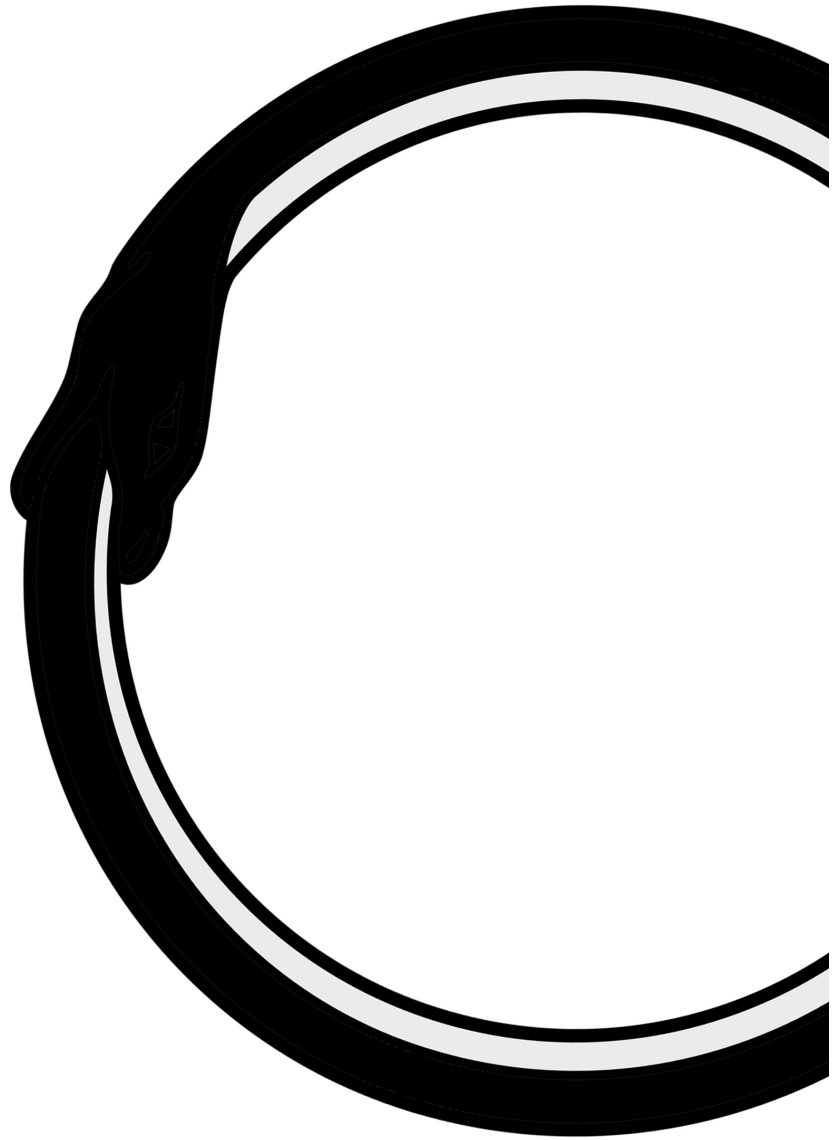


21st Annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference

Meaning in Motion

knowledge, dialogue and discourse



March 5th, 2015

Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Michael Oppenheim



Thursday March 5th 2015

Registration and coffee

9:00 – 9: 30 am

Room H-765

Session 1

9: 30 – 11: 00 am

Panel 1	Traditions Within the Empire	Room H-763
Panel 2	Questioning Authority	Room H-767
Panel 3	Debate & Dialogue	Room H-762

Session 2

11: 15 am – 12:45 pm

Panel 4	SIS: Legislating Belief	Room H-760
Panel 5	The Self Transformed	Room H-762
Panel 6	Contemporary Visualization	Room H-763
Panel 7	Embodied Subjectivities	Room H-767

Lunch

12:45 – 2: 00 pm

Department of Religion, 2060 Mackay, Room FA-202

Session 3

2: 00 – 3: 30 pm

Panel 8	Divine Soundscapes	Room H-767
Panel 9	Renaissance Fronts	Room H-760
Panel 10	Betwixt & Between	Room H-763
Panel 11	Performance Art	Room H-762

Session 4

3:45 – 5:15 pm

Panel 12	Role Inversion	Room H-763
Panel 13	Religious Identity in Canada	Room H-767
Panel 14	Philosophy in Motion	Room H-762

Keynote Address

5:30 – 7:00 pm

H-767

Reception

7:00 – 8:00 pm

H-765

Keynote Address: "Three Vignettes On Dialogue and Meaning."

Dr. Michael Oppenheim (Concordia University)

Dr. Oppenheim's research and publications have predominantly been in modern Jewish philosophy, but also include the areas of Comparative Philosophy of Religion, Psychology of Religion, and Feminism. He recently published *Encounters of Consequence: Jewish Philosophy in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Academic Studies Press, 2009), which provides an introduction and deeper analysis of the situation of Jewish philosophy in the last century and beyond. It charts Jewish philosophy's engagement with modernity and post-modernity along two overlapping axes -- issues and persons -- which often intersect. Key issues in modern Jewish philosophy are raised, including: the nature of Judaism and Jewish identity, the quests for meaning and continuity, the value of remaining a Jew, the relevance of Jewish law, as well as the challenges of secularism, modern history (including the Holocaust), and feminism and religious pluralism.

Earlier, he published the book *Jewish Philosophy and Psychoanalysis: Narrating the Interhuman* (Lexington Books, 2006), that examines the correlation between modern Jewish philosophical narratives of the inter-human and contemporary models of the self and others offered by psychoanalytic theorists. The Jewish thinkers are those philosophers of dialogue, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas, known for their detailed views about the ways that others bring the self to fruition. The post-Freudian psychoanalysts include Erikson, Klein, Winnicott and Fairbairn, who turned away from Freud's more isolated view of the self. The next step in this dialogue between Jewish philosophy and post-Freudian psychoanalysis will explore late twentieth century psychoanalysts including Hans Loewald, Stephen Mitchell, and Jessica Benjamin.

Meaning in Motion
March 5th, 2015

Schedule

Session 1: 9:30 - 11:00 am

Panel 1 – Traditions within the Empire

Chair: Carlos Fuentes

H-763

L'omnipotence isiaque universelle : des aréalogies au monnaies tardives

Stéphanie Briaud, Université de Montréal

L'époque hellénistique fut essentielle dans l'évolution des pouvoirs et fonctions prêtés aux divinités isiaques, originaires d'Égypte et désormais présentes en Grèce. L'évolution tendant à l'omnipotence universelle est particulièrement visible dans le cas de l'Isis dépeinte par les aréalogies. Une aréalogie isiaque est un récit gravé d'Isis elle-même, sur sa généalogie, ses pouvoirs, les dons et les miracles qu'elle octroie aux hommes. Nous en dénombrons six en Grèce, qui étaient conservées dans les archives des temples : Andros, Kymé, Thessalonique, Ios, Maronée et une partie du texte de Diodore de Sicile.

Dans un premier temps, nous dresserons le portrait aréalogique de cette nouvelle Isis hellénistique : quelles sont les fonctions qu'elle y a conservées depuis l'époque pharaonique ? Au contraire, nous nous intéresserons surtout à voir quels sont ses nouveaux pouvoirs, et comment les nouveautés épigraphiques s'incarnent dans les pratiques rituelles et liturgiques, en particulier dans le monde romain d'époque impériale. Certains aspects d'Isis vont être exacerbés sur les monnaies impériales issues de l'atelier de Rome. Finalement, au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C., dans un contexte de christianisation de l'Empire et des empereurs, nous verrons que l'aristocratie païenne romaine choisira de reprendre iconographiquement la grande variété fonctionnelle isiaque d'autrefois.

Ritualized Body and Ritualized Identity; Bodily Imagination in the Initiation Ritual of the Mystery Cult of Mithras

Nina Mazhjo, Concordia University

Initiation ritual played a focal role in the mystery cult of Mithras of the Roman Empire, since initiates created a special relationship with the god through performing the ritual. Mithraic initiation ritual consists of a hierarchy of seven initiation grades and some bodily rituals, which new initiates had to pass and perform for entering to the Mithraic brotherhood. These initiation rituals play a significant role in the historiography of the cult of Mithras, its cosmology and astrology.

The aim of this paper is to explore how the Mithraic initiation ritual acts, how it reproduces the Mithraic cosmological concepts and doctrine through the body and environment, and finally how it prepares individuals for entering to the cultic society. The main concentration here is to comprehend "Ritualization" as a process in which the initiate internalized the Mithraic doctrine and cosmology, and acquired the newly ritualized identity and body. My intention is to look at the Mithraic initiation ritual as a social performance in which an initiate grasped the Mithraic doctrine, distinguished himself from others, ultimately acquired a new identity (a communal identity) and became a Mithraist.

I will examine the practice theory of Bell to interpret how the Mithraic initiates internalized the cultic concepts and values through performing the ritual by employing their own bodies and environment. Firstly, I will describe the Mithraic cult vessel of Mainz, dated to 120-140 CE and unearthed in 1976, as one of our primary sources regarding the bodily ritual of the mystery cult of Mithras; then, I will review Roger Beck's interpretation regarding this archeological evidence in connection to the Mithraic initiation ritual. Finally, I will return to the practice theory of Bell and attempt to explain that in the context of Mithraism, "Ritualization" was indeed the process of "Socialization" in which initiates were prepared for playing cultic roles in the cultural context of the Roman Mithraism.

"When Status and Argument Collide: The Volatile Meeting Rav Kahana and Rabbi Yohanan"
Claire English, Concordia University

Baba Kamma 117a-b, in the Babylonian Talmud, tells the story of Babylonian scholar Rav Kahana's period of exile at the famed Palestinian academy of R.Yohanan. The story is widely interpreted as dealing primarily with the ascendancy of the Babylonian academy over the rival Palestinian academy, a common trope in Babylonian talmudic narratives. In this paper, I will argue that in addition to this interpretation, the story is anxiously concerned with the volatility of an academic environment in which the competing interests of status and argumentation are tensely pursued. This volatility stems from the fact that each interest relies on a different set of conditions. On the one hand, the concept of status is rooted in notions of fixity; it is "firmly held", and at its apex is absolutely static. The process of argumentation, on the other hand, is dynamic; it is always in flux, pushing first one way, then another. The consequences of this volatility are not only felt on the level of competing interests within a formal environment. They also emerge from the impact that events in the intellectual/academic sphere have on the realities at play within the emotional/interpersonal sphere. On this level the Rav and Rabbis become exposed to the shame and humiliation that result both in response to the wins and losses of argumentation and from the resulting shifts in status. Moreover, within the sphere of the emotional/interpersonal environment the narrative suggests that there is no process for clarifying communication. This narrative concern is given its fullest expression in the central dispute between Rav Kahana and R.Yohanan

Panel 2 – Questioning Authority

Chair: Haley Firkser

H-767

Somatic Practices and Embodied Knowledge: Processes of Unlearning

Shalon Webber-Heffernan, Queen's University

This paper seeks to examine what it means to experience freedom through the moving body and what possibilities exist through processes of embodiment for self-knowledge, and performance. It explores somatic ways of knowing, seeing, feeling and being. Through exploration of improvisation, movement, and dance, the deep impulses of the bodies, if listened to, have profound teachings that can be used performatively and pedagogically if applied (physical thinking). By using embodied processes we can begin to know and understand deeper truths leading to 'glimpses of freedom' or 'flashes of autonomy'--not only in performance but also in the everyday living body in space, in communities, within structures, systems, and societies. Embodiment becomes an opportunity for freedom from restraint, and improvised movement lends possibilities for challenging the confines of class, gender, race, genre, and sexuality allowing bodies negotiate freedom.

Embodiment can act as a proxy for other kinds of freedoms--breaking free from containment, while not eliding the reality of layered oppressions and strictures. Through somatic processes individuals can experience themselves and their lives outside of the confines of structures, systems, routines, and mechanized (auto)motions. I am interested in examining critical notions of freedom and the discarding of rules placed upon us (our selves and bodies) unnecessarily, but that we believe in nonetheless, through embodied processes. Practices of freedom can begin through the body. Through movement and embodied learning, one can begin to create space and time that is one's own, and thence begin questioning larger social and cultural questions.

Synthesizing Perfection: Muhammad Iqbal, Authorial Agency, and the Question of Influence

Jessica Stilwell, McGill University

Scholarship on the philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal, as for other South Asian Muslim intellectuals, often elides authorial agency by attributing the majority of significant ideas either to outside influence or to the author in some kind of imagined seclusion. Using Iqbal's discourse on human perfection as a case study, I argue that the middle ground between these extremes allows for a consideration of the active role intellectual inheritors play in choosing, mediating, and often subverting earlier strands of thought. I suggest that the investigation of his synthesis of two strands of his intellectual inheritance, that of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and that of Andalusian Sufi Ibn 'Arabi, exemplifies a possible methodology for investigating intellectual influence without dismissing the agency of the influenced author. Further to this methodology, I suggest that appeal to an author's life and historical moment can both contextualize a set of works and offer possible motivations for synthesis that can deepen an understanding of authorial agency. Drawing from extensive study of textual sources, I will present two instances of synthesis, the perfect man's relationship with the divine and his will to power, and speculate as to possible motivations for their content. These, I will argue, are illustrative of Iqbal's consciously pursued adaptation, synthesis, and subversion of Nietzschean and Akbarian ideas.

Political Ministers: The Stamp Act Sermon and its Role in the Creation of New England

Political/Religious culture

Daniel Tirre, San Francisco State University

In a society as secularized as ours, where religion is often put on the back burner, it is interesting to note the weight that it once placed on the thinking of those not too distant colonists. Indeed, so imbued in our imagination is the eighteenth century with rationalism, empiricism and enlightenment thought that we often forget that the Salem Witchcraft trials occurred less than a century before our subjects took pen to paper. So immersed was the populace of the New England colonies in religious culture that both every day and political events often took on supernatural meanings. We must not forget that even as the writings of classical antiquity and contemporary philosophers were called upon to help argue a point, so too were Calvinist ministers. Religion played a huge part in the creation of colonial culture and society, and so too was its weight felt in the creation of its political mind. All of this will be explored in the context of the Stamp Act Crisis, spanning roughly from 1764-1766. This event was chosen because of its unique place within the revolutionary narrative: at a tipping point where outright revolution was not a foregone conclusion, where England still had the chance to redeem itself in the eyes of the most ardent patriots. Through this event, this essay will argue that New England ministers acted not only as spiritual leaders, but also as political actors during the decade before the revolution. More than that, it will seek to demonstrate how, just as the Stamp Act forced many laymen in America towards political radicalism, so too did it push already political minded ministers into political activists.

Panel 3- Debate and Dialogue

Chair: Joseph Brito

H-762

“Avançons vers ce qui est parfait”: exhortation pour les destinataires de l’épître aux Hébreux à mûrir spirituellement par l’instruction

Daniel Giorgio, McGill University

L’auteur de l’épître aux Hébreux a un objectif bien précis pour ses destinataires, « supportez ces quelques paroles d’exhortation que je vous envoie ». Même si l’auteur ne manquera pas de faire l’éloge du travail, service et amour dont les récepteurs de sa lettre ont fait preuve entre eux par le passé, la situation est tout autre dans le présent : ils sont devenus lents à comprendre, immatures, puisqu’ils en sont encore au stade de l’élémentaire, et à ce rythme ils pourraient bientôt se trouver sur le chemin du non-retour. Mais bien qu’il les réprimande, l’auteur est déterminé à changer le cours des choses, il veut pousser ses lecteurs à aller de l’avant, soit de passer aux enseignements avancés, malgré leur situation précaire. « Avançons vers ce qui est parfait », voilà la direction à prendre dorénavant. Les expériences divines vécues dans le passé, entre autres par les sens (au sens littéral et métaphorique) – « témoins de signes miraculeux », « ont été éclairé », « ont goûté au don céleste », et « ont eu part à l’Esprit Saint » – même si elles avaient leur place, ne sauraient suffire à présent. Ainsi, l’auteur argumente, c’est par l’instruction, plus précisément l’enseignement sur la prêtrise éminente du Christ, que l’on avance réellement, que l’on se développe spirituellement. De cette instruction, il en suivra des applications pour

la foi chrétienne : elle ne se vit ni dans le passé ni dans l'ignorance, un appel donc à une foi dynamique et à la centralité du dogme de la prêtrise christique. Enfin, après la conversion et les premières expériences sensorielles et transcendantes, ce serait l'instruction particulière et distinctive qui serait l'élément décisif – qui rassemble et qui divise – et incontournable de tout adhérent à la foi chrétienne, phénomène que nous constatons aussi ailleurs dans le NT.

“Betraying” Ecclesiologies: Discursive Functions of Labels, Insults & Accusations during the “Arian Crisis” (4th c. CE)

Shaun Retallick, McGill University

Beginning ostensibly as a doctrinal dispute over the “orthodox” position on the relationship of God the Father and Son, the fourth-century CE “Arian crisis” was rapidly complicated by related doctrinal concerns, politics, partisanship, personal animosities, and conflicting ecclesiologies. Undoubtedly among the most audacious supporters of the Council of Nicaea (325 CE), Athanasius of Alexandria was the major symbol of the council’s doctrine that Christ was homoousios (i.e., “same essence”) with God the Father; he became the linchpin of the controversy and a prime target of those who rejected this conciliar teaching (i.e., non-Nicenes). As a result, the ensuing conflict involved charged discourses between Athanasius and non-Nicenes, many of which are extant in letters, synodal documents, and imperial decrees. As an aid to their respective positions, both Athanasius and his opponents used skilled rhetoric, including labelling, insulting, and accusing their opponents of various criminal/immoral/sinful behaviours and ways of thinking.

This paper is not primarily interested in the historical truth/falsehood of particular partisan claims. Rather, it will be shown that, regardless of such labels (e.g., “Arian”, “Eusebian”), insults (e.g., “utterly bereft of reason” (Athanasius, *De Decretis* 2)) and accusations (e.g., murder, heresy, innovation) had discursive functions, namely to undermine opponents’ legitimacy, especially ecclesiastical authority, and their theological positions by extension. In the final analysis, these partisan claims partially betray (i.e., reveal) their authors’ views on ecclesiology and models of authority, which are important for understanding this crucial period in the institutional development of Christianity more generally.

African Ancestral Christology: A Potential Boost to Jewish-Christian Dialogue

Malith Kur, University of Western Ontario

This paper proposes that African Ancestral Christology has a potential to boost the Jewish-Christian Dialogue. It examines the gaps that exist in the current Jewish-Christian Dialogue and suggests that these gaps exist because sizeable Christian communities in Africa are absent in this dialogue. They are absent, but they form an important constituent within the larger Christian ecclesia. Pew Research Religion & Public Life published a report in 2011, which indicates “one in four Christians live in Sub-Saharan Africa.” I argue that, for the Jewish-Christian Dialogue to make headways, the Western Christian conversation with the Jews must involve Christians from the third world, particularly from Sub-Saharan Africa. The presence of African Christian theologians in this debate is important because they will come with theological innovation that may provide clues on how Jews and Christians could return to their source or origin. The current mode of dialogue between Jews and Christians in the West has already reached a stalemate since it began after the Holocaust in the middle of Europe during the World War II. Injection of new theological ideas from Africa into this process remains a necessity at this

point in the history of the relationship Judaism and Christianity. African theologians will bring into the discussion the philosophy of Ubuntu and Ancestral Christology, which may revive ancestral interconnectedness between Jews and Christians. The Abrahamic Covenant is an essential place where Jews and Christians may begin to re-emphasize their shared heritage, which they often talk about, but have neglected for generations.

Session 2: 11:15 am - 12:45 pm

Panel 1- SIS Legislating Belief

Chair: Ashley Crouch

H-760

Legal Knowledge, Lawfulness and the Pious Subject

Faraz Sheikh, Indiana University

It is a truism today that law is and has always been central to Muslim or Islamic piety. Historically, jurisprudence became the queen of Islamic sciences within the first few centuries after Muhammad's death and law became the primary means for Muslims to know God's Will. And yet, early on in the tradition, Muslim thinkers like the 9th century moral pedagogue and mystic, Abū Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857) raised serious questions about the alleged relationship between legal knowhow and religious piety. This paper examines al-Muḥāsibī's views on the pitfalls of legal knowledge for cultivating what I would call his view of proper subjection to God or an 'abdī- subjectivity. It discusses the ways in which al-Muḥāsibī understood the complex relation between knowledge of God's commands and prohibitions and living as a slave of God. Al-Muḥāsibī's teachings suggest that he is alert to a deep tension between legal knowledge and piety: legal knowledge is useful because and even necessary for it helps a believer make clear distinctions between the actions that God hates or dislikes and those that He likes or approves. And yet the same epistemic clarity can be dangerous and counterproductive for piety if it is coupled with the assumption that knowledge of what is lawful is, on its own, a protection against impious inclinations or that a lawful action would necessarily be pious as well. In his view, a lawful action is thus not the same as pious or religiously meritorious action and legal knowledge is not only insufficient but can be positively dangerous for piety for it can lead to the vices of delusion, hypocrisy and pride. This paper evaluates modern Muslim focus on lawfulness and legal knowledge as categories or metrics for describing ideal or proper religiosity in light of al-Muḥāsibī's critiques. His arguments about the inadequacy of a legal view of religious subjectivity are not purely spiritual or mystical. Rather they are psychological, rationalistic and also grounded in tradition and scripture.

Sex Selection: The Case Against
Sean Boivin, Concordia University

I address the issue of in vitro fertilization (IVF) and preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) technologies and the selection for non-disease genetic traits. I focus on sex selection and argue against the position that women's inequality should only be addressed at the social and institutional level and not at the reproductive decision-making level. Sex selection for non-medical reasons raises serious moral, legal, and social issues and challenges cultural, historical and societal ideals. Selecting for the genetic sex of a child is legal in parts of Australia and in the United States. It is illegal in Canada and the UK. The practice of sex selected abortions in countries such as India and China have resulted in distortions of the natural sex ratio, in favour of males.

My position will be that women's social inequality should be addressed at the social and educational level and at the procreative individual level. I present philosopher Julian Savulescu's Principle of Procreative Beneficence and his argument that selecting for the genetic sex of a child ought to occur even if this maintains or increases social inequality. In my evaluation of his argument I maintain that he does not provide good reason to think social inequality should not be addressed at the procreative level. I argue that the restriction of sex selection in the case of males is a justified violation of parental autonomy.

Panel 2- The Self-Transformed

Chair: Ildikó Glaser-Hille

H-762

Other Worlds: The Externalization of Consciousness in Taoist Internal Alchemy
Alex Enescu, Concordia University, Liberal Arts College

Taoist literature is filled with incredibly detailed accounts of celestial realms, spirit excursions and ecstatic states of consciousness. Its teachings are purposely concealed in multiple layers of symbolism, metaphors and linguistic contradictions. Because of this, Taoist literature can at times be opaque, dense and border-line paradoxical. Having said that, the end goal of Taoist practitioners is to attain spiritual immortality through a series of rigid meditative techniques and spiritual practices or through the concoction of a "magical" elixir, otherwise known as the "Golden Elixir."

In this presentation I will set out to answer the following question: "What is the phenomenology of Taoist subtle body experiences and how does it relate, if in any way, to our modern notion and understanding of out-of-body experiences? Through internal alchemical processes, Taoists were able to learn how to command the principal of conscious-awareness and use it to navigate through the world and other celestial realms. The Taoist spirit excursions described in internal alchemy belong to the same phenomenological category as out-of-body experiences. These practices were inherited from older Chinese spiritual practices and adopted to Taoist metaphysics and cosmological principles.

This presentation will also explore the use of symbolic language in Taoism. Internal alchemists used metaphors and similes in an effort to detach themselves from the normal restriction of language, discourse and dialogue. In particular, the Taoist "embryonic" language was used as an allegory to

different, or particular, states of consciousness that enabled alchemical practitioners to actively induce out-of-body experiences in hope of attaining permanent or “immortal” forms of disembodied consciousness.

(Un)disciplined Bodies: Ascetic Transformation in Performance Art

Tatiana Koroleva, Concordia University

This presentation investigates different modalities of self-transformation enacted in ritualistic performance art by the examination of the work of three contemporary performance artists – Marina Abramović, Linda Montano and Ron Athey. Drawing on theoretical models of ritual in religious studies and cultural anthropology, in particular the model of ascetic ritual developed in the works of Gavin Flood and Richard Valantasis, Georges Bataille’s theory of sacrifice, and the concepts of wounded healing by Laurence J. Kirmayer and Jess Groesbeck, I argue that ritualistic performance provides a useful model of the therapy of the body that undermines rigid models of the individual self. Ritualistic performance employs a variety of methods of re-patterning of the dominant standard of individuality and formation of alternative model of the body associated with the ascetic self. In view of the significance of the transcendence of the body in the work of these artists I employ a theory of “transformation” to reflect upon performative methodology developed in the artworks of Abramović, Montano, and Athey. Investigating the intersections between performance art, religious studies and cultural anthropology, I focus on dialogic exchange between these disciplines and the ways these dynamics contribute to the formation of a new system of knowledge rooted in interdisciplinarity and research-creation.

Talon, River, Bloom: Toward a Poetics of Wilderness

Leah Silviesu, Independent Scholar

This paper examines the relationship between wilderness and the sacred in the poetry of Robinson Jeffers, Richard Hugo, and Fanny Howe. Despite these poets’ varying stances on religion, central to their understanding of the sacred is an emphasis on the ways in which wilderness plays a critical role in decentralizing human reason while enacting embodied ways of sensing-as-knowing. In Jeffers’ pantheistic approach, the violence of wilderness allows us to experience the natural sublime. For Hugo, the distance and desolation of the wilderness transforms survival into a sacred act. In Howe’s mystical poems, the journey into wilderness leads to a bewildered collapse of reference, which yields a transcendent experience of the physical world. In light of the ways in which wilderness interrupts, challenges, and revises human attempts at rational meaning-making, I conclude by discussing the relevance of a poetics of wilderness for us as readers, teachers, and writers today. What might be relevant about envisioning text as a kind of wilderness – and the value of non-rational, experiential ways of digesting knowledge? What are the possibilities of a critical method in which we allow the limitations of our rational conceptualization to yield openings into the wild, the unknown, the sacred, and the sublime?

Panel 3- Contemporary Visualization

Chair: Tiawentí:non Canadian

H-763

Death as Dialogue: Digital Memorialization and Grief in North America

Jeremy Cohen, Concordia University

Alongside the growth of internet technology, a plethora of virtual spaces of memorialization have been created on the internet over the past 15 years. Digital memorials are digital spaces of remembrance for someone who has died. Taking root after the September 11th attacks on New York City, digital memorials have signalled a shifting landscape of grief and collective memory in North America. While scholarly work on digital memorialization and the proliferation of technology within the sphere of religion have been published, little has been written about the role of digital memorialization and the religious experience itself.

Scholars have noted that before the 19th century, death was given special status in the Western World. Mourners were ritually connected to the dead, given time to grieve and supported by large networks. Modernity and the privatization of religion broke our connection to the dead, relegating grief to the personal sphere. Mourners today are often told to “get over it” and support networks in the Christian West are all but absent. Moreover, traditional forms of bereavement that include war memorials, statues and monuments have often been imbued with governmentality, politics, valour and nationalism that physically and emotionally disconnect mourners from the dead.

This presentation will demonstrate the ways in which religion and technology are made up of interwoven narratives that speak not only to a democratizing of grief and a shifting public arena of bereavement, but to the human desire to dialogue with the dead. This presentation will focus on the modern relationship to death and the ways in which digital memorialization disrupts boundaries by allowing mourners to externalize their grief through networking, dialogue, collective memory making and active participation.

The Game: Exploration of Religious Meaning in Video Games

Gisoo. Kim, Concordia University

The exploration of religious rhetoric in video games is a relatively recent activity. The video game Bioshock Infinite uses themes that are explicitly religious and noticeably Christian. The video game revolves around the story of the protagonist Booker DeWitt, who was given the objective to retrieve a girl named Elizabeth in the fictional city of Columbia. The city was founded by a prophet named Father Zachary Comstock and who consolidates his authority through traits recognizable of charismatic cult leaders. The video game lays heavy emphasis on baptism as a rite of passage into the city; the city of Columbia being portrayed as a New Jerusalem as depicted in Revelations 21; and the protagonist as a Christ-like figure. Most notably, understanding the meaning of the use of religion in Bioshock Infinite to the gamer and the greater significance of video games to those who engage in it. In other words, the decline of the popularity of institutionalised religion is perhaps correlated with the increase in video game popularity. The Christian themes used in the video game give further meaning to the image of Columbia as the ideal city, a utopian vision. More importantly, revealing the use of religion as a decorative tool or a literary object to drive the narrative or to create the context. As it is clear in Bioshock Infinite, the violence engaged in the game is justified through religious rhetoric. Furthermore,

religious rituals such as baptism carries very little religious significance to the gamer as it is displayed through Booker's attitude towards the ritual. Seemingly, Booker's attitude throughout the game reflects a similar attitude as the gamer who embodies DeWitt for the period of the game's narrative.

Body and Spirituality: The Functions and the Meanings of Religious Tattoos Symbols amongst the Underground Musicians and Fans

Constantius Tri Handoko, Sheffield Hallam University

My research is based on 7 months of participant observation fieldwork in Surabaya and Sidoarjo, East Java Province, Indonesia. To obtain information about the existence of religious tattoos amongst underground music communities. This study reveals the motivations of musicians and fans tattooing their bodies with religious images, symbols, and certain typefaces. To understand the functions and meanings of the tattoos need to understand the context in which they are applied and what factors influence them. This is why I have to consider to the value of contextually as well as how I use other sources to interpret an image (tattoo). I do this by using "reflective contextual approach" analysis. This approach is used to understand the context of tattoo production in its natural meaning since tattoos are the reflection of the wearers' life story and history (internal narrative). I also re-write informants' opinions from my perspective as a researcher by tracking and locating specific concepts within the scope of the underground music communities' life, in which I use tattoo as a means of looking into those conceptual dimensions (external narrative). I found that the social and cultural dimensions have affected how the underground musician and fans choose to be tattooed and given meaning on them and how meanings are constructed by the socio-cultural aspects. The visual elements of tattoos: images, symbols, and typefaces have functions to express as well as remind the tattoos wearers their lives journeys, in the realms of religiosity and spirituality, such as expressions of faith and salvation, love and hatred, despair and hope.

Panel 4- Embodied Subjectivities

Chair: Savannah Talbot-Kelly

H-767

Words, Meaning and the Effect of Repetition Semitic Rhetoric in Gertrude Stein's Three lives?

Joseph Brito, Concordia University

The work of Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*, uses a similar repetitive style and characteristics as found in ancient Semitic Rhetoric (Roland Meynet 1988, Pierre L  tourney 1993 and Marc Girard 1996). Although often criticized for her repetitive style, close attention has not been granted to the effect that these repetitions have in the audience's reading mechanism and hermeneutics. In fact, a careful analysis of *Three Lives* shows that there is a variation in the use of repetitions; Stein's short length repetitions are used to delimit narrative bubbles, whereas her long-length repetitions are used to invest the reader in the development of her characters. At last, repetitions across this literary canon are done to insist on location –not in the geographical sense, but rather on the interaction between location, yearning and the persona. With this in mind, this research argues that the effect of repetitions in Semitic Rhetoric inasmuch as Stein's *Three Lives* can be better understood by applying Fauconnier and Turner's Conceptual Blending Theory (2002), which focuses on the connections that are created by blending two concepts –or in this

case, two similar sentences. However, Stein's repetitions often come with grammatical or lexical alterations which would seem to distort the memory pattern previously created. I argue that Stein's insistence on repeated words (as opposed to grammar) creates chains of neuron-images that are stressed, as opposed to distorted linguistic-memory. The question we wish to elaborate is, if indeed Semitic Rhetoric uses repetition, then how can neuroscience help explain the memory mechanism that is involved and its resulting hermeneutics? By analyzing *Three Lives* through the lens of a Semitic Rhetoric methodology, we wish to highlight not only the structure of the repetitive phrase formula, but also how Stein's variation of terms and phrases comes to intertwine words and their inferred meaning.

Composed for Memory: The Embodied Mind and Performative Experience in the Gospel of John
Marc-André Argentino, Concordia University

Human beings are embodied creatures; the nature of the human mind is shaped by our body and the way it interacts with the world. Our psychological construct, experience and nature are resultant from this embodiment. Undeniably, in a religious context, the way humans experience religion, will be affected by our embodied nature. This framework will play a significant role in the field of biblical performance criticism. In the first century Greco-Roman world, religion was practiced in an oral culture. For Christians this would imply that religious texts were transmitted orally under the form of oral performance. In such a context, memory plays an important role in oral cultures, where written materials and the ability to read are both scarce. Memory, in the field of biblical performance criticism, has been treated in a very static fashion. Those who have dared to venture into examining ancient memory have limited themselves to archaic means and methods of analysis and explanation. Many scholars still relied upon the work of Plato, specifically his *Phaedrus* or *Philebus*, as well as upon Aristotle's *De Memoria*. This is bothersome, for in the past two decades the field of neuroscience has greatly depended on our knowledge of the human brain and the way in which memories are stored and created. More recently cognitive neuroscience has demonstrated the role our senses play in the process of memorizing and creating long-term memories. In light of this, recent neuroscientific discoveries can help elucidate the role memory played in the performance of the Gospel of John, and how elements of the gospel text aid the process of memorization.

Toward an Embodied Epistemology of Science and Religion
Brian Jenkin, Boston University

Modern science largely operates upon the assumption that the human mind or reason acts autonomously from the body. Similarly, many religious traditions posit that the soul transcends the world it inhabits and investigates. Recent philosophy of mind and cognitive science, drawing on the philosophical frameworks of the American pragmatist and French phenomenological traditions, however, radically rejects any metaphysical or epistemological dualism between mind and body. It affirms instead that human knowledge, cognition, and experience are ultimately "embodied." This shift has far-reaching implications for science and religion, since both are concerned with the nature of knowledge and how it is obtained. What is the scientific and religious meaning and significance of embodiment? Given their mutual emergence from our bodily experience, what can the concepts and methods of science and religion together tell us about the external, objective world and internal, subjective human experience? After reviewing the meaning and importance of embodiment, this paper attempts to intimate answers to such questions while renewing the call for cooperation between science and religion by questioning the rigid dichotomizations that separate their objects and languages.

Session 3: 2:00 pm - 3:20 pm

Panel 1- Divine Soundscapes

Chair: Jesse Toufexis

H-767

The World Sings Back: Animism, Autonomous Religiosity and Singing in the Eastern Baltic **Dace Veinberga, University of Toronto**

Europe has often been equated with a Christendom beset by a number of persistent foes, including superstition, a widespread phenomenon seen as fragmentary, disjointed, and arbitrary. The native religiosity of one European region, the Eastern Baltic (modern day Latvia and Estonia), often labelled superstitious, acquires much more coherence when the area's singing traditions are taken into account and viewed through the lens of recent thinking on animism and ontology.

The extant historical record tells us that the native peoples of the Eastern Baltic were known for a pronounced enthusiasm for singing and for centuries maintained flourishing singing practices which confounded the German clergy and ruling class and resisted eradication attempts. Both singing traditions evoke worlds characterized by animistic imaginaries full of helping, empathetic and playful persons, only some of whom are human and visible, engaging profoundly with human beings. Singers showed a persistent and strong desire to know about non-human persons and actively sought knowledge through sung dialogues. The extensive folk song archives of Estonia and Latvia indicate that through recitative, as well as more melodic singing styles, singers actively conversed not only with other human beings, but also with a wide variety of other persons, including celestial bodies, animals, trees, indwelling earth spirits, temporal beings, as well as non-material spirit persons. The religionist Ivar Paulson described this as a "double religion existing in folk tradition" which possessed a distinct spiritual autonomy despite centuries of church participation and Christianization efforts.

Hasidism, Popular Kabbalah, and the Sounds of Sacred Spaces

Casey Ungar, San Francisco State University

In my paper "Hasidism, Popular Kabbalah, and the Sounds of Sacred Spaces", I will explore the manner in which the concept of *devekut* was understood, transmitted, and physically experienced within early Beshtian Hasidic communities. I will argue that the shift toward a universally attainable concept of *devekut* within the Beshtian Hasidic Movement dramatically changed the understanding of *devekut* as only attainable by solitary ascetics, to a popular, necessary element of Jewish worship. This is significant because the circulation of Beshtian concepts of universally attainable *devekut* necessitated the creation of distinctive communal structures, which manifested themselves as sensual experiences and rituals which focused on the body, and were mediated by the sacral soundscape of Hasidic worship. In order to accomplish this, I will examine the distinctive communal structures as they developed the concept of *Devekut* from the individual body to the communal body, as centered through and on the *Zaddiq*. In my presentation, I will specifically focus on the manner in which the *zaddiq* mediated and controlled the Hasidic relationship to the divine and facilitated the experience of *devekut* as an

embodied sensual experience within a unique sensory landscape resultant from an understanding of devekut founded in community, bodily pleasure, song, and dance, as opposed to solitary asceticism.

A Heart-Based Sufi Mindfulness Spiritual Practice

Faruk Arslan, Wilfrid Laurier University

Spiritual Psychology is the study and practice of the art and science of the human evolution of consciousness. The heart occupies an important place in Sufism and is considered to contain the divine spark that leads to spiritual realization. Fethullah Gülen's action-oriented Sufi methods described in his book series "The Emerald Hills of the Heart" provides the basis for a heart-based therapeutic intervention through self-journeying, which is the objective of this thesis. These self-purification and mindfulness-related transpersonal methods generate a form of treatment that is culturally sensitive. Through my reflections in this research, I transformed my personal experiences into a transpersonal narrative by writing 80 poems in 80 days, and this output, along with Gülen's teaching methods, techniques and spiritual practices formed the source of my intellectually generated data, and the basis for the new therapy model. It took two forty-day periods in two different cultures—Canada and Turkey—to reach the necessary divine knowledge for discovering the innate power of the spirit. The journey involved seeking freedom from the ego, or the lower self, in order to reach self-awareness and a conception of how to use the self. I also categorized seven different levels of development of the soul, representing the levels or stages of the self, ranging from absolutely self-centered and egotistical to pure spiritual human perfection. My examination of the two forty day periods revealed the seven categories of thankfulness, purity of intention, reflection, patience, truthfulness, trustworthiness and presentation. From these I developed a model for ten weeks of therapy for a specific population. This thesis presents my journey in Fethullah Gülen's Sufi path and an emerging model for a heart-based Sufi mindfulness spiritual practice. In this research, I propose a faith/spirituality-based model of heart-centred psychotherapy rooted in the spiritual philosophy, psychology and discipline of Fethullah Gülen's practice.

Panel 2- Renaissance Fronts

Chair: Shaun Retallick

H-762

The Lisbon Workshop's Hispanic Society Bible: Jewish Art and identity on the Cusp of Modernity

Yitzchak Schwartz, New York University

This paper will examine Lisbon's 15th century Hebrew manuscript workshop through a careful stylistic and contextual study of the fifteenth century Hebrew Bible at the Hispanic Society of America in New York. I will argue that, in its full participation in Portuguese artistic conventions of its day, the Workshop produced the first fully modern Jewish art. While prior to the fifteenth century Jewish art had tended to take more internally conversant forms, the commercial culture of Portugal in the fifteenth century that brought Jews unprecedented freedoms in the emerging secular sphere also deeply impacted their art.

Yet even as the Lisbon Workshop's output fully participates in Portuguese artistic developments, the Hispanic Society Bible also reflects the negotiation of a distinct Jewish identity by its patrons in this new modern context: Its artists avoided much of the figural imagery characteristic of Christian illumination, for example; and the maintenance of certain mudejar themes within this otherwise mannerist school's work evidences the continuing identification of Lisbon's Jewish patrons with Iberian Islamic culture. My paper will thus contribute to our understanding of this manuscript and its school, even as it breaks new ground in using art to shed light on the cultural dynamics of Jewish modernity in Iberia.

Some Thoughts on Piero della Francesca's *Misericordia Altarpiece*: An Anthropological Study

Daniel Santiago Saenz, Concordia University

In order to understand an artwork's meaning and importance, historians of late Medieval and Renaissance art have employed anthropological approaches to explore the social and historical context in which a work of art was created. The anthropological approach allows scholars to understand how a particular artwork fit into social interactions of the time, and thus the artwork could shed light on the social uses and importance of images in these periods. With this in mind, my research set out to explore the social context of Quattrocento Sansepolcro.

From 1445 to 1462, Italian artist Piero della Francesca worked on the *Misericordia Polyptych*. It was commissioned as an altarpiece for the Compagnia della Misericordia, a confraternity of lay men who performed works of mercy in the city of Sansepolcro, in Italy. In this paper, I am interested less in formal and iconographical analyses, and more in the ways in which this painting represents Early Modern understandings of the sacred. I argue that the *Misericordia Polyptych* reflects the civic and religious culture of a society that has been affected by the Black Death, and is witness to the efforts that Early Modern Christians made to gain control of their situation. The first part considers the effects of the Black Death, and how people in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance attempted to gain divine favour through the Virgin Mary. The second section discusses confraternities and the role of art in these organizations. The third section examines two panels of the altarpiece: the Virgin of Mercy and Saint Sebastian, and asks how these images were understood and used by the confraternity, and what they can tell us about fifteenth-century Sansepolcro.

"Between Barbaric 'Others' and Commercial Allies: Venetian-Ottoman Relations in the Sixteenth Century"

Patrick Helferty, McGill University

In the sixteenth century, the dominant European and Venetian understandings of the Ottoman Turks regarded them as the moral, religious, social, and ethnic opposites of the West. In Venice as elsewhere, the stigmatized image of the Turk materialized in: paintings, woodcuts, printed works, and civic ritual. The centrality of these cultural products in Venetian culture suggests the level of profound significance that the perceptions they articulated possessed in Venice. In fact, the "otherness" of the Ottomans was central to delineating self-conceived notions of Venetian identity by casting the Ottomans as the binary opposites of "Venice" and "Venetian." Trade itself played a role in meaning making. The liminal spaces of trade and diplomacy functioned as intersections between Venetian stigmatizations of the Turks, and the necessities of Venice's economic and political life. While intercultural contact through trade normalized the Turks in the eyes of the Venetians, for some, the presence of Ottoman merchants in

Venice itself was cause for alarm and posed a threat to Venice at large. Yet, also in these shared spaces, Venetians and Turks communicated with each other and tried to secure the others goodwill through lavish gifts. The existence and importance of the gift giving practices Venetian diplomats engaged in indicates how deeply Venetians were concerned with securing Turkish amity. Two potentially contradictory narratives seem to emerge: one of revilement, and one of cooperation. Although these two separate processes did exist, they were anything but contradictory. Instead, their mutual coexistence highlights the truth of Venetian-Ottoman relations of the time. While frequently portraying the Turks as a demonic “other,” Venetians almost habitually subordinated this prevailing, stigmatized image of the Turk in order to maintain vital trade interests in the East.

Panel 3- Betwixt and Between

Chair: Marnie Guglielmi-Vitullo

H-763

Tino Sehgal’s *This Progress* as “constructed conversation” as philosophic practice

Aaron Finbloom, Concordia University

This paper attempts to draw attention to a marginalized practice of dialogic exchange- in particular dialogue exchange that bridges disciplinary gaps between philosophy and art- by focusing on the artistic construction of artist Tino Sehgal. I argue that Tino Sehgal provides a compelling model for how to create an intellectually compelling and simultaneously creative and artistic conversation. I begin by framing Tino Sehgal’s practice within a Situationist narrative of de-habitation via constructed situations. Sehgal’s art tells us that to make a creative conversation one needs to let the content of the conversation inform a method of structuring conversation. The body of the paper focuses on two structural techniques implied by Sehgal- bodily movement and non-representational spoken gestures - and explores how exactly these techniques affect the content and modality of intellectual conversation. The paper ends by imagining how we as academics can respond to this call issued by Sehgal’s work for conversation to become creative via “construction” or structuring.

Learning in an Atmosphere of Vulnerability

Galen Watts, Queen’s University

How does a learning environment affect the way we learn? How do we cultivate an atmosphere of learning that is suitable to our purposes and values? These were questions we asked ourselves when planning a one-day conference on “Living Spiritually.” The conference’s purpose was to provoke thought and shared discussion surrounding the question, what does it mean to live a spiritual life? We hoped to cultivate an atmosphere within which a group of mostly strangers—aged twenty to eighty, with diverse life, educational, and faith backgrounds—would feel comfortable sharing ideas, emotions and stories openly and honestly. In place of an atmosphere of competition and perfectionism—rampant on university campuses—we hoped to encourage vulnerability. We conceived of vulnerability not as weakness, but as a necessary condition of interpersonal encounter and community building that reinforces the value of personal sharing and experiential learning, and creates more resilient and compassionate individuals. In the planning stage we identified factors that we expected to cultivate such an atmosphere. These included, providing varied opportunities to interact with other participants and

multiple ways of being alone and together in the shared space—through singing, seated yoga, laughter yoga, as well as small group discussions, facilitated large group discussion, guided meditation, food, short accessible oral presentations, panel discussions and silent reflection—held in a warmly lit room at the community library. The rich and varied learning opportunities the day provided reflected not only our belief that there are diverse routes to, and different forms of, knowledge—it encouraged us to actually experience this together. The success of the conference also illuminated the importance of creating more spaces like this especially in institutions of higher learning, as well as spoke to us about some of the possibilities for responding to such needs

From Finitude to Otherness: Karl Rahner's Spirit in the World

Matthew Nini, McGill University

Karl Rahner's transcendental reimagining of theology begins with a theory of knowledge: *Spirit in the World*, his first major work, is a rereading of Thomas Aquinas's theory of human knowing in light of Immanuel Kant's turn towards the subject. The highly original theory that results sees human knowing as something ontological, as tantamount to Being; to know means to exist as an oscillating point (*schwebende Mitte*) between act and potency, between what is and what might be. Here, Rahner is borrowing from his teacher Heidegger, who describes the same movement as "space for play" (*spielraum*). For both, knowing is not merely the acquisition of facts by a passive subject, but a self-assimilative movement—to know the outside world, to know the other, is to become more fully oneself. Setting knowers in motion, as both Heidegger and Rahner do, has a radical effect on metaphysics, and the structure of theology thereby; if knowing is a form of becoming, then possibility is just as important as actuality, and what is meant by "finitude" must be entirely reassessed. In Rahner's schema, finitude is not merely an axiomatic term referring to the limitations of particular intellects, but rather a positive description of how humans think and know. Consequently, any theological movement beyond the here and now, any form of transcendence, is not a movement beyond finitude, but an acceptance of it and the horizons of possibilities it opens up. The space of possibilities of human finitude is not the overcoming of limits, but openness to the Other. The conclusion that can be drawn from Rahner's metaphysical reversals is that transcendence is the natural product of being a finite knower in the world.

Panel 4- Performance Art

Chair: Georgia Carter

H-760

Québécois Orality, Intergenerational Religious Tradition, and the Supernatural in Bernard Émond's *La neuvaine*.

Kester Dyer, Concordia University

As the first film of Émond's theological trilogy, *La neuvaine* (2005) has faith as its central theme and brings into light the tension between the everyday and the supernatural. The spiritual trajectory of Québec society, shaped historically by rigid Catholicism, then marked by the rapid secularization of the Quiet Revolution, provides the focus of Émond's film through which he endeavours to overcome modern estrangement from Québec's cultural and historical legacies. In *La neuvaine*, this undertaking is manifested by an attempt to represent the supernatural via cinematic realism. However, embedded within Émond's cinematic strategies, we also find the marks of orality identified and theorized by

Germain Lacasse. These counter-hegemonic characteristics, Lacasse contends, have shaped and continue to colour Québécois cinema. Indeed, *La neuvaïne* seemingly communicates its oxymoronic commitment to both cinematic realism and spiritual faith by deploying oral storytelling tropes that confront and attempt to integrate the miraculous. Meanwhile, the tension between a secular view of nationhood and adherence to cultural traditions inevitably aligned to a specific set of religious beliefs has resurfaced as a topic of importance in Québec. This paper therefore takes one of Québec's most important contemporary filmmakers as a point of departure to explore the convergence of intergenerational expressions of Catholic tradition and underlying formal patterns in its national cinema, and seeks to examine the points of tension that underpin the cinematic representation of apparently irreconcilable perspectives. Émond's thesis on the loss of religious models in *La neuvaïne* thus serves as a conduit to retrace antecedent interventions bearing upon Québec's religious legacy and engagements with the supernatural. My paper therefore stresses the oral components of *La neuvaïne*, and attempts to elucidate the supernatural form of their expression in this text and other key works in Québec film history. This comprises one half of a larger study tackling intergenerational spirituality and the supernatural in Québec cinema, an approach structured around distinct, but porous, gender-specific traditions. As such, I focus here on male directors, but also place my analysis in a broader conversation with the work of women filmmakers in Québec.

“Death is the most blessed dream.” Elements of ecstatic performance in “Leonce and Lena” by Georg Buchner

Cristina Iovita, Concordia University

This study focuses on the representation of the sacred in 19th century drama with direct applications to the acting method I used in my 2013 staged version of “Leonce and Lena” by Georg Buchner. I will argue that the “loss of the sacred” leading to the rise of the melodramatic expression engenders new types of performance that recover elements of sacrality present in the medieval mystery plays (i.e. The Dance of Death/Danse macabre/Totentanz 14th century) and describe the use of the Viennese waltz as a means to create the ecstatic acts of Rosetta, Leonce, and Lena.

Feminist Ontological Frameworks: The Politics of Devotional Legibility and the Devadasis

Sydni Meyer, Columbia University

Feminist theorists have undertaken the project of constructing a problem space within the site of female salvific narratives and feminine engagement with religious community structures. These theological and practiced religious structures are often characterized as a discrete patriarchal modality. The impetus for this scholarship has largely been articulated as a means of illuminating the gender politics of the private, a hermeneutical wresting of female voices and rites within a structure that has the potential to relegate female voices. While feminist scholarship has been useful as a theoretical framework for dismantling and reimagining patriarchal structures, interventions in the South Asian devotional context are often myopic and problematic, vacillating between the extremes of New Age goddess recuperation to assertions that religious practice emphasizes masculinist hegemony.

Historically, giving primacy to essentialized constructions of “liberation” and “emancipation” have mapped the feminist translation project as congruently functioning with the modern secular project. To

consider both the scholar and the subject of scholarship within a plane of immanence that is embedded in and constituted by political, devotional, class, and gendered subjectivities offers a more holistic and challenging theoretical ontology.

A particularly salient site for this process of bridging the distance between feminist theory and devotional practice are the devadasi communities in India. Due to the unique intersectionality of the devadasis, their subjectivities have been historically scrutinized and recast through the lenses of caste, gender, sexuality, and access to national representation. Providing a historiographic narrative of the construction of the devadasi as a problem space for the colonial emancipatory project frames the further feminist and postcolonial constitutive encounters. In what ways have these feminist interventions been a process of rendering legibility to devadasis, of redefining them according to a separate grammar? In what ways does the process of constructing legible subjectivities draw together feminist discourse and devadasis practice? Finally, these critical entry points provide a glance into the paradoxical problem of embodying and defining the postcolonial experience.

Session 4: 3:45 - 5:15

Panel 1- Role Inversion

Chair: Josee Roy

H-763

The “Good” Christian Mother: Manufacturing an Unattainable Ideal

Mandi Veenstra, Queen’s University

If it is the concern of feminist theology to bring current questions that effect the contemporary lives of women to the forefront, then it is the goal of this paper to address the embedded term that is, the “good” Christian mother. The adjective “good” attached to the identity of Christian mother, is a social construction, manufactured as an unattainable ideal with purpose, including the intent of stirring up not only desires but emotions such as fear, guilt, and blame. In an analysis of Biblical principles and Scriptures concerning mothering, ideals are not apparent, demonstrating Biblical representation and recognition of the variance in experience within practices of mothering across aspects of time and space and social factors including, class, culture, age, and so on. As a social institution and player, capitalism, with its focus on the Profit Ethic, successfully plays a role in manufacturing, perpetuating, and capitalizing on the creation and effects of establishing ideals and stereotypes. A quick snapshot of three current businesses, Joyce Meyer Ministries, Thirty-One Gifts, and Mary & Martha, demonstrate the intersection of capitalism and Christianity, with all three highlighting specific tenets responsible for blurring conceptions of mothering identities, including their focus on ideologies of domesticity, in attempts of upholding proposed monolithic identities of what constitutes the “good” Christian mother.

Mother Teresa: Patron Saint of BDSM

Ashely Crouch, Concordia University

Mother Teresa is one of the most beloved saints in Catholic history. Her influence has spanned continents, inspired politicians and civilians alike, and created a series of homes for the poor, sick, and dying. Queering Mother Teresa then, undresses the image of her as a nonsexual, celibate nun. Portraying Mother Teresa as a master of the BDSM lifestyle is to shatter this image even further, transgressing her presumptuously non-sexual and divinely inspired life into one of a constant deviant eroticism. Mother Teresa is holy because of her mad desire to please God and to serve humanity in a queer expression of love and self-denying eroticism. Queering Mother Teresa as a master of erotic BDSM practice destabilizes the historical understanding that tries to contain her to the heteronormative patriarchy. BDSM saint Mother Teresa opens up a dialogue for the ways in which even a modern saint so revered by the Catholic Church, is in fact queer. By examining her hagiography as well as her private writings published after her death, this paper explores an alternative understanding of the holy saint. Rather than becoming unholy or removed from God, Mother Teresa gains her holy status because of her erotic, lifelong search for God.

Panel 2- Religious Identity in Canada

Chair: Taylor Baruchel

H-767

The Potential for Communal Spirituality Groups in Southern Ontario:

Activists and/or Seekers

Christopher Medland, Huron University College, Western University

Old and new views of religion in the western world have focused on the decline of traditional institutions while often ignoring the prevalent individualized religious belief and sentiment existing outside of institutional religious belonging. Many Canadians are more than willing to walk out of the old religious institutions and never look back. However, they are still not entirely ready to give up all of their personal religious beliefs and sentiments. This study analyzes interviews concerning non-institutional forms of religion in Southern Ontario via a small population sample (10), with sociological description culminating into a theological perspective (via typologies and thematic analysis). This study of religion suggests a potential pattern for the development of forms of personal theological autonomy that are prevalent in this sample of individuals taken apart from their respective groups. A syncretistic version of a secularized and politicized Judeo-Christian ethos appears to be lingering just under the surface of the (superficial) need for autonomy among these interlocutors, who at the same time desire a sense of ‘communitas’ that is missing from their current groups. The aspirations of the participants have suggested two possible types emerging from this sample of spiritual adherents: 1) the “inclusive seeker” and 2) the “spiritual-political activist”.

This sociological account of the so-called “Spiritual But Not Religious” also suggests a political theology of ‘non-institutional Judeo-Christian esoteric spirituality’ via Habermas’ theory of “communicative action.” The spiritual-political relationship of these types of adherents to God can be taken as an anthropological revelation within the continuing work of the Spirit in the public sphere. It is taking place not in the so-called ‘citadels of knowledge’ of the decadent West, but among the mundane,

secular, and everyday life of the earthly ecclesia in our culture. This can be conceptualized as a small indicator of a new ‘post-secular’ Canadian public theology – a new meaning of revelation in culture.

The Ku Klux Klan in Canada: Oshawa, Ontario Caught in a Divide

Branden Pare, Queen’s University

With immigration at an all time high (20% of the population), the Ku Klux Klan’s mission statement found an appreciation amongst some white protestant Canadians. Unemployment, compounded by cheap immigrant labour and a rise of Catholicism, upset the nativists. The KKK created and circulated new forms of meaning as they exploited the pre-existing fears of the Ontarians. With occupational titles such as Imperial Wizard, and followers who garb themselves in white hooded gowns and attend large open air demonstrations, all while standing around a fiery cross, the KKK had a unique way of acting out their beliefs. All across the province chapters sprung up; but it was not without competition. Oshawa, Ontario was caught directly within this competition and their supporters were asked to choose a side. The competition was between the KKK of Kanada and the KKK of the British Empire. Ironically, both groups were led by American citizens. My research looks at the development of the KKK in Oshawa. While attempting to situate Oshawa’s KKK development within Ontario, I argue that a significant contributor to the eventual failure of the Klan came directly from the group’s inability to unite and organize, rather than a lack of political space or societal interest. Ideologically the Klan fit the context; however, administratively they failed to deliver.

Panel 3 – Philosophy in Motion

Chair: Marc-André Argentino

H-762

Interpretants and Semiosis

Julian Fernando Trujillo Amaya, Universidad del Valle

Ph.D. Student Researcher at Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture, Concordia University

Peirce’s pragmatism was conceived as a method of ascertaining the meanings of intellectual concepts. He argued that the only way to ascertain such meanings is through the study of interpretants, or ‘proper significate effects’ of signs. The ‘interpretant’ derives its meaning from its role in Peirce’s theory of semiosis.

Thus, after characterizing the role of the interpretant in semiosis, I will consider Peirce’s division of interpretants. I will focus on the trichotomy of interpretants: emotional, energetic, and logical. According to Peirce, the first proper significant effect of a sign is a feeling produced by it, this is an emotional interpretant. The energetic interpretant is any further effect a sign might produce; this will always involve a mental or muscular effort and will always be mediated through the emotional interpretant. Finally, he designates the logical interpretant as the meaning of a concept, which is divided into logical and ultimate logical interpretants. While the logical interpretant may be an intellectual sign, such a sign itself has a logical interpretant, and thus is not the ultimate logical interpretant of a concept. The ultimate logical interpretant is the concept’s ‘living definition,’ an interpretant which itself has no further interpretant. This, Peirce concludes, must be a habit which is a disposition to perform a certain operation, given some mental content.

In fact, Peirce's definition of belief is that upon which one is willing to act. Furthermore, according to him the essence of belief is the establishment of a habit; and different beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give rise. From this view, I will suggest that the meaning could be understood better as a dynamic interpretation which produces belief and action. Then I will argue that Peirce's interpretants show us the meaning in motion.

Nihilism, Rhetoric, and the Rationality of Religious Tradition

Joseph Kirby, Institute for Christian Studies

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl makes a remarkable claim based on his experiences in the Nazi death camps. He claims that all human beings are free to decide how they will respond to their external circumstances, no matter how terrible those circumstances might be. This essay will consider not the truth or falsity of this profound ontological claim. Instead, I will consider a far more obvious point: that this kind of claim only functions rhetorically when it is spoken by a person like Frankl, someone whose virtue has been proven by the most extreme suffering. To take a contrasting example, if a white, middle-class man from Canada were to argue as Socrates argues in the *Gorgias*, that it is better to suffer injustice than to inflict it, even to the extent that it would be better to be tortured to death than to become the tyrant of a city – it is unlikely that an audience would take these arguments seriously. In fact, it would be perfectly rational for such a speaker to cite the authority of someone like Frankl, someone who had retained his or her dignity even in the furnace of extreme suffering. Moreover, for the kind of claim that Socrates makes in the *Gorgias*, the appeal to traditional authority would be the only way to make it rhetorically plausible – because only someone who has “merited the victory of an unjust death” (to quote Boethius) would have grounds to say that it is better to die than to become unjust. From this, I argue that the members of a culture that has lost touch with its own traditional authorities will find themselves unable to plausibly argue for the kind of claims that both Frankl and Socrates insist are true.

Journal of Religion and Culture

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