Project proposal of fantasy analogy for directed research project

Literature

Project Proposal

Fantasy has, in my opinion, always been one of the most compelling literary genres and, as such, it has found itself ingrained in much of my previous creative fiction writing. Over the last few years, for example, I penned the beginnings of a fantasy universe in various forms (short stories, poems, Dungeons & Dragons characters, etc.) which together create a hybrid type of narrative—albeit one that is inconsistent and not entirely coherent.

For my ENG 499 Directed Research Project, I propose to amalgamate the assorted bits of my unfinished fantasy anthology and write the first in a trilogy of one-act plays entirely in verse. By the end, it will include elements from and homages to Shakespeare, ancient Greek and Medieval theatre, J. R. R. Tolkien, and other various well-known playwrights, poets, and novelists and will incorporate knowledge gained from both my English and theatre majors.

Through the writing of this play, my main goals are twofold. One thing I always noticed about fantasy as a genre (noticed, but didn't care for) was how ingrained it is in the conventions of romanticism, epic poetry, and (in the context of playwriting) formulaic stock melodramatic characters. The men are heroes; the women are trophies; the villains are two-dimensional. That type of story, frankly, is hackneyed and overdone. Therefore, my first objective is as follows: I aim to subvert romantic conventions by building an entertaining and stimulating story in which women are the subjects and not merely the objects, antagonists are nuanced and have sympathetic motives, and " heroes" perhaps aren't so heroic after all.

My second goal is to convey this primary theme: the risks and rewards of individuality. To indicate distinctions between the social class or psychological state of his characters, Shakespeare would occasionally alternate between verse and prose in his scripts. I plan to take this concept one step further and assign each character their own unique metrical form (such as heroic couplets, dactylic tetrameter, and ballad stanza), which will make each character stand out in both the literary sense (the page) and the auditory sense (the stage). Furthermore, many stories deal in some manner with hamartia—the Aristotelian term generally used to mean character error or tragic flaw. Hamlet's is his indecisiveness; Oedipus's is his arrogance; Frankenstein's is his curiosity; Captain Hook's is his obsession with Peter Pan. Using inspiration from the Christian doctrines of the seven deadly sins (among others), my goal is to assign a unique flaw to each and every character in this trilogy. If everyone has a different defect, it bolsters the element of individuality and the play becomes less about how a character's flaw becomes their downfall and more about whether or not it does at all (i. e., whether or not they can overcome it). The way each character acknowledges and confronts their flaw (if at all) will serve to demonstrate their uniqueness. In addition to subverting romantic conventions, this will become one of the play's major premises.

My critical piece will explore the history of playwriting and prosody and will examine the theory and classifications of poems, prose, and plays. The research I will undertake for this project will primarily involve inspirational reading (such as The Lord of the Rings and A Song of Ice and Fire for the genre and Shakespeare and Corneille for the literature form). Because I will

essentially be threading the needle between play and epic poem, I will read Dante, Homer, and Spenser in addition to the aforementioned playwrights. My research will also include nonfictional works and textbooks for historical knowledge about the setting and prosodic knowledge about poetic meter and versification. More texts will appear on the list as I encounter useful sources and receive recommendations on craft and prosody from my project director.