

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

Class 6 - Tuesday 10/23/12

Comedy

To follow somebody, without them knowing that you're doing it, is not the doddle they make it seem in films. I've had some experience of professional following, and a lot more experience of professional going back to the office and saying "we lost him". Unless your quarry is deaf, tunnel-sighted and lame, you need at least a dozen people and fifteen thousand quids-worth of short wave radio to make a decent go of it.

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By the time we reached the bottom of the Haymarket, the sweat was pouring off me and I was praying for him to hail a taxi. He didn't do it until he got to Lower Regent Street, and I caught another one an agonizing twenty seconds later.

Well, obviously it was another one. Even the amateur follower knows that you don't get into the same taxi as the person you're following.

Hugh Laurie *The Gun Seller*

The headmaster sighed and crossed to the window..."The fact of the matter is, and you must appreciate that I have had some thirty years in the teaching profession, that Peregrine is an unusual boy. A most unusual boy."

"I know that," said Mr. Clyde-Browne..."are you suggesting he's stupid?"

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(Headmaster) "In short, he takes everything he's told as Gospel."

"As Gospel?"

"Literally, absolutely literally."

"He takes the Gospel literally?" said Mr. Clyde-Browne, hoping for a chance to vent his feelings about Religious Education in a rational world.

"Not just the Gospel. Everything" said the headmaster, who was finding the interview almost as harrowing as trying to teach Peregrine. "He seems incapable of distinguishing between a general instruction and the particular. Take the time for instance."

"What time?" asked Mr. Clyde-Browne, with a glazed look in his eyes.

"Just time. Now if one of the teachers sets the class some work to do and adds, 'Take your own time,' Peregrine invariably says, 'Eleven o'clock'.

"Invariably says 'Eleven o'clock'?"

"Or whatever the time happens to be. It could be half past nine or quarter to ten."

"In that case he can't invariably say 'Eleven o'clock' said Mr. Clyde-Browne, resorting to cross examination to fight his way out of the confusion.

"Well, not invariably eleven o'clock," conceded the headmaster, "but invariably some time or other. Whatever his watch happens to tell him. That's what I mean about taking everything literally. It makes teaching him a distinctly unnerving experience. Only the other day I told the class they'd got to pull their socks up, and Peregrine promptly did. It was exactly the same in Bible Studies. The Reverend Wilkinson said that everyone ought to turn over a new leaf. During the break Peregrine went to work on the camellias. My wife was deeply upset."

Tom Sharpe *Vintage Stuff*

"Jeeves," I said, and if my voice shook, what of it? We Woosters are but human. "You stand alone. Others abide our question, but you don't, as the fellow said. I wish there was something I could do to repay you."

He coughed that sheeplike cough of his.

"There does chance to be a favor it is within your power to bestow, sir"

"Name it, Jeeves. Ask of me what you will, even unto half my kingdom."

"If you could see your way to abandoning your Alpine hat, sir."

I ought to have seen it coming. That cough should have told me. But I hadn't, and the shock was severe. I don't mind admitting that for an instant I reeled.

"You would go as far as that?" I said, chewing the lower lip.

"It was merely a suggestion, sir."

I took the hat off and gazed at it. The morning sunlight played on it, and it had never looked so blue, its feather so pink.

"I suppose you know you're breaking my heart?"

"I am sorry, sir."

I sighed. But as I have said, the Woosters can take it.

"Very well, Jeeves. So be it."

I have him the hat. It made me feel like a father reluctantly throwing his child from the sledge to divert the attention of the pursuing wolf pack, as I believe happens all the time in Russia in the winter months, but what would you?

P.G. Wodehouse *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*

Irony

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

"Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least."

Jane Austen *Pride and Prejudice*

But the Misses Wentworth received an impression that Eugenia was no friend to the primitive custom of "dropping-in"; she evidently had no idea of living without a door-keeper. "One goes into your house as into an inn – except that there are no servants rushing forward," she said to Charlotte. And she added that that was very charming. Gertrude explained to her sister that she meant just the reverse; she didn't like it at all. Charlotte inquired why she should tell an untruth, and Gertrude answered that there was probably some very good reason for it which they should discover when they knew her better. "There can surely be no good reason for telling an untruth," said Charlotte. "I hope she does not think so."

Henry James *The Europeans*

Surprise

"I say agin, I want you," Sir Pitt said, thumping the table. "I can't git on without you. I didn't see what it was till you went away. The house goes all wrong. It's not the same place. All my accounts has got muddled agin. You *must* come back. Do come back. Dear Becky, do come."

"Come – as what, sir?" Rebecca gasped out.

"Come as Lady Crawley, if you like," the Baronet said, grasping his crape hat. "There! Will that zatusfy you? Come back and be my wife. Your vit vor't. Birth be hanged. You're as good a lady as ever I see. You've got more brains in your little vinger than any baronet's wife in the country. Will you come? Yes or no?"

"O Sir Pitt!" Rebecca said, very much moved.

"Say yes, Becky," Sir Pitt continued. "I'm an old man, but a good'n. I'm good for twenty years. I'll make you happy, zee if I don't. You shall do what you like; spend what you like; and 'av it all your own way. I'll make you a settlement. I'll do everything regular. Look year!" and the old man fell down on his knees and leered at her like a satyr.

Rebecca started back a picture of consternation. In the course of this history we have never seen her lose her presence of mind; but she did now, and wept some of the most genuine tears that ever fell from her eyes.

"O Sir Pitt!" she said. "O sir – I – I'm *married already*."

William Makepeace Thackeray *Vanity Fair*

"Well, Mrs. Joe, we'll do our best endeavours; let us have a cut at this same pie."

My sister went out to get it. I heard her steps proceed to the pantry. I saw Mr. Pumblechook balance his knife. I saw re-awakening appetite in the Roman nostrils of Mr. Wopsle. I heard Mr. Hubble remark that "a bit of savory pork pie would lay atop of anything you could mention, and do no harm," and I heard Joe say, "you shall have some, Pip." I have never been absolutely certain whether I uttered a shrill yell of terror, merely in spirit, or in the bodily hearing of the company. I felt that I could bear no more, and that I must run away. I released the leg of the table, and ran for my life.

But I ran no further than the house door, for there I ran head foremost into a party of soldiers with their muskets: one of whom held out a pair of handcuffs to me, saying, "Here you are, look sharp, come on!"

Charles Dickens *Great Expectations*