Do Not Pass GO

DO NOT COLLECT 10% ON ALL BESTSELLERS

by Richard A. Thompson

Three years ago, while in northern California on personal business, I happened to be in the city of Santa Rosa, in the heart of the Sonoma Valley, with some time to kill. I assumed that the primary industry would be wine making, but strolling around the old core downtown, the only industries I saw any evidence of were the buying and selling of antiques and books. Antiques have never been a passion of mine, but books are another matter altogether. Within a block of the old town square, I counted over a dozen bookstores, each with a slightly different focus. There were genre stores, stores that sold strictly nonfiction, stores that sold rare books, used books, new books, bestsellers, whatever. A bibliophile’s paradise. And right in the middle of it all, its shelves hardly needing their first dusting yet, was a brand new Barnes and Noble, with a storefront half a block long. It seemed like an obvious mistake or a bad joke. I thought of some of the clients I had worked for in my years in construction, firms like Sambo’s Restaurants and LaBelle’s discount stores, which had expanded mindlessly and geometrically for over a decade and then collapsed suddenly and totally under the burden of their over-extended development debt. Not that the founders necessarily suffered, but that’s another story. Was Barnes and Noble playing the same game, I wondered?

Not at all, said one of the long-time local vendors. He had a small shop specializing in science fiction, and I bought a replacement for my aging copy of Theodore Sturgeon’s More Than Human from him. We chatted about the genre, the writing business in general, and finally about the book selling business.

“They know exactly what they’re doing,” he told me. “What they’re doing is running people like me out of business, and there’s nothing even slightly accidental or funny about it.”

He made an allusion to the Walmart phenomenon. Remember Sam Walton? Some people think of him as an icon of American entrepreneurship, right up there with Bill Gates and Colonel Sanders. Sam Walton built hundreds, by now maybe thousands, of big, glitzy discount department stores out in the middle of the boon-docks where no sane retailer would dream of expanding. Locals saw it as a good thing. In the tiny farm towns with shrinking populations and perpetually tight economies, there were jobs for construction workers and later for clerks and stock boys, goods that the local mainstreet merchants couldn’t afford to stock, and discounts that the same merchants couldn’t afford to give. What tight-fisted rural American type can resist a discount? So farmers and townspeople alike flocked to the new stores. And before long, one by one, rural mainstreets the nation over began boarding up their store windows for good. The only people who cared were the small merchants, and the farmers never liked or trusted them very much anyway. Later, when some of the Walmarts started closing as well, panning back to the stores that showed a profit, the locals just had to drive further to the next one. By then, what other choice did they have?

It’s a familiar story. Walmart drives Fred’s Hardware out of business, KFC and McDonald’s devastate Chatterbox Cafes the nation over, fortunes are made, old ways of life disappear, and there’s nothing at all to be done about it. It’s hard

continued on the following page
even to find anybody who cares. And now, apparently, it is the turn of the local, small-time independent bookseller. What's more American than that?

At the time, I thought the fellow in Santa Rosa was exaggerating. Surely, I thought, an economy as diverse as ours can support many sizes and types of retailers, mass marketers as well. Small specialty shops. Now I'm not so sure. I wish I had kept the address of the science fiction shop so I could see if it is still hanging in there, but I don't feel optimistic. The nature of monopolizers is to monopolize; it's what they do, and they are good at it. What they want is easy to summarize: they want it all. In the last ten years fully one third of all independent booksellers in the nation have gone out of business. One third! In that same period, the Twin Cities have seen ten new Barnes and Noble outlets, some of them within a mile of each other. In the three years since I came back from the gloomy bookseller in Santa Rosa, I have seen the B.Dalton and Waldenbrooks in downtown St. Paul, where I work, close their doors, along with Odegaard's on Grand Avenue, which I used to drive past on my way to and from work. This is not an abstract issue any more.

Consider the following: Barnes and Noble currently owns outright, either in its own name or that of its de facto partner Bertlesmann, the publishing firms of Random House, Fawcett, Ballantine, Bantam, Doubleday, Dell, and Knopf. Remember your ninth grade civics class? That's called a horiztonal trust, also known as a monopoly, or at least the start of one. Remember the game of Monopoly you played as a kid? It's really not a very nice game, not like Parchesi or Uncle Wiggly or Scrabble, where one person wins but somebody else might come close and everybody at least gets the chance to make a good showing. In Monopoly, one person winds up owning ev-

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continued from the previous page

eything and everybody else is totally wiped out. That's why it's called Monopoly, and that's exactly the game that Barnes and Noble is playing.

Barnes and Noble is currently attempting to buy Ingram, the world's largest wholesale distributor. The deal requires the approval of the Federal Trade Commission, but that appears to be forthcoming, despite a petition by the American Booksellers Association last January with 88,794 signatures on it. Remembering our civics class again, that is (if allowed) what is called a vertical trust.

Bertlesmann, the German publishing conglomerate, has recently purchased 50 percent interest in Barnsandnob.com, the Internet marketing arm of B&N. It's called a purchase, but it's really a joint venture on the part of two companies who are already partners, freeing up $200 million in venture capital for further expansion, both of physical stores and of Internet operations. The Author's Guild tried in vain to get the U.S. Justice Department to block the sale.

About a year ago, B&N tried to coerce the New York Times Book Review into adopting them (B&N) as the exclusive source of sales reporting. If it didn't sell big at Barnes and Noble, in other words, it couldn't be called a New York Times bestseller. That was the only venture by the conglomerate so far that was too arrogant, even for an emerging monopolist. One shouldn't try to use extortion tactics on a newspaper; they tend to go public about it. The final result was that a team of B&N lawyers did some public apologizing and promised to behave in the future. But the intent was clear, and its framers are not likely to go away.

All of the above is as illegal as poisoning a public water supply. In the last
our paragraphs, I count at least seven violations of the Federal Trade Commission Act, the Clayton Act of 1914, and the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890. But antitrust litigation is not popular anymore. Unlike laws that deal with crimes such as kidnapping, murder, bank robbery, etc., the antitrust laws don’t have to be enforced. The U.S. Attorney General’s office and the FTC have broad discretion in how proactive to be. The last time they were extremely so was in the breakup of the Bell Telephone empire, and public reaction to the outcome has generally not been positive. The current action against Bill Gates hardly merits the term investigation, much less prosecution, and the public seems to find that acceptable. Give the guy a scolding and get off his back. People are a lot more inclined to trust big business right now than they are to trust big government prosecutors, and the recent impeachment debacle can only heighten that bias.

In researching this article, I dusted off some books that had filled my then-young mind with concern almost forty years ago: Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World Revisited, Vance Packard’s The Hidden Persuaders, and even my old textbook from freshman political science. The pertinent message of all of them is clear: if the public willingly participates in its own brainwashing and condones the narrowing of its own horizons, there is little that any government can (or will, at any rate) do about it.

I submit that the estate of our independence as scholars and even as citizens is in peril. Ultimately, it is not just a question of who gets the reading public’s dollar but of what the public gets for that dollar. We usually think of “information control” in terms of power-hungry, totalitarian cabals aimed at societal domination. But domination of the information market is no less sinister when its outcome is “merely” homogenization. Think of a Walmart or a McDonald’s of the world of books. Now think of having no other place to shop for the nourishment of your mind. The tyranny of mass insanity, enforced by mass marketing, is still a tyranny, no matter how many smiley faces appear in the ads.

So what, if anything, is to be done? Winston Smith, the hapless hero of George Orwell’s 1984, said, “If there is any hope, it is with the proles.” I disagree. The proles will be proles, and will gleefully dismantle their own culture, given the right ad campaign. If there is any hope, it is with us, citizen scholars, perhaps even daring to think of ourselves as elitists. Long after the designer coffee and overstuffed chairs of the B&N emporiums have ceased to be magnets for the trendy, and the “proles” have bought as many discount picture books as their coffee tables will hold, it will still be we who hunger for solid knowledge, rather than just information, and who provide a stable market for diverse publications. And what we should do to preserve that diversity is absurdly simple: practice a bit of militant self-indulgence. Go out to your favorite independent, the one that has never abused its position in the marketplace, and buy a book that you want but don’t need. Don’t check the price and don’t go home and order it on your computer, either. In a month or two, do it again. Going back to our same old civics class, that’s what is called voting with your pocketbook, or the democracy of the marketplace. It may not be much, but it’s something, an honorable gesture of defiance. It may not ultimately work, either, but, in the meantime, how bad can it be? I think the man who found me the copy of More Than Human would approve.

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Reckoning MISF's Past With Its Future

by George R. Anderson, Ph.D.
MISF President

It is an honor to be elected President of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum. I trust my service in 1999 will match in some ways the expectations of those who attended the Forum's November annual meeting. Personally, I have found calm dedication in MISF members, order in its records, cooperation from previous board members (notably past-President Pat McDonough), and a sound financial base on which to grow.

Treasurer Curt Hillstrom has summarized MISF's membership trends and expenses over the past several years, and these data appear in the graph below.

Membership "bars" are important to notice. Our numbers have gradually declined, dropping off ten percent over the past four years. This trend needs to be reversed, and I think we can do it. MISF expenses, however, have been growing over the years, primarily due to (1) cost of increase in size and quality of the journal, and (2) cost for anticipated Web site in 1999. These two investments, in the journal (The Forum) and in a web site, should help attract new members. Both items were included in a 1998 grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission, and this grant is allowing our operating 1999 budget to stay in the black. Our savings account, approximately three thousand dollars, is roughly the size of our annual budget. As a friend from Lake Wobegon might say, "That's not so bad."

The challenge to MISF may not be in our size (though membership needs to grow), nor are we stymied by a budget; the challenge lies in addressing the obvious, coming to know what we do best and then doing it. MISF members are known to have well-honed skills, and many have claims to scholars' trophies. We read about their publications in the MISF journal. We saw an example in October, when we hosted a conference of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars. Yes, we all have heard notable lectures by members. But the tougher questions are: Why should new members join? What sets MISF apart from other Minnesota organizations? How do we define ourselves, in terms both of what we are for and of what we are against? What does "independence" mean to us?

In the broader sense of identity, I feel the Forum's "independence" hearkens back to a long established sanguine guard against institutional orthodoxy, against the abuse of power, and against "art made tongue-tied by authority" (Sonnet 66 by Shakespeare). Members of MISF must stand ready to defend and protect scholarship as a flower of liberty, wherever it grows, not only for ourselves but for generations to come. In pursuing original work, in research and scholarly efforts, authority remains diffuse. It may be subtle or blatant, encoded in software or on the Web, but heedless authority is known to encroach upon those who challenge current thinking and ideas, as well as upon minorities and the powerless. The only moral response to silencing is to provide access to a forum for diverse voices. As scholars, we have rights that come tightly bundled with obligations to those from whom our rights are derived. Shakespeare's Sonnet 94 was composed about four hundred years ago, but it resonates with today's struggles over issues of power. It presents an image of authority whose force and essence are expressed in self-containment, in granting to all others the same autonomy of which it itself is the supreme example. As "authors" of our own scholarship, we can have no better model to follow:

They that have power to hurt and will
To do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show.

Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow,
They rightly do inherit heaven's grace:
And husband nature's riches from expense;

They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others but stewards of their excellence.

Reckoning our past with challenges to liberty may be scant framework on which to rest further articles on the "Future of Independence," but we will try. Beginning with this issue of The Forum, we will include in our journal articles that cover specific encroachments on intellectual freedom. In the first of a series, Richard Thompson describes the plight of independent bookstores (see page 1). We look forward to articles by others, and we encourage readers to participate, writing letters or offering suggestions.
The New Board Gets Down To Work

by Curt Hillstrom
Acting MISF Secretary

A new Board of Directors took control of MISF on January 1, 1999. The new President is George Anderson, and Vice President is Richard Thompson. Other new Board members include Wallys Conhaim, Rodger Dalman, Alice Schroeder, and Charles Skrief. 1998 Board members who declined to run or resigned are Roger Hammer, Carl Allen, and our past President Pat McDonough. Mary Treacy, Forum Editor Helen Watkins, and Curt Hillstrom, Treasurer and acting Secretary, are continuing on the Board.

The money from the $1,000 grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission has been received. We have spent the $300 allocated to a web site, resulting in its preliminary incarnation (we still need to make it interactive) under the address <http://home.att.net/~misl/>. We now can receive e-mail at <misl@worldnet.att.net>, although if you send “it” a letter, we’re not yet sure who will read or respond to it—a problem to be resolved.

Part of the vision of our new President is to integrate MISF into the larger nonprofit community of the Twin Cities and of Minnesota. Keeping within our organization’s charter (as defined in our by-laws), the Board has been working to flesh out its goals in a clear and marketable way: supporting the scholar in free inquiry and research for the advancement of science, arts, and the humanities; supporting scholarship through liaisons to a working infrastructure of journals, publishers, other related non-profits, libraries, bookstores, and the Internet; and making access to our services open to all, beyond institutions, for the public good.

A new position the Board defined at the behest of President Anderson is that of a Business Editor for our journal The Forum. The main function will be to seek out organizations with goals consonant with those of MISF who would like to advertise in the journal. Alice Schroeder has agreed to take on this responsibility.

Alice would like members to suggest potential advertisers for her to approach.

One of the major problems that the Board has had is finding someone to take sole responsibility for MISF programs. Therefore, we are creating a Program Committee instead, Chaired by President Anderson, and consisting of Catherine Wengler, Alice Schroeder, and Richard Thompson. We still have a need for a permanent Secretary.

Meetings of the MISF Board of Directors are ordinarily held on the first Tuesday of each month. Any member is welcome to attend.

For independent scholarship, we open windows to independent views.

WHO'S NEW ON THE MISF BOARD?

GEORGE ANDERSON

George Anderson, our new President, holds a Ph.D. degree in physical chemistry from the University of Iowa. Previously, he received a B.A. degree from Augustana College, Rock Island, IL, majoring in chemistry and mathematics. He first moved to Minneapolis in 1974, a Visiting Professor in chemistry at the University of Minnesota, on leave from Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine. Two years later, in 1966, he began at the Pillsbury Company Technology Center in Minneapolis, working with food instrumentation and quality assessment. While there he published and received eleven U.S. Patents in controlling the microwave heating of food. In 1994, he began consulting in chemistry, self-employed as he is today. A long-standing member of the American Chemical Society, he currently is writing about a new perspective on the periodic relation of the elements.

George has many outside interests. He joined the Shakespeare Oxford Society in 1994 after he was introduced to an original Bible owned by Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. Two years later, he chaired the organizing committee for the Society’s national conference held in Minneapolis in October, 1996. Currently, he is coordinating a Shakespeare Authorship course for the Elder Learning Institute (see Member News & Notes, page 10).

George joined the Science and Humanities study group in 1995 and became involved with the MISF organization the following year. Applying for a grant to the Shakespeare Oxford Society from the Minnesota Humanities Commission, he worked with Board officers David Juncker
and Lucy Brusic to propose that MISF act as fiscal agent for the grantee. With the help and leadership of MISF the grant was obtained, providing the Twin Cities with a stimulating conference.

He enjoys sports (squash, golf, biking) and plays music with a recorder group. George is a father of two sons: Mark living in Massachusetts, and Peter living in Minneapolis. His late wife, Diane, died of cancer in 1989.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Richard Thompson, our new Vice President, is a professional civil engineer, certified Minnesota building official, and part-time writer of mystery novels, science fiction short stories, and non-fiction articles on a variety of topics. He is an alumnus of Macalester College, where he studied studio art under Anthony Caponi. Richard is also a former U.S. Coastguardsman, and a graduate of the University of Minnesota Institute of Technology, with honors. He lives in St. Paul with his wife of 36 years, Caroline, and their geriatric cat, Mr. Peabody. This is his first time as a member of the MISF Board, though he is a long-time member of the Science and Humanities study group.

RODGER DALMAN

Rodger Dalman has a strong background in theology. He studied at three seminaries: Westminster in Philadelphia, Biblical in Hatfield PA, and Concordia in St. Louis. He holds three graduate degrees: M.Div., S.T.M. and ThD. Dr. Dalman is currently Dean of the department of Bible and Theology for Trinity Newburgh College and Seminary. He has studied subjects related to the history and culture of the ancient Near East. He has presented several papers at regional and annual conferences of both the Evangelical Theological Society and the Society of Biblical Literature. He is known for writing highly innovative studies in the field.

ALICE SCHROEDER

Alice Schroeder is currently Programs Manager at the Bakken Library and Museum. She has initiated, designed, and implemented programs for elementary education, school field trips, Family Science Saturdays, and for the many Bakken volunteers. A long-time member of the Museum Association of Minnesota, she coordinated their Education Forum for three years. She participated actively in the NSF-funded Science and Humanities Seminars sponsored by the Association of Science and Technology Centers.

Prior to her 15-year stint at the Bakken, Alice was a political organizer, was field director in a congressional race, convention chair and campaign strategist/manager, and was elected to a two-year term on the DFL State Central Committee.

Her recent volunteer positions include Anoka County Neighborhood Mediator, reading tutor, Economic Development Commissioner/City of Ramsey, and founding member and past President of the Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.

For fun, Alice enjoys bike treks, gardening, bird watching, hiking, and camping with her doberman, Opus.

A native of Minnesota, Alice holds a Juris Doctor and a Bachelor of Elected Studies, University of Minnesota.

CHARLES SKRIEF

Until he crossed swords recently with St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman, Charles Skrief had been quietly pursuing a career as an independent historian. He has written on Minnesota subjects. He recently completed a commissioned, book-length history of a Minneapolis family. His long-term project is a history of a 1920’s Boundary Waters controversy. His goal is to write a postmodern narrative of the events.

Charles was dismissed by Mayor Coleman from St. Paul’s Heritage Preservation Commission for saying several of the city’s downtown buildings are historically significant. One of the buildings is St. Paul’s oldest commercial building (and the State’s Civil War arsenal); another is one of the city’s few remaining vaudeville theaters.

Charles is trained as a lawyer. He has worked for both the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
Postcards From A Lost World

EXHIBITION REVIEW

by Richard Thompson

On the Road with Thomas Hart Benton: Images of a Changing America


The term “Regionalist” usually refers to the entire generation of artists who dominated American art between the world wars, working in the “modernist” style and taking their themes from contemporary local life. Today, Grant Wood and Edward Hopper are the most widely recognized artists of the genre, if only because their work has so often been the subject of humorous or satirical parodies. Other important contributors, such as John Stuart Curry, are largely forgotten.) But it was Thomas Hart Benton (1891-1975) who was the acknowledged artistic and intellectual leader of the Regionalist movement, and he was also arguably its most masterful painter. Enormously successful throughout his long career, he actually appeared on the cover of Time in 1934. To readers of that day, he was American art.

Benton would have approved of the title of MMAA’s exhibit of 80 of his oils, tempras, watercolors, and sketches. It was his lifelong ambition to paint a portrait of America’s back roads and unique, colorful regions before they all became homogenized into anonymity by what he saw as the mindless rush into urbanization and modernization. He didn’t capture them all, but what he did get is indelible. The works in the exhibit were grouped by the geographic and thematic areas that Benton saw as distinct American “regions”: The Cities, The Rivers, The South, Missouri and The Middle West, and The Rocky Mountain West. He did not imagine or pretend that the list was exhaustive; it was merely the gamut of areas that he personally knew well enough to render with affection and energy. Placards near the works were well written and informative, and refreshingly free of the kind of insider-jargon that we have come to expect at contemporary exhibitions. (In some cases – notably The Jon Boat and Sheepherder, the focal piece of the exhibit – the final painting was surrounded by smaller sketches and studies that were done in preparation for it, making the display an excellent study in artistic method and discipline as well.)

But this was not an exhibit purely for scholarly students of sociology or American studies or even of modern art history, though they would have found plenty to feast on there. Benton’s work should also be seen simply for the pure visual joy of it. In an age when the avant-garde has all but convinced us that draftsmanship, craftsmanship, identifiable theme, and even beauty itself are rightfully dead, work like Benton’s is a potent reminder of why we valued those things in the first place and why they will endure. He was, above all, an artist who loved the medium and embraced its discipline, and his work radiates energy and positively oozes color. No reproduction of it comes close to having the impact of the real thing. And of course, as in that entire bygone and seemingly naive era, there is no ambiguity whatsoever as to point of view.

Editor’s Note, based on an interview with Lin Nelson-Mayson, Curator, Minnesota Museum of American Art:

Lin Nelson-Mayson believes that the Christmas 1934 issue of Time was the first place the term “regionalist” was used in print to describe the works of Benton, Curry, and Wood. She says the term had a positive connotation, and implied that these artists were finally being taken seriously by the arts establishment. Before 1934, all three were perceived, at best, as painters of the “American Scene,” or, at worst, as satirists of the
MISF Study Groups

Study Groups provide independent scholars and others an opportunity to read and discuss, debate and inquire of each other regarding topics of interest and relevance. After all, being an independent scholar does not mean being exclusively independent or an intellectual or social recluse. We as social beings need to bounce our ideas around, verbally. This is an important way to deepen our own understandings and develop our own theories. This is the only effective way for an overtly independent scholar to avoid the slippery slope to unbound and consummate solipsism.

Currently we have two active Study Groups: Science & Humanities, and Philosophy. There have been others: Family Values, Religion and Culture, The Eighteenth Century, Women and Spirituality, Chaos Theory, and more, have come and gone as members perceived their changing needs.

Each group generally meets every three or four weeks. Anywhere from two or three to a dozen people may show up for a meeting. Usually a book or other reading is discussed (including critical papers by members), or, as is often the case, this can become merely a point of departure. Meetings take place in people's homes, apartments, in coffee shops or libraries, wherever it is deemed convenient. Membership in MISF is not required to participate in a Study Group; it is only required of the Study Group contact person.

If you would like to start a Study Group, and are a member of MISF, this is the procedure to follow. (1) Select an area you are interested in, broad enough to draw in other participants but narrow enough to keep you happy. (2) Submit your proposed Study Group to the MISF Board of Directors for approval by contacting a Board member. (3) Select a time and place to meet. (4) Try to establish an initial core by finding two or more people who are also very interested in your topic.

In return, the MISF Board has the capacity to approve your Study Group, making it official, which means that your group's activities will be publicized in The Forum, in our promotional literature, and in our member information packet. We can also send you a list of members who have indicated an interest in topics related to your Study Group. For more information, including the possibility of mailing labels for your group, contact Curt Hillstrom at 612-823-5132.

SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

The Science and Humanities Study Group on March 17 more or less finished their discussion of Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory. Selection of a new book is by polling: each member who has attended at least 3 sessions this past year (or is a newly entering regular participant) may nominate one book, the group votes by a ranking system, and the winner constitutes the reading/discussion topic for the next meeting on April 7, to be held at the home of Ginny Hansen (2408 Girard Avenue South in Minneapolis; 612-374-5505). For more information, please con-
tact the group convener June Dale, weekday evenings, at 612-883-7670. (Results of the vote can also be e-mailed, faxed, or phoned to all interested.)

In order to attend discussions (held roughly every three weeks, currently Wednesdays), it is not necessary (although of course it is preferred) to have bought the book nor to have finished reading it. Many times we find that better discussions arise from a book that we don’t “like” than if we all admire and sit around nodding assent. Even if we do find a book provocative on positive terms, our tangential discussions are frequently more interesting than what the author is specifically addressing. Visitors may find that they have their own “tangenis” to add to our understanding.

Our members vary widely in background, from those who have advanced degrees in physics, chemistry, theology, philosophy, literature, economics, engineering, history, law, or business, to artists, writers, radio commentators, educators, and occasionally participants who have little college education but are simply interested. Discussions vary widely according to which book is attracting discussants, and which specific discussants (usually four to eight of us) are in attendance on any one night, “in fine form” or not. If you don’t like the book, come tell us why not. If you don’t like the discussion, try us another time.

**PHILOSOPHY**

The Philosophy Study Group is finally finishing up many months of reading and discussion related to the huge issue of *postmodernism*, and the changes it has affected in contemporary thinking about the individual, society, law, literature, values, history, time, and philosophy. We are now reading/discussing *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering our Past*, by Keith Windschuttle (The Free Press, 1996). The major message of the book is summed up on page 90. “If we... disown a realist and empiricist account of history, anything goes. We would have no means of distinguishing between history and myth, between biography and hagiography, between eyewitness reports and fairy tales. Without facts, we would lack one of the most important grounds for debate.” Windschuttle is obviously part of the backlash against the long-time popularity of “cultural studies” within academic circles, particularly in the humanities, and there are probably many potential MISF members who would like to answer back. If you are one of these, or if you say “yes!” to Windschuttle (as some of us do), come join us at our next meeting on Monday, April 5, at 7:00pm at Curran’s Restaurant on 42nd and Nicollet in Minneapolis (please note the change in our traditional venue).

For more information on the group, on directions, or anything else, contact the group convener Curt Hillstrom at 612-823-5132.

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**Reminder to MISF Members**

We offer fiscal agency services to those of you who are applying for or have received grants from foundations or other funding sources. Included is assistance in the grant writing process, administration of the funds, with quarterly reports, as may be required by the grantor, and assistance with a work-in-progress public presentation by the grantee. For more information about MISF fiscal agency, contact either David Juncker (612-824-2317) or Lucy Brusic (651-646-2970).

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HULDH AH C U R L

The Science and Humanities Study Group is stunned and saddened to learn that Huldah Curl died suddenly at her home on December 16, 1998. A former colleague, Marion Watson of KUOM, was kind enough to sketch in some background on our friend, who didn’t talk much about herself.

Huldah Curl graduated from Bennington College in Vermont with a major in painting. She came to the Twin Cities in the 1950s and worked first as Director of Installations for the Walker Art Center. There she gained a reputation as a strong supporter of local artists.

She was then hired by the University of Minnesota as Director of Continuing Education in Art. Besides arranging for standard art offerings, she played a major role in mounting several traveling exhibits. Most notable were a project on "Minnesota Lifestyles: The Scandinavians," funded by the Minnesota Humanities Commission, and "The Winona Project." The latter was a design for energy-conservation by the University of Minnesota School of Architecture, for which Huldah also wrote the brochure.

In the 1980s, Huldah developed a severe heart condition that forced her to take a medical leave of absence. After 18 months at home, she was told by her physician that she was in the lucky 1% with spontaneous recovery. As an Associate Professor she had tenure, but her position had been filled. She transferred to KUOM, where she was known primarily for her "how to" daily call-in programs. She once said, "This is a great job because I like finding out about all kinds of stuff."

When she entered college, Huldah’s intention was to major in the physical sciences, but she became impatient with her professors’ unassailable beliefs that theirs was an exact science with proven theories. She knew there were more answers to be had, and until her death she explored such topics as chaos theory, the body electric, the language of elephants, and communication among plants, all the while continuing her painting.

Huldah was a woman of many skills, possessed of a deep curiosity which led her to find satisfying answers. We shall miss her very much.

RHODA GILMAN

Rhoda Gilman is one of four authors of a book called Making Minnesota Territory: 1849-1858 (MN Historical Society Press, 1999). Gilman says that the bill creating the new territory of Minnesota, signed

David Wiggins on March 9 gave a brief talk on the history of St. Anthony Falls to participants in a free landscape painting session coordinated with Richard Rock of the National Park Service MNRRR (Mississippi National River and Recreation Area). Wiggins will speak again in late May on Nicollet Island, and twice on Boom Island for the MNRRR’s 10th Anniversary celebration on June 10. (For more information, call 651-290-4160 ext. 221.)

Wiggins has been participating with Rock on this project for several years. By showing painters historic photos related to the landscape they are about to paint, he "challenges them to think about the process of capturing the scene as more than transforming three dimensions into two... to see the hidden dimension of time" within a place. "The painters... are

James Fairman, Old Government Mills at Falls of St. Anthony, ca. 1890, oil on canvas, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.
in 1849, and the California Gold Rush, that began the same year, "both were expressions of the burst of expansion that transformed the nation in the 1840's."

**MORGAN GRAYCE WILLOW**

Morgan Grayce Willow read her poetry on Friday, February 26, at the opening reception for Female Power Portraits by the WARM arts organization, held at the Larson Art Gallery of the University of Minnesota.

*Editor's Note: The Forum will soon include an article on the non-profit organization SASE: The Write Place, founded by Executive Director Carolyn Holbrook, and funded to provide a voice for "marginalized" writers in the communities where they live. It was Holbrook who last year provided fiscal agency for Willow's program on deaf poets and translating from ASL to English and vice versa.*

**GEORGE ANDERSON**

George Anderson will coordinate a six-week course through the University of Minnesota's Elder Learning Institute (ELI) on "The True Author of Shakespeare's Works," beginning March 29. The course's "textbook" will be the April edition of Harper's Magazine, which features ten scholars debating the two sides of this 150-year-old question. Five will argue that William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is the author as proposed in the (posthumous) first anthology of 1623. The other five will advance an alternate theory: that "Shakespeare" was a convenient stand-in for the true author of the works, a courtier of Queen Elizabeth's court named Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604). The course will also include dramatic readings, video interviews and debate, and a discussion of the Guthrie's production of Julius Caesar with a prominent dramatist. For course registration, contact ELI at 612-624-7847.

**JOYCE FULLARD**

Joyce Fullard is working on entries for the new British Dictionary of National Biography, a project of Oxford University. As the current DNB was published in 1882, revision and updating are overdue. Many of the new DNB's 50,000 articles will include portrait illustrations, and all volumes will be available in print or on CD-ROM.

Fullard also teaches senior citizens in Augsburg's College of the Third Age (ACTA). ACTA has a paid faculty of 54, who hold 158 short-term classes in senior housing complexes, churches, community centers, etc. For more information, contact ACTA Director Karen A. Lindesmith at 612-330-1139.

**RODGER W. DALMAN**

Rodger Dalman presented a paper titled "The Book of Judges in the Context of the Egyptian Empire" to the Midwest Regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, at Northwestern College in St. Paul, on February 26, 1999. The paper centers on the much-debated question of whether the exodus of Israel from Egypt occurred during the latter's 18th or its 19th Dynasty. The paper is based on an impressive depth of scholarship. As Dalman says, its greatest value lies in his attempt to help fill an "historical vacuum," by giving "evangelical teachers the data that they need to teach the Book of Judges in a credible way."

Rodger Dalman, View of St. Anthony from the West Side of the Mississippi, 1997, watercolor on paper.
Upcoming MISF Programs

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC AND LITERARY LEGACY OF HERBERT W. GLEASON (1855-1937)

Tuesday, April 27, 7:30pm
Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis

A WORK-IN-PROGRESS REPORT
BY DALE SCHWIE

Whatever your area of scholarship, you will find this to be a fascinating story appealing to a broad range of disciplines, including photography, literature, music, nature study, and the undisciplined "gentle madness" of bibliomania which was a critical element in the creation of this project.

In 1997 Dale Schwie resumed research, originally begun in 1976, upon discovering a wealth of new and important material about both Gleason's life and work in Minnesota, which extended from 1883 to 1899, and details of his photographic illustrations of the writings of Thoreau (for which he is best known publicly).

Past published information on Gleason's Minnesota years was decidedly sparse. But Gleason looked back on his sixteen years in Minnesota when he expressed "a peculiar satisfaction in being on hand at the beginning of things." As Dale has discovered, the years in Minnesota were hardly wasted ones. Gleason was building the foundation for a career that would assure him a place in photographic and literary history.

This project has attracted the interest of Thoreau scholars and of a publisher. In July of 1999 Dale will speak at the annual meeting of The Thoreau Society in Concord, Massachusetts.

This event on April 27 is a true "work-in-progress" presentation: an informal story of the many paths down which Dale has pursued his enticing subject matter. Time will be made for questions, and Dale encourages discussion and debate.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ELEMENTS
FOR THOSE WHO MAY FEEL UNACQUAINTED

Tuesday, May 18, 7:30pm
Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis

A PRESENTATION BY
GEORGE ANDERSON

This will be George's first public discussion of a subject he has been thinking about and working on for many years: a new perspective on the periodic table of chemical elements. The elements' interrelationships suggest subtle but not arbitrary parity, revealing both creation's aesthetic authority (particle wave duality) and the means by which that authority may be achieved (quantum mechanics).

The elements tell us the world is larger than we have faculties to imagine. After a point, the harder we try to know something, the less we are able to; information - by its very nature - is limited by the means we use to abstract it. Wisdom lies in recognizing both this limit, and our human need for a sense of harmony in the universe.