The Center for the Humanities

A MEMBER OF THE CONSORTIUM OF HUMANITIES CENTERS AND INSTITUTES

AUTZEN HOUSE       OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY    FALL  2012

‘It seemed Ireland had been blessed with only male writers’

A woman who raised her head above the parapet was a woman who would not win.
Maeve Binchy

The genesis of Charlotte Headrick’s project on the women who have served as “movers and shakers” of the Irish theater involves a good story—of course.

In 1985, several prominent men in the Irish theater world announced the plan to publish three volumes of the best Irish writing. When the project, the Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, was completed in 1991, “it seemed that Ireland had been blessed with only male writers.”

Not one of the many Irish women playwrights, poets, essayists or fiction writers had been included. Outrage ensued, and a fourth volume that would “give women their place in Irish letters” was promised. Years passed. No such book appeared.

At length, a group of Irish women scholars took on the task, and in 2002, the fourth volume was published. A fifth soon followed. In addition to literary figures, the volumes included women’s contributions in social sciences, history, theology, oral tradition and other fields.

“It was only in the late twentieth century, and now in the twenty-first century that female artists have claimed their rightful place in Irish letters, particularly Irish theater,” said Headrick, a Research Fellow and professor of theater arts in OSU’s School of Arts and Communication.

But, in fact, the magnitude of women artists’ influence on Irish theater has been far too great to be covered in an anthology that includes women from other fields.

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Research proposals invited for 2013-14 Fellowships

The Center is now accepting applications from OSU faculty members interested in 2013-14 Fellowships for the resident research program. Each year the Center brings together a new group of scholars to pursue research and writing in an environment designed to be stimulating as well as protected from the usual daily demands of academic life. Up to eight Fellows will be selected.

Until 2009-10, Fellowships also were awarded to faculty from other universities as well as independent scholars, but the Visiting Fellow program has been put on hold for a couple of years. When that program resumes, it will be noted in this newsletter and on the Center website.

Applications from OSU faculty may be for any humanities related research, which should be understood to include not only traditional humanities disciplines but also those projects within the social and natural sciences that are historical or philosophical in approach, and that attempt to cast light on questions of interpretation or criticism traditionally found in the humanities. This also includes interpretations of science and technology.

Fellows are awarded one term of release from teaching, though they may keep their office in Autzen House for the full academic year. The Center provides all Fellows with a computer and general office support services.

Applications must be submitted by 4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 17, 2013. Application information is on the website or available by calling or writing the Center:
http://oregonstate.edu/dept/humanities/
Fellowship Program
Center for the Humanities
Oregon State University
811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue
Corvallis, OR, 97333-4506
541-737-2450

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A great ship demolished on its first voyage

The 1610 waterfront gathering, which included King James, expected to celebrate the launching of the largest merchant ship so far built in England. Instead, the 1,200-ton Trades Increase proved too big to get through the dock head. And this was just the beginning of the ship’s troubles.

As noted by the ship’s second-in-command in an unpublished log: at the attempted event “... all things failed & nothing was effected...”

“It was an ill-omened start to an expedition whose catastrophic losses in equipment and personnel, and handsome profits for investors, ignited bitter controversy in England,” said Richmond Barbour, a Research Fellow and professor of English in the OSU School of Writing, Literature, and Film. “The full story of this voyage has never been told. .. But the narrative, fragmented among journals, minutes, and letters, some unpublished, has been treated summarily by scholars, most of whom have endorsed the mythos of British imperialism.”

Everything related to the Sixth Expedition of the East India Company went wrong—corporate strategy, marine technology, structures of command, even the extraordinary capture and temporary enslavement of the captain and many crew members in Ottoman-ruled Arabia Felix (Yemen). Barbour’s new book project, The Loss of the Trades Increase, aims to tell this story as it has not been told before, drawing in part on unpublished portions of a journal kept by the captain of the Eighth Voyage, which followed and ended up in conflict with the Sixth Voyage in the Red Sea and Java.

“The biography of a great ship demolished on its first voyage, the book will present a ‘micro-history’ that illuminates the long view of the East India Company’s contributions to the development of British imperialism and global capitalism.”

A portion of the Eighth Voyage journal, published in 1900, begins the account halfway through the journey. The suppressed earlier section, said Barbour, “provides material exceptionally useful for post-colonial scholarship—unvarnished witness to damaging conflicts among company agents and critical breakdowns in structures of command.”

Long recognized as a principal tool of British empire building, the East India Company is less known for its initial failures and inherent limitations. Most prior editors of the company’s papers have marginalized or effaced the dysfunctions that haunted and ultimately unraveled the British Empire.

The original work of the company deserves scrutiny, said Barbour, “not only because it set preconditions for a lengthy interval of British domination in India, but more importantly today, because the East India Company expressed and propagated, in elemental and sometimes brutal form, global appetites, methods of organization, conflicts of interest, patterns of exploitation, and structural weaknesses that persist in multinational corporations and continue to volatilize international markets.”

The current project is a natural outgrowth of Barbour’s previous books, The Third Voyage Journals: Writing and Performance in the London East India Company, 1607-10, and Before Orientalism: London’s Theatre of the East, 1576-1626. For a literary scholar, the records of the founding generation of the East India Company provide a broad window.

“The merchants kept careful records. .. To study their corporate writing culture in relation to the material traffic it managed, the other peoples and histories it engaged, and the public discourses the business stimulated, valuably triangulates literary and economic history for the twenty-first century.”

“... all things failed & nothing was effected. ..”
Clues to progress lie in nature of discourse

The delegate from Yemen emphasized the importance of transparency and equity, and said all countries must have a voice.

The delegate from Yemen characterized the agreement as a kind of “new colonial exercise” that marginalized many nations and violated trust.

The delegate from Mauritania argued that the most vulnerable countries needed assistance—now.

This was discourse in action at a 2010 meeting in Bonn aimed at improving the international climate change negotiation process—and it is discourse itself that interests Gregg Walker. A Research Fellow and OSU professor of speech communication, Walker is devoting his fellowship to a study of “Dominant Discourses of Climate Change: Power and Culture in the Search for Common Ground.”

While there is little scientific disagreement at this point regarding the evidence of human-caused climate change, there are considerable differences over climate change policy. “In light of the scientific consensus, why has progress during the climate negotiations been slow, particularly on the critical issues of mitigation and adaptation? What are the prospects for consensus on a comprehensive treaty?”

Walker suggests that some answers lie in the very nature of climate change discourse. “While there are numerous commentaries to explain the progress—or lack thereof—of the United Nations climate talks, no research has examined the negotiation discourse in depth.”

Progress has been made on a number of issues, including clean development mechanisms and forest management, but a final, comprehensive treaty remains elusive despite almost two decades of work. During this period, said Walker, the negotiation process has become increasingly complex and controversial, a pattern he has observed while attending eight UN climate change meetings since 2009.

Scholar Vivien Burr describes the significance of discourse in this way: “If we accept the view . . . that a multitude of alternative versions of events are potentially available through language, this means that, surrounding any one object, event, person etc. there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the object in question, a different way of representing it to the world. . . Each discourse claims to say that the object really is, that is, claims to be the truth.”

Any public policy may feature multiple discourses, said Walker. “Discourses are bound up with political power, philosophy, and ideology. They compete for dominance and control. . . For example, within the natural resource management arena one discourse may emphasize technical work and economic benefits while another discourse may feature stewardship practices and conservation values.”

The discourses that climate change conference delegates rely on take varied forms, including formal and informal communication, technical reports, and negotiation texts. In addition to his own observations at the meetings, Walker will draw on conversations with delegates and other observers, published reports, and conference documents.

By identifying and analyzing significant climate change discourses, Walker hopes to help the process move forward. “Comprehending the basis for divergence can lead to transformative views that could accommodate important discursive elements such as culture, institutions, and incentives. The result could be convergent discourse that balances power and influence and in doing so generates common ground on which to base policy.”
During the summer of 1964 when the U.S. Congress debated and passed the Wilderness Act, a very different act took place in the mountains of Nevada: a 5,000-year-old tree that turned out to be the oldest living individual organism on earth was cut down in the name of science.

The destruction of the bristlecone pine that became known as Methuselah continues to reverberate in scientific and environmental circles. Essays, poems, and songs have been composed in commemoration, field research protocols have been reformed, Great Basin National Park was founded to protect other ancient bristlecones, and the tale of this strange destruction remains a favorite cautionary tale told to biology students.

Why?

Why does such venerability matter? What can this “charismatic species” tell us about ecological integrity, human survival, and human-driven climate change?

Such questions are on the mind of James Capshew, the Center’s Gordon/Horning Visiting Fellow and a professor of history and the philosophy of science at Indiana University. Investigating the mystique of the bristlecone pine is part of Capshew’s larger project on the history and sociology of dendrochronology, the study of tree rings.

“This small scientific field is concerned with establishing long chronologies through tree-ring research,” said Capshew, noting that as far back as Leonardo da Vinci’s day some attention was paid to the meanings of tree rings. It was not until the early 20th century, however, that a scientific methodology developed.

“Dendrochronology has many applications in archaeology, climatology, ecology, and other areas, including art history, where it has been used to determine the provenance of wooden substrates of early modern paintings and musical instruments. . . Although the field has been in existence for nearly a century and has all the trappings of a maturing science, relatively little historical research has been done on the discipline of its practitioners.”

The systematic study of tree rings developed, surprisingly, from the work of an astronomer whose principle interest was the influence of sunspots on the earth’s climate. A.E. Douglass, of the University of Arizona, developed the method for cross-dating tree ring specimens, and by 1919 he had measured 75,000 rings from the U.S. and Europe. In 1937, he established the
Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the university.

Douglass’s students have played a prominent role in the field ever since; one of them, geographer Donald Currey, was the now infamous man who caused the death of Methuselah. Though accounts vary regarding what actually happened, a common version is that the boring tool he used to get samples—a benign method for the trees—broke in the field and he asked the local ranger for permission to cut down a tree to complete his research.

The tree turned out to be at least 4,900 years old. In subsequent accounts, Currey stated that he wanted a record from as old a tree as possible but had no idea his choice was the oldest in the world or even in that region. The uproar that swelled following the death and dating of the tree led, among other things, to the founding of Great Basin National Park in 1986.

It also raised many scientific, philosophical, and cultural questions. As one essayist wrote, “As it turns out, the longevity of these trees revealed only the beginning of their value. Their value came not only from their age, but from how they aged, what their aging revealed, how their aging was related to the environment in which they lived.”

Another noted that “their value comes from what humans imagine these trees to have witnessed. . .”

Capshew’s interests include the principles, methodologies, and aims of dendrochronology coupled with sociological research into the demography and ethnography of the tree-ring scientists. “The primary method of cross-dating tree samples and its possible relation to use of the ‘personal equation’ in nineteenth-century astronomy raises intriguing questions about how to standardize the human observer in order to create reliable data.”

The term “personal equation” in 19th- and early 20th-century science referred to the idea that every individual observer had an inherent bias in regard to observation and measurement. It originated in astronomy on the discovery that investigators making simultaneous observations were likely to record slightly different values, leading many scientists to be skeptical of the findings of others.

“Our dendrochronologists inhabit a scientific space where the interpretation of tree rings is a paramount goal. . . To understand their beliefs, values, and behavior toward their objects of study—trees—could shed new light on the science and culture matrix.”


. . . their value comes from what humans imagine these trees to have witnessed. . .
“Cupcake” isn’t a word that springs to mind on hearing the name Napoleon Bonaparte, but it turns out he does very well as one of twelve miniature paintings in “Cupcake portraits,” a highly original piece by Chi Meredith in the Center’s current art exhibit. The portraits are painted in egg tempera on the bottom of each compartment of a cupcake pan, which itself is elaborately painted.

The show, “Works by Kristina Kennedy Daniels and Chi Meredith,” brings together dozens of oil paintings and lithographs by Daniels and mostly smaller, highly detailed and sometimes stylized images in egg tempera, oil and mixed media by Meredith. The result is visually dazzling.

The two artists are old friends who have been sharing ideas and commenting on each other’s work since they met during the 1970s. Their pieces are intermixed in the show in such a way that the distinct styles are complementary, the effect energetic.

The mostly large canvases by Daniels offer diverse subjects: plankton; human blood cells; a painting titled “Firebird” that includes the figures of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Chekov; portraits of old friends.

Meredith’s “Renaissance Shelf” is one of a number of pieces that begin with a familiar object—cupcake pan, Jello mold—that ends up richly decorated over its entire surface. The shelf, originally for small knickknacks, presents a portrait in each compartment based on a famous painting, including “Portrait of a Young Woman,” by Simonetta Vespucci and “Ginevra de’ Benci” by Leonardo da Vinci.

Daniels received a BFA degree in painting from Ohio State University in 1967, and has exhibited paintings, prints and drawings throughout the Northwest. She also does commissioned portraits (including the painting of Peter Copek that hangs in the Center’s Copek Room). Daniels says in her artist’s statement that she is
interested in “light and color, the immediacy and physical richness of the paint and meaningful juxtaposition of seemingly disparate images, sometimes abstract, sometimes representational.” Since 1999, her work has drawn on her experiences with metastasized lung cancer.

Meredith received an MS degree in materials science from Stanford University before moving to Corvallis in 1973 to work as an oceanography research assistant. In 1977, she received a BFA in printmaking and painting from OSU and now works full time as an artist.

The exhibit is free and open to the public weekdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Autzen House, 811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue, Corvallis. It will be on display through January 4. Information: 541-737-2450.

### Cupcake Portraits from top, left to right:

**Row 1**

**Napoleon Bonaparte** (1769-1821)
Painting in Louvre

**Edgar Sawyer Chase Meredith**
Artist’s father (1916-1999)

**An Angel playing the lute** (c. 1480)
Fresco fragments at Vatican Museum

**Gloria Smythman** (1935-1979)
Fashion designer

**Row 2**

**Darrel Anderson** (1912-1995)
Environmental Scientist

**Cynthia Hollenback** (1945-)
English model

**Row 3**

**Coco Chanel** (1883-1971)
French fashion designer

**Tony Bradford II** (1978-)
Watchmaker’s son from Switzerland

**Andre Agassi** (1970-)
American tennis player

**Mme Memssiere and Her Son**
Joseph Paul Mesle, French (1855-1929)

**Ruth Neff Meredith**
Artist’s mother (1917-1998)

**Brad Pitt** (1963-)
American actor

**Cupcake Portraits**, mixed media on cupcake pan, Chi Meredith
Randall Milstein’s dramatic photographs of dancers started as an inside job—as a performer in “The Nutcracker” he used his camera as well his body.

That was in 2000. Since then, he said, “My photography has evolved into a non-traditional vision of dance and dancers meant to express energy and emotion as well as the passion, strength, and trust of dancers.”

Taken during live performances rather than rehearsals, the photographs have been exhibited widely in solo and group shows. They have appeared in numerous periodicals, books, posters, and advertisements, and are included in government, corporate, and private collections. In 2010, his images were exhibited at the Portland Center for the Performing Arts in “Photography and Painting Inspired by Dancers of the Oregon Ballet Theatre.” In 2011, he won the Vice President’s Choice Award for a piece in the OSU Faculty and Staff Exhibition at Giustina Gallery.

The show will be on display January through March in the Center’s main exhibition rooms at Autzen House. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. Information: 541-737-3450.

I photograph dancers for the same reason I dance; it makes me happy.

R.L. Milstein

“This collection of essays has a two-fold purpose, one, to document the contributions of these important, sometimes overlooked, artists and their work, and two, to add to the world of scholarship recognizing their rightful place in the world of Irish theater.”

Headrick is a co-editor (with Eileen Kearney) of one of just two anthologies of Irish women playwrights, *Women of Ireland: Irish Dramatists*, to be published by Syracuse University Press. The new book will include not only dramatists but the women directors, designers, stage managers, actresses, company managers, critics and artistic directors who have helped to shape Irish theater.

“To date, there is no volume which deals exclusively with the broad work of women theater artists,” said Headrick. “There is much more scholarship needed in order to evaluate, analyze, and document the work of the women of the Irish theater.”

Headrick has been deeply involved for years in Irish Studies relating to drama, knows many of the influential contemporary figures in the field, and

has directed premier U.S. performances of plays by Irish women. Essays in the new book will be contributed by both U.S. and Irish scholars, mainly women but also some men who have previously published on the subject.

The Maeve Binchey quote that heads this article—“A woman who raised her head above the parapet was a woman who would not win”—refers to Ireland of the 1930s.

“By the end of the twentieth century, one would have thought that the situation Binchey describes would be dramatically altered, not only for women in general, but also for theater artists,” said Headrick. “It has been a long and continuing struggle in both Northern Ireland and the Republic for women in the theater to gain the recognition they deserve. This volume of essays will be one piece in an ongoing process to rectify this gap in theater history.”
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. Recent examples of efforts that have received support from the Fund include OSU’s new Asian Studies Program and the new Center for Latin@ Studies and Engagement (Cl@se), the annual Magic Barrel reading to raise money to combat hunger, and the OSU Holocaust Memorial Program.

PLEASE JOIN US IN SUPPORTING THE PETER J. COPEK FUND
For information on how to contribute, please see the Center’s website and click on “Make a gift”
http://oregonstate.edu/dept/humanities/
You may also send a check, made out to the OSU Foundation, Peter J. Copek Fund, to:
Center for the Humanities
811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue
Corvallis, OR 97333-4506

Gifts made in response to this solicitation are tax deductible to the amount permitted by law, depending on individual donor tax situations.
Fall & Winter Calendar

FALL TERM

Art Exhibit: October-December
*Paintings by Daniels & Meredith*

Lectures are at 4 p.m.
811 SW Jefferson Avenue

October

15  *The Fascinations of Age: Bristlecone Pines Between History and Imagination.*
    **James Capshew**, Center’s Gordon/Horning Visiting Fellow, Dept. of History & Philosophy of Science, Indiana University.

November

5  *Tex-Mex Borderlands: Mexican Ethnic Restaurants & Identity.* **Norma Cárdenas**, 2011/12 Research Fellow, Ethnic Studies Faculty Member, OSU School of Language, Culture, and Society.

12  *Standing on Their Shoulders: Reclaiming the Women Who Created and Continue to Shape the Irish Theatre.* **Charlotte Headrick**, Research Fellow, Theatre Faculty Member, OSU School of Arts and Communication.

WINTER TERM

Art Exhibit: January-March
*Dancers*
*Photographs by Randall Milstein*

January

28  *The Loss of the ‘Trades Increase’.*
    **Richmond Barbour**, Research Fellow, English Faculty Member, OSU School of Language, Culture, and Society.

February

11  *Dominant Discourses of Climate Change: Power and Culture in the Search for Common Ground.*
    **Gregg Walker**, Research Fellow, Speech Communication Faculty, OSU School of Arts and Communication.

18  *The Experiential Turn: Art and Encounter in the 1970s.* **Kirsi Pelomaki**, Research Fellow, Art Faculty Member, OSU School of Arts and Communication.
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 scholar, including the Horning Postdoctoral Fellowship in the History and Philosophy of Science, as well as by sponsoring conferences, seminars, lecture series, art exhibits and other events. The Center occupies Autzen House, 811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue, Corvallis, OR, 97333-4506.

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