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A way around *mono no aware*

Mono no aware. That's a Japanese term literally meaning "the pathos/sadness of things." Although there is no direct translation into English for this phrase, it is most appropriately interpreted as the appreciation of beauty and the sadness of being aware of its transience.

I would have never learned what *mono no aware* was if I had never taken CLCS 1101 (Classics of World Literature I), during which I read *The Tale of Genji* and learned about how critics used this phrase to describe the aesthetics of Japanese literature. As I meditate on *mono no aware*, I've come up with my own interpretation for it: "nostalgia in the moment"—the inescapable feeling, as one is experiencing something beautiful or enjoyable, of yearning to preserve the moment and the inability to do so because its wonder lies in its transience. This definition is applicable to my experience in CLCS 1101, as I wanted the course to go on, to last beyond the final exam. I wanted to continue to study literature and read interesting, unfamiliar works that would challenge me to discover new meanings and new ways of thinking.

Though CLCS 1101 was one of the first courses that I ever took at UConn, I relied on the lessons I learned about literature and myself while taking the class when I began to have doubts about my STEM major during the first semester of my sophomore year. At that time, I took exclusively math and science classes. Though I was doing well, I was disinterested in the material and began to dislike my course load. When I would talk about my classes and how I didn't enjoy them, my mom would encourage me to change my major.

"But to what?" I would say.

“To English!” she would tell me, as if it were obvious. Why would a bibliophilic STEM major who enjoyed reading *The Tale of Genji* and thinking about words used by critics to describe the aesthetic of this epic tale ever want to be an English major?

As my sophomore-year winter break drew to an end and I began to think about purchasing books for my upcoming STEM classes, courses with labs and even a science “W” class, I realized that my true joy lied in reading literature rather than in running a lab experiment.

When I looked back, I realized that, of all of my gen-eds, I had enjoyed Classics of World Literature I the most. Though not an English course itself, CLCS 1101 encouraged me to read widely and investigate all of the confounding complexities that literature has to offer. So, on the first Wednesday of the second semester of my sophomore year (I remember the day because I was so excited to join English), I visited ppc.uconn.edu and changed my major to English. By pursuing the love of literature I had discovered in CLCS 1101, I believe I have found a way around experiencing *mono no aware* just this one time.