



NEWSLETTER

The Kenneth Burke Society

April 1991

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CALL FOR SEMINAR PROPOSALS

A major feature of the 1993 Kenneth Burke Society Convention at Airlie House in Airlie, Va., May 6-9, 1993, will be a series of seminars exploring specific facets of the Burkeian system. The seminars will bring together people interested in one specific topic for six hours of discussion and debate. The immediate goal of each seminar is to allow a small group of participants to explore specific topics which are of primary and pivotal interest to them; however, the ultimate goal is to enable participants to develop research questions and scholarly agendas that will guide them until the next Burke Society Convention.

All members of the Kenneth Burke Society are invited to submit proposals for seminars for the 1993 Convention. Seminar proposals should include a carefully and precisely worded topic, a 50 to 100 word summary of the purpose and procedures of the seminar, required advanced readings, and the name and address of a coordinator of the seminar. The label "coordinator" has been chosen so as not to imply the burden or responsibility of "chairperson." Any agenda governing the seminar, for example, is established by all members of the seminar. The coordinator is thus responsible for getting the seminar started at the introductory session but then participates fully as a seminar member along with everyone else in the seminar.

Seminar proposals should be submitted by June 1, 1992, to James W. Chesebro, 1993 Chief Convention Planner, Kenneth Burke Society, c/o Speech Communication Association, 5105 Backlick Road, Building #E, Annandale, VA 22003. Seminar proposals will be reviewed by the 1993 Convention Planning Committee. The Planning Committee members' final ranking of the seminars will determine which seminars are scheduled at the Convention.

At the 1990 Convention, nine seminars were scheduled which were viewed as particularly useful, insightful, and potentially promising for individual scholars. The 1990 seminars illustrate the kinds of seminars which can be scheduled for the 1993 Convention. Seminar topics in

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BOOK REVIEW

Paul Jay, ed. *The Selected Correspondence of Kenneth Burke and Malcolm Cowley 1915-1981*. New York: Viking, 1988.

Kenneth Burke and Malcolm Cowley have secure places in 20th century American intellectual life. Paul Jay's edited collection of their letters is not intended, therefore, to make that place. Rather, Jay seeks to edit the letters so as to construct "the uncanny...recording [of] a single life in an autobiography written by two subjects" (viii). In an important sense, this project never fully succeeds in this objective – probably through no fault of Jay's but because, as Cowley writes to Burke, "I came to regard my letters to you as a sort of record not of my life but of my intellectual life, which tacitly we regard as life" (128). What Jay has left us, however, provides a treasure trove of many things that emerge from the sweep of two extraordinary minds, each interacting with the mind of a lifelong friend and reader. The result is a sort of album of family verbal photos, moments captured along the way of a slightly unreachable but obviously rich narrative. Viewing these photos, those who know the work of these two friends will smile innumerable times with the joy of newly acquired insights into Burke, into Cowley, and into the sweep of American intellectual life in this century.

Because of their richness, the letters leave open many readings. To be sure, one reading of the letters should be as biography. Read in this way – clearly most easily accomplished in a rapid reading – the letters provide a poignant reminder of the humans behind the literary accomplishments. The letters of two youths are filled with the dreams and frustrations of obviously deep desires for success in their chosen work. These mellow into letters which project confident craftsmanship in inventing the ideas that we have come to know in their work. The broad smile of accomplishment soon appears as each senses the gentle recognition of their success. And the letters conclude with each looking

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1990 explored "Pedagogical Approaches to the Study of Kenneth Burke," "Theological Implications of the Theories of Kenneth Burke," "Kenneth Burke and the Creative Artist," "Feminist Critiques of Kenneth Burke," "Unknown (Relatively) Essays by Kenneth Burke," "Kenneth Burke and Political Communication," "Kenneth Burke and the Critique of Contemporary Culture," "A Critic's Workshop," and "Kenneth Burke and Postmodernism."

Descriptions of the purpose and procedures governing a seminar will vary depending upon the seminar. The description of the "Kenneth Burke and the Creative Artist" reads as follows: "Artists who know Burke realize that they use his theories during the critical/analytical phase of the creative process. However, some artists suspect that they also use Burke in many other undefined ways during the creative process itself. This seminar will explore both the critical and the creative ways that artists use Burke." In other seminars, advanced required readings were also specified in the seminar description to provide a common frame of reference for the seminar.

Seminar topics will be announced in the October 1992 *Kenneth Burke Society Newsletter*. Insofar as possible, participants will choose seminars according to their individual backgrounds, interests, and preferences. However, because seminars will have enrollment limits, participants are asked to identify their first and second choices. Each participant must submit a request for a specific seminar to the Chief Convention Planner by, and ideally before, January 1, 1993. Notification of the seminar enrollment is provided by immediate return mail. By mid-January 1993, each seminar participant will be sent a list of the other members of the seminar. By February 1, 1993, each seminar participant must prepare and mail to the seminar coordinator and the other members of the seminar a 1-10 page position paper. Before attending the seminar, each participant is expected to have read the position papers of all other seminar participants.

AIRLIE REMINDER

Airlie House in Airlie, Va. will be the site of the May 6-9, 1993 Kenneth Burke Society Convention. Combining the charm and grace of a stately mansion with a relaxing atmosphere appropriate for an academic gathering, Airlie House offers superb accommodations at reasonable prices in a picturesque environment. Airlie House, which was selected from a list of 10 possible convention sites throughout the United States, provides a setting that assures the continuation of the conversation and the New Harmony tradition. The convention theme is "Operation Benchmark," in the spirit articulated by Kenneth Burke at the New Harmony convention. Additional information regarding rates and reservations will be forthcoming as negotiations are finalized. In the meantime, make plans to meet at Airlie in '93!

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers for programs, seminars, workshops, and special formats and activities are encouraged for the Kenneth Burke Society's second national convention on May 6 to 9, 1993, at the Airlie House in Airlie, Virginia. Papers dealing with political activism as well as theory and application that relate to Burkean analyses are encouraged.

Participants can utilize two submission dates. For people whose ideas are at an exploratory stage in development and would like detailed attention and feedback, the preliminary submission date is September 1, 1992. The final submission date for all papers is December 15, 1992. This date has been established because February 6 is the final date to register for rooms at the Airlie House. Of course, people can participate in the convention without presenting formal papers. The seminars will again play a significant role in this conference.

Participants submitting convention papers will also have their submissions automatically reviewed for possible inclusion in the volume to be published following the convention. The volume will be edited by Bernard L. Brock.

The following people will serve on the Program and Paper Selection Committee:

Dr. Bernard L. Brock, Chair
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back over a body of life-work and considering how to round the edges to leave their fully developed legacy.

Here too are brief glimpses of personal selves: two impish plotters conspiring to trick the Dean at Harvard into granting Cowley a few extra days at Christmas so the two could play together in New York; the philosophical musings of a bohemian of Greenwich Village realizing that he belonged on a rustic farm in New Jersey; and, in the most touching letter in the book, Burke mourning the loss of Libby and paying tribute to her as a helpmate of many years. The flow of the seasons of the literary careers present a wonderfully general sense of the humanness of literary work. It is this picture that gives value to the letters as records of the two lives rather than the intricate texture of experience that we expect from autobiography.

But once those of us interested primarily in Burke have read the letters in this fashion, the real fascination of the collection begins. Hidden within the pages are all sorts of gems for the interpreter of Burke. Those who attended the Burke conference last May found that the foremost searcher for these little insights was Burke himself. In a familiar moment for those of us who have heard him speak, he approached the letters as the product of some third person and told us what he had discovered in them.

One sort of gem contained in these letters is the quick comment that is recognizable as an incipient concept which would later become an important element in Burke's work. Burke's work is filled with ideas that emerge in an early work as a brief textual reference, then reappear in a later work in a footnote, and become fully developed in a still later work, perhaps changing names between books, but linked nonetheless. The pentad is an example incipient in the concept of symbolic patterns of experience in *Counterstatement*, outlined in a footnote in *Philosophy of Literary Form*, and fully developed in *Grammar of Motives*. The tendency reappears continually in these letters. For example, in October of 1921 Burke writes to Cowley "The one property which literature possesses to the exclusion of all other arts is that of ideological clarity" (103). Can this be a waystation in the quest for understanding this ideology (as philosophy) which led to the project of the *Grammar*? In December, 1940, Burke writes to Cowley "Terms are interrelated once you select a few, you are no longer free simply to apply them like labels to external situations, but must also follow through all sorts of internal battles, as the terms bring up obligations with relation to one other" (237). This is the clearest statement, in my judgement, of the concept of clusters of terms prominent in *Permanence and Change* and which becomes a fully developed central process of inquiry in *Rhetoric of Religion*. Such examples are common in the correspondence.

Perhaps even more intriguing are small vignettes in the letters which reveal values which shape Burke's work. For example, Burke describes in a 1921 letter his idea of the ideal book review (102); in 1923, brief thoughts appear on how to judge a book (140-41).

Adding to these passages are little moments which bring smiles simply from the sheer accuracy of their thought.

Cowley envies Burke's "knack" for being prophetic of developments in literary theory (130). The accuracy of other passages is penetrated by an almost wispish quality. At the moment he is struggling to decide whether to join the Communist party, Burke writes to Cowley in 1932 "I am not a joiner of societies, I am a literary man" (202). At age 39, Burke writes to Cowley "I want very much to be talking about the world when I'm ninety" (218). The playfulness that Burke demonstrates in all his writing, but most pleasantly in his letters, adds a dimension to this reading that other correspondence lacks.

The book also presents challenges to students of Burke's work. Two come immediately to mind from my reading. The first relates to the growing body of study which treats Burke's work diachronically. Burke's work now stretches over seven decades. Although there is an obvious consistency in the work that constitutes Burke's recognizable identity, work has now begun to see the major stages in his work and to track the discontinuities that any maturing work of such duration must contain. A careful reader will find evidence for this work in the letters. One problematic is Burke's struggle to locate his basic intellectual moves. At times, his statements seem to be those of a descendant of Plato, seeking formal universals (179); at other times, he offers a clear articulation of contextual ways of thought (103, 202); at other times, his Marxist influences give voice to a dialectical and organic sense of wholeness (80, 167). Is there pattern to these wanderings? Major changes in Burke's definition of his task are also evident. For example, in October, 1931, Burke, who to this time has been nearly exclusively literary, begins to turn to social and political concerns (196). Later, through the 1940s, one can read the gradual shift to the commitment to produce a system, a philosophy of language. Even better than the many essays which Burke has spread liberally through literary journals, these letters fill in the gaps between his major works in a way that will benefit the search for texture of development in Burke's work.

The other major project that surfaced for me in the correspondence was the evidence throughout of the intriguing relationship of Burke to the recent developments in theories of language which followed the importation of the European influence. The questions which are posed by this relationship are given background early in the book by the tension between Cowley the exile and Burke the nativist. Their correspondence in the period following the first World War contains persuasive pleas by each: Cowley pleading with Burke to come to Paris where their generation will remake the world; Burke pleading with Cowley to come back to participate in the building of an American literature. Cowley did return, of course, and Burke's work shows his widespread familiarity with European literature. Yet, as one reads the letters, one senses that Cowley's voice was to achieve an internationalism and Burke's a unique American expression that set them apart from each other.

But more importantly for the question we have posed, Burke ponders and puzzles problems which have given power to the so-called "postmodern turn" in letters to Cowley as early as the 1920s, and founds impulses in those

ponderings and puzzlements which are basic to modern understanding of language. For example, as early as 1923 Burke identifies specialization as characteristic of modern thought and destructive of human sensibilities (133). From this springs the synthetic character of his treatment of text integrated with living. Or consider that by 1925, Burke's development of a theory of the reader as the creator of discourse sows the seeds for his tracing the implications of language as a cultural possession (171).

It, of course, oversimplifies the issues to characterize the challenge in the search for the intellectual linkages of Burke and the postmoderns as an effort to prove Burke was there first, or that Burke influenced those who failed to acknowledge his influence. The issue is more profound: our tendency to read people rather than ideas (a tendency that certainly has been as true of Burkean scholars as any others) and to pit our theorist against their theorists can force us to miss some important ideas which can help us answer the questions which are posed in our times.

Paul Jay's edited edition of the correspondence of Burke and Cowley can test the reader's attentiveness at times, but the inherent fascination of the correspondence of these two irrepressible writers is ultimately – well – irrepressible. Different readers will find rewards at different points, but there will be rewards aplenty. That is how family albums are, of course, boring at times, but delightful overall. And when you have made your journey through those many years of photos, you understand something that none of the photos could quite communicate by itself – a flow of lives as lived and the influence which individual lives have on the times which are captured in those photos.

James F. Klumpp
University of Maryland at College Park

KB VISITS EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Last year from September to December, Kenneth Burke was a visiting scholar in the English department at Eastern Michigan University. He served as the McAndless Distinguished Chair in the Humanities. In this role, he worked with faculty and students from the departments of English, speech communication, philosophy, political science, sociology, and others at Eastern Michigan University on an individual basis. In addition, he met with groups of students and faculty from Wayne State University and Western Michigan University. KB also engaged in a number of his own projects, among them a plan to update Harper's *Dictionary of Modern Thought*, which he calls "our Rosetta Stone."

At the close of the visit a formal convivium was held to allow those who had profited from KB's wisdom and insight to thank him. The following are excerpts from some of the presentations made at the convivium.

Marcia Dalbey:

KB's presence on our campus during the past three months has been a great source of personal pleasure and

intellectual stimulation for me. In fact, this semester has been a very special one for many of us in the English department at EMU, as I'm sure some of our speakers tonight will attest. I won't take up much time adding my testimonial to those you will soon hear, but I have one small anecdote to relate because it's given me a way to identify a man whose work stubbornly resists labels. The first time KB came to my house for dinner, the conversation was ranging over a number of events in his life – his times in Greenwich Village with Bret Harte, Djuna Barnes, and others who are only famous names to us; his editorship at the *Dial*, and his publication, for the first time, of Eliot's *The Wasteland*; his long friendship with Malcolm Cowley; his teaching at Bennington. Then someone asked if he'd traveled much as a young man. He responded that he'd wandered around the country for a while, and I asked him what he did to support himself in those travels. "Oh" he said, "I verbalized. That's what I do." So this semester I'm privileged to call him, with affection and with the utmost respect, our resident verbalizer. That is indeed what he does, and, one could argue, does better than anyone else in this century.

When I first learned that he was coming to EMU, I went to the on-line MLA bibliography to obtain a complete list of his works. I knew his major books: *Counterstatement*, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, *Language as Symbolic Action*, *Permanence and Change*, *Attitudes Toward History*, *The Grammar of Motives*, *The Rhetoric of Motives*, *The Rhetoric of Religion*, *Dramatism and Development*. I knew that he had written much more than those works, and I knew, of course, that a great deal had been written about him. What I didn't know was that it would take what seemed like at least 10 minutes just to print out what had been written by or about him in the last decade. He's been the subject of more than 100 books, articles, and Ph.D. dissertations in the last 10 years alone. This year, as often in the past, there's at least one MLA session devoted to what he humorously calls in one of his poems, "advanced Burkol-ogy." The great verbalizer clearly inspires more, if not greater, verbalizing.

Phillip Arrington:

Much later, sitting on a quiet beach during a well-deserved respite from academic dizziness, the young man would find the moment to discover another Burke, perhaps the greatest one, in *The Rhetoric of Religion*. There, too, he found a name for the logologist he'd always been, a man made not of words, but of words for words. A most unexpected place for such a name: words for God, the rhetorical spirit in the spirit of the rhetorical, ultimate terms for ultimate turns, the language of negative transcendence, words for God's (and language's) more-than and not-than, and all the possibilities of a verbal theology, and its capable culpability. Augustine. Genesis. God's debate with the Devil. All these were radiations, emanations of the verbal theology, turning him around and upon his own turnarounds. "It's more complicated than that," Burke's God keeps telling Burke's Satan. But Satan, like Burke, like the young man, keeps trying to explain it anyway, and to explain the

explanations, and on and on. The positive genius of negative reduction at war with the negative genius of positively rotten and wonderful abstractions. And happy about the war.

And when the moment came, as it would, this self-discovered, not self-made, logological man, still quarrelsome, but happy about it, when the moment came for him to put his reluctant but deliberate finger on Burke's telephone digits, and when waiting nervously, heart skipping, dry-mouthed, for this Burke fellow to answer, he wondered if indeed he could ask what he called about, or remember the words to remember.

The phone would stop ringing.

A barely audible, fragile voice would say, "Hello," as if it were a question.

"Mr. Burke," said a voice the logological man wasn't sure was his own. "Mr. Burke," the voice repeated, not sure if it had heard itself, rather than Burke's response, "I'm Phillip Arrington, from Eastern Michigan University, calling to ask if you'll allow me to nominate you for this year's McAndless Chair in the Humanities."

An hour later, the logological man would be driving to a dentist appointment, giggling in perfectly rotten self-satisfaction, slapping the steering wheel, and swerving slightly, repeating aloud over the hum of the tires and the radio, "Yes, he said 'yes.' Yes."

Elizabeth Babcock:

I don't claim to be a Kenneth Burke scholar, although I hope someday to be one. My tribute to him is a student's tribute — to the man who I consider one of my greatest teachers: a scholar, poet, critic, and visionary who has opened up for me a realm of new ideas that I hope to explore for many years to come...

KB has said that tragedy is the metaphor for all human experience. He uses the dialectic to explain human motivation in terms of two opposing principles: desire and loss. Desire is the thesis: we want something, so we go after it. We're greedy, and we're fallible, so what we get falls short of what we want. We're fallen, so we ourselves fall short: there's the loss, the antithesis. Through suffering, we learn — that's the synthesis — and that learning gives rise to yet another desire. And so it goes.

As scholars and as students, our desire is for knowledge. All of us who have pursued graduate study know that "the suffered is the learned." We study the great literatures of the world and we find both knowledge and beauty written there. We struggle to express our visions in our discourse, both spoken and written, but no matter how hard we try, our best is never as good as we hope it will be. We share our visions with our students, hoping they'll catch some of the divine spark that inspired us — but we try not to give away so much that we burn out and lose it ourselves.

The tragedy is that so few minds like Kenneth Burke's come along to enlighten us, inspire us, and renew our vision. KB, in his 95th year, has that divine spark in abundance. He has never burned out. He's given of himself, his time, his energy, and his love — of learning, of language, and of people — to our university, and we are the richer for it.

Bernard Brock:

In the 1950s and '60s, people asked, "Who's Kenneth Burke?" The people in rhetoric and public address were into the great speakers and speeches, and they felt Aristotle had said everything we needed to know about rhetorical theory. Some people even said Aristotle had written the first and last book on rhetoric — it was both theory and practice. In that context, Edmund Burke, the great British statesman and orator, the Father of Conservatism, was the only Burke who readily came to people's minds. He, of course, was the model that speakers needed to emulate.

At that time, there were a few people on the fringe of the discipline, like Marie Hochmuth Nichols, Leland Griffin, and Bernard Brock, who talked about a rhetorical theory called "dramatism" advocated by a funny little man who didn't even have a Ph.D., so he could never be a scholar named Kenneth Burke. He had some ideas that he called "identification," "the pentad," and "substance." Of course, the real question was, "How do these concepts relate to Aristotle's rhetoric?" Fortunately, people didn't know that Burke felt all people were innately critics, nor did they know about his flirtation with Marxism and Communist thought. During this period, Kenneth Burke and his ideas languished on the fringe of the speech communication discipline.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, the question became, "Which Burke, Kenneth or Edmund?" The late 1960s were not only a period of confusion in the American society, but the discipline of rhetoric was in upheaval as well. The country was polarized over issues like civil rights, the Vietnam War, and the Free Speech Movement, and younger scholars wanted to study these events as social movements. They didn't want to be limited to the formal speeches by the leaders but felt that demonstrations, marches, and other symbolic activities did a better job of capturing the spirit of the "New Left." They weren't willing to accept the argument that you can't legitimately study such events because you have to wait until the main figures die and their diaries and letters become available and that there is no way they would be able to maintain the necessary objectivity since they were so close to the events. Anyway, didn't they realize that the violence they were studying wasn't rhetoric? Traditionally, rhetoric was more rational and peaceful, so these coercive, violent acts simply were not rhetoric.

Many scholars within speech communication felt they must study these events because they were the most significant acts of communication influencing people's attitudes and behavior. They also realized that Kenneth Burke's "dramatism" was more useful than Aristotle's in describing, interpreting and evaluating these activities. Burke saw rhetoric as inducing cooperation through the use of symbols which is precisely what these acts were doing.

By the 1970s, Kenneth Burke's dramatism was common place in the journals, and it was applied not only to social movements but to all other rhetorical phenomena. The most frightening thing was that contemporary rhetorical theory and public address were as common as traditional Aristotelian theory and the history of British and American public address. In the process Kenneth Burke became as promi-

ment as Edmund Burke who was losing his favored position.

In the 1980s, the question became, "Who's Edmund Burke?" By the 1980s, scholars no longer needed to defend their use of Kenneth Burke's dramatism, and they could assume their readers had a general knowledge of his theory. In public address, concern for political campaigns and social movements had replaced interest in single speakers and speeches. Courses in contemporary public address or even special topics like the rhetoric of Watergate or the Vietnam War were popular. Undergraduates were not necessarily exposed to Edmund Burke, so people assumed that any Burke mentioned was, of course, Kenneth Burke.

The world has changed a great deal since, in 1967, at the University of Minnesota, a graduate student asked me, "When will we no longer have to defend the use of Kenneth Burke and provide a detailed explanation of his theory?" My response was, "Be patient. It takes a long time for people to accept new ideas." But I'm pleased to say that day has arrived, and instead of having to defend the use of Kenneth Burke's rhetoric we're here in a tribute to his contributions.

Looking ahead to the 1990s, I feel that the question people will be asking is, "How do other theories relate to Burke's dramatism?" Today, Kenneth Burke's unified theory of "logology" and "dramatism" is the dominant contemporary rhetorical theory. As a result, people are comparing the ideas of Americans like I. A. Richards, Richard Weaver, Suzanne Langer, and Europeans like Habermas, Grassi, Foucault, and Diderot to Kenneth Burke. Kenneth Burke's dramatism has become the springboard for discussing all other contemporary rhetorical theories.

Yes, KB, I've seen your theory come a long way. So tonight, my tribute to Kenneth Burke is that he has led the way in revolutionizing the field of rhetorical theory and criticism, and after visiting with him recently, I'm pleased to say that he continues to lead the way.

Robert Welsbuch:

I read Burke first in the Vietnam years, when as a student I would wake in the mornings pondering whether to emigrate to Toronto or cut off a few digits. Literary criticism was my refuge from all of that until I learned from Burke that no such refuge was offered or needed. Burke taught me how one could employ the techniques of criticism for the non-literary: how the political and historical could enter in, must enter in, to any description of a literary text because there really was only one world, one symbol-making humanity; and how all phenomena-as-perceived could be treated to the analyses of the pentad's ratios. Long before Roland Barthes shocked the latecomers by analyzing restaurant menus and professional wrestling, KB had performed hundreds of such operations. And too, Burke was the first of the moderns to restore the larger sense of literature as all that is written, a sense now, nearly 50 years later, being forwarded as if it were a new idea; and the pentad got it right, as the race-class-gender and new-historicist movements haven't yet, by making us aware that the political and cultural consist in acts of symbolic logic, which make them not less real but only real.

And that led, finally, to the most lasting reaction to

Burke, a sense of Burke as useful, of how handy-dandy this extraordinary gadget was – it slices, it dices, it merges and verges – and the gadget was the pentad but the pentad was the terminological scheme for human thought, which is to say symbol-making. For Burke, the human self is the symbol-maker, symbol-manipulator, symbol-misuser, symbol-victim, and there really is no great distance between worrying the nature of ghosts and weird sisters in Shakespearian tragedy and the social question asked of a host, "Is this an ashtray or a seashell?"

So, for instance, when my Shakespeare professor would ask what it meant in *Macbeth* when Great Birnam Wood comes to High Dunsinane Hill, when Malcolm orders that "every soldier hew him down a bough and bear't before him," I would shout out, "Scene and agent and agency are merging and collapsing!" This made me incomprehensible to most and annoying to all, but to me it meant that, via the pentad, I was understanding something otherwise unintelligible, the meaning of *Macbeth*, "Fog and filthy air" as the play's climate, its climate of language, too. And so when Great Birnam Wood comes to High Dunsinane Hill, this is nothing more than the symbolic language of the entire play made action in this state of unnatural nature combined with the unnatural human, as foliage is ripped from the soil to fulfill the witches' prophecy. The collapse of scene and agent, agent and agent (*Macbeth* soon outwatches the witches, mimicking their cadences), agent and agency throughout and at last is the appropriate non-linear causality for a play in which "Fair is foul, foul fair," most everything one way foul which Burke and his pentad sets fair.

All the time, this great toolkit offers itself. Years later, wondering about the ways in which the American romantics treat time and history and noting how much more often they would define the present by the future rather than the past, I would be led back to Burke's discussions of definition, familial and directional, by origin or goal; and it would all make sense that, in a nation without much of a past, as the British were always reminding Americans, essence would be allied not to a past but to a destiny. But most of all, in the most casual encounters with people and events, every time that I am able to take a step around someone's claims on how things are to note how that reality is being posited, by what unconscious assumptions, it's by the pentad's goad. To what extent that I can be anybody's friend or teacher, Burke is no longer merely big but ubiquitous.

What is best, this is an influence that does not enslave but emboldens. While that he is, there is and will be no "school of Burke," much as many of us consider ourselves Burkelians, because each of us has enjoyed such a personal awakening by him that we could not fathom making a club of it. There is no school of Burke, large or small, because size circumscribes, and there is nothing that exists, not even "nothing" itself, on which Burke has written brilliantly, nothing that exists outside of Burke's school, the only classroom without walls that every mattered.

And so to the decision. Between my second and third college years, on a summer evening, reading delightedly in my room at home of Burke's definition of man in *Language and Symbolic Action*. I decided my life. I ran downstairs

and announced to my parents that I was refusing the study of law for literary criticism. And this is when Burke made my father a poet, for a few seconds in any case. "I have a vision," said my dad, who never had a vision before or again. "It is a vision of dollar bills flying like birds away from you." When I told my father last week that I was going to speak here tonight in tribute to Kenneth Burke, he said, "Remind him how much money he owes us." But the debt, I'm afraid, runs profoundly the other way.

POET'S CORNER

CONVERSATION WITH KB

SYNERGY gathers in
the room where candles
flicker in the wind –
but there's no wind. Soft
moth wings brush our throats;
our pulses throb. Sweet smoke
rises and wreathes his bent head.
Our columned spines extend
and lengthen forward, paired stems
bending toward the glistening thread
the wiseman spins and weaves – a web
star-spangled,
petal-pearled.

Our hands, like blind crustaceans,
fingers curled, crawl slowly
over sand-white linen,
hovering, seeking. The starman
ceases speaking, lifts his glass –
his hand blue-white
on ambered melted light –
to beckon us. We linger –
yearning – yes closer – he commands;
his trembling finger
rims his glass and dips
and blesses parted lips,
his own last.

Eons pass. The shaman's voice
begins to speak again in runes
of ruins, of the incestuous
first union. "You must go back,"
he says, "to understand;
you must go on. The history
of language is the study of all error."
The walls crack,
and the room becomes a cave,
a world, a sky.
Summoned and yielded
to the exaltation and the terror,
our hands clasp, reaching toward the light
that streams from atavistic eyes.

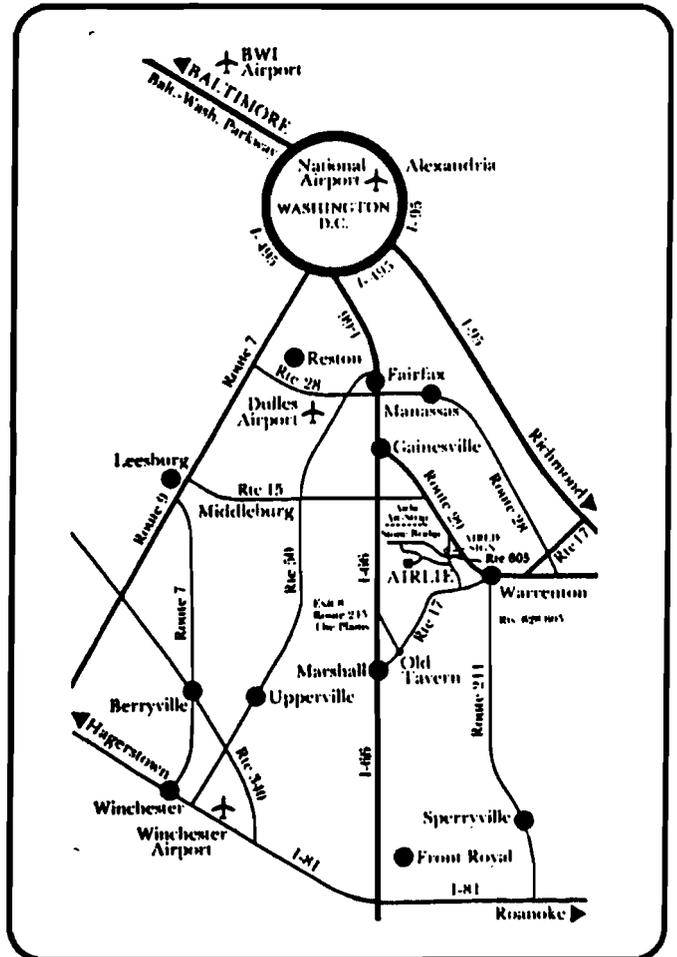
Signs overflow and empty,
multiply, divide,
and sum together.
(Beyond the burning bush)
Oh God – his eyes
reflect the stars
we are and always are
Becoming...

– Elizabeth Babcock

DIRECTIONS TO AIRLIE

Airlie is located three miles north of Warrenton, Va., about one hour's drive from Washington, D.C. The campus may be reached from either Route 17 or Route 29, and is marked by Airlie signs directing traffic to Route 605, where our main gate is located across from a waterfall. Guests coming from the Washington area frequently exit Interstate 66 West at Exit 10A in Gainesville and proceed 9.5 miles on State Highway 29 South to the Route 605 turn-off for Airlie.

An alternate route that is slightly longer, but less travelled, continues west on Interstate 66 to Exit 8 (The Plains) and proceeds on Route 245, then south on Route 17 (passing Great Meadow Events Center). Proceed 5 miles to Route 628/605 turn off and follow the signs to Airlie.



NEWS AND NOTES

CONGRATULATIONS

The Kenneth Burke Society congratulates Michael Burke for his exhibition of sculpture, large prints, and collages which was on display at the New York Academy of Sciences, September 25-October 31, 1990. The exhibition, "The Observers," paid homage to the scientific achievements of ancient cultures and to the continuity of wonder in human experience.

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CHESEBRO HONORED

The Speech Communication Association of Puerto Rico honored Dr. James W. Chesebro at its 10th annual meeting December 7-8, 1990 at the Condado Plaza Hotel and Casino in San Juan. Chesebro, past president of the Eastern Communication Association, was presented the Jose De Diego Award for his outstanding service to Puerto Rico and to the Hispanic community in the United States. Under his direction in 1989, La Raza Caucus was organized to promote research on Hispanic cultures and communication and to foster improved community service to the Hispanic peoples.

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THANK YOU

The editor wishes to thank his graduate students for their helpful suggestions and diligent efforts in making this newsletter possible. Tom Speicher, Bryan Schaffer, and Karen O'Donnell have contributed much and deserve a heartfelt thank you!

BLOOMSBURG UNIVERSITY



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The *Kenneth Burke Society Newsletter* is published biannually under the auspices of the Kenneth Burke Society, and printed through the Department of Communication Studies by Duplicating Services at Bloomsburg University. Readers are encouraged to "join the fray" by submitting letters, abstracts or manuscripts that promote the study, understanding, dissemination of, research on, critical analysis of, and preservation of the works of and about Kenneth Burke. The Kenneth Burke Society is a nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of New York, 1988.

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(tear off this form and mail it in)

Kenneth Burke Society One Year Membership

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

For a one year membership in the Kenneth Burke Society, please mail this form and a check for \$10 made payable to the Kenneth Burke Society to: Dr. James W. Chesebro, Membership Committee, Kenneth Burke Society, Speech Communication Association, 5105 Backlick Rd., Suite #E, Annandale, VA 22003. An undergraduate or graduate student membership in the KBS is \$5 per year, one-half the regular membership rate.