

R417 Aspects of the Novel 9.30 – 11am
OLLI Fall Session 2012 – Reston
Kay Menchel

Class 5 - Tuesday 10/16/12

Stream of Consciousness

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this, of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she was then) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?" – was that it? – "I prefer men to cauliflowers" – was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out onto the terrace – Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished – how strange it was! – a few sayings like this about cabbages.

Virginia Woolf *Mrs. Dalloway*

Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass.

William Faulkner *The Sound and the Fury*

One of the unsolved mysteries of life, or the unsolved mysteries of my life, is why the vicar's wife is expected to go to church at all. A barrister's wife doesn't have to go to court, an actor's wife isn't at every performance, so why have I always got to be on parade? Not to mention the larger question of whether one believes in God in the first place. It's assumed that being the vicar's wife one does but the question has never actually come up, not with Geoffrey anyway. I can understand why, of course. To look at me, the hair, the flat chest, the wan smile, you'd think I was just cut out for God. And maybe I am. I'd just like to have been asked that's all. Not that it matters of course. So long as you can run a tight jumble sale you can believe in what you like.

Alan Bennett *Talking Heads*

Metafiction

Then I went to the library, closed myself in, hunted out *The Princess Bride*. It was in pretty good shape, I realized as I checked the binding, which is when I saw it was published by my publishing house, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. This was before that; they weren't even Harcourt, Brace & World yet. Just plain old Harcourt, Brace period. I flicked to the title page, which was funny, since I'd never done that before; it was always my father who'd done the handling. I had to laugh when I saw the real title, because right there it said:

THE PRINCESS BRIDE
S. Morgenstern's
Classic Tale of True Love
And High Adventure

You had to admire a guy who called his own new book a classic before it was published and anyone else had a chance to read it

William Goldman *The Princess Bride*

It was a long walk down the stadium stairs, dragging his javelin behind him. Will she ever wear anything but that gray sweat suit? he wondered. Garp wrote later that he first discovered that he had an imagination while trying to imagine Helen Holm's body. "With her always in that damn sweat suit," he wrote, "I *had* to imagine her body; there was no other way to see it." Garp imagined that Helen had a vey good body – and nowhere in his writing does he say that he was disappointed when he finally saw the real thing.

It was that afternoon in the empty stadium, with the frog gore on the point of his javelin, when Helen Holm provoked his imagination and T.S. Garp decided he was going to be a writer. A *real* writer, as Helen had said.

John Irving *The World According to Garp*

You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away, "No, I don't want to watch TV!" Raise your voice – they won't hear you otherwise – "I'm reading! I don't want to be disturbed!" Maybe they haven't heard you, with all that racket; speak louder, yell "I'm beginning to read Italo Calvino's new novel!" Or if you prefer, don't say anything; just hope they'll leave you alone.

Italo Calvino *If on a winter's night a traveler*

Perhaps you suppose that a novelist has only to pull the right strings and his puppets will behave in a lifelike manner; and produce on request a thorough analysis of their motives and intentions. Certainly I intended at this stage (Chap. Thirteen – unfolding of Sarah's true state of mind) to tell all – or all that matters. But I find myself suddenly like a man in the sharp spring night, watching from beneath that dim upper window in Marlborough House; I know in the context of my book's reality that Sarah would never have brushed away her tears and leaned down and delivered a chapter of revelation. She would instantly have turned, had she seen me there just as the old moon rose, and disappeared into the interior shadows.

But I am a novelist, not a man in a garden – I can follow her where I like?

She began with a Staffordshire teapot with a pretty coloured transfer of a cottage by a stream and a pair of lovers (she looked closely at the lovers); and then a Toby jug, not one of those garish monstrosities of Victorian manufacture, but a delicate little thing in pale mauve and primrose-yellow, the jolly man's features charmingly lacquered by a soft blue glaze (ceramic experts may recognise a Ralph Leigh). Those two purchases had cost Sarah ninepence in an old china shop; the Toby was cracked, and was to be re-cracked in the course of time, as I can testify, having bought it myself a year or two ago for a good deal more than the three pennies Sarah was charged. But unlike her, I fell for the Ralph Leigh part of it. She fell for the smile.

John Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

Intrusive Author

With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799.

George Eliot *Adam Bede*

To Margaret – I hope that it will not set the reader against her – the station of King's Cross had always suggested Infinity. Its very situation – withdrawn a little behind the facile splendours of St. Pancras – implied a comment on the materialism of life. Those two great arches, colourless, indifferent, shouldering between them an unlovely clock, were fit portals for some eternal adventure, whose issue might be prosperous, but would certainly not be expressed in the ordinary language of prosperity. If you think this is ridiculous, remember that it is not Margaret who is telling you about it..."

E. M. Forster *Howards End*