

# Reading Matters

SAN FRANCISCO GREAT BOOKS COUNCIL  
Serving Northern California

## Asilomar 2013:

### Lincoln speeches grab highest marks ever

#### Pairing Shakespeare with modern novel succeeds

Rob Calvert announced in our fall 2012 edition that we would try pairing a play with a novel. The play was to be Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the novel Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*. Smiley's Pulitzer-prize novel follows the structure of *King Lear*. Its characters and plot depart significantly from *Lear*. We scheduled the play in the morning and the novel



View from Asilomar Beach

in the afternoon, encouraging participants to draw or reject parallels as they saw them. This led, as we had hoped, to a particularly lively discussion. One person remarked of *One Thousand Acres* that it was "a challenge to get into all

of its furrows." The readings Sunday morning were Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" and his "Second Inaugural." Some had doubted these two brief speeches would sustain two hours of discussion, but they did. They grabbed the highest marks ever recorded for an Asilomar discussion.

A participant from Texas who had heard about our shadowy theme committee suggested that it may have influenced the planners of this event. The theme, she said was "Dysfunctional Families." In *A Thousand Acres* this was obvious. In Lincoln's two speeches, the family was the United States of America, coming apart in civil warfare, sometimes with sons of the same family fighting on opposite sides.

The Asilomar book selection committee insists this theme is a coincidence; as Lincoln would have said, there was "no malice aforethought."

The poetry selections for Friday evening were well received. One participant noted afterward, "I was so stimulated I could hardly sleep." Several others did not try, instead carrying on until 4:00 a.m. in the Scripps common room.

For reflections on the weekend by a man relatively new to Great Books, please see Jim Baird's diary below.

### Annual Meeting and Picnic:

#### Rob Calvert for GBSF president Laura Bushman for VP

#### *The Sense of an Ending* will be discussed

Vice President Rob Calvert has been nominated for election as president of GBSF and Laura Bushman for vice president. Barring unprecedented nominations from the membership, Calvert and Bushman will assume these offices upon election June 9 at the annual meeting/picnic in Berkeley's Tilden Park. The vice president usually succeeds the president at the term's end.

After elections and reports, we will discuss *The Sense of an Ending*, a Man Booker prize novel by Julian Barnes.

*The Sense of an Ending* is a short book, but not a slight one. In it Julian Barnes reveals crystalline truths that have taken a lifetime to harden. He has honed their edges, and polished them to a high gleam. — *New York Times*

It "reads like that of a thriller paperback: full of vengeful ex-girlfriends, youth suicide and illicit sex—though it's Barnes masochistically lyrical insights on loss



Padre Picnic Area

and memory that drives this novel's recruiting fan base to keep flipping back the pages." -- *Forbes*

The picnic begins at noon in the Padre Picnic Area, free of charge. Bring a dish enough for four to share.

## Guest speaker is announced for Long Novel Weekend

**Samuel Otter is Berkeley professor, author of *Melville's Anatomies***

Louise DiMattio, chair of the Long Novel Weekend to take place at Vallombrosa Retreat in Menlo Park on August 24-25, has enlisted UC Berkeley English professor Samuel Otter as Saturday evening speaker. In addition, Louise's husband, concert pianist Bill Corbett-Jones, will perform classical music on water themes.

Professor Otter has taught at Berkeley since 1990, focusing on 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature. He is particularly interested in the relationship between literature and history and the varieties of literary excess. His *Melville's Anatomies* (1999) analyzes how meanings, racial meanings in particular, have been invested in and abstracted from human bodies. Attendees are invited to explore with Prof. Otter the connections with the weekend's subject novel, *Moby-Dick*. A registration form with details about the event can be found within.

## Would-Be King comes to Calistoga Great Books discussion

Rudyard Kipling's classic short story, *The Man Who Would Be King*, is the subject of Jim Hall's third annual book discussion at the Calistoga Inn and Spa. It will be followed by the eponymous 1975 film adaptation directed by John Huston. The film features Sean Connery, Christopher Plummer, and Michael Caine.

The story is about two ex-sergeants of the Indian Army who depart from 19<sup>th</sup> century India looking for adventure and find themselves identified as gods and

drafted as kings of a country now a province of Afghanistan. Then the trouble starts.

According to Wikipedia, the film was nominated for four Academy Awards. Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* wrote that it was "Gloriously old-fashioned...right down to the characters' politically incorrect attitudes...." Roger Ebert gave the movie his highest rating, four stars, and called it "unabashed and thrilling and fun."



**Mount Saint Helena  
As Seen from Calistoga**

415-387-2125 or write him at [jimrhall@earthlink.net](mailto:jimrhall@earthlink.net). The price is \$30. Rides can likely be arranged. An extra special weekend can be had by registering at the Calistoga Inn and Spa to enjoy its several pools and other facilities and the charming village of Calistoga at the head of Napa Valley.

The program will be held on Saturday, October 5, and repeated the next day. Afterward, fine wines and cheeses will be served.

For information or to sign up, call Jim Hall at



## *Asilomar Diary*

by Jim Baird

### Session 1: Poetry (Friday Night)

"A poem comes to life when read aloud in a group."

The seven poems looked more like sheet music to me than literature: no sound or melody, just marks on paper. Though I'd read our other weekend selections twice each, these poems got their first read-through as our group assembled. I imagine that musicians fol-

low this same routine, checking beats per line and other technical things. I had no ideas to share.

Then everything changed: a volunteer read the first poem aloud.

It helped that this first selection rhymed and also looked like a poem, with its six stanzas of four lines each. I watched the words while listening to the voice, like a musician in a chamber piece. With the sound, the ideas appeared. “What exactly is the ‘leap’ mentioned over and over?” “Whatever it is, it’s serious.” “How about this ‘disappearing’?” “How can someone rejoice when he’s lonely?” “Sounds like death to me.”

Once we’d heard the words out loud, the poem became a shared experience we could look at together. Someone would add an idea (“Maybe we’re talking about sexuality here”) and, like turning something slightly to get a different view, a whole new meaning appeared. This was starting to be fun.

“A poem is like a Christmas tree; each of us gets to add our own lights.”

Time for the second selection. Repeat the title (“The Night, The Porch”) and a mood is set, and the clear image of a long-ago farmhouse after dark appears. Hearing is like seeing. “The Universe doesn’t think about us, though we do think about it.” “The Book isn’t ‘out there’ after all.” “There’s no end to what we can learn.” This is the genius of the Shared Inquiry method isn’t it? “I see this. What do you see?”

So, what did you hear and see? There were five more poems, and rather than discuss each one, let’s treat them like songs we’ve all heard. See if you can “Name That Tune” from these phrases, one each in the order we read them:

“Look if you like, but you will have to leap.”

“The book out there was never written with us in mind.”

“You await the handsome savior, but the plain man draws near. . .”

“You kept casting your line, and when it did not come back empty, it was tangled with mine.”

“Finally I just gave up and became my father”

“Those powerful allies who bear away our dead, at no juncture mesh with any of our gears.”

“Such permanence is terrifying. So I touch them in the dark, but touch them trying.”

## **Session 2: King Lear (Saturday Morning)**

If Friday’s poems were chamber music, Saturday’s *King Lear* was grand opera, complete with a complex plot and lots of characters. Unfortunately, our Dover edition of the play contained few stage directions or other guides to the onstage action, so keeping up with events required slow and careful reading. But like an opera, *King Lear* produces powerful emotions through its music—in this case Shakespeare’s amazing words—so that when we took turns reading scenes out loud, things came to life.

We began by naming our idea of what drives the play. We said Age, Betrayal, Greed, Secrets. We added Vanity, Revenge, Madness, Power, Evil. We each had a different answer but none of us called *Lear* a Love story. It is, though: that’s the heart of the drama. Take a look at Act 1, Scene 1 where *Lear* commands his daughters to tell him how much they love him; then Kent challenges *Lear* out of love, and is banished; then the king of France accepts Cordelia strictly out of love since her dowry has been cancelled. Eventually there’s ambition, sibling rivalry, and violence aplenty, but love—losing it and being tested by it—is the pivot upon which everything turns.

Something more: the play forces the audience to fill in the characters’ biographies. Characters talk about themselves, especially scheming heartthrob Edmund and disguised loyal Edgar, but we don’t exactly know their minds. *Lear* gives us the most to work with, and his realization in the final scene about the price everyone has paid for *Lear*’s folly is cathartic and memorable. Otherwise, we’re left to wonder, especially about the three women and their father. For example, did Cordelia have a different mother than the elder sisters? Are Goneril and Regan acting sensibly when they eliminate *Lear*’s retinue or are they settling an old score? And, why the poison after all they’d been through together? Good questions. Maybe that’s why we’re still fascinated by this play after 400 years.

## **Session 3: A Thousand Acres (Saturday Afternoon)**

*An aged patriarch, to keep ancestral land in the family, divides it among his three adult daughters, though abruptly cutting off the youngest over what seems a minor insult. Immediately, things begin to*

*disintegrate*. This is the plot structure of *King Lear* transplanted by author Jane Smiley into 1979 rural Iowa, and told from the eldest daughter's point of view.

Since the premise is Shakespearian, a reader automatically goes through a mental checklist to see how things line up with the original: In both works, there's the father and three daughters, including husbands for the older two, the father's lifelong friend, with two sons (one still at home and one who has just returned), and dramatic events that include a powerful storm, madness, multiple deaths, and a poisoning. In fact there is a lot of poison in this disturbing novel, so much of it that it lingers beneath the surface of much of the book like contaminated Iowa groundwater seeping into a well. Unlike Shakespeare's *King Lear*, this is not a tale of sin and redemption; it is, instead, a toxic world where repentance doesn't exist, and—because the guilty never ask for it—forgiveness cannot be given.

Gossip: Is it what people who know you say when you're not there? Or is it making sense out of situations involving people we care about?

In our group discussion, we didn't compare the play and the novel very much. Instead, we looked at the characters as real people, and we talked about what they did and why. In a way we became neighborhood gossips, but with better information. Early in the novel Ginny Cook Smith (our narrator and the oldest of the three sisters) recalls the neighbor's pig roast when the characters came together and the train of events began. She looks for clues but doesn't see anything that might have warned her about what was to come. We readers, however, get plenty of clues to ponder, beginning with a pivotal Monopoly tournament played at Ginny and her husband Ty's house. Later, when an inter-family brawl erupts at a Fathers' Day church event—with patriarch Larry Cook cursing his oldest daughters—no neighbors or friends intervene. Larry's the best farmer in the county, so what he says must be true. Appearances count.

Midway in the novel, we learn a vicious family secret that changes the story from tragedy—the fall and ultimate redemption of a great person—into something much different and darker. That crime is the poison that sickens everyone in the story, and us as readers, too.

With this information we watch with a kind of horrified understanding as everything is destroyed. Eventually, we see Ginny as a divorced woman in her forties, living in a big Midwestern city and raising her two orphaned nieces. Everything she knew at the beginning of the novel is gone, except the two girls, and they'll soon be off to college. Then, on the last page of the book, Ginny gives us a hint of what allowed her to tell this difficult long story with a kind of bracing honesty. She calls it an “obsidian shard” that she clings to, a hard and sharp understanding of her father's mind.

Quite a book. It's even better, though not any easier, when read a second time.

#### **Session 4: Lincoln Speaks (Sunday morning)**

This session was a masterstroke of timing: since we read Lincoln's two speeches aloud, it seemed more like a church service than a literary conversation. He was perhaps our greatest politician, and he was also a 19<sup>th</sup> century man, steeped in scripture and moral thinking that were parts of American life 150 years ago. Has it really been that long since the Civil War? It doesn't seem that way, does it? After all, “Lincoln” received an Academy Award just this year.

The two masterpieces that we discussed are so familiar, and have been the subject of so much serious-minded parsing, that it won't help much to do more of it in this article. Instead, here are some selected thoughts from our group, more or less in the order that they came up.

#### Gettysburg Address

“Four score and seven” has an almost religious sound. A “score” is twenty years but it also would have been a generation back then. So something from the Revolution has been passed down to us.

That all men are “created equal” is mentioned in the Declaration. Lincoln presents it as a “proposition”—not a settled Truth—that therefore requires testing. The Civil War is that test.

The “new birth of freedom” cannot happen unless the war is won. These are very high stakes: many have died (the “full measure of devotion”) and many more will. There is no winning the war without more pain, perhaps much more. It sounds almost as if the country is in labor.

Government of, by, for the people cannot continue if someone can blow up the government. If the Confederates win, the government will revert to a kind of monarchy where decisions affecting everyone come down from above, not up from people governing themselves.

### Second Inaugural

One side made the war; the other side accepted it. All wanted to avoid it, and now it's almost over. The "insurgents" he mentions were southern senators who led the secession, not the whole south. Nobody was free of sin in this thing: "We will not judge lest we be judged."

"God's decisions are just altogether." Lincoln sounds like he's shifting the blame to God here, but "God's Will" would have been seen differently in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. God is Just, and that means balanced scales. So, if parts of the Confederacy want to keep on fighting until all slavery's bills are paid ("sunk"), they will just be doing God's will with the scales.

The "malice towards none" lets us imagine how Lincoln would have managed reconstruction. "God gives us to see the right" but sometimes, as happened after Lincoln died, we can go blind for a long time.

## *In Memoriam:*

### **Three Great Books leaders**

2013 was a sad month for the Great Books Council of San Francisco. Three of our prized discussion leaders died.

**Ted Kraus** served on our Executive Committee and over the years led countless Great Books discussions at our special events and at home in Rossmoor. In literature, his great love was the theater. For years he led his own London theater tour. In life, his great love was **Joanna**, a playwright, who survives him. They were among the closest of couples. Ted was 89.

He was born in New York City, raised on Long Island, and schooled at Franklin Marshall College and New York University. He received his M.A. from Columbia.

In his professional life he was a drama critic who reviewed more than six thousand plays, edited and published a New York-London newsletter for drama editors and teachers worldwide. He taught related subjects at several institutions including the Rochester Institute of Technology and Humboldt State University.

**Jim Stabenau** led Great Books discussions at Asilomar but was known to readers of these pages as a recurring participant in imaginary discussions with literary personages in saloons.

Jim was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and graduated from Marquette University in that city, where he went on to medical school and graduated first in his class. His internship was at Johns Hopkins Hospital, after which he undertook post-doctoral studies at the National Cancer Institute and Strong Memorial Hospital.

He worked for several years at the National Institutes of Health where he was best known for his studies of schizophrenia in twins. He founded the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Connecticut.

On a cruise among the Greek Islands, Jim met Barb, the love of his life. They married in 1981. When he retired from the university, Jim and Barb moved to California and built a house for themselves in Rancho Murietta. They designed it for an extensive collection of modern and contemporary art. Jim won prizes for his own sculpture.

In 2009 they moved to La Jolla, where Jim enjoyed the scenery, the galleries, and other cultural venues. At the time of his death he was writing a book to explain the major divide in American politics.

Jim Stabenau was 82.

**Kathleen Conneely**, like Ted Kraus, devoted much of her life to the theater. After obtaining her BA from Hunter College, she earned a Master of Fine Arts at Yale University. From 1961 until retiring in 1993, she taught dramatic arts for most of those years at Chabot College. She helped to create and develop the theater arts program at Chabot's new campus where she taught alongside her friend and colleague Herb Kennedy.

Kathleen served on the GBSF Executive Committee and for several years managed our annual meeting and picnic. She participated in and led book discussions at our events, where those who did not know her might have recognized her as the petite and attractive blond woman in a large hat. She wore it faithfully to protect herself from the sun.

Kay White, leader trainer, recalls Kathleen as a vibrant discussion leader. She brought her theater training and experience to Great Books. Her strong voice projected to all and her keen awareness of each person in the room drew everyone into the discussion.

## Hyphen disputed in Moby-Dick

It has been brought to our attention that there is no reason for the hyphen in Moby-Dick unless Moby was the whale's father and Dick his mother. Who ever heard of a mother with the name "Dick"? We googled; the most satisfying of many answers was the following:

The title of the English edition, *The Whale*, was Melville's earlier title for the book. In an undated letter to Bentley, Allan Melville wrote, "Since sending proofs of my brother's new work . . . he has determined upon a new title & dedication — Enclosed you have proof of both — It is thought here that the new title will be a better selling title —." Allan's letter arrived in time for Bentley to include the dedication to Hawthorne; but presumably it was already too late to change the title, which appears twice in each of the three volumes and had been used in advertising. In his letter Allan spells "Moby-Dick" with the hyphen, as it also appears on the title page and divisional title page of the American edition; but only one of the many occurrences of the name in the text includes the hyphen. The Northwestern-Newberry editors retain the hyphen in the title, arguing that hyphenated titles were conventional in mid-nineteenth-century America. As a result, the hyphenated form refers to the book, the unhyphenated to the whale.

From: <http://patell.org/2012/10/moby-dick-a-note-on-hyphenation/>



This information is provided to encourage participants in this year's long novel weekend to read the entire book without getting hung

up on the matter of the title. The event will be held on August 24-25 at the Vallombrosa Retreat in Menlo Park. A flyer including a registration form can be found inside.

## Letters:

I can confirm (*Potpourri*, Winter-Spring-issue) that "fortuitous" is indeed already in the process of having its dictionary definition changed. Here's what Merriam-Webster online has to say:

1: Occurring by chance

2a. fortunate, lucky <from a cost standpoint, the company's timing is *fortuitous*—*Business Week*>

2b. coming or happening by a lucky chance <belting down the stairs, and there was a fortuitous train—Doris Lessing>

Sense 2a has been influenced in meaning by *fortunate*. It has been in standard if not elevated use for some 70 years, but is still disdained by some critics. Sense 2b, a blend of 1 and 2a, is virtually unnoticed by the critics. Sense 1 is the only sense commonly used in negative constructions.

My bias is to use fortuitous only in sense 2b, since I think that "by chance" or "random" usually works well enough for sense 1, and "lucky" is a fine stand-in for sense 2a. As for negative constructions, I think that Merriam-Webster may soon have to acknowledge usages like "the occasion was not fortuitous" (meaning that it was not conducive to positive outcome—a flavor of sense 2a) which I am hearing more and more often recently.

I consider myself a usage maven, but in response to your rhetorical question, sure, I think it's worth fighting the losing battle. Curmudgeons rule! You may eventually have to change your citizenship to French, though, since that seems to be the only country that truly honors its purists.

*Carol Hochberg, Berkeley*

## Great Books Week at Colby College to focus on “The Coming of Age”

### Couple from GBSF to attend

As reported in our previous issue, **Kay** and **Rick White** will fly to New England for the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Books at Colby College summer institute in Waterville, Maine, July 28-August 3, 2013. These two, along with other family members and friends have participated in the program several times in the past. The couple looks forward to the program and to seeing old friends.

Five books will be discussed in two hour discussions, one each day for five days. Ample time and facilities are provided for exercise, live music, literary and social events, and field trips, including a private beach owned by the college.

The readings are Simone de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age*; Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*; Anton Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya*; Vita Sackville-West, *All Passion Spent*; and Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic*. The event is sponsored by a committee of members from Great Books councils in the Northeast. As with our own events, prices are kept low because there is no paid staff. For more information, please go to their website, [www.greatbooks-atcolby.org](http://www.greatbooks-atcolby.org).

## Report: Leader-Reader Workshop March 2013

By Kay White

Early Saturday morning, lawn bowlers in their whites were quietly playing on the greens outside the Hillside Club at Rossmoor, while 16 Great Bookies were sipping coffee inside. We introduced ourselves: **Peter Gray, Jane and Bill Kadner, John Marsyla, and Sheldon Solloway** are active in one or two book clubs in Walnut Creek. **Clifford Louie, Lucy Marton, Charles Head, Brenda Ow Wong, and Nancy Wortman** are from San Francisco, and cover a range of groups and experience. **Ann Campbell** is from Los Gatos in the same group as **Brent Brown-ing, Karen Schneider** from Fairfax, and Kay White from Novato, are co-leader trainers. **Betty Cash** and **Barbara McConnell** are from Walnut Creek, hosting us at Rossmoor.

Brent opened the day with a demonstration discussion of Richard Wilbur's poem, "A Simile for her Smile." His usual introduction of how Great Books

is a courteous conversation among friends, and how to listen and stay with the material gave us a good start. Without hesitation, a lively discussion was launched. Brent kept the group focused even with some intentional distractions such as "cross-talkers" and "outside references."

It was clear the registrants had done their homework, and were ready for their own discussions. Karen and Brent guided two smaller groups through a homework review and practice discussions. By day's end, we had ten mini-discussions with individual feedback.

Participants said the small group practice was the most useful part of the training, and the mailed advance materials were excellent. The training session scored 9.6 points out of a possible 10, thanks to the excellent support from Brent and Karen, and the trainees' preparation. Cliff Louie added a bonus to our day with his presentation and handout, "Starting A Great Books Discussion Group."

Please give our new leaders an opportunity to lead discussions in your local group. Experience is the best teacher.

## Innovative great books university employs its own “distance learning” strategy

By Rebecca Fisher

*[This article was invited by Reading Matters. Harrison Middleton University has, from its beginning, helped to support the Great Books Foundation and worked with Classical Pursuits. The author is one of two of its tutors who attended this year's Asilomar Spring Conference. Their participation was sponsored by the University.]*

Whether you started reading great books as a child or fostered a love for reading and discussion in your golden years, as great bookies you know how powerful the art of reading and discussion can be. Harrison Middleton University (HMU) was founded 15 years ago with the desire to provide people of all walks of life the opportunity to earn a liberal arts education through the study of Great Ideas and Great Books.

There was also the hope that by offering these studies exclusively through distance education the road blocks to earning a degree would be lessened. Students don't have to relocate, quit their jobs, or put their family life on hold in order to pursue their studies. Our students study from home, across the United States and around the world, on their own schedule.

HMU is not the typical distance program where interaction between students and faculty is through email and online chat forums. Our students hold one-to-one shared inquiry discussions with tutors from the university. Students work with faculty over the phone or Skype (depending on preference and location) in order to maintain the human-to-human contact that is often absent in distance learning programs. These are similar to other great books discussions except for being one-on-one. Tutors and students come together as peers to explore the texts in a collaborative effort.

A second founding principle of the university was to provide students with the opportunity to focus their study on issues they are interested in. HMU students design their own program (within limits). The studies of recent graduates have included the great ideas of education, science, will, law, mind, good and evil, happiness, love, duty, virtue and vice, punishment, emotion, logic, knowledge, immortality, life and death, citizen, democracy, war and peace. As one of our students, James Keller, recently noted,

By creating my program of study, I accept responsibility of my learning. It is tempting to see learning as the responsibility of the teacher to impart education on the student, as if the student is a passive vessel into which knowledge can be poured. The student who chooses what to study denies passivity, actively pursuing knowledge. He seeks it.

In addition to needing or wanting a liberal arts degree, students choose HMU for a variety of reasons. Many are working professionals who find the flexibility of schedule and location (or lack of location) a draw. Some are retired and finally have the opportunity to study what they always wanted to. We also have students who are enrolled in other technical or trade programs who earn their general education requirements through HMU.

HMU has launched <http://www.hmu.edu/blog/>, a blog striving to bring the great authors' ideas into a contemporary context.

In addition to degree and diploma programs, HMU offers quarterly discussions open to the general public. If you, your children, or your grandchildren would like additional information, please visit our website ([www.hmu.edu](http://www.hmu.edu)), call us at 1-877-248-6724, or e-mail us at [information@hmu.edu](mailto:information@hmu.edu). Harrison Middleton University is accredited by the accrediting commission of the Distance Education and Training Council ([www.detc.org](http://www.detc.org)).

I enter into conversation and argument with great freedom and ease, inasmuch as opinion finds in me a soil into which it cannot readily penetrate and take root. No propositions astonish me, no belief offends me, however contrary it may be to my own.



~ Michel de Montaigne

## 2013 "Toronto Pursuits" in the summer

Sunday, July 14 to Friday, July 19, 2013

By Ann Kirkland

Over 100 people from across Canada and at least 20 states will gather on the shady garden campus of the University of Toronto's Victoria College. About 70% will be returnees and the remainder will be there for the first time. About half will be working and half will be retired. They will range in age from early thirties to mid-eighties. Some will stay in an economical campus residence; others will opt for a nearby hotel. Still others will commute each day from home.

Out-of-towners and first-timers get started on Sunday afternoon, July 14, with an optional demonstration in the Shared Inquiry method of discussion and a guided walking tour of Toronto's art and architecture. The program gets into full swing on Monday morning with the convening of 12 seminars, which take place concurrently each morning. Participants select one seminar for the entire week. The groups are small, capped at 15 participants. At noon we gather for an excellent lunch. Each afternoon and evening, you may choose from a wide variety of cultural and social activities both on and off the campus – topical talks, walking tours, film screenings, small dinners and much more. On Thursday evening, there will be an optional concert as part of the **Toronto Summer Music Festival**. We have two gala receptions, one on Monday evening and the other at the conclusion of the week on Friday, and a dinner and travel evening on Wednesday.

The 15th annual Toronto Pursuits will take place from July 14-19, 2013. The 5th annual [Stratford Shakespeare Festival Excursion](#) will take place July 12-14, 2013. Includes return transportation to Toronto, accommodation for two nights at Stratford hotel, premium tickets to three plays, discussions, talks, reception, one lunch, and one brunch.