

I have included a abstract at the bottom of this email (if you would like to look at it) that shows the direction I am taking with this project thus far (it may change a bit). I hope you're able to be my referee! It would be awesome.

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### **Postmodern and Early Modern Confessions: Derrida's Parergon and Calderón de la Barca's Literary Frames**

The *parergon*, as employed by Jacques Derrida in his text (1978?) *The Truth in Painting*, is both the frame of a painting and a part of the artwork that is commonly disregarded but influences and manipulates its interpretation. In *Circumfession* (1989), Derrida employs a type of marginal writing that reflects a continued interest in the conveying power of frames and borders. He declares his broken covenant with Judaism and surreptitiously introduces a circumambulatory discourse of confession. This essay examines the way in which this Derridean parergon is present in painterly, textual, and theological intonations in two of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's plays: *El pintor de su deshonra* (c. 1646), and *El socorro general* (1644). Derrida's marginal discourse, although extensively examined in the context of Western philosophy and theology, has not been thoroughly elucidated alongside other writings that contain similar features, like the drama of Calderón. As one of the most significant Spanish Baroque playwrights, Calderón focuses on intricate dilemmas with philosophical depth that reflect the preoccupations of seventeenth-century skepticism. Calderón approaches these themes obliquely and he introduces a complex theological discourse that greatly reflects Derrida's own system of confessionary and marginal writing. Derrida and Calderón use painterly, textual, and theological frames in a fluid manner in order to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of dominant philosophical systems and societal constructions in both the postmodern and early modern eras. Ultimately, Derrida can be seen as an inheritor of the skepticism demonstrated by Calderón in the early modern period.

# **Honors Thesis Proposal: “Postmodern and Early Modern Confessions: Derrida's Parergon and Calderón de la Barca’s Literary Frames”**

XXXX XXXXX, Comparative Arts and Letters

## **Purpose**

This project will investigate the relationship between Jacques Derrida’s writings on religion and a number of works by one of Spain’s most renowned playwrights, Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Derrida portrayed his problematic relationship with Judaism in a number of his texts. His discourse, although extensively examined in the context of Western philosophy and theology, has not been greatly elucidated alongside other authors that reflect similar preoccupations with religion. As one of the most significant Spanish Baroque playwrights, Calderón introduced complex theological concepts in his writing that greatly reflect Derrida’s sentiments on confession. Calderón’s corpus shows the author’s familiarity with painting theory. Calderón used painting as a type of discourse in both his dramas or *comedias*, and his sacramental plays or *autos*. I want to examine how painting, as portrayed in Calderón’s works, functions as a confessional discourse that mimics Derrida’s writings and its further epistemological implications in both the Early Modern and Postmodern eras.

## **Background and Significance**

The *parergon*, as employed by Jacques Derrida in his 1987 text *The Truth in Painting*, is both the frame of a painting and a part of the artwork that is commonly disregarded but influences and manipulates its interpretation. In *Circumfession* (1989), Derrida employs a type of marginal writing that reflects a continued interest in the conveying power of frames and borders. He declares his broken covenant with Judaism and surreptitiously introduces a circumambulatory discourse of confession. This thesis will examine the way in which the Derridean parergon is

present in painterly, textual, and theological intonations in two of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's plays: *El pintor de su deshonra* (c. 1646), and *El socorro general* (1644). Derrida's marginal discourse, although extensively examined in the context of Western philosophy and theology, has not been thoroughly elucidated alongside other writings that contain similar features, like the drama of Calderón. As one of the most significant Spanish Baroque playwrights, Calderón focuses on intricate dilemmas with philosophical depth that reflect the preoccupations of seventeenth-century skepticism. Calderón approaches these themes obliquely and he introduces a complex theological discourse that greatly reflects Derrida's own system of confessionary and marginal writing. Derrida and Calderón use painterly, textual, and theological frames in a fluid manner in order to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of dominant philosophical systems and societal constructions in both the postmodern and early modern eras. Ultimately, Derrida can be seen as an inheritor of the skepticism demonstrated by Calderón in the early modern period.

The question of Derrida and religion has been examined thoroughly in light of theology, Western philosophy, and Derrida's own biographical background. There is little investigation, however, of the impact of this religious discourse in Derrida in literature. Derrida may be seen as a postmodern inheritor of Baroque Spain, and more attempts need to be made in order to bridge the gap between the Baroque and postmodern epochs. The field of Derrida studies has experienced a revival, especially with the recent and ongoing publishing of his seminars. Scholars like John D. Caputo and Simon Critchley have produced and continue to publish significant work on the relationship between religion and deconstruction. Pedro Calderón de la Barca is one of the most preeminent dramatists of Spain and his works have obtained global acclaim. This project aims to produce an intellectual discourse that has been initiated by only a

few others in the field of Derrida and Spanish Baroque studies. The added body of knowledge I want to create in this project will be a contribution to these fields as Derrida's seminars continue to be published and as more critical editions and bibliographies of Calderón's corpus are printed.

### **Methods and Procedures**

My research will involve reviewing primary and secondary literature. I will use the Harold B. Lee Library as well as other sources that my faculty advisor recommends. The writing portion of the thesis will include at least 3 different drafts, the first of which I am planning to complete by August 2016. Further revisions will be made according to my own discretion and my faculty advisor's suggestions.

### **Preliminary Outline**

- I. Introduction
  - a. Derrida's Confessionary Writings
  - b. Calderon's Theological Preoccupations
  - c. Early Modern and Postmodern Epistemology
- II. Calderón's Painterly Background
  - a. Painting Theory in 17<sup>th</sup> century Spain
  - b. Painting as portrayed in some *comedias* and *autos*
- III. Derrida's *Parergon* and its Artistic Implications
  - a. Borders of painting and new meanings
  - b. Disegno vs. Colorito
- IV. Epistemological Implications
  - a. What a painting can tell us
  - b. Derrida as an inheritor of Early Modern Skepticism

## **Preliminary Bibliography**

- Alberti, Leon Battista. *On Painting*. Rev. ed. and trans. John R. Spencer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956.
- Alpers, Svetlana. *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Ancell, Matthew G. "Perspectival Fig Leaves: The Failure of Representation in Calderón De La Barca's *El pintor de su deshonra*." *Revista De Estudios Hispánicos* 48.2 (2014): 255-84.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.
- Bass, Laura R. *The Drama of the Portrait: Theater and Visual Culture in Early Modern Spain*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008.
- Carducho, Vicente. *Diálogos de la pintura: su defensa, origen, esencia, definición, modos y diferencias*. Edited by Francisco Calvo Serraller. Madrid: Turner, 1979.
- Coward, Harold and Toby Foshay, eds. *Derrida and Negative Theology*. Albany, NY: University of New York Press, 1992.
- Caputo, John D. *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Derrida Jacques. *The Truth In Painting*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Heller-Andrist. *The Friction of the Frame: Derrida's Parergon in Literature*. Tübingen: Francke, 2012.
- Pacheco, Francisco. *Arte de la pintura, su antigüedad, y grandezas*. Sevilla: Simon Faxardo, 1649.

Paterson, Alan K.G. "Juan Roca's Northern Ancestry: A Study of Art Theory in Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra*." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 7.3 (1971): 195-210.

---. "The Comic and Tragic Melancholy of Juan Roca: A Study of Calderón's *El pintor de su deshonra*." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 5.3 (1969): 244-261.

---. ed. and Trans. *The Painter of His Dishonor: El pintor de su deshonra*. Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1991.

Regalado, Antonio. "Capítulo 9." In *Calderón: Los orígenes de la modernidad en la España del Siglo de Oro*, Vol II, 321-51. Barcelona: Destino, 1995.

### **Qualifications of Investigator**

My chosen curriculum has included classes on literary theory (IHUM 350) and Baroque Spain and its cultural and philosophical production (IHUM 490R). I have become acquainted with philosophical writing as well as Spanish theater. I directed a class discussion in a senior seminar that investigated the familiarity Calderón had with painting theory and how it was portrayed in some of his comedias. My senior seminar paper focused on painting and Calderón's comedias. I have been involved in the Derrida Research Group for two years. This group is sponsored by the Humanities Center and comprises a number of faculty members and select graduate and undergraduate students that engage in bi-weekly discussions of Derridean texts. We have chosen to focus our reading on the question of Derrida and religion (a theme very pertinent to my research). I have worked closely with my mentor, Dr. Ancell, for three years and helped him conduct research on Calderón, Derrida, and other important figures of Baroque Spain and postmodernism.

### **Qualifications of Advisor**

Dr. Ancell teaches various courses on Baroque Spain and Pedro Calderón de la Barca. He has published important articles relating to Derrida and art, and Calderón and philosophical thought in the Oxford Art Journal, Renaissance Drama, The Comparatist, and Hispanic Review. He took courses from Jacques Derrida while at University of California-Irvine, and helped inaugurate BYU Derrida Research Group. The close relationship I have with my mentor as well as the coursework I have completed at BYU have prepared me to engage in this project which will serve as a culminating experience to my undergraduate education.

### **Timeline**

June- August 2016

Finalize a preliminary full draft of honors thesis by the end of Summer Term.

September 2016

Review primary research and research additional topics to strengthen arguments.

October 2016

After gathering additional research, rewrite portions of thesis that require more development

November-December 2016

Finalize a draft of thesis before the end of Fall Semester.

January-February 2017

Review final draft and determine possible weak areas of thesis.

March 2017

Defend thesis by March 11/10

Upload final version of thesis by March 17

(Vilca)

Deadline

Defense: by March 10th

## **Budget** ?

I have received the Robert K Thomas Scholarship for Winter 2017. I will not require additional outside funding for this project.