

This summer I was fortunate to assist Dr. Eric Thurman in his research on masculinity and the figure of Adam from Genesis 1-3. Dr. Eric Thurman's research sought to examine and understand modern masculinity in the Christian context in relation to Adam as the original man. Within Genesis 1-3, Adam is presented not only as this original man, the prototype of males made in God's own image, he is the original man that *failed* and is ultimately punished. Commonly, it is Eve's transgression that ultimately results in the Fall of Man, that inhabits the foreground of Genesis 1-3. Yet, Dr. Thurman's research looks to the background moment, as it were, of Adam's failure to *prevent* this Fall. Adam, the first man and husband, failed to keep dominion over his wife and was thusly expelled from the Garden of Eden. My research dealt with the ramifications of this failure throughout Christian masculinity, and eventually, the manifestations of such in popular culture. My responsibilities included thoroughly gathering scholarly materials covering hundreds of years of history, and analyzing said materials, and determining their worth for the overall project.

My organizational approach was historical, that is to say that I began with the earliest writings available (the Apocrypha) and worked my way forward to Greco-Roman, medieval, and so on. I continued to modern day popular culture where I spent the majority of my time and where my skill-set, a literary and general television enthusiast, was most helpful. In delving into popular culture I looked at moments in series such as *Arrested Development*, *The Simpsons*, and *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*. I looked at tongue-in-cheek graphic novels and even "The Tonight Show". Given the rich historical basis I was able to acquire from the initial stages of my research, I was able to

look at these comical and dramatic programs with a critical eye, comparing and contrasting it to earlier patterns of historical perception. A prime example of this would be the “Tonight Show” sketch of Adam and Eve, starring Betty White and Johnny Carson from 1979. The sketch chooses to comically appropriate the emasculation of Adam by his wily wife Eve by way of the modern concept of divorce. Adam’s emasculation by Eve’s flippant disregard for his masculine authority echoes Adam’s treatment in both the early Christian and Hebrew traditions.

During my internship I gained invaluable experience in research of an extensive nature, that is to say that I learned about the transformation of an idea or suspicion, to a grounded academic notion, to a specific understanding that lent itself to a broader knowledge. The “hands-off” treatment of my internship allowed for me to develop instincts for scholarly research on my own, to follow an inkling of an estimation to new ideas. I was also able to experience a change in the way that I had viewed research. Concentrating on a single topic for so long, I learned that research doesn’t just happen at the library. Dr. Thurman had advised me to find things that interested me or made points that I wouldn’t have necessarily thought about. He advised that I “pull the threads,” meaning see what unravels following a single clue, of these ideas and see where they went. This organic and interesting approach to research is something that I’ll continue into my adult life. Countless times I left the library only to have my best ideas for “threads to pull” in the middle of a conversation, while walking around campus, while surfing the net in my free time. This confirmed to me the value of my research—the

omnipresence of Adam & Eve in the popular culture in which we are so thoroughly steeped.

As Dr. Thurman's research assistant, it was my responsibility and pleasure to go through multiple decades of popular culture, from the aforementioned Johnny Carson to *Family Guy*. My English major had prepared me for the analysis of *stories*, simple and complex, older and newer, sincere and satirical.

The process of my research this summer, while highly specific, trained me in the investigation of the implicit. In order to explore the gendered treatment of Adam in, say, Protestant Reformation literature, it was necessary that I develop even greater skills of analysis. I had to become a master of "reading between the lines." I had to simultaneously gain a working understanding of a vast span of history while also close-reading literature from myriad perspectives. I feel that the experience I have been fortunate enough to gain will serve me well in my dreams of pursuing the study of law. I become comfortably practiced in making subtle as well as overarching connections between documents and concepts centuries apart. My aptitude for in-depth analysis has built a confidence in me I can take into graduate school and beyond.

I have also benefitted academically and personally from my experience this summer. I greatly enjoyed establishing a working mentorship with my project-professor. I also look forward to re-gearing the literary aspect of my research this summer into a senior thesis for my English major.