

English 2850 TMWA: Great Works of Literature II

Prof. Trogan

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Research Project: Annotating Literary Texts

## **I. Introduction**

Scholarly annotation is the art of writing brief “notes” that help readers to understand a particular text. The kind of annotation – how many notes, how long they are, what they focus on, etc. – can vary greatly. The variation in part depends on who writes the notes and for whom they are written. Notes written for professional scholars can be very extensive and complicated. Notes written for students often focus more on basic definitions and necessary background (like some of the simpler footnotes in your readings). Sometimes notes can be creative and inspiring: they raise new questions, they connect the text with other historical and cultural phenomena, and they encourage readers to look at the text in new and surprising contexts.

In this assignment, you will be asked to annotate one of three texts: “The Wise Neighbor” (1679), a story by Pu Song-Ling; “La Belle Dame sans Merci” (1819), a poem by John Keats; or “Zaabalawi” (1963), a short story by Naghib Mahfouz. You will work together with you group. Groups 1 and 2 will be assigned to “The Wise Neighbor,” Groups 3 and 4 will be assigned to “La Belle Dame sans Merci” and Groups 5 and 6 will be assigned to “Zaabalawi.”

Your notes on these texts should be *for your fellow students*. The notes can provide basic definitions of words and important background information, but they can also go beyond this kind of necessary explanation. In your notes, you should feel free to raise questions, to make interpretive points, and to discover links between your text and many other phenomena (other works of art, key historical events, political movements, etc.). Any research that illuminates the text will be useful for your classmates. You must remember that your notes should be connected to specific, concrete details in the actual text.

## **II. Thinking about Your Research**

The first step in this project is to meet with me so that I can answer any questions about the project you may have and make sure that you have a plan for moving forward. I will also give you an example of an annotated text when we meet. Then (after carefully reading the literary text) you will meet with the other members of your group in order to discuss possible subjects of annotations. Together you will generate a list of words/details/references that need further research and explanation. One person from your group should be designated to e-mail this list to me. We will then discuss the list in another brief in-class meeting. This list will then be divided up among the group members so that each student is responsible for researching and writing up about three notes.

As you read your assigned text, and as you discuss it with fellow group-members, you should look for words/details/references that might serve as the subjects of explanatory notes. Here are some questions to consider as you think about possible annotations:

- Are there references to real-world places, historical events, or famous people? Would knowing about these places, events, or people help you to understand the text?
- Are there specific words that you do not know? Or are there words that are being used in a strange way - perhaps because the word meant something different a long time ago?
- Are there references to particular religious or philosophical or political ideas?
- Are there references to cultural practices (like marriage, or child-rearing, or ways of making a living) that vary according to time and place?
- Are there references to other works of art (literature, music, visual art, or other art-forms)?
- Are there particular words or phrases that seem important to note, perhaps because they are ambiguous or especially meaningful?

There are many, many options for research. You do not need to worry about “explaining everything” or writing every possible relevant note. You just need to make sure that your set of notes provides concrete, useful information that illuminates the literary text for your classmates. In order to give you a head start on your research, I have attached some suggested secondary sources for each text (see below).

### III. Requirements for Each Student: Written Notes and (Informal) Oral Presentation

Once you have completed the steps above, each student must write up about three notes and submit them to me via email as an MS Word attachment (approximately 2.5 pages long). Each student must also speak to the rest of the class about his or her notes on the day we discuss the text in class. The key task is *to explain clearly how your research helps us to understand what is happening in the story or poem*. You always need to keep in mind the actual words of the story or poem.

Written notes will be due on the dates of the informal oral presentations on the three texts. The dates are as follows:

**Groups 1 & 2: READING 4 - “The Wise Neighbor” by Pu Song-Ling Monday, February 24**  
**Groups 3 & 4: READING 6 - “La Belle Dame sans Merci” by John Keats, Monday, March 3**  
**Groups 5 & 6: READING 15 – “Zaabalawi” by Naghib Mahfouz, Wednesday, April 9**

### IV. Suggested Secondary Sources

#### Pu Song-Ling’s “The Wise Neighbor”

Chang, Chun-shu and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang. *Redefining History: Ghosts, Spirits, and Human Society in P'u Sung-ling's World, 1640-1715*. ISBN 0-472-10822-0

Chiang, Lydia Sing-Chen. *Collecting The Self: Body And Identity In Strange Tale Collections Of Late Imperial China* (Volume 67 of *Sinica Leidensia*). ISBN 978-9004142039.

Huntington, Rania. *Alien Kind: Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative* (Harvard East Asian Monographs). ISBN 978-0674010949

Owen, Stephen, ed. Introduction to Pu Song-ling in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. ISBN-13: 978-0393971064

Zeitlin, Judith T. *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*. ISBN 0-8047-2085-1

Supernatural Literature in China

[http://www.illuminatedlantern.com/cinema/archives/ghost\\_lovers\\_and\\_fox\\_spirits.php](http://www.illuminatedlantern.com/cinema/archives/ghost_lovers_and_fox_spirits.php)

Fox Spirits in China

<http://academia.issendai.com/fox-chinese.shtml>

### Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"

Bloom, Harold. John Keats. ISBN 978-0791059340.

Bostetter, Edward E., *Romantic Ventriloquists: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron*. ISBN 978-0295739182.

Grant, John E., "Discovering 'La Belle Dame sans Merci,'" in *Approaches to Teaching Keats's Poetry*. ISBN 978-0873525435

McFarland, Thomas. *The Masks of Keats: The Endeavor of a Poet*. ISBN. 978-0198186458

Wolfson, Susan J. *Cambridge Companion to Keats (Cambridge Companions to Literature)*. ISBN 978-0521658393

Web Sites

*John Keats and Mythopoetics: A Reading of "La Belle Dame sans Merci"* by Sibylle Baumbach

[http://www.zaa.uni-tuebingen.de/wp-content/uploads/2006\\_04\\_BAUMBACH.pdf](http://www.zaa.uni-tuebingen.de/wp-content/uploads/2006_04_BAUMBACH.pdf)

Close Reading of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"

<http://garethprior.org/close-reading-la-belle-dame-sans-merci/>

Overview of Keats

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/keats.html>

Overview of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/belle.html>

### **Mahfouz's "Zaabalawi"**

el-Enany, Rasheed. *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning*. ISBN 978-0203416808

Gordon, Haim. *Naguib Mahfouz's Egypt: Existential Themes in His Writings*. ISBN 978-0313268762

Le Gassick, Trevor, ed. *Critical Perspectives on Naguib Mahfouz*. ISBN 978-0894106606

Peled, Mattityahu. *Religion, My Own: the Literary Works of Najib Mahfuz*. ISBN 978-0-87855-135-4.

#### Web Sites

Naguib Mahfouz – Nobel Prize Electronic Museum Site

[www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1988/index.html](http://www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1988/index.html)

Naguib Mahfouz – Authors Calendar

<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/mahfouz.htm>

Literary Analysis: "Zaabalawi"

<http://www.humanities360.com/index.php/literary-analysis-zaabalawi-by-naguib-mahfouz-66375/>

Mahfouz's "Zaabalawi" as Parable

<http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/mahfouz.htm>