DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

GUIDE TO HONORS

For 2006-2016

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ENGLISH HONORS PROGRAM

Students who have completed at least six major courses by the end of their junior year and have an average in the major of 3.4 or higher (and a college average of 3.0 or higher) are eligible for the Honors Program. Students pursuing both standard and modified majors may apply. Eligible students may propose an Honors project (thesis), which extends normally through two terms and earns two major credits, one of which may be counted towards the eleven courses required for the regular major (or the eight English courses required for the Modified major); the second credit is additional. That is, the Honors Major consists of a total of 12 credits (for modified majors, 9 English credits plus four modifying courses). Students undertaking an Honors project must complete a course in critical methods or theory (New Course #'s English 45 or Comparative Literature 72, Old Course #'s 14, 15, 63 or Comparative Literature 72) before the final term of their Honors work. In exceptional cases, students may petition the C.D.C and the Directors of Honors to undertake a three-term thesis, for three major credits. In addition, participation in a bi-weekly seminar, which is organized by the Honors directors and which will usually meet in the 3A hour, is required. Students who do not meet this requirement will not be allowed to advance to the second term of English 98. A "Guide to Honors" booklet and an application are available in the English Department. For more information, consult the Directors of Honors.

This Guide to Honors in the English Major is intended to amplify and clarify the ORC description of the English Honors Program and so to assist students considering the option of upgrading their standard English majors to Honors majors. No usable document, however, can cover every contingency. Students are encouraged to discuss possible Honors majors with their English Department advisors and the Directors of Honors, and should consult the Department bulletin or website (http://www.dartmouth.edu/artsci/english/majors/honors.html) for updates to this Guide.

WHY AN HONORS MAJOR?

"No form of Honors or Distinction in the major is allowable, unless the student has undertaken an Honors Program" (ORC). For a student to graduate with Honors or High Honors in the English major, he or she must have satisfied the requirements of English 98, the Honors course. English 98 is the only route to these distinctions. The decision to take English 98, however, should be based on an evaluation of the personally satisfying aspects of the program.

Dartmouth defines Honors work as "greater in depth and scope than that expected in the normal major program." Honors is to be "an additional undertaking." An Honors student must take a course in critical methods or theory before the final term of Honors work. Only one term of English 98 can be counted toward the eleven courses required in the major; the second term is an additional course. The Honors element of the major "shall take the form of supervised independent work on an individual or small-group basis." All Honors programs will involve "independent, sustained work" (ORC) resulting in a formal thesis to be presented to the Department.

The key phrases here are "greater in depth and scope" and, above all, "independent, sustained work." The Honors program requires a student’s sustained attention over more than two terms in
designing a special topic, researching it (research has many aspects, but perhaps the most important one is simply thinking at length about the subject), and eventually producing a substantial piece of writing whose depth and scope may permit the author to stand as something of an authority on the topic. (A number of Dartmouth English theses have eventually become the bases of Ph.D. dissertations.) This concentrated and sustained program is qualitatively different from much academic coursework at Dartmouth, and its acknowledgment of a student's independence and individuality makes it a highly desirable option for most of the brightest and best motivated of English majors.

A further attractive element of the Honors program is the collaboration of the student with the faculty member who serves as supervisor of the thesis, its "first reader." The student works with the supervisor from the earliest stage of the process, the defining of the topic, usually meets the supervisor once a week over the two terms, and so establishes an intellectual and personal relationship that our graduates often declare to be the most valuable educational experience of their time at Dartmouth, and one which can hardly be equaled in academic work done outside the Honors program.

**ADMINISTRATIVE OVERVIEW**

The Directors of Honors oversee and administer the program. They also facilitate a required seminar for Honors students. We ask that students enrolling in Honors not enroll in any 3A course during the two terms of English 98. The seminar will meet bi-weekly for two hours. Early in the second term of the thesis work, students will be asked to make short public presentation about their work in progress.

Proposals for all honors projects are approved by a departmental committee called the C.D.C. (Committee on Departmental Curriculum). Completed theses are graded by the supervisor and a second reader assigned by the directors. Further description of the administrative personnel and procedures can be found in the Who's Who and Administrative Details sections below.

**ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS**

At the time of application, a would-be Honors student should have an average in the major of 3.4 or higher. The applicant's overall college average must be 3.0 or higher. Small downward adjustments in these G.P.A. requirements may be permitted on appeal. See the Directors of Honors.

Honors students must have completed at least six of the eleven courses required for the regular major by the end of their junior year.

**THE PROJECT PROPOSAL**

The application and proposal for Honors work submitted to the C.D.C. identifies the area in which the student wishes to work and the particular work or topics to be pursued. It should be accompanied by an application to Honors in English (which can be downloaded from the website or picked up in the English Department) or a short letter to the C.D.C. that includes the following information: overall G.P.A.; a list of English courses taken, by term with grades received; the name of the faculty member who has agreed to supervise the work; and the terms planned for English 98. The proposal should be given to the Department Administrator. Do not submit a writing sample with the proposal.

Thesis proposals are due by the end of the 7th week of classes in the term that is before the term in which you would begin your thesis work.
The application for the Honors proposal should say enough about the area and topic to show that the student has the preliminary knowledge to get started and a sufficient sense of direction to carry the work forward. The student is not expected to know all the conclusions in advance, but should be able to indicate the dimensions of the topic and the direction of the study.

Two pages of explanation should be enough to make the case for the thesis as a viable project. If the C.D.C. finds the proposal weak, or the project unsuitable for an Honors thesis, then the C.D.C. may ask the student to revise and resubmit the proposal.

A one-page bibliography should accompany the proposal, to show that the preliminary research has been done and that the relevant major books and articles have been identified.

Some successful thesis proposals from past years are appended to this guide.

**HONORS IN THE MODIFIED MAJOR**

Students pursuing modified majors in English may be granted permission to do Honors work by the same criteria that pertain to unmodified English majors. The modified majors should be, however, of the "English modified" or "English modified with [another subject]" types, where eight of the major courses are in English.

**WHO'S WHO IN THE HONORS PROGRAM**

The Directors of Honors are members of the English Department faculty appointed to supervise and administer the program in general. The Directors are the students' chief source of information about the program. The Directors also arrange a bi-weekly seminar of Honors students during the terms they are enrolled in English 98 in order to discuss their progress and to consider various questions of method, focus, and organization that come up in the course of writing a thesis.

The Directors see that deadlines are assigned and met and arrange that each thesis has a second reader. In instances of disagreement between first and second readers over grades, Honors or High Honors, or nominations for prizes, the Directors of Honors appoint adjudicators or "third readers." The Directors transmit the grades and distinctions awarded for English 98 to the Registrar. The Directors receive the nominations of supervisors and second readers for prizes to be awarded for Honors work, and appoint a committee of readers to decide the winners.

The C.D.C. or Committee on the Departmental Curriculum is chaired by the Vice-Chair of the English Department. The C.D.C. is the body that considers and approves applications for Honors projects. When a student, in consultation with the prospective supervisor, has prepared a description of the project, he or she should turn it into the Department Administrator for the honors program. The C.D.C. may approve, reject, or require changes in the proposal. The Department Administrator then notifies the student of the committee's action by email and letter.

The supervisor, or "first reader," of the Honors work is the member of the English Department who works most closely with the student over the course of the Honors project. Identifying the Department member who is willing to supervise the project and who will be teaching or on an "R" term for the duration of the work is the would-be Honors student's first task after deciding to apply for the program and after deciding generally on the topic. (The C.D.C. is reluctant to allow Department members on leave to supervise Honors projects.) The faculty member who agrees to supervise a project begins his or her work by advising the applicant on the project proposal, helping to define the topic, suggesting items for the bibliography, and endorsing the proposal when it is submitted to the C.D.C. Once the project is
approved and the English 98 work has begun, the supervisor arranges to meet regularly with the student to discuss the project and proposes a schedule for the delivery of sections of the thesis. The thesis is read in parts and as a whole by the supervisor who suggests revisions and helps the student co-ordinate all the elements. After the work has been read by the second reader, the supervisor and second reader agree on two grades for the two terms of English 98, which are the grades for the thesis. Supervisor and second reader agree on a nomination for Honors or High Honors, if the student's grades permit, and possibly on a prize nomination.

The second reader appointed by the Directors of Honors to read a thesis is to be, in the Department's words, "a stranger to the thesis," a reader who comes to the work on its completion and provides an external and objective evaluation of it. The Directors of Honors assign second readers as far as possible for their expertise in the area of the thesis, but such harmony is not always consistent with the equal sharing of the work-load of reading, and so some second readers will bring to theses only their general understanding and appreciation of critical discourse. Experience shows, however, that such second readers fill their roles very effectively.

Adjudicators or "third readers" are appointed by the Directors of Honors only if the supervisor and second reader cannot agree on grades, recommendation for Honors or High Honors, or on nomination for prizes.

The Department Administrator for the honors program handles the routine business of the program. She has copies of the guide and can answer many procedural questions.

**ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS**

The Directors of Honors and the Department Administrator will confirm enrollment with the Registrar for the honors course by issuing electronic permission to enroll in English 98 to the accepted students.

Three paper copies of the finished thesis, as well as an electronic copy, are required. One paper copy is for the student, one paper copy is for the student’s advisor, and one for the Department Administrator (which eventually goes to Rauner Library). An electronic copy of the thesis must also be submitted to the English.Department@Dartmouth.EDU at time of completion. Students are responsible for arranging the duplication and binding. The Department pays the cost of the three copies. Students should consult the Department Administrator about the methods of payment.

All theses should be bound and printed on acid-free bond paper of 20 pound weight. (Cranes Thesis Paper or Howard Permalife Bond meet this requirement). The title page or prefatory matter should include the thesis title, author's name and class year, department name, advisor's name, and date.

**DUE DATE**

Theses are due in electronic format by 4pm one week before the last day of classes in the term when the thesis is to be completed. Three bound copies are due within 72 hours of the electronic submission. No grade will be issued until bound copies are deposited with the Department. Theses delivered after the due date for each format are not eligible to be awarded High Honors or to be nominated for prizes.

Students should realize that completing a thesis on time always entails difficulties. Word-processing catastrophes in particular are inevitable. The student's schedule for completing the work
should acknowledge and make allowances for last-minute problems. To turn in before the deadline an incomplete thesis, one without its footnotes or bibliography, for example, does not satisfy the requirement.

**HONORS AWARDS AND PRIZES**

"Those students who satisfactorily complete the Honors Program with a B+ average or better will earn Honors recognition in their major or, in appropriate cases, High Honors." An average grade of B+ for the Honors work, therefore, brings an automatic conferral of Honors for the thesis. "High Honors will be granted only by vote of the department on the basis of outstanding independent work" *(ORC)*. If the supervisor and second reader agree that the thesis is "outstanding," they will recommend, via a short citation submitted to the Director of Honors, that the student be awarded High Honors in the major. (This decision is based solely on the Honors work.) The Director of Honors will propose awards of High Honors at a Department meeting for formal vote.

Honors theses in English, unless disqualified by lateness, are eligible for the Feinstein Prize, awarded annually for the Department's best thesis. Those who endowed the prize added these criteria: the winner shall be the author of "a thesis that demonstrates a forceful yet easy mode of expression, a work with well expressed ideas that are more apt to change the way people feel about things in the world, a work that exhibits the greatest likelihood of influencing how the world responds."

The Feinstein Prize is awarded by a committee appointed by the Directors of Honors to consider those theses nominated by Supervisors and Second Readers.

The Department may also nominate the Feinstein Prize thesis or another thesis for the Rintels Prize, an award given for the best thesis in the Humanities and Social Sciences.
APPENDIX: Some Proposals for Honors Theses

Proposal #1

"It is in the very moment of speaking that the hysteric constitutes her desire," writes Jacques Lacan in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. "So it is hardly surprising that it should be through this door that Freud entered what was, in reality, the relations of desire to language and discovered the mechanisms of the unconscious" (Lacan 12). Language, then, is both source and substance of desire, and Lacan, like Freud and Socrates before him, views each phenomenon "as an object" (13). Both desire and language, after all, result from lack: the former is a "perpetual effect of semiotic articulation" (278), i.e., of the latter. The relation is circular, for articulation itself at once refers to and results from want, from that which we do not possess. In Lacanian terms, then, language is twice indicted for our longing. Through its postulation of the definite pronoun "I," language "de-centres" us as subjects in a previously undifferentiated world. As an example of this unbounded self, Lacan shows us the child who remarks, "I have three brothers--Paul, Ernest, and me" (20), unable as yet to distinguish between the "I" who counts and the "I" who must be counted. Through repeated utterance of the first-person singular pronoun we become aware of self and its boundaries; it is the gap between self and Other that we seek to mediate through narrative and desire.

In Coriolanus, language and desire serve as reflexive metaphors in a title persona who, in creating a narrative of himself as atomized, classical hero, repudiates both. Caius Marcius Coriolanus refuses to beseech the Roman people for their "voices," or votes. Unable to acknowledge any lack in himself, he adopts an exaggerated masculinity in "defense against acknowledgement of his neediness," writes Janet Adelman in "Anger's My Meat': Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in Coriolanus" (in Representing Shakespeare). He becomes instead "a grotesquely invulnerable and isolated thing" (Adelman 132). Coriolanus will not admit to any desire, nor will he even take food except from his "mirror image" (138), the Volscian general Tullus Aufidius. Concomitant with disclaiming his own hunger, Coriolanus must also disclaim any kinship with the hungry rabble, "whose loves [he] prizes/As the dead carcasses of unburied men/That do corrupt [his] air" (III.iii.122-24). Coriolanus, after all, wishes to be sui generis, to "stand/As if man were author of himself/And knew no other kin" (V.iii.35-37). Coriolanus, in short, longs for the impossible, for "a world elsewhere" (III.iii.136).

In his essay, "'Who Does the Wolf Love?'" (in Themes Out of School) Stanley Cavell points out the essential paradox of Coriolanus's "hungering not to hunger, of wanting not to want, of asking not to ask"-- of requiring public support yet being unable to "bring [one's] tongue to such a pace" (II.iii.49-50)-- a paradox whose only solution is that of "becoming a God" (76). The theme of silence, Cavell continues, "haunts the play":

...the words 'silent' and 'silence' are beautifully and mysteriously associated, one each, with the women in his life: with his wife ('My gracious silence, hail!') and his mother ('He holds her by the hand, silent') (85).
Virgilia and Volumnia associate silence with peace, speech with war. Coriolanus, then, is caught in another paradox: speech, by his reckoning, belies desire, while silence, associated with peace by his female relations, thus connotes kinship and femininity. And all—desire, family, femininity—are equally abhorrent to a general who craves classical autonomy. For human beings, however, as Cavell writes, there can be no silence; "in this respect, there is no world elsewhere" (86).

The honors thesis I propose will comprise a psycho-linguistic and feminist critique of Coriolanus: specifically, of Coriolanus's effort to "re-centre" his own subjectivity by becoming "author of himself." I will examine Coriolanus's exaggerated masculinity and subsequent abnegation of his mother and wife. Does Coriolanus repudiate Volumnia and Virgilia because, as women, they are inherently more "grotesque" (i.e. as opposed to the "classical," as Mikhail Bakhtin postulates in Rabelais and His World), than he and therefore representative of that which he fears most in himself? or because they remind him of kinship, and of the reality that to be truly sui generis is, ultimately, an impossible fiction? Aufidius's speech to Coriolanus (IV.v.103-136)—like Iago to Othello: "I am your own forever"—is arguably the most romantic in the play. In what ways does intimacy with a member of the same sex "re-centre" Coriolanus as a subject? In what ways does it restore him to a childlike state, filling the Lacanian gap that differentiates between the Cartesian "I" and chaotic external world? And in seeking to become "author of himself," what semiotic system can Coriolanus, as author, employ? What signs recount the marginalized narrative of his desire?

These are some of the questions I will pose in the course of an honors project. Although they are, I realize, broad, I attach a preliminary bibliography below.

Proposed bibliography

Bennett, Tony. Formalism and Marxism, 1979.
Bullough, Geoffrey. Narrative and Dramatic Sources in Shakespeare.
Cantor, Paul A. Shakespeare's Rome, Republic and Empire, 1976.
-----, Criticism and Ideology, 1976.
-----, Allegory and Representation, 1981.
Huffman, Clifford C. Coriolanus in Context, 1972.
-----, Representing Shakespeare, 1980.
-----. The Language of the Self, 1968.
Medvedev, Pavel. The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to
Spencer, T.J.B. William Shakespeare, the Roman Plays: Titus Andronicus; Julius Caesar;
Anthony and Cleopatra; Coriolanus, 1963.
Willemen, Paul. "Notes on Subjectivity--on Reading 'Subjectivity under Siege,'" (Screen, vol.
19, no.1, 41-69).
Proposal #2

In his essay, "William Blake and his Reader in Jerusalem," Roger Easson claims of Blake's final illuminated prophecy, "Seldom in Western literature has the onus of communication fallen so heavily upon the reader." He argues that Jerusalem "is a poem about itself, about the relationship between the author and his reader." It is a "grand allegory," which "enjoins the reader to participate with its writer in the creative process" (Curran and Wittreich, 309.) Similarly, in his study of William Blake's "Composite Art," W.J.T. Mitchell writes (paraphrasing Northrop Frye): "entering the vortex of a book is like trying to read the book from its own point of view." His theory of reading Blake's illuminated texts--as well as his actual reading of Jerusalem--is based on this idea of reading Blake from the inside out; in other words, reading it the way the author intended it to be read.

I am at once intrigued by this idea of Blake's text as an "allegory of reading" and wary of the traps and kinds of blindness that might stand in the way if, like Mitchell, I attempt to systematically define the way of reading that Blake intended.

I do concur, though, that Jerusalem is an extraordinarily wealthy subject for a reading-based, or, more precisely, a signification-based study. Its unique form forces its audience to experience the interpretive process in a way that challenges traditional methods of reading. As with the other apocalyptic writings I've read, the use of codes, cryptic language, and more generally the manipulation of the significative power of written language seems to be at the forefront of the author's--or the text's--mind. As Easson notes, the unique and complex form of the poem seems to be a screen to confound "enemies" of the text and to educate its "friends." Indeed, the poem opens with an address "To the Public," which reveals the author's apocalyptic judgment and separation of his readership into "sheep" and "goats." More interesting than this screening of his audience, though, is the more general phenomenon that Blake acknowledges and anticipates his future audience's reading of the poem.

My interest, then, lies not so much in the subjective mechanics of the "reading process", so to speak (although as a reader myself, I must inevitably face this), but in the way in which Blake anticipates it. It seems that Blake transforms the impulse to "read" and find significance into an impulse to create. Both in its subject matter and in its unique form, Jerusalem tends to call attention to the creative process. Why does Blake do this? Is it simply an obscure, nihilistic game that holds as its "meaning" only the fact that it is about "meaning"? I propose, rather, that Blake attempts to perpetuate the creative process that began in his own mind by installing it in the minds of his readers. In other words, I will try to show that Blake conveys to us his vision by anticipating how we read his visual/verbal poetry and then making us bear "the onus of communication" not simply by decoding a cryptic book of "confined thoughts, in mummy cases, embalmed in the spice of words "(Joyce, Ulysses), but by joining its creative mechanism as a necessary consequence of our reading.

My interest, then, lies not so much in the subjective mechanics of the "reading process", so to speak (although as a reader myself, I must inevitably face this), but in the way in which Blake anticipates it. It seems that Blake transforms the impulse to "read" and find significance into an impulse to create. Both in its subject matter and in its unique form, Jerusalem tends to call attention to the creative process. Why does Blake do this? Is it simply an obscure, nihilistic game that holds as its "meaning" only the fact that it is about "meaning"? I propose, rather, that Blake attempts to perpetuate the creative process that began in his own mind by installing it in the minds of his readers. In other words, I will try to show that Blake conveys to us his vision by anticipating how we read his visual/verbal poetry and then making us bear "the onus of communication" not simply by decoding a cryptic book of "confined thoughts, in mummy cases, embalmed in the spice of words "(Joyce, Ulysses), but by joining its creative mechanism as a necessary consequence of our reading.

In my thesis I will explore this "catalytic" or, as Mitchell would say, this "vortexical" quality of Jerusalem, and discuss the mechanisms by which Blake communicates his prophetic vision.

In pursuing this idea I will examine both the poetic and pictorial means by which Blake expresses his vision. Following W.J.T. Mitchell's lead in Blake's Composite Art, I will take as a given the need to examine the essential and dynamic interplay of the pictorial and the poetic in Blake's art. However, whereas his study of Jerusalem is limited to the monochromatic Copy D, I will focus my attention primarily upon Copy E of the text, which Blake colored by painting upon the engraved prints. Since there is only one extant color version¹ I will study a facsimile edition of the poem, which has been recently published by the Princeton University Press. (I will also consult older facsimiles in Baker Special Collections, although many are not actually color reproductions of Blake's original but instead have been hand-colored by the publishers.) The use

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¹ There is a second hand-colored edition of Jerusalem, Copy B; however, it consists only of the first 25 plates (one quarter of the full text) of the poem.
or color in the poem is a crucial and as-yet virtually overlooked2 tool in Blake's manipulation of the signifying process. Both stylistically and symbolically, color adds a further dimension, a further complication, a further invocation into the world of creation.

Also, I will trace the development or Blake's notions of creation through his revision of Milton's Paradise Lost which takes place in his prophecy, Milton, which is the immediate precursor to Jerusalem. I will examine the way in which Blake explores in Milton the notion of perpetuating the creative act, which he realizes in his later poem. Since in Milton Blake is not only an author but a reader himself, his description of how he reads may give us an idea of how he envisioned his own future readers.

Finally, I will show that this idea of perpetuating the creative act by forcing the reader to create is likewise perpetuated in the works of many of Blake's readers. Joyce, Yeats, and Poe all take part in this tradition of forcing the reader to bear so much of "the onus of communication," a tradition which, as Stanley Fish argues, began with Milton (if not before) and was revised and concentrated by William Blake.

Preliminary Bibliography


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2 Some critics (see Blake's Sublime Allegory) prefer to study Copy D because it is a later, and supposedly "more accurate" representation of Blake's ideas. However, this may very well be inaccurate since Blake's lamentable financial status would have made the production of another hand-colored copy a virtual impossibility.


Proposal #3

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s DICTEE was published a few months before her tragic death in 1982. Although the work received relatively little attention after its publication, DICTEE was republished in 1995 by Third Woman Press. The work has been enjoying a renaissance, a part of which is collection of essays about DICTEE, entitled Writing Self, Writing Nation, edited by Elaine Kim and Norma Alarcón, was recently published. This revival may be connected to the current emergence of a field of Asian American studies.

Cha was born in Korea; lived in Hawaii for a while as a child and studied Korean traditional dance; attended Catholic schools in California, where she began to study French and the Greek and Roman classics; and studied film, art and literature on both coasts of the U.S. as well as in France. She was heavily influenced by writers and theorists such as Beckett, Joyce, Marguerite Duras, Roland Barthes, Marguerite Yourcenar, and particularly by French film theorists such as Christian Metz and Thierry Kuntzel. She incorporated Korean history, dance, and language, a feminist consciousness and the awareness of an ex-colonial living in the diaspora into her work. The range of her work included film, video, performance art, dance, and literature, as well as a consistent experimentation with the breaking down and reassembling of genres and forms.

DICTEE is as uncategorizable as Cha herself. The text includes poetry (she invokes both the lyric and the epic tradition), prose, pastiche, seemingly random images, handwritten pages, exercises in "translation," and even empty space. English, French, Chinese, and Korean are the recognizable languages of the text, and Cha creates words such as "diseuse" to assume the meanings(s) for which there are no words. Elaine Kim writes that the subject of DICTEE is "a syntax of crisis;" the category-defying position which Cha herself inhabits results in a complex, genre-defying work. Because of its various influences and unique nature, the work stands at the intersection of postmodernism and postcolonialism as few other Asian American texts do.

Like postcolonial native cultures, Asian American ethnicity/culture resists the appropriative or perhaps homogenizing tendencies of the larger culture, including postmodernism. Yet unlike the postcolonial, the Asian American lives in the diaspora. Neither "authenticity" or "identity" can be a claim to truth, for what is the "authentic" Asian American? Neither is positioning within a simple colonizer/colonized binary possible for the Asian American. If the postcolonial project is to eradicate or encompass the residues of colonialism, the Asian American project is that as well, but it is also to create a space within the "colonizing" or "mainstream" culture that is neither insular nor destructive of the particular Asian American cultural heritage. I wish to examine ways in which Dictee's "syntax of crisis" results from radical cultural dislocation and/or multiple positioning, and I shall consider as well the work's attempt to construct a space of Asian-American subjectivity in the contexts of U.S. culture and global postmodernism.

Proposed Bibliography


Frank Chin notwithstanding.
Bhabha, Homi K. The Location of Culture. London: Routledge, 1994
-----. DICTEE. Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1995
Proposal #4

I wish to propose a one-term honors thesis examining the role of ghosts in James Joyce's Ulysses. Exploration of this topic dominated my work last Spring term in English 73.2, the Advanced Seminar on Ulysses, and I wish to build upon this work—specifically upon my term paper concerning the imagery and importance of Stephen Dedalus' ghostly mother in Joyce's text. Among the themes I touched upon in this paper were: the imagery of the ghost mother's visits as they paralleled that of the dead King Hamlet in Shakespeare's text; Stephen's reaction to the "beastly dead" nightmare figures as a response to his own "beastly" mortality, the mother ghost as an archetypal woman and her connection to the Church; and a psychoanalytic reading of the ghostly visitations in Nighttown. I propose continued exploration of these themes as well as an expansion into the narrative's other "ghostly" figures.

My initial question echoes that of Stephen in his discussion of Hamlet in Chapter Nine of the novel: "What is a ghost?" (9.147). It seems to me an important concept to define in a novel in which both our heroes, two "darkbacked figures," (10.313) spend Bloomsday in mourning clothes. Both Stephen and Bloom are visited by ghosts, and clearly the men have distinct relationships to the dead. What do the nature of their 'hauntings' reveal about them? The ghost of May Dedalus haunts the novel's opening chapter and establishes Stephen's relationship to Shakespeare's mourning son, Hamlet. In Chapter Six, Bloom visits Dublin's 'Hades' and reveals himself as both father and son to the dead. In Chapter Nine, ghosts figure heavily in Stephen's theory of Hamlet, and his contemplation reveals much about his personal phantoms. Finally, ghosts of various types inhabit both Stephen and Bloom's Nighttown hallucinations in Chapter Fifteen. I plan to do close readings of these chapters, as well as other sections of the texts in which ghost figures appear and figure significantly.

In Homer's Odyssey, our hero remembers visiting Hades and conversing with the "blurred and breathless dead," (XI.28) and describes the inhabitants of the afterworld: "Now the souls gathered, stirring out of Erebus, Brides and young men and men grown old in pain/ and tender girls whose hearts were new to grief," (XI.37-39). In Joyce's epic, we find echoes of these shades: not only May Dedalus as the ruined bride in Chapter Fifteen, but Bloom's vision of his dead infant son Rudy as "a changeling, kidnapped" (15.4957) and transformed into a young man of eleven years, and Bloom's painful memories of this father who, old in pain and mourning for his dead wife, committed suicide. As well as continuing my investigation into the Shakespearean models for the ghosts of Ulysses, I plan to explore these Homeric models and their influence on Joyce's use of haunting spirits. Do the ghosts of Ulysses, like the Homeric shades, bring otherworldly messages of betrayal or prophecy?

Central to Stephen's Hamlet theory in Chapter Nine is his radical redefinition of a ghost—"One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence, through change of manners," (9.147-149). This definition seems to me central to the understanding of ghostly figures and imagery in the text. For example, we might consider Si Dedalus a 'ghost of absence' to his son or Molly and Bloom 'ghosts of absence' to each other, sexually and emotionally. Finally, I plan to consider the concept of Dublin as an entire city haunted by ghosts, as James Maddox writes, "living on the memories of its dead patriots, dead tenors and dead journalist," (Maddox, 53). As, in Chapter Nine of the novel, Stephen "will have it that Hamlet is a ghoststory," (9.140/141), my thesis will examine many of the varied and fascinating ways in which James Joyce will have it that Ulysses is a ghost story.

Below is a preliminary list of relevant works, many of which I have already examined in the course of my work last spring. I am encouraged in my research thus far, since I have found little material directly relating to the topic of ghosts in Joyce's work but much that is applicable, especially concerning the influence of Homer and Shakespeare on Joyce's text.

Preliminary Bibliography