Independent Scholarship Enters a New Era

Contemporary independent scholarship, that of the last ten years or so, has been consistently associated with the academic crises that beset higher education in the seventies and early eighties. Until recently, so-called “independent” scholars have been identified as “the lost generation” of academicians, refugees from a shrinking market and a diminishing student population.

The consequences were professional isolation on the fringes of the academic world, and the development of a caste system in which part-time instructors and one-year appointees roamed the academic terrain trying to make their rootlessness seem like opportunity rather than a visible sign of intellectual limitation.

Toward the end of 1985, another view of independent scholarship began to take shape in the face of the term “focus” which had come to connote elitism and economy in intellectual matters. In the new view independent scholars began to think of themselves not as outsiders looking in but as a completely different professional genre. One that might have a distinctive intellectual contribution to make.

Simultaneously, long-standing ways of knowing were being challenged; while independent scholars were struggling to define themselves, the definitions of scholarship in general were shifting. In 1981, cultural historian William Irwin Thompson was pointing out that “forms of knowledge change as society changes” and further, “As fiction and music are coming close to reorganizing knowledge, scholarship is becoming closer to art. Our culture is changing, and so the genres of literature and history are changing as well” (The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light). Several years later, he wrote “the Scientific Method is canonized into a sanctified procedure.

New Era Continued Page 2

Changing The Patterns: The Boise Peace Quilt Project

A history and interpretation of the Boise Peace Quilt Project will be offered by Forum President, Susan Smith, on Saturday, April 22nd, at 9:30 a.m. in Guild Hall, Plymouth Congregational Church, 1900 Nicollet Ave. So., Mpls. Titled “Changing the Patterns”, the program will feature the award-winning documentary film, “A Stitch for Time”.

The Boise Peace Quilters have made twenty quilts since they first came together in 1981 to work for peace by “stitching the world together”. Their quilts have been given in friendship to the people of the Soviet Union and Japan, to honor peacemakers such as Frank Church, Sister Marjorie Tuite, and Norman Cousins, and to carry messages of peace to places like Greenham, England and Nicaragua.

This project has also given us the means to look at the American patchwork quilt not only as a design tradition, but as a long active agent for social change. Smith will make comments about the contemporary significance of that fact, and discussion will follow the film.
I recently stumbled across John Briggs' Fire in the Crucible: The Alchemy of Creative Genius (St. Martin's Press, 1988). It offered me a happier interpretation of my chaotic workplace with phrases like "ability to tolerate ambivalence" and statements from stellar creators like Virginia Woolf who is supposed to have said that she was able to "achieve a symmetry by means of infinite discords."

But I mention it to you here only because it is the context in which I became acquainted with Nobel prize biochemist Arthur Kornberg's observation that a creator needs not only intense focus but a certain restlessness. Also, it is where I discovered the concept developed by Howard Gruber, of the "network of enterprises."

Taken together, it seems to me, these two ideas are enormously helpful to the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum at this point in its development.

We will differ, I suspect, in our assessment of "what point" we are "at." My view is that we have learned in the course of the last year how to generate the vitality and the sense of community necessary to survive as an organization. That our programs have served that purpose is clear in our growing membership, our expanding audience, the sustained interest of past and potential co-sponsors, and the appearance of many generous donors of funds, in-kind contributions, and space in the absence of any organized fund-raising effort. More important than anything, and I am convinced that this is the case, these programs have rekindled much of our own enthusiasm for the possibilities of independent scholarship. We still have a lot to learn about what interests us most in terms of these programs-what best to generate them, and how to produce them most effectively.

Which brings me full circle back to the matter of "what point" we are "at." I think we are now ready to start talking about who the "us" is in our particular community of independent scholars. What story do we share in common that brings us here? To what are we committed? Who shall belong? What is our agenda? What are our priorities? What is scholarship? Who is a scholar? What does it mean to be independent? Independent of what? Of whom? And why? And when?

I don't think questions like these stay answered for long if they are answered initially in the abstract. They need to be answered in the context of activity and experiment. It takes concrete experience to learn what works and what doesn't. I think it also takes concrete experience to focus identity and crystallize values and priorities. What follows, then, for the Forum is the need to work on several fronts at once. I believe we can offer an exciting schedule of public programs while we strengthen and expand the range of our study groups. I think that we can explore and participate in collaborative arrangements of a wide variety with other organizations, at the same time that we are developing the many services and opportunities that foster independent creative work of independent scholars.

What I am encouraging, of course, is that we apply the processes of creative genius as John Briggs describes them to the life of an organization. I am suggesting that we commit ourselves to focused activities and a spirit of restlessness, and that we do so within a "network of enterprises."

Heidegger thought that the truth was to be glimpsed "on the edge" of what we know. Georgia O'Keeffe claimed that she had spent her life on a "knife's edge." William Irwin Thompson, a cultural historian, has said that "we are all on edge" in a culture that is changing.

I agree with Thompson that we are all on edge. I also think that "the edge" is where independent scholarship will come into its own, and that we should make the most of it."

New Era Continued from page 1

that has very little to do with the actual way individual human scientists make discoveries and invent new theories" (Gaia: A Way of Knowing, "The Cultural Implications of the New Biology", 1987). He is not alone when he speaks in this different voice.

Given all this radical questioning of how things are, these frontal assaults on academic disciplines and methodologies, what is the independent scholar to do? The answer is simple. Rejoin the academic conversation, on an equal footing. And do not waste precious energy at this particular moment in defining independent scholarship when all the definitions of traditional scholarship are in the process of being evaluated.

This is a time for inclusiveness within our own ranks, a time for the best that we can offer by way of imagination, the reformulation of old patterns and canons, and new insights. It may well be that this is an era of transformation, and too much self-definition is premature. Above all else, it is a time for questions."

Susan Smith
May Program Offers Double Insight

John Parker has chosen the provocative title “Double Insight: Travel Literature as a Literary Genre” for his talk to the Forum members on Saturday, May 20th, at 10:00 a.m. in the Fourth Floor Gallery of Wilson Library, at the University of Minnesota.

Parker, who is curator of the James Ford Bell Library and editor of The Journals of Jonathan Carver, points out that human beings are the only animals who seek out new environments for reasons other than survival. In travel literature, he says, we catch a glimpse of the human response to an unfamiliar environment. It is a “double insight” because we see not only the new environment that the traveler has seen, but we learn something about the traveler as well. Comments Parker, “Some of the most creative people we’ve ever had have been travelers.”

The lecture will be illustrated with volumes from the James Ford Bell Library which was established in 1953 to house the literature of early geographical knowledge and exploration.

Publicity Campaign Planned

Laura Weber will be organizing publicity for the Forum. She will be trying to reach appropriate audiences for Forum events through press releases to radio stations, newspapers and other publications. If you are interested in working on this campaign, please call Laura at 822-3574.

Upcoming Programs

Programs are free and open to the public. Please bring your friends!

April 22 “Changing the Patterns: The Boise Peace Quilt Project”, featuring the award-winning documentary “A Stitch for Time”, Guild Hall, Plymouth Congregational Church, 1900 Nicollet Ave. So. Mpls. 9:30 a.m.

May 20 “Double Insight: Travel Literature as a Literary Genre”, featuring John Parker, Curator of the James Ford Bell Library, Fourth Floor Gallery, Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, 10:00 a.m.

The Board is planning a possible program in June, a summer social in July, and a year of programs for 1989-90. We are pursuing some specific ideas and speakers in the area of regional literature, theories of chaos, writing for the so-called “new science”, and many others.

We are working hard to display our full “network of enterprises” in the Forum, and are eager to have your suggestions for the future. Please contact any one of us on the Board, to present your ideas at our Board meetings held once every month.
Past Program Highlight:
"Watteau and the Dance"

Paintings by the early 18th century French painter, Antoine Watteau, came alive on February 25th at St. Clement's Church, as dance of the period portrayed by Watteau was performed by dancers from Ex Machina.

Dr. JoLynn Edwards, Mankato State University, presented a lecture with slides on the role of Baroque dance in the French Court, and its impact on the artistic temper and social milieu outside the court. She illustrated her subject with paintings of Watteau’s in which dance was used as a metaphor for love and life—a seeking of the ideal human experience in harmony with society and nature.

Special thanks are due to James Middleton, director of Ex Machina, to dancers Jane Peck and Jocelyn Gorham, to violinist Ginny Watson from Concentus Musicus, and to sign interpreter Amy McGuaid. This program was co-sponsored by Very Special Arts Minnesota and made possible by a mini-grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission in cooperation with the Northwest Area Foundation and the Minnesota State Legislature.

This was the first event sponsored by the former Minnesota Society for Historians of Art, now merged with the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum. The Forum is indebted to Judith Akehurst for arranging the many details of the program.

Past Programs in Review

The focus on programs in the last year has been very rewarding. In January, Roger Jones led panel comments and audience discussion about the film “Koyaanisqatsi” (World Out of Balance). Panel members were Ty Cashman, Rhoda Gilman, and Hal Barron. In February, Mary Heffernan led another panel discussion on the film “Godzilla Meets Mona Lisa: Reflections on the Pompidou Center.” Panel participants were Neal Cuthbert, Jill Waterhouse and Bruce Wright. In May, Independent Scholar of the Year, Marilyn J. Chiat lectured to a Forum audience of nearly 250 people on “Independence and the Scholar: A Conflict of Terms?” During September, we were represented at the “Festival of the Book” by publications of Forum members. We were also co-sponsors of Metromet’s program featuring writer Joseph Amato, titled “Community and Intellectual Life: The Public Challenge” as well as The Loft’s Creative Non-Fiction Panel, titled “Transforming America: The Immigrant Experience in Literature.”

The October program, “Communities within Community: Glimpses of a Different Minnesota,” featured Marianne Wargelin and Carl Ross. Wargelin’s research in the Finnish community resulted in a paper titled "Finntown Mpls.: A Will to Remember." Carl Ross spoke on his work with the 20th Century Radicalism in Minnesota Project titled, “The Radical Within Community.” The emphasis on work being done by Minnesota’s independent scholars continued in November with a lecture by Mary Ellen Waite (see article on Annual Meeting p. 7). In January, 1989, Carolyn Gilman, Regional Editor of the University of Minnesota Press, Roger Sween, President of Minnesota Reviews, Inc., and Donna Montgomery, President of the Minnesota Independent Publishers’ Association, led a morning of questions and discussion which was titled “Meet Your Next Editor/Publisher.” The vitality of the Forum has been enhanced on these occasions, and we look forward to providing more of them in the coming year.
Study Groups

Study groups provide members the opportunity to explore ideas through reading and discussion. Depending on the desires of the group, a familiar topic of interest may be studied in greater depth, or an unknown topic may be investigated. The ideas offered by other members prove to be thought-provoking, and also helpful in providing new insights when returning to one’s independent work.

Anyone interested in “sitting in” or joining currently established study groups is welcome. Membership is not mandatory, although eventually desired. The following is a list of active and inactive study groups:

**Eighteenth Century Study Group**
Contact Joyce Fullard 333-4605

The 18th Century study group’s multidisciplinary interests include art history, literature, philosophy, history, and political science, from the Restoration period to the early 19th century. The group has begun discussing essays on English literature in *The New 18th Century*. In this new volume, leading scholars demonstrate the usefulness of feminist, Marxist, new-historicist and psycholanalytic approaches to the analysis of 18th century texts. The essays raise questions from the cultural and social terrain including problems of race and colonialism, capitalism, and penal institutions.

**Science and Humanities Study Group**
Contact Rhoda Gilman 224-6383

The Science and Humanities study group recently completed reading a draft of a play by Roger Jones, titled *Trial By Fire*, “A Morality Play for the Sacro Vosco, *The Sphere of the World Theater of the Mind.*” The group is currently reading a book titled *Reflections on Gender and Science*, by Evelyn Fox Keller. Keller’s essays are based on the premise that both gender and science are socially constructed categories. Keller states, “Women, men, and science are created, together, out of a complex dynamic of interwoven cognitive, emotional, and social forces. My subject, therefore, is not women per se, or even women and science: it is the making of men, women, and science, or, more precisely, how the making of men and women has affected the making of science.”

The following groups are presently inactive. If anyone is interested in convening one or more of these groups or starting a group of your own, please contact Susan Smith at 871-1125.

**International Feminism Group**
This study group considers women’s issues worldwide; members have focused on informal discussions and analysis of materials treating the interplay among gender, nature, and social order.

**Social History Study Group**
Contact: Jo Blatti 291-7048
This group was formed with the idea of investigating the fields of historiography and public history.

**Writing Support for Women Group**
Contact Susan Smith 871-1125

The operating assumptions of this group are that women encounter particular barriers to achievement when they are writing and that many of these barriers can be overcome with the support of other women who are writing. Writing goals may range from fiction to research presentations. Procedures and schedules will be worked out by participants.

**Philosophy and Cultural Criticism Group**
Contact Patrice Koelsch 722-3813

**Family History Study Group**
This group was formed with the idea that family history, when correctly interpreted, can reveal truths, not only about family, but about much else in our cultural history that is otherwise concealed. Family history goes far beyond the genealogical facts and dates revealed. When questions about gender, ethnicity, geography, naming practices and other rituals usually associated with religious affiliation, intellectual and artistic products are asked, the full richness in the potential of family history study is evident.

**Art Historians Study Group**
Contact Catherine Vesley 789-5888

This study group was started by people interested in presenting programs within the range of specialties which art history comprises. The first program, "Watteau and the Dance", was presented in February, 1989.
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<th>Members' Services</th>
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<td>The following is a list of services offered to members of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum:</td>
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**Current Services**

- Offers public programs.
- Sponsors study groups that informally explore subjects such as 18th century studies, and the relationships between science and the humanities.
- Enables members to gain access to the University of Minnesota Libraries.
- Publishes a quarterly newsletter.
- Cooperates with other organizations to promote independent scholarship.

**Services in Progress**

- The possibility of a small grants program is being researched.
- Enhanced access to the University of Minnesota libraries including special sessions on learning the Lumina system and workshops for independent scholars.
- Contact with the Intertech project carried out by the Minnesota Dept. of Administration, which would link the Forum with a variety of information and research channels.
- The Independent Scholar of the Year Award will not be offered this year, but is being planned for 1990.

**Summer Forum to Feature Members’ Activities**

In an effort to begin to answer the question “Who is an independent scholar?”, the focus of the summer issue of The Forum will be to identify and describe work accomplished during the past year and activities planned for this year by Forum members.

The upcoming newsletter will feature information such as members’ books published or in progress, lectures or readings presented or to be presented, photos of art work, etc. Professional notices and queries will also be printed. Please submit photos and/or brief descriptions of activities to the Editor, Susan Milnor, 3614 16th Avenue So., Minneapolis, MN 55407. Call Susan at 721-4972 for details on the summer issue and also if you have articles you would like to contribute to future newsletters.

**Job Opportunities**

Anoka-Ramsey Community College is soliciting resumes of persons who might be interested in part-time teaching of basic philosophy courses at the college during the academic year 1989-90. Interested persons should contact:

Robert Skottegaard  
Anoka-Ramsey Community College  
11200 Mississippi Boulevard, N.W. Coon Rapids, MN 55433  
or call: 427-2600 or 823-0411

**Grants**

NEH fellowships are open to all independent scholars. Maximum stipend $27,500. Application deadline: June 1, 1989. For guidelines and application write to:  
Division of Fellowships & Seminars  
National Endowment for the Humanities, Room 316, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C., or call (202) 786-0466

Mail to: Susan Smith  
2415 Third Avenue So.  
Apt A-39  
Minneapolis, MN 55407

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**Membership Application to the Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum**

**Regular**

- $12.00 (under/unemployed)
- between $12.00 and $36.00
- $36.00 (regularly employed)

**Household**

- $18.00 (under/unemployed)
- between $18.00 and $40.00
- $40.00 (regularly employed)

**Sustaining**

- $50.00 or more

**Donor**

- $75.00 or more

**Benefactor**

- $100.00 or more

Name_________________________________________
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City________State____Zip_________
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Annual Meeting of the Membership

The annual meeting of the membership convened on November 19, 1988 in the Fourth Floor Meeting Room of the St. Paul Central Library. Reports from the Secretary-Treasurer and the President, proposed bylaw changes to 1) permit the Board of Directors to determine membership categories, and 2) extend the number of renewable terms for members of the Board of Directors were discussed and passed.

The officers and members of the Board of Directors for 1989 were approved as presented by the nominating committee following a motion for a white ballot: President—Susan Margot Smith; Vice-President—John Fierst; Secretary-Treasurer—Jim Casebolt; Members of the Board: Jo Blatt, Marilyn Chiat, Joyce Fullard, Ned McCrae, Susan Milnor, Robert Thimmesh, Catherine Vesley, Laura Weber, and David Wiggins.

The program following was a slide and lecture presentation by Mary Ellen Waithe, Founder of the Project on the History of Women in Philosophy, titled, "New Pieces to an Old Puzzle: Do Women Change Philosophy?" Several members of the Forum have contributed to the four volume work in progress, including Morgan Grayce Willow, who introduced Dr. Waithe. The Forum is proud to have acknowledged in this way such an ambitious and extensive work of independent scholarship. We wish Dr. Mary Ellen Waithe and her authors well in completing the last two volumes of A History of Women Philosophers.

Membership Drive Planned

Sandy Sandell will be organizing this committee. If you are interested in working on the membership committee, call Sandy at 377-8849.

Contributions Received Through March 1989

We received considerable support in the last 15 months from the following friends and benefactors of independent scholarship. It is with pride and gratitude that we acknowledge those who have provided financial support for the programs of the Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum.

1988 Independent Scholar of the Year Lecture and Award Ceremony
Friends of The Immigration History Research Center
Minnesota Jewish Historical Society
Minnesota Society for Historians of Art
Society of Architectural Historians, Minnesota Chapter
Temple Israel Sisterhood
Minnesota Humanities Commission
in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Minnesota State Legislature

The Loft Creative Non-fiction Program, "Transforming America"
Anonymous donor

"Communities Within Community: Glimpses of a Different Minnesota"
Friends of The Immigration History Research Center
Hennepin County Historical Society
Metronet
Minnesota Reviews, Inc.

"New Pieces to an Old Puzzle: Do Women Change Philosophy?"
Women Historians of the Midwest
Anonymous donor

"Watteau and the Dance"
Minnesota Humanities Commission
in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Minnesota State Legislature
Minnesota Society for Historians of Art

Unrestricted Program Expenses
Herbert Barnes
Taube Horwitz

Unrestricted Operating Expenses
Anonymous donor
Welcome to the first issue of The Forum
the newsletter of The Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum