the formation of the People’s Republic of China, many stories describe girls who decided to engage in revolution instead of love, and this engagement was considered more valuable. By the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, love and sex had disappeared from fiction.

After the Cultural Revolution had ended and Deng Xiaoping initiated the Reform and Opening-up policy, the absoluteness of heterosexual love was once again questioned. In Wang Anyi’s *Brothers*, heroines emphasize bonds between women, try to escape from heteronormativity, but end up failing. In fact, the texts from the May Fourth era reveal that there were many girls who did not conform to heterosexuality. This indicates that the recognition that a “happy marriage” is not the only goal for girls emerged during the early years of modern China.

TRANSLATION AND NOTES:

Jin-lou-zi (by Xiao Yi) Part 8

——KÔZEN Hiroshi

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——TANIGUCHI Tadashi, Kyôto University of Education

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——ISHI Tsuyoshi, The University of Tôkyô

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