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Final Project for Modern World Fiction

Fairy Tale Stylization Project

Abstract:

The Fairy Tale project is a group project that captures the key distinctions in literary style that we analyze in our Modern World Fiction class. In that class, we look at fiction through the lens of different stylistic flavors: maximalism, minimalism, ludic (playful) style, surrealism, and magical realism. To establish these styles, we use the following readings (mainly selections from them; only the full text on a few occasions), among others. Of course you can pick your own choices here.

Maximalism: James Joyce, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*; Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*; David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*; Joyce Carol Oates, "How I Contemplated My World from the Detroit House of Correction"
Key concepts: rich detail, stream of consciousness, formal experimentation (portmanteaus, footnotes, lists), shifts in point of view
Minimalism: Ernest Hemingway, "The Sea Change," "A Clean, Well-lighted Place"; Raymond Carver, "Sacks," "Fat," "Why Don't You Dance?"; Gertrude Stein, "The Gentle Lena"
Key concepts: economy of words, very limited information and detail, implication, lack of speech tags
Ludic Style: Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*; Barth, "Lost in the Funhouse"; Nabokov, *Pale Fire*; Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*; Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*
Key concepts: self-referentiality, playfulness (of names, plot points, interpretations), direct address to reader, pop culture references
Surrealism: Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; Andre Breton and Philippe Soupault, *Magnetic Fields*; Daniil Kharms, select stories
Key concepts: non-sequitur, lapses of logic, destruction of conventions
Magical Realism: Gabriel Garcia Marquez, "Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"; Alfonso Reyes, "Major Aranda's Hand"; Octavio Paz, "My Life with the Wave"; Julio Cortazar, "The Night Face Up"; Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths," "The Lottery of Babylon"
Key concepts: mixture of the mundane and magical, bizarre scenarios reported nonchalantly, the wonder of ordinary things

The fairy tale project helps students look back on all these different styles, reflect on them, and note their key features and differences more clearly. In this project, groups of students will rewrite a fairy tale in all (five) literary styles. Each member of the group will rewrite the tale in one style and also write a detailed analysis of that revision. The

full group will present their ideas and process, along with some readings, to the rest of the class.

Procedure:
Divide students into groups; each group should contain one student for each different literary style you have worked with. (In groups with an extra student, two students can double up on one style; in groups with one student too few, one style can go unrepresented.) Each group will be given time to decide on a fairy tale that all members want to re-write. Each group member will choose a style to revise the tale with.

You may give groups class time to plan their approach to the shared fairy tale. Members should decide on the key elements or plot points that each stylized version will be sure to contain. (For example, in "The Tortoise and the Hare," does the hare have to stop and take a nap, or is another form of delay allowed?) Groups must make the rules that allow for recognizable, yet still flexible, stories. These guideposts should be clear to all members before they begin writing, so that writers can structure their ideas more easily.

You might also give some time for writers working in the same style (on different fairy tales) to meet up. These style groups can help writers focus on the key elements of their assignment and help each other brainstorm new ideas.

Presentations: The story groups present their revisions to the class, documenting their approach as well as any salient changes, discussions, and disagreements. Each showcase of style should refer back to some model texts in that genre. Groups should read a bit from each style to give the audience a specific experience, but the presentation should not be ONLY readings; half discussion/half readings is a better ratio.
A time allotment of 20 minutes per group works pretty well. Students are encouraged to get creative, take some judicious risks with presentation approaches. Students may use powerpoint, video, Prezi or another format to present their ideas.

Stories and Analysis: I give the following directions:
You will hand in individual final papers. These papers contain the final copy of **your stylized tale and your analysis of your own story**. Your task in the analysis is to document the ways in which your story lives up to its stylistic category. Your analysis should make substantial reference to class works within your style, noting spots of stylistic consonance and dissonance. For instance, where did your notion of "play" come from? What texts did it privilege and why? What techniques? What sort of "magic" did you *not* want to include? The account should address any particular challenges you faced in adapting the fairy tale and explain any significant departures from that style.
Your analysis must bring quoted evidence from both your rewritten story and the pieces you are drawing stylistic cues from.

You can see examples of student work under "MWF Revised Fairy Tales" on my website:
http://staff.imsa.edu/~gleason