In Iris Murdoch’s *The Black Prince*, the protagonist, Bradley Pearson, falls desperately in love with his best friend’s teenage daughter. As a direct result of this relationship, outlandish situations occur: kidnapping, murder, and public shaming all ensue. Knowing Murdoch’s Neo-Platonic leanings, I questioned why this literary convention—the unrealistic situations—appears in the fiction of a philosopher who argues for literature’s unique ability to connect the reader to a reality beyond the phenomenal world. I began to notice how the external situations—what scholars have categorized as “Murdoch happenings”—focus the reader’s attention on the development and presentation of the characters’ psychology. While Murdoch is not a realist author in the sense that her writing is not an attempt to display life as is, she creates a realistic inner life for her characters—a space where the mind can be seen deliberating over questions of individual morality. This discovery led me to explore the development of psychological realism in the novel genre since its formal conception in the 18th century. My master’s thesis, my participation in academic conversations (particularly around aesthetics and psychological realism in the novel), and my teaching and Writing Center experience, all inform my work as a graduate student of literature. In the doctoral program in literature at Temple, I want to continue exploring interpretations of the novel as well as the development and evolution of psychological realism.

My thesis, “The Inner Life of the Artist: A Development of Form,” focuses on the history and development of psychological realism in the *Künstlerroman* genre, and in my Ph.D. work, I want to analyze this development in the broader context of how the novel influences the presentation of morality in relation to the individual and society. The psychological realism novel is a combination of aesthetics and life: the novel itself is a carefully crafted work of literary art and it attempts to understand a certain perspective of the world. In my thesis, I trace the development of the psychological life of artists through the *Künstlerroman* novels of Samuel Richardson, Henry James, and Iris Murdoch. I suggest that the *Künstlerroman* genre is a key sub-genre in the development of literary realism because of the writers’ presentation of the moral inner life in conjunction with depictions of psychological realism; I frame this discussion using theories of the development and function of the novel by scholars such as Watt, McKeon, Bakhtin, and Armstrong. The study of literary realism and the genre of artistic development are important because, by studying this synthesis of art and application in the novel, I believe one can better understand an individual’s relationship to larger social and cultural frameworks. As scholars such as Armstrong argue, the creation of the novel genre is innately tied to the rise of the modern conception of individuality. The novel, since its formal conception in the eighteenth century, has grappled with issues of identity, individuality, and their expression in narrative. My future work will explore questions around psychological realism as its techniques and narrative forms evolve alongside the development of the field of psychology and the modern conception of self. In the literature department at Temple, with the program’s varied critical perspectives on aesthetics and modernity, my research will expand to understand and incorporate the numerous exterior influences on the modern novel.

My participation in academic conversations about aesthetics and literature in both graduate seminars and academic conferences gave me the opportunity to discuss, and appropriately refine, my research with other scholars in the field. At the German Graduate Studies Conference at the University of Virginia, I explored German author Hermann Hesse’s *Narcissus and Goldmund* and his understanding of art’s relationship to the artist and to the audience. Contextualizing Hesse in relation...
to post-war European novelists, I argued that Hesse’s discussion of art in the novel makes evident art’s dual purpose: the expression of beauty as a concept and the externalization of that concept in a physical vehicle that can interact with its audience. I demonstrated, by focusing on the conversations of the two protagonists and Hesse’s descriptions of works of art, such as trees and pulpits, that art is both an expression and externalization of beauty. My presentation at The Southwest Conference on Christianity and Literature discussed philosopher-novelist Iris Murdoch’s rewriting of Hamlet in her novel The Black Prince and her desire to connect the inner, intellectual life with the outer, experiential life. Murdoch, as a moral philosopher, strikes this balance through writing about the existence of the moral inner life in her philosophical treatises and writing novels – external works of art – in which she demonstrates the existence of the inner moral life. I argued that Murdoch’s interpretation of the famous play focuses on how art is a unique medium through which to express the moral state of selflessness. This focus happens, I suggested, though her deliberate discussion of the differences between high literary culture and low popular culture embodied by the two main characters, both writers. This perspective on literature and aesthetics led me to begin in-depth research on the novel genre and its unique ability to communicate and foreground the inner moral life. I plan to extend this work into projects focused on postmodern novelists’ presentation of psychological realism and the morality of the individual.

For the past two years I have successfully balanced my academic pursuits in my graduate courses, independently teaching composition classes, and working twenty hours a week at the Writing Center. My pedagogy is informed by Trimbur’s notion of dissensus and by theories based in dialogue and conversation (Delpit, Bruffee, Flower) in order to create an environment for academic ideas that are furthered dialectically through discussion, disagreement, and genuine curiosity. I construct assignments for my composition classroom that connect aesthetics, technology, and critical engagement to my students’ academic pursuits. In my Extended Arguments class, for instance, I teach my students how to effectively use Prezi to create a presentation of their research that is both professionally and aesthetically effective. Presenting their arguments using Prezi allows the students to explore modes of visual rhetoric – such as constructing relationships through transitions and spacing – while at the same time fostering dialectical discussion in the classroom. The presentations, then, function as a visual representation from which they can examine and conceptualize their written arguments. I also teach in a one-on-one setting in the Writing Center as a Professional Writing Consultant. From leading with a collaborative agenda to working on higher order writing concerns, the Writing Center offers me an environment in which I can adapt my pedagogical approach to individual student needs. This focus on dialogue and adaptability pervades my work with students in the Writing Center as well as in the composition classroom.

The doctoral program in literature at Temple will provide me with the knowledge and opportunity to continue my exploration of the novel genre and the theories of literary realism. It is only through the level of critical engagement in both literary studies and teaching demanded by Temple that I will successfully achieve my goals of participation in the intellectual life of the academy and of finding useful and practical applications for scholarship.