Making the ‘best’ of feminist theology

Now as they went on their way, [Jesus] entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part.”

Martha and Mary stand on opposite sides of a deep divide that separates conservative and progressive Christians: fundamentalists and evangelicals want women to serve in the home like Martha, while progressives support women’s right to be active and equal followers of Jesus, like Mary.

“Unfortunately, from a feminist perspective, those on the Christian Right have been much more successful in the mass communication of their

Continued on Page 9

Eight Fellows named for 2010-11

The Center has awarded eight Research Fellowships for 2010-11 to OSU faculty members from five different departments. A new program jointly sponsored by the Center and the Horning Endowment will offer a Visiting Fellowship in the history and philosophy of science, to be announced during Spring Term.

OSU Fellows receive one term of support to be relieved of teaching and other responsibilities, though they are considered in residence for the full academic year. They are provided a comfortable office in Autzen House, along with a computer and support services.

The call for applications for 2011-12 Fellowships will go out in the Fall. New Fellows and their research project titles are listed below.

2010-11 Fellows:

David Bernell (Political Science)
The Curious Case of Cuba in American Foreign Policy

Fina Carpena-Méndez (Anthropology)
Seeds to the Wind: Growing Up Across Furrows and Borders in Neoliberal Rural Mexico

Sebastian Heiduschke
(Foreign Languages and Literatures)
From Boring to Booming: Fan Cultures of East Germany’s DEFA Cinema

Continued on page 11

Center & Horning offer new Fellowship

The Center and OSU’s Horning Endowment in the Humanities have teamed up to offer a new post-doctoral Research Fellowship in the history and philosophy of science, to begin in 2010-11.

The Horning Endowment will provide funding for the new Fellowship while the Center will handle administration and will provide an office and general support services just as it does for other Research Fellows. The stipend for the nine-month residency will be $40,000.

The Fellowship is open to scholars (not currently employed by OSU) who have completed doctorates since January 2005. They may be from all fields of the history of science, including medicine and technology, as well as the philosophy of science and intellectual history.

The first call for applications went out during Fall Term, with a deadline of March 1. Information about next year’s application process is available on the Center’s website: http://oregonstate.edu/dept/humanities/
To understand the American story of emancipation and Reconstruction, asserts historian Stacey Smith, it is necessary to look not only north and south but also west.

In 1849, delegates to the California constitutional convention voted unanimously to prohibit slavery and involuntary servitude within state boundaries. One year later, California entered the Union as a free state.

Yet, from the gold rush to the 1880s, California was home not only to illegal African slavery, but also a state-operated system of Native American indenture and apprenticeship, Latin American and Chinese labor, and systems of sexual trafficking in Chinese and Indian women.

The state was also home to many who protested race-based bondage in all its forms.

“Perhaps most importantly, it was a place where complicated forms of unfreedom persisted in the face of a free constitution that prohibited slavery,” said Smith, a Center Research Fellow and assistant professor of history at OSU. Smith’s book-in-progress, California Bound: Unfree Labor, Race, and the Reconstruction of the Far West aims to tell the story of the complex world of unfree labor, how it came into being, how Californians struggled over its meanings and contradictions, and how it ended.

Unlike the standard narrative that depicts the struggle over slavery as a contest between North and South, free labor and slave labor, black and white, Smith’s book will open geographic and cultural boundaries.

“One we expand the frame of vision to include California and the Far West, it becomes clear that the dilemmas raised by slavery and emancipation touched distant corners of North America.” Moreover, said Smith, the California story gives a very different regional picture of the transition from bondage to liberty, one in which contests over the meaning of human freedom and human difference could not easily be contained by binary categories of black or white, slave or free.

“The book weaves together the histories of California’s multiple unfree populations to construct a broader narrative about the state’s bound labor systems and the diverse people who endured them, profited from them, and argued about them.” The stories of these groups have been told before individually, Smith said, but bound together in her book they reveal a common struggle over the meaning of freedom in California, “a tortuous, and torturous, process by which relations of free labor came, at least ostensibly, to replace those of bondage.”

Delegates to California’s constitutional convention not only sought to prevent slavery from expanding to the Pacific, but they were eager to restrict migration of semi-bound African-American, Pacific Islander, and Latin American men. “Though slavery appeared to be a clear-cut type of unfree labor inimical to California’s free state status, slaveholders and proslavery officials proved adept at manipulating and interpreting state laws to protect rights to slave property.”

Like the 1849 constitutional convention debates, said Smith, the controversy over contract labor was deeply inflected with the language of race, gender, and citizenship as Anglo legislators argued over whether Chinese and black contract workers were free men or degraded slaves who would corrupt the state economy and polity. “The confusing status of these labor systems—were they examples of voluntary contract or insidious forms of unfree labor?—generated intense disputes about how the government of a free state should regulate them.”

Smith discusses the evolution of apprenticeship laws in California, and how the binding of Indian and black children—and eventually adult Indians—into white households became tightly linked to ideas about white supremacy and male mastery.

During the 1860s, as slavery was eroding in the U.S. South, antislavery Republicans gained power in California politics. Republicans repealed discriminatory legislation, including Indian apprenticeship and anti-black testimony laws, but at the same time many embraced the language of antislavery to justify barring Chinese male “coolies” and Chinese female “harlot serfs” from the state.

Returning to power in 1867, Democrats continued the trend through Reconstruction policies that “used the radical idiom of antislavery as a basis for Chinese exclusion. Initially California oddities, these peculiar anti-Chinese, antislavery discourses eventually fed into national
For an artist to fall among reformers is more fatal than for a merchant to fall among bandits.

When Australian writer and feminist Stella Miles Franklin “fell” in 1906, she landed in Chicago in the arms of the National Women’s Trade Union League and “threw herself full tilt into the exciting and pioneering work of social reform.” The writing that had won her early fame slid into the background—but not nearly as far as some have asserted, according to Janet Lee.

“Although the decade in Chicago has been characterized as unproductive for Franklin since she published very little, she wrote incessantly and left behind a considerable amount of writing that was intimately connected to her passionate friendships and her commitment to working women in

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**My Brilliant Career**

_Excerpt from the novel describing the arrival of the heroine at remote Barney’s Gap where she was to be governess to eight children of a rough Australian farm family. Written by Miles Franklin at age 16._

“Six dogs, two pet lambs, two or three pigs, about twenty fowls, eight children which seemed a dozen, and Mrs. M’Swat bundled out through the back door at our approach. Those children, not through poverty—M’Swat made a boast of his substantial banking account—but on account of ignorance and slatternliness, were the dirtiest urchins I have ever seen, and were so ragged that those parts of them which should have been covered were exposed to view. The majority of them had red hair and wide hanging-open mouths. Mrs. M’Swat was a great, fat, ignorant, pleasant-looking woman, shockingly dirty and untidy. Her tremendous, flabby stockingless ankles bulged over her unlaced hobnailed boots; her dress was torn and unbuttoned at the throat, displaying one of the dirtiest necks I have seen. It did not seem to worry her that the infant she held under her arm like a roll of cloth howled killingly, while the other little ones clung to her skirts, attempting to hide their heads in its folds like so many emus. She greeted me with a smacking kiss, consigned the baby to the charge of the eldest child, a big girl of fourteen, and seizing upon my trunks as though they were feather-weight, with heavy clodhopping step disappeared into the house with them. Returning, she invited me to enter, and following in her wake, I was followed by the children through the dirtiest passage into the dirtiest room, to sit upon the dirtiest chair, to gaze upon the other dirtiest furniture of which I have ever heard. One wild horrified glance at the dirt, squalor, and total benightedness that met me on every side, and I trembled in every limb with suppressed emotion and the frantic longing to get back to Caddagat which possessed me. One instant showed me that I could never, never live here.”

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Born in 1879 in the Brindabella Valley of New South Wales, Franklin was just 22 when her novel *My Brilliant Career* was published to instant acclaim. The book, written when she was 16, was a semi-autobiographical story about coming of age in the Australian bush, and reflected Franklin’s passionate interest in feminism as well as her budding socialism and support for land reform.

“However, despite early literary fame, Franklin quickly became disappointed by rejections associated with sequels to *My Brilliant Career,*” said Lee.

*Continued on Page 11*
A one-man exhibit of paintings by Herbert Berman will be on display at the Center through June and will include portraits along with still lifes and landscapes.

A native New Yorker, Berman studied drawing and painting at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, The National Academy, and the Art Students’ League in New York. His paintings are in collections in the U.S., Europe, Asia and South America and his work was featured in the June and December 2001 issues of The Artist’s Magazine. He has been represented by numerous galleries in the Pacific Northwest.

Berman is a former artist-in-residence at the Salmagundi Club Center for American Art in New York City and for six years was the resident artist at Forrest Temple Gallery in Corvallis. His portraits, including many of local residents, were first displayed at Pegasus Gallery in Corvallis.

A striking book of Berman’s paintings has been created by Shadowsmith Photographers and SP&B Reprographics in Corvallis. Berman maintains a blog about his work and painting in general at http://herb32427.wordpress.com/.

The exhibit is open weekdays, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at Autzen House, 811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue. For information, call 541-737-2450.

Scholar from Spain will consider Emerson’s ‘Experience’

Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso, Associate Professor of English at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain, will be a guest of the Center in April and will deliver a talk on April 19 as part of the regular Monday lecture series.

Miguel-Alfonso specializes in 19th-century American literature and literary theory, with particular interest in American Renaissance writers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Margaret Fuller. His book El romanticismo estadounidense y la idea de la literatura (American Romanticism and the Idea of Literature) will be published in June by Verbum (Madrid). Previous books include translations into Spanish of Emerson’s Essays and George Santayana’s Reason in Art.

Miguel-Alfonso’s current project is an essay on Margaret Fuller and politics for a special issue of ESQ commemorating the second centenary of her birth. His Center lecture “The Experience of Reading Emerson’s ‘Experience’” will draw on a larger project with the working title Emerson, Aesthetic Vision and the Disenchantment of Modernity.

Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso
Winter & Spring Calendar

WINTER TERM
Art Exhibit--January through March
     Collage Art: Nimble Arrangements for the World of Thought

Lectures at 4 p.m., Autzen House
January 13 Adopting Stalinism: Mao and his Making of the Chinese Communist Party into a Bolshevik Party, 1941-45. Lecture by Hua-yu Li, Research Fellow, Department of Political Science, OSU.

February 8 The Money Question: Currency in American Political Thought, 1700-1900. Lecture by Jeffrey Sklansky, Research Fellow, Department of History, OSU.


22 The Global Gothic: Tolerance and Cosmopolitanism in the Novels of Ann Radcliffe and her Contemporaries. Lecture by Evan Gottlieb, Research Fellow, Department of English, OSU.

April 12 They Didn’t Teach Me That in Sunday School: Feminist Theology from Ivory Tower to Pew. Lecture by Susan Shaw, Research Fellow, Director of Women Studies and the Difference, Power & Discrimination Program, OSU.

SPRING TERM
Art Exhibit--April through June
     Paintings, by Herbert Berman

May 17 California Bound: Unfree Labor, Race, and the Reconstruction of the Far West. Lecture by Stacey Smith, Research Fellow, Department of History, OSU.

‘Unfree’ continued from page 2

Reconstruction politics in the 1870s and 1880s.

“They became integral components of the federal Page Law of 1875 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the harshest race-based immigration restriction measure of the nineteenth century—all this in a nation that had, in most of its other Reconstruction policy, disconamteened arbitrary distinctions and inequalities based on race and color. . . The primacy of anti-Chinese discourse to national racial and immigration policy in the 1870s reveals that California’s own distinctive contests over the meaning of human freedom remade the face of Reconstruction itself.”

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Recent books by Center Fellows

Neil W. Browne, English, OSU

Tracy Daughterty, English, OSU
*Hiding Man: A Biography of Donald Barthelme* (St. Martin’s Press, 2009)

Hua-yu Li, Political Science, OSU

Vrenelli Farber, Foreign Languages and Literatures, OSU
*Stanislavsky in Practice: Actor Training in Post-Soviet Russia* (Peter Lang, 2009)

Kirs Peltomaki, Art, OSU

Anita Helle, ed., English, OSU

Evan Gottlieb, English, OSU
*Feeling British: Sympathy and National Identity in Scottish and English Writing, 1707-1832* (Bucknell UP, 2007)

Susan Shaw, Women Studies, OSU
*Good Speaks to Us Too: Southern Baptist Women on Church, Home and Society* (UP of Kentucky, 2008)
Gary Ferngren, History, OSU  
**Medicine & Health Care in Early Christianity**  
(The Johns Hopkins UP, 2009)

Bryan Tilt, Anthropology, OSU  
**The Struggle for Sustainability in Rural China: Environmental Values and Civil Society**  
(Columbia UP, 2010)

Kay Garcia, Trans., Foreign Languages & Literatures, OSU  
**Paletitas de Guayaba--On a Train Called Absence**  
By Erlinda Gonzales-Berry  
(Floricanto Press, 2009)

Richmond Barbour, English, OSU  
**The Third Voyage Journals: Writing and Performance in the London East India Company, 1607-10**  
(Palgrave MacMillan, 2009)

Jon Lewis, English, OSU  
**American Film: A History**  
(W.W. Norton, 2008)

Michael Oriard, English, OSU  
**Brand NFL: Making & Selling America’s Favorite Sport**  
(U of North Carolina P, 2007)

James Blumenthal, Ed., Philosophy, OSU  
**Incompatible Visions: South Asian Religions in History and Culture**  
(U of Wisconsin-Madison Press, 2005)

Sunil Khanna, Anthropology, OSU  
**Fetal/Fatal Knowledge: New Reproductive Technologies and Family-Building Strategies in India**  
(Wadsworth Publishing, 2009)

Continued on page 8
Books by Fellows continued

Hung-yok Ip, Ed., History, OSU
Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm
(Rowman & Littlefield, 2008)

Vicki Tolar Burton, English, OSU
Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism
(Baylor UP, 2008)

John Tolan, History, U of Nantes
Saint Francis and the Sultan: The Curious
History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter
(Oxford UP, 2009)

Ehud Havazelet, Writing, UO
Bearing the Body
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007)

Paul SpickaKr, History, UC-Santa Barbara
Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and
Colonialism in American History and Identity
(Routledge, 2007)

Michael Oriard, English, OSU
Bowled Over: Big-Time College
Footbalm from the Sixties to the BCS Era
(U of North Carolina P, 2009)

Evan Gottlieb, Ed., English, OSU
Approaches to Teaching Scott’s Waverly Novels
(MLA, 2009)

Hua-yu Li, Ed., Political Science, OSU
China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1919-Present
(Lexington Books, 2010)
Feminist theology continued from page 1

ideas about women than have progressives,” said Susan Shaw, a Research Fellow and director of both Women Studies and the Difference, Power & Discrimination Program at OSU. Not only is there a split in the biblical interpretation of the role of women, said Shaw, but public discussion about women and Christian faith also suffers from “bifurcation.” On one side is the “fundamentalist/evangelical pop theology about women that utilizes literalist readings of the Bible to teach women’s submission to men, women’s primary role as wife/mother/homemaker, and women’s exclusion from ordained ministry.”

On the other side is “feminist theology which is highly academic, rigorous, complex, and mostly inaccessible to general readers.” To tackle this split, Shaw is writing a new book, Choosing the Better Part: Women, Faith, and Feminist Theology, aimed at making the best of feminist theology and biblical criticism readily accessible to the general public in a way she hopes will be both appealing and challenging.

In general, said Shaw, religion has played an increasingly prominent role in cultural conversations over the past few years, resulting in much public discussion over significant issues of concern to men and women alike. That this has not been true for a discussion of women’s role in Christianity has left a gap in the discourse. Popular writers on the fundamentalist, conservative side of the issue of women’s role, she said, tend to “rely on theologically shallow, antifeminist assertions and clichés to argue that women’s happiness and fulfillment come from a formulaic submission to conservative notions about women, which they cast in the guise of liberation under God.”

On the progressive side, the arguments are mostly above the heads of readers without some theological education.

Shaw’s book will focus on topics typically found in a work of systematic theology—the Bible, Christology, moral and ethical decision-making, eschatology—as well as on issues of particular importance to women, and will use language intelligible to all. The book will begin with a discussion of the place of doubt. “I will make the case that a true, living Christian faith is rooted in questioning, struggling, and not-knowing and that certainty and fear of intellectual rigor in matters of theology are really the antithesis of faith. I will examine the popular antifeminist writings that encourage certitude over inquiry and submission over agency.”

In later sections, Shaw will discuss feminist interpretations of biblical passages and feminist alternatives to tradition, with the goal of helping readers use interpretive methods that go beyond biblical literalism or traditional historical criticism.

In a section devoted to examining traditional theological doctrines, Shaw will emphasize the importance of language and metaphor and look closely at practical implications of theological doctrines in women’s everyday lives. The role of women in the ministry is another key area, in particular, “the current ‘women’s ministries’ movement among evangelicals, which purports to provide women avenues for ministry while emphatically excluding them from ordained ministry and the pastorate.”

Reproductive rights, domestic violence, sexual assault, war, poverty, family and other ethical issues important to women will be examined through the lens of feminist theology. The book will conclude by exploring the relationship of Christian women to environmental issues. “By examining feminist biblical criticism, theology, church history, and ethics in an engaging and accessible way, this book will provide an alternative to readers, women in particular, who are seeking more progressive ways to understand and live their Christian faith but who lack the tools to do so.”

Susan Shaw is the author of God Speaks to Us, Too: Southern Baptist Women on Church, Home, and Society and Storytelling in Religious Education.

Korean scholar on American literature a guest at Center

South Korean scholar and expert in early American literature, Young Soo Kim, is in residence at the Center for the second half of Winter Term through Spring Term. He is on sabbatical leave from his position as Chair of the Department of English Language and Culture at Hanyang University in Ansan, South Korea. While at OSU, he is being provided with an office and support services at the Center. Kim is the author of more than a dozen articles on the writing of Nathaniel Hawthorne, as well articles on Willa Cather, Mark Twain, and others. He is the Korean translator of A Short History of English Literature, by Robert Barnard.
During Peter J. Copek’s sixteen years as the founding director of the Center, he regularly made Center money available to support cultural events on campus. In addition to conferences, music festivals, and film series, the Center supported many special and unusual lectures and programs, including visits to OSU by Gore Vidal, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and venerable South African township jazz singer and film star Dolly Rathebe. The level of support for such events has always depended on the state of the Center’s finances from year to year. After Peter died suddenly in June, 2001, there was much discussion of how best to keep his name alive so that his impact on OSU intellectual life would not be forgotten. What resulted is the Peter J. Copek Fund, intended to provide more regular and stable support for the same kinds of cultural events that he supported through the Center. In spring of 2003, the campaign to raise money for this fund began with a letter to former Research Fellows. The campaign has turned to a general appeal to Center friends and supporters, plus all those who not only value Peter’s work on behalf of the university but would like to see strong, ongoing support for campus cultural events.

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Send this form along with contribution to the Peter J. Copek Fund, Center for the Humanities, 811 S.W. Jefferson Ave., Corvallis, OR, 97333-4506

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Fellows return for Center talks

Former Research Fellows Adam Rome and Robin Schulze returned to the Center in early March to talk about the future of the book and the impact of the first Earth Day, held on April 22, 1970.

The two were in residence at the Center in 2005-06; both are on The Pennsylvania State University faculty. On March 8, Schulze led a noon discussion on “The Future of the Book? Testing the Sony Electronic Reader at Penn State,” and Rome lectured that afternoon on “The Genius of Earth Day.”

Schulze is Department Chair, Professor of English, and Executive Director of the Society for Textual Scholarship. She is the author of Becoming Marianne Moore: The Early Poems, 1907-1924, and The Web of Friendship: Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens.


Miles Franklin continued from page 3

“She was also confused about men and marriage in the context of her growing feminism and ambivalent about a suitor whom she knew would destine her to a life of domestic toil at the edge of the bush. Franklin’s choices about marriage, work, and relationships, which plagued her throughout her life, mirrored the challenges faced by educated women negotiating the constraints of femininity at this time.”

Armed with an introduction to Jane Adams of Hull House, the 26-year-old Franklin landed in Chicago in 1906. She soon became national secretary for the National Women’s Trade Union League and eventually editor of its journal, Life and Labor.

“Through her activities with some of the most famous labor leaders of the day, and in contact with working women themselves, Franklin worked to improve the terrible conditions of women’s lives.” Her own life also proved difficult as she faced health and financial problems, unaccustomed cold weather, absence of family, and coping with romantic relationships that threatened loss of autonomy and undermining of her creative life.

Despite these private troubles recorded year after year in her pocket diaries, said Lee, Franklin enjoyed social engagements with a host of colleagues and friends, reformers and writers alike.

“As amply demonstrated in her journals, she wanted desperately to succeed as a writer and to experience fame and acceptance. The poignancy of this conflict, however, was that literary success eluded her during these years in Chicago and it was not until she left the United States in 1915, and then returned to Australia in 1933, that she regained her fame.”

The novels that followed included Bring the Monkey, All That Swagger, My Career Goes Bung, and the Brent of Bin Bin series that spanned 1928 through 1956.

“Still, the muse for this great ambition during the Chicago years, and for the many unpublished short stories and plays left behind, was her passion for the causes of the day and her involvement in social reform,” said Lee. “Franklin lived the politics of gender, social class, and pacifism with a zeal that gave these unpublished writings insight and vitality. This passion in Franklin’s life and work during her time in Chicago is the focus of Fallen Among Reformers.”

New Fellows continued from page 1

Anita Helle (English)
Photo-signatures: Poetry, Photography, and the Changing Shapes of Literary Authorship since 1960

Shelley Jordon (Art)
Anita’s Journey

Deanna Paniataaq Kingston
(Anthropology)
Niglarugut Uguvangiuguruagut: We King Islanders are Wolf Dancing

Susan Meyers (English)
Del Otro Lado: Constructions of Literacy in Rural Mexico and the Effects of Transnational Migration

Keith Scribner (English)
Connecticut Shade (A Novel)
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 continues to offer a certificate program in Twentieth Century Studies, but its 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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