

# Organizing the Orals

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## Introduction

The second Qualifying Exam, or as it is commonly referred to, the Orals, is a more personal exam than any you may have encountered thus far. Your Orals committee - three professors chosen by you - will each examine you for a period of forty minutes on a list of texts, again chosen by you. It might sound daunting, but it can be a stimulating and yes, enjoyable experience.

What makes the Orals special - the way they are uniquely tailored to you and your interests - is precisely what makes it difficult to give general advice about preparing for them. Because the Orals are different for everyone, compiling a universal guide is a little tricky. However, we've organized this guide into sections that broadly cover the process you will have to go through: Choosing Your Committee, Making Lists, Reading, Staying in Touch With Your Committee, and Day of Exam. In each section, we give a brief overview and present some first hand accounts, written by your fellow grad students who have already been through this experience, in hopes that their advice will be helpful to you.

“Unlike the Comps, the Oral Exam is not just a hoop to jump through on your way to a degree: it is the time when you define, for yourself, what it means to be a scholar of literature and what type of scholar you'd like to be. You are no longer just accumulating knowledge, but are beginning, hopefully, to pose certain fundamental questions to yourself. It's an exciting, rewarding, if sometimes

frustrating process; for me, it was a slow one.”<sup>1</sup>

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“The mystique surrounding the oral exams in the English program is warranted, only to the extent that no two students have the same Orals experience. However, to preserve student sanity (in what can often become an insane – and lonely – studying experience), I offer a few guidelines...”

Perhaps the most important piece of advice we can offer you is to think of this exam as your own creation. It is, in some ways, the first announcement of yourself as an academic scholar. You can frame this experience any way you want; ultimately, it is all up to you. What kind of academic do you want to be? Will you think of these lists as a teaching resource? Will you think of them as preparation for your dissertation? If so, what kind of project might you be interested in? What critical approaches do you see yourself participating in? How do you want to collaborate with your colleagues (because the professors on your committee today could be colleagues tomorrow)? What is the kind of work you want to do?

“The first statement that I’d like to make about the oral exam is that it is not something to be feared. It is a very different beast from the comprehensive exams, and this is a good thing. The oral exam is an opportunity to explore your own ideas in a conversational setting, and possibly pave the way for your dissertation. At the very least, [the Orals offers] you the chance to pursue your own interests with academic support. The wonderful part about this exam is the level of control that the student has. You design the reading lists, pick your examiners, and can even shape the structure of the exam by deciding the order of examiners. When I took my oral exam, I began with the list that was the broadest, and that I most enjoyed, creating a backdrop against which I was able to position my theoretical discussion, which was my weakest field. By beginning with my favorite list, I gained confidence, and a point of reference to help the examiners understand my academic mindset.”

One of our contributing writers suggests that keeping in mind the following affirmations might be valuable:

- I don't have to do a project I dislike or find boring (I can negotiate with my professors)
- I don't have to read texts I am uninterested and unexcited about (I can negotiate with my professors so that most of the texts I read will be ones that I am interested in)
- I don't have to work with professors who I feel are not helping me (for whatever reason) – I can choose other people to work with (even if I haven't taken their classes before)

As you plan for the Orals, remember that in order to move

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<sup>1</sup> Quotes from firsthand accounts will appear in this font and format throughout the guide.

to Level III where you will be writing your dissertation, you must also successfully finish all incompletes, and pass both language exams. These factors can influence when you schedule your exam. When you schedule your exam date, you will want to give yourself a nice, unhurried time to prepare if possible. Scheduling an exam at the end of a break (and therefore at the beginning of a semester) is often popular. You are responsible for coordinating a suitable date with all of your committee members (sometimes faculty are hard to pin down), and professors are generally unwilling to schedule exams during the summer or winter breaks. At least six weeks before your scheduled date and preferably earlier, you must submit your completed Orals contract (to be found on the English Department website) and lists to the APO for Program approval and to schedule a room for the exam.

You will also want to keep in mind certain deadlines. In order to apply for Graduate Center dissertation fellowships (which, if won, provide some support for your next year), you must have moved to Level III and have had your prospectus submitted to the department by November 15th. The application deadline for these fellowships usually occurs at the end of January. So, you may want to schedule your exam such that you have adequate time afterwards to prepare for this next set of hurdles.

“Even if it means delaying doing the reading, you’ll feel a lot better if you can leave the Orals as a level three student. If the incomplete is a signal of some kind of emotional baggage (mine was), then again, ask someone for help” and “Whatever you’re not sure of, ask about. Ask your committee to give you practice questions. Ask them how they’d like you to prepare.”

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“I spent a year and three months studying for Orals – from May 2006, when I finished coursework, until August 2007 – which is longer than most people I know. I wasn’t, of course, assiduously studying for Orals that whole time. In the summer of 2006, I took the Latin course offered by the Language Reading Program in order to complete my last language requirement, and in the Fall of 2006, I audited a class with a professor who I wanted on my Orals committee but who I hadn’t been in touch with in awhile, and I also took a dissertation workshop offered through the American Studies Certificate Program. I didn’t finalize my Orals lists and begin serious, regular Orals reading until the Spring of 2007. What forced me to take the exam, finally, was that I had to be ABD for an adjunct job that was starting in the Fall of 2007.

It’s not that I was putting off the exam, or that I was afraid of it in some way. It simply took me awhile to figure out what exactly I wanted my literary-intellectual trajectory to look like. Twice I ended up changing lists (and professors) I had already begun reading for: in the summer of 2006, my three fields were in Colonial American Literature, 19<sup>th</sup> Century African-American

Literature, and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Avant-Garde American Poetry; in the fall, I changed the Colonial list to a list on Native American Literature, and in the spring I changed the African-American list to a list on the OuLiPo (which ended up being my dissertation topic). It was like I was playing musical chairs with my lists and my professors. I'm glad, though, that I gave myself as much time as I did to get my three lists right, and I'm also glad that I gave myself another 6-8 months of time to read those lists once I settled on them."

As you can see, there are a variety of approaches you can take towards preparing for this exam. We hope this guide will be helpful to your planning process.

We'd like to also take this opportunity to thank Steve Kruger and Nancy Silverman for their encouragement and help with this project, our contributing writers, Svetlana Bochman, Louis Bury, Louise Geddes, Brooks Hefner, Gary Lim, Anne McCarthy, and Jason Schneiderman, and finally our own Orals committees - Ammiel Alcalay, Rachel Brownstein, David Greetham, Carrie Hintz, and Rich McCoy for all their patient advice, as well as making our own Orals experiences both memorable and fun.

*Emily Lauer & Balaka Basu*

## **Choosing Your Committee**

Your Orals experience may become easier if you think of the exam itself as a long process rather than a "do-or-die" couple of hours. In some ways, the beginning of the second Qualifying Exam begins with the process of choosing your committee. The nuts and bolts of this process are fairly self-explanatory. This committee should consist of three professors who are typically appointees at the Graduate Center, although they need not all be English faculty. So if you have an interest in theater, or comparative literature, or history, you may be able to add a professor from a different department to your committee. To do so, you need EO approval. With the EO's approval it is also sometimes possible to have a non-Graduate Center appointee serve on the orals committee. If, for instance, there is someone at one of the CUNY campuses who is not currently on the doctoral faculty at the GC but who you feel would be a particularly appropriate examiner, you should ask the EO if it would be possible for that professor to serve on the examining committee.

You may wish to first approach the person who you wish to serve as the chair of your committee. Often, if your interests and focus do not shift in the interim, the chair of the Orals

committee goes on to serve as the adviser for the dissertation, and will therefore be someone with whom you will have a close working relationship. Each member of the committee will examine you on one list (more about compiling these lists in the next section). You may wish to approach professors whom you know from taking classes, but if you have an esoteric interest not normally covered in course offerings, you may wish to ask around the department. Often professors have a secondary research interest that they do not usually teach but will be happy to explore with you in an Orals list.

When you approach professors, feel free to candidly ask them about how they usually handle lists and exams. This will help ensure the best possible fit. While choosing professors, consider whether or not you have similar outlooks on similar interests. For instance, suppose you want to do an early modern list focusing on drama other than Shakespeare (because you secretly think Shakespeare is over-rated). Choosing an examiner who has made Shakespeare his or her life's work and subscribes to the Bardolatry camp may add some unnecessary angst to your Orals-related stress. On the other hand, you may find that the challenge of justifying your ideas to a somewhat hostile audience helps to solidify your own, although few people seem to feel this way.

If you have taken classes from the professors in the past, you should consider how they gave feedback in that setting. For instance, did you find their responses to your work and ideas provocative? Encouraging? You may also be worried about personality clashes between your committee members. One way to avoid those awkward moments is to compile your committee with the advice of your committee chair.

“I think the first thing to remember about Orals is that you should feel like you’re in control. Sure, your committee members are the ones who are going to be asking the questions and they should certainly have a say in what (and how) you read, but, ultimately, it might be more helpful to think as the exam almost as a colloquium or an exchange—one that you should be able to shape through your answers. While I obviously can’t speak for all the different professors in our department, the impression I got from my committee is that the Orals are the turning point between coursework and dissertating and, along with that, they were looking for me to take an active role in shaping the experience and approaches—and in balancing their views with my own. (It helped, of course, that my committee was made up of professors I’d worked with in different capacities since the beginning of my time at the GC, but I’m not sure that was the deciding factor in the experience overall. Though I will say that if you’re completely in awe of someone and can’t imagine ever disagreeing with them to their face, then you might want to think long and hard about having them on your committee.)”

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“I had done an independent study that in many ways foreshadowed one of my lists; the professor with whom I did that was already on board to be my advisor. Independent studies can be a great way of preparing for the Orals. Then I had taken courses with another professor, who I knew I wanted to be involved. Luckily they were both interested in the project, and they both suggested the third person, whom I had never met nor worked with, but who also seemed excited by the project when I approached her. (This third professor ended up becoming my dissertation advisor; the Orals were really helpful in showing me where I wanted my focus on this project to be!)”

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“When I was thinking about who I wanted for my committee, I chose professors whose classes I’d enjoyed and who I knew gave thoughtful and nuanced feedback to my work. I didn’t have a dissertation advisor yet (though some people do have this planned before they get to their Orals), so I chose my Orals committee partly as speculation about what my dissertation would be.”

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“I began my preparation by talking with my dissertation advisor. I knew who two of my committee members would be, and my advisor suggested other professors to approach, gently steering me away from what I thought was my genius idea of combining two early modern theatrical lists with an introductory foray into the field of Southern Gothic novels.”

## **Making Lists**

Once you have chosen your committee, you are ready to begin compiling your lists. The first thing is to settle upon a specific topic/area for each list. This subject could be a time-period, genre, group/author, theory, or some specific combination of the four. You will want to decide if the structure of each list should be narrow and deep or broad and exhaustive. The length of each list will in some ways be determined by this decision. One way to consider list length is to say that the list should, at minimum, cover all the reading necessary to teach the list topic as an undergraduate course. Naturally if you have a very dense list (on say, french theory) or a list with very long texts (on say, the epic) the number of texts on your list may be small in comparison to someone who is doing a list on 21st century comics.

You will probably want to have some combination of primary and secondary sources on each list, though the list can be skewed in favor of either depending on topic. The APO keeps sample lists for your perusal. Expect the list supervisor to add/remove items to/from your list before approving it, and even afterwards during your preparation period. While these suggestions are often very helpful, you may find that some of

them don't work for you, for whatever reason. Keeping an open dialogue about the list itself can be very helpful in this regard. Remember that you and the list supervisor will often be reading or at least re-reading these texts at the same time in order to prepare for the exam. Some faculty may be especially impressed with very long lists; others may not be pleased to have to read or re-read excessive quantities of material - this is something to keep in mind when selecting your committee, and making your lists.

Some important things to consider in terms of list composition: Be forward-looking. Choose lists and texts that you think will be helpful to your dissertation, or on the market, or later in life, not just things you feel you already know and may no longer be so interested in. You may want to get your lists to talk to each other - while there shouldn't be overlap between the lists, you may be able to make helpful connections by thinking about the list subjects in conjunction. You can use the Orals to create a specialty and/or subspecialty. Balance the lists between primary and secondary, new and familiar. We suggest that you try to avoid signing on for anything you've never even seen or heard of. If a committee member wants you to add a text you don't know, you can tell him or her that you'll check it out and see if it would be helpful. Also, as you are choosing your texts and subjects, remember that you may be asked in the exam itself exactly why you made these particular choices, so that's a question to keep in mind for yourself as you are compiling.

Remember, at the end of your preparation, you are going to be an expert on the fields that you have chosen. You'll want to make sure the choices of fields you've made are ones you actually like.

“Think of each list as an expanded syllabus. Lists should be thematically and logically organized. Don't make the mistake of putting only books you haven't read on there (initially I did that). Think about the list the way you would think about a syllabus for an upper level or graduate course. The number of books on each list will far surpass a reading list for any kind of course, but the list might provide three or four different sets of books you could use to teach the same course, depending on what you wanted to emphasize in each version. At the same time, an Orals list is often easier to imagine if you first imagine an upper level course you might want to teach - what would the readings be? What other books might be good to use as reference points? Where could you direct eager students looking to expand their knowledge beyond the main reading list?

Also, don't approach the list itself as an aesthetic object. Another stumbling block involves anxiety about making the Orals lists themselves perfect objects. Students can spend months (even semesters) in the writing and revising of lists, ultimately impeding academic progress. Some lists do take time to craft,

but these lists will not be published in gilt-edged volumes – they will sit in a filing cabinet in the English office. After you’ve come up with a theme for the lists (again, think of courses you might like to teach), create a quick list of 25-30 books. Get feedback from potential examiners as soon as you can and you’ll be well on your way to finalizing lists. In this context, done is much better than pretty.”

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“I picked three topics that I was interested in, all of which were subjects that I felt would be significant in my dissertation. One was a subject I had never studied formally in grad school, but I was widely read in it nevertheless. I came up with a rationalization for the bounds of each list, and why I’d chosen them; this proved extraordinarily helpful in the exam itself – when I was asked why I’d chosen these particular topics in the first place! I compiled an initial list of primary texts, and a few secondary texts for each list, and then expanded them after consultation with my committee (all of whom seemed eager to continue piling sources on.) I never argued with them about any of my sources, so I ended up with lists that were extremely long. . . . There were pros and cons to doing it this way; I spent the summer slightly insane, but I do read pretty quickly, and I think my committee was impressed by the sheer quantity I presented them with. It’s important to remember though, that you’re only going to get in depth questions about texts that your list supervisor has also read, although of course you can bring in other things into your answer if you really want to talk about a specific text.”

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“I went through most of my preparation thinking that the lists had remained pretty stable since I first compiled them; I found the originals the weekend before my exam and realized a lot had changed . . . . I had some primary and secondary reading under my belt and could start to see my trajectories developing—and revise the rest accordingly. Most of the changes weren’t major in terms of texts, but there were some significant alterations to my goals for each list, and those changes were reflected in new titles, all of which ended up being longer and more specific than they were at the beginning. A lot of this important conceptual work happened in conversation with members of the British long 19<sup>th</sup> century group. (Several of us were reading for Orals at the same time.)

Though I had written a rationale for the lists at the beginning of the process at the request of my chair, I very quickly discovered the limits of that particular framework. It was through discussions with other people in my field that I was finally challenged to articulate both an overall approach and the reasons for constructing the lists the way I had. That resulted in better titles and a stronger sense of ownership over my intellectual projects. It also forced me to defend some of my structural decisions that, at the time, had seemed unconscious, arbitrary, or someone else’s idea and to show how they actually reflected something important about what I was trying to accomplish. If I had to give one piece of advice about the Orals, I would say this: take the time to work out the rationales for each list individually and think about why your three lists work together. If your committee is anything like mine, they are going to be most interested in getting



you to talk about broad conceptual issues (genre, periodization, form, theoretical approaches) in your field(s) using specific texts from your lists as examples rather than quizzing you about the plotlines of individual works. This is another place where you need to be in control—and you can prepare for this ahead of time by talking to your committee members about what interests you and what they plan to ask, based on your list.”

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“If a book is unpromising, let it go—it’s ok to stop after the preface or the introduction. Most of the good theoretical stuff is usually up front, so if it’s not there, it’s not there. If a source mentions something interesting, add it to the list (but write down where it was mentioned!). Keep your committee advised of how the lists are growing, changing, morphing—it’s what’s supposed to happen.”

## **Reading Strategically**

There are many different ways to organize the time you’ll spend reading. Regardless of what strategies work for you, your goals should be to remember what you’ve read and keep up the reading momentum. You should try to read in a planned way, instead of haphazardly: group texts into categories; find syntheses between books and articles on different lists. Realize that you are reading for themes, and to develop your own thoughts about what you read, not to memorize dates and facts *per se*. In addition to choosing what order you’ll read things in, there are many personal factors that will determine how you structure the time you’ll spend reading. You’ll discover what time of the day you read best, when in the week you’ll have the most uninterrupted time, and whether you benefit from keeping a reading log, separate notes in the margins and pages of each book, or some other system or combination of systems.

The space you study in can be as important as the hour of the day you study. Many find they work best away from the distractions of home, and keeping a locker at the Graduate Center full of books may be helpful. You can discuss locker availability with the APO. Another excellent space for reading is the Wertheim Study on the second floor of the New York Public Library (the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building at 42<sup>nd</sup> and Fifth). To become a user of the Wertheim Study, visit the General Research division, room 315, on the third floor and after an interview, you will be granted a key card. From then on, books you request will go straight to the Study, and you’ll have your own shelf where the requested books can be kept for up to a month. The Wertheim Study, with its long, well lit tables and comfortable chairs, big windows, and other quiet scholars is very conducive to concentration and it is open whenever the

library is.

Some of your reading strategy will be determined by external factors, like the availability of the books you need. In addition to the Mina Rees library at the Graduate Center and the various collections at the New York Public Library, there are many private collections around the city that will give access to scholars, such as the Morgan and the Grolier Club.

“[I]nclude some books you have already read on your lists; setting a date for the exam, even if it’s 4-6 months away, is useful for forcing you to bear down and begin reading seriously, systematically; establish a reading routine that works for you; learn to read efficiently, particularly when it comes to secondary sources: ie, read a few representative or important chapters in a work of criticism, instead of reading the book cover-to-cover.”

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“I was particularly nervous about getting everything read because I am not a very fast reader. I am, however, a very good planner. At the beginning of each week, I planned what I wanted to get read for the week, balancing between different lists, fiction and nonfiction, full books and shorter works. I tried to finish at least one thing every day so I could feel like I was really getting somewhere, and I realized that I could process the theory and criticism better earlier in the day. So, for instance, I might read a dense article in its entirety for list A in the morning, do a billion non-Orals related things in the afternoon, and then continue reading a long fiction work for list C in the evening. The next day, I might start a long dense work for list B, and then finish the fiction for list C in the evening. At the end of each week, I almost always had some left over because things were taking longer to read or absorb than I had anticipated.

I also tried to balance my reading between home and other places. Some days I would read from home and others I would go to the Wertheim Study, the Morgan, or the Graduate Center. I live in Manhattan, so I would budget time for walking to and from these libraries just to make sure my legs didn’t atrophy from all that sitting, and I didn’t forget what the outside world was like. Reading for the Orals is immersive, and remembering to surface every now and then is key to keeping perspective. I know people who, both studying for their Orals, met once a week to play catch in the park and summarize for each other everything they had read that week. That meant that in addition to being able to talk about what they’d read, they were both forced to keep up the momentum so they’d have something to tell each other about each week, too.

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“I like a tactile, visual record, so I took notes about each text separately. For each text, I’d head a page with the MLA-style bibliographical entry for the text, and then keep up running notes while I read. This meant I could physically sort the notes later by list, chronologically by publication date, by theme, or anything else. I had originally planned to transcribe my handwritten notes at the end of each day, but that idea quickly fell apart when I realized how time-

consuming that was, and how exhausted by reading I often was at the end of the day.”

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“Remember, this is not the last time you will read any new books. The most common mistake (from my perspective) in designing Orals lists is that students approach the exam as if it were the last time to read anything in their professional career. In the nine months that followed my Orals, I probably read as many new texts related to my dissertation as appeared on all three of my Orals lists. The tendency is toward a completist sensibility – don’t delay your exam (and your academic progress) because you think you should read every novel published in the nineteenth century. In the exam itself, there’s a good chance you will only mention about a half of the books on a normal sized set of three lists (90-120 books), and you’ll probably only talk in depth about a quarter of those books, at most.”

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“I kept a book log; after completing a text, I’d enter it in on a spreadsheet, along with notes about what I thought was important to the main thrust of my list. These were really helpful in grouping texts together as they fit into an argument, not just as lumps of information. Organizing the order in which I read was also really helpful; in the morning, when I was fresh, I’d read theory, criticism and any text which was very dense. Then I’d read novels that were more pleasurable in the afternoons when I was more tired. I worked in the Wertheim Study (NYPL); it helped to have a dedicated, internet free area surrounded by other people, all of whom were also working hard. (Hard to slack in those circumstances.) Having a place to study that wasn’t home also made demarcation easier.”

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“I took a speed-reading course; I asked my professors how they took notes; I asked everyone I knew how they keep track of what they’ve read. I’m terrible at taking notes, and I knew I had to have something to go back over in order to review. I finally settled on something that more or less resembles an annotated biography. In reviewing my notes, I found my own summaries of the texts far more useful than the quotations I wrote. But this really has to be a personal thing.”

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“To study for the exam, I took notes on almost everything I read, which, while time consuming, made it much easier to remember details about books months later. At the very least, I recommend taking notes on the books you think will pertain to your dissertation; the notes help a lot when it comes time to write the dissertation.

About two weeks before the exam, I stopped reading any new books and began taking notes on my notes. I basically distilled my notes down into talking points. I wasn’t trying to anticipate what would be asked of me, but to have

several intelligent, well thought out directions I could go in if asked to discuss a specific book. About a week before the exam, I stopped taking notes on my notes and began reviewing them, paying attention to recurrent themes or ideas within and among my lists.”

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“I completed the bulk of my reading between January and May of 2008, while teaching, running a student area group, and writing a paper for a major conference in my field. I know a lot of people prefer to give themselves the summer to do this when they have less going on; I think that was sort of a vague plan that I had if I had gotten around to doing this reading earlier, but in retrospect, I think the way I did it was fine. I found some of the process to be pretty isolating, so being forced to interact with other people in non-Orals contexts two or three times a week was all that stood between me and madness....But, let’s face it. There’s never going to be enough time to read everything on your lists. Obviously, you will plan to read everything. But you won’t, and that probably will stay true regardless of how long you spend on it... One of my committee members sent me an email the weekend before my Wednesday exam saying, essentially, “Stop reading! Start thinking!” And even though everything turned out okay in the end, I wish I’d just followed her advice because I probably made myself needlessly miserable in those last couple of days before the exam—not that I remember them at all clearly.

With that being said: sometimes it is okay just to skim things and /or trust that you’ve gotten the idea of them. Other texts you will want to take the time to read—or, even, yes, reread—more carefully.... My rule of thumb was basically that I would reread anything I read before I started grad school and didn’t feel like I remembered all that well. ...Obviously, some of these decisions entail a certain amount of risk, but the more in control you are of the central concepts, the more you will be able to steer the conversation in the way you want it to go. Also, most committee members will tell you (unofficially) that it’s okay to strike a book or so off your list the week before if you don’t think you’re going to get to it....

I had one list that was mostly novels and autobiographies—that one was largely read on the subway and before bed. Some poems went quickly; others did not.... While the process continued to vary according to genre (I didn’t make a lot of internal annotations on novels, but then again I’m not planning to write my dissertation on novels), in general, I would read the text while making minor annotations and marginal comments, turning down the pages or making a note in the back of the book when I found something particularly significant. A day or so after I finished the text (okay, in practice this was somewhat longer—I was always running a pretty significant deficit between what I’d read and what I’d written about), I would return to the text and essentially do a brain dump on it—just typing out everything significant I could remember about it, then going back to those turned down pages and back cover notes to see what else I could add. My overall rationale was more or less that if I couldn’t remember something two days after reading a book, there was no way I was going to be able to remember it during my exam. I think this was a good overall strategy, even though it was somewhat time consuming (though not as much so as my first idea, which was writing out notes by hand and then typing them up) and involved a lot of

discipline on my part. I didn't do this for everything, but I'm quite happy about the archive I've created—notes that, hopefully, I *will* be able to use “for the next forty years” as one member of my committee put it. This approach also forced me to have a little bit more faith in myself as a reader—as in being able to say, yes, I will remember this concept / scene / idea even if I don't transcribe it at this very moment.”

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“I made extensive handwritten notes as I read the texts, recording everything from the outlines of plots to critical opinions. These notes came in useful because by the time I took the Orals in September 2007, a good deal of what I'd read earlier in the year was already becoming fuzzy. These notes helped me navigate the texts more efficiently as I went back to clarify and remember material. As for keeping myself on schedule, I constructed a reading timetable that portioned out the texts that I had to cover each week. I tried my best to keep to the schedule but also moved texts around during the process when it became apparent that a particular text would work nicely with something else that I had recently read.

I had submitted very preliminary lists. These lists had a lot of 'canonical' texts on them and did not include much criticism. My committee gave me feedback about what I might consider taking out and including, and I began the work of refining my lists. I spent the winter break hunting down references and secondary criticism in order to flesh out my lists. I also began annotating my lists with practical information such as the call numbers, locations, and the availability of texts, noting which books had to be purchased or obtained through the Inter-Library loan system. At the same time, I began to keep track of bibliographical information and recorded it in a consistent manner by using the bibliographical software Endnote. This came in handy later on when I assembled the working bibliography that forms part of the dissertation prospectus. I managed to have my lists approved by the end of January 2007, incorporating much more criticism on my lists than was initially the case.”

## **Keeping in Touch (with your committee)**

Staying in contact with your committee throughout the reading process may be the most important thing you can do to ensure Orals success. It helps your committee members know what you are thinking about as you read and it creates a conversation that will be continued into the exam itself. Your interaction with your committee while you read will set the tone for the day of the exam.

Depending on the wishes of your committee members, and your availability, you can keep in touch over email or have a series of in-person meetings to discuss what you've read so far. You can also use this contact to set internal deadlines for yourself, for instance, by telling a committee member what you

plan to read next and when you'll be in touch about it. The contact with your committee members should be a give and take - you should volunteer some of your own ideas about what you've read and correlations between different texts, but you can also ask questions like "this work is really dense! What do you want me to focus on in it?" or where your committee member stands on issues of theory and critical approach. You can also ask your committee member which texts he or she considers the core of the list, and which texts are relatively supplementary.

Staying in touch will also mean that your committee knows what books you read when. It will be helpful to all concerned to know which books you are saving for last and will thus be freshest in your mind during the exam itself.

Some committee members will be willing to give you some sample questions before the exam itself, or even sit a mock Orals with you. If you are particularly nervous, this may be beneficial. However, if you have been in touch with the committee the entire way through, and you have been orchestrating a conversation about these texts geared toward your interests and focus, in effect, you have already practiced your Orals.

"Everyone wants you to succeed. It's like driving—accidents are a real possibility that you have to prepare for—but the system is rigged in your favor. Once this program has chosen you, it will not abandon you. If you feel abandoned or lost or adrift, ask someone for help."

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"One of my committee members and I stayed in constant contact via email and meeting. This meant there were absolutely no surprises for me in the section of the exam. The other two, I spoke with about once a month, updating them on my reading and what I was thinking about the texts. The benefit to doing it this way is that the committee knows you are reading and thinking; you go into the exam not having to prove this! Two of my committee members gave me mock questions before the exam; this was helpful because it gave me an idea of what to expect, and also let me know that I was, in fact, prepared."

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"I had moved away from New York and could not meet with my committee members with any sort of frequency that would be expected in preparation for the Orals. Instead, I wrote what essentially amounted to 'reading reports', where I made observations about the texts that I was reading along themes that interested me, without necessarily making clear arguments as one would do in a paper. This may actually have worked out for the better in the long run as forcing myself to write these reports over an extended period of time (rather than giving aural updates on what I was reading) was good practice for the discipline required to write dissertation chapters."

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“My relationship with my three committee members varied by individual. One of my committee members very much took me in hand and had me meet with her once every week to ten days, with specific reading selections and assignments for each get-together. This was incredibly helpful—particularly given the nature of the list—and it meant that I read conceptually rather than chronologically. It also meant that even in weeks where I would have been tempted to let the reading slide I did accomplish *something* towards my Orals. We also had a meeting where we prepared potential questions that she would ask me on the exam. (The list I did with this member was the only one where I really felt “finished.”) On the other hand, if I had had to do this with all three of my committee members, I would have been wretched. The other two, however, were much more inclined to sit back once we’d negotiated the lists and let me do my thing. I met with each of them a couple of times, and they were certainly interested in my project throughout, but there wasn’t as much interaction about the exam specifically. And all of this was fine. I did have a couple of meetings with my director about the format and emphasis of the exam—that was definitely a good move, as it cut down on the potential for surprises.”

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“Meet with your examiners multiple times before the exam. Because the exam itself only allows time for a small percentage of the books you’ve read to come up in discussion, it’s always a good idea to have regular meetings with your examiners. This way, they will know that you’ve been working steadily on the lists and if you aren’t having your best day for the exam, they’ll know it’s not indicative of your mastery of the lists. The final meeting with each examiner should happen in the two weeks before your exam – this way each examiners will know what your primary interests are in each list, what thematic and theoretical narratives you’ve managed to thread through the texts, and how best to approach questioning you during the exam.”

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“I was reading during the summer, so I kept in touch mostly over email. Generally, I would send a committee member a long rambling email every couple of weeks, talking about what I’d read since the last email and asking any questions I had, and drawing parallels between things. I’d also state when I’d be emailing next. The committee member would get back to me in a couple days, telling me his or her thoughts about what I was focusing on, asking questions, etc. This gave me a running commentary on the studying process, and also let my committee members know that I was keeping up and was open to their input. It turned out that it was nice to have a written record of what we had discussed, and right before the exam I printed out all of my back and forth with each committee member and used the emails as notes.”

## The Day of the Exam

Plan for the two hour exam as though you were planning for a job interview. Dress nicely and comfortably; prepare to be animated. Recognize that talking for two hours takes a lot of energy and eat breakfast beforehand. Bring water with you.

You will be examined on each list for about forty minutes (your committee chair is generally the one who will keep an eye on the clock and make sure that each list gets equal time, though generally the examining member will do so as well). Each examiner is responsible for their list alone, though depending on the committee, the subjects of the lists, and your own style, you may find the exam becoming less structured, with committee members joining in the conversation even for lists they are not examining you on.

After the conclusion of the exam, you will be asked to leave the room while the committee determines your result, which will be told to you when they invite you back in.

Consult with your committee chair ahead of time to determine the order of questioning you'd prefer. It's entirely up to you. You also have the option of beginning the examination with a brief (5-minute, or so) opening statement, which often addresses a question like "why did you choose these three lists," or "how do you see these three lists fitting together?" You do not have to begin the exam with such an opening statement, but it is often a good idea: It gets your voice out into the room first, and allows you to articulate some of your main concerns; the statement will often lead your examiners to frame their questions in relation to your stated concerns.

You should plan to bring copies of your lists for yourself and your committee members to refer to during the exam. Decide with your committee beforehand whether these lists should include bibliographic information as well. Ultimately, the Orals can be a lot of fun. It is your chance to discuss your ideas about three topics of vital interest to you, with engaged, knowledgeable people. Perhaps that's the best way to think of it - as a conversation rather than just another test.

"The best thing I did in the days before the exam—when I wasn't making myself wretched by trying to cram a bunch of Judith Butler into my head—was to write out some ideas on concepts that had become central to me through the exam—with examples that I could bring up. I also wrote out preliminary answers to the questions that I knew would be asked. As for the exam itself, I had previously told my committee what order I wanted them to go in and that I would be making preliminary remarks. Again—this is about being in control—they ask the questions, but you should be the one providing the direction."



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“As for the exam itself, it was more pleasant than I'd imagined it would be, though in my anxiety I'd forgotten to eat before it and ended up being very hungry during the exam, which was at least mildly distracting. There were several moments where I was caught off guard—the most embarrassing of which involved a narrative fact that I could not recall on a work that I'd volunteered to discuss ... — but I candidly admitted my inability to answer the question and the exam moved on to what I could talk about. In all, I benefited tremendously from the process and the dissertation project that I'm currently working on emerged directly out of the reading and writing that I did for the Orals.”

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“When I took my oral exam, I began with the list that was the broadest, and that I most enjoyed, creating a backdrop against which I was able to position my theoretical discussion, which was my weakest field. By beginning with my favorite list, I gained confidence, and a point of reference to help the examiners understand my academic mindset.”

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“During the exam, I wasn't asked much about specific books, but that could have been due to the dispositions of my examiners. (Be sure to ask other students about their Orals experiences with different professors, what they were like both before and during the exam; it's very useful information to know.) The questions my examiners posed were usually broader in scope, asking me to make generalizations about my lists and connections between books. Nonetheless, I found my talking points very helpful, since I could easily ground my generalizations in specifics.”

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“One of the things that stressed me out about the exam was trying to figure out how formal it was going to be. I decided on business casual; someone else taking their exam the same day as I was showed up in shorts. Do whatever makes you feel comfortable! Remember, the committee is on your side; they are not going to expect you to remember every little detail about everything; you are allowed to have your lists in front of you to refer to. It can be a really fun experience, and the time actually flies by. I was actually disappointed when it was over; [the time] is not nearly enough time to exhaustively cover everything you know. It's not the kind of exam you cram for.”

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“I felt weird about having the two list supervisors who weren't examining me at the moment just sitting there, so I tried to draw a lot of parallels between the lists, making connections and pointing out useful examples and demonstrations. This worked beautifully; everyone stayed interested, and I felt like I was able to talk cogently and cohesively, rather than just being drilled or examined. Remember, you're the one with control over the course of the exam; feel free to steer.

One of my committee members advised me to think of this process as a

really insane dinner party. Somehow this actually helped; you don't want to look stupid at a dinner party, but at the same time, you should feel free to ask examiners to clarify questions you don't understand, and respond to them as equals.”

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“I had predicted having a lot of fun during my exam. I knew my committee members well, we'd stayed in touch during the reading process, and I was excited to get to talk about these subjects. Before the exam, one of my committee members had advised me to hold honesty above all else, and if asked a question I didn't know how to answer, to admit that frankly. I think this did a lot to decrease my anxiety about being perfect. That said, I was terrified of doing poorly because everyone I knew kept telling me how sure they were that I would do well, and it seemed like if I did poorly I would be disappointing not only myself, but everyone else who had confidence in me. This felt like an unreasonable burden.

Once the exam began, however, I stopped being nervous because I was enjoying talking about my ideas about these texts. Though the exam began with one committee member asking questions from one list, the exam quickly evolved into an engaging four-way conversation that lasted longer than two hours. Because this felt so casual, I felt fine about asking committee members to clarify questions when I wasn't quite sure what was going on. When we eventually had to stop, we all still felt we had things to say. I was later complimented by a committee member for creating a discussion out of the interview format. My Orals chair became my Dissertation Advisor and my Orals committee became my dissertation committee.”

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“My committee knew each other, and worked well together, which helped to create a more relaxed environment on the day of the exam. You will get thrown curveballs – one professor asked me a specific question about an author not on my list, and whom I have never read. My response was incorrect, but all I could do was smile, remind the committee that the author wasn't on the list, and move on. I don't think it ultimately made any difference. As long as you and your committee feel that you're ready for the exam, awkward little moments won't matter. Finally, the most vivid memory I have of the exam is the tremendous sense of accomplishment I felt once I'd passed – it's a much prouder feeling than post-comp exhaustion! I had sat in conversation with people I admire and respect, and they had all agreed that I have something valid to say. It's a good feeling.”

**Appendix: Sample Lists [More can be found at the APO's desk in the English Program Office.]**

**1. Illustrating Character in Victorian Fiction**

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility* [1811], *Pride and Prejudice* [1813], *Mansfield Park* [1814], *Emma* [1816], *Northanger Abbey* [1818] and *Persuasion* [1818].  
illustrated by Hugh Thomson {illustrated: *Pride and Prejudice* [1894], *Sense and Sensibility* [1896], *Mansfield Park* [1897], *Emma* [1897], *Northanger Abbey* [1898], and *Persuasion* [1898]}. London: Shoes and Ships and Sealing Wax. 2006.

Lynch, Diedre. *The Economy of Character: Minds, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1998.

Spielmann, M.H. and Walter Jerrold. *Hugh Thomson: His Art, His Letters, His Humour, and His Charm*. London: A&C Black, Ltd. 1931.

Carroll, Lewis. *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* [1865] and *Through the Looking Glass* [1871]. Ill. Sir John Tenniel. Ed. Martin Gardner. New York: Wings Books. 1998.

[plus various early editions.]

Morris, Frankie. *Artist Of Wonderland: The Life, Political Cartoons, And Illustrations Of Tenniel (Victorian Literature and Culture Series)*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 2005.

Dickens, Charles. *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* [1848] in *Charles Dickens: Christmas Books*. Illustrated John Tenniel, John Leech, Frank Stone and Clarkston Stanford. London: Oxford University Press. 1954. pp. 313-399.

--. *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* [1837]. Ill. Seymour and Phiz. New York: Random House. 1998.

--. *Sketches by Boz* [1836], illustrated George Cruikshank. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1957.

--. *Great Expectations* [1861]. New York: Signet. 1980.

Steig, Michael. *Dickens and Phiz*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1978.

Curtis, Gerard. "Dickens in the Visual Market." *Literature in the Marketplace: nineteenth-century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, eds. John Jordan and Robert Patten. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1995. pp. 213-249.

Thackeray, William Makepeace. *Vanity Fair* [1848]. New York: The Heritage Press. 1940.

--. --. Introduction J.I.M. Stewart. London: Penguin Books. 1985

- Colby, Robert. "Vanity Fair; or, the Mysteries of Mayfair" *Thackeray's Canvass of Humanity: An Author and His Public*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 1979. pp. 231-275.
- Trollope, Anthony. *Thackeray* [1879]. Detroit: Gale Research Co. 1968.  
 Chapter 1, Biographical, pp. 1-61.  
 Chapter 3, Vanity Fair, pp. 90-107  
 Chapter 9, Thackeray's Style and Manner of Work, pp. 184-210.
- Trollope, Anthony. *Autobiography of Anthony Trollope* [1883]. Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing. 1987.
- . *Can you Forgive Her?* [1864]. Ill. Browne, Hablot K. and E. Taylor. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1972.
- . *Barchester Towers* [1857]. New York: Signet Classics. 1963.
- . *The Warden* [1855]. London: Random House. 1991.
- Hall, N. John. *Trollope and His Illustrators*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1980.  
 Introduction, pp. 1-7  
 Chapter 2: Hablot K Browne and E Taylor: Can You Forgive Her? pp. 89-102.  
 Chapter 6 Decadence, pp. 140-149.  
 Chapter 7 Artist and Engraver, pp. 150-156.
- James, Henry. "The Real Thing [1893]." Available online:  
<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=2715>
- Tucker, Herbert F. "Literal Illustration in Victorian Print" *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, ed. Richard Maxwell. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. 2002. pp. 163-208.
- Bendley, G.E. Jr. "Great Illustrated Book Publishers of the 1790s and William Blake" in *Editing Illustrated Books*, ed. William Blissett. New York: Garland. 1980. pp. 57-96.
- Garry, Charlene, "Illustrated Books as Original Works of Art: Form as Complement to Content" in *Editing Illustrated Books*, ed. William Blissett. New York: Garland. 1980. pp. 113-124.

## 2. The Look of the Book Page in Material History

- Miller, J. Hillis. *Illustration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1992.
- Mitchell, WJT. *Picture Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1994.
- Greetham, David. *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1994.
- Areford, David and Nina Rowe. "Introduction" in *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, Audiences. Essays in Honor of Sandra Hindman*, Ed. Areford, David and Nina Rowe. Hants: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2004. pp. 1-12
- Weigert, Laura with Pascale Charron. "Illuminating the Arras Mystery Play" in *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, Audiences. Essays in Honor of Sandra Hindman*, Ed. Areford, David and Nina Rowe. Hants: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2004. pp. 81-108.
- Brown, Michelle P. *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications in association with The British Library. 1994.
- Parkes, M. B. *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*. Aldershot: Scolar Press. 1992.
- Olson, Mary C. *Fair and Varied Forms: Visual Textuality in Medieval Manuscripts*. New York: Routledge. 2003.  
Chapter 1: Graphic signification, pp. 1-28.  
Chapter 4: Narrative in Graphic Space, pp. 99-130  
Chapter 6: Marginal Portraits and the Fiction of Orality: The Ellesmere Manuscript, pp. 153-176.
- Tinkle, Theresa. "The Wife of Bath's Sexual/Textual Lives" *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture (Editorial Theory and Literary Criticism)*, eds. Bornstein and Tinkle. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. 1998. pp. 55-88.
- Camille, Michael. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1992.
- Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales: The New Ellesmere Chaucer Monochromatic Facsimile (of Huntington Library MS. EL26C9) [~1401]* Ed. Woodward, Daniel and Martin Stevens. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library. 1997.
- DeHamel, Christopher. *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* [Second Edition 1994]. London: Phaidon. 2003.
- Bornstein and Tinkle, "Introduction" *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital*

- Culture (Editorial Theory and Literary Criticism)*, eds. Bornstein and Tinkle. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. pp. 1-6.
- Schillingsburg, Peter. "The Faces of Victorian Fiction" *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture (Editorial Theory and Literary Criticism)*, eds. Bornstein and Tinkle. pp. 141-156.
- Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol* [1843]. Facsimile of the original manuscript. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1967.
- Baines, Philip. *Penguin By Design: A Cover Story 1935-2005*. London: Penguin Books. 2005.
- Bornstein, George. *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001.
- McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art*. New York: HarperPerennial. 1994.
- . *Making Comics*. New York: Harper. 2006.
- Whitlark, James. *Illuminated Fantasy: From Blake's Visions to Recent Graphic Fiction*. London: Associated University Presses. 1988.
- Bettley, James. *The Art of the Book from Medieval Manuscript to Graphic novel*. London: V&A Publications. 2001.
- Randall McLeod [Random Clod]. "Information Upon Information" in *Text: Transactions of the Society for Textual Scholarship*. New York: AMS Press. 1991. Vol. 5. pp. 241-248.
- [Random Cloud]. "Flat Flux" in *Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance*. Ed. Randall McLeod. New York: AMS Press, Inc. 1994. pp.61-172.
- Manguel, Alberto. "Turning the Page" in *The Future of the Page*, ed. Stoicheff, Peter and Andrew Taylor. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2004. pp. 27-36.
- Stoicheff, Peter. "Introduction" in *The Future of the Page*, ed. Stoicheff, Peter and Andrew Taylor. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2004. pp. 3-26.
- Dagencils, John. "Decolonizing the Medieval Page" in *The Future of the Page*, ed. Stoicheff, Peter and Andrew Taylor. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2004. pp. 37-70.
- Slights, William. "Back to the Future: - Littorally: Annotating the Historical Page" in *The Future of the Page*, ed. Stoicheff, Peter et al. Toronto: U of Toronto Press. 2004. 71-90.

### **3. The Novel of Manners in the “long” 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Louisa May Alcott	Little Women A Long Fatal Love Chase The Inheritance
Jane Austen	Pride and Prejudice Mansfield Park Northanger Abbey Sense & Sensibility Persuasion Emma Juvenilia
M.E. Braddon	Lady Audley’s Secret
Charlotte Bronte	Angria & The Glass-town Saga Jane Eyre Villette
Emily Bronte	Gondal’s Queen Wuthering Heights
Anne Bronte	The Tenant of Wildfell Hall
Fanny Burney	Camilla Evelina
Charles Dickens	Great Expectations
Emily Eden	The Semi-Attached Couple The Semi-detached House
Maria Edgeworth	Belinda
Henry James	Portrait of a Lady
Charlotte Lennox	The Female Quixote
George Meredith	The Egoist Diana of the Crossways
Hannah More	Coelebs in Search of a Wife
Margaret Oliphant	Miss Marjoribanks
Samuel Richardson	Pamela Clarissa
Sir Walter Scott	Ivanhoe The Bride of Lammermoor Waverly
Mary Shelley	The Last Man

Anthony Trollope	Rachael Ray Lady Anna Can you forgive her? Barchester Towers (c.f. Angela Thirkell)
Frances Trollope	Domestic Manners of the Americans
Edith Wharton	The Age of Innocence
<b>Secondary Texts:</b> M. M. Bakhtin,	The Dialogic Imagination
Roland Barthes	S/Z The Rustle of Language (esp. The Reality Effect)
Peter Brooks	Reading for the Plot
Daniel Cottom,	Civilized Imagination: A Study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott.
Margaret Doody	The True Story of the Novel
Marjorie Garson,	Moral Taste: Aesthetics, Subjectivity, and Social Power in the Nineteenth-Century Novel (U Toronto Press, 2007--just out).
Henry James	Literary Criticism (2 volumes) The Art of Fiction Preface to Portrait of a Lady
Georg Lukacs	The Theory of the Novel The Historical Novel
Deidre Lynch,	The Economy of Character.
D.A. Miller,	The Novel and the Police; Jane Austen: The Secret of Style.
Donald David Stone	Novelists in a Changing World: Meredith, James, and the Transformation of English Fiction in the 1880's
Lionel Trilling,	"Manners, Morals, and the Novel" (in his The Liberal Imagination).
Ian Watt	The Rise of the Novel
Joseph Weisenfarth	Gothic Manners and the Classic English Novel



#### 4. Reading Images and Looking at Words: Making Culture and Marking Time

- Berger, John with Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb, and Richard Hollis. *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin. 1972.
- Tufte, Edward. "Words, Numbers, Images – Together;" *Beautiful Evidence*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, LLC. 2006. pp. 82-121.
- . "Visual Confections: Juxtapositions from the Ocean of the Streams of Story" *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, LLC. 1997. pp. 121-151.
- . "Narratives of Space and Time" *Envisioning Information: Narratives of Space and Time*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press. 1990. pp. 97-119.
- Arnheim, Rudolph. *Visual Thinking*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1969.  
Chapter 2: The Intelligence of Perception (i), pp. 13-36  
Chapter 3: The Intelligence of Perception (ii), pp. 37-52  
Chapter 8: Pictures, Symbols, and Signs, pp. 135-152  
Chapter 13: Words in their Place, pp. 226-253.
- Gregory, Richard. *Eye and Brain: The Psychology of Seeing* [Fourth Edition]. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1990.  
Chapter 1: Seeing, pp. 17-22  
Chapter 10: Art and Reality, pp. 171-196  
Chapter 11: Do we have to learn how to see? pp. 197-226
- Clay, Steven and Rodney Phillips. *Secret Location on the Lower East Side*. New York: The New York Public Library and Granary Books. 1998.
- Smith, Keith. *Structure of the Visual Book: Book 95 The Expanded Fourth Edition*. Rochester, NY: keith smith BOOKS. 2003
- Phillips, Tom. *A Humament: A Treated Victorian Novel, First Revised Edition*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd. 1987.
- Kondo, Yuko. *Too Fat, Can't Fly and other stories*. Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press. 2004.
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. New York: Pantheon. 1991.
- Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*. Atlanta and Portland: Top Shelf. 2003.
- Sabin, Roger. *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels: A History Of Comic Art*. London: Phaidon. 1996.  
Introduction: Not Quite Art, pp. 6-9

Chapter Seven: A New Mainstream, pp. 156-175  
Chapter Eight: Alternative Visions, pp. 176-215  
Chapter Nine: International Influences, pp. 216-235

Eco, Umberto. "On Chinese Comic Strips: Counter-information and alternative Information" *Apocalypse Postponed*. Ed. Robert Lumley. Bloomington: Indiana University Press and the British Film Institute, London. 1994. pp. 148-166.

Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* [1990 edition]. Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse Press. 2004.

*McSweeney's Quarterly Concern, Issue Number 13, Comics Edition*, Ed. Chris Ware. San Francisco: McSweeney's Ltd. 2004.

Fold-out cover,

Introduction

"Rudolph Topffer: The Inventer of Comics" and

NOW – all by Chris Ware

"Independent Comic Book Publishers" by Malachi Cohen

"Our Blood was Blue and Yellow" by Chip Kidd

Sekikawa, Netsuo and Jiroh Taniguchi, *Hotel Harbour View*. Trans. Jones, Gerard and Matt Thorn. San Francisco: Viz Communications. 1990.

Carrier, David: *The Aesthetics of Comics*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press. 2000.

Chapter 1: Caricature; or, Representing Causal Connection, pp. 11-26

Chapter 4: Words and Pictures Bound Together; or, Experiencing the Unity of Comics, pp. 61-76

Chapter 5: The Content of the Form; or Seeing Pictures, Reading Texts, Viewing Comics, pp. 77-86

Chapter 7: Posthistorical Art; or Comics and the Realm of Absolute Knowledge, pp. 107-124

Phelps, Donald. *Reading the Funnies: Essays on Comic Strips*. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books. 2001.

*Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings. Revised and Expanded [~1550?]*. Trans Dennis Tedlock. New York: Touchstone. 1996

*Walam Olum in The Lenape and their Legends*. Trans. and ed. Daniel G. Brinton, A.M., M.D. Philadelphia: DG Brinton. 1885. pp. 170-217.


Brotherston, Gordon. *The Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americans through their Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1992.

Dawson, Christopher, trans. and ed. *Mission to Asia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2005.

- History of the Mongols by John of Plano Carpini [~1240], pp. 3-72  
 The Journey of William of Rubruck [1253], pp. 89-223
- Mandeville, John. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* [1366?]. Trans and Introduction C.W.R.D. Moseley. London: Penguin. 1983.
- Krasa, Josef, ed. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville: A Manuscript in the British Library*. Trans. Peter Kussi. New York: George Braziller. 1983.
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* [late 14<sup>th</sup> Century] in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*. Andrew, Malcolm and Ronald Waldron, Eds. Exeter: The University of Exeter Press, 2002. pp. 207-300.
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Trans. and Introduction Brian Stone. London: Penguin. 1974.
- Bierman, Irene. "The Fatimid Public Text in a Changing Political Climate" *Writing Signs*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1998. pp.100-132.
- Messick, Brinkley. *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1996.  
 Introduction, pp. 1-12.  
 Part Two: Transmission, pp. 73-132.  
 Part Four: Inscription, pp. 201-256.
- Greenwood, Tim and Edda Vardanyan. *Hakob's Gospels: The Life and Work of an Armenian Artist of the Sixteenth Century*. London: Sam Fogg. 2006.
- Diringer, David. *The Book Before Printing: Ancient, Medieval and Oriental* [1953]. New York: Dover. 1982.  
 Chapter 1: The Book in Embryo, pp. 13-52  
 Chapter 8: Outlying Regions (I): Ancient Middle East, Central and Southern Asia, pp. 336-381  
 Chapter 9: Outlying Regions (II): Far East and Pre-Columbian America, pp. 382-438  
 Conclusion: Fate of Books, pp. 539-543.

## *5. Renaissance Fiction & Genre Theory*

### **Primary Texts:**

Ariosto,	Orlando Furioso (trans. Harrington)
Francis Bacon,	The New Atlantis
Giambattista Basile,	Pentamerone
Giovanni Boccaccio,	The Decameron
Margaret Cavendish,	The Blazing World
Cervantes	Don Quixote
John Dee,	Introduction to Euclid's Elements
George Gascoigne,	The Adventures of Master F.J.
Robert Greene,	The Scottish History of James IV Pandosto
Gabriel Harvey,	Letters to Spenser
John Heywood,	The Four P's
Ben Jonson,	The Alchemist The Masque of Oberon
Thomas Lodge,	Rosalynde
John Lyly,	Euphues
Christopher Marlowe,	Doctor Faustus
John Milton,	Paradise Lost
Thomas More,	Utopia (trans. Ralph Robinson)
Thomas Nashe,	The Unfortunate Traveler
Henry Neville,	The Isle of Pines
Rabelais	Gargantua and Pantagruel
William Shakespeare,	The Tempest The Winter's Tale A Midsummer Night's Dream Macbeth As You Like It 
Philip Sidney,	Arcadia

	Defense of Poesie
Edmund Spenser,	The Faerie Queene
Mary Wroth,	Urania
<b>Secondary Texts</b>	
Erich Auerbach	Mimesis
Mikhail Bakhtin,	Rabelais and his World
Reid Barbour,	Deciphering Elizabethan Fiction
Harry Berger,	Second world and green world: Studies in Renaissance fiction-making
Walter Davis,	Idea and Act in Elizabethan Fiction
David Duff, ed	Modern Genre Theory, Benedetto Croce, Criticism of the Theory of Artistic and Literary Kinds Yury Tynyanov ,The Literary Fact Vladimir Propp, Fairy Tale Transformations Mikhail Bakhtin, Epic and Novel : Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel Mikhail Bakhtin The Problem of Speech Genres Northrop Frye, The Mythos of Summer : Romance Ireneusz Opacki, Royal Genres Hans Robert Jauss, Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature Rosalie Colie, Genre-Systems and the Functions of Literature Fredric Jameson, Magical Narratives : On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism Tzvetan Todorov, The Origin of Genres Gerard Genette, The Architext Jacques Derrida, The Law of Genre Alastair Fowler, Transformations of Genre Mary Eagleton, Genre and Gender
Angus Fletcher	Allegory: The Study of a Mode
Alistair Fowler	Kinds of Literature
Northrop Frye	Anatomy of Criticism
Stephen Greenblatt	Renaissance Self-Fashioning
Helen Hackett,	Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance (2000)
Richard Helgerson,	Elizabethan Prodigals
Lorna Hudson,	'Fortunate Travelers: Reading for the Plot in Sixteenth- Century England', <i>Representations</i> 41 (1993), 83-104.

Arthur Kinney,	Humanist Poetics
C.S. Lewis,	Sixteenth Century Literature Excluding Drama
Naomi Conn Liebler,	Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading (essays by Sheila T. Cavanaugh, Stephen Guy-Bray, Mary Ellen Lamb, Joan Pong Linton, Steve Mentz, Constance C. Relihan, Goran V. Stanivukovic)
David Margolies,	Novel and Society in Elizabethan England
R. W. Maslen,	Elizabethan Fictions.
Michael McKeon	The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740
Steven Mentz,	Romance for Sale
William Nelson,	Fact or Fiction: The Dilemma of the Renaissance Story-Teller (1973)
Lori Newcombe,	Reading Popular Romance
Patricia Parker,	Inescapable Romance
Peter Platt	Reason Diminished: Shakespeare & the Marvelous
Maria Teresa M. Prendergast,	Renaissance Fantasies: The Gendering of Aesthetics in Early Modern Fiction
David Quint	Epic and Empire
Constance Relihan,	Fashioning Authority
Constance Relihan, ed.	Framing Elizabethan Fictions
Constance Relihan, Goran V. Stanivukovic (eds),	Prose Fiction and Early Modern Sexualities in England, 1570-1640
Paul Salzman,	English Prose Fiction 1558-1700
Tzvetan Todorov	The Fantastic

## 6. YA and Children's Fantasy & Science Fiction

### Primary Texts:

Edwin Abbott,	Flatland
Lloyd Alexander,	The Chronicles of Prydain (5 books)
K.A. Applegate,	Remnants
Isaac Asimov,	Lucky Starr
Frank L. Baum,	Oz (First 12 books)
Holly Black,	Tithe, Valiant, Ironside
Ray Bradbury	Fahrenheit 451
Lewis Carroll,	Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
John Christopher,	The Tripods Trilogy (3 books)
Susan Cooper,	The Dark is Rising sequence (5 books)
Cassandra Clare,	The Draco Trilogy (fanfiction// Harry Potter) City of Bones
Roald Dahl,	The Witches The B.F.G.
Pamela Dean	The Secret Country The Hidden Land The Whim of the Dragon
Arthur Conan Doyle,	The White Company
Clare Dunkle,	The Hollow Kingdom Close Kin In the Coils of the Snake
Edward Eager,	Half Magic, Knight's Castle, Magic by the Lake, The Time Garden, Seven Day Magic, Magic or Not, The Well Wishers
Sylvia Engdahl,	Enchantress from the Stars,

	The Far Side of Evil
Paul Fleischman,	Weslandia
Neil Gaiman,	Coraline Stardust The Wolves in the Walls The Problem of Susan (short story)
James Gurney et al	Dinotopia
J. V. Hart	Capt. Hook: The Adventures of a Notorious Youth
Robert Heinlein,	Juveniles
Mary Hoffman,	Stravaganza series, (3 books)
Eva Ibbotson,	The Secret of Platform 13
Diana Wynne Jones	The Tough Guide to Fantasyland Charmed Life, The Lives of Christopher Chant, Witch Week, The Magicians of Caprona, Conrad's Fate, The Pinhoe Egg
Norton Juster,	The Phantom Tollbooth
Nancy Kress,	David Brin's Out of Time: Yanked!
Michael Larrabeiti,	The Borribles
Ursula K. LeGuin,	Earthsea (5 books)
Madeleine L'Engle,	A Wrinkle in Time A Wind in the Door Many Waters A Swiftly Tilting Planet An Acceptable Time
C.S. Lewis,	The Chronicles of Narnia (7 books)
David Macaulay	Black and White
Anne McCaffrey	Dragonriders of Pern (3 books) The Harper Hall trilogy (3 books)
China Mieville	Un-Lun-Dun
E. Nesbit,	Five Children and It, The Phoenix and the Carpet, The New Treasure Seekers, The Story of the Amulet, The Enchanted Castle,



	The Magic City, Wet Magic
James A. Owen,	The Chronicles of the Imaginarium Geographica
Katherine Patterson,	Bridge to Terabithia
W.R. Philbrick,	The Last Book in the Universe
Philip Pullman,	His Dark Materials (3 books) Lyra's Oxford
Philip Reeve,	Mortal Engines
J.K. Rowling,	Harry Potter (7 books)
Neil Shusterman,	Downsiders
Matthew Skelton,	Endymion Spring
Lemony Snicket,	A Series of Unfortunate Events (13 books)
Neil Stephenson	Snowcrash The Diamond Age
Caroline Stevermer	A College of Magics Sorcery and Cecelia (with Patricia Wrede)
Frances Thomas,	Cityscape
J.R.R. Tolkien,	The Hobbit Farmer Giles of Ham Smith of Wootton Major
Scott Westerfield,	Succession, Peeps, The Midnighters
T.H. White,	The Once and Future King Mistress Masham's Repose

### **Secondary Texts**

Janice Antczak.	Science Fiction: The Mythos of a New Romance
Isaac Asimov	Asimov on Science Fiction.
Brian Attebery,	The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature from Irving to LeGuin
Paul Budra and Elizabeth Schellenberg	Part II- Reflections on the Sequel
Marcus Crouch	The Nesbit tradition: the children's novel in England, 1945-1970

Barbara Harrison & Gregory Maguire,	Innocence and Experience: Essays and Conversations on Children's Literature.
Karen Hellekson & Christina Busse,	Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet
Carrie Hintz & Elaine Ostry	Utopian and Dystopian Writings for Children and Young Adults.
Fredric Jameson	Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions.
Brian Jarvis,	Postmodern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture.
Henry Jenkins,	-Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Media Consumers in a Digital Age -Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture (Studies in Culture and Communication) The Children's Culture Reader
Ursula K. LeGuin,	The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction, rev. ed.
Lawrence Lessig	The Future of Ideas
Alberto Manguel & Gianni Guadalupi,	The Dictionary of Imaginary Places
Scott McCloud	Understanding Comics
Lyman Tower Sargent,	British and American Utopian Literature
George Slusser & Eric S. Rabkin, eds. the Creation of Fictional Worlds	Styles of Creation: Aesthetic Technique and
Ann Swinfen	In Defence of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945
J.R.R. Tolkien,	On Fairy Stories
Jack Zipes	-Breaking the Spell: radical theories of folk and fairytales -Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: the classical genre for children and the process of civilization (1983)