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The metamorphosis of fae

- An examination of the evolution of the fae in contemporary literature

"Stories should always be considered a gloriously wrapped gift from the teller to the members of the audience; they should never be given begrudgingly..." (de Vos 8)

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the question: How has the portrayal and evolution of supernatural creatures, specifically fae, in the YA fantasy genre transformed over the past 20+ years, encompassing the decades 2000, 2010 and 2020? Primarily to examine how contemporary novels portray the perception and development of fae in current times within the selected literature and how authors have approached the worldbuilding of fae realms and societies.The examination of modern fae will include chapters on what other academics within the field of supernatural creatures have studied, the base definition of the mythical and folkloric fae, and the literary genre of young adult (YA) fantasy. These definitions open for further exploration of current fae by using these as the context. Hereafter, the following chapters will centre on the fae species and how they are represented, the worldbuilding, which makes the fae's occurrence realistic within their storyworlds, and the tropes included in most or all of the studied novels. The dataset for this study is the ten novels from the chosen genre spread over the three decades: 2000, 2010 and 2020. Lastly, these chapters will lead to an exploration of the trends modern fae showcase and how these novels reflect the change in the literary world.

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Introduction

Across the ages, readers have been fascinated by magical creatures, be it in literary fiction, myth or history. Creatures such as vampires and werewolves have captured the attention of fantasy creators and audiences for centuries. In the last century, these creature have dominated the YA fantasy genre in literature, but in recent decades a new creature has captured the love and attention of authors and readers: the fae. The mischievous and otherworldly fae of lore and mythology has given way to the cunning and alluring fae of modern YA fantasy as the fae adapts to current readers' changing preferences and identities. Fae have been a part of literature for much longer than the three decades this thesis focuses on. But the last three decades, the 2000s, 2010s and 2020s, are the centre for this thesis due to the fae's rise in popularity, overtaking both vampires and werewolves in the YA fantasy literary genre.

In the past three decades, these mythological and folkloric beings transformed, travelling through countless books in the last 30 years and capturing readers' attention worldwide, causing an evolution of the creature to ensue. This thesis seeks to establish how the fae are portrayed in this literature, the changes over time and the expansion of their narrative that give these timeless creatures new life. A thorough investigation into the development of fae is done through the exploration of the threads that create the tapestry of the magical, mysterious metamorphosis of the fae by analysing ten novels published over the course of the three decades. The novels that will be analysed from the 2000s are *Fairy Tale* (2009) by Cyn Balog, *A Kiss of Shadows* (2002) by Laurell Hamilton and *Wondrous Strange* (2008) by Lesley Livingston. In the 2010s, the novels are *The Cruel Prince* (2018) by Holly Black, *Fighting Destiny* (2013) by Amelia Hutchins, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (2015) by Sarah J. Maas, and *To Kill a Fae* (2019) by C.S. Wilde. Finally, the last three books are from the 2020s and include *A Dance with the Fae Prince* (2021) by Elise Kova, *The Anointed Fae* (2022) by Jess Huxx & Anna Raven and *Crown Princess Academy* (2020) by A. J. Flowers.

This thesis means to show how the representation of fae changed within the boundaries of YA fantasy literature, impacting the genre conventions and age groups while challenging readers' expectations. This thesis aims to examine these ten works of literature through the thesis statement: How has the portrayal and evolution of supernatural creatures, specifically fae, in the YA fantasy genre transformed over the past 20+ years, encompassing the decades 2000, 2010 and 2020? Primarily to examine how contemporary novels portray the

perception and development of fae in current times within the selected literature and how authors have approached the worldbuilding of fae realms and societies. As illustrated in the section below about what works others have done, only one of the works concerns the fae, as there are few studies about the fae of the current day.

There is much work on the small fairies with wings known from British history, on the different Fair Folk from places such as Celtic or Scottish Folklore, Shakespearean Fairies, etc. Several forms of fae and Fair Folk have been studied and written about through time, but the current fae that we find today in fictional literature has yet to receive interest in the academic world. While some scholars may think that the evolution of fantasy creatures may not seem as relevant or essential for studies, in fictional genres, such as fantasy, urban or paranormal, there are merits that are worthy of an academic discussion (Krul 156). They contain appealing elements that not only intrigue the audience they try to reach but also have a strong sense of the traditional combined with the new, which create something that is not only familiar but leaves room to evolve without losing the original appeal (156). That is why we believe this thesis can help not only fill some of the gaps that are missing in current time's fae studies, but it can perhaps also start a large research project into the fae, where this thesis can be expanded in various ways, such as a bigger dataset, to explore multiple different topics outside of our three main topics: The portrayal of fae, worldbuilding in YA fantasy and selected tropes we see in the books. There can be multiple studies on each of these topics individually. The historical aspect of the fae today can also be investigated together with their relation to folklore or a study can be done on how the fae today has moved away from folklore, which this thesis briefly touches on. There are plenty of ways this thesis can be continued or expanded, which we hope others might find interest in. This thesis hopes to fill a part of the significant gap, which is in the current contemporary fae studies. However, we also wish for people in and outside of academia to turn their attention to the fascinating world and evolution of fae in contemporary literature, be it in YA, adult, new adult or fantasy, sci-fi, history or whatever genre and age group there is.

The reason for the choice of this topic is academic curiosity and personal interest in fae literature. The conversation about the topic started during our bachelor studies and has since been worked on and developed into the topic and questions that will be studied in this thesis. We are both avid readers of a multitude of genres across many different age groups and have found the increase in fae fiction published to be a pleasure to read and follow

through the years. While the thesis focuses on fae in YA fantasy, we are both avid readers of fae fiction outside this genre and age group. Still, we decided to focus on YA fantasy as that is where we first encountered fae in contemporary literature. As our primary sources had to be limited through certain choices, we chose to focus on this genre and age group.

This thesis will be divided into three parts, two of which are the main parts of the thesis. The first part will be introductions and definitions of central terms to help create an overview of the world of YA fantasy that this thesis will examine. There will be a literary review of others works and an introduction and definitions of the two terms: YA fantasy and fae. Following this, will be the first of the two main parts, which will be split into three chapters. In these chapters, we will use interdisciplinary concepts from a multitude of different theories to establish the elements that have evolved through the three decades in the sections of the fae themselves, the worldbuilding in these novels and the tropes that we believe show the progression over time and has a significant role in the specific genre of YA fae fantasy. The first part will analyse the content of the ten novels through theoretical approaches related to genre, adaptation, myth and time to better understand and showcase the evolution that this thesis claim happened.

The second part will explore different influences or relevant subjects that have influenced the evolution shown in the three sections of the first part. The second part will draw from academic and universal knowledge to support our claims and statements made when looking at subjects such as the gender portrayals effect of YA fantasy literature, the strategies and world of publishing, trends found in YA fae fantasy, etc. The second section is used to both support the evidence and statements made in part one and to highlight the reasoning for the choice that we have made in choosing this topic of fae in YA fantasy.

It should be noted that there is a vast amount of YA fantasy novels about the fae, and we have only included a small portion of them. The ten books that we chose have not been picted with any other criteria than they had to be a YA fantasy from one of the three decades and that one of the central characters had to be fae. A majority of the books we had not read before we chose them. So, they were chosen based on their synopsis found on Goodreads.com, but there was no guarantee when they were chosen that they would be different and thereby showcase the expected changes throughout the years. There is some bias as we chose books, which from their synopsis, sounded like they would have interesting plots. Some of the books we had read before were chosen because they fit the two criteria, and we

believed they portrayed the general tendencies of YA fae fantasy. We tried to keep as little bias towards the choice in books, which is why only four of the ten novels were books that we had been read before. Still, it is unavoidable to have some form of bias when selecting a small dataset from a large amount of source material.

Problems with our approach

Throughout this project, we needed to narrow down our focus and corpus as there was not enough time, space or room for everything. We had to figure out how to limit our corpus, as the genre of YA fantasy has risen in popularity. One way we did this was to decide that the focus of the books had to be fae, meaning that one of the main characters, be it the protagonist or love interest, had to be fae. If species other than humans or fae were present in the novels, they could not be the book's focus. Additionally, we limited our sources to those that represent traditional gender portrayals, as well as having only heterosexual couples in our corpus. This choice could affect our findings as we do not look at primary sources representing modern culture in their gender or sexualisation. Still, our goal was not to see if the subgenre of YA fae fantasy was representative of the current trend. It was to see if they changed the way the species is represented and how they incorporated them realistically into the storyworlds. Therefore, we find it unnecessary to have a corpus that embodies modern adversity within these two scopes, as that would either result in a too extensive corpus to get it inclusive or a corpus too diverse to examine our focus.

The size of our corpus has been a continuous debate, as we needed enough sources to either prove or disprove change but still small enough that there was room to showcase the details that makes each novel unique in the worldbuilding and the Fair Folk. In the end, as we worked with three decades, we needed at least three books to see if we could find trends and changes from each decade. When we started our examination, we choose a dataset of ten novels. Furthermore, we limited these to the first book in each series, since we needed different authors from each decade. We did this to limit the number of books in our corpus and to insure that certain author's series would not dominate the findings or trends. However, this meant that some aspects of the worldbuilding and the representation of the fae were outside the scope of our abilities to comment on, as we did not use all the stories from each universe or series. This way of limiting our dataset meant that we had enough different narratives to make generalising points while still having space for unique details. However, it

also means we only got the initial introduction readers get from these first instalments. In the future, it could be prudent to repeat this approach while incorporating the whole series to include the complete knowledge about the storyworld and its species. Also, it could be interesting to see if our results based on examples found in these ten novels are also produced across a more significant case study, as many books fit the requirements we used when choosing our sources. Furthermore, it is fascinating if these changes across the decade are the same or different if you explore YA fae fantasy novels that contain a culturally representative corpus – where we did not limit the corpus on account of binary gender and heterosexuality.

Another limitation we found while doing this project was academic sources that examine contemporary fae depiction in current literature. Fae is not a current trend, but the way they are represented now in literature is a mix of historical and mythological balanced with culturally modern tendencies, as we prove throughout this study. Though to have academic sources to compare to, we needed to extend our search to include vampires and werewolves as these species experienced a boom in popularity before the fae and as such have already been the case study for the academic examination. The recentness of the fae popularity is also why we chose to have four novels from 2010, as that was the decade where it boomed.

Lastly, our structure in this thesis is based on what we found to be the most straightforward way to emphasize our focus points. We are aware that the fae species could be included in the worldbuilding chapter as a mixture of a cultural and natural invention and vice versa: that worldbuilding could be part of the fae section, as their culture and world explain many of their characteristics and how they use magic. We chose to separate these two into separate chapters and instead allude to their link in each section, as that would help us clarify to readers what our examination of our thesis ensued and produced as a result.

What have others done?

From the beginning of our study, we knew what we wanted to examine – the fae – but in order to limit this topic, so that it would fall within the scope of a master's thesis, we needed to investigate academic studies already in the field. During this examination, it became evident that academics have not yet explored the contemporary fae, despite the extensive research on the revival of other mythical monsters in contemporary YA fantasy.

It started with the renewal of the vampire. In the book: *The Everything Vampire Book: From Vlad the Impaler to the Vampire Lestat - a history of Vampires in Literature, Film, and Legend*, Barb Karg et al. explore the history of the vampire in literature, film and historical society. Furthermore, they point out that there have been many incarnations of vampires, e.g. the Greek lamia or Bram Stoker, and the vampire has been fictionalised and romanticized throughout time, both in history and fiction (introduction). The vampire has become exceedingly popular in modern times though not in its original monstrous form. It has evolved into an ambiguous figure that, if authors wish, can be portrayed as a monster, victim or hero, though still with a clear link to mythology, according to Caitlyn Orlomoski's research, which makes vampires more humanized, as seen in *Interview with a Vampire,* states Dijana Vuckovic in her article: *The Evolution of the Vampire from Stoker's Dracula to Meyer's Twilight Saga.* According to Vuckovic, the new vampires are more likeable to the modern, especially young audiences, but they still represent society's fears about the unknown 'other', like the vampires from previous centuries.

Furthermore, their weaknesses are less pronounced than the 'old' vampires and are unrelated to darkness. In contrast, the 'new' vampires are sensitive to light in an extraordinary way and live as vegetarians and drink only animal blood (6). As Erik Smetana's review concludes, all contemporary vampires owe homage to Bram Stoker, as he sparked the evolution of vampires (173). He finds that the modern vampire has been highly sexualized (178), which Orlomoski's research supports. She even concludes that the gay liberation gaining momentum in the 1960s and 70s created the opportunity for the homoerotic and sexually not-judgmental vampire to emerge in contemporary literature (29-30). So, academics find that the vampires have become more ambiguous and less like the black-and-white monsters of history, which enables them to become fictionalized, romanticized and sexualized in a way that appeals to modern readers, especially young people.

After vampires made their big comeback, the shifter followed, specifically the werewolf, who has also become the subject of academic exploration. Two such studies are *EVOLUTION OF THE WEREWOLF ARCHETYPE…* by Brent A. Stypczynski and Carys Crossen's *The Nature of the Beast: Transformations of the Werewolf from the 1970s to the Twenty-First Century*. Crossen's research focuses on the werewolf's subjectivity. She explores the evolution from the traditional werewolf, who has seldom had an 'inner life' to reveal to its audience because, in its transformed state, the werewolf is pure violence, pure bloodthirstiness and pure instinct, leaving no capacity for rational thought or reflection, to the modern self-reflective shifter (20). Still, the contemporary werewolf is no longer solely associated with the unconscious and is becoming a conscious subject. They retain their conscious mind, rationality and sense of self, rather than temporarily being consumed by a monster – keeping the subjectivity, as she concludes (21). Werewolves often create their own moral codes of conduct, and if they live in groups or packs, they create a social hierarchy, laws and penalty system (107).

Furthermore, she states that Stypczynski frequently references Jung when examining the modern werewolf and identifies the shadow as the source of the werewolf's darker, socially unacceptable desires and drives (28). Stypczynski's research is centred around the differing traditions, the modern shifters build upon, explaining how, why, and where they emerge, and as a result of this creating a classification system based on the historical archetypes found throughout history, as he states that werewolf legends, myths and stories are found in virtually every culture (16). Like Crossen, he finds that werewolves vary and are ambiguous creatures. Still, instead of accrediting it to them gaining subjectivity, he points to it being a result of the differing traditions that modern authors can draw from. According to academics, no matter which explanation, modern shifters have become ambiguous and like the vampire, one cannot simply claim them all monsters.

An aspect that creates a commonality between the vampire and the shifter is that they started with humanity, being changed from human into monstrous creatures. This change is not valid for the fae, as they are their race from birth till death. But have contemporary fae also experienced an evolution similar to these other magical creatures? From the beginning, fae have been ambiguous (Andersen 107), but have they become fictionalized, romanticized and humanized in contemporary YA fantasy? A monster is scary due to the otherness, power

or differing ethical values and morals they represent, as apparent when Stypczynski quotes David Gilmore:

> Terrible monsters are impressive exactly because they break the rules and do what humans can only imagine and dream of. Since they observe no limits, respect no boundaries, and attack and kill without compunction, monsters are also the spirit that says "Yes" to all that is forbidden. (84)

Caralyn Andersen explores the fae's evolution in her study: *Tales of the Fey: The Use of Traditional Faerie Folklore in Contemporary Young Adult Fantasy Novels*. She focuses on the YA novels with fae representation, but her research is how they add, change and interfere with aspects of plot, theme and motif (ii). In her research, she establishes a baseline for how the fae are represented in her primary sources, which relate to the history of the mythical fae's characteristics, such as a "few humans have the ability to see fairies when they are invisible and to see through fairy glamour. Some people are born with second sight that gives them this ability; some gain it from the use of fairy ointment, or from holding a four-leaf clover" (25 & 58). One of her study's main arguments are that fae differ from humans as they do not suffer from guilt or feel regret and strictly follow their code of behaviour. Humans that interact with fae are often in grave danger, and even if they leave their dealings with fae unharmed, they are inevitably altered by the experience (108). We add to her research of the fae stories' motifs and themes by examining their tendencies related to the representation of fae in contemporary YA fantasy, like what Stypczynski and Karg did for the vampire and shifter.

YA Fantasy

YA fantasy is a combination of two parameters: young adult and fantasy. The option of aiming stories toward young adults is a concept that emerges with the acknowledgement that a teenager is a life stage - not a child anymore, but still not quite adult ("young adult literature", Cart & Koss). According to Michael Cart's historical timeline, the concept of the teenager started in the late '40s. It became established in American society by the '50s and, as such, became subjects for targeting by authors (94). He found that, what began as a limited age group of 13-18-year-olds, has expanded through the late 20th and beginning 21st century to embrace people from the age of 10 and into their mid-twenties due to the fluidity of young adult literature (94-5 & "young adult literature").

The category of YA became a space for the 'crossover', meaning it can include all genre types but should contain broad-based appeal that focuses on specific motifs and themes, not genre conventions (Cart 95-97 & Altmann 15). The notion that YA stories are centred around motifs and themes, such as good versus evil or light versus dark, is shared by scholars (Krul, Nikolajeva "Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales", & de Vos 8-9), which correlates with the exploration of fae literature's motifs and themes conducted by Andersen. What makes YA literature complicated is the nuances, as there is often a deeper meaning than what is first perceived. Stephens states:

> Story alerts audiences to the distinctions between surfaces and depths and hence between material and transcendent meanings; it fosters responses to the numinous or mysterious; it suggests ways of making sense of being and existence; it helps define the place of the individual in the world; and it offers social and moral guidance. ("myth/mythology and fairy tales" 1)

YA literature often contains aspects of individuality, coming of age/growing up, empowerment, and ethical and moral values to help young readers create their own value system and identity. However, Roiland's thesis proclaims that teenagers cannot be trusted to find these deeper levels of meaning by themselves. They need guidance from teachers and other adults (1-3), though she makes the point based on the reoccurring trope of the neglectful parent seen in the genre. As mentioned earlier, we will not focus on motifs and themes in our primary sources; instead, we will examine which tropes are present in the specific

subcategory of contemporary fae YA fantasy to identify if any patterns become evident or see if any tropes are present in them all.

Creating a merger between YA and fantasy also requires a determination of fantasy. The fundamental definition of the concept 'fantasy' is "a complex sequence of imagination in which several imaginary elements are woven together into a story" ("fantasy" 1). Fantasy as a genre started in the late 1800s to early 1900s and became widely popular due to writers like Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. It draws from several different traditions like fairytales, myths or legends. According to Propp, the fairytale genre is static in its structure and comprises a max of 31 action types, which he calls functions. These functions often detail the home-away-home plotline found in the genre, where the main character, due to an issue, must go on a (hero's) quest. This quest narrative is also in fantasy (Altmann 15-16 & Nikolajeva "Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales"), though "[f]airy tales have their roots in ancient society and thought, thus immediately succeeding myths. Fantasy literature is a modern phenomenon" (Nikolajeva "Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales"). As this thesis examines modern, contemporary novels, it makes sense to use the fantasy term, although we could argue that our primary sources are modern fairytales.

Like the YA concept, the fantasy genre is ever-changing and has yet to settle into specific conventions. As fantasy takes inspiration and borrows traits from "myths, romance, picaresque, science fiction and other genres" (Nikolajeva "Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales"), it varies and is eclectic. Though Rosemarie Jackson's theory limits the stories by arguing that no fantasy story has a happy ending, as they explore the dysfunction and brokenness contained in humanity (Skyggebjerg 38-41 & Jackson). As the primary sources in this study, all have a happy-ever-after or a happy-for-now ending, they do not conform to Jackson's point and therefore we do not use her as one of the primary theories when looking into the chosen dataset.

Scholars can agree that the base requirement to fit into fantasy is the presence of a secondary world, first mentioned in "On Fairy-Stories" (Tolkien, Lynn & Wolf). Wolf defines the world within the story as 'storyworld'. The storyworld is split into a primary world, which mimics reality, and at least one secondary world, which is magical and otherworldly. (Wolf, Lynn & Nikolajeva "The Magic Code…" 35-41). The storyworld does not have to present both world types physically. Often only one is present, where a human presence in the secondary world implies a primary one exist or a magical object or agent in the primary world

can imply the secondary. (Nikolajeva "The Magic Code…" 36-40, 84-86 & 91). Lynn categorizes our primary sources as 'high fantasy', which refers to stories centred around the fate of the world, also variously named "epic fantasy, heroic fantasy, myth fantasy, other-world fantasy, and alternate world fantasy" (289, 424 & 510).

Stories contain two types of beliefs: the readers' belief and engagement with the narrative and that of the characters within the storyworld. According to Todorov, the main character's acceptance or denial of the otherworldly or magical determines the story's genre classification. He made three differing distinctions based on how the main character interacts with magic: the marvellous, where magic is met with no resistance at face value and accepted as is often seen in fairytales; the fantastic, where the hero and readers have initial doubts and reject the supernatural but end with acceptance – leaving room for ambiguity – as seen in fantasy stories and lastly the uncanny, where no acceptance of the otherworldly takes place (Nikolajeva "Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales", Jackson & Skyggebjerg 26-38).

The second belief involved with stories is the recipients, called secondary belief. The secondary belief means the reader suspends their regular demands of recognition and adherence to the natural laws (Skyggebjerg & Nikolajeva "Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales"). Regardless of the subgenre of a fantasy novel, the storyworld can establish secondary belief by constructing a believable reality within its universe. According to Nikolajeva, myths derive from true belief, while fairy tales originate from imagination ("Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales"). Still, to establish a secondary belief, it does not matter if the reader starts with or without a genuine belief in the fae. What matters is that they appear as a realistic part of the storyworld, and as this study is looking at fae representations, we need to also focus on the world in which they manifest, as that is part of their appeal. One must establish narrative empathy to create a link between the story and the reader. Suzanne Keen is the leading expert in narrative empathy. She states there is a difference between feeling *with* a character – both having the same emotion, expressing empathy – and feeling *for* a character – which is sympathising with the character. Still, both are narrative empathy as they are explicit emotional investments for the reader in the narrative (3). In extreme cases, this emotional investment becomes all-consuming, as it comes at the cost of the reader's ability to interact with the real world, which is the danger of escapism (Konzack). Konzack and Keen determine that some level of escapism is needed, as you cannot emotionally involve yourself in a story without it, and concerning this, it will not occur if the storyworld is unrelatable or unrealistic.

According to Wolf, one examines secondary belief thoroughly through the terms 'saturation', 'immersion', and 'absorption' (Bønkel 13). However, we cannot deem whether readers of our primary sources experience secondary beliefs without doing a recipient study, which is outside this project's scope.

Fae definition

Regarding the choices in books, the selection of novels is based on the fae being the main species besides humans. Still, as all the books have different universes and terminologies, the thought was that it was necessary first to establish what we define as fae. Fae started as a shortened term for 'faery' or 'fairy', but as the fairy creatures evolved, so did the terms that describe them. Throughout the rest of this thesis, when discussing faeries, fairies, and similar entities, the term 'fae' will be utilized. When it comes to terms to describe all types of fae within a world, there are quite a few to choose from. This thesis will use the term Fair Folk as an umbrella term for all the species and creatures that can be categorised as a type of faerie. In general, there are many terms within the Fair Folk and the fae realm, such as Seelie and Unseelie, Sidhe or different types of the Fair Folk, such as pixie, goblin, brownie e.g. They will not be defined here, because each novel has its own specified definition of these terms. Therefore, the analysis will delve deeper into these terms, when they are used within the novels. An important thing to note is that today, one could argue that fae and fairies are two different species, much like elves and fae are, because, when discussing what a fairy is in current times, most would think of a small magical winged creature like Tinkerbell. In contrast, the fae is seen as a beautiful humanoid creature with dangerous and powerful magic. In this thesis, however, we have decided to define the fae as a combination of what fairies have been throughout the ages by examining what characteristics recur.

Regarding the origins of the term 'fae', it is derived from the adoption of the word 'fairy' from the Old French faerie, faierie, and its modern synonym, fae, is traceable back to the Old French fae, faye, fee, etc., which is the past participle of the verb faer, fayer: "to enchant, bewitch," and also "to declare by an oracle" (Martínez 67). This is further supported by Noel Williams, who states that the term fairy has four meanings: "in Old French which passed into English, namely (1) enchantment; (2) fairyland, land of illusion; (3) human with special powers; (4) supernatural beings" (463). When looking at the meaning of the word, it makes a lot of sense, how fairies used to be defined, as people believed that fairies were related to the Greek Fates, demons, tricksters, nature spirits, and domestic gods. (Clinton 23). They are often spoken about as mischief-makers and can come to live in a house, either making life better or worse for the inhabitants (Altman and de Vos 23).

William Shakespeare's fairies are perhaps the best known in Early Modern fairy literature and illustrate the nature of the folkloric fairies (Goodrich 20), which is why most of the fae characteristics we see today seem not to be taken directly from mythology or folklore, but instead from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The reason for this is likely that Shakespeare's plays develop the folkloric fairy material in greater detail, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the "King" and "Queen of Fairies" – Oberon and Titania – and Puck, the mischievous hobgoblin, are at the centre of the plot's complications (Goodrich 20-21). Through Shakespeare, fae evolved into creatures with peculiar characteristics, such as immortality and extreme humanlike characteristics (Altmann and de Vos 31).

When it comes to the looks of the Fair Folk, the fae's beauty is widely known and has led humans to their doom on several occasions in myth and legend, whereas other Fair Folk, such as trolls, goblins, gnomes, dwarves etc., are known as "ugly" in terms of looks (Altmann and de Vos 33). The particulars of how subraces, such as a fae, goblin, dwarf, etc., are described vary depending on which story. Some subrace similarities have developed over the years, which will be more detailed when analysing the chosen books. Regarding how the Fair Folk act or is viewed, all agree they should be treated cautiously (31). The fae is unpredictable and make decisions at the moment, which seem rash or whimsical, though they are easy to please if you stay out of their way and follow their rules (32). The fae is vengeful and does not care about human life or the feelings of neither adults nor children. The fae was often associated with creating changelings, children who had been abducted from their cribs and replaced with undesirable impostors. In legend, the fae are fond of young children, especially beautiful children, and habitually steal them, when they get the chance (48-49). The fae will do anything to get their way, but this does not make them intrinsically evil. Fae lives in the boundary zones – they cause as much trouble as good, do not have clear-cut moral values, and are neither good nor bad (40), but one thing that all could agree on was that fae is not necessarily what they appear.

One of the choices that were made was to focus on fae and to decide to differentiate between fae and elves, so that the primary sources would be specifically about the fae. And to be able to make this decision, it is essential to first look at how they differ, though it is important to state first that fae and elves are both viewed as sub-species of Fair Folk creatures. Folklore and fantasy literature often feature both, but despite their similarities, they have some key differences.

A key difference between elves and fae is their origins. Elves are often associated with Norse mythology and Germanic folklore, while fae traces their roots to Celtic mythology. It is important to note that the type of elves that is often associated with the species today stems from the elves that J.R.R. Tolkien defines in his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy universe, which created a particular type of elves that the literary world popularised and from this, the species of elves in current times was built. Tolkien's elves are noble, wise, beautiful, deathless beings living in remote and enchanted woodlands of Middle Earth. They are wholly benevolent, although their fuller mythology clarifies that they were not always sinless (Simpson 76). However, Tolkien did base his myth around the elves on Nordic and Celtic myth, which can be seen as indirect evidence suggesting that early Anglo-Saxons thought of elves as otherworldly non-monstrous, good-natured, beautiful, human-like beings related to humankind similar to heathen gods (Martinéz 68). Elves are seen as magical humanoid creatures with pointed ears (Bergman 9) and otherworldly abilities. They are typically depicted as skilled warriors or archers with a deep connection to the natural world and a unique culture and language, as seen in Tolkien's storyworld, where Legolas becomes the template for elves (Bergman 106-107, Goodrich 7).

In many works of fantasy literature, elves play an essential role as allies of human characters. Another key difference between faeries and elves is their relationship with humans. While the fae is known to interact with humans, their interactions are often unpredictable and dangerous (Altmann and de Vos 32). Conversely, Elves are more likely to be helpful to humans, even though they are known for helping by doing nothing, as they are not good at accepting change, so they remain neutral while offering the smallest amount of support (Bergmann 112). Regarding behaviour, elves are often portrayed as noble and wise, if not solemn due to their age, with a deep respect for nature and a sense of duty to protect the natural world. This stems from Tolkien's elves, who are seen as superior beings and decide to create the fellowship to get rid of the ring on a quest that they call elf-sanctioned (Bergman 107), suggesting that the elf wants to see the world at peace and help save it. On the other hand, people often perceive the fae as playful and mischievous, with a tendency to cause trouble instead of offering help. Elves and fae are described as immortal or "ageless, neither old nor young" (Tolkien 295). However, whether they are immune to diseases or how they heal from wounds depends on the individual novel and is not generally specific due to the

species. Still, most novels in current times seem to agree that both fae and elves can heal from flesh wounds more quickly than humans.

Fae through the decades

Fae has shown up in everything from mythology and folklore to poems and novels, but in the last three centuries, a significant part of the literary world has repeatedly been the Fair Folk and fae (Nutt 30). Before Shakespeare, people frequently used fae in fairy tales, but it was Shakespeare who initiated the concept of the fae that exists today. *A Midsummer-night's Dream* has inspired countless works with fae with its creation of a new positive view of the fae. It made them more relatable to humans and played around with the sizes of the fae ("British Library"). Authors worldwide used this trend to further develop the concept of fae, taking inspiration from the same folklore and mythology as Shakespeare.

While not all authors directly use Shakespeare's fae or folklore and mythology as the source of their inspiration, parts of these depictions of the Fair Folk have stayed in literature; however, their usage has varied in the last three decades. After Shakespeare created his plays, there was a rise in literature with a combination of popular folklore and the aristocratic literary medieval romance. Due to the increasing literacy and a wider audience, the more folkloric versions of fae emerged alongside this and eventually favouring the aristocratic fairy (Goodrich 1-2). With the re-rise of fae in literature in the 2000s, the fae's portrayal will change, with elements such as more folkloric versions of them losing popularity and the reappearance of the aristocratic fae.

There have been substantial changes in the portrayal of fae in these three decades, but the most significant change occurred between the 2000s and 2010s Fair Folk portrayal. Still, there are not just changes and differences throughout the decade, but also consistent similarities and characteristics that are intertwined and associated with the fae. This chapter will look at three aspects of the fae: folklore, history and mythology, followed by the physical description of the fae and their characteristics, and then ending with a short overview of the Otherworld – their world.

Folklore, History & Mythology

The Fair Folk's portrayal varies in the three novels from the 2000s, but one thing they all have in common is that they all base their fae on folklore and mythology. Some use it more than others, but they all use the already-established worlds and characteristics of the Fair Folk instead of creating their own. The two novels that rely the most on established Fair Folk and lore are *Wondrous Strange* by Lesley Livingston and *A Kiss of Shadows* by Laurell Hamilton. In contrast, *Fairy Tale* by Cyn Balog uses the least folklore due to its general lack of information on the species.

Livingston is the only primary source author who uses a mixture of Shakespeare's fae world, different folklore, and mythological creatures. The book's premise is that the teenager Kelley, who is part of a local theatre production of *A Midsummer-night's Dream,* finds out that not only are all the characters in the play real, she is also a fae princess. The novel features well-known characters from Shakespeare's play, such as Auberon (Oberon), the King of Winter, Titania, the Queen of Summer and then the well-known Puck – also known as Robin Goodfellow – is represented. However, many of these characters are originally from different folklore. As there are many other characters from myths and legends, they need to be identified and explained further to show the impact of folklore in this novel.

As he is more widely known, Auberon or Oberon is the name of the fairy king mentioned in the French romance Hnon de Bordeaux. He was introduced into English literature by Shakespeare with Titania as his wife. While he possesses a beautiful face and kingly deportment, he can also target pranks and mischief on his people of the Fair Folk or humans. Humans who meet him are warned to remain silent and not to address him, no matter what he conjures up, for anyone who speaks to Oberon is forever in his power (Rose 244). The Queen to Oberon's king is Titania, who was first introduced to literature by Shakespeare. However, her name appears in more ancient works such as *Ovid*, where it is an alternate name for Diana, the goddess of the moon and the chase (Rose 309). She is also a part of Scottish folklore; in the Scottish Highlands, she is supposed to have given the Fairy Flag to the Chief of the Clan MacLeod at Dunvegan Castle on the Isle of Skye in the thirteenth century (Rose 309). The infamous Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, has been around long before Shakespeare used him as Oberon's servant and jester. The name of Robin Goodfellow was recorded as early as 1489 in one of the Pastern Papers. He is described as possibly a type of household spirit, hobgoblin, or brownie. He was well known for helping with all the unfinished domestic

tasks but was equally capable of trickery and pranks. His trickery and mischief became known to such an extent that a saying of the sixteenth century, "Robin Goodfellow has been with you tonight", became mainstream when referring to the trouble his misadventures could bring (Rose 276).

Like their folklore version, Livingston takes these characters from the play in the book and uses them as a foundation to build her fae and lore. Much like Hamilton, Livingston returns to the historical view of fae having supernatural powers, they can use for good or evil. They do not see the world as humans do and live by their own codes of ethics, which can be rigid and far from humans (Alexander 45-46). It is seen in Livingston's novel in location 1812 when the readers are told about bargaining with the fae:

> Bargaining with the Faerie was always bad business. If a deal was ever broken, the consequences could be dire. An unfulfilled agreement was considered an unforgivable transgression by Faerie laws. If you wanted to break a bargain with the Fae—and couldn't find a loophole by which to do it—then you risked granting the wronged party unlimited power to seek redress. It was always best never to enter into a deal with the Faerie in the first place, but here was an opportunity to not only eliminate the threat of the Wild Hunt waking—by getting the kelpie back to the Otherworld—but also earn favour of a Faerie queen.

While making a bargain with the fae is described as bad, it also shows that if humans break the bargain, and thereby the fae's code, fae turn on them. This behaviour is not unusual, as even the friendly fey can turn on people for no apparent reason (Alexander 253-254). However, Livingston adds the element of selfishness to the fae by showing that while they may bargain with humans, they do not do it unless they get something out of it.

Hamilton's book has greater complexity and nuances as most fae are described as having no soul and no sense of responsibility (Hamilton loc 274), making them neither evil nor good. However, the complexity starts when the different courts and creatures of the Fair Folk get involved, as they each have their code of ethics, powers and view on humans. While most fae in Hamilton's work is based primarily on folklore and mythology, the lack of Shakespeare's influence is also apparent as the Fair Folk in this world are more dark, sensual and bloodthirsty, as seen in Merry's description of the Unseelie court on loc 3202: "I had paid

in blood, flesh, pain: the coin of the Unseelie Court", whereas the Shakespearean fae was mischievous, but not violent or cruel.

Livingston and Hamilton include several different Fair Folk species from folklore in their stories, which further cements their worlds as folkloric. However, the two authors use the creatures of folklore, mythology and history differently. In Livingston's world, all of the stories about the Fair Folk, from Celtic lore to Elizabethan plays to Victorian superstitions, are all true, as the fae lived among the humans all along (Livingston loc 1844). Here, not only are the characters from the play seen as real, but also other elements within the context. Other Fair Folk races exist in this universe, creatures of the Fair Folk from folklore, such as Sirens, which are sea nymphs who were malicious spirits in the mythology of ancient Greece and Rome (Rose 294). Kelpies, who appear like horses, the Kelpie looks benign; it is, however, a deadly water monster that lures its human victims to ride upon its back, then plunges to the depths of the lake or river, where it drowns and eats the helpless person (McElroy 230). The Black Shuck, which is a ghost dog that roams the moors of England; it is black furred and shaggy, with green or red glowing eyes—from which a look can kill, though it might take you a year to die (228).

Furthermore, much like in Livingston's novel, Hamilton incorporates some of Fair Folk into her novel, but unlike Livingston, Hamilton almost rejects folklore in her story that takes place in our world. However, Merry clarifies that some parts of folklore and mythology are either untrue or just stories in this world. She does this on location 1676-1677 when she states that names like Robin Goodfellow and Tamlyn, both from folklore, are just fae aliases that people use, which indicates that certain aspects of folklore and mythology are not true; however, it is unclear how much or how little is real or not. Nevertheless, and despite this, Hamilton uses elements and Fair Folk from lore and mythology with creatures such as Roanes, which are gentle supernaturals, who appeared in the shape of humans but needed the sealskin to travel through the sea to their underwater abode (Rose 276), Hags, who appear in many cultures' myths and although folklore acknowledges their powers as healers, neither mythology nor modern literature has much good to say about them (Alexander 34), etc.

Unlike the two other novels from this decade, *Fairy Tale* has little to do with folklore except in its worldbuilding. It describes the fae as "liking to play tricks on humans" (Balog 812) and nothing else. While transformation is quite normal, this form of transformation with the physical changes happening to Cam, such as weight loss, height loss, and almost

becoming sickly from transitioning at 16 (Balog loc 992) is not from folklore or mythology. This form of transformation and the rest of the novel's fae lore Balog herself created or took from fairy tales, such as how water harms fae, which does not seem to be in any lore or mythology. The statement suggests that fae could die if they come into contact with water.

Regarding the other novels in the primary sources in the 2010s and 2020s, the folklore traces are much less noticeable and tied to particular parts of the Fair Folk in folklore and will therefore onward be explored in the different subject paragraphs in this subsection. Here, folklore regarding the Fair Folk is complicated. One aspect that remains from folklore across all three decades, though it becomes less directly from folklore and vaguer in its ties to fae myths, is the fae tradition of stealing humans. Throughout Europe, they tell stories of abductions of individuals targeted to become fae lovers and spouses, but even more common are accounts of stolen infants (Ashliman 25). In older representations, the Fair Folk often created changelings – children abducted from their cribs and replaced with undesirable impostors. In legend, the Fair Folk are fond of young children, wonderful children, and habitually steal them when possible (Martinez 48-49, Ashliman 25-29, Alexander 66-67 & Bane 235-237).

There are numerous reasons for stealing human babies and replacing them with a changeling – some sources claim the reason for this is that the Fair Folk are an actual race of hidden people, who need to replenish their bloodlines due to years of inbreeding (Bane 235). Other possible explanations include taking a human child to deliver as the Tithe, a seven-year tribute paid to the evil one, the Devil, or the prince of darkness, depending on the tale. This occurs on nights like Samhain, Beltane or Imbolc (Bane 235-236 & Lady Wilde 28). Samhain is an ancient Celtic holiday falling on November 1 and marks the end of summer. People believed that witches, fairies, and other demons freely roamed during the night because of the thin veil between the worlds. Many of the beliefs and customs of this day survive in the modern holiday of Halloween (Ashliman 208). Beltane, which similar to Samhain, is May 1, the day the invisible veil separating humans from the Otherworld becomes thin, enabling people to see and communicate with those on the other side (Alexander 18). Imbolc is an ancient Celtic religious festival celebrated on February 1 to mark the beginning of spring (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica "Imbolc | Ancient Celtic Religious Festival"). Simply put, the reason is that the Fair Folk see human babies as wonderfully beautiful and desire to have one as a lover, plaything or enslaved person (Bane 235-236).

If humans discovered their babies had been switched with a changeling, their reactions were never positive. They often tried to get the Fair Folk to take them back or kill them so they would be switched back (Bane 236-237, Rose 64-65, Alexander 66-67 & Ashliman 26-27). The reasoning for the origin of the changeling myth is simple, if not slightly cruel. According to descriptions of Fair Folk, changelings gleaned from a selection of legends, the stories likely originated from kids with conditions like autism, down syndrome, hydrocephalus, or any other condition that prevented a child from thriving and developing normally. A large head, odd looking eyes, a flat nose, constant sobbing, inappropriate behaviour, an inability to learn to walk or talk, and excessive hunger are among the specific symptoms mentioned in the stories (Ashliman 25, Rose 64 & Bane 235-237).

The term 'changeling' is something we see in a few of our books and is the beginning of the abduction trope that belongs to the fae genre and stems from folklore. In *Fairy Tale*, *Wondrous Strange* and *Fighting Destiny*, a changeling is used, but all use it differently. *Wondrous Strange* and *Fairy tale*, as we have seen earlier, is the closest to the folklore about changelings, with *Wondrous Strange* being the most accurate. In the novel, one of the protagonists, Sonny, is a changeling who is described as:

> a changeling—a human, stolen as a child from the mortal realm by godlike beings who did not often produce children of their own [...] the changelings served as surrogate offspring for the Faerie [...] Mortals made almost immortal, they lived in that timeless, dreaming place, doted on or ignored by their capricious masters, sometimes treasured, sometimes tormented. But always in the thrall of the Faerie (Livingston loc 294).

This links to the definition of changelings from folklore mentioned above and shows Livingston's use of that lore, like the portrayal of Sonny being stolen as a child and made to live in the Otherworld but always treated as beneath the fae. What differentiates Livingston's changeling definition from lore is that the Fair Folk has stolen a human child because they cannot have children and do not leave a child of the Fair Folk in his place. This is a small, but significant, difference. What created the changeling myth is that people believed their ugly or deformed children, who most likely had a congenital disability etc., had been switched by the Fair Folk. This change does not affect the book's story or make it feel less like it is genuine people from folklore who exist among us today. However, it is a deviation that shows the beginning of how the interpretation of folklore in novels is today.

Fairy Tale and *Fighting Destiny* also use the term but with more deviation from the folkloric term and a lot less detail than *Wondrous Strange*. In *Fairy Tale*, Balog only briefly on two locations describe that changelings are sickly fae offspring switched with a human, because they are too weak and will die (loc 814). The fae switches them so as not to see this failure happen, but the human changeling does not get treated like the fae child that is taken and often gets ignored or mistreated (Balog loc 1505). Balog uses the element of two babies being switched; however, the reason for the switch is that the Fair Folk want to be rid of their child, one who matches the sickly description of folklore, but other than that and the treatment of humans in the Otherworld, there is not much else from folklore in *Fairy Tale*. In *Fighting Destiny,* there is even less information about the changelings, and the use is hard to justify as an interpretation of the folklore origin. In this 2010s novel, the folklore serves as a mere inspiration, but adhering to anything essential is not required. The novel defines a changeling as only half fae and nothing else (Hutchins loc 5704). It is not the aspect of a half-human, half-fae child that is surprising as seen in folklore and myth, but the use of the term changeling to define the mixed child is new and is Hutchins' spin on the folkloric term.

None of the other books mention or use the term changeling, but some use the tradition of the Fair Folk abducting humans or tricking them into following them to the Otherworld. *The Cruel Prince*, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *A Dance with the Fae Prince* all have an element of the fae abducting, tricking or using humans by taking them to the Otherworld.

While changelings are the most used form of human abduction in folklore, the abduction or stealing of humans is not uncommon in the folklore surrounding the Fair Folk, but it is rare. Although children are most vulnerable to abduction, adults are at risk (Ashliman 29). Ballads especially told the story of how the Fair Folk would steal or trick humans into joining them in their world, where they would convince them to stay either through seduction or marriage (Ashliman 166). Rose also warns in her novel about how many types of Fair Folk, such as Daoine Sidhe, Djin, Elves, Fin Folk and Trolls, steal humans, both men and women, to make them their bride and use them for entertainment or sexual reasons.

One such instance is in Sarah J. Maas' *A Court of Thorns and Roses*. While Maas uses little from folklore or mythology, she has based her book on fairy tales and ballads. The most known one is the famous *Beauty and The Beast* fairytale by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve from 1740, but another one of the stories is *The Ballad of Tam Lin* from Scottish

folklore. There are nine versions of *The Ballad of Tam Lin*. Works include a complete story by Robert Burns, an almost complete story by Sir Walter Scott, and two fragments that give just a few narrative details, but where the author is unknown (Hixon 72). While not all versions are identical or feature all the same plot lines, the one that they all stay true to is the one Maas uses in her novel. In this version, Tam Lin was once human but was taken by the Fair Folk and is now a knight, and he meets Janet, who has hatred towards him, because he is a fae whose magic makes her fall in love with him, gets her pregnant and then leaves. She plans to get rid of the baby, but Tam Lin stops her and tells her how to save him from the evil fae queen by completing her trials. Jane then faces the fae queen, who puts her through trials to prove her love for Tam Lin. She goes through the trial and succeeds, saving him (Alexander 92-95). This is similar to the plot in *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, where Tam Lin takes Feyre to the spring court, and she has to fall in love with him to save him. When Amarantha takes him, she goes through 3 trials to save him, and she succeeds in the trials, causing the defeat and death of Amarantha (Maas). Of course, there are differences, like Feyre never getting pregnant, the number of trials, and the trials themselves being different, but the inspiration is there. So, while Tam Lin is a figure from folklore, Maas also takes inspiration from the ballad's narrative structure.

One aspect she does approach, and which other novels in the dataset hint at, is the idea that the Fair Folk used to be gods and are now called by a different name. As mentioned earlier in the project, this idea that fairies result from a degradation process from ancient deities is not uncommon (Sayce 120). Mainly when the fairies are referred to be Tuatha de Danaan in Irish mythology, according to this theory, the Tuatha and fairies are descended from primordial gods and goddesses, making them ancient goddesses, priestesses, nature spirits, nymphs, and druidesses ("The Origin and Lore of Fairies and Fairy Land"). *A Court of Thorns and Roses, To Kill a Fae, A Kiss of Shadows* and *Wondrous Strange* all approach the idea that fae was once viewed as gods, either by revealing later, as in the *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series, that certain beings in their world used to be viewed as gods, especially in her third book, *A Court of Wings and Ruin*, where it is revealed that the bone carve is an old death god. The other novels bring up historical gods from myth or folklore: Poseidon (Wilde loc 2243) and the Fennrys Wolf (Hamilton loc 520). *A Kiss of Shadows* hints at the Fair Folk being worshipped as gods, but the practices having since been outlawed (Hamilton loc 3107). *Wondrous Strange* includes the most ancient names related to gods, just as it incorporates

most folklore. Using these relational links to gods from various myths and folklore makes sense, given that much of the Fair Folk's lore is similar to ancient mythology, such as Greek mythology, which Shakespeare used. The gods in Greek mythology were well known to trick humans, play games with them, have children, and abduct them. However, it was not just humans that the gods would abduct. In Greek mythology, no one was safe, not even other gods, which is well known from the myth of Hades and Persephone, where Persephone is tricked and taken by Hades to the underworld to become his wife (Graves 91-97).

A Dance with the Fae Prince uses abduction in a manner that is more similar to that of mythology than that of folklore, as Katria is married to a fae without even realising it. They were tricked into believing he was human due to his need for a wife and the stepmother's greed for money (Kova). The practice of giving your daughter away in marriage and receiving money for her hand is a well-known historical aspect that was done in many countries all over the world and is still done today in some countries (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica Bridewealth | Marriage Custom"). However, the nature of the marriage and how it came to be is also seen in folklore about the Fair Folk. Although, the reasoning behind the marriage varies in folklore, it is often through force or seduction that humans end up in marriages with Fair Folk. In folklore, primarily Celtic, the capture of beautiful young women is often introduced. The women are then forced or tricked into being brides to the Fair Folk, likely to fae kings or princes. However, it was more typical for humans to become midwives or nursing maids (*Encyclopedia of Fairies in World Folklore and Mythology* 65). It was not always women, who were abducted by the Fair Folk either, as in *The Ballad of Tam Lin,* he was once human and captured by the Fair Folk. In cases where a man was captured for marriage, the union between a human man and a fairy wife was usually enforced through the capture of the human. (65). In another one of the novels from the primary sources, *The Cruel Prince,* abduction plays a significant role, but the reasoning for the abduction differs from Maas' novel. In Black's novel, the main character, Jude, is forcefully taken to Elfhame, the magical fae world in this book. She is taken with her twin sister and an older half-sister by her mother's ex-husband, Maddoc, after he kills their parents (loc 62-109). The reason for the murder and abduction of the children is that Maddoc had taken their mother to Elfhame – though it is unknown whether willingly or by force. However, their mother was unhappy there and forced to stay with Maddoc, and therefore she chose to fake her death and run away back to the human world (loc 2985-3007). In this novel, the abduction of the three siblings is

different as it is not done with the motivation to torture them or to make them brides, but due to the mother's betrayal. Betrayal of vows or secrets is taken seriously by the Fair Folk in folklore, but more often than not, the consequence of that betrayal is not death nor being abducted to the Otherworld. Instead, the Fair Folk would punish depending on the severity of the crime, so the punishment could range from pinching to losing the ability to see Fair Folk, illness, or light forms of torture etc. (*Encyclopedia of Fairies in World Folklore and Mythology* 167-168).

Most of the stories from lore and history that have been mentioned portray the Fair Folk as tricky, mean, and disregarding humans. It is a generalisation and simplified description of the Fair Folk. There are many different Fair Folk species, as briefly mentioned above. Having multiple species of Fair Folk results in different ways of behaviour and attitudes toward humans. As this thesis does not examine the evolution of each species of the Fair Folk but focuses on the fae race encased in the Fair Folk, the portrayal and behaviour of the fae will be explored further by looking at two important terms regarding the Fair Folk and fae.

The two important terms are related to the Fair Folk but also the evolution of fae in novels of the last three decades; Seelie and Unseelie courts. The two terms may seem simple and of no significant relevance, but when looking deeper, they have had a significant influence on the fae novels in YA fantasy. The reasoning behind this is twofold; as mentioned earlier, YA stories often revolve around themes such as good vs evil, and the fae also embody this dynamic. According to American folklorist Dr D. L. Ashliman, one of the leading experts in folklore, categorizations appear to be deeply ingrained in human nature, which results in a choice being either a wise one or a mistake. This also shows up in the portrayal of the Fair Folk in lore and mythology. Regardless of other classifications, people often categorize them as good or bad. While either side might be capable of being more than that, depending on their classification, people generally expect them to primarily exhibit the characteristics associated with the good or bad category they belong to. An example is the Scottish Seelie and Unseelie court, one of the most well-known divisions (Ashliman 55). The two courts are a subdivision of the Fair Folk divided according to their characteristics and species (Rose 108). Most often, they are described simply as opposites, with the Seelie court being the good Fair Folk who are light and benevolent, whereas the Unseelie are evil, meaning dark and malevolent (Alexander 253-254).

To further support and elaborate on this straightforward idea of the two courts in her book *Spirits, Fairies, Gnomes, and Goblins: An Encyclopedia of the Little People*, Dr Carol Rose from the University of Kent describes the Seelie court as "those Trooping Fairies who are generally engaged in their society with royalty, nobility, and a community existing relatively peacefully within the human world. They enjoy feasting, hunting, and dancing in the earth's rural idyll. They comprise such groups as the elves and the Sidhe." (286) In her book *Fairies: The Myths, Legends, & Lore*, author Skye Alexander supports this by describing the Seelies as fun-loving, beautiful folk who enjoy music, games and dancing and that, while they interact and help, they are still part of the Fair Folk, who can be unpredictable but mean no harm (90). British folklorist Doctor Katharine M. Briggs, in her *An Encyclopedia of Fairies: Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies, and Other Supernatural Creatures*, agrees with both authors on the Seelies' nature and name as the kindly Fair Folk, but while Rose does not mention it, Briggs agrees with Alexander that while they can be kind to humans, they were still not to be trusted and would turn on you if you insulted them and would then injure or harm the humans (353). All three authors, in their books published over a span of approximately 40 years, concur that the Seelie Court, out of the two courts, embodies kindness and goodness. They are a court with the idyllic version of the fae that most people think of when imagining fae, as they are associated with their love for music, dance and beauty. Most of the Fair Folk, such as the fae, leprechauns, roanes, brownies, etc., belong in the Seelie Court as they are seen as more harmless, still untrustworthy, but not as ugly and dangerous as those who are from the Unseelie Court.

As with the Seelie court, all three authors support the idea of the Unseelie Court being the place of the evil Fair Folk. According to Alexander, the most descriptive of the three in her language, the Unseelie court consists of the 'dark' Fair Folk, the villians that wish to torment humans. Unlike the Seelie Court, they go after humans without provocation and with the intent to harm humans and sometimes kidnap them and turn them into their pets in the Otherworld (Alexander 91). Rose and Briggs agree with Alexander's explanation but also include more of the lore about the Unseelie. Rose describes them as "malignant spirits whose purpose is the destruction of humans at every opportunity" (Rose 108). At the same time, Briggs shortly says that "the Unseelie Court are never under any circumstances favourable to mankind" (*Encyclopedia of Fairies…* 239). Both authors proceed to discuss how The Host or The Slaugh is included within or constitutes the Unseelie. In folklore, before Christian

religion had influenced it, the entity was known as a band of the dead who would ride above the earth and kidnap humans after they had shot them first to either hurt or distress them (*Encyclopedia of Fairies in World Folklore and Mythology* 239-240). Following the Christian beliefs, people started considering them as Fallen Angels who searched for lost souls, but as they searched, they would cause sickness and death to humans and animals and lead humans they met astray (Rose 296). The only one who directly comments on their appearance is Rose, who describes them as "of ugly appearance, existing in the wilderness areas and places associated with bloodshed" (Rose 108), leading us to believe that creatures, e.g. goblins, hags, the black shuck and more belong in the Unseelie Court.

Despite their seemingly insignificant role in the changes to Fae over the last three decades, there is a clear indication of the significance of the two courts. In earlier years, when the fae was popular, Goodrich, as previously stated, saw an increase in the more folkloric version of the fae beginning to emerge over the aristocratic fae (1-2). Still, today's tendency is the opposite of what Goodrich observed in the past. The ten primary sources and their use of folklore-inspired Seelie and Unseelie Courts vary in their level of inspiration, but the three books from the 2000s all use the two terms. However, the portrayal of the two courts varies. All three use the terms and stay within the boundaries of the Seelie Court being good and the Unseelie Court being bad. An example is *A Kiss of Shadows,* where the Seelie is light, and the Unseelie is dark (Hamilton loc 688). Further clarification reveals that while the view of the Seelie is that they are good and pure, they still engage in lying and scheming (loc 335), so while they are not dark like the Unseelie, they are still fae. Three of the four novels from the 2010s employ the terms, but they reveal very little about either of the courts. *The Cruel Prince* and *Fighting Destiny* both hint at the knowledge that the two are opposite, with Black in her novel describing them only as "glittering Seelie and terrifying Unseelie" (loc 3311-3312) and Hutchins going as far as saying that the Unseelie is "the Darkest Fae" (loc 2472). In Wilde's novel, she mentions the two courts but does not detail what separates them, except a short comment about how few people knew what they looked like (loc 31). The last of the four books, by Maas, does not use the terms in any way, but what it does have in common with the three other books from the 2010s is that no matter if they are using the terms Seelie or Unseelie Courts, the books always divide the courts included in them into smaller courts with different names or areas of magic, government, or belonging. A Court of Thorns and Roses has seven courts, four seasonal and three daytime courts, each with its own

environment, specialised magic and form of government (Maas). The same structure is in Black's novel, where subdivisional courts exist in the Seelie and Unseelie Courts. Some of them are the Court of Moths which is Unseelie (loc 4321-4332), the Seelie Court of the Twilight folk (loc 3162) and the Unseelie night host (loc 3162). Wilde also has this in her novel with courts such as the Night, Winter, Summer, Autumn, Spring and Day Court (loc 329), much like in Maas' novel. While Hutchins subtly mentions and makes it difficult to notice, she also divides the courts into subdivisions, although she hints at it rather than stating it outright. In this universe, these divisions are considered castes – the light fae, the dark fae and ones belonging to the Horde King (loc 154). The details of the different castes in this novel are missing, but as it is part of a series, it is likely to go into more depth about them in the subsequent novels.

All four novels retain how the folklore structured the Fair Folk, which was in courts. However, the authors begin to move away from the folklore version and create their division by emphasizing the aristocratic version of the fae world, in lore known as the Otherworld, and less the folkloric version. Furthermore, as it reaches the 2020s, the novels have entirely moved away from folklore inspiration of the fae world, at least in the sense that none of the three novels from the 2020s use the two terms. They still use the aristocratic version of the fae, which is emphasised now with the courts still present, but the weight and importance of kings and queens playing a more significant role than the court system. While the world may be divided, it is only *A Dance with the Fae Prince* that uses courts, again with no mention of Seelie or Unseelie, but a multitude of courts, which is much like the 2010s, but these courts are all ruled by one court, the High Court, and with one high king. Even if the subdivision courts have their rulers, they answer to the king of the high court, who, if abusing this power, can face the consequences, as the readers get briefly explained in loc 2558 and 2559 (Flower). The two other books are also divided, but one is divided into two powers, light and malice, with city boroughs almost functioning as courts, in *A Crown Princess Academy* (Flowers). The other one, *The Anointed Fae*, has a world with many different realms that their kings and queens govern but no courts (Huxx). *A Crown Princess Academy* nearly mirrors the Seelie and Unseelie with its rendition of Light fae and Malice users. However, the novel does not utilize the court systems of Seelie and Unseelie and seeing as this novel is the first in a series, it does not provide enough information about the two types of magic for a precise portrayal of its similarities or difference to the Seelie or Unseelie.

The aristocratic fae has taken over the folklore in current YA fantasy literature. The time of Celtic and Scottish folklore making appearances in the novels has slowly disappeared, and now what is left is a Fair Folk and a world that is inspired and grew from the folklore and the two original courts of the Fair Folk, which now resembles other fantasy storyworlds while maintaining the Fair Folk's aristocratic behaviour and the message of excellence or evil seen through other means than the Seelie and Unseelie.

Fae Appearance & Characteristics

There are many species of Fair Folk, which means that the description of their looks and characteristics depends on their kind, as this thesis focuses specifically on the species of fae rather than any other Fair Folk. However, the following section on the fae and their looks and characteristics in the ten books may mention them. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, similarities between fae in the different books are apparent throughout the decades, as seen in the chosen novels. Nine out of the ten agree on the features and form of the fae in broad terms. The three main aspects that the nine agree on are the fae's ears, beauty and size. Still, it is essential to note that there are differences in their descriptions, and not every part is identical, but the overall description of the fae is consistent. Some differences are found mainly in *Fairy Tale* and *The Cruel Prince*, who mostly agree with the others in the portrayal of the fae, but with other elements added or missing.

When describing fae today, most would describe them as human-looking with pointed ears and an otherworldly beauty that made them stick out from humans. At the same time, some would say that the only thing distinguishing fae from humans is their magical powers (Sayce 99). However, the first thing that most would point to as a giveaway that a person is fae is their pointed ears. Eight of our ten primary sources all portray fae as having pointed ears. The description of the ears in the books does not vary much, nor do they provide detailed information on their appearance, except for mentioning that they are pointy. Both *Fairy Tale* and *Wondrous Strange* describe briefly that the fae has pointed ears, with examples being from *Fairy Tale* when Morgan notices that there was "a nub of skin poking out from over his ears" (Balog loc 1767) or in *Wondrous Strange* when Kelley takes off her necklace and sees "the tips of her ears were ever-so-slightly pointed" in the reflection of the mirror (Livingston loc 1745-1755).

In the 2010s, three novels portray the fae as having pointed ears, but *Fighting Destiny* describes the fae as having normal ear, the pointed ear is only something that the elves possess (Hutchins loc 1793). The remaining three books portray the fae as having the typically pointed ears. In *To Kill a Fae*, they are described as having "pointy ears" (Wilde loc 32) when they find the dead king. In *The Cruel Prince,* Jude talks about why she is jealous of the fae and mentions the "pointed tips of his ears" (Black loc 406) when mentioning different fae she knew. In *A Court of Thorns and Roses,* when Tamlin forces Feyre to have dinner with

him for the first time, she mentions his ears and describes them as "delicate, pointed arches" (Maas 712).

Continuing into the 2020s, two of the three books portray fae with pointy ears. One novel, *A Crown Princess Academy*, mentions that the fae king could be confused for a human where it is not "for the pointed ears that reached his elaborate crown" (Flowers loc 1010). In *A Dance with the Fae Prince,* it is never mentioned that Davien has pointed ears, but on the novel's cover page, he is portrayed as having pointed ears. As that is the official art of the novel created by the author, it is reasonable to state that the fae in this novel has pointed ears. *The Anointed Fae* do not mention anything about the fae having pointed ears. There is little information about the fae as they are the only sentient species in this world. Therefore, there is not much focus on their looks as it is all normal to them and therefore accepted.

Having 80% of the novels feature fae with pointed ears shows that the pointed ears are something ordinary and common in the fae genre in the last three decades, indicating a clear tendency for this feature. Scholars attributes the pointed ears to the fae from literature, as the fae did not have pointed ears in folklore or myth. Some believe that pointed ears were introduced to the fae by the woodcarvings from *The Mad Pranks and Merry Jests of Robin Goodfellow*, where Goodfellow is depicted much like pan, with goat legs and pointy donkey ears ("Why Do Fairies Have Pointed Ears?"). The depiction of the fae varies through time, but at the end of the Victorian Era, the fae became popular again and was often featured in literature and paintings. From the Victorian age forward, the fae with pointed ears began to show up. It gained popularity after the publication of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *Lord of The Rings* complete trilogy combined with Disney's release of *Peter Pan*. The popularity persisted in portraying the fae, elves and other Fair Folk with pointed ears. The reason for it is most likely that it was an easy way to show that someone is not human but something else, and with the pointed ears becoming a well-known trait of the fae, it becomes a way to identify them as not only non-human but specifically fae ("Why Do Fairies Have Pointed Ears?").

The last of the ten books that has not been mentioned is *A Kiss of Shadows*. It stands out from the rest, as it states that the fae has pointed ears, but it is a feature limited to those who are not pure blood Sidhe (Livingston loc 283). However, some humans who are not Fair Folk get them by having cartilage implants to make their ears pointy so they would appear Sidhe since they are unaware that the pure-blooded Sidhe do not have them (Livingston loc 282). Here the Sidhe is a race within the Fair Folk separated from the fae. In this world, there

is a hierarchy between the races within the Fair Folk, with the Sidhe being on top of the hierarchy as the superior race and as the nobility and monarchs. While there is not much physical difference between the fae and Sidhe in the novel, people can spot the difference by their ears and facial features, which are more striking and beautiful than the fae (Livingstone). The reason for bringing attention to the Sidhe is that in folklore, people often believed that the Sidhe were fae and not a different species of the Fair Folk, as portrayed in *A Kiss of Shadows*.

The Sidhe is a part of folklore, primarily Scottish and Irish. According to Irish mythology, the Sidhe are an ancient and influential group of dwindled gods who occupied Ireland and parts of Scotland. They were thought to possess a humanlike appearance, and people often described them as exquisitely beautiful, with powers far exceeding those of mortals. These powers were possibly flight, shapeshifting or, as some call it, glamour and long lives or immortality (Alexander 38, Lady Wilde 352 & McElroy 212). Several others describe other species of the fae similarly. Lady Wilde describes them as having "the reputation of being very beautiful, with long yellow hair sweeping the ground and lithe light forms" (352). Author Greg Clinton, in his novel *Fairies (Creatures of Fantasy)*, agrees with Lady Wilde on the beauty of fae, describing their appearance as "[t]he beauty of fairies have led humans to their doom on more than one occasion in myth and legend" (33). While literature and lore often mention the beauty of the fae, they also highlight that the fae are a graceful race, most likely attributed to their love and skills in dancing (Lady Wilde). Lady Wilde notes that in myths and stories, they describe them as having "perfect forms, and their dancing is beyond all expression graceful" (353). Other authors further comment on the grace that the fae seem to pose and that they often notice said grace when observing the fae dancing or when describing their clothing (Briggs *An Encyclopedia of Fairies…* 435, Rose 304, 317 & Ashliman 185). These descriptions of Sidhe's physical appearance and magical abilities are often the ones that are more consistent with what is seen as fae today in literature, as seen in the primary sources.

The reason for the return to the fae folklore is that it has stayed when describing the fae and is used in nine out of ten of the primary sources, both their connection to the Sidhe and their beauty and grace. So, there is a propensity in certain aspects of the fae's description. In all three 2000s books, the fae get described as: "all the fey are beautiful" (Hamilton loc 2172), as "a fairy, he's more beautiful than he ever was in human form" (Balog loc 2732) and "the woman, flame-haired and fantastically beautiful [...] such fierce grace and majesty"

(Livingston loc1928-1938). Much as in the 2000s, the fae of the four novels in the 2010s get described: "They're also beautiful. Faerie lords and ladies, just like in the songs" (Black loc 284), "[f]ae were generally beautiful" (Wilde loc 88), "[h]e was one of the High Fae, one of their ruling nobility: Beautiful, lethal and merciless" (Maas loc 701-711) and "[t]he fae were beautiful ethereal creatures" (Hutchins loc 182). In the 2020s, two of the three novels describe the physical appearance of the fae. In these two novels, the fae is described as: "It made him look so ethereal and beautiful that I could cry" (Flowers loc 2349-2360) and "[h]e can hide his wings and glamour his more unnatural beauty to appear as nothing more than a human" (Kova loc 6003-6014). In the third of the 2020s novel, there is no description of the fae other than that each subrace has a specific eye colour (Huxx). The lack of description of the fae in this novel is due to no humans existing in it. So, by only having fae and Fair Folk appear in the book, no one stands out as different by the human standard as they do not exist within this storyworld. It is clear that in the last three decades, the notion of fae being beautiful and graceful, as mentioned in quite a few of the novels, has become a stable depiction in YA fantasy. There will, of course, be novels such as *The Anointed Fae* that deviate from this, and as all three novels from the 2020s describe their fae minimally or not at all, perhaps the fae genre is moving away from giving such general descriptions of a race, and perhaps they are leaving more room for the reader's imagination, or maybe the fae have become mainstream enough that these aspects are redundant to repeat as readers already know what a fae looks like.

      As mentioned above, the statement that the fae today resemble the Sidhe from folklore is not just because they are described as beautiful but also due to the description of their size and otherworldly abilities. Again, nine of the ten novels agree on the size of the fae as a humanoid, with the exception of *Fairy Tale,* which leans more towards a famous fairytale description of the fae, which is also found in folklore – but primarily is in works such as Disney movies – where the fae is miniature with wings and healing magic (Balog loc 2315-2325 & *Peter Pan*). In folklore, there are varying accounts of the size of the fae: Folklore collectors have addressed the inconsistencies about size in traditional fairy descriptions and theorised that the reasoning is due to the fae's shapeshifting abilities (Ashliman 4-5). In his paper, *The Origins and Development of the Belief in Fairies*, social anthropologist R.U. Sayce points out that "[f]airies are accredited with attributes that are often contradictory" (101). In most tales from folklore, myth and the general belief in folklore was that the fae could shift to

any size, change their shape into anything, be it a different gender, species of the Fair Folk, animal or human, add wings or remove them, which they did frequently when interacting with humans (Alexander 127, Briggs *An Encyclopedia of Fairies…* 90, Lady Wilder 352, Sayce 99, Briggs "The English Fairies" 271, Ashliman 4-5 & Emerick 204-205).

While not all novels describe the fae's size, other indicators show that they are slightly bigger or the same size as humans. One of those indicators is the novels' covers. In novels such as *To Kill a Fae*, *Wondrous Strange*, *Fighting Destiny*, *A Dance with the Fae Prince* and *Crown Princess Academy,* the fae featured in the books are showcased on the front of them. This gives the readers an exact picture of the appearance and size of the fae. Fan art can also be a good indicator of the size and appearance of fae in novels, especially if the book's author has posted the fan art on their social media because it signals their approval of the fan art and the artist's portrayal of the characters. Despite that, while not all of the novels mention the height of individual fae in their plotlines, some chose to comment on the fae's size as a species, but this is often not the case. Instead, the height of the specific character described gets mentioned. Examples are in *A Dance With the Fae Prince* loc 583-595 *Wondrous Strange* loc 1913-1923, *The Anointed Fae* loc 30 and *A Court of Thorns and Roses,* loc 1444-1456, which show that the description of the fae species' height is not always them being tall. Instead, the individual fae's height description only portrays the specific fae and not the entire fae species, although some of these books also point out that an average fae can be tall. This illustrates evidence of their stature that leads us to conclude that the fae species in these novels are the size of humans or bigger. The fae as a race is described as human-sized or taller in *A Kiss of Shadows* (loc 755-766), *To Kill a Fae* (loc 77), *Fighting Destiny* (loc 367-380) and *A Crown Princess Academy* (loc 1009-1020). The only book with a variation from humanlike height is *The Cruel Prince,* where the fae are individually described, with some being tall (Black loc 107-117) or human-sized, if not a few inches shorter (loc 429). Other than this, the novel does not give much indication of the size of the fae, but as the main character is the human Jude, who can sit at the same tables and in the same chairs as the fae, it is reasonable to conclude that they are equal in size. Additionally, their size in the Folk of Air universe, one of Black's other novels, which takes place in the same realm and with the same characters, has Cardan, the fae prince turned king, from *The Cruel Prince* on the cover portraying him as human-sized (Black *How The King of Elfhame Learned to Hate Stories*). With nine of the ten primary sources hinting at the fae as human-sized or bigger, it seems

reasonable to conclude that the fae in the last three decades has become known to be that size, while fae in *Fairy Tale* are small. It is a book from the 2000s, which means that as time has progressed, the idea of small statuesque fae has lost popularity to the point of near extinction in current literature.

The constant change in the fae's sizes was due to the belief that they could shapeshift or use glamour to change their appearance. Ashliman defines glamour as: "A magic spell, typically cast by fairies and giving objects an appearance quite different from normal reality" (202). Alexander (49) and Briggs (*An Encyclopedia of Fairies…* 191) support this definition of glamour and use it throughout their novels when discussing the Fair Folk using magic. Our primary sources also portray this definition. Nine out of ten reference glamour or shapeshifting, with eight using glamour specifically. The book that does not mention glamour or shapeshifting of any kind is *The Anointed Fae*, which once again sets itself apart in not sharing much with the other novels regarding the fae race or its relation to folklore. The function of glamour works either as a form of magic that manipulates what people can see and does not change the person physically or permanently. In some instances glamour is just a general form of fae magic. However, the books often reveal that glamour involves controlling various aspects such as sight, people, feelings, etc. (Hamilton loc 88, Livingston loc 2544, Black loc 1492, Hutchins loc 780-792, Wilde loc 1370-1381, Maas loc 2607-2681, Flowers loc 1067-1078 & Kova loc 1067-1078). In the book *Fairy Tale,* the characters use magic to change their size. Dawn changes regularly from small to human size and tells Morgan that the reason for this is that shapeshifting is easy for the fae (Balog loc 877). The novels in which the use of glamour appears are spread across all three decades, showing that the tendency in the fae's ability to use glamour has stayed relevant since the tales from folklore and that there is little deviation from its use in the last three decades. It has become a trope within the fae genre, much like the pointed ears, and this trope will likely continue to be a part of the fae genre in fantasy literature through the coming decades.

Other aspects of the fae play a minor, but still important, role when it comes to the species. One is the idea that the fae is immortal, which is another aspect that links the fae in the primary sources to the Sidhe, though it was not only the Sidhe that was considered immortal or long-lived. Generally, fae and the Fair Folk were considered immortal or long-living (Alexander 38, Briggs *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* 186 & Rose 317). While folklore does not extensively mention this, mythological stories depict gods as immortals and

hint at the fae as their descendants or relatives. This suggests that the trope of immortality in fae literature holds a connection to history and folklore and is not an attribute that literary authors created themselves.

When looking at the corpus, two of the books from the 2000s mention that fae are immortal. In the 2010s, three out of four books discuss immortality and none of the 2020s reference it. The reason behind the rise and fall of immortality as a fae attribute is still not completely determined. One reason could be the minimal use of folklore and myth in the 2020s, resulting in the idea of fae as immortal, which stems from lore and myth, losing its relevance or importance. Another factor could be that there is a new way of describing the ageing of the fae, which was created in the 2020s, where the fae is portrayed as human in most aspects, with the exception of their magic. Authors could do this to make the fae relatable, increasing the support of characters and their relationships more for the reader. As previously stated, it is difficult to determine the reason behind this. Still, immortality is brought up here due to its rise and fall in popularity throughout the last three decades. Suppose the primary dataset focused on was more extensive than ten novels, then an apparent pattern likely would emerge; nevertheless, as our project has a relatively small dataset, only an educated guess as to why is possible.

Examining these facets of fae and their evolution through time has made it clear that the fae race today is similar to the Sidhe with their beauty, human appearance, use of glamour and immortality, elements seen in most primary sources. To be clear, this does not mean all fae in these stories are like the Sidhe or are based on inspiration from the Sidhe. However, it is easier to get a more precise understanding of the progression of fae representation through times by having a commonality between them that you can then compare, which is why the resemblance to the Sidhe is essential. Furthermore, the conclusion is that while the fae in all ten books depicts the race differently, there are aspects that they all incorporate which relate to folklore and myth. This means that all have taken inspiration from past fae descriptions. Additionally, the part of folklore that has the most commonality with the fae from contemporary YA fantasy is the Sidhe, while different Fair Folk inspire other parts from a mixture of folklore and myths. However, these other qualities, not related to Sidhes, which are present through the last three decades, are used less, almost to the point where mainly the relation to the Sidhe is the single folkloric component in the novels from the 2010s and onward.

The Otherworld

The Otherworld is a term that has been used multiple times but has yet to be clarified. The reason is that while it plays a vital role in these novels, it is in a grey area between the fae species and worldbuilding, as it is the fae's world. Therefore, while it will be defined here, the use of the different variations of the Otherworld in the novels is explored as a secondary world in the worldbuilding chapter of this project and not as the historic Otherworld in itself.

The Otherworld was once considered a place of origin – the enchanted abode of the Irish people's heavenly ancestors. The Tuatha Dé Danann came to Ireland from the Irish Otherworld, Tir na Nog, the "Land of Youth", originally situated on an island far west – a magically potent place (Emick 168). It has also been named Faerie – other spelling variations are Faerie or Faery – and has been "described as existing beneath the ground, underwater, above the clouds, or on a distant island" (Ashliman 201). When describing how the Otherworld functions, folklorists and fictional authors describe it as: "where the passages of time, the taste of food, sights, and sounds bear no relation to normal human experience" (Rose 318). Celtic historian Dr John T. Koch further elaborates on Rose's statement by stating that the "Otherworld is often described as a place where death and old age do not exist. More generally, time there moves differently from normal time. A short interval there may correspond to a long one here, or vice versa; or it may be summer in the síd when it is winter among mankind" (Koch 1404).

As time progressed, people started describing the Otherworld as existing concurrently alongside the mortal realm. Still, it was inaccessible to humans due to the glamour that makes it invisible to mortals. The veil between the mortal world and Otherworld sometimes fades on specific days. Other times, entrances would exist in a particular place, or fae would use magic to travel between the two (Emerick 169, Asliman 201 & Koch 1405). The opening of the entrance on specific dates is seen in *Wondrous Strange,* where the gate to the Otherworld opens for seven days on Samhain; more detail on this will come later in the worldbuilding section. There are even changelings assigned to the Gate, the Janus Guard, which in Roman religion meant gateway or door and were even referred to as god doors, making the name of the group of guards that protect the gates logical, as it refers back to mythology and folklore much like the rest of the novel.

A majority of the primary sources depict the idea that the Otherworld and mortal realm coexist alongside each other. While not all novels call it the Otherworld, six primary

sources include a universe where both a mortal realm and an Otherworld exist. This chapter will not delve into this at the moment; instead, the worldbuilding chapter will examine this thoroughly. Historically, it was not uncommon for humans who went to the Otherworld to not return or remember their time there. People used to believe that the Otherworld was a sort of afterlife, so when they went there, they did not return because they had died and gone to either heaven or hell (Bane 421).

This chapter of the thesis will not go further into the use of the Otherworld, Faerie, Elfhame or the many other names of the fae realm, as it will be analysed as part of the evolution explained in the next chapter.

Worldbuilding

When examining the primary sources, we will use Nikolajeva's terms to determine which type of construction they are; furthermore, we will use the two books written or edited by Wolf – *Building Imaginary Worlds* and *The Routledge Companion to Imaginary Worlds* – to determine how each of these storyworlds function in greater detail.

2000s

In the 2000s category, our primary sources are *A Kiss of Shadows*, *Wonderous Strange* and *Fairy Tale*. All have female protagonists as the narrator, who each go on their quest to save the world. In *A Kiss of Shadows*, Merry has to save the primary world; in *Wonderous Strange*, both the primary and the secondary worlds are in peril and with *Fairy Tale,* they imply that the salvation of the secondary world is at stake. Based on which worlds are present and how they interact in the story, Nikolajeva divides fantasy into three types of world constructions (Skyggebjerg 42-50): The ones where the plot is limited to the primary world, which Nikolajeva deems the implied construction and associates with 'low fantasy', the ones where the story is limited to the secondary world(s), defined as a closed construction often linked to the traditional 'high fantasy', or the ones where the plot crosses between worlds, characterized as an open construction ("The magic code…" 36-40, Skyggebjerg 42-50 & Lynn 289, 424 & 510).

In the three novels from 2000, one of Nikolajeva's construction types is present. They are all implied constructions. In *Wonderous Strange*'s storyworld, faeries and mortals will be able to cross between worlds by using gates, though they are not always open, as is explained here: "The Gate that stood in the centre of the teeming New World metropolis would open for one night every year, from sundown on October 31 to sunrise on the first of November. Moreover, every nine years, the Gate would swing wide for nine full nights, of which Samhain was the last" (Livingston loc 316). The narrative transpires during one of these nine-year events where the gate cracks and creatures and fae alike can cross the veil into the primary world, which happens when Kelley comes across a horse in Central Park one evening. The horse is not a mortal horse but a dangerous kelpie from the secondary world (loc 661). Although the story implies the existence of a secondary world, the entire plot is situated in the primary world and becomes an implied construction. In *Fairy Tale*, the implied construction is tangent in the same way, by having clear rules of how to traverse between the

worlds, as is evident when Morgan is told: ""There is a portal between the two worlds," Pip explains. "Fairies—or anyone, for that matter—may always pass into this world. But the portal to the fairy world is open only at midnight on Day of Birth and Day of Becoming."" (Balog loc 865). This quote shows that a secondary world exists, but the narrative takes place in only the primary world. *A Kiss of Shadow* does not have a secondary world displayed as distinctly as the other two, but as it takes place in the primary world, it is also an implied construction. Though here, the fae are known and have become celebrities within the primary world, their own 'world' is part of the primary world but hidden beneath the human one: "I'm told once upon a time there were entire worlds under the ground. Meadows and orchards and a sun and moon of our very own" (Hamilton loc 4824). The fae world is part of the primary world, but only those in the know can find and enter it through hidden doorways as the entrances move. The fae here becomes a manifestation of something beyond our reality and, as such, is the symbol of the implied magical secondary world that is not physically present in the storyworld.

Of Todorov's three terms, these novels belong to the fantastic category, because characters initially meet elements not fitting into the primary world with scepticism but later accept them, which is evident from this quote: ""It's this kingdom, this whole other world," he says, his voice wavering. "I'm not sure. Dawn told me it exists alongside this world. I know, it's totally whacked, but I have to go there on my sixteenth birthday"" (Balog loc 752). This initial denial of the storyworld's reality becomes accepted at the end of the novel, when Cam ends up travelling to the secondary world as he is "a fairy. Part of [him] has always wanted to be in Otherworld" (loc 2895). However, he would have stayed if Morgan did not give him her blessing to leave her behind. In *Wonderous Strange*, Kelley has to accept magic as she confronts inexplicable things: "the horse had climbed entirely—impossibly—through the small casement window and was now standing in the tub. It also seemed to be running itself a bath" (Livingston loc 596). Kelley finds the horse weird but cannot get rid of it, and later finds out that it is the roan horse of the wild fae hunt (loc 2072) as well as finding out that she is a faerie princess (3211), which she must come to terms with during her journey. In *A Kiss of Shadows,* Merry does not get blindsided by the existence of magic, being aware that she is a Sidhe from the start (Hamilton), in the same way as the two other girls. That makes the narrative the closest to Todorov's concept of the marvellous, where magic is accepted at face value. However, as she is sceptical when the magical rules in the primary world are

changed, it still fits into his fantastic category. An example of Merry's denial is when her aunt – the queen – changes the rules of succession to not automatically make her firstborn heir, and it instead be the "one of you gives me a child first, that one shall inherit my throne" (Hamilton loc 5195). Therefore, Merry does not have a choice. She must accept that she is forced into a deadly race with her cousin to inherit the fae throne of her aunt. All three women meet changes to their concept of reality with scepticism but end up understanding and accepting the presence of the supernatural, which means that they conform to the fantastic category.

All three heroines go on a quest, where they each gain acceptance of the 'new' world where magic is real, or the permanent rules are not as rigid as they previously believed. According to Alexander, "[t]he heroic journey is a sequence of three acts, departure, initiation, and return" (11), where each has four subcategories. Still, that amount of detail is irrelevant to this exploration of worldbuilding. The three novels' narrators go through a hero's journey on their adventure towards change and acceptance. Kelley, Morgan and Merry are all heroines, and during the stories' duration, they grow their own identities. Morgan tries everything she can think of to save the love of her life from being forced to leave but realises that "Cameron would go through certain changes before he fully inherited his [fae] powers" (Balog loc 2172) at the age of sixteen and would not be able to function happily as part of the primary world any longer. Therefore, she ends up letting him go: "I know it wasn't fantasy. I know it was real. And I remember. Not so much the past, but the way I felt when we were together. […] I know that's because Cam is looking out for me" (loc 2932), which is the ending to Morgan's hero arc as she comes of age letting go of her childhood.

Merry's hero's journey is more complicated than Morgan's, as her story arc is longer and gives an indication of being only the beginning of a series. Readers start by following Merry's career as a detective in a human society trying to solve a supernatural case about "the nastiest death spell" (Hamilton loc 121). Still, in this part of the plot, Merry does not evolve or change, and her hero's journey begins as she, approximately in the middle of the novel, is forced to return home to the fae court from her self-imposed exile. Her hero's journey begins, when someone presents the opportunity for her to become the heir. However, readers do not find out if she is successful in the first book, as she returns to human society with her new lovers. Nonetheless, this gap in the plot will probably be answered later in the series, as she finishes her journey.

Readers' understanding of Kelley's journey starts by relying on their knowledge of Shakespeare's play – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – as both the play happening in the primary world and the basis of the fae's secondary world draws from it. Her journey transforms her from the actor playing a role in a play containing the Fair Folk to being "a Faerie princess" in reality and accepting "her destiny on her terms", becoming her own saviour instead of being reliant on Sonny to save her (Livingston loc 3211). In the novel's final chapters, she wins the battle, but her story arc continues in the following books, where readers will discover if she saves the world by winning the war or if she fails. Thereby, all three novels portray a hero's journey, but only Morgan finishes her arc as *Fairy Tale* is a standalone novel. In contrast, both *A Kiss of Shadows* and *Wonderous Strange* are the first of several books and, therefore, only illustrate the beginnings of Kelley and Merry's journeys, leaving readers craving more due to the temporary endings to their story arcs.

According to Wolf's worldbuilding theory, three terms exist to explore the assembly of a storyworld. The first term, inventions, encompasses everything added to the storyworld that deviates from an accurate representation of reality – everything supernatural and magical. Inventions come in four subdivisions: nominal, cultural, natural and ontological (Wolf 36-38). To be categorised as an invention, it has to exist in the storyworld, but be unable to occur in the actual world realistically, and as such, act as an addition to the primary world if not the creation of an entirely different world – a secondary one (Ryan 74-75).

Ontological changes are the biggest as they describe a shift in the natural laws such as physics, time, space, gravity etc. All three narratives from the 2000s contain few of these elements, as they are situated in the primary world and follow the rules that apply there. They have all had the added change of magic and the implied secondary world. In *A Kiss of Shadows*, the description of magic emphasizes that "like any tool: it has to be treated with respect, or it can turn on you. Most magic isn't overtly harmful any more than a buzz saw is harmful, but they can both kill you" (Hamilton loc 4035). As a result, the author thoroughly explains the invention of magic within her storyworld without having to describe it in detail. She assimilates it with something her readers know, relying on their familiarity with a buzz saw instead. Moreover, the fact that the Fair Folk is a part of human society and not hidden from humankind has created a need for cultural change – humanmade change – which clarifies how they have become part of human society. Here, Hamilton again relies on readers' knowledge and creates a link to how countries interact with each other, establishing

"the Bureau of Human and Fey Affairs" (loc 102) acting like an embassy in a foreign country and detective agencies specializing in magical affairs per "The Magical Dispensation Act" (loc 532).

Instead of relying on comparisons, Livingston relies on readers' knowledge of the Shakespeare play as mentioned above, which draws on fae mythology, thereby limiting the need for an explanation about the existence of the Fair Folk and creating room to focus on explaining how the secondary and primary world function as shown by the gates quote from above. As a result of this, the author has chosen to establish an ontological change by adding a secondary world where time moves differently and "[g]rowing to adulthood [could take] the course of a century or more rather than years" (Livingston loc 255). In juxtaposition, Balog ensured the accuracy in real-time by having Cam and Pip maintain equivalence in age, despite their exchange as changelings. She ontologically adds magic in two forms: that which surrounds the presence of the fae and that of making Morgan psychic. Her peers call her spooky (loc 16), and Morgan herself states that ""I'm sorry, but I've never been wrong." I know that probably makes me sound like a total snob, but it's simple fact" (loc 29). Balog uses the first few chapters to explain when Morgan got her gift and how it works. This ontological addition appears realistic to recipients when reading the book, as the rules are immediately transparent.

Since all three narratives unfold in the primary world, they do not include significant natural inventions, except for the realistic occurrence of the Fair Folk, which in both *A Kiss of Shadows* and *Wonderous Strange* becomes an extensive addition, as the species in these stories has several subraces as is further explored in this project's fae section, and neither do any substantial nominal changes occur in any of these narratives. It is also a minor type of invention – a name change – but as these narratives take place in the primary world, there is no need for nominal inventions since readers share a common understanding of the world. Introducing nominal changes could potentially create unnecessary confusion for the audience.

The last type of invention is cultural, making the Fair Folk society relevant and the most significant in all three storyworlds. The Fair Folk is not just simple animals functioning as a natural invention but a complicated race with a complex and long history as well as the human ability to live in societies, think and feel. Livingston initially does this by using fae known from myths and Shakespeare's play as a framework for presenting the fae characters to readers. She adds to these through Sonny's descriptions of the fae world, society and history.

Herewith, Livingston explains the fae as a complete cultural invention, since they have their own social structure where some hides within the human's primary world and others live in the secondary Otherworld. Here the Fair Folk is hierarchical and, like in medieval times, dependent on titles and blood, like "king of Winter, the most powerful of the Four Courts of Faerie, Auberon" (loc 251), "the queen of the Seelie Court. Titania" (loc 278) and "Queen Mabh, capricious ruler of the malevolent Autumn Court; and Gwyn ap Nudd, the strange and secretive Lord of the Spring" (loc 285). This elaborate societal structure and dependency on titles, where the highest holds power, are also evident in *A Kiss of Shadows*, where readers learn that Merry is "Princess Meredith NicEssus" hiding from her murderous family (Hamilton 646). Furthermore, the Fair Folk's society divides into subraces that isolate themselves in their respective geographical areas, similar to human countries ruled by their monarch.

> It could also be that the Queen of Air and Darkness, my aunt, the overall ruler of the court for the last thousand years, give or a take a century, is very into dominance and borders on being a sexual sadist. She has shaped the court in her image, as my uncle, the King of Light and Illusion of the Seelie Court, has shaped his court in his image. Strangely, you can scheme and lie more easily in the Seelie Court. (loc 336)

This monarch-ruled society is also the base of the fae culture in *Fairy Tale*, where "Cam was a changeling. A sickly fairy. He was supposed to die of illness before he reached adulthood" (Balog loc 856), but as he survives into adulthood, he becomes heir apparent in the secondary world and needs to become its ruler, so their society does not collapse after the king loses his first heir (loc 862). The cultural invention of the fae created a need to establish a societal structure for their race. In all three storyworld, the fae is hierarchical and centred around their monarchs' will, equivalent to medieval human societies.

The fae has their law systems heavily reliant on the wishes of the royals, another aspect related to their cultural invention in these storyworlds. Balog sticks with the closeness to medieval society by portraying fae marriage as a business deal instead of a symbol of love (loc 1055). Livingston illustrates this focal power structure of the fae society by displaying Auberon as capable of manipulating not just his people to stay in power but most of the Fair Folk, as he creates the situation that puts Kelley's life in danger. Her death means he has no heir to threaten his hold on power: ""Forsake your claim, girl. Give up the Unseelie power

that resides within you" (loc 3081). The changes in societal law are explained in greater detail in *A Kiss of Shadows,* because part of the plot takes place within the royal court of the Unseelie, where the dark Sidhe are at the top of the food chain, and magic combat duels to the death are used to settle disputes (Hamilton loc 1380-1386). The major plot twist is when the succession laws are refuted and changed. The natural invention of the Fair Folk and the cultural invention of their societies emerge from the ontological invention of the secondary world.

Besides inventions in its four different expressions, Wolf also uses two terms, completeness and consistency, to examine the storyworld's build, and these two aspects are closely intertwined (38-39 & 43-45). Completeness refers to how well the inventions in the storyworld are incorporated to become feasible without disturbing the plot by needing extensive explanations (Robertson 82). Consistency then describes whether all inventions are coherent throughout the narrative on each's merit and in coherence with the other inventions (Wolf 43-45 & Nikolajeva "Fantasy Literature and Fairy Tales" 33-34). As mentioned, the three narratives rely on readers' common knowledge about different aspects of their plots. This similarity to familiar characters, myths, history and societies means that the authors do not have to explain every detail to make their inventions feasible. Hereby, they focus on driving the plot onward, while leaving gaps that readers can fill based on the implied similarities to the commonly known. These minimal explanations also create less opportunity to establish inconsistencies, as there are few concrete facts about the new inventions within the narrative. Minimal details mean a better chance of staying consistent but also create change, leaving readers with a sense that either the primary, secondary or the entire storyworld is incomplete.

A Kiss of Shadows, *Wonderous Strange* and *Fairy Tale* are consistent throughout these books, but as a standalone, only *Fairy Tale* has a storyworld that is complete. Worldbuilding-wise, it could be interesting to explore whether the other two stay consistent as they are the beginning of a series. Especially *A Kiss of Shadows*, which has eight following novels in the series (appendix a), must balance presenting readers with a 'complete' world while staying consistent throughout the entire series. Due to the impossibility of explaining all changes from the real world without ruining the flow of the plot, gaps are necessary. They can then be filled out later, like whether Merry or her evil cousin ultimately becomes the successor, which readers still need to get the answer to after finishing the first book. Hamilton might also give

readers a greater insight into the Fair Folk's complicated court system in the rest of the series by clarifying rules, the hierarchy, and social structures or creating links and differences to the primary world. Another gap left is in *Wonderous Strange*, where the answer to who Kelley's birth parents are not revealed initially. Here she discovers that her mother is Mabh – Queen of Air and Darkness (Livingston loc 3130) – and her father is Auberon, who brought Kelley home from the forest one day (loc 2173), which is not disclosed from the beginning. These gaps mean that the storyline is fluid instead of slowed down by long explaining passages, but this is only possible because readers understand the ontological aspects as each narrative occurs in the primary worlds where the basics are directly in line with reality.

All three authors use character interactions to introduce their storyworld to readers. In *Wondrous Strange,* the clash between the primary and secondary world gets explained to readers through the dual narratives of Sonny and Kelley, instead of explicitly said. This means that when readers and Kelley, representative of the primary world, have problems understanding the presence of inventions from the secondary world, Sonny can explain them through his narrative passages. Examples are his introducing readers to the concept of the gates between the worlds or the horse/kelpie situation alluded to earlier. In *A Kiss of Shadow*, Merry is the reader's guide to understanding the inventions created in the storyworld, like her repetitive explanation of different magical beings' appearances. Like this description of Jeremy Grey: "Even his skin was a pale uniform grey. Not from illness or age. No, he was a trow in the prime of life, just a little over four hundred. There were some lines around his eyes, along the thin mouth, that made him appear mature, but he'd never be old" (Hamilton loc 59). Lastly, *Fairy Tale* does not have a dual perspective or a narrator with an innate understanding of inventions. Instead, Morgan gets a guide comparable to the fairytale mentor – Pip – who helps her understand the secondary world. An example is when he states that the secondary world treats humans as outcasts (Balog loc 2120).

The three books use different tools to explain and introduce the secondary world elements to readers, such as dual narrative, guide, or narrator with an understanding of the entire storyworld. Still, all make the induction of the otherworldly features seem smooth and realistic for readers. Only the inventions relevant to the plot get explained, which makes the worlds feel complete, and while gaps sometimes appear, they are filled later, making the narratives appear consistent.

2010s

From the 2010s, the corpus contains four novels: *The Cruel Prince*, *To Kill a Fae*, *Fighting Destiny* and *A Court of Thorns and Roses*. Similarly to the novels from the 2000s, they centre around a female heroine responsible for saving a world, but they differ from the previous books, because they are placed in the secondary world or have passages that happen in them. Therefore, in the worldbuilding in these novels, the 2000s and 2010s are juxtaposed in construction types but alike in the plot, as they too are built as a hero's journey.

The Cruel Prince's plot portrays Jude's hero's journey and centres around her as the main character. She has been taken from the primary into the secondary world as a young child, as readers find in the prologue (Black). The rest of the narrative occurs several years later when Jude and her sisters are teens. Here the secondary world becomes vulnerable because the king is stepping down, but one of the royal heirs is unwilling to stand back and watch his sibling get crowned. A bloodbath ensues, which reveals Jude's half-brother as another hidden heir. She will not sacrifice him but will not let the evil, murderous royal take the throne either, but the magic in the crown forces Jude to cooperate with the third living heir – the cruel prince Cardan – who has made Jude's life in the secondary world a nightmare as he is the last option (loc 511). Readers follow Jude on this journey to save the secondary world from destruction at the hands of Cardan's older brother. At the end of the book, a happy-for-now happens when Oak crowns Cardan instead (loc 4912). At this moment, Jude wins, but the win is precarious because Cardan never wanted to be king. His vow earlier forces him because a fae has to keep their word, which gives Jude approximately a year to find a better solution. This both shows the hero arc Jude faces through this novel but also gives readers an indication of what will be the focal point in the following books.

The hero's journey in *A Court of Thorns and Roses* is similar to Jude's. Here Feyre starts in the human part of the land but is taken to the spring court in the fae territory as punishment to live there for the rest of her life. The rest of the plot occurs in the fae lands, where the fae are cursed to wear masks: "another High Fae: red-haired and finely dressed in a tunic of muted silver. He, too, wore a mask" (Maas loc 760). Feyre wants to help the fae break the curse and embark on a journey to free them. She also learns that the world is in peril because its magic is unbalanced. The secondary world needs magic even in the parts where the mortals live, and the fae already experiences a "sickness in their lands, affecting their

magic, draining it from them … A magical blight that might one day spread" (loc 1106). Feyre wished to help the fae, so they could stop the blight from spreading and save the world.

In *To Kill a Fae*, Mera's journey presents a detective's story. She needs to catch the serial killer before they start a war between the boroughs. As it's a fae king killed in human territory, the Fair Folk and human authorities must cooperate. Thus Mera, a mermaid in hiding, and Bast, a dark fae, become partners on this quest to save their world from another war (Wilde loc 129). The hero's journey, illustrated by the search for a serial killer, is also seen in *Fighting Destiny*. Syn has to find out who keeps murdering people while helping the Dark Prince keep the light heir from being killed, as they have received threats on her life, but something is not adding up with the newly found Light Heir (Hutchins loc 3294). Syn and Mera must find their killer before the murderers start a war that could destroy their worlds.

All four novels have an unwilling heroine as the centre, like in the 2000s. Feyre gets pushed out on her hero's journey as all she has "been able to do for years: focus on surviving the week, the day, the hour ahead" (Maas loc 46). Additionally, she refuses to help the fae and their world initially: "I would have to be clever and quiet and bide my time until I could escape" (loc 796), but as she finds out they are not the enemy, she tries to save them. This initial refusal to believe the fae species can be anything but evil and vicious while afterwards realising they are not all the same means that *A Court of Thorns and Roses* belongs to Todorov's fantastic category. So do the three other novels. Syn's initial refusal to believe she is a fae becomes negated once her body transforms: "While I didn't embrace the idea of being Fae, I had no plans on dying because I was too stubborn to feed" (Hutchins loc 5090). Here it is showcased that while Syn might not have come to full acceptance, she is moving towards it and no longer refuses that she is not a human witch but a fae. Jude starts out by rejecting being forced to stay in the secondary world and planning on getting back to the primary world with her sisters to live happily ever after, which they also tried at one point while growing up: "Vivi enchanted a random woman to take us home with her" (Black loc 814). This dream persists, but she wants to live and flourish in the secondary world while saving her siblings. Now she must stay to ensure the secondary world does not elapse into anarchy, and nobody else follows Vivi and Oak into the primary world, as seen here: ""You said, 'I will have that crown.' You," I remind him, my hand going to the hilt of my sword. "You've barely spoken Oak's name. He is just a means to an end, and that end is power. Power for you."" (loc 4753). Mera does not have as blatant a refusal of the magic in the beginning as the other heroines,

but it is still present. The difference might be that magic is an integral part of the heroes' journeys in the other stories, whereas *To Kill a Fae* is centred around the murder mystery instead. Therefore, Mera's initial refusal to understand the magical focuses on the murdered fae discovered in the human borough, not his territory. As "Fae didn't get along with… well, basically the entire country" (Wilde loc 16) and a fae royal is not typically found in a human house, but as the details of the case emerge, she accepts the king's body's presence as part of the investigation. These four novels have heroes that initially refuse to believe the changeability of the rules they know. Still, as the narrative explains the magical inventions, our heroes begin to accept the new magic, which classifies them as belonging to Todorov's category of 'the fantastic'.

According to the genre conventions, all four stories fit the young adult genre as the plotlines' structure are quest stories. Still, they illustrate Nikolajeva's two other construction types than what was present in the 2000s. *The Cruel Prince* and *Fighting Destiny* are both open constructions, as narrative passages happen in both a primary and secondary world. In *The Cruel Prince,* fae can cross between the world, but humans need magical aid from the fae, and once a human enters the secondary world, they need to beware of the new rules that govern it. A servant named Tatterfell helps Jude out with the basics of living as a human amongst the fae in the beginning:

> [She] smeared stinging faerie ointment over my eyes to give me True Sight so that I could see through most glamours, who brushed the mud from my boots, and who strung dried rowan berries for me to wear around my neck so I might resist enchantments. She wiped my wet nose and reminded me to wear my stockings inside out, so I'd never be led astray in the forest. (Black loc 155)

Afterwards, Jude has to fend for herself. Where Syn's story unfolds mainly in the primary world, she ends up taking part in 'the Hunt' in the secondary world. Here she learns that the hunt is how Fair Folk traditionally claim their lovers (Hutchins loc 3571). The fae are also the only ones that can open portals between the two worlds:

> The room around us vibrated with powerful magic. It took a very powerful Fae to call open a portal this big. It also meant there was a leyline directly beneath Ryder's club. It was wide open, drawing from this planet and Faery alike to open it. Wind rushed through as the hole opened; a wide meadow with a forest bordering at the edge of it stood where the wall had once been. (loc 3606)

In both storyworlds, some from the Fair Folk can cross between the secondary and the primary world if the situation meets these conditions. In Black's storyworld, the gate is crossing water hidden by fog, and in Hutchins', a fae can open a portal if they are close to a leyline.

The other two novels from the 2010s are closed constructions, as these stories have no primary world. Maas' storyworld is a secondary world divided into mortal and fae territories. A wall in the forest separates these territories: "So as a representative of the immortal realm, I can either gut you like swine, or … you can cross the wall and live out the remainder of your days in Prythian" (loc 560), which indicates that crossing the wall is not often done or something humans should wish for. To be taken to the fae lands is viewed as a punishment. Furthermore, Feyre is drugged and sleeps through the crossing, so she cannot cross back to the human territories, as she cannot find the magical barrier. In Wilde's storyworld, Mera can travel between the boroughs by regular transport, similar to crossing borders between countries in reality, as when "they arrived, a black train shaped like a bullet waited for them. It didn't follow the pattern from the regional trains to the other boroughs—those were white with a red line cutting through their length. "The hull is made of carbon fiber. Everything has iron in the human world, including the paint you use on your trains."" (loc 513). Here, the addition of creating a train that is iron free for the routes that cross into fae boroughs becomes a necessity due to the fae's intolerance to the material. In *To Kill a Fae*, the land is split into boroughs, one for each species, similar to the split between the fae and human territories in *A Court of Thorns and Roses*. Still, as the land markers, country names, or regions do not fit in reality, they are placed in a secondary world as opposed to *A Kiss of Shadows*, where the inventions integrate into the primary world. The 2010s show a development in how storyworlds involve the fae, as none of them are implied constructions as seen in the 2000s; instead, both Nikolajeva's open and closed construction categories are present.

According to Wolf's four categories of inventions, these four novels all have the natural invention of the species fae. More about this is present in the projects fae section. Other natural inventions are the hounds involved in the Hunt in *Fighting Destiny*: "The hounds will scare you at first, but they are trained to find and protect until their rider gets to you" (Hutchins loc 3583), but they are closely related to the invention of the Fair Folk as they are the hounds' masters. Furthermore, to integrate the Fair Folk, who became publicly known into society in the primary world, laws had to be made, changed or evoked to encompass them

as an intelligent species. A system where "Enforcers and Assassins for an organization of Witches who kept Otherworld creatures on the right track—and out of the local newspapers. Thirty some years ago, those creatures of the Otherworld crept out of the shadows and made it known to the humans that they were no longer alone here on earth" (loc 120). In this storyworld, the fae's entry into mainstream society is relatively recent within a human lifespan. Humans often view them as beautiful celebrities (loc 3294) with a status similar to the Fair Folk in *A Kiss of Shadows*. Another natural invention is the dangerous plants of the secondary world with poisonous flowers (loc 3583). This segment occurs in the secondary world and alludes to readers that it has a different plant system where most things are deadly. These natural inventions where the secondary world is fatal to humans are also evident in Jude's story, where she needs to salt her food to ensure she does not fall victim to fae enchantments or addiction to the fae fruit (Black loc 1163 & 4224). *The Cruel Prince* presents the deadly part of the Fair Folk's territory as the dangerous creatures that roam the lands rather than being inflicted by the plant life. An example is the Puca, who "use[s] your own desires to lure you to some remote place. Then they eat you. Slowly" (Maas loc 1471). The three storyworlds present readers with a presentation of the secondary world as being deadly due to the natural invention incorporated in the narrative.

To Kill a Fae does not have these distinct natural inventions. Instead, the secondary world presents itself as modern and global, creating links with our world in the way each species has its borough, like each nationality, in reality, has its country - where they can cross the boundaries, which for some is more normal than others, as the Fair Folk does not typically travel outside their society (Wilde loc 16). As a result, Wilde minimises the need to explain how the physical secondary world works and can focus on the detective plotline and introduce each species as they become relevant. The prominent natural inventions here are the different species and subcategorizations, like "most pixies have wings" (loc 374), to help readers understand Mera's conclusions based on the clues found.

The natural invention of this geographical structure is directly given to readers early, where Mera explains that "Hollowcliff was the Capital of Tagrad, and it was split into five non-bordering boroughs, each the capital of their respective state—witches, vamps, shifters, humans, and fae" (loc 21). The maps in both Black and Maas' storyworlds clarify the geographical build. Here readers will have the visual aid from the start to help reduce misunderstandings regarding mentioned locations. The maps appear on the page before the

prologue and first chapter, illustrating the map of Elfhame and Prythian, where the plots unfold. See each map below:

(Maas & Black)

Cultural inventions are similar to those found in the 2000s worlds, where the Fair Folk have their own society and world. However, in the 2010s, readers and narrating heroines get to experience the secondary worlds. The cultural inventions in Wilde's storyworld are closest to reality where again, societal structures and law system is alike to what readers know. One has to substitute species boundaries for nationalities or states. The Fair Folk in their borough of Tir Na Nog still have a hierarchical system with monarchs (loc 14, 32 & 61), though due to Mera's exposure as a mermaid princess of Atlantea (loc 799), the series will most likely change focus from the solved murder case and the Fair Folk to more globalisation and

cooperation or even onto that of mer society and species in the sequels. The Fair Folk society's cultural invention displays similar systems in *The Cruel Prince*, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *Fighting Destiny*. In these storyworlds, the Fair Folk are structured around monarchs and divided into subcategories. However, in *Fighting Destiny,* the Fair Folk actively integrate themselves into human society rather than being confined solely to the secondary world. A way Black invented a cultural change in her storyworld that is akin to medieval human society is by stating that "[o]nly in Faerieland is a giant toad the less conspicuous choice" to ride than a horse (loc 1493). This could be defined as a nominal invention, as the toad functions as a horse would in reality. However, one can argue that it can be perceived as a cultural change considering the continued existence of horses in both the primary and secondary worlds within this storyworld. Additionally, it is peculiar how the secondary world society is akin to medieval reality as the primary world is similar to the real world with malls, phones etc. In *A Court of Thorns and Roses,* the resemblance to medieval society is not limited to the human or fae part, but that is because, in this storyworld, both territories are part of one island, as the map of Prythian above showcases. An example of the medieval likeness is when Feyre is out hunting. Here she uses a bow instead of a firearm, as modern hunters would. To Feyre, using a bow comes naturally because she does not know any other methods due to the lack of the invention of the firearm(Maas loc 80). With this, the four novels create cultural inventions explaining each secondary world evolving around the fae species and their society.

Ontological inventions are not prevalent due to the presence of magic, the fae and the secondary world in each narrative. However, as readers, one can assume the natural laws function as in our world, seeing as there is no evidence to the contrary. Nevertheless, each of these storyworlds contains either two worlds, a primary and secondary world, as seen in *Fighting Destiny* and *The Cruel Prince*, which is an ontological change from reality or one world, which is a secondary world, not a primary one, as evident from *To Kill a Fae* or *A Court of Thorns and Roses*. In these two, there is one world present, but that world is not reality, plus a few magical additions and, as such, cannot be categorized as a primary world. Since they are secondary storyworlds, they are evidence of ontological changes from reality by themselves. Another aspect indicating an ontological change is the differing societies between *The Cruel Prince*'s primary and secondary worlds. The time difference between them can be a symbol that once the two worlds were in closer contact, the fae society in the

secondary world was comparable to that of the human world in medieval times, but at some point, this closeness ended. Since humans have a shorter lifespan, they also change faster. The difference in ageing could explain the ontological invention of the period difference between the worlds as time seems to move the same otherwise. As the four authors have not deemed to describe other ontological changes and nothing confuses the reading experience, one can assume that these secondary worlds are ontological, like reality, as that is the default understanding of readers when the difference is not apparent or explained.

As with the 2000s, the 2010 novels stay consistent with their inventions and give the impression of completeness by relying on readers' default understanding of its natural laws as being like reality's ontological rules, which eliminates the need for further explanations. Worldbuilding has evolved from implied constructions set in the primary world to either occurring entirely in a secondary world, closed construction, or crossing between a primary and secondary world, open construction. Therefore, they require greater detail as the secondary world is an implied presence and an actual physical world in these storyworlds. Readers must understand their rules to immerse themselves in the storyworld and plot. According to Lessa, the issue of consistency is central to the understanding of both the ontological makeup and the internal organization of possible worlds. This highlights that for any world to be possible, its universe of objects must be internally free of contradictions (90), which is the case with all four narratives. They all leave gaps throughout the plot; some are filled later in the same novel, others will not fill them at all, and later books in the series will clarify some of the gaps. In *Fighting Destiny*, an example of a gap that leaves readers questioning is when they discover that the light heir is a fraud.

> "Arianna, well she's made of at least a few of the victims. She's been sewn together magically, for lack of a better description—with pieces. But something or someone is controlling her. She has no blood, no heat. She's just dead. Like a puppet, taking her down would be easy, but it wouldn't stop whoever is controlling her" (Hutchins loc 4538)

This passage implies that Arianna is not "the newly found Light Heir" (loc 3294) but just a puppet the murderer made and controls. Syn finds out who the real puppet master is at the end of the book. The first book does not answer the question: Who and where is the real Light Heir, but *Taunting Destiny*, the sequel, does. In this novel, Syn finds that she is not just any high fae but the missing heir (Hutchins), which gives readers the answer to the gap left in

Fighting Destiny. This way of leaving gaps is common and occurs in all four novels, just as they also do in the 2000s. Again, readers question whether they can find the answers to the gaps in later instalments, satisfying questions readers might have from these first books in each series, or if they are left wanting while still managing to keep focus in the eventline. These worlds are complete and consistent enough to allow readers to experience immersion, but if this remains the case throughout the entire series could be the focus of further study.

Readers' guide to comprehending the storyworlds' inventions is essential for them to feel complete and consistent. In *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, readers follow Feyre into the fae territory and learn in parallel with her how things function here. This means that her confusion in the beginning about her treatment as being almost a guest and not a slave or servant translate to the reader. ""So you truly mean for me to stay here forever." What I meant was: So I'm to stay in this luxury while my family starves to death?" (Maas loc 902), as readers' knowledge is limited to what Feyre has already told the reader – fae are vicious, evil creatures – readers can have the same initial confusion she experiences as she finds out her new living arrangement is luxury. This correlation to the narrator as readers link to understand the storyworlds and inventions are also present in the other three novels. Wilde has Mera explaining the secondary world's infrastructure; though she, as a character in the book, has an innate understanding of the layout and does not need to clarify, she still narrates it so that readers get an insight too, functioning as the reader's guide. When she gets to the fae state where she does not possess this innate knowledge, she and the readers have Bast as a guide instead of her, like: ""certain Sidhe have the ability to communicate with each other from a distance […] as long as they wish to share such things, of course. It takes weeks for us to create a mind link, but once it's stablished, it works better than one of your phones." He tapped his temple" (Wilde loc 1544). Here Mera learns why the fae does not need phones or modern technology as humans; instead, they rely on their magical abilities. Readers understanding of *Fighting Destiny* functions much the same. Syn introduces the aspects she understands. Otherwise, she has guidance from other supernatural creatures like Ryder or Zahruk to explain. Jude is human but has gained an understanding of the secondary world from growing up there, which readers follow as she is the narrator, like here: "I read about the blusher mushroom, a pale fungus that blooms with beads of a red liquid that looks uncomfortably like blood. Small doses cause paralysis, while large doses are lethal, even for the Folk" (Black loc 2034). She can find out what she does not know from other characters or

books, like in the primary world or reality, which equates the way thing are taught to what readers know. All four heroines function as the reader's guide to understanding the storyworld, which is necessary now that the narratives do not only transpire within a primary world where readers have an innate understanding of the ontological laws. The guide was unnecessary in the 2000s novels, as the only had implicit secondary worlds.

2020s

The corpus in 2020 contains three novels: *The Anointed Fae*, *Crown Princess Academy* and *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, and again they are centred around a female main character who has to go on their hero's journey. In *Crown Princess Academy*, Penne unwillingly becomes the focal point when a "tiny crown—a mark of one chosen to be a Crown Princess Initiate… and [she] had activated it and used its power" (Flowers loc 601). She then has to survive within the palace, and to do that, and she must align with the fae prince in saving the world from "raw dark magic manifested from the Malice that had killed most of humanity" (loc 233). In *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, the fate of the fae land is at stake. To save the species and their land, they need to get the right fae on the throne (Kova loc 5844). *The Anointed Fae* has two heroines, Aries and Oriel, from different worlds who must find a way to save the three secondary worlds in this storyworld from collapsing into each other. As portrayed with the "[c]reatures are breaking through the barriers, seemingly from somewhere in between, a place where we didn't believe anything could thrive" (Huxx loc 124). The girls figure this out and set out to save their worlds from destruction. Each of these three stories involves one or more worlds in peril, so they are heroic quests to salvage them and therefore defined by belonging to the fantasy genre like the rest of the corpus.

In construction types, these three belong to Nikolajeva's closed category, as none have a primary world. Kova and Flowers created their storyworlds to divide the lands into human and fae territories, similar to what Maas did in the 2010s. In *Crown Princess Academy,* the land and people are split into two parts "those who remained segregated between the pompous fae-ruled lands of the Kingdom and the lawless outskirts known as the Dregs" (Flowers loc 233) in the secondary world where most of the plot takes place. Penne finds herself kidnapped to a malice realm at one point: "Teleportation always left behind a remnant, but a true scar like this meant she hadn't just traveled a long distance, she'd traveled across realms' (loc 2549). Here one sliver of the plot takes place, though it is known the war between malice and light is taking place as "[m]alice grows ever stronger and it has begun to invade more worlds than just our own. There are seven realms, three of which thrive on Light" (loc 2870). So, the human realm has become the frontline in stopping malice from overtaking the three worlds thriving on light, and as such, is the prominent place where the narrative takes place. The human world could be described as a dystopian version of the primary world. Still, as its geography is limited to one kingdom with the rest of the world destroyed by malice, the

differences to the real world are so pronounced that it is defined as another secondary world, not a primary one. Therefore, the storyworld is a closed construction.

Kova's storyworld is close in its built to Maas', as there is a physical barrier distinguishing the boundaries between two territories – the magical and the human – making it possible for Katria and her group to cross "the Fade into the land of Midscape…we are no longer on that mortal plane" (Kova loc 1501). Furthermore, Kova included a map of the magical lands of Midscape, so readers understand the landmarks and distances the group pass and references, to see

(Kova placed right before the story begins)

enlarged picture look in appendix b. As the story takes place in a world where geography and history differ from reality, it is a secondary world and a closed construction. *The Anointed Fae* immediately introduces readers to the fact that the storyworld consists of three secondary worlds with no humans, and all citizens are a part of the Fair Folk. The three worlds are named as realms within the storyworld: "three realms, Equipoise, Leukós, and Tenebrous" (Huxx loc 124), where there are clear rules for crossing between them. Only the storyworlds' councillors should be able to create portal crossing between the world (loc 360-365), like the rule set in place when travelling between the primary and secondary worlds in the 2010 novels; for instance, how portals work in *Fighting Destiny*, where only powerful fae can create a portal.

The Anointed Fae's storyworld has several worlds, but none is primary, so it is a closed construction. This shows an evolution in how the worlds are constructed in YA fae fantasy through the last three decades, as it started as what is often known as low fantasy, being implied constructions, then in the 2010s came a transition period with both open and closed constructions depicted and finally in 2020 where the only closed constructions are in the corpus, which is most often associated with high fantasy according to Nikolajeva.

According to Todorov's classification, all the storyworlds are secondary when examining these three novels. Everything is a natural and cultural invention, so characters within these universes do not find differences in a nonexistent primary world weird, as a

primary world does not exist. However, the protagonists meet changes in what they perceive as normal with initial hesitancy. In *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, Katria sees a fae ritual which she interrupts as she does not understand and rejects it. Furthermore, she refuses to recognise that it requires one of the last things she has left of her mom (Kova loc 1347). Still, when Oren explains its necessity, she cannot deny that the ritual was important to save the fae: "The ritual we performed in the wood last night was to draw out the ancient power of the lost royal family of Aviness from the last living heir. […] They ruled for centuries, until Boltov the First killed King Aviness the Sixth" (loc 1871-1873). Here Katria starts to understand what her disruption meant and how she is now willing to help save the fae as the magic went into her instead of Davien. Initially, she refuses the magic to save her heirloom but ends up accepting the need for the magic, so she goes on her hero's journey. In *Crown Princess Academy,* Penne's initial refusal of light magic, once she finds herself bound to the crown, later gives way to acceptance as she realises she can wield its power and use her status as the princess to aid other humans, especially those exiled to the dregs, by defeating their overlords, the fae. She accepts her call to duty and embarks on her journey to exile the fae from the human realm: "A candidate full of Malice sent through a portal to the fae realm? Yeah, that would definitely break down the portal for good and stop this madness. Fae weren't supposed to be here" (Flowers loc 1025). Where in *The Anointed Fae*, both Aries and Oriel express resistance when they cannot simply continue school in their realms in chapters two and three (Huxx), and later one of them gets burnt at the school ground on Equipoise by an animal which leaves "the glowing mark, which was now pulsating with small veins running up my arm. "This is going to sound crazy, but I think it was a Tenebrous frosted frog."" (loc 1277). In the beginning, the girls trust and believe what they are told – that one cannot cross between the secondary worlds without a portal – but once confronted by the frog from Tenebrous while staying on Equipoise, they decide not to accept the facts as the girls now know them and commence on their journey of getting answers. So, though none of these three novels has a primary world, there are still clear rules of how the secondary world(s) and magic work, where the heroines initially start by refusing changes to their status quo through the narratives; they start accepting them, and can therefore they still be categorized as what Todorov deems the fantastic.

Alexander highlights that fantasy often structures itself as a quest journey, which she considers a hero's journey. Like all the others in the corpus, this is also true of these three

novels. The hero's journey is a way to examine the story's plotline, which is crudely the home-away-home structure (Alexander 11). Initially, all four heroes of the 2020s refuse their call to battle, instead focusing on their wishes. Katria wants to escape her stepmother and stepsister's clutches but does not want to enter Midscape as "[p]eople who go into the forest are presumed dead after less than an hour" (Kova loc 147), but due to her interference in the fae's ritual "to restore [Davian's] power to him as the sole remaining heir of Aviness" (loc 1877). She receives the power in his stead and has to start her journey to help Davian until they can transfer them to him. On her journey, they find that Katria is half fae though she still insists that her mother must be a random fae (loc 5804). In the end, though, she takes the fae throne as its rightful successor after saving their lands from the tyrannical pretender Boltov (loc 5844). As a result, she finds her new home after the growth she experiences throughout her journey. In *The Anointed Fae,* Aries and Oriel are forced from their home realms to enter school in Equipoise and have to start their journeys because of it. Their emerging friendship helps them support each other through their journeys. An example is: "Oriel's instructions were calm, nobody was whispering about me in the background. I felt the power of my element in my veins. The water in my palm started to swirl around, small droplets rising up from my hand into the air" (Huxx 2004). Here Oriel helps Aries gain a new perspective on her element, which they need to stop the secondary worlds from collapsing into one another. The novel's ending still needs to reveal whether they save the worlds, as it is only the beginning of this series, so both girls' journeys still need to be completed. However, they each have to return home for summer break (chapter 42/43), ending the journeys in book one by returning to their original worlds. In *Crown Princess Academy,* Penne leaves the dregs, despite being reluctant, to save her friend from being consumed by the malice and to return the light artefact, but she ends up bonding with it, because "Malice Casters had Malice. Malice destroyed Light. Therefore, the crown should have been destroyed, taking with it the other crowns that governed entrance to Crown Princess Academy. Instead, it did exactly what it was designed to do: find a candidate and give her power over Light… never mind that she was a Malice Caster" (Flowers loc 611). Herewith, she must enter the academy as a candidate, as returning to the dregs is not an option. She survives the deadly competition till the final test, where "This dose of Malice is significant enough to awaken the Light in your bodies and turn you near-immortal" so that one of them can become queen (loc 2911). Penne endures, though by the end of the novel, she has not saved the realm from malice or the dark fae king

yet, as the epilogue reveals: Steel "adjusted the reigns to [his] Malice horse, a beast that was more shadow and bones than living creature" (loc 2966), but she has gained the power to fight the coming battle in the sequels. As shown above, the main character in the 2020s novel each goes on a hero's journey, which is the plot's focal point and driving force, aligning the structure of all the novels included in our corpus.

As all three novels have secondary worlds, inventions must exist, according to Wolf's theory of worldbuilding. The essential invention that indicates that the storyworld does not represent reality is the existence of magic as a fundamental part of their world, often represented by the introduction of the Fair Folk. Magic is an ontological invention as it changes the storyworld's natural laws from that of ours. Examples are how all Fair Folk share the ability of glamour in the Midscape universe (Kova loc 1036), where Katria can also smell and tastes lies (loc 686), how "Lucas produced an artifact which he activated with a bolt of Light" (Flowers loc 2889) or the Fair Folk separation into races based on their elemental magic in *The Anointed Fae* (Huxx loc 952). This ontological invention of adding magic to the worlds' foundation is incorporated in both the geography, history and culture in these storyworlds so that they can no longer be defined as primary but are instead secondary worlds. This means the entire storyworlds are imagined and not based on a warped representation of reality.

Several cultural inventions are present in each novel, such as changes to history or society, because the worlds are imaginary. Each world's history differs from ours, explicit or implicit in the narratives. For example, Aries and Oriel have grown up knowing that the "Fae from the different realms won't ever get along, there has and will always be a power struggle between the Lumini, Tartarean, and Mesial. […] Travel between the realms is forbidden for a reason" (Huxx 111-112). Those are the rules and customs ingrained in the modern fae of this storyworld, which also explains why the girls start by refusing to begin their hero's journey in another realm. Similarly, in *Crown Princess Academy*, Penne accepts the divided kingdom into the malice-ravaged part, the dregs, and the fae lands with riches because that is all she has ever known (Flowers). The same as the storyworld in *A Dance With a Fae Prince* is "three worlds: the Beyond—where you go when you die; Midscape—where you are now, and where those of us with magic still reside; and the Natural World—the world humans were given after the ancient wars, and where you're from" (Kova loc 1546), which indicates that these worlds separation is due to an ancient war in this storyworlds history. These novels all contain

cultural inventions explaining the world's history and modern society due to the natural invention of the fae species.

The fae represents a natural invention, as they represent an addition of a new species not proven to exist in reality. Their presence must be clarified to become a realistic part of these storyworlds. One way to do that is by explaining their origins like:

> 'Eons ago, nine gods came to life in the Equipoise Realm, giving birth to the elemental bloodlines. Lifeforce, Light, Earth, Fire, Water, Ice, Air, Energy, and the Psionics. All elements existed together in perfect balance, until one day, a volatile elemental feud broke out between Fire and Water over power. The feud stretched over thousands of generations until it reached a point where the gods feared that the whole realm would dwindle into oblivion. They split the realm in three, separating the elements to ensure peace, keeping the neutral earth magic as a central connection where magic could flow between the two realms restoring balance once again.' (Huxx loc 421)

Here Huxx incorporates the Fair Folk's origins, validating their presence and repeating what readers already know of the storyworld – specifically, why it has three separate secondary worlds. Flowers use the same approach though not as explicitly, introducing the light/dark fae dilemma resulting in the malice presence in the human realm and the separation of the lands, as mentioned before. Kova dedicates long passages to explain the intricacies of fae history, modern struggles and lands, for instance, the storyworlds geography found in chapter 10. The presence of the Fair Folk is seamlessly incorporated this way into the narrative as a natural invention that is realistic and understandable.

Another significant natural invention is the geography of these secondary worlds, as it is diverse and differentiates from reality. Kova uses written explanations, which allow readers to imagine the kingdom's structure because it is implied. Flowers presents readers with a map of the magical part of her world – Midscape – depicted earlier. Huxx is thorough

(Huxx before 1 chapter & after chapter 43)

by not just representing a part of the secondary world(s) like Flowers on the map; instead, readers are from the beginning given a map showcasing the school grounds where almost all the narrative takes place, and after the book's final chapter readers can also find a map for each of the three secondary worlds presented as illustrated on the picture. Hereby, the authors help readers comprehend the geographical aspects of these storyworlds that Wolf defines as a type of natural invention through written explanations or visual maps.

Despite these storyworlds comprising no primary world, where the ontological aspects are implied based on reality, they still give the impression of being complete and consistent. An example could be Aries explaining that she enjoys the cold climate in Tenebrous (Huxx chapter 3). Later she reminisced that the "cold Equipoise air was different from the winter chill in Tenebrous. Slightly fresher, and a lot less cold" (loc 1223). This little detail of the climates affirms another aspect of how the secondary worlds vary and gives readers the impression of completeness concerning this storyworld. Similar examples of minor details explaining the mechanics of secondary worlds can also be found in the other novels, displaying a whole world to readers. The authors again choose to abstain from lengthy explanations of world aspects not imperative to understand the plot. Therefore, they leave gaps in the eventline, e.g. readers only get the first part of Aries, Oriel and Penne's heroes' journeys in these first instalments of their series, though one can expect answers in the coming sequels. This gap is absent in *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, as Katria completes her hero's journey letting readers know she saves the fae lands. Instead, the rest of Midscape is the gap the other novels in the series need to fill. This book is part of a series of standalone novels placed in different territories of the same storyworld, though each book has a happy-ever-after end. The Midscape map, depicted before, shows part of Midscape is the elf lands, and book 1 in the series is *A Deal with the Elf King*. The fae tells Katria that "[h]umans aren't made for this world […] Only one human can survive here—the Human Queen. […] She's married to the Elf King and lives far to the south" (Kova loc 1571-1575), this first instalment provides details on how a human survives in Midscape, the natural invention of the elves, and the cultural inventions of their species history and societal functions. So, readers can get insight into other parts of Midscape in the other standalone novels, but they are not relevant to this examination of the contemporary expression of the fae. The novels present readers with storyworld characteristics that seem realistic, which means that we can define them as consistent and complete, according to Wolf, because if there were too many or significant

gaps or counterintuitive information, it would prohibit the reader's understanding of the narratives, which the inventions do not.

For future research, it could be interesting to see if the worldbuilding stays realistic throughout the entire series, like with all the novels from the corpus, as *Fairy Tale* is the only standalone with no other books within the same storyworld. The other novels this thesis focus on are part of extended series. The worldbuilding needs to stay consistent, and the growing storyworlds still need to give the impression of being complete without creating inconsistency for the fae to remain realistic to readers. Furthermore, conducting a recipient study could be relevant to determine if readers perceive the storyworld as realistic and accept it as such. Here, Wolf readers' relations terms of saturation, immersion and absorption become applicable. According to McCallum, reading is an interactive process, and meanings are the product of intertextual and intersubjective relations generated by a text, where the implied reader is a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient ("Intro…" 15). Therefore, a recipient study could be valent to prove if different recipients also perceive these findings and how else they interpret the storyworlds.

Tropes

When examining the changes in tropes since the millennium change, first, it is essential to delineate the meaning of the term 'trope'. When used in rhetoric, tropes refer to "a substitution of a word or phrase by a less literal word of phrase" (Lundberg and Keith 66). In this sense of the word, it is used as a literary tool by authors when constructing their narratives, but it is also a tool that people can use in everyday speech. (Mušić). However, this is not the definition that the word 'trope' is most associated with today. The second use of the word, which is the one we will focus on, "is a storytelling convention, device, or motif; specific tropes might be a characteristic of a particular genre of storytelling" ("What Is a Trope? || Definition and Examples").

In literature, tropes are not limited to just one genre; they can be found in anything from classic, contemporary, fantasy, etc. Authors frequently use tropes to create a sense of familiarity and recognizability for the reader and establish genre conventions. When it comes to the literary fantasy genre, there are a lot of popular and well-established tropes that readers expect to find. The trope of the chosen one is an example of this since it has become widespread since the 2000s. However, it has also gathered a love/hate relationship with fantasy readers. The chosen one is where "a character who is alone capable of fulfilling an important purpose, and whose responsibility is to resolve the plot's main conflict — which will often be to save the world" ("14 Popular Fantasy Trope (and How to Revitalize Them)"). This trope's popularity and usage mean readers might tire of its overuse. Therefore, authors must walk a thin line when they include it. If they add too many tropes, the readers feel deja vu, losing the book's originality and appeal. Still, suppose the author does not add enough or none. In that case, they risk losing the readers altogether as they do not adhere to the reader's expectations of some recognisability ("14 Popular Fantasy Tropes (and How to Revitalize Them)").

Tropes rise or fall in popularity over time, and none ever withdraw completely. However, the extent to which it is used changes, particularly in genres like fantasy with various subgenres and adaptability. The use of mythical creatures such as the fae started as tropes, but the fae has since evolved into mainstream fantasy, including its own set of sub-tropes, fx changelings, portals to a different world, do not know their real identity, etc. In this thesis, we will examine the central tropes used throughout the decades with a focus on

different aspects such as character tropes, worldbuilding tropes, and plot tropes in our primary sources through the seven tropes: retelling, the chosen one, coming of age/establishing a self-identity, visual storytelling, multiperspectivity and good vs. evil – the grey area and romantic tropes. Primary sources can explore different tropes, but some tropes take on a more central role than others, either due to their importance and presence in the novels or their importance in general in the literature world. It is based on these that we decided which tropes to highlight.

Visual storytelling

The entire corpus contains elements of visual storytelling in the form of their covers, which can give readers visual aid, for instance, with how the main character looks, as pointed out in the fae section. Another way the covers can function as initial guides for readers are when they symbolically hint at the plot. Three of the novels have this type of symbolism on their covers, one from each decade; furthermore, they do not have any character representations in juxtaposition to the covers mentioned in the fae section.
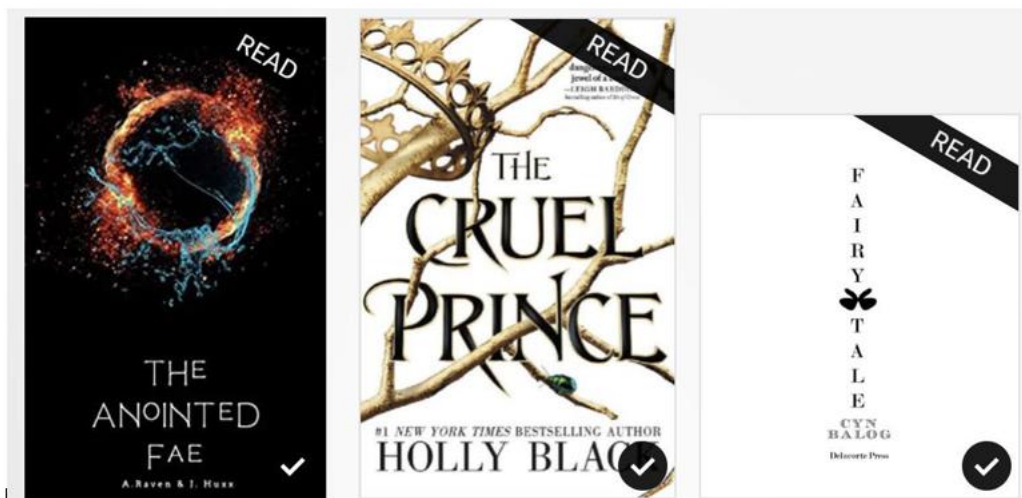
(Huxx, Black & Balog cover pages)

The picture displays these three covers, with *Fairy Tales*' cover being the simplest. It has the title, the author's name, the publishing firm in black, and a set of wings with a white background. The title can be a symbol of the genre and, in coherence with the wings, highlight its origin of being tales about the fae where the black and white colour scheme can be a reference to good vs evil as a leading theme in this novel. These symbolisms are equivalent to Morgan's beginning worldview of the fairies, and her journey is displayed as a battle between her, the hero, against the antagonistic fae and the traditional approach to fae as

mainly being separated from the primary world. *The Cruel Prince*'s cover illustrates the fight for the throne, where the tree can symbolise the significance placed on the bloodline and family trees. In *The Anointed Fae*, the circle can be a sign of collaboration, and the fact that it has water and fire is essential because the two main characters are a fire and a water fae, hinting at the need to unite to face the coming struggles. Furthermore, the fact that the entire circle comprises both elements instead of each element representing a part of it hints at them joining and controlling each other's element, not just their own. All the novels in the corpus have covers that contribute to the visual storytelling in each narrative. However, the three highlighted above do this without illustrating characters but are still symbolically relevant once readers know the story.

   Another visual storytelling aspect is the beginning quotes before the author's narrative begins. Half of the novels from the primary sources have a beginning quote or dedication. Those that do not are Balog, Wilde, Hutchins, Flowers and Kova's stories. According to Song, recipients of visual storytelling have better recollection and understanding of one-liners than highlighting the important paragraphs or text unites or repeating them (30-32). These beginning quotes are a type of one-liners guiding the readers' comprehension of the coming narrative. Maas uses the phrase "go Under the Mountain" (loc 2) as part of her dedication. Within the narrative, the evil Amarantha's court is situated under the mountain (loc 4056), so her dedication hints that to go under the mountain for somebody is a personal sacrifice and something that means they are loyal and dedicated to the person they do it for - Like Feyre proves to be for her fae lover. Huxx quotes George R.R. Martin ""You may be as different as the sun and the moon, but the same blood flows through both your hearts. You need her, as she needs you."" (loc 37), which, like the circle on the cover, indicates that the girls need each other to succeed. Black's beginning quote is a poem by Robert Graves depicted in the picture. Here

(Black loc 55)

the poem gives readers an idea of the elusive and powerful fae involved in history and this novel. This impression of elusiveness is also present in *Wonderous Strange*'s fae, and again
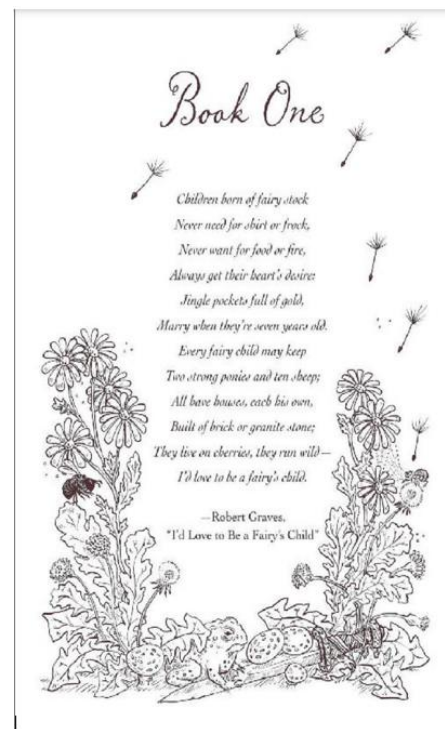
their ambiguity is hinted at with the beginning quote, "Up and down, up and down, I will lead them up and down" (Livingston loc 94). Lastly, Hamilton does not allude to the narrative in this way; instead, she dedicates thanks to believers, storytellers and consumers. Her story would not be without the traditions of both genre and species, as YA fae fantasy is built upon these two facets. "For everyone who kept the old stories alive in small rooms and great houses, by firelight and electricity, for all who kept the faith and for those who just liked a good story" (loc 43). These five beginning sentences, be they quote or dedication, either symbolises respect and reverence to the tradition they draw from or hint at essential aspects in the novels to help guide readers' understanding, like the one-liners' assistance in Song's study.

Visual storytelling is also present due to the maps included in some of the narratives to illustrate the secondary worlds' spatial structures, all depicted throughout the worldbuilding section and in appendix b as Ekman argues, a map is present at the beginning of a considerable number of fantasy novels, and it holds information about the imaginary world awaiting in the text (71). A map is a metaphor for a geographical setting. The map maker asks the map reader to believe that a mosaic of points, lines, and areas on a flat sheet of paper is equivalent to a multidimensional world in space and time, which can reference the setting of the plot's main events (Muehrcke 319 and Sundmark 123). According to Song's research, spatial narratives, story maps, and visual storytelling are commonplace in the cartographic lexicon. They can combine graphics, images, videos, and text to provide a profound account of people, places, and events. (Song 12), which is what these fantasy novels do. They combine a visual map with a text to steer the reader's spatial understanding within the storyworld, which Muehrcke states are more manageable than having to use writing to describe the land as a visual map will be concrete and more realistic (318). The maps included in fantasy are not traditional maps, as they do not depict reality. Instead, they show the manifestation of the storyworld or secondary worlds they portray. Christy Williams quotes Ekman, who states that to "create the map means, largely, to create the world of the map" (134). This is the case with all the map examples included in our corpus. They are the indication of the storyworlds manifestation. However, the presence of maps and their type differ depending on the novels' publishing decade. The three novels from the 2000s do not have maps as part of the visual storytelling. In the 2010s, half of them include maps, Black and Maas, and they are black and white drawings. They evolved into colourful 3D

depictions in the 2020s, taking inspiration from computer game maps, as seen in *A Dance with the Fae Prince* and *The Anointed Fae*. So, how to create a map and the storyworld that has this visual aid has evolved over the last three decades based on the small corpus.

Retellings

One of the repetitive tropes seen throughout time in everything from literature to the film industry is retellings. A retelling is a text that has to exist in the context of another source, often in relation to a specific work, but that is not always the case. Three aspects shape retellings: the already-known story, the current social preoccupations and values, and the textual form. These three aspects help establish a strong sense that a canon within these stories is distinct enough to be recognisable even when adapted into new stories (Stephens "Retelling Stories across Time and Cultures" 91). Due to the fact that they provide desired knowledge about society and the self, few retellings are straightforward replications. Folktales, myths, and legends serve as stories with concrete connections to a broader system of narratives, and the significance of these stories depends on how they fit into an assumed entirety (92). While several aspects of the 'original' narrative are retained in retellings, they may deviate significantly and emphasize social ideologies related to gender, class, materialism and economic presumptions depending on the contemporary time of both stories (98).

Much like children's literature, which originates from retellings and adaptation of familiar stories, YA also takes inspiration from older stories and uses them to create a discourse for young adults that can be seen in not just literature but across different media due to the timelessness of these historical tales (Zipes "13: Adapting Fairy-Tale Novels" 320). It is, of course, not simply fairytales that are used but mythologies, folklore, historical romances, fx Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII, legendary heroes from history such as Robin Hood and modern classics like Romeo and Juliet. These familiar tales are frequently recycled because they include archetypal characters and universal themes like the struggle between good and evil, the value of love and friendship, and/or the victory of the human spirit. These can then be modified; however, there still needs to be a tiny amount of the original story for it to be deemed a retelling, and since these themes appeal to audiences of all ages and socioeconomic status, it makes them a potent source of repetition and inspiration for creators. Using fairytales, myths and folklore stories for retellings in the entertainment industry helps

keep the different genres and the tales alive. Thus, literature changes how myths and folklore are voiced and has even bolstered the creation of new ones (Greenhill and Rudy 10).

Three primary sources either use other works as part of the story and rewrite them or utilize inspiration from other works to tell an adopted version. One novel from each decade is a retelling: *Wondrous Strange*, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *A Dance with the Fae Prince.*

In the 2000s, there is *Wondrous Strange,* where the plot centres around *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare. It is a different form of retelling since the story that the novel is retelling is also a part of the novel. Elements of the main plot are also loosely based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In a way, it is a sequel to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as it is stated in the novel that every tale known about the Fair Folk through time is real (Livingston loc 1844). With that information, it seems reasonable to assume that while *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may not have happened exactly as the plot in the original play, there is some truth to it. The tale's events happened in this storyworld where Shakespeare learned of it from Puck and adapted it himself, much like he did in reality (Livingston loc 924). *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a retelling of the Pyramus and Thisbe myth, not in a straightforward way as *Romeo and Juliet,* in which he also rewrites it. Still, the notion of forbidden love is there, as is the play about the myth, which also takes place in the novel. While it is unknown where the Pyramus and Thisbe myth stems from, the oldest recorded version is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses book 4* from around 8 AD (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica "Pyramus and Thisbe | Babylonian Mythology").

In the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, they are from rivalling houses but fall in love; however, due to misunderstandings, a meeting where they both arrive at different times at a tomb where a lioness is, they each believe the other is dead. Therefore, both commit suicide as a result of the other's death. This story is similar to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, but there are also similarities to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and, by extension, *Wondrous Strange*. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* there is the love trope 'forbidden love', represented by Hermia and Lysander. They are not allowed to be together, so they run away. Unfortunately, in this tale, the fae gets involved, and their love story becomes more complicated and they almost lose each other, though it ends with a happy-ever-after ("A Midsummer Night's Dream"). Shakespeare made the forbidden love trope famous and is featured in this play. The play takes place in a theatre in Wondrous Strange, offering an

explicit retelling. Livingston uses the perfect opportunity to further employ it as a retelling aspect in relation to the two protagonists. Sonny and Kelley come from two different worlds and want to be together but are forced apart because of the Fair Folk meddling (Livingston), just like the play's plot. The Fair Folk, the characters from A Midsummer Night's Dream, adds a layer of retelling and gives it a sequel as it does not directly retell the story that Shakespeare wrote, nor the myth it was inspired by. Instead, it continues the story of Shakespeare's characters Oberon, Titania, Mab and Puck, which is a retelling. Still, adding the forbidden love trope from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the myth shows history repeats itself with different people at different times. This is not uncommon for authors, as they often use myths in novels to show that retellings are essential because they make people realise that the epics are still relevant in current times like they were in earlier eras (Guest). So, while *Wondrous Strange* does not retell *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe, it still shows retelling trope tendencies as it exists in the context of another text. It uses an already well-known story, and by placing it in the modern day and making the protagonist a strong female lead who saves her love interest before losing him again, it adds current social norms to the narrative while still staying true to the original trope of the families keeping lovers apart which all three literary works revolve around.

Similar to *Wondrous Strange,* the 2010s retelling novel also centres around a romance trope but is a classic retelling opposite of *Wondrous Strange*. *A Court of Thorns and Roses* retells different tales, *Beauty and the Beast* or *the Ballad of Tam Lin*. As mentioned in a previous chapter, *The Ballad of Tam Lin* is used as inspiration for the struggles and trials that Feyre faces in the novel, while the *Beauty and the Beast* retelling aspect takes up the most space. In the premise of Beauty and the Beast, a girl is taken hostage by a 'beast' to save her family. However, during her time with him, she falls in love with him and discovers that he is cursed, and her love can save him (Barbot De Villeneuve). This is also the premises of *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, where Feyre chooses to go with Tamlin to the Spring Court to protect her family. She stays at the cursed Spring Court for months and falls in love with Tamlin. Before they confess their love, Amarantha takes Tamlin, and the curse is about to expire. To save him, Feyre must conquer the trials and riddles Amarantha creates. In the end, Feyre wins and becomes High Fae. Her happy-ever-after is to live with Tamlin in the Spring Court (appendix a).

The use of *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Ballad of Tam Lin* in the novel is apparent, although the story of *Beauty and the Beast* is the most similar to Maas' book. *A Court of Thorns and Roses* is a typical retelling narrative as it directly applies the plot points and structure from the other tales instead of using it in a more abstract or copy-paste way, like *Wonderous Strange*. There is no doubt when reading *A Court of Thorns and Roses* that it is a retelling. Whereas in *Wondrous Strange,* it is clear that inspiration is taken from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because it is an explicit part of the plot, but if the play had been taken out of the novel, readers might not think of it as a retelling of Shakespeare's play. Shakespeare's works are not as well-known as classic fairy tales such as *Beauty and the Beast*, except for *Romeo and Juliet*. Furthermore, *Beauty and the Beast* variants have the advantage of being the most frequently rewritten within popular fiction, with versions of Cinderella being a close second (Lee 58-59). *Beauty and the Beast* are also frequently used as inspiration in paranormal romances, which the corpus is comprised of. These novels are often close to the fairy tale retelling counterparts, as they frequently depict the male as a monster, beast or supernatural creature. In this case, the monster is the fae Tamlin (Lee 79).

Generally, it is easier for an audience to recognise the fairy tale, myth or folklore from a popular work, such as *Beauty and the Beast*, than more obscure works, like *The Ballads of Tam Lin*, in a retelling. A third case is where the retelling strategy is similar to *A Court of Thorns and Roses,* but instead of a famous fairy tale retelling, it is inspired by less-known folklore. The well-known myth has also inspired several fairy tales. The tale of *Cinderella* and the myth of *Psyche and Eros* inspire the plotline in the 2020s novel *A Dance with the Fae Prince*. At the novel's beginning, the myth and fairytale play a part, whereas, after revealing who and what Davien is, the author takes creative liberties and invents her own story. However, she sticks with the happy ending as reliant on marriage. Like the two retelling novels, *A Dance with the Fae Prince* carries on some plot points from *Cinderella,* such as the protagonist, Katria, living with her mean stepmother and two stepsisters after her father's death (Kova). As with the original fairytale, the stepmother and sisters treat Katria as a servant, not a real part of their family (loc 233). However, A Dance with the Fae Prince does not incorporate the rest of the tale's plot with the ball, losing a shoe, and searching for the right girl. Instead, the myth of Eros and Psyche inspires some of the remaining storyline, which is also part of the inspiration for Cinderella. Here two people from different worlds fall

in love and try to be together, with a subpoint of losing and searching for each other (*Apuleius (c.124–170) - the Golden Ass: Book V*).

One aspect the novel uses from the myth of *Eros and Psyche* is hiding the male love interests' appearance. In the myth, Eros marries Psyche by tricking her and telling her she has married a monster and that she is not allowed to see the monster, so she does not discover who he is. She only talks to him at night when it is dark when she cannot see him, but she gets curious one day and goes with a light to see Eros and discovers who he is, which starts the conflict in the myth (*Apuleius (c.124–170) - the Golden Ass: Book V*). The same is seen in the novel, where Katria is married to Davien without knowing what he looks like or who he is, as in the myth, they only talk with each other doing the night and with their backs turned towards each other, but one night Katria gets too curious and follows Davien and discovers who he is and gets drawn into the conflict of the novel (appendix a). Just as with *A Court of Thorns and Roses,* the use of *Cinderella* is easier recognisable than the myth of *Eros and Psyche* because it is more well-known, but the myth is used to a greater extent in the novel than the fairy tale, likely due to its plot point not being as repeated which adds an interesting build-up towards the climax of act one and leading into act two, than another obvious repetition of *Cinderella*. Often retellings of lesser-known or less popular stories have a dual effect: to elevate the original in the reader's consciousness and a new way to introduce the original story to reader, as stories can contain topics that are severe and dense for modern young readers (Price).

While all three novels are retellings and use inspiration from various sources, they all use it differently. The novels from 2010 and 2020 are more similar in their use of fairy tales and myth, with their apparent use of the tale's plot points and plot structure. *Wondrous Strange* is not as clear in its retelling and uses it as a faint plot inspiration, while the two others are retellings and not original literary works. Most retellings from the 2010s and 2020s follow the same pattern as these two novels, using the major plot points and structure from a fairy tale or myth to build their novel while adding new elements and conflict to tell the story in a new way that displays current societal struggles. Such works could be *Cinder,* a YA sci-fi and fantasy retelling of *Cinderella*, a is *Song of Achilles* an LGBTQ+ retelling of the battle of Troy, *These Violent Delights,* a YA historical fantasy retelling of Romeo and Juliet and *A Touch of Darkness,* a modern retelling of the Hades and Persephone myth. The way that *Wondrous Strange* uses Shakespeare's play is rare as most would take inspiration from it and

not have the play to be performed actively. One can argue that any novel that takes inspiration or incorporates elements from folklore or myth retells the story, as it follows the criteria that define a retelling: the use of narrative repetition, which is when a storyteller retells something that already exists but infuses it with new meaning (Dailey 4). The authors adapt the folkloric elements to new circumstances and contexts, which keeps them fresh, viable and relevant for each succeeding generation (Brewer 7). Retellings of fairy tales, myths or other stories ensure they are never forgotten and argue their presence in all texts. So, the idea that all novels contain elements or people from folklore or myth means they are retellings. Then all our primary sources count as retellings, but examining retelling directly, only three primary sources belong to the category. Still, this thesis argues that all ten novels are retellings because the past has long been a source of inspiration for new literature. One of the main reasons for the popularity is their timelessness and universal appeal, which makes new stories recognisable to audiences. With well-known characters and universal themes, such as good versus evil or the importance of love and friendship, the authors create novels that resonate with audiences of all ages and backgrounds. This repetition makes them the perfect material to draw readers in, while the new twists keep them fresh to avoid readers feeling staleness or deja vu.

The Chosen one

The hero's journey is a way to examine a narrative's structure, but it is closely intertwined with the trope of the chosen one, as this trope evolves around the heroic character instead of the plot. The plot structures itself into sequences, which creates the narrative that is present in, e.g. myth, legend, tales, epics, history, drama, pantomime, paintings, stained-glass windows, and movies (Barthes 237 & 274). When narratives contain a chosen one, authors often structure them as quests, which all the novels included in this study do, as showcased in the worldbuilding section.

> The Chosen One archetype is a trope used in writing where a single character is in charge of saving the world or society they live in. […] The Chosen One comes from humble or tragic beginnings, and they are put into an impossible situation that rests the world on their shoulders. They inevitably become […] the hero of the story because without them the story cannot be propelled forward. (Adams)

This is generally also true of all the heroes who are the centre of each journey in these novels. So, they are all representations of the chosen one trope, though, in *Fairy Tale*, the one destined to save the world is not the heroine but her love interest, though the novel still portrays her quest to save him from having to start his hero's journey to save the secondary world. She can be qualified as the chosen one as she is the one on whom the drive of the plot relies, as is a characteristic of this trope ("The Chosen One"), but he is the chosen one classically – he must save the world by claiming his place as the successor.

In the nine remaining novels, the heroines are the chosen ones in both regards – propelling the plot and having to save the world –though that is not stated directly in eight of them, instead it is indicated implicitly through their journeys on which the worlds' survival depends as pointed out before in correlation with the hero's journey segments. An example is in *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, where Katria is a hidden successor to the Fae throne, but they do not know that. Instead, she has to help save the fae world because she accidentally receives the powers of the royal line when she interrupts a fae ritual to restore them to Davian. As a result of this, joining the fae group becomes her only option to start her journey, as they would have otherwise left her at the estate in the human territory. R(Kova). Katria and Feyre are alike in this regard. They also start their journey leaving their family homes because a male demands them to. Katria is sold into marriage with Davian by her stepmother, as fits the series description of each standalone (loc 5979). Feyre tries to fend for her family, as her mother is dead and her father and sisters are incapable. Therefore, it is up to her. She breaks the human/fae treaty by killing a fae (Maas loc 133). It states a life for a life, so Feyre must live the rest of her life in the fae lands with Tamlin (loc 532-551). As a result, both Katria and Feyre start their journey, and they do not become representations of this character trope by their own will; instead, they, like the other heroes, are reluctant but feel it is their responsibility to help to the best of their abilities. The same goes for Aries and Oriel. The difference in the story is that they are both chosen, even though they are part of the same narrative. Therefore, *The Anointed Fae*, unlike the other stories in our corpus, is not limiting the chosen one trope to a single individual; rather, several chosen ones are present due to "the legends and myths around The Nine, the anointed ones" where each represents one of the nine elemental subraces of the fae (Huxx loc 428). Aries and Oriel are representations of two different subraces of the anointed ones, and due to the prophecy of the anointed ones' revival, readers expect the gap of the seven

missing resurrected anointed ones to appear in the sequels. Based on the first novel, readers can guess who becomes part of the anointed ones due to the friendship group emerging throughout the plot in *The Anointed Fae*. The perception of this group as the resurgence of the legendary anointed ones is supported by the fact that they all belong to different subraces, so they each represent one of the nine elements, like the gods of legend (loc 421).

The chosen one trope is traceable back to Greek mythology and the Old Testament (Adams & Dillon). Dillon further writes that the chosen one provides "multi-generational appeal [as these types of stories] continue to inspire the imaginations of millions around the world" (Dillon). Furthermore, readers "take great comfort in cliché" but authors are responsible "to give readers what they want, though not the way they expect", which aligns with Barthes' argument that "narrative "pulls in" new material even as it "holds on" to previous material" (Barthes 255). So, each of the ten novels portrays the chosen one trope though each narrative does it differently. Maas creates a classical manifestation of the trope until almost the end of the book, where Feyre seems to give up on saving the world and travels back to her family home (loc 3649); hereby, she leaves Tamlin to be defeated and controlled by the fae antagonist queen. Feyre's surrender and return is Maas' way of twisting the chosen one trope, as once the chosen one has accepted their part in saving the world, they often do not return home without being the victor. Huxx is the only author who explicitly implies that the anointed ones will rise again in a prophecy typical of the trope. The deviance here is the portrayal of both Aries and Oriel as two of these chosen ones, as they do not both experience an abnormal episode when receiving their powers (Huxx loc 853-864 & 896-905), herewith differentiating their chosen one status from each other. The new aspect Kova introduces surrounding the chosen one trope is the subterfuge portraying Davian as the chosen one while later revealing Katria as the real chosen one. Even though each novel features the historically well-known trope of the chosen one, each author incorporates a twist presenting something new or unique in correlation with it.

An aspect represented in seven of the ten chosen books is getting the right person upon the fae throne. This can be another facet of the chosen one trope while also exemplifying one of Ekman's distinctions of spacial mapping in an imaginary world – the link between ruler and realm. He states that "the different connections between ruler and realm, including the restoration of a rightful ruler as a happy ending", can be read into these types of narratives. However, he further "argues that conventional readings of settings as

metaphorical representations of a ruler's mental and emotional state ignore fantasy's inventiveness" (Williams, Christy 134-135). The seven books representing a quest of restoring a rightful ruler as the goal for a happy ending are *A Kiss of Shadows*, *Fairy Tale*, *Wonderous Strange*, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, *The Cruel Prince*, *A Dance with the Fae Prince* and *Crown Princess Academy*, but in none of them are the original 'bad' ruler magically linked to the land. In *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, Katria tries to help Davian gain the Aviness powers to prove his validity as the rightful king, and while the Boltovs have sat on the throne, the land and people have suffered due to the greed of this family. Still, to state that disposing of the Boltov-king and ending with Katria as the hidden chosen one obtaining queendom is by no means a magical fix to the state of the land and the people's disgruntlement, mending that will take time. It is not a magical solution to restore the land to its glory (Flower). So, using this as the example, it would be too simplistic to state that getting the one chosen for the throne on it will magically cure everything, but the chosen one achieving it will spread the hope for stability and the future restoration of land and fae, which is also the case in the other narratives that incorporate this visual interpretation of the land.

Coming of age/establishing a self-identity

Folk and fairy tales often centre around the theme of growing up/finding one's identity (de Vos 8), and fantasy books often draw from tales and YA aim towards teens. This means that the tropes of self-identity and coming of age are often present, as pointed out in the YA Fantasy chapter – especially true when examining the eleven main female narrators. As Altmann puts it, new retellings are often parodies or quest stories – which prepare them for a new place in society relatable to the transitioning stage of teenagers (Altmann 15-16). Coming of age or establishing one's identity is very important in the transitional time of a teenager; as such, they relate to this trope as something recognisable. An example of this could be Morgan's hyper-focus on planning her and Cam's joined sweet sixteen birthday party: "If he really, truly is going to be leaving me forever on his sixteenth birthday, that gives us only a week. And I have no idea who I'll be then because I've never had to define myself without him" (Balog loc 986). Cam's departure causes Morgan to reevaluate her identity, as she built her entire sense of self around being part of a couple. First, as childhood best friends and later as each other's first boy/girlfriend, which Morgan never considered would not last as the quote portrays. At the end of the book, she gets a better understanding of adulthood and

accepts this forced change which she initially rejects. Like Morgan, several of the other heroines are teenage girls who start to explore their first love and romance on their way to adulthood.

Some of the heroines are not portraying this relatable teen girl. Instead, they are adults or in their twenties, which means they do not have this same hesitation about romance, and sex is nothing new. An example is the twenty-two-year-old Syn. She is no longer a teen but is still in the process of building a self. A symbol that she is not a complete adult is that she has not transitioned yet and, as such, can be mistaken for a magical human and not a fae: ""They look Human until somewhere about twenty or twenty-two and then they go through 'Transition' – it's a bit like puberty – but a helluva lot more violent, as they come into their full powers during this time. At this age, they could be mistaken for Witches' children—cute as all get-out – with a lotta magic."" (Hutchins loc 2744). Syn's upbringing as a witch has accustomed her to being autonomous. Moreover, she is the leader of her coven, further highlighting her responsibilities as a witch, but as a fae, she is considered a child. After the transition, she will need tutoring to control her new power, which takes some of her autonomy away. This ambiguity illustrates her coming of age as an immortal opposite of the transitional human age of teens, which she has concluded. Another girl in her twenties is Mera; she has been through her teens, chosen a detective career and has her own place to live, but she is rejecting and hiding her powers to appear human (Wilde loc 75 & 246). Her self-identity journey does not centre around coming of age through her teens but instead focuses on accepting all parts of herself while finding her place in the society where she lives. In juxtaposition to the teens portrayed in some of the books, these to twenty-year-olds portray a development where the YA books no longer portray main characters in the same age range as teens – 12-18 years – as stated in the YA Fantasy section. In current literature, YA fantasy includes narrators and main characters who have experienced all their firsts. Still, they illustrate girls learning difficult life lessons, influencing self-identity throughout the plot.

This development, where YA fiction adapts to include a broader age range, is seen with these older heroines in the primary sources. However, this shifts the focus on to another topic of establishing a self-identity. It is no longer the first kiss, love or sexual adventure. Instead, it is a higher reflection of where they fit into the world. The coming of age portrayed in teen novels is often focused on selfish aspects, such as Morgan's need to keep Cam, despite it being against his best interest, whereas with the older heroines, it is more focused on how

they can contribute, like Mera, who negotiates peace between land and sea folk. The oldest heroine in the corpus is Merry from *A Kiss of Shadows*, who is in her thirties (Hamilton loc 329), which indicates the young adult moniker as such now includes people from 12 to at least 25. An age range that means it has to include different life stages. A newer term used to differentiate between the stories geared towards the younger and older part of this age range is the 'new adult' – NA – defined as 18-25: "The protagonists in NA titles, much like their demographic, are new to "adulting" and don't yet feel like functional adults" (Peraza-Brown). They shift away from having a safety net and focus on tropes such as:

- Moving away from home for the first time
- Starting higher education
- Deeper exploration of sexual experiences, identity and gender
- Establishing careers
- Figuring out relationships – familial, platonic and romantic (Peraza-Brown).

This shift means the older heroines in the novels can be defined as belonging to the NA, not the YA moniker, as they include these explorations. In the later instalments, Syn moves to the fae's secondary world (Hutchins *Taunting Destiny*), where she needs greater knowledge of magic, representing her need for higher education. Furthermore, the novel is one of the more explicit series in the corpus regarding sex, as she explores her identity, trying to balance her want for autonomy with her craving for Ryder and, later, sustenance (Hutchins). All these illustrate later stages in establishing an identity than the coming of age represented by the protagonist's first everything. Merry's age in *A Kiss of Shadows* might be the cause why the element of sex, gender and identity is pushing the boundaries of what can be appropriate for younger teens, as the most graphic elements in the parameters of violence and sex of the examined novels are apparent, the exploration of this topic in more detail will occur in a later chapter. The problem with using the NA, not the YA moniker, is its newness. It is still not a clearly defined term, and the five aspects mentioned above often portrayed in these narratives are also included in the genre definition of YA in the coming-of-age trope, which makes the distinction between the two complicated. To be able to differentiate appropriately between NA and YA, they each need to be clearly defined better than they currently are, which is why, at this point, they construe as YA fantasy novels. Still, the aspect of creating a self-identity is present in them all, and the main characters learn, accept or change something about

themselves throughout the narratives – the young ones are coming of age, and the older girls create a substantial understanding in some aspects of their selves.

Good vs. evil – the grey area

A big theme in YA is coming of age; part of that is finding yourself and learning right from wrong. This is one of the reasons why themes such as good vs evil are so often portrayed. There are several other reasons, as stated further above in the thesis. However, when it comes to characters that the reader can relate to, they are often portrayed as good vs evil. Thousands of stories involve characters in literature which frequently symbolize a conflict, a mirror of society or a symbol of the message the writer wants to emphasize. In literary history, the hero and villain archetypes serve as a stark contrast between good and evil. The literary genres, character clichés, and what they represent change over time. The literary landscape now has a new spectrum of characters in the morally grey area, hovering between the black-and-white system.

To define the terms hero and villain simplistically: the hero "is a good man trying to accomplish some good end", and the villain "is a bad man who, from hatred or for personal advancement, uses unjust means to block the hero's purpose" (Boyer 4). The hero and villain are two sides of the same tragic coin, who differ in how they encounter a crisis and choose to respond to it. This differing response shows which character has a good/heroic persona or an evil/villainy persona (Alsford 124). Some standardized depictions of this dualism in the literature include the opposition between civilisation and wilderness, upper and lower class, reason and emotion, and rationality and imagination (Hourihan 24, 34 & 87). A thin line separates the hero and the villain, despite having traits regarded as polar opposites of one another. These lines occasionally cross, and there are several situations where it is impossible to tell which is which (Fahrin 16). Moral etiquette is essential when defining good and evil and, in turn, assigning stereotypical monikers based on how they adhere to such principles. However, the protagonist frequently violates these 'good' laws, which does not always make them bad people (Boyer 6). Boyer argues that the reader's sanction of the moral law the bad guy breaks and their reason for breaking it determine what makes a villain a morally grey character (7). Morally grey characters have become popular in modern times, and since morality is a considerable part of YA, it adds to the coming-of-age theme as it helps teach that

no one is just good or evil. This evolution from black and white to ambiguous characters over the decades is also in the primary sources.

There is a rising trend in YA fantasy literature where the male love interest to the female protagonist is an ambiguous character who is neither good nor bad, and often the character has a tragic backstory too. Readers see them initially as a villain, which offers a new perspective on the love interest and blurs or complicates their perception of the love interest's morality. This transforms the love interest from a villain into a morally grey character, as there is a reason for their behaviour. In the 2000s, there were clear good and evil characters in the two novels, *Fairy Tale* and *Wondrous Strange*. The protagonist Morgan and her two love interests, Cam and Pip, are good, and the Fair Folk in general is bad in *Fairy Tale*, indicated by the court's treatment of Pip and humans on locations 1092-1104. Here Pip describes how he was not allowed to look fae in the eye and had a lot of restrictions and rules they needed to follow since humans are beneath the Fair Folk (Balog). Morgan emphasizes the Fair Folk's cruelty when she describes their apathy towards humans (loc 1505).

In *Wondrous Strange*, the evil characters of this novel belong to the Fair Folk, although the portrayal of the bad guys does not apply to all Fair Folk. However, the reason behind the characterisation as villains is ambiguous. It is the first book in the series and hints at a complex background story that is not part of it, which could change the characters' villainous status. The characters in question are Queen Mabh and King Auberon (Livingston). The good guys, the two protagonists Sonny and Kelley, spend most of the novel trying to hide and stop Queen Mabh from getting to Kelley, which marks Mabh as the villain. While the book never portrays Auberon as a good guy, he ultimately assumes the role of the villain by deceiving Sonny into joining the wild hunt and forcing him into the Otherworld after tricking both protagonists. The lines between good and evil are evident in this book, but not all characters are definitively good or bad until the revelation of their true intentions.

Characters may appear as good, but later their evil actions oppose this image, actions like trying to gain power, manipulate others or try to create a world in their image (Alsford 39-41). It can also be the other way around, where a character becomes a hero by risking self-destruction to save the world or someone they love (40). *A Kiss of Shadows* introduces the morally grey love interest for the first time in the primary sources. While it is still clear who is good and evil in the novel, Merry Gentry's many love interests are neither good nor evil when described. Still, their protectiveness and loyalty to Merry imbue readers with empathy for

them. An example is when Doyle saves Merry from Sholto's Slaugh and apologises before he kisses her even though he wants to, but his respect for her and her boundaries clearly shows him as a good guy despite loyalties to her aunt (Hamilton loc 2747-2801). The men in *A Kiss of Shadows* do bad things and have fought, killed and tortured, but as they spend time in Merry's presence, it becomes clear that they do not enjoy it. They do it because the Queen orders it, and as Merry shows them another side to life, they would rather be on the side of good now that is an option. This makes them morally grey characters as the background knowledge of their reluctance, the laws they break on orders and the changes to their morals affect the readers' perspective of them from black to grey. While they have all done wrong and illegal things, many were years ago and often forced by Merry's aunt, the Queen.

In the 2010s and 2020s, the line between good, evil and everything in between is the same, where the point of view matters and characters are complex and ambiguous. In these two decades, an increasing number of books introduce the morally grey love interest and protagonists that are also morally grey. In the seven novels, all the love interests are morally grey characters. The only novel where the love interest is ambiguous is, *To Kill a Fae*, where the portrayal of Sebastian as a good guy makes it difficult to judge him from the start until the end of chapter 22 when Bast kills to protect Jules. His motives are good, but to kill is not, so he changes into a morally grey character in Jules's eyes, making him one to the readers due to her point of view. The other six's love interests are shown as morally grey from the beginning. Their treatment of the protagonist shows this lack of goodness, but they still end up helping to save the world. A 2010 example is *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, where Tamlin forces Feyre to the Spring Court to stay as well. Here Tamlin often threatens Feyre and constantly walks the line between friendly and rude when interacting with her (Maas). Like a morally grey character, he toes the line between good and evil. In *The Cruel Prince*, Cardan and Jude spend the entire novel torturing and hurting each other, and a specific example of Cardan's violence and cruelty is when he beats up a boy in their class and rips off his wings (Black loc 295-306). Cardan is portrayed as a violent and mean character throughout the novel until the revelation of his motivations and loves for Jude, in which he goes from cruel and evil to morally grey. *Fighting Destiny's* love interest is Ryder. He is only shown as morally grey since he spends the time torturing Synthia, but he also protects and teaches her. His secrets and selfish motivation result in him never being good, and his passion for Syn means he is not completely bad either. Therefore, he stays in the grey area throughout the

plot, though that might change as little information about his background or morals is revealed, which Hutchins might disclose in the following novels. The same appears in the three books from the 2020s. In *The Anointed Fae*, Aries and Oriel have love/hate relationships with different characters (Huxx). *A Crown Princess Academy* show Lucas as having good motivations, but his poor treatment of Penne prevents him from good guy status and places him in the grey area (Flowers). He has the right motivation, but his actions are at her expense. The same occurs in *A Dance with the Fae Prince,* as Davian's motivations to save the fae and human realms and become king are good. Still, his terrible treatment of Katria initially and throughout the novel puts him in the grey (Kova), precisely like Lucas.

The rise and stay of these grey characters are likely due to today's readers, who are more aware that the world and people in it are not black and white and wish to see this reflected in what they read. Furthermore, the concept of YA now includes readers in their twenties who understand these multi-layered and realistic characters, limiting the need for black-and-white simplification. Another reason is that the concept of a hero constantly evolves to fit the changing political and cultural world. So the characters show this dualism of good and evil with ambiguous heroes and villains who not just exist in literature or entertainment but everywhere (Houriham 21). There is a constant overlap between good and evil as there is no one and nothing in the world that is fundamentally and wholly either. So, with the constant need for people to hide the bad things in the world, the readers and authors found this way to incorporate new realistic characters by introducing the morally grey characters. However, they are still good enough that the audience will love and root for them, such as antiheroes.

Multiperspectivity

When looking at YA fae fantasy books, like with YA and fantasy in general, the author might employ multiperspectivity, which several of the novels in the corpus do. According to Hartner, "the arguably most common usages of the term refer to multiperspectivity either as a basic aspect of narration or as a mode of storytelling in which multiple and often discrepant viewpoints are employed for the presentation and evaluation of a story and its storyworld" (1). McCallum argues that adolescent fiction is replete with ideas about subjectivity, which are intrinsic to narratives of personal growth or maturation, to stories about relationships between the self and others, and to explorations of relationships between individuals and the

world, society or the past ("INTRO…" 3). She states that there are three ways to establish a multiperspective narrative, one of which is multiple points of view – here forth POV – as subjectivity and varying POVs are crucial to give agency to multivoiced stories ("Representing…" 30) though the relationship between voices is often unequal and aligned so one occupies a privileged position in stories aimed towards younger audiences (34). Furthermore, to be a successful multiperspective narrative, the POVs must show diversity in social speech types or individual voices according to Bakhtin's concept of polyphony genres in novels (McCallum "Representing…" 25).

The first published novel in the corpus with a multivoiced narration style is *Wonderous Strange*, where Sonny and Kelley share the narrative responsibilities. Here it is used to help readers understand the secondary world in Sonny's passages while it mainly follows Kelley on her hero's journey. So, Kelley preserves an advantageous position as the hero and main protagonist. The dual perspectives in *Wonderous Strange* give readers the opportunity in some places to understand the secondary world's aspects before Kelley knows of them, such as when Sonny explains that the "kelpie were known to appear near sources of water. They'd take on the guise of beautiful horses to lure unwary mortals. Once a person was mounted, the kelpie would plunge below the surface of the lake or river, dragging its hapless victim away to the Otherworld, or down to a watery death" (Livingston loc 661) before she even knows it is not a regular horse. This is also to see the flourishing relationship between them and to see events from both POVs – giving readers the information to decide about events instead of automatically being aligned with the single appointed narrator.

The polyamorous relationship introduced in *A Kiss of Shadows* does not in the first novel have multiperspectivity. As this study does not include the rest of the series, it is speculated that Hamilton lets the male love interest tell a few segments as it could be how readers achieve significant knowledge of how Merry's guard lovers feel about her and the relationship in all. It would not be surprising if this becomes part of later books in the same way that *Fighting Destiny* has it. Here Syn narrates almost the whole story, but Ryder has a few sections where readers get his POV on Syn. Hutchins, with this, gives readers both sides of the underlying love story; it furthermore prewarns readers that Syn is not what she believes: "She isn't Human; not even fucking close. It's driving me crazy inside trying to figure out what she is. I can feel her hunger, as if something is struggling to get out from under her skin. I can smell her need" (Hutchins loc 3063). This showcases the dual function

of letting him narrate a few segments. Readers learn that Syn is not a powerful human witch as she believes; she is something more, giving readers an advantage with the gap of her being a fae which she learns later. Also, it indicates that the attraction is not one-sided, but both Ryder and Syn experience a magnetic pull towards each other.

The dual perspective is used similarly in *Crown Princess Academy*, where Penne and Lucas, the two main characters, share the narrative role. Here the duality is clearly defined before readers even get to the first chapter as the table of contents illustrates which of the two characters narrate each chapter – see the picture – though Penne still narrates a significant part of the plot as the plot's heroine. Furthermore, the epilogue is the only segment narrated by Steel, whom readers get to know as first the voice in Penne's head representing her malice and later the storyworld's antagonist, which creates a cliff-hanger as he survived with his goal still in mind by the end of the novel establishing a gap in the plot that leaves readers craving the next instalment in the series. Throughout the narrative, readers get a front-row seat to the miscommunication between Lucas and Penne since they judge each other based on their preconceived notions, where readers know they are not the enemies they think. Readers know they are fighting for the same goal, to

(Flowers Contents)

save the humans and their realm from malice, as Lucas proves by trying to find a strong enough opponent to defeat another fae: "According to my magic, she would be a woman of grace, power, and prestige that would be strong enough to stand up to my fellow fae" (Flowers loc 106), and she constantly tries to save first her best friend, then the other candidates from getting killed by the malice forced upon them (loc 309, 1170 & 2911). Here the dual POVs give readers an innate understanding of both characters, their goals and their journeys.

The last novel, which includes multiperspectivity, is *The Anointed Fae*, with two characters, Aries and Oriel, in the privileged position of going on a journey. Some of the other characters also get to narrate chapters as well as contribute to the girl's journeys and learnings. Again, this is alluded to in the table of contents, as seen in the picture. Several of the novels in the corpus introduces numerous important characters whom readers expect to play an essential part in the series apart from the protagonist, antagonist and love interest, e.g. the several lovers from *A Kiss of Shadows* who might get to narrate in the future. This is especially true of the later novels, wherein 2000, except the Hamilton series, the novels

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have a limited number of characters, which then expands through the 2010s and then culminates with multiperspective stories where the voices are not limited to the main romantic couple and a cliff-hanger delivered from the villain. *The Anointed Fae* shows a clear link to the evolution of the fantasy genre in other media by having a comprehensive and vast number of main characters, where each gets to narrate segments and not just be part of somebody else's story.

Additionally, the two privileged narrators whose character arcs readers follow become near friends, not love interests. Contingent on these factors, *The Anointed Fae* become similar to video games or modern fantasy tv-show, such as *True Blood* or *Teen Wolf*. Throughout the last three decades, YA fae fantasy has used to trope of multiperspectivity. Still, recent books draw inspiration from fantasy in other media and on different platforms, showing that it has started to be used in other ways than to help readers understand the secondary worlds or to highlight the romance.

Romantic tropes

Romance is an essential feature of every primary source, but the type of love in the novels differs over the decades. Certain stereotypes get categorized into specific romance tropes, and

authors use these in novels to drive the plot forward, so authors often include several romance tropes. A romance trope is categorized as a plot device or theme used within a novel, giving a starting point to the story that is recognizable to readers. Though novels often use one of the standard romance tropes, their plotlines and characters differentiate the novels from each other while incorporating these standard plot devices ("The Ultimate Guide to the Romance Genre and Romance Tropes").

The primary sources this thesis examines belong to the paranormal romance subgenre of YA fantasy. A paranormal romance occurs in universes where creatures such as vampires, werewolves, fae or monsters are no longer secret. The storyline often follows a teenage girl who falls in love with someone who is not human. Sometimes, the girl is not human, though she is unaware of that (Kaveney 222, Priest 275-76 & Stamper 12). The decades all have different romance tropes, but one dominates each decade.

In the 2000s, there were two significant romantic tropes, where the dominant was instant love. Instalove used to be a popular romantic trope, especially in YA. It involves a couple instantly attracted to each other, but it does not always mean love at first sight. Often the two are kept apart or face challenges before they can finally be together (Thelocaldialect & Marshall). Three novels of the dataset show this: *Wonderous Strange*, *Fairy Tale* and *A Kiss of Shadows*. In *Wondrous Strange,* Sonny and Kelley feel drawn to each other from their first meeting, and through the novel, they fight to protect each other despite barely knowing each other (Livingston). In *Fairy Tale*, Morgan was in love with Cam, but her feelings for him transferred to Pip in a few short days, again with her barely knowing him (Balog). Then in the last one, *A Kiss of Shadows*, Merry experience attraction to different love interest from the beginning, but it is not love as the two others; it is sexual and general allure (Hamilton). While popular in the 2000s, instant love lost popularity, maybe because it fails to impress mature readers who want an advanced romance, as it comes across as childish and superficial. However, it can maintain some appeal in the YA genre (Marshall). Others would argue that instant love is not unrealistic but a portrayal of first love, especially in children or YA novels. Here young kids' first love makes them impulsive and consumed with their relationships in reality and literature. To some adults, when reading novels with instant love, it makes them nostalgic for a time when love and connection felt like that, while young kids look forward to it, and these novels create a hope that when they meet 'the one', they will fall in love instantly (Thelocaldialect). Instalove is in both well and lesser-known books. Other examples are, e.g.

Twilight by Stephanie Meyers, *White Star* by Elizabeth Vaughan, *November 9* by Colleen Hoover, *Standoff* by Lauren Dane, and *Ice Planet Barbarians* by Ruby Dixon.

In the 2010s, there are two significant love tropes, but the most dominant is the popular trope enemies to lovers. Every 2010 novel from the primary sources showcases this. In *The Cruel Prince,* Jude and Cardan spend most of the novel discussing how much they hate each other. In the end, they both realise they have feelings for each other, and then throughout the rest of the series, they end up falling in love and getting married (Black *Elfhame: The Folk of the Air*). Like Jude and Cardan, in *Fighting Destiny,* Synthia and Ryder spend most of the novel fighting their mutual attraction, with occasional moments where they give in. This continues throughout the series until they admit their love and have kids (Hutchins *The Fae Chronicles*). In *To Kill A Fae,* Mera and Sebastian do not specifically hate each other. However, Mera dislikes Sebastian in the beginning, but as the novel goes on, as their lives are endangered, they grow closer, and while they do not become a couple in this novel, they do later in the series (Wilde *Hollowcliff Detectives*). It gets complicated in *A Court of Thorns and Roses* as the protagonist, Feyre, has two love interests in the series, Tamlin in the first novel, which is a classic enemies-to-lovers relationship and then Rhysand in the rest of the series, which repeats the enemies to lovers story (Maas *A Court of Thorns and Roses series*).

The enemies-to-lovers fiction trope uses two characters who hate each other at the novel's start, and they then slowly get closer through the plot's challenges and finish up the story on love (Lee 58, Kirke, Kabir & MasterClass). According to Lee, the trope is about strong, passionate emotions – love or hate – though it is more than passionate emotions, which is why readers love it in YA fiction as they see past the love/hate relationship (Lee 61). The trope's popularity in YA has also caused controversy due to novels' portrayals of mental, emotional, or verbal abuse. However, this facet of the trope does not harm the trope's popularity (Kabir). The enemies-to-lovers trope is not new but became mainstream with Jane Austen's representation in *Pride and Prejudice* though it is present in works from further back; for instance, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* from 1594 (Masterclass). Today the trope is in famous works such as *The Hunger Games* (Suzanne Collins), *Divergent* (Veronica Roth), *The Hating Game* by (Sally Thorne), *From Blood and Ash* (Jennifer L. Armentrout) and so on.

In the three 2020 novels, it is difficult to pinpoint a dominant love trope as it is only three years into this decade. The result is that many of the tropes and trends from the 2010s

are still present as there has not been time to develop its own characteristics yet. So far, the enemies-to-lovers trope is still significant in the three 2020 novels, but there are other tropes these novels demonstrate too. For example, arranged marriages, seen in *The Anointed Fae* and *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, or forbidden love, which this thesis argues, will be the dominant trope throughout the 2020s. In the forbidden love trope, the two characters are not supposed or allowed to be together. In extreme cases, they cannot even be friends, which forbids a romantic relationship (Bauman). The trope has been a part of romantic literature since the genre's infancy. Several classical works use the trope – a couple falls in love but cannot be together – such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* by Shakespeare. In older works, forbidden love often ends in tragedy when the lovers do not get a happy ever after or even extremes where death separates them (Cuadrado 5-6).

The three 2020 novels show different types of forbidden love, although two are similar to forbidden romances. It might not seem like forbidden love to everyone, but the traits of the trope are there. In *A Dance with a Fae Prince*, Katria and Davien get married, but the marriage is invalid to Davian because they are of different species. Davian believes they are not to be married as it was only through legal standards in the Natural World, whereas in Midscape, the people do not see their marriage as legal and do not respect it. On location 2704-2716, Davien tells Katria their marriage was void the minute he left for Midscape (Kova). It is not the conventional portrayal of forbidden love. Still, there are aspects, such as the mentions of Davien's royal status and Katria being a commoner and human, which the people will not accept. Towards the end, this objection becomes null and void when Katria discovers she is half-fae and the natural heir to the throne (loc 3642-3653). In the two other novels, the forbidden love is related to where they come from and who they are, but they still have differences. In *The Anointed Fae*, it is never directly uttered that Aries and Rafe cannot be together, but at the end of the novel, as Aries is reunited with her dad, she discovers the hate between their two families, plus in this instance, Rafe choose to ignore her and their relationship. This makes it clear that their families will not accept the relationship between the two (Huxx loc 364-365). In *A Crown Princess Academy*, Penne and Lucas have two different kinds of magic, light and malice; both users of the magic hate each other. Additionally, Penne is human, and Lucas is fae, and in the competition for the title of the crown princess, no one wants Penne to win due to her status as a low-born human. She is constantly sabotaged and fails competition elements. At the end of the book, Lucas and Penne do not end up together.

Instead, the King of Malice gains access to the human realm, where he is determined to conquer Penne (Flowers loc 2822).

In all three novels, the forbidden love trope is not as prominent as the dominant tropes in the other decades, but it shows up in all of them, as well as many popular books from the 2020s. Current novels that have forbidden romance are *Twisted Games* by Ana Huang, *Credence* by Penelope Douglas, *Throttled* by Lauren Asher, *From Blood and Ash* by Jennifer L. Armentrout, *Sinners Anonymous* by Somme Sketcher etc. the amount of books from 2020 that feature this trope is why this thesis hypothesises that it will dominate the 2020s, even though the trope is not especially emphatic in the three fae sources, where the enemies to lovers trope asserts itself. The relationship context hints at forbidden love regardless.

To say that one decade has one trope would be incorrect, and this study does not argue that, but One trope tends to be more popular based on its typical presence in each decade, and this section aims to highlight that tendency. Of course, there are other essential tropes besides the decade's dominant one. Love Triangles are in the 2000s, but it does not appear in all three, just one *Fairy Tale*. In the two other books, it comes in later books in the series. That is why the instant-love trope is deemed dominant here. In the 2010s, where enemies-to-lovers are dominant, the trope of fated mates is also a significant component in three of the four book series, but due to the higher number of enemies-to-lovers books, it is deemed the primary trope. And in the 2020s, there is no conclusively way yet to say if the dominant trope is as enemies to lovers. However, it is still a significant trope in the three novels, but as they also hint at forbidden love, which, combined with the high amount of forbidden love stories that are published and gaining popularity in the 2020s, means that to state the dominant and primary trope of the 2020s is forbidden love seems reasonable.

Gender portrayals and explicit content

When looking at the primary sources, it is interesting to notice that all ten feature a female protagonist. Some novels also feature male protagonists but with a female one, never alone and with the female receiving an essential role in the plot. This is evident from examining the hero's journey in the worldbuilding section and the multiperspectivity included in the trope section. Furthermore, some studies have found that female main characters outnumbered males (Wolford 8). The corpus aligns with this statistic. What is surprising about our primary sources is not the fact that they have female protagonists but what that means and how they change.

In the 2000s, while there is a female protagonist in all three novels, they are all dependent on men throughout the novels, and the plot of each novel is also about the female's relationship with the men. In *A Kiss of Shadow,* the plot revolves around Merry having a baby with one of the queen's guards (Hamilton), in *Fairy Tale,* Morgan is trying to stop her boyfriend from becoming fae and leaving her behind, but she spends most of the novel anticipating what he will choose (Balog), and in *Wondrous Strange* someone from the Otherworld is trying to kill Kelley, so Sonny, a janus guard who she has just met and falls in love with, is protecting her (Livingston). In all three novels, the women depend on the active men and only succeed when they accept the need for their passivity. They all intend to protect the people they love, but they do little to save them actively. Only Merry possesses fighting skills, but even then, in most situations, she is saved by a man, and the novel ends with her having a harem of male lovers who is to be her bodyguards (appendix a).

All three novels from the 2000s do have female protagonists, but they all play into the traditional and stereotypical gender roles of the woman needing a man to help and save her. It is not unusual for society to put women in the box as caretakers who must meet mainstream, conventional expectations, such as Merry, who must get pregnant to become queen (Hamilton), or Kelley, who needs Sonny to protect her (Livingston). In none of these novels do the women threaten patriarchy or challenge mainstream societal norms. However, it should be noted that two of these novels are series and could, later in the series, change this stereotypical view of women (Rubinstein-Avila 366-367). According to Lee, most scholarship on romance novels falls into one of two polarized camps: conservative forms that uphold the

existing patriarchal structure or subversive, resistant forms that challenge the existing structure (54). The 2000s novels belong to the first category as they each conform to traditional gender portrayals despite featuring a female heroine.

In the rest of the primary sources, in the 2010s and 2020s, the females are portrayed differently as they instead challenge traditional gender roles and reject conventional expressions of femininity (Cruger 117). They are, as most YA female protagonists, described as "strong, feisty, clever, witty, insightful, independent, self-reliant, resourceful, dynamic, confident, spunky, gutsy and creative, but the definition of 'strength' is seldom defined or articulated, and evidence for protagonists' 'strength' is vague, at best" (Rubinstein-Avila 366). An example from this corpus is in *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, where the book describes Feyre as clever several times, including the moment when she captures the Suriel (Maas loc 1789). She earns the description of creativity due to her painting skills, as readers can observe in chapter 22 when Feyre finally allows Tamlin to see her paintings. Another example would be in *The Anointed Fae,* where the two protagonists throughout the novel are described as clever (Huxx and Raven loc 196), having guts (loc 164) and confident (loc 36). As a result, these newer heroines are active and independent of the male characters involved, though they still adhere to tradition in the romance aspect.

They can save the world on their own. Still, the narratives have an equal focus on their emotional evolution in the form of finding or keeping romantic relations with males keeping them in the traditional role of needing a man for emotional support. According to Turello, fantasy literature has traditionally split the roles of its characters between active/male and passive/female, but modern-day fantasy, established in the 1950s, depicts women in active roles and moves past the constraint that earlier fantasy literature had placed upon female characters (4). This shift is evident in the corpus, too. The females were passive in the 2000s but were self-sufficient throughout the 2010s and 2020s. In the 2010s and 2020s novels, the female protagonists are all very similar. They are strong, capable of either magic or fighting skills, they exhibit cleverness, and although all of them have a male love interest, it is evident that they do not require them for salvation. The lovers provide emotional support rather than filling the active saver role. These modern female protagonists solve the conflict of each novel and are active participants in the narratives. The main reason for the novels of the last two decades being so similar is that many novels today in fiction, be it fantasy, romance, sci-fi and so on, all reflect different feminist concerns and try to challenge the existing social

structures in different societies and cultures in mainstream often that of the western world values (Lee 52). In the primary sources, these feminist aspirations of complete independence fall to that of the romantic relationship since they each contain a love story in some way, as illustrated under romantic tropes. The opposite is true in fiction in the current era, where romantic love tends to fragment under the pressure of female sexual emancipation and autonomy, according to Giddens ("4: LOVE, COMMITMENT AND THE PURE RELATIONSHIP" 61).

These ten novels become part of the gender debate by showcasing female heroines. "Through the process of gender socialization, children and adolescents learn the norms and expectations for females and males in their culture […]. This process involves the development of gender schemas, which help individuals organize information about various aspects of gender, such as the typical behaviors, attributes, and appearance of women and men" (Walsh 132). These novels are aimed at young people, showcasing recognizable tropes and characters that young readers can use to learn how to express their gender and handle emotional turmoil throughout life. An example is how Morgan shows emotional growth by letting Cam go, which is best for both in *Fairy Tale* (Balog). Here she learns to consider other viewpoints besides her own, which children need to learn before adulthood, though still, as pointed out earlier, she represents a passivity not often associated with a strong modern woman. Therefore, Morgan becomes ambiguous as a role model for young females based on a feminist standpoint similar to the other two leads from the 2000s. In *To Kill a Fae*, Mera is an active self-sufficient female hero (Wilde) with whom female readers can align. She embodies the active nature that contrasts with the passive portrayal of the main characters from the 2000s and, as such, does not become ambiguous between gender identity and modern feminist values like the other heroine of the 2010s and 2020s.

The recurring focus on romance and the move toward active female heroes can be due to the fact that they are all written by modern young female authors and, as such, illustrate what they think young girls should learn. According to James, most fantasy readers are female and female authors use this venue to express ideas about feminism and utopian feminist possibilities (75). So, these novels portray the authors' exploration of modern gender roles within a global society. Giddens found that the primary thematic device of the girls' stories was the quest for romance, which saw the sexual activity as a sparking device on the way to an eventual love relationship ("4: LOVE, COMMITMENT AND THE PURE

RELATIONSHIP" 50). So, the focus on romantic relationships is a part of the female narrative in the current time, which is also evident in our corpus, as all the novels, except *The Anointed Fae,* centre around love stories, as mentioned above. Achieving a successful relationship might not be the female narrator's personal goal, but the authors depict it as crucial for them to attain a happy ending. Like in *A Dance with a Fae Prince*, where Katria does not want a husband, but to get away from her oppressing family and get free of their control, she has to marry so that she becomes the husband's 'property' or problem instead of the stepmother's (Kova). To make matters worse, she cannot choose this man herself. Her stepmother does it for her, and to make her happy ever after, she needs to learn to live with him, as he becomes her partner (appendix a). This secondary world is similar to how older human social hierarchies worked and, as such, portrays traditional roles, which can be problematic as young girls might read this novel and assimilate to Katria and, as a result of this place, extensive gender values on needing a man as women traditionally did, as they had no value in themselves, to grow into being a woman.

This portrayal of traditional gender roles is even more problematic if they are trying to promote feminist views. Walsh's study results show that gender role portrayal across different media varies and depends on the individual consumer's comprehension when processing these gender expressions. Though she found that "one of the most significant factors affecting media-gender associations is, gender – girls' ideas about gender are consistently found to be more tied to their media use than are boys'" (Walsh 154). The heavy romantic focus for female characters in YA fantasy might be precarious because girls are the most affected by gender portrayal in their consumption. Suppose the media a girl consumes are predominantly YA fantasy novels which all illustrate a need for romantic intrigue. In that case, they might get influenced to think that the right and the only way to be a hero in their own life is to depend on romantic relations with guys. This is why Attebery states that contemporary women writers face challenges when incorporating traditional elements into fantasy fiction, using the authority conferred by the traditional storyteller's voice without accepting the accompanying cultural assumptions about hierarchies and gender roles (Attebery 51). As with the example of Katria, she depends on marrying a stranger according to tradition to get out of the house. Kova does not let her conform completely to tradition by making her the active hero for the rest of the book. Kova starts *A Dance with the Fae Prince* by sticking to the old tradition of gender roles but builds on that, letting Katria become independent and let her

make her own choices, allowing young girls to see a self-reliant and clever girl they can mirror in their identity expression.

These strong female leads who are active and autonomous are, in some cases, still problematic, as they still value new romantic relationships over long friendships. Viswanath contends that feminist novels should have strong female characters and sustainable female friendships. Female protagonists in contemporary young adult novels often sacrifice their female best friends for romantic heterosexual relationships (4-5). *Fairy Tale* and *Crown Princess Academy* are two instances where the main female character forgets their best friend. Here, Morgan and Penne neglect their best friend. Morgan does it because of the problems emerging with her first boyfriend Cam (Balog) and Penne due to the closer proximity to Lucas and the emanating chemistry as they try to save the world. Traditionally, the goal for our female leads has changed away from being solely focused on the female gender role encompassing simply the home, husband and children towards equality with males and, as such, have become autonomous. Though the quest for romance is an active process for these characters still, they do not have to fight to achieve sexual freedom but must make something of it instead (Giddens "4: LOVE, COMMITMENT AND THE PURE RELATIONSHIP" 51). This focus on finding the 'right' man where there is chemistry can be explained by their behaviour, as the authors wish to illustrate the heroine's romantic autonomy. However, it can be ascribed to conforming to tradition instead. The novel in our corpus that does not depict a loss of friendship due to romantic interest is The Anointed Fae, which centres around friendship – the love life comes second.

The sexual autonomy of women can also explain the more explicit sexual content some of these novels incorporate. Another factor could be that teens since the 1990s often presumed sexual experience, which is less of a taboo (Stern 319). "Sexual content has been featured in many of the [media] viewed by teens over the years, ranging from subtle innuendo to frank dialogue to overt imagery" (Stern 316), and due to this exposure, teens have become desensitised to it. However, sexual experience is not portrayed as equal for the sexes. For boys, the first sexual experience is a plus, a gain. For girls, virginity is still something seen as giving up, and the question is how to choose the right time and circumstance to do so (Giddens "4: LOVE, COMMITMENT AND THE PURE RELATIONSHIP" 51), as is the case in *A Court of Thorns and Roses* where Feyre knows her sex with a boy from the village will not affect both prospects the same if exposed (Maas). As a result, some of the corpora

highlight a traditional binary division with sexual allowances while still being explicit in the phrasing of the novels. Giddens argues that the stereotype that women want love and men want sex is false. Women want sex, men want to love, and men's position in the public domain has been achieved at the expense of their exclusion from the transformation of intimacy (Giddens "5: LOVE, SEX AND OTHER ADDICTIONS" 66-67), which is also evident from Feyre's encounter. She instigates a physical relationship between her and the village boy, and he is not allowed to express his feelings or want a more emotional one (Maas loc 443-454). Another example is Jude: "I change the angle of the knife, turning it so it's against his neck. He doesn't look nearly as alarmed by that as I might expect. Not nearly as alarmed as when I bring my mouth to his" (Black loc 4168). Here she, like Feyre, instigated the sexual contact with a male, exemplifying her activeness in the act and clearly stating that it happens. On the more implicit end of the scale is the novel *Fairy Tale* which does not have much violence, and the most explicit sex reference is a kiss. On the other end are novels like *Kiss of Shadows* and *Fighting Destiny,* where the sex is explicit, dirty and a heavy presence throughout the narrative. Seen with how fae use sex with humans as a potent feeding source in *Fighting Destiny* (Hutchins) which makes sex a must and an explicit need for the fae in the storyworld. Both books have examples such as:

> "He's like a drug. Once he's touched you, you crave his touch. Not just him either. It's like he wakens you sexually, until your body aches to be touched." She looked down again. "I've never been so sexually aware of other people. It was embarrassing, and exciting, at first. Then he started to hurt me. At first it was just little things, tying me up, then . . . spanking." (Hamilton loc 319)

As a result, the books create a similarity with the more explicit content found in other media and literary genres aimed towards teens.

Like Crossen found with werewolf fiction on page 204, so does this thesis find that in the corpus, the central characters are heterosexual and white. According to Crossen's argument, they are the closest possible to the 'ideal' human specimen, and their focus can be romance or rebellion instead of existential angst. This is evident from the main characters in the primary sources. They do not have to fight for their right to be as they all fit the ideal of a community. Instead, they can focus on saving the world and obtaining a happy ever after by traditional romantic standards, as pointed out in the trope chapter. An example is Morgan and the narrative arc's focus on maintaining her relationship with Cam throughout the novel

(Balog). Here she is popular, has some close friends, and what she regards as a perfect plan for the future. Her existential crisis comes when that plan of ever-after with Cam cannot come to fruition, creating the circumstances around her whole pursuit of keeping him. In *Dance with the Fae Prince*, Katria focuses on rebelling against her evil stepmother as she was born into privilege, including the following prospects and rules. However, her rebellion shifts as she moves from the human to the fae lands to align with her love interest making it possible for Katria to help Davian's rebellion while pursuing him as a love interest (Kova). As most of the novels join the romantic pursuit of the central characters by manipulating them onto the same side of the narratives' rebellions, they mimic the result found by Crossen in werewolf stories. This also implies that the corpus sexualizes the fae to conform to traditional ideals of relationships – man and woman – though *A Kiss of Shadows* pushes the boundaries by having several lovers courting the heroine, not sticking with the 'normal' two-person relationship with the stereotypical 'ideal' candidates.

One of the novel's storyworlds takes this romanticisation and sexualisation in a bloody direction more known from vampires. As Karg states, when one thinks of vampiric figures, it's quite naturally a set of frighteningly sharp pearly whites that first comes to mind. Vampires use their fangs to consume food and are often portrayed as sexual predators (Karg 89). In *Fighting Destiny*, the portrayal of the Fair Folk presents them as sexual predators, feeding on human emotion as their source of sustenance, similar to vampires and human blood. "The Fae's preferred method to generate the highest emotion in Humans was sex. It seemed there was some truth to those old stories about Succubi and Incubi, as the Fae not only consumed emotions, they could also take all or part of the soul while feeding" (Hutchins loc 206). Here, Fair Folk not only use humans as a food source, but they further sexualize the feeding process to maximise the feelings they can access. Furthermore, the hypnotic pull that vampires are known for is also present in the fae in the form of magic – the ability to glamour – and the notion of immortality's appeal. Vampires are insufferably erotic creatures that use hypnotic powers to bend everyone to do their bidding, sexual or otherwise. The romantic notion of immortality is an enticement, and the bad boy/bad girl syndrome caters to humanity's wild, rebellious side (Karg 264). Ryder and the other Fair Folk in *Fighting Destiny* have these mind-bending human powers similar to those demonstrated in Karg's study of vampires. Another example is the attraction towards the fae, which Sonny has even though he now them to be cunning, vindictive and cruel towards most humans (Livingston).

Again, Jude is taught from childhood how to protect herself from being tricked by the fae (Black loc 231 & 1163). Repeatedly, this appeal vampires have is similar to how the fae in these novels are romantically and sexually appealing to humans. However, most Fair Folk seem able to glamour humans into a fake sense of security while the natural draw is limited to the fae subrace.

The sexualisation of the fae is present in several of these novels. For one, in *Fighting Destiny*, where Ryder's few narrative passages give readers insight into his almost constant focus on Syn and their mutual attraction, which he constantly craves as a fae and as a food source: "I can smell it as I can smell her fucking sex begging me to tear off those tight fucking jeans and ravage it" (Hutchins loc 1028). Secondly, all the books highlight the beauty of the fae, showcasing their allure in the presence of both humans and fae beings, such as *The Cruel Prince*, where Jude describes their beauty as "like a golden stag's carcass, crawling with maggots beneath his hide, ready to burst" (Black loc 3604), which highlight the human ambiguity about the attraction to the fae. They are attractive, but they hide the bad behind the façade – their true colours – what makes them dangerous. Humans know the danger fae represent, yet they are still irresistibly drawn to them. A novel in the primary texts which sexualises the species down to minor mannerisms is *A Kiss of Shadows*: "I smiled at Jeremy and gave him what I knew he wanted: the look that said that I appreciated the slender potential of his body under his perfect suit. It would have looked like flirting to humans, but for the fey, any fey, it wasn't even close to flirting" (Hamilton loc 104). In this storyworld, even the species' greetings are recounted as flirting with humans. Here the sexualization of the species has been pushed to the point where they need to be flirtatious to be polite towards each other, which explains why if there is a romantic interest, it has to be further out on the spectre of detailed sexuality, further resulting in explicit sections of the species casual relations to monogamy (loc 5195) and sex, in general, is not a taboo and often being extreme in some way – like BDSM (loc 329-335). In YA fae fantasy, the species, due to romantic plotlines, the appeal of monsters and the intrinsic beauty, have become highly sexualised, which in some instances means that sexual passages are succinctly explicit and border on the taboo. Maybe this is due to 'regular' sex not being a taboo in modern society, but we cannot say for sure.

This sexualisation of another species, often in relation to humankind, can be a sign fae have become humanised alike shifters. In contemporary literature, the werewolf is often

interpreted as a conduit between humanity and a lost wilderness, a means to reconnect humans with nature; however, nature is equally likely to be presented as a cruel avenging force or as supremely indifferent to humankind's suffering and striving (Crossen 133). The fae represents a species ruled by their instincts, often in line with nature and with a social structure similar to those of medieval times compared to humans. In this way, they can represent a link with nature humans do not possess. As a rule, the fae have never been human, and humans in these stories cannot suddenly become or change into a fae unless they were a fae, to begin with. Feyre is the exception, as she is turned into a fae at the end (Maas loc 5687-5707). This is a difference between the fae and shifter species. The fae does not represent an evolutionary state where a human degreases into only following their instincts, going into the wilderness living in peace with nature, as Crossen found in the werewolf stories. Instead, fae possesses these abilities and, as such, represents a way to do this while still living in highly sophisticated societal structures, which humans can assimilate instead of evolve into. The humanization of the fae has nothing to do with their representation of and metamorphic states humans can achieve, unlike the shifters and vampires; instead, they represent it in the way they conform to the recognisable human societal structure, as mentioned in previous chapters. Furthermore, their capability to join humans in fulfilling romantic relations, like in *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, showcases they can assimilate, understand and comprehend human emotions as well as their societies portray likeness to human logic, which means they have cultivated from the isolated forest species from history and myth.

The world of publishing

In the last ten years, the publishing world changed a lot. One change is social media, but that affects the marketing and sales of publishing. Regarding publishing itself, what changed most is the formats of books published and the resulting effects. The primary sources used in this project are Kindle editions instead of physical copies of the novels. The reason for this is two-fold. One is that Kindle books are easily accessible – no wait for shipping or sharing one copy – but it is also easier to find usable quotes, as you can place bookmarks and take notes in them while accessing them on multiple devices (Talbot *The Impact of Technology on Publishing*). Eliminating the need to carry ten physical novels with us everywhere – they are on an online platform accessible to every device. The second reason is the cost. An e-book on Kindle is significantly cheaper than a physical copy. If you buy the ten novels as physical copies, it costs 810 DKK on Amazon, a price that excludes shipping costs. The Kindle versions cost 400 DKK, using the Kindle Unlimited subscription on Amazon, where you can read a wide variety of books for free. This is at least a 50% discount compared to the physical copies. However, e-books are easy to find online for free, which decreases the cost to nothing. This project's research revealed that nine can be accessed free online. *The Anointed Fae* is the only novel that needs to be paid for access. Due to this, the cost would be 40 DKK for these ten Kindle novels. Physical books are free if found at public libraries, but living in a country where English is not the native language makes it unlikely to find newer English novels. A dataset from novels only found at a Danish library significantly limits the source material available. In the chosen niche of YA fae fantasy, gathering enough sources to replicate this study is impossible. In fact, only one of the primary sources, *The Cruel Prince,* was available at Aarhus public library, which limits the corpus substantially – one opposed to ten sources.

While e-books and audiobooks are cheaper than physical copies, it does not mean it is not a profitable business. Experts estimate the global e-book market to be worth around 32.19 billion dollars in 2032. (Talbot *The Impact of Technology on Publishing*). Amazon is the biggest platform for e-books today, with 75% of all sales in the US placed on the site (Talbot *The Impact of Technology on Publishing*). Amazon has sold more e-books than physical books since 2012. The number of e-books sold annually almost tripled from 2010 to 2020 – 69 million versus 191 million (Talbot *The Impact of Technology on Publishing*). This increase in the e-publishing industry is not just e-books; audiobooks gained just as much popularity.

They are the fastest-growing publishing format, expected to generate 35,05 billion dollars by 2030 (Talbot *The Impact of Technology on Publishing*). Similar to E-books, audiobooks grow in sales every year.

The two e-publishing formats' growth rates are around the same. As Fig.1 below illustrates, e-books are still more popular, but audiobooks are getting closer in percentage. The growth and popularity of E-publishing have yet to outgrow physical copies. Despite the technological advancements, with 10% of the world using digital devices, 9 out of 10 people still prefer owning physical copies to digital ones (Talbot *The Impact of Technology on Publishing*).
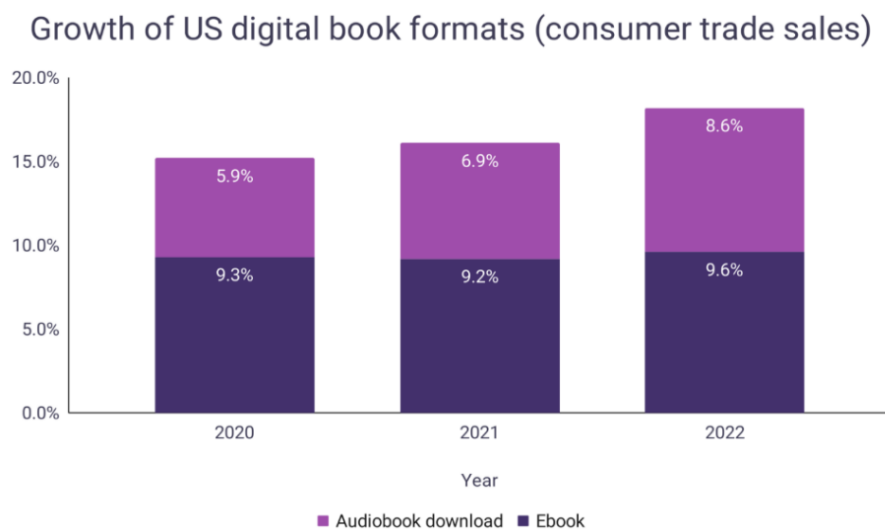
Fig 1. Growth of US digital book formats (consumer trade sales) from Dean Talbot.; *The Impact of Technology on Publishing*; wordstated.com, 2 Mar. 2023, https://wordsrated.com/the-impact-of-technology-on-publishing/

E-publishing benefitted from the pandemic, as specific genres and age categories rose in popularity due to Covid-19. The physical bookstores had to close during the pandemic. Thus, stores and publishing houses turned to the digital world, increasing online sales to around 50% of the trade sales for the first time (Talbot *What Impacts Book Publishing*). The growth in e-publishing and Amazon's success has also made it easier for authors to self-publish. Their novels no longer need traditional publishing to reach readers. Amazon especially helps millions of authors to launch their careers by setting new benchmarks for the industry and creating an easy and accessible platform for authors and readers alike (Talbot *What Impacts Book Publishing*).

Publishers and the literary community snubbed self-publishing. It was a process where you did everything yourself, and often those who self-publish were not good enough to be

traditionally published. Today self-publishing is a diverse business where individual parts of the process are outsourced to a service provider to help with book production, printing or marketing etc. (Earnshaw 486). Respect for self-publishing in the publishing world expanded because of two events in 2012. The most significant event was the publishing of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy. It was initially self-published before Random House bought and republished it worldwide. The second event was when Pearson PLC overtook Authors Solutions, one of the largest self-publishing companies. This acquisition meant that Pearson PLC could enter the market growth of self-publishing through Author Solutions and gain easier access to potential authors to publish (Creco 188). Concurrently, authors had few options for self-publishing, but these shifts in the publishing world changed the view on self-publishing; the market evolved, and the arrival of Amazon's Kindle e-book market stabilised (Earnshaw 490).

The reasons for authors' use of self-publishing vary. An author may choose to self-publish to get a more significant profit from their sales, to maintain control over all the aspects of their books, to bring old books back to the market etc. (Earnshaw 489). Typically, authors self-publish their books digitally, like e-books, because it is cost-effective. Getting the work done more quickly is easier, and the infrastructure to sell through online retailers is already established (Earnshaw 487-488). Authors choose to self-publish on platforms like Amazon since they have complete control and publishing procedures are accessible and available. Others may use a self-publishing service firm, which offers different services based on the ever-changing market (Earnshaw 490). Authors can find it easier to self-publish, as this embraces and reacts to market changes quickly and easily. As self-publishing continues to rise and become a significant part of publishing, rumours indicate that the term is being replaced by the new term indie publishing as a more common usage term (Earnshaw 492-493).

Self-publishing gains in popularity and becomes easily accessible to authors, which starts the debate about the quality of self-published books. Self-publishing, due to its easy access, adds to the issue of quality control and editing, as platforms such as Amazon does no services except publish if authors choose to use them. Essentially, self-published books belong to two categories: those that make it to the public forums but should not have and the hidden gems that fans and publishing houses discover, engage with, and distribute (Earnshaw 492).

The primary sources show the relevance of self-publishing as five out of the ten novels were self-published – half. The self-published novels are two from 2010, *To Kill a Fae* and *Fighting Destiny* and the three from 2020. They are a mix of books published directly on Amazon or through self-publishing companies. The five authors' reasons differ for choosing self-publishing instead of traditional publishing through a publishing house. Some authors do not comment on their reason, but Elise Kova, the author of *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, has told the reason for her choice to self-publish on her website. Kova states that she first tried traditional publishing with her first series, *Air Awakens*, though she considered self-publishing but that it is challenging to enter traditional publishing if you self-publish first. So, she decided to try traditional publishing first and then published it herself when there was no interest (Kova *About/FAQ*). Her self-publishing reason is not just because the classical way did not work but also because it gives her complete creative control, the ability to run her own business, make her schedule and higher royalty earnings. Kova also highlights differences between the two publishing types – royalties, creative control, upfront costs, marketing, distributions, and responsibilities and how both sides handle these. Lastly, she argues that one is not better than the other. It depends on the author and what they are most comfortable with (Kova *About/FAQ*).

Current times and popularity

While fantasy has always been popular in literature, in the last twenty years, YA fiction has been on the rise, especially fantasy novels filled with witches, vampires, fae and other fantastical creatures that have gained traction (Hill). The statistics show a clear evolution over the years regarding fantasy and YA. In 2021, the sale of fantasy novels grew up to 45.3% compared with 2020 (Curcic *Fantasy Book Sales Statistics [2023])*, and while YA sales, in general, did not increase as much as fantasy, they still increased by 27.5% in 2021. YA is the fastest-growing category over the last five years, with sales increasing by 48.2% since 2018 (Curcic *Young Adult Book Sales Statistics*).

This is a significant growth in fantasy and YA literature, which might be because of social media and e-books. These new formats and interactive websites allow everyone to access book content and, additionally, have made bookish social media into money-making platforms. These technical advances grant a broader audience to gain access to novels worldwide. It also allows authors to self-publish, which results in more novels being published (ErinNickCarlyBridie). Social media further allow publishers to reach their audience in new, engaging ways. Big publishing houses, like HarperCollins and Penguin Random House, have profiles across seven major social media platforms. On these platforms, they share information, photographs and videos to promote the novels they have already published or that will be released soon (ErinNickCarlyBridie).

Instagram and Tiktok are the two social media platforms that have helped boost the popularity of fantasy and YA, not to mention literature in general. In 2020, #BookTok emerged during the pandemic. The community grew quickly as people came together to share their love of literature. Some of the platform's videos went viral, contributing to its growth. While readers continued to post, authors joined in and made accounts to promote their titles. In contrast, publishers made company accounts to promote specific titles and made sponsorships with the popular BookTokers (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*). The #BookTok hashtag on TikTok gained over 137 billion views by May 2023, with various other BookTok-related hashtags achieving millions and billions of views. The platform gained so much popularity bookstores, like the giant US chain Barnes & Noble, began to promote titles from the community with shelves and tables dedicated to BookTok (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*). This way, customers

can view and find TikTok's trending titles. In the UK, by 2021, its popularity reached heights. TikTok's #BookTok trend was responsible for four out of the five best-selling YA titles (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*). As TikTok is a new app, its users are predominantly young. Most users are below 35, which helps boost the YA category in particular (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*).

Like TikTok, Instagram influences the online book community. Instagram became popular by letting the platform's users share photos. Still, the Bookstagram trend has grown since 2014 because it gave book bloggers and reviewers a space to share worldwide visual content (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*). The most popular Bookstagramers gain hundreds or thousands of followers, which helps and harms books. These platforms also expose to traditional publishing as publishing houses use these platforms for promotion (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*). As with TikTok, Covid-19 had a significant impact on Instagram in relation to book-related content. This content rose by 31% on Instagram as people encouraged their followers to read during lockdowns (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*).

It is not unreasonable to conclude that sales of different genres and age groups rise due to the influence of their popularity on social media. In age categories such as YA, children's and adult books, there are significant growths and declines in current literature. The growth seen, especially in YA and adult fiction, is connected to the rise of social media because they are the audience on many of these platforms. The fall in children's fiction; thus, means children do not use social media yet, and books aimed toward them are not promoted on social media by default. Looking at these three age categories, from 2018 to 2022, the adult fiction category grew 32%, children's fiction dropped 8.9%, and YA fiction grew 58%. 58% means it is the fastest-growing age category of these three since 2018 (Curcic *Fiction Books Sales Statistics*). The table below shows the Adult, Children's and YA fiction sales. It shows the boost in sales in the Covid-19 years. Where the book-related content on social media bloomed too, according to table 1 below on the next page.

Table 1

Units of fictions book units sold in millions among three fiction age groups from 2018 to 2022, by Year, Adult fiction,

Year	Adult fiction unit sales (million)	Children's fiction unit sales (million)	YA fiction unit sales (million)
2022	189.0	184.0	31.0
2021	174.2	201.9	31.0
2020	138.8	184.2	23.7
2019	130.5	167.3	19.5
2018	143.1	165.7	21.1

Source: "Fiction Books Sales Statistics" *Wordsrated*, 30 January 2023, https://wordsrated.com/fiction-books-sales/.
Accessed 28 May 2023.

Notably, these statistics relate to fiction novels, not non-fiction, which has different genres and statistics and is a much larger category than fiction. Still, the category fiction has increased by 22,4% since 2018, as is to be expected when every other categories and genres also rise. The peak of the last five years doing COVID illustrate that fiction book sales increased substantially from 317 million sold novels in 2019 to 347 million in 2020 and 407 million by 2021, as seen in Fig. 2 below.
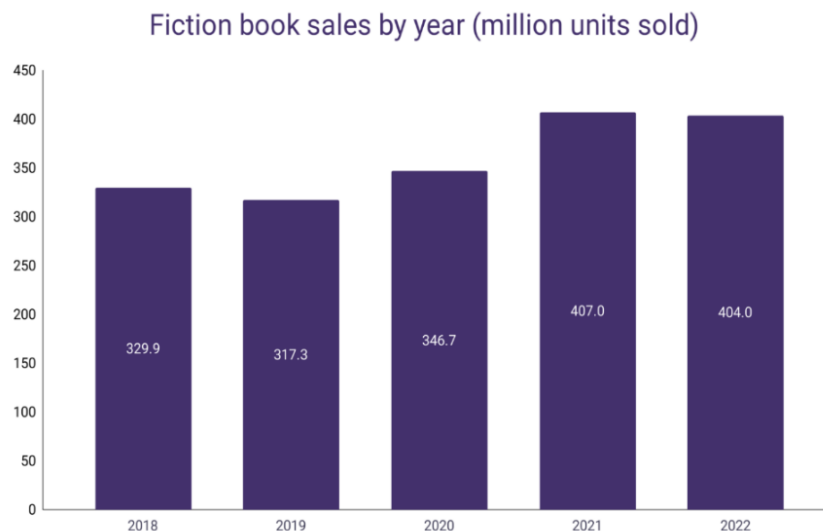
Fig 2. Fiction book sales by year (million units sold) from Dimitrije Curcic.; *Fiction Books Sales Statistics*; wordstated.com, 30 Jan. 2023, https://wordsrated.com/fiction-books-sales/

As stated earlier about the age categories, YA is written to appeal to teens and younger adults, just as children's are for kids etc. However, while a book belongs to a specific age category, it does not mean readers outside that age cannot enjoy it. In fact, nothing in children

or YA literature prevents adults from indulging in them. Adults experience childhood and teen years when they are young. Therefore, they relate to and understand stories meant for them. Furthermore, these stories can be a form of escape to simpler times for adults (Zipes *Why Fantasy Matters Too Much* 5-6). This illustrates why adults turn to age categories like YA. 55% of those who buy YA books do not fit the teen moniker, as the graph below depicts. 28% of those readers are 30-44 years old, so age-wise, they would reside within the adult category (Curcic *Young Adult Book Sales Statistics*) even with the expanded YA age. The reason can be the simpler or more lighthearted themes in kid and YA versus adult literature. Another factor is fandom. Adult YA readers might appreciate a particular series or a specific author, either still published within the YA conventions. Then their love for the series or author means they continue to read YA stories, which approximately 66% of YA readers confirm (Curcic *Young Adult Book Sales Statistics*), meaning the statics show that YA buyers, over half are above the targeted demographic age.

Share of YA books purchased by age group
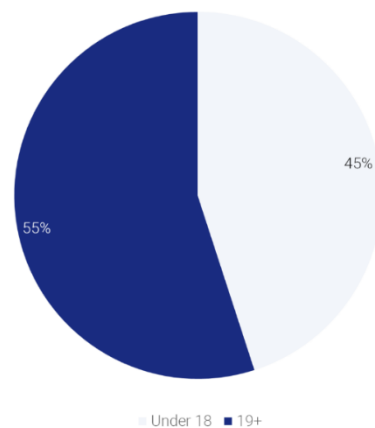
Fig 3. Share of YA books purchased by age group from Dimitrije Curcic.; *Young Adult Book Sales Statistics*; wordstated.com, 30 Jan. 2023, https://wordsrated.com/young-adult-book-sales/

The easy accessibility to books today is part of why general book sales increase. Today, most, if not all, books are accessible online. So, adults with limited time to go out and purchase new literature can now find, buy and read anytime. The online opportunities aid an easier time appropriating new E-books and audiobooks, which are readable anytime on every modern device, like phones, computers or e-readers. E-books and audiobooks make it easy for everybody to read anytime e.g. during commutes, lunch breaks, before bed, or while taking a bath. These formats mean reading is convenient for all ages. Additionally, they make

purchasing books cheaper, which means less hassle physically and appeal to more people. It also tempts adults whose guilty pleasure is YA, as they might not buy many books they feel embarrassed to own and display because they are marketed towards YA. Lastly, e-books and audiobooks' appeal is not simply that they are cheaper and faster in acquisition; they are also more anonymous as no physical purchase or space is needed.

Strategies in the book world

Fantasy in the book industry and contemporary culture functions like how a celebrity is a money-making machine (Zipes *Why Fantasy Matters Too Much*). Not everything that publishers, authors, media, film studios, etc., do revolves around books, but specific actions and decisions are driven by the intention of treating them as a lucrative commodity placed in the spotlight. Several strategies are employed to either market books to make them go viral or increase revenue.

Publishing currently overuses one old popular way, which involves redesigning covers to republish older and newer novels. The reasons behind cover redesigns are manifold. Reasons include attracting attention and boosting sales, freshening up a book, reflecting a change in the target audience, or bringing attention to new books being released in an older series (Bobby). An example of the last reason is *The Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins. Recently, she released a prequel to the series and in connection, she rereleased the original trilogy with new covers, most likely so they all match. This is a clever stunt as book fans of the series would buy the new book and the new designs of the old books to have a matching set aesthetically, which is important to most book fans.

Collins, Cover Image

UK Alternate ed.   UK Classic ed.   UK 2021 Box Set ed.

The cover changes are used by publishers and authors not only as a sales and marketing strategy; bookstores also use it to their advantage. They will market the new covers and showcase them in the stores to highlight the newest edition in hopes that fans might rebuy it even if they own the original (Cooper and Cooper). Rumours also state that authors choose

to redesign their covers because they become greedy, which can neither be confirmed nor denied, but public knowledge is that every author does, in fact, not control their book covers. It surprises and anger authors when they see the covers for the first time, as it does not fit their vision or picture of what they wanted. This leads to issues between author and publisher (Cooper and Cooper). Some publishing houses purposely give a book a lousy cover if they do not believe in it; the result is that a book needs a redesign later if it defies the odds (Harvey). These problems only occur when it comes to traditionally published authors, as self-published authors have complete creative control – they choose and design their covers, eliminating these problems.

      A component of book cover changes is the varying issues across different countries. The biggest countries in the English-speaking world, the US and UK, do not publish books with the same covers. The different covers are theorized to be like this so they better reflect the country where they are published or to be mindful of certain visual representations (Bobby, Cooper and Cooper). While none of the primary sources has different UK and US covers, it is common for the two countries to differentiate covers. Examples are *They Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera and *Gallant* by V.E. Schwab, as depicted below.
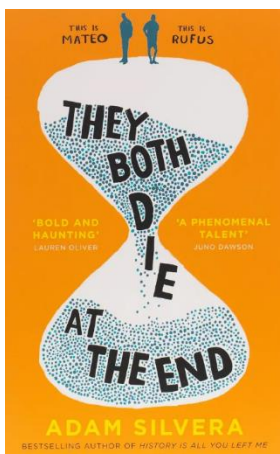
Silvera, Cover Image
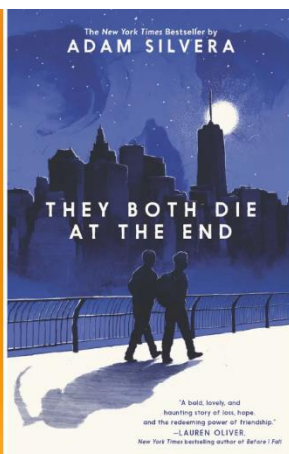
UK ed.   US ed.

Schwab, Cover Image
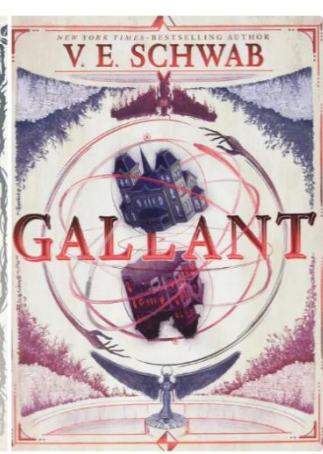
UK ed.   US ed.

      The reason for the new covers are to re-establish attention or seize unforeseen popularity, some books do well and still get new covers mid-series. One of the primary source series does this: *A Court of Thorns and Rose*. Maas' books have always done well, and as with other series that already sells well and get a lot of attention, the series get new covers to further boost the conversation surrounding new releases within them (Murphy). In 2020, Maas unveiled new covers for the *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series along with the

announcement of the fifth book in the series to the shock and disappointment of fans. They expected the announcement of the next book in her new *Crescent City* series instead. The cover changes also angered many fans since they had to rebuy the first four books to match the new fifth book. While new book covers are not unusual, redesigning covers for a series while it is at the peak of popularity and before it is finished is highly unusual. Redesigns of covers are a means to gain a higher fan base by rebranding toward current trends, and famous authors with large fan bases need not worry about old covers in current series, as they do not need the attention the new covers bring (Cooper and Cooper). Since the release of the fifth book in the *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series, Maas has released and announced new covers for her remaining two series. The series *A Throne of Glass*, the only completed series, has gotten new covers since the release of A Court of Silver Flames. They released the entire series in the US and UK on February 14th of this year. Her third ongoing series announced new covers that angered fans even more. Maas' latest series, with the last book released in 2022, surprised readers when, about a year later, in February 2023, an announcement was made that new covers for the first two books would be released alongside the rest of the series. The release of the third book is scheduled for early 2024. Some fans expressed excitement over the new covers because they dislike the originals of all three series. However, the fan majority across all social media platforms mostly agree with the anger over the changes. They view it as a money-making scheme by Maas that forces fans to rebuy them if they want matching books, which is a well-established fact about fans. Now fans feel Maas, other authors and publishers take advantage of this.
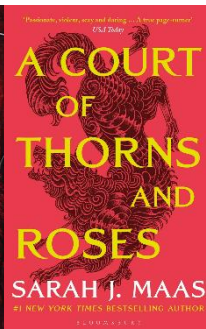

Maas, Cover Image 2012 ed.   2023 UK ed.
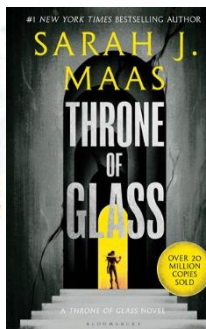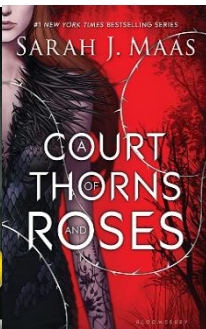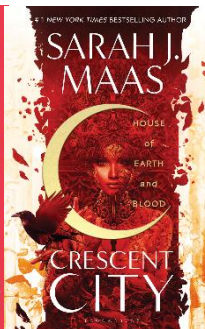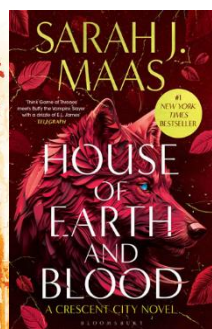
Maas, Cover Image 2015 ed.   2020 ed.

Maas, Cover Image 2020 ed.   2023 ed.

Another valuable finance and marketing strategy is that of book adaptations. Turning books into TV shows or movies is neither news nor revolutionary when a book switches from a literary form to the screen. However, according to data from Publishers Marketplace,

literary adaptations to TV instead of movies have increased since 2000. It should exceed film adaptations for the first time last year, although it is unclear if that was the case (Manshel et al.). One reason for the amount of business in adaptations is a mix of publishing companies pushing for books to be adapted due to fan demand and the current streaming services, such as Netflix, HBO Max, Amazon and Hulu (Manshel et al.).

The adaptational reason varies depending on the media and the publishing aspects. For the TV and movie world, there is less risk involved with releasing something that is a literary adaptation as it already has a built-in audience, which means that no matter what, it already has a pre-existing audience, and with social media in the picture, fans have an easier time promoting, sharing and creating excitement about it (Talbot *Impact of Book Publishing on Film Industry* & Rothwell). Furthermore, adaptations have proven beneficial to the film and tv industry. Book adaptations, on average gross approximately 44% at the UK box office and, on a worldwide plan, earn 53% more than original screenplays (Rowe). It is also beneficial for publishers and authors to make literary adaptations. Like movies or tv shows, they bring a spotlight on the original book and the new adaptation, which often boosts the sales of both works (Rowe, Talbot *Impact of Book Publishing on Film Industry* & Rothwell). Adaptations for readers are beneficiary since book enthusiasts want to prolong and enrich their experience of a beloved novel or series, which an adaptation provides. It adds to the beloved narrative and universe that readers lover but incorporates new storylines and characters that is often still mindful of the original source material. It takes on the form of visual fan fiction, providing an enjoyable experience for fans who do not mind the adaptation deviating from the books. (Murray 14).

The evidence of the effect of adaptation in the literary world is clear from the amount of ratings on Goodreads, where the ratings on an adapted novel will quadruple after the TV or movie releases (Manshel et al. & Talbot *Impact of Book Publishing on Film Industry*). Goodreads is a platform with over 120 million members globally and is the most popular book fan database (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*). Members use the platform to track the books they read, find recommendations, write reviews, participate in the yearly reading challenge, follow friends, do Q&As with authors etc. The data that readers provide on Goodreads is valuable to both the literature and entertainment industry as it shows the thoughts and opinions of the audience they try to reach (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*). While the statistics anno 2019 to now

is not public, the data from 2011 to 2019 shows a significant increase in users on the site. Fig. 4 below illustrates the growth in users: From 2011 to 2019, numbers grew by 83,5 million, an average increase of 10,44 million members per year. Goodreads registered their highest percentage increase in 2012 at +100% (Talbot *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*).
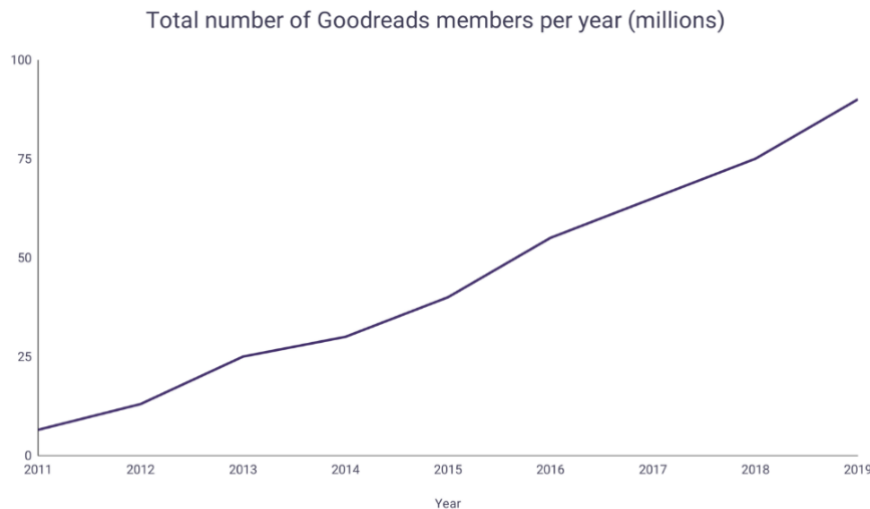

Fig 4. Total number of Goodreads members per year (millions) from Dean Talbot.; *Impact of Social Media on Book Publishing Industry*; wordstated.com, 1 Mar. 2023, https://wordsrated.com/impact-of-social-media-on-book-publishing-industry/

A contributing factor to Goodreads' success is that Amazon purchased the site in 2013, allowing readers to link their Kindle with their Goodreads account. Their Goodreads will update every time they read, finish or start a book. So, as Kindle and E-books gain popularity, so do Goodreads as the two interconnect through Amazon. As previously stated, Amazon is a big part of E-publishing, so it is logical for Goodreads numbers to rise if Amazon's does.

It is also apparent that while most aspects point to the positive effects of adaptation, there is also disadvantage for creators, publishers and audiences. Adapting a literary work into a show or movie can negatively affect the book and the show/movie. If the adaption is too extreme – the book is no longer recognisable in the adaptation due to the number of changes or their severity – it can upset fans greatly to the point where they will boycott the adaptation and refuse to see it. Additionally, they might become angry with the author and boycott the original book because of this dislike for the adaptation, which also causes book sales to drop (Rothwell). From the start, adapting a literary work faces a challenge due to the original fan base, who hold biases and view the adaptation as a failure, driven by the belief that the original literary work holds more value than any new show or movie. Even before giving it a

chance, fans have already pledged their loyalty to the canonical source material, which results in a situation where no matter what the adaptation does, it will struggle to meet the standards set by the original book (Kennedy-Karpat 287). The popularity of adaptations in Hollywood has hurt authors as they often choose to adapt already successful and influential writers only, which can affect their fan base' loyalties. Hollywood adapts the bestseller lists and uses the hype surrounding the original to improve the adaptation's demand and vice versa. This makes it harder for more minor authors. They do not have the popularity, influence or audience to be noticeable enough for an adaptation, leaving them out of the spotlight in the media world and the bestsellers list (Chapmann).

Trends in YA fae fantasy

So to conclude, this thesis examined the current culture surrounding the fae species in YA fantasy literature and, based on the ten primary sources, found that some aspects recur throughout while others evolved or depend on the decade. There are only a few academic studies within the field of the modern fae, as studies of this species are generally focused on historical or mythical versions. Instead, studies of modern representations of supernatural creatures focus on vampires and shifters since they became popular earlier than the fae. Still, this project found that fae is humanised and sexualised in much the same way as them throughout this project. To come to this conclusion, it was first needed to define the study's parameters – what is a fae, and how does this thesis define the YA fantasy genre – which enabled us to limit our dataset to the ten novels mentioned above and see if they deviate or exemplify these tendencies. Fae is a species included in the umbrella term of Fair Folk, which stems from lore, tales and myth. In current literature, they saturate the YA fantasy genre and are increasingly popular. The YA moniker determines that it aims toward teens, though that distinction might be absolute according to the current trends. Meanwhile, fantasy must contain some magical item, either a material object, character or function, which is still valid.

In the chapters "Fae definition" and "Fae through the decades", this study thoroughly examines how we define fae based on folklore and myth and how these play into current literature. The most noticeable changes in the historical relations are the aspects of changelings and the fae courts. Changelings are represented in two novels from the 2000s, *Wonderous Strange* and *Fairy Tale*, whereas only aspects of changelings are used in the 2010s novels; instead of a baby from each world getting switched, the humans get stolen to the Otherworld as in *The Cruel Prince*. In the 2020s, changelings are absent from the three novels in any form. The courts are an aspect that is used throughout all ten books. Still, the 2000s portrays the courts as very close to folklore, as seen in Wonderous Strange, where as the 2010s begin to slowly move away and have it structed more aristocratically, such as in Fighting Destiny and then as we enter the 2020s, the courts are still present. Still, there is no longer anything inspired by the folklore version of fae courts but instead a similar structure to the human aristocratic version of courts, which can be seen in *A Crown Princess Academy*. While there are many differences in the portrayal of the fae, most of the novels concur on the beauty of the fae, which all ten novels point out, but it is also something that draws back to

folklore's portrayal. There is also an agreement on the size of the fae, which is that they are human-sized. It is mainly in the 2000s it is made clear that the fae can change their size and sometimes are smaller if they wish to appear, as stated in *Fairy Tale*. It is also made clear that the use of pointed ears has become a regular occurrence, as most novels either point out the curved ears or show them on the novel's covers. There is universal agreement throughout all ten books that the fae has magic, but the magic that the fae wields is very varied as it depends on the storyworld of the book. In the 2000s and into the 2010s, it was called a form of glamour which can be seen in *A Kiss of Shadows* and *To Kill a Fae*, but from the 2010s to 2020s, it became less specific magic and has lost most of its terms and just becomes magic as well as relation to lore, as seen in *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *The Anionted Fae*.

In "Worldbuilding", we examine the storyworlds' built. According to Todorov, all of them are placed in the 'fantastic' story category, equal to modern fantasy. However, few, like *A Kiss of Shadows,* border between the 'fantastic' and his fairy tale category of the 'marvellous'. The difference is if the acceptance of the magical is automatic or if there is hesitancy first. An evolutionary change over the decades is in the secondary and primary worlds are implicitly or explicitly present in the storyworlds. In the 2000s, the secondary worlds were implicit through the presence of magical creatures and objects, which means they are implied constructions according to Nikolajeva's theory. However, this changed in the 2010s, which the presence of both open and closed but no implied constructions illustrate. So, the storyworld in 2010 had either a primary and secondary world, such as *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, or only secondary worlds, like *To Kill a Fae*. In 2020, no primary worlds were within the three storyworlds; though two have several worlds, they are all secondary, like in *A Dance with the Fae Prince*, which equips them to closed constructions. This depicts the trend that the storyworlds in YA fae fantasy become more extensive since authors shift away from simply creating primary worlds by adding the fae species to the real world where everything else is tacit to readers. Instead, they create one or more explicit secondary worlds where every aspect needs explanation. Still, these ten novels all portray Fair Folk or only the fae species as the primary invention added. Still, it is also the common denominator for how each of these storyworlds illustrates they are not reality placing them in the fantasy genre. A way authors get around this new need to explain every aspect of their more comprehensive storyworlds is to equate them to something recognisable from reality, for instance, the fae societies'

similarities to medieval human hierarchies with a focus on titles or bloodlines as in *The Cruel Prince*, or the schooling system in *The Anointed Fae*, which likens the US system.

Besides the invention of the fae, their culture and history, these novels also share several trends – which we explored in the context of seven popular tropes that either manifest in all or change by the decade detailed in the "Tropes" chapter. The selected tropes are relevant due to themes and motives in YA literature, they are popular in the fantasy genre, or they are a substantial part of several of the primary novels. Some tropes are in all ten, but that is not the case with every trope.

The chosen one trope is often represented in quest stories like these, where the heroines go on a journey to save the world as part of worldbuilding, but one describes the character and the other the plotline. However, the entire corpus includes both aspects, but not identically; each depiction is unique. Furthermore, this structure with one or several chosen ones questing to save the world is repetitive and means that one can define them as retellings though we do not make this claim for all. The three novels we claim are retellings are clear and directly linked to other stories, like *A Dance with the Fae Prince* is, an adapted version of *Cinderella* and the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe. They all feature, if not centre, around love stories, but the popular tropes changed through the decades. These fae stories portray the dominant love trope to be instant love in the 2000s; in the 2010s, it was enemies to lovers, and in the 2020s, we believe the trope will become forbidden love. Each decade has other tropes present, as stated in the "Tropes: Retelling" subsection, but those are more unique to specific narratives than they occur as a general trend in our texts. Elements that are not all-encompassing are, e.g. visual storytelling – here, the occurrence of maps evolved with the tendency not to place the plot in a primary world which geographically represents reality – or multiperspectivity – which in the last decade shifted from representing the POVs on the love story to representing different POV's on the same friendship as in *The Anointed Fae*.

The gender portrayal and explicit content, violence and sex, become extensively featured depending on the protagonists' age. The reason behind this is two-faceted. First, younger readers, like teens, are expected to be experienced and knowledgeable in current global society due to the broader access and other media. This makes room for complex characters that are neither good nor bad but instead, fall into the newer term: morally grey. It also allows for themes that focus on not only the coming of age but also the later stage of establishing an identity because these reflect the problem of the less naïve reader. Second, the

protagonists reflect a bigger age range than the YA category was initially intended for, illustrating that authors try to reflect older readers. Both are present in all the decades, but as a rule, the protagonist's age will determine the level of explicit content. The youngest in our case is 16-year-old Morgan from *Fairy Tale* – here, explicit sexual content is limited to a kiss (Balog). At the other end of the spectrum, we have thirty-something Merry, whose sexual escapades are vividly detailed with added BDSM kinks from the first chapter (Hamilton). Still, both these examples are from the 2000s, so the development where stories aimed at an older audience this way did not happen inside our corpus timeline but before, though after the classical distinction of a young person equals a teen was clarified. This might be because authors try to cater to the older readers that statics show purchase YA literature today. Thus, this vastly different level of explicit content involved in YA can result in it splitting into two age categories in the future: the YA and the new concept of the NA – new adult.

The fae are now humanised and sexualised the same way as vampires and shifters were before the start of this millennia. Their description highlights the beauty and magnetic pull, the fascination with their immortality while their society and emotions become humanly rationalised, as with the other creatures. The similarities between the fae's recent evolution and the previous changes with werewolves and vampires could be due to the increasingly accessible access to novels and online literary communities. This makes finding current trends within the romantic fae YA fantasy literature niche easier. Lastly, it makes sense that authors consider these while navigating the modern publishing world, where online support can make or break a novel's earnings. The context surrounding a book matters, such as the book's own, like newer editions with cover changes, the fan culture around it and the original tales they adapted, or how they adhere to current trends like the love trope but add personal spins, etc.

The current fae still needs to be studied comprehensibly by scholars within the literary field. Further research of a more saturated dataset could be done within the exact specifications we focused on and, in general, examining an inclusive corpus in the aspects of sexuality or non-binary gender expressions.

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Appendix

A – Primary sources info

Divided by decade of publication and subdivided by publication year

2000

A Kiss of Shadows

Facts

("a kiss of shadows", "laurell hamilton" & "A Kiss of Shadows (Merry Gentry, #1)")

Author: Laurell Hamilton, St Louise MO

Published: 2002, Ballatine Books

A Kiss of Shadows – Book 1 of 9 novels

Main characters:

- Narrator: Merry Gentry

- Love interest: several males

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.6 out of 5 - 2.486 ratings --

Goodread: 4,01 out of 5 - 57.236 ratings

Kindle: 4.6 out of 5 - 2.486 ratings

Resume (Hamilton):

Merry is a runaway of fae royalty. Had she stayed at court she would have been killed indirectly by her deranged cousin with her aunt, the queen, looking the other way. During her time away the queen starts realising the fault of her son but instead of removing him as heir apparent she creates a competition between him and Merry. Furthermore, the extremely low birth rate among the fae has made the queen fearful of the royal line dying out. Therefore, the first to produce the next generation's heir become heir apparent within the maximum of a three-year timespan. But not just anybody can father a royal heir. Merry gets the stipulation that her lovers need to be chosen from the queen's own guards, and she need to choose more than one as many as possible of the males plus a spy of the queens choosing. Hereby, leading up to Merry creating her personal harem who will protect her against all threats and help her conceive.

Wondrous Strange

Facts

("Wonderous Strange", "Lesley Livingston" & "Wondrous Strange (Wondrous Strange, #1)"):

Author: Lesley Livingston, Toronto

Published: 2008, HarperTeens

Book 1 of 3

Main characters:

- Kelley Winslow
- Sonny Flannery

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.3 out of 5 - 156 ratings

Goodreads: 3,69 out of 5 - 20.960 ratings

Resume (Livingston):

Kelley dream of being a Hollywood actress and gets her change as the understudy when the lead twist her angle. The theatre is playing *A Midsummer night's Dream*. Meanwhile, Sonny is a human changeling, stolen from birth grown into a great warrior trained to protect the rift in the veil between the fae and human world so nothing crosses over. The break is found in central park where Sonny meets Kelley one day as she is rehearsing her lines. Turns out she has been stolen from the fae realm as a baby by Sonny's mother as retribution for them stealing Sonny, who she could not get to. Now the trouble starts. Kelley's powers and light are beginning to shine through, and Sonny needs to protect her from the fae people. Some fae royals are trying to use Kelley to start a war between the fae people and break the barrier to the human world so that fae can be free again, but who - light, dark, summer, spring etc?

Fairy Tale

Facts

("Cyn Balog", "Fairy tale" - Amazon & "Fairy Tale" - Goodread):

Author: Cyn Balog, Allentown PA

Published in 2009, Delacorte Press

Standalone

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.3 out of 5 - 66 ratings

Goodreads: 3,44 out of 5 - 5266 ratings

Main characters:

- Narrator: Morgan Sparks

- Love interest Cam & Pip

Resume (Balog):

Morgan Sparks can see people's future a talent which see uses for the students around her with the exception of her and her childhood sweetheart, Cam. They are planning a big party for their sweet 16, but when Cam's mysterious cousin, Pip, shows op everything changes. Turns out Cam is really a fairy and have been switched at birth with human baby Pip, who have become a changeling growing up in the fairy realm. Cam was a weak, sick baby not meant to survive into adulthood, but as he has manage that the fairy king wants his currently only living heir back. In exchange for taking Cam back to the fairy realm, they will leave Pip in the human realm to take his place. Morgan tries to prevent the fairies from being able to re-switch Cam and Pip, so she can keep the love of her life, but ends up excepting that it because she realises the consequences to the boys if they remain in the 'wrong' realm.

2010

Fighting Destiny

Facts

("Fighting Destiny", "Amelia Hutchins" & "Fighting Destiny (the Fae Chronicles, #1)"):

Author: Amelia Hutchins, Spokane WA

Published: 2013, self-published

Book 1 in *the Fae Chronicles* series 7 books

Main characters:

- Narrator: Synthia, Syn
- Love interest: Ryder

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.4 out of 5 - 12.866 ratings

Goodreads: 3,99 out of 5 - 41.213 ratings

Resume (Hutchins):

Readers follow the fae hating witch Syn and her coven in their dealings with the dark fae royal Ryder. The witch guilt is hired to protect Ryders fiancé, the found light fae princess, whom Ryder and his guards have received death threats for. At the same time Syn and Ryder become allies trying to protect the princess and solve the witch and fae murders happening in the city, which seem related to the reappearance of the lost princess. But everything is not as it seems. The light heir is an imposter puppet created Frankenstein stile with pieces collected from the death victims and Syn is what she hates most of all - fae. She just has not gone through transition yet and have been hidden as a witch from a young age by powerful spells and magic.

A Court of Thorns and Roses.

("A Court of Thorns and Rose*s*", "Sarah J. Maas" & "A Court of Thorns and Roses (ACOTAR)"):

Author: Sarah J. Maas, New York

Published: 2015, Bloomsbury publishing

Book 1 of 5

Main characters:

- Narrator: Feyre

- Love interest: Tamlin

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.7 out of 5 - 89.963 ratings

Goodreads: 4,2 out of 5 - 1.392.157 ratings

Resume (Maas):

The story follows Feyre, a human girl living in a world of magic, where humans and faeries are living in divided lands. After killing a disguised faerie in the woods, she is taken captive by Tamlin, a powerful and handsome High Fae lord, and taken to his realm as punishment. As Feyre learns more about the faerie world and the threat that looms over it, she finds herself drawn to Tamlin and his court, despite her hatred towards them. But as she spends more time in the faerie realm, Feyre beginnings to uncover the truth about the curse that plagues Tamlin's part of the land, the spring court, and his ulterior motives for bringing her to his court. With the help of Tamlin, his friend Lucien, and different faeries of this world, Feyre sets out on a mission to save Tamlin's world from destruction.

The Cruel Prince.

Facts

("The Cruel Prince", "Holly Black" & "The Cruel Prince (the Folk of the Air, #1)"):

Author: Holly Black, New England

Published: 2018, Afdo books

Book 1 of 3

Main characters:

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.5 out of 5 - 29.009 ratings

Goodreads: 4,08 out of 5 - 858.961 ratings

- Narrator: Jude

- Love interest: Cardan

Resume (Black):

After witnessing the brutal murder of her parents at a young age by her fae stepfather, Jude and her siblings are brought to the fae realm and raised there. During her teenage years, she became an expert at spotting fae mischief but is still human and does not fit in. Jude still fights to find her place in this world because she has adopted it as her home and does not wish to leave and live back in the human world. To ensure she can stay, she inters court intrigue by becoming one of the older fae princes' spies in his grasp for the throne as the king has decided to abdicate to one of his children. This ensured a deathly power struggle between the heirs. Another of the princes, Cardan, has bullied Jude throughout her time in the realm. So, in her eyes, he has become the second worst heir possible, just above the tyrannical older brother. Still, due to the death of almost the royal bloodline and to protect her royal stepbrother, she manipulates the coronation in Cardans favour against both wishes.

To Kill a Fae

Facts

("To Kill a Fae", "C.S. Wilde" & "To Kill a Fae (Hollowcliff Detectives, #1)"):

Author: C.S. Wilde

Published: 2019, Amazon Digital Services LLC - KDP Print US

Book 1 of 4

Main characters:

- Narrator: Mera 'Poseidon' Maurea

- Love interest:

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.3 out of 5 - 312 ratings

Goodreads: 3,93 out of 5 - 783 ratings

Resume (Wilde):

The story starts with a murder mystery, with both a human and a fae as the casualties. Detective Mera is put on the case, but due to the circumstances not with her regular partner, Jules. Instead, she is partnered with the fae detective Seb. Normally, each race has its own jurisdiction but the crime crosses boundaries and forces the police to follow suit. This forces Mera to work with the perceptive fae to solve the case. Therefore, Mera has to balance a new partner, assassins trying to murder them, keeping her secret - she is a waterbreaker which carries and automatic death sentence - and the corrupt light fae influencing the fae police department. Will she manage to find the balance and bring the fae king's killer to justice or will the stakes get the better of her?

2020

Crown Princess Academy

Facts

("Crown Princess Academy", "A.J. Flowers" & "Crown Princess Academy (Crown Princess Academy, #1)"):

Author: A. J. Flowers, Detroit

Published: 2020, Amazon Digital Services LLC - KDP Print US

Book 1 of 3

Main characters:

- Narrator: Penelope, Penne

- Love interest: Lucas

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.5 out of 5 - 189 ratings

Goodreads: 4,11 out of 5 - 356 ratings

Resume (Flowers):

The world is almost consumed by the shadowed force of malice. Malice kills fae but some humans can learn to control. The fae have created a safe zone but most humans live outside the barriers in the dregs. Our heroine is a strong malice caster from the dregs who ends up in the deadly race to become the next queen by marrying the fae crown prince. She does not want to participate but to safe those she holds dear she has to. Furthermore, Lucas has ulterior motives for her and fixates on her wining the competition, which plays out at the Crown Princess Academy in the safe zone with deadly consequences to the class losers.

A Dance with the Fae Prince

Facts

("A Dance with the Fae Prince" & "A Dance with the Fae Prince (Married to Magic, #2)"):

Author: Elise Kova

Published: 2021, Silver Wing Press

Book 2 in the *Married to Magic* series totals 4 books

Main characters:

- Narrator: Katria
- Loveinterest: Davien

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.4 out of 5 - 8.312 ratings

Goodreads: 3,91 out of 5 - 20.480 ratings

Resume (Kova):

Katria never wanted to fall in love. Having always been treated cruelly by her family, Katria does not believe in love, but when she is married off to Lord Fenwood, a handsome prince, all she wants is a better life without getting any feelings for her new husband. As they begin to spend time together, their attraction grows and not falling in love becomes more difficult. But the struggle that Katria is facing with her growing feelings isn't her only problem, as her new life is now filled with odd rules, and frequent attacks by fae that Katria never knew were real. And when she one day accidentally interrupts a ritual and is sent to the land of Midscape after gaining the magic of ancient kings, she is suddenly faced with the responsibility of having to save the fae and a man she swore she would never love.

The Anointed Fae

Facts

("The Anointed Fae" & "The Anointed Fae (the Anointed Fae, #1)"):

Author: Jess Huxx & Anna Raven

Published: 2022, Huxx and Raven Publishing

Only book published in the series

Ratings:

Kindle: 4.9 out of 5 - 9 ratings

Goodreads: 4,82 out of 5 - 11 ratings

Main characters:

- Aries
- Oriel

Love interests:

- Eros
- Lucien
- Alexio
- Rafe

Resume (Huxx):

Readers mainly follow the two girls, Aries and Oriel, through their first year of high school. They are part of the first year where fae from all three worlds are attending the same school. There are nine subcategories of fae, living in three separate worlds, each in control of their own elemental power. Aries and Oriel find that not only can they control their own element but each other's. Their free time is spend trying to solve how that is possible, when it should not be, which leads them to the mysterious legends of the anointed fae. The veil between these worlds is failing and the legend is that the anointed fae will bring an end to the separate world structure. They will merge them into one world, but the myth of the anointed fae are wrapped in mystery. During the girls' journey, they create a deep friendship the extend to several other fae creating the main group of characters in the story.

B - Maps

(Maas & Black)

(Kova placed right before the story begins)

(Huxx before 1 chapter & after chapter 43)