Summer Research Circle Report
Stacy Beckwith and Shaohua Guo
September 7, 2022

Project title: History, Memory, and Commercialism in Contemporary Cultural Production in China and in Spain

During the summer of 2022, we met three times to discuss our projects on June 10 (in person), August 3 (on Zoom), and August 29 (on Zoom). Since we are both at an early stage in working on our projects, at our first meeting we discussed our individual work plans and brainstormed together to help each other develop our writing. Then, after our first meeting in June we sent each other a sample of our writing and conference presentation slides/notes to build greater familiarity with our respective topics, contexts, and recent related scholarship.

Next, on August 3rd we discussed a draft of Shaohua’s article for publication, "The Reincarnation of the Socialist Model Worker: Morality and Governance in Contemporary Chinese Television Drama." In preparation, Stacy prepared detailed comments in writing and we reviewed these together on Zoom. Ahead of our August 29th meeting Shaohua sent thorough notes to Stacy on her grant application narrative in process, which is for her book project, "Inquisition, Pueblo, Plot: Spain's Map of Old Jewish Quarter Novels." Then, on Zoom we reviewed Shaohua's thoughts on Stacy’s narrative in draft.

Shaohua's reflections:
I am working on a paper tentatively titled as above. This paper discusses the return of the socialist model worker as one of the ideal models of masculinity in contemporary China. I benefitted tremendously from receiving Stacy's feedback on the organization of the paper, the presentation of materials, and the sections that needed further clarifications. Among the numerous valuable comments that I received, Stacy’s notion of “judicious repetition” is particularly helpful for me to rethink about the effective ways in which an argument may be introduced, presented, and reinforced in different sections of a scholarly project.

Stacy's reflections:
One of many reasons why partnering with Shaohua was so valuable for me this summer was her ability to provide not a general appraisal of my grant writing, but a uniquely insightful comparative take on it. We both really enjoyed discussing collective memory, the field of Memory Studies, and intersections with commercialism and contemporary media in China and Spain. The pointed questions that Shaohua asked are helping me to reframe my project narrative so that I better articulate how Spanish authors' re/presentation of medieval Iberian Jews involves a ratio of imagination to local and national memory. Then, this ratio itself is imitated and reproduced as memory throughout the country's commercially successful historical novel genre. I had not seen this commercially-goaded solidification of fictional imagination into memory quite so clearly before. In addition, I learned a great deal about sequencing and phrasing in grant writing from Shaohua's experience and careful reading.

In closing, we found the experience of forming a summer research circle rewarding and rejuvenating. Shaohua brought her research specialization in media and cultural studies to our
partnership, while Stacy brought her expertise in collective memory and its expression in contemporary literature and television. We wish to thank the Center for Global and Regional Studies for its support of our collaboration, and the Humanities Center for organizing this wonderful opportunity for us to dialogue on our scholarship over three months - we're eager to keep it going!