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Abstract

This thesis reviews four young adult/new adult retellings to understand how these novels shape understanding of and empathy for real world social issues. The first chapter explores the novel *Girls Made of Snow and Glass* and how the reshaping of the “Snow White” narrative, within the text, undermines the patriarchal narrative that pits woman against woman and, instead, tells a story of female solidarity. Chapter two considers *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *A Court of Mist and Fury* and how the fallout of “The Beauty and the Beast” narrative in book one carries into book two as a means to build empathy and understanding for those suffering with mental health issues, including those suffering with PTSD. Finally, Chapter three reviews *The Lunar Chronicles* and how the pandemic within these science fiction retellings foster discussion around medical injustices and the dehumanization that allows such injustice to occur.

A Spoon Full of Sugar: Exploring Real World Social Issues in YA/NA Retellings

By

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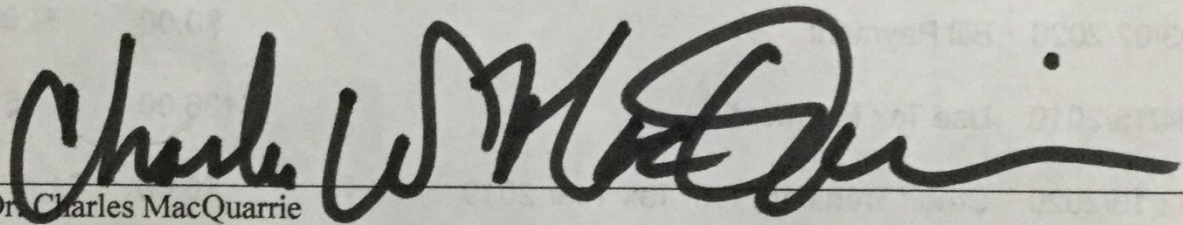
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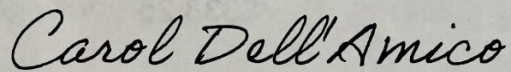
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This thesis has been accepted on behalf of the Department of English by their supervisory committee:

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles W. MacQuarrie', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Charles MacQuarrie

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Dell'Amico', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Carol Dell'Amico

Dedication

To my friends and family for all their support.

To the twins for their amazing help.

And, to MacQuarrie and Dell'Amico for being willing to be my committee.

Love and hugs, to all of you.

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A Spoon Full of Sugar: Exploring Real World Social Issues in YA/NA Retellings

With over 7,000 titles in existence, a readership that spans a myriad of age groups, and the potential ability to shape how readers see themselves and the world,¹ contemporary young adult and new adult literature plays a role in shaping present and future generations' views of life beyond the page. One route the genre has towards shaping these values and identities is through retellings. The purpose of this thesis is to review several contemporary young adult/new adult retellings in order to understand how these modern adaptations shape social and individual understanding and empathy for real world issues. The main texts under consideration are Melissa Bashardoust's *Girls Made of Snow and Glass*, Sara J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *A Court of Mist and Fury*, and Marissa Meyer's *The Lunar Chronicles*. These primary texts explore how fairytale retellings can be used to grow understanding and empathy for those who suffer from mental health issues, class and race discrimination (in conjunction with unethical medical practices), and gender violence (specifically women).

So, why young adult literature and why retellings?

The young adult genre is an American contribution to the literary world. Its beginnings lie with burgeoning views of adolescents and youth culture at the start of the twentieth century. Early writings and titles focus on creating adventure books for young men and domestic narratives for young women. The early versions of young adult series include *The Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew*, in 1927 and 1930 respectively. Most young adult commenters agree, *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) is the first qualifying young adult novel, formally establishing the publishing field of young adult and sparking the teen magazine culture. Following *Seventeenth Summer*, romance fiction takes to the genre, focusing on the love and life of young women in

¹ Reader identification and adoption of values found in a text can be complex

relatively relatable settings. In the 1960's and 1970's, novels such as S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* bring gritty realism to the young adult literary world. These novels, specifically Hinton's, showcase the "mean urban streets where teenagers didn't have time to agonize over first love and dates for the prom; they were too busy agonizing over whether they would survive the next skirmish [...] with a rival gang" (Cart 3-16, 27, 27-34). During the latter half of the twentieth century, contemporary romance fiction returns to the young adult novel as a form of literary escape from the troubles of everyday life, and formulaic horror enters the genre, as does concerns about multiculturalism and political correctness. Middle grade makes its appearance as younger readers begin to pick up young adult titles and new views on the developmental needs of middle graders enters the picture in the early 1990's (Cart 41-59).²

In 2016, over 7,000 young adult titles hit bookstore shelves, making the genre one of the top producers for publishing houses. Today, the age range for a young adult reader reaches from ten years old all the way to twenty-five years old or older as more and more adults are reading young adult literature for pleasure (though the idea of crossover readership is not a necessarily new concept); adult readers push the genre to grow in sophistication, specifically subject and style. Sub categories within the genre include middle grade (10-14), teen (12-18), and young adult and new adult (18-25),³ depending upon the commentator. Contemporary young adult novels are now finding traditionally adult fiction writers pushing into the field (also not an entirely new idea). Genre-wise, young adult texts range from realistic fiction (its roots) to speculative fiction (science fiction and fantasy) and any plot type in between. Topics of young adult novels continue to explore the reality of adolescent life; the risky behavior,

² Age range 11-14 years (Cart 58)

³ new adult category coined in 2009 by St. Martin's Press; its primary nature is a novel like young adult but proves capable of publishing/marketing to adults; see (Cart 143)

physical/emotional violence, bullying and cyberbullying, and questions of sex and sexuality that contemporary youth face, though “multicultural literature [...] remains the most underpublished segment of YA” (Cart ix-xii, 140, 97-106, 163-195, x). Given the power of literature in general to shape an individual’s understanding of the world, the range of topics and genres in young adult literature are important areas for consideration as the target audience is learning to navigate the wider world around them, and the books this audience reads has the ability to shape their view of themselves and the world.

With all this young adult and new adult literature on the market, questions about how these narratives shape readers’ perspectives of society and their identities within it arise. In “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: A Qualitative Study of How Young Adult Fiction Affects Identity Construction,” Kokesh and Sternadori review ten “popular young adult fiction books” to explore how these texts portray gendered stereotypes and interview young adult readers to learn how these teenagers adopt “the stereotypical portrayals of women in some of their favorite young adult books” (144).⁴ After analyzing the chosen texts, Kokesh and Sternadori found female characters within young adult literature are often Caucasian and middle to upper class and that these literary young women are or strive towards thinness,⁵ care little about the politics of their respective worlds, and do not have career goals. Sex and sexuality become problematized within young adult texts, with heterosexual relationships lacking love and equality and homosexual identity stigmatized and pushed into the shadows. Interview results found further that, teenage readers do identify with the various characters in young adult narratives to a degree either because the character is like the reader in some way or represents the ideal individual they want

⁴ Texts reviewed were *The Princess Diaries*, *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, *Gossip Girl*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *The Truth about Forever*, *Twilight*, *A Great and Terrible Beauty*, *Hunger Games*, *Graceling*, and *The Luxe*

⁵ Kokesh and Sternadori also found five stereotype/prototype female figures within the texts “[t]he Meanie, [t]he Wimp, Miss Perfection, [t]he Rebel, and [t]he Sticky Willy” (146).

to become in life. Readers do form emotional attachments to characters and find a majority of “young adult plots and developments as realistic” (146, 151-153, 152).⁶ When using young adult literature as a guide for life, interview results appear divided by age; teens between 13-15 use the lessons and situations found in young adult literature as guides for social interactions, while 15-18-year-olds would not use character lessons. Answers to what constitutes a good or independent female varied. While the authors note the limitations to the study,⁷ Kokesh and Sternadori conclude understanding of young adult literature’s influence on its target is not complete, and the varying representations of female characters, along with female ambivalence towards gender construction, suggests the complexities found in the next feminist wave (153-156).

Given the potential for young adult novels’ influence on reader constructions of identity and society, the ability to draw from previous narratives (young adult/new adult retellings and spin-offs) to construct a contemporary view of the world and gender identity proves an interesting avenue for exploration. For this thesis, the use of prior narrative structures or plots to create a new narrative is a retelling. An example of this type of story is the young adult novel *Girls Made of Snow and Glass*, which uses elements and motifs of the “Snow White” tale-type to tell the dual stories of Lynet (the story’s Snow White figure) and Mina (the story’s version of the jealous stepmother). Other examples of retellings in the young adult/ new adult genre include *The Lunar Chronicles*, *A Curse so Dark and Lonely*, *Sky without Stars*, *Pride*, and *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, as well as many others.

Retellings capture the charms of previous versions, while simultaneously providing a fresh spin and commentary based on the teller’s world views. In the introduction to her *The Classica Fairy Tales*, Maria Tatar comments on the nature of fairytale retellings. She considers

⁶ Interview answers note “that fantasy and reality are often closely intertwined” (Kokesh and Sternadori 152)

⁷ Sample size and diversity of participants (Kokesh and Sternadori 155)

the overarching power of fairytales in general and notes the abilities of adaptations (retellings) to break with traditions for a specific effect; one of her primary examples is feminist adaptations, which “move along a different path, producing creative adaptations that unsettle the genre by breaking with tradition and renewing it” (Tatar xi-xxvi, xix).⁸ Cristina Bacchilega, whom Tatar refers to in her introduction, echoes this sentiment, noting that fairytales provide structural substance for a variety of intertextual creations. These manipulations can range from political to narrative, “accomplish[ing] a variety of social functions in multiple contexts [...] in more or less explicitly ideological ways” (Bacchilega Ch.1). For Tatar and Bacchilega, fairytales and their adaptations/retellings, construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct society and its various ideologies (Ch.1). While both critics are primarily concerned with fairytales and their retellings, these critics’ commentaries on intertextual dialogue can apply to any form of retelling as the primary concept is the same; new narratives draw upon the elements of previous tales, entering into a dialogue with the former version and/or current world views to create and/ or comment on values and ideas the re-teller wishes to express. When combined with young adult/new adult literature, the shaping power of adaptations to shape discourse and identity proves interesting; if the overall view is that today’s youth are tomorrow’s future, then the narratives shaping this audience is an important area of study.

With the potential found in young and new adult literature and the power found in narrative retellings, then understanding the ways contemporary young and new adult novels use these revised narratives to shape social and personal identities within the text proves an interesting avenue of investigation. Though highly limited, the Kokesh and Sternadori study shows the potential influence the characters and plots of young adult novels have on the youth

⁸ She also mentions Disney, Hans Christian Anderson, and Oscar Wilde

who read them, which suggests continuing the research into how young adult novels shape understanding and opinions of social issues is imperative due to the impact these characters possibly play in shaping young adult lives. While fairytale retellings are a wide field of study, this thesis plans to contribute specific looks at how several contemporary young adult/ new adult novels shape social and empathy for real world issues.

Mirror, Mirror How Do You Shape the Girl You See Here: The Reshaping of the Violence Narrative from Grimm’s “Snow White” to Melissa Bashardoust’s *Girls Made of Snow and Glass*

Melissa Bashardoust’s novel *Girls Made of Snow and Glass* (2017) is a contemporary young adult retelling of the “Snow White” fairytale. This retelling follows the dual perspectives of the two main figures of the story, the Snow White figure (Lynet) and the Wicked Stepmother (Mina), as they each navigate through the various elements of the tale, from how Mina becomes the woman she is to how Lynet is shaped to become like Snow White. A tale that has a long oral and literary tradition, “Snow White” according to critics can serve as a means of highlighting how the framework of a fairytale is shaped by its society and its tellers in order to reflect the values and ideals of a particular culture and its people. In reimagining the “Snow White” tale, *Girls Made of Snow and Glass* highlights the role men play in shaping women’s lives, within Grimm’s “Snow White,” and in doing so works to reframe the story into one of female solidarity and empowerment, as opposed to perpetuating the cycle of violence by and to women.

In “The Framing of ‘Snow White,’” Bacchilega considers the relationship between gender and narration, using the “Snow White” tale as both a direct and indirect example of her concept of mirroring. During her discussion, Bacchilega reviews the idea of the frame, which shapes the mirror and its reflection of the narrative, and that frame is made up human “ideas, desires, and practices” or, essentially, the values that make up a culture and its various individuals (Bacchilega Ch. 2). Bacchilega adds because the idea of mirroring is not free of cultural values,⁹ but is instead “a ‘special effect’ of ideological expectations and unspoken norms,” it serves as “a naturalizing technology that works hard at, among other things, re-

⁹ Fairytales supposedly “[reflect] and [conform] to the way things ‘truly’ are, the way our lives are ‘truly’ lived” (“The Framing”).

producing ‘Woman’ as the mirror image of masculine desire” (Ch. 2). For Bacchilega, fairytales serve as a reflection of society’s beliefs about its existence and the way to live a life in that culture. However, because a specific culture’s values shape the frame, the narrative reflected is not free of cultural biases and generally reproduces them, including the masculine idea of the desirable female. Bacchilega concludes that a useful tool in diminishing the power of a given narrative reproduction is through the examination of the frame and its ideals, which shapes the narrative told (Ch. 2)

To understand how modern retellings work with, and against, earlier adaptations, it is important to understand what early version of the tale most influences current variations of the story. Maria Tatar points out the most influential early adaptors proves to be Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, whose *Nursery and Household Tales* has been “[p]erpetually appropriated, adapted, revised, and rescripted” and “function as robust nomadic carriers of social practices and cultural values” (Tatar “Preface 2003”). While many names exist on the list of early literary transcribers of oral narratives, Tatar suggests one of the most influential is the Grimms; their work continuously finding itself adopted and/or adapted as carriers of social ideologies the world over.

According to Bottigheimer, women in nineteenth-century Germany faced an ideology of silence and marriage, though this tradition does not extend into areas such as France, England, or America. This German ideology, she adds, weaves into the various tales that had been around since ancient times and becomes encoded into the Grimm’s versions through both informant assumptions about gender and Wilhelm Grimm’s beliefs. In her review of the various Grimm retellings, she finds the belief in female silence often equates to a punishment enforced on transgressing women, while men take on silence as a means of breaking a curse or redemption. Bottigheimer also notes, when it comes to male characters speaking, the reader gets to read their

exact words, while women's perception is given in summary. For Bottigheimer,

fairy tales offered an apparently innocent and peculiarly suitable medium for both transmitting and enforcing the norm of the silent woman. To the extent that these tales corroborated and codified the values of the society in which they appeared, they reinforced them powerfully, symbolizing and codifying the status quo and serving as paradigms for powerlessness. (Bottigheimer)

Bottigheimer feels the tales as transcribed by the Grimm brothers provided a medium for reinforcing the cultural norms of the day, norms that kept ideas and values as they were at that time, norms that created a sense of powerlessness, particularly for women. If this serves as the framework that *Girls made of Snow and Glass* even partially draws from, as Tatar intimates, then how does the tale work to expose the tale's framework, as Bacchilega notes, and possibly re-imagine it?

To provide a structure to the discussion of *Girls Made of Snow and Glass*, this chapter will use the AT709 breakdown of elements, comparing motifs between the young adult novel and its predecessor in order to understand how Bashardoust manipulates the framework for a modern audience. The first motif Aarne and Thompson reviews is "I. *Snow-White and her Stepmother*," which breaks down further into "(a) Snow-White has skin like snow and lips like blood. (b) A magic mirror tells her stepmother that Snow-White is more beautiful than she" (377). In the Grimm version, whose influence on the popular understanding of the story Tatar and others have related, these elements form themselves around a queen who,

[w]hile she was sewing and looking out at the snow, [...] pricked her finger with a needle, [causing] three drops of blood [to fall] onto the snow. The red looked so beautiful against the white snow that she thought to herself: "If only I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window frame." Soon thereafter she gave birth to a little girl, who was as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony, and she was called Snow White. The queen died after the child was born. (Grimm and Grimm 95)

Snow White's mother wishes for a child as beautiful as snow, blood, and ebony wood. Upon

giving birth to her desired daughter, the queen dies, and the king marries a woman who

was a beautiful lady, but proud and arrogant and could not bear being second to anyone in beauty. [...] [And, on the day her magic mirror declares:]

“My queen, you are the fairest one here,

But Snow White is a thousand times more fair than you!”

[...] [The Queen] trembled and turned green with envy. From that moment on, she hated Snow White, and whenever she set eyes on her, her heart turned as cold as stone. (Grimm and Grimm 95-96)

Desiring to remain the fairest of all, the stepmother becomes envious of her stepdaughter; an envy that turns to hatred. It is this last portion of the opening segment that critics Gilbert and Gubar point to as evidence of the King’s continuing presence in the tale.¹⁰ For Gilbert and Gubar, the voice in the magic mirror serves as the voice of the King and patriarchy, weighing the value of the Stepmother, and women, against that of the docile and dutiful daughter. Playing with this idea, writers, such as Angela Carter,¹¹ reframe the “Snow-White” narrative to undermine the masculine desires of beauty as found within the tale (Gilbert and Gubar 388-389).

Like Carter, Bashardoust subtly makes this patriarchal framework apparent, while reshaping the “Snow-White” framework to fit into a contemporary young adult novel. From the start of the text, the audience comes to understand the forces shaping Mina, the novel’s version of the Evil Queen. The reader learns, as a teenager, Mina’s father tells her ““Oh, but I do need you. I need that face of yours.’ [...] ‘You’ll marry someone highborn, and my place—*our* place—will be secure even if the king forgets his debt to me”” (Bashardoust 21). Mina’s father, Gregory, blatantly tells his daughter he needs her for her ‘face,’ her beauty, to secure a place for himself among the nobility, including her in that position only as a correction to his first comment. To persuade Mina to become his puppet, Gregory counters her protest, telling her

¹⁰ Written in 1979, Gilbert and Gubar prove outdated in relation to current feminist criticism. However, given this chapter focuses on how masculinity frames the “Snow White” tale, their thoughts on the King’s continuing presence in the story are valid.

¹¹ See Carter’s “Snow Child” (*The Bloody Chamber*)

because he replaced her ailing heart with a glass one, when she was a small child, “[...] [she] owe[s] [him] *everything*” and that:

“There’s no point fighting me on this, Mina. I understand how you function better than you do. You can rage and hate and despair and hope as well as anyone else, but love is something more complicated. Love requires a real heart, which you do not have, and so you cannot love, and you will never be loved, except” [...] “you have beauty, and beauty is more powerful than love. People can’t help themselves: they crave beauty. They will overlook anything, even a glass heart, for it. If they love you for anything, it will be for your beauty. But there’s nothing for either of us here. Come to court with me, and you’ll be the most beautiful lady there, the most envied, the most desired.” (Bashardoust 23, 22, 27-28)

For his own ends, Gregory has reduced his daughter to a commodity, her value based on her looks and what they can do for him. He works to convince her that, as a woman living with an inorganic heart, she has nothing left but the beauty society craves; a beauty he has a right to use for his needs because he saved her and she owes him; and, with no other choice, “Mina put her hand in his” when “[Gregory] reached his hand out for her in a gesture of reconciliation,” even “though she hated herself for it” (Bashardoust 28). Gregory, through mental abuse, has worked to shape his daughter into the woman who would stand before the mirror asking for the affirmation of her beauty because her beauty is all the world loves about her; she is destined to despise her future stepdaughter because the little princess will surpass her in the eyes of the king. Through literarily shaping her heart, metaphorically shaping her sense of identity, and reducing her to a commodity, Gregory has turned Mina into his, and patriarchy’s, ideal woman, docile, compliant (even when it goes against her wishes), and beautiful. This ideal, however, has the potential of shaping Mina into the woman who will compete with her future stepdaughter to remain the most favored in society’s eyes.

In a similar vein, men, and society, shape Lynet’s existence. Early in the novel, Lynet discusses her father’s expectations for her with Mina: “‘It’s just that...well, the others only talk

about how much I *look* like her, but Papa...I think he wants me to *be* like her in every way. He expects me to be sweet and gentle and—and—*delicate*” (Bashardoust 10). According to Lynet, her father expects her to act exactly like someone else, in this instance her dead mother, the former queen. Lynet cannot be Lynet; she must become ‘delicate,’ ‘sweet,’ and ‘gentle,’ the picture of Grimm’s Snow White and her father’s first wife. Strengthening this desired shape for Lynet, the reader later learns, along with Lynet:

Nadia shook her head. “You don’t understand. You have no mother, no father. You never did. You were created magically, out of snow.”

Lynet repeated the words to herself, but they didn’t make any sense. “What did you say?”

Nadia’s jaw tensed; now that the thrill of the secret had passed, she seemed to realize the full impact of what she was telling Lynet. “Your stepmother’s father—the magician—shaped you in your mother’s image out of snow and blood. You were made to resemble her exactly.” (Bashardoust 54)

Not only is Lynet expected to act like the dead queen, she was shaped exactly like her from the very beginning in order to fit expectations. Before Lynet is even old enough to be conscious of her own identity, her identity, and desired future, is literally set for her; an abuse that attempts to rob her of her own sense of self. Men have shaped her into the literal the carbon copy of the king’s idealized wife. No choice in her constructed genetics, Lynet lives in a world that sees her as her dead mother and expects her to be like her dead mother, her created form leaving little room for her views about herself and who she will become. Society has reduced her to the object of one man’s desires, hoping to strip her of any sense of self for the sake of the perfect woman.

The King’s desire to extend his patriarchal influence over his daughter creates a rift between Lynet and Mina. On the eve of Lynet’s sixteenth birthday, her father, King Nicholas, attempts to drive a wedge between Lynet and Mina, by telling Lynet

“When you were a child, you took to Mina at once. You doted on her. I made it very clear to both of you that I didn’t want her to take the place of your mother, or for her to have too much influence over you. And for a while, I thought she understood. But you two

have formed...an attachment. When you were a child, I could understand. But now that you're older, you don't need a stepmother anymore." He took her hands in his and gave her an imploring look. "I know you're at an age when you think you don't need a father's guidance, but I hope you still trust and respect my judgment. I'm thinking of your future, Lynet." (Bashardoust 115)

The king begins by hypocritically suggesting Lynet does not need the guidance of a mother figure anymore, though he expects her to continue seeking his advice. He also tells Lynet

"I know this may be difficult for you to understand now, but as you get older, you won't always be able to trust Mina to have your best interests at heart. You would be wise to distance yourself a little from her before that happens." (Bashardoust 115-116)

King Nicholas wants Lynet to believe the only person she can trust is him; only he, and, by extension men, have her best interest in mind. Later, the King, takes the South from Mina and gives it to Lynet to govern, leaving Lynet to choose between upsetting her father and asking forgiveness from Mina (Bashardoust 118-119). As Lynet approaches sixteen years of age, her father attempts to pull her away from the bond she shares with her stepmother and into the folds of his patriarchal influence. This has the potential of becoming an abusive relationship as he is trying to become the only voice Lynet can listen to. It is also forcing her to take the path of her dead mother, a path she has already stated she does not want for herself. Like the voice in the magic mirror, King Nicholas judges the value of the two women in his life, deciding to replace his second wife with his youthful and beautiful daughter and setting up the rivalry between the two women by reducing them both to commodities whose only value is beauty.

The second section of Aarne and Thompson's motif breakdown for AT709 is "II. *Snow-White's Rescue*," which contains the themes of "(a) [t]he stepmother orders a hunter to kill her, but he substitutes an animal's heart and saves her, or (b) she sends Snow-White to the house of the dwarfs (or robbers) expecting her to be killed. The dwarfs adopt her as sister" (Aarne and Thompson 377). For Snow White, in "Snow White," the pattern plays out much as Aarne and

Thompson's motif. After hearing her stepdaughter is more beautiful than she, the evil queen grows envious, until she can no longer stand looking at little Snow White. She orders a huntsman to take the child beyond the castle, kill her, and bring back her lungs and liver, which the evil queen later consumes. Snow White, whom the huntsman saves by letting her run away and then killing a boar for the requisite organs, meanwhile finds her way to the cottage of the dwarves. These seven dwarves allow her to stay, so long as she "keep house [...], cook, make the beds, wash, sew, knit, and keep everything neat and tidy" (Grimm and Grimm 96-97, 97). Consumed with the decision of the male voice in the mirror, the Evil Queen turns her jealousy into a murderous deed. She chooses to kill her young stepdaughter, instead of seeking solidarity because solidarity, according to Gilbert and Gubar, "is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy" as "women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other" (Gilbert and Gubar 399). Since female solidarity, within this framework, is difficult to achieve, Snow White's only saving grace is masculine desire. The huntsman lets Snow White live because she is beautiful, and the dwarves let her stay because she takes on the domestic duties expected of women in traditional patriarchal ideology (Grimm and Grimm 96, 98).

While King Nicholas's interference does not initially create a wall between Mina and Lynet, the voice of men still proves a driving force against solidarity. Following the King's hunting accident, Lynet goes to make amends with her stepmother and instead learns of Mina's glass heart. Panicked by Mina's lack of a heartbeat,

Lynet wrenched her hand away, her own heartbeat wild and frantic. There was so much defiance in Mina's voice that Lynet almost missed the fear hiding beneath. It was there, though, waiting for Lynet's next move, her next word. With each second that passed, Lynet knew she had to do or say something if she wanted to prove that she wouldn't look at Mina differently now, that she wasn't afraid of her, that she still loved her stepmother. But there was nothing to say, no words capable of breathing life into

Mina's heart, and the truth was that Lynet *was* afraid. Mina was a mystery to her now; how could she claim to know her stepmother's heart better than Mina did?

And so she could only watch as the hope on her stepmother's face slowly died away with each moment of silence. (Bashardoust 187)

Already worried about her future, should her father die, and set to run away, Lynet cannot bring herself to tell Mina how much she loves her. Lynet cannot bridge the gap created by her father. Her silence pushes Mina to the breaking point, and forces Mina to lose control and shatter all “the stained-glass windows [...]at once,” which sends Lynet running (188). Because Mina's father had made her believe she cannot be loved, a moment that was meant for reconciliation ends instead in division. Men have manipulated both women into distrusting each other in their attempt to mold both girls into the picture-perfect woman they desire. This distrust leads to fear and fear leads to an orchestrated rift that leaves Mina and Lynet on opposing sides of the “Snow White” paradigm. The toxic masculinity found in the novel has reinforced the importance of beauty and desirability. When the king decides to favor his daughter over Mina, he pits Mina against Lynet, leaving little room for either woman to seek reconciliation with the other. King Nicholas, along with Mina's father, have pushed both women into a competition to remain “fairest of them all” in the eyes of the king.¹²

Sections three and four of AT709 focus on the poisoning aspect of the “Snow White” tale type. Three breaks down as “[*t*]he poisoning. (a) [*t*]he stepmother now seeks to kill her by means of poisoned lace, (b) a poisoned comb and (c) a poisoned apple,” and four breaks down as “[*h*]elp of the Dwarfs. (a) The dwarfs succeed in reviving her from the first two poisonings but fail with the third. (b) They lay the maiden in a glass coffin” (Aarne and Thompson 377). In the Grimm's “Snow White,” parts three and four play out much as the index describes, each interweaving with the other. Learning her stepdaughter still lives, the Evil Queen disguises

¹² This is based on reader understanding of Mina's father based on earlier parts of the text

herself, goes to the cottage of the dwarves, tricks Snow White into letting her lace her up, and tugs the stays tight enough to stop Snow White's breathing. The dwarves cut the tight laces and revive Snow White. This forces the Evil Queen to try again with the poisoned comb. Again, the dwarves, by removing the comb from her hair, revive Snow White. After the first two attempts are thwarted, the stepmother tries one final time to kill her stepdaughter with the poisoned apple. Unable to determine the cause of Snow White's comatose state, the dwarves mourn her for three days and, instead of burying her, place her in a glass coffin on top of a mountain (Grimm and Grimm 98-101). Ironically, the Evil's Queen's murderous attempts transform Snow White into the quintessential passive object that patriarchy adores (Gilbert and Gubar 391, 391-392). Even as the Queen works to destroy her rival, she inadvertently gives Snow White more power over her by turning her into the perfect woman of masculine wishes, which saves her from the grave because she looks alive with her "beautiful red cheeks" (Grimm and Grimm 101).

Lynet and Mina undermine the patriarchal paradigm of the narrative. When Lynet goes on the run, she forms a version of herself out of snow to fool the castle guards into believing that she is dead. Upon completion, she feels "almost weightless, like a spirit leaving her weakened body behind. [She] was dead, just like her mother, and the girl who would emerge was someone new" (Bashardoust 209-211, 210). Though the circumstances of her exile are partially due to patriarchal machinations, Lynet designs her own metaphorical death in order to find a new life for herself. She also chooses when she will revive herself. Upon learning her father is dead,

She moved on from the fountain with new purpose. She had delayed this moment long enough, hiding away and trying to forget the ties that still pulled at her heart. She had been relieved to feel alone and untethered before, but now felt herself tumbling into that black and empty void that kept threatening to swallow her whole. And yet there was still one way out from the void—Mina. Mina was her only family now, and Lynet couldn't let her stepmother go until she knew there was no way to cure her.

No more distractions. No more chasing ghosts or dragging her feet. Tonight, under cover of darkness, she would break into that church. Tonight, she would become

Lynet again. (Bashardoust 247)

When Lynet revives from this figurative death, it is at her choosing, and not through a man or men's help as Grimm's dwarves help revive Snow White the first two times. However, after returning to the castle to reunite with Mina, Mina's father briefly takes back the shaping of the narrative after Mina refuses to play the role men have laid out for her, the role of the Evil Queen who poisons her stepdaughter in jealousy. Using a false Mina to poison Lynet, he lets Lynet fade away believing any chance of reconciliation with her stepmother is gone: "[t]his was Mina, standing in front of her, choosing to give her a bracelet coated in poison. Choosing to kill her" (Bashardoust 333-335, 325). Thwarted by a non-compliant Evil Queen, Gregory ensures the tale still plays out. He creates a duplicate Mina to carry out men's bidding. It is this fake Mina who poisons the beautiful princess. In this inert state, Lynet becomes the docile woman of masculine desire, just like Snow White in her glass coffin. Lynet's poisoning will later leave her with only one thought, "that any chance of reconciliation with her stepmother was lost—and that the only way to ensure her safety was to kill Mina" (351-352). While Lynet briefly takes control of her own story, Gregory tries to reinforce the male domination of the narrative. He directs a puppet Mina to poison Lynet, just as the Evil Queen in "Snow White" is driven by the male voice in the mirror to destroy her stepdaughter. In making Lynet believe her stepmother has poisoned her, Gregory has insured that the narrative will play out without female solidarity. The only choice Lynet appears to have left is killing the woman who tried to kill her, just like Snow White will eventually kill the Evil Queen.

The concluding element for the "Snow White" motif/tale type focuses on the awakening of Snow White and the punishment of the Wicked Stepmother. This portion of the Aarne and Thompson breakdown is "V. *Her Revival*. A prince sees her and resuscitates her. The stepmother

is made to dance herself to death in red hot shoes” (377). While staying with the dwarves, a prince finds Snow White laying in state within her glass coffin. He asks for the coffin from the dwarves, for Snow White’s beauty so moves him he wishes to “cherish her as if she were [his] beloved” (Grimm and Grimm 101). After the dwarves relent and give him the coffin, his servants stumble and jolt the piece of poisoned apple from Snow White’s throat, reviving her. Snow White and the Prince marry and invite the Evil Queen to the wedding, where red hot iron slippers are waiting for her to dance herself to death (101-102). Gilbert and Gubar view the Prince’s plea to have Snow White given to him as home décor turns Snow White into the perfect woman in patriarchy’s eyes; she is “an idealized image of herself, and [...] has [...] proven herself to be patriarchy’s ideal woman, the perfect candidate for Queen” (392). However, as Gilbert and Gubar add,

What does the future hold for Snow White [...]? When her Prince becomes a King and she becomes a Queen, what will her life be like? Trained to domesticity by her dwarf instructors, will she sit in the window, gazing out on the wild forest of her past, and sigh, and sew, and prick her finger, and conceive a child white as snow, red as blood, black as ebony wood? Surely, fairest of them all, Snow White has exchanged one glass coffin for another, delivered from the prison where the Queen put her only to be imprisoned in the looking glass from which the King’s voice speaks daily. There is, after all, no female model for her in this tale except the “good” (dead) mother and her living avatar the “bad” mother. And if Snow White escaped her first glass coffin by her goodness, her passivity and docility, her only escape from her second glass coffin, the imprisoning mirror, must evidently be through “badness,” through plots and stories, duplicitous schemes, wild dreams, fierce fictions, mad impersonations. [...] She will become a murderess bent on self-slaughter implicit in her murderous attempts against the life of her own child. Finally, in fiery shoes that parody the costumes of femininity as surely as the comb and stays she herself contrived, she will do a silent terrible death-dance out of the story, the looking glass, the transparent coffin of her own image. Her only deed, this death will imply, can be a deed of death, her only action the pernicious action of self-destruction. (392-393)

For Gilbert and Gubar, the ending of the “Snow White” story reaffirms the image of the docile woman and when that docile woman becomes a mother in a patriarchal tale the narrative repeats itself. Snow White will become Queen, give birth, become jealous, try to murder her child, and

exit the story dancing in red hot slippers just as she once forced her stepmother to do. She will be trapped within the King's narrative, the final ending of her own tale proving one of jealousy and violence, instead of the potential for reconciliation with her own daughter because patriarchy demands only one can be "fairest of them all."

In *Girls Made of Snow and Glass*, on the other hand, Snow White's revival serves to reclaim the story from the masculine framework and saves not just Lynet, but also Mina. Confronting her father as she races up the stairs to protect Lynet, Mina begins to understand the machinations he has used to manipulate her life; she comes to understand:

He knew that if he raised his daughter without love, and that if he told her often enough that she wasn't capable of it, she would soon start to prove him right, if only because it was all she'd ever known. He had reshaped her in his own image, not by taking out her heart, but by convincing her that she was as unable to love as he was. (Bashardoust 332-334, 334)

Mina finally sees the frame her father has used to configure her life; she figuratively sees the values and ideals her father, and by extension patriarchy, has used to almost turn her into this story's version of the Evil Queen. Upon realizing her father's plans to take Lynet's heart to replace his ailing one, Mina confronts Gregory before the court and, even with a cracking heart, she finds the will "[...] *to keep fighting for [...] for Lynet*" and kills her father with a shard of glass (Bashardoust 342-343, 346). Determined not to let her father win, Mina takes control of and subverts the standard narrative. Even if it means her own end, it is an end she will shape, an end she will ensure comes from her own hands and power. If she is to die as the supposed Evil Queen, then she is taking the shaper down with her in an attempt to stop the cycle of physical and mental violence patriarchy has placed her and Lynet in.

Meanwhile, Lynet's awakening begins by following the traditional narrative but is reshaped into a happy ending for both Lynet and Mina. Coming to in her family's crypt, Lynet

seeks her stepmother, dagger in hand, only to find a scene she could not imagine, leading her to realize, as the court looks on,

[that] [t]hey were leaning forward eagerly, waiting for their newly resurrected princess to slay her usurper and take her rightful place on her mother's throne. This was an era they would all willingly forget, and perhaps one day, years and years from now, Lynet would start to forget some of the details too. She would forget that she had loved her stepmother, forget the nights they had spent in front of the mirror, sharing secrets. She would forget that her father had tried to push Mina away from her, forget the part that Gregory had played and that it was probably his blood on Mina's hands. She would forget the way Mina looked now. All she would remember was the story that would be passed down by those watching: the cruel stepmother, and the wronged princess who had returned from the dead to strike her down and take back what was hers. (Bashardoust 349, 354, 355)

Just as Mina has come to realize and resist the role she has been shaped for, Lynet has come to understand the story society wants her to play. The story of the princess who slays her wicked stepmother and becomes the queen men, and society, want. In understanding this, Lynet decides,

She didn't want their story to end this way. And more than that, she knew she had the power to change it. They both had the power to change it. She remembered what Mina had told her once, and those words now resounded in her mind, in her bones, in every heartbeat: *You'll find something that's yours alone. And when you do, don't let anyone take it from you.*

She thought she heard someone calling her name behind her, but she ignored it, ignored everyone who wanted to take Mina away from her.[...] (356)

Lynet decides to end the cycle of patriarchal violence that has controlled her and Mina. The cycle that sees the old queen, the stepmother, grow jealous of her stepdaughter and try to kill her. The cycle that sets the wronged princess against her stepmother because patriarchy has left her no choice in the fight to remain the king's favorite. After helping her stepmother heal her own cracking heart and being crowned queen, Lynet later gives Mina the South to govern. She then finishes breaking Sybil's curse,¹³ a process started earlier in the novel by Mina, knowing "that this would be their legacy, the story they had chosen—two girls made of snow and glass who

¹³ A secondary plot in the story about a long-ago queen whose grief over the death of her child caused the North to become permanently entombed in snow (Bashardoust 38)

were more than their origins, two queens who had come together to reshape their world” (370). In changing their fates, Lynet provides a new frame for the story of “Snow White,” one where the Evil Queen lives and divides her power with her stepdaughter and where both women work to break the cycle of grief and violence with their power. By recognizing the framework of the mirror, as Bacchilega relates, Lynet and Mina subvert the patriarchal values and ideals reflected in the mirror and rewrite the story into one of female solidarity and empowerment.

Even the Fae Cry¹⁴: Building Understanding for Mental Health Patients through Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *A Court of Mist and Fury*

Published in 2015, Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* is the story of Feyre, a human woman who finds herself in the home of the high fae Tamlin as penance for killing one of his subjects.¹⁵ A "Beauty and the Beast" re-telling, the novel follows much of the trajectory associated with "The Search of the Lost Husband" tale type (i.e. Girl falls in love with beast. A taboo is broken and the girl must fulfil tasks in order to get husband back) (Uther 494-495). Maas's sequel, *A Court of Mist and Fury* (2016), explores the outcome of the events in *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (2015) and builds on the world and mythos Maas has created. Though marketed in the Young Adult section, some consider both novels and their conclusion New Adult. No matter which distinction a reader places the texts under, there is no denying the content of the novels are markedly explicit (i.e. sex scenes are more detailed and violence is not glossed over). It is this explicit nature of the works, however, that allows the gritty nature of post-traumatic stress disorder to be explored in detail. Through the trials and tribulations Feyre faces as part of the "Search for the Lost Husband" tale type, Maas is able to shed light upon the horrors trauma can bring to the human psyche, create empathy for those suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental illnesses, and open a conversation that most fantasy authors avoid.

While the trauma fictional characters experience in a text may not have occurred in the real world, the consequences of that trauma nevertheless can explore the real world implications of traumatic events on the psyche of an individual, including the reality that is post-traumatic stress

¹⁴ A nod to lyrics in the song "Homecoming Queen" by Kelsea Ballerini

¹⁵ Fae, in the world of Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, are beings that have magical abilities and are generally feared by humans.

disorder. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th edition (DSM-5)*, “[t]he essential feature of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events” (American Psychiatric Association [APA] 274). For the APA, PTSD is a mental disorder characterized by a set of symptoms that appear in patients who experience trauma. To diagnose an individual with PTSD, the APA lays out a set of criteria for psychologists to review. These criteria are as follows

- A) Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence
- B) Presence of one (or more) of the following intrusion symptom associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred
- C) Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred
- D) Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred
- E) Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred
- F) Duration of the disturbance
- G) The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning
- H) The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., medication, alcohol) or another medical condition. (APA 271-272)

Within these eight categories are numerous variables and examples, which potential patients need to at least fit one or more of, depending on the category, in order to reach a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. Beyond the initial list, the APA provides further criterion for adding “dissociative symptoms” (271-272). When diagnosing either real or fictional victims of trauma with PTSD, psychologists or literary scholars need to consider a variety of symptoms linked to the traumatic experience or experiences and how these symptoms express themselves in the individual.

In the novel *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, Feyre faces several trials that place her life and the life of others in danger. She faces dark dungeons, a giant flesh-eating worm, a pit with spikes ready to crush her and Lucien, and forced murder. While three of these trials prove life or death

and Feyre does receive assistance during or after each one, it is the third trail (based on extrapolation from commentary in the subsequent novel) that appears to affect her the most.

After stabbing the first fae youth, she speaks to her emotional state:

My bloody dagger clacked on the marble floor as I stumbled back several steps.
[...]
I wanted to get out of my body; I had to escape the stain of what I'd done; I had to get out—I couldn't endure the blood on my hands, the sticky warmth between my fingers. (Maas Chapter 43)

As Feyre faces the second youth she is to kill, she continues to relate her feelings towards the task:

Silent tears slid down my face and neck, where they dampened the filthy collar of my tunic. As she spoke, I knew I would be forever barred from that immortal land. I knew that whatever Mother she meant would never embrace me. In saving Tamlin, I was to damn myself.
[...]

As I lifted the ash dagger, something inside me fractured so completely that there would be no hope of ever repairing it. No matter how many years passed, no matter how many times I might try to paint her face. (Maas Chapter 43)

Upon killing the second fae, she adds:

And maybe one more after that—maybe one more swing, up and inward and into my own heart.
It would be a relief—a relief to end it by my own hand, a relief to die rather than face this, what I'd done. (Maas Chapter 43)

With each death, Feyre appears to feel strong emotional turmoil. She is taking another life and it is weighing down her soul to the point that she begins to contemplate her own death as a release. Though circumstances save the final fae (revealed to be Feyre's lover Tamlin), Feyre's trauma continues. Enraged Amarantha begins torturing her, ensuring she stays awake for all of it so "that [Feyre] felt everything, [...] that [Feyre] screamed every time a bone broke," until, due to her connection to Rhysand, Feyre sees her own body, "prostrate on the ground, [her] head snapped to one side at a horribly wrong angle" (Maas Chapter 43, Chapter 44, Chapter 45). Having escaped death during her first two trails and faced the other machinations of Amarantha's devising, Feyre

still experiences torture and death at the hands of Amarantha (she is resurrected through the stories magic system, however). It is this combination of earlier trials and tribulations, the emotional pain of killing the fae youth, and her own torture and death that qualify under the DSM-5's criterion A. Feyre is the direct recipient of the trauma and, in some ways, a witness to her trauma through the mental link, A.1 and A.2 respectively (A.P.A. 271).

Following the events of Amarantha's court, Feyre faces several distressing psychological and physiological symptoms. At the start of *A Court of Mist and Fury*, Feyre experiences a dream sequence, which returns her to her time spent under Amarantha's tyranny:

There was blood everywhere.
It was an effort to keep a grip on the dagger as my blood-soaked hand trembled.
As I fractured bit by bit while the sprawled corpse of the High Fae youth cooled on the marble floor.
I couldn't let go of the blade, couldn't move from my place before him.
"Good," Amarantha purred from her throne. "Again." (Maas 1)

As the dream continues and guards remove the hood of the next victim, Feyre finds:

I knew the face that stared up at me.
[...]
Knew the hollowness, the despair, the corruption that leaked from that face.
My hands didn't tremble as I angled the dagger.
As I gripped the fine-boned shoulder, and gazed into that hated face—*my* face.
And plunged the ash dagger into my awaiting heart. (Maas 2)

Upon jolting awake, Feyre experiences further distress:

[...][W]hen I hadn't been able to tell the darkness of my chambers from the endless nights of Amarantha's dungeons, when the cold sweat coating me felt like the blood of those faeries, I'd hurtled for the bathing room.
I'd been here for fifteen minutes now, waiting for the retching to subside, for the lingering tremors to spread apart and fade, like ripples in a pool. (Maas 5)

A few moments later, after seeking comfort next to a partly open window, Feyre nearly succumbs to her nightmares once more:

This was real. I had survived; I'd made it out.
Unless it was a dream—just a fever-dream in Amarantha's dungeons, and I'd

awaken back in that cell, and—
 I curled my knees to my chest. Real. *Real.*
 I mouthed the words.
 I kept mouthing them until I could loosen my grip on my legs and lift my head.
 (Maas 6)

Nightmares follow Feyre, day and night (Maas 5). Some, like the one described above, return her to the moment when she is forced to kill fae youth at Amarantha's command. Disgusted by her own actions (a topic discussed in greater detail later), her dream sees her plunging the final dagger into her own heart. Waking holds no immediate source of comfort for Feyre following such nightmares. She initially cannot tell the difference between reality and past, forcing her to empty her stomach and fight to remind herself that her safety is real and that she is no longer facing the terror of Amarantha's torture.

These symptoms match with section B in the DSM-5's criteria for Post-traumatic stress disorder. While only one symptom under section B is required to begin diagnosing a patient with PTSD, Feyre appears to suffer from at least three. In dreaming that she is once again forced to kill the young fae, Feyre, at least once, demonstrates B.2: "[r]ecurrent distressing dreams in which the content and/or affect of the dream are related to the traumatic event(s)," or dreams that reflect the past trauma; in this case, being forced to murder others (A.P.A. 271). Feyre's description of being unable to tell the difference between present and past surroundings and her brief uncertainty about reality suggests she is suffering from B.3: "[d]issociative reactions (e.g. flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring" (A.P.A 271). When faced with reminders of her trauma, Feyre has moments where she cannot tell past from present, briefly making her believe events are recurring; in this case, sweat feeling like blood, the darkness becoming the dungeons, and her mind trying to trick her into believing her current safety is merely a farce. The vomiting, cold sweats, and tremors, she suffers from fall

under B.5: “[m]arked physiological reactions to internal or external cues that symbolized or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s)” (A.P.A 271). Her body physically reacts to reminders of her trauma. Even with the events of *A Court of Thorns and Roses* behind her, the trauma continues to traumatize Feyre.

In *A Court of Mist and Fury*, Feyre attempts to avoid various reminders of her trauma. During an early conversation with Ianthe, a High Priestess residing her fiancé’s court, Feyre finds herself confronted with the seemingly benign question about the color of roses for her upcoming wedding:

When I didn’t respond to her gentle reprimand, she said, “Have you given any thought to what color roses? White? Pink? Yellow? Red—”

“Not red.”

I hated that color. More than anything. Amarantha’s hair, all that blood, the welts on Clare Beddor’s broken body, spiked to the walls of Under the Mountain—” (Maas 17)

Feyre, an artist, vehemently shuts down the choice of a primary color; her immediate reaction, as portrayed through divisively cutting off Ianthe, and her subsequent narration, which trails off as her mind wanders back to her trauma, suggests, for Feyre, red has become a trigger that she would avoid if possible. This trigger and avoidance behavior continues:

Lucien crossed his arms, his metal eye narrowing, and shook the red hair from his face.

I had to look away for a moment.

Amarantha’s hair had been darker—and her face a creamy white, not at all like the sun-kissed gold of Lucien’s skin.

I studied the stables behind him instead. (Maas 26)

Confronted with the red hair of a fellow fey, Feyre looks away and seek contrasts between Lucien and Amarantha in an apparent attempt to avoid remembering past events. She, again, avoids red at her wedding:

My vision narrowed on him, on my High Lord, his wide eyes glistening as I stepped onto the soft grass, white rose petals scattered down it—

And red ones.

Like drops of blood amongst the white, red petals had been sprayed across the path ahead.

I forced my gaze up, to Tamlin, his shoulders back, head high. (Maas 40-41)

Faced with the red rose petals, Feyre forces herself to look away to avoid the image of blood entering her mind's eye. For Feyre, red has become a reminder of the bloodshed and individuals tied to the trauma she experienced. To keep distressing memories away, she now actively works to avoid the color, if possible.

This behavior correlates with post-traumatic stress disorder, section C, in the DSM-5.

According to the A.P.A., patients suffering with PTSD often show “[p]ersistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s) [...]” which includes either:

1. Avoidance of or efforts to avoid distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s).
- [or]
2. Avoidance of or efforts to avoid external reminders (people, places, conversations, activities, objects, situations) that arouse distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s). (271)

For individuals suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder, certain stimuli become too unbearable, forcing the patient to actively avoid those stimuli. Feyre, having experienced blood and death as a part of her trauma, finds red, the color of blood flowing from fatal wounds, triggering. She noticeably makes efforts to lessen her experiences with the external cue, going so far as to hate the color itself.

Following the trials found in the first novel, Feyre develops negative perceptions of herself. From the opening moments, she relates “[m]aybe I’d always been broken and dark inside” (Maas 1). Having gone through a traumatic experience, Feyre sees herself as a horrible (‘dark’) broken individual. This expands during a conversation with another fae about her upcoming wedding:

“Congratulations on tomorrow,” Bron said, grinning. “A fitting end, eh?”

A fitting end would have been me in a grave, burning in hell. (Maas 35)

Not only does she see herself as horrible and broken, Feyre believes she deserves death and hellfire, not love and commitment, for the part she played within her traumatic experience. Even as she walks down the aisle, Feyre does not push aside her negative beliefs about herself:

So unaware of the true extent of how broken and dark I was inside. How unfit I was to be clothed in white when my hands were so filthy.

Everyone was thinking it. They had to be.

[...]

I was a murderer and a liar. (Maas 41)

Nor does Feyre consider herself worthy of her perspective partner: “Maybe I’d wait until the mating bond snapped into place, until I knew for sure it couldn’t be some mistake, that...that I was worthy of him” (Maas 51). With memories of the trials following her, Feyre turns against herself. She no longer sees herself as a whole individual, a good person, or someone worthy of love. Despite being a victim, Feyre believes she deserves only death and eternal punishment for the part she played; her trauma robbing her sense of self-worth.

Along with a diminished sense of self, Feyre experiences a loss of interest and appears to now lack some positive emotional experiences. Early in *A Court of Mist and Fury*, Feyre relates her feelings about painting:

“I’d only set foot in that room—my old painting studio—once, when I’d first returned.

And all those paintings, all the supplies, all that blank canvas waiting for me to pour out stories and feelings and dreams...I’d hated it.

I’d walked out moments later and hadn’t returned since.

I’d stopped cataloging color and feeling and texture, stopped noticing it. I could barely look at the paintings hanging inside the manor.” (Maas 13)

Potentially a by-product of, or in conjunction with, her inability to encounter the color red without being reminded of her traumatic experience, Feyre no longer desires to paint the world around her. In the time since her traumatic events, she admits to only entering her studio once

and finding herself hating everything within the room, everything that she once appeared to enjoy. This disdain or disinterest pushes Feyre to exit the room nearly upon entering it and lose interest in activities she once participated in, namely activities generally associated with a painter. Later in the text, Feyre adds, “Alone in my bedroom, I realized I couldn’t remember the last time I’d truly laughed” (Mass 37). Besides a loss of interest in favored activities, Feyre appears to no longer express true joy, suggesting her trauma has affected her emotional state.

As with prior symptoms, the above descriptions fall under the DSM-5’s criteria for Post-traumatic stress disorder, namely section D. Feyre’s self-hatred following her time spent under Amarantha fulfills D.2, or “[p]ersistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world,” and, through extrapolation, likely fits D.4, or a “[p]ersistent negative emotional state (e.g. fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame),” as a hatred of self is likely born from shame or horror, etc. (A.P.A. 272). Her reactions to her art and studio fit D.5: a “[m]arkedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities” (A.P.A 272). For Feyre, art and creating art, has become horrid to her, keeping her from participating in an activity that she once enjoyed. While another extrapolation, her admission to not truly laughing, since her time in Amarantha’s lair, falls under D.7: “[p]ersistent inability to experience positive emotions” (A.P.A. 272). Though only a passing mention, her potential lack of some semblance of joy, in this case laughter, suggests some positive emotions maybe rare for Feyre at this time. For Feyre, the trials at the end of *A Court of Thorns and Roses* have robbed her of a positive view of herself, her laughter, and her enjoyment of art, exacerbating her PTSD.

In *A Court of Mist and Fury*, Feyre experiences restless sleep, a heightened sense of vigilance, and a startle response that appears extreme. While referencing her fiancé’s behavior, Feyre relates, “I knew similar dreams chased him from his slumber as often as I fled from mine”

(Maas 8). Though speaking of Tamlin's nightly distress, her comment nevertheless explores her own aftereffects following the trauma she experienced. By suggesting she often flees from her own nightmares, Feyre speaks to her own nights of fitful sleep brought on by her own nightmares of the past. Even as Feyre faces restless nights, her days find her taking extra precaution, despite, by all appearances, the immediate danger being over:

At least Tamlin didn't object to the dagger I kept at my side, hanging from a jeweled belt. Lucien had gifted both to me—the dagger during the months before Amarantha, the belt in the weeks after her downfall, when I'd carried the dagger, along with many others, everywhere I went. You might as well look good if you're going to arm yourself to the teeth, he'd said.

But even if stability reigned for a hundred years, I doubted I'd ever awaken one morning and not put on the knife. (Maas 13)

This hypervigilance co-exists with a heightened reaction to startling moments:

He'd appeared moments before, a healthy distance away, and if I hadn't known better, I might have thought it was because he didn't want to startle me. As if he'd known about the time Tamlin had crept up behind me, and panic had hit me so hard I'd knocked him on his ass with a punch to his stomach. (Maas 66)

Despite living in a time of seeming peace, Feyre appears to gain little respite from the traumatic experiences she faced. Her sleep is plagued by nightmares that pull her awake and she cannot face the day without arming herself with multiple daggers that, by all accounts, seem unnecessary at the time. On top of this vigilance, when abruptly come upon, without announcement, sudden panic can lead Feyre to take extreme measures, like punching an individual in the stomach for merely creeping up on her.

As with prior symptoms, the above descriptions sit within the A.P.A.'s criterion for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Restless sleep, caused by nightmares, appears to fit E.6 "[s]leep disturbance (e.g. difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep)" (A.P.A. 272). Feyre shows hypervigilance (E.4) when she chooses to carry multiple daggers, despite the apparent danger being far behind her. She shows an "[e]xaggerated startle response" when she immediately

punches Tamlin in the stomach when he sneaks up on her (272). For Feyre, the danger does not appear to have dissipated, following her time under Amarantha. The trauma has pushed her to restless sleep and keeps her proverbially looking over her shoulder.

To fully diagnose a patient with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, the DSM-5's final three major criterion are sections F, G, and H, which for the sake of this paper will be treated together. Criteria F considers duration of symptoms (>1 month). G asks whether these symptoms cause "clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning," while F considers whether the symptoms are or are not caused other forces (drugs, alcohol, or "another medical condition") (A.P.A. 272). Given the nature of most novels is to cover the most pertinent information to drive a story forward, these three criteria prove the hardest to pin down. While Feyre does note that three months have passed "since Under the Mountain," and that her nightmares, both "asleep and waking," have been on going, she does not give an exact timeline for when the symptoms started, leaving the reader to assume duration and placing a question mark over F (Maas 5). G is a judgment call for diagnosing Feyre as she does not specifically state these symptoms have markedly affected certain areas of her life; however, loss of interest in hobbies, color avoidance, and nights of vomiting, among other symptoms suggests parts of her life have likely been significantly affected by her trauma. Again, because the reader is not given Feyre's medical history and there does not appear to be any direct reference to substance abuse, the reader has to assume that the above symptoms have been caused by the events in Amarantha's lair.

Sarah J. Maas, in the first two novels of her *A Court of Thorns and Roses* trilogy, uses the element of trials found in the "Beauty and the Beast" search for the lost husband tale-type to explore the symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Feyre, the trilogy's main protagonist

and beauty character, undergoes horrific trials and tribulations that, in the second novel, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, come to the surface as, in many ways, debilitating symptoms from the trauma she received in the first novel of the trilogy. Recurrent nightmares jolt her awake, leave her momentarily uncertain of her surroundings, and often send her rushing to the bathroom. A sudden abhorrence of the color red that pushes her to avoid the color in order to avoid memories of the traumatic event. Negative emotions causing her to frequently condemn herself and find little joy. And, an increased vigilance and extreme startle response that leaves Feyre armed to the teeth and jumpy. While the second novel does appear to go on to show recovery and a strengthened sense of self for Feyre (another important psychological element), the beginning chapters, along with the trials of the first book, build empathy for those suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder and open up the conversation about mental health, in general, and the challenges all mental health patients' have faced, currently face, and will face in the real world.

A Sci-fi Pandemic: Exploring Discrimination and Dehumanization through Medical Injustices in Meyer's *The Lunar Chronicles*

Marissa Meyer's *The Lunar Chronicles* (2012-2015) is a collection of four primary novels, several short stories, and a single novella centered around a futuristic Earth threatened by the Lunar Queen, Levana, and the band of heroes and heroines bent on stopping her. Each of the four main texts retell a fairytale, alongside the overarching plot, with each novel's focused female and male protagonist severing as the leads of their fairytale retelling; the four tales retold are "Cinderella" (*Cinder*), "Little Red Riding Hood" (*Scarlet*), "Rapunzel" (*Cress*), and "Snow White" (*Winter*). Serving as modern retellings, set in a future version of the current world, Meyer's novels allows the reader to experience and empathize with real world issues, such as discrimination, dehumanization, and the struggles of the lower classes, through the novels' protagonists and the situations they face. In raising these issues in her works, Meyer, intentionally or not, pushes readers to acknowledge what happens when real world societies' devalue an individual or population and to rethink today's practices and how they might affect those populations most vulnerable to the loss of their human rights.

Science Fictions allows for a variety of theoretical interpretations, from cultural studies to feminist and theory, with the most productive being Marxist theory. According to Mark Bould, "Fantastic fictions of various sorts and across multiple media can easily be read as expressions of— and are sometimes concerned with—capitalist modernity [...] [adding¹⁶] SF world-building is typically distinguished from other fictional world-building, whether fantastic or not, by the manner in which it offers, however unintentionally, a snapshot of the structures of capital" (3-4). Since the 1970s, Science Fiction has seen various literary criticisms applied to its body of

¹⁶ Bould does include a short caveat "(This is not always or exclusively the case, and may often be unintentional; and it is important to recognise that it is a difference of degree rather than of kind)" (Bould 4).

works, a list that includes Marxism. Bould's reasoning, for Science Fiction's relationship with the above theories, lies in the genre's ability to view the world differently within its pages. For Bould, Science Fiction is not the only 'fantastic fiction' that can consider 'capitalist modernity,' but does separate itself from other types of fantastical world-building through intentionally, or not, providing pictures of capitalist structures. These capitalist structures are clearly present in the health care systems found in the world of *The Lunar Chronicles*.

In Meyer's *The Lunar Chronicles*, death may prove the great equalizer; however, dying highlights the realities of class distinction. Having contracted letumosis,¹⁷ at the start of book one, the Emperor of the Eastern Commonwealth is in quarantine at the palace; his surroundings are described as follows:

The room was quarantined on the seventh floor of the palace's research wing, but the emperor had been made as comfortable as possible. Numerous screens lined the walls so he might enjoy music and entertainment, so he might be read to. His favorite flowers had been brought in droves from the gardens—lilies and chrysanthemums filling the otherwise sterile room. The bed was dressed in the finest silks the Commonwealth had to offer. (Meyer, *Cinder*, 105)

When the Emperor requires water, "the android roll[s] to the emperor's side and lift[s] his backrest, guiding a glass of water to his lips and wiping away the dribble with a white cloth" (*Cinder*, 106). If he coughs up blood, "[t]he med-droid held a towel to his mouth," and if the Emperor is in any physical discomfort, "the med-droid [...] fill[s] the IV with clear liquid, something to ease the pain" (*Cinder* 106). The Emperor of the Eastern Commonwealth (Emperor Rikan) faces the disease in the lap of luxury. He is given a variety of entertainment, his favorite

¹⁷ The pandemic that exists in the world of *The Lunar Chronicles* (Meyer, *Cinder*, 169)

flowers, and the best silks of his country. Every need is catered to and is able, thanks to safety glass, to visit with his son, while “[...]most people don’t get to see their loved ones when they’re taken away” (*Cinder* 106). Money and individual value allows one person to progress through a disease in comfort. Wealthy and the head of a country, the Emperor receives exemplary health care as compared to the rest of his people.

Though the masses receive treatment for the deadly disease, questions of quality remain. When Cinder goes to visit her ailing stepsister Peony, the first thing she notices is “[t]he stench of excrement and rot reach[ing] out to her as she stepped into the warehouse” (*Cinder* 145). As she continues into the building, Cinder notes:

It was cooler inside, the concrete floor untouched by the sun. Opaque green plastic covered a thin row of windows near the high ceilings, swathing the building in a dingy haze. Gray lightbulbs hummed overhead, but they did little to dispel the darkness.

Hundreds of beds were lined up between the distant walls covered in mismatched blankets—donations and scraps. She was glad to have brought a nice one for Peony. Most of the beds sat empty. This quarantine had been hastily constructed in just the past weeks as the sickness crept closer to the city. Still, the flies had already caught on and filled the room with buzzing.

The few patients Cinder passed were sleeping or staring blankly up at the ceiling, their skin covered in a blue-black rash. Those who still had their senses were hunkered over portscreens—their last connection to the outside world. Glossy eyes looked up, following Cinder as she hurried by.

More med-droids moved between the beds, supplying food and water, but none of them stopped Cinder. (*Cinder* 145-146)

While the Emperor rests in opulence, every need catered to, those of humbler means rest in abject squalor. The smell of human waste and decay fills the building enough to reach the entrance. Those dying are dying in depressing darkness, huddled together in rags to keep warm, with flies rather than family for visitors. Even with potential mitigating circumstances taken into consideration (number of infected, rate of spread, time for preparation, etc.), the majority of the population receives substandard care as compared to the Emperor. Despite both receiving some type of treatment from med-droids, the emperor can afford to die surrounded by flowers, has

numerous avenues for entertainment, as well as the finest silks. In contrast, the poor die surrounded by stench, darkness, and second-hand blankets.

Wealth and value factor into the decision of who will get any potential cure first. Upon learning she is immune to letumosis, Cinder successfully bargains for her freedom and monetary assistance. However, when she bargains for the life of her stepsister Peony, requesting Peony be the first to receive any possible antidote, she gets a drastically different response:

This time, the doctor's gaze faltered. He turned away and paced to the holograph, rubbing his hands down the front of his lab coat. "*That*, I'm afraid I cannot promise."

She squeezed her fists together. "Why not?"

"Because the emperor must be the first to receive the antidote." His eyelids crinkled with sympathy. "But I *can* promise your sister will be second." (Meyer, *Cinder*, 103)

Instead of agreeing to Cinder's request, Dr. Erland promises only that her stepsister will get any future antidote after the Emperor. When it comes to possible cures, status appears to win out over the masses. As the head of a government, the Emperor's life appears to hold more value over that of a young civilian; *he* must come first, not a representative of his people, because *he* is worth more than those who have less, creating a distinct difference in how treatment is administered between rich and poor. The greater an individual's value the more likely he or she will get a cure.

Even in death, wealth and value dictate treatment. Emperor Rikan's body is treated with dignity. By contrast, when the plague victim Sacha dies, an android cuts into her arm as Cinder watches:

"What are you doing to her?" she [Cinder] asked again. [...]

"Removing her ID chip," said the android.

"Why?"

The visor flashed again, and the android returned its focus to Sacha's wrist. "She has no more use for it." The med-droid traded the scalpel for tweezers, and Cinder heard the subtle click of metal on metal. She grimaced as the android extracted the small chip. Its protective plastic coating glistened scarlet.

"But...don't you need it to identify the body?"

The android dropped the chip into a bed of dozens of other bloodied chips.

It drew the tattered blanket over Sacha's unblinking eyes. Instead of answering her question, it said simply, "I have been programmed to follow instructions." (Meyer, *Cinder*, 138; 153)

Cinder later learns "[b]ecause it is difficult making a living without [an ID chip][...]" the ID chips of poor plague victims are removed and sold on the black market for profit (*Cinder* 169). Unlike Emperor Rikan, Sacha's body does not receive respect. Instead, her arm is cut open, and her identity removed and dropped into a collection of others to be sold on the black market. Part of the masses, her value only appears to lie with her death, where her identity is taken from her to line the pockets of those who prey on the poor and unfortunate. Emperor Rikan exists in a world able to protect his identity in death and give his body the respect it is due. In contrast, the masses, represented by Sacha, exist in a world where an individual's worth on the blackmarket trumps respect for the individual and his or her body and identity.

Class discrimination is not the only issue found in the novels. Discrimination in relation to medical research adds to the social and ethical questions posed within the texts. In the real world, when it comes to medical and psychological research, the *Belmont Report* lays out the framework for testing on human subjects. It lays out three principles of guidance "respect for persons, beneficence and justice" (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR] 4). Of these three principles, respect and justice are the most relevant to discussions of Meyer's *Lunar Chronicles*. The overall understanding of "[r]espect for persons incorporates at least two basic ethical convictions:"

first, that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection. The principle of respect for person thus divides into two separate moral requirements: the requirement to acknowledge autonomy and the requirement to protect those with diminished autonomy. (NCPHSBBR 4-5)

According to the report, to protect potential test subjects individuals should be considered agents

capable of acting of their own accord. For individuals whose ability to act of their own free will is compromised, the report notes those persons have the right to protection. Justice, as laid out in the *Belmont Report*, consists of understanding “injustice occurs when some benefit to which a person is entitled is denied without good reason or when some burden is imposed unduly.

Another way of conceiving the principle of justice is that equals ought to be treated equally” (NCPHSBBR 8). Within the context of the *Belmont Report*, when an individual does not receive an entitled benefit or faces undue hardship in accordance with participation, researchers have committed an injustice. Meyer’s *Lunar Chronicles* highlights the violation of both the principle of respect for person and the principle of justice, which are highly relevant in the 21st century.

In *Cinder*, the cyborg draft calls attention to the lack of autonomy given to discriminated individuals and the loss of equal treatment. Early in the novel, the narrator relates:

The cyborg draft had been started by some royal research team a year ago. Every morning, a new ID number was drawn from the pool of so many thousand cyborgs who resided in the Eastern Commonwealth. Subjects had been carted in from provinces as far-reaching as Mumbai and Singapore to act as guinea pigs for the antidote testing. It was made out to be some sort of honor, giving your life for the good of humanity, but it was really just a reminder that cyborgs were not like everyone else. Many of them had been given a second chance at life by the generous hand of scientists and therefore owed their very existence to those who had created them. They were lucky to have lived this long, many thought. It’s only right that they should be the first to give up their lives in search for the cure. (Meyer, *Cinder*, 28-29)

The above description recalls the injustice and unfair treatment, including medical experimentation, the underprivilege have received throughout human history.¹⁸ For cyborgs in

¹⁸ According to the report, “during the 19th and early 20th centuries the burdens of serving as research subjects fell largely upon poor ward patients, while the benefits of improved medical care flowed primarily to private patients. Subsequently, the exploitation of unwilling prisoners as research subjects in Nazi concentration camps was condemned as a particularly flagrant injustice. In this country, in the 1940s, the Tuskegee syphilis study used disadvantaged, rural black men to study the untreated course of a disease that is by no means confined to that population. These subjects were deprived of demonstrably effective treatment in order not to interrupt the project, long after such treatment became generally available” (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research 9).

the world of *The Lunar Chronicles*, life after their operation is dictated by discrimination, their autonomy stripped in the name of medical research. The society of *The Lunar Chronicles* sees cyborgs as ‘not like everyone else,’ different, a second-class citizen and indebted to the those who gave them ‘a second chance.’ This opinion allows the drafting of cyborgs into being test subjects, or ‘guinea pigs,’ ahead of the regular population, to find a cure for a disease that at this point in the novel appears to be a death sentence. It also speaks to Sherryl Vint’s views about robots and created beings in relation to Science Fiction and Marxism:

Equally common in SF is the fantasy of creating a class of beings to serve humanity. In this dream of plentitude all necessary but unfulfilling labour is done without human effort, performed by machines or manufactured beings, such as Isaac Asimov’s regulated robots and Iain M. Bank’s god-like AI ‘Minds’, thereby freeing humans for fuller lives. Such tales reveal the alienated nature of labour under capital and, therefore, the human desire to escape from labour as an expression of utopian longing. Manufactured beings are presumed not to be alienated in this way, their labour conceptualised as analogous to that performed by machines rather than to human labour-power.

This problematic assumption drives many SF plots, drawing attention to the emergent subjectivity of the created being and thus its need for life as something beyond being a tool used for human ends. (119-120)

According to Vint, dehumanization and subsequent subjectivity of created beings drives multiple Science Fiction plots. Society, in these stories, do not see created individuals as living beings. Instead they are machines, any work provided by these manufactured individuals is seen as the work of a machine and not a person. Within the world of *Cinder* and *The Lunar Chronicles*, this dehumanization and subsequent discrimination places cyborgs at a disadvantage in this world, a disadvantage that allows them to be taken away to die for those who often do not even see them as human, just as discrimination in the past has allowed fellow human beings to be used as science experiments. Having lost their humanity, cyborgs are not given autonomy, they cannot decide if they want to participate in deadly medical research, instead, because they are considered not human, they can be taken away to likely die for humanity’s ends.

The novel adds to this image of discrimination and disadvantage through the humanization versus dehumanization of a draft subject. While reviewing the file of the latest cyborg draft, Dr. Erland learns:

Male. Thirty-two years old. He had a child but no mention of a spouse. Unemployed. Turned cyborg after a debilitating work-related accident three years ago, no doubt spent most of his savings on the surgery. He'd traveled all the way from Tokyo. (Meyer, *Cinder*, 69).

Dr. Erland reads the humanity of the subject; he has a child, who would be left alone if he should perish, is only a draft subject because he was injured at a past job, and likely exists as a lower class citizen, with a savings depleted and a society against him. However, when Dr. Erland attempts to cut the subject loose, his assistant initiates the following conversation:

She bunched her lips to one side. "Doctor, this will be the sixth draft subject you've turned away this month. We can't afford to keep doing this."

"He has a child. A son. It says so right here."

"Yeah, a child who'll be able to afford dinner tonight because his daddy was lucky enough to fit our subject profile."

"To fit our profile? With a 6.4 percent ratio?"

"It's better than testing on people." (Meyer, *Cinder*, 70)

As the doctor speaks to the draft subject's humanness, his assistant speaks to the otherness that makes him a prime candidate for research. To Dr. Erland's assistant, he is an expense, a fitting subject profile, and a not a person, making him a prime candidate for experimentation; to let him go makes no sense to her. Discrimination blinds her to the situation's reality, he is merely an unfortunate man forced into an impossible situation. Because he was injured, he became cyborg; because he is cyborg, he is drafted; because he is other, he should die first in the search for the cure for 'people.'

In understanding the test subject's humanity and situation, the reader understands the injustice of the medical practice. According to the Belmont Report:

the selection of research subjects needs to be scrutinized in order to determine whether

some classes (*e.g.* welfare patients, particular racial and ethnic minorities, or persons confined to institutions) are being systematically selected simply because of their easy availability, their compromised position, or their manipulability, rather than for reasons directly related to the problem being studied. (NCPHSBBR 9-10)

When selecting research subjects, ethics dictates individuals should be selected for their relation to the study and not because they are readily available, unable to decide for themselves, or because they can be manipulated into participating. However, the male test subject, in *The Lunar Chronicles*, appears to be selected due to circumstances less to do with the medical research and more because he exists in a compromised position. He is a minority within this futuristic society, discriminated against and viewed as indebted to those who saved his life. Instead of being allowed to volunteer, he is drafted. Money is involved, compensation to a son who has lost a mother and likely would lose his father, if the medical research continues. Even in fitting the test profile, the subject appears to barely fit at his ‘6.4 percent ratio.’ Like discriminated minorities of the past, the male cyborg appears to have been selected for medical research because the majority no longer sees him as human; his value based on his ability to die for their benefit.

Deepening the impressions of discrimination and medical research, the novel places its title character into situation. When her stepsister, Peony, falls ill with letumosis, Cinder, a cyborg, returns home to find her stepmother has “[...] volunteered [her] for plague research” because, as her stepmother notes, there is “[...] a high demand [...] for ... [Cinder’s] type [...],” adding “[the family] can still help Peony. [Researchers] just need cyborgs, to find a cure” (Meyer, *Cinder*, 66). As a cyborg and considered a thing by her stepmother, Cinder is treated as an object easily disposed of for the benefit of the family because she is a ‘type,’ not a person (*Cinder*, 27). Because her guardian holds control, and cyborgs appear to hold a second-class citizenship, the idea of volunteering a teenage girl for potentially lethal medical experimentation is questioned by no one, except the aforementioned teenager, and is enforced

through force when she attempts to run:

[...] the android's metal pinchers grasped her wrist first. Electrodes fired. Electricity sizzled through Cinder's nervous system. The voltage overwhelmed her wiring. Cinder's lips parted, but the cry stuck in the back of her throat. (Meyer, *Cinder*, 66-68; 68)

With the need for a cure and a viable discriminated class to pull from, even a teenage cyborg is at a disadvantage. Her life as easily dismissed and experimented on as the unnamed cyborg male in Dr. Erland's research facility and the many discriminated groups throughout human history.

A minor, the situation Cinder faces adds to injustice of dehumanization and medical research the reader faces through the text. A minority and a minor, Cinder's participation in medical research requires the consideration of her vulnerable position. According to the Belmont report, subjects with limited comprehension (this includes minors) should be "giv[en] [...] the opportunity to choose to the extent they are able, whether or not to participate in research. The objections of these subjects to involvement should be honored, unless the research entails providing them a therapy unavailable elsewhere" (NCPHSBBR 13). The report adds:

Respect for persons also requires seeking the permission of other parties in order to protect the subjects from harm. Such persons are thus respected both by acknowledging their own wishes and by the use of third parties to protect them from harm.

The third parties chosen should be those who are most likely to understand the incompetent subject's situation and to act in that person's best interest. (NCPHSBBR 13)

Dehumanized for being a cyborg, being a minor means nothing for Cinder's rights in the world of *The Lunar Chronicles*. Her right to choose to volunteer denied; her guardian allowed to dismiss Cinder's life for the sake of her own interests and not the best interests of the party volunteered for medical research. Cinder is exploited because she is part machine and not considered human, according to her society; her value is calculated only through her benefits to humanity, saving them from having to die for a cure to the disease they all face. This is reminiscent of Vint's views and echoes the United Nations' (UN) declared rights for children.

Under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, non-discrimination is the first of ten principles, which articulate:

[T]he child shall be given opportunities and facilities to enable him or her to develop in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration (principle 2). Other principles provide, inter alia, the right from birth to a name and nationality; the right to enjoy the benefits of social security; the right of children with disabilities to special treatment, education, and care; the right to receive education, free and compulsory at the primary level; and the right to be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty, and exploitation and against employment which would prejudice the child's health and education or interfere with physical, mental, or moral development. (Doek 5)

In stark contrast to UN declaration, being cyborg, in *The Lunar Chronicles* denies Cinder freedom and dignity as a minor, her best interests not considered; she is not protected from exploitation, in this case forced experimentation with potentially deadly results, which would hinder her health and physical development.

This dehumanization and exploitation of children for medical research does not limit itself to Cinder and cyborgs. In the world of *The Lunar Chronicles*, Lunars disregard those born without the gift,¹⁹²⁰ called shells, and:

When a shell was born and taken away, their families were told they were being killed as part of the infanticide laws. Years ago they had actually been kept in captivity—secluded dormitories where they were regarded as little more than useful prisoners. But one day those imprisoned shells had raised a riot and, unable to be controlled, managed to kill five thaumaturges and eight royal guards before they'd been subdued.

Since then they'd been considered both useful *and* dangerous, which had led to the decision to keep them in a permanent comatose state. They were no longer a threat and their blood could more easily be harvested for the platelets that were used for the letumosis antidote. (Meyer, *Winter*, 581)

Because shells are born without the gift, their fate is feigned murder and subsequent 'captivity;' a

¹⁹ In the world of novels, "Lunars [are] a society that had evolved from an Earthen moon colony centuries ago, but they weren't human anymore" (Meyer, *Cinder*, 43).

²⁰ The ability to "alter a person's brain—make you see things you shouldn't see, feel things you shouldn't feel, do things you didn't want to do" through the manipulation of bioelectricity (Meyer, *Cinder*, 43; 240).

term likening them to wild animals in a zoo, where their value lies just above ‘useful prisoner.’ This dehumanization keeps shells as permanent comatose patients, following an unsuccessful riot, in order to mitigate their danger to their captors and make it easier to harvest their blood for medical purposes. Like the cyborgs, in this world, Lunar shells face a discrimination that strips their autonomy from them, leaving them vulnerable to medical injustice as it relates to research. Taken as children, their freedom and dignity are gone, replaced with a life on a shelf in “suspended-animation tanks” that “hummed and gurgled,” with “insides lit with faint green lights that made the bodies look like frozen corpses” (*Winter*, 581). Shell children do not receive the chance to volunteer for medical research; it is forced upon them, nor do those who use them have their best interests at heart, instead holding the product of that unethical experimentation over the heads of a beleaguered Earth (*Cinder*, 211-212). Lunar shells do not receive the rights as laid out in the real-world UN declaration. They are exploited, taken as children for medical research and left to live life in a comatose state because they are not considered human, or in this case Lunar, in the world of *The Lunar Chronicles*.

Just as Cinder’s relationship to the discrimination of cyborgs and the cyborg draft adds to horror of the situation, so too does Cress’s relationship to the discrimination of shells and the forced medical experimentation. A shell, Cress, who is also a minor, has spent around seven years, alone, aboard a satellite, where for:

a time Cress had hoped for warmth and kindness from her mistress. That perhaps Sybil would look at her and say, “My dear, sweet Crescent, you have earned the trust and respect of Her Majesty, the Queen. You are welcome to return with me to Luna and be accepted as one of us.” (Meyer, *Cress*, 3-4, 10)

The ruling class has placed Cress in solitary confinement because she is a member of the dehumanized part of her society. She is out in space, serving as a “lackey” for the Lunar Crown (*Cress* 5). While she is not placed into a comatose state like her fellow shells, Cress nevertheless

rests in a vulnerable position, forced into compliance for the sake of survival:

“I’m not interested in your excuses. All these years I’ve persuaded Her Majesty to let you live, under the premise that you had something valuable to offer, something even more valuable than blood. Was I wrong to protect you, Crescent?” (Meyer, *Cress*, 12)

Cress is a tool. Her value and her ability to remain alive are determined by her success or failure at supplying information to the Lunar crown; Cress also supplies her own blood, which “her mistress” collects from her arm “every three or four weeks” (Cress 21). She does not have the opportunity to grow up in a healthy manner. She lives a compromised existence, unable to freely decide to participate in medical research, or step out of line. Essentially a slave, as she serves a mistress, Cress’s dehumanization has stripped her of her rights as a child and a person, leaving her vulnerable to manipulation by those in power.

Meyer’s world of *The Lunar Chronicles* opens discussions around the real-world Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations lays out two articles that speak to the social and health care related issues found in *The Lunar Chronicles*. Article 25, Section One states:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (United Nations 52)

In *The Lunar Chronicles*, when the poor die in squalor because they hold less value than an Emperor, the governments in this futuristic world have denied them the basic real-world right to adequate living as defined by the UN’s declaration. Their health and well-being disintegrates as they die in misery. In targeting cyborgs and shells, the governments and society, in the novels, violate the real-world right found in article two of the United Nations declaration:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other

opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional, or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. (United Nations 6)

Neither the Lunars nor the Earthens within Meyer's world, accept that difference should not dictate worth, and that everyone has the right to a life free of dehumanization. They, before Cinder's revolution in the final novel, do not understand everyone should be able to choose whether to participate in medical experimentation.

By addressing these human rights violations, *The Lunar Chronicles* opens a dialogue about these topics within the world outside of the novel. Meyer, in using familiar tales ("Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Rapunzel," and "Snow White"), in conjunction with a backdrop known to touch upon Marxist issues (Science Fiction), allows her target audience (young adults) to experience and empathize with the discrimination, dehumanization, and the struggles of the lower classes through characters and situations, and, as well as reflect upon the reality of these situations within their own world. In raising these issues, Meyer intentionally, or not, pushes readers to see the realities of class distinction and discrimination. She allows readers to experience what happens when society devalues an individual or population, which leaves that individual or entire group vulnerable to exploitation by the very society that has dehumanized them, and, potentially, pushes readers to acknowledge today's practices and how they might affect those populations most vulnerable to the loss of their human rights.

Conclusion

Young Adult/ New Adult (YA/NA) literature has a wide audience base that ranges from its intended market to adult readers who enjoy the genre. Current topics found in YA/NA literature include a range of risky behaviors, such as sex and sexuality, and complicated social issues. Given the influence literature has over readers, including its younger audience,²¹ it is important to review how YA/NA texts handle social issues. One way this genre explores social issues is through reframing fairytale narratives to undermine paradigms and/or draw attention to social injustices.²² Four texts that typify this reframing, within the YA/NA market, are Melissa Bashardoust's *Girls Made of Snow and Glass*, Sara J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *A Court of Mist and Fury*, and Marissa Meyer's *The Lunar Chronicles*. Each novel works to develop understanding and empathy for those who suffer from injustices relating to healthcare issues or those who suffer from mental illnesses.

The similarities and differences in YA/NA retellings, readers may become aware of particular social issues included in novels. Fairytales contain familiar frameworks most individuals recognize (e.g.- the beautiful maiden marries the beast). Because of this recognizability, readers of retellings can spot the differences and similarities more easily (e.g.- a handsome warrior marries the female beast) and ponder the 'why' surrounding the change or changes. In the above example of the 'Beauty and the Beast' motif, depending on the writer's purpose, it could be a feminist revision, a comedic parody, a commentary on the beauty industry, a combination of all three, or something else entirely. This reframing of the narrative inspires conversations surrounding the 'why,' and in doing so initiates a dialogue about the reshaped tale. YA/NA retellings push their target audiences towards empathy and understanding for those real

²¹ See Kokesch and Sternadori's study in the Introduction to this thesis.

²² See Tatar and Bacchilega in the Introduction to this thesis.

world individuals and populations suffering from injustices, mental illnesses, and/or healthcare related issues.

Melissa Bashardoust's novel *Girls Made of Snow and Glass* is a "Snow White" retelling that undermines the toxic masculinity found in earlier versions of the tale in order to provide a path towards female solidarity and reconciliation. Through comparing Bashardoust's narrative to the Grimm's tale, readers recognize the traditional patriarchal values working to set Bashardoust's female protagonists against each other, just as the voice in the mirror sets the Evil Queen against Snow White; readers see the emotional turmoil these values wreak upon the titular women, Mina and Lynet. With these values brought to the forefront, readers begin to consider how those values may, or may not appear, in their own lives. The novel allows the reader to question whether that same cycle exists in the real world, and if it does, what form, or forms, it takes. This contemplation has the potential to become discussion with friends, family, and/or classmates. These discussions then have the potential to lead to change at the individual and/or societal level. And this change could lead to a new ending, where women understand the forces attempting to pit them against one another to become the 'fairest of them all' and, like Lynet and Mina, choose to end that cycle of violence in favor of female solidarity.

While Bashardoust's novel undermines the traditional patriarchal values that destroy women's views of themselves and other women, Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *A Court of Mist and Fury* sheds light on the horrors of trauma, creating empathy for those suffering with PTSD, or any mental disorder, and opening a dialogue around mental illness. Through the character of Feyre, who experiences extreme trauma in the final act of *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, Maas gives readers a first person-view of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in *A Court of Mist and Fury*. This up close and personal view builds empathy within the reader

and pushes them to understand the humanity in those suffering with PTSD, or any mental illness, in the real world. By understanding their humanity, readers come to recognize that those with mental health related issues are no less human than them, which helps to remove the stigma that exists around mental illness. For readers who may suffer silently with mental health related issues, the inclusion of mental illness in the novels they read tells them they are not alone and that someone understands them. By pushing readers to see the humanity in individuals suffering from PTSD, or any mental illness, and/or allowing sufferers to feel seen and heard, conversations around mental illness can change for the better.

Like Bashardoust and Maas, Marissa Meyer's *The Lunar Chronicles* raises questions around health and wellness related issues. Using fairytale retellings set against a futuristic backdrop, Meyer explores the real-world issues of discrimination, dehumanization, and the struggle of the lower classes through her protagonists and the healthcare related issues they face. In contextualizing the issues cyborgs and shells face and placing two of her female protagonists into the middle of the discrimination and dehumanization, Meyer, just like Bashardoust and Maas, builds empathy within the reader through the characters. Readers see the medical injustices practiced against Cinder and Cress, and the stark healthcare differences between the wealthy and the poor, and they question whether these injustices occur in the real world and how those injustices might be addressed. By using familiar frameworks, *The Lunar Chronicles* raises conversations about real-world medical injustices and the dehumanization that allows for such injustices to occur. And, as Bashardoust and Maas's fairytale retellings highlight, conversations can lead to positive changes in the real world.

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