

Introduction

Personal Statement

Two years ago, as I sprawled out on the floor of the University de Grenoble's library in Grenoble, France while working on an explication du text of Guillaume Apollinaire's "La Lorelei" for my Poems et Proses du XX Siècle class—I realized with certainty: this was my approach to literature. Close reading - staying intimately close to the text and delving into formalism had made it clear that these were powerful methods for exploring and understanding written works.

Body Paragraphs

Although I once believed that my certain direction was set, I soon discovered it to be fragile. Thus, upon returning from Grenoble, while continuing at Swarthmore College I opted to take two courses which promised an array of highly theoretical approaches: Women Writers 1790-1830 and Feminist Literary Criticism. By doing so, I made sure not to limit myself from other opportunities in literature.

In the end, these courses guided me to a fusion of strategies for approaching literature that I find immensely rewarding, effective and fun. With this hybrid approach, I am able to remain astutely connected with the text while also utilizing theoretical work.

This year, I have the opportunity to apply this approach to literature in two major projects. To begin with, I was awarded a \$2,400 National Endowment for the Humanities Younger Scholars Summer Research Grant. My research project examines Elie Wiesel's utilization of silence in his novels and how he is able to recognize and transcend the limitation of language when discussing The Holocaust. Moreover, my senior English thesis will also expand on this same exploration.

My thesis, which appears as "Senior Essay" on my transcript (but will be renamed to the more appropriate "Thesis" next semester), focuses on analyzing how Elie Wiesel writes about and uses silence in his works. My expertise in French from my semesters studying abroad in Grenoble has been instrumental, as most of Wiesel's novels were written originally in French. This study requires close readings of each text and is enriched by theoretical work.

My current research project, which replaced comprehensive examinations in the Swarthmore English department this year, examines British poetry shortly following World War I. Curiously enough, many of these poems draw upon religious and mythological symbols to illustrate their message - as if modern visuals were not sufficient for depicting such an unprecedented conflict. By exploring how poets used language to capture the magnitude of death generated by industrialized warfare in a pre-visual era, I will uncover new insights into our past while breaking down barriers between historical periods through artistic expression.

With ambition and enthusiasm, I have known for several years that I want my graduate work to ultimately be in English literature. However, it is only through the combination of studying both English and sociology-anthropology that has allowed me to produce an enlightened perspective within the field of literature.

My enthusiasm for anthropology has twice driven me to investigate literature from all cultures outside of Europe, both times with considerable pleasure. For *The Black African Writer* I produced documents which combined scholarly research alongside formalist textual analysis and exact reading. On multiple occasions Prof. Wallace Mann, the R Talbot Sondheim Professor of African Studies at Swarthmore College and I discussed my reports in great detail.

As I prepared for my next voyage of discovery, I wrote a paper about Isaiah 65:17-25 for *Introduction to Hebrew Scriptures*. Because I had taken Religion 93 and was moderately well versed in the language, I decided to work from the original text itself. Going beyond mere reading meant conducting an exegesis that involved delving into each word as well as individual letters - what a joyous surprise! Exploring it so deeply gave me immense pleasure while uncovering its secrets and treasures.

This year, I've been blessed to be able to use the same theme of war literature for both my thesis and senior project. Working on one has inspired me with new ideas that I can apply to the other. Despite being intrigued by twentieth-century literature while studying at University of Colorado-Boulder, I'm eager to broaden my horizons by exploring different paths as well!

Again and again, I have discovered that when I genuinely cherish a certain kind of literature for an extended period, my academic research into it leads to wonderful results. Old English Literature is certainly one such instance. When delving deeper into these texts academically, the appreciation I already had for them only flourished further.

Although I have no experience in Old English literature, the stories of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Caedmon, and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell* that are preserved on cassette tape transport me to another world. In times when I am feeling overwhelmed or frazzled, my favorite pastime is visiting Swarthmore library where an aged recording from *Beowulf* awaits. With both a modern English translation and original old text before me as reference points; nothing rivals this method for calming my mind!

Through mimicking the cadences I've heard and studying translations, I have been able to learn a smidgen of this language. Now that my interest has been piqued, I'm eager to pursue it

further.

Conversations with people such as Professor Laurie Langbauer, who had personal familiarity with the University of Colorado-Boulder due to a summer spent their teaching, piqued my curiosity in learning more about it. Abbe Blum, an English professor at Swarthmore College, suggested I reach out to Professor Margaret Ferguson for additional information when I expressed my interest.

I did so, and had a wonderful conversation which helped me to confirm that I would feel very much at home in the department. I am especially excited about the department's strengths in twentieth-century, Renaissance, and Old English literature.

I'm glad for the distribution requirements at University de Grenoble because they will allow me to explore places and topics that weren't available at Swarthmore. It's essential that my experience in this library isn't a one-time occurrence but instead allows me to develop further as a student of literature. By continuously learning new things and refining my approach, I'll become an eternal scholar and devotee of literature - something that is invaluable beyond measure.