

# Writing Workshop



## OUTLINE

- Revisit your MAP from last week's workshop
  - What is reading?
- prepare for a brief seminar: read forwards and backwards
  - conduct a seminar "reading" of one novel and the chapter that precedes it
    - find the sexy bits
  - discuss the erotics of a chapter
  - discuss the erotics of a passage
  - discuss the erotics of a sentence

**MAPS** Keep working on the maps you started with last week's workshop. Add to what you've already done by incorporating the new chapters. For this stage of the workshop, explain in what ways your map can be **instructive**: how does it help the reader to understand the text better because of **what** you have chosen to show on the map **AND** how does the **way** that you have made the map visually communicate something about the text? RECORD your answers. (20 minutes)

## *What is Reading?*

Find at least two passages in every section that discuss reading explicitly or implicitly. RECORD their locations and RECORD a line or two from each. (15 minutes)

### *Prepare for in-workshop seminar...*

Read backwards and forwards: if we go through books like this one just straight from beginning to end, we tend to miss a lot. Spend some time bouncing around chapters. Ask (and answer) the following questions about patterns: are there certain ways that Calvino ends chapters? If you read all of the last paragraphs of the novels, what connections would you find? Is there any rhyme or reason to the way that the Reader is prevented from hearing more of each book? RECORD your answers to these and then come up with at least four more similar questions (an answer them, too). (20 minutes)

### *A Brief Seminar Begins @ 11:10*

Choose a novel. Based on your individual choice, you will group up with others to discuss that novel and the chapter that leads into it. In this seminar, your goal is to conduct a careful "reading" of the text. What are the major themes and images in the chapter? How does the chapter advance the narrative? Examining Calvino's description of the chapter from the Oulipo Packet (provided). Make sense of it! Why/ How does this chapter lead into its corresponding novel? What sort of novel do we get? Is it of a describable genre? What are the major themes/relationships/ideas presented? (40 minutes)

## Reading is Sexy! (45 minutes)

*Return to your project seminar.*

**Key words:** anticipation, expectation, frustration, satisfaction, rewards, obsession, resolution, reveal, conceal, climax, conflict, tension, tease, titillate, arouse... and so on. There are too many to count.

- Your first job is to find a few sexual encounters in the book. How are they described? What do they have in common?
  
- Next, with the notion of a generally erotic structure to the pleasure of reading, take one of the **novel** chapters and describe it in terms of the expectations it sets up for the reader, what/how it satisfies, how it climaxes, and how it ends (more details than this = great!). RECORD your findings.
  
- Find a brief passage (up to half of a page) in the same novel. Again, describe it in terms of the expectations it sets up for the reader, what/how it satisfies, how it climaxes, and how it ends (more details than this = great!). RECORD your findings.
  
- Finally, identify a sentence, probably a long one, and break apart into components that enable you to describe how it leads the reader from expectations to rewards and so on. To do this, you must be able to say out loud all the little things that happen in your brain as you read. It means slowing yourself down considerably. In order to RECORD your findings, write the sentence out in a fashion that allows you to label and annotate its parts.

# PROJECT

1. Complete any portions of the workshop that you didn't get to in class.
2. Write a story using a coin-toss to determine the course of events as you write them. In the margins of the story, make a note of what the options were (Heads = ?; TAILS = ?). You should use at least 20 coin-tosses total.
3. Imitate Calvino's structure-development system as depicted in "How I wrote one of my books." So: determine a few "elements," characters and objects. Note that in the Calvino, elements tend to have doubles (male reader & female reader; actual book & book in the text). Without worrying about Calvino's source for the system, explain 4-5 different matrices in the same manner as Calvino. If you're feeling adventurous, go on to try it with triangles... hexagons!...stars!