

THE TRICORN

NEWSLETTER published jointly by the BOSTON +
LONG ISLAND + PHILADELPHIA GREAT BOOKS COUNCILS

March, 1983

Fact and Fantasy at Colby

Fact and fantasy. The Great Books Summer Institute will try to determine where one ends and the other begins. Substance and shadow. Can we separate them? Should we separate them? Does fancy always color our perceptions? Do facts become fantasies when superseded by newer facts? Does fantasy need a foundation of fact, or can we really create castles in the air?

Philosophers differ on the value and the purpose of fantasy. Plato's renowned cave dwellers forego the whole world as well as the hope of transcending it because they take shadow for substance. And Plato bars poets, those dangerous fantasists, from his ideal state. In our own time, though, George Santayana writes of the relaxing and enriching power of fantasy, in "The Soul at Play": . . . "(The world) is not made better, far from it; to live in mindfully and to live in long, the real world is better than the coloured chaos of dreams, of art, and play, and religion, and utopias: but we have nevertheless a malicious pleasure in flouting nature, and appealing to the deeper chaos of possibility that lies beneath. We want our holiday, we love our midsummer trauancies; like shopboys on strike we put up the shutters in the shop of conscience, and business, and versimilitude. The cat, the censor, is away, and the mice are having an outing: we are not going to call ourselves to account for any scampering or nibbling of theirs. Yet these silly runaway impulses are parcels of our very selves; truer, in one sense, that the rational self they shatter, which is a sort of mask, . . . Nor is the life of fancy within us suspended when the life of reason, in some measure, supervenes; on the contrary, the workshop of fancy is as busy as ever, not only beneath the varnish of the surface, like the stars shining invisibly by day, but supplying all the warp and woof of our daylight tapestry. It is fancy — the creative reaction of the senses — that sup-

plies the quality of all our perceptions; and fancy supplies even the movement and pattern of all our thoughts, except as comparison or adjustment calls them to book, and renders them coherent, and pertinent to some ulterior issue."

But when does fantasy go beyond Santayana's "relaxing and enriching," beyond Jung's basis of all creative work, and become destructive? We have known the fantasy of the "master race," as well as the fantasy of the brotherhood of man. When does fantasy overthrow reality? Why do some people turn in their earthly latches and take up residence in their castles in the air?

And what is the enormous appeal to most of us of the literary fantasy? Why do the imaginings of great writers affect us as much as or more than our own? Essayist Joseph Addison wrote in **The Spectator Papers**: "There is a kind of Writing, wherein the Poet quite loses sight of Nature, and entertains his Reader's Imagination with the Characters and Action of such Persons as have many of them no Existence, but what he bestows on them. Such are Fairies, Witches, Magicians, Demons, and departed Spirits . . . Among the English, Shakespear has incomparably excelled all others. That noble Extravagance of fancy, which he had in so great

Perfection, thoroughly qualified him to touch this weak superstitious Part of his Reader's Imagination; and made him capable of succeeding, where he had nothing to support him besides the Strength of his own Genius."

This August, Colby Week participants will explore Fact and Fantasy. Fantasies read will include Shakespeare's **A Midsummer Night's Dream** and part of Spenser's **Faerie Queene**. Other readings, such as selections from several Platonic works and an essay by master fantasist Tolkien consider the complexities of the fact-fantasy relationship.



COLBY

FACTS (firm):

The Annual Great Books Institute will be held at Colby College the week of August 7, 1983. To reserve a place, please send a check for \$115.00 per person (total cost: \$235.00) payable to Colby Summer Institute Committee, c/o Isadore S. Wachs, 1521 Walnut st., Philadelphia, PA 19102. Please let us know how you want your name listed, if you want to be in a leaderless group or have a different leader for each discussion, and whether you want a no-smoking group. Deposits are refundable, less charge for books and mailing if you cancel before July 1, 1983.

COLBY

FANTASIES (feasible):

A reaching and a response; knowing of essence; breaking of gravitational bonds; unicorn in the volleyball game.

There Is No Nunnery in Heaven

Ophelia drowned
and soon forgot
Prince Hamlet's words.
From the icy brook,
she floated to a warmer river.
Her outspread arms caught up a head
and
f r a g m e n t s
of a torso.
She soon embraced a better man,
half-God.
His lyre restored,
One song seduced her witless senses.
There is no nunnery in Heaven.
Ophelia lies with Orpheus.

lee sharpe

BOSTON NEWS

A New Book from Boston

If you're looking for a good book to supplement a diet of Great Books, our Boston correspondent has co-authored a book scheduled to hit the shelves in May. Adam Finkel and three colleagues have been working for more than a year to produce **Science Almanac 1983**, published by Alfred A. Knopf and Random House. **Science Almanac** is a review of the new developments since January 1981 in 13 fields of science and technology. It is written for the layman with an interest in both the technical achievements of science and the implications of the many discoveries of the last two years.

Adam has researched and written three chapters of the almanac: 1) medicine and health, discussing advances in neurology, epidemiology, research into blindness, obesity, and **in utero** surgery, and the discovery of new antibiotics and antiviral drugs; 2) biology, explaining the amazing feats of genetic engineering and biotechnology, the problem of endangered species and deforestation, and the revived debate between the evolutionists and the creationists into the origins and development of life on earth; and 3) a special report on cancer and heart disease, featuring articles about the new artificial heart and new data on the genetic basis of cancer.

Other chapters include discussions of new developments in astronomy, technology, computers, agriculture, energy, earth sciences and weather, chemistry, environmental sciences, physics, and psychology. According to Adam, the book is technically superb, but on a stylistic scale it reads somewhere in between **I and Thou** and **Tristes Tropiques**.

An O'Neill Theatre Party in Boston

On a cold Sunday last month, Boston Great Bookers and their friends trooped to the Lyric Theatre to see Eugene O'Neill's **Moon for the Misbegotten**, followed by a discussion with the cast.

Boston Spring Institute

Three works of psychology and literature will furnish "Keys to the Treasure" for those Boston Spring Weekend participants who join in the search on the weekend of April 8-10, 1983. Twin Light Manor, an oceanfront lodge on Scenic Shore Drive in Gloucester, Massachusetts, is the scene of the quest. The oracular works to be explored are C. G. Jung's **Analytical Psychology, Its Theory and Practice**, John Barth's "Dunyazadiad," from **Chimera**, and Robertson Davies' **The Manticore**. \$125.00 per person, double occupancy, includes books, discussions, six meals, and all gratuities.

To register, fill out the form below and mail it with a \$40.00 per person deposit no later than March 5 to Virginia Thurston, P. O. Box 299, Harvard, Massachusetts 01451. Make check payable to Spring Institute Committee. If you cancel by March 19, deposit, less charge for books and mailing, will be refunded.

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ Roommate Preference _____

Ode to Parmenides

While reading the humanities
I came upon Parmenides,
Who said, "BEING IS AND NOTHING IS NOT."
An empty thought, but it means a lot
When you consider that P. did also claim,
"THINKING AND BEING ARE ONE AND THE SAME."
Nice idea! But I still had this confusion:
How in the world to account for illusion?

Ah forgive me, Parmenides! How could I doubt
That you would be able to straighten me out?
For though false thought and illusion tenaciously persist,
"FALSENESS IS NON-BEING AND DOES NOT EXIST."

And so I thank you, Parmenides, 500 BC,
For a world free of deception, your splendid gift to me.
I found your philosophy excellent—as much as I understood;
And even what was not so clear, was also very good.

C. Louis Ferrara

LONG ISLAND NEWS

Long Island's One-Day Institute

ESSENCE & EXISTENTIALISM

What is it that makes us what we are, that gives meaning to the world and to life – or makes it meaningless?

Join us at the Long Island Institute this spring.
Great Books in a Great Setting.

The Readings: **A Tragic Sense of Life** – Miguel de Unamuno
A Burnt-Out-Case – Graham Greene

The Place: The Welwyn Conference Center & Woodland Preserve in Glen Cove

The Date: May 15, 1983 – Sunday

The Cost: \$16.00 includes books, coffee, lunch

There will be no general mailing, so please use application below.

Mail to: Long Island Great Books Council, P. O. Box 821, Forth Washington, N.Y. 11050

Please reserve _____ places at the Long Island Institute at \$16.00 each.

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Please mail reservation before 4/1/83.

PHILADELPHIA NEWS

A New Coordinator – Again

Because of illness in her family, Mary Ochs has had to resign as Philadelphia Coordinator after six months in the post. Thus the long string of five-year terms for coordinators has been broken.

Our helm is by no means without a guiding hand, though. Ruth Abel, our new Philadelphia Coordinator, has long been active in Great Books. She is splendidly qualified for her new job by past experience as a teacher of group dynamics and a coordinator of Jr. Great Books at Central High School, and present activities as Coordinator of Special Educational Events at Abington Free Library, leader of a 7th year Great Books group, and designer of Communicating Seminars for Older Adults. We're delighted that Ruth's talents and skills will be used to further the Philadelphia Area Great Books Program.

Thoreau on Listening

The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to the answer. I am surprised, as well as delighted when this happens; it is such a rare use he would make of me, as if he were acquainted with the tool.

Jonathan Swift on Conversation

Take as many half minutes as you can get, but never talk more than half a minute without pausing and giving others an opportunity to strike in.

Philadelphia's 24th Annual Spring Seminar

If you bring enough friends, you win –

To tell the truth, participants in Philadelphia's one-day Spring Institute will sift their way through a pack of lies at scenic Chestnut Hill College on Sunday, May 15, 1983.

Is it ever all right to lie – in government, medicine, law, academia, journalism; in the family and between friends? A philosopher's view will be explored in discussing **Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life** by Sissela Bok. Self-deception and deadly "self-knowledge" will be examined in Eugene O'Neill's immortal drama, **The Iceman Cometh**.

True or false, chairpersons Sue Ross (885-3450) and Etta Nussbaum (886-5955) see the Institute as the perfect occasion to win new friends for Great Books. They have kept the enrollment fee to \$16.00 per person for books, luncheon, and refreshments – the same as last year. They have also set up three full scholarships for anyone who recruits four new participants for this event, people never before on any GB mailing list. The earlier your check is received along with those of your four newcomers, the better your chances of becoming one of Council's three honored guests for the day, at no charge.

What if you bring fewer than four new friends? Your reward lies in having helped Great Books; and that's no lie.

My newcomers (address and phone shown on \$16 checks):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Enclose check for \$16 per person, payable to Phila. GB Council. Mail to Harold Moll, 657 Wyndale Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19151.

- NAME(S) _____
- ADDRESS _____
- _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____
4. _____

New Training Program in Philadelphia

In the December, 1980 TRICORN, Boston told the Great Books world about leader training for new discussion groups. Philadelphia Leader Training Chairman Sibyl Cohen found this idea appealing. Two years later, Philadelphia has taken this leaf from Boston's book, revised it to suit local needs, and has begun a successful new discussion training program.

Sibyl recruited four trainers who each agreed to conduct a session with a particular focus in three different discussion groups, of which two were older and one was newly formed. The training was named "discussion training" because the team felt that all participants could benefit from work on question formation, from experience in leading, and from critiquing discussions.

When the groups finished their four sessions, fifteen members interested in becoming certified leaders formed an ongoing group for four follow-up sessions conducted by Sibyl. A double profit will accrue to Great Books: old and new groups will have more thoughtful and knowledgeable participants; Council will have a newly-trained corps of leaders to start new groups and to replace retiring leaders. Aaron Heller, always in the vanguard of volunteers, was the first leader to offer his group for discussion training. He says, "My Welsh Road Library group was always good, but I can see that the level of participation is even a notch higher now."

The training committee is likewise pleased with the results of this pilot program. This spring they are planning a bigger and better discussion training program for the fall. Though the trainers (as well as participants, of course) had to endure some sauna-like rooms, as well as several first-time snafus, they found real interest among participants in learning more about how a leader works and how a group interacts.

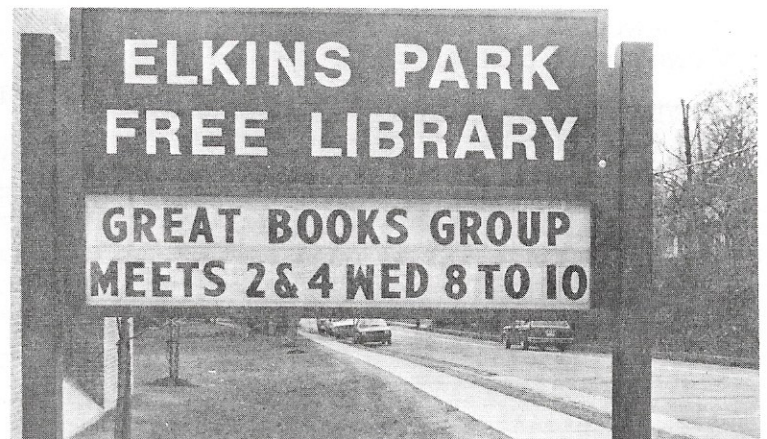
To have your group become part of this stimulating, enlightening, free program, contact Sibyl Cohen (568-9827) or Ruth Abel (887-7110).

Philadelphia Fall Institute – 1983

We've contracted for more space. The Fall institute, after two years of turning people away because of limited accommodations, is moving to larger quarters. This year's institute will be held at the Pocono Hershey on the last weekend in October. The Pocono Hershey is a lovely hotel with pleasant guest rooms, which prides itself on its cuisine. Most important of all, we should now be able to accept all who want to come and join in another intellectually stimulating and fun-filled Pocono week-end.

A Success Story in the Philadelphia Suburbs

How many libraries give this sort of support? Last month 20 members of the Elkins Park Great Book Group turned February into June with their impassioned discussion of Shakespeare's sonnets. Excellent readings, diversified leading, and a nearby pancake house for prolonging meetings all contribute to the long life and vigor of the group.



DELAWARE NEWS

Delaware Events

The Great Books Council of Delaware will participate in Delaware's 3rd Annual celebration of Women's History Week. The week-long program on the theme of "Perfect in Her Place" is sponsored by the Delaware Commission for Women. The Great Books Council will offer three demonstrations on Friday, March 11, concentrating on "Perfect in her place, but what is her place?" The three sessions cover selections from **Sex-Based Discrimination**, J. S. Mill's **The Subjection of Women**, and Virginia Woolf's **Three Guineas**. Leaders will be Barry Bernstein, Dennis Scully, and Doris Auspos.

Reservations are still being accepted for Delaware's 5th Annual Spring Seminar on Saturday, April 16 at Archmere Academy on Philadelphia Pike. The fee of \$18.00 includes books (**The Awakening**, by Kate Chopin, and **As I Lay Dying**, by William Faulkner), lunch, and refreshments. Checks are being received by Georgia Lane, 115 Delview Drive, Wilmington, DE 19810.

It Worked in Wilmington

For the past few summers, Wilmington, under the chairmanship of Cyra Gross, has held a series of well-publicized summer discussion sessions. They have attracted people with no previous Great Books experience, as well as old participants feeling withdrawal symptoms after a discussionless month or two. Some of the new people stay on in the fall to join regular groups. Readings are either poetry or excellent and readable literature, such as **The Great Gatsby**. Pascal would not be politic in the summer.

This summer, Philadelphia plans such sessions, hoping to attract new members. Cyra Gross (one of the Wilmingtonians who serves on the Philadelphia board), Eva Bix, Sibyl Cohen, and Sylvia Kasser will coordinate the summer meetings.

A Late Entry in the Leader Letters Forum

Dear Editor:

After a history of more than 25 years as a Great Booker, I am currently in the third year of leading a group at the Institute of Retired Professionals, an auxiliary of the New School in New York City.

In the Great Books Foundation guide we are instructed, "Don't try to cover the whole book . . . better if you examine a few main ideas thoroughly. But in our readings, every page, every paragraph, and sometimes every line is ripe with main ideas! For example, when we were doing Freud's **Civilization and its Discontents**, at the end of the session we had covered only **22** pages. I asked the group whether we might continue the book at the next session. They unanimously agreed, and we went on for 3 more sessions. We spent 4 sessions on Rousseau's **Social Contract**, also. Presently, after 2 sessions doing Kant's **Perpetual Peace**, we have covered only 24 pages. Drop it and go on to the next book? No way!

When we assemble for a new book my first question is, "Who's got a comment on page 1?" And we're off. But thoroughly. The Great Books Foundation may not be happy about this procedure — they're not selling us new books so fast — but I hope they'll understand. What do your readers feel about our procedure?

Edward A. Lewin

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Bumping Dates

Long Island and Philadelphia Councils selected the same date in April for their one-day institutes. Since they both draw participants from the same geographical pool, this is unfortunate. There are too many Great Books spring events for really comfortable spacing, but the TRICORN is available for date clearing, making same-day conflicts unnecessary.

The Cull to the Cullers

If the number in the upper right corner of your mailing label ends in "/1," and if you don't wish to remain on our mailing list, please peel off your label and mail it to Henry Cohen, 5800 Tulip St., Philadelphia, PA 19135.

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