Lit 522-01: Whales & Shaggy Dogs, Among Others

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Office Hours: TuThs 2:00-3:00 & by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS

Borges, Jorge Luis. 《Ficciones》. (Grove.)
Burton, Robert. 《The Essential Anatomy of Melancholy》. (Dover.)
Flaubert, Gustave. 《Bouvard and Pécuchet》. (Dalkey.)
Machado de Assis, Joaquim Maria. 《The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas》. (Oxford.)
Melville, Herman. 《Moby-Dick》. (Penguin Classics.)
O’Brien, Flann. 《At Swim-Two-Birds》. (Dalkey Archive.)
O’Brien, Tim. 《The Things They Carried》. (Mariner.)
Sebald, W.G. 《The Rings of Saturn》. (New Directions.)
Sterne, Laurence. 《Tristram Shandy》. (Norton Critical Edition.)
Woolf, Virginia. 《Orlando》. (Harvest Books Annotated Edition.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

LIT 522 explores fictions that reach for, trouble, ironize, or otherwise grapple with the limits (if there are any) of the novel as a literary form. Not content with telling stories, writers such as Sterne, Melville, Flann O’Brien, and others, building upon some of the greatest traditions in world literature, tell stories within stories, mix genres, parody storytelling, create infinity machines, seemingly lose control of both their characters and their narratives, and otherwise see how far they can push (or break?) the bounds of setting, plot, character, point of view, and more. Menippeans, anatomists, fabulists, satirists, jokesters, and keen dissectors of the mind, they mock, digress, play games, lose track, lie, and otherwise try everything they can think of; at the same time, not content with mere gamespersonship, they dive as deeply as they can into the imagination and the sometimes dark, even furious realms of motivation and desire. While some of these strategies and concerns perhaps became commonplace among the postmoderns, our course engages a far deeper tradition of searching or self-conscious artists from ancient Rome to the present.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each seminar participant will be responsible for the following:

1. Bring to each class, on a 3X5 notecard, THREE observations, comments, questions, or critiques about each week’s reading. Keep your observations brief and pithy—one or two sentences at most. You will TURN IN the notecards at the end of each class. (Nota
**bene:** Your THREE notecard observations/remarks/questions/critiques/etc. **must be written BEFORE COMING TO CLASS!** You may, of course, *supplement* these three notes during class, but you must come to class already armed with three killer insights/questions/comments/somethings.

2. Submit, at the end of the semester (specific due date TBA), a 15-20+ page scholarly essay that analyzes or critiques one (or perhaps, though rarely, more) of the course’s primary texts. Your essay must display a working knowledge of (that is, include directly) such secondary sources as may be available (including reviews, interviews, and scholarly articles and books, etc.). Strong, smart-as-hell theoretical readings are especially welcome (depending, of course, upon your interests, investments, and backgrounds in literary and cultural theory).
SYLLABUS

M Aug 27: Introduction/Semester Plan
**Lecture: Menippean Satire/The Anatomy/The Novel**

M Sept 3: **No Class: Labor Day**

M Sept 10: Reading Packet
**Lecture: The Humours**
Burton

M Sept 17: Sterne vii-237

M Sept 24: Sterne 238-467

M Oct 1: Melville 1851 Title Page-312

M Oct 8: Melville 313-625

M Oct 15: Machado de Assis

M Oct 22: Flaubert

M Oct 29: Woolf

M Nov 5: Flann O’Brien

M Nov 12: **No Class: Veterans Day**

M Nov 19: Borges

M Nov 26: Tim O’Brien

M Dec 3: Sebald