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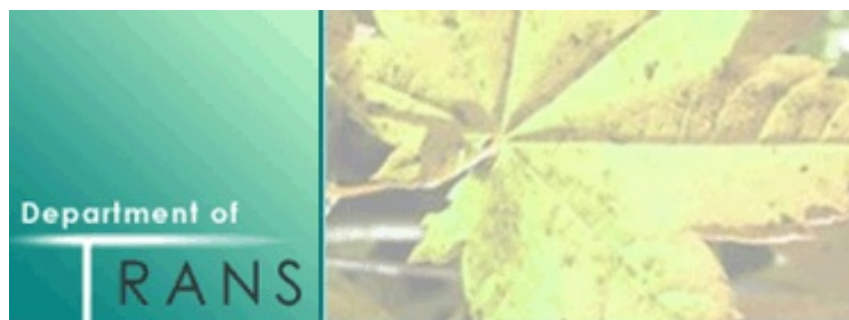
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Philology, anthropology and poetry in Waley's translation of the Shijing

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Abstract

The topic of my thesis is Arthur Waley and his translation of *The Book of Songs* (1937), as Waley entitled it. The *Book of Songs* is especially notable for its philological ingenuity, anthropological insight and poetic appeal. Through my research I discovered that there exists an interesting interplay between the linguistic and anthropological aspects of this translation. In this thesis, I hope to examine the hermeneutics of *The Book of Songs*.

Waley did not read the *Shijing* as a scriptural text inscribed with divine authority; rather, he returned it to its folkloric origin, presenting it as an anthropological document of the lives of ancient Chinese people. The expression of the desires, beliefs and values of a primitive society is a key aspect of ancient life. Waley's philological decisions were underpinned by his interpretive orientation, informed by his understanding of the historical and cultural significance of the *Shijing* and guided by an attentive concern for its anthropological and poetic aspects. These aspects were mutually implicated and displayed a keen interest in the common people, and Waley's knowledge of comparative anthropology enabled the Western reader to hear the distant echoes from their own traditions. These anthropological insights articulate and enrich the poetics of *The Book of Songs*. Waley's use of poetic language he employed bring forth these anthropological insights in a simple manner. The "folk" elements in the *Shijing* were foregrounded and deemed to be aesthetically interesting. The style and voice of his translation communicate the naive appeal of a folk aesthetic. The compositional features and modes of experience of the "primitive" are highlighted in Waley's translation, the remote, difficult text of the *Shijing* is transformed into evocative English poetry, and the philological, anthropological and poetic aspects of *The Book of Songs* coalesce into a Chinese aesthetic that is finally accessible, enjoying a pristine intimacy with Nature.

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