

## **Fiction Writing**

CRW 2100 (2500)

Fall 2013

CBD 212, Tuesday, 10-E1

Vincent Poturica

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Office Hours: Mondays, 9 : 35-10 : 35am, and by appointment

### **Required Texts :**

Kenneth Koch, *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* (Harper Perennial, 1999)

Course Pack (available at Book iT, 1250 W University Ave., Unit 2.)

**Course Objectives:** that you leave it writing better than when you entered it. This course in a more thorough introduction to fiction writing and, since careful and reflective reading is the best way to learn how to write, an introduction to literature. We will write AND read bearing in mind how each story "works" - structurally, stylistically, and thematically. We will ask ourselves (over and over) while writing and reading: So what?

The first half of the semester will be devoted to a discussion of the basic elements of fiction. The second half will be a traditional fiction workshop, the requirements of which will be discussed in detail later on, but which can be described in general as a format in which we apply the same critical skills to our own work that we've learned to apply to the assigned readings.

Our aim is to "do" what writer (and UF Professor) Padgett Powell urges: "In a workshop we should spot that which keeps us from wanting to keep reading. One need go no further than that ... If your writing is lively and interesting, we can address ourselves to its faults in form. This is the zone of the question Can writing be taught? that may be answered Yes. Then it will be up to you to say something new: to put to paper things not said before that surprise us. This is the zone of the question that must be answered No. We cannot legislate interest, surprise, new utterance. We can but pray."

(This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For more information, see:

[http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#learning.](http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#learning))

### **Course Format :**

Reading : short stories, poems, and essays from Course Pack; chapters from Gardner's *The Art of Fiction*.

Writing : in-class exercises, five 600-word reading responses, a 100-250

word story, a 500-750 word story, a 1,000-1,500 word story, and a portfolio of revised work.

Critiquing : of both the published stories and the work of your peers.

#### **GRADED ASSIGNMENTS AND OTHER COURSE COMPONENTS**

##### **Class Participation: 50% (500 points)**

Each week we will discuss both the textbook (Gardner's *AOF*) and published fiction/poetry. Doing the reading is only half the assignment. In-class discussion of the material is the other half. Not having your books in class will result in a participation grade of zero for the day.

On workshop days it is expected that you will come to class having read each piece carefully *at least once*, and that you have spent time formulating a typed response to it. I urge you to read the piece once, without marking it, before writing your marginal notes during the second read. I will check to see that you are writing adequate comments throughout the semester.

In-class discussion, preparedness (including timely response to all class emails), and (especially) engagement/attitude are all parts of participation. A writing workshop should be a safe place where everyone should feel encouraged and welcome to share their thoughts/feelings - the participation of those who fail to respect their peers' thoughts/feeling will be graded accordingly.

This course requires you to have a journal. This journal - it can be a composition book, notebook, sketchbook, whatever you prefer - will be collected at the end of semester and will be graded out of 150 points. You will record your *writing exercises* (both in-class and for homework) in your journal. These exercises will be evaluated based on effort, imaginativeness, and correct style and usage. I encourage you to take in-class notes in your journal as well as any reflections/ideas you might have for stories; keeping a notebook at hand is very helpful for many writers.

##### **Reading Responses/Stories: 30% (300 points)**

1. *five, 600-word responses to the reading* (published work). The structure and content of the reading responses (worth 30 points each) will be taught in class, both explicitly and organically as a result of our classroom discussions about the stories and poems we read. The responses will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

demonstrated reading of the stories/chapters, critical thinking, depth of analysis, and engagement in the discussion of craft. Your analytical and critical skills are expected to improve over the course of the semester, both through practice and in response to my written feedback.

2. *three short-stories*. Your stories (a 100-250 word story, a 500-750 word story worth, and a 1,000-1,500 word story; each story is worth 50 points) will be evaluated based on the same criteria as your writing exercises. Do not write these stories the night before they are due. I will be able to tell if this is the case, and your grade will be lowered accordingly. Manuscripts must be delivered to the class **the week before** they are to be workshopped. There is no late delivery. There is no switching. No last-minute writing. If you are unable to

turn in the story on time, an entire letter grade will be deducted from your final grade. **Please bring enough copies for everyone.**

**Rubric of Evaluation for Reading Responses**

**A-Response:** Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops original, sophisticated ideas. Has exceptionally well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

**B-Response:** Contains extended analysis of the texts and develops original, sophisticated ideas. Has well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

**C-Response:** Contains some analysis of the texts and develops some original ideas about them. Has adequately well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., brief introduction, body, brief conclusion), adequately-supported claims, and some appropriate stylistic elements.

**D-Response:** Contains minimal analysis of the texts. May lack well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis, and/or a persuasive organizational structure. Fails to adequately support its claims and/or use appropriate stylistic elements.

**E-Response:** Lacks analysis of the text, and therefore fails to demonstrate reading and/or comprehension.)

**Revised Stories: 20% (200 points)**

You will rewrite/revise your stories, based on my comments and those of your peers. Your revisions will be turned in as your final project. This portfolio should be polished and THOROUGHLY proofread.

**Formatting**

Each assignment will be submitted at the beginning of class in *double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman (or Calibri or Courier New) font. Pages must be numbered.* One staple goes in the upper-left-hand corner. You are responsible for photocopying your workshopped stories. Failure to follow the formatting directions will result in the loss of a full letter grade of that assignment. There is no late delivery (i.e. tardy assignments will receive a 0). AVOID last-minute writing.

**Attendance**

You are allowed one absence without explanation, but *do not miss the day of your scheduled workshop.* Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade (0) for that story. Each absence after the first will lower your final grade by a full letter grade (an A becomes a B, a B becomes a C, etc.). If you arrive 5 or more minutes late to class, you will be marked tardy. Two tardies will count as an absence.

**Conferences :**

You must meet with me at least once before the course is over. It is your responsibility to set up that meeting.

**Notes :**

You are responsible for **checking your university emails**. I will often give or change assignments via email as well as make any necessary changes to the schedule. *You are responsible for checking your email and letting me know if you have any questions.* If I send you an email, you NEED to read it.

**CELL PHONES AND LAPTOPS ARE NOT PERMITTED IN CLASS.** You will be politely asked to leave class if I see you using either device, and you will subsequently be marked absent.

You **MUST** come to each class fully prepared (with hard-copies of each assignment, the readings, and pen/pencil and paper to take notes).

(This syllabus is subject to change.)

**Final Grade Appeals**

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

**UF Requirement for Writing**

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for Writing. For more information, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/gordon.aspx>

**UF Reading and Writing Center**

The Reading and Writing Center at the University of Florida is an excellent resource for improving reading comprehension and writing skills. For more information, see:

<http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/>

**Student Disability Services**

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

**Harassment**

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

**Academic Honesty**

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

### Grade Point Equivalencies

UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies. For more information, see:  
<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

### Poturica, CRW 2100 (2500), Spring 201, SCHEDULE:

Aug. 27 **FIRST DAY:** "Darius & The Clouds," Sandra Cisneros; "The Behavior of Mirrors on Easter Island," Julio Cortázar; "The Fall of the Star High School Running Back," The Mountain Goats (John Darnielle); selected prose-poems of Russell Edson

Sept. 3 **Introduction:** WLD "Wishes"; "The Stranger," "The Eyes of the Poor," "Beat Up the Poor," Charles Baudelaire; "End of the World of the End," "The Narrow Spoonful," Julio Cortázar; "The Vulture," "Prometheus," Franz Kafka; "On The Quai At Smyrna," "Indian Camp," Ernest Hemingway  
**Reading Response #1 due**

Sept. 10 **Showing and Telling the Significant Detail:** WLD  
"Comparisons"; "Chapter 1," *The Pure and the Impure*, Colette;  
"The Watch," Martha Ronk; "The Student," Anton Chekhov  
**100-250 word story due**

Sept. 17 **Characterization:** WLD "Noises"; "Anne Moore's Life," Roberto Bolaño; "Macario," Juan Rulfo  
**Reading Response #2 due**

Sept. 24 **Point of View/Dialogue:** WLD "Dreams," "Wishes, Dreams, and Comparisons Together"; "Work," Denis Johnson; "Gimpel the Fool," Isaac Bashevis Singer

Oct. 1 **Logic of Playing:** WLD "Metaphors," "A Swan of Bees";  
Selections from Lydia Davis' *Collected Stories*

Oct. 8 **Story Form, Plot and Structure:** WLD "I Used To / But Now";  
"Old Boys, Old Girls," Edward P. Jones; selections from Nicanor Parra's *Antipoemas*  
**500-750 word story due**

Oct. 15 **Fictional Place:** WLD "If I Were the Snow, and Spring";  
"Bartleby the Scrivener," Herman Melville  
**Reading Response #3 due**

Oct. 22 Workshops 1, 2, and 3  
**Postmodernism:** AOF "Colors"; "The School," "Views of My Father Weeping," Donald Barthelme; "Visitation," Bruno Schulz

Oct. 29 Workshops 4, 5, and 6  
**Poetry:** *WLD* "I Seem to Be / But Really I Am"; "The Blackbirds Are Rough Today," "young in New Orleans," "Less Delicate Than the Locust," Charles Bukowski; "Dogfish," "October," "When Death Comes," Mary Oliver; Selections from *Crow with No Mouth*, Ikkyū; "Spectacle," Susan Steinberg; "Autumn Begins in Martin's Ferry, Ohio," "ABlessing," "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota," James Wright

Nov. 5 Workshops 7, 8, and 9  
**The Fantastic:** *WLD* "Being an Animal or a Thing"; "A House Taken Over," Julio Cortázar; "The Immortal," Jorge Luis Borges; "The Yard Boy," Joy Williams  
**1,000-1,500 word story due**

Nov. 12 Workshops 10, 11, and 12  
**Horror/Supernatural :** *WLD* "The Third Eye"; "The Facts of the Case of M. Valdemar," Edgar Allan Poe; "A Distant Episode," Paul Bowles; "Jack-in-the-Box," Ray Bradbury  
**Reading Response #4 due**

Nov. 19 Workshops 13, 14, and 15  
**The Sublime:** "Sashka Christ," "The Life of Matvey Rodionovich," "A Letter," Isaac Babel

Nov. 26 Workshops 16, 17, 18, and 19  
**Last Words:** "A Tomb for Boris Davidovich," Danilo Kis; "Debts," Grace Paley  
**Reading Response #5 due**

Dec. 3 **FINAL DAY OF CLASS**  
**The Frontier:** "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk," Franz Kafka  
**FINAL PORTFOLIO/REVISIONS DUE**

**NOTE :** All stories are found in the course pack, except for those marked *WLD*, designating Koch's *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* or those for which I provide handouts.

### **Writing/Reading Considerations :**

1) My best stories come out of nowhere, with no concern for form at all.  
--Barry Hannah

2) Learn to play your instruments, then get sexy.  
--Debbie Harry

3) I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.

--James Baldwin

4) There is at the back of every artist's mind something like a pattern or a type of architecture. The original quality in any man of imagination is imagery. It is a thing like the landscape of his dreams; the sort of world he would like to make or in which he would wish to wander; the strange flora and fauna of his own secret planet; the sort of thing he likes to think about. This general atmosphere, and pattern or structure of growth, governs all his creations, however varied.

--G. K. Chesterton

5) Let the writer take up surgery or bricklaying if he is interested in technique. There is no mechanical way to get the writing done, no shortcut. The young writer would be a fool to follow a theory. Teach yourself by your own mistakes; people learn only by error. The good artist believes that nobody is good enough to give him advice. He has supreme vanity. No matter how much he admires the old writer, he wants to beat him.

--William Faulkner, *Paris Review*, "The Art of Fiction No. 12"

6) Did it happen? Could it happen? Should it happen? You do not want the first answer to be yes. The second should be a strained maybe. The third answer should be a resounding Yes ! Fiction is implausibility rendered plausible by an accuracy of sentiment conveyed by precision of utterance. Fiction must be a doozie, and it must be a gratifying doozie. You must at all cost forestall "So what?"

--Padgett Powell

7) A good story is the author's private idea of what makes a very good day. It chronicles a heightened moment of his or her dreams.

--Padgett Powell

8) I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced.

. . . but the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion and which would be as valid in a year or in ten years or, with luck and if you stated it purely enough, always, was beyond me and I was working very hard to get it.

--Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon*

9) Whatever the case, the important thing is to keep reading . . . That's more important than writing . . . don't you think? The truth is, reading is always more important than writing.

--Roberto Bolaño, Interview, 2002

10) Now if people are going to write, they must first of all have something to write about, and if a man starts out to teach English composition, he implicitly obliges himself to teach the students how to get up enough interest in things to write about them. But it is also impossible for people to learn to write unless they also read. And so a course in composition, if it is not accompanied somewhere along the line by a course in literature, should also take a little time to teach people how to read, or at least how to get interested in a book.

--Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 300

11) Keep them people, people, people, and don't let them get to be symbols.

--Ernest Hemingway to John Dos Passos, 1932

12) I am becoming convinced that anybody who gives anybody else advice ought to spend forty days in the desert both before and after. Anyway, when I told you to write what was easy for you, what I should have said was what was possible for you. Now none of it is easy, none of it really comes easy except in a few rare cases on a few rare occasions. In my whole time of writing the only parts that have come easy for me are Enoch Emery and Hulga . . . .

--Flannery O'Connor to "A," 1957, *Habit of Being*, 241

13) I am very much taken with your books and their wonderful imaginative energy. The more fantastic the action the more precise the writing and this is the way it ought to be.

--Flannery O'Connor to John Hawkes, 1950, *Habit of Being*, 292

14) Nobody really knows or understands and nobody has ever said the secret. The secret is that it is poetry written into prose and it is the hardest of all things to do.

--Ernest Hemingway in *How It Was*, Mary Hemingway, 352

15) Interviewer: If you had to recommend one influential writer, perhaps one who might be most helpful to students--

Taylor: Turgenev.

Int.: Why?

Taylor: . . . these envelopes, that kept going . . .

-Peter Taylor, Interview

16) Interviewer: In your non-commercial novels you feel no need to make concessions of any sort?

Simenon: I never do that, never, never, never. Otherwise I wouldn't write. It's too painful to do it if it's not to go to the end.

--Georges Simenon, *Paris Review*, "The Art of Fiction No. 9"

17) I always start with the best intentions and then end up screaming.

--Junot Diaz



18) . . . everybody's . . . offering true accounts of the activity of the mind.

--Donald Barthelme, Interview

19) There are four legends about Prometheus. According to the first, because he had betrayed the gods to men he was chained to a rock in the Caucasus and the gods sent eagles that devoured his perpetually renewed liver.

According to the second, Prometheus in his agony, as the beaks hacked into him, pressed deeper and deeper into the rock until he became one with it.

According to the third, in the course of thousands of years his treachery was forgotten, the gods forgot, the eagles forgot, he himself forgot.

According to the fourth, everyone grew weary of what had become meaningless. The gods grew weary, the eagles grew weary, the wound closed wearily.

What remained was the inexplicable range of mountains. Legend tries to explain the inexplicable, since it arises out of a foundation of truth, it must end in the realm of the inexplicable

--Franz Kafka, "Prometheus"

20) What the fuck? Fuck shit up.

--Chuck Dukowski, Black Flag

21) What is desired in a man is / kindness.

--Proverbs, 19:2

22) Twain was always prepared to die. That's the only way to understand his humor.

--Roberto Bolaño, "Our Guide to the Abyss" (Preface to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*)

23) The craft or art of writing is the clumsy attempt to find symbols for the wordlessness. In utter loneliness a writer tries to explain the inexplicable. And sometimes if he is very fortunate and if the time is right, a very little of what he is trying to do trickles through—not ever much. And if he is a writer wise enough to know it can't be done, then he is not a writer at all. A good writer always works at the impossible.

--John Steinbeck, *Paris Review*, "The Art of Fiction No. 45"

24) It's possible to have many homelands, it occurs to me now, but only one passport, and that passport is obviously the quality of one's writing. Which doesn't mean writing well, because anyone can do that, but writing incredibly well, and not even that, because anyone can write incredibly well. So what is top-notch writing? The same thing it's always been: the ability to peer into the darkness, to leap into the void, to know that literature is basically a dangerous undertaking.

--Roberto Bolaño, "Caracas Address"

25) And, I wondered, would *Pride and Prejudice* have been a better novel if Jane Austen had not thought it necessary to hide her manuscript from visitors? I read a page or two to see; but I could not find any signs that her circumstances had harmed her work in the slightest. That, perhaps, was the chief miracle about it. Here was a woman about the year 1800 writing without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching. That was how Shakespeare wrote, I thought, looking at *Antony and Cleopatra*; and when people compare Shakespeare and Jane Austen, they may mean that the minds of both had consumed all impediments; and for that reason we do not know Jane Austen and we do not know Shakespeare, and for that reason Jane Austen pervades every word that she wrote, and so does Shakespeare. If Jane Austen suffered in any way from her circumstances it was in the narrowness of life that was imposed upon her. It was impossible for a woman to go about alone. She never travelled; she never drove through London in an omnibus or had luncheon in a shop by herself. But perhaps it was the nature of Jane Austen not to want what she had not. Her gift and her circumstances matched each other completely."

--Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 61

26) Be truthful, one would say, and the result is bound to be amazingly interesting.

--Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 89

27) What is meant by 'reality'? It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable - now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech - and there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates. Now the writer, as I think, has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. It is his business to find it and collect it and communicate it to the rest of us. So at least I infer from reading *Lear* or *Emma* or *La Recherche du Temps Perdu*. For the reading of these books seems to perform a curious couching operation on the senses; one seems more intensely afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life. Those are the enviable people who live at enmity with unreality; and those are the pitiable who are knocked on the head by the thing done without knowing or caring. So that when I ask you to earn money and have a room of your own, I am asking you to live in the presence of reality, an invigorating life, it would appear, whether one can impart it or not.

--Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 109

28) When one ceases to feel, I am of the opinion one should keep quiet.

--André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 7

29) What is admirable about the fantastic is that there is no longer anything fantastic: there is only the real.

--André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 15

30) At an early age children are weaned on the marvelous, and later on they fail to retain a sufficient virginity of mind to thoroughly enjoy fairy tales. No matter how charming they may be, a grown man would think he were reverting to childhood by nourishing himself on fairy tales, and I am the first to admit that all such tales are not suitable to him. The fabric of adorable improbabilities must be made a trifle more subtle the older we grow, and we are still at the stage of waiting for this kind of spider . . . . But the faculties do not change radically. Fear, the attraction of the unusual, chance, the taste for things extravagant are all devices which we can always call upon without fear of deception. There are fairy tales to be written for adults, fairy tales still almost blue.

--André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 15-16

31) Keep reminding yourself that literature is one of the saddest roads that leads to everything.

--André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 29

33) I believe in the pure Surrealist joy of the man who, forewarned that all others before him have failed, refuses to admit defeat, sets off from whatever point he chooses, along any other path save a reasonable one, and arrives wherever he can. Such and such an image, by which he deems it opportune to indicate his progress and which may result, perhaps, in his receiving public acclaim, is to me, I must confess, a matter of complete indifference.

--André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 46

34) ... There is an end, and how we get to the end is all that matters. / You must do something, anything. / Say it is possible that I hate you. / Say it is possible that I love you. / Say that we're going to vanish and we know we're going to vanish / but we haven't vanished yet and we know we haven't vanished yet. / What this leaves is time - another inning, a near-infinity / of generations, of fucking things up / and fucking toward knowing more than we know now. / How to advance the runner without swinging the bat. / How to suture the wound with our lips. / How to take the scraps of touching the sky and touch the sky again. / The universe doesn't know we exist. / So we tell it.

--Bob Hicok, "Go \_\_\_\_\_"

35) Let us tell each other everything we can.

--Bob Hicok, "A primer"

36) There was Aristotle / being right: we are political, we are animal, / we are lost.

--Bob Hicok, "Weebles wobble but they don't fall down"

37) Recently I did formulate a kind of theory of fiction which can be expressed in few words. It seems to me that fiction should achieve revenge for all the indignities of our childhood; it should be an act of rebellion against all the constraints of the conventional pedestrian

mentality around us. Surely it should destroy conventional morality. I suppose all this is to say that to me the act of writing is criminal. Obviously I think that the so-called criminal act is essential to our survival.

--John Hawkes, Interview, 1971

38) For me, writing something down was the only road out.

--Anne Tyler, *The Writer on Her Work*

39) Indeed, from the viewpoint of the Revolution, everything must directly contribute to the final goal: the liberation of the proletariat. . . . Everything, including literature, painting, etc. But for the artist, on the contrary, and despite his firmest political convictions - even despite his good will as a militant revolutionary - art cannot be reduced to the status of a means in the service of a cause which transcends it, even if this cause were the most deserving, the most exalting; the artist puts nothing above his work, and he soon comes to realize that he can create only *for nothing*; the least external directive paralyzes him, the least concern for didacticism, or even for signification, is an insupportable constraint; whatever his attachment to his party or to generous ideas, the moment of creation can only bring him back to the problems of his art, and to them alone.

--Alain Robbe-Grillet, "On Several Obsolete Notions" (1951)

40) Now, on the contrary, if there is one thing of which an unprejudiced reading convinces us it is the absolute reality of the things Kafka describes. The visible world of his novels is certainly for him the real world, and what is behind (if there *is* something) seems without value, faced with the manifest nature of objects, gestures, words, etc. The hallucinatory effect derives from their extraordinary clarity and not from mystery or mist. Nothing is more fantastic, ultimately, than precision. Perhaps Kafka's staircases lead *elsewhere*, but they are *there*, and we look at them, step by step, following the detail of the banisters and the risers. Perhaps his gray walls wide something, but it is on them that the memory lingers, on their cracked whitewash, their crevices. Even what the hero is searching for vanishes before the obstinacy of his pursuit, his trajectories, his movements; they alone are made apparent, they alone are made real. In the whole of Kafka's work, man's relation with the world, far from having a symbolic character, are constantly direct and immediate.

--Alain Robbe-Grillet, "From Realism to Reality" (1955 and 1963)

41) Imagination applied to the whole world is vapid in comparison to imagination applied to a detail.

--Wallace Stevens

42) We do not have to live as if we were alone.

--Wendell Berry, "It All Turns On Affection"

43) . . . literary activity, in its specific aspect as a mental discipline, cannot have any other justification than to illuminate certain matters for oneself at the same time as one makes them communicable to others, and that one of the highest goals . . . is to

restore by means of words certain intense states, concretely experienced and become significant, to be thus put into words.  
--Michel Leiris

44) I did not read all of them. After *Disgrace* I lost interest. In general I would say that his work lacks ambition. The control of the elements is too tight. Nowhere do you get a feeling a writer deforming his medium in order to say what has never been said before, which is to me the mark of great writing. Too cool, too neat, I would say. Too lacking in passion. That's all.  
--J.M. Coetzee, *Summertime*

45) Yes, but we are all a little desperate, that is life. If you are strong you conquer the despair. That is why I ask: how can you be a great writer if you are just an ordinary little man? Surely you must have a certain flame in you that sets you apart from the people in the street. Maybe in his books, if you read them, you can see that flame. But, for me, in the times I was with him I never felt any fire. On the contrary, he seemed to me - how shall I express it? - tepid.  
--J.M. Coetzee, *Summertime*

46) I just look into my own imagination. I don't have a secret way.  
--James Tate