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Notes and Questions on the Chinese *Book of Songs* (Selections in NAWME)

A C-90 lecture tape is available on this material.

G1a. The most easily accessible translations of *She King*, or *Shi Ching*, *Shih King* or *Shih Jing* (various transliterations of the Chinese title) are the following, used in subsequent notes:

G1a-1. *General Anthologies of Chinese Literature or Chinese Poetry with Substantial Selections from Shi Jing*

Barnstone, Tony, ed. *The Anchor Book of Chinese Poetry: From Ancient to Contemporary, the Full 3000-Year Tradition*. Doubleday-Anchor. [8 poems from Shih Jing.]

Birch, Cyril, and Donald Keene, eds. *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century*. Grove Press, 1965. [33 poems from Shih Jing.]

Liu, Wu-chi, and Irving Lo, eds. and trans. *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry*. Anchor Books - Doubleday, 1975. [12 poems from Shih Jing.]

Owen, Stephen, ed. and trans. *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. Norton, 1996. [60 poems from Shih Jing; poems in the traditional numbers -- but arranged differently, by thematic groupings in the anthology: 001, 004, 005, 006, 007, 009, 010, 012, 017, 020, 022, 023, 024, 026, 030, 034, 035, 041, 042, 045, 046, 048, 051, 056, 059, 061, 063, 064, 065, 066, 073, 076, 077, 081, 082, 087, 090, 094, 095, 107, 111, 113, 131, 133, 137, 138, 140, 158, 167, 168, 177, 184, 236, 237, 245, 250, 255, 262, 272, 290.]

Payne, Robert, ed. and trans. *The White Pony: An Anthology of Chinese Poetry from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, Newly Translated*. John Day, 1947; rpt. Mentor - New American Library, n.d. [70 poems from Shih Jing; translated by Robert Payne in conjunction with Chinese scholars.]

Watson, Burton, ed. and trans. *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century*. Columbia UP, 1984. [35 poems from Shih Jing ; poems, in the traditional numbers, # 1, 5-6, 14, 16, 20, 23, 26, 41, 46, 52, 61, 66-67, 76-77, 81-82, 85, 87, 91, 97, 110, 113, 124, 132, 140, 167, 192, 206, 219-220, 228, 245, 279.]

Yip, Wai-lim, ed. *Chinese Poetry: An Anthology of Major Modes and Genres*. 2nd ed. Duke UP. [6 poems from Shih Jing. #1, 23, 65, 95, 167, 234.]

Zhong, Xu Yuan. Ed. and Trans. *Songs of the Immortals: An Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*. Penguin Books - New World Press, 1994. [10 poems from Shih Jing.]

G1a-2. *Annotated Selection and Translations of Shi Jing*

Yemang, Xianyi Yang, Gladys Yang, and Naidie Nai, eds. and trans. *The Book of Songs*. Beijing: Wai wen chu ban she, 2001. [ISBN: 7119028235.] [45 poems; the book is mostly in Chinese characters, except for the English translations of the poems.]

G1a-3. *Translations of All or Most of Shi Jing*

Legge, James, ed. and trans. *The Five Chinese Classics*. Includes a volume on *Shih King*. (This version is available online from the University of Virginia.) Note that a separate volume titled *The Shih King* or *The She King* by Legge (available from Gutenberg online, and Kessinger Publishers) includes only a translation of mainly religious poems from the *Book of Songs* or *Book of Odes*, plus being set up in an extremely confusing format of translation and notes interspersed among and interrupting each other.

Pound, Ezra, ed. and trans. *The Confucian Odes: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius.* ; rpt. New Directions, c. 1954.

Waley, Arthur, ed. and trans. *The Book of Songs: Translated from the Chinese.* 1937; rpt. Grove Press, 1960. Revised edition, arranged by traditional numbering, with additional annotation and translation by Joseph Allen, New York: Grove Press, 1996.

G1b. The overall collection is also known (besides as *Book of Songs*) as *The Odes*, *The Confucian Odes*, *The Book of Poetry*, and *The Classic of Poetry*. The introduction by Stephen Owen in NAWME indicates ten categories from among the 305 poems (nearly the whole body) included in the principal English translations of the book: (1) temple hymns to the Chou dynasty ancestors; (2) narrative ballads on dynastic history; (3) royal laments; (4) soldier songs – either glorifying war or deploring war; (5) hunting songs; (6) banquet songs; (7) mourning poems (laments); (8) love songs; (9) marriage songs; (10) songs of deserted wives (purely a literary invention, which could never occur in real life). In translations by Stephen Owen, the famous American poet Ezra Pound, and the collection *Sunflower Splendor*, the translators or editors note that the traditional division of *The Book of Songs* was into four main categories: (1) hymns, (2) great odes, (3) lesser odes, and (4) airs (in the musical sense of the term). In his English translation of 290 of the poems (the most easily available of the principal English translations), entitled *The Book of Songs*, Arthur Waley divides the collection into 17 categories: (1) courtship (poems 1-69); (2) marriage (poems 70-116); (3) warriors and battles (poems 117-152); (4) agriculture (poems 153-162); (5) blessings on gentle folk (poems 163-176); (6) welcome (poems 177-188); (7) feasting (poems 189-193); (8) clan feast (poems 194-198); (9) sacrifice (poems 199-204); (10) music and dancing (poems 205-213); (11) dynastic songs poems 214-237); (12) dynastic legends (poems 238-255); (13) building (poems 256-257); (14) hunting (poems 258-262); (15) friendship (poems 263-265); (16) moral pieces (poems 266-271); (17) lamentations (poems 272-290). My numbering of poems below and in the test on the selections in NAWME uses the capital “W” to indicate the numbering based on the Arthur Waley collection, which is also the numbering system used in the NAWME. Waley notes in the introduction to his collected translation that he omits 15 poems as too long or textually corrupt or both. (Note the misprint in stanza 4 of W-75 in NAWME.)

G1c. As noted by Birch and Keene, the 305 poems range “from solemn dynastic hymn to unabashed love lyric. In between come songs of the hunt, of feasting, of grief, of folk wisdom, of seignorial homage or ancestral praise, a rural calendar, an epithalamium, . . . courtship, . . . ballads [that] would inform the ruler of the mood of his people [by officers designated to tour the countryside and bring these back]. . . The most common form of Shih Ching ballad [is] three stanzas, with near or complete repetition of certain lines, particularly in the first two stanzas. The commonest length of line was four syllables, and rhyme was indispensable. . . Knowledge of the tunes of the songs [is so far unknown]” (p. 3).

G1d. Into what categories do the 16 selections in NAWME fall?

G2. Which categories of poems naturally include reference to the other two components of the Humanities course – (visual) art or music?

G3. In which poems are the following motifs in the selections found: (a) wind, storm; (b) the metonymy of *heart*; (c) floral imagery; (d) clothes imagery; (e) class conflict or social stratification; (f) wall (g) gate ; (h) exchange, give and take – especially in the form of gifts; (i) references to Nature; (j) references to music or musical instruments; (k) references to color?

Particular Questions

W-17 (“Plop fall the plums”). (1) What ideas does repetition help convey in this poem about the course of events or time? (2) How does some sort of progression occur from the first stanza to the last in the poem? (3) Into what category or categories, should this poem be placed, and why?

W-18 (“She threw a quince to me”). (1) What is Stephen Owen’s analysis of this poem, given in Owen’s introduction to the *Book of Songs* in NAWME? (2) What details of the poem aren’t mentioned in Owen’s analysis, and what is the significance of these details? (3) How does the refrain (so common in many of the poems) help convey any meanings or ideas?

W-22 (“Of fair girls the loveliest”) . (1) How does this poem exemplify part of the subcategory of lovers’ tryst or lovers’ meeting poems? What are the two basic possibilities of categories for a lovers’ tryst or lovers’ meeting poem? (2) What

idea or ideas might be suggested about what modern psychology would call *displacement* in the poem? (3) How does the poem connect in any of its details to both the visual arts and music components of Humanities? (4) What philosophical or psychological idea is conveyed about material objects in this poem? Who or what is referred to by “you” in the third stanza? What figure of speech is exemplified by the young man’s address to the “you”? This particular figure of speech always conveys, when it occurs in poetry, something about the speaker’s emotional state, psychological state, or social state. What ideas are conveyed in this instance? (5) What ideas about romantic love, or about the relation between male and female, are conveyed by the poem? (6) How can this poem be seen to have a connection with W-57 (“By the willows of the Eastern Gate”)?

W-24 (“I beg of you, Chung Tzu”). (1) What is Stephen Owen’s analysis of this poem, given in Owen’s introduction to the *Book of Songs* in NAWME? (2) How is the refrain used meaningfully in the poem? Why is each detail in a particular stanza in the order that it is (e.g., why the detail in the first stanza, in the second stanza, and in the third stanza – in that order)?

W-25 (“The lady says, ‘The cock has crowed’”). (1) How does this poem exemplify the poetic genre of alba or aubade? (2) What ideas are conveyed about proper roles or behaviors of male and female in the long-term romantic relationship? (3) What parts do Nature and music play in the (long-term) romantic relationship? (4) What hints are there that this relationship (at the moment) may be a clandestine or secret one?

W-28 (“Cold blows the northern wind”). (1a) How does this poem exemplify the *carpe diem* genre? (1b) How does the implied contrast between outside and inside relate to the *carpe diem* motif? (2) What role does Nature or imagery drawn from Nature play in the poem? (Cf. Chinese visual art.) (3a) How does stanza 3 show a marked difference, indicating that the poem’s structure is stanzas 1-2 and stanza 3? (3b) How does the comment about *essential defining* or *ultimate components* of the fox or crow relate to the lovers or the male speaker’s plea (or persuasion) to the beloved? How might the idea of essential defining traits, characteristics, or components be relevant to a male lover’s persuasion of the beloved to “*carpe diem*” with him? (3c) How do details mentioned about the fox and crow relate to the visual arts? (4) How does this poem represent an interesting variation of Frank Loesser’s famous popular music song “Baby It’s Cold Outside”?

W-54 (“HE: The gourd has bitter leaves”). (a) How (as in W-34, not in the 1-volume NAWME) does the symbolism of a barrier or boundary occur in the poem, and what meanings -- about the romantic or marital relationship between male and female -- are suggested? (b) How is argument or persuasion within the romantic or marital relationship a motif in the *Book of Songs* poems, and why? (c) If the couple isn’t married, what ideas are conveyed about the female speaker in the poem, including what she wants? (d) What ideas about art and music are suggested in the poem?

W-56 (“If along the highroad”). (1) What ideas about separation and distancing in the romantic or friendship relationship are conveyed in the poem? (2) What symbolism in gestures and clothing can be found in the poem’s first stanza? (3) What idea or ideas about time, and the connection between time and space, might be suggested about the romantic or friendship relationship in the poem?

W-57 (“By the willows of the Eastern Gate”). (1) How can this poem be seen to have a thematic connection with W-26 (“Of fair girls the loveliest”)? (2) What symbolism might wall or gate have in the poem, relative to the romantic relationship or courtship? (3) What symbolism might light and dark have in the poem, relative to the romantic relationship or courtship?

W-63 (“In the wilds there is a dead doe”). (1) What symbolic connections are there between the doe and the lady? (2) What multiple symbolism might there be in the rushes and their color? (3) What imagistic or other connections might there be between the handkerchief and the rushes? (4) What ideas about the romantic relationship or courtship are suggested by the poem, including male or female roles in the relationship?

W-75 (“Tossed is the cypress boat”). One of Arthur Waley’s notes on this poem is that “this is the song of a lady whose friends tried to marry her against her inclinations” (p. 71). (1) What items, notions, or facets of human nature or behavior or interpersonal relationships, does the cypress boat seem to represent metaphorically or symbolically? How so? (2) How does this poem parallel ideas in the romantic poetry of Francesco Petrarca (Francis Petrarch)? (3) What ideas about wine or alcoholic beverages are suggested in the poem’s first stanza? (4) What ideas about interpersonal relationships or individual psychology are conveyed by the metaphor of the mirror in stanza 2? (5) What ideas about interpersonal relationships or individual psychology are suggested by the metaphor of the stone in stanza 3? (6) What ideas about interpersonal relationships or individual psychology are suggested by the metaphor of the mat in stanza 3? (7) How is the figure of speech *metonymy* used in the refrain in stanzas 2-4? (Note that “heard” in line 19 is a misprint in some editions for “heart.”) (8) How are comparison and contrast used in the refrain of the last two lines of stanzas 4-5? (9) How does the imagery of sun

and moon in stanza 5 loop back to some of the imagery in stanza 1? What ideas might be suggested through this linkage or connection? (10) How, in several respects, does the explicit simile in stanza 5 relate to the interpersonal relationship between male and female?

W-131 (“We plucked the bracken, plucked the bracken”). Waley includes a note that W-131 to W-134 constitute a group of four poems that “deal with or mention the campaigns of the Chou people against the fierce Hsien-yun tribes” (p. 122). (1) How is the imagery of nature, the bracken, repeated in parallel in stanzas 1-3, used to signal something about time, and how time applies to the soldiers? (2) How does the repetition and refrain in “Oh to go back, go back” in stanzas 1-3 suggest anything about the soldiers’ feelings and the strength of those feelings? (3) How is the imagery of Nature used in stanza 4 symbolically to reflect things about the soldiers, the soldiers’ lord, and the interrelation between the social classes of the soldiers and their lord?

W-157 (“They clear away the grass, the trees”). (1) What ideas about order, sharing, and the group are conveyed in the poem, and how? (2) How is pleasure one of the end products of the agricultural produce? (3) How is a religious element part of the end products of the agricultural produce? (4) How are ideas about continuity or tradition intertwined with agriculture in the poem?

W-238 (“She who in the beginning gave birth to the people”). (1) How are religion and agriculture (including agricultural produce) shown to be intertwined in numerous ways or aspects in the poem? (2) How is the subject of history or dynasty treated in the poem? (3) What parallels with Moses, Oedipus, or Romulus and Remus can be seen in the infancy of Hou Chi?

W-276 (“Big rat, big rat”). (1) How does this poem deal with what in sociology is called “social stratification” and in political science is called “class conflict”? (2) How is the succession of crops mentioned in stanzas 1-3, both in parallel and contrast, suggestive of any points about the upper class? (3) How might repetition and refrain in the poem suggest anything about emotion (especially of the lower class), length of time, and the general situation (and component activities)?

W-278 (“‘Kio’ sings the oriole”). (1) How is this poem related to the monumental art of the sculptures in the burial mound of the First Emperor of Qin? How, by implication, was art -- sculpture -- used to save human lives? (2) What attitudes toward death -- especially death in the circumstances described in the poem -- are conveyed? (3) How is repetition in the poem used to suggest something about these servants’ attitudes about or emotions toward death in the circumstances described in the poem?

Selections in *Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces, Expanded Edition* (W = number in Waley's nearly complete translation of the *Book of Songs*); square brackets indicate that the poem is found in the two-volume but not the one-volume edition of the *Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces, Expanded Edition*

Waley Translation	Barnstone	Birch & Keene	Legge (5 Chinese Classics Version)	Liu & Lo	Owen	Payne	Pound	Watson	Yemang	Yip	Zhong
[W-10]		p. 7	#147			p. 30	#147				
W-17	pp. 7-8	p. 7	#20		p. 36	p. 33	#20	#20	p. 31		p. 2
W-18			#64		p. 45	p. 58	#64		p. 112		
W-22	p. 8	p. 9	#42	p. 3	p. 44	pp.33-34	#42		p. 60		
W-24	pp. 10-11	p. 10	#76		p. 46	p. 42	#76	#76	p. 130		
W-25			#82		p. 51	p. 31	#82	#82	p. 135		p. 8
[W-26]			#96			pp. 30-31	#96				p. 6
W-28			#41		p. 35	p. 28	#41	#41			
[W-34]			#129			p. 30	#129		pp. 194-195		
W-54	pp. 11-12		#34		p. 50	pp. 41-42	#34				
W-56		p. 17	#81		p. 51	pp. 29-30	#81	#81			
W-57			#140		p. 40	p. 58	#140	#140			
W-63	pp. 8-9	p. 8	#23	pp. 5-6	p. 36	p. 33	#23	#12	p. 36	#23	
W-75		p. 21	#26		p. 47		#26	#26	pp. 43-44		
[W-101]			#66				#66	#66			
[W-109]			#201				#201				
[W-122]			#36				#36				

Waley Translation	Barnstone	Birch & Keene	Legge (5 Chinese Classics Version)	Liu & Lo	Owen	Payne	Pound	Watson	Yemang	Yip	Zhong
W-131			#167		pp. 41-42		#167	#167	pp. 251-253	#167	
[W-148]			#133		p. 52	p. 56	#133		p. 207		
W-157			#290			pp. 39-40	#290				
[W-191]		pp.11-12	#115				#115				
W-238		pp. 5-7	#245		pp.12-13	pp.61-62	#245	#245	pp. 292-295		
[W-242]			#255		pp. 20-21		#255				
W-276			#113		pp. 52-53		#113	#113	pp. 175-176		
W-278			#131		pp. 26-27		#131		pp. 201-202		