

There were two winners in 2017: Leena Aljobeh and Kathryn Fogleman. Both essays appear here.

### **2017 Winning Essay by Leena Aljobeh**

When beginning my research paper for my Spanish Senior Seminar, I knew that my research would revolve around the following two thematic ideas in regards to Latin American literature: obsession and dissociation. Reading and re-reading passages in the short stories of Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, and Julio Cortázar, I had tabbed and underlined my textual evidence for my thesis and created an outline of my research paper. From just the short stories themselves, I knew that I wanted to connect the characters' obsessions with various objects to the characters' eventual dissociation from themselves or reality. However, it was not until I began to use the Christopher Center Library Services that I fully developed both my thesis and my research paper.

After doing extensive research for corresponding articles on the Christopher Center's online databases, including Informe Academico and International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, I came across a myriad of potential resources, including ones acquired via Interlibrary Loan. Narrowing them down was an art form. I specifically needed articles and journal papers in Spanish, so that was my first filter. Second, I needed background information on the topics of obsession and dissociation in literature—if I was to write a detailed research paper on the topic, I needed to be well-versed in the subject matter. Through this filter, I began to formulate my introduction to include a morsel of what was revealed to me about obsession; the rest I used to help shape my research paper into a coherent and unified entity. Finally, I needed resources that explicitly discussed the short stories that I was explicating, so I made sure to later search keywords and weed out the articles irrelevant to the short stories and thematic ideas of my research topic.

Even after weeding out unrelated articles, I was still left with a stack of journal articles to sift through and prune. I divided the journal articles into different piles according to which of the three aforementioned Latin American authors they corresponded. It was then that the real challenge was faced. Just like the care needed to be taken when deciding upon the most beneficial soil, seeds, and fertilizer when planting a garden, I needed to make sure that my chosen resources were ones that would help my thematic ideas flourish into full themes—I needed my measly introductory paragraph to actually be followed by insightful quotes from trusted sources to really develop my paper. At this point, I skimmed each paper for a few things, including the proper tone, the relevant keywords, and the feeling that the author of the critical article really knew about what he or she was talking. Just as one would take gardening advice more practically from an experienced gardener, as a researcher on the topic of obsession and dissociation in Latin American literature, I wanted to make sure that my resources were substantial, that the authors of the journal articles had done their research well on the corresponding part of the subject matter.

After encountering the resources that would be best for my paper, it was time for me to read and annotate each and every one. This took time and effort that paid off wonderfully. After using the sources found in the Christopher Center's database, I realized that there was another thematic idea that was just as important to my research; this thematic idea was the interpretation, or the meaning, of the obsession and dissociation in each of the chosen short stories. This newly encountered thematic idea became one of the keystones of my research paper; it rounded out my thesis very nicely, as it added

new depth to my paper. Now, in my research paper, I was not only answering the questions what and how but also why.

Finally, I put my newfound sources and ideas to paper, and began editing my outline. Typing away at my keyboard in regards to this research paper became something to which I looked forward. I was excited about the direction of my paper, the substance that it would include, and most importantly, all the textual evidence and academic resources that I had found to support my thesis. In the end, thanks to my extensive research and the great sources that were available to me, I was able to write a very well-rounded research paper about how a character's obsession with something "other" results in an immersion in this object until the protagonist dissociates from him or herself or reality due to a distinct interpretation.

### **2017 Winning Essay by Kathryn Fogleman**

When it came time to brainstorm ideas for my political science senior seminar class, I wanted to focus on one of my areas of interest-policies that directly affect lives of vulnerable persons. I decided to focus my research on refugee and asylum policies. As I spoke to my professor about some preliminary research trajectories, I realized that I was still in pursuit of not only a far narrower topic, but also my voice, what I would add to the extant literature that would fill a gap. I decided that the best way to find the gap was to familiarize myself with the extant refugee/asylum policy literature. I began my research by utilizing a number of the library's available databases to familiarize myself with some of the big names in the field of asylum/refugee policy. During this exploratory stage, I was sure to keep track of the authors I came across, how often I came across their works or references to them, and general notes about their particular contributions to the literature. These notes aided my future research, as it gave me an indication of schools of thought to return to once I had narrowed my research. Ultimately I was inspired by an article I came across entitled: "The Myth of Free-Riding: Refugee Protection and Implicit Burden Sharing", and I decided to focus on how countries spread the economic burden that refugees pose.

With a narrower research question in mind, I began to dig deeper into the research process and harkened back to what I had first learned about the research process during my first major collegiate research paper. I remembered that my research librarian suggested was building on the shoulders of giants. As I researched, I looked at the citations and sources used from one article, search it in a database and based on the abstract decide whether pursuing the source would be fruitful to my research endeavors. I discovered that the literature related to burden sharing is rather limited, and that the burden sharing of refugee literature is even more so. However, this indicated to me that there were a number of gaps that I could fill. Noting that much of the asylum burden sharing policy analysis centered on the EU due to common asylum policies, I decided to also center my study in the EU. My next step was to return to the articles and examine the questions that I had noted in the margins. From these notes I developed a list of potential gaps to fill.

I took this list with me to my first meeting with professor Robison, and through our conversation I decided that I wanted to research if there were additional factors not being accounted for that influenced the inequity of the burden sharing in the EU. Given the current EU migrant crisis, I was most curious to see if xenophobia had a statistically significant effect on a country's willingness to accept refugees. My next step was to organize my research into schools of thought ranging from the broadest

to the narrowest and develop my annotated bibliography. The process of editing my annotated bibliography and literature review illustrated the gaps in my research, and once again I had to return to the resources available in the Christopher Center.

My ultimate research question was guided not only by the literature I read, but also by the availability of data. As it turned out, there was not an appropriate measure of xenophobia, or a method to calculate it. So, again I altered my research question and decided to measure for islamophobia instead. The data for measuring islamophobia was also very limited. With the help of Professor Robison, I came across a question posed in the PEW Global Attitudinal survey that asked about the favorability in opinion of Muslims.

The research and writing process was long, and regularly revisited, but ultimately a rewarding learning experience and added to the existing conversation in the field. The results of my limited study indicated that islamophobia does have a statistically significant impact on the willingness of a country to accept refugee asylum applicants. Because my study was ultimately exploratory, these results suggest that further research should be done. Without having access to various Journals through the Christopher Center's subscriptions and inter-library loan, I would not have been able to have explored the field of burden sharing in such detail. I am grateful for the resources and the support of Professor Robison and my advisor Dr. Atchison.