

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

SESSION 1G

ONLINE SPACES: THE EPHEMERA AND RITUAL, THE ARTISTIC AND SUBVERSIVE

*Session Moderator: Kristin Gustafson, School of
Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, UW Bothell*

242 MGH

1:15 PM to 2:45 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

The Post(ing) Human

*Kyle Kubler, Senior, Religion, French Language and
International Affairs, University of Puget Sound
Mentor: Jonathan Stockdale, Religion, University of Puget
Sound*

Death has been a phenomena that has been dealt with in varying ways throughout human history. How we deal with physical death online, specifically through Facebook, has proved to be an insightful challenge to the current digital age. The use of Facebook as the link between the living and the dead highlights the level at which we appropriate our Facebook profiles as extensions of our physical body due to the desire for reinvention associated with death. While only a few studies exist directly related to death on Facebook, they expose communities of mourners interacting with each other and the deceased on a surprisingly horizontal level, and contacting the dead without necessitating time restraints or religious/spiritual intermediaries. Traditional death rituals usually have temporal limits on liminal periods of mourning, divided between private and public time, but Facebook offers us unlimited access to memories of the deceased. The choice to mourn communally and virtually problematizes not only our personal relationships with the deceased, but also the legal ownership of our feelings and sentiments. The final element of death on Facebook examined in this paper is the spiritual space that deceased profiles occupy. For the secular and religious, these profiles give a virtually physical body to what might traditionally be called a spirit, which challenges the finality and permanence of death. In studying the posts and stories that decorate the profile walls of the deceased, it is clear that this virtual aspect of ourselves has very real elements, and it is exactly this questioning of reality that death demands of us in

the first place.

SESSION 1P

MCNAIR SESSION - DIVIDES OF POWER: ECOLOGY, IDENTITY, MEDIA, AND (RE)PRESENTATIONS

Session Moderator: Devon Pena, Anthropology

295 MGH

1:15 PM to 2:45 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Royal Women in the Bible

*Jamie Staley, Fifth Year, History, Religion, University of
Northern Iowa*

McNair Scholar

*Mentor: John Burnight, Philosophy and World Religions,
University of Northern Iowa*

Bathsheba, the Queen of Sheba, and Jezebel are the three queens presented in the Bible who are known most widely today. These three figures are not the only important female leaders mentioned in the Bible: there are stories of numerous other women who stood near the heart of political power. I argue that the Bible presents four archetypes of women in power. The first is the Israelite women in an Israelite king's court. This woman will rarely speak in the text and, when she does, it is only to show her obedience to God's will. The second archetype is the Israelite women in a foreign king's court. They serve an instrument of God's will within the foreign courts that they inhabit. Their presence near the foreign power brings blessings and wealth to the Israelites in their adopted kingdom, at the expense of its native subjects. The third group is the foreign women in the court of an Israelite king. These women are viewed as dangerous. They are nearly always portrayed as acting contrary to the interests of the kingdom and they also frequently accused of drawing the king away from God in some sense. The fourth and final group is the foreign women of a foreign king's court. They represent God's power to act even outside the boundaries of Israel, often acting as witnesses to God's punishment or the instrument through which God acts to carry out his plans for Israel. A study of these women, through a careful reading of the Bible, will give us a better understanding of how the

biblical authors conceived of female power – whether that of queens or other positions of political power.

POSTER SESSION 2

Commons West, Easel 35

12:45 PM to 2:15 PM

Pushing Limits: Self-Mutilation and Spiritual Body Modification as Functions of Taught Bodies

Rowan Carrick, Junior, Religion, University of Puget Sound
Mentor: Jonathan Stockdale, Religion, University of Puget Sound

Contemporary US society has in many ways written off self-mutilation, the deliberate damage or modification of one's body tissue without intention of suicide, as a pathological act whose roots lie in mental illness and destruction beyond any sort of rationality. Often, self-mutilation is linked to suicidal behavior, but even when it isn't it bears a transgressive nature and is frequently met with repulsion. In order to understand and examine the effects of the transgression of self-mutilation on individuals and larger communities, I took into account some ways in which individuals in specifically religious contexts have been marginalized by these practices. Parts of the Lakota Sun dance involving self-mutilation were banned in the US between the years 1895-1978 and the Modern Primitives, a group that emerged in the late 1960s and 70s seeking to reclaim self-mutilating religious rituals were met with extreme ostracism. In my research I explored spiritual self-mutilation as a vehicle for connection to something beyond an individual's bodily limits, examined the physical and psychological capacities humans have to endure intense physical sensation, and looked at the implications of the process of physical healing as a powerful and direct metaphor for spiritual healing. Taking all of these into consideration, with the help of the narrative of the Modern Primitives, I sought to understand the way in which, for many individuals, the brutal destruction and modification of skin and flesh becomes an act of creation, of reconstruction and life-affirmation. If we allow ourselves to reconsider our cultural taboos surrounding self-mutilation in a religious context, we begin to see that there may be a stronger, deeper connection between spiritual self-mutilation and pathological self-harm than we can realize, without taking a closer look at the roots of both.