

MINUTES
of the Meeting of
the Novel Club of Cleveland
October 3, 2017

Hosts: the Glazers (Our thanks)

After a warm reunion over a generous board and bar, the meeting was called to order at approximately 8:15 pm. Reports from the Council, the Website Comte, and the Treasury (\$1,363.55 current balance). This season's new members (list), not all of whom were present, were acknowledged. Ann Ogan shared that Celeste Ng, daughter-in-law of our Novel Club colleague Carol Fox, has published a new book – *Little Fires Everywhere*.

Biographical paper: Nick Ogan

Critical paper: Whitney Lloyd

Ably comprehensive, sensitively drawn biographic picture of Murdoch from Ogan.

As seen from Lloyd's definitive critical perch, that buttressed by trenchant critical readings of others, perhaps Murdoch's Bradley is more erotically and morally confused than philosophically, much less sympathetically, convincing. The nine questions that Lloyd prepared for the Club members' discussion were very much pitched at their individual and collective reading experiences - provoking, yet gently leading in a strategic critical direction.

Lloyd's questions provoked diverse perspectives from the NC members: characters' hatred, sexual aggression, blind selfishness were noted repeatedly, and there was a discursive trend to see the novel's eroticism as destructive, rather than creative or capable of leading to any ideal relationship of love or cultural gesture of art. Bradley was characterized as unbalanced, self-delusional. Some, conversely, were more understanding of Bradley's need to transform himself through his exculpatory book, given his difficulties with love and everyday life before he was awarded his "writer's residency" behind bars. Examination of the title's reference to Hamlet produced many ingenious parallels to both Shakespeare's play and Freud's theories. The NC members considered the novel's Platonic "tease" to be largely unsuccessful, most refusing to buy Bradley's compulsion for Julian as a search for "the truth." Some readers experienced the narrative as humorous in the extreme, given its comic pomposity. Though many claimed to have liked the novel, most seemed to nevertheless find fault with (or need to justify) its characters, narrative world, ideological premises.

Weirdly, a majority of members agreed that reading it had been worth effort, regardless of their sundry disappointments and cavils!

Everyone returned happily to the buffet promptly at 9:58.

Respectfully submitted,

JK