THE SENIOR THESIS PROPOSAL

Writing the senior thesis proposal is the first step in formulating your senior thesis project. The proposal should define carefully the parameters of your field of exploration and inquiry and should consist of three parts: 1) a tentative thesis title; 2) a prose description of approximately 800-1000 words outlining your proposed topic; and 3) an annotated bibliography listing at least five works that are relative to your topic. The proposal due date is indicated on the timetable above.

READ AND REFLECT: It can be difficult at the outset to decide the focus of your thesis work, so take plenty of time in the early days to think about what you are most interested in. It's often useful to start by reflecting on past projects and papers. What texts have you found most provocative over the past three years? Which courses have served as your intellectual touchstones? This kind of reflection can be helped enormously by reading widely in both primary and secondary literature as you are trying to formulate your topic. Re-read works you already know well; read the books that you've been meaning to read for years but haven't, if they tie in to your field of interest. Look back at critical and theoretical texts that have opened up new fields of inquiry for you, paying special attention to the introductory chapters and the way the problem is formulated. Finally, talk at length to your tutor or any other member of the Faculty Committee or Tutorial Board about your interests and ideas. Use them to help you formulate your thoughts, define an area of study, and determine interesting texts to consider for your project.

ASK A QUESTION: One of the most productive ways to formulate a thesis project is to ask a question and then attempt to answer it, e.g.: What does it mean to write in a new or revived or “minor” language? What makes some texts/aesthetic objects/media seemingly incomprehensible? How do we define authorship and how is that definition altered by new media? How do we define a refugee narrative and what is their relationship to current governmental policies on immigration? Tease out the various implications and ramifications of the question. Try it out on different texts. Don't feel that you need to know the answer to the question, or even have a working hypothesis, at the outset of the project. But make sure that you find the question interesting, and that it is rich enough and provocative enough to sustain you through seven months of reading, thinking, and writing.

BE SPECIFIC: Your proposal should specify which works you intend to examine in your thesis. There is no set or recommended limit to the number of works to analyze. Successful theses in the past have concentrated on one work alone; others on several works from different genres and traditions. Similarly, there is no one kind of text to investigate. Some theses have focused primarily on theoretical texts, others on primary works of fiction or poetry; still others on works drawn from different media. The important thing to remember here is that you should read closely whatever work(s) you choose to investigate and analyze. Engage your works carefully as a means of answering the questions you have asked.

You should also outline the structure of your thesis in your proposal: How many chapters do you anticipate? What will each chapter address? Do you anticipate an appendix or other textual material that is not a part of the thesis itself (e.g., the original text of a work you are translating)? Will your thesis contain external material (e.g., a video, a recording, a website)? This structure will change as your project develops, but it is very helpful to think early on about the shape of your work.
CREATIVE COMPONENTS IN THE CRITICAL THESIS: See the section entitled "Creative Material" above for information on incorporating creative material into the senior thesis.

THE TRANSLATION THESIS: See the section entitled "The Translation Thesis" above for information on the translation thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: In addition to specifying those texts to be examined in the body of your proposal, you should append an annotated bibliography of at least five critical or theoretical works that pertain to your proposed topic. You should have read these works before submitting your proposal, and in addition to giving the conventional bibliographic information, you should write three or four lines outlining the subject matter of the book, making its relation to your thesis topic clear. Keep in mind that your final thesis project will include a lengthier bibliography indicating works cited and consulted in the course of your research.

MENTORS: The goal of the mentoring program is two-fold: to facilitate more contact and communication between students and faculty; and to provide seniors with, if possible, an expert in their field of study with whom to consult as they develop their thesis project.

We have discovered that there is no prescribed formula to follow in facilitating the connection between student and faculty member, but we do have a few requirements in place to make the relationship as productive as possible. You should meet with your mentor to discuss your thesis project before you submit your proposal, and if possible, your tutor should join you in that meeting. Three subsequent meetings should take place following the submission of your three chapters to discuss feedback and progress. In return, your mentor will serve as a member of the committee that reviews your specific thesis proposal, and will read and comment on your three required written submissions. We urge you, however, to take full advantage of your mentor and to meet with them as often as you can.

It is your responsibility to choose and initiate contact with your mentor. You should contact your mentor as soon as possible to set up an initial meeting to discuss your thesis plans. The Director of Undergraduate Studies is available to discuss any questions and concerns you may have. Please give your mentor enough advance notice when you request a meeting to accommodate their schedule.

PROPOSAL PRESENTATION: Your proposal needs to include the Thesis Proposal Cover page shown below. Students should email their entire proposal in a single Word file to the Undergraduate Office by the specified deadline. Your tutor must also send a separate acknowledgment to indicate approval to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator. The proposal itself and the annotated bibliography should be included with this form.

PROPOSAL FEEDBACK: A small sub-committee, headed by your senior tutor and including your faculty mentor and one member of the Tutorial Board, will review the individual proposal for content, argumentation, bibliography, etc. and will offer ideas for further development as necessary. Your tutor will either provide you with their feedback directly or will arrange a meeting that includes the student and the sub-committee. Occasionally a student will be asked to rewrite the proposal and resubmit it.
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE CONCENTRATION

SENIOR THESIS PROPOSAL COVER PAGE

NAME: ____________________________

TUTOR: ____________________________

MENTOR: ____________________________

TENTATIVE THESIS TITLE: ____________________________

Please use this form as the cover page for your proposal and save it all in one document. Please limit your proposed senior thesis topic description to 800-1000 words and include an annotated bibliography. Consult “The Senior Thesis Proposal” above for further information.

Email your entire proposal in a single Word file to Isaure Mignotte at (mignotte@fas.harvard.edu) by the specified deadline. Your tutor must also send a separate acknowledgment to indicate approval to Isaure Mignotte.
THESIS
PROPOSAL SAMPLES
Turning Inward: Anachronism, Memory, and the Literature of Crisis in Modern China and Taiwan

A quick look at today’s state of affairs shows demagogues rising, interpersonal tensions growing, and monolithic climate change threatening to fundamentally alter life on Earth. Indeed, it seems that I and many of my generation are convinced that—unless dramatic action is taken soon—we will witness the end times. Still, this impending sense of crisis, however legitimate, is nothing new in human history: to be convinced, one need look no further than Walter Benjamin’s conception of history as a “single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage” while the “storm” that is progress (or the flow of time) “irresistibly propels [us] into the future to which [our backs are] turned” (257-258). To Benjamin, the rise of Fascism was cataclysmic, and it necessitated a kind of Messianic salvation and redemption. This view of history thus raises an important question: what kind of salvation or respite is possible for an individual when everything one knows is at risk of being destroyed?

For answers, my thesis will turn to a timeline rife with tension and mutation—the history of modern China and Taiwan—and it will consider three distinct moments of unease when authors were moved to articulate putative answers regarding what can be done during times of crisis. Specifically, I will look at revolutionary vanguard Lu Xun and his collection *Old Tales Retold* 《故事新编》, written during the post-May-Fourth governmental and cultural identity crisis that precipitated China’s invasion by Japan and fomented the Communist Revolution; selected works of the Taiwanese poet and former soldier Luo Fu, who wrote in response to the Chinese Civil War that displaced upwards of 2 million (including himself) to Taiwan1; and the

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novel *The Old Capital* 《古都》 by second-generation Taiwanese author Zhu Tianxin, who lamented the rapid modernization of Taiwan in the late 1980s and 1990s as a movement away from the ideological and emotional purity of her youth. In considering these authors, I will primarily seek to understand how each manipulates memory and anachrony to confront their separate crises. I will discuss how each author delineates a temporally and spatially ambiguous dimension in which their work takes place, within which a conflict is staged between past and present that leads to the negotiation, articulation, and assertion of a self-identity. In doing so, I will rely on critical frameworks external to Chinese literary studies, such as Derrida’s Hauntology, as well as existing critical work within the field—most significantly, Stuckey’s *Old Tales Retold* and Cheng’s *Literary Remains*. However, I will also devote significant attention to close reading of details within the text that support this aforementioned reckoning with histories as deeply personal and esoteric, with implications regarding the purpose of literature and the nature of literary representation.

I will order my chapters chronologically, beginning first with Lu Xun. Looking at several stories from Lu Xun’s *Old Tales Retold* 《故事新编》, I will show how Lu Xun facetiously appropriates and adapts pre-modern Chinese mythology and philosophy to delineate a temporally and spatially ambiguous setting for his stories. I will also show how, in populating this ambiguous space with characters and dialogue, Lu Xun uses esoteric details relating scholarship, politics, and culture from his historical moment that necessarily and anachronistically conflict with the pre-modern elements of the stories. Reckoning with this construction of narrative through the assembly of temporally fragmented details as articulated by Stuckey, I will then discuss—with recourse to Cheng—Lu Xun’s possible intent in writing the stories with the personal, dark, intellectual twist that he does. I will assert that Lu Xun’s purpose was to articulate a coherent philosophy of self—one inherently recondite to and disjointed from a wider audience and readership—in a moment when that which underpinned his society and value
system was threatened with upheaval. In bringing together various secondary sources and setting up how my thesis differs from existing scholarship, this first chapter will also frame and prefigure the later analysis that I will conduct in my thesis.

My second chapter will look at the poetry of Taiwanese soldier-turned-poet Luo Fu, specifically those poems of his—such as his Song of Everlasting Sorrow 《长恨歌》, On a Bus Reading Du Fu 《车上读杜甫》, Sharing a Drink with Li He 《与李贺共饮》, and The Bright Moonlight in Front of My Bed 《床前明月光》—that engage with Tang Dynasty (618-907) literature. As in my first chapter, I will conduct close readings of these poems to outline how anachronism and memory are deployed in a process of lyrical—rather than facetious—construction that results in both the delineation of an ambiguous, imaginary temporal and spatial setting and the articulation of an intimate, personal worldview and identity. I will offer original translations of poems that I am working with—some of which were included in my junior paper on the appropriation of classical source materials in Luo Fu’s poetry—though I will also consult previous translations that have been made of Luo Fu’s work.

Finally, in my third chapter, I will explore questions of anachronism, memory, identity, and space in Zhu Tianxin’s novella The Old Capital 《古都》, which follows an alienated narrator’s search for personal and cultural identity in modernizing Taipei. While previous scholarship on this text has discussed its use of pastiche and temporal fragmentation as an attempt to situate itself amidst larger critical frames or political phenomena (e.g., postcolonialism, cultural hybridity, mainland-descendant identity), I will primarily focus on the role that personal and emotional connections have in shaping memory and narration in the text. In doing so, I hope to shed light on Zhu’s patently melancholic (in the Freudian sense) narration in the Old Capital, and I hope to show how the novella—like Lu Xun’s stories and Luo Fu’s poems—struggles with representing a complex, personal mental state. I hope to align the project
undertaken by Zhu Tianxin in her novella with the projects of Luo Fu and Lu Xun in their weaving together of the personal, the chronologically past, and the intersection of these elements in memory. Ultimately, I hope that my thesis will be a testament to the power that authors in crisis vest in memory, in the self, and in literature—despite formal and representational limitations.

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

Hong, Zicheng, and Michelle Mi-Hsi Yeh, editors. *Bainian xinshi xuan* 百年新诗选. Vol. 1, Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian 生活・读书・新知三联书店, 2015.

This source is one volume of the most comprehensive anthologies of modern Chinese-language poetry available. I used it last year in writing my junior paper, and I plan on using it as a printed source for the Chinese text of several of the Luo Fu poems that I will analyze.


This source is the Chinese version of the collection immediately below, and it includes scholarly footnotes. As mentioned above, I will be using this as one of three main works in my thesis to show the process of anachronistic constellation at work. I will ground much of my analysis of Lu Xun’s text in G. Andrew Stuckey’s analysis and Eileen Cheng’s analysis, but while these authors only address a few stories from this collection (“Mending Heaven,” “Gathering Vetch,” “Curbing the Flood,” and “Raising the Dead”), I plan on addressing a more significant volume of the stories and orienting the analysis
more in the direction of the personal.


This source is the English version of the collection immediately preceding, and it will be used to much of the same end as the Chinese version, perhaps quoted side-by-side.

Luo Fu 洛夫. *Selected Poems*.

I am using this entry as a placeholder pending my discovery of poetry volumes that contain the Chinese text of Luo Fu poems not present in the Hong and Yeh anthology. I have already cast a wide-net in the Harvard library system and will be able to update this as soon as I am able to pick additional poetry books up and review their contents.


This volume is the most recent translation of the Zhu Tianxin novella I plan to address in my third chapter. I think that Goldblatt does a good job of rendering the novella’s pastiche, heteroglossic language, and form in English, so I will undoubtedly be using his translation to quote side-by-side with the original text (or, if time permits, as a resource to consult in making my own translations).


This volume is the Chinese version of the novella addressed in the immediately preceding entry. As stated above, while previous criticism of this novella has addressed how the narrator might be situated in larger critical or political frameworks, I will primarily be addressing the psychological, personal, and emotional content of the text as it relates to memory, anachronism, and the use of constellation to construct a coherent aesthetic
mood, setting, and identity for the narrator.

**Secondary Sources:**


This source represents one of the chief texts addressing Lu Xun’s narrative style and move away from realism before the publication of the Stuckey text. This source will be useful to my thesis insofar as Anderson outlines the process by which Lu Xun was fed up with the complicity of modernist representation and turned inwards towards formats that complicate the reader-author relationship and deconstruct both the ideal of cultural heritage and the idea that literature must be “for” someone else in the first place. This has great utility in helping me establish my idea of constellation and reinterpretation of history as an esoteric process.


As stated above, Walter Benjamin’s idea of history as a series of erasings and catastrophes is something that I think is shared among the various authors I have selected for inquiry. I also, like Stuckey, think that his idea of constellation is useful for contextualizing and explaining the process of reckoning with the disconnect between history and subjective memory, then filling in the details with personal experience. The application of Benjamin’s theory to this context also represents one of the Comparative Literature applications of my thesis.

301-323.

This is one of the sources that I reference above as trying to situate Zhu Tianxin’s novella within broader cultural and critical frameworks, without giving as much attention to the personal articulations of memory and identity being made in the text. Nonetheless, I think that Chen’s piece articulates the issues of culture and appropriation present in the text nicely, and I plan on quoting from this text in my chapter on *The Old Capital*.


This source is a fairly recent and comprehensive treatment of Lu Xun’s mode of literary creation—specifically, how he addresses the past by reconstructing a literati tradition, subverting that tradition, and deploying it as injected with contemporary elements so as to destabilize it and force a confrontation between pre-modernity and modernity. Rather than making a clean break with tradition as the New Life movement of Chang Kai-shek wanted, Lu Xun was determined to point out the weaknesses of both modernity and Chinese literary tradition, and the resulting works come off as complex, temporally confused, and esoteric. This has great utility for my thesis, and I plan to rely heavily on Cheng’s characterizations of Lu Xun’s sarcasm, his occupation with literature as representation, and his sense of the imbrication of past and present to support many of my claims.


This source represents a published, abridged (with the author’s permission) version of the lecture series that Derrida delivered at UC Riverside that would later develop into his book *Spectres of Marx*. I plan on using this in my paper to operationally define “Hauntology” as the spectral mode of existence that seems to define memories, historical Personas, and other elements of the past (such as ghosts) in the works considered for my
thesis. I think this spectral mode of existence is crucial to parsing the emotional states of the speakers and why they look back to the past in times of crisis, so I anticipate that it will prove quite useful.


This source is an article by Sigmund Freud in which he distinguishes between the natural process of mourning and the pathological condition of melancholia. I plan on using this in the context of Zhu Tianxin’s novella (and perhaps Lu Xun’s stories) to show how ambivalent feelings towards a lost object (in the case of Zhu, Taiwan’s purity; in the case of Lu Xun, both a stable Chinese identity and the connection to a canonical pre-modernity or tradition) and the investment of feeling being pointed inwards leads to a profoundly melancholic sensibility in both works—one that lends itself to self-effacing impulses, esoteric and complex emotional states, and deep identification of the personal with the object that is lost.


In this piece, Taiwanese author Luo Yijun articulates largely the process by which memories are assembled from the past and reinterpreted to form a coherent vision of history and the self in the work of Zhu Tianxin. This obviously has great utility towards not only helping me clarify and express with rigor what I am referring to as the process of “constellation,” but I also think that Luo’s addressal of the relationship between Zhu’s narrator and her best friend will be useful in my final analysis of the novella.

Stuckey, G. Andrew. *Old Stories Retold: Narrative and Vanishing Pasts in Modern China.*
As mentioned above, Stuckey’s work is the main theoretical work I will wrestle with in my thesis, since he addresses two of the same authors as me and outlines their use of the same process of memory’s constellation. As articulated above, though, I think that Stuckey’s work is neglectful of the personal and emotional representational stakes in the texts that he addresses, and I plan to take issue with this and complicate his ideas in my thesis.


In this piece, Taiwanese author Zhang Dachun articulates much about the disconnect between recorded history and the subjective experience of reality and memory in Zhu Tianxin’s novellas and short stories. Further, his exploration of the means by which Zhu Tianxin simultaneously rejects the present and future while qualifying and interacting with a subjectively interpreted past has utility towards helping me establish both the esoteric nature of constellation and also simply the mechanism by which Zhu attempts to establish a worldview and identity for her narrator in The Old Capital.
In retrospect, I have lived a tame and happy existence, in picturesque northeastern Massachusetts, where my paternal family has lived for centuries. However, I have grown up on a hearty diet of riveting stories from my mother’s family, which consists of feminist iconoclasts and Puerto Rican immigrants. While one side is secure and comfortable the other is adventurous and even mischievous. I like to think of myself as much the same. While “Lincoln” obviously comes from my New England side, “Mateo” is my mother’s maiden name. In fact, the Mateo family consisted originally of itinerant ranchers in southern Puerto Rico, and my grandfather, now nearing his 97th birthday, tells stories of his upbringing, weathering hurricanes, raising cattle, and fending off bandits. I was brought up listening to Caribbean music, sometimes eating Puerto Rican food, and most of all knowing that somewhere in me were characteristics of the huge, festive, garrulous Mateo family I’ve heard so much about but have barely met.

My thesis will be an ambitious musical retelling of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as a 19th century colonial narrative in Puerto Rico, accompanied by a critical essay of twenty to thirty pages. I am planning to use the Translation Thesis guidelines for the form of my thesis, except that instead of a “translated text” I will produce a musical adaptation. Still, my critical essay will roughly take the form of the translator’s preface and will explain the workings of my musical and position the piece in relation to previous musical adaptations of *The Tempest*. I will illuminate exactly how my vision of Shakespeare’s play is communicated in the music, and how I form a literary and comparative argument through my reshaping of the original text. Fortunately, *The Tempest*, like other Shakespeare plays, expands beyond itself and implicates philosophical, theatrical, musical, and even anthropological ideas. The playwright takes the chance to open up conversations around colonialism and utopian societies (through Gonzalo’s famous speech in which he echoes Montaigne’s essays about indigenous peoples) as well as about the very nature of human existence: as Prospero says, “We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little / Is rounded with a sleep” (IV.1.156-158).

Having dealt extensively with issues of intercultural musical exchange (most recently when I worked with the Silkroad Ensemble this summer), I am eager to delve into such “exchange” within *The Tempest*. To do so, I must hearken to the musical history of Puerto Rico, which was inhabited originally by the Taíno people but colonized by the Spanish in the 16th century and again by the United States in the last years of the 19th century in the wake of the Spanish American war. I will choose this later date because I feel that I have a greater capacity to access the history of the later period as well as the music that might have been played then (the Mateos were also already settled down on their ranch by then). On the most fundamental level, I plan to have Ariel and Caliban sing a different kind of music than everyone else in the play. Because they are native to the island, they will perform using a Latin-Caribbean musical idiom, whereas the colonizers (everyone originally from Milan, though, in my adaptation, from the United States), will embody a more traditional musical theater aesthetic. I will engage critically with the cultural responses
to and repercussions of colonization both in *The Tempest* and in colonial and postcolonial writings. Importantly, Prospero wields much of his power thanks to the music of the enslaved Ariel, which has the ability to control people and put them to sleep.

Since *The Tempest* is a narrative that deals clearly with themes of colonialism (Prospero enslaves two creatures indigenous to the island, whom he sees as inferior), it is not revolutionary to set it somewhere on a Caribbean island. It’s not clear where exactly Shakespeare might have intended to place the erroneously-dubbed “uninhabited island,” whether in Bermuda or in the Mediterranean, but as playwrights, writers, and critics have started to view the text through a postcolonialist lens, they have grounded it in particular localities. Aimé Césaire famously rewrote the play in *Une Tempête* and set it in Haiti; the Cuban poet Roberto Fernández Retamar restaged it in Cuba; the list goes on. In fact, Caliban’s name seems to derive from “cannibal” or more indirectly from “Carib,” the name of a tribe inhabiting parts of South America and the root of both “Caribbean” and “cannibal.”

I will adapt Shakespeare’s language to create a libretto for my musical, generally keeping the richness of the text (in the form of word choice, metaphors, and other literary devices) while modernizing some of the vocabulary and syntax. This is to prevent the creation of a confusing score that dissonantly superimposes archaic English on popular musical theater music. I will look at previous adaptations of Shakespeare plays, with a particular focus on Bernstein and Sondheim’s *West Side Story*, which is essential for several reasons: its inclusion of the Latin musical idiom as well as its restaging of a text both geographically and temporally distant. While some may see concerns of verisimilitude in the fact that everyone is speaking and singing in English in the musical, firstly I believe this could be a creative and critical tool to have the two enslaved beings using the language of the oppressor (saying more about the oppression itself than about Caliban and Ariel), and secondly there are much larger problems of verisimilitude in the very magic of the plot. Therefore, the wizardry in *The Tempest* will allow room for disbelief to be suspended around more minor issues. The very nature of musical theater, in which the unreal presence of music grants the creator the ability to realize an artistic interpretation, will allow me to position and pair characters and situations in ways that reflect an interpretive framework. For example, pairing Miranda’s discovery of Ferdinand with Caliban’s of Stephano (i.e. giving them the same melody or the same song) will show that “love” in *The Tempest* is akin to worship, and stems not only from emotional adoration but also from servitude and isolation.

Under the tutelage of Thomas Wisniewski as well as of Professor Chaya Czernowin in the Music department, I will create the score of this musical, likely comprising at least ten songs and running for an hour to an hour and a half. If I have enough time, I will try to subtly adapt the script to fit between my songs. I will probably compose for violin, cello, drums, guitar, horns, keyboards, percussion, reeds, and trumpet, and present it as a conductor or piano-vocal score. I would love at least to have excerpts of the musical performed, if not a full staging. I have talked to a director on campus, however, who has expressed
his interest in being involved in a staging. The final product will constitute the score, my adapted libretto, as well as the “composer’s preface” mentioned earlier.

**PRIMARY SOURCES**

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête*

As mentioned above, I will learn a lot from Césaire’s postcolonial lens and the racial and cultural implications of characters such as Caliban and Ariel.

Leonard Bernstein & Stephen Sondheim, *West Side Story*

As evoked above, my study of this musical will be an essential part of my preparation for creating my work. In fact, there is one instance of uncanny intertextuality between my proposed thesis and *West Side Story*: in the famous song “America,” Rosalia sings: “Puerto Rico, / You lovely island.../ Island of tropical breezes...”; and Anita sarcastically replies: “Puerto Rico, / You ugly island, / Island of tropic diseases...”. Their emphasis—superficial though it may be—that the island is both idyllic and foul reflects exactly a scene in *The Tempest* in which Adrian and Gonzalo are lauding the beauty of the island and Antonio and Sebastian are deriding its filth (II.1.47-56).

Hector Berlioz, *Roméo et Juliette*

—, *Béatrice et Bénédict*

Lin-Manuel Miranda, *In The Heights*

Cole Porter, *Kiss Me Kate*

**SECONDARY SOURCES**

Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare*

Albright’s book illuminates the corpus of Shakespeare-based musical works and shows how composers over the years have used rules of music theory to recreate emotions and plot-lines reflected in Shakespeare plays.

Daniel Albright, *Music Speaks*

This book is vital to my project from the perspective of the interweaving of music and words, and the degree to which music can function as a language.

Robin Moore, *Music in the Hispanic Caribbean*

This book will give me more academic underpinnings for my understanding of music in Puerto Rico and how it functioned and functions as a cultural agent, particularly with regard to colonialism.
Tentative Thesis Title: Trump Country and America’s Refugee Capital: Creating a Community through Everyday Acts of Welcome

There are 65.6 million “forcibly-displaced people” in the world, 22.5 million of which are documented as refugees. Though 86% of refugees are hosted by developing countries, the United States is “the top resettlement country in the world,” and it has taken in over 3 million refugees since 1975.² There is a long history of refugee relocation to the United States; it is a history primarily based on changing political circumstances that determine who qualifies for resettlement. The Trump Administration made one of the most sudden and extreme changes to refugee policy in recent years, following campaign rhetoric that was hostile toward refugees. The administration reduced the number of refugees admitted to the country to 50,000, from 110,000 under the Obama Administration, and the number could drop further still. The original version of the executive order pertaining to immigrants and refugees ended refugee resettlement for 120 days and banned individuals from seven countries. Despite this change, many refugees continue to make a home in communities across the United States, including Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Lancaster County is a rural community, historically rooted in the Anabaptist faith, that has voted conservatively since 1964; however, last year BBC dubbed it “America’s Refugee Capital” for taking in 20 times more refugees per capita than anywhere else in the country.³ These seemingly contradictory characteristics create an interesting case study of rural America’s private and public opinions concerning immigration. Why is a community that voted for Donald Trump in 2016, and has a history of conservative ideology, also one of the most vibrant communities of refugee resettlement in the United States? Over the last two months I conducted over 15 interviews in Lancaster that will serve as both my primary literature and the qualitative data with which I will write my thesis. How are people in rural America responding to the resettlement of refugees in their community? And what explains the seeming divergence between public will and the will of political representatives in the community?

Last fall, in Vienna, Austria, I volunteered at a house for young Middle Eastern refugees. I was struck by the disparity between the narratives of the young men and the image of them presented by the American media. I conducted interviews with the young men and wrote my junior paper on the topic, in which I explored the importance of understanding individual narratives. Upon returning home to Pennsylvania, I discovered that my hometown, Lancaster, had been named “America’s Refugee Capital.” Though a reasonably engaged community member, I was unaware of a critical part of my community, ignorant of a population hidden in plain sight. Lancaster County is squarely in the Rust Belt, in the

² "Resettlement in the United States." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR.

reputedly conservative region between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The way the county voted in the 2016 presidential election indicates that it would support the unwelcoming immigration policy and rhetoric of the Trump Administration. However, the refugees resettling in the area and the overwhelming support for them indicate otherwise. It suggests a tension between the political will and public will of the community.

This thesis seeks to intervene into the communal space between government and the individual. It will be oriented around narratives from the Lancaster community, seeking to show how people are responding in their everyday lives. The interviews are conducted with people who are based in Lancaster and are involved in some capacity with refugee resettlement and integration. I spoke with the main refugee aid organizations in the area, all faith-based to varying degrees. I talked to the President and Vice President of the Somali Community Organization, both refugees themselves who are working toward further integration in Lancaster. I interviewed the director of a community school that is both a fully-functioning middle school and a refugee center, and spoke with a “public pastor” who organized a vigil to support refugees during a protest against refugee-resettlement. I also examined a local Mennonite church that has grown from less than 40 members to over 200, and 75% of the members are Burmese refugees. I will use these interviews to create a public dialogue on the page, a constellation of voices grounded in the stories of refugees who have been resettled in Lancaster.

Situated at a cross-section of the comparative literature and government fields, I will use my background in comparative literature to read these interviews as individual and shared narratives that express the real-life implications of international and national policy decisions on refugee resettlement. And I will use my government background to interpret the implications of refugee policy on international, national, and local levels. In addition to interviews, primary sources include local newspaper articles and statistical data that describes the conservative make-up of the county. I will also use participant observations from my interactions with various community actors while conducting fieldwork in Lancaster. I will depend on literary and political theory to build on theories of community-building and refugee resettlement, engaging with authors like Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Raymond Williams, and Hannah Arendt. I will also use developments in the field of narratology, including the work of James Phelan and Mieke Bal, to read the interviews as narratives, often defined by religion. By bringing together interviews, theory, media, and policy, I hope to demonstrate how narratives express the space between government and the individual.

The first chapter of the thesis will be titled “Refugees and the Building of a Community.” It will engage with theory about communities, drawing on concepts like Raymond Williams’s *structure of feeling* and works like Hannah Arendt’s *We Refugees*. It will explore theoretical concepts about community building, refugees, and individual vs. state powers. I will draw on these theories to delve into the communal space that exists between the government and the individual, where policy has real-world effects. I will then transition into an interim section that will establish how interviews can be read as
literature. Here I will touch on the voices of refugees who were resettled in Lancaster, which will show the county through the lens of people who experienced resettlement first-hand. This section will be grounded in the voices of refugees and will provide a transition into Lancaster as a case study.

The second chapter of the thesis will be titled “Lancaster; Home of the Refugee Crisis.” It will demonstrate how Lancaster has experienced the effects of the global crisis on a local level and nonetheless been a historically welcoming place. This section will use methods of narratology to read community voices as literature. This approach will reveal Lancaster as a place of hidden tensions between the liberal city and conservative suburbs and between party affiliations and personal beliefs. I expect these narratives to draw on religious threads that have tied Lancaster together as a community for centuries, from William Penn’s founding of Pennsylvania as a religious refugee haven to present day. This chapter will examine the responses and everyday acts of welcome in the community – a community that recently opened an exhibit called, “Here there is Welcome: 300 Years of Refugees in Lancaster County.” I will use the travel ban as a turning point, a change in policy that revealed tensions in the community and will show how the community has responded to this shift.

More than anything, this thesis will attempt to orient itself around the narratives of refugees themselves. In a crisis that breaks and bends the boundaries of community, stories may be the only thing people have left to share with each other. Narratives transcend the limits of nations and communities, and persist despite differences in religion, nationality, and physical appearance. Government policy may determine the plotline, setting, and even characters featured in the stories of people who are involved in the refugee crisis, but true integration and community building is carried out in the communal space between government and the individual. The stories of people who welcome refugees into their communities can be weaved together into ways that offer valuable insight into how to strengthen the fabric of new, diverse, communities.

Primary Sources

Interview with Andy Mashas of Eastern Mennonite Missions.

Interview with Stephanie Gromek of Church World Service.

Interview with Christine Baer of Church World Service.

Interview with Bilal Tememi, Iraqi Refugee.

Phone Interview with Aseel Abaas, Iraqi Refugee.

Phone Interview with Angie Earl of Eastern Mennonite Missions.
Phone Interview with Don Sensenig, Vietnamese Translator.

Phone Interview with Josh McManness, IU13 Community School Coordinator.

Phone Interview with Kevin Ressler, Public Pastor and Community Organizer.

Phone Interview with Mustafa Nuur, Somali Refugee.

Phone Interview with Nita Landis, Coordinator of Muslim-Christian Friend Group.

Phone Interview with Rhoda Charles, Congregation Member at Habecker Mennonite Church.

Phone Interview with Sami Muya, Somali Refugee.

**Secondary Sources**


Agamben here discusses the *homo sacer* as a sacred being, one who is both outside of and completely impressed under society. It also intimately relates the *homo sacer* and Sovereign, which has proved useful in understanding the relationship between minor and major narratives in the refugee crisis.


Arendt speaks from her experience as one who has been classified as a refugee, providing insight into the external perception of refugees through an internal commentary. She also discusses the crisis of nationality that affected Jews as refugees, while they were in fact stateless individuals. Arendt comments on how identity shifted – or remained static– for Jewish refugees.


Butler discusses the U.S. response as one of fear and censorship that promote racist ideals in American society and culture. She considers the racist norms of who has a voice in America, and how that also affects who is worthy of being mourned by American society. The media has the power to dehumanize particularly Muslim and Arab lives. This piece will be useful in discussing the racist response of U.S. society following 9/11 toward Muslim communities, especially in relation to the travel ban.

This text will inform the thesis on the ethics of hospitality. It will help to define what hospitality is, involving a discussion of borders and conditional vs. unconditional hospitality. Derrida also discusses relationships of power between the host and foreigner, which will help me discuss the nuanced relationships of refugees, aid organizations, and community members.


This article analyzes the role of the faith community for refugee resettlement in the United States. It focuses on the motivations of individuals, communities, and organizations, all of which are groups represented in this thesis. It also discusses the role these organizations play in refugee resettlement and in advocating for refugee rights in the U.S. government. This piece give background information into how faith-based organizations have historically functioned.
Bernard de Chartres once said that we stand on the shoulders of giants, peering ahead, hoping to see further than our predecessors. His vision, built on a linear model of time, seemed promising for those who spied in it ascendant progress. Yet the same image posited a descent from giant to pygmy, a personal and cultural waning toward death. In this double bind, we can see modernity’s terrible burden: a legacy where one could feel crushed by industrial, commodified time, by the weight of the past, the struggle to innovate, the inevitable approach to an apocalyptic end. Instead of gazing forward, many artists began to look back—on memories, on histories and literatures—hoping to escape the endgame or find some solace in what came before.

In my junior paper I proposed a new approach to studying these burdens of time and cultural history through one such way of looking back: intertextuality. An intertext, I argued, is not simply a structural and relational device, but is embedded with a specific time representation and temporal color available to the writer who practices it: a specific relationship to one’s textual predecessors. My thesis takes that theoretical framing as its starting point, but expands from my earlier Anglophone, modernist examination of Virginia Woolf. Now, I propose to move comparatively between French and Serbian literatures, across modernist and postmodernist paradigms.

Woolf, I argued, confronted the burdens of cultural past and linear time by interweaving Shakespearean intertext so radically that her characters are fully fused with their literary predecessors. Now I turn to two authors whose work mediates the local and the global, the East and the West, the earnest and ironic, to confront those same burdens. I wonder, first, how Woolf’s quasi-utopian outcome manifested differently across the Channel in the oneiric architecture of Marcel Proust. I am curious, too, as to its transposition into postmodern irony, meta-fiction, and non-closure, specifically in the work of Serbian author Milorad Pavić. How do the burdens of time, and the writers’ solutions, develop across these varied cultural contexts?

The essay will be divided in three chapters:

1) A comparative analysis of the intertext as representation of time in modernism versus postmodernism. My previous work built on Matei Călinescu’s delineation of two modern temporalities and fused his framework with the schools of Julia Kristeva and Erich Auerbach. In addition to the cultural theorists and post-structuralists previously examined, I will incorporate George Poulet’s foundational work on human time as well as phenomenological and philosophical approaches to time from Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger—whose theories both reveal and structure the (post)modern relationship to the past. Global/Anglophone postmodern theory by Brian McHale, Linda Hutcheon, and Ihab Hassan
will be localized to the specificity of the Eastern European context with the use of Hungarian, Romanian, and Serbian theorists.

2) A modernist case study on Marcel Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu. The novel’s central conflict, by many accounts, is the narrator’s confrontation with mortality and irreversible time. Yet, when the plot is fully played out in this circular, closed novel, that narrator seems to ultimately write himself into redemption. How does intertextuality mediate and complicate the Proustian development of this modern internality? I will look at Proust’s use of French writers like the post-Romantic Gérard de Nerval and the Realist Gustave Flaubert, as well as his creative engagement with Antoine Galland’s Les mille et une nuits, a global tale turned local through translation. How does this engagement with both the local and ‘the Orient’ offer a different modernist relationship to cultural history than Woolf’s?

3) A postmodernist case study on Milorad Pavić lexicon novel The Dictionary of Khazars. The novel is based on the historical account of the Khazar people’s conversion to Judaism, but it multiplies that singular narrative into three accounts that cannot be unified into a single time scale or cultural history. Filled with ruminations on non-linear time models and a litany of editors/transcribers/corruptors of each presumed source text, it constantly evades closure. I will examine how Pavić develops a collage of real, fictional, and even anachronistic intertexts from the Bible to Yehuda ha-Levi’s work to Pavić’s own crypto-Serbian poetry. Just as Proust sought in the East an oneiric escape from modern industrial developments, Pavić looks to the West for a postmodern aesthetics that flees local political totalitarianism. How does his work deny the modernist dream of reconciling with the cultural past, while at the same time displaying a nostalgia for that project? How does The Dictionary of Khazars challenge Anglophone assumptions about a single uniform postmodernism replicated throughout the globe? This chapter will be informed by my work this summer with Pavić’s manuscripts and with academics at the University of Belgrade.

Taken together, these chapters will track the intertext as representation of time far beyond Woolf’s London streets. My thesis, I hope, will offer theoretical tools for the practice of world literature, while staying true to local specificity in France and Serbia. The result will be neither prescriptive nor relativistic, but rather will trace the global burdens of Chartres’ modern giants as they have manifested from the Nebuchadnezzar to Scheherazade, from Combray to the Khazar salt sea.
Selected Bibliography


A fundamental theoretical work that frames modernity as developing between two temporalities: measurable, linear time as a bourgeois commodity and a writer’s or artist’s non-linear time that fights back the former. Călinescu delineates that modernity into five faces: modernism, avantgarde, decadence, kitsch, postmodernism. His work is the foundation on which I build my own theories of the burdens of time and cultural history, as accessed through the use of the intertext.


Heidegger’s canonical study of the relationship between existence and various temporalities offers a philosophical complement to Călinescu’s cultural perspective. In particular, his delineation of authentic and inauthentic temporalities—the first which unites future, past, and present, the second which separates them and prioritizes the present—can find an analog in different uses of the intertext. One use of the intertext as it reaches across times may be to shift one from inauthentic to authentic temporality, and being.


Poulet’s work investigates the problem of isolated present moments that, bereft of a God-given telos, teeter on a meaningless void. If Heidegger offers an ontological schema of how temporalities can be linked or separated, Poulet presents the efforts of various writers to perform that linking process. He reads Proust, for instance, as recovering a temporal continuity and a sense of stable self through the acts of memory and writing—but Poulet’s framework and critical style can be brought to bear more widely on the construction of personal and cultural histories.


As one of the earlier theorizers of postmodernism, Hassan’s work will operate as a cornerstone of the theoretical chapter. He makes several key delineations. One is between chronological and typological assessments of postmodernism: the first pegs it to a specific time period and group of authors, while the second links it to devices and forms that could appear centuries before. Another is the combination of continuity and discontinuity in postmodernism: a phenomenon that both breaks with modernism while always looking back and defining itself in terms of what came before. Another is between postmodernity as a social and historical phenomenon that arises in post-industrial late capitalism versus postmodernism as an aesthetic movement. This distinction is particularly important to contextualizing Pavić, as Eastern European postmodernism developed without those materialist postmodern social conditions—and therefore elides many canonical characteristics of postmodernism such as engagement with pop culture and kitsch.


Like Hassan, Hutcheon, will be a central theorizer of postmodernism in my first chapter. In particular, I will situate The Dictionary of the Khazars within her discussion of historiographic metafiction: works that posit historical reality, while foregrounding the biased and narrativized ways that reality arrives to later generations. By her account, history becomes itself an enormous intertext, constantly revised by the present’s retrospective gaze. Her work discusses the postmodern nostalgia for a grounding referent, the use of paratext, anachronistic/parodic intertextualities, and the de-totalized role played by the author figure. Like Hassan, Hutcheon’s Anglophone-centric work, though, will need to be translated to the local specifics of Eastern European postmodernism. In many ways, Pavić eludes her universals.
Additional Secondary Sources on Marcel Proust and Milorad Pavić


“The personal is political,” wrote Carol Hanisch in 1969, in an essay reflecting on the conflicts between feminist theory and personal reproductive choices. And although her words were written more than a century after the first modern Hebrew literary works began to penetrate the Pale of Settlement, the collapsing of personal and political choices encapsulates the historical, linguistic and national debates surrounding the development of a modern Jewish literature. In this time of upheaval, the linguistic was political, a struggle for the hearts and minds of Jewish readership between Hebrew, Yiddish and a plethora of local languages in the Pale of Settlement. In the period between 1828 and 1921, the end of the Russian Revolution, Hebrew was transformed from a language of liturgy and exegesis into a viable medium for sophisticated modern prose, poetry and journalism. In my senior thesis, I hope to explore and translate critical and theoretical works by Micah Yosef Berdichevsky (1865-1921), one of the foremost—and most radical—writers in this literary revolution, in an effort to inform English-language readers about this unprecedented linguistic, literary and ideological phenomenon.

I plan to translate three early-twentieth-century Hebrew works by Micah Yosef Berdichevsky: *Lemahut Hashira* (Towards The Essence of Poetry), *Al Ha-Perek* (On the Chapter), and *Inyanei Lashon* (Matters of Language). Each work is a thematic collection of smaller essays that allow Berdichevsky to express himself in his preferred form—the short and often cryptic reflection. These essays, on the border between literary theory and literary criticism, express Berdichevsky's views on issues pertaining to the philosophy of literature: the specific role of Hebrew literature in a modern world; the role of the artist in historical memory; and the role of poetic creation in man's relations with the divine, among other topics. Cumulatively, the essays provide a fascinating insight into the self-conception of an author writing amid the revival of his language of choice. The essays reflect the perspective of a man trained in the classical German philosophical tradition in Berlin and Bern, and, at the same time, the expressions of an artist writing in a half-formed and continually evolving language, with a minute and disputed readership. As these essays have never been translated into English, my work will allow a new set of readers to access a series of questions evoked by Berdichevsky's thought: What does it mean to write in a new, or revived, language? What is the role of national art, and the artist in a developing
nation? Was the development of Hebrew into a spoken tongue historically inevitable—or historically necessary? These, among other questions, are ones I plan to answer in my translator's preface.

Choosing Berdichevsky as an author offers a unique perspective on the ideological and aesthetic motivations behind the Hebrew literary revolution. Well acquainted with a variety of European languages and their literatures, and the Jewish religious sphere, Berdichevsky embodied the Europeanism that defined the resurgence of Hebrew letters. Berdichevsky was even dubbed 'The Hebrew Nietzsche'—a name that not only revealed the deep influence of Nietzsche on Berdichevsky's writing but also pointed to the depth of the German writer's influence on Hebrew ideologues of the time, and the emergent Zionist movement. In my preface, I will explore the influence of Nietzsche's aesthetics and ideas of nationality on Berdichevsky's writings, in addition to outlining the challenges of translating these works.

Translating modern Hebrew literature from the turn of the twentieth century presents a unique set of translation difficulties and rewards. Like most of his Hebrew-writing peers, Berdichevsky was reared in a religious home and comprehensively educated in the Jewish textual tradition, including the Old Testament, Mishnah, Talmud, and centuries of exegesis.

Thus, both the author and his audience were steeped in a rich and highly intertextual Hebrew tradition. Hebrew writing of the period, though bereft of a spoken dialect, drew on linguistic strata ranging from Genesis to the Medieval Hebrew poetry of Spain. The resultant texts are host to a complex network of allusions, from the Pentateuch and Prophets to Talmudic tractates both minor and major; they contain Aramaic phrases taken directly from the Talmud, Greek influenced Hebrew vocabulary from the Mishnah, and a plethora of words newly invented by the authors of a language perpetually adapting to the needs of modern realist prose. In my translation, I hope to highlight the complex subtexts engendered by allusion, taking advantage of the many pan-Biblical and pan-Talmudic reference works that render this effort possible in a modern age. I plan to reflect my research in a significant number of footnotes and, if necessary, explanatory appendices.
Annotated Bibliography

This compendium of Modern Hebrew literary works, with a highly informative preface by Robert Alter, will allow me to view Berdichevsky's works in the literary context in which he wrote them. Authors include Uri Nissan Gnessin, the pioneer of stream-of-consciousness writing in Hebrew; Hayyim-Nahman Bialik, the national poet of Israel; and Shaul Tschernichovsky, who brought sonnets, ballads, epics and other classical literary forms into the Hebrew language for the first time.

In this book, Robert Alter outlines the stages in the Hebrew-language literary revolution, tracking the developments in Modern Hebrew prose style over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This will allow me to pinpoint the unique features of Berdichevsky's style in historical context, and chronicle the remarkable evolution of Hebrew prose in the absence of spoken dialect.

The primary source text I will be working from, this 1921 collection includes the contents of Berdichevsky's collection of essays 'Ba-sadeh Ha-sefer,' 'Ali HaPerek' (On the Chapter'), 'Le-Mahut Ha-Shirah' (Towards the Essence of Poetry), and 'Inyanei Lashon' (Matters of Language). The essays express Berdichevsky's ideas and attitudes towards the role of the artist, what constitutes literature, and the specific roles of Hebrew literature and language in the modern literary sphere.

This text, edited by Berdichevsky's foremost biographer, gathers testimony from relatives, coworkers, friends and followers in a book of essays and excerpts that paint a remarkable portrait of the life of the author. Texts include the testimony of former yeshiva classmates, prominent historian Simon Dubnow, fellow Hebrew poets and feuilletonists, and the author's wife, Rachel.

This text chronicles the development of Hebrew and Yiddish literatures within a series of historical events Harshav dubs the “Modern Jewish Revolution,” ranging across continents, empires and languages. The book provides an important theoretical context for the development of these literatures, meshing literary theory and historical perspective.

In one of his earliest works, Nietzsche explores his philosophy of aesthetics and outlines his notions on the nature of art. In exploring texts by Berdichevsky and Nietzsche in tandem I hope to examine Nietzsche's influence on Berdichevsky's aesthetic philosophy directly.

In this aphoristic work, Nietzsche advances the idea of eternal recurrence and the notion that “God is dead,” and begins to develop a number of his theses on power. Both the form and the content of this book are important for study of Berdichevsky, as Berdichevsky adopted the aphoristic form in many of his short (and somewhat cryptic) essays.

Golomb, Jacob. Nietzsche and Zion. New York: Cornell University Press, 2004. This work seeks to explore the influence of Nietzschean thought on Hebrew writers and ideologues in the early twentieth century, and the consequences of this for the ideology of Zionism. Among other prominent writers of the
period, such as Martin Buber and Theodor Herzl, Golomb devotes multiple chapter to Berdichevsky's relationship to Nietzsche as visible in his work and correspondence. In particular, Golomb explores the Nietzschean influence on a central debate between Berdichevsky and the scholar, writer and editor Ahad Ha'am, on the fundamental nature of Hebrew writing.


A collection of scholarly articles about various aspects of Berdichevsky's life and work, *Mekhkarim U-Teudot* includes an essay about Nietzsche's influence on Berdichevsky and the Zionist movement; an essay about the role of historical study in Berdichevsky's works; and a collection of one hundred letters culled from Berdichevsky's correspondence in the years 1890-1900, a period in which he wrote and formulated many of the works I am translating.


In this essay, Marcus Moseley delineates the complex, ambiguous, and often vilified role of memory and historic consciousness in Berdichevsky's work. The essay traces influences of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on Berdichevsky's views of memory and consciousness; the relation of Berdichevsky's autobiographic work to his notions of memory; and the role of memory in art as evidenced by his literary criticism, including essays I will be translating.