



NEWSLETTER

The Kenneth Burke Society

October 1991

Volume 7 Number 2

PLANS FOR THE 1993 BURKE CONFERENCE ARE UNDERWAY

Activities for the 1993 National Kenneth Burke Society Convention are now being planned. The Conference will be held on May 6-9, 1993, at the Airlie House, in Airlie, Va. A special theme for the Conference has been identified, seminars and proposals are being fashioned, and the membership of the 1993 Kenneth Burke Society Convention Planning Committee has been finalized.

1993 Convention Theme

The convention theme will be the "Extensions of the Burkeian System," which is designed to celebrate new potentials of the Burkeian system. The theme provides an opportunity to go beyond a close textual reading of Burke to explore the new possibilities which the Burkeian system offers for understanding and incorporating the symbolizing of diverse cultures, subcultures, and disciplines into the Kenneth Burke Society. Thus, the theme explicitly permits and encourages diversity in the ways in which the Burkeian system can be applied and the exploration of new objects of study can be examined from a Burkeian perspective.

The impetus for the theme was provided by Kenneth Burke at the 1990 Convention when Burke issued a call for "operation benchmark." In issuing his call, Burke proposed that "there has to be some leeway in this business," that Burkeian studies be governed by a perspective which maintains that "Burke says it this way, I say this," and invited developments of his system.

A series of special programs reflecting the theme of the convention is anticipated. One set of programs will include "Our Burkeian Colleagues in Other Disciplines" and will focus upon the relationship between the Burkeian system and academic disciplines such as theatre, sociology, anthropology, and political science. Colleagues from these disciplines will be specifically invited to participate

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MONUMENT TO A MAN OF MONUMENTAL MIND

Don M. Burks

On June 27, 1991 our eponymous founder visited the Pattee Library at the Pennsylvania State University to view the bust of Kenneth Burke, which is now on permanent display in the foyer of the Rare Books Room. A reception in his honor was hosted by Professor Charles Mann, Chief of Rare Books and Special Collections, and Professor Nancy Cline, Dean of University Libraries.

Among the invited guests were Carole Sams, widow of the former chairman of the English Department at Penn State, Professor Henry Sams. Mr. Sams along with Charles Mann is responsible for bringing the Burke papers to the Pattee Library. Mrs. Sams was accompanied by her friend Jacqueline Rodgers. Other guests present were Professor Henry Johnstone, Editor of *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, his editorial assistant Kate Hastings, and Mary Mino, Associate Editor of the *K.B.S. Newsletter*. (Teaching responsibilities in Bloomsburg prevented Editor Dale Bertelsen from attending the reception, though he enjoyed a visit with KB later in the day.) Representing the Penn State Department of Speech Communication were Professors Thomas Benson, Richard Gregg, and Dennis Gouran, the Department Chairman. Other members of the Penn State Library Staff in attendance were Gloriana St. Clair, Cordilia Swinton, John Kaiser, Shirley Davis, and Sandra Stelts. The recently retired Dean of University Libraries, Stuart Forth, who strongly supported the acquiring of the Burke bust, was out of town and sent his regrets he could not attend. Representing the Department of English was Professor Emeritus Robert W. Frank Jr., former department chairman and present editor of the *Chaucer Review*. Also attending were Don Burks from Purdue University, and his wife Virginia, the sculptor of the Burke bust. They accompanied KB from and on the return trip to his home in Andover, N.J. Professor Mann and Dean Cline briefly addressed the assembled guests, and several pictures were

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Conference Plans

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in these discussions. Another set of programs will emphasize the relationships between the Burkeian system and the discourse of women, African-American, and Latin cultures. These programs will examine not only the ways in which the Burkeian system can illustrate alternative cultural systems, but will also identify some of the limitations and the extensions required in the Burkeian system to characterize multicultural communication systems.

Seminar Proposals

Preliminary proposals have already been received for the seminars at the 1993 Convention. William Rueckert, President of the Kenneth Burke Society, is planning a seminar which will focus on "Burke's theory of the text." James E. Combs has proposed a seminar which will deal with "political Burkology." Thomas Carmichael is developing a seminar proposal in which Burke and specific postmodernists are to be compared and contrasted.

A major feature of the 1993 Convention, the seminars explore specific facets of the Burkeian system. The seminars bring together people interested in one specific topic for six hours of discussion and debate. Additional seminar proposals are encouraged. The "Call for Seminar Proposals" was detailed in the April 1991 (Volume 7, Number 1) issue of the Kenneth Burke Society Newsletter. The deadline for seminar proposals is June 1, 1992.

Papers and Panels

Papers and panel proposals for the 1993 Convention are also encouraged. Bernard L. Brock, chair of the Program and Paper Selection Committee for the 1993 Convention, has noted that, "Participants can utilize two submission dates. For people whose ideas are at an exploratory stage in development and who 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." Of course, people can participate in the Convention without presenting formal papers.

Planning Committee

The composition of the 1993 Convention Planning Committee has been finalized. The members reflect the diversity of disciplines, orientations, and the six branches of the Society. The members include Dale A. Bertelsen, Bernard L. Brock, Thomas Carmichael, Sheron J. Dailey, Dennis G. Day, Micheal G. Feehan, Sonja K. Foss, Greig Henderson, Andrew King, John W. Kirk, James Klumpp, Mary Mino, Star A. Muir, Charles I. Nero, Ellen Quandahl, Vito Signorile, and Timothy N. Thompson. James W. Chesebro is the Chief Convention Planner and Chair of the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee is responsible for the activities of the 1993 Convention, and any member of the Planning Committee can be contacted regarding the Convention.

SECOND EDITION OF THE HISTORY OF THE KENNETH BURKE SOCIETY IS NOW AVAILABLE

The second edition of the *History of the Kenneth Burke Society* was published September, 1991. The history provides summaries of the origin of the Society in 1984, the activities of the six branches from 1985 through 1991, the May 1990 National Conference, plans for the 1993 National Conference, and the publications of the Society. The book also includes the Constitution and the Bylaws of the Kenneth Burke Society.

The second edition is a 42 page, paper and spiral bound publication, and is available for \$7.50 per copy. All proceeds from sales of the publication are donated to the Kenneth Burke Society.

To order copies of the publication, send a check for \$7.50 made payable to the *Kenneth Burke Society* to: James W. Chesebro, Kenneth Burke Society Treasurer, c/o Speech Communication Association, 5105 Backlick Road, Building #E, Annandale, VA 22003. Be sure to include your name and complete mailing address with zip code with your order.

NEWS AND NOTES

IN MEMORIUM

Howard Nemerov, the Pulitzer Prize winning poet and former poet laureate of the United States, died July 5, 1991, at 71 years of age. Nemerov has been seen as a relatively conservative, formalist poet, whose strengths, as listed by other poets, include clarity, wisdom, irony, and an ability to handle the contemporary world in formal verse.

Nemerov's friendship with KB began over 40 years ago when both men were teaching at Bennington College. As a featured speaker of the first Kenneth Burke Society Convention in 1990, the poet shared elements of both his friendship with Burke and his artistry while presiding over the "Burke-Day" party.

The friendship of Kenneth Burke and Howard Nemerov contained a mutual element of respect reflected in the writings of both men. Nemerov reflected on Burke in various writings including a humorous essay entitled "The Winter Addresses of Kenneth Burke" which he presented at Indiana State University in 1977, and "Gnomic Variations for Kenneth Burke," seven poems published in *The Kenyon Review* (Summer 1983). Burke, likewise, was inspired by Nemerov; he wrote of his poetic gifts in "Comments on Eighteen Poems by Howard Nemerov." This thoughtful poet will be missed, but his legacy will live on in the works he left behind.

THANK YOU

The editor wishes to thank his students for their helpful suggestions and diligent efforts in making this newsletter possible. Graduate students Karen O'Donnell, Jennifer Schlagle, and Jo DeMarco and undergraduate Marsha Parks have contributed much and deserve a heartfelt thank you!

Monument

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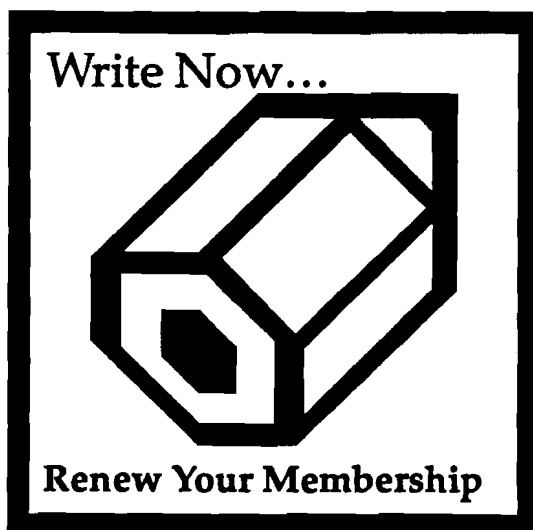
taken of KB, well into his 94th year, viewing the bust of Kenneth Burke. Then followed the social part of the reception.

Display cases on either side of the bust contain samples of the works by and about Burke. Inside one of these, Professor Mann has placed a page concerning the bust of Kenneth Burke and the collection of Burke's papers at Penn State, from which the following remarks are excerpted:

Rare Books Room Exhibit: Kenneth Burke

The sculptor, Virginia Burks, a personal friend of Mr. Burke worked from life to fashion this extraordinary portrait, which captures the protean energy and vitality of one of the 20th century's most phenomenal figures. Kenneth Burke has merged diverse fields of human knowledge in profound and startling ways. His ever-fertile writings have made his name a byword in literary theory, history, economics, linguistics, dramaturgy, rhetoric, and much else. Burke's words and his personality are rather more linked than many have had the opportunity to observe. Perhaps this bust of his great head, at once impish, friendly, demonic, and at rest may help to bridge the gap between the man and his ideas. We are glad to see it now installed in Pattee Library, which houses Kenneth Burke's papers and correspondence.

In the featured article of the first newsletter of the Kenneth Burke Society (October, 1984), Professor Mann discusses the content of the Penn State Burke collection to that date. He explains that the collection, which was obtained in 1974, is primarily a correspondence file through the year 1961, although it also contains occasional manuscripts and transcripts of Burke's work. Burke has continued to add to the collection from his correspondence



of the past thirty years, and discussion of further enlargement of the collection is underway.

On the pedestal supporting the bust is a plaque with the words:

Kenneth Burke
1897—
Ad Bellum Purificandum

At the back of the pedestal is a plate with the following statement:

Burke's Motto
Ad Bellum Purificandum, or Toward's the Purification of War, is the motto of Kenneth Burke's book *A Grammar of Motives*, a goal of all his works, and his choice of words for the title plaque.

For the last several years the writer of this essay has had the privilege of asking many questions of KB, during which time there has been but one unqualified and quick answer to any question of importance. When asked what words or title he wanted on the plaque on the front of the pedestal, his answer was immediate and certain, "*Ad Bellum Purificandum*." In *A Grammar of Motives* Burke explains his hope that

human thought may be directed toward 'the purification of war,' not perhaps in the hope that war can be eliminated from any organism that, like man, has the motives of combat in his very essence, but in the sense that war can be refined to the point where it would be much more peaceful than the condition we would now call peace. (p. 305)

This is perhaps the most important and clearest statement of Burke's belief that "'abolitionism' is impossible" (*Permanence and Change*, "Afterword," 1984, p. 308.), that symbol users may transform, purify, and transcend their hierarchical, competitive and combative ways, though such will not be eliminated. (See "Counter-Gridlock: An Interview with Kenneth Burke," p. 21) Burke's "belief in the impossibility of 'control by elimination'" (*Attitudes Toward History*, p. 238) is an idea that appears, as here, in his early work, (see 1937 edition of *Attitudes Toward History*, vol 2, p. 94) as well as the places just cited from his work during the 1940s and the 1980s and is thus one of his most basic themes.

For those who have had the privilege of knowing KB the bust of Kenneth Burke may hold a personal authenticity, which hopefully may also be appreciated to some extent by future students of Burke's works. The pedestal height is planned so that one encounters the bust at about the same height at which one encounters KB. Those who know the man himself cannot forget the dynamic personality which somehow gives the impression of a person of large physique, his gentle yet booming voice adding to his

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naturally statuesque countenance. As many an interested listener can testify, one becomes quite unaware that he is less than tall when communicating about ideas with *l'homme meme*. With characteristic irony, however, KB reminds one of his height, "I'm a giant! At 5'4" I over-tower Balzac by a whole inch" ("Counter-Gridlock," p. 5). Accordingly, the sculptor has captured a perspective by incongruity in KB's bearing, his monumental shortness, by making the bust 30 inches high, twice the life-size dimension, while maintaining the combined height of the pedestal and bust at 5'4". There is thus the suggestion of extraordinarily strong physique in the man whose one and only dimension of smallness is height.

The sculptor intended from the beginning of her work on the Burke bust to place it in the Pattee Library with the Burke papers. Now that the bust is completed the present writer might wish that it was closer to his teaching, since the work of Kenneth Burke receives much attention at Purdue University, where courses in Burke's works are cross-listed in both the departments of Communication and English. Indeed, it was KB's visits to Purdue and to Indiana State University which inspired the bust.

There is no question, however, that the bust is "entelechiially" speaking, precisely where it belongs, with the Burke papers in the Pattee Library at the Pennsylvania State University. As KB might say in one of his most frequently spoken phrases, the bust should "round things out," helping to complete the collection of his papers with an appropriate *objet d'art*. Perhaps that is one reason why KB, at the age of 94, was willing to "round things out" in person by undertaking the journey to view the bust.

Librarian Cordilia Swinton remarked to the sculptor during the reception that the bust is clearly a labor of love. That proverbial statement does indeed "name the situation," as Burkeans may well understand. Perhaps those who know the works of Kenneth Burke may also sense, when in the presence of the bust, another of the basic themes running through his works, "communication as a generalized form of love" (*A Rhetoric of Motives*, p. 37). The bust of Kenneth Burke as a consummation, as "the carrying out of possibilities" ("Dramatism," p. 331) represents through symbolic action "an 'entelechy'" (ATH, p. 246).

There at Penn State, then, the bust will remain as a bronze permanence in the world of motion that will quite likely outlast the library building in which it is housed. The bust may also embody a recalcitrant permanence in the changing world of symbolic action which may stimulate students in the 21st century and beyond, suggesting to Burkeans yet unborn, the character of the peaceful warrior, the diminutive giant, who devoted his life's work to the purification of war. As is said in a preliminary report when the work was still in clay form (*Pre-Text*, p. 303) the bust of Kenneth Burke is and will remain a "Monument to a Man of Monumental Mind."

Don M. Burks teaches courses in rhetorical theory and the works of Kenneth Burke in the Department of Communication at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind.

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**PLAN
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KENNETH BURKE & ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

Star A. Muir

This past July, the Department of Communication and the Humanities Center at the University of Utah sponsored the first Conference on the Discourse of Environmental Advocacy. Organized in conjunction with the Alta Conference on Argumentation by James Cantrill of Northern Michigan University and Christine Oravec of the University of Utah, the conference featured participants from a range of disciplines, including English, Philosophy, Political Science, Environmental Studies, Urban Planning, Media Arts, and Communication Studies. Kenneth Burke's ideas were an important element of the conference, given his long-standing concern with technologism and that "little fellow among sciences named Ecology."

The featured keynote speaker, Bruce Piasecki of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, reiterated the concern expressed in his latest book, *In Search of Environmental Excellence: Moving Beyond Blame*: that society moves away from victimizing and scapegoating corporate and governmental actors to positively and cooperatively achieving environmental action. The address sparked a lively dispute, since the power of victimage is well noted by environmentalists, and the close relationship formed by such cooperation can be a subverting and quiescing influence. Burke, in noting the tragic tendency of victimage, prefers the comic frame, but equally notes some shortcomings of his ironic indictment of technology. This conversation continued throughout the conference.

Elise Scott, of San Francisco State University, posited the rhetoric of ecotage (environmental sabotage) as a counter-rationale to technologism. Frequently employing a perspective by incongruity, ecotage physically manifests a negative statement, a no to technology. Jonathan Lange's (Southern Oregon State College) larger point about Earth First!'s use of ecotage is that while such tactics may not gain significant identification by the public at large (and may even alienate many people), it makes a powerful statement about commitment, and also shifts many existing environmental organizations toward the center of the political spectrum and toward greater respectability.

Carol Corbin (University College of Cape Breton), current editor of *Ecologue*, focused on important elements in Burke that are useful in understanding the role of symbol systems in the environmental movement. Corbin first notes Burke's view of language as central to the technology, to the motives for "completion" that drives technologism. The dialectical capacity of language, enabling us to be in two places at once, is also a feature of Burke that reflects the tension of the environmental movement—language connects us to nature and separates us as well. Preferring Burke's parenthetical "moved by a sense of order" over "goaded by hierarchy," Corbin argues that the naturalness of hierarchy is inscribed on

nature (and humans within nature) rhetorically, and that reconstructing the order should propel us away from such inscription of hierarchy. Finally, a preference for fluctuation, or the recognition of pluralism, is expressed in the mobilization of Burke's negative for environmental purposes. Speaking for nature, Corbin argues, should add to the range of discourse, rather than subtracting from it.

In the Panel on Media and Advertising, all of the panelists made reference to Burke in discussing the advent of "green consumerism." Star Muir (George Mason University) mobilized the concept of the cult of commodities, but noted that in bringing consumers closer in contact with attitudes toward scene, Burke's arguments about the imbalance of instilling "habits" need to be reexamined. For Muir, even the purest representation of environmental consumerism, a credible and explicit catalogue of green products, mystifies the public about underlying divisions between economic and ecological motivations (including conceptions of time and bureaucratization of an ecological vision), and commodifies the process into an indirect consumer-to-corporation-to-environment relationship. Patricia Paystrup, of Purdue University, examined the shift to mortification as a key motivation for consumer purchases. Where in the 1970s scapegoating was the result of public guilt, mortification, and voting with the check-book, now characterize environmental social reactions. Examining deceiving tactics by advertisers, Paystrup cautioned against a belief that the public can truly solve problems by buying products.

The conference, as judged by the participants, was a success. Out of this meeting of individuals interested in discourse and the environment, another project was conceived: a clearinghouse of information about scholarship on communication and the environment. Star Muir has begun compiling addresses and information about individuals working on discourse and the environment, and hopes to foster more interconnections and interdisciplinary work in this area. If you are interested, contact him at the Department of Communication, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030.

There is also a good possibility that the conference will be held again in two years (Summer 1993). If you want more information write James Cantrill, Department of Speech, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI 49855; or Christine Oravec, Department of Communication, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112. If you have an interest in receiving the newsletter *Ecologue*, contact Carol Corbin, Department of Communication Studies, University of Cape Breton, Sydney, Nova Scotia.

TOP SCA BURKEAN PAPERS

The following Burkeian studies will be presented at the SCA convention this year. All papers come from the Kenneth Burke Society, SCA Branch, and represent a variety of research areas.

Top Three Papers in Burkean Theory

"The Symbol Model and the Philosophy of Language: The Case of Kenneth Burke"
"Burke's Early Readings and Freud's Theories of Identification"
"A God Coming Down to Earth: Kenneth Burke in History and Out"

Top Three Papers in Burkean Criticism

"Cultural Collision, Culpability and Catharsis: A Burkean Analysis of the Killing of Karen Wood"
"Good-Bye Ol' Friend: A Burkean Analysis of the Closing of Cominsky Park"
"Critical Response to *The Diary of H. L. Mencken: An Exercise in Victimization*"

SCA Reaches Out to the World: Burke Studies in Great Britain and Japan

"Some Burkean Scenes in Japan"
"Burke Studies in Great Britain"

Yea-Saying, Nay-Saying and Beyond: Kenneth Burke and Rhetoric at the Fringe

"Criss-Crossing the Line: Kenneth Burke as Liberal/Conservative"
"Pure Persuasion and the Limits of Dissuasion"
"Rejecting 'Collective Revelation': Fanatic Leadership Styles in American Environmental Movement Organizations"
"Peace, Protest and the New World Order: *Ad Bellum Purificandum*"

Limits of the Burkean System

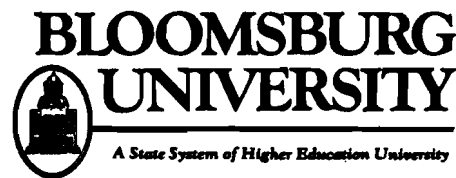
"Post-Burke: Transcending the Substance of Burke"
"Extensions of the Burkean System"

United States Reaches Out to the Middle East: Some Burkean Reflections on Rhetoric and the War With Iraq

"George Bush's War Speech as a Symptom of Our Identification with Fascism"
"The Comic Frame as Equipment for War: Surviving Social Shell Shock"
"Setting the Stage for War in the Gulf: Constitutive of Definitional Dimensions of George Bush's Rhetorical Strategy"

Teaching Burke to Undergraduates: An Interdisciplinary Approach

"A Burkean Analysis of Contemporary Cigarette Advertising"
"A Burkean Analysis of Commercials"
"Towards a Political Attitude for Kenneth Burke"



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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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Kenneth Burke Society One Year Membership

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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.