

Tabitha Speelman 2009-2010  
Honors Project Application

A. Title of Proposed Honors Project:

Ezra Pound's Translations from the Chinese before and after *Cathay*

B. Proposed Argumentative Thesis

Ezra Pound's translations of the Chinese in *Cathay* and *The Cantos* both exemplified and resisted his own theories of translation and in doing so transformed the role of literary translation in the Modernist movement.

C. Description

Pound's theory of translation as a primary mode of literary creation that should not be hindered by verbal literalism is controversial and, although his translated poetry was popular among a wide contemporary audience, this has sometimes led to easy dismissal of his translations as such by critics both at that time and later. In particular, his creative translations of Chinese, a language not many Western critics were and are familiar with, were in Pound's time mostly regarded only as English poems in their own right and later were dismissed as imperialist and ignorant efforts.

Pound's translation work, however—which does not neatly fit his own theories—was at the core of the Modernist project for a new language and form in English poetry, and his early Chinese translations transformed his style for good, culminating in the hybrid text of the *The Cantos*. Today, in the growing fields of Translation Studies and Comparative Literature, questions of linguistic and cultural translations that have arise after Said's classic *Orientalism* have led to a positive reinterpretation of creative translation as potentially able to reveal inherent differences and gaps between languages and cultures instead of merely attempting to resemble perfectly a superior original.

Pound's theoretical intentions and the practical resistance of the poems themselves reveal translations that are sensitive to the context and power differentials at play. Pound's "translations" also illuminate the gaps between China and the West and between criticism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and today.

D. Preparation for the Project

This Spring semester I am taking an independent research class at Oxford University, in which I have started to research this topic for a shorter essay. I can take the project in a number of directions right now, but for the honors project I am planning to expand my current research in the direction of Pound's influence on other Modern poets and on Translation Studies, thus establishing a focus on the English literature rather than the Chinese language component of the topic.

For more translation theories after Pound, I have been reading George Steiner's classic *After Babel* (1976), as well as more recent works such as Ashok Bery's *Cultural Translation and Postcolonial Poetry* (2007) that apply older theories such as Friedrich Schleiermacher's distinction between domesticizing and foreignizing translations to contemporary works. For a

more general sense of the role of translation in literary debates today I hope to incorporate perspectives from several of the theorists who wrote in Haun Saussy's *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization* (2006) and in Lawrence Venuti's *Translation Reader* (2004), while for Pound's own theoretical perspective I will most heavily rely on his letters and on his *Literary Essays* (1932) as they were edited by T.S. Eliot.

Alissa Goudswaard, 2009-2010

**A. Title of Proposed Honors Project:**

Food, Place, and Self in Creative Nonfiction

**B. Proposed Argumentative Thesis: (What is the argument that you propose to make in this Honors project?)**

**OR**

**Central idea and Proposed Outline of a Creative Project:**

Introduction (7 pgs)

Food and place are, it seems, almost inextricably connected. It is because of this connection that we are able to talk about ethnic cuisine (French, Spanish, Dutch, “Southern,” etc.), that foods like crepes, tapas, kimchi, black-eyed-peas and jerk chicken are not just flavors but regional icons. This connection has been brought to the forefront this century with increased attention given to the local food movement, and bestselling books like Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon’s *Plenty: Eating Locally on the 100 Mile Diet* and Barbara Kingsolver’s *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*.

Local eating is not a new concept too food essayists, however. Place has always figured strongly into essays with a food emphasis. Take, for example, M.F.K. Fisher, a prolific writer of nonfiction, who from 1937 nearly until her death in 1992 published books dealing primarily with food and tied to her culinary experiences in France and California. Her book, *Long Ago in France*, is a look back on her first time in France, a three-year stay in Dijon with her first husband. She speaks about their first experience at a French restaurant, and says, “We were really very timid that first time, but soon it all would become familiar to us. The noisy dark staircase and the big glass case with dead fish and lobsters and mushrooms and grapes piled on the ice no longer seemed strange to us” (31).

Ruth Reichl, a long-time restaurant critic and current editor-in-chief of *Gourmet* magazine, also has culinary ties to France, and in *Comfort Me with Apples*, speaks of her café experience on a return trip: “‘This is why I came,’ I said to Colman, and for that moment I meant it. ‘It’s like having France in my mouth. If I stay away too long I forget the flavor’” (39). Other writers, like Kim Sunée in *Trails of Crumbs: Hunger, Love and The Search for Home*, and Linda Furiya in *Bento Box in the Heartland: My Japanese Girlhood in Whitebread America*, talk about what happens when multiple foods and places combine.

Essay 1 (5 pgs)

I learned to cook the summer after my freshman year of college. My mother didn’t cook much—she used to make jokes about the superfluous presence of the self-cleaning function on our oven—and I decided that since I hadn’t grown up cooking, I’d have to teach myself. So I took all things food-related on myself. Moving back home summer was an interesting transitional experience. While my home is a mere 20-minute drive from Calvin, I’d changed at college and

no longer belonged at home the way I used to. I had also become a vegetarian, which made my cooking a bit of a fiasco—I wouldn't eat meat; my father wouldn't eat meatless meals. I shopped almost exclusively at the Fulton Street Farmers' Market, which played out serendipitously. For perhaps the first time in my life, I really began to feel the life-affirming rhythm of growing seasons. I also came to feel at home in Grand Rapids, at home with my childhood, in a way that I couldn't before I saw how, too, I was separate from it.

#### Essay 2 (5 pgs)

Last semester, I participated in the Oregon Extension, and moved for 14 weeks to a small cabin in an isolated community on the side of a mountain. We OE students did all our own cooking, set loose with no microwave, a set of Mennonite cookbooks, and weekly drives down the mountain to a remarkable little grocery store that carried everything from local organic produce to incense and Tibetan prayer flags. In Oregon, I discovered coffee, marionberries, vegan chili, and Tillamook ice cream. I also discovered yeast breads. The sweet-sour smell, the comforting rhythm of kneading dough, the aroma of baking that filled our entire cabin. One of the professors taught my brought homemade country-bread and Provençal herb butter around the cabins each week, and taught my cabin-mate and I to cultivate our own yeast starter. The warm, crumbly feeling of rustic country bread in my mouth still brings me right back to the zany, difficult, glorious Indian summer days of central Oregon.

#### Essay 3 (5 pgs)

What is a West Michigan childhood without quality time spent at the Lake Michigan shore? For about a decade of my growing-up years, I tagged along with my childhood friend and her family (family friends—Bethany and I knew each other from birth) to their rental cottage just south of Grand Haven. As the children of the menagerie, Bethany and I were delegated to dish duty, until we found a way to get out of it. If we cooked, someone else would offer to clean up. So “our meal” became an annual event. Even after Bethany and I went on to different high schools and began to grow apart, we coordinated recipe ideas and shopping lists, and produced a summer meal—something like Chicken Kiev with roasted green beans, and for dessert ice cream with wild raspberries we'd picked that morning. It was food that tasted like summer, and the meals we made were only what that were because we were, for a week, suspended in time among the trees and sand and waves.

#### **C. Description: (200-400 words) (What is the scope of your project? What critical theories or paradigms do you plan to employ? Why is this an important project?)**

One could argue that all good writing is a means of truth telling. Creative nonfiction simply states this goal explicitly. Books on the art and craft of creative nonfiction have titles like *Telling True Stories*, *Writing True*, and *Inventing the Truth*. The genre is focused on telling (more or less) factual reality, and in doing so, telling the truth. Steven Harvey describes this truth telling as a sort of relationship in his essay, “The Art of Translation.” He writes, “‘Getting it right’ for an essayist means putting events and details into a revealing—a revelatory—relationship with one another. Strolling through the museum of love and change, the essayist

rearranges for all to see the treasures we cannot keep,” (Root 366). Food writing is a particular interesting division of creative nonfiction.

Food writing has seen a remarkable jump in popularity in the last few years. In her introduction to *Best Food Writing 2005*, Holly Hughes writes, “food writing is hot now in a way it wasn’t when I began this enterprise back in the year 2000—food writing courses have sprung up everywhere, from adult education classes to the top culinary colleges in the country...” (xi). The best food writing is about much more than just the flavors and dishes it describes. In *Comfort me with Apples*, Reichl describes fellow writer M.F.K. Fisher to a friend, saying, “She can make you taste things just by writing about them, but that’s not the point. She actually makes you pay attention to your next meal, feel more alive because you’re doing that. When you read her you understand that you need to respect yourself enough to focus on the little things of life. She celebrates the everyday by making it momentous” (152).

Nedra Reynolds’ book, *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*, explores the concepts of space and place in rhetoric and composition. She examines the meaning of place, and talks about geography as a lived event—both embodied and metaphorical. She writes, “Geographies of rhetoric and writing begin with the assertion that the way we map the world is a direct but complex result of gender, race, class, and abilities; images and feelings get imprinted in our heads and on our bodies, affecting how we walk through a neighborhood choose an apartment, find our way across campus, or navigate texts or acts of literacy” (140).

**D. Preparation for the Project: (include work completed or in progress in other classes)  
OR**

**If you honors proposal is not the deepening and development of work completed or in progress, please indicate how you have prepared to undertake this project.**

I’ve had experience with nonfiction writing at Calvin in English 265 (spring 2008) and English 275 (fall 2007). At the Oregon Extension, I worked in a writers’ group with faculty member Jessie Van Eerden, who holds a degree in nonfiction writing.

I have published essays in student publications at Calvin (“Community listening” and “Review: The Gospel Truth” in *Uncompressed*, winter 2008, and “Calvin invited new authors for FFW event” in *Chimes*, 04/18/2008), and in *Catapult*, a bi-weekly online and print publication edited by Kirsten Giessen-Reitsma (“Remembering” 11/16/07, “A shifting image” 12/28/07, “Back in time” (02/08/08).

I have also compiled a bibliography of works that I have read and plan to work with or that I have tasted and plan to peruse further.