

THE TRICORN

A NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED JOINTLY BY THE NEW ENGLAND ♦
LONG ISLAND ♦ PHILADELPHIA GREAT BOOKS COUNCILS

AUGUST 1996

REPORT FROM LONG ISLAND OR *SWEETNESS AND LIGHT IN ARCADIA*

The Long Island Council is with mixed feelings:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| Happy | The Institute was oversubscribed. |
| Sad | So many Great Bookies who wanted to attend had to be turned down -- the limited facilities of the Main House at the Bailey Arboretum. |

The readings, *Sweetness and Light*, a Matthew Arnold essay defining culture and its ends; and *Arcadia*, a serio-comic Tom Stoppard play illuminating the underlying truths about the universe, proved to be challenging if not difficult. As usual, a number of the participants discovered connections between the readings (which seems to indicate that at least one person on the Book Selection Committee had read both works). It was generally agreed by reasonable people who read the essay, and most leaders, that "sweetness and light" is interchangeable with "beauty and intelligence".

The Food Selection Committee reported that the fried chicken was preferred to the barbecued (although both went quickly at the end of the day Post-Discussion Punch and Chicken Sale) the potato salad won out over the macaroni and the red punch over the green (cranberry and lime???) the new pickles did not fare as well as the standard dills-- too new.

READING QUOTES OF THE DAY:

ARCADIA "It's the best possible time to be alive, when everything you thought you knew is wrong."

SWEETNESS AND LIGHT "It (culture) does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes... with ready made judgements or watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely,--nourished and not bound by them."

Sounds like Great Books!

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NEW ENGLAND NEWS

Fall One-Day Institute

Many thanks the volunteers and participants who made our last fall and spring events so successful. This fall we will continue our Monty Python approach - no flying circus, but definitely something completely different. We will meet at the Lowell national Park to discuss Dickens's *Hard Times*, his short novel about life in an oppressive mill town. The park preserves cotton mills, worker boarding houses, canals and waterpower structures to illustrate America's industrial development and Lowell's rise and demise as textile center. To keep the program accessible to those with limited mobility, we will restrict our tour, bag-lunch, and discussions to the Boott Cotton Mills Museum, with a possible visit to a boarding house next door. The museum features a weave room with working power looms, exhibits on spinning and carding, a slide presentation on this country's transition from an agricultural to an industrial society, and oral histories of former mill workers. Please register early so we can give the Park Service accurate information. See our flyer for details.

Leader Training

If there is sufficient demand, leader training will be offered this fall. For the past few years the Council has focused on group training and train-the-trainer work shops. This is an opportunity for individuals to improve their skills. The schedule and location will be determined later. Contact me (508-667-9610) for information or to register.

Jean McGreehan

A BRIEF HISTORY OF A WEEKEND

Some events go on so many years, their purposes and origins become lost to memory. This Tricorn includes an announcement of one such; the Philadelphia Great Books Fall Institute Weekend. Here is a brief history of this 26 year old tradition:

Each year since 1971, the Fall Institute Committee has organized a weekend event for dedicated Great Bookies. This weekend is held in the Poconos and includes social as well as literary happenings. A typical weekend provides three prepared discussions, a hospitality room for social interaction, a Friday night program, a Saturday night special event, as well as free time to explore the out-of-doors, nap, swim, whatever.

This combination of books and book-lovers is exhilarating. The discussions build on each other and friendships are formed that deepen over the years. This is where we meet participants from other groups, even from other states. No one remains a stranger - new participants are welcomed and included.

You will find the particulars of this Fall's Institute in this Tricorn (p.4). Please feel free to call one of the committee members to answer any questions you may have. Early registration will assure your space is reserved.

We hope to meet you in the serenity of the Pocono Mountains.

The Fall Institute Committee

Bob Blumenthal	215-233-3655	Florence Kessler	908-531-4429
Leah Blumenthal	215-233-3655	Dave Perelman	215-635-1470
Betsy Galante	215-885-2595	Sylvia Perelman	215-635-1470
Fran Jacobs	215-482-1367		

Reference / Book Selection Aid.

Readers familiar with Adler's *Syntopicon* (see Aaron Bechtel's article, August 1995 *Tricorn*, p.4) may be interested in a related reference work, the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, edited by Philip Wiener, NY: Scribner, 1968,1973. The *Dictionary's* four volumes of essay/bibliographies and index volume are organized similarly to the *Syntopicon*, but the *Dictionary* is broader in scope. Its 300 entries include "Music as a Demonic Art," "Renaissance Humanism," and "Utilitarianism," as well as "Democracy" or "Justice". Traditional "great books" are well represented in the essays, but bibliographies may favor secondary literature. The *Dictionary* is useful for orientation to a topic and for identifying related readings.

Jean McGreehan

PHILADELPHIA NEWS

Conversation Lives!

A number of people continue to meet and discuss readings about cultural diversity in America, after the original ending date for our Gathering of Equals project, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. We plan to resume in the fall at Friends Select School one Thursday a month, at 7:00 P.M.

If you would like to participate, or to be informed of our plans, please call or write to Anne Cramer, (609) 346-3621, 405 Jefferson Avenue, Lindenwold, NJ 08021

Available Stuff

1. Spring Institute Books at Bargain Prices

Groups wanting to juice up their lists can purchase Beryl Bainbridge's *The Birthday Boys*, a thrilling fictionalization of Scott's assault on the south pole, for \$5.50, and "Sur," an Ursula LeGuin story about a women's polar expedition (plus an intriguing Elizabeth Bishop poem, "The Imaginary Iceberg") for only \$1.50. Both readings provoked excellent discussions. Contact Clark Simons, 269 Mather Road, Jenkintown, PA 19046, (215) 576-8836.

2. David Perelman has single copies of a number of old Foundation classics. Call him for titles, which you are welcome to duplicate for your group. (215) 635-1470.

3. Honor and Memory Cards

These cards serve two good purposes: they are a simple way to honor or to remember friends; they attract contributions to Great Books, a most worthy recipient. Send your message and your contribution to Bernard Wald, 2200 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, #902-S, PA 19130, (215) 564-0463.

They're Changing the Guard at Buckingham Palace

Betsy Galante gallantly served as Philadelphia Area Coordinator for four successful years. Now our outgoing outgoing (not an error) coordinator will continue to lend her enthusiasm and energy as a member of the board of directors. Thanks Betsy!

Stepping into the job is Clark Simons, our first male coordinator. We are pleased that this capable, well-liked, long-time Great Bookie will be keeping us spinning, as he juggles our 50-odd groups. Good Luck, Clark!

Attention, Cryptogram Lovers!

Philadelphia board member Louise Moll has a third book of cryptograms in the bookstores. *Baffling Cryptograms*, coming hard on the heels of *The Great Book of Cryptograms* and *Clever Cryptograms* is a collection of nearly 600 proverbs. These funny and/or profound proverbs are drawn from twenty-nine cultures. Here is a sample from Sweden (Solution on page 5) :

ZEK GISK EQX UKRKG JKKU PQAK ZEYZ JCUAX ZEIWBEZX.

Our 26th YEAR!!!

PHILADELPHIA GREAT BOOKS
FALL INSTITUTE WEEKEND

NOVEMBER 15, 16, 17, 1996

POCONO MANOR INN

THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL

Absalom, Absalom
The Devil's Disciple
The Gates of the Forest

William Faulkner
George Bernard Shaw
Elie Wiesel

Man can hardly even recognize the devils of his own creation .

Albert Schweitzer

COST: \$215 per person, double occupancy.
\$275 for single occupancy.
Price includes meals, lodging, books,
entertainment and tips.

TO REGISTER: Please send deposit of \$115
per person for double occupancy and \$145 for
single occupancy with your registration to:

CANCELLATION: Your deposit, less charge
for books and mailing , will be refunded if notice
is postmarked no later than October 14.

Sylvia Perelman
8214 Marion Rd.
Elkins Park, PA 19027



REGISTRATION FORM

Enclosed is a deposit of _____ \$115 per person double occupancy or \$145 per person single
occupancy - (if available) made payable to Fall Institute Committee.

Names (please give the first and last name of each person)	Non-smoking group	Smoking group	No Preference
(first)_____ (last)_____	[]	[]	[]
(first)_____ (last)_____	[]	[]	[]
Address (street)_____			
(city)_____ (state)_____ (zip)_____ (phone)_____			

Special requests should accompany this form. They will be honored if possible.

(Optional) I would like to room with_____

Criteria for Evaluating Participants as Leadership Material

Dialectic Skill

Does she always make relevant contributions that advance the discussion and are germane to the reading?
Does she occasionally raise questions which contribute to the development of the author's thought?

Rhetorical Skill

Does he communicate with other participants (a two-way process)? Does he avoid arguing over definitions, trying to understand when others use words differently than he does?

Listening Ability

Does she listen with care and respect to others, or is she merely waiting for an opportunity to break in?
Does she interpose too often? Is she receptive to influence by the views of other contributors? Does she welcome contrary views?

Human Relations

Is he overly impressed by rhetorical skill rather than content? Does he disagree without being offensive?
Is he offended when someone disagrees, criticizes or challenges him? Can he relieve a tense situation gracefully? Is he aware of the need for assistance of the less aggressive? Does he have a sense of humor?
Does he exhibit poise, self-confidence? Does the group respond favorably to his participation?

Logical Skill

Does she recognize her own assumptions, as well as those of others? Does she know that there can be no logical argument when basic assumptions differ? Are her inferences valid? Can she evaluate evidence?
Can she recognize common fallacies in reasoning? Does she recognize the risks in generalizing?

I suggest these criteria for selfevaluation (a use I myself make of them) as well as for evaluating others.

Aaron Bechtel

What's Doing in Westchester

In the summer of 1995 the Westchester Great Books Council was one of six groups hosting meetings as part of the Gathering of Equals sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities to discuss works of historic interest in the context of our diverse society. At the first meeting, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and the Declaration of Independence were discussed. At the April 30 session, the two works discussed were Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address and "High School Graduation" from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou.

Westchester also sponsors two ongoing groups which meet on alternate Tuesdays and Thursdays. They held an annual institute last January, at which time some forty participants analysed *Praisesong for the Widow* and *The Remains of the Day*. A unique feature: Paule Marshall, author of the *Praisesong*, attended the session and offered her analysis of the participants' views at the end of the discussion.

Solution to Cryptogram

THE ROPE HAS NEVER BEEN MADE THAT BINDS THOUGHTS.

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New England Correspondent: Jean McGreehan, 228 Nashua Road., N.Billerica, MA 01862-3160

WILMINGTON NEWS

Theatre Party

The excellent Delaware Theatre Company is presenting their production of Twelfth Night (by the Bard, of course) this winter. We are having a theatre party on Saturday, December 7, at 2:00 P.M. Your \$20.00 ticket buys an eternally delightful comedy, light refreshments, and a post-play discussion. Reserve the date, and watch for the coming flyer. Tickets: Cyra Gross, 101 delview drive, Wilmington, DE 19810, (302) 475-3914.

Wilmington vs. Tolstoy

This summer, breaking away from their tradition of reading three books for their three June and July meetings, the Great Books Council of Delaware gave the great hordes who have always meant to read *War and Peace* the opportunity to decently do so. What better way than to read and discuss it with Great Books friends?

C IS FOR CLASSIC

A classic, according to Mark Twain, is something that everyone wants to have read and nobody has read it.

As for reading per se, those who don't are to be pitied, if withal they don't know what they are missing, like the gender who can't give birth.

Better that the world is too much with us. Ionescu snarled, "People who don't read are brutes."

A dictionary defines classic "basic," "fundamental," traditional." Such mid-air terms will give way in Colby week to the simple earthbound definition of the word: timeless appeal.

Proof of literary worth is its mutual effect. We are absorbed by it and it absorbs us. A good reader of classics, says Nabokov (an almost-tradition himself), "is one who has imagination, memory, a dictionary and some artistic sense."

Truly, we enter another world somehow, inhabit another skin, another voice, even another soul.

Further proof lies in rereading, which can be a cultural shock in the best sense. Recurrence of the expected is bound to be amended and extended by slings and arrows of intervening time. The fickle finger of you-know-what may well account for increased sensitivity.

Thus, Plato may be more clear, Shakespeare further appreciated and Dante less or more daunting.

Disregard the controversial canon. Respect your taste. Poe did, 'way back, when he praised "Helen's classic face." A classic within a classic.

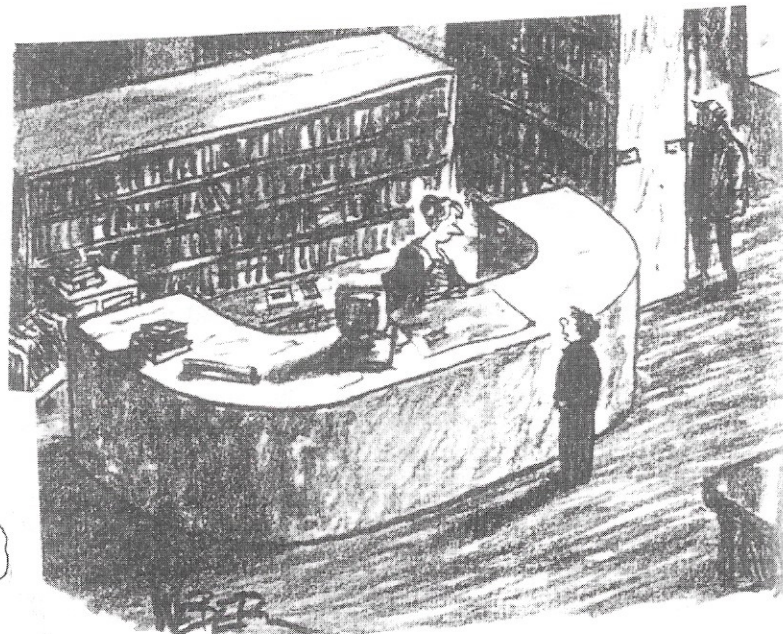
To offset such serious reflection, consider the letter C. C for Colby, for Communicating with Caring Comrades and (sometimes in) Conflict and (seldom in) Conclusion.

Only Connect.

Claire Gerber

WORDS

AND



"I'd like to see everything you have on girls."

THE

SEXES

Howard Will's Top Ten List of Member Recruiting Suggestions

I took the original Great Books ten-week leader training course in 1955. As a Johns Hopkins graduate student, I came to the course at the urging of friends, because I thought that seven and a half years of college left little to be learned in a volunteer adult night course. The first discussion was on The Declaration of Independence. I held back for almost forty minutes. Then I got blood on my lips and never looked back. I soon found myself leading a first, a second, and a third year group in different parts off Baltimore. Then I started a new group in my own neighborhood. I figured selfishly that if I stayed with these four groups for twenty years I might be moderately well read. But the Foundation in Chicago offered me a job to pursue this hobby full time, and get paid for it: I became the first Southern Area Director. Thirty-five years later, I retired and now work with my new program that combines great literature and great music. All these years people have asked me how to get new people into the Great Books Program. Here are my suggestions:

1. Invite people to join your group for just one session and encourage them to borrow the book from the library. Later, if they get hooked, they can be encouraged to buy the paperbacks.
2. In social situations there is often an opportunity to drop in an idea that your group had discussed, or a quote from a great book that you remember. Be sure to credit Great Books with your erudition.
3. Don't be put off by the person who tells you he read all those books in college. Careful questioning reveals often that they heard of the titles in survey courses. Sadly there are too many people coming out of colleges feeling they have graduated.

(continued on p.8)

Howard Will's Top Ten List of Member Recruiting Suggestions (continued from p.7)

4. Lend a potential candidate your own copy overnight and explain you are having difficulty with a certain passage. This shouldn't be difficult if you are doing the great books.
5. Get a volunteer secretary for your group. Secretaries can advertise your meetings in local papers to attract new people, and can send notices to members who have missed meetings, keeping them interested.
6. Maintain contact with directors of local adult schools, and other ongoing education outreach programs. In time, they might send you interested people or even want to host a group for their own programs.
7. Make it known in your community that a Great Books leader (perhaps you) is willing to give a demonstration discussion free of charge for any type of group any time of day.
8. Don't take a good-size group for granted. Even if you have over twenty participants, start recruiting new members right away. In my experience it takes two to three years for a good group to come together.
9. Recruit vertically within your own group. Ask young people in your group to bring their parents for a trial session. Ask the older members to bring their children. In the four groups I co-led in Baltimore, for three years the ages ran from twenty-five to over seventy.
10. Contact the public relations director of your local school district. They often have newsletters that will accept your group announcement. They may even have teachers who took the Junior Great Books training course and might be open to joining an adult group.

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c/o Ferrara
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