

# THE TRICORN

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

February, 1989

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## Colby 1989: Destiny

Whither the human species? What is our destiny?

Are we caught up in an unchanging, repetitive cycle, with no new thing under the sun? Or is the sun itself new every day?

Will we always continue to survive an unending series of natural and man-made disasters by the skin of our teeth?

Are we subtly evolving — almost unnoticed amidst the complex, swirling flow of events that characterize our daily lives — and gradually but inexorably becoming something new under the sun?

Do we really know what and who we are now, and do we really understand the fundamental nature of the world we live in — a world our minds imagine, unconsciously shaped by perception, myth, language, and custom?

Are we humans and the objects we see surrounding us separate, fixed things which move and interact in time and space, or are we and all other objects really of the nature of vortices in a universal, underlying, continuous flow — shifting patterns of energy that interpenetrate, share, and exchange continually? Are we many, or one?

Are we unnecessarily constraining and limiting ourselves to far less than our human potential just because of our generally accepted world view — our present paradigm?

What is our role in the universe as a whole? Have we evolved to become the self-consciousness of the universe, its ability to appreciate itself? What exciting work opportunity awaits our hand, mind, and heart?

Is our human vision of ourselves and our world one of discouragement and desperation to be endured, or of encouragement and inspiration to be enthusiastically engaged?

These are the questions we will be asking ourselves and each other at Colby this August as we seek to understand our destiny as a species. We'll be aided by our reading of six fascinating works, dating from the Hebrew Bible to modern physics. A most meager sampling of their riches:

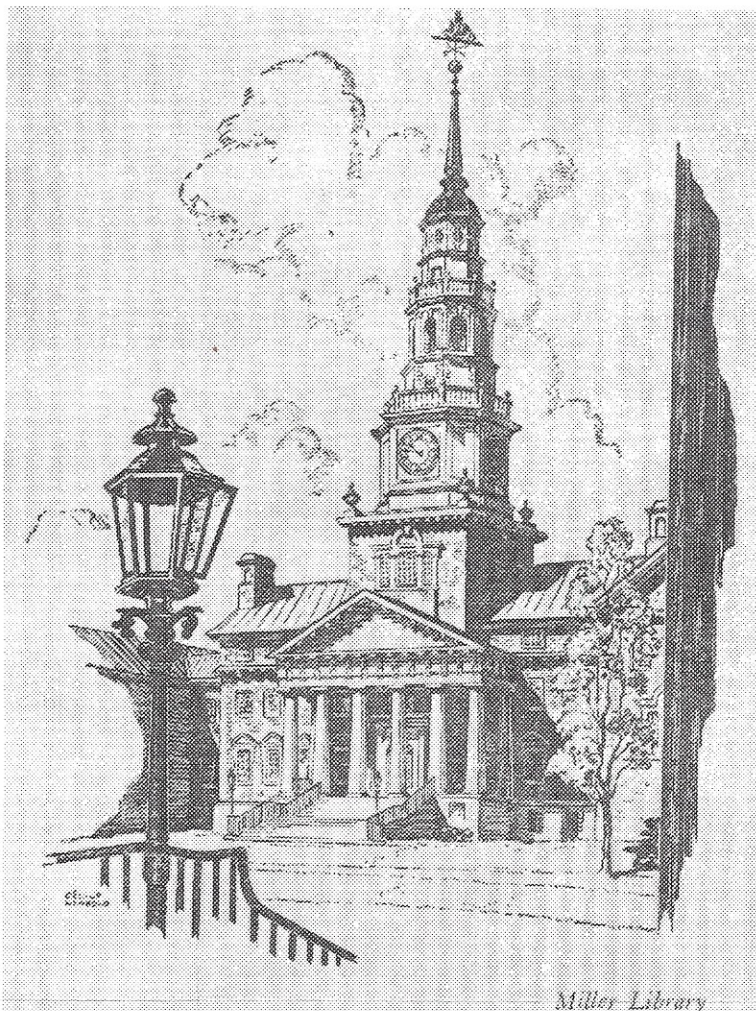
From Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*:

... All I ask is the chance to build new worlds, and God has always given us that second chance, and has given us voices to guide us; and the memory of our mistakes to warn us.

From *The Aquarian Conspiracy*:

... After the final no there comes a yes. And on that yes the future of the world depends.

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COLBY COLLEGE CAMPUS

**HOW MUCH IS A WEEK WORTH —**

If it can give you perspective on the other fifty-one; if it can bring you to being interested in what other people think and feel; if it can rekindle the thrill of reading a book and being exposed to ideas; if it can make you want to discuss what you've read with others so that, together, you can make sense out of what the author says — and, just maybe, come to a better understanding of what your life is all about?

**SIDELIGHTS:**

Swimming, boating, tennis, golf, summer theaters, warm hospitality of a staff who look forward to our return, and a clambake.

**APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION**

Mail to: Colby Summer Institute Committee  
 c/o Mr. I. S. Wachs Tel: 1-215-496-0420  
 21 South 12 Street  
 Philadelphia, PA 19107

with a leader   
 1/We prefer a group  
 without a leader

Enclosed herewith is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for registrations of the following persons at Colby Institute.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 First Name Please Print Last Name  
 Address City State Zip Code

Deposit of \$160.00 required for each participant; balance may be paid at any time prior to or at registration at the College.  
 Make checks payable to Colby Summer Institute Committee.

*Encounter Destiny*

At The

1989 GREAT BOOKS  
 SUMMER INSTITUTE

**WHERE AND WHEN:**

Colby College, Waterville, Maine — August 6-12

**THEME: DESTINY**

**READINGS:**

- Ecclesiastes
- Wilder - The Skin of Our Teeth
- Ferguson - The Aquarian Conspiracy
- Bohm - Wholeness and the Implicate Order
- Swimme - The Universe is a Green Dragon
- Heraclites - Fragments

Quoted by Ferguson in "The Aquarian Conspiracy"

"... We have it in our power to begin the world again."  
 THOMAS PAYNE

"... Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."  
 DOROTHY

**COST:**

\$320 which includes room, board and readings. Books, travel information and schedule of events will be sent upon receipt of deposit.

**ELIGIBILITY:**

Any adult who desires to spend a relaxing week, which includes the reading and discussion of books.

**CANCELLATIONS:**

Your deposit will be refunded, less \$50, if you cancel before July 1, 1988.

**CHILDREN:**

Families with children between 4 and 14 are welcome. A reduced fee for room, board and supervised morning activities for children will be quoted on request. Contact Ginny Thurston, P.O. Box 299, Harvard, MA. 01451; 508-456-3505.

# LONG ISLAND NEWS

## Annual Meeting

After the business part of the Annual Meeting in November, The Long Island Great Books council discussed stories from a collection called *Sudden Fiction*, one of which is printed here. You might want to try it for a Sudden Discussion.

Chuck Ferrara



## A Sudden Story

Once upon a time, suddenly, while it still could, the story began. For the hero, setting forth, there was of course nothing sudden about it, neither about the setting forth, which he'd spent his entire lifetime anticipating, nor about any conceivable endings, which seemed, like the horizon, to be always somewhere else. For the dragon, however, who was stupid, everything was sudden. He was suddenly hungry and then he was suddenly eating something. Always, it was like the first time. Then, all of a sudden, he'd remember having eaten something like that before: a certain familiar sourness . . . And, just as suddenly, he'd forget. The hero, coming suddenly upon the dragon (he'd been trekking for years through enchanted forests, endless deserts, cities carbonized by dragon-breath, for him suddenly was not exactly the word), found himself envying, as he drew his sword (a possible ending had just loomed up before him, as though the horizon had, with the desperate illusion of suddenness, tipped), the dragon's tenseless freedom. Freedom? the dragon might have asked, had he not been so stupid, chewing over meanwhile the sudden familiar sourness (a memory . . . ?) on his breath. From what? (Forgotten.)

## One-Day Institute

**The Theme:** THE HUMAN DILEMMA

**The Readings:** Two political novels written in exile about human life in the trap the world has become.

*The Long Night of Francisco Sanctus*, by Humberto Costantini

" . . . (Francisco) knows that it's not hard to sidestep the challenge . . . the world won't come to an end . . . he also knows that should he not grapple with this moment, his moment, all the other moments of his life would unaccountably and suddenly lose their meaning."

*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, by Milan Kundera

"We can never know what we want, because, living only one life, we can neither compare it with our previous lives nor perfect it in our lives to come . . . what happens but once might as well have not happened at all."

**The Place:** The Moore Estate, East Norwich, Long Island

**The Date:** ~~Sunday, June 4, 1989~~  
Saturday June 3, 1989

**The Cost:** \$20.00, which includes readings and traveling directions, coffee at registration, lunch, and post-discussion refreshments.

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Mail to: Long Island Great Books Council, P.O. Box 821, Port Washington, NY 11050  
before April 1, 1989.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Letters

To the Editor:

Too little has been said in appreciation for the work of the organizing committees without whom there would be no Pocono Weekend or Colby Week. Untold hours of work, dedication, astuteness at conference, and plain administrative dull work must of necessity be accomplished before the bulk of us can sit down together and invite our spirits to soar and mingle in the rarefied atmosphere of a Great Books session. Nothing happens of itself; someone must plan, perform, and check on performance. The tasks of book and leader selection, purchase, mailings, record keeping, date approvals, publicity, cancellations, refunds, meetings, phone calls, and a dozen other anticipated-and-not items must add inevitably to the belly bulge and the graying or fading hair lines. How much they give for us — how much they must forego that might be more immediately rewarding and less tiring!

There is an adage that says: "The more you give, the more you receive." If this is true, then the members of the Pocono and Colby committees are far more wealthy than the rest of us.

Charles S. Brown

To the Editor:

Is it possible to print this letter in the next *Tricorn*? The subject is LOVE — what it is.

After almost 25 years of continuous Colby attendance, it was very disappointing to miss Colby this past summer. It took an extremely serious incident on June 8 at Harvard Yard, where I had gone to attend my grandson's graduation to keep BeBe and me away. It was not until July 14 that we could return home to Washington from the hospital.

The great charm for me at Colby has always been the feeling I experience when I am there — that there is an absence of hostility in the group. The feeling lasts the whole week, and offers a surcease from the wearisome world. But I experienced something even greater from Colby during my recovery. BeBe and I received phone calls, notes, cards, wishes and prayers from so many members of Great Books that we were overwhelmed. These expressions of concern and love gave us strength to fight a tough battle. BeBe joins me in thanking all of you from the bottom to the top of my repaired heart. Colby is, indeed, an expression of love, as Is says: "We look forward to hugging all of you next year at Colby."

Arthur Katims

### WILMINGTON: ELEVENTH ANNUAL SPRING SEMINAR

#### Dogma vs. Truth

These are the watch-words for the Spring Seminar being hosted by the Great Books Council of Delaware, on Saturday, April 15, 1989, at Archmere Academy in Wilmington. Explore how people arrive at their moral and political truths through the main characters in two works: *Major Barbara*, by George Bernard Shaw, and *Bread and Wine*, by Italian novelist Ignazio Silone.

What do the characters do when reality conflicts with belief? Major Barbara is a member of The Salvation Army in England; Pietro Spina is an anti-Fascist in Italy following World War I. Two very different people. Join in on April 15 and see how they respond to this challenge.

For further information, call Cyra Gross, 302/475-3914.

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To register, send your check for \$20.00 for books, lunch, and refreshments by March 27 to Cyra Gross, 101 Delview Drive, Wilmington, DE 19810. Please make your check payable to Great Books Council of Delaware.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

# PHILADELPHIA NEWS

## A Banner Crop of New Groups

Philadelphia Great Books Council president Bob Blumenthal is delighted to announce the birth of eight bouncing new discussion groups. Some were coaxed into life, while others appear to have sprung full-grown from Bob's forehead. In January, leader trainer Sibyl Cohen instructed their neophyte leaders, enabling the new groups to continue autonomously.

## Annual Membership Meeting

All Philadelphia area members are invited to Bill and Lucille McConeghey's for the March 12 meeting. Officers will be elected. Come and see how the Executive Board functions, and enjoy socializing and refreshments. Address: 938 Westdale Place, Springfield, PA (Delaware County). Call KI-3-7628 for directions.

## Prison Group Needs Leaders

Any leaders interested in the possibility of working with a group of prisoners at Graterford Prison, please call Joan Waldbaum at 446-5008.

## Theatre Event

The Philadelphia Great Books Council is sponsoring a theatre party on Sunday, April 16, at 2:00 p.m., at 1619 Walnut Street in Philadelphia. The drama department of Temple University is presenting George Bernard Shaw's wise and witty *Misalliance* on Stage 3 at the school's Center City campus (TUCC). Refreshments and group discussions will follow the play. Tickets are \$10.00. Please send checks made out to Phila. GB Council to Max Klayman, 2200 Tremont, Apt. 206, Phila., PA 19115. Call Olga Wallace at 637-3238 for further information.

## THE SOUL OF WIT: PHILADELPHIA'S 30TH ANNUAL SPRING SEMINAR

Is *Hamlet* the world's greatest play? — Possibly. Is *Hamlet* the world's *lightest* play? — Impossible! How can five acts resulting in a high pile of corpses be anything but heavy? Since the pivotal character, even while morbidly depressed, can't stop his continuous outpouring of wit, it *is* possible to call *Hamlet* the lightest of plays.

The entire literate world knows and responds to this work. One of the most interesting responses was that of playwright Tom Stoppard, who appropriated two of Shakespeare's minor characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and built his own existential comedy around them. Stoppard audaciously lifted chunks from *Hamlet* as bases for his philosophical speculation. Discussing *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* with *Hamlet* enhances the wittiness of both plays.

The Philadelphia Spring Seminar is slated for Sunday, May 21, 1989 at Holy Family College, Grant and Frankford Avenues, Philadelphia. The \$21.00 fee covers books, lunch, and other feedings. For further information, call Ruth Allen, 673-3718.

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Please enclose check for \$21.00 per person, payable to Philadelphia GB Council. Mail to Harold Moll, 7657 Wyndale Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19151.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## The Battle of the Books II

Battle lines are clearly drawn in the clash over the canon in the Battle of the Books. The past few months have seen large gatherings of the group favoring a loosening of the criteria for liberal arts studies, and of the newly formed National Association of Scholars, the conservative teachers who wish to preserve the Western canon of great books. Two of the leaders of the latter group, Allan Bloom, professor of philosophy and political science at the University of Chicago and author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, and William J. Bennett, newly departed Secretary of Education, announced the formation of a nonprofit foundation, The Madison Center, which will run a summer program for selected college students on Western works in literature, philosophy, and political theory. Bloom and Bennett hope to expand this new foundation into a public policy institute concerned with education and other domestic issues.

Volleys hurled at enemy lines are increasingly incendiary, in this deeply political encounter. No prisoners are being taken by either side. Some typical salvos:

Allan Bloom: Classic literature is treated like an old-style exclusive country club. Outsiders spend all their time running it down while trying to get in.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: [The conservative forces are yearning for a time] when men were men, and men were white, when scholar-critics were white men, and when women and persons of color were voiceless, faceless servants and laborers, pouring tea and filling brandy snifters in the board rooms of old boys' clubs.

Alan C. Kors: The barbarians are in the midst. We need to fight them a good long time. Show them you are not afraid, they crumble.

Stephen H. Balch: [The new National Association of Scholars will try] to redeem American higher education from intellectual and moral servitude to forces having little to do with the life of the mind or the transmission of knowledge.

Houston Baker: What has determined a "classic" has been the ability of a text to reinforce, preserve and perpetuate, in an easily teachable way, the values of white, Western, male straight culture . . . We must let the idea of the "Great Books" share the fate of the dinosaurs.



An article on this subject in the August *Tricorn* has brought these responses:

The views presented in your article were stimulating and strengthened my feeling that works of other civilizations should be incorporated into Great Books. That would give us the freedom to try to understand the literary excellence as well as the ideas and ideals of a broader section of mankind . . . The time period of fifty years is too long, because of the fast-changing world; twenty-five years would be helpful in clarifying concepts and values. Great Books presently is a WASP's nest, and wonderful as far as it goes. There are other "creatures" out there with the same skills but with different ideas. It would be exciting to have them join us.

Selma Spielberger

I like the old idea of the sound liberal education, myself. However, there are many sides to this. If you change the content of the course, you must change the name, also. "Western" would become "World" or perhaps just "Civilization." If the *Upanishads* and the teachings of Lao Tse affected civilization, then perhaps they ought to be included. On the other hand, you could argue that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* also influenced civilization, but it is still not a "great book." You can't cram everything into one course without ruining it. As far as I know, women with few exceptions wrote very little that survives until the 17th century. And blacks, for obvious reasons, little until the 20th. These are my thoughts on the great controversy.

Marna Tucker

Yes, contemporary and Eastern books should be considered for the Great Books Program. Of course, how a great book is determined would have to be reexamined, to develop criteria fair to all books. You can assure the WASPS, though, that Great Books would not stray from, but would move closer to its aims. I suggest that the selection criteria center on the properties intrinsic to all books, such as subject matter, diction, artistry. Some readers may be at odds with what seems to be the message of the *Bhagavad Gita*,

or biased against the ideas in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, but who can deny the worth of any work whose greatness lies in the mutual integrity of its own form and content? As to how Great Books purists might perceive this argument for judging a book on its own terms, remember: the text has always been the focus of Great Books discussions. Our aim is to reach a deeper understanding of what we read, without outside authorities; this is the pure, noble essence of Great Books.

Ken Loughlin

I don't know of anyone climbing a mountain and returning with a tablet of stone listing the standard roster of works underlying Western civilization. If the Great Books of our organization, as well as of the academic world, are human choices, how can we object to changes at any time? . . . Non-Western culture has always been a part of our civilization. How could calculators operate without Arabic numerals? How could my patriotic neighbors light up the sky on July 4th without the stuff invented in China? In my small town, the many Korean fruit and produce stores succeed because people admire the freshness and appealing look of the food. It looks even better when compared with the stuff at the local supermarkets, an important creation of Western civilization. If this is due to Korean values, isn't there something written in that language that might be useful for us? And we don't usually consider the original inhabitants of our continent as part of Western civilization, but I don't know of a more provocative idea than the American Indian concept that land belongs to all of us and can't be private property. Actually, the entire world can be considered Western. Heisenberg, Einstein and Newton agreed that wherever you are, it is west of someplace. So let's welcome new books, especially anything that brings us closer to the loveliest gender of all.

Irving M. Rosenwasser

## BOSTON NEWS

### New Officers

The officers of the Metropolitan Boston Great Books Council for 1989:

**President:** Mary Vallier  
**Vice President:** William Shea  
**Treasurer:** Ann Mogan  
**Secretary:** Diana Pieters  
**New Directors:** W.M. Snodgrass and Eleanor Jensen

### Winter Event

Greater Boston Great Books members and friends will attend a performance of *Not About Heroes*, by Stephen MacDonald, at the Lyric Stage Theater, 54 Charles Street. A discussion with the cast and a wine and cheese reception will follow the play. *Not About Heroes* explores the extraordinary encounter of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, World War I's most celebrated English poet-soldiers. Set in a war hospital, the play examines heroism, cowardice, creativity and friendship in an amusing and thought-provoking manner. The date is March 5 at 3:00 p.m. Please make out checks for \$14.50 to Metropolitan Boston Great Books Council, and mail to Mildred Siegel, 56 Marshall St., Brookline, MA 02146 before February 18. Tickets will be held at the box office.

### The Spring Weekend

**The Theme:** Unfettered  
**The Place:** University Campus Center Hotel, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
**The Dates:** March 31 - April 2  
**The Books:** *The Book of Exodus*  
*Beloved*, by Toni Morrison  
*The Road Less Traveled*, by M. Scott Peck  
**The Cost:** \$170.00, all inclusive

To register, please mail an \$85.00 deposit, made out to Spring Institute Committee, to Virginia Thurston, P.O. Box 299, Harvard, MA 01451. The reservation deadline is March 7. Cancellations will be accepted till March 14; deposit, less books and mailing will be refunded. Roommate preference will be honored.

## What Is the Meaning of Life?

How would you like not just one, but 250 answers to that most basic of questions? Hugh S. Moorhead, long-time Great Books leader and professor of philosophy and department chairman at Northeastern Illinois University, made collecting individual responses his chief avocation over a period of several decades. He sent copies of their books to hundreds of authors, requesting their inscribing the works with their notions of the meaning of life. A great proportion complied. This past November, 250 of the best of the answers were published in *The Meaning of Life*, by the Chicago Review Press, 814 N. Franklin St., Chicago IL 60610. A cloth edition sells for \$14.95 plus \$2.00 postage.

Hugh Moorhead has a long Great Books history. He served on the Great Books Foundation staff for five years, and undertook a history of the Great books movement for his Ph.D. dissertation. Last summer at the Colby Institute, he spoke about his research most interestingly. Two statistics his audience was pleased to learn were the 50,000 figure for current adult membership, and the stunning 300,000 figure for the Junior Program in the schools.

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(continued from page 1)

From *The Universe is a Green Dragon*:

... I condense our contemporary cosmological scientific story of reality by saying that the universe is a green dragon. Green, because the whole universe is alive, an embryogenesis beginning with the cosmic egg of the primeval fireball and culminating in the present emergent reality. And a dragon, too, nothing less. Dragons are mystical, powerful, emerging out of mystery, disappearing in mystery, fierce, benign, known to teach humans the deepest reaches of wisdom. And dragons are filled with fire. Though there are no dragons, we are dragon fire. We are the creative, scintillating, searing, healing flame of the awesome and enchanting universe.

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