

### **The Final Project: Interpreting *The Magic Toyshop***

**Due dates: Please refer to the Updates Page for specific dates. The complete, final draft should be delivered to my office or placed in my mailbox in Founders 201.**

The final project this semester asks you to interpret Angela Carter's novel *The Magic Toyshop* through the lens of one of the critical perspectives we covered this semester in our discussions of *Heart of Darkness*: that is, feminist and gender criticism, postcolonial theory, or queer theory (or some combination thereof). In addition to trying your hand at producing an analytical paper from a particular critical perspective, you'll also put to use the close reading techniques we employed in the beginning of the semester and the writing strategies we've practiced throughout. The last two weeks of the semester will be devoted to producing this project with as few additional distractions as possible. You'll share your work-in-progress with your peers in a formal feedback session and in other more informal sessions; you'll have time in class to ask questions of both me and your colleagues. We'll address sundry questions of usage, style, and editing in these final days, as well as any additional writing issues the class would like to discuss.

During finals week, on the day we're scheduled to have a final, you'll hand in a polished version of your paper that, again, conforms to MLA formatting for a paper: one-inch margins; double-spacing throughout; a running header one half-inch from the top of the page, in the upper right-hand corner, with your name and the page numbers; a first page that includes your name, my name, the course number and the date in the upper left-hand corner, and a centered title. It will also include a Works Cited page (even if that page consists only of references to *The Magic Toyshop* and to the critical articles in our edition of *Heart of Darkness*). Textual references in the body of your paper will be appropriately cited.

The grade for this final project will be divided among the initial draft that you share with colleagues, your written feedback to your peers, and the final draft. The final version of the paper will account for the biggest chunk of the grade: 25% of the final course grade. The initial draft and peer feedback will each account for 10% of the final course grade.

The initial draft that you distribute to your peers will be graded according to an objective and simple criterion—length. You must hand in a draft of at least 1200 words (approximately four pages) to receive a C. A draft of *at least one additional full page* (~1500 words) will receive a B; a draft of a six full pages (~1800 words) will receive an A. A draft of three *full* pages will receive a D; a draft of fewer than 1,000 words will receive *no* credit.

The following restrictions apply to the first draft:

- The draft must be produced on a computer, using a conservative font—preferably Times or Times New Roman. I won't accept drafts in large fonts, such as Courier. Check to see how many words you're getting to a page; if that number isn't somewhere around 300, choose a different font so you have a realistic sense of how much you've produced.
- Margins must be one-inch wide—left and right, top and bottom.
- Your draft should include a running header with your name and the page number.

- If your draft relies on *excessive* quotation from the text, I'll deduct those quotations from the total number of words/pages. (What's "excessive"? Any material you quote that isn't relevant to the specific point you're trying to make.)
- If your draft simply repeats the same idea, rather than developing it, I'll also deduct words from your total.

I won't, however, consider the viability of your working thesis, the structure and organization of the draft, its logic and argumentation, the development of your ideas, or mechanics in *grading* the initial draft.

You'll distribute copies of your draft to two of your peers and to me; we'll spend time in class that day discussing the feedback process and compiling questions to use as heuristics in reading the drafts. The next class session will be devoted to discussing the drafts. You'll come to class that day with a written response letter for each of your colleagues. I may also provide you with some feedback, but it won't be as exhaustive as the feedback you'll get from your colleagues.

Your initial draft ideally should, at the very least, identify some central focus, as suggested by the critical perspective you've chosen, and develop that focus as thoroughly as possible. If you have a provisional thesis, however vague, you'll get more useful feedback from your colleagues. If you develop an outline of your argument and your evidence, your peers will have even more to ponder and discuss. The closer you are to something like a recognizable paper, the more you'll get from the peer feedback session. But an initial draft is also a place to toss out ideas, however tentative and wacky they may seem, to take a few interpretive chances, and to figure out if and why they're logically defensible.