



PERSONAL STATEMENT – COURSE IIB #1

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It was through listening to John Finnemore's Souvenir Programme on BBC Radio 4, that I began to appreciate the relevance of Classics in modern literature and popular culture: his witty sketches demonstrated not just the versatility and capacity of Classics but our dependence on it for innumerable purposes. An interest in literary criticism naturally drew me to Aristotle's Poetics where I admired his attempt to biologically dissect literature - most noticeable was the parallelism of 'purgation' to Hippocrates' 'Four Humours' - indicative of the intrinsic interlinkage within Classics. I listened to all 'In Our Time' episodes concerning tragedy, becoming particularly interested in the limitations or subversion of the catharsis in paradigmatic tragedies such as Hamlet: the visual extent of corpses at the end exceeds the boundaries of catharsis, incurring instead a sense of bathos.

Whilst reading essays on Classical Reception, I discovered Harold Bloom and his thesis 'The Invention of the Human'. For the St Hugh's essay competition, for which I received a special commendation, I disputed Bloom's claim using texts from antiquity - now also the subject of my EPQ. These texts include Euripides' Medea which is hardly devoid of self-conscious soliloquies and the dichotomous introspection associated with Hamlet. My discussion of Medea's internal struggle between conscience and obligation inspired further reading on Platonic literary analysis in Annas' A Very Short Introduction to Ancient Philosophy and subsequently Plato's Socrates' Defence - his prioritisation of himself as an individual integral to state welfare ironically conforms to the principals of Athenian democracy.

During the UNIQ Oxford Summer School, I studied 'Diana and Actaeon in Art' for my tutorial. I concluded that Ovid's use of ekphrasis deliberately digresses from the focus on metamorphosis, redistributing the emphasis on 'Actaeon's' act of inadvertent profanation. This, in turn, implicates the reader, punctuating the pathos in his innocence. Reconsidering literature through artwork reawakened my appreciation of theatre which, as an actress, is something I have long maintained. Performing as the titular role in Antigone reinforced Aristotle's necessitation of performance as an outlet for emotion: my love of Classics is such that studying it must be accompanied by the practice of it.

I was inspired to read Metamorphoses in its entirety: the chaos which pervades the poem seemed to me to derive from impulsive passion, both divine and mortal, in the place of a clear binary opposition between good and evil. After reading The Iliad it struck me that this heroic impulse or passion is correlative to seminal works of Classical literature: intensely human traits and morality transcend all conventions of heroism and divinity. This is a theme addressed in Wolf's Cassandra that



demonstrates to me the necessity of such modern, and particularly feminist, reconstructions; Miller's *Song of Achilles* and Atwood's *The Penelopiad* served to reinforce this. They attack the universal glorification of epic heroes who, when extracted from the contemporary conventions of 'heroes', lose much of their inherent integrity. I scrutinised this celebrated archetypal heroism as part of my A-Level coursework on Duffy's poetry collection *The World's Wife* in which I critiqued the idolised presentation of Pythagoras.

Since my introduction to Ancient Greek at UNIQ I have also tried to acquaint myself with Latin, partly through the poetry of Catullus. I became intrigued by the *paraclausithryon* motif as the derivation of the common cliché of the 'shut out lover', a reminder that Classics is the foundation of Western thought and critical to understanding such things. Training as a dancer has ingrained in me an independency and self-reliance that makes time management a constant priority: an integral requirement for Classics.

