

R421 Aspects of the Novel
OLLI Spring Session 2015 - Reston
Kay Menchel

Class 4- Thursday 4/16

Time

***Bleak House* Charles Dickens**

In Chancery

London, Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full grown snow-flakes – gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

***The Enormous Radio* John Cheever**

Jim and Irene Westcott were the kind of people who seem to strike that satisfactory average of income, endeavor, and respectability that is reached by the statistical reports in college alumni bulletins. They were the parents of two young children, they had been married nine years, they lived on the twelfth floor of an apartment house near Sutton Place, they went to the theatre on an average of 10.3 times a year, and they hoped someday to live in Westchester. Irene Westcott was a pleasant, rather plain girl, with soft brown hair and a wide, fine forehead upon which nothing at all had been written, and in the cold weather she wore a coat of fitch skins dyed to resemble mink. You could not say that Jim Westcott looked younger than he was, but you could at least say of him that he seemed to feel younger. He wore his graying hair cut very short, he dressed in the kind of clothes his class had worn at Andover, and his manner was earnest, vehement, and intentionally naïve. The Westcotts differed from their friends, their classmates, and their neighbors only in an interest they shared in serious music. They went to a great many concerts – although they seldom mentioned this to anyone – and they spent a good deal of time listening to music on the radio.

***A Visit from the Goon Squad* Jenifer Egan**

"It's incredible," Sasha said, "how there's just nothing there."

Astounded, Bennie turned to her. Was it possible that she'd followed his musical rant to its grim conclusion? Sasha was looking downtown, and he followed her eyes to the empty space where the Twin Towers had been. "There should be *something*, you know?" she said, not looking at Bennie. "Like an echo, Or an outline."

Bennie sighed. "They'll put something up," he said. "When they've finally done squabbling."

***Thérèse Raquin* Émile Zola**

For three years days followed days, all alike. Camille never once stayed away from his office, his mother and wife seldom left the shop. Living in musty shadows and dismal, oppressive silence, Thérèse could see her whole life stretching out before her totally void, bringing night after night the same cold bed and morning after morning the same empty day.

***To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf**

So with all the lamps put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof a downpouring of immense darkness began. Nothing, it seemed, could survive the flood, the profusion of darkness which, creeping in at keyholes and crevices, stole round window blinds, came into bedrooms, swallowed up here a jug and a basin, there a bowl of red and yellow dahlias, there the sharp edges and firm bulk of a chest of drawers. Not only was furniture confounded; there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say, "This is he" or "This is she".

***Mrs. Dalloway* Virginia Woolf**

The hall of the house was as cool as a vault. Mrs. Dalloway raised her hand to her eyes, and, as the maid shut the door to, and she heard the swish of Lucy's skirts, she felt like a nun who has left the world and feels fold round her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions. The cook whistled in the kitchen. She heard the click of the typewriter. It was her life, and, bending her head over the hall table, she bowed beneath the influence, felt blessed and purified, saying to herself as she took the pad with the telephone message on it, how moments like this are buds on the tree of life, flowers of darkness they are, she thought (as if some lovely rose had blossomed for her eyes only); not for a moment did she believe in God; but all the more, she thought, taking up the pad, must one repay in daily life to servants, yes, to dogs and canaries, above all to Richard her husband, who was the foundation of it – of the gay sounds, of the green lights, of the cook even whistling, for Mrs. Walker was Irish and whistled all day long – one must pay back from this secret deposit of exquisite moments, she thought, lifting the pad...