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**PRELIMINARY THESIS PROPOSAL
DUE 1 NOVEMBER**

**GRADUATE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

Student's Name	Lawrence Evalyn
Student's Field of Specialization (Please circle one)	1. American Literature 2. Aspects of Theory 3. Canadian Literature 4. Medieval Literature 5. Renaissance Literature 6. Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature 7. Romantic and Victorian Literature 8. Twentieth and Twenty-First Century British and Irish Literature 9. World Literature in English
Proposed Title of Thesis	Popular Writing in England, 1789-1816
Proposed Supervisor	Alexandra Gillespie

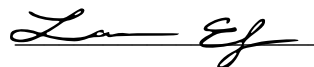
Names of members of the graduate faculty with whom you have consulted about this proposal:

1.	Name: Alexandra Gillespie	Email address: alexandra.gillespie@utoronto.ca
2.	Name: Terry Robinson	Email address: terry.robinson@utoronto.ca
3.	Name: Simon Dickie	Email address: simon.dickie@utoronto.ca
4.	Name: Tom Keymer	Email address: thomas.keymer@utoronto.ca

Names of members of the graduate faculty whom you would like to suggest as possible members of a Supervisory Committee:

1.	Name: Alexandra Gillespie	Email address: alexandra.gillespie@utoronto.ca
2.	Name: Terry Robinson	Email address: terry.robinson@utoronto.ca
3.	Name: Tom Keymer	Email address: thomas.keymer@utoronto.ca
4.	Name:	Email address:

Student's Signature:



Date:

Nov 1, 2016

Notes on Preparing the Preliminary Thesis Proposal

The Preliminary Thesis Proposal is a document intended to get you started on the major research project that you envisage for your doctoral thesis. Drafting the proposal is an opportunity to consult widely with faculty members, including both those who are working within your fields of interest and those who may work outside your field but whose theoretical and practical approaches to literature converge with yours. During the course of these conversations, you will be asking a faculty member of he/she is interested in serving as your thesis supervisor. Such discussions should begin early, preferably several months before the 1 November deadline for submitting the preliminary proposal. Please note that while you will be discussing your proposal with other faculty members, that you are *not* responsible for recruiting members of your Supervisory Committee during this process. While you may make suggestions on Form A, the two other members of the Supervisory Committee will be appointed by the Associate Director PhD in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and your proposed Supervisor.

You should feel free, if it in fact reflects your most current thinking about your topic, to substitute your plan of study from your SSHRC or OGS proposal for this preliminary thesis proposal. Otherwise, the proposal should be approximately 1-2 single-spaced pages long. Describe the specific area of research you intend to undertake and the substantive questions you intend to investigate in the thesis. State clearly and as specifically as possible the scope and method of the inquiry as well as the relationship of the topic to present scholarship in the field. Submit the proposal in succinct and clear prose, not in point or outline form.

Supply a briefly annotated bibliography of the ten or so most important studies relevant to your project and supply a couple of sentences for each title indicating its relevance. **Generally (unless your supervisor advises otherwise) the titles in this bibliography should register the methodological/theoretical/critical priorities of your thesis project.** On the final sheet of the proposal, indicate the library requirements and the language requirements of your project.

Provide a copy of your completed Preliminary Thesis Proposal forms to your proposed supervisor. The supervisor fills out a Supervisory Approval form (Form B), and submits it directly to the department by 1 November.

Submit another copy of your completed Preliminary Thesis Proposal forms to Graduate English by 1 November. Preliminary Thesis Proposals are circulated among the graduate faculty for comments and suggestions.

The next step in writing about your thesis will be the Approved Thesis Proposal, due 15 February. It is required that you meet in person with your committee as a whole well before the 15 February deadline. During the three months between 1 November and 15 February, significant consultation about the proposal should take place.

Further advice about preparing thesis proposals is available in the departmental *Guidelines for the Preparation of Ph.D Theses*.

PRELIMINARY THESIS PROPOSAL

Student's Name	Lawrence Evalyn
Proposed Title of Thesis	Popular Writing in England, 1789-1816
Proposed Supervisor	Dr. Alexandra Gillespie

This dissertation will build on my previous research on the Gothic novel 1790-1830. Late eighteenth-century literary production, as contemporary writers anxiously noted, was characterized by excessive volume. With more writers and more readers entering the conversation, it became ever harder to make sense of the literary world as a ‘whole.’ My MA research sought to contextualize the Gothic writers Matthew Lewis and Ann Radcliffe in terms of the masses of their now-forgotten peers on the shelves of circulating libraries. My examination of the plot information recorded in two bibliographies of the Gothic revealed that Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* was, indeed, characteristic of a minor group of ‘Male Gothic’ novels which presented horrifying stories not to be found in works by women. However, this method could reveal no corresponding subject matter that was the sole province of women in the several hundred novels assembled, and instead revealed many ways in which Ann Radcliffe’s novels were markedly different from the rest of the ‘school of Radcliffe.’ For my dissertation, I will follow the same pattern of comparing key authors to large bodies of their peers, while breaking away from trying to isolate a singular, self-contained field called the ‘Gothic’.

My primary interest is in finding a way to cope with the “great unread” of literature, and to marry large-scale descriptive work with meaningful interpretive insight. I will particularly seek to account for the complex interactions between the broad generic traditions of prose fiction, drama, and poetry, and to identify how particular key writers have made use of these interactions in their works. The broad range of textual forms under consideration will be rendered moderately manageable by my narrow chronological constraints, 1789-1816, which may be narrowed further to 1789-1799 if necessary¹. My study of broad trends within this period will be grounded in a small number of case studies, likely centering on Ann Radcliffe, Elizabeth Inchbald, Charlotte Turner Smith, Hannah More, and/or Samuel Taylor Coleridge, all of whom wrote prolifically in the period to further both aesthetic and political goals in a range of literary forms.

These key authors I will study in the traditional way, by reading and re-reading their works, but to interpret their peers I will turn to computational methods. During my MA research and the first year of my PhD I have cultivated a large and varied set of technical tools, to allow me to pursue my research questions flexibly. I will ultimately design and carry out a range of computational experiments in order to model a body of textual works, but I intentionally leave the nature of those experiments undecided until I have a firm grounding in the materials and questions most relevant to my inquiry.

¹ These dates are determined by events in the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars; they also track with the first explosion of Gothic fiction in the 1790s, and (if I extend to 1816) its second flourishing as knockoff and parody in the early nineteenth century.

The first phase of my project, then, will be a large descriptive effort. As I read through the works of my key authors, I will also assemble a comprehensive spreadsheet² of information about the full range of literary works produced in my chosen chronological period, and as many digital texts as I can find. The three corpora I already possess — the Eighteenth Century Collections Online Text Creation Partnership corpus (2,188 texts from 1701-1800), the Chawton House Library corpus of women's writing (46 texts 1723-1830), and my own collection of Gothic novels listed in Ann Tracy's index (122 texts 1790-1830) — provide a foundation to which I will add texts from collections like Women Writers Online, the Oxford Text Archive, and from digital library holdings like those at the University of Indiana and the University of Michigan. The ECCO-TCP corpus will likely account for a substantial percentage of the resulting collection, but by seeking a diversity of sources I hope to create a body of several hundred texts representing a unique range.

The second phase of my research will then be determined by the results of the first phase. By comparing the texts which have ended up in my corpus to my full bibliographic list of literary production, I will be able to get a sense of the selection bias reflected in my corpus, and adjust accordingly. I am comfortable with enough computational approaches to allow for flexibility: stylometric analysis of word choice; statistical correlation of bibliographical details; topic-modeling classification of texts according to a defined ontology; and network-map visualizations of textual prose similarity. I can select between and adapt these approaches based on the questions and limitations that emerge from my text-collection process.

The substantial computational component of this work thus situates itself in the overlap of two fields. In the field of the Digital Humanities, I will contribute case studies in a comparatively under-studied literary period, as well as methods to deal with heterogeneous corpora. I will also be able to contribute the resources I build for myself, both in the form of any code I may write, and in terms of the collection of texts I assemble. Ideally, I would share my text files directly, but if necessary to comply with the originating collections' policies, a detailed guide to my sources would be useful to others.

Most important to my work's impact in the Digital Humanities, however, will be its ability to contribute meaningfully to the field of eighteenth-century studies. Here, I hope to expand our understanding of popular writers and popular writing: do literary fads emerge in plays, poems, and prose simultaneously, or move through them sequentially? How different are the writers and audiences for each medium? I also anticipate finding new insight into the forms and popularity of political writing in the period: how much of the work being consumed is presented with explicit political aims? What mediums are most-used for different political positions? In a somewhat separate line of inquiry, I will explore in-depth the works of the individuals authors under consideration: how do they use each of the generic mediums available to them? How do they adapt their ideas to each form, and how do they conceive of each audience?

Both the macro and the micro views will merge in the question: are my key writers 'representative' of the popular written discourse in which they participate? What does it mean for a text to be 'representative,' and how should we find and understand outliers?

² Despite the scale of the project, a spreadsheet is in fact better-suited to my needs than a database: the CSV files that store spreadsheet data are more flexible and more interoperable with the programs and software I may later wish to write or use.

Annotated Bibliography

Algee-Hewitt, Mark. "Acts of Aesthetics: Publishing as Recursive Agency in the Long Eighteenth Century." *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* 57-8 (2010). Web.

Algee-Hewitt undertakes a computational analysis of a large volume of eighteenth-century works that themselves express alarm at the rising volume of texts being produced in the eighteenth century, to find an emerging consensus that written texts had the power to affect not only their readers, but also other texts. Algee-Hewitt thus provides a model for using computational methods to narrow down an enormous field to a new body of texts (or text extracts) which can then be informatively close-read in response to a research question.

Clery, E.J. *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction 1762-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print.

Clery tracks the rise of supernatural stories in fiction, drama, and popular news, producing a history of the Gothic that is sensitive to its impact in varying literary contexts. Clery thus provides a model for accounting for the movement of ideas between generic forms, and touches upon many of the key incidents and texts of interest to the first half of my inquiry.

Drucker, Johanna. *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2014. Print.

Although much of Drucker's discussion of our contemporary relationship to visual interfaces is tangential to this project, her monograph includes a highly-relevant discussion of the use of data visualizations in varying disciplines. This discussion expands on her 2011 article "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display" (*Digital Humanities Quarterly* 5.1) to highlight the importance of avoiding a false appearance of observer-independent objective truth in humanities visualizations. Her warnings will continue to shape my own creation and use of visualizations as I seek to make sense of my large bodies of information.

Fischer-Starcke, Bettina. *Corpus Linguistics in Literary Analysis: Jane Austen and Her Contemporaries*. London: Continuum, 2010. Print.

The first half of this work introduces best practices for corpus analysis of literature, with an emphasis on theoretical frameworks regarding the subjectivity of analysis, the bias inherent in the selection of texts, and the interpretive limits of the results. The second half of this work compares Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* to Austen's other works and to a wider body of her contemporaries, producing both a useful case study and specific results of interest to my inquiry. Fischer-Starcke thus provides a model for my own application of corpus linguistics.

Gamer, Michael. *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

Gamer's work provides a foundation for the non-digital elements of my inquiry, detailing the interconnectedness of what is now seen as the separate categories of 'high' Romantic literature and 'low,' popular Gothic writing.

Garside, Peter et al., eds. *The English novel, 1770-1829: A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

This monumental, comprehensive bibliography provides the titles and impressive bibliographical details for every work listed, and will provide my initial list of prose fiction works 1789-1816 to seek out.

Lennepe, William Van, ed. *The London Stage, 1660-1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment*. 11 vols. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1960-65. Print.

Like the Garside bibliography of the novel, the last volume of this enormous comprehensive bibliography will provide me with the first list of the works I intend to examine in my much narrower chronological period.

McCarty, Willard. "Knowing: Modeling in Literary Studies." *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*, ed. Susan Schreibman and Ray Siemens. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. Web.

McCarty's detailed consideration of models, which explores the implications of the maxim that "all models are wrong; some models are useful," informs my understanding of the relationship between computational literary research and the mental modeling inherent to 'analog' literary research.

Moretti, Franco. *Distant Reading*. London: Verso, 2013. Print.

This collection of essays recaptures the development in Moretti's career of his theories of literary history as evolutionary and as an imbalanced center-periphery system of exchange, alongside his increasing use of computational methods that come to be known as 'distant reading.' Moretti's interest in accounting for the "great unread" of literature, and his use of computational models to carry out comparative research, provides much of the theoretical background for my own methods.

O'Quinn, Daniel. "Half-History, or The Function of *Cato* at the Present Time." *Georgian Theatre in an Information Age: Media, Performance, Sociability*, special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 27.3-4 (2015). *Project Muse*. Web.

O'Quinn discusses three particular performances of Joseph Addison's *Cato* (1713) and a famous 1812 portrait of John Philip Kemble in the role of Cato, in order to compare each production's allegory of George III's political position and to make a broader argument about the use of partially forgetting the past when re-staging history. O'Quinn's article, like the majority of those in this special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, thus models the examination of literary work in context with its moment and with other forms of artistic production

Potter, Franz J. *The History of Gothic Publishing, 1800-1835: Exhuming the Trade*. Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.

Potter's history of the second flourishing of the Gothic, as parody and as knockoff, provides a wealth of bibliographical information on the production and circulation of bluebooks.

Worrall, David. *Celebrity, Performance, Reception: British Georgian Theatre as Social Assemblage*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013. Print.

Worrall provides a theoretical framework for understanding the dramatic works which I wish to incorporate into my study, applying Manuel De Landa's idea of "social assemblage" to the historical moment of a theatrical performance.

Library Requirements:

Will this dissertation require access to materials not available at the University of Toronto or through interlibrary loan?

An interest in inaccessible texts is a likely outcome of my interest in non-canonical texts, which are less commonly digitized or reprinted in modern editions, but I don't yet know of any in particular. The first several stages of my inquiry will be adequately addressed through accessible bibliographies, online holdings such as Eighteenth Century Collections Online (to which U of T does subscribe), and works that are currently in print.

My library needs are likely to get a bit odd, however: I have more need of cleanly-edited plain-text files than I do physical first editions, but many libraries and collections restrict digital usage in idiosyncratic ways. The project will be partly shaped to accommodate these limitations. If I opt to examine metadata rather than full texts, I may want to travel to note down unrecorded information on books in the Sadleir-Black collection in Virginia or the Corvey collection in Germany, but I expect that I will prefer full-text analysis.

How much time will likely be involved in working with other archives and collections?

Physically travelling to other libraries and archives: unlikely to be necessary. Manipulating and investigating digital texts, some of which may need to be acquired from outside U of T: at least half the project.

Language Requirements:

What languages other than English are REQUIRED for your research?

Python (or similar general-purpose coding language); R (or similar statistical software)

What languages other than English are ADVISABLE (i.e., would enhance your research)?

Excel Visual Basic for Applications (or similar data management language / tool)

What is your competence in these languages? If necessary, indicate how you plan to attain the required levels of proficiency?

Rudimentary Python competence (have written a program that can count words in 500 documents and output to CSV; need more expertise managing large datasets and manipulating outputs) — currently self-teaching with *How To Learn Python the Hard Way* to some success (knew no Python before July). Once I'm done with this textbook, I'll assess whether my needs would be best served by self-teaching from a more advanced textbook, taking an online course like MIT's, or auditing undergraduate classes at U of T. The goal is not to become a computer scientist, but to be able to problem-solve my work with readily-available resources.

Intermediate familiarity with R from a course at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute, already sufficient to my needs. (R is, properly, statistical software, rather than a programming language in itself, so it is vastly simpler to learn and to problem-solve with online resources.)

No experience with Excel VBA, but expertise with Python will transfer: VBA is a limited programming language intended to make it easy for non-programmers to automate complex tasks in Microsoft Excel. Self-teaching with one of the many online guides should suffice.