



## **First Presbyterian Book Club**

**2009-2010**

12:00 noon in the Presbyterian Women's Suite (Enter from the back parking lot.) All meetings will be on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month, except the November meeting which will be held December 3.

### **October 22—*Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh**

**Leader: Paul Leslie**

In this classic tale of British life between the World Wars, Waugh's major character Charles Ryder finds himself stationed at Brideshead, the family seat of Lord and Lady Marchmain. Exhausted by the war, he takes refuge in recalling his time spent with the heirs to the estate before the war--years spent enthralled by the beautiful but dissolute Sebastian and later in a more conventional relationship with Sebastian's sister Julia. Ryder portrays a family divided by an uncertain investment in Roman Catholicism and by their confusion over where the elite fit in the modern world.

### **December 3—*Oscar Wilde and a Death of No Importance* by Gyles Brandreth**

**Leader: Mary Anne Selber**

This historical mystery is based on real events and cloaked in authenticity. Best of all, it casts British literature's most fascinating and controversial figure as the lead sleuth. In the book, a young artist's model has been murdered and legendary wit Oscar Wilde enlists his friends Arthur Conan Doyle and Robert Sherard to help him investigate. But when they arrive at the scene of the crime they find no sign of the gruesome killing -- save one small spatter of blood, high on the wall.

### **January 28—*The Falconer* by John Cheever**

**Leader: Lee Morgan**

In this book, Cheever features a heroin-addict named Ezekiel Farragut imprisoned at Falconer, a grey obsolescent "correctional facility," for fratricide. Deeply critical of modern forms of punishment and drawing on his own experiences as teacher at Sing-Sing in the

70s, Cheever depicts a world where the forgotten and forgettable are kept behind bars, their humanity suppressed and marginalized. Ezekiel, or Zeke, comes from a genteel family fractured after a reversal of fortunes that closely resembles Cheever's own family and childhood. The story of Zeke's wayward brother, his gas attendant mother and disconnected father deftly weaves in and out of Zeke's year-long death in Falconer and finally his gripping and unexpected rebirth.

**February 25—*The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows**

**Leader: Nancy Wilhelmi**

The letters comprising this small charming novel begin in 1946 when Juliet Ashton writes to her publisher to say she is tired of covering the sunny side of war and its aftermath. When Guernsey farmer Dawsey Adams finds Juliet's name in a used book, he invites his neighbors to write Juliet with their stories, and she finds herself back in the path of war stories. The letters jump from incident to incident—including the formation of the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society while Guernsey was under German occupation—and person to person in a manner that feels disjointed. But Juliet's quips are so clever, the Guernsey inhabitants so enchanting and the small acts of heroism so vivid one forgives the authors for not being able to settle on a single person or plot.

**March 25—*The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit* by Lucette Lagnado**

**Leader: Zama Dexter**

This memoir of an Egyptian Jewish family's gradual ruin is told without melodrama by its youngest survivor, now a reporter at the Wall Street Journal. Lagnado's story hinges on her father, "the Captain," who cut a dashing figure in mid-century Cairo, consorting with British officers and Egyptian royalty at French cafés while his family, neglected, stayed home. At first refusing to join the tide of Jews fleeing Egypt under the Nasser regime, the Captain finally yields, in 1963, when the family escapes to Paris and then Brooklyn. Deprived of wealth, status, and any means of coping, Lagnado's father fades, but he never loses his air of chivalry.

**April 22—*The Aspern Papers* by Henry James**

**Leader: Billy Gilley**

This novella is the story of a man who travels to Venice in search of Juliana Bordereau, whom he believes is in possession of some personal letters of the famous and now dead American poet, Jeffrey Aspern. Juliana, an elderly American, has her reasons for keeping and for selling the letters (if they exist at all). The narrator, a greedy and unnamed young journalist, wishes to build his career on the exposure of Juliana's love affair to Aspern. Add to this Tina, a spinster and Juliana's niece, who is the "price" for the sale of the letters.

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