DIPLOMARBEIT / DIPLOMA THESIS

Titel der Diplomarbeit / Title of the Diploma Thesis

"Of Girly Girls and Bad Boys: An Analysis of Imbalanced Heterosexual Relationship Dynamics in Young Adult Fantasy Novels"

verfasst von / submitted by

Anna Zimmerl

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2018 / Vienna, 2018

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Univ.-Prof. Dr. Sylvia Mieszkowski who encouraged me to consider the broader ideological implications of representations of gender and sexuality. Her feedback and insights have helped immensely in writing and revising this thesis.

I would also like to thank friends and family who have supported me throughout my studies. Special thanks go out to my parents for their continuous emotional and financial support. I want to especially thank my mum for inspiring my love for the English language. I hope that one day I'll be half the teacher you are.

I also want to thank my sister with whom I can share my love for, and sometimes also frustration with, fantasy novels.

And finally, thank you to Christina, my best friend, for being the linguistics to my literature. So glad to have had you by my side throughout our time at the English department.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

Relationships, especially heterosexual romantic ones, have been one of literature's most pervasive subjects for centuries. Ranging from classics such as William Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) or Jane Austen's Georgian society novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) to more contemporary bestsellers like Nicholas Sparks's *The Notebook* (1996) or Jojo Moyes's *Me Before You* (2012), it is not only within the romance genre, but also in a number of other genres (e.g. tragedies), that finding love and maintaining romantic relationships greatly influence how the stories' plot progresses. Novels within the young adult fantasy genre, for instance, typically feature several romantic relationships and heavily rely on these heterosexual pairings throughout the story. The majority of novels with elements of romantic love still follow and implicitly or explicitly sustain the heteronormative order. However, several exceptions can be named, which promote other romantic relationships than heterosexual ones. Especially within young adult contemporary literature recent efforts have been made to include and discuss different sexualities and establish these as part of the norm rather than 'the Other' in relation to heterosexual relationships. For example, there have been some recent young adult publications which feature gay couples, e.g. John Green and David Levithan's *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (2010), Benjamin Alire Sáenz's *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012), Becky Albertalli's *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* (2015), or Jandy Nelson's *I'll Give You the Sun* (2014), and some, if fewer, novels which feature lesbian couples, e.g. Julie Maroh's *Blue Is the Warmest Color* (2010), or bisexual couples, e.g. Mackenzie Lee's *The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue* (2017). Rarely does one find an inclusion of asexuality in novels, Seanan McGuire's *Every Heart a Doorway* (2016) is the notable exception that proves the rule.

Even though this recent development of a more inclusive concept of sexuality will most likely continue, it cannot be denied that the vast majority of stories, especially the most widely read publications within the young adult fantasy genre, including the two series selected as the objects of analysis, *The Mortal Instruments* by Cassandra Clare (2007-2014) and *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas (2015-2017), centre around a heterosexual female protagonist who finds herself caught between two male lovers who compete with each other to win her heart. In these stories homosexual relationships are either non-existent or situated at the margins, e.g. gay minor characters. I will turn to a closer examination of the love triangles

between each series' heroine and two young men shortly. Overall, it can be said that love continues to be a widely-discussed topic in literature, be it in the form of friendship or romantic partnership. Given its presence and importance not only in literature but in our everyday lives, it will most likely always enjoy great popularity and interest for readers.

One frequently discussed notion regarding heterosexual relationships is that of power, more specifically the power dynamics between the genders. Historically, men have been in a more powerful position compared to women and this power imbalance influences many aspects of life, public as well as private ones. The ongoing struggle for greater equality among the sexes started centuries ago. Mary Wollstonecraft, a predecessor of the feminist movement, was one of the first to publicly demand certain rights for women, e.g. education, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Feminism, which strives for equality between men and women, initially sought to improve women's political, financial and educational situation. Demands to grant basic legal rights to women are associated with first-wave feminism, which describes the period between the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, when the efforts of the suffragette movement brought about women's right to vote in many Western countries. Second-wave feminism extended its focus to discuss women's role in society in general, i.e. constrictions regarding sexuality, reproductive rights, women's role in the family as well as issues of domestic violence against women (McAfee n.p.). Simone de Beauvoir contributed one of the most influential theories regarding women's role in society with her work *The Second Sex* (1949). She established that "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (330), thus maintaining the now wide-spread and generally accepted idea that gender is socially constructed. With the increasing interest in women's studies following the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, feminist (literary) studies focused on the oppressed role of female characters within patriarchal societies. Femininity shifted into focus of academic as well as public attention, leading to a disregard of an explicit focus on masculinity (Connell 41f.). The man was seen, first and foremost, as the powerful patriarch suppressing women and so masculinity was equated with dominant behaviour. It certainly was and still is important to raise awareness of women's roles and treatment in real life and literature to reach greater gender equality. Nevertheless, a discussion of both femininity as well as masculinity is more inclusive and useful, also for my analysis, since the two concepts, as Raewyn Connell rightly points out, are relational, i.e. one cannot exist without defining itself in opposition to the other (68). The field of gender studies, compared to the field of women's studies, incorporates both genders in the discussion, also in the analysis of literary works, and therefore enables a broader discussion

of power relations (Showalter 2). These power dynamics within romantic relationships will be the subject of this thesis. In this context the term 'power' is understood in reference to the asymmetrical power dynamics between the genders. As Michelle Lazar states, "[f]rom a feminist perspective, the prevailing conception of gender is understood as an ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination, respectively" (7). Power will be discussed considering this connection between gender and dominance. The French philosopher Michel Foucault also contributed to gender studies' understanding of sexuality. In his *Histoire de la Sexualité* (1976) he contends that the repressive power in sexuality is often overestimated (10). In other words, power "does not operate by repressing and prohibiting the true and authentic expressions of a natural sexuality", as one true natural sexuality does not exist (Gutting & Oksala n.p.). Power should rather be understood as a conglomeration or web of normative practices and discourses, which regulate how sexuality ought to be realised, and therefore also creates the distinction between 'normal' and perverted sexual behaviour (Gutting & Oksala n.p.). Thus, whenever power dynamics are addressed in this thesis, attention will be given to the practices and discourses that regulate sexuality and gender identities in the young adult fantasy novels under analysis.

What first sparked my interest in this topic was reflecting on my past reading experience. As a teenager I read and adored Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005-2008) and viewed Bella and Edward's relationship as an ideal to strive for in real life. Only after growing older, reading more novels and reading more critically, did I notice the questionable messages in the depiction of gender relations *Twilight* and other similar novels might send, especially to their younger readers. While Edward embodies the role of the man as a fierce, loyal and controlling protector as well as the powerful and dangerous predator, Bella is depicted as an insecure and submissive damsel in distress who is not able to function properly without her boyfriend, and even resorts to seeking out near-death experiences to feel connected to him again. As the *Twilight* series gained in popularity, in particular following the release of the movies (2009-2012), I would argue that the series' depiction of romantic love did not only influence my friends' and my own idea of an ideal relationship, but also many other teenage readers. As one's teenage years are generally considered crucial in terms of identity formation, closer attention should be paid to the novels, movies, TV shows and other media consumed during that age, which includes a critical analysis of how the genders are depicted.

1.1 Fantasy Literature and Children's Fantasy

Fantasy is one of the broadest literary genres in existence, encompassing fairy tales, epic/high fantasy, low fantasy, juvenile fantasy, paranormal romance and urban fantasy among many other subgenres. It is therefore hard to clearly define the term fantasy literature as a whole. According to Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, a definition of fantasy literature accepted by many scholars in the field is "that fantasy is about the construction of the impossible", which can be contrasted to science fiction, which is "about the unlikely, but [...] grounded in the scientifically possible" (both 1). This broad definition of fantasy results in a wide spectrum of stories classified as fantasy texts, and also leads to a considerable number of tropes associated with the genre. Frequently employed tropes within the genre are, for instance, the fight between good and evil, the quest story, and, in terms of characters, figures such as the trickster, the hero, the antagonist or the damsel in distress.

Fantasy literature does not enjoy a particularly high status in the academic community. In fact, as Brian Attebery notes, reading fantasy novels is often considered a form of escapism, though he proposes not to view this negatively (99). While, as Maria Nikolajeva observes, adult fantasy literature has long been dismissed within academic discourse as being too formulaic, children's fantasy enjoys a relatively high status within the academic field of children's literature (*Fantasy* 61). Viewing children's fantasy as a genre in and of itself is historically closely tied to Enlightenment's proclamation of childhood as a crucial period in a person's life requiring a clear distinction from adulthood. As Nikolajeva remarks, early children's literature during Romanticism served one primary purpose, namely "to educate and socialize the child", which also included setting role models for its readership (*Fantasy* 50 f.). Though no clear and definitive distinction can be drawn between children's fantasy and fantasy for an older readership, children's fantasy stories tend to feature child protagonists and provide more "moral and spiritual guidance" compared to adult fantasy (*Fantasy* 60). Fantasy series marketed primarily towards children, with popular examples such as C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956), Philipp Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000), Cornelia Funke's *Inkworld* series (2003-2007), Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* (2005-2009), or the first novels in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), have been devoured by many young readers and continue to be bestsellers. These popular novels allow young readers to be transported into new settings and spark their imagination. Nikolajeva identifies another positive quality of children's fantasy:

> [F]antasy can empower a child protagonist in a way that realistic prose is incapable of doing. In this respect fantasy has a huge subversive potential as it can interrogate the existing power relationships, including those between child and adult, without necessarily shattering the real order of the world. (*Fantasy* 61)

Fantasy's subversive potential could, in my opinion, also be utilised to question gender imbalances; in other words, the hierarchical power relationships between men and women as well as between boys and girls, which are, for the most parts, still in place in many fantasy stories. As Lucie Armitt rightly argues, "transgression lies at the root of the fantastic, [...] via the fantastic we are enabled to journey beyond limits we would otherwise not dare to cross" (97), and this should also extend to offering alternatives to and challenging stereotypical depictions of masculinity and femininity, which have historically dominated the genre. As Judy Simons notes, children's books of the "[e]ighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century [...] are full of strong, active boy characters, and much more submissive, domestic and introspective girls" (143). Well-known novels that feature this traditional allocation of roles are, for instance, Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) or C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956). James. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904) can also be listed as a prime example, as Wendy, who is about twelve years old, cares for the boys on the island and acts as the mother figure as soon as the children arrive in the parent-less Neverland. While girls were able to find at least one counterexample to the stereotypically submissive girl in tomboy characters, e.g. Jo in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and *Good Wives* (1868/1869) or George in Enid Blyton's *The Famous Five* (1942-1963), femininity in boys was and still is interpreted as a sign of sissiness, and thus viewed negatively (Simons 152-156). Simons further points out that only during the second half of the twentieth-century did the "blurring of gender roles" begin to be discussed in novels (155). Even though recent children's books try to represent multiple gender identities, the "more traditional representations of gender" have not been rendered obsolete (Simons 157). The same tendencies can also be observed in young adult literature, which will be discussed in the following section.

1.2 Young Adult Literature

There is no readily available definition of young adult literature, and so it is also difficult to clearly distinguish between children's, YA (i.e. young adult), and adult literature (Coats 322). One way to identify a book as one written for young adults is by relying on publishers' classifications. The book market aims books at a specific audience and age group and so young

adult novels are generally viewed as those which are marketed towards the age group following childhood, namely 12 to 18-year-olds, though many popular YA novels have a much broader readership, including many adult readers, e.g. *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (2008-2010). The primary target audience of young adult novels are young women, who form a considerable part of the reading community, thus making it possible to create a book market which specifically targets their reading tastes (cf. Lewit n.p., Dahl n.p., Kokesh & Sternadori 140). Melissa Dahl summarises a recent study which confirms that women purchase over 60 per cent of young adult novels (n.p.). As Jessica Kokesh and Miglena Sternadori point out, adolescent "girls tend to be more prolific readers than their male peers" during that stage in their lives, which explains why the majority of "young adult books are geared toward female audiences" (both 140). Though most YA novels are marketed with a teenage audience in mind, many young adult books are in fact bought by adults (Garcia 17), either to gift their children or to read themselves, and the international success of many young adult novels can only be explained by taking into account the substantial number of women over the age of 18 who enjoy reading these novels (see Dahl n.p.). This popularity of young adult books among adult readers has many reasons. Especially young adult fantasy books are often published as part of a series and, given their fast-paced nature, they can be quite addictive. Furthermore, compared to adult fantasy novels, many readers find them more accessible and easier to read, which could be attributed to the overall length of the novels as well as to the tendency to create less complex worlds and more straightforward magic systems. Caroline Kitchener lists a further reason to explain the fact that more than half of the young adult reading community consists of adults, i.e. primarily women over the age of 18. She argues that since the success of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) adults are more inclined to read books not specifically aimed at their age demographic (n.p.). In my opinion, the escapist appeal of young adult novels, which Georgina Howlett recognises (n.p.), should not be underestimated. Most young adult fantasy series, while being easy to read, offer a cast of characters with magical abilities, include magical creatures and exciting adventures, and are set in a fantastical world different from our own, thus lending themselves to escapism via literature.

It is not only young adult's readership that is predominantly female, but the overwhelming majority of authors are also women. They contribute most of the bestselling novels in the genre with the occasional exception, e.g. Neal Shusterman's *Scythe* (2017). This dominance of female authors in YA literature can be illustrated by perusing the Goodreads Choice Awards, where readers can vote for their favourite new publication in a given genre each year. In 2017, 20

authors were nominated in the young adult fantasy and science fiction category and 18 of these most popular novels were written by female authors (see www.goodreads.com). Interestingly, in children's fantasy the male/female ratio among authors is fairly balanced. The adult fantasy genre, by contrast, continues to be dominated by male authors, which goes hand in hand with the often-voiced criticism of one-sided portrayal of female characters in traditional heroic tales. While there have been counter-movements to depict female characters more diversely in adult fantasy, stories still feature the trope of the damsel in distress in need of rescue and fantasy worlds tend to be more sexist and patriarchal compared to Western-European world nowadays, often explained and excused by the fantastical medieval setting of the stories.

While it is difficult to clearly categorise books as young adult, one possible distinguishing feature from children's literature is the protagonist's age (Coats 322). Furthermore, what, for some scholars, marks the difference between children's and YA literature is the omission, or inclusion and discussion of sex. Others, such as Karen Coats, argue that "YA novels tend to be more interrogative of social constructions" compared to children's literature; in other words, in YA novels there seems to be no clear divide between good and evil, whereas novels for children feature a rather straightforward "punishment for the wicked and reward for the good" (both 322). Kokesh and Sternadori summarise Jonathan Stephens's definition of young adult literature as containing three elements: "(a) teenage protagonists, (b) a distinctly teenage voice and/or attitude, and (c) a journey toward identity discovery and separation from adults" (140), elements present in many novels marketed for a young adult readership. The teenage voice or attitude Stephens lists as one of the defining features of YA literature refers to the distinctly teenage perspective most of these stories are told from. Compared to adult fiction, more young adult novels are narrated in first person and use the present tense. Furthermore, the narrative voice is "unique", as Stephens summarises, the stories' pacing is fast, and the observations made are "distinctly teen" (both 41). Overall, these stories appear to be catered for a teenage audience and their increasing popularity among young women (and men) only confirms Stephens's observations.

With the recent success of many young adult novels, a related genre, namely 'new adult', has also been flourishing. 'New adult literature' is a term generally used to describe novels that contain more mature content than young adult literature. While romantic elements are present in young adult as well as new adult novels, sex scenes tend to be more explicit in the latter (see Peterson n.p.). This distinction also becomes evident when examining the two objects of

analysis at the centre of my study: *The Mortal Instruments* (2007-2014) by Cassandra Clare and the *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series (2015-2017) by Sarah J. Maas. I would classify *The Mortal Instruments* as a young adult series, whereas I would consider the *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series new adult, though it is still marketed as young adult as well.

Young adult books, though often overlooked and dismissed as less complex and important compared to adult fiction, in my opinion generally unjustifiably so, continue to enjoy increasing popularity among their readership. Marketing books specifically towards teenage readers is a fairly recent development which started in the 1960s and the young adult book market has continuously been increasing in popularity ever since, with a significant upswing during the last decade. Following the release of popular fantasy and dystopian series, such as *Twilight* (2005-2008) and *The Hunger Games* (2008-2010), sales of young adult literature have skyrocketed with a 20% increase in sales from 2013 to 2014, for instance (see Peterson n.p.). Looking at overall sales figures in the U.S., the increasing importance of the children's and young adult sector (grossing 4,398.6 U.S. dollars in 2014 compared to 3,637.5 in 2013) becomes visible, also in comparison to adult fiction (2013: 10,939.5, 2014: 9,873.5) (source: GBO 4). A similar trend is noticeable in the UK, where the children's and young adult market is the only remaining "book market where sales of paper books are still rising", as Jennifer Rankin notes (n.p.). A report by the Nielsen company further reveals that "[t]he UK children's book market has consistently grown year on year since 2013, peaking at £381m in 2016" (13). It is difficult to show the increasing interest in young adult novels, as the publishing industry usually only distinguishes between children's and adult novels and thus counts young adult titles as sales for the children's book market. Nevertheless, if one considers recent figures indicating that over 35 per cent of book sales in the UK are children's and young adult publications (The Nielsen Company 3), the popularity of the genre cannot be denied. The young adult book market relies on a vast number of serialised works to contribute to its continuing sales increases, as readers wish for more of the same. Popular young adult books are frequently developed into major blockbusters, which in turn leads to renewed interest in the respective books. The books are republished as movie tie-ins, accompanied by massive franchise efforts, and the market's need for similar series seems unrelenting.

While the success of young adult literature in recent years is undeniable, some have seen its increasing monopoly critically. The stories are occasionally described as being less complex and featuring problematic elements. Given the fact that young adult novels are primarily read

by young women, this development should be analysed closely, especially with regard to the novels' portrayal of gender. As Coats points out, "[y]oung adult literature exerts a powerful influence over its readers at a particularly malleable time in their identity formation" (315). One part of this process of identity formation is closely entwined with society's and one's own expectations concerning gender and sexuality, as well as issues of race and class. Literature is able to influence our views regarding these topics, be it positively or negatively. Coats also comments on critics' reluctance to view YA literature as equal to adult literature, when she writes that "young adult literature is often viewed as a gateway drug used to entice readers to try the harder stuff" i.e. works of adult literature, particularly classics (316). This inferior status of YA should be overcome, as Coats remarks, and she further proposes viewing young adult literature as a destination (317). In my opinion, Coats's insistence to elevate the status of YA literature is justified, as it would be a premature judgement to dismiss all works of young adult literature as inferior to adult fiction and therefore unworthy of academic discussion. While I would consider young adult novels easier to read than classics, for instance, and, in that sense, they are less complex, the themes discussed in many YA novels are still multi-faceted and complex and, most importantly, relevant to teenagers; thus, I would also opt for considering YA literature as a destination. This would entail furthering the efforts of creating a YA canon of literature as well as "theoriz[ing] YA fiction as a type of literature that has its own constellation of concerns that mark it as distinctive from literature for either children or adults" (317). Coats's wish for more academic discussion of young adult literature is certainly desirable, as it would not only make it possible to better distinguish YA from other literature, but also lead to more critical discussion of recent young adult publications, for instance, concerning gender roles.

1.3 Gender Roles in Young Adult Fantasy Novels

Recent examples of popular novels within the young adult fantasy genre show that there is a tendency of authors to include physically strong female protagonists. Put simply, young adult literature is generally written for women, by women and about women, even though this does not automatically guarantee a story that empowers women. As is common in the fantasy genre in general, the protagonist of a young adult fantasy novel usually has to fight to defeat an evil force with the help of allies. In contrast to most adult fantasy book series, in which the action generally takes centre stage, young adult fantasy series tend to focus strongly on relationships and romance, typically featuring a love triangle between a female protagonist and two male

love interests. Popular examples that include love triangles are Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005-2008), Cassandra Clare's *The Infernal Devices* (2010-2013), Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* (2011-2013), Kiera Cass's *The Selection* (2012-2014), Sarah J. Maas's *Throne of Glass* (2012-tbc) as well as Victoria Aveyard's *Red Queen* (2015-2018) series. What is striking about the relationships presented in many of these novels is that, while the heroine is physically strong and a fierce warrior, she is both emotionally as well as physically abused and manipulated by her partners and forced into stereotypical gender roles. While efforts to "promote gender equality" in YA fantasy novels can be observed (Kokesh & Sternadori 140), these developments are fairly recent and often only at surface level, i.e. the protagonist is initially described as emotionally and physically strong and independent, but her actions within the novel imply that she is more dependent on others, especially on her male lovers, than originally anticipated. Studies have concluded that female teenagers strongly identify with characters in books and "tend to use these novels as a guide to life" (Kokesh & Sternadori 139), which is why it is important to pinpoint problematic, unhealthy, destructive or even openly abusive aspects of these fictional relationships. Similarly, the portrayal of male characters also requires critical attention, and the issue of toxic masculinity needs to be addressed.

Since the number of successful female writers greatly exceeds that of male authors within the young adult fantasy genre, it might not be surprising that there also is a dominance of female protagonists, as female writers tend to write about female protagonists (Nikolajeva *Power* 106). Laura Robinson points out that this uneven representation of protagonists' genders in terms of numbers is caused by the underlying assumption that "girls are readers, and they want to read about girls" (209). Recently, probably also in reaction to the academic and public discussion and criticism of *Twilight*'s representation of Bella as a weak female protagonist (e.g. Deffenbacher, Franiuk & Scherr, Łuksza), many young adult fantasy novels aimed at teenage girls try to include empowering messages. Coats summarises recent developments concerning gender representation as follows:

> While books about girls have always located their characters in relationship-intensive plotlines, gone are the days where getting the guy ends the story with a happily or a tragically ever after. Girls today are generally encouraged to be more savvy in negotiating objectifying discourses, even standing against mainstream feminism in their quest to chart their own destinies. (Coats 318)

In other words, the female characters' decisions are ultimately based on their own world views rather than what might be expected of a feminist narrative. As Coats notes, the female protagonist often has to find a balance between asserting herself in a male-dominated world,

while at the same time wanting "to be recognized as a sexual being" (318). The progressive developments and feminist messages Coats found in the young adult contemporary publications she examined do not, however, extend to the objects of analysis in this thesis. Although it cannot be denied that recent publications within the young adult fantasy genre contain empowering messages for teenage girls, I would argue in this thesis that often this is only superficially so, and the underlying ideology is still one that suggests the female protagonist is somehow incomplete without the guidance of a male romantic partner at her side. Nowadays, as Simons states, "brave, smart, [and] resourceful" female characters are common; however, rarely are they "allowed to upstage the male hero or the man they love" (both 156f.). Moreover, while young adult fantasy novels now actively try to show a variety of roles for young women, the message they send about boys and young men is rather one-sided. Perry Nodelman suggests that boys' reluctance to read is also caused by how male adolescents and men in general are represented in YA fiction nowadays: "as being a problem" (Nodelman 14 in Robinson 209). Overall, as Laura Robinson acknowledges, there appears to be an effort in young adult novels to "creat[e] a message of female-centred empowerment", which, while being a positive development, is also quite often accompanied by the additional message that men are part of the problem, and "have to be domesticated" as a consequence (both 216). Especially YA's depiction of male violence against women, often with rape employed as a device to distinguish the good from the bad men (219 ff.), creates an overall concerning message to young readers, leaving teenage boys with few positive male role models.

1.4 The Power of Young Adult Literature

As has been mentioned above, young adult literature should not be overlooked or dismissed merely as a source of escapism, as it also serves an educational function. Since it contributes to the socialisation of today's youth in many areas, only some of which, i.e. gender and sexuality, will be the subject of discussion in this thesis, it is important to closely examine the power structures embedded in popular fiction and uncover ideological currents that are woven through many of these novels. Tison Pugh observes that "literature performs cultural work often in service of larger ideological objectives" (3), and it is these objectives that need to be traced and revealed in YA literature in order to determine how these novels can be powerful devices in influencing young readers. As Sharyn Pearce recognises, sources of popular culture, which include popular young adult novels, are part of a larger framework of "a cultural practice that has its own power to create social change" (175). At the same time, these practices can argue

against any social change whenever traditional outlooks on life are promoted, for instance, with regard to gender and sexuality. Pearce further highlights "that from the beginning of the twentieth century the concept of adolescence has been entangled with concerns about and attempts to manage or at least regulate the sexuality of youth" (176). Young adult literature thus serves a didactic purpose, namely to educate teenagers on how to behave sexually and on how to behave in relationships. This expected behaviour is typically one promoting the heteronormative order, which enforces the belief that men desire women and vice versa. More specifically, as Suzanne Pennington outlines, we are led to believe that it is masculine men who desire feminine women and vice versa (34), and every other expression of sexuality (e.g. feminine men desiring masculine women, masculine men desiring feminine men) is seen as a deviation from this norm and is therefore queer. The heteronormative order thus controls what is viewed as normal in a society. Since "popular culture and the entertainment industry in fact serve a de facto educational role for young people seeking information about their sexuality" (178), as Pearce points out, it is vital to pinpoint which options teenagers are shown in the media with which they engage. By primarily depicting and promoting heterosexual love between a stereotypically feminine female character and a stereotypically masculine male character and not featuring many alternative views on desire, the young adult series under analysis in this thesis perpetuate a heteronormative outlook on sexuality. These novels serve the role of "channelling adolescent sexual behaviour into approved routes" (Pearce 200), and are regulated by society, in particular by what adults deem a respectable route to be taken. The same way in which "children do not define the genre of children's literature as much as they are defined by it" (Pugh 3), young adults do not define the novels aimed at their age group. The authors of young adult fantasy novels are overwhelmingly adults who, consciously or unconsciously, reinforce certain beliefs on gender and sexuality with their work. As traditional sexual education in schools often does not provide teenagers with the kind of information about sexuality they seek, today's youth turns to the internet and different forms of media, which promote certain views on sexuality (Pearce 200, see also Giroux 30). As Pearce establishes, movies for teenagers present their audience with specific options on dating and love, "steering them towards sexual and cultural heterodoxy and emphasising the pleasure and profit of normative desire" (200, see also Kidd 98), and, I would argue, the same observation holds true for most young adult fantasy novels. The few alternatives to heterosexual relationships the novels offer, i.e. gay male characters, are often relegated to the sidelines and stereotypically feminised. Non-conforming characters seldom feature prominently and generally struggle with their identity, e.g Alec in the *The Mortal Instruments* series, which I will discuss in more detail in later

sections. Other options, e.g. lesbian, bisexual, or asexual characters, are rarely represented in the genre, or only added as an after-thought for the sake of diversity. Thus, these novels only show a limited picture concerning expressions of sexuality.

As has been mentioned above, when examining the history of children's and young adult novels, it becomes evident that stereotypical depictions of gender permeate from the beginning. Michelle Ann Abate draws attention to the didactic function of literature as a mode of socialisation of boys and girls, in particular in showing them how to behave according to their gender (6). Historically, many children's books "focus on reaffirming the gender status quo and maintaining patriarchal power", as even stories, such as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), which features the tomboyish character Joe, eventually see her tamed, thus restricting women's roles to being a wife (Abate 7). Young adult literature as such is a relatively young genre. As Amy Pattee highlights, only after adolescence was recognised "as a distinct and separate phase of human social and psychological development" at the beginning of the 20th century, did this also bring about "the re-conception of this age group as a consumer demographic, for whom specific and unique products might be created" (both 7). The first young adult novels specifically published with a teenage audience in mind began to surface in the 1950s. These books "adhered to a recognizable formula that perpetuated dominant ideologies" of the middle class (11). In the 1960s, young adult novels shifted from moralistic and happy tales to become more realistic (Pattee 13). The 1970s, a decade often referred to as "the 'golden era' of adolescent literature" (13), saw the rise of so-called 'problem novels', which "addressed institutional and social failures and inequalities and refused to ponder to the adolescent audience by offering easy answers and happy endings" (13f.). These novels introduced "characters who were beginning to question the compulsory chastity and heterosexuality of the previous decade" and thus provided an "uncensored and realistic depiction of teen life" (both 14). However, ultimately these novels are still riddled with gender stereotypes and especially girls' roles are limited, as they only seem to be preoccupied with appealing to boys (14). The 1980s saw a boost in paperback books marketed directly at teenagers rather than institutions (e.g. libraries, schools) that previously bought the bulk of YA publications (Pattee 19). The teenagers themselves began to influence the market with their buying power (Cart 91) and were then able to control which content they were looking for in books (Pearce, Muller & Hawkes 1). In the 1980s there was also a shift back to "old-fashioned content" that "reproduced a conservative fantasy" and romance books for girls became popular (both Pattee 27). These novels "emphasized the importance of heterosexual romantic

relationship[s], modeled chaste, proper behavior on dates and discouraged heroines from attending to dangerous, hot-rodding heroes of the type populating cautionary tales for boys" (Pattee 11). This tradition of confining female characters to stereotypical roles and teaching them what is 'proper' behaviour continues to this day, as Abate points out. She establishes that "[e]ven the more contemporary and seemingly more iconoclastic genre of young adult" books, "which are commonly seen as challenging the status quo, routinely support it in some form or to some degree" (both 9). Roberta Seelinger Trites reaches a similar conclusion when she observes that young readers are ideologically manipulated by institutions interested in the socialisation of the youth, e.g. "schools, religion, church, identity politics, and family" (142). Overall, she continues, sexuality and sex are represented in a way that acknowledges "the adolescent's need to feel empowered", while at the same time adhering to "the culture's […] need to repress the adolescent." (both 142). Thus, while young readers support the inclusion of sexual scenes, as they find them intriguing and welcome the depiction of this otherwise taboo topic, it is important to note that the different expressions of sexuality within these novels are culturally regulated. Often, the binary opposition between the sexes as well as between the genders remains upheld. At this point it is important to briefly outline that sex and gender are generally understood as separate categories. As Pennington summarises, "[s]ocial constructionist theories of sex/gender attempt to deconstruct the preexisting essentialist paradigm that reinforces notions of 'natural' or biological dualistic differences between women and men" (35). Thus, the power differences between men and women are culturally and socially created or constructed. Second-wave feminism views sex as a biological category, distinguishing between 'male' and 'female', whereas gender is socially constructed and concerned with masculinity and femininity, i.e. the concrete realisations of what it means to be a man or a woman in society (34). While Judith Butler questions the common "dichotomy of sex (biology) and gender (culture)" and argues that both categories are constructed (Pennington 34), for the purpose of this thesis the distinction between sex as a biological (male/female), and gender as a social category (masculine/feminine) will be made. Pennington rightly stresses that "gender is not a reflection of any inherent traits of males and females, but rather gendering is a process that occurs through performing certain sets of behaviors" (35). These sets of behaviours often also exist as scripts in young adult novels and educate readers on 'correct' sexual behaviour. The present thesis aims to examine how the categories of sex and gender are realised and represented in two popular young adult fantasy series.

1.5 Objects of Analysis

Two series are chosen as the objects of analysis for this thesis, both of which were *New York Times* bestsellers and continue to be popular and well-liked series among the predominantly female readership: *The Mortal Instruments* series (2007-2014) by Cassandra Clare and the *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series (2015-2017) by Sarah J. Maas.[1] Both of these series were originally conceptualised as trilogies; however, as they became popular bestsellers, the trilogies were extended to six and seven-book series respectively. For the purpose of this thesis only the original trilogies will be taken into consideration, as these are closely centred around the protagonists Clary and Feyre and include the most salient aspects of their love stories, thus providing sufficient material for analysis. Moreover, the three concluding novels in the *ACOTAR* series have not yet been released (as of 2018). *TMI* as well as *ACOTAR* feature female protagonists who are suddenly transported out of their everyday lives into a world where, surrounded by fantastical creatures, such as werewolves, faeries, vampires and warlocks, they discover that magic exists. They realise they have abilities previously unknown to them and quickly fall in love with mysterious young men, who show them how to survive in the new and dangerous environment. As the romance develops, complications ensue and they have to join forces with allies, who are often friends of their male lover, to defeat a powerful villain. While the series share similarities in terms of commonly used tropes, there are differences in the portrayal of the protagonists' reactions to imbalance within the romantic relationship. While Clary Fray (*TMI*) finds ways to overlook her boyfriend's aggressive behaviour, Feyre Archeron (*ACOTAR*) initially reacts in a similar fashion, but soon recognises her boyfriend's abusive behaviour and struggles to escape the relationship only to find herself in a similarly manipulative situation once again. Both series feature a second male love interest who acts as a counterpart and rival to the first boyfriend.

In my thesis I aim to analyse the relationship of the female protagonist with the male love interests. I will examine when and in how far the characters conform to or subvert and resist the traditional gender hierarchy imposed on them by societal expectations as well as by their partners. The underlying abusive tendencies and gender roles depicted in the series as well as the ways in which certain problematic situations within the relationship are romanticised, while

---

[1] Henceforth, I will shorten the titles of each novel in the series and use the following abbreviations: *The Mortal Instruments: TMI, City of Bones: COB, City of Ashes: COA, City of Glass: COG, A Court of Thorns and Roses: ACOTAR, A Court of Mist and Fury: ACOMAF, A Court of Wings and Ruin: ACOWAR*, as these are also frequently used abbreviations among the novels' readers.

others are criticised, will be discussed in detail. More specifically, this will include an analysis of the power relations, violence, instances of submissiveness as well as agency, which will be based on close readings of the primary literature embedded within a theoretical framework.

The main part is divided into two sections, with a focus on aspects of gender and sexuality, and is further subdivided into two subsections each. First of all, the representations of gender within the book series will be analysed drawing on Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, as it highlights the ways in which certain men maintain their dominant role in society, subsequently leading to the subordination of women and other men. This is followed by an examination of the relation between gender and violence, i.e. in how far characters are physically or mentally abused by members of the other gender, and its connection to toughness, drawing on Sherrie Inness's conception thereof. Martha Nussbaum's work on objectification is taken as the basis for analysis of the physical and sexual components of the romantic relationships to focus on identifying different types of objectification and their implications for the characters' agency. Finally, Robert Sternberg's theory of love is useful in discussing how the romantic relationships are portrayed and which type of romantic idea is perpetuated in these novels.

2 Gender: Masculinities and Femininities

Since the 1980s the representation of gender has not only become a frequently discussed topic in the analysis of media, such as movies, TV shows, advertisements and literary works (Showalter 1), but it also remains a relevant issue in need of continuous academic as well as public discussion. Even though modern Western societies are more aware of gender-related issues than they were a few decades ago, there is still much to be done in order to reach gender equality on all levels, be it regarding equal payment and equal opportunities on the job market or equal treatment in everyday life or in the expression of one's sexuality or gender identity. The recent #MeToo Movement has once again revealed that the majority of sexual assaults and instances of harassment are committed by men against women, where the former are usually in a more powerful position, e.g. they are the women's superiors in the workplace. This also illustrates that, as Elaine Showalter stresses, "gender is not only a question of *difference*, [...] but of *power*, since in looking at the history of gender relations, we find sexual asymmetry, inequality, and male dominance in every known society" (4). It would therefore be insufficient

to treat gender solely as sexual difference, as there is always a sexual hierarchy involved (Showalter 4). Men and women are not only depicted and treated differently causing a perpetual reinforcement of stereotypical images of what should be considered male or female, but there is also an underlying hierarchy inscribed in these discourses, where men are usually in the more powerful position. This overall dominance of men can not only be found in real life, but also in many young adult novels, which can, as I have outlined above, influence readers' conception of the supposed 'naturalness' of gender distinctions, which are in fact culturally constructed and should thus also be recognised as such. As Katherine Cruger summarises, "despite often being written by women and about girls, the narratives found in YA often perpetuate internalized sexism, [...] reduce heroines to love interests, romanticize unhealthy relationships [and] use rape as a plot device" (115). However, it is not only women's portrayal that one should evaluate critically, as Kara Hemphill notes, because "[i]n popular media, portrayals of masculinity can be just as harmful and fraught with stereotypes as portrayals of femininity" (Hemphill 7). Since our views on masculinity and femininity are shaped by representations in the media we consume, it is important to examine which types of masculinities and femininities are depicted in YA novels. In the following chapter, I will analyse the societies in the two selected young adult fantasy series concerning their treatment of male and female characters supported by Raewyn Connell's theory on hegemonic masculinity.

2.1 Hegemonic Masculinity

Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, first introduced in her work *Masculinities* in 1995, which was later revised in 2005, is considered one of the most influential contributions concerning masculinity and its social construction. The author originally published works on gender and masculinity from a sociological perspective using the gender-neutral name R.W. Connell (short for Robert William Connell), before openly identifying as a transgender woman and publishing under the name of Raewyn Connell. Her theory on hegemonic masculinity has mostly been positively received by the academic community, and her work has been translated into a number of languages.

Taking Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to describe class relations as a point of departure, Connell links the term hegemony with gender relations, defining hegemony as "the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (77). This group in a leading position generally consists of men, be it real-life or "fantasy figures,

such as film characters" who embody a certain type of masculinity (77). In the two young adult fantasy series under analysis it is also men who hold the most powerful positions in society. In *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, for instance, seven High Lords rule over their respective territories, even though Amarantha, the King of Hybern's female accomplice, initially threatens their position. In the first novel, however, Amarantha, who had cunningly drained most of the High Lord's magic and therefore the source of their influence and power fifty years before, is defeated and killed by one of the High Lords (*ACOTAR* 405). The society of the *ACOTAR* series is deeply patriarchal, as women are only ever briefly in positions of power. Amarantha is painted as an evil antagonist who only deserves death as a punishment for her violent actions, whereas the High Lords are similarly cruel, but never punished for their behaviour. This negative portrayal of women can also be found in many fairy tales, where female characters, such as witches and stepmothers, are rarely depicted positively and tend to find a violent end. Since the *ACOTAR* series is in fact a modern retelling of *Beauty and the Beast* (1740), it could have been possible to allow for changes in the depiction of female antagonists, as it is long known that fairytales perpetuate harmful stereotypes about women and do not promote gender equality, as Alice Neikirk observes (38). She points out that this reinforcement of stereotypical roles is achieved not only by showing how 'bad' women who attempt to deviate from the norm ought to be punished, but also by controlling how 'good' women ought to behave: "The good female is generally submissively accepting of her lot in life while waiting for the prince to appear and take control of her destiny." (38) While the female antagonists in fairy tales, similar to Amarantha, can briefly gain power "by exhibit[ing] traits that directly threaten the feminine ideal [, as] they are strong, determined, and perhaps even greedy", eventually the prince (in the case of the *ACOTAR* series the High Lord), "proves his masculinity through killing" her (both Neikirk 39). This violent behavior contains "[t]he double-fold message […] that violence is a necessary trait of males and that females, when angry, become unruly and violence may be necessary to control them." (Neikirk 40) Thus, in fairy tales, ambition in women is generally interpreted as a source of evil (Nanda 249), and this observation also holds true for the *ACOTAR* series, as I will outline in more detail in section 3.3.1. Overall, there seem to be many similarities between classic fairy tales and the *ACOTAR* series, as can most clearly be seen in the depiction of female antagonists. Instead of offering a new and more modern interpretation of fairy tales, the YA series emulates many gender stereotypes of the former. By the end of the third novel power is restored back to the High Lords, all of which are described using stereotypically masculine character traits and the protagonist Feyre repeatedly refers to them as intimidatingly powerful (cf. *ACOTAR* 136, 141, *ACOWAR* 425). A similar power imbalance is

also at place in *The Mortal Instruments*, an urban fantasy series set in New York. The antagonist Valentine aims to establish Shadowhunters at the top of the power hierarchy with him as their leader, as he views humans and fantastical creatures, such as werewolves, faeries and vampires, as inferior. Valentine is described as a strict father who regards the expression of feelings as a sign of weakness and whose main aim is to assert himself as a strong leader. Thus, the High Lords as well as Valentine hold the most powerful positions in their respective societies. It is important to note, however, that not all of these men automatically embody hegemonic masculinity solely due to their powerful position, nor are those who embody this type of masculinity all exactly the same, as hegemonic masculinity is itself not a fixed concept (Connell 77). As Connell stresses, no one characteristic can continuously be ascribed to hegemonic masculinity, as the potential to challenge and change the currently accepted concept always remains (77).

Connell's extensive research on hegemonic masculinity provides a useful basis for my analysis, as it takes into account the power relations between men and women as well as the power hierarchy between men. Both of these gendered power dynamics are addressed in the *TMI* and the *ACOTAR* series. The societies created in these two young adult fantasy series contain misogynistic, sexist and heteronormative elements, which I will address and analyse in the following chapter by relating them to Connell's theory on hegemonic masculinity. This, first and foremost, requires a clear definition of the concept, which Connell explains as follows:

> Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell 77)

As the concept emphasises the practices that consequently legitimise patriarchy, i.e. the things men do to ensure their dominance over women and other men, it proves useful in describing specific scenes in the novels where dominance is displayed by male characters. In contrast to other gender theories, masculinity is "not just a set of role expectations or an identity", but constituted by a set of practices (Connell & Messerschmidt 832). On the one hand, the dominant behaviour can be expressed physically, for instance by showing physical strength, sometimes even through violent acts, a detailed analysis of which will be the subject of the subsequent chapter. On the other hand, it can also be exerted emotionally, for example by controlling or manipulating the female character and limiting her agency. In *TMI*, Jace believes that Clary does not know what is best for her and decides to disregard her wish to join the Shadowhunter

group on a trip. In an attempt to ensure Clary stays safe he deceives her and conspires with Clary's best friend Simon to leave her behind (*COG* 27). In *ACOTAR*, Feyre is made submissive by her lover Tamlin and eventually, under the pretext of wanting to protect her, even locked into his home against her violent protests. (*ACOMAF* 123 f.). These two examples illustrate how the female protagonists are suppressed by their first boyfriends, both of whom demonstrate behaviour associated with hegemonic masculinity.

Connell explains that only certain men embody hegemonic masculinity in a given society, which can be expressed in a variety of practices. While these men might not necessarily be those in the most powerful positions in terms of their jobs, for instance, this group of men holds power over women and other groups of men that are marginalised and subordinated, such as men of ethnic minorities or homosexual men. Furthermore, as the concept "embodie[s] the currently most honored way of being a man, it require[s] all other men to position themselves in relation to it"; which, inevitably, results in the "subordination of women" (Connell & Messerschmidt 832). Thus, hegemonic masculinity is normative and can only exist in a framework of domination and subordination with the additional crucial component of complicity that further legitimises men's dominant position. As Connell argues, it may only be a small group of men that "rigorously practic[es] the hegemonic pattern in its entirety"; however, most men benefit from staying complicit in the system as they experience "the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women" (both Connell 79). These men show what is called complicit masculinity, since they do not "enact a strong version of masculine dominance", but do not contest the hegemonic position either (Connell & Messerschmidt 832). They might even strive to become more accepted in society by acting like the currently most honoured type of masculinity and thus remain compliant in the system.

In *ACOTAR*, the dominant hegemonic male character is most clearly personified in Tamlin who not only suppresses the protagonist, but also forces his friend Lucien and other men to position themselves complicitly in the hierarchy. Lucien embodies what Connell describes as complicit masculinity (79), i.e. while he may disagree with some of Tamlin's actions and his harsh treatment of Feyre, he does not challenge or openly condone his friend's behaviour. All the other men in Tamlin's court also regard him as their uncontested leader and loyally follow his orders, even if they are of a different opinion (*ACOMAF* 123, 458, *ACOWAR* 33). Neither Lucien, who occasionally struggles with accepting Tamlin's orders and then dutifully follows them nonetheless (*ACOWAR* 33), nor any of the other male characters, ever openly show

resistance, as they all profit by staying complicit in the system (Connell 79). It is only with the help of these supporters that Tamlin is able to remain in his position as High Lord.

This complicity among men also becomes evident when examining the relationships between the male characters in *TMI*. Clary's first boyfriend Jace displays the dominant male behaviour typically associated with hegemonic masculinity, while her second boyfriend and former best friend Simon is more emotional, more insecure and clumsy; in other words, less stereotypically masculine. Clary draws comparisons between the two, which reveal that she is more attracted to Jace, as Simon appears to be less masculine and therefore a less desirable partner (*COB* 199). Simon's support of Jace's actions illustrates that he does not challenge the system (*COG* 27), thus embodying complicit masculinity. Furthermore, Simon is subordinated himself, because both Clary and his mother question his heterosexuality (*COB* 43, *COA* 205), which I will analyse below (cf. section 2.4.2). According to Connell, heterosexual men dominate over homosexual men, leading to the latter's subordinate form of masculinity (78). Thus, Simon shows signs of complicit as well as subordinate masculinity.

It is important to note that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed notion that is always represented by a set of specific character traits. Rather, it summarises different ways and practices of domination, which can, for instance, be expressed by showing strength, physical as well as sexual maturity or aggression (Böhm 107); in other words, characteristics that are generally viewed as masculine in our society. According to Connell, it is always "one form of masculinity rather than others [that] is culturally exalted" at a specific point in time and so the currently accepted hegemonic behaviour also changes over time (77). In fact, all masculinities, as well as all femininities, are fluid concepts subject to change. While currently the above-mentioned features are associated with hegemonic masculinity, "more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic" in future (Connell & Messerschmidt 833). The current situation, however, places strong, rational, less outwardly emotional, white, heterosexual, middle- or upper-class men at the top of the hierarchy, followed by those embodying complicit masculinity. At the end of the gender hierarchy one finds subordinate masculinities, e.g. homosexuals, and marginalised masculinities, i.e. men who are discriminated against based on their race or class (Connell 80) or a combination thereof (i.e. intersectionality), also showing how social stratification is at work in many areas (e.g. class, race, gender, sexual orientation). Intersectionality, a concept originally describing how women of colour face marginalisation along two axes of power, i.e. race and sex (see Crenshaw), can also show the dynamics between

different types of masculinities, which are all set in relation to each other. In summary, as Connell points out, these "types of relationship – hegemony, domination/subordination and complicity on the one hand, marginalization/authorization on the other – provide a framework in which we can analyse specific masculinities" (81). While Connell's concept is mainly concerned with the relationality between different masculinities, she also discusses the relationality of gender. Connell outlines how gender is a socially constructed category of distinction, which aims to set men and women as well as masculinities and femininities in opposition to each other.

2.2 World Building

World building forms an integral part of most fantasy series. In theory, as the created world contains fantastical elements, there is no need to reflect our current day societal issues. In other words, regarding gender, for instance, it would be possible for fantasy authors to create worlds where gender inequality has been overcome, where strong female characters are not an exception, or where men do not continuously undermine, threaten and objectify women. Interestingly, the two young adult fantasy series under analysis do exactly the opposite by creating incredibly misogynistic and backward-thinking societies. Both series feature societies with supernatural and fantastical creatures, as the Fae society in the *ACOTAR* series includes faeries that can transform into wolf-like beasts, for instance, and the Shadowhunter society in the *TMI* series introduces werewolves, demons, warlocks, and vampires living next to a human society that is viewed as inferior by the more powerful magical society. Instead of showing a more evolved fantastical society in opposition to the human one, the fantastical parts of the worlds are, in many ways, a worse place to be for women.

In *ACOTAR*, gender-related injustices are frequently addressed as a pressing issue in the series. There are several descriptions of violence against female faeries, which are considered "breeding stock" by the majority of men (*ACOMAF* 397). Illyrian warriors have only recently allowed female faeries to participate in military training, and some trainers still decide to exclude them from practice until they have finished the household chores (*ACOMAF* 444). Sexually harassing and raping women seems to be a common and everyday occurrence and almost every female character introduced in the series has been the victim of sexual assault (cf. *ACOTAR* 186, *ACOWAR* 217). The treatment of women (or, more specifically, female faeries) becomes a subplot explored in the second novel, but it is neither resolved nor sufficiently

addressed at the end of the original trilogy (which was later extended into a seven-book series). Throughout the series it is mostly women who sacrifice themselves for the greater good (*ACOWAR* 657); female bodies are brutally ripped apart (*ACOTAR* 299); women have to endure domestic violence (*ACOWAR* 455), are held captive (*ACOWAR* 337) and raped (*ACOWAR* 216) or treated as objects for bearing children (*ACOMAF* 169 f.). As Mor, a female faerie, explains to Feyre, there are hardly any options available to women:

> Nowadays, most women wed, bear children, and then plan their children's marriages. [...] [T]he wealthier they are, the more restricted their freedoms and roles become. [...] [F]emales are . . . prized. Our virginity is guarded, then sold off to the highest bidder – whatever male will be of the most advantage to our families. (*ACOMAF* 237)

In the faerie world, women are still confined to the domestic sphere where their roles are restricted to being a docile housewife and mother. Men also view them as possessions one can buy, as objects which only have value if untouched. Thus, women are constantly objectified, a topic I will discuss in more detail in chapter 4. Moreover, promiscuity or any kind of pre-marital sexual activity in women is regarded as a sin. As soon as an unmarried, wealthy female faerie has sex, she is viewed as unmarriageable, since she has "ruin[ed] her value" and is now "sullied" (both *ACOMAF* 397). Mor attempts to flee the constricted path her parents have chosen for her and is punished for 'giving away' her virginity. Eris, the male faerie she was promised to, breaks off the engagement saying "he'd sooner fuck a sow" (*ACOMAF* 397), implying that, in his opinion, she is not worthy anymore, as he deems her even less valuable than an animal. As a consequence of her promiscuous behaviour Mor's family harms her, nails a note to her body and leaves her to die on the street (*ACOMAF* 397). In addition to the maltreatment from the man she was engaged to, Mor has to endure her family's wrath and cope with being left abandoned without any relative's support, which reveals the abominable treatment of women in the Fae society.

The misogyny is deeply rooted in Fae society in the private as well as in the public sphere. In order to "keep their women safe" some regions order female faeries' wings to be clipped at birth, hindering them from flying or joining the armed forces (*ACOMAF* 445). "[I]f a female was caught training, she was to be deemed unmarriageable" (*ACOMAF* 446) and men keep women's clipped wings as trophies (*ACOMAF* 449). The armed forces remain a male sphere as most of the world's military power is held by men leading to a continuing institutionalisation and legitimisation of violence (Connell 193). Whenever the High Lords discuss military tactics, a woman's opinion is not deemed as important as a man's. During a meeting of the High Lords,

the High Lord Beron is annoyed and exclaims that "[w]ives were invited as courtesy, not as consultants" (*ACOWAR* 436). Thus, women's intellect is questioned and dismissed in a way reminiscent of long-outdated opinions of 18th century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed women's intellect to be inferior to men's and also argued that "[i]f woman is made to please and to be subjugated to man, she ought to make herself pleasing to him rather than to provoke him" (358). Similarly, women are expected to be little more than pretty accessories at the powerful High Lords's meetings, always eager to please, but careful not to provoke, which is certainly a deeply troubling message conveyed in a young adult novel. Since no opposition is given in answer to Lord Beron's wish to silence women, it can be assumed that men's sexist comments are generally accepted in Fae society.

The Shadowhunter society in *TMI* also places men at the top of the power hierarchy, though gender-related inequalities are not as frequently addressed as in the *ACOTAR* series. Clary is surprised to find out that Shadowhunter women were long regarded as weaker and less able warriors compared to men:

> Jace said slowly, "it's only been recently that women have been Shadowhunters along with men. I mean, there have always been women in the Clave – mastering the runes, creating weaponry, teaching the Killing Arts – but only a few were warriors, ones with exceptional abilities. They had to fight to be trained. Maryse [Isabelle's mother] was a part of the first generation of Clave women who were trained as a matter of course – and I think she never taught Isabelle how to cook because she was afraid that if she did, Isabelle would be relegated to the kitchen permanently." (*COB* 134)

The fact that Isabelle's mother refuses to teach her daughter how to cook out of fear that Isabelle's rights to participate in training might be taken away illustrates that equality has not yet been established firmly and is still fragile. Women are denied the option to combine a variety of skills, e.g. cooking, caring for one's family, being a loving mother, on the one hand, and inhabiting powerful positions, training and fighting, on the other hand. Maryse, whose relationship to Isabelle is rather distant, only wants what is best for her daughter and feels that Isabelle should have the same opportunities to participate in the Shadowhunter society as her brother Alec, and therefore denies her any education in traditionally female spheres, i.e. cooking. Women and men in this society are aware of their roles and expectations, which, with the exception of women being allowed to fight, are rather traditional. For instance, when a male character tries to hide his feelings "the way boys did" or usually do, as the novel suggests, he is masculine (*COB* 13) and most men and teenage boys in the series embody this cliché. Isabelle and Clary constantly compete against each other to impress the male characters, thus

perpetuating the belief that "the most significant and fulfilling relationships they will have in their lives will be with men [and] [...] that the thing that will most interfere with those relationships are other women" (Cruger 118). Overall, the story is suffused with stereotypical images of what it means to be male or female. The Shadowhunter society's views on homosexuality, which I will address in section 2.5, show a similarly outdated picture.

As I will outline in section 3.3, there are different, if only limited, options of femininity offered in the two series under analysis in this thesis. Different options of masculinity, the most common being hegemonic and complicit masculinity, exist in both series, and subordinated masculinities are represented as well. In the *TMI* series, Alec identifies as homosexual (i.e. subordinated masculinity according to Connell) and struggles coming to terms with his non-conforming sexual identity that is not accepted in the Shadowhunter society. Magnus, a warlock and later partner of Alec, openly identifies as bisexual and is generally characterised as an 'unmasculine' man. Simon is also characterised as less stereotypically masculine compared to Jace. The same diversity cannot be found in the *ACOTAR* series, which I will discuss in more detail below (cf. section 2.5). As far as female characters are concerned, both series primarily feature stereotypically feminine women. While they may be allowed to fight alongside male characters, seldom do they call into question male authority. Even Amarantha, the female antagonist in *ACOTAR*, is punished for her 'masculine' behaviour and her claim to power is immediately silenced. Both Feyre and Clary can be characterised as 'feminine' rather than 'masculine', as they deliberately emphasise their femininity through clothing, thereby wanting to be attractive to men, and generally display behaviour traditionally expected of women. A closer examination of different types femininity can be found in chapter 3, while the discussion of men's overall suppression of women will be addressed at various points in this thesis, as it is a prevalent theme throughout the novels under analysis. Stories featuring patriarchal or misogynist societies can potentially send empowering messages to female readers, for instance, if the depicted injustices are implicitly or explicitly criticised. Both young adult fantasy series present a world where men exert power and consequently subordinate women; however, as Cruger rightly stresses, "[t]he Mortal Insturments [sic!], and the countless other YA fantasy stories that follow their generic form pass off disempowering narratives as feminist epics" simply by portraying a physically strong female protagonist (128). On its own, this is not feminist, as too often the hierarchal relationships within the series remain unquestioned. Even though both Clary and Feyre criticise the system, in the end they rely on and define themselves

through their boyfriends, as I will discuss in the following subchapters focusing on the series' protagonists.

2.3 Characterisations: The *ACOTAR* series

2.3.1 Tamlin

The first novel in the *ACOTAR* series is a loosely based *Beauty and the Beast* (1740) retelling, where Tamlin (the beast) is presented as Feyre's (beauty) primary love interest. This in and of itself is already a difficult premise for creating a feminist story with an empowering message for teenage readers, as the original tale is centred around a woman falling in love with her captor, which has been associated with Stockholm syndrome. This term originates in the 1970s and was attached to hostages of a bank robbery in Stockholm who developed sympathy for their captors (Adorjan et. al. 457). While Stockholm syndrome's recognition as an official disorder is still pending, since it has, as of yet, not been included in the American Psychiatric Association's list of psychiatric disorders, it is commonly treated as a subcategory of post-traumatic stress disorder (Adorjan et. al. 459). As Michael Adorjan et. al. point out, "Stockholm syndrome was typified […] as a condition resulting from situations where there is face-to-face contact between captors and captives, where captors induce extreme fright or terror in their victims in order to render them helpless, powerless, and totally submissive" and "[t]he etiological theories that psychiatric experts propose generally posit a psychoanalytic explanation, emphasizing the idea of a survival mechanism" (both 458). As such, the condition is caused by the traumatic incident of being captured and threatened, and the submission is interpreted as part of the victim's strategy to survive. In the *ACOTAR* series, Feyre's survival instincts are emphasised when she initially only pretends to like Tamlin so that he trusts her, and she might consequently be able to escape more easily. The protagonist is a more independent version of Belle; however, it cannot be denied that she, too, quickly develops romantic feelings for her captor and soon forgets ever wanting to escape.

At the beginning of the first novel, the reader is introduced to the territorial Tamlin who limits and controls Feyre's actions from the beginning. In his first appearance in beast form he is described as "beautiful, lethal and merciless" (*ACOTAR* 50). When Feyre meets Tamlin she is forced to make a bargain and live in his castle. Tamlin's beastliness and dominance are constantly emphasised, as he commands her to eat with a "low growl" and she obeys his order (50). He displays his dominance by using his magical abilities to force the protagonist to stay

26

seated (62 f.). Only when he loosens the magical bonds, is she permitted to leave the room (64). This scene is only one of many that exemplify the imbalanced power relation between Feyre and Tamlin and the way in which he exploits her physical inferiority to suppress her agency. His dominance is justified by referring to his power as a High Lord and it is implied that he is already a more modern, and therefore more likeable, ruler, as "High Lords of legend [...] had sacrificed virgins and slaughtered humans at will" (141). However, the fact that Tamlin is less openly violent than his predecessors does not in any way excuse or legitimise his abusive behaviour.

Regarding his character, Tamlin is repeatedly described as a predator who regards Feyre as his prey. From the beginning he is described as "a predator blooded with power" (59) or "[a] purebred predator" (136). According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, the term predator is not only used to refer to "an animal that naturally preys on others", but in its second meaning refers to "a person who ruthlessly exploits others", which also invokes the collocation of sexual predator (both n.p.). Tamlin, during an annual event in the Fae world that is centred on choosing a maiden to sleep with to release magic, becomes a sexual predator and assaults Feyre. This scene clearly illustrates men's (or male faerie's) dominant position in *ACOTAR*. During the event, which marks the beginning of spring, the High Lord Tamlin is required to "find the Maiden" and sleep with her, as "[f]rom their coupling, magic will be released" (both *ACOTAR* 193). Even though Tamlin likes Feyre, he feels obliged to partake in this ritual and aggressively orders Feyre to stay in her room without explaining what is about to happen (183 f.). During this tradition the High Lord finds the "path lined with faerie females waiting to be chosen as his mate for tonight" and the reader is told "it's his instincts that select her" (both 193). This highly objectifying practice places men in a more powerful position and consequently enforces the asymmetrical hierarchy between men and women. The practice is justified by emphasising men's primal instincts and their inherently predatory nature, which can be interpreted as a biologisation of gender. Instead of viewing gender as socially constructed, the novels suggest that a person's biological sex is directly tied to their behaviour, e.g. their predisposition for violence and dominance, and thereby equates sex with gender, viewing them as a-historic and universal. The novels construct what Roland Barthes defines as 'myth' by naturalising the cultural and social construct of gender. Myth "abolishes the complexity of human acts" and "gives them the simplicity of essences" (Barthes 143), i.e. it oversimplifies matters to construct and convey certain ideologies. The reader is led to believe that men's aggressive and predatory behavior is natural, when in fact it is not. Myth is part of the creation of a larger framework and set of

27

values society wants to reinforce, i.e. the ideology that exculpates violence and dominance in men and promotes submission in women.

Initially the protagonist is shocked by the misogynist Fae society, but is soon led to believe that she must accept men's mistreatment of women, since dominance is in the former's nature, as the series suggests. Feyre is disgusted when she finds out about the above-mentioned spring ritual and "the thought of Tamlin forcing" and claiming her, but at the same time she is confused "that some feral part of him wanted" her (both 194). She disregards his order to stay in her room and runs into Tamlin after he has completed the ritual. In the following scene, written from Feyre's first person perspective, he assaults her:

> I was about to pass him when *he grabbed me*, so fast that I didn't see anything until he had me pinned against the wall. The cookie dropped from my hand as *he grasped my wrists*. "I smelled you," he breathed, his painted chest rising and falling so close to mine. "I searched for you, and you weren't there."
> He reeked of magic. When I looked into his eyes, *remnants of power* flickered there. *No kindness*, none of the wry humor and gentle reprimands. The Tamlin I knew was gone.
> *"Let go,"* I said as evenly as I could, but *his claws punched out*, imbedding in the wood above my hands. Still riding the magic, he was *half-wild*. […]
> "I searched for you, and you weren't there. When I didn't find you […] it made me pick another." *I couldn't escape. I wasn't entirely sure that I wanted to.* […]
> "Why should I want someone's leftovers?" I said, *making to push him away. He grabbed my hands again and bit my neck*. (195 f., my emphasis)

This scene illustrates the territorial behaviour to which Tamlin believes to be entitled. As Kristina Deffenbacher argues, novels with supernatural creatures often attempt to "renaturalize rape as part of men's biological makeup: the supernatural male is driven by the 'nature' of his species to lay sexual claim to his instinctively recognized mate" (926). This naturalisation can also be observed in the *ACOTAR* series. The assault revealed in the above-quoted passage is clearly non-consensual, even though Feyre is confused at the same time, as she is attracted to Tamlin. Nevertheless, she tells him to let go, giving a verbal no, and also tries to "push him away", thus expressing a physical no (196). He still bites and kisses her "territorially" and "lull[s her] into complicity" (both 197), as if she belongs to him. Feyre feels pleasure, while at the same time thinking the situation is fundamentally wrong and so she hits him, but he only laughs in response (197). Instead of apologising, he reprimands her, angrily telling her: "Don't ever disobey me again" (197), excusing his behaviour by blaming his instincts, thus also perpetuating the belief "that male sexuality is uncontrollable past a certain point" (Whisnant n.p.). Tamlin's attempted justification is also reminiscent of the excuse sexual predators and

rapists give for their actions, saying the women they molested and assaulted consented or were 'asking for it'. As Rebecca Whisnant stresses, too often perpetrators convince themselves that a woman's consent is "simply the absence of refusal or resistance" or "that a woman's appearance, attire, status, location, prior sexual history, or relationship to the man in question either function as stand-ins for consent (that is, as 'asking for it') or render her consent irrelevant or unnecessary." (both n.p.) Tamlin's argument is structured similarly, as he blames Feyre for disregarding his orders to stay in her room, which leads him to the following conclusion: "If Feyre can't be bothered to listen to orders, then I can't be held accountable for the consequences." (199) Thus, according to this logic by leaving the room she consented to everything that might happen to her, which is a dangerous suggestion. Whisnant states that it is crucial to "challenge and discredit such ideas" and "that what a woman wears, where she goes and with whom" should never "be seen as having consented to sex" (all n.p.). This belief in women's default state of consent prevails to this day and it thus remains a vital task to counteract such misconceptions not only in our daily lives, but also by highlighting how young adult literature, for instance, perpetuates these harmful ideas.

Although Feyre does not agree with Tamlin's conclusion, she quickly forgives the incident. Initially she replies: "You cornered me in the hall like a wolf with a rabbit!" (199); however, on the next page she seems to have already forgotten what happened, as she decides to wear a dress to emphasise her femininity and be attractive to Tamlin (200) who then compliments her (202). From then on, their romance quickly flourishes and at the beginning of the second novel he proposes, after only knowing her for a few months. There is, however, a clear shift in the portrayal of Tamlin from the first to the second novel, even though his behaviour only slightly changes. In the first novel he is described as a worried boyfriend, whose overly-protective streak is not condoned or criticised. In the second instalment of the series, however, his behaviour is evaluated more critically by the first-person narrator and protagonist Feyre. The heroine feels trapped in the palace and is tired of being his "pet" (*ACOMAF* 277). While in the first instalment Feyre feels grateful that "[t]he High Lord thought [she] was worth saving", and admires his power (*ACOTAR* 137), she starts to resent his protective behaviour and the hierarchical relationship between them at the beginning of the second novel. Out of fear of losing her, Tamlin orders Feyre to stay in the palace and the surrounding gardens. His reasoning is that he does not want to worry about her safety (*ACOMAF* 11). Though Feyre initially stays complicit and does not "have the heart to tell Tamlin [...] [she feels smothered;] not when he looked so happy" (12), she soon voices her disapproval of the current situation in which all decisions are

being made for her. When she tells him to loosen the ties, as she is not interested in constant protection and prefers autonomy, he locks her in his house; thus limiting her ability to move around freely (121 f.). Tamlin's name is reminiscent of the word 'tamed', which accurately describes what he constantly attempts to do with Feyre. As soon as she realises that he limits her agency, she wants to escape the relationship. From this moment onward Tamlin is depicted negatively, as he does not accept her decision to leave him and has other people looking for her and hunt her down, "[a]s if [she] were indeed prey", once again confirming Tamlin as the predator (*ACOMAF* 457 f.). This behaviour is always justified by referencing that "Fae males were territorial, dominant, arrogant" (*ACOMAF* 467) and because they are "a different *breed*" (*ACOWAR* 57, original emphasis) they cannot help their instincts which lead them to view others as possessions rather than beings with their own entity and agency. Again, the novel construes women's 'nature' as being fundamentally different from men's. While men, especially those embodying hegemonic masculinity like Tamlin, are allowed and expected to be aggressive, violent and dominant, women ought to accept men's behaviour as an unchangeable fact of nature. In doing so, the *ACOTAR* series suggests that everything is predetermined by one's biological sex, thus supporting biological determinism which assumes "that biology is destiny" (Mikkola n.p.). In other words, being male or female (based on biological features) automatically leads to certain character traits and behavioural patterns, i.e. men are masculine, with stereotypical attributes such as active, determined, strong, rational, and aggressive, and women are feminine, which is commonly associated with being passive, weak, and emotional.

The men's territorial behaviour continues when Tamlin is established as the accomplice of the story's villain, the king of Hybern, at the end of the second novel. In a showdown between Feyre's two lovers, Tamlin tells Rhysand: "I don't give a shit if you think you're entitled to her. She is mine." (*ACOMAF* 613) Both Tamlin and Rhysand lay claim on Feyre and the rivalry between the two male characters culminates in them fiercely proclaiming that Feyre is 'theirs', i.e. they regard her as an object they can own. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick highlights Gayle Rubin's essay *The Traffic in Women* (1975), where she argues that women are used as (symbolic) "property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (Sedgwick 25f.), thus making the two male characters the active agents of the story. Their rivalry is foregrounded rather than the wishes of the female protagonist, as is also the case in the *ACOTAR* series. Tamlin, with his proclamation "She is mine" (ACOMAF 613) reveals that he believes to be entitled to Feyre. This shows how his position as a powerful male faerie has convinced him of

his superiority over the female protagonist. Rather than viewing her as his equal, he expects Feyre to be submissive and docile (*ACOMAF* 122) and gets angry whenever she challenges his decisions (*ACOMAF* 94). He does not embody hegemonic masculinity consciously out of contempt for her, as he does indeed seem to have deep feelings for the protagonist and he feels the need to "take care of" her from the beginning (*ACOTAR* 110). Instead, this behaviour appears to be deeply engrained in him, as the society he grew up in is deeply misogynistic. The fact that his character in the end redeems himself and Feyre forgives him (*ACOWAR* 692) sends a problematic message, as it implies that Tamlin's behaviour towards Feyre should simply be forgiven and forgotten, once again legitimising the type of masculinity he embodies.

2.3.2 Rhysand

In some ways, Rhysand can be regarded as a counter-figure to the territorial Tamlin, while in other ways he is more similar to the latter than Feyre might be willing to admit. Tamlin is a one-dimensional character, since he stays the same throughout the series, even if his negative character traits are highlighted in the second novel, whereas they are excused in the first one. Rhysand, on the other hand, is a typical 'bad boy turned good' character found in many YA fantasy novels. His character changes drastically from the first to the second instalment of the series, where he develops from an antagonist into a potential, and eventually ideal, partner for Feyre. While it might be easier to identify Tamlin as a prime example of hegemonic masculinity, Rhysand, though seemingly in favour of breaking down patriarchal structures, ultimately shows elements of hegemonic masculinity and complicit masculinity. According to Connell and Messerschmidt, "[a] degree of overlap or blurring between hegemonic and complicit masculinities is extremely likely if hegemony is effective" (Connell & Messerschmidt 839). It is therefore difficult to clearly define whether Rhysand embodies hegemonic or complicit masculinity.

In the first novel, Rhysand's introduction to the story is very similar to Tamlin's. He is also described as "a predator sizing up prey" with the prey referring to the female protagonist, as he "began circling" her (both *ACOTAR* 190). Feyre immediately feels attracted to him and describes him as "the most beautiful man [she]'d ever seen" (189). Although he acts like an invincible character, the reader is told that Rhysand is the victim of sexual assault, and he is continuously used by the villain's accomplice, Amarantha, to fulfil her sexual needs. He is subsequently regarded as a laughing stock by Tamlin and other men who call him "Amarantha's

whore" (235), because he subjects himself to her wishes. Tamlin, the hegemonic male character who is viewed as a role model by other men in society, feels that Rhysand threatens his authority and therefore constantly pokes fun at his past with Amarantha, and the other men complicitly emulate his behaviour. Rhysand has learned to ignore the remarks rather than contest them openly, as this would further remove him from the group of men. He still wants to benefit from the patriarchal system and therefore tries to fit in as well as possible. Even though he knows how hurtful it is when one is treated as inferior, he stays complicit in the system and verbally belittles Feyre, calling her a "new pet" (238), during their second encounter. Like Tamlin, Rhysand uses magic to control Feyre's body and mind, by reading her deepest thoughts and revealing them to the former, a highly invasive act which the heroine cannot escape (239). He also objectifies Feyre repeatedly in front of others, for instance, by calling her his belonging (348) and his pet (378), in order to ensure his villainous facade is upheld. By treating Feyre abominably, he places himself in a superior position to women and thus benefits from displaying complicit masculinity.

Rhysand's behaviour in the first novel contrasts with how he is depicted in the rest of the series – as a considerate boyfriend with feminist views. However, the fact that he encourages Feyre to express her own opinions and leaves her choices should not excuse the amount of abuse she has to endure from him in the first novel. For instance, at one point he twists her already broken arm to pressure her to make a bargain in his favour (*ACOTAR* 331) and subsequently forces a tattoo on her body, thus marking her permanently against her will (335). A detailed analysis of his violence against and objectification of the female protagonist can be found in the following chapters. In general, Rhysand's efforts to treat Feyre as his equal in the later instalments should not be depicted as being something special in and of itself. It implies that most men behave like Tamlin or the Rhysand of the first novel, and that other types of masculinities are incredibly rare and should therefore be praised continuously, as Feyre does with Rhysand when she is grateful that he always leaves her with a choice in the later novels (*ACOMAF* 208, *ACOWAR* 170, 217). It is true that violence against women, such as rape and attempted rape, are sadly much more common than generally assumed, with 18.3 per cent of women experiencing this form of abuse in their lives according to a recent study (Whisnant n.p.). Only a shockingly small amount of perpetrators are convicted, as "ninety-four to ninety-eight percent of total rapists and approximately eighty-four percent of reported rapists go free" (Kim 272). Nevertheless, it would be wrong to demonise all men and show them as inherently bad and prone to violence, a view the *ACOTAR* series contends at various points. By suggesting that belittling, abusing

and raping women is something most men consider doing or do with impunity in the Fae society, the novels send a disturbing message of what masculinity entails and imply that most men, contrary to Connell's argument, "rigorously practic[e] the hegemonic pattern" (Connell 79) by displaying dominance, oftentimes by exerting violence. In other words, most men in the *ACOTAR* series exhibit a variety of characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity, as they adhere to traditional standards of what it means to be 'a real man'. It is important to note that "[i]t is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony (though violence often underpins or supports authority)" (Connell 77). Thus, Rhysand, even in the later instalments where he does not display physical violence towards Feyre, still remains in the more powerful and authoritative position.

Especially during the third instalment of the series, Rhysand is established as an advocate for women's rights. While he does indeed help certain women, e.g. by providing shelter to those who were victims of sexual assault, he only aids those he feels in some way connected to, such as Illyrians who are members of his tribe, or women he knows personally and has an interest in, like his lover Feyre or his cousin Mor. In other words, he is rather selective of the women he encourages to stand up for their rights in the misogynist Fae society. Nevertheless, Feyre adores Rhysand, because he constantly reminds her that they are equals and she is entitled to her own opinions and choices (*ACOWAR* 193). According to Feyre, her lover is "[t]he better man – male" (427), because of the selfless sacrifices he makes for the greater good. As women are not viewed as equal in the Fae society, it is easy for Rhysand to position himself as 'a good man' i.e. as someone who respects women and would like to see more gender equality in future. However, once the series' conflict is resolved by defeating the enemy, nothing is done to address the many inequalities and violent acts against women. The ending is focused on the loving couple Rhysand and Feyre who decide to die together when the time comes, because they cannot bear the thought of living without the other. Rhysand inhabits one of the most powerful positions in the Fae society and ultimately does little to promote gender equality, even if he claims that he wishes to ameliorate women's position. He is "the most powerful male in Prythian" (*ACOMAF* 367), a fact that Feyre mentions at various points throughout the series (*ACOMAF* 493, *ACOWAR* 425). Power alone, as Connell points out, is not automatically correlated to hegemonic masculinity and it is not the case "that the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are always the most powerful people" (Connell 77). However, Rhysand, in addition to his power, exhibits "primal, male rage" (*ACOMAF* 421), e.g. by resorting to physical violence as a solution whenever he wants to protect Feyre (417). While Rhysand seems

more restrained in terms of violent outbursts compared to Tamlin, whenever he acts violently towards men or women, or displays inappropriate behaviour towards Feyre, he legitimises his actions with the following explanation: "It's hard to shut down my instincts." (421). Once again, biological determinism and the fact that Rhysand is a supernatural creature with an innate predisposition for violence serve to justify his actions. As Deffenbacher stresses, "it is this very difference - the hero's lack of responsibility for forcing his attention on or sexually assaulting the heroine because of the influence of (supernatural) forces beyond his control—that at once reinforces and re-conceals fundamental rape myths" (925). She further points out that though it is no longer acceptable nowadays to feature "rape in a romantic storyline" and convey it as a romantic act of love, "the repeated defense [sic!] is that terms like 'rape' and 'consent' cannot be applied to a fantasy world in which a supernatural hero is driven by his instinctive recognition of a preordained bond with the heroine" (both 925), which is a deeply troubling claim. It perpetuates the idea that men cannot help themselves, that being violent is part of their nature, further enforcing the cliché that 'boys will be boys' and nothing can be done about that. Rather than viewing gender as socially constructed, as Connell advocates, the characters' acts in the series suggest that much is predetermined by their instincts, which are not only used to excuse violent behaviour towards women, but also towards other men. Rhysand might have created the position of High Lady for his lover Feyre, but this does ultimately neither make him a feminist hero, nor does it challenge men's powerful position in the community and should rather be seen as a well-meant, but empty gesture. In the end, Rhysand stays complicit in the system and benefits from his powerful position.

2.3.3 Feyre

In line with the current trend of writing physically strong female characters, Maas - with Feyre - creates a prime example of a young adult fantasy protagonist. As Hemphill points out, many recent young adult publications "critique traditional femininity, emphasize choice and independence for their female protagonists, and attempt to subvert the conventions of romance" (6). However, the protagonists' strength is often only one-sided, solely referring to physical strength (Hemphill 56). Even though the strength is only visible at "surface-level", as Hemphill remarks, "the view that many of the novels in the genre contain strong feminist elements" prevails (56); in my opinion, often unjustifiably so. While Feyre is described as a physically strong, intelligent, and strong-willed character at the beginning of the novel and, by going hunting, is the sole provider for her family, it is striking how quickly she becomes much more

submissive and less self-reliant once the romantic relationship between her and Tamlin develops. Even in her second relationship with Rhysand, who is less restrictive than Tamlin, her personality is shaped primarily by her partner. She is denied the possibility of finding her own path without the guidance of a male character, and, due to the reliance on her romantic partner, her friends and family ultimately only play minor roles in her life. As she is shaped by the male love interests, it is difficult to find passages on Feyre's growth that are not in some way connected to her romantic relationships.

Tamlin influences Feyre immensely, so that she develops from a headstrong character into the cliché of a submissive housewife without any willpower to reject his dominant behaviour. At first, Feyre is surprised to hear that the most powerful positions in the Fae world are all held by men, i.e. the seven High Lords. She quickly accepts the society's rules when Tamlin explains: "There is no such thing as a High Lady. [...] High Lords only take wives. Consorts." (*ACOMAF* 24) Feyre soon does not even express the wish to be considered his equal any more: "I was grateful that I'd never be High Lady, never be Tamlin's equal in responsibility and power. A small, forgotten part of me roared and screamed at that, but..." (*ACOMAF* 33). Her inability to remind herself of what she used to believe in is expressed by the unfinished sentence. She feels that something is amiss, but cannot find the words to express her thoughts. Moreover, she is unable to react defensively, although she feels trapped. The way the story is narrated also shows her lack of agency during these scenes, as many passive constructions are used (e.g. "I was introduced and passed around" (*ACOMAF* 33)). When the two love interests start arguing about who is to 'keep' her, she notices her "relief to not be expected to speak or act" (*ACOMAF* 88) and she remains silent even when one of them proclaims: "I'll be taking her now" (44). Overall, she seems successfully "lull[ed] [...] into complicity" (*ACOTAR* 197), a phrase used in the first instalment. Feyre appears to have accepted her fate and is almost unrecognisable when compared to her character at the beginning of the story, i.e. a fierce young woman willing to do anything to support and protect her family. Her relationship with Tamlin shows many signs of emotional abuse, ranging from dominance, humiliation, isolation, threats, intimidation to denial and blame, which serve as indicators for emotional abuse, as Melinda Smith and Jeanne Segal summarise (n.p.). If examined more closely, Tamlin's behaviour shows all the above-mentioned signs: He verbally and physically shows his dominance, also objectifying her by treating her as his possession. Later, he begins humiliating and threatening the protagonist, making her feel powerless and worthless. Furthermore, he tries to control her life and isolates her from friends and family by not permitting her to leave the house. He also intimidates Feyre by displaying

his physical strength and smashing things in the house when he gets angry with her. He denies his actions ever crossed a line and instead blames Feyre, for instance, for the fact that he almost raped her. Thus, while their relationship shows clear signs of physical and especially emotional abuse, it is nevertheless romanticised and only later depicted in a more negative light, once the abuse has become so severe that it cannot be brushed over anymore. The controlling behaviour of male characters in the *ACOTAR* series is nothing new, however, as male dominance in relationships has been normalised in popular culture for decades. Young readers might find it romantic that the male characters seem to care so much about the protagonist that they would do anything for their 'love'. The abusers often make their victims feel special, for instance, by constantly reminding them that they love them and could not imagine a life without them. As Nian Hu rightly stresses, it is dangerous to mistake abuse for love, as the two concepts are opposites: "Love is about caring for and supporting" one's partner, whereas abuse causes pain and unhappiness (n.p.) Especially young female readers mistake the male characters' overly protective behaviour as an extreme expression of his affection for the female protagonist. Ultimately, the romanticised portrayal of toxic relationships shapes readers' view of men and women and normalises abusive behaviour in the former, while it proposes submissive acceptance thereof of the latter.

Rhysand, her second lover, saves Feyre from her abusive relationship with Tamlin and encourages her to see her former lover's faults. He aims to shape her back into her old self that is "no one's subject" (*ACOMAF* 74). While it is true that Rhysand empowers Feyre and she becomes more confident, this is in itself not an empowering message, as it also implies that she could not have done it on her own. She heavily relies on his constant support and on him saving her in the first place. Once Feyre realises, through Rhysand's guidance, that she had been trapped in her relationship with Tamlin (*ACOWAR* 123), she constantly reminds herself that she is strong now: "I was not a pet, not a doll, not an animal. I was a survivor, and I was strong. I would not be weak, or helpless again. I would not, could not be broken. Tamed." (*ACOMAF* 226). She arrives at this conclusion only after several of Rhysand's remarks, e.g. "You look exactly like the doe-eyed damsel [Tamlin] [...] want[s] you to be" (*ACOMAF* 47). The two male characters' contrasting views heighten the rivalry between them, which, though at surface level being about who can win the protagonist's love, started long before they knew Feyre. Both want to be recognised as the most powerful High Lord and seem to compete in showing as many features of hegemonic masculinity as possible. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues, "in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links

either of the rivals to the beloved, and Tamlin and Rhysand are, in fact, "the two active members of [the] erotic triangle" (both 21). The contrast between the two main characters aims to present Rhysand as the preferred option of masculinity to the readership. Feyre chooses him and believes him to be her ideal match, constantly stressing Rhysand's gallant behaviour towards her. While she may feel accepted as an equal, and the author also attempted to present them as equals (see Maas's interview with Thompson n.p.), Rhysand is, in my opinion, only a toned-down version of the aggressive and overly-protective Tamlin, as I will outline in chapter 3 and 4. The two male characters are the pursuers of Feyre's love and affection, which highlights their active role in the erotic triangle. Feyre can never truly be an agent of her own story, as Rhysand influences her views and decisions repeatedly. While Feyre briefly questions there being only men in positions of power at the beginning of the first novel, it is Rhysand that actively promotes Feyre to High Lady, formally making her his equal (*ACOWAR* 192). Rhysand tells her that "there can be High Ladies" (*ACOMAF* 73), showing that the patriarchal structure can be overcome, even if it has not been attempted before. Feyre's promotion shows that change is always possible, there is no fixed power in place at all times. As Connell argues, femininities and masculinities are always historical and subject to change rather than fixed notions (185). Thus, opening up the most powerful position in the Fae society to both male and female characters might consequently also lead to a readjustment of different types of masculinities and femininities. Over time, hegemonic masculinity itself might shift its meaning. This, however, is a slow process and at the end of the third novel nothing else has been done to improve women's situation in society.

As a character, Feyre is aware of her 'feminine side' and tries to use it to her advantage at various points throughout the story (e.g. *ACOMAF* 321, *ACOWAR* 21). As Connell and Messerschmidt state, "[t]he concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally formulated in tandem with a concept of hegemonic femininity soon renamed 'emphasized femininity' to acknowledge the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities in a patriarchal gender order" (848). As such, the concept "focused on compliance to patriarchy" (848), which also describes Feyre's behaviour. She is intelligent and recognises when she must act submissively (*ACOTAR* 66), thus it is not only men that can then benefit from her subordination. She consciously uses her femininity as a disguise and secret weapon, as can be seen in the following passage: "[T]he rose-colored dress, the hair that Alis had curled and braided over the top of my head in a coronet, the pale pink pearls at my ears. A harmless, lovely package, perfect for a High Lord to mount whenever he wished." (*ACOWAR* 21) Since it is her decision to deceive

men by acting submissively, she wants to exploit the situation and cunningly spin it in her favour. Nevertheless, by doing so she complicitly reaffirms the hierarchical power relation between men and women and embodies what Connell calls emphasised femininity. Ultimately, Feyre is not able to overthrow the patriarchal order, even though she tries to challenge it. As Hemphill remarks, young adult authors "usually make a concerted effort to challenge gender norms in some ways, [but] characters are almost always operating in a patriarchal society with norms slightly different than they are today" (58). This also holds true for the *TMI* and the *ACOTAR* series, where the heroines try to emphasise their femininity to gain power, but eventually find themselves reliant on their boyfriends to navigate the novels' patriarchal and misogynist societies.

2.4 Characterisations: The *TMI* series

2.4.1 Jace

Jace, Clary's on-and-off boyfriend in the *TMI* series, is a sarcastic, witty, intelligent, confident, but also arrogant and sometimes insensitive character. Furthermore, he is described as one of the best Shadowhunters of his time and his physical strength and skills as a fighter make him a powerful opponent in battle. Even though he is only about eighteen years old, he is respected in the Shadowhunter community. Unlike Tamlin or Rhysand in the *ACOTAR* series, Jace's dominance over the protagonist Clary is less physical in nature, but expressed through his intellectual superiority, experience, and access to knowledge of the Shadowhunter community. As Connell notes, hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily primarily expressed through physical aggression:

> A familiar theme in patriarchal ideology is that men are rational while women are emotional. [...] Hegemonic masculinity establishes its hegemony partly by its claim to embody the power of reason, and thus represent the interest of the whole society; it is a mistake to identify hegemonic masculinity purely with physical aggression. (Connell 164)

This juxtaposition of rationality (Jace) and emotion (Clary) is also at work in *TMI*. Jace is depicted as an experienced demon hunter who has to teach Clary how to survive in the Shadowhunter world that is new to her. He is not only physically superior, because he has been training as a Shadowhunter for many years, but it is rather his mental advantages that are highlighted. Clary's actions are often impulsive, and she acts without thinking, thus stumbling from one dangerous situation to the next. Jace, on the other hand, is the voice of reason; one could say, he is her voice of reason. He tries to make plans before he acts and is overall less

emotional and unstable compared to Clary. From early on, Jace was told that feeling meant being weak and so he does not often display emotions (*COB 193*). Thus, he embodies a brooding male character who is dark and mysterious, because he rarely expresses his feelings.

Jace constantly asserts his power over Clary verbally. In their first encounter, for instance, he talks down to Clary in a mocking tone:

> "Have you had dealings with demons, little girl?" […]
> "My name is not 'little girl,'" Clary interrupted.
> He grinned at her and dropped a half-apologetic, half-mocking shrug. (*COB* 22).

By calling her a "little girl" (*COB* 22), even though his intention might only be to tease her, he infantilises Clary. He repeatedly emphasises their unbalanced relationship by establishing himself as the more experienced mentor or teacher-figure. At a later encounter he calls her a little girl again and then continues to assert himself as the more knowledgeable one by asking her: "You don't know much, do you?" (44). Even though Jace treats Clary rudely most of the time, she falls in love with him. She seems to be the only one who can see his hidden softer side, when "[s]he wondered how often he let glimpses of his real self peek through the facade that was as hard and shiny as the coat of lacquer on one of her mother's Japanese boxes" (132). Thus, Jace, so the novel suggests, only outwardly acts tough and masculine, while he is a considerate boyfriend beneath the hard facade.

2.4.2 Simon

Simon, in comparison to Jace, is more considerate, shy and awkward around girls, which also makes him the less desirable partner in Clary's eyes. By depicting him as the less stereotypically masculine and therefore less desirable male character, the novels perpetuate the idea that women primarily desire masculine men. The representation of 'feminine' male characters as less sexy and less mysterious teaches young adults that femininity in men is not something a girl should look for in her romantic partner. Instead of falling in love with a considerate teenage boy who treats Clary as his equal, the protagonist is immediately drawn to the cold, handsome facade of Jace, the hegemonic male. Clary, when comparing the two boys, finds Jace much more intriguing:

> [Simon] looked like the sort of boy who'd come over to your house to pick you up
> for a date and be polite to your parents and nice to your pets. Jace, on the other
> hand, looked like the sort of boy who'd come over to your house and burn it down

for kicks. "I like the dress," he said, unhitching himself from the wall. His eyes ran up and down her lazily, like the stroking paws of a cat. (*COB* 199)

While Simon is described as nice and courteous, Jace is exciting, mysterious, dangerous and overall depicted as a tough rebel. Jace is always leaning, never standing, which accentuates his coolness (*COB* 44, 199, 227). By comparing the two boys with each other, the novel implies that there is only one ideal type of masculinity, i.e. the hegemonic one Jace embodies. Simon might be a good person, but he is not masculine enough to compete with Jace. Thus, hegemonic masculinity is highlighted as the most desirable form of masculinity in the *TMI* series.

As has been mentioned above, Simon's subordinate position among men is expressed by his lack of experience with women and by questioning his heterosexuality. While Jace was romantically involved with a number of young women he did not care for (*COB* 299), Simon is concerned because he has never had a girlfriend before (*COA* 205). Thus, Jace is established as the heterosexual norm and Simon looks up to him and secretly admires Jace's flirtatious behaviour. Moreover, Simon's mother and Clary are both unsure whether Simon is heterosexual. The way Clary asks him if he is gay suggests that being homosexual is something out of the norm and shocking: "You're not gay, are you?" (*COB* 43). The question also implies that Clary interprets Simon not having had a girlfriend at sixteen as a sign of homosexuality. It shows that a certain behaviour is expected of teenage boys with regard to dating, i.e. actively showing interest in teenage girls, and if said expectations are not upheld, something has to be 'wrong' with the boy. Regardless of the fact that Clary has no right to question Simon's sexuality based on stereotypical expectations of what it means to be a man or male adolescent in society, she could at least have phrased the question more neutrally (e.g. Are you gay?). Simon, however, is similarly insensitive to other people's sexual identity, when he replies with a stereotype about gay men: "If I were, I would dress better." (*COB* 43). His reply reveals that he cannot answer the question seriously without making a joke about stereotypical homosexual men. By doing so, he also wants to assert himself as a 'normal', heterosexual teenager, who, because he wants to be perceived as masculine rather than feminine, does not know what is fashionable. Thus, Simon is a good example of complicit masculinity, as he is not interested in directly holding power, but still wants to benefit from the patriarchal dividend and "the privilege of [his] gender" (Connell 114). Like hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinity reaffirms the current gender imbalances and hinders equality.

2.4.3 Clary

Clary is introduced as an insecure teenager at the beginning of the series who quickly adjusts to her new life as a Shadowhunter. Like many young adult heroines, she soon becomes physically strong, but can never compete with her boyfriend's strength (Cruger 116). Even though Jace treats her like a little girl most of the time, she is willing to sacrifice everything for her 'love', even her own life. As Weissman and Swanstrom suggest, "[t]hese self-sacrificing heroines present a possible future that attracts girls to plausible domestic issues" (11). The readers influenced by "these new images of female identity" might consequently become equally insecure and submissive in their romantic relationships (Weissman & Swanstrom 11). This is problematic, as it pushes women into stereotypically feminine roles, not only in romantic relationships, but in society as a whole, further strengthening patriarchal structures.

Clary is not just subordinated by male characters, such as Jace or Simon. By creating competition between herself and Isabelle, Clary herself contributes to the sexism surrounding her. Cruger outlines that

> [t]o prove their strength and individuality, heroines often reject conventional expressions of femininity, but more than that, fantasy heroines reject other women and girls as vapid, conniving, or slutty. [...] The message is painfully clear: there is only room in the story for one amazing girl, there is only one way to be a girl or woman, and perhaps most troublingly, it's impossible for girls to have meaningful friendships with one another. These characters often display internalized sexism, the involuntarily believe [sic!] of the worst existing stereotypes about one's own gender identity group. (Cruger 117)

The protagonist constantly doubts herself and struggles with accepting her physical appearance. Some teenage readers may sympathise with and relate to her, as they experience similar insecurities concerning their bodies. However, the repeated discussion of beauty also has serious consequences. Clary places great emphasis on how men perceive her and fears that she might not be attractive to them. By doing so, the novels convey the message that women's worth is tied to their beauty and consequent desirability to men. Young readers might also get the impression that girls ought to continuously critically examine their faces and bodies, and the resulting lower self-esteem can severely impact self-perception, easing the way into body dysmorphia or eating disorders (Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 8). Clary not only critically evaluates her own body, but also compares herself to other women, mainly to Isabelle (e.g. "She thought of Isabelle's tiny waist and felt suddenly gigantic." (101); "If only her thin freckled legs looked more like Isabelle's lanky smooth limbs." (155)) and actively despises the

other girl for looking a certain way. Clary is insecure and jealous and therefore resents Isabelle for her beauty:

> She seemed to shimmer in the lamplight – she was wearing a long silvery skirt and a sequined top, and her nails were painted like glittering coins. Strands of silver beads were caught in her dark hair. She looked like a moon goddess. Clary hated her. (*COB* 194)

This passage illustrates Cruger's observation that YA fantasy depicts female characters as constant competitors jealous of one another. It also highlights the harmful 'girl hate' practised in these novels, which only worsens sexism, as it is not only practised by men towards women, but also by women towards other women. Jace does little to boost Clary's self-confidence by making comments with an "irritating superiority […] in his voice." (65), such as: "Our own Sleeping Beauty. Who finally kissed you awake?" […] Jace squinted at her. "Are those Isabelle's clothes? They look ridiculous on you." (*COB* 64). At one point, Clary contemplates pouring soup over Isabelle's head because the latter's beauty intimidates her. She resents Isabelle for the reactions she receives for her beauty by male characters (130). The female rivalry is centred on being attractive to men, more specifically, about answering the question of who is most feminine and therefore most desirable to the other sex. Only once Clary discovers that Jace and Isabelle were never romantically involved and that Isabelle felt as intimidated by her as vice versa, can she overcome her hostile thoughts and starts to be nicer to her. Jace explains that Isabelle does not hate Clary: "You just make her nervous, because she's always been the only girl in a crowd of adoring boys, and now she isn't anymore." (*COB* 289) This further strengthens the novels' underlying message that a girl's life centres around boys and that other girls should be considered rivals in the fight for the latter's attention. Isabelle offers a more assertive and confident role model to teenage readers, when compared to Clary, thus representing a stronger and more active version of femininity in the novels. Nevertheless, the tough Isabelle can never outshine Jace, who is the best Shadowhunter his age (Isabelle "was probably better at what she did than any other Shadowhunter her age, with the exception of her brother Jace" *CAFA* 23). This illustrates that the *TMI* series ultimately endorses men's overall position of power, as female characters are not permitted to become stronger or, in a sense, more 'masculine', e.g. by embodying stereotypically masculine characteristics, than the male characters.

2.5 Homosexuality and Heteronormativity

While hegemonic and complicit masculinity support the status quo, there are masculinities which disrupt the structure, even though these masculinities are perpetually marginalised. According to Connell, "[t]he main alternative to hegemonic masculinity in recent Western history is homosexual masculinity" (216). While "[i]t is possible for straight men to oppose patriarchy and try to exit from the worlds of hegemonic and complicit masculinity" (220), subversive potential mainly lies with subordinated masculinities, such as homosexuals. Both young adult fantasy series primarily feature heterosexual couples and place them as the norm within the gender order. Therefore, the series perpetuate what Connell calls obligatory or compulsory heterosexuality (104). Within the young adult fantasy genre, readers only receive a limited number of alternatives to heterosexual romantic relationships. In general, as Connell points out, heterosexual love "is the taken for granted meaning of 'love' in popular culture and it has massive institutional support. Masculinity is necessarily in question in the lives of men whose sexual interest is in other men." (Connell 90) Therefore, I want to examine how homosexual men are represented in the novels.

In *TMI*, there is one homosexual pairing between the Shadowhunter Alec and the warlock Magnus. Magnus is over two centuries old and has come to terms with his sexuality and identifies as bisexual, whereas Alec is seventeen and still insecure about his identity. He does not want to tell anyone he is homosexual, especially not his best friend Jace. It is not explicitly addressed why Alec hides his sexual identity and so I can only assume that he might do it out of fear of being regarded as less tough of a fighter, or generally less masculine. As Connell notes, "[o]ppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men", as "gayness is easily assimilated to femininity". (both 78). Within a patriarchal system, homosexual men are viewed as lacking masculinity (Connell 143), as during the 19th century "heterosexuality became a required part of manliness" (196). In *TMI*, Magnus is portrayed as the stereotypical feminine gay character: "He does seem to be hooked into an enormous gossip network. He's such a *girl*." (*COB* 436, original emphasis), thus equating homosexuality with a loss of masculinity. The novels address homosexuality mainly as an identity within the gender system by portraying how being homosexual is tied to a man's behaviour i.e. he supposedly becomes more feminine. However, homosexual desire also plays an important role in queer theory, even if the novels do not show this connection and seem to be interested in separating homosexuality from sexual activity. This could also be explained by

the fact that the *TMI* series only rarely addresses desire, also in heterosexual relationships, apart from occasional kisses, and the protagonist's desires are similarly repressed.

Among the Shadowhunter community, it is important to always appear strong and willing to fight off evil, and therefore homosexuality has no place and is not openly addressed. This also becomes evident in a conversation between Clary, who is new to the Shadowhunter world, and Isabelle, Alec's sister, who grew up as a Shadowhunter:

> "Is Alec gay?"
> Isabelle's wrist jerked. The eyeliner skidded, inking a long line of black from the corner of Clary's eye to her hairline. "Oh, hell," Isabelle said, putting the pen down. "It's all right," Clary began, putting her hand up to her eye.
> "No, it isn't." Isabelle sounded near tears. (*COB* 197)

Isabelle is shocked to find out that Clary knows of Alec's secret sexual orientation. It is not clear whether Isabelle's comment to Clary's proclamation of "It's all right" is in reference to the eyeliner or to being homosexual. The fact that Isabelle is "near tears" highlights how worried, and possibly ashamed, she is about her brother's sexuality being revealed. The conversation continues, and Isabelle urges Clary to stay silent on the topic:

> "You absolutely can't tell anyone," said Isabelle.
> "Not even Jace?"
> "Especially not Jace!" […]
> "I guess I didn't realize it was such a big deal."
> "It would be to my parents," said Isabelle quietly. "They would disown him and throw him out of the Clave-"
> "What, you can't be gay and a Shadowhunter?"
> "There's no official rule about it. But people don't like it. I mean, less with people our age – I think," she added, uncertainly […]. "But the older generation, no. If it happens, you don't talk about it." (*COB* 197)

This passage illustrates that especially the older Shadowhunter generation still in power is reactionary with regard to homosexuality. Instead of addressing the issue, it is hushed up by everyone. Decades of suppression and silencing have created a society that punishes queerness and so Isabelle fears severe repercussions if Alec's sexuality were ever revealed. Instead of attempting to change the status quo, the younger generation wants to remain silent out of worry. Alec himself is unable to address his homosexuality, as he does not feel he would be accepted by society:

> "When you told me that you, you know, that I was just – that it was because –" He seemed to be having trouble forming a complete sentence. He tried again. "When you said I was . . ."

"Alec, don't." (*COB* 436)

This passage conveys Alec's insecurity and fear of expressing his sexuality, which also illustrates how difficult it is in the rigid Shadowhunter society to diverge from the heterosexual norm. Alec is generally concerned about his friends' and family's safety and constantly seeks to protect them, even willing to sacrifice himself, if need be. He is Jace's best friend and worries that Jace might one day be injured in battle. Therefore, rather than killing demons, Alec always remains a passive observer during fights with demonic creatures. Whenever Jace is in trouble, he can then come forward to protect him. When his friend runs away and is caught up in a dangerous situation without consulting Alec first, the latter is devastated and exclaims: "Normally, I'd be with him, covering him, watching his back, keeping him safe" (*COB* 275). Thus, Alec is always ready to risk his own life to save his friend. By showing the subordinated masculinity being sacrificed for the hegemonic masculinity, the power hierarchy between these types of masculinity is enforced. There seems to be a pattern in literature to sacrifice marginalized and subordinated individuals. Minorities, referring to those who are subordinated based on race, class, gender, or sexual identity, are often introduced for the sake of diversity only to be killed off or shown willingly sacrificing themselves. They are only allowed to exist in relation to the white heterosexual heroic figure, and their importance to the overall story is limited. Alec, one could thus argue, only serves the function of worrying for and saving Jace and is only defined in relation to the latter: "Something about Jace sharpened him [i.e. Alec], brought him into focus" (*COB* 181), which sends a conflicting message to the young readership, namely, that Alec's life matters less, that he is expendable and disposable, in contrast to Jace, the most powerful Shadowhunter his age.

Minority representation is crucial, as it can raise awareness and consequently create social change and minimise inequality. As George Gerbner and Larry Gross stress, "[r]epresentation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation" (182), and many minorities are glaringly underrepresented and thereby symbolically annihilated in the media. Symbolic annihilation works in three ways, according to Gaye Tuchman:

> *omission*, when characters from a particular identity group are simply absent; *trivialization*, when characters from a particular identity group have silly, minimal, or foolish storylines or coverage; and *condemnation*, when characters from a particular identity group are depicted disproportionately as either victims of violence (as with women and girls) or perpetrators of violence (as with black men, for example.). (qtd. in Cruger 116f., my emphasis)

All three types of symbolic annihilation can be found in the *ACOTAR* series. Up until the second half of the third novel, there is no diversity in terms of sexual identity, thus the series simply omits these minorities. Even then, the queer characters are placed at the sidelines and are not relevant to the story, or only stereotypically represented, i.e. they are trivialised. It seems that Maas decided to feature different sexualities only after facing massive criticism from fans (e.g. in blog posts[2], on twitter[3]) for the lack of diversity in her novels. The underrepresentation of diverse characters in the series, not only regarding sexual identity, is glaring. While the author responded to the criticism and included some LGBTQ+ characters, they seem to be solely added for the sake of diversity. Their sexuality is not explored, but only superficially mentioned, so as if to satisfy enraged readers. At the end of the third novel, one of the more prominent minor characters opens up about her bisexuality, which she has hidden for the entire series. This reveal seems artificially added, however, as she had previously been in a love triangle between two men. Moreover, the representation of homosexual and bisexual characters is lacklustre and mixed with harmful stereotypes. Helion, an openly bisexual character is introduced as follows: "*Helion favors both males and females. Usually together in his bed. And he has been hounding after that trio for centuries.*" (*ACOWAR* 450 f., originally italicised) The brief mention of his sexual orientation is immediately succeeded by the stereotypical image that bisexuals prefer polyamory, which can again be interpreted as the second form of symbolic annihilation, i.e. trivialisation. Condemnation is also present in the series, since women are frequently victimised, and sometimes only introduced to reveal the misogyny of Fae society, e.g. the female faeries that were raped and now work in a library that Rhysand established (*ACOWAR* 217). These women are not even given names and reduced to the violence they had to endure. While they are not characterised, they are used as a device to further characterise Rhysand, who is depicted as their saviour, as he provided a safe space for them after they were sexually assaulted. To conclude, it is difficult to find true representations of diversity in the analysed young adult fantasy novels. Both series support and feature mainly heterosexual relationships, thus further establishing them normatively.

---

[2] https://inbetweenpagessite.wordpress.com/2017/06/18/diversity-in-the-acotar-series-sarah-j-maas/,
https://delicateeternity.com/2016/review-a-court-of-mist-and-fury-by-sarah-j-maas/
[3] https://twitter.com/whittynovels/status/810355422532079617,
https://twitter.com/whittynovels/status/810358034111361025?lang=de

3 Gender, Violence and Toughness

As has been outlined in the preceding chapter, hegemonic masculinity is prevalent in both YA series under analysis in this thesis, leading to a perpetual reinforcement of what it means to be 'truly masculine' in a society. Furthermore, alternatives to the naturalised assumption that masculine men desire feminine women and vice versa are rarely featured, and gender is represented as essentialist and unchangeable rather than as socially constructed. By depicting femininity as the polar opposite of hegemonic masculinity, the two series sustain harmful stereotypes of both femininity and masculinity. Not only is a supposed heteronormative ideal promoted by pairing the female protagonist with traditionally masculine characters; violent acts, such as those where one character physically dominates over another, are often excused and subsequently legitimised. As Raewyn Connell argues, "violence often underpins or supports authority" (77); therefore, this chapter is closely connected to the previous one. In the following chapter, I will examine in how far aggression and violence can be linked to a character's toughness, which is a trait that is also associated with hegemonic masculinity.

3.1 Gender-based Violence

Nowadays we are constantly informed about the violence in our world, leading us to believe that it is and always has been a natural part of human life. While deaths through warfare have seen a considerable decline over the centuries, as Stephen Pinker illustrates in his *TED talk*, press coverage of violence has become much more detailed and graphic (e.g. footage of massacres), thus creating the illusion that violence is more present than ever (9:24). As Pinker rightly argues, fewer people die as a result of violence and his observations primarily focus on the decline of war-related violence (8:00). However, it is important to take all forms of violence into account, including domestic and gender-based violence. When examining real-life situations of women around the world, it becomes clear that gender-based violence continues to be a pressing issue, as "[w]orldwide, an estimated one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime", according to WHO data (*UNFPA*, n.p.). These figures are frighteningly high; yet, these acts of violence are often normalised, as Aili Mari Tripp states:

> Violence against women in the home is normalized, creating a culture that accepts
> war, militarism, and other forms of domination in addition to a culture of impunity
> for such violence (Bunch 2004, 32). Popular culture, from the media, movies,
> music, and novels, contributes to a perception that violence against women is

something that can be expected, and that violence in general can be entertainment (Tripp 13).

This normalisation of violent acts and the resulting acceptance thereof can also be observed in the selected young adult fantasy novels. Female characters often find themselves at the receiving end of physical violence and are generally not surprised when they are subjected to it, since they live in a world in which male characters constantly try to exert dominance over them. While there are some notable exceptions, the majority of physical attacks within the novels are committed by male characters against female ones. This paints a picture of female passivity opposed to male agency, except in those scenes where male and female characters work together to defeat a seemingly all-powerful villain. In their intimate relationships, however, the female characters often lack the same vigilance and assertive strength they display on the battlefield. The originally intended message of the female authors of the respective series is to empower girls and women through the role model of strong female characters in their stories, who presumably are not dependent on male characters, as Cassandra Clare, the author of *The Mortal Instruments* suggests:

> The Mortal Instruments is the story of Clary above everything else: the story of a girl who starts out ordinary and becomes a hero. A girl who first is blind to the magic in the world all around her, but comes not just to see it, but to be able to master and control it. [...] she shapes her own story and her own destiny. (Foreword by the author, *COG* 9)

Sarah J. Maas, the author of the *ACOTAR* series, similarly aims to depict her protagonist as an equal to the male characters, as she expresses in an interview (Thompson n.p.). This intention to empower the female protagonists of their series, however, is not successfully achieved when one examines the power hierarchy in the romantic relationships. Clary is subjected to her boyfriend's moods who, due to his 'bad boy' attitude, rarely respects her as his equal and rather infantilises her verbally (e.g. by calling her "little girl" (*COB* 21)) and physically (e.g. by shoving her around, because he is the more experienced fighter (*COB* 57, 240, 250, 257)). In *ACOTAR*, Feyre is emotionally and physically abused by both boyfriends, but never sees Rhysand's faults, instead focusing all her hate on her first boyfriend, Tamlin. *TMI*, *ACOTAR*, and similar stories suggest that physical power exertion is primarily a male domain, whereas emotional manipulation is utilised by female characters as well. Thus, as I will outline below, violence in its physical form is first and foremost viewed as a masculine trait, one could argue as a natural consequence of hegemonic masculinity. As Tripp argues, "[v]iolence is both gendered and gendering", as our understanding of gender is continuously "reproduced and reconstituted through violence" (both 16). In other words, it can be through violent acts, but

also through a variety of other practices, that men subjugate women or other men, as only few men can embody hegemonic masculinity. Gender-based violence thus not only pays attention to the power hierarchy between men and women, but also to the internal power struggles between men, for instance, or amongst women of different classes, sexualities and ethnicities. In general, when examining the behaviour of the characters in the *TMI* and *ACOTAR* series, male characters tend to initiate physical violence, whereas women primarily use it as a means of self-defence.

Violence is most commonly associated with its most aggressive and physical form, e.g. hitting or otherwise hurting someone using muscle strength. The violent spectrum is broad and includes everything from holding someone down or engaging in fist fights to raping and murdering, overall summarising instances where power is exerted physically. Emotional and psychological violence consists of shaming, belittling and lowering the self-esteem of others. In a traditional sense this is often not identified as a violent act; however, these instances greatly influence characters' feelings, thoughts and actions and thus have wide-ranging consequences. The *Oxford Dictionary* lists both definitions of violence, first naming the physical aspect ("Behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something." n.p.), and listing the emotional/psychological aspect in the second definition ("Strength of emotion or of a destructive natural force." n.p.). Both of these definitions are important for the analysis of violence in the two young adult series. As Judith Franzak and Elizabeth Noll point out, violence appears to be ubiquitously prevalent in many YA series, and its presence can have "a numbing effect" (662). They draw on Dorothy Van Soest and Shirley Bryant's model which "presents violence as a complex, multilayered social phenomenon in which conditions of oppression and aggression are present" (Franzak & Noll 663). In this model violence is defined "as any act or situation in which an individual (or individuals) injures another, whether physically or psychologically, directly or indirectly" (663). However, violence is not only exerted by individuals. In fact, Van Soest and Bryant identify "three levels of violence: individual, institutional, and structural-cultural" (Franzak & Noll 663). Institutional violence, such as one leading to systematic oppression, is also at play in the discussed YA fantasy series as well as structural-cultural violence, which leads us to "accept violence as a natural part of life" (663). However, for the purpose of this thesis a focus on intimate partner violence, and therefore individual violence, will help to reveal the connection between the violent acts characters are subjected to and their gender. In addition, abuse, which is defined as "[c]ruel and violent treatment of a person or animal" by the *Oxford Dictionary* (n.p.)*,* also ties into violence.

The two series feature instances of verbal as well as physical abuse, mostly initiated by male characters and directed towards female characters.

Recently, as has been mentioned, trends in young adult literature have gone towards including physically strong female protagonists at the stories' centres. In opposition to the quiet and dependent Bella Swan in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005-2008), which has had great influence on the popularity of young adult novels in general, most heroines nowadays show similar character traits to the popular protagonist in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* series (2008-2010), Katniss Everdeen. These new female protagonists usually fight against evil, often showing physical as well as emotional strength during action-packed scenes. On the one hand, this can be viewed positively, as young readers, especially girls, are able to witness non-traditional female characters that act fiercely and bravely rather than submissively. On the other hand, while the female protagonist can be tough and strong, she is not allowed to be stronger than her boyfriend or other important male characters in the series, which sends a rather conflicting message to readers. Furthermore, as Kathryn James points out, the female protagonist's sexual desirability is usually stressed at various points throughout the story (171), thus reducing women to their bodies and whether these are attractive to men, which again perpetuates harmful stereotypes. This erotic aspect also leads to sexual violence and abuse in some YA series, not only suggesting that men are a constant threat to women either by acting inappropriately or by going so far as to consider rape, but also that it is the women's fault for acting a certain way, i.e. 'leading men on', for instance, by dressing a certain way. Examples of this objectification of characters' bodies and its connection to gender and sexuality can be found in the following chapter.

3.2 Toughness

One characteristic that is closely related to violence and masculinity is toughness. According to Sherrie Inness, toughness is difficult to define, as a variety of factors influence whether one perceives a character as tough (12). In general, tough characters are muscular (12) and display physical violence (13). However, toughness is not only linked to a person's physique, as a certain "self-presentation, attire, setting, and attitude" contribute to toughness, as Inness highlights (12). The *Oxford Dictionary* also shows that the adjective "tough" evokes many connotations. It can be used to describe a person that is "[a]ble to endure hardship or pain", which includes "[h]aving the confidence and determination to cope in difficult situations" (both n.p.). While being tough is often associated with being strong, the term also carries a negative

undertone, i.e. a tough person is "prone to violence" and "demonstrate[es] a strict and uncompromising approach" (both n.p.). In young adult fantasy series, a tough character displays similar qualities. Being tough means showing both physical and mental strength in challenging situations and entails a willingness to exert violence and dominance regardless of the consequences, e.g. the pain one might cause others. Toughness thus relates to power, as tough characters tend to find ways to overpower their, not quite as tough, adversaries.

Toughness is not only linked to power, but also to masculinity as well as to being male. Overall, this link ensures "that men, not women, will be the only 'real' heroes in a culture where toughness is frequently associated with power and typically only men are allowed to display it", as Inness recognises (14). In popular media, portrayals of tough men generally outweigh those of tough women in terms of number as well as impact and effectiveness of their toughness (4). As Inness observes, "toughness is perceived as the antithesis to femininity" (12), making it difficult for female characters to display toughness as male characters do without being defeminised. She further comments on the connection between toughness and gender:

> Women are led to believe that physical (and emotional) toughness belongs to men. The connection between toughness and male/masculinity is so strong in our society even today that many women are uneasy about appearing *too* tough. (Inness 23)

Women's reluctance to appear tough in order not to be perceived as "too tough" can also be observed in the two young adult fantasy series under analysis in this thesis. Both Feyre and Clary doubt themselves as soon as they question male authority and subsequently retreat to more stereotypically feminine versions of themselves. Feyre, after disobeying Tamlin's orders, forgives his aggressive outburst and decides to dress nicely for him, thus accepting his behaviour and blaming her own actions for him nearly raping her (*ACOTAR* 200). Clary similarly blames herself after talking back in an argument with Jace and quickly forgives him for shouting at her and hurting her feelings (*COB* 292ff.). Thus, both protagonists clearly situate themselves within the gender hierarchy after their brief attempts to usurp male authority. As Inness points out, "the popular media are still deeply ambivalent about how to depict tough women so that they do not challenge gender conventions too dramatically" (5). By creating only few tough female role models, traditional gender norms as well as the assumption that men are the tougher, more powerful, violent and successful gender are continuously reasserted. This has wide-ranging consequences, because "as long as men are the primary people associated with toughness, they will continue to be the ones associated with success and power" (Inness 14). Inness does not draw specific attention to young adult fantasy novels when she writes about

popular media, but many of her observations can be applied to the genre. In general, there can be only few tough or superficially tough female characters in a YA fantasy series, most often the protagonist, her closest friend, or a female antagonist, whereas the overwhelming majority of male characters display characteristics of toughness. According to Inness, tough female characters are interpreted in different ways:

> Her tougher and more masculine image suggests that a greater variety of gender roles are open to women; at the same time, however, her toughness is often mitigated by her femininity, which […] [is] associate[d] with weakness. […] Tough women can offer women new role models, but their toughness may also bind women more tightly to traditional feminine roles - especially when the tough woman is portrayed as a pretender to male power and authority, and someone who is not tough enough to escape being punished by society for her gender-bending behavior. […] [W]hen the media *do* depict tough women, it is often to show that they are exceptions to the rule that women are not tough. (Inness 5)

In both YA series stereotypical gender images are constantly reiterated, by highlighting that tough female characters are an exception, and that most girls prefer their more traditionally feminine, weaker, more submissive, and less violent selves. Whenever the toughness of male characters is challenged by a female character, the latter's willingness to be violent is evaluated critically. Amarantha, the antagonist of the first novel of the *ACOTAR* series, as well as Ianthe, the antagonist of the second and third novel, are ultimately punished for their attempts to become tougher than the dominant male characters. Both women are shown as being too egoistic, self-confident, and driven in their thirst for power (which are character traits usually accepted in tough men as part of their heroic attitude), and their overly-ambitious actions need to be disciplined. In the end, both women are killed for wanting too much, their power hunger is most clearly identified as wicked through their sexual drive, which leads them to manipulate men into sleeping with them. In order to rectify the abuse these manipulative women exerted throughout their lives, they have to be penalised and thus only deserve violent deaths, so the series suggests. It is important to note that male characters are often not called out or punished for similarly abusive actions.

While women are demonised for their manipulative sides, male characters' abusive behaviour is often tolerated, overlooked, excused, or even romanticised. Both Clary and Feyre find ways to blame themselves rather than their boyfriends whenever the male characters behave violently. Clary, even though Jace insults and belittles her throughout their relationship, always forgives her boyfriend for misbehaving. While the power struggle between the protagonist and her partner is visible in the *TMI* series, it is much more pronounced in the *ACOTAR* series and

so more examples of the latter can be mentioned at this point. Feyre, at first, does not see the faults of her first lover Tamlin and never recognises those of her second boyfriend Rhysand. Tamlin is implicitly and openly criticised for his actions, but eventually redeems himself through one selfless act. Only seldom is there an overt criticism of Rhysand's behaviour in the series and Feyre blames herself whenever she challenges his opinion (*ACOMAF* 422 f.). Ultimately, neither Clary nor the generally more assertive Feyre can successfully counteract their boyfriends' dominant behaviour, as has been highlighted in the previous chapter. I will now examine specific scenes in both series and analyse the instances of emotional and physical violence and abuse.

3.3 Lack of Diversity Among Female Characters
3.3.1 The *ACOTAR* Series

Women are portrayed in three different ways in the *ACOTAR* series. First of all, one can find stereotypically feminine and naive female characters, such as Feyre's sister Elain who always emphasises her traditional femininity. Her looks are what is most important to her and she wants to embrace her girly side. For example, she enjoys gardening and is interested in flowers, which are pretty to look at, rather than vegetables, and she never offers to help her sister go hunting or cut wood. Overall, Elain is ineffective and fits into the stereotype that "boys do, [and] girls are" (Key in Kortenhaus and Demarest 221), patiently waiting for her prince charming. She would never resort to violence, as this would contradict her feminine nature. Only after having been turned into a faerie, thereby shedding her human form which defined and confined her to her gender (i.e. woman as the 'Other') and transforming into something radically 'Other' (i.e. a supernatural creature), does she eventually become a force to be reckoned with. She gradually undergoes a process of transformation, as the powerless, naive girl shifts into a rather depressed faerie woman struggling with her new role only to realise that she can be tough and assertive as well. This newly-found strength empowers her so that she develops agency and is able to kill the king of Hybern to avenge her father's death. However, she uses violence only as a last resort in order to defend her remaining family, which supports Inness's observation that women "are often tough only in order to protect their children and families, a form of toughness that our society assumes is 'natural' for women; thus, their toughness does not call into question gender roles" (Inness 20). The second type of female character can be summarised as the strong female character, whose power is mostly upheld with the help of men (e.g. Feyre and Mor, who both rely on Rhysand to defend them in difficult situations). Therefore, they are tough, but never

tougher than the men surrounding them, making them merely pseudo-tough, a term used by Inness. Although she does not provide a clear definition of the term 'pseudo-toughness', she stresses that it relates to the less powerful and less effective toughness many female characters display. While they look superficially tough at first, i.e. willing to fight and defend their friends and family, even if it puts them into dangerous situations, like Feyre and Clary, these characters are never the ones in power, as men typically dominate the narrative. Inness argues that "depicting women as not tough or as 'pseudo-tough' is one of the ways that the media perpetuate the myth that women are less capable and competent than men" (14). In both YA fantasy series the protagonists are allowed to form bonds with other women, even if these women also never display more toughness than men, so as not to question the traditional gender order. Feyre meets her later friend Mor in Rhysand's court, and all of Feyre's friends were in fact Rhysand's friends first, i.e. the members of his inner circle. Similarly, Clary meets Isabelle at the Shadowhunter institute, where Jace introduces them to each other. Thus, the relationships the protagonists form with other female characters have already been previously 'allowed' and regulated by their boyfriends, as they were the ones introducing them in the first place. While Isabelle and Mor are also fierce fighters and willing to risk everything to protect their loved ones, they can also only be described as pseudo-tough. In general, pseudo-tough women are not automatically masculinised simply by displaying some characteristics associated with toughness. Their toughness is restricted in a way that makes it possible for them to remain feminine, i.e. it only appears in dangerous situations. Isabelle, for instance, is in many ways a stereotypical 'girly' character, as she shows great interest in make-up and fashion. She celebrates her femininity by emphasising it through clothing, similar to Feyre and Clary. Thus, in an effort to create likeable female protagonists, YA series only allow for pseudo-tough heroines, as too much toughness in women is still perceived negatively, which can be inferred from the way antagonistic female characters are depicted. They form the third group of morally black female characters, who gained power by themselves, by using their bodies and minds as weapons (e.g. Amarantha, Ianthe, the human queens). Their claim to power, however, cannot be upheld and they eventually succumb to the power of the hegemonic masculine characters. The antagonists are shown to have no humanity left in them, and thus are neither masculinised nor feminised, but simply demonised. Jes Battis contends that "it is this desire to dismiss 'too powerful' female characters […] as being somehow 'unreal', somehow 'not women', that allows feminist resistance in literature […] to be contained by hegemonic and patriarchal forces of protection" (323). The negative depiction of tough women is deeply troubling as it is made clear "that a woman's toughness is still not the equal of a man's" (Inness 14). In fact, her claim

to authority is deemed outrageous and preposterous and thus needs to be punished and contained by dehumanising and killing her.

As has been briefly addressed in section 2.2, female characters in the *ACOTAR* series, even the tougher women, are noticeably confined to submissive roles in the patriarchal Fae society. Many instances of domestic as well as sexual abuse (*ACOMAF* 397, *ACOWAR* 216, 455), given the series' focus on sexual content, can be outlined. Often the victims of assault and violence are female characters who are not able to or simply do not show agency when being harassed. These women are subjugated based on systematic oppression, as bad treatment of female faeries is common among some clans. It is important to note the male faeries of one specific clan mistreat the female faeries of the respective clan. Thus, rather than being threatened by humans or faeries of other clans, members of their own kind constantly harass the female faeries. By regarding the women's gender as a definitive feature and constantly viewing them as the opposition, the 'Other', male faeries within this community feel the need to assert their dominance. "They cripple their females so they can keep them for breeding more flawless warriors" (*ACOMAF* 169) by cutting their wings and keeping them as trophies, as some men appear to be proud of having violated innocent female faeries (*ACOMAF* 449). Thus, they reduce and actively restrict women to their role as mothers, housewives and merely regard them as breeding stock. This is reminiscent of the recent dystopian TV show based on Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), which also addresses severe restrictions to women's rights in a society where women gradually come to be little more than breeding stock. Given the current relevance of women's issues since the political climate in the U.S., but also in Europe, has seen a massive shift to the conservative right, it is important to address unjust policies that reinforce the inequality between men and women (e.g. the restriction of abortion laws, lax sexual harassment laws, unfair judicial persecution in cases of rape or domestic violence). Popular fiction, e.g. young adult novels, can raise a teen audience's awareness to these issues, but, at the same time, if only insufficiently addressed, do the exact opposite and encourage readers to accept men's superior position in the fantasy society and consequently also in real life. In the *ACOTAR* series, women's suppressed situation in society is given great attention; however, ultimately the love story between Feyre and Rhysand takes over the plot, and women's issues are disregarded. The series also depicts the violence women are subjected to for being sexually active, only to show most of them remaining silent and enduring the grave injustices (e.g. faeries in the library, Mor) and dropping this issue completely as the plot progresses. It is interesting to note that promiscuity in women is viewed as a sin (*ACOMAF*

397), although the faerie society practices a non-human religion. They have High Priestesses and pray to many Gods, yet this Christian idea of sin might have slipped into Maas's writing, as she also minored in religious studies. Another reason why religious themes might have been incorporated into the story is that *ACOTAR* is based on *Beauty and the Beast*, and fairy tales typically contain "Christian and Biblical themes", as Alice Neikirk establishes (39). Almost every fairy tale "culminates in marriage" (39), and *ACOWAR* similarly supports the institution of marriage. In the third instalment, the 535-year-old immortal Rhysand proposes to the 20-year-old protagonist, and the couple plan to marry as soon as they have defeated evil. This perpetuates the idea that marriage ultimately brings happiness and disregards any institutional or religious background thereof, or the fact that it is, to this day, an enforcement of heteronormativity. Moreover, marriage supported and legitimised men's power for centuries. Up until 1975, for instance, women in Austria had to ask for their husband's permission to work, and marital rape has only officially been recognised as a criminal offence since 1989 (Lumetsberger n.p.). Thus, the message the series sends to young readers is one that heavily romanticises marriage.

Similar to the other women in the story, the main character initially also finds ways to downplay and disregard the violence to which she is submitted, but soon realises there is a grave power imbalance in her romantic relationship. At first, the protagonist ignores and normalises Tamlin's abuse, e.g. she flinches when he "gave no warning as he gripped [her] arm, snarling softly" (*ACOMAF* 46), but does not openly protest to the maltreatment. However, his violence increases gradually, he becomes enraged and displays power more and more often. He shatters everything around them (100), followed by an apology, which is supposed to make his outburst forgotten (102). The situation worsens and culminates in him trapping her in the house. Feyre is confused and cannot believe her lover would subjugate her in this way. She expresses her disbelief by repeating similar sentences over and over: "I was trapped [...] He'd trapped me..." […] "I couldn't get out." (123 f.). The subject switches from the protagonist's first-person "I" to Tamlin becoming the agent of the second sentence, symbolising how her agency is taken away by his cruelty, consequently leading to her passivity. Eventually Feyre overcomes her initial shock and apathy and flees with the help of her later boyfriend, thus showing that one can escape an emotionally abusive relationship. The manipulative and coercive techniques Tamlin uses to control Feyre are similar to real-life abuse. In *The Battered Woman* (1979) Lenore Edna Walker, an American psychologist, outlines the cycle of violence in abusive relationships, proposing that it typically follows a three-stage pattern. Initially, as Sue Cote

Escobar summarises Walker's stages, tension builds up and, while "the abuser may behave in a charming, caring, gentle, and affectionate way with the victim", problems will slowly start to surface (257). The second stage, also known as 'acute battering phase', describes the violent outburst, which may be of physical, verbal, or psychological nature. In the 'honeymoon phase' the couple reconciles and both parties convince themselves that the "abusive episode is an isolated event" (257). The battered person stays in the relationship and so the cycle of abuse can start over again. The violence increases in intensity "and eventually the possibility of a third stage that involves apology and denial no longer exists" (Cote Escobar 257). In the *ACOTAR* series, this cycle of abuse is described in detail. The ways in which Feyre slowly slithers into the relationship, losing her agency in the process, are detailed from the beginning, depicting the entire story from initial capture, beginning romantic feelings, first warning signs that she ignores, the increasing intensity of abuse, her initial submissive reaction, the final outburst, and the difficulty of leaving an abusive relationship. The novels' focus on domestic abuse and strategies to overcome it can be interpreted positively, as she only briefly loses her agency, but ultimately grows as a character and is able to reclaim her life.

The fact that Feyre soon chooses a similarly manipulative boyfriend, whose violent acts are not sufficiently addressed, condoned or critically evaluated by the first-person narrator reveals the novels' unfortunate lack of consistency with regard to violence and thus the general lack of a clear message about abuse in intimate relationships. This might confuse the predominantly young readership, who could receive the impression that a more toned-down, less openly violent, but nevertheless abusive relationship is something to accept or even strive for in one's own life, as Feyre and Rhysand's relationship is romanticised. Rhysand who does not openly abuse her in the second novel, which certainly does not excuse his abusive actions in the first novel, still uses her as bait and does not apologise when she confronts him. He explains only having done it for her so that she can find her strength (*ACOMAF* 268). Feyre is blinded by her love for Rhysand and excuses all his previous aggressions and manipulations (e.g. *ACOTAR* 303, 331, 368, 385, tattooing her body against her will, twisting her broken arm) based on the belief that she could not have overcome the traumatic experiences in her first relationship without him (he "kept me from shattering completely" *ACOTAR* 369). Rhysand's previous manipulations are excused by implying they were ultimately intended to help Feyre, even if they submitted her to violence and suffering at the time. Feyre's naive way of excusing and legitimising Rhysand's abuse only because he changed his actions is treated as a logical reaction. She is still coping with the abuse from her previous relationship and thus concentrates

on hating Tamlin rather than Rhysand. The series perpetuates the message that since Feyre and Rhysand are mated, i.e. connected via a strong bond that ties them together, their relationship cannot be bad. By using a loaded term such as soulmates, the series feeds into readers' connotations with this term. In our society, the soulmate bond has a long-standing tradition and many people to this day strive to find their one true match. One of the first mentions of soulmates goes back to Plato's *The Symposium* (approx. 360 BC), where he describes three human sexes, i.e. men, women, and the "Androgynous". All these humans, according to Greek mythology, "had four hands and four feet, one head with two faces" and two sets of genitalia (Plato n.p.). Zeus split all humans in half, so that they are now perpetually searching for their other half, i.e. their true pairing. This soulmate bond illustrates "the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of man" (Plato n.p.) The ideological implications of using a term with such historic tradition, even though Maas interprets the bond differently (i.e. as mainly focused on a strong physical connection), still evoke all the connotations of the term in young readers that they are exposed to in society. Therefore, the readership is led to believe that the mating bond in the novels is meaningful, not only referring to a physical connection, but also to an emotional one, and that the mated couple is meant to stay together forever. In the *ACOTAR* fandom, they 'ship' the two characters together, regardless of their actual compatibility. Overall, the series reinforces unrealistic expectations as to what true love entails by depicting Feyre and Rhysand's relationship as 'meant to be' without drawing attention to or critiquing Rhysand's severe physical and emotional abuse of the protagonist in the first instalment.

In general, the series suggests that Rhysand always knows best. He teaches Feyre some questionable views regarding violence when he tells her: "You get used to it [i.e. manipulating others]. The sense that you're crossing a boundary, that you're violating them [...] the benefits outweighed the costs" (*ACOMAF* 344). This utilitarian thinking that some need to suffer for others to benefit from a situation is presented as the most reasonable way of thinking, thus making Rhysand's suggestions the best course of action. In general, Rhysand's views on justice in connection to violence are positively evaluated. This is brought to the extreme when Rhysand views himself as an advocate for women's rights and a saviour of all women, as he helps those who have been raped by giving them shelter (*ACOWAR* 217) and punishes those men who have hurt women. He wishes these perpetrators a violent end and enjoys watching them die (*ACOMAF* 523), thereby displaying sadistic tendencies, as he seems to be "[d]eriving pleasure from inflicting pain, suffering, [and] humiliation on others" (*Oxford Dictionary* n.p.). What the

series implies is that Rhysand can in some way avenge the abusive intentions, in this case, attempting to rape Feyre, by subjecting the perpetrators to violence. This drastic method reveals the eye-for-an-eye mentality that results in even more violence. The underlying message that violence can be stopped by combating it with even more violence is deeply troubling, in my opinion.

Frequently, male aggression and violence is presented as necessary and natural, creating the impression that violence serves an important purpose, and ultimately protects rather than harms, while also conveying a biologistic and essentialist view of gender, as has been mentioned above (cf. section 2.3.1). When Feyre is insulted as a whore, Rhysand defends her by displaying physical strength (*ACOMAF* 417) – revealing violence as the only possible solution. His anger and consequent outbreak are excused because he reacted the way he did based on his "primal male rage"; in other words, he simply acted on "instincts" (both *ACOMAF* 421). Throughout the series it is implied that because Rhysand and Tamlin are male, their aggression cannot be helped and should even be regarded as something positive, since they protect female characters in the process. As Katherine Cruger rightly stresses,

> [t]his portrayal of violent, overprotective Fae male behavior as well-meaning and noble echos [sic!] the unfortunate reality that abuse victims are sometimes told that their abuser's behavior is for their own good. It also echos [sic!] one of the most damaging myths about dating and domestic violence: men simply cannot help themselves and therefore cannot be held responsible for the damage they do. (Cruger 121)

It is interesting to note that men's violence is excused by referencing their genetic disposition for it, whereas no such explanation is given when female characters act violently. Men do not only fight, they fight over women, and this behaviour is normalised. Rhysand explains to Feyre that once a male and female faerie are mated, referring to the above-mentioned soulmate bond, the male Fae cannot help himself and becomes overly protective: "Males get so volatile [...] [they can] shatter a room because another male looked too long in their mate's direction, too soon after they'd been mated" (*ACOMAF* 541). He also fights his best friend Cassian because the mating bond between him and Feyre is fresh (544). This behaviour is presented as something every male character does, and there are no social sanctions for it. Rather, these aggressions form a natural part of the mating process, so the novels suggest, and can even add to a character's toughness, if he willingly accepts his instincts and resulting aggression. For instance, Cassian purposely provokes Rhysand so the latter can 'let off steam' after being mated with Feyre. The fight is suggested to be cool and necessary, and they even enjoy it (544). The

protagonist does not evaluate this behaviour critically, but accepts it as a fact. It is only commented on briefly when she thinks: "So strange, the High Fae with their mating and primal instincts" (546). Thus, Feyre accepts the idea that some things men do happen on instinct and cannot be avoided. Violent behaviour seems to be accepted as inevitable by almost all members of society. One male character notes that "High Lords have gone to war for less [...] Doing it over such an unusual female would be nothing unexpected" (*ACOMAF* 314). It is suggested that High Lords, i.e. members of the highest class of male faeries and considered nobility, use their influential rank in society to start wars in which women are the 'prize' to be obtained. These powerful male faeries see women as a reward for their battle achievements. Their dominance over others is not only the result of the benefits their gender allows them, but also based on class and social rank, revealing how two axes of power cross to create the High Lord's seemingly uncontestable position of power.

3.3.2 The *TMI* Series

It is difficult to outline different types of female characters in the *TMI* series, as I have done with the *ACOTAR* series, due to the lack of a fleshed-out female cast in the former. Most of the characters that contribute to the plot's progression are male (e.g. Jace, Magnus, Alec), there are only male villains (e.g. Valentine, Sebastian), and only two female characters are somewhat crucial to the story. First and foremost, there is Clary, the initially insecure protagonist who becomes more self-assured throughout the series, but always remains in the shadow of her boyfriend Jace. Isabelle, who becomes Clary's only close female friend as the series progresses, is a Shadowhunter and trained in fighting demons. She enjoys emphasising her femininity with dresses and make-up, and always looks flawless, even immediately after battle. This results in some initial jealousy from Clary, who feels intimidated by Isabelle's beauty and competes with her for male attention. Isabelle is an assertive and tough character compared to Clary's characterisation at the beginning of the series. Nevertheless, Isabelle's toughness is never more prominent than Jace's, whom she admires.

Even though abuse and violence within intimate relationships are addressed more extensively in the *ACOTAR* series, as the main character and other women are frequently subjected to it, in the *TMI* series one minor character also experiences serious abuse. Maia, a 14-year old teenage girl who has recently been turned into a werewolf, had a physically abusive boyfriend, who she then separated from. Her story is only briefly mentioned, saying that "he became obsessive, controlling", regarding her as his possession: "You're mine now. You'll always be mine." (both

COA 36) He eventually resorts to hurting Maia after she separates from him, attacking her, and thus turning her into a werewolf. Nevertheless, his character is redeemed two years later, and his violent outbreaks are excused because he is a werewolf. He supposedly lost control due to his supernatural strength and thus only acted instinctively (Cruger 120), implying that his abusive behaviour should therefore be forgiven. It is even suggested that Maia provoked Jordan to attack her by kissing a different boy, thus putting the blame on her. Jordan greatly regrets his outburst and is sorry to have turned Maia into a supernatural creature against her will. Cruger suggests that "[b]ecause Maia and Jordan's story is heavily focused not on the pain that Jordan caused Maia, but on the pain Jordan feels for hurting Maia, the message is being sent that in some cases domestic violence is acceptable and forgivable" (120), which is certainly a deeply concerning message. Furthermore, similar to the *ACOTAR* series, the *TMI* series normalises aggressive behaviour in men and highlights how they brutally attack women on the streets, which "support[s] the myth that men are tough heroes - or predators - and women are frail victims - or prey" (Inness 18). Thus, the novels enforce stereotypical depictions of both masculinity and femininity, which affects and limits readers' perception of the different options of gender identities and roles available to them. By showing merely a few selected ways of being a woman or a man and highlighting some of these as the most desirable options, i.e. the hegemonic man and the stereotypically feminine woman, the series ultimately only supports and normalises these narrow interpretations of gender.

Clary, though her relationship to Jace is romanticised in the series, is subjected to verbal abuse by him. At one point, during one of their short periods of separation, Clary discovers Jace kissing a different girl and is hurt by his immature and insensitive behaviour (*COG* 117). He then insults her in anger, although she has already been hurt by his actions:

> [Clary:] "Lying to me like that. You had no right-"
> "I had *every right*!", he shouted. [...] "I had every right, you stupid, stupid girl. I'm your brother and I-"
> "And you what? You own me? You don't own me [...]" [...]
> "I don't want you here because you're rash and thoughtless and you'll mess everything up [...] Shut up, Clary, SHUT UP-" [...] She couldn't think of a thing to say. (*COG* 119 ff., original emphasis)

The characters seem to employ different notions of what is right in this passage. While Clary condemns Jace's dishonesty and overprotective behaviour and criticises him for feeling entitled to make decisions for her, he believes his actions to be justified based on his expectations of how older brothers should care for their sisters. His understanding of gender roles is quite

traditional, and, even though he only wants to keep Clary safe, he views her as an ineffectual child in the process, and even actively infantilises her by calling her a 'stupid girl' or 'little girl' repeatedly. While there are relationships where heated discussions can lead to telling the other person to stop talking, in this case, it is always one-sided, as Clary never insults Jace in a similarly harsh way (e.g. by calling him stupid or infantilising him), and she never implies that his arguments do not count. What is even more concerning is the fact that at this point they have only known each other for a month (*COG* 324), so one can only imagine how the insults might worsen as time passes, as Walker's above-mentioned cycle of violence predicts an increasing intensity of abuse over time (see Cote Escobar 257). In the above-quoted passage, Jace succeeds in silencing Clary, which is the verbal equivalent of limiting her agency and making her submissive. Nevertheless, she consistently finds excuses for his unfriendly treatment and aggressive behaviour. When Clary is told that Jace has never actually liked any girl he previously dated and it is thus special that he likes her, his behaviour is quickly forgotten and forgiven. Isabelle explains: "He'd hook up with girls, *sure*. Girls *always* fell in love with him, but he never cared." (*COG* 324, my emphasis). It becomes clear that not only is it natural for every teenage boy to have dated many girls, but also that girls, given their more sensitive and emotional nature, fall in love more easily, whereas boys find it harder to form emotional bonds. While Isabelle is condoned for her affairs, Jace can be both womaniser and hero, and Clary receives the impression she should be thankful that he likes her in return. His 'bad boy' attitude and resulting inconsiderate and unapologetic behaviour is not condoned by his friends or his girlfriend, as they seem to accept it as a natural consequence of the hegemonic masculinity he embodies. Clary apologises whenever she reflects on her behaviour towards Jace. He, however, never feels the need to justify his mean comments:

> [Clary:] "I'm sorry. For snapping at you."
> He chuckled. "Which time?"
> "You snap at me, too, you know."
> "I know," he said, surprising her. (*COB* 134)

As can be seen from this short conversation, Jace feels entitled to act inconsiderately towards his girlfriend and never apologise for it. She is even surprised when he admits having snapped at her but does not expect an apology, already having accepted that it is not in his 'nature' to do so. This again assumes that a person's behaviour is directly tied to their supposed biologically determined and unchangeable character traits, thus suggesting a biologisation of gender (cf. section 2.3.1). Clary also has to endure insults from the antagonist Sebastian, who at first tricks her into liking him, but later reveals himself as her half-demon brother. When he finally shows

his evil side, he insults everyone and shouts at Clary: "And you, you stupid bitch." (*COG* 263). Again, she faces the verbal abuse but does not do anything to counteract it. She leaves it to Jace to defend her, who then fights Sebastian, again resorting to physical violence. This also proves Inness's assertion that as soon as "a man appears to rescue her, the tough woman often returns to a more feminine prototype" (Inness 21). It also plays into fantasy's trope of the damsel in distress, which describes a female character who patiently awaits a male hero's attempts at rescue.

As has been outlined in the present section, physical power exertion in the form of violent acts is presented as a primarily male domain in the two YA fantasy series. Female characters that challenge male authority are eventually punished and identified as evil imposters. Ultimately, the seemingly tough female protagonists cannot successfully subvert the conservative images of femininity still prevalent in the novels' societies. As Inness recognises, tough female characters are not the norm (181), and therefore the protagonists of *TMI* and *ACOTAR* can only be tough in specific situations. Both Feyre and Clary are only superficially tough, i.e. their toughness is limited to certain situations. They can only briefly give up their traditionally feminine side during fights, but cannot show this same toughness within their intimate relationships. If they were to continue being too strong and assertive in their romantic relationships, they would not be perceived as 'normal', and lose their femininity. Moreover, they would face accusations of being overly combative. Their violence, in contrast to that of their male counterparts, needs pre-established and clearly defined borders. At the final battle, for instance, Feyre refuses to fight because she does not feel ready for "that sort of warfare" (*ACOWAR* 517). Both protagonists only exert violence in order to protect important people in their lives, which, as Inness highlights (20), is common for tough women, who only act violently out of necessity. Ultimately, violence in female characters is only accepted when it can be justified, whereas male violence is generally accepted, or downplayed and excused, if necessary. Men's superior position in the novels' societies is not only supported via violence and toughness, but also via (sexual) objectification of women, as will be outlined in the following chapter.

4 Objectification

Objectification, especially sexual objectification, is a prevalent topic in our daily lives. We are surrounded by media, advertisements and blockbuster movies, which suggest that the objectification, in most cases that of female bodies, is omnipresent in today's culture and

something natural and unavoidable. The word 'objectification' in and of itself already has a negative undertone to it, as it summarises instances where a person is regarded as an object rather than a human being. This is in conflict with basic ethical principles, such as Immanuel Kant's pronouncement to "use humanity, whether in your own persona or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (4: 429). In order to avoid and counteract objectification it is vital to pinpoint instances thereof and evaluate the possible consequences it can have on the individual or a suppressed group as a whole, which is the purpose of the present chapter. My analysis is primarily based on Martha C. Nussbaum's objectification theory, as her versatile approach includes a focus on literary works, which thus lends itself to the further discussion of the two young adult fantasy series in question. First and foremost, a brief introduction to objectification theory is needed, and special attention will be given to sexual objectification, as characters within the analysed novels are frequently exposed to this form of objectification.

4.1 Objectification Theory

Over the last decades a number of objectification theories have been developed, many of which focus on gender and identify women as the primary group that is continuously objectified. As Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts clarify, objectification theory is "a framework for understanding the experiential consequences of being female in a culture that sexually objectifies the female body" (173). In other words, objectification theory draws attention to women's individual experiences with various forms of (sexual) objectification and reflects on possible consequences of continuous and systematic suppression via objectification. In film theory, Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze has been one of the most influential and frequently-employed theories of identifying the objectification of female bodies. It describes how women are viewed as passive sexual objects by the camera and thus the viewer, who is assumed to be a heterosexual male deriving enjoyment from the display of female bodies. Mulvey argues that "[i]n their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (837, original emphasis). While Mulvey's theory and the issues it raised in the 1970s persist to this day, a contrasting concept, namely that of the female gaze, has also been developed to account for instances where male bodies are objectified. Female gazing, however, generally occurs less often than the male gazing in popular media. In general, Mulvey's theory is in line with many other feminist objectification theories,

where objectification is interpreted as a device that confines women to the passive role of 'being looked at' rather than the more active role of looking. In feminist theories, as Martha Nussbaum outlines, objectification "is used as a pejorative term, connoting a way of speaking, thinking, and acting that the speaker finds morally or socially objectionable, usually, though not always, in the sexual realm" (249). She agrees with most thoughts and suggestions of feminist objectification theorists such as Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, who identify the objectification of women and their consequent resistance to it as a pressing issue of modern day societies (Nussbaum 249). In many feminist theories "men's sexual objectification of women [...] [is] a central problem in women's lives" (250) and it is certainly of utmost importance to oppose this objectification, as it contributes to the continuing patriarchal hierarchy between men and women. As long as sexual objectification is prevalent to the extent that "[a]ll women live in sexual objectification the way fish live in water" (MacKinnon in Nussbaum 250), women's insistence on being regarded as full human beings rather than objects should not be disparaged.

Nussbaum's approach combines the feminist aspects of previous theories which focused on women's experiences with components of non-gender-specific objectification theories. Nussbaum, a renowned contemporary philosopher, postulates that objectification does not necessarily have to be negative, as some cases of objectification, albeit only a few, can "be 'wonderful' parts of sexual life" (256). In analysing cases of objectification in works of fiction, she identifies seven different types of objectification, some of which are "always morally problematic", whereas others "may be either good or bad, depending upon the overall context" (both 251). Thus, the term objectification may carry more positive connotations in certain contexts, whereas, in line with feminist theories, it should be regarded as something negative in others. The combination of theories in Nussbaum's approach enables an analysis of objectifying instances of both male and female characters in the young adult fantasy series.

Nussbaum defines objectification as treating someone as something or, to be more precise, as occurring in any situation in which "[o]ne is treating as an object what is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being" (257). She suggests seven areas of objectification, which can co-occur and often do so:

> 1. *Instrumentality:* The objectifier treats the object as a tool of his or her purposes.
> 2. *Denial of autonomy:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.

3. *Inertness:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.
4. *Fungibility:* The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types.
5. *Violability:* The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
6. *Ownership:* The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.
7. *Denial of subjectivity:* The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account. (257)

In all of these cases, as Nussbaum stresses, it depends on the context whether or not the objectification is regarded as morally negative or could also be seen more positively (251). For instance, if "the objectification is symmetrical and mutual" and "undertaken in a context of mutual respect and rough social equality" (both 275), then the objectification is consensual and all participants remain equals (256), thus making the experience a "necessary or even wonderful [...] [part] of sexual life" (251). In Nussbaum's concept there is no form of objectification that is always problematic, as the overall context needs to be considered. She does clarify, however, that whenever autonomy is denied to an extent that "leaves the human being so denuded of humanity, in the eyes of the objectifier, that he or she seems ripe for other abuses as well", this is certainly problematic and should never be excused (265). Nevertheless, there might also be a possibility to "surrender autonomy in a good way (a way that enhances receptivity and sensitivity to the other) without instrumentalizing one another or becoming indifferent to one another's needs" (Nussbaum 267). In other words, a careful evaluation that considers the context in which the objectification occurs helps decide whether to interpret an objectification positively or negatively.

Nussbaum's list may not account for all instances of objectification, as later additions to her categorisation show. As Evangelia Papadaki notes, Rae Langton extended Nussbaum's list by three additional types of objectification:

8. *reduction to body*: the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;
9. *reduction to appearance*: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;
10. *silencing*: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak. (Langton 228 f. qtd. in Papadaki n.p.)

These added components of objectification can also be found in the selected literature that is analysed in the following, where different passages of the novels that classify as objectifications

according to the above-mentioned notions will be evaluated. This will include instances of objectification of male as well as female main characters and, considering the context of the conversations and situations, reveal in how far the instances of objectification can be regarded negatively or positively and whether the gender of the objectified character has an impact on the portrayal.

In order to determine when objectification in the objects of analysis could be interpreted as morally permissible, intimate scenes within the novels need closer examination. Overall, the *TMI* series is characterised by a noticeable absence of overtly expressed sexual needs, especially regarding female characters, therefore only little can be said on this topic. Clary is clearly attracted to Jace's body and notices his "lean muscle[s]" (*COG* 200). However, only in the third instalment of the series does the couple start to show more interest for each other physically, apart from kissing (e.g. *COG* 200 "Her fingers explored his body as his mouth explored hers"). Clary's sexual drive or wishes are never openly addressed in the novels, suggesting that active sexuality and femininity are mutually exclusive. This is also reminiscent of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005-2008), where Bella's sexuality is constantly suppressed and abstinence until marriage appears to be the recommended message for teenage readers.

In contrast to the rather rigid display of sexuality in the *TMI* series, the *ACOTAR* series shows sexuality as a natural part of teenagers' lives. Sexuality is frequently addressed and female characters are equally interested in sex as male characters, which is a refreshing change to many other young adult series. The series features more mature content, as the protagonist's sex life also forms an influential part of her romantic relationships. Feyre has sexual experiences with both partners, which include instances of male as well as female objectification, some of which are not necessarily negative or done without consent. In *ACOTAR*, during Feyre and Tamlin's first sexual intercourse (245 ff.), her point of view and thoughts are foregrounded. There is agency on his side ("spreading me beneath him" 246) as well as hers ("I grabbed him, pulling him farther on top of me" 246), indicating mutual enjoyment. The fact that Tamlin looks at Feyre's body with "a ravenous, unyielding sort of hunger […] [on] his face" is not evaluated negatively (247). His beastly side is emphasised during the scene and she welcomes his "predatory intent" and power that is "capable of sweeping away everything [she] was" (both 247). His male gaze is identified as such by the protagonist, but not dismissed ("watched his gaze travel to my bare breasts […] to my abdomen, to between my thighs"), and she enjoys that he "feasted on [her]" (both 247). There seems to be no need to automatically condemn his

actions and objectification, as it is done with her consent. Nevertheless, I feel the need to address that the wording (e.g. feasting) is undeniably strange, as it evokes connotations with food rather than sex. Furthermore, the fact that she feels as if she is coming undone, even if only for a short moment at the peak of her pleasure, once again serves as indication of his more powerful position, which facilitates later exploitation. One could still argue that, according to Nussbaum's definition, this particular encounter is not necessarily a negative sexual experience, even though objectification is part of it. Feyre is briefly reduced to her body, but neither is her subjectivity denied, nor is her autonomy actively threatened by her lover.

Objectification theory can not only be brought to bear on individual experiences, but also to society as a whole, and the novel's in-depth portrayal of power struggles mirrors present-day society to a considerable extent, as has been outlined in previous chapters. As Nussbaum argues, context has great influence on objectification. Not only does it refer to the situation in which the objectification takes place, but it also includes a broader societal background. Given the long-standing hierarchy between the genders, it is important "that we assess male-female relations in the light of the larger social context and history of female subordination, and insist on differentiating the meaning of objectification in these contexts from its meaning in either male-male or female-female relations" (Nussbaum 271). Thus, the objectification of female bodies might be more in focus and recognised as a more sensitive topic, given its historical tradition. Nowadays the "reduction of persons to their bodily parts" (274), which was previously criticised as dehumanising, co-exists with more recent interpretations of objectification as an important part of sexual experience. Nevertheless, this more positive interpretation can only exist in a framework of "mutual respect and rough social equality", as Nussbaum stresses (275). More specifically, Nussbaum views the objectification of specific body parts in passionate moments as "an addition, rather than a subtraction" and highlights its positive nature, given the above-mentioned prerequisites (275). Thus, objectification in and of itself should not be dismissed automatically, but rather examined critically.

In general, all sex scenes within the *ACOTAR* series focus on male as well as female bodies and feature instances of objectification thereof. While Tamlin's gaze at Feyre's body is foregrounded in the first sex scene, another encounter features an examination of Tamlin's naked body (*ACOMAF* 21), thus showing that bodies are sexually attractive and can be exposed to objectification regardless of gender. Gazing is not a solely male activity, though it is still primarily done by male faeries, as I will outline below. The men tend to be described as animal-

like during erotic scenes with vocabulary such as "growled, so roughly", "hissed" (both *ACOMAF* 21) or "roared" (*ACOMAF* 533) and also evoke animal-like behaviour in Feyre (e.g. "his soft tone made me want to purr" *ACOTAR* 222). While the men's sexual experience is outlined with stereotypically masculine sounds, i.e. the rough growl of a predator, Feyre's animal sounds are more quiet and tender, i.e. the purring of a feline. Thus, the sounds during this passionate moment are gendered, creating the effect that masculine and feminine sexuality are radically different, the same way in which the novels suggest that masculinity and femininity in general are opposites. In the above-mentioned cases, dehumanisation (i.e. treating as an animal) is part of a mutual pleasurable experience where both the male and the female character act as agents and as objects of desire and it is therefore not necessary to condemn it if one takes the context of these scenes into account.

There are, however, moments where sexual intercourse between characters clearly indicates gender imbalances. The scenes frequently feature food analogies (e.g. "his features turned ravenous" *ACOMAF* 21, "feasting on me" *ACOMAF* 532), but it is only the male characters that consume the female protagonist, therefore placing the former in the more powerful position. By suggesting consumption, i.e. referring to eating the other person, even if one does not actually do so, both partners treat Feyre as an object that can be devoured rather than an active participant. The subject, i.e. the male character, eats up the object, i.e. Feyre, who then becomes food or prey that can be incorporated. In these scenes, Feyre is reduced to a tool that the male characters can use for their pleasure, which corresponds to Nussbaum's first form of objectification, instrumentality. Furthermore, she lacks autonomy and agency, and her subjectivity is denied when she turns into a 'feast'; thus, Nussbaum's second, third and seventh type of objectification are shown. Feyre's descriptions also suggest that the sexual act can bind her to her lover and obliterate her ("he swept in, claiming me, branding me" *ACOMAF* 21, "For a moment, I was nothing, no one" *ACOMAF* 22). This is not a one-time occurrence as she describes a similar possessiveness with her second lover ("slow, satisfied male smile", "'You're mine,' he snarled" *ACOMAF* 532). In these cases, Nussbaum's second, third, fifth and sixth form of objectification apply, as the protagonist is regarded as an object lacking agency and autonomy. She is something that can be owned and is permanently marked as owned (i.e. "branding") as well as something that can be broken, since she is, as the novel suggests, "nothing". Again, the dominant male behaviour is excused by her partner in yet another instance of 'mansplaining': "It's normal [...] [, t]he frenzy" "When a couple accepts the mating bond, it's... overwhelming. Again, harkening back to the beasts we once were [...] ensuring the female

was impregnated" (all *ACOMAF* 541). At this point, the woman's body is reduced to its potential to bear children, thus limiting sexuality to the purpose of reproduction. The passage further highlights how men's overly protective behaviour towards their female partners is encouraged and excused in the series, as women are seen as valuable breeding stock.

4.2 Sexual Objectification

Sexual objectification is not only part of the consensual erotic scenes in the novels, it also serves as an indication of characters' skewed morality. Both series show that overt sexual objectification is one of the practices with which one can uncover morally bad characters. Female characters are objectified more frequently than male characters, which mirrors our present-day society, where "women more often than men are depicted in sexualizing and objectified manners (e.g., wearing revealing and provocative clothing, portrayed in ways that emphasize their body parts and sexual readiness, serving as decorative objects)" and find themselves "the target of men's sexists [sic!] comments (e.g., use of deprecating words to describe women), sexual remarks (e.g., comments about women's body parts), and behaviors (e.g., ogling, leering, catcalling, harassment)" (Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr, both 10). The books also show these practices, and objectification is addressed as morally problematic, especially in the *ACOTAR* series. The evil High Lords' lacking moral compass is immediately revealed by their sexist comments towards female characters present at a meeting. Being evil often goes hand in hand with raping, suggesting rape or using others for one's own sexual needs, thereby treating others as objects used for one's own relief. One High Lord suggests to Rhysand that Feyre should become his lover in exchange for his loyalty during the war. Not only is this a highly problematic suggestion, but the fact that Feyre herself is not even addressed directly reveals the High Lord's depreciating opinion of women (*ACOWAR* 267). All too often men's objectification of women is left uncommented within the series (e.g. "you look absolutely delicious" *ACOMAF* 62). In *TMI*, a similar evaluation of objectifying instances of morally black or grey characters can be found. A demon objectifies female bodies at the beginning of the first instalment, immediately clarifying that demons are evil and non-human ("Not that humans didn't have their uses." *COB* 10, "He stared at her. She was beautiful, for a human", "His mouth started to water as she neared him" *COB* 11). The demon's strange reaction to women's bodies, i.e. his mouth waters, is noteworthy in comparison to a human's typical reaction to a sexual stimulus, e.g. faster heartbeat. By evoking food connotations and suggesting that the demon might eat up his object of desire, he is characterised as the dangerous predator in this passage,

70

while the women become his prey. The demonic creature views humans as mere objects and evaluates them according to their usefulness to him. As he has been identified as evil, there is no need to object to him being killed in the next scene.

It is also important to draw attention to the possible consequences of continuous sexual objectification. Sandra Bartky provides a definition of sexual objectification, which has been summarised by Dawn Szymanski, Lauren Moffitt and Erika Carr as follows: "SO occurs when a woman's body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire" (8). If done repeatedly, SO can have wide-ranging consequences, leading to "women's internalization of SO experiences or self-objectification" (Fredrickson & Roberts in Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 8). Clary's body insecurities and her interminable self-objectification in *TMI* might be indication of a deeper societal issue in the series, where the objectification of women is still normalised. Similarly, Feyre strives for a more traditionally feminine body and is happy when she becomes curvier (e.g. "my sharp bones and skeletal form had filled out. A woman's body." (*ACOTAR* 221)). The comment "[a] woman's body" perpetuates the idea that there is one ideal body women should strive for, as other, less curvy bodies are viewed as undesirable and tomboyish, i.e. too child-like to be sexualised. While the dominant Western beauty ideal is a thin body, at the same time, women are taught to accentuate their feminine features, e.g. breasts, hips, waist, and bottom in order to appear sexy to men. This is exactly what young women like Feyre and Clary also aim to do, as they do no longer want to be seen as girls with children's bodies, but as desirable women who proudly emphasise the above-mentioned body parts, while at the same time never gaining 'too much' weight, so as not to appear chubby.

A direct consequence of the continuous objectification to which the female protagonists are exposed is that they internalise the way they are regarded and resort to self-objectification (Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 8). Self-objectification is stronger in Clary than in Feyre, which can be explained by Clary's greater insecurity in general. Both protagonists recognise the effect certain female body parts can have on the heterosexual men surrounding them and so they try to emphasise these parts and use the attention they receive to their advantage. Usually they prefer jeans and casual clothes to skirts and dresses. As Inness argues, "[c]lothing is an important element in the performance of toughness because it serves as a visual reminder that a woman has distanced herself from femininity. Masculine clothing also suggests a woman's capacity for action and leadership." (25) At times Clary and Feyre decide to wear revealing dresses and they do so deliberately (e.g. *ACOTAR* 200, *ACOMAF* 21, *COB* 199, *COG* 100,

COG 477) to emphasise certain body parts. On the one hand, their conscious choice to emphasise their femininity through clothing immediately places them "within the 'objectification limelight'" (Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 23). On the other hand, it also empowers them to a certain extent, as they become more confident and conscious of the effect their beauty has on others. Their choice of clothing not only affects heterosexual men surrounding them, but also attracts the attention of women, though their gazes are envious rather than erotic or desiring, and there are no lesbian desiring gazes in the series. Whenever the protagonists wear dresses willingly, they seem to be enjoying the stares their choice of clothing generates. Consequently, they can use this attention to influence and manipulate men's choices, which gives them a power advantage. Self-objectification, however, makes women anxious with regard to their physical appearance, leading them to question their appearance and whether others find it appealing. (Fredrickson & Roberts in Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 8). As Inness remarks, especially women feel a pressure to conform to certain beauty ideals:

> The body needs to be carefully regulated and controlled to achieve the appearance of femininity, and the pursuit of femininity is never-ending: "Through the pursuit of an ever-changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity . . . female bodies become docile bodies — bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, 'improvement'" (Bordo 166 in Inness 22).

Thus, the supposed feminine ideal restricts women, the same way in which men feel they need to conform to ideals concerning their gender. Nevertheless, the media as well as the two YA fantasy series place a focus on women's beauty ideals. Much of what Inness observes is also in line with other studies on the topic, as Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr reveal:

> Research also indicates that the media often depicts a narrow and often unattainable standard of women's physical beauty and links this standard with a woman's sexiness and worth (APA, 2007b). Exposure to sexually objectifying media has been related to greater importance of beauty and appearance in defining an individual's own self-worth (Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 10).

Clary frequently belittles herself and criticises her body or specific features thereof. At one point she proclaims: "I am completely ordinary" (*COG* 202) and is surprised when Jace disagrees and shows interest in her. Her mother experienced the same insecurity as a teenage girl and overall Valentine and Jocelyn's love story is similar to Clary and Jace's, as Jocelyn explains: "Every girl loved him [i.e. Valentine], and I thought I didn't have a chance. There was nothing special about me." (*COG* 359) This statement indicates how Jocelyn doubts herself and her worth. The feeling of not being special enough does not only apply to physical features,

although they form a major part of it, as can be seen by Clary's unfavourable descriptions of herself and her thin body in comparison to Jocelyn's or Isabelle's (*COA* 145, *COG* 101). Both young Jocelyn and Clary do not see their self-worth and are surprised that, somehow, they are chosen by the men every girl seems to want. They feel honoured for being chosen, as if they have no agency themselves. Even Simon, who does not embody hegemonic masculinity, is adored by two women and jokingly tells Clary: "You tell me which one to choose" (*COG* 480), eventually dating both (*COFA* 15) and consequently hurting their feelings and increasing the competitiveness between the two women. This further suggests that women are in constant competition over men's attention and scarcely have any other interests. Objectification ultimately creates competition amongst the characters in both series. In *TMI*, the competition is amongst women and creates jealousy and rivalry between them, as they worry about who is more desirable to men. In *ACOTAR*, men are competing for women in the patriarchal society, viewing them as mere prizes one can acquire and own. Thus, in both series the female characters are frequently exposed to sexual objectification, which denies them a purpose that is independent of their sexual desirability to men. Even in those instances where Clary and Feyre willingly wear revealing clothes to attract men's attention and view this process as empowering, the sexual objectification consequently reduces them to signs that only have value within the semiotic system of sexuality, thus rendering them passive objects rather than active participants.

While self-objectification is not a prominent feature in the *ACOTAR* series, objectification is used as a means to an end. Objectification in *ACOMAF* is done deliberately to deceive others, thus empowering the characters doing it. Nevertheless, it is mixed with Feyre's desire for Rhysand, which paints a confusing picture for the reader of whether to evaluate the objectification positively or negatively. The line between consensual and non-consensual objectification is blurry, as sometimes Rhysand is clearly sexist and does not do it to deceive others and is ultimately, I would argue, as possessive as Tamlin, even though he hides it better underneath his supposed feminist beliefs. Initially Rhysand wants to deceive others into thinking he has no genuine interest for Feyre, and the couple consequently decides to pretend she is his servant rather than his romantic partner whenever they are in public. Feyre is to be the submissive object of attention, while Rhysand openly objectifies her, displaying a prime example of the male gaze with comments such as: "Her breasts are rather spectacular, aren't they? Delicious as ripe apples" (*ACOMAF* 310), again evoking food analogies. He draws other men's attention to Feyre's physical features (e.g. "every male in here is contemplating what they'd be willing to give up in order to get that pretty, red mouth of yours on them" *ACOMAF* 410), and touches her in front of a crowd (e.g. "proprietary touch of a male who knew he owned

someone body and soul" *ACOMAF* 410) until she becomes "his own personal plaything" (*ACOMAF* 412). Feyre allowed this objectification beforehand; nevertheless, one could discuss what the overall message is supposed to be here, as it is only women who are objectified in order to achieve a greater goal. Many comments are deeply disturbing and sexist, riddled with stereotypical ideas of what constitutes an attractive female body ("You look like a woman again." *ACOMAF* 432). To sum up, many of Nussbaum's and Langton's above-mentioned types of objectifications (e.g. instrumentality, ownership, denial of subjectivity, reduction to body, reduction to appearance as well as silencing) can be linked to corresponding scenes in the novels.

In *ACOTAR*, Feyre has to endure a plethora of different forms of sexual objectification. She is severely sexually victimised and confronted with attempted "rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment", which are forms of sexual objectification that many women also have to endure in our present-day society. In line with present statistics, the "majority of perpetrators are male" (Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr, both 11), as Feyre is harassed at multiple occasions by male characters (*ACOTAR* 186 f., 348, 368, *ACOMAF* 62, 310, 473, 613, *ACOWAR* 267, 319). Rhysand has also been systematically oppressed, objectified and used as a sex toy by the villain Amarantha (e.g. "She could use my body however she wanted." *ACOMAF* 436). This, however, is an exception, as the majority of victims are female (*ACOMAF* 169, 237 f., 397, *ACOWAR* 216 f.) and overall women are the ones being viewed as possessions and prizes than vice versa (e.g. Feyre and her sister are attacked by two male faeries who objectify them: "You're an unexpected prize" *ACOWAR* 319). Overall, the *ACOTAR* series mirrors present-day society regarding the frequent occurrence of sexual objectification, to which primarily women are subjected.

Within the series, Tamlin and Rhysand use possessive pronouns at multiple occasions to claim that Feyre belongs to them, i.e. to indicate possession of a person, which can be classified as Nussbaum's sixth type of objectification, ownership. At first, this objectifying practice is only done as a facade to deceive others into thinking Rhysand is evil. He calls Feyre "[m]y lady" (*ACOMAF* 343) and she finds the thought of belonging to anyone repulsive: "My lady. I ignored the two words." (*ACOMAF* 343); "his human woman [...] [the phrase] made me clench my teeth" (*ACOTAR* 129). She also objects to Tamlin's claim on her when she comments on him sending out a search party for her: "We've been hunting for you for over two months" "As if I were indeed prey" (both *ACOMAF* 457). Later in the series, however, possessive pronouns do not appear to be problematic anymore, as both partners assert their right to be with Feyre. Her

lovers' fight over her comes to an extreme when the two men talk about her as if she were not in the room. At one point, Rhysand proclaims possessively: "She's mine" (*ACOMAF* 444) and during a different scene Tamlin asserts: "I don't give a shit if you think you're entitled to her. She is mine." (*ACOMAF* 613). Thus, both lovers view Feyre as their own; as if she were a piece of property to be possessed. Nevertheless, Rhysand does not realise he is as possessive as Tamlin, when he urges her to separate from the latter: "He locked you up because [...] the bastard knew what a treasure you are" (*ACOMAF* 320), unintentionally objectifying her again by referring to her as "a treasure". Feyre does not mind Rhysand's possessiveness and their relationship is romanticised throughout the story.

In *TMI*, Clary has internalised the belief that other women's beauty is a threat to her and she needs to view other women as competitors for male attention (see Wolf in Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 25). This long-fostered view is still prevalent to this day, as Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr point out, because "women are told to compete for things that are supposedly important to them", such as men, more specifically, "male attention, male resources, or, more broadly, association with male power" (both 25). Women perpetuate the status quo by staying complicit in the traditional gender role system as well as by objectifying others (28). Thus, Connell's concept of emphasised femininity, which shows women complicity aligning themselves in the gender hierarchy, also seems to exist in the *TMI* series. Instead of working against the misogyny in the Shadowhunter society by cooperating with Isabelle, Clary is preoccupied with 'girl hate' and jealousy, also critically evaluating Isabelle's choice of clothing, for instance. Objectification among women is usually subtler compared to men's objectification of women, since, as Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr state, it "occurs between members of a systematically oppressed group, and women may subsequently experience ambivalence when imposing it on other women" (28). The sexual objectification inevitably leads to the "construction of women as competitors" (28). Clary and Isabelle initially clearly view each other as rivals and continue to compete against each other even after they become friends, reinforcing the harmful idea that other women should be seen as a threat.

In *ACOTAR*, Feyre is challenged by her sisters who resort to slut shaming her for pursuing intimate relations with a boy from the village. Feyre's sisters are disgusted by her decision to engage in sexual intercourse with Isaac, and critically comment on it: "rutting in the hay […] like an animal" (*ACOTAR* 18), again dehumanising the protagonist by comparing her to an animal driven by instincts. Their reaction reveals the underlying issue that sexuality in women is still not universally accepted and rather frowned upon, if not openly criticised. Nussbaum

points out that inequality and the "dehumanization of women" can be traced back to "the denial of women's erotic potentiality [and] the insistence that women be seen as sex-less things" (277). Her sister's reactions to Feyre's sexuality also imply that women should not be or generally are not interested in sex. Although the *ACOTAR* series addresses and shows sexuality in women, only few characters actually promote or celebrate it. It is not only Feyre's sisters who object to it, but many male characters also view women's sexuality critically. While men are womanising heroes whenever they boast about their sexual adventures, a pronounced sex drive in women is an indication of evil nature, as the sex drive and resulting manipulations of the two female antagonists, i.e. Amarantha and Ianthe, suggest.

Objectification is often also closely tied to traditional roles within the gender hierarchy. As Nikolajeva observes, an increasing number of young adult novels do not depict the female protagonist as confined to submissive roles, but rather as a strong character insisting on her independence. However, as soon as a potential male partner is introduced, the girl reverts back to a more traditional feminine stereotype. She changes "[f]rom an independent subject, albeit on patriarchal conditions, [...] [and] voluntarily becomes an object for the strong and protective male" (*Power* 111). This description perfectly summarises the ways in which Clary and Feyre are changed by their romantic relationships. Especially Feyre switches roles from initially being the provider for her family to becoming Rhysand's companion and stepping aside whenever he is in the spotlight. Clary's independent life is also disrupted by the arrival of Jace, who, together with his Shadowhunter friends, objectifies the protagonist. When Clary meets them for the first time, they do not address her directly, but talk about her instead, as if she were not present in the room:

> It was Alec who spoke first. *"What's this?"* he demanded, looking from Clary to his companions, as if they might know what she was doing there.
> "It's a girl," Jace said, recovering his composure. "Surely you've seen girls before, Alec. Your sister Isabelle is one." […]
> "That's [the demon] not a person, *little girl*." […]
> Clary backed up, wanting to run, but her feet caught on a loop of wiring and she went down, knocking the breath out of her chest. (*COB* 18 ff., my emphasis)

As can be inferred from this scene, Clary is identified as less able in comparison to them and initially they do not even deem her worthy of addressing directly. She becomes a stereotype of weak femininity as they continue to disregard her feelings. Not only is she initially referred to as "it" and "this", i.e. pronouns used for objects, but as the conversation continues Jace infantilises her by addressing her as "little girl". This reduction to a child not only makes the protagonist seem childish and immature, but also implies that she needs saving, because she

cannot take care of herself. Thus, she is overall characterised as weak and dependent on the male character, making him the hero of the story in the process. He never views her as an equal, therefore their relationship is one that supports the dominant gender hierarchy. Clary embodies the stereotypical damsel in distress when she then clumsily falls down and needs her saviour Jace to sweep in and defeat evil. His opinion of Clary only changes later on, but in the beginning all the Shadowhunters think it is permissible to objectify her. Alec and Isabelle discuss Clary after being introduced to her and continue to objectify her:

> [Isabelle] "I told you it was the same girl."
> [Alec] "I know. *Little thing*, isn't she. […] "
> [Isabelle] "Yeah. I thought she was a pixie the first time we saw her. *She's not pretty enough* to be a pixie, though." (*COB* 59, my emphasis)

While Alec resorts to calling her "little thing", therefore objectifying and infantilising her, Isabelle critically evaluates Clary's beauty and concludes that she is not as attractive as a pixie. Overall, the characters feel it is their right to talk down to or discuss the protagonist as if her feelings do not count, thus denying her subjectivity in addition to reducing her to her appearance.

As Nussbaum points out, traditional gender roles also extend to sexual contact between men and women and influence who objectifies and who is objectified:

> The problem derives […] from the way in which we have been socialized erotically, in a society that is suffused with hierarchy and domination. Men learn to experience desire in connection with paradigm scenarios of domination and instrumentalization. […] Women learn to experience desire in connection with these same paradigm scenarios, which means that they learn to eroticize being dominated and being turned into objects. (Nussbaum 268)

Objectification is organised asymmetrically with women typically in the inferior position concerning power and dominance (268). In an analysis of wedding rings and other forms of marking or branding as symbols of objectification in a book passage, Nussbaum makes the following observation: "They mark her as an owned object and in no way symbolize the passage into maturity and freedom." (270) The same can be applied to Feyre's tattoo that Rhysand places on her body for everyone to see, permanently marking her as his object of desire. Excerpts of this passage, which are outlined below, clearly indicate Rhysand's dominant, objectifying and outright abusive behaviour towards Feyre:

> "Get away," I repeated. […]

> Without waiting for my reaction, he grabbed my elbow and forced my arm into the
> dim light of the cell. […]
> "I'll heal your arm in exchange for *you*. For two weeks every month, two weeks of
> my choosing, you'll live with me at the Night Court." (331 f., original emphasis)

The deal Rhysand suggests is one that allows him to own Feyre for a significant period of time each month for the rest of her life. It thus grossly violates her personal freedom, making her a puppet in his life, as he can theoretically 'claim' her at any point during the month. The deal restricts her agency, while also turning her into an object for Rhysand to use and play with whenever he pleases. Initially she vehemently declines his offer, and, under less dire circumstances, she would never even consider what he proposed. However, she is dying from the infected wound on her arm, has been losing blood for days, and is also delirious from a fever she has developed. Rhysand cunningly uses her position of weakness and is not willing to help her unconditionally. He still views her as an object to be traded, something he can use to his advantage. Even though she tells him to leave repeatedly, he ignores her wish and presses her to accept the trade. She eventually bargains with him and agrees to stay at his court for one week every month.

> Rhysand was silent for a long moment, his eyes traveling across my body and my
> face before he murmured: "A week it is." […]
> His smile became a bit wild, and before I could brace myself, he grabbed my arm.
> There was a blinding, quick pain, and my scream sounded in my ears as bone and
> flesh were shattered, blood rushed out of me, and then- Rhysand was still grinning
> when I opened my eyes. […] I lifted my arm.
> "What have you done to me?" […]
> Rhysand hadn't done any of this to save me, but rather to hurt Tamlin. […]
> I'd sold myself to Rhysand. I couldn't look at the eye on my palm. I had an absurd,
> creeping feeling that it [the tattoo] watched me" (*ACOTAR* 335 ff.)

As can be inferred from this passage, Rhysand is not willing to help Feyre without personally gaining from the situation. To force her into a bargain in order to save her life is a deeply troubling and problematic foundation for their future relationship and it is shocking that their relationship is romanticised later on. Not only does Rhysand deliberately deepen the rivalry between Tamlin and himself by marking Feyre as his own via the tattoo, he also places the tattoo without informing her beforehand and simply shrugs off her complaints, i.e. "You didn't tell me this would happen.", by saying: "You didn't ask. So how am I to blame? (both *ACOTAR* 336). Again, women are given the fault for something out of their control. The fact that the tattoo Rhysand forcibly places on Feyre looks aesthetic, hides the grave violation done to her. Nowadays, tattoos mainly serve an aesthetic function and are generally described as 'cool' in our Western culture. Rhysand brands Feyre with an aesthetically pleasing tattoo, and, so the

series suggests, his action can therefore be exculpated. The message this sends to readers is that this invasive action might not be so bad after all, since the tattoo looks nice. However, historically tattoos served more sinister functions. As Mark Gustafson remarks, "[w]hen forcibly applied, the tattoo is generally an indication of status, ownership, or punishment, and the tattoo has served as a badge of slavery in many societies since antiquity" (629). While some cultures only tattooed "delinquent or runaway slave[s]", others used this form of permanent branding to mark all slaves, thereby indicating their low status in society (629). Furthermore, this long-standing cruel use of tattoos to degrade people continues to more recent days, as during the second world war "tattooed identification numbers [were imposed] on the forearms of Jews and others in Nazi concentration camps" (629). Tattoos were thus used to dehumanise people, making them merely cattle or objects which it is permissible to brand, and subsequently violate or even kill. Feyre is similarly lowered in status and marked as Rhysand's property, indicating his superiority over her. Although the tattoo may look aesthetic, it does not hide or legitimise the violation and degradation accompanying it.

His maltreatment of the protagonist does not end at this point, however, as Feyre continues to be harassed by her later partner. He calls her "my belonging" (348) and "my pet" (378), forces her into revealing clothing and has servants paint "intimate parts of" her body, breaking her to the point where she "stopped fighting back" (both 346). When she questions being painted and forced into a tiny revealing dress, he excuses this with the following question: "How else would I know if anyone touches you?" (347), thus marking her as his possession with the painting process, even though the body paint, in contrast to the permanent branding with the tattoo, does wash off and smudge. He touches her against her will (347) and continues to objectify her, which she notices and laments ("He owned me for a week every month" "I belonged to him", both 348). When Feyre wakes up the next day, after having been drugged, she notices "marks that looked like hands had held" her (351). These touches signify a great violation of personal privacy, as she does not even like Rhysand at this point. As Feyre notes, she "became Rhysand's plaything" waking up "with vague shards of memories" such as "dancing between Rhysand's legs as he sat in a chair and laughed" as "his hands […] touched [her] waist" (all 354). His selfish actions are later forgiven, as they were done to deceive Amarantha. In my opinion, however, this does in no way excuse his abominable behaviour towards Feyre and it seems highly unlikely that any foundation of trust could ever develop considering these initial encounters between the soon-to-be couple.

Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr summarise important insights concerning sexual objectification and its relation to the deeply ingrained patriarchal system. As the practice of objectifying women in its myriad manifestations (e.g. harassment, assault, rape) continues through mainstream media and society, women find themselves in constant fear for their safety (18). This is especially difficult in sexually objectifying environments, so-called SOEs, which Szymanski, Moffitt and Carr characterise as follows:

> SOEs are ones in which (a) traditional gender roles exist, (b) a high probability of male contact exists (physically speaking, a male-dominated environment), (c) women typically hold less power than men in that environment, (d) a high degree of attention is drawn to sexual/physical attributes of women's bodies, and (e) there is the approval and acknowledgement of male gaze. (20 f.)

All of the listed criteria also apply to the fantastical worlds of the young adult novels in question. As has been outlined in previous chapters, traditional gender roles are encouraged in both series and men occupy almost every superior position in society, pushing women to the sidelines. The only way in which women are then permitted to exert power is through external features and this sends the message that a woman's face and body determine her worth. More specifically, her beauty and the extent to which she is attractive to men are portrayed as woman's only asset and her purpose in life is to please men. Traditional gender roles represent men oriented more actively with "traits such as independence, aggression, competitiveness" and general orientation "towards competency, achievement and agency", thus overall more powerful (both Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 21). Their dominant role is further reinforced through the acceptance of viewing women as a sex objects, something to be conquered or regarded as property (21). Women, on the other hand, should be oriented towards more submissive roles that promote "emotionality, passivity, dependence [on men], and harmony" (21). Overall, these preconceived opinions on gender roles are partly responsible for upholding outdated attitudes, which normalise the objectification of women (21). Women might also excuse men's aggressive and protective behaviour and thus involuntarily place them on a pedestal. Feyre, for instance, quickly forgives Tamlin after he nearly rapes her. She ironically tells him that she never felt imprisoned by his actions (*ACOTAR* 219), which is exactly what he later does.

Frequent occurrences of the male gaze are further indication of a sexually objectifying environment. According to Fredrickson and Roberts, it is "[t]he most subtle and deniable way sexualized evaluation is enacted" (175). The male gaze has also been termed "girl watching" by Beth Quinn who views this practice as "a specific, yet subtle, form of sexual harassment that cannot be avoided and is not under women's control" (Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 24). It is

used to exert power over women and often disguised as a game. The game, however, is typically only played among men, while "the targeted woman is generally understood to be an object, rather than a player, in the game" (24). Therefore, the game, from men's viewpoint is ultimately "played with objects: women's bodies" (Quinn 398). Interestingly, in the *ACOTAR* series, Feyre and Rhysand play a game to deceive others wherein Feyre willingly becomes a playing figure and permits Rhysand to objectify her.

Clary critically comments on her average looks and compares herself to her mother, leading to constant self-objectification:

> She knew she wasn't beautiful like her mother was. To be beautiful you had to be willowy and tall. When you were as short as Clary was, just over five feet, you were cute. Not pretty or beautiful, but cute. Throw in carroty hair and a face full of freckles, and she was a Raggedy Ann to her mother's Barbie doll. (*COB* 29)

Not only does this passage uphold harmful images of there being one true objectifiable beauty ideal young girls should adhere to, i.e. being tall and looking like a Barbie doll; but it also shows how Clary takes self-objectification to an extreme by comparing herself to a Raggedy Ann doll. She thinks there is nothing special about her appearance and much insecurity derives from her comparison to other girls and her mother, who she believes to be more attractive. Alternately, her love interest is described as one of the best-looking teenage boys ever to exist with unusual hair, a rare eye colour, a convincing smirk as well as a muscular body: "the lean curve of his back, the swell of muscles under the short sleeves of his T-shirt. The moonlight washed the color out of his hair, turning it more silver than gold." (*COB* 234) Even though not all of Jace's features are perfect, they are still adorable and never disliked: "Unlike his hair, his teeth weren't perfect. An upper incisor was slightly, endearingly chipped." (*COB* 282) This suggests that Clary is much more critical of her own appearance and her insecurity has reached a level where constant comparison to others seems unavoidable, which consequently further stresses her.

Instances of male as well as female desiring and objectifying gazes can be found in both series. This can be explained by the fact that the novels are generally aimed at a female readership, the majority of whom most likely identify as heterosexual and therefore female gazes that describe and objectify male bodies are intentionally included. The gaze can be interpreted positively by the one being looked at, as has been outlined above, but can also be felt as something distracting or negative e.g. Clary experiencing Jace's gaze: "his gaze like a weight on her shoulders" (*COA* 150). The fact that he is watching her closely makes her feel uncomfortable. The gaze can also serve as a way to inform the readership that a certain character finds someone attractive, e.g.

when Jace longingly looks at Clary (*COB* 298). Even though Jace likes her, he continues to intentionally hurt her feelings. It is surprising that Clary repeatedly ignores Jace's verbal abuse, and he himself wonders why she still forgives him:

> He could think of only one reason for her to be there, though it made no sense after what he'd said to her. Words were weapons, his father had taught him that, and he'd wanted to hurt Clary more than he'd ever wanted to hurt any girl. In fact, he wasn't sure he had ever wanted to hurt a girl before. Usually, he just wanted them, and then wanted them to leave him alone. (*COB* 298 f.)

Jace's troubled upbringing has led him to view other people as a threat. He finds it hard to trust Clary and pushes her away, often verbally, whenever she tries to get to know him better. He then feels the need to exert his dominance and hurt her in the process. Jace also admits to using girls and then discarding them once he has lost interest, thus merely regarding them as objects to fulfil his desire. This is also confirmed by Isabelle when she says: "I thought he was using you, that you were just some stupid mundane girl he could impress" (COG 343). The above-mentioned scene also highlights Jace's distorted views on what dating entails, i.e. he is used to girls liking him more than he likes them, and he did not have any problems with hurting their feelings in the past. He used to switch from one meaningless encounter to the next treating girls as interchangeable, thus resorting to Nussbaum's fourth type of objectification, fungibility.

Most of the time it is male characters that use female characters for their own agenda, as has been shown by the previous situations described in this chapter. However, the situation can also be vice versa, as can be exemplified by passages in both series where women use men. In *TMI*, Isabelle uses Simon to distract herself from the distressing things happening at that time and he seems too fazed by her sudden interest to do anything against it (i.e. "yanked him bodily onto the bed beside her" *COG* 303). Similarly, in *ACOTAR*, Feyre uses a village boy named Isaac for sex, treating him as an object for relief and escapism ("losing myself for an hour or two in his body" *ACOTAR* 91) and admitting that she does not have any romantic feelings for him. However, the objectification seems to be mutual, as Isaac also does not have any feelings for Feyre and they thus both derive pleasure from their purely physical relationship ("a release, a reprieve, a bit of selfishness" *ACOTAR* 31). Their power dynamics are fairly balanced, i.e. Isaac does not embody hegemonic masculinity or constantly oppress the protagonist. Feyre might even feel empowered through these encounters as, socially, Isaac is in a lower position. Thus, she is briefly able to reverse the traditional power structure and assert herself as a subject whose needs have to be taken seriously rather than overlooked. As Feyre admits, her meetings with

Isaac are "a reprieve" (31) before she has to step back into the constricting society and fulfil the various expectations placed on her.

In line with the feminist message of female gazes and cases of objectification of men, Feyre sometimes also actively resists objectification in the *ACOTAR* series. The underlying intended feminist message surfaces in some scenes, when the protagonist asserts her status as subject rather than object: "I was not a pet, not a doll, not an animal." (*ACOMAF* 226) This realisation, however, only comes after Rhysand questions Tamlin's behaviour towards her ("they had you wrapped like a present yesterday. Like you were his reward" *ACOMAF* 65). In reality, as the paratext on *ACOMAF* suggests, Feyre remains a powerful weapon rather than a subject wielding a weapon ("For her world, she will become a weapon" paratext, "weapon", "pawn" both *ACOMAF* 110). This leaves the unanswered question as to who the agent of the story is, i.e. the one using the weapon.

To conclude, it is important to identify certain cases of objectification as problematic. Even though there are arguably some instances in which the objectification is done with the objectified person's consent, too often non-consensual objectification is not addressed or problematised, but rather normalised, leading to imbalanced relationships.

5 Idea of Love

Much has already been said on the power relations between the protagonists in the preceding chapters. Nevertheless, I would like to address the series' depiction of love and how the idea of love as presented in the novel ties in with the power struggle between the genders. In general, romantic love is depicted as something all encompassing, overarching, and deeply impactful within both series under analysis. This can most clearly be seen by the way the protagonists' lives change as soon as their future boyfriends enter the storylines. Often, as is also the case in the *ACOTAR* and the *TMI* series, the relationships in young adult novels are described as fated, i.e. two characters find each other and discover they are soulmates and could not possibly be with anyone else. This presence of a soulmate bond, as Kristina Deffenbacher cogently recognises, is subsequently used to excuse abusive behaviour (923), in most cases that of male characters, as has been addressed in the preceding chapters. In other words, as Cruger expresses it, "these characters are written as being destined to be together [and so] instances of abuse are easily brushed off; a relationship with a soul mate cannot be toxic, as it was written in the stars"

(119). Both series in question include references to soulmate bonds and heavily rely on romantic relationships for plot progression. In the following, I aim to trace the novels' depiction of love with reference to Robert Sternberg's triangular theory of love, which establishes three components of complete love. The most complete form of love is an ambitious goal, as Sternberg outlines. It "can be easier or more difficult to form and maintain, depending on the relationship and the situation in which it is developed and maintained" (124)[4]. In many young adult fantasy novels, the characters have to face seemingly impossible tasks, make difficult decisions and sacrifice things dear to them in the face of war, death and an ever-present evil as well as smaller dangers lurking at every corner. While they may experience passionate emotions about people they are attracted to, rarely do they get the time to form a strong emotional bond, thus frequently resulting in a lack of intimacy in their romantic relationships.

5.1 Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love

Robert Sternberg, a renowned psychologist and former president of the American Psychological Association (APA), has contributed many comprehensible theories to the field of psychology, such as a triarchic theory of intelligence, as well as theories on creativity, love and hate. In his triangular theory of love Sternberg describes different kinds of love. Consummate or complete love consists of the following three components:

> *(a) intimacy*, which encompasses the feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness one experiences in loving relationships; (b) *passion*, which encompasses the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation; and (c) *decision/commitment*, which encompasses, in the short term, the decision that one loves another, and in the long term, the commitment to maintain that love. (119)

Based on a combination of these three components, Sternberg outlines different kinds of love, which are characterised by an absence of one or two of the components. All three components are required for complete love, as each serves different functions. The intimacy component corresponds to "feelings that give rise, essentially, to the experience of warmth in a loving relationship" and "derive[s] from emotional investment in the relationship" (both 119). While the passion component corresponds to "motivational involvement in the relationship", the commitment component summarises "the cognitive elements that are involved in decision making about the existence of a potential long-term commitment to a loving relationship" (both

---

[4] Unless indicated otherwise, references to Sternberg are taken from "A Triangular Theory of Love"

119). Put simply, the passion component is "hot", the intimacy component is "warm", and the decision/commitment component is the "cold" component of a relationship (119). As each relationship is different, the three components come to play in a variety of ways. For instance, "[i]n short-term involvements, and especially romantic ones, the passion component tends to play a large part. […] In contrast, the intimacy component and the decision/commitment component typically play relatively large parts in a long-term close relationship." (120) Overall, as Sternberg argues, love should be seen as "a complex whole that appears to derive in part from genetically transmitted instincts and drives but probably in larger part from socially learned role modeling" (120). In other words, what we define as 'love' in our society is largely based on observation and imitation. Our idea of what constitutes love is not only shaped by real-life relationships surrounding us, but also by expectations transmitted via media, such as movies and books.

In the following, I will briefly discuss the various kinds of love that Sternberg outlines, before examining how these are represented in the novels. The chart below shows a summary of the kinds of love listed in "A Triangular Theory of Love" (123).

Table 2
Taxonomy of Kinds of Love

Kind of love	Component		
	Intimacy	Passion	Decision/ commitment
Nonlove	−	−	−
Liking	+	−	−
Infatuated love	−	+	−
Empty love	−	−	+
Romantic love	+	+	−
Companionate love	+	−	+
Fatuous love	−	+	+
Consummate love	+	+	+

Note. + = component present; − = component absent. These kinds of love represent limiting cases based on the triangular theory. Most loving relationships will fit between categories, because the various components of love are expressed along continua, not discretely.

Sternberg 123

As can be inferred from this chart, the more components are absent from a relationship, the harder it is to classify it as a loving one. In novels, certain types of love are more frequently featured than others. One of the most common kinds of love portrayed in YA literature is "love at first sight" (Sternberg 124), also frequently referred to as 'instalove' by the book community, which is an umbrella term used for committed romances that have only recently developed and consist mainly of feelings of passion, thus corresponding to Sternberg's definition of infatuated love. The characters in these primarily passion-focused relationships quickly commit to one

another, and their relationships can therefore be classified as fatuous love. Feyre's relationship with Tamlin fits into this category, as it is one of young adult's many "whirlwind courtships" where "commitment is made on the basis of passion without the stabilizing element of intimate involvement" (both Sternberg 124). To a certain extent Clary's relationship with Jace also corresponds to this type of love. It is difficult to neatly sort specific relationships into Sternberg's list, as the psychologist himself admits, since the different kinds of love are not strictly separated, but rather form a continuum. It is also necessary at this point, to address that Sternberg's classifications have their limitations. While the psychologist recognises culture's and society's influence in forming people's expectations on relationships and love, his model nevertheless does not address how gender may affect behaviour in relationships. Thus, the impact of gender seems to be overlooked as well as any historical underpinnings to his model, which therefore appears as an ahistorical concept. It also needs to be mentioned at this point that, according to Sternberg's typology, relationships with a less pronounced or completely missing passion component (e.g. long-distance friendships, asexual relationships) can never constitute complete love, but only companionate love, which seems to me to be a grave oversight in this theory.

It is important to note that relationships are constantly in flux and so the love triangle itself (i.e. the combination of intimacy, passion and commitment) is never fixed, as some components may receive more importance over certain periods of time, for instance. In general, as Sternberg admits, it is not an easy task to maintain complete love forever:

> The triangular theory predicts that relationships will almost inevitably have a course that will result in qualitative shifts over time. […] One of the frequent findings, both in people's experience and in the literature on interpersonal attraction, is that it is difficult to maintain romantic love over a long period of time (Berscheid & Walster, 1978). (qtd. in Sternberg 133)

Thus, in contrast to what the novels suggest, it is hard work to maintain romantic love indefinitely. The romantic idea perpetuated through mainstream media is often in direct opposition to real-life relationships. Various studies have shown the impact media can have on young adult's perception of love and romantic relationships and how constant reassertion of certain romantic ideals can "cultivate idealistic or even unrealistic beliefs" about dating (Hefner & Wilson 151). As Veronica Hefner and Barbara Wilson note, "both male and female adolescents seek out romantic content in television and other media in order to get information about dating" (151). Thus, the media educates young people and can influence their beliefs about love to a considerable extent. While Hefner and Wilson mainly focus on the effect

romantic comedy films have on young adults' romantic ideals, much of their analysis of reoccurring patterns in movies also holds true for YA fantasy novels. They argue that romantic stories perpetuate "a set of expectations for how a model relationship should form, develop, function, and be maintained" (152). Similarly, the two series under analysis in this thesis also support and convey certain scripts about romance and dating to their readership. The four main claims that are presented as the romantic ideal are as follows: "Love can overlook flaws; love can seek out that one perfect mate; love can happen instantaneously; and love can overcome all obstacles" (Hefner & Wilson 152). *TMI* and *ACOTAR* also reinforce these beliefs, as the characters idealise their partners and constantly overlook and excuse their abusive actions. Furthermore, they believe they are soulmates, fall in love very quickly, and stay together despite seemingly unendurable problems and dangers, suggesting that love conquers all.

Sternberg also argues that the concept of love is socially constructed and first introduces this theory in a collaboration with his colleague Anne Beall. They propose a social constructionist approach to love, which supports the idea "that people actively construct their perceptions of the world and use culture as a guide to do so" (qtd. in Sternberg *Cupid* 60). When examining the diegetic worlds of both fantasy series, this social construction also becomes visible. While there is no media in the *ACOTAR* series, the Fae society heavily relies on beliefs about the mating bond in their construction of love, as this concept has a long-standing tradition and support in the community. It is regarded as the ultimate goal to find one's mate and this heteronormative and sexist bond is heavily romanticised (cf. section 5.2.1). *TMI*, on the other hand, is an urban fantasy series set in present-day New York, and thus Clary and her friends are also influenced by romantic ideals shown in the media, as I will outline below (cf. section 5.2.2). According to Sternberg, "[p]eople also selectively appraise their romantic relationships to conform to the romantic stereotypes of the society in which they live", e.g. they believe in "love at first sight" (both *Cupid* 73), and both series in question use and support such beliefs. The protagonists are also influenced in their ideas of love by the role models they find in their environment, e.g. romantic relationships of family members and friends. Furthermore, as Sternberg outlines, "[o]ur perceptions of who is a suitable object of our love are also shaped by culturally defined conventions of acceptability" (*Cupid* 74). In *ACOTAR* and *TMI*, most romantic relationships are heterosexual ones and the female protagonists fall for stereotypically masculine men, which not only influences readers' perception of the 'most suitable' romantic partner, but also shapes the characters within the diegetic world and thus reinforces a heteronormative order on both levels. To conclude, if compared to the outside world and the

beliefs that are culturally conveyed in our present-day society, diegetically, similar concepts are active.

5.2 Romantic Idea of Love as Portrayed in the Novels

In many young adult fantasy novels love is closely tied to dependency. According to Sternberg, the passion component "behaves in a manner comparable to that of addiction" as it may result in "dependency on other persons", but he would not go as far as to view love in its entirety as an addiction (both 133). In *TMI* and *ACOTAR*, the relationships are not only committed, but show addictive tendencies. In other words, the characters rely so heavily on their romantic partners that they cannot imagine a life without them and vow to die rather than live on after their partner's death. Their state of co-dependency has reached extremes that are unhealthy and unrealistic and perpetuate the idea that true happiness is only attainable with a romantic partner.

Sternberg elaborates the three components of love and constitutes that each consists of a variety of practices. Usually one finds several, if not all, of these applicable to a certain relationship. In the following, Sternberg's list of actions, which serve as examples of a particular component, are outlined:

> The actions that convey each of the three components of love differ. For example, some of the ways in which one might express the intimacy component are by (a) communicating inner feelings; (b) promoting the other's well-being; (c) sharing one's possessions, time, and self; (d) expressing empathy for the other; and (e) offering emotional and material support to the other. Some ways of expressing the passion component include (a) kissing, (b) hugging, (c) gazing, (d) touching, and (e) making love. Some ways of expressing the decision/commitment component include (a) pledging, (b) fidelity, (c) staying in a relationship through hard times, (d) engagement, and (e) marriage. (132)

This list can help reveal how little intimacy the characters in *TMI* and *ACOTAR* develop in their romantic relationships. In contrast to most adult relationships in the real world, the teenage protagonists in the book series commit almost instantaneously to the first male characters they meet. After knowing each other for approximately two weeks, Jace and Clary profess their undying love for one another and make plans for the future. Similarly, Feyre and Rhysand discuss a possible engagement, marriage and kids at the beginning of their relationship during a time when Feyre is still struggling with the aftereffects of the abusive relationship with Tamlin, to whom she used to be engaged. Moreover, in *TMI*, Clary and Jace rarely support each other emotionally and find it difficult to communicate effectively, so they develop little

intimacy. While their feelings of passion are repressed, they are clearly attracted to one another, as the amount of gazing as well as their desire to kiss and touch indicate. Overall, I would argue that the relationships of the two fantasy series show similar tendencies. I believe that in both series what the female protagonist experiences and classifies as 'love', has not reached its complete form, but is an infatuation, which develops into fatuous love later on. The novels, however, suggest that Feyre and Rhysand as well as Clary and Jace are perfectly matched and compatible and that their love is complete. By doing so, the series disregard the male character's dominant and aggressive behaviour towards the female protagonist. The relationships are romanticised, leading young readers to idolise the fictional pairings and perpetuating the idea that it is acceptable for romantic love to entail abuse and manipulations.

5.2.1 Feyre's Relationships

Feyre, who is the focaliser of the *ACOTAR* series, mistakes initial attraction and infatuation for love. There is a heavy reliance on the passion component in all of Feyre's romantic relationships (Isaac, Tamlin, Rhysand). Much of Feyre and Tamlin's chemistry boils down to physical attraction. The couple shares many moments wherein one of them gazes at the body of the other (e.g. Tamlin gazing: "his eyes roved down, then up. As if he were studying every inch, every curve of me. […] that gaze alone stripped me bare." (162), Feyre gazing: "I let myself indulge in the glimpse of a broad chest, arms corded with muscle, and long, strong legs" (163)). Soon after, they share their first kiss, which Feyre describes as the "happiest moment of [her] life" (230), since she can briefly distract herself from the burden of caring for her family and escape into this passionate moment. However, this passage also illustrates that romantic love is presented as the most fulfilling experience, perpetuating the idea that it can change a girl's life forever. Thus, happiness ultimately relies on finding a partner, so the series suggests. The kiss is followed by Feyre's want for more: "He could have had me right there, on top of that table", "broad hands […] bare skin […] his mouth all over me", "devouring me with his eyes" (all 232). After their first intercourse Tamlin promptly professes his love to the protagonist (248), showing how closely the novel portrays the connection between sex and love. The only reason Feyre does not say she loves him is that she feels unworthy of his love and attention (251). Tamlin, and to some extent also Feyre, mistake love for ownership as he is possessive of her, as has been outlined previously, but also vice versa ("My Tamlin" 327). Subsequently, their romance develops with a great reliance on physical aspects, as sex becomes their way of dealing with hardships. Instead of communicating after the many traumatising moments Feyre willingly went through to save her partner's life (289), the couple shares passionate moments ("I gave

myself again to that fire, threw myself into it, into him, and let myself burn" (412)). Feyre does not deal with the stress she endured and rather distracts herself with sex. This harmful behaviour is upheld until she eventually ends their relationship. Lust does not equal love, as Feyre discovers in *ACOMAF*, when her relationship to Tamlin becomes more openly manipulative and abusive. Before that, however, she is delusional and thinks she cannot live without her partner. She confesses her love and is not willing to take back this profession even though it threatens her life: "Say you don't love him!" Amarantha shrieked […] But I wouldn't say it. Because loving Tamlin was the only thing I had left, the only thing I couldn't sacrifice." (*ACOTAR* 405) At the end of the first novel, her delusion, which is presented as love, conquers all, leaving the reader with conflicting messages of how healthy their relationship is, especially considering Tamlin's depiction in the later instalments.

According to Sternberg, there seems to be some discrepancy between who we imagine a person to be versus who the person actually is. As he argues, "a clean separation of fact from fiction isn't possible in the context of personal relationships, because we shape the facts of a relationship to conform to our personal fictions" (*Story* 5). Therefore, a relationship might differ considerably from the imagined ideal in our heads (Sternberg 128). The ideal triangle is one where all three components are fairly equally balanced. In *ACOTAR*, for instance, Feyre initially perceives her relationship to Tamlin as perfect, and she only later realises that while they might be compatible regarding the passion component, they never developed intimacy. Her ideal triangle thus does not correspond to the actual situation. What is lacking from this relationship is "mutual understanding" and "emotional support", in addition to effective "intimate communication", which are all important parts of Sternberg's intimacy component (all 121). As is the case "[i]n some close relationships with members of the opposite sex" (122), passionate feelings between Feyre and Tamlin developed and peaked quite early (127), but proved to be an insufficient basis for a loving long-term relationship.

In *ACOMAF*, Feyre quickly realises that she and Tamlin know only one way of 'communicating' effectively: "skin to skin", "body to body" (both 102). As she admits, he "worshipped my body […] But that had never been the hard part. We just got tripped up with the rest." (103) Thus, the passion component in their relationship clearly overarches everything, leading to an imbalance in their relationship. Soon after their relationship ends, Feyre calls herself "a fool in love" and admits to having "lived in ignorance" (both 156). Her love had been so "frantic, desperate" and immature (251), that it blinded her to the extent that she was willing to do "everything for that love" (296). She resents her former lover for loving "him so much I

had not minded destroying myself for it – for him" (368), when "all he'd wanted to do wasn't free me, but fuck me" (296). She later concludes she "debased [her]self" in the relationship (296) and tries to be more careful in future. Overall, Feyre learns not to give herself up for anyone, and her countless reflections on her previous relationship certainly help her overcome the abuse she experienced. Nevertheless, her resolutions quickly fade, and she seems none the wiser when she stumbles into the next relationship.

Feyre quickly develops feelings for Rhysand, even though she vows to be more careful and selective in choosing a partner after the harrowing experience with Tamlin. Having established that "[l]ove can be a poison" (320), she initially decides to keep her next relationship "purely physical" (455). She is noticeably attracted to Rhysand, but is not eager to commit to a new relationship yet: "I wanted him. […] Whether it was purely sex, or more, or something between or beyond them, I didn't know." (424) Shortly after this decision, however, she discovers that there is a mating bond between them: "'You love me?' Rhys nodded. And I wondered if love was too weak a word for what he felt, what he'd done for me. For what I felt for him." (528) The mating bond is a deeply heteronormative, sexist, biologistic and reproduction-oriented concept that supposedly binds two people together that share a rare connection. It is presented as something a-historic and natural that occurs in all parts of the fictional world, even if some of the Fae territories are described as more progressive than others with regard to their treatment of women. Only few people actually experience this soulmate-like bond, but it could theoretically surface in any two characters, be they human or faeries, as long as the heteronormative order is upheld. In other words, the bond only exists between male and female characters, as no mated same sex couples are mentioned. In order to accept the bond, the female character has to prepare and offer food to the male character, thereby showing her acknowledgement of the bond. This is in and of itself shockingly sexist, and the novel goes even further in supporting the sexism by suggesting that this practice is romantic. The mating bond usually results in aggressive male behaviour, as the male character views other men as a threat to the mated female character. He therefore seeks to eliminate other men and mark his territory, thereby viewing the woman as territory in the process. Gayle Rubin comments on various social conventions and institutions, e.g. marriage, where women are regarded as chattel to be exchanged between men. She argues that "a systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and fashions domesticated women as products" (28) is responsible for the glaring power imbalances between men and women. While it is crucial to critique this system of dominance and subordination, rather than only focusing the critique on hegemonic men and how their power can be overthrown, we should, as Rubin suggests, work towards "the

elimination of the social system which creates sexism and gender" (54). The sex/gender system, a term Rubin uses to define "a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner" (32), exists in all societies, though the conventions and expectations differ in each society. Ultimately, Rubin's outlook is a positive one, showing that oppression can be overcome, if only we work to dismantle "the specific social relations which organize it" (33). In the same way a societal change could also be brought about in the diegetic world of the *ACOTAR* series. Instead of promoting and romanticising soulmate bonds, the series could draw attention to and critique the concept's underlying misogyny and biologistically determined understanding of gender. However, the series continues to mention the mating bond in connection with men's resulting aggressive behaviour, but never questions it. The gender differences in behaviour are shown, as there never seems to be any aggression in female characters stemming from the mating bond, since women are treated as 'the Other', the ones that are possessions to the territorial and violent men who view every other man as a potential threat (*ACOWAR* 153). Feyre, disregarding her resolutions not to bind herself to anyone, quickly confesses her love for Rhysand: "And now I want you to know, Rhysand, that I love you […] every piece of my heart belongs to you. And I am honored – honored to be your mate." (*ACOMAF* 529). She ignores the fact that she is once again forced into a more submissive role and focuses on the freedoms her new partner permits her:

> [I loved him] for not insisting I stay, even if it drove his instincts mad, for not locking me away in the aftermath of what had happened yesterday. And I realized […] how badly I'd been treated before, if my standards had become so low. If the freedom I'd been granted felt like a privilege and not an inherent right. (577)

The book diverges from the feminist message (i.e. the portrayal of Feyre's escape from an abusive relationship) it set out to send initially, and instead focuses on the developing romance between Feyre and Rhysand, who commit to each other rather hastily, as they decide to get married after they defeat all evil forces (579). This suggests that marriage can potentially change everything for the better. Instead of giving themselves time after all the traumatic events they had to endure, they immediately want to bind themselves to each other after the greatest threat is over. Marriage is thus used to provide a neat end point to their love story. Even though Rhysand and Feyre do not give themselves the necessary time to get to know each other better, their decision is never questioned, leaving the readership with an idealistic and unrealistic idea of marriage, e.g. that it can solve problems and automatically guarantee happiness. The couple is already permanently connected via the mating bond; nevertheless, they seek more validation

of their love, and so a traditional marriage is supposed to bind them together until the end of time, overlooking the ideological background of the marital bond. As Rubin outlines, drawing on Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory of marriage as a "basic form of gift exchange" (36), it is often through marriage that a woman is forced into a passive and submissive role, where she is seen as a gift, or merely as a commodity, e.g. something to be traded between father and husband or between communities of men as a whole (37). The novels, however, disregard the issue of women's position in society completely at this point and end the second instalment with the pronouncement that "love was a balm as much as it was a poison" (622). Again, love is chosen as the most important topic and the protagonist is constantly preoccupied with it. While she viewed love only as a poison after her traumatic separation from her first abusive boyfriend, she now also believes in love's ability to soothe or heal her. The novels ultimately suggest that romantic relationships can change everything for the better, no matter how unhealthy the relationship actually is, which is a problematic message to send to young readers.

In the third and originally concluding novel before the series was extended, the relationship between Feyre and Rhysand develops further. Similar to Feyre's first relationship, there is a clear focus on the passion component. Upon Feyre's arrival after being separated from her partner for a few weeks, he immediately orders everyone to leave the room. Instead of discussing what Feyre has learned from spying on her former boyfriend Tamlin, all the couple is interested in is sex:

> [H]e murmured "My love," and kissed me. […] "Go find somewhere else to be for a while." […] "Do you want to go over what happened at the Spring Court?" I asked, voice raw, as I studied my mate's face. No amusement, nothing but that predatory intensity, focused on my every breath. "There are other things I'd rather do first." He carried me into our bedroom (*ACOWAR* 129).

The scene clearly illustrates that their sexual needs outweigh any other matter that might be in need of discussion; however, as Feyre does not become weary of stressing, Rhysand would understand if she wanted to discuss other things: "hunger lighting those violent eyes […] He'd shove down his need for me and take me to them, if that was what I wanted. My choice. It had always been my choice with him." (132) At this point, Feyre seems to have already forgotten that Rhysand did not leave her any choices in *ACOTAR*, when he forced her to bargain for her life and imprinted a tattoo on her body. Feyre also only briefly questions the mating bond and continues to view their relationship as fated, even when she finds out that mated partners are not necessarily soulmates, as Rhysand informs her:

> "A mating bond can be rejected […] There is choice. And sometimes, yes – the bond picks poorly. Sometimes, the bond is nothing more than some . . . preordained guesswork at who will provide the strongest offspring. At its basest level, it's perhaps only that. Some natural function, not an indication of true, paired souls." A smile at me – at the rareness, perhaps, of what we had. "Even so," Rhys went on, "there will always be a . . . tug. For the females, it is usually easier to ignore, but the males. . . It can drive them mad. […] some believe they are entitled to the female. Even after the bond is rejected, they see her as belonging to them. Sometimes they return to challenge the male she chooses for herself. Sometimes it ends in death. It is savage, and it is ugly" […] "On the continent, there are territories that believe the females literally *belong* to their mate." (258 f.)

By suggesting it is the bond that picks poorly rather than a person, it is implied that the two characters are not actually the agents in the mating bond scenario, but the bond itself has power over them and can only rarely be resisted, further justifying the existence of such a heteronormative and sexist practice. Furthermore, this passage is one of many in which male and female faeries are simply referred to as "males" and "females", thereby equating characters with their biological sex and enforcing a strict binary distinction by suggesting that 'females' do x, while 'males' do y. As Rubin recognises, "this rigid division of personality" oppresses both men and women and forces them into a society's predefined roles (40). While Maas might be using these terms to distinguish between humans (i.e. men and women) and faeries (i.e. 'males' and 'females'), the phrasing is nevertheless undeniably odd. It is highlighted that male characters are driven mad by the bond and become extremely possessive and aggressive. Their violent behaviour is already exculpated, as it seems to be an inevitable consequence of the mating bond and of them being male. Furthermore, the bond excuses them feeling entitled to female characters, which reduces the latter to property, or belongings, as the passage suggests, again feeding into the idea of women as men's territory. Once a female character has committed to the relationship it is difficult for her to leave her mated partner, even if faced with overly protective behaviour and aggression. Even though it is one's own choice to accept the bond, the existence of a soulmate bond still seems outdated and constricting if viewed in comparison to current conceptions of dating and romantic relationships in Western society. By heavily romanticising the concept, e.g. by stressing one can find true love and a deep and unbreakable connection via this bond that ultimately promotes stereotypical gender roles, it becomes attractive to the young readership that may consequently pursue similarly traditional relationship dynamics in real life.

The concept of love is sometimes closely related to hate, as can also be seen by how quickly Feyre changes her mind about Tamlin and vice versa ("The loathing in Tamlin's eyes practically

simmered. No one, not even Amarantha, had ever looked at me with such hatred." 416). After Tamlin insults and humiliates Feyre, she defends herself and tells him: "You don't get to rewrite the narrative," […] "You don't get to spin this to your advantage. (418). Through this difficult time, Rhysand is supportive and for once the couple shares a more intimate moment that is not connected to sex:

> He'd held me all night, tucked against his chest, his wings draped over me. A different sort of intimacy than the sex – deeper. Our souls entwined, holding tight. […] I was well aware how wildly I loved him, but looking at him then . . . I felt it in every pore of my body, felt it as if it might crush me, consume me. (464)

Feyre feels a deep connection to Rhysand and describes her love for him as all-consuming. She is once again willing to sacrifice herself in order to save her boyfriend: "He had given enough. And if this broke me, drove me mad, ripped me apart . . . […] my own cost […] I would gladly pay it. Face it." (602) Their love story is romanticised and presented as the most epic and fated connection ever to have existed: "And if I had not met my mate . . ." […] *The wait was worth it*. […] (612, original emphasis), "everything happened, exactly the way it had to . . . so I could find you." (613). Both accept that everything happens for a reason, that destiny brought them together. When Rhysand dies in an attempt to save them all, Feyre repeatedly pronounces she cannot live without him and begs the powerful High Lords to bring him back to life and they eventually grant her that wish:

> *I love you*, he whispered into my mind. […] *I love you*, he said again. […]
> The mating bond. It wasn't there. It was gone. Because his own chest . . . it was not moving. And Rhys was dead.
> I had only silence in my head. Only silence, as I began screaming. Screaming and screaming and screaming. The emptiness in my chest, my *soul* at the lack of that bond, that *life-* […] *lack* of him, and I could not stop screaming and screaming […]
> I would have rather the world *ended* than this, this *thing* he had done and this *emptiness* where he was, where we were- […] I couldn't live with this, couldn't endure this, couldn't *breathe-* […]
> "He's seeing if there's anything to be done," […] "I'm sorry." It was those two words that shattered me. Shattered me in a way I didn't know I could still be broken, a rending of every tether and leash. […]
> And I snarled, "*Bring him back*." Blank faces. I screamed at them, "*BRING HIM BACK*."
> […] "I don't care. Do it." […] not caring what rules or laws it broke. […]
> "Please," was all I said to him. Then Tamlin glanced between us – me and my mate. […] "*Please*," I wept. "I will give you *anything –* " […] Tamlin stood there. Staring down at me. […] "Be happy, Feyre," he said quietly. (*ACOWAR* 665 ff., original emphasis)

The sheer agony Feyre experiences at Rhysand's death is palpable throughout this passage and stylistically conveyed by employing several repetitions and unfinished sentences. To illustrate how impactful the loss of her partner is the passage includes behaviour associated with traumatic events, i.e. acute stress reactions, which can be of physical (e.g. inability to breathe), mental (e.g. confusion and disbelief), emotional (e.g. feeling of emptiness and helplessness), or behavioural nature (e.g. emotional outburts) (cf. Common Signs n.p.). Feyre is deeply affected and swears to do anything in her power to reverse her partner's death. This again highlights the importance of a romantic partner in the series, as she would also be willing to die for him, if necessary. The fact that death is reversible in the diegetic world, but only used to bring back romantic partners and never to save family members (e.g. Feyre's father), also emphasises how romantic love is put on a higher pedestal. Rhysand's sacrificial death and Feyre's reaction to it serve as last reminders of their undying love for one another, and, given Feyre's inability to cope with her partner's demise, a loophole needs to be created. Therefore, death is reversible, if only for a selected few. Feyre even begs her former boyfriend for help who redeems himself by answering her pleas and the High Lords come together to bring Rhysand back to life. When his death is reversed, he even comments on the fact that it was men who were the powerful saviours, in a supposedly humorous comment: "I couldn't let all you *ladies* take the credit for saving us. Some male had to claim a bit of glory so you don't trample us until the end of time with your bragging." (697, original emphasis), again stereotyping men and women's behaviour. The reunited lovers vow to never experience such heartbreak again (697) and decide to die together when the time comes, because they cannot bear the thought of living without the other (698).

Overall, it is not only the protagonist that is greatly affected by her romantic relationships. Even Feyre's cold and unfeeling sister Nesta, who always bickers and criticises her, eventually falls in love with a male faerie and decides to die with him if need be ("Together. They'd go together." 652). This perpetuates the idea that people, especially women, should put a greater emphasis on their romantic relationships as opposed to friendships, as the former ultimately brings true happiness. While the loss of a romantic partner can be so devastating that life without them does not seem worth living, no such feelings of this intensity are attached to friendships.

5.2.2 Clary's Relationships

Similar to *ACOTAR*, *TMI* proposes that romantic love should be placed above everything else. While other types of love are also depicted, they are not given the same life-changing quality and overall relevance in the series. Clary is deeply affected by her relationship with Jace, which

I would classify as fatuous love according to Sternberg's typology, whereas Clary's long and committed friendship with Simon, which classifies as companionate love, does not influence her opinions and actions to the same extent. The series also includes other friendships and relationships (e.g. companionate love between the siblings Alec and Isabel and their friend Jace, Clary's initial infatuation with Sebastian, Alec's developing romantic feelings for Magnus). These, however, only form side stories to the overall narrative that is mostly concerned with Clary and Jace's love story, which it tries to convey as consummate or complete love. Their romantic relationship is at the centre of attention and, while it is depicted as flawed, it is nevertheless romanticised. It can best be described as immature, yet the novels suggest that readers should strive for similar relationships by implying that what Clary and Jace experience is true love. Clary and Jace's inability to express what they are feeling and the consequent misunderstandings hinder the entire plot and create unnecessary obstacles. For considerable parts of the novels, there is no genuine communication between them, as they both withhold important information and feelings from each other, leading to many misinterpretations that could easily be resolved with a single conversation. Unsurprisingly, the "ability to communicate effectively is almost a sine qua non of a successful loving relationship" (134), as Sternberg states, however hard it may be to maintain effective communication. Sternberg and Grajek have found that women generally have "greater communicational intimacy in closeness with other women than with men", meaning they find it easier to communicate with their best friend rather than their partner (qtd. in Sternberg 134), an observation which also applies to *TMI*, where Clary can confide in Isabelle rather than her boyfriend in later instalments of the series. The ineffective communication between Clary and Jace results in them not being able to develop intimacy, one of the main components for complete love according to Sternberg. Their relationship is passionate as well as committed, but lacks real intimacy. As Kendare Blake asserts, what makes their relationship interesting is the amount of "seemingly insurmountable obstacles" they have to overcome (102). As she continues, "[e]very literary relationship has to have conflict" (103). Hefner and Wilson comment on the popularity of these impossible romances and conclude "that people seek romantic content in the media in order to see relationships that appear to work despite all obstacles" (151), even though these are not realistically attainable in real life. While Jace and Clary's developing relationship is complicated by them believing they are siblings, as soon as the obstacle (i.e. supposed incest) is removed, it becomes quite bland and repetitive with little other than continuous assertions of affection.

Simon's inability to express his true feelings for Clary also hinder the development of their relationship. Simon is jealous of Jace and sees him as a rival for Clary's attention, while Clary is oblivious to Simon's true feelings (*COB* 110 ff.). Simon is dependent on Clary: "I've always been the one who needed you more than you needed me." (279) When Simon sees Clary kissing Jace, he becomes jealous and angry and drama ensues, which also leads to conflict between Clary and Jace. Both male characters want Clary for themselves and wish only the best for her, yet they constantly disregard the protagonist's feelings and wishes. Clary tells Jace to be honest ("If you're angry, just say it. Don't act like nothing ever touches you. It's like you never feel anything at all." *COB* 293), but he only mocks her, as he has learned to never show his true feelings and emotions in order to uphold his position of the hegemonic male in society: "He looked at her with glittering malice. 'Don't worry,' he said, 'it [i.e. the kiss] wasn't that memorable for me, either.' (293) This discussion happens at the beginning of their relationship, but one can already witness one of the couple's main problems. Instead of talking through problems and trying to understand the other's point of view, they snap at each other or make each other feel bad on purpose. Clary is left to apologise to Jace, even though he is usually the one that hurt her feelings. He leaves Clary at the verge of tears (293) and not even her best friend Simon consoles her, but instead confronts the protagonist (294 f.), leaving her riddled with self-doubts. Eventually Clary even apologises to Simon for kissing Jace (293) and Simon still tries to make her feel guilty (294).

> "I *hate* Jace. […] He's an asshole. I thought you were better than that."
> Clary's temper flared. "Oh, and now you're pulling a high-and-mighty trip on me?" she snapped. […] "So what if Jace is a jerk sometimes? You're not my brother; you're not my dad; you don't *have* to like him. I've never liked any of your girlfriends, but at least I've had the decency to keep it to myself."
> "This," said Simon, between his teeth, "is different."
> "How? How is it different?"
> "Because I see the way you look at him!" he shouted. "And I never looked at any of those girls like that! It was just something to do, a way to practice, until-"
> "Until what?" Clary knew dimly that she was being horrible […]
> "I was *trying to make you jealous*!" Simon screamed […] "You're so stupid, Clary. You're so *stupid*, can't you see anything?" […] "I've been in love with you for ten years." (294 f., original emphasis)

Simon, instead of being a supportive friend, essentially tells Clary her kiss with Jace was wrong, and that she was "better than that", suggesting that he had expected her to select the person she falls in love with more carefully, while also conveying that he knows what is best for her. Clary tries to defend herself, only to be lectured, yelled at, and insulted as "stupid" again. Furthermore, this passage shows that not only are the other girls Simon 'practised on' treated

like dismissible objects, Clary herself seems little more than a prize to be won by either Simon or Jace. The two compete against each other and succeed at reducing her confidence in the process. When Clary reflects on the quarrels she thinks about Jace and Simon's feelings rather than her own. She convinces herself she cannot be loveable, and her self-esteem is lowered, as can be seen in the following inner monologue, which is highlighted in italics:

> That was the worst part, that she'd been happy.
> *Maybe this*, she thought, *losing Simon, maybe this is my punishment for the selfishness of being happy, even for just a moment, when my mother is still missing.* None of it had been real, anyway. Jace might be an exceptional kisser, but he didn't care about her at all. He'd said as much. (296, original emphasis)

Clary eventually convinces herself she is not worthy of anyone's love and even views Simon's anger as a punishment for feeling happy when kissing Jace. This also restricts the protagonist's sexuality, as chastising her first kiss already implies that sex or a representation of female sexuality seems unthinkable in the series. Second-wave feminists like Simone de Beauvoir and Germaine Greer have also commented on the long-standing assumption that women ought to be viewed as sexless beings. As Beauvoir argues, "[p]atriarchal civilization condemned women to chastity; the right of man to relieve his sexual desires is more or less openly recognized, whereas woman is confined within marriage" (443f.) and viewed as a passive being only existing to provide release to her husband. Greer similarly proposes that women are rendered eunuchs, as they "have somehow been separated from their libido, from their faculty of desire, from their sexuality" (Greer in an interview with Weintraub n.p.) in order to create docile and subservient beings. More recently, in a well-received *TED talk* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has drawn attention to the fact that in our society female sexuality is still restricted, when she explains that girls are taught not to be sexual beings in the same way that boys are and consequently "girls grow up to be women who cannot see they have desire" (17:30). This might first seem to create a paradox, as women are, as I have outlined above, constantly sexualised and sexually objectified in our culture. Yet, little room is given to the expression of female sexuality, as can also be seen by the *TMI* series' depiction thereof. Since the series is set in the 2000s (and was also written in this time period), the omission and repression of sexuality seems rather constricting and outdated, especially if contrasted with the *ACOTAR* series' depiction of male and female sexuality. By suggesting that women's sexuality needs clearly defined borders and chastising any sexual thoughts, the former series further highlights differences between men and women, thereby enforcing stereotypical interpretations of gender and sexuality.

The belief that they are siblings drives a wedge between Clary and Jace and restricts and represses their sexuality even further. It would be easier for her to start a romantic relationship with her best friend Simon who has known her since they were children and, in many ways, seems more compatible with her than Jace. However, as Sternberg points out, mere exposure does not automatically guarantee complete love over time, as "the exposure effect is likely to promote liking but not passionate or necessarily committed love" (133). After their fight in which Simon confesses his love they reconcile and Clary apologises again:

> "I know that when you said you loved me, what I said back wasn't what you wanted to hear."
> "True. I'd always hoped that when I finally said 'I love you' to a girl, she'd say 'I know' back, like Leia did to Han in *Return of the Jedi*." (313 f.)

While Clary still feels bad for not loving Simon in a romantic way, he seems to have forgiven her and wants to become good friends again. This passage also illustrates that teenagers are taught certain romantic ideas from movies and other media they consume. Furthermore, the reader is reminded that the series is set in our world, as a reference to the *Star Wars* series indicates. Simon is clearly influenced by the latter's depiction of love, and, even though his remark is part of a humorous comment, it informs readers of how his idea of romance was shaped by these movies, similar to how Hefner and Wilson have observed romantic comedies' influence on viewers (cf. section 5.2).

When Clary meets Jace, she is instantly attracted and drawn to him. The tension only increases as the story progresses ("The tension between them seemed to press down on her like humid air." (288)), leading to their first kiss, which both of them enjoy (290). Physical contact between them is accompanied by many embarrassed blushes (168). Jace's flirting attempts consist of his sarcastic and snarky comments that praise himself while making fun of Clary. From an early age on, Jace's father told him "that to love is to destroy and that to be loved is to be the one destroyed" (193). His strict upbringing has led him to believe that he constantly needs to uphold a strong facade and never show his true feelings. As Kami Garcia points out, there is a trend in novels where "[t]he guy who gets the girl avoids showing both physical and emotional vulnerability" in front of others with the possible exception of the girl he is attracted to (93). This is certainly true for Jace who generally withholds his true feelings, possibly also because he fears his masculinity might be questioned if he were to show a more emotional and less rational side of himself. When Clary discovers that she might be related to Jace, she is in denial (431). They both try to convince themselves that they never felt a spark and are not actually

interested in love. Instead of talking about the situation, they avoid each other. The whole novel takes place over the span of two weeks, yet it is suggested that they already truly love one another after such a short period. Simon kisses Clary, making her feel uncomfortable (432), but she is familiar with him and so decides to pursue this relationship instead. However, they both soon realise that there is no passion between them and break off the relationship.

In *COA*, Clary dates Simon in the beginning but cannot stop comparing him to Jace. She describes Simon's kisses as "a gentle sort of pleasant" (91), which gives the impression of a friendship rather than a passionate romance. When Simon confesses his love once again, Clary brushes it off and responds with a joke about having sex, thereby reversing stereotypical gender roles (92). She describes Simon's presence as safe and comfortable, whereas she sees Jace as the unknown and exciting force in her life (93). While she perceives Simon's kisses as pleasant, Jace's are hot, sweet and bitter (93). The faeries force Clary to decide who she feels more passionate about and ask her to choose "the kiss that she most desires" (164), i.e. the one where lust is foregrounded, and Clary unsurprisingly picks Jace. Again, passion, or the repression thereof, becomes the focus of the story and, even though the intimacy component is still missing in their relationship, the reader is led to root for the couple. Clary and Jace kiss (166), which then leads to conflict with Simon. Even though she has only known Jace for two weeks and believes he is her brother (170), she insists that she loves him (174). Clary, in one of the first genuine conversations between her and Jace, describes what she feels for Simon as love: "I love Simon like I should love you, and I wish he was my brother and you weren't" (174). Her love for Simon, however, is a companionate and less passionate one. Later, she concludes that "love takes your choices away" (200), as she feels helplessly in love with her supposed brother and cannot stop feeling drawn to him. The sexual tension between them is palpable, but there is no outlet for it: "the thought of him touching her like that brought the blood to her cheeks in a hot flood" (219). The taboo of their relationship might actually be what makes it even more exciting: "the yearning to touch him was so bad she wanted to [...] scream", "I want to hate you" (both 228). Thus, even though their sexual desires are never satisfied or fully endorsed (as can also be seen by the chastisement of Clary's sexuality outlined above), the passion component is clearly foregrounded in their relationship. According to Sternberg's triangular theory, in an ideal triangular shape the three components of love should be fairly equally balanced (128), which is not the case in Clary and Jace's relationship. The *TMI* series, however, continues to promote their love story as a fated and happy connection. Jace admits to Clary that he feels strongly about her and would be willing to do anything for their love: "Every time you

almost die, I almost die myself" (411), implying that a willingness to die for one another is a prerequisite for love. Ironically, he then apologises for not listening to her by cutting her off mid-sentence again, which again establishes him in the more dominant and active position.

In the third, and originally final, instalment to the series, the love triangle surrounding Clary slowly disintegrates, as Jace is the one she feels passionate towards. When he confesses: "I don't even *want* to want anyone but you" (199, original emphasis), she is ecstatic. In a moment of passion everything else is forgotten: "All that existed was Jace; all she felt, hoped, breathed, wanted, and saw was Jace. Nothing else mattered." (199) They profess their undying love for one another: "I love you, and I will love you until I die, and if there's a life after that, I'll love you then." (307) Their unrealistic expectations towards romantic love can perhaps be explained by the fact that they are love-sick teenagers who have only just met und thus have no experience of being in a relationship. While Clary is sometimes still unsure about their relationship, everyone keeps telling her that Jace truly loves her (325) and eventually she is convinced as well. Similar to the dramatic ending of the *ACOTAR* series, Jace dies in battle (448). Clary, like Feyre, is so shocked by her boyfriend's unexpected death that she experiences symptoms of acute stress. She feels "as if time were stretching itself out" and realises she "couldn't move. Could barely breathe." (both 449). The clipped sentence conveys her sorrow, and she briefly gives up all agency and decides to lie next to Jace and wait to be killed herself. She does not verbally react to his death, but the traumatic experience removes her from the scene ("She could hear her own heart beating, hear the scrape of her breathing in her dry throat" (449)), which is a common reaction to a severely stressful situation (cf. Common Signs n.p.). Clary, however, quickly reminds herself that Jace had always believed in her and "had always thought she was strong", and because he would be "disappointed" and "angry at her for giving up" (all 450), she decides to avenge his death by usurping his murderer's plans. She shows agency during this passage only as a last act of defiance and revenge for her partner's death, as it is suggested that "she would watch [and do] it for Jace, because he couldn't" (452). Thus, her agency ultimately depends on the male character again. Clary is granted a single wish by an angel and asks for the revival of "the person she loved most in the world. Jace." (457), which further shows how romantic love is foregrounded. It is also suggested that "[t]here was only one thing she could ask for, in the end, only one real choice" (457), as every other wish pales in comparison to her need for Jace. He returns from the dead saying that her voice led him through the dark back into the light (458), similar to Rhysand's return in the *ACOTAR* series where he heard Feyre's voice when he was dead (*ACOWAR* 697). Jace tells her she could have chosen anything (e.g. ending

world hunger) but she replies: "I don't want anything else in the world" (458). Both do little else than reiterate their love for one another: "Since I've met you, everything I've done has been in part because of you [...] I always thought love made you stupid [...] love makes you stronger (487 f.). In a love letter, Jace summarises his feelings towards Clary: "I belong to you. You could do anything you wanted with me and I would let you. You could ask anything of me and I'd break myself trying to make you happy. My heart tells me this is the best and greatest feeling I have ever had." (498) Jace's idea of love is still closely tied to ownership and belonging when he permits Clary to use him and stresses he would endure anything for her. As the series progresses, the young couple talks about marriage, as Jace is convinced they are perfect for each other: "Because there isn't anything I believe in more." (*COFA* 257) They both establish that "*love is strong as death*" and their love "is stronger than that", able to overcome anything (both 257). Similar to *ACOTAR*, neither of them could imagine a life without the other: "If you died, I wouldn't want to live. But I wouldn't kill myself, because whatever happens after we die, I want to be with you there." (270) What Clary and Jace perceive as love seems to transcend all rationality and has become all encompassing: "You came into my life and suddenly I had one truth to hold on to – that I loved you, and you loved me." (422) The attention given to professions of love indicates the novels' overall endorsement of committed relationships. These consequently might lead to marriages and children, which is still presented as the ultimate goal in life. While Clary and Jace are still too young to get married, it is implied that they eventually aim to do so. A seemingly happy pairing marks the conclusion of many YA fantasy series, and rarely are teenage readers presented with a different ending. Given the novels' educational function for today's youth (cf. section 1.4), alternative outlooks on life ought to be promoted as well. Instead, readers are shown a female protagonist that does not get to shape her own path, but concentrates on her seemingly happy, but ultimately subservient relationship with a male character.

To summarise, the protagonists of both series are greatly affected by their feelings for their partners and these feelings quickly take over the storyline. The rapidly developing relationships usually consist of a great amount of passion and commitment, but only few moments of intimacy. The idea of love perpetuated in the novels is one of ownership, as they suggest that love ties one to another person and that this process is inevitable and practically irreversible. Furthermore, the novels support the idea that love conquers all, and sacrificing one's self is a necessary side-effect of loving someone.

6 Conclusion

As has been discussed in this thesis, stereotypical depictions of masculinity and femininity as well as a heteronormative understanding of dating and sexuality prevail in the *ACOTAR* and the *TMI* series, and all too often alternatives thereof are omitted or relegated to the sidelines.

In the *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series, Feyre, though she is an independent and strong-willed character at the beginning of the story, quickly loses her agency when she falls in love with the hegemonic male character Tamlin, who emotionally and physically abuses her. Eventually she escapes the vicious cycle of violence, only to stumble into the next committed relationship with Rhysand, a less openly abusive, but nevertheless manipulative rival of her former boyfriend. While the series promotes and celebrates male as well as female sexuality, it is still predominantly women that are subjected to violence, rape, and other forms of physical or emotional abuse. Thus, ultimately men remain in power in the misogynist Fae society, even if the protagonist occasionally attempts to challenge male authority. Certain feminist ideas the novels sought to convey are disregarded as soon as Feyre and Rhysand's relationship shifts into the centre of attention. Their love story is heavily romanticised, supported by the reference to a heteronormative and sexist concept of a soulmate bond, leaving readers with conflicting messages on love and dating. The lack of diversity regarding gender and sexuality is glaring, and so heterosexual relationships between stereotypically masculine men and superficially tough, but ultimately stereotypically feminised, women are promoted and normalised.

In *The Mortal Instruments*, Clary is similarly immediately attracted to the hegemonic male character Jace, who emotionally and verbally manipulates her throughout their relationship. Simon, Clary's best friend, who embodies complicit masculinity, never stands a chance against the tougher, more stereotypically masculine Jace in their rivalry for the protagonist's affection. Furthermore, the series supports the idea that women generally view each other as competitors for male attention by depicting Clary and Isabelle worrying about who is most attractive to men. Similar to Feyre, Clary feels the need to emphasise her femininity with dresses to become more confident, even though this subjects her to sexual objectification in the process, thereby leading to even more insecurities about her body. While the novels attempt to show that women are equally strong fighters as men, ultimately their actions are gendered again by showing how their motives for violence differ. Women are only tough when the situation requires them to be so, i.e. in order to save their family and friends, whereas men fight because it is in their nature, which supports a biologistically determined understanding of gender, and ultimately ties sex

(male/female) to gender (masculine/feminine). Clary and Jace's immature relationship lacks intimacy, but is presented as a fated love story, conveying the message that readers ought to strive for similar interpretations of love in their own lives.

The stereotypical depictions of gender promoted in the analysed fantasy series can influence readers' understanding of these issues, as popular fiction plays a role in socialising today's youth. Uncovering the powerful ideology behind young adult novels which educate readers and support specific prevalent scripts surrounding dating and relationships remains an important task, since, as of 2018, more research in this area is still needed. In general, it is of utmost importance to carefully analyse which ideas about gender and sexuality are supported in popular culture and which options are omitted and therefore not established as the norm. While this thesis has examined two popular young adult fantasy series, an analysis of a greater number of novels in the genre would be needed to detect general patterns and tendencies concerning depictions of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, other areas of representation, e.g. class and race, require close analysis and interpretation as well, as these issues are relevant, especially in light of current struggles in present-day society. The overwhelming majority of characters in YA fantasy, especially the main characters, are white, able-bodied, middle- or upper-class, and heterosexual. Thus, symbolic annihilation (cf. section 2.5) in these novels is at work in many areas. The exclusion or stereotypical depiction of minorities (be it based on race, class, gender, or sexual identity) requires further discussion and criticism in order to challenge the current situation and work towards the much-needed representation of a more diverse set of characters in young adult literature.

By depicting only a limited array of characters, often riddled with stereotypical images of what it means to be a man or woman in society, the discussed young adult novels do not show the diversity that exists in our everyday lives. Rather than viewing gender as a spectrum, a rigid division is upheld, which seeks to constantly reinforce the status quo by naturalising and normalising men's dominance over women. Hegemonic masculinity, as Connell argues, could potentially shift in meaning as society changes. It could then describe a different, less stereotypically masculine character, for instance. At present, however, the male characters of YA fantasy novels often remain those who show dominance, aggression, and overall superiority over women and other men, thus supporting the current interpretation of the heterosexual, hegemonic masculine man. In the *TMI* and the *ACOTAR* series, hegemonic masculinity is seldom called into question or openly criticised, and rather further established as an ideal, a

norm other men should aim to embody as well. Thus, fantasy genre's subversive and transformative potential is not utilised to its fullest, at least regarding the issues raised in this thesis. In fact, the overall dominance of men and subsequent oppression of women is even more pronounced within the novels compared to present-day Western society.

Ultimately, however, I opt for an optimistic outlook to the future. In recent years the young adult market has begun to cater to readers' wishes to see themselves represented in literature by including more ethnically and sexually diverse characters. While *ACOTAR* and *TMI* disregard diversity or mainly feature stereotypical representations, e.g. of homosexuality, my hope is that these become the exception as our society becomes more aware of these issues. More acceptance and inclusion of the diversity of human life is still much needed in literature in order to challenge the rigid adherence to certain constricting norms. Young adult literature should not be demonised, belittled or excluded from academic debate altogether. It should rather be sufficiently discussed and, if necessary, problematised in order to bring about the needed change and consequently offer fleshed-out and diverse alternatives to stereotypical depictions of gender and sexuality.

7 Bibliography

7.1 Primary Sources

Clare, Cassandra. *City of Bones*. London: Walker Books, 2007. Print.
---. *City of Ashes*. London: Walker Books, 2008. Print.
---. *City of Glass*. London: Walker Books, 2009. Print.
---. *City of Fallen Angels*. London: Walker Books, 2011. Print.

Maas, Sarah. *A Court of Thorns and Roses.* London: Bloomsbury, 2015. Print.
---. *A Court of Mist and Fury*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. Print.
---. *A Court of Wings and Ruin*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. Print.

7.2 Secondary Sources

"abuse, n." *Oxford Dictionaries*. Oxford UP. Web. en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/abuse
    <15 Apr. 2018>.
"predator." *Oxford Dictionaries*. Oxford UP. Web.
    en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/predator <19 Feb. 2018>.
"sadistic." *Oxford Dictionaries*. Oxford UP. Web.
    en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sadistic <14. Sept. 2018>.
"tough." *Oxford Dictionaries*. Oxford UP. Web. en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/tough
    <29 Aug. 2018>.
"violence." *Oxford Dictionaries*. Oxford UP. Web.
    en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/violence <28 Mar. 2018>.

Abate, Michelle Ann. *Raising Your Kids Right: Children's Literature and American Political
    Conservatism.* London: Rutgers UP, 2010.
Adichie, Chimamanda. "We should all be feminists." *TED talks*. Dec. 2012. Euston. Web. 21.
    Sep. 2018.
    www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists
Adorjan, Michael, Tony Christensen, Benjamin Kelly, and Dorothy Pawluch. "Stockholm
    Syndrome as Vernacular Resource." *The Sociological Quarterly*. 53.3 (2012): 454-74.
American Psychological Association. *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of
    Girls*. Washington, DC: Author, 2007.
Armitt, Lucie. *Theorising the Fantastic*. London: Hodder, 1996.
Attebery, Brian. *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth*. New York, NY:
    Oxford UP, 2014.
Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. 1957. Translated by Annette Lavers. London: Cape, 1972.
Bartky, Sandra. *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*.
    New York, NY: Routledge, 1990.
Battis, Jes. "Trans Magic: The Radical Performance of the Young Wizard in YA Literature."
    Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature Ed. Michelle Ann
    Abate and Kenneth Kidd. Michigan, MI: U of Michigan Press, 2011. 314-28.
Berscheid, Ellen, and Elaine Hatfield Walster. *Interpersonal attraction*. 2nd ed. Reading, MA:
    Addison-Wesley, 1978.
Beall, Anne and Robert Sternberg. "The social construction of love." *Journal of Social and
    Personal Relationships* 12 (1995): 417-38.

Beauvoir, Simone De. *The Second Sex*. 1949. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila
    Malovany-Chevallier. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011.

"Best Books of 2017." *Goodreads Inc*. 2017. 29 Dec 2017.
    www.goodreads.com/choiceawards/best-books-2017

"Best Young Adult Fantasy & Science Fiction." *Goodreads Inc.*, 2017. 29 Dec 2017.
    www.goodreads.com/choiceawards/best-young-adult-fantasy-books-2017

Blake, Kendare. "Brotherly Love: Jace, Clary, and the Function of Taboo." *Shadowhunters
    and Downworlders: A Mortal Instruments Reader*. Ed. Cassandra Clare. Dallas, TX:
    Smart Pop, 2013. 101-12.

Böhm, Kerstin. *Archaisierung und Pinkifizierung: Mythen von Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit
    in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017.

Bordo, Susan. *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*. New York, NY:
    Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1999.

Bunch, Charlotte. "A Feminist Human Rights Lens on Human Security." *Peace Review: A
    Journal of Social Justice.* 16.1 (2004): 29-34.

Cart, Michael. *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism.* Chicago, IL: American
    Library Association, 2010.

Coats, Karen. "Young Adult Literature: Growing Up, In Theory." *Handbook of Research on
    Children's and Young Adult Literature.* Ed. Shelby Wolf, Karen Coats, Patricia Enciso
    and Christine Jenkins. New York, NY: Routledge, 2001. 315-29.

Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. 1995. 2nd ed. Los Angeles, CA: UP California, 2005.

Connell, R. W., and James Messerschmidt. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the
    Concept." *Gender and Society* 19.6 (2005): 829-59. Web. 28. Nov.2017.
    www.jstor.org/stable/27640853

Cote Escobar, Sue. "Cycle of Violence." *Encyclopedia of Victimology and Crime Prevention*
    Ed. Bonnie Sue Fisher and Steven Lab. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publ., 2010. 256-61.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist
    Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics."
    University of Chicago Legal Forum 40 (1989): 139-68.

Cruger, Katherine. "Men are Stronger; Women Endure: A Critical Analysis of the Throne of
    Glass and the Mortal Instruments YA Fantasy Series." *Journal of Media Critiques*
    3.10 (2017): 115-32. Web. 16. Feb. 2018.
    www.researchgate.net/publication/318678203_Men_Are_Stronger_Women_Endure_
    A_Critical_Analysis_of_the_Throne_of_Glass_and_The_Mortal_Instruments_YA_Fa
    ntasy_Series

Dahl, Melissa. "The Dudes Who Read Young-Adult Fiction." *The Cut*, 8 June 2014. Web. 20.
    Aug. 2018. www.thecut.com/2014/06/dudes-who-read-young-adult-fiction.html

Deffenbacher, Kristina. "Rape Myths' Twilight and Women's Paranormal Revenge in
    Romantic and Urban Fantasy Fiction." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 47.5 (2014):
    923-36.

Dworkin, Andrea. *Woman Hating*. New York, NY: Dutton, 1974.

"Common Signs & Signals of a Stress Reaction." U.S. Department of Health & Human
    Services. Web. 19. Sep. 2018. foh.psc.gov/NYCU/StressReaction.asp

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction.* 1976. Translated by
    Robert Hurley. New York, NY: Random House, 1978.

Franiuk, Renae, and Samantha Scherr. "The Lion Fell in Love with the Lamb." *Feminist
    Media Studies* 13.1 (2013): 14-28. DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2011.647966

Franzak, Judith, and Elizabeth Noll. "Monstrous Acts: Problematizing Violence in Young
    Adult Literature." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 49.8 (2006): 662-72.

Fredrickson, Barbara, and Tomi-Ann Roberts. "Objectification Theory: Toward Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 21.2 (1997): 173-206.

Garcia, Antero. *Critical Foundations in Young Adult Literature: Challenging Genres.* Rotterdam: Sense Publ., 2013.

Garcia, Kami. "Why the Best Friend Never Gets the Girl." *Shadowhunters and Downworlders: A Mortal Instruments Reader.* Ed. Cassandra Clare. Dallas, TX: Smart Pop, 2013. 89-99.

Gerbner, George, and Larry Gross. "Living With Television: The Violence Profile." *Journal of Communication* 26 (1976): 172-99.

Giroux, Henry. *Breaking Into the Movies: Film and the Culture of Politics.* Maldon, MA: Blackwell, 2002.

Gustafson, Mark. "Tattooing." *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery. 2.* Ed. Junius P. Rodriguez., 1997. 629.

Gutting, Gary, and Johanna Oksala. "Michel Foucault." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2018. Web. 6. Sep. 2018. plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/foucault/

Hefner, Veronica, and Barbara Wilson. "From Love at First Sight to Soul Mate: The Influence of Romantic Ideals in Popular Films on Young People's Beliefs about Relationships." *Communication Monographs* 80.2 (2013): 150-75.

Hemphill, Kara E. "Gender and the Popular Heroines (and Heroes) of the Young Adult Dystopia." *Honors Research Projects*, 2015.

Howlett, Georgina. "Why are so many adults reading YA and teen fiction?" *The Guardian* 24 Feb. 2015. Web. 20. Aug. 2018. www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2015/feb/24/why-are-so-many-adults-reading-ya-teen-fiction

Hu, Nian. "When Love Hurts: How Romanticizing Abuse Normalizes Toxic and Violent Relationships." *Harvard Crimson* 7.Apr. 2016. Web. 11. Sep. 2018. www.thecrimson.com/column/femme-fatale/article/2016/4/7/Literature-romanticizing-abuse/

Inness, Sherrie A. *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture.* Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

James, Edward, and Farah Mendlesohn. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* Ed. Edward James, and Farah Mendlesohn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. 1-4.

James, Kathryn. *Death, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Adolescent Literature.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2009.

Kant, Immanuel. "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals." 1785. *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy.* Ed. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

Key, Mary. "The Role of Male and Female in Children's Books: Dispelling All Doubt." *Women: Dependent or Independent Variable?* Ed. Rhoda Kessler Unger, Florence Denmark. New York: Psychological Dimensions, 1975.

Kidd, Kenneth. "He's Gotta Have It: Teen Film as Sex Education." *Sexual Pedagogies: Sex Education in Britain, Australia and America, 1987-2000.* Ed. Claudia Nelson, and Michelle Martin. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 95-112.

Kim, Jane. "Taking Rape Seriously: Rape as Slavery." *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender* 35 (2012): 263-310.

Kitchener, Caroline. "Why So Many Adults Love Young-Adult Literature." *The Atlantic* 1 Dec. 2017. www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/12/why-so-many-adults-are-love-young-adult-literature/547334/

Kokesh, Jessica, and Miglena Sternadori. "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: A Qualitative Study of How Young Adult Fiction Affects Identity Construction." *Atlantic Journal of*

Communication 23.3 (2015): 139-158. Web. 20. Sept. 2017.
dx.doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2015.1013104

Kortenhaus, Carole, and Jack Demarest. "Gender Role Stereotyping in Children's Literature: An Update." *Sex Roles* 28 (1993): 219-232. Web. 23. Mar. 2018.

Langton, Rae. *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Lazar, Michelle. "Politicizing Gender in Discourse: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as Political Perspective and Praxis." *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. Ed. Michelle Lazar. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 1-28.

Lewit, Meghan. "Why Do Female Authors Dominate Young-Adult Fiction?" *The Atlantic* 7 Aug. 2012. www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/08/why-do-female-authors-dominate-young-adult-fiction/260829/

Łuksza, Agata. "Sleeping with a Vampire." *Feminist Media Studies* 15.3 (2015): 429-43. DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2014.945607

Lumetsberger, Sandra. "Meilensteine für Frauen in Österreich: Eine Chronologie." *Kurier*. 30.Sep. 2012. Web. 13. Sep. 2018 kurier.at/politik/meilensteine-fuer-frauen-in-oesterreich/822.591

MacKinnon, Catharine. *Feminism Unmodified*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1987.

---. *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989.

McAfee, Noëlle. "Feminist Political Philosophy." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2016. Web. 6. Sep. 2018. plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/feminism-political

Mikkola, Mari. "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2017. Web. 10. Sep. 2018. plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/feminism-gender/

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. 833-44.

Nanda, Silima. "The Portrayal of Women in the Fairy Tales." *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention* 1.4 (2014): 246-50. Web. 9. Sep. 2018. pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4c9e/8c5d6e82dbfa2fdaa5583294decba15b0e59.pdf

Neikirk, Alice. "'… Happily Ever After' (or What Fairytales Teach Girls About Being Women." *Hohonu* 7.7 (2009): 38-42. Web. 9. Sep. 2018. hilo.hawaii.edu/campuscenter/hohonu/volumes/documents/Vol07x07HappilyEverAfter.pdf

"Nielsen Book Research: Data and Insights for the Book Industry." *The Nielsen Company*. 2017. Web. 19 Aug. 2018. www.nielsenbookscan.com.au/uploads/Final%20Research%20Brochure_Digital(4).pdf

Nikolajeva, Maria. "The Development of Children's Fantasy." *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* Ed. Edward James, and Farah Mendlesohn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. 50-61.

---. *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2010.

Nodelman, Perry. "Making Boys Appear: The Masculinity of Children's Fiction." *Ways of Being Male: Representing Masculinities in Children's Literature and Film.* Ed. John Stephens. New York: Routledge, 2002. 1-14.

Nussbaum, Martha C. "Objectification." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24.4 (1995): 249-291. Web. 13. Nov. 2017. www.jstor.org/stable/2961930

Papadaki, Evangelia. "Feminist Perspectives on Objectification." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Ed. Edward Zalta, 2018. Web. 21 June 2018. plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/feminism-objectification/

Pattee, Amy. *Reading the Adolescent Romance: Sweet Valley High and the Popular Young Adult Romance Novel.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2011.

Pearce, Sharyn. "Television, Entertainment, and Education: Issues of Sexuality in *Glee*." *Popular Appeal: Books and Films in Contemporary Youth Culture.* Ed. Sharyn Pearce, Vivienne Muller, and Lesley Hawkes. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publ., 2013. 175-207.

Pearce, Sharyn, Vivienne Muller, and Lesley Hawkes. *Popular Appeal: Books and Films in Contemporary Youth Culture.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publ., 2013.

Pennington, Suzanne. "Bisexuals 'Doing Gender' in Romantic Relationships." *Journal of Bisexuality* 9.1 (2009): 33-69.

Peterson, Valerie. "Young Adult and New Adult Book Markets: Facts and Figures to Know." *The Balance.* 8. Jan. 2018. www.thebalance.com/the-young-adult-book-market-2799954

Pinker, Stephen. "The Surprising Decline in Violence" *TED talks*. Mar 2007. Web. 28 Aug. 2018. www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_on_the_myth_of_violence

Plato. *Symposium*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. The Internet Classics Archive. Web. 19. Sep. 2018. classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html

Pugh, Tison. *Innocence, Heterosexuality, and the Queerness of Children's Literature.* New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2011.

Quinn, Beth. "Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of 'Girl Watching'." *Gender & Society* 16.3 (2002): 386-402.

Rankin, Jennifer. "'Golden age' of UK Children's Books Bucks Failing Sales and Print Runs." *The Guardian* 8 May 2015. www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/08/golden-age-of-uk-childrens-books-bucks-falling-sales-and-print-runs

Robinson, Laura M. "Girlness and Guyness: Gender Trouble in Young Adult Literature." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 1.1 (2009): 203-22.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile, or On Education*. 1762. Translated by Allan Bloom. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1979.

Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*. Ed. Linda Nicholson. London: Routledge. 1997, 157-210.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. 1985. New York, NY: Columbia UP, 2016.

Showalter, Elaine. "Introduction: The Rise of Gender." *Speaking of Gender*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Routledge, 1989. 1-13.

Simons, Judy. "Gender Roles in Children's Fiction." *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature* Ed. M. O. Grenby, and Andrea Immel. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 143-158.

Smith, Melinda and Jeanne Segal. "Domestic Violence and Abuse: Recognizing the Signs of and Abusive Relationship and Getting Help." *HelpGuide.* March 2018 Web. 11. Sep. 2018. www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/domestic-violence-and-abuse.htm

Stephens, Jonathan. "Young Adult: A Book by Any Other Name…: Defining the Genre." *The ALAN Review* 35 (2007): 34-42.

Sternberg, Robert J. "A Triangular Theory of Love." *Psychological Review* 93.2 (1986): 119-35.

---. *Cupid's Arrow: The Course of Love Through Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

---. *Love Is a Story: A New Theory of Relationships*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

Sternberg, Robert, and Susan Grajek. "The Nature of Love." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 47 (1984): 312-29.

Szymanski, Dawn; Lauren Moffit, and Erika Carr. "Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory and Research." *The Counseling Psychologist* 39.1 (2011): 6–38.

"The U.S. Book Market." *GBO New York*. 22 Dec 2017. www.book-fair.com/images/ fbm/dokumente-ua-pdfs/2016/book_market_us_jan_2016_56617.pdf

Thompson, Eliza. "Sarah J. Maas Can't Wait for You to Know What Happens in *A Court of Wings and Ruin.*" *Cosmopolitan* 28 Apr. 2017. Web. 2. Oct. 2018. www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/books/a9578146/sarah-j-maas-interview/

Tuchman, Gaye. *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality.* New York: Free Press, 1978.

Tripp, Aili Mari. "Toward a Gender Perspective on Human Security." *Gender, Violence, and Human Security: Critical Feminist Perspectives.* Ed. Aili Mari Tripp, Myra Marx Ferree, and Christina Ewig. New York: NYU Press, 2013. 3-32.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature.* Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2002.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). "Overview." Web. 28 Aug. 2018. www.unfpa.org/gender-based-violence

Van Soest, Dorothy, and Shirley Bryant. "Violence Reconceptualized for Social Work: The Urban Dilemma." *Social Work* 40 (1995): 549-57.

Walker, Lenore Edna. *The Battered Woman.* New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1979.

Weintraub, Judith. "Germaine Greer – Opinions That May Shock the Faithful." *The New York Times* 22. Mar. 1971. Web. 21. Sep. 2018. archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/99/05/09/specials/greer-shock.html

Weissman, Jodi, and Elizabeth Swanstrom. "Gender and Agency in Young Adult Fiction." *Faurj* 5 (2016): 6-12.

Whisnant, Rebecca. "Feminist Perspectives on Rape." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2017. Web. 10. Sep. 2018. plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/feminism-rape/

Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*. New York, NY: Anchor, 1991.

8 Appendix

8.1 Abstract

Literature plays an important role in the socialisation of today's youth, also educating young men and women how to behave as sexual beings. It is therefore important to examine depictions of gender and sexuality in order to uncover the ideological underpinnings thereof. Drawing on a wide array of theories, including Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, Martha Nussbaum's objectification theory, and Robert Sternberg's triangular theory of love, this thesis aims to examine how the female protagonist is depicted compared to the two male characters competing for her affection. Two popular young adult fantasy series form the objects of analysis: Cassandra Clare's *The Mortal Instruments* (2007-2014) and Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (2015-2017). A close reading of these novels reveals that heterosexual pairings are established and promoted as the norm, while other forms of sexuality are either omitted or only marginally and stereotypically addressed, thereby establishing them as 'the Other', overall reinforcing the heteronormative order. While the female protagonists in both series are physically strong and able fighters, they quickly lose their agency as soon as they meet their future boyfriends, hegemonic male characters that, more or less subtly, manipulate and physically, verbally, or emotionally abuse the former into more submissive roles. Moreover, the female characters are subjected to sexual objectification, rendering them passive objects of desire. The heterosexual romantic relationships lack intimacy and advocate that dating inevitably entails suffering on the woman's part, as it is in men's nature to be overly protective and aggressive. Yet, these pairings are purported to be romantic, fated and indispensable to the young protagonists' lives, perpetuating the idea that young readers ought to accept or even strive for similarly imbalanced relationships in their lives.

8.2 Zusammenfassung

Literatur spielt eine wichtige Rolle in der Sozialisation Jugendlicher, da sie jungen Männern und Frauen auch Informationen über Geschlechterrollen und sexuelle Rollen liefert. Daher ist es wichtig, Darstellungen von Sexualität und sozial konstruierten Geschlechtern in der Literatur junger Erwachsener zu analysieren, um ideologische Hintergründe dieser Bücher sichtbar zu machen. Unter Bezugnahme einer Vielzahl von Theorien, unter anderem Raewyn Connells Konzept der hegemonialen Männlichkeit, Martha Nussbaums Objektivierungstheorie und Robert Sternbergs Dreieckstheorie der Liebe, untersucht die vorliegende Diplomarbeit, wie die weibliche Protagonistin im Vergleich zu den beiden um ihre Liebe buhlenden männlichen Charakteren dargestellt wird. Zwei populäre Jugendbuchreihen aus dem Fantasygenre werden hierfür beleuchtet: Cassandra Clares *Chroniken der Unterwelt* (2007-2014) und Sarah J. Maas *Das Reich der sieben Höfe* (2015-2017). Eine Analyse dieser Romane zeigt, dass heterosexuelle Paare als Norm etabliert und propagiert werden, während andere sexuelle Orientierungen und Beziehungsstrukturen entweder nicht vorkommen, oder nur am Rand der Handlung stereotyp dargestellt werden, wodurch diese in ihrer Rolle als 'das Andere', das von der Norm Abweichende, bestätigt werden. Die heteronormative Ordnung wird dadurch insgesamt legitimiert und weiter gestärkt. Obwohl die Protagonistinnen in beiden Serien körperliche Stärke in Kämpfen beweisen, können sie diese Stärke nicht auf andere Lebensbereiche übertragen. Sobald sie auf die jungen, hegemonialen und dominanten Männerfiguren treffen, verlieben sie sich rasch und werden durch mehr oder weniger subtile Manipulation und körperlichen, verbalen und emotionalen Missbrauch in unterwürfige Rollen gedrängt. Darüber hinaus sind die weiblichen Charaktere sexueller Objektivierung ausgesetzt, was sie zu passiven Objekten der Begierde degradiert. Die Darstellung der heterosexuellen Liebesbeziehungen zeigt, dass es diesen an Intimität mangelt und impliziert, dass Beziehungen in jedem Fall ein gewisses Leiden der Frau mit sich bringen, da es in der 'Natur' des Mannes liegt, sich übermäßig beschützend und aggressiv zu verhalten. Dennoch werden diese toxischen Beziehungen romantisiert und als schicksalhafte, positive Verbindungen hervorgehoben. Dies könnte vor allem junge Leserinnen dazu verleiten, ähnliche, gegen Gleichberechtigung arbeitende, Beziehungsstrukturen in ihrem eigenen Leben zu akzeptieren.