

Reflective Essay

The research paper I am submitting for consideration was birthed in Dr. Douglas Christie's History of Christian Spirituality class last fall. As we read works by mystics such as Marguerite Porete and Teresa of Avila, I noticed interesting references to Mary Magdalene—or “the Glorious Magdalene,” as St. Teresa lovingly called her. Once I came across Hadewijch of Antwerp using the story of Magdalene being the first to proclaim the resurrected Christ as justification for her own writings, I knew I wanted to follow this thread of medieval women who took inspiration from Magdalene. When I proposed this topic for my final paper, Dr. Christie was more than encouraging; and so, I opened up Hannon Library's Graduate Theological Studies LibGuide to get to work.

However, my initial searches in LINUS and the Atla Religion Database proved less fruitful than expected. It quickly became apparent that I needed a second opinion, so I scheduled a research consultation with reference librarian Alexander Justice. Alexander was extremely helpful—not only did he give me database search tips (such as doing Subject Thesaurus searches in EBSCOhost, which generated some articles that I was unable to find by using keywords), but speaking with him also helped me realize that I needed a different approach. As soon as I had a better amount of medieval women to work with, I decided to categorize their devotion into three types of Magdalenes—the Penitent, the Contemplative, and the Apostle. Now I had a better entryway into the research, as well as a compelling structure to the exploratory paper.

To begin building a bibliography, I created a list in my library account that I saved promising sources in LINUS to. Then I searched the stacks to see what I could find. Hannon has a great selection of Mary Magdalene books, two of which were invaluable for my paper: Katherine Ludwig Jansen's *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*, and Susan Haskins's *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*. Jansen's was also in e-

book form, but I decided to check out the physical copy, purely because I find it easier to mine the footnotes when I have the pages in hand. And that is exactly what I did, leading me to many primary sources that would have taken much longer to find on my own.

Other time-saving strategies I used include requesting books from the library staff, saving PDFs from Atla and JSTOR, and recording citations in Notion. There were a few instances I had to reevaluate and change course, however. For example, I checked out a couple of books on Magdalene that I ended up quickly returning, because they were not up to careful, historical scholarship standards. A chapter I acquired through ILLiad on Dorothy of Montau also ended up not being used, as I decided to stick with three women per *Magdalian* category. But despite these instances, Hannon had everything I needed, in the correct editions and English translations.

In January, after receiving Dr. Christie's support, I decided to revise the paper for this competition. Some portions I had edited out for the required class length went back in, particularly relating to the Magdalene myths that grew around the turn of the second millennium. I never delete research lists from my library account, so it was easy to jump right back in and grab what I needed. This took the paper from 14 pages to 19, and added another page to the bibliography. I was also able to double-check my citations and expand upon my conclusion, as Dr. Christie suggested.

Aside from my thesis, this is the most research I have done on an LMU project. My research skills, from database searches to the way I conceptualize and problem-solve, have thus improved tremendously. It also proved to me that I truly love doing this work: researching, writing, researching some more, polishing, and above all, learning. I will greatly miss everything about Hannon after I graduate next month, but I know I will carry the skills I have gained there, as well as my ever-growing love for research, wherever I go next.

Thank you very much for your consideration.