

Final Project Assignment

Medieval Drama – Fall 2006

The nature of the production project will vary dramatically from one person to another. In effect, each of you will have the freedom to develop your own project. On September 25, I would like to have a one-page prospectus explaining what you intend to pursue for your project, how you intend to go about that task, and how your project might inform our production.

For example, the person playing Merlin might write a paper on the literary history of that character and how understanding that background could inform representation of Merlin in this production. The person playing Silence might research medieval music performance, and consider how understanding these conventions can make the performance more effective and accurate. How can medieval ways of thinking be incorporated into the performance? What attitude to women prevails in our text? One of the costumers might concentrate on the costume for Silence, considering how clothing might best represent the original text accurately and simultaneously evoke the appropriate response in a modern audience. How do medieval costuming practices reflect medieval attitudes to theater? Two or three people can work together on a particular aspect, pooling their reading and ideas. In this case you would double or triple the length of the paper you turn in and your sources.

The production project paper is due on October 16. This paper should be a 4-6 page analysis of some aspect you are involved with in the production. The paper should present a combination of the research you have done and your experience with that aspect in the actual production. It would be best if you could use at least three solid sources in the paper (not just the results of internet searches). Ideally you will create a synthesis of the opinions and discoveries of scholars with your experiences and ideas. Even if your ideas do not end up being implemented, you can still discuss them as options that might have been part of our production.

Topic Suggestions

Here are some broad topics to get you started. You may use any of these or change or combine them or use something completely different as you see fit. Do not try to do more than is reasonable. Any of these ideas would need to be narrowed to a manageable scope.

1. Analyze one of the characters in *The Adventures of Silence*. Consider the historical background of that character. What is the scope of possible interpretations? What seems most effective to you and why?
2. Consider the theme of conflict in *Silence*. What brings about conflict? How is conflict expressed? How is it resolved? In what way does this play express ideas about conflict? In what way might these ideas be relevant today? How can ideas foreign to our culture be translated? How can they be productive in our community?
3. Is there some element in the original text of *Silence* that is not present in our script, but you feel ought to be incorporated into our production? Give support for your suggestion, perhaps drawing on secondary sources. Provide a revision of the relevant passage in the script. Note that any changes that significantly increase the length will not be possible to implement, though you can still discuss them.
4. The ending of *Silence* seems unsatisfying to modern readers, and there is evidence it may have been intended to be an unhappy ending in the Middle Ages. How can a production build around that ending? What meanings can be drawn, and how can it be made dramatically satisfying?
5. Compare *Silence* with analogous medieval stories. What features distinguish our thirteenth-century French story, setting it apart from contemporary stories? How might those features be incorporated into our performance?
6. Scholars are divided about whether *Le Roman de Silence* is the work of a misogynist or a proto-feminist. Which do you think is most accurate? How are attitudes to women expressed directly or indirectly? How might these attitudes inform our production.
7. Consider how humor is involved in medieval performance. Examine variation in the nature of the humor, and research the philosophy behind one type of humor. You might begin with Ruggiers' book *Versions of Medieval Comedy*. Is humor a part of *Le Roman de Silence*? If so, how might that humor be incorporated into our production?

