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LAURE Submission

**The History of the Body:**

**Concepts and Care**

I became interested in Renaissance literature when I conducted a research project on Shakespeare. It was apparent that the medicine of the bard’s time lacked one thing: scientific accuracy. I became inquisitive— how has the understanding of the body morphed from a system of humors into a complex, nearly mechanical being over the past 500 years? I partnered with Dr. Klestinec as an undergraduate research apprentice to hone in on this question. Through resources from the Miami University libraries, I was given the outstanding opportunity to immerse myself in the fascinating, and sometimes bizarre, world of medical and philosophical literature. In addition to drafting reports, I am collaborating with Dr. Klestinec on a syllabus for a course offered at Miami that deals with the evolution of the body image through art and literature. It will be offered in the fall of 2017, and I will serve as the undergraduate associate for it. This is a two-year project.

My research has three stages: (1) Surgical Instruments and Procedures, (2) Neoplatonic Love, and (3) the Mechanized Body. To understand the development of body image, it is necessary to move chronologically, tracing subtle shifts in attitudes and terminology.

With a focus on surgery, I began my research by investigating surgical instruments, specifically illustrations in books for surgeons. I tackled my first step of research, Surgical Instruments and Procedures, by examining images’ obscurities. Using Miami’s extensive online database, Databases A-Z, I spent time scrolling through a wealth of images. I found Early English Books Online (EEBO) to be the most fruitful. In my preliminary searches, I used the keywords “medicine” and “doctors” and explored foundational documents such as *The Canon of Medicine* (1030) by Avicenna, *Chirurgia* (1190) by Roger of Slerno, *On Monsters and Marvels (*1510) by Ambroise Pare, and *Mikrokosmographia* (1631) by Helkiah. After chronologically cataloging over 100 images from primary sources, I observed a trend in the evolution of surgery from an abstract system of humors to a solidified body between the 12th and 17th centuries. I adjusted my search with terms including “chirugia” and “barber surgeon;” these terms yielded more specified sources. It would be a fallacy not to note that I did face challenges in my research; specifically, these primary documents were not in English, which significantly slowed down my cataloging process. On top of this, the dated images did not always resemble modern day surgical instruments, making them hard to discern.

Upon completing my survey of early surgical imagery, I moved onto my second area of focus: Neoplatonic Love. Very different from surgery, this philosophical tradition focuses on transcendence of the body. I began by combing through books in King Library on the origins of Neoplatonism. The online catalogue of Miami Library books was critical in this step, highlighting necessary, notable texts. The core texts I cite in this groundwork research are *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486) by Pico dellaMirandola, *Platonic Theory* (1474) by Marsilio Ficino, and *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium* (1476) by Marsilio Ficino. Along with these print texts found in the library, I utilized Stanford Encyclopedia’s entry on Neoplatonism found on Miami Library’s online article feature; this was an in-depth commentary on the basic organization of Neoplatonism. To interpret Neoplatonism’s ties with the ever-changing portrayal of the body, I next spent time with mentioned books on Neoplatonic Love. Neoplatonic Love is, in essence, the shift from sensual love to a spiritual love that transcends the body. I checked out the following books: *The Courtier: Book Four* (1528) by Castiglione, *Plato’s Symposium* (385BC) by Plato, *Sonnets for Michaelangelo* (1542) by Vittoria Colonna, and *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love* by Tullia D’Aragona.

My reading of *Sonnets for Michaelangelo,* by Vittoria Colonna, motivated me to explore the relationship between the two; this was not a path that I anticipated but yielded fascinating commentaries on love. Searching on MLA and JSTOR, I found secondary sources highlighting modern interpretations of the artists’ works. For instance, in “Drawing Christ’s Blood: Michelangelo, Vittoria Colonna, and the Aesthetics of Reform” (2006)—found on JSTOR—Una Roman D’Elia, describes symbolism presented in Neoplatonic art. The Miami Library Database system has allowed me to find and study not only old texts but also current, historiographical ones.

The final stage of my research has not begun but I intend on utilizing similar library resources. Additionally, on the Special Collections website, I found primary texts to expand my understanding of the body image.

Aside from the obvious resources that the library offers students, I discovered underestimated tools. Firstly, and most importantly, the librarians at King—I met with Ms. Vonnahme and was impressed by the number of resources offered. She enlightened me on different search tactics within databases, the Web of Science database, academic events on campus that pertain to my subject (i.e. 2017 Altman Symposium), and the “Subject and Course Guide” feature on Miami’s library homepage. I also have her to thank because I began using the suggested Zotero Citation Manager available through Miami Library and citations have never been so approachable. On top of Zotero, I found the short instructional video on the library’s website called “Creating a Bibliography” to devise my complete Works Cited. Having a face-to-face brainstorming interaction was influential in the continuation of my research.

Secondly, I am a frequent user of the Book Eye available at King Library; I have been fortunate to have this tool in my research as it allows me to print, highlight, and annotate my tangible texts for teachable material. Thirdly, I continually appreciate the comfortable and focused space that the various campus libraries maintain.

Overall, my research with Dr. Klestinec has introduced me to the Miami libraries and I have a newfound appreciation for the resources it has provided me with. I know that I haven’t harnessed the full potential of the library and look forward to taking advantage of the plethora of opportunities in the future. The library’s tools are inexhaustible!