Architecture of Religious Freedom

A REPORT ON THE ANNUAL MEETING PROGRAM

By George Anderson

Marilyn Chiat was the featured speaker at this year's Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum. Dr. Chiat holds degrees in art history (M.A. '72, Ph.D. '79) from the University of Minnesota, where she is an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Classical and Near Eastern Studies. John Wiley & Sons has recently published her beautifully illustrated book in America's Religious Architecture: Sacred Places for Every Community. The book examines with loving and respectful detail more than 500 places of worship in the United States, explaining their architectural and cultural value in an era that is becoming increasingly a-historical.

Dr. Chiat's slide-illustrated talk drew highlights from the book, projecting pictures of churches, mosques, and synagogues. Ranging from modest to well adorned, they have stood as houses of worship in America's landscape. Some are now gone forever. Carefully weaving a thread back and forth from yesterday's life to today's world, the presentation implicitly raised an important question. How shall we remember? What is meaningful to keep?

A child folding her hands, fingers inside, might say:

Here is a church, and here is the steeple.
Open the door, and see all the people.

Chiat's slides were primarily architectural, but her accompanying commentary recounted a very human story. It told of citizens who remembered their past when they left their homelands and came to this vast, hitherto empty, landscape, where each was "free" to build and worship in his or her chosen way. With integrity, they designed meeting houses and centers of worship where they came, week after week. These structures often doubled as schools, and they were

continued on the following page
where education began. What is interesting is how many of each culture's traditional religious architectural features are replicated in the designs. Instead of leaving behind symbols and conventions that might have sustained painful memories, immigrants transported them across the Atlantic and self-consciously embedded them in these buildings that still dot the countryside. The documentation of this historical continuity of cultural diversity has been and continues to be Chiat's great passion.

The minds of many immigrants held stories of religious intolerance, tales of bigotry and dread. Coming to America they constructed religious places which, while as diverse as East is from West, stood side by side in cities and on plains all over the land. How could this birth of religious equality happen? Chiat addressed this issue in part by quoting from a letter George Washington wrote during his term as first President. The letter was in response to a question regarding religious freedom for "minorities," sent to him from the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island. (A complete text may be had on request to the synagogue, addressed 85 Touro Street, Newport, R.I. 02840.) Specifically, are "non-orthodox" religions to be "tolerated," or do all religions in America have equal rights and obligations? Here is what President Washington wrote:

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to Mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy, a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that tolerance is spoken of [Editor's emphasis], as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support, while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.

Here is a reason why we have diverse religious architecture in America, sacred places in every community. This is why these icons of stone, wood, and glass are part of the landscape. Indeed, they are more of our past than we may know.

How shall we remember? By doing justice to buildings of our past, conceding that not all old churches deserve to be parking lots.
1998 A Year of Many MISF Accomplishments

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MISF PRESIDENT

by Patricia McDonough

I have had the privilege to serve as President of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum for this 1998 year. For the first part of the year, my focus was on the internal organization of the corporation. We inherited mailing lists which had become badly out of date. With considerable effort by the Board, especially Helen Watkins, Roger Hammer, and Curt Hillstrom, we now have accurate mailing lists. 75% of those receiving our mailings were not paying members. We could not afford to keep subsidizing journal subscriptions and other mailings for those who made no financial contribution to the organization. A category of Associate Member was created so that institutions and individuals who did not want full membership but did want the journal could subscribe at a reduced rate.

Mary Treacy, Vice President and program chair, offered excellent, stimulating programs almost every month, but the average turnout was poor. My recommendation for next year is that the new administration consider replacing these with a series of day-long retreats on a theme of special interest, where attendees can also be the presenters. The science and humanities group has done this and had excellent turnouts, with interesting papers presented.

Our most significant accomplishment, which has brought us extensive recognition, is the elevation of the publication of The Forum from a newsletter to a journal under the able editorship and guidance of Helen Watkins. At least one major publisher in the region has said it watches our journal to find possible writers for its future book publishing agenda.

Rhoda Lewin is our liaison to the National Coalition of Independent Scholars and was successful in attracting their national conference to this area. We are the largest and most active group in the nation. As our part of the conference in St. Paul, Roger Hammer came up with the "Scholarly Pursuit" game, in which over half of the attendees participated. I hope MISF can play the game again in the coming year, as a way of interesting potential members.

Despite the innovative programs, full membership blitz to collect dues, and belt-tightening, we were still facing the need to go into cash reserves if we did not secure additional help. Luckily, we were successful in securing a $1,000 grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission to help with expenses ($300 of which is for R&D to get a web page and chart room up and running on the Internet). The Humanities Commission has indicated that we can apply for this grant annually for help with various administrative expenses.

Although often feeling overwhelmed, I believe we accomplished a phenomenal amount in 1998, and moved MISF a long way toward rejuvenation. However, it is my strong recommendation that every member of MISF recruit additional members in the coming year. We need to get more people active in the organization. The make-up of the 1999 Board, thanks to Ginny Hansen’s leadership and labor on the nominating committee, is very encouraging in this respect. MISF, with its Fiscal Agency service, University of Minnesota library privileges, works-in-progress and other independent scholar-related programs, excellent on-going study groups, and social as well as networking opportunities, is a very good thing.

MISF BOARD NOTES

The MISF Board recently voted to join the National Coalition of Independent Scholars. To receive the full benefits of NCIS membership, one must join NCIS as an individual. MISF intends to give its members as much access to NCIS benefits as is possible for a Chapter.

The Board established and defined Associate membership in MISF. Although referred to in our by-laws, it had not been formalized before. An Associate membership costs $40. An organization can subscribe to our journal for $25.

MISF took in less money this year than we spent. We have a reserve of about $2,000. Though reluctant to draw from this, we have done so twice. The $1,000 grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission, for which we are very grateful, has relieved some of the financial pressure, but the Board needs to look for additional sources of revenue/working capital.

The Annual Meeting was held at Kramarczuk's Restaurant in Minneapolis on November 19. Before the program presentation by Dr. Marilyn Chiat (see p.1), President Pat McDonough conducted a business meeting, followed by the report of the nominating committee, and an election of Board members for 1999. Elected were George Anderson as President, and Roger Hammer, Curt Hillstrom, Helen Watkins, Mary Treacy, Wallys Contham, Roger Dalman, Alice Schroeder, Charles Skrief, Rich Thompson, Steve Daniel, and Bill Millikan. A few days later Roger Hammer sent in his resignation, which saddened many of us who have worked with him over the last two years. Six of the new members have already met with the old Board, and are inspiring in their commitment, positive attitudes, energy, and offers to get going immediately with implementing new ideas and old tasks.

- Curt Hillstrom, MISF Secretary-Treasurer
National Scholars' Coalition Conference Held Here

by Ginny Hansen

The 1998 Annual Meeting of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars was held at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul from Friday October 2 through Sunday October 4. About 45 people attended, including an impressive contingent from MISF. Alice Schroeder, MISF 1999 Board member, remarked on her delight at making so many new friends. “I felt I was among a lot of people very much like me. Although they were obviously committed to good, thorough scholarship, they were totally approachable, glad to discuss their work and yours.”

Registrants were welcomed at dinner Friday by NCIS President Ellen Huppert (San Francisco historian of 19th c. Europe). The keynote speaker was Anne Lowenthal, Ph.D. in Art History from New York City, who talked on The Star of Independence. Saturday’s sessions began with NCIS Past-President Patricia Farrant (Iowa City, Iowa, electronic publisher of scholarly journals) moderating a panel called Independent Scholarship and the Academy: Status Reports. The panel included Toni Vogel Carey (Lansdale, Pennsylvania, author of It’s Only Logical: Your Old Habits Won’t Tell You How To Change Your Old Habits). Her talk was on The Noble Legacy (and Present Eclipse) of Independent Scholarship. Alice Goldfarb Marquis, Ph.D. (LaJolla, California, author of five books on 20th c. American culture) talked on Scholarship: Navigating a World in Chaos. Jean Cameron of Minneapolis (University of Minnesota, CLA analyst of college entrance assessments) asked, Do Independent Scholars Know Something the Rest of Higher Education Doesn’t?

Alice Schroeder said Ms. Cameron’s talk underlined interesting trends related to her own work: (1) flexible degree programs for adults with jobs; (2) more program-control for older students and ethnic minorities; (3) more specifically job-oriented degrees; (4) an increase in “distance learning”; and (5) evidence that demands for change will be initiated by the public, not by the colleges: e.g. wel-

Scholars Pursue Trivial Fun at Conference

by Roger Hammer

A rousing game of “Scholarly Pursuit,” hosted by the Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum, was a featured session at the national independent scholars’ conference here in October. The brainstorm of Board members Roger Hammer and Carl Allen, it was given substance with questions produced by the study groups (from June Dale in particular), and from Hammer’s four multi-cultural historical reference books on American minorities. Cheryl Dickson acted as moderator – our Alex Travek – and was every bit as tough on the players.

The object of the game was not so much to test knowledge as to allow interaction among scholars of different disciplines on questions that might be beyond their area of expertise. Where it bogged down was on multi-cultural questions. The audience was all-white and, though scholars, their knowledge of contributions by minorities to mainstream culture was almost totally lacking, except for questions about women’s history. There, the predominantly female audience did fairly well. The men, of course, blanked on women’s history.

Each player received a set of ground rules prior to the start of the game. Scoring was five points for each original question answered correctly, and ten points for tougher detailed questions about the subject question. Running totals were carried on the blackboard, and for the most part it was neck and neck, with the lead changing several times down the home stretch. All questions were used in the 90-minute session; scholars with wrong answers wanted to debate the judges. Humorous prizes gathered by MISF President Pat McDonough were awarded to all participants.
fare-to-work training, self-determined degree programs, interdisciplinary programs, and life-long learning.

Saturday continued with two concurrent sessions. Nela Schleuning (Mendota Heights, Minnesota, author of books on Meridel LeSueur and the Hormel strike) handled Transitions and Balancing Acts, a panel which included Jane Ford, Ph.D. (La Jolla, California, in publishing) on Making it in Two Worlds: Developing the Strategies; Bill Engel (Nashville, Tennessee, author of Slips of Thought and Education and Anarchy), on Let No One Belong to Another Who Can Belong to Himself; and Joanne Lafier (founding member of NCIS, theater historian and author) on The Biographer as Participant in the Story: Writing the Life of My Husband’s Father.

Session II late Saturday morning was moderated by our Rhoda Lewin, Ph.D. (author of Witnesses to the Holocaust and another book on Black/Jewish relations in the 1960s). The panel was called What Are We Doing? (Individual Research Reports). Presenters were Herbert Posner (Durham, North Carolina, NIH biochemist/pharmacologist and degreee, city/regional planner) and Isabel Samfield (Durham, North Carolina, music teacher) on Creative Inquirers: The Poetry of Scientists; Georgia Wright (Berkeley, California, medieval art historian/photographer) on A Pamphleteer in the French Revolution; and Yaffa Claire Draznin (Chicago, Illinois, researcher, author, and compiler of correspondence of Olive Schreiner and Havelock Ellis), who asked But What Did She Do All Day? The Life of the Middle-Class Matron in Late Victorian London.

Concurrent sessions Saturday afternoon began with one on Virtual World Interactions moderated by Margaret DeLacy, Ph.D. (a founder of NCIS, President of the Northwest Independent Scholars Association in Portland, Oregon, webmaster for NCIS, working on a book on contagion in 18th c. England). Presenters were Thomas Jepson (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, telecommunications systems engineer/historian, NCIS Board member, and biographer of Ma Kiley) who spoke on Deconstructing the Global Village: Scholarship in the Information Age; and Laura Garces, Ph.D. (Washington, DC, author, self-employed in international affairs) who focused on Globalization and Violence.

Session II, Scholarly Publishing and the Tiger Traps Along the Way, was moderated by Yaffa Claire Draznin. Panelists were Elizabeth Welt Trahan (Amherst, Massachusetts, retired scholar in German literature) on Kafka’s Castle Revisited: Finding a Publisher for My Holocaust Memoir; Rhoda Lewin on The Good, the Bad, and the Indifferent of Getting Published; and William Murphy (editor at University of Minnesota Press) on If It Is Good, It Will Be Published.

Late Saturday afternoon our own MISF presented Mind Games (a "scholarly pursuit" game). June Dale (food R&D and writer) worked up some advance publicity; Roger Hammer (independent publisher) kept score, while Alice Schroeder (the Bakken Museum) and George Anderson (chemist and Shakespeare scholar) were judges of answers; Cheryl Dickson, Executive Director of the Minnesota Humanities Commission, moderated. Over 20 participants had a grand, fun time, and many prizes were awarded. A concurrent session, What We Are Doing: Reports of Individual Research, was moderated by Catherine Reed (St. Paul entomologist, prairie conservationist). Presenters were Jeane Olson (Washington, DC), Some Spiritual Aspects of E.M. Forster’s Disbelief; and Edith Ehrling, Ph.D. (Amherst, Massachusetts, Philosophy/German Literature), Choice Under Duress: Jewish Councils During the Nazi Period.

The conference ended with two sessions on Sunday morning. The first, Constraints and Realities, was moderated by Elizabeth Trahan and presented Paul Finkelman (Akron, Ohio, legal historian and co-author of a constitutional history of the U.S.) on Independent Scholarship and Academic Freedom — A Conundrum; Charles Shrader (Carlisle, Pennsylvania) on Problems of Intellectual Property; and Patricia Farrant on The Scholarly Journal in the Digital Age. Session II was a Conversation with the NCIS Executive Board, moderated by President Ellen Huppert, designed to encourage voicing of concerns, questions, and suggestions.

Information on NCIS (and subscriptions to the national newsletter) may be obtained at their website, <http://www.ncis.org/>; by phone at (510) 540-8415; or by mail to NCIS, POB 5743, Berkeley, California, 94705.
DALE SCHWIE

Dale Schwie recently presented an illustrated lecture, Literature and the Landscape, the Writings of Henry David Thoreau and the Photographs of Herbert W. Gleason, at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, cosponsored by the Minneapolis Athenaeum. The lecture was repeated at the Otter Tail County Historical Society in Fergus Falls. Dale has also been invited to lecture at the 1999 Annual Meeting of The Thoreau Society in Concord, Massachusetts.

This project is part of a work in progress on the life and career of Herbert W. Gleason (1857-1937). Gleason is known primarily for his photographs illustrating the writings of Henry David Thoreau (905 photographs by Gleason are bound into an edition of Thoreau's works), and of the western wilderness of North America.

Gleason began his professional career in Minnesota in 1883, not as a photographer, but as a Congregational minister and managing editor of a denominational newspaper titled The Kingdom. Little is known about Gleason's life, especially his years in Minnesota. Writers and editors of publications featuring Gleason's photographs all agree on the importance of his work, but they also comment on the lack of biographical information. His years in Minnesota are virtually ignored. The common assumption is that he retired from the ministry on account of ill health, and in 1900, at the age of 44, moved back to Boston to begin a career as a photographer, which he continued until his death in 1937 at the age of 82.

However, in 1898 a series of 28 nature-related articles, some with photographs, began to appear in The Kingdom. All were related to local and regional subjects such as a series on birds and another on various locales, including Lake Minnetonka, Lake Waconia, Leech Lake and other areas in Central Minnesota. Gleason's interest in ornithology led to a close friendship with Dr. Thomas S. Roberts, Director of the Museum of Natural History at the University of Minnesota, and Gleason is included in the biography of Robert's book Birds of Minnesota.

The object of Schwie's research is to answer some of the questions regarding Gleason's life and work, and to fill the void referred to by previous writers. Recently discovered information reveals that his years in Minnesota were highly productive and most important to his professional development. One of the last projects on which Gleason was working was Thoreau's 1861 trip to Minnesota.

JIM REILLY

On Sunday, October 11, Jim Reilly conducted the Mindekkirken Choir in world premieres by composers Johan Kvandal and Paul Suskind, as part of the Leiv Eriksson International Festival under the patronage of His Majesty King Harald V of Norway. The purpose of the festival is "to bring together leading artists, educators, and theologians of different societies with a common heritage to exchange views on present-day living, values, and culture."

JOHN RADZILOWSKI

John Radzilowski has been elected to a second term as President of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota. On November 11, 1998, Polish Independence Day, he gave the keynote address at the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Chicago. On this occasion the Polish government also awarded Radzilowski the Cavalier's Cross of the Order of Merit for his grassroots organizing in Minnesota on behalf of NATO enlargement.

Also this fall, Radzilowski put on a program for the Lyon County Historical Society on Railroads and the Settling of Southwest Minnesota. He is the author of forthcoming articles on Taras Shevchenko, Henryk Siemkiewicz, Rosa Luxemburg, and Frederick Chopin, for a volume titled Makers of Western Culture (Greenwood, 1999).
GEORGE ANDERSON

George Anderson attended the 22nd annual conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society in San Francisco, November 12-15. The conference brought together more than 150 scholars, authors, drama coaches, lawyers, and a variety of inquisitive readers from all parts of the USA, Canada, and England. Their interests in Shakespeare have led them (1) seriously to question authorship attributed to the gentleman from Stratford-upon-Avon (1564-1616), and (2) to follow arguments leading to a more likely historical candidate, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. The long controversial theories underlying Oxford’s authorship involve intricacies and dangerous relationships within Elizabeth’s court, and allusions thereto from an insider’s perspective in almost all the plays.

One of the papers at the Shakespeare Oxford Society conference was presented by physicist Eric Altshuler, Ph.D., looking at Shakespeare from an astronomer’s point of view: contemporary stellar allusions included in the works, and those omitted. In 1572, a supernova (SN1572A) was reported in Cassiopeia by Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe; found in Hamlet (1600-1). In 1577, a great comet was visible and reported throughout Europe; found in Henry VI, Part I (1589-94), and in Hamlet. But the 1604 appearance of a new star, Kepler’s 1609 account of the orbit of Mars, and Galileo’s 1610 telescopic observations of the phases of Venus and of five moons of Jupiter are all omitted. If the Bard was really Oxford (1550-1604), the omission was because the author was already dead.

More information can be found at the Shakespeare Authorship Sourcebook <http://home.earthlink.net/~mark_alex/>.

LUCY SMITH

Lucy Smith has been accepted by Intermedia Arts as one of nine artists in residence with the Minneapolis Schools. On October 15, at a conference sponsored by the Minnesota Literacy Council, Lucy presented a workshop entitled The Use of Food to Build Bridges to Hearts and Minds.

JOSEPH AMATO

Joe Amato’s work on The Small, A History of Dust is in the final stages of production for spring publication by the University of California Press. A manuscript on Bypass is still circulating at prospective publishers. As Director of Rural and Regional Studies at the Southwest State University in Marshall, Joe is working with others on three spring conferences. The first is on philosophers and hog operations; the second on the new Thoreau center, representing nature with words and drawings; the third is on writing local and regional history. In the fall, in conjunction with the Federal Reserve, they intend to offer a conference on new forms of writing local and regional business and bank history.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKING

Independent scholars of Minnesota may have a new opportunity to teach what they know best, to share a part of themselves, and to make a difference. The Elder Learning Institute (ELI), affiliated with the University of Minnesota, offers quarterly non-credit courses of study to its 350 (and growing) list of members. ELI organizes short courses throughout the country and over the world, and it facilitates learning locally, primarily within the state. It coordinates the best experienced teachers to cover topics most engaging and pleasing to the intellectual appetite.

If you are an independent scholar working anywhere in architecture to zoology, and are interested in talking with ELI coordinators, you are invited to inquire. If you identify yourself as a member of the Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum, that will serve as an effective reference and help answer questions as to who is knocking at the door.

The contact person is:

Steve Benson, Executive Director
Elder Learning Institute
P.O. Box 141057
Minneapolis, MN 55414; Tel. (612) 624-7847
MISF Study Groups

SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES STUDY GROUP

On November 3 the Science & Humanities Study Group completed its discussion of Cohen's Science and the Founding Fathers. For December, the group is reading Ian Hacking, Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personalities and the Sciences of Memory (2nd edn, Princeton). As Rich Thompson says, “Hacking advances several very original theses, e.g. the indeterminacy of all memory, the indeterminacy (and possible alterability!) of the past itself, and the ‘scientizing’ of the soul. Along the way he gives a history of psychiatry over 150 years in thorough, often surprising, detail. Scholarly, complex, readable.” An option for future discussion is Owen Barfield’s Worlds Apart: What Coleridge Thought – Romanticism Comes of Age. An excellent web page on Barfield is found at: <http://www.mtsu.edu/~dcarrigan/barfield toc.html>. The group meets about every three weeks at 7:30 at the home of coordinator Ginny Hansen, 2408 Girard Avenue South, Phone: (W) 612-377-5960 and (H) 612-374-5505.

PHILOSOPHY STUDY GROUP

Postmodernism is the current project of the Philosophy Study Group. These thinkers have fervently attacked what they regard as the wrong-headed presuppositions of modern philosophy. Typically rejecting objective truth, postmodernists at the same time claim not to have fallen into the sins of skepticism or nihilism. Some say that what “truth” there is has been socially constructed, usually by those with power. Others “deconstruct” language as containing a layer of pre-supposed “truth” that most of us, scholars and non-scholars alike, accept without question. The postmodernists’ assaults on broadly accepted ideas are perhaps their most valuable contribution. But their critiques can be more imposing than their solutions; their challenges to such fundamental notions as reason or the role of language can send one scrambling to defend cherished concepts.

While the postmodernist influence is very broad, the Philosophy Study Group is focusing on three specific areas: Academia: Should there be a core curriculum; if so, what should it consist of? Literature: How is meaning conveyed? If myths and metaphors are more powerful than logic in creating reality, then what is the role of philosophy? Law: If laws are constructed by those in power, they represent the codified needs and desires of privileged white males. Does this justify tactics such as assigning quotas to correct past inequalities, or using stories rather than legal arguments?

If you would like to contribute your opinions to the mix, call Curt Hillstrom, (612) 823-5132. The group meets (usually) every 3rd Monday night at the Chicago Deli in Minneapolis.