

My investigation of the intersection between masculinity and national polemics began as a class project my sophomore year at University of Maryland, College Park. I first selected the topic of national polemics in the *Moroccan Letters* by José Cadalso to be the central theme of my final paper for SPAN408A Camp: Comedy, Foppery, and 'Aberrant' Sexuality in 18th-Century Spain. One of the three main themes I critiqued in that essay was the perception of the aberrant man perceived as too effeminate. That summer I completed an internship with Dr. Mehl Penrose and I began my own research under his guidance. This led to further investigation of the role of gender in the *Moroccan Letters* and the decision to compare the criticism in the *Moroccan Letters* to that of Francisco Goya in his series *Los Caprichos*.

With my paper topic in mind, I searched through the University of Maryland library catalog for any books that seemed to be related to my topic. Once I found a few good sources I was in the library a few days a week for that summer using a combination of electronic and print sources. The research was performed primarily on-line and under the guidance of Dr. Penrose. The three sources I have used the most throughout my research are the library catalog and Inter Library Loan, the Modern Language Association International Bibliography database, and the JSTOR database. The University of Maryland library system has been central to my work over the past two years.

In fall 2011 I took a professional writing class and chose to continue my investigation into gender with other works for my final paper in that class. Although I sought help only from Dr. Penrose, my paper for my professional writing class was related through the theme of gender and sexuality in 18th century Spain and once again, the UM library system was indispensable. A librarian assigned to help our class provided me with several new databases where I might find more specific articles on gender and history. I was able to add depth to my research, which, in combination with advice from Dr. Penrose convinced me to shift my focus more strongly to a gender-centric theme. It is this change that has added a uniquely original spin to my continuing research.

With this new direction and an abundance of new sources at my disposal it became increasingly important to be able to sort and evaluate the information. I first looked at sources to make sure they were peer reviewed or came from a reputable publishing source, a university for example. Then I would judge

the content of the work itself. I had five main divisions for information. Three of them dealt with the three principal aspects of my paper: luxury, recreation, and *petimetría*. The other two were historical information about the time period or the fashion and background information, which was composed of anything useful to understanding my topic but beyond the scope of my research. I also have a filing system that I have used to further breakdown and organize articles and drafts.

My ability to evaluate sources and information quickly and effectively is perhaps one of the greatest benefits that I have gained in this process. I intend to begin studies for a Doctorate of Philosophy in Spanish Literature in the next two years and the ability to evaluate sources is critical to producing quality academic research. I have also honed my skills in researching sources to an effective level. I know more about what to search for and how to find pertinent readings among the multitude of results. My writing ability has increased dramatically as well. As a native English speaker it has been a task learning to write in Spanish; however, with the guidance received I have improved several fold. All these practical skills will be very important in graduate school without a doubt though I also learned that I am keen on research and I specially value Spanish literature from the 18th – early 20th centuries. It is this passion and appreciation of quality scholarship that will help me develop a career in research but it was the University of Maryland library system that allowed me the physical resources to cultivate this interest.

Words: 707 Limit: 500-750