Explanation: This ad-hoc prelims list is designed to (1) provide a grounding in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American prose (mostly fiction) and poetry and (2) allow me to begin formulating my dissertation project. In my dissertation, I plan to investigate how tropes and metaphors of organic breakdown (such as decay and digestion) work in contemporary American poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. What is the literary history of these tropes—to what extent do they revisit or revise figures of decay in nineteenth-century American literature? What relationship do these tropes have with environmentalism and popular conceptions of ecology? What relationship do they have with environmental changes? What relationship do they have with burial practices—practices that deal with human decay? Finally, what are the ethical, political, and ecopolitical implications of tropes and metaphors of decay in contemporary American literature?

At the moment, several keywords function as the nodes around which this project circles. These keywords are (1) organic form in poetry (literary organicism), (2) organicism more broadly, as in political, historical, philosophical thinking that understands a phenomenon through the metaphor of the organism, (3) environmentalism and ecology, (4) burial, the dead, death, (5) beautiful decay, (6) ruins, (7) trash or garbage, (8) compost, (9) growth, (10) keeping house. In constructing the three lists below, I have tried to include texts relevant to one or more of these keywords. While some texts not apparently related to any of the keywords are included as background, I have tried in general to select the most relevant text by a given author.

The two literature lists are divided by genre rather than by period because I am interested in tracing historical trajectories within each genre. These generic trajectories are separable rather than separate: Melville’s fiction, for example, is important to certain experimental strands of postwar poetry.

The theory list is designed to help me figure out my critical approach, and therefore includes a wide range of thinkers on subjects related to the keywords of this project. I have theoretical leanings—I like Vico’s focus on how material cultural practices shape thought and representation, for example—but I need to assess and grapple with a range of possible approaches. Some works on the theory list are devoted to organic form in poetry, in part because I have specific questions about literary organicism that these works will help me answer: Does contemporary poetics shift from a traditional focus on poem-as-
growing-organism to poem-as-decaying-organism? What are the implications of that shift?

Committee members: Professor Lynn Keller  
Professor Russ Castronovo  
Professor Tom Schaub

Note: For the sake of legibility, poem, short story, and essay titles are given in plain type rather than in quotation marks. Book titles are italicized.

I. Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Prose

1. MARY ROWLANDSON, A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682)

2. St. JEAN de CREVECOEUR, Letters from an American Farmer (1782)

3. WILLIAM BARTRAM, Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee country, the extensive territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek confederacy, and the country of the Chactaws (1791)

4. JAMES FENIMORE COOPER, The Pioneers (1823)

5. WILLIAM APESS, A Son of the Forest (1829), An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man (1833)


7. RALPH WALDO EMERSON, Nature, The American Scholar (1836), Self-Reliance, Circles, Art (1841), The Transcendentalist (1842), The Poet, Experience, Politics (1844), Fate (1860)

8. FREDERICK DOUGLASS, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845); My Bondage and My Freedom (1855)

9. HENRY DAVID THOREAU, Walden (1854)
10. HENRY DAVID THOREAU, Resistance to Civil Government (1849), Slavery in Massachusetts (1854), A Plea for Captain John Brown (1859), Walking (1861), The Maine Woods (1864), Journal III (Sept. 16, 1851 – April 30, 1852)

11. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, Roger Malvin’s Burial; My Kinsman, Major Molineux (1832); Young Goodman Brown, The White Old Maid (1835); The Minister’s Black Veil, The Maypole of Merry Mount (1836); The Celestial Railroad, The Birth-mark (1843); The Artist of the Beautiful, Rappacini’s Daughter (1844); Ethan Brand, The Scarlet Letter (1850)

12. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, The House of the Seven Gables (1851)

13. HERMAN MELVILLE, Moby-Dick; or, The Whale (1851)

14. HERMAN MELVILLE, Hawthorne and His Mosses (1850); Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, 16 April 1851 (“No! in Thunder” letter); Bartleby, the Scrivener; Benito Cereno; The Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles (1856); Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative) (1891)

15. HERMAN MELVILLE, The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade (1857)

16. WALT WHITMAN, Preface to Leaves of Grass (1855); Democratic Vistas (1871); Preface: “A Backward Glance O’er Traveled Roads” (1888)

17. MARK TWAIN, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884); To the Person Sitting in Darkness (1901)

18. FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER, Iola Leroy, or, Shadows Uplifted (1892)

19. HENRY JAMES, The Turn of the Screw (1898), The Ambassadors (1903)

20. THEODORE DREISER, Sister Carrie (1900)

21. ZITKALA-SA, Impressions of an Indian Childhood, The School Days of an Indian Girl, An Indian Teacher Among Indians (1900)

22. W. E. B. DUBOIS, The Souls of Black Folk (1903)

23. GERTRUDE STEIN, Selection from The Making of Americans (written 1906-08, published 1934), pp. 150-286 [Mrs. Hersland and the Hersland Children]

24. HENRY ADAMS, The Education of Henry Adams (1918)

25. JEAN TOOMER, Cane (1923)
26. WILLA CATHER, *The Professor’s House* (1925)

27. ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)

28. JOHN DOS PASSOS, *The Big Money* (1927)


30. ZORA NEALE HURSTON, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

31. JOHN STEINBECK, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939)

32. ALDO LEOPOLD, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)

33. RALPH ELLISON, *Invisible Man* (1952)

34. HELEN and SCOTT NEARING, *Living the Good Life* (1954)


37. THOMAS PYNCHON, *V.* (1963)

38. THOMAS PYNCHON, *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973)


40. WENDELL BERRY, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977)


42. NORMAN MAILER, *Ancient Evenings* (1983)


45. CORMAC McCARTHY, *Blood Meridians, or the Evening Redness in the West* (1985)


47. GARY SNYDER, *The Practice of the Wild*


**II. Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century American Poetry**

53. EDGAR ALLEN POE, Sonnet—To Science; Romance (1829); Fairy-Land; To Helen; Israfel; The City in the Sea; The Sleeper (1831); The Coliseum (1833); Dream-land; The Raven (1845); Ulalume (1847); Annabel Lee (1849). RALPH WALDO EMERSON, Each and All; Hamatreya; The Rhodora; The Snow-Storm; Merlin; Threnody; Days (1847). HENRY DAVID THOREAU, The Inward Morning (1842); I am a Parcel; The Fall of the Leaf (1863)

54. FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER, From *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*: To Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, The Syropheneician Woman, The Slave Mother, Eliza Harris (1854); from *Sketches of Southern Life*: Aunt Chloe (1872)

55. WALT WHITMAN, *Leaves of Grass* (1855 edition); From the “deathbed” edition of *Leaves of Grass: Children of Adam; Calamus*; Crossing Brooklyn Ferry; Song of the Answerer; A Song of Joys; Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking; As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life; When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer; The Dalliance of the Eagles; *Drum-Taps*; When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d; There Was a Child Went Forth; The Sleepers; Passage to India; Whispers of Heavenly Death; A Noiseless Patient Spider; Yonnondio; So Long! (1892)

56. EMILY DICKINSON, *Final Harvest* (ed. Thomas Johnson, pub. 1964)

57. JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER, Snowbound, Maud Muller (1866), Ichabod!, Laus Deo, Telling the Bees


Fire and Ice, Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, To Earthward, Two Witches; For Once, Then, Something; The Need of Being Versed in Country Things, Acquainted with the Night, West-Running Brook, A Hillside Thaw, Once by the Pacific, Two Tramps in Mud Time, Desert Places, Design, Come In, The Most of It, The Gift Outright, Take Something Like a Star, Directive, Neither Out Far Nor in Deep; Provide, Provide; The Death of the Hired Man, Home Burial, A Servant to Servants; Build Soil

60. GERTRUDE STEIN, From Geography and Plays (1922): Susie Asado, Sacred Emily; from Selected Writings (1946): Tender Buttons, Preciosilla; from Bee Time and Other Poems (1953): Lifting Belly, Patriarchal Poetry, Stanzas in Meditation

61. EZRA POUND, Ne Audiart; Sestina: Altaforte; Portrait d’une Femme; The Return; Seafarer; The River Merchant’s Wife: A Letter; The Jewel Stairs’ Grievance; The Rest; A Pact; In a Station of the Metro; Hugh Selwyn Mauberley

62. EZRA POUND, From The Cantos (1970): A Draft of XXX Cantos (1930); Canto XXXI (A Jefferson / Adams Canto); Canto XLV (“Usura”); Canto XLIX (“Sunup; work/ Sundown; to rest”); The Pisan Cantos (1948); Canto LXXXV; Canto XCV (from Rock-Drill); Canto CVI (from Thrones); Canto CX; Canto CXVI


64. WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, Kora in Hell: Improvisations (1920), Spring and All (1923)

65. WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, Paterson (1958)

66. WALLACE STEVENS: Harmonium (1923); The Man on the Dump; Notes toward a Supreme Fiction

67. E. E. CUMMINGS, from Tulips & Chimneys (1923): when life is quite through with; when god lets my body be; into the smiting / sky tense; Buffalo Bill’s / defunct; at the ferocious phenomenon of 5 o’clock; i am going to utter a tree; my eyes are fond of the east side; Spring is like perhaps a hand; gee i like to think of dead; Later poems: next to of course god america i; my father moved through dooms of love; anyone lived in a pretty town how; since feeling is first; Poem, or Beauty Hurts Mr. Vinal

68. LANGSTON HUGHES, The Weary Blues (1926), Montage of a Dream Deferred (1951)

69. HART CRANE, The Bridge (1930); Voyages; At Melville’s Tomb; For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen; The Broken Tower
70. H.D., *Trilogy* (1946)


72. W. H. AUDEN, *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957*

73. KENNETH FEARING, *Green Light; Dirge; Denouement*; GENEVIEVE TAGGARD, *To the Natural World: at 37; All Around the Town; Hymn to Yellow; The Weed*; JOHN WHEELWRIGHT, *Fish Food: An Obituary for Hart Crane; Anathema, Marantha!*; STEPHEN VINCENT BENET, from *John Brown’s Body* (1928): Invocation and Book One; American Names; Metropolitan Nightmare

74. ALLEN TATE, *Ode to the Confederate Dead*; RICHARD EBERHART, *The Groundhog*; DELMORE SCHWARTZ, *The Heavy Bear Who Goes With Me; The Mind Is An Ancient and Famous Capital*; LOUISE BOGAN, *Medusa; Women; Winter Swan*; RANDALL JARRELL, *The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner*

75. LOUIS ZUKOFSKY, Poem beginning with ‘The’ (1927), ‘A’ sections 1-12, 24 (1978)

76. STERLING A. BROWN, *Southern Road* (1932)

77. MURIEL RUKEYSER, *The Book of the Dead* (1938); *Ajanta; The Soul and Body of John Brown* (1944); all of the “Lives” series: “The Risen Image Shines”; Gibbs; Ryder; Chapman; Ann Burlak; Ives (1939); Akiba; Kathe Kollwitz (1968); Night Feeding (1951); F. O. M. (1958); Myth; Breaking Open (1973)

78. GEORGE OPPEN, *Discrete Series* (1934)

79. LORINE NIEDECKER, *New Goose and “New Goose” Manuscript* (1946); *North Central* (1968); Paean to Place (1968) from *Collected Works* (ed. Jenny Penberthy)


81. GWENDOLYN BROOKS, *Selected Poems* (1963)


83. THOMAS McGrATH, The Seekers; Afternoon of a McGrath; Poem – Unfinished Poem; Go Ask the Dead; The Underground; *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*, Part One (1962)

84. ALLEN GINSBERG, *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), *Kaddish* (1959)
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<td><em>Life Studies</em> (1959); <em>For the Union Dead</em> (1964)</td>
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<td>ROBERT DUNCAN</td>
<td><em>The Opening of the Field</em> (1960), <em>Roots and Branches</em> (1964)</td>
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<td>ROBERT CREELEY</td>
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<td>JOHN BERRYMAN</td>
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<td>SYLVIA PLATH</td>
<td><em>Ariel</em> (1965, but will read restored edition, pub. 2004)</td>
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<td>MICHAEL HARPER</td>
<td><em>Debridement</em> (1973); <em>Dear John, Dear Coltrane; In Hayden’s Collage</em>;</td>
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<td>*Grandfather; “Goin’ to the Territory”; <em>The Ghost of Soul Making</em></td>
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<td>SUSAN HOWE</td>
<td><em>The Nonconformist’s Memorial</em> (1993), *The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the</td>
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<td><em>Wilderness in American Literary History</em> (1993)</td>
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104. FRANK BIDART, In the Western Night: Collected Poems 1960-90 (1990), Star Dust (2005)

105. JOAN RETALLACK, How To Do Things With Words


110. JULIANA SPAHR, This Connection of Everyone with Lungs (2005), The Transformation (2007)

111. JORIE GRAHAM, Sea Change (2008)


III. Theoretical and Critical Approaches

113. PLATO, Phaedrus; ARISTOTLE, Poetics (trans. Leon Golden, 1982 edition); De Anima

114. GIAMBATTISTA VICO, The New Science (1725)

115. IMMANUEL KANT, from Critique of Judgment: Part 1, Critique of Aesthetic Judgment (1790); also include part on theory of nature

116. G. W. F. HEGEL, from The Phenomenology of Mind (1807): Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage; Observation of organic existence; Observation of nature as an organic whole; Observation of the relationship of self-consciousness to its immediate actuality: Physiognomy and Phrenology (section headings from Baillie translation)

117. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, Biographia Literaria, (1817); Shakespeare’s Judgement Equal to His Genius (1836)

118. KARL MARX, The German Ideology (1846); Book I, Chapter 1 of Capital (1867); The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1869)
119. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887)

120. SIGMUND FREUD, *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917); *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920); *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930)

121. MARTIN HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time* (1927)


125. KENNETH BURKE, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941)


128. JACQUES LACAN, *The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I* (1949); *The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud* (1957)


130. PERRY MILLER, *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956)

131. HANNAH ARENDT, *The Human Condition* (1958); *The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man* (from *Between Past and Future*, 1968)


134. THEODOR ADORNO, Lectures 9 and 10 (The Critique of Universal History and “Negative” Universal History) from *History and Freedom: Lectures*


139. ADRIENNE RICH, *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision* (1971); *Notes Toward a Politics of Location* (1980); HELENE CIXOUS, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975); LUCE IRIGARAY, *This Sex Which Is Not One*; When Our Lips Speak Together (1977); JULIA KRISTEVA, “Stabat Mater” (1977)

140. SACVAN BERCOVITCH, *The American Jeremiad* (1978)


146. GLORIA ANZALDUAA, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987)


149. FREDRIC JAMESON, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991)


