

**GOOS BOOK CLUB  
320 SOMERULOS STREET  
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70802**

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**In Memoriam**

Page Acree: 1919--2005  
Frank Craig, Jr.: 1918--2005  
Durwood "Woody" Facundus: 1934--2003  
Charles Prosser: 1919--2005  
Carter Wilkinson: 1947--2006  
William E. "Bill" Fisher: 1937--2007  
Hermann Moyse, Jr.: 1921--2007

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**GOOS BOOK CLUB MEETING OF JUNE 28, 2007**

**Friends,**

For all members unable to attend, I'm pleased to report that the group assembled in our usual spot (meaning, thankfully, our usual private room this time) at Kiva's on Thursday, June the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Present for duty:**

Scott Thurston	Alan Carey
David Wall	John Clifford
Gus Dalton	Fred Billings
Wally Dunlap	Keith Richardson
Lou Leggio	Buzzy Anding
Clay Waggenspack	Bubba Currier

And a guest, Fred Hogeman

The dragooned GOO for the night/man-of-the-hour, Wally Dunlap, presented Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. Prior to a detailed and informative summary of Joseph Conrad's background and life, Clay Waggenspack noted that this is the type of book that makes one really glad for the likes of Hemingway, and his ability to write a simple declarative sentence(!) Then again, according to Scott Thurston, maybe the guy (Conrad) is just so much smarter than all of us. No fighting please. Remember, the evening's presenter just reports...you decide.

Conrad, born Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, published *The Secret Agent* in 1907 when he was reaching the age of 50. As Wally Dunlap explained, Conrad lost both his parents to tuberculosis and was raised by an uncle. While still in his teens, Conrad went to sea, ultimately rising to command a vessel in the British merchant marine. As you might imagine, his voyages later provided a rich source for many of his works. Conrad, like another author who spent some time aboard boats (Twain) was fortunate to be able to write about the things he knew best about, as observed by Fred Hogeman.

Conrad's work for the evening, *The Secret Agent*, was one that was largely unfamiliar to most of the members prior to its selection. Set in turn-of-the-century London, the tale's title character, Adolf Verloc, is a lazy, occasional agent for a foreign government. Accustomed to simply drawing his pay without regards to the actual value of his intelligence, he is suddenly tasked by a new handler with a real mission that might better have been handled by James Bond, or even Austin Powers. Memo to all would-be agents: when tempted to enlist your wife's dimwitted and stumble-prone brother to carry your explosives, just don't do it. Poor Stevie.

Verloc, for all his ham-handed incompetence, lists as his friends and acquaintances half of the anarchists in London. One of the observations mentioned by several members of the group was surprise at how London's status as a target for fringe-group bombers is far from a new development. Apparently, among other incidents, there was an attempt to bomb Nelson's monument in Trafalgar Square in 1884, and Verloc and Stevie's target in this story, the Greenwich Observatory, had in reality been the intended target for a crazed Frenchman (yes, that's redundant) in 1894. The attack was thwarted only by an early detonation of his explosives, in the process killing the bomber. (hmm...sound familiar?)

The book prompted several members to suggest *Heart of Darkness* for a future club selection, leading Fred Billings to decline after expressing regret that he "only had one asterisk for his country"! Alan Carey also chimed in with a "take-it-to-the-bank" bit of advice for those attempting to crack Conrad, or any other writer, noting that you should "never read a page numbered with Roman Numerals", and instead one should simply bypass all those introductions and notes and just get to the good stuff.

Which makes it a form of justice, I suppose, that Alan found himself dragooned at the conclusion of the meeting, and selected our next read, *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. I, for one, plan on skipping any page without Arabic numerals, or any introductory, recycled literary reviews by English professors from schools that refused me admission. Per Alan's advice, this should half my reading time(!)

Our next meeting will be Thursday, August the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. in our usual private room at Kiva's. I look forward to seeing everyone there, and as always please feel free to bring a guest.

Keith Richardson