The Center for the Humanities

AUTZEN HOUSE          OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY                 SPRING 2005

The plight of a warrior
in changing times

It is a joyous thing, is war... You love your comrade so in war. When you see that your quarrel is just and your blood is fighting well, tears come to your eyes. A great sweet feeling of loyalty and of pity fills your heart on seeing your friend so valiantly exposing his body to execute and accomplish the command of our creator. And then you prepare to go and die or live with him, and for love not to abandon him. And out of that, there arises such a delectation, that he who has not tasted it is not fit to say what a delight it is.

Jean de Bueil
Le Jouvencel c. 1461

At first, the young man who is the hero of the 15th-century romance, Le Jouvencel, appears to succeed despite being at odds with the tradition of other such medieval narratives because of his contempt for flamboyant knights who engage in court intrigues and wear sumptuous outfits on the battlefield. All does not go well with the Jouvencel (the Youth), however. “He finds that he has been used by the king and the court,” says Michelle Szkilnik.

A Research Fellow and professor of French literature at the University of Nantes, Szkilnik is working on a new critical edition and study of Le Jouvencel, a romance written between 1461 and 1468 by Jean de Bueil, a well-known knight who fought many battles against the English. The tale, which enjoyed immediate popularity, is preserved in fourteen manuscripts and five early editions. In a previous book, Jean de Saintre, une carriere chevaleresque au XVe siecle, Szkilnik was concerned with showing how the image of the knight shifts in the late Middle Ages and how the ideal knight becomes a courtesan whose principal interests are court politics, dress codes and complex combat rituals.

Through analysis of many late medieval romances, Szkilnik found that most fall into one of two categories: those which imitate 13th-century Arthurian romances; and those that, though seeming to show deference to Arthurian literature, go on to undermine its principles. “Jean de Bueil’s romance does not fit these categories. Indeed, the term ‘romance’ is barely appropriate for a narrative

Michelle Szkilnik
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Center names
2005-06 fellows

The Center has awarded 11 residential research fellowships for 2005-06, including nine OSU faculty members and two visiting scholars from Pennsylvania State University. Fellows receive a stipend as well as a comfortable office in Autzen House, a computer, and support services. Visiting fellows are generally in residence for the entire academic year, while internal fellows receive one to two terms of support and are included in all Center events.

VISITING FELLOWS

Adam Rome
Assoc. Professor of History
Pennsylvania State University
Sustaining the Nation: Environmental Reform and the Emergence of Modern America

Robin Schulze
Professor of English
Pennsylvania State University
‘Beyond the Yawp’: Nature, Natural History and the Origins of Modernist Poetry

OSU FELLOWS

Kristin Barker
Asst. Professor of Sociology
Virtual Communities and Contested Chronic Illness: An Exploration in Electronic Ethnography

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Theater offers insights into post-Soviet Russia

Theater in 20th-century Russia, under the last of the tsars as well as under the Communists, mirrored much of what was taking place in Russian society and in Russian culture. It continues to do so today, said Vreneli Farber, “yet works in English on Russian theater published in the last dozen years give little attention to this rich source of information on post-Soviet Russia.”

As a case study of the cultural and social evolution that has occurred in Russia since 1991, Farber is examining the status of the Stanislavski tradition of actor training during the post-Soviet years. A Research Fellow and professor of Russian at OSU, Farber held a previous Center fellowship during which she worked on her book The Playwright Aleksandr Vampilov: An Ironic Observer (Peter Lang, 2001).

“Under the Soviets, theater served as a means of political organization,” said Farber. “The Soviet government generously subsidized theaters—and the training of actors and directors—as long as they followed the line set by the Communist Party.” This gave the Soviet rulers control over the theatrical world. “Under Gorbachev, the pattern of support and control began to change. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union both the financial support and ideological control have practically disappeared, yet theater remains alive and well and its importance to Russians has not diminished.”

Modern actor training in Russia and the United States is rooted in the writings of Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), and it was only in the 1980s that the tradition began to erode in Russia, leading to a rush to catch up with more diverse methods that had developed elsewhere. This “revolution” continues in the post-Soviet era, said Farber. “Amidst all the change, disruption, controversy, and hardship of the past thirteen years, Russian theater has not only survived but has revitalized itself.”

Farber’s study focuses on the way actors are trained in Russia today, and the philosophy behind the curriculum “in order to reveal what persists from the Stanislavski tradition and to show what is new since 1991, and, consequently, how thinking and approaches have or have not been modified.” Because developments in actor training reflect challenges and problems faced by other institutions—in the arts and sciences—they offer “insight into post-Soviet Russia and allow me to draw broader conclusions about Russian culture and society.”

Farber has direct access to the theater world through her own performance, particularly a sabbatical year spent affiliated with the St. Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy, one of Russia’s foremost theatrical institutes. In addition to the usual scholarly research, Farber attended acting classes at all four levels of the actor training program, each level for six weeks. She also interviewed teachers, administrators, and students, attended diploma performances by students, and attended twenty-five dramatic productions in eight different professional theaters in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Vreneli Farber

Konstantin Stanislavski

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“GlASNOST’ is also bringing with it the demythologizing of . . . Stanislavski and a reassessment of his System . . . Experimental workshops employing everything from yoga to behavioral science are sprouting everywhere as the younger generation strives to catch up with the latest trends in actor training.

When Southern Baptist missionary Lottie Moon was censured for preaching in China, an activity denied to women, she threatened to resign and return to the United States. The church backed down, but this did not signify an improved position for women within the denomination, which historically has excluded them from positions of authority within the church and charged them with submissiveness at home.

“Despite these oppressive pronouncements, and often women’s own acceptance of the beliefs,” said Susan Shaw, “many women have found their experiences in Southern Baptist churches to be empowering.” The key to understanding the seeming contradictions, she has written, may be found in the “way these women have appropriated and embodied Baptist theology itself, in particular the doctrines of the priesthood of believers, the autonomy of the local church, and religious liberty.”

A Research Fellow and Director of Women Studies at OSU, Shaw is a co-author, with Mina Carson and Tisa Lewis, of Girls Rock! Fifty Years of Women Making Music (UP of Kentucky, 2004). The book chronicles how women performers in the heavily male-dominated rock music genre have managed to succeed—with difficulty, as it turns out. Shaw’s current book, also contracted with Kentucky, is Competent Before God: Southern Baptist Women, Agency, and Autonomy.

The book explores how Baptist women, particularly during the first half of the 20th century, “constructed gendered identities as Baptist women, how they understood, accepted, and challenged Southern Baptist ideas about women and how they found in Baptist theology the impetus to construct themselves as leaders, missionaries, teachers, and interpreters of Scripture while remaining strongly connected to the churches and denominations that at times sought to place limitations on their roles.”

The project is of wide significance, said Shaw, in that Southern Baptists now claim sixteen million members in 42,000 churches, mainly in the South, where they “exert an incredible amount of social and political influence, which ultimately affects the entire nation.”

In addition to personal interviews, important sources include the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives and the Woman’s Missionary Union Archives, which contain letters and other writings of Southern Baptist women. “These women lived through times in which the rights of women were dominant social issues—from suffrage in the nineteenth century to the Women’s Movement, ERA, and abortion rights in the twentieth,” said Shaw.

That Southern Baptists have no creed is critical to her exploration. The denomination’s confessional statement, The Baptist Faith and Message, is not binding on local churches or on any individual Baptist. The preamble to the statement stresses this point: “The sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience . . . We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers.”

As a consequence, said Shaw, “through the Convention’s 158-year history, individual Southern Baptist women have continued to believe what they choose to believe, to serve God in whatever ways they feel God has called them to serve, and to construct their identities as Southern Baptist women in whatever ways have seemed right to them. Of course, this has also meant that a great diversity of belief and experience has always characterized the gendered identities Southern Baptist women constructed.”

Another seeming contradiction within the denomination has to do with race. The Southern Baptist Convention was born out of support for slavery in the South, yet many Baptists found in their faith a demand for social justice, and they opposed racism in society and in the church.

Prominent among Shaw’s interview subjects are the Southern Baptist women of her mother’s generation. “While these women probably would not choose to use the word, they are the ones who taught me feminism. While purporting to accept theologies that deemed women subordinate, these women were leaders—in the home, church, and community. They were strong, opinionated and outspoken. They struggled against sexist oppression, while drawing strength from a sexist institution. This is the contradiction that intrigues me.”
medieval Gandhi preaching peace, love and understanding? A naïve and quixotic wanderer? A champion of the crusading ideal? Which of these, if any, accurately describes St. Francis of Assisi when in 1219, with the armies of the fifth crusade besieging Damascus, he crossed to the Egyptian camp to preach to the Sultan al-Kamil?

“Though we know very little about this event, writers from the thirteenth century to the twentieth, unencumbered by mere facts, have portrayed Francis alternatively as a new apostle preaching to the infidels, a scholastic theologian proving the truth of Christianity, and a crazed religious fanatic,” said John Tolan. “My study of the varying depictions of this lapidary encounter will attempt to throw into relief the changing fears and hopes that Muslim-Christian encounters inspired in European writers over eight centuries.”

A Research Fellow and professor of medieval history at the University of Nantes, Tolan is the author of Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination (Columbia UP, 2003), Petrus Alfonsi and his

Medieval Readers (UP of Florida, 1993), and the forthcoming Points of Contact: Fourteen Centuries of European-Arab Relations.

His current project examines how different European authors and artists have presented the encounter between Francis, archetype of Western sanctity, and Al-Kamil, powerful Sultan and nephew of Saladin, making it fit into their preconceptions of proper relations between Christian Europe and the Muslim East. The encounter, said Tolan, is not mentioned in any Arabic sources. As far as is known, St. Francis and friar Illuminatus crossed over to the Egyptian camp to preach and after a number of days returned, having apparently spoken to the Sultan.

Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Acre, who was with the crusading army when Francis arrived, wrote in 1220 that Francis “came into our army and, burning with zeal, did not fear to cross over to the enemy army and preach to the sultan for several days; then, having accomplished little, he returned.” Said Tolan, “For Jacques, as for other 13th-century crusade chroniclers, Francis’s attempt to convert the enemy, however admirable, was doomed to failure. This underlines, for many of them, the necessity of crusade.”

In contrast, some other medieval authors depict Francis skillfully debating with the Sultan’s men, offering rational proof of the superiority of Christianity. “For these authors, Christian missionaries, through exemplary piety and proper training, can foil objections to Christianity and hope to bring Muslims and other infidels into the fold.”

Certain Franciscan hagiographers of the 13th century used the incident as a testimony to their founder’s sanctity. They described the Sultan as proposing a debate between Francis and the Saracen “priests,” which Francis refused by arguing that faith is beyond reason. Francis then asked the Sultan to order the lighting of a fire, saying he would enter it with the priests to see which religion was superior. At this, such accounts relate, the Saracen priests fled in fear. Francis proposed to enter the fire alone but the Sultan declined, fearing it might provoke a scandal.

Even though this version described the Sultan as rejecting Francis’s offer,
people were not necessarily sicker in early New England than they are now, but the mechanisms for dealing with illness were different, as was the attitude toward suffering. “One does not have to travel far in early modern narratives of daily life to encounter illness,” said Ben Mutschler. “Almost any source from the period, from diaries and letters to the proceedings of courts and assemblies, reveals a world beset by morbidity.”

A Research Fellow and assistant professor of history at OSU, Mutschler is working on a book *The Province of Affliction: Illness in Eighteenth-Century New England*, which is scheduled to be published by the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture in Williamsburg, VA.

While there has been much scholarly work on medical thought, healing practices, and public health in early America, said Mutschler, his study takes sick people and those implicated in their afflictions as its central concern. “What happens to our portrait of eighteenth-century life if we place the social relations of illness at its center? How was a society animated by work, striving, and industry able to absorb the regular occurrence of sickness, with all its disruptions and wrenching changes?”

Sickness was just one of many misfortunes in daily life—from accidents and injuries to changes in weather—that were understood to be Man’s fate to accommodate and endure. “New Englanders worked hard to resign themselves to fate,” said Mutschler. “They struggled to accept the inevitability of hardships large and small.”

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New methods for teaching literacy in developing regions are likely to resemble the Trojan horse, said Laura Rice, bearing “within them innuendos and subtexts that demean the very people they intend to help.” In her new book *Imagined Lives*, Rice is investigating international literacy conditions, with an emphasis on the experiences of rural North African women. The women, she said, “live at the intersection of 3R literacy, indigenous knowledge, and large-scale development programs.”

By “literacy,” Rice means “the knowledge needed to cope with everyday needs,” while “3R literacy” refers to reading, writing and numeracy.

A Research Fellow and associate professor of English at OSU, Rice held a previous fellowship at the Center during which she worked on her book *Departures* (City Lights, 1994), co-authored with Karim Hamdy. She also was acting director of the Center in 1993 while then-Director Peter Copek was on sabbatical. Rice’s current project draws on work done with the help of a 2001-02 Fulbright grant, which took her to remote locales to interview Bedouin women, and supported visits to development projects promoting literacy. In summer of 2004 she returned to Africa to do final interviews with Bedouin women and their extended families.

Literacy in this study of adults does not refer to the linear, individually experienced, progressive acquisition of 3R skills associated with children.” It is, rather, “a complex, non-linear, and spatially-experienced set of social practices.”

3R literacy is becoming more central to Maghribi oral cultures where print culture has become fixed through the processes of nation-state building and globalization in much the same way that computer-literacy is becoming more central to the print cultures of the industrialized West, said Rice. “But one does not suddenly become illiterate in the knowledge needed to cope with everyday needs when a new literacy technology takes over.”

*Imagined Lives* has two parts, the first an analysis of current literacy conditions internationally, in the Arab world in general, and in rural North Africa in particular, the second focused on the discourse of literacy in development projects, North African novels and memoirs, and the life experiences of rural women. Using gender analysis and post-colonial theory, Rice has identified two practices in development efforts that she considers particularly germane to her study.

“First, local facts are extracted from their contexts and tailored to fit Western paradigms. Second, top-down agendas are imposed, ignoring indigenous knowledge, alienating local stakeholders, and undermining projects before they start. It seems to be hard for development experts to ‘learn from below’ in this situation. It is important to avoid ‘doing good with contempt in your heart,’ as Gayatri Spivak has put it.”

*Imagined Lives* employs an interdisciplinary approach including literary criticism/discourse analysis, applied international development, and ethnography. The project, said Rice, has required her to think across the border between what has been called two “social imaginaries,” one based on Western social contract theory where individuals think of their identities as autonomous, the other based on collective, relational identities.

Rice participated in development work, and conducted scores of interviews, initially based on questionnaires and then expanding into open-ended conversations. She selected the life stores of three women and their extended families to capture the idea of literacy as a complex, nonlinear, and spatially-experienced set of social practices.

“Except in quoted material, I avoid the word illiterate because it sets up a binary vision of the world,” Rice said. “Overall, we can say that development projects promoting 3R literacy for adults have had little success. New literacy theory and practices have evolved to address the facts on the ground, but powerful development institutions have been maintaining the status quo.”
Meriam is one of six siblings. She is the first among them, in a remote village in Southern Tunisia, to get a chance to go to school. Her two younger siblings, Ali and Leila, also go to school. Meriam, a precocious and gifted student, is often in demand; her 3R-literacy skills frequently being needed by her mother, father, and neighbors, and even by the local grocer who is charged with distributing the mail.

Her mother asks her to read the directions on medication. Her father has her look over the grade reports sent home with Ali and Leila. Her neighbor, Khadija, asks her to read the letters from her husband in France. Her older siblings ask her to fill out job applications.

Although she holds the prestigious position of scribe for these tasks, Meriam, a dutiful child, is greatly attached to her parents, her emotional and material support, and very respectful toward elders around her. To her, her father is a hero and a wise man. She loves her mother’s nightly storytelling. She is constantly amazed by the travels undertaken, the perils faced, and the sagas related by hosts of characters, appearing and disappearing, following the shuttle of the narrative, which only her mother can weave together with such harmony.

Meriam, an avid reader of storybooks from the bare-bones public library, is fascinated by her father’s wisdom but is confused by the fact that he cannot read and write. Likewise, she finds her mother’s tales to be more compelling than books, but they are not recorded and kept safely in a library.

The paradox Meriam struggles with – respecting and valuing the knowledge of her parents who do not read and write while being aware of the status of reading and writing as skills that make one “smart” – is one that underpins the literacy stories examined here.

Imagined Lives is about the local texture of lives interlaced with each other and threaded into the larger patterns of the global framework.

Qol li-man yada’ee fil ‘ilmee ma ‘rifatan; ‘Hafidhta shay’an wa ghaabat ‘anka ashyaa ‘u.”

(Tell those who claim to know all; “In learning a thing or two, you missed the rest.”)
Photographs of Steens Mountain, Summer Lake, the Painted Hills, Catlow Valley, Malheur Refuge, Harney Basin, Warner Valley and the Alvord Desert are among sixty striking images of Eastern Oregon now on exhibit at the Center for the Humanities. This is not the “Eastern Oregon” of Bend and the outdoor winter playground, but of the real eastern half of the state where rock, sky and evidence of ranching past and present dominate the landscape.

The pictures were taken by five photographers who have traveled often during the past five years—together and separately—east of the Cascades, and have pooled their work to create the exhibit, “Five Photographers: Perspectives on Eastern Oregon.” The sixty-plus prints in various photographic media are by Owen Bentley, Rich Bergeman and Allan Doerksen, of Corvallis, and Kurt Norlin and Bob Ross, of Albany.

“The show explores how different eyes perceive the same subject,” said Bergeman. Although they sometimes photographed in the same places, such as the abandoned Shirk Ranch at Guano Lake, the petroglyphs at the base of Hart Mountain, and the ghost town of Richmond, the artists created widely different works that reflect their personal styles.

Doerksen and Bergeman offer classic black-and-white studies of weathered wood-plank buildings, abandoned interiors and other scenes taken with large-format cameras. While Doerksen uses the traditional silver-gelatin papers to print his work, Bergeman prints in the historic platinum process and also shows some small, manipulated-color Polaroid prints.

Ross, a well-known nature photographer, presents color images made with a digital camera. His work reveals a fascination with the land and a wide-ranging interest in subject matter, from wildlife and scenery to detailed close-ups of lichen on rocks. Norlin is showing two distinct styles of work—a selection of panoramic color prints that reveal the scale of the Eastern Oregon landscape, and a set of photographs made with a toy camera, whose soft focus and distortion add a dream-like quality to the images.

Bentley presents large-format black-and-white prints that find the ironic and playful in the small towns and deserted homesteads that dot the desert landscape.

The exhibit is on display through June in the Center’s public meeting rooms in Autzen House, 811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For information, call 737-2450.
The most sympathetic thing I ever heard my father say about my mother was, “How’d you like to be that fat?” It was raining and I was in the backseat of the Impala, eleven years old, my sister Helen beside me, and my brother Timmy leaning against the other window. We were on a vacation in Maine, looking for a motel. My father thought reservations were limiting — he liked to take each day as it came, find a motel on the edge of a sleepy town no longer on the main road, cut off from the Interstate by ten miles. A motel managed by an old couple — The Swaying Pines or The Whale and Schooner — dark paneling, dusty lampshades, a Howard Johnson’s ashtray, a sign welcoming hunters and snowmobilers even in summer, and rock-bottom rates.

The opening passages of Keith Scribner’s novel in progress, House of Stairs, describes two related scenes told in the voice of narrator Max Phelan, the first a typical moment on a family vacation, the second the death of a young man who plunges from a rooftop at prep school. “In part, the novel is about memory, how memories change over time and how they can be created or imagined,” said Scribner, a Research Fellow and assistant professor of English at OSU.

The book merges three main narratives; one in 1963, one in 1976, and one present-day narrative at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The 1963 narrative is about Max Phelan’s maternal uncle, Richie, who goes to college but drops out to join the army and is killed in Vietnam. Max recreates Richie’s story from imagination, with little real information.

Others in the family also are obsessed with the story of the lost Richie, each believing private versions in which he’s a hero who saved his platoon, or a martyr who joined the army to bring honor to a dishonored family, or a victim of the Sixties. “The novel explores these sorts of fabrications and the ways in which family members can live their lives in response to each other,” said Scribner. “In a more general sense, it explores the ways in which American mythology can influence a family’s mythology.”

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### Calendar

**April**

- **4** Arulf: A Frankish Pilgrim in Arab Jerusalem in the Seventh Century. Seminar by John Tolan, Center Research Fellow, Professor of Medieval History, University of Nantes. 4 p.m. Autzen House.
- **18** We’ve a Story to Tell: The Perils, Pitfalls, and Occasional Rewards of Being a Southern Baptist Woman in the Ministry. Lecture by Susan Shaw, Center Research Fellow, Director of Women Studies, OSU. 4 p.m. Autzen House.
- **25** On Editing the ‘Jouvencel.’ Seminar by Michelle Szkilnik, Center Research Fellow, Professor of French Literature, University of Nantes. 4 p.m. Autzen House.

**May**

- **2** Conflict and Cooperation: Researching the Operation of Tea Outgrower Schemes in Zimbabwe. Seminar by Joseph Mtisi, Center Research Fellow, Lecturer, Dept. of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe. 4 p.m. Autzen House.
- **9** Imagined Lives: Women and Literacy in North Africa. Lecture by Laura Rice, Center Research Fellow, Associate Professor of English, OSU. 4 p.m. Autzen House.
- **16** The Province of Affliction: Illness in Eighteenth-Century New England. Lecture by Ben Mutschler, Center Research Fellow, Assistant Professor of History, OSU. 4 p.m. Autzen House.
- **23** Citizen Reviewers: Popular Culture, Technology, and the Circulation of Cultural Power. Lecture by Lisa Ede, Center Research Fellow, Professor of English, OSU. 4 p.m. Autzen House.
Family mythology continued . . .

Most of the novel concerns the 1976 narrative about Max in prep school. A scholarship student, he is motivated by class aspiration and feelings of resentment and inadequacy. He is compelled by Richie’s story because he comes to realize that, like everyone else in the family, his life is a reaction to the life he has imagined for Richie.

“I think of the 1963 narrative as the ‘beginning’ of the Sixties, and the 1976 narrative as the ‘end’ of the Sixties. Richie is killed in the summer of 1968 – perhaps the height of the Sixties – a year of assassination, paranoia, and chaos. Richie stumbles into the beginning of the Sixties and social freedom he can’t navigate. In 1976, Max and his friends are beset by a feeling of having just missed the Sixties, longing for what they see as a more socially liberal time that has passed them by.”

In 2004, Max Phelan’s teenage son has an accident that he may or may not survive. The novel links the death of Richie with the death of Todd Harrington, the young man who fell from the school roof – a death that Max turns out to have been more involved in than is revealed earlier — and both are linked to the possible death of Max’s son. “Max’s redemption and the salvation of his son involve Max’s revisiting the earlier deaths and symbolically saving Richie and Todd through an act of forgiveness.”

The screen rights for Scribner’s novel The Good Life have been optioned by Killer Films, which hopes to raise the money to produce a movie starring Sarah Jessica Parker, Matt Dillon, and Allison Janney, to be directed by Scott Elliot. Scribner also is the author of the 2003 novel Miracle Girl, and is completing, The Oregon Experiment, about a fictional secessionist movement in the Pacific Northwest.

Illness continued . . .

Illness continued . . .

small, and to discern the benefits of the changes that life’s trials visited upon them. At the same time, the peoples of the region created practices to meet the immediate social challenges of affliction.”

Mutchsler’s book explores the creative challenges that grew out of the everyday nature of crisis and suffering, focusing on the problems routinely presented by illness, the disruptions it caused and the pressures it placed on the afflicted and their caregivers. Even for the well-connected, illness could present serious challenges to efforts to achieve and maintain “competencies,” or a middling level of subsistence.

At the other end of the spectrum were the sick poor and an even broader array of persons brought into dependency through forces that everyone considered to be beyond control. Epidemics and war were chief among them. War removed healthy bodies from households and returned them injured, desperately ill or chronically infirm, while epidemics cut through towns, leaving not only many dead but survivors who struggled to survive the aftermath.

“The book attends to the stark differences that separated the experiences of the well-connected and the marginal, but it argues as well that both were united in facing a dynamic of dependency in daily life. Illness acted as a force pulling the stricken and those charged with their outward care towards dependency.” The demands of sickness spread outward, from families and households to neighborhoods and towns, and through all layers of government.

Mutschler also examines the changing fate of illness in a society that increasingly embraced health as something that could be achieved through proper habits and the timely intervention of charitable institutions. New institutional responses to illness included state programs aimed at helping “paupers,” and charitable help for the sick, including dispensaries, female societies, and hospitals.

“Here the challenge lies in probing the ambiguous terrain that illness created in a liberal society—between the worthy and the vicious, between the sick body as a source of heightened sensibility and of shame.”

“Illness acted as a force pulling the stricken and those charged with their outward care towards dependency.”
that, albeit following the adventures of a young knight, also amply deals with war techniques and ethics.”

The protagonist of Le Jouvencel is a poor nobleman who, through bravery and audacity, quickly rises in the military hierarchy. Sent to rescue a foreign king, he succeeds in saving him and marries his daughter, thus becoming regent of the kingdom. “His remarkable career at first seems to contradict my findings about what makes a successful knight in the 15th century. While staying away from the court and refusing to abide by its social practices—in one instance he says he would rather spend money ransoming a bowman than buying clothes—he does manage to reach quite an enviable social position. He owes his success not to some courtly favor, but to personal qualities extolled by the narrative, notably austerity, modesty, and bravery combined with shrewdness.”

Eventually, however, the Jouvencel recognizes that his position is not what he assumed. “Although he pretends to take it lightly, one is left with an ambiguous message. Could it be, after all, that political intrigues are a better means to social ascendency than military prowess? The Jouvencel thus reflects with some unease on the place and the role of the warrior in the changing society of the late Middle Ages, on his relation to the prince and the court.”

The ongoing literary impact of Le Jouvencel is of particular interest to Szkilnik. “I believe that its influence can be felt in the image that 17th-century war memoirs, such as those of La Rochefoucauld, Campion or Bussy-Rabutin, give of the ideal military leader.” Also of interest is the “complex reworking of sources. Medievalists have long acknowledged that rewriting is the basis of literary production in the Middle Ages.” Jean de Bueil, for instance, drew on texts that agreed with his own reflections on war, strategy, and military duties.

Preparing a new critical edition of the romance is complicated by the existence of numerous manuscripts scattered around Europe, as well as by the length of the text. One important copy fills 122 folios (this includes notes by Guillaume de Tringant). Some of the manuscripts were lavishly illustrated, one by the 15th-century painter Jean Fouquet.

The only available edition of Le Jouvencel dates from the 19th century (reprinted in 1996), but “the edition is hardly a critical one. While containing a long historical and biographical introduction, it provides very few variants, no glossary, no analysis of the language, no critical notes and no justification of editorial decisions.” Szkilnik’s new critical edition is under contract with Champion (Paris), to be issued in the Classique Francais du Moyen Age collection.

Could it be, after all, that political intrigues are a better means to social ascendency than military prowess?
The Center for the Humanities

The Center was established in 1984 as an outgrowth of the Humanities Development Program, which had been creating innovative interdisciplinary courses since 1977. The Center’s focus has broadened to a concern for improving the quality of humanities research as well as teaching at OSU. This is accomplished through the awarding of resident research fellowships to both OSU and visiting scholars, as well as by sponsoring conferences, seminars, lecture series, art exhibits and other events. The Center occupies Autzen House, 811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue.

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