

Johanne Marie Båtstrand

Bringing the Male to his Knees - Taming the Dangerous Lover

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as the blueprint for
love relations in Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns
and Roses*.

Master's thesis in Language Studies with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Nicole Falkenhayner

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Abstract

This masters dissertation seeks to examine and illustrate the presence of Deborah Lutz's dangerous lover character in contemporary popular fiction, by analyzing how the character relations in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* function as a template for contemporary romance fiction's representation of love relations, and identifying how prevalent Lutz's dangerous lover, rooted in the character of Mr. Rochester, is in contemporary romantic sub-genres, especially in the Romantasy subgenre, exemplified with Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series. Both dangerous lover characters in the series display various sides of Mr. Rochester, with Rhysand being the one the protagonist Feyre ends up with, which is due to him being the Rochester Jane arguably marries, and not the one Bertha married. Most notably, the protagonists in *Jane Eyre* and *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, are able to tame their dangerous lovers, Rochester and Rhysand, due to the mutual respect between them. Given that the primary texts are not categorized as Romances, this thesis also outlines why the dangerous lover narrative and its associated novels became assigned to the Romance, even though they are written within the narrative structures of other genres.

Sammendrag

Denne masteravhandlingen ønsker å undersøke og illustrere tilstedeværelsen av Deborah Lutz sin karakter «den farlige elsker» i moderne populær skjønnlitteratur. Dette gjøres ved å granske hvordan karakterrelasjonene i *Jane Eyre* av Charlotte Brontë fungerer som en mal for hvordan moderne romanse representerer kjærlighetsforhold. Dette gjøres for å kunne identifisere hvor hyppig Lutz karakter oppstår i moderne undersjangre av romansen, ettersom «den farlige elskeren» baserer seg mye på Mr. Rochester. Ved å sammenligne bokserien *A Court of Thorns and Roses* av Sarah J. Maas med *Jane Eyre*, ser man tydelig inspirasjonen Mr. Rochester har gitt til undersjangre av Romansen – spesielt «romantasy». Begge de «farlige elskerne» vi møter i bokserien av Maas demonstrerer dog forskjellige sider av Mr. Rochester. Rhysand, som er protagonisten Feyre ender opp sammen med, ligner Mr. Rochester som Jane blir kjent med, og ikke Mr. Rochester som stenger sin kone inne på loftet. Mest av alt er protagonistene i begge primærtekstene i stand til å temme «de farlige elskerne» sine grunnet en gjensidig respekt. Gitt at primærtekstene ikke er kategorisert som romanser undersøker denne avhandlingen også hvorfor fortellinger med «den farlige elsker» blir assosiert med romansen, selv om de er skrevet innenfor strukturene til andre sjangere.

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Introduction

“The romance heroine finds her most authentic self at the heart of what seems at first most foreign and outside of her way of being – an arrogant, hateful other” (Lutz xi).

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* tells us the five-part story of Jane, following her through key moments in her life – her upbringing in her abusive Aunt's home at Gateshead, the miserable school and cruel minister at Lowood, her employment at Thornfield where she falls in love with her employer Mr. Rochester, her finding her true self in the Moors, and her returning to Mr. Rochester at Ferndean. The story of *Jane Eyre* is considered as a classic within the Western canon, much due to Brontë's mastery of narratives, as the novel encompasses various interpretive angles – being categorized as a *Bildungsroman*, but also regarded as an acclaimed classical Romance (Regis 86). Moreover, at the center of its love story lays the uncanny – the dangerous kind.

In the late eighteenth century, Ann Radcliffe changed the course of women's fiction and made the Gothic novel a particularly female associated genre (Clair 63), and ever since the emergence of women's narratives in the popular sphere in the nineteenth century, objects of female desire have been a topic of discussion for both readers and critics – their heroines' choices debunked and examined, most significantly regarding their love interests. As Kristin Ramsdell explains in *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre*, Romances are not books about submissive heroines who give up everything for the hero, but rather stories about women who get what they want, who win, and who tame the hero in the process (23). Consequently, because of the central aspect of many Romance novels being the heroine 'taming' the hero, the hero has an important function in Romance novels – more significantly the dangerous kind.

In her book *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative* (2016), Deborah Lutz explores a character who's eroticism lies in his dark past, who she named the dangerous lover. With the identification of this character, Lutz provides us with a radically new way to attend to the Romance genre and its associated narratives, which Eric Selinger states was “as needed as the aesthetic turn we [found] in Regis (“Rereading the Romance” 324). The presented dangerous lover narrative makes the demonstration that our our “true” selves reside in the uncanny – in the strange and enemy-like dangerous lover (Lutz xi), who's allure is interlinked with our own flaws and our search for someone who is accepting of them – someone who embrace them. One would assume that reading about a heroine getting married in a majority of narratives must reinforce the patriarchal institution of marriage, and thus damage the many women trapped in it. However, according to Pamela Regis, this rests on the assumption that marriage as the end goal in romance novels is the governing element – which it is not (13). As the dangerous lover narrative evolved from its predecessors in the Gothic, it bears in mind also the evolved gender narrative – no longer pertaining the narrative element of women waiting to be rescued, waiting for their life to be completed by a man and be married. Even though one can identify elements of this in contemporary literature, the center of the story is more aimed the woman's self-discovery and empowerment, which *Jane Eyre* is arguably the “blueprint” for – most notably with its dangerous lover narrative. Within the narrative of the dangerous lover, it is the heroine who can provide the final freedom for both herself and the dangerous lover, when she acts upon her own agency and choice (Regis 90), which we can identify

in the both the story of *Jane Eyre*, as well as the story of Feyre Archeron in Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series.

I have chosen to illustrate the presence of the dangerous lover character in contemporary popular fiction by examining how the character relations in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* function as a template for contemporary romance fiction's representation of love relations, identifying how prevalent Lutz's dangerous lover, rooted in the character of Mr. Rochester, is in contemporary romantic sub-genres, especially in the *Romantasy* subgenre, exemplified with Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series. Both *Jane Eyre* and *A Court of Thorns and Roses* are not strictly categorized as romance novels, but as something other than that – yet the romance narrative, or romance sub-plot, has an essential role within them. The word "formula" is often misused when it comes to Romance fiction, and is often confused with "genre." It is narrower. All elements of the genre are present in the formula, but not the other way around. Thus, *Jane Eyre* can fit within the romance formula, even though it is not categorized as a Romance novel. The term has its place, however, not as a synonym for genre, which is a less loaded, more accurate term for the Romance novel (Regis 23). Even though *Jane Eyre* is categorized as a *Bildungsroman*, because of some of its other narrative elements, it fits into the category of a Romance – containing what both Regis and the Romance Writers of America explain as the two main factors of a romance novel: a courtship and a happy ending.

That said, the relationships between Sarah J. Maas' female protagonist Feyre Archeron and her love interests – Tamlin and Rhysand – find inspiration in *Jane Eyre*'s relationship with her suitors, Mr. Rochester and St John. The character of Mr. Rochester functions as one of the prototypes of the literary figure Deborah Lutz presents as the 'dangerous lover', which I argue in this paper to thrive in *Romantasy* – a contemporary Romance subgenre that fuses the genres Romance and Fantasy.

Methodology

In this thesis, I base my analysis on a combination of close readings and conceptualizations of scholarly aspects from academics when examining Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, *A Court of Mist and Fury* and *A Court of Wings and Ruin*. In other words, I will utilize the scholarly concepts and their categorizations heuristically – adapting them to my research, as they do not strictly describe the examples in my discussion but merely inspire my analysis. Moreover, I rely on knowledge from literary history in my comparison of tropes and types of characters of contemporary fiction with those of the nineteenth century fiction. In my discussion of the dangerous lover in *Jane Eyre*, I will base my analysis on existing literature – in other words, a literature review – in comparison to my analysis of the *A Court of Thorns and Roses* novels, where I will base my analysis on close readings to a larger extent.

Because I base much of my findings on close readings, the textual analysis objectively has its limits, as others might read the primary texts differently because of each reader's individual complex relation to said texts and genres (Modleski xx). Me being a white woman in her twenties who lives in the 'Western' world thus affect my own interpretation of the text. However, because I am a representative of the target audience for this kind of fiction, my relation to the texts is an asset – as I can investigate my interpretation and perception of the text in combination with the use of scholarly conceptualizations.

To limit the extent of my research in the scope of this thesis, I choose to focus on the relationships between protagonist and her love interest/-s in my chosen primary texts, and view how the generic character of a nineteenth century romance narrative has evolved into a popular trope in contemporary romance sub-genres. Because of this, I discuss the first three publications of Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series as one collected work – examining the trajectory and development of the relationships of the protagonist during the three books, outlining the presence of the dangerous lover narrative. When analyzing the relationships in the series I will discuss the books as one, however referencing them separately.

Theoretical Background

As mentioned, I conceptualize my research using aspects from other scholarly works. Throughout my research, Deborah Lutz's notion of the 'dangerous lover', supplied, when deemed relevant, with Pamela Regis' eight essential and three incidental elements of the romance novel, presented in her book *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, create a foundation for my analysis of the romance narratives and characters in the chosen primary texts. While Regis discusses specific literary heroes as villains as well as heroes as lovers and the place they hold in their respective narratives, Deborah Lutz approaches the dangerous subjectivity "from a traditional philosophical framework rather than a feminist one", by examining romance in the same rarefied light as philosophy in attempts to uncover "what romance has to say about the mystery of existence" (Lutz xii).

Deborah Lutz's book *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative* has to a great extent inspired the research in this thesis. One of Lutz's main goals in her book was to research the function of longing in reception of romance fiction (Lutz ix), and how it affects readers relation to villainous love interests – which she calls the dangerous lover. This character has become an exemplary figure for desolate homelessness and the search for one's true self in the uncanny. Perennially present, the dangerous lover narrative has become *the* conventional way to represent erotic desire and romantic love (xi). In her research, Lutz limits herself to the male dangerous lover, thus articulating a particular type of longing which is bounded by heteronormative expectations (xii) – excluding the female dangerous lover from her research. However, this does not exclude the existence of female dangerous lover, however, it is not the focus of her research – mine included.

Pamela Regis's eight essential elements of the romance novel supply the thesis's analysis when deemed relevant to the discussion, as certain aspects of them are apparent within the narrative of both primary texts. *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* was published 20 years after Janice Radway's trailblazing *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, continuing the scholarly discussion surrounding Romance fiction. With the proposed narrative elements, Regis sought to define the Romance novel as a recognizable form, to establish a shared terminology or genre-prosody, avoiding lumping together or demystifying the texts she studied (Selinger "Literary approaches" 304). Because of this emphasis on form, it is possible to identify the romance formula also within non-romance fiction. A reason for this is that not all writers of other genres use the guidelines associated with their assigned subgenre, as all elements of a genre can be present in the formula, but not the other

way around (Regis 23). Ultimately, this results in novels, and genres, which contain romance sub-plots often being mistaken as Romances by readers who read 'incompletely' (Regis 48), due to writers adapting narrative traits associated with the Romance. This notion is essential in my analysis of my chosen primary texts, as they are both not categorized as Romance novels – *Jane Eyre* being a gothic *Bildungsroman* and *A Court of Thorns and Roses* being a fantasy fiction series – yet both are associated with Romance due to their central love stories.

In addition to my own observations, and the theoretical framework provided by Lutz and Regis, Jayne Ann Krentz's essay collection *Dangerous Men and Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance* provides me with various romance authors' perspectives on the appeal of the Romance genre and themes relating to Romance fiction, and the complexity of an arguably powerful genre (Krentz 2). The writers of the essays are all Romance novelists (Krentz 3), and for this reason the essays reflect and provide unique insight into the thinking of authors of such fiction (5). Throughout the collection, there are several unifying themes; (1) there is an exasperated declaration that the romance novel is based on fantasies, and that readers are aware of this, (2) female empowerment is an important aspect in romance novels, (3) romance novels have a subversive nature and (4) often contains the integration of male and female, (5) it celebrates life, (6) readers can identify with the characters through identification, and (7) romance novels have a duality (Krentz 5-7).

Research paradigm

Whereas research on Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is plentiful, with scholars such as Regis, Radway, Selinger, and Maynard examining the romance codes in Brontë's novel, there has not been much research and scholarship, or any at all, on the emerging hybrid-genre that is romantasy. This results in a scarcity of scholarly secondary material on the topic for my analysis of the dangerous lover in Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses*.

When searching for scholarly sources on the subject, "Romantasy" generates no findings on both JSTOR and ProQuest. Whereas, when searching for material that refer to "romantasy" in NTNU's own web-search, Oria, it generates 19 hits, all published from 2022 and onwards, except one being published in 2020. However, there are no peer-reviewed articles that mention the newly emerged sub-genre. On the other hand, when searching "romance" and "fantasy", what appears is a number of articles, chapters, and books, however, they do not relate to the specific topic of discussion. When searching for "Fantasy Romance" there are some hits, however, they are limited. Kristin Ramsdell has a dedicated section for the subgenre, however, also expresses that there has been limited research on it, as it is such a new topic of interest (91).

From what I have learned during the research for this thesis, a reason for there being little to no scholarly material on the topic of Romantasy is arguably because of the earlier categorization of texts that are now perceived as 'Romantasy' – being previously assigned to the subgenres Paranormal Romance and Urban Fantasy, which I will later examine in chapter 2 of this thesis. The new subgenre is thus not much regarded by the scientific community at large, but is a term that younger writers – such as myself – utilize, which is why I wish to elaborate on it more and show that this new genre assignment is growing both in interest, and novels associated with the subgenre are worth exploring.

Chapter 1. The Dangerous Lover in the Nineteenth Century

Although the Romance genre is an arguably modern phenomenon, its history is long, and to understand the emergence of the dangerous lover character, it is important to note its past. Predecessors of the Romance can successfully be traced to the eighteenth century and Samuel Richardson's 1740 epistolary novel *Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded* (Ramsdell 6), and scholars, such as Ramsdell and Lutz, also consider it to be the first popular Romance novel. At the same time, the Gothic emerged, and Horace Walpole produced in 1764 *The Castle of Otranto*, which then inspired Anne Radcliffe – mellowing the gothic in Walpole into a more romantic sentimental gothic (Ramsdell 7). In the nineteenth century, stories with threatened heroines and mysterious settings had, according to Ramsdell, become the favorite “forbidden” readings of young women (7). The Romance novel became an escape from their own secluded and uneventful domestic lives.

The most popular form of literature for women in during the Victorian era was the so-called “domestic novel,” which often expressed women's discontent with domestic life; “express[ing] female anger, frustration, and sexual energy more directly than had been done previously” (Showalter, qtd. in Modleski 12). However, as the Romance emerged as a dominant form of the English novel, the expectations surrounding the choice of husband also shifted. The affective turn of the nineteenth century, with affective individualism, added to the choice a desire for liberty. Nancy Armstrong argues that we consequently develop an almost automatic ability to imagine, by repeatedly evaluating the emotional responses of others (445). What's more, this affected female readers encountering the domestic novel, which arguably expressed sentiments formerly unknown to the reader. This resulted in a shift from older forms of union to a companionate marriage with the added requirement that the wife- and husband-to-be love each other. That said, older assumptions did not disappear, and the goal of self-fulfillment had to be “measured against the need for financial support and the desire for love” (Regis 58). Coupled with the emergence of domestic novels, women sought out romantic love in both life and fiction. However, there is a distinct difference between the narrative of male and female authors on the subject, which can be examined with publications such as *Pamela* and *Jane Eyre*, as they are both also regarded as domestic novels (Kamblé et al. 4).

In the majority of popular narratives, women end up disfigured, dead, or at the very least domesticated – their downfall being seen as anything but tragic (Modleski 2). This is the case with Richardson's *Pamela*, where he places the villain as both the heroine's worst enemy and her final blessing “for [her] virtuous behavior” (Lutz 30).

“Mr. B, for his part, repeatedly disregards, refuses, or pretends to acquiesce to the request, only to further confine Pamela and attempt her virtue once more. Eventually, Mr. B acquires Pamela's epistolary account of her suffering at his hands. The writing softens his heart and reforms his morals, and he decides to marry Pamela” (Chaskin 70).

Arguably, we can identify the predecessor to what will later be know as the dangerous lover, however, here, he is nonetheless simply a villain from a feminist perspective. Seeing that this had been the dominant narrative, arguably due to the lack of popular female authors, women had a different relation to characters and stories than today, as they often were separated from the story both in terms of narrative and of the plot itself.

To assert their difference from the feminine, male texts did so through language, with the suppression of “flowery” descriptions or the refusal to employ any other expression of emotion than anger (Modleski 2) – thus the female readers were not able to identify with neither men nor women in the novels they read. Because of the pervasive scorn of all things feminine, the woman writer, to protect her literary reputation against the prejudiced critics, often had to disable the heroine by, what Tanya Modleski describes in her book *Loving with a Vengeance*, “render[ing] her entirely ignorant of the most basic facts of life so that the man, finally impressed by her purity, would quit trying to destroy her and would, instead, reward and elevate her – that is, marry her” (3). This arguably also affected the gothic Brontë and, therefore, *Jane Eyre*. Yet, *Jane Eyre* twists this narrative, and, in contrast to *Pamela*, the betrothal between Jane and Mr. Rochester is not deemed as Jane’s tragic downfall, but rather as a triumph – a reward for her unconventional desires and ultimately a victory over Rochester.

Subjective Desires Enhanced

When examining the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester, it is important to state the effect of the novel’s point of view and narrative structure and how it shapes the dangerous lover narrative. The relationship between protagonist and the dangerous lover is enhanced by the choice of narrator – which differed from that of other publications in the first half of the nineteenth century. Modleski expresses how a third-person limited point of view in Romances often functions to minimize the contradictions women suffer in relation to the expression of sexual desire (xvi). This is a contrast to the narrative styles found in majority of contemporary Romance fiction, which utilizes first-person narrative to a greater extent – as is the case with Maas’ *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series. That is not to say that we don’t encounter first-person narrative in the nineteenth century, in books such as Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, but it is not the dominant focalization as it is in contemporary Romantasy. In earlier publications where the dangerous lover makes an appearance, such as in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, the heroine Elizabeth Bennet assumes the role of a nonperson. Consequently, this removes her from the dialogic intimacy with both the dangerous lover and the narrator, creating a distance between us and their sexual behavior (Armstrong 447). After learning about Mr. Rochester’s dark secret, Jane goes on to speak of herself in third person, resulting in an emphasis on how she is or must have been a ‘different’ person’ during the discourse of their courtship (Brennan 71). “And yet where was the Jane Eyre of yesterday? [...] Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent, expectant woman – almost a bride – was a cold, solitary girl again” (*JE* 341). Here, Brontë utilizes the third-person narrator to emphasize this separation the narrative style enables.

John Maynard argues that “[w]e cannot and should not want to take the sexual desires and agonies out of Charlotte’s work” (253), and this is apparent because of the narrative style and its depiction of the dangerous lover. In *Pride and Prejudice*, even though sexual tension and elements of game-playing are apparent in the story, we are removed from them because of the distance between the narrator and heroine. In other words, we are not fully immersed in the erotic discourse of the characters. Conversely, in *Jane Eyre*, the heroine’s inner life is on display, fully immersing the reader in the erotic discourse between the protagonist and her dangerous lover. Brontë’s choice of narrator not only contributes to the book’s realism, as it sets out to depict a “real” woman’s story, but also teleports the reader into the heart of the story. Brontë writes, or rather Jane tells the reader, that “[...] this is not to be a regular autobiography” (*JE* 99), which,

indeed, it is not. It is not only a relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester, but also a relationship between us – the reader – and Jane, as her most trusted confidante. Thus, the subjectivity of female desire is on display.

Moreover, the tension in *Jane Eyre* both depict the subjectivity as well as the eroticism of the uncanny, apparent and developed from the dangerous lover narrative – a theory rooted in the Gothic and then moves through the nineteenth century to the contemporary gothic-themed Romance (Lutz 32). For this reason, *Jane Eyre* fascinates and compels generations of readers, in different circumstances. “What will you give in return for love?” (Stoneman 191). As previously stated, the answer will depend on the reader, as each reader manufacture individual responses to the text and the facts that are presented by Jane. When provided with all Jane’s thoughts on the matter of Mr. Rochester, the reader, because of the affective individualism, will imagine how their own expression of emotion must look to someone not personally invested (Armstrong 445) – a spectator of their own life. The compulsion to work through the struggles and desires of *Jane Eyre* lead readers to Jane’s own process of self-narration than a simple process of mirroring (Stoneman 191). We – the readers – are brought to feel and examine the tension between Jane and Rochester.

As spectators of the tension between Jane and Rochester from Jane’s point of view, having her sexual desires on display – we are manipulated by Brontë into sensing the allure of the mysterious side of Rochester, illustrated with the subjectivity of Jane’s attraction towards him. However, it is important to note that Jane does not reveal her attraction explicitly, as there are no vivid and detailed descriptions of her sexual attraction towards Rochester. Turning to Freud, the impediment, the ‘not-saying’, though enhances desire in the narrative, inflamed by hesitations and brooding silences by the heroine (Eagleton 117). Jane rather presents her lust through allusions, exemplified in her wish not to like Mr. Rochester, but exclaiming that denying her feelings would be a “[b]laspemy against nature!” (*JE* 204). Maynard also presents various themes that enhance the desire with not-saying during the course of Jane’s relationship with Mr. Rochester; Abandonment, game-playing, competition, and domination (252), however, game-playing is the most apparent one, especially within the dangerous lover narrative. They are teasing each other, which is at its height when Rochester makes his proposal to Jane, after toying with her and making her believe he is going to marry Mrs. Blanchard. However, even though she finds him alluring, she does not find him conventionally attractive – not a “handsome, heroic-looking young gentleman” (*JE* 134). His attractiveness lays in his uncanniness.

A Byronic Hero

In Gothic literature, the virtuous hero is often not the memorable character of the story, as they are overshadowed by the bold villain – a Gothic stranger who create a central development and complexity of the narrative by their inexplicably, or rather unexplainable, meaningful actions (Lutz 31). The villain, also coined as a tortured hero, and later dangerous lover, became known as the Byronic hero, famed by Lord Byron’s writings. The intriguing villain steals the show, whilst the protagonist gets lost in the background, often because of their transparency, which fades in comparison to the villain’s chiaroscuro shine (Lutz 31). Atara Stein describes the Byronic Hero as “an outlaw and an outsider who defines his own moral code, often defying oppressive institutional authority, and is able to do so because of his superman or supernatural powers, his self-sufficiency and independence” (qtd. in Olsen 464). Though lacking the

supernatural element of the description, Rochester possesses self-sufficiency and independence to a large extent. However, the dangerous lover is also often an outcast, without a place in society, and a central aspect of the narrative is his redemption – the lover, Jane, as a figure for redemption, bringing the dangerous lover, Rochester, back to society (Lutz 49; 51). In novels of the nineteenth century that contain the dangerous lover narrative, this is often the case, not only in the Gothic.

A central question that arises regarding the dangerous lover character is why they take the forefront in many romance narratives, even though they appear morally ambiguous – we cannot be sure of their motives until a grand reveal, or towards the end of the romance narrative. Mr. Darcy in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* influenced the creation of many later dangerous lover figures in his powerfully aloof stance as a rich misanthrope (Lutz 43), acting as Elizabeth's enemy in his initial role when separating her dear sister Jane from the naïve Mr. Bingley and degrading her social standing and family. The novel is regarded as a canonical romance novel (Regis 28), which further emphasizes the presence of the dangerous lover in romance narratives. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the dangerous lover is an outcast in the sense of his aloofness – he is a part of the nobility, but his unfriendly behavior and refusal to partake in societal activities, such as the ball at Meryton, distances him from being a full pledged member of said society. For this reason, Mr. Darcy inspires the later dangerous lover with the display of his turmoil, which creates a mystery around the essence of his character, adding to the questioning of his actions. However, the motivations for his turmoil are not revealed. This arguably enhances the allure of the character, as he is engulfed in mystery, and his attractiveness is rooted in this as well. Whereas we do not learn much of Mr. Darcy's reasons for treating Elizabeth poorly, we learn more of Mr. Rochester's motivations.

'My Master' The Dangerous Lover

Jane's relationship with Mr. Rochester is one of both passion and betrayal, which both are frequent themes in dangerous lover narratives. The two characters are opposites of each other, yet similar in their wants and needs– their inner beings thus drawn to each other. Though Jane is not explicit in her narration of her longing, Rochester is far more direct in his speech towards her. His narrative discourse is embedded with metaphors, allusions, and sexual insinuations, but also deceit. The longing and lies function together to create a thrill in their relationship, and ultimately makes Jane's victory over Rochester all the more forceful.

Rochester's dark past is his most prominent trait as a dangerous lover, with the way he lies and hides it – only revealing himself and the truth after being caught in his deception. During their first meeting, Jane helps Rochester after he is hurt in the woods, which, when familiar with the entirety of the story, is arguably foreshadowing the trajectory of their relationship and end of the novel. Mr. Rochester denies that he is hurt, and it is Jane that urge him to seek help and bids that she can fetch help for him. However, she is unaware that he indeed is Mr. Rochester – her employer – and they discuss her employment without him giving any indications of his own persona, but rather asks “[d]o you know Mr Rochester?” (*JE* 135). Even at their first encounter he keeps things hidden from her, and his lie is revealed when she is to have tea with him. The tormented dangerous lover's hell is often situated in memory; he cannot forget the past that imprisons him – he is a soul tormented by remorse (Lutz 55). Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper at Thornfield, explains to Jane after she met him that Mr. Rochester has a temper, and that “it is his nature – and we can none of us help our nature; and partly

because he has painful thoughts, no doubt, to harass him, and make his spirits unequal" (JE 149). The reason for this is, as is later disclosed, that he feels imprisoned by his marriage to Bertha, whom he hides in the attic. In a way, he is the archetypal gothic enemy because of how he moves, changes, and hides a riveting past. When learning of the deceit, Jane questions what she knows, and exclaims that "Oh, how blind had been my eyes! How weak my conduct!" (JE 341), which alludes to this aspect of his character being villainous – someone Jane rather should fear than love, a dangerous man.

Mr. Rochester takes on the quality of a gothic lover, who's insipidity comes from his ability to be only one thing – Mr. Darcy a dandy, and Mr. Rochester a stubborn aristocrat. Nevertheless, what is special about Rochester is how he represents the collapse of the 'blackguard' and 'sweetheart' into one (Lutz 31). In other words, Rochester is both villain and lover, as we can identify in his relation to Jane and the development of their relationship. He begins as an intriguing gothic stranger, and later transforms into a dependent lover – exemplified by the shift from him being a stranger in the woods, to Jane's employer, to, ultimately, a blind man in need of caretaking. However, he is not to be confused with the dangerous hero, who emerged as a more apparent character in the following century, even though we can identify traces of him in Rochester with his want of control over her and with his superiority as her employer. Yet, as the romance- and dangerous lover narratives are apparent in *Jane Eyre*, this barrier – their difference in ranks – between them is subsequently overcome by Jane and her taming of Rochester.

The villainous side of Rochester is evident throughout the novel, in his attempts to dominate Jane through the game-playing – which, again, functions to add to their lust and sexual tension. Jane's use of 'my master' when speaking of Rochester is arguably sexually charged. It is both a sign of endearment, of his rank, and a sign of the sexual attraction "the Byronic and masterful Rochester has for Jane" (Davies xxii), as he gladly takes on this dominating role. Their dynamic is rooted in obstacles, which Regis presents as "the barrier" – one of romance's eight essential elements. They are of different ranks – him being a nobleman/her employer and she a governess for his ward, Adèle. However, misunderstandings, partings, and essentially his betrayal are also obstacles – or barriers – preventing their matrimony. These are all scattered throughout the novel, establishing for the reader the reasons the heroine and hero cannot marry (Regis 32). This comes forth for instance in their nagging at each other – them challenging each other, testing who is the wittiest. Barlow and Krentz in their essay "Beneath the Surface: The Hidden Codes of Romance," state that "[w]hat is said between the hero and the heroine is often the primary battlefield for the conflicts between them" (22), which is the case with Jane and Rochester. Additionally, according to Eagleton, these factors, the elements of game-playing, are essential incentives in the creation and increasing of desire within a relationship (115). With the game-playing, they are toying each other, yet one has an advantage over the other. Rochester is superior than Jane in various ways; him being of a higher rank, a man, and in the sense that he knows the full truth, which Jane does not. Coupled with the facts that Jane calls him 'my master' and him calling her by his nick name for her, "Janet," she takes on the apparent role as sort of a pet of his – a submissive role – which Mrs. Fairfax also notices: "I have always noticed that you were a sort of pet of his" (JE 305). In many ways, one can argue that this need for dominating Jane is rooted in his need for control – as he is lost to himself, after his hated wife went mad and he discovered the lies of his father and brother (Lutz 52).

Even though Jane is misled by Rochester, she finds it in her heart to love him regardless after leaving him, much because she believes him to be her equal – she believes herself to be his redemption. This is an essential aspect in the dangerous lover narrative, as Lutz states that “[t]o love the dangerous lover is to feel the creepy uncanniness of finding the familiar at the heart of terrifying strangeness” (32). She senses that he needs her, even though he does not sense this himself at first, exemplified with their first meeting. However, when realizing that he is losing her, he understands that he also has found a home in her.

“After a youth and manhood passed half in unutterable misery and half in dreary solitude, I have for the first time found what I can truly love – I have found *you*. You are my sympathy – my better self – my good angel. I am bound to you with a strong attachment. [...], a solemn passion is conceived in my heart; it leans to you, draws you to my center and spring of life, wraps my existence about you, and, kindling in pure, powerful flame, fuses you and me in one” (*JE* 363).

Rochester’s confession reveals a secret unveiled only to his beloved, though it is eroticized with dangerous subjectivity – he reveals the secret depth of his soul to Jane, stating a paradox which illustrates that his love for her can never truly be understood (Lutz 7). That said, his confession is a result of Jane learning of his betrayal, which represents a shift in their dynamics – she now has the upper hand. Yet, she still leaves him, as she believes that she is of no use to him. He does not need her in the way she wants to be needed, signifying that she has not tamed him yet. However, as he is blinded after the fire at Thornfield, Jane has a purpose. “I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you” (*JE* 513). Jane wants to be of use to Mr. Rochester, as using her wits is important to her – she needs something to do, and she wants to be needed. This becomes Rochester’s redemption, as she returns to him by her own accord when he realizes that he needs her. Regis presents that it is an important of the romance narrative, and that it is with her own agency the heroine “provides the final freedom for both her and the hero” (90). In brief, Jane civilizes Rochester. This is represented in how she shifts from calling him “my master” into rather calling him “My Edward” (*JE* 520), and in how she makes him realize that he does not want to be an arrogant outcast, and that he longs for a home – he longs for her, an equal to his soul.

Chapter 2. The Evolved Dangerous Lover.

Whereas the 'dangerous lover' emerged from realist fiction with gothic elements, it rooted itself in romance sub-genres in the course of the twentieth century. On one hand, the dangerous lover narrative divided itself into the Gothic Romance, and Erotica on the other – two closely intertwined trajectories, as the two genres are both descendants of the Gothic genre (Lutz 92). However, as writers of fiction often utilize formulas and narratives categorized and associated with other genres, the dangerous lover narrative was adapted and incorporated into the Romance.

As the century shifted into the twentieth, the Romance novel emerged as a cultural phenomenon – remaining so today (Regis 109), which can be compared to the popularization of the domestic novel of the nineteenth century, as they both convey new viewpoints regarding women's experiences and desires. Texts classified as belonging to the Romance genre typically have a central love plot that often results in a happy ever after (HAF) (Kamblé et al. 2). Regis points out how the genre today includes the topics of women's freedom, the conveying the pain, uplift, and the joy that freedom brings (xiii). One can argue that this is because of how many Romance novels invert the existing power structure found in a patriarchal society, as they often show women exerting power over men – defying the masculine conventions of other literary forms because of how they portray women as heroes of their own stories (Krentz 5), which we can identify in the shift in narratives from *Pamela* to *Jane Eyre*. For this reason, the Romance has become one of the dominating genres in popular culture, drawing massive readerships, illustrated by the Romance Writers of America (RWA) estimating that twenty-three percent of the overall US fiction market consisted of romance. In recent years, also due to trends on social media platforms such as TikTok "has gone from being a novelty to becoming an anchor in the publishing industry and a dominant driver of fiction sales" (Harris, "How TikTok Became a Best-Seller Machine"), resulting in Romance novels dominating best-seller lists. Regis states that "[t]he long life of this genre attests to the power of the story of courtship and betrothal as both a subject and a narrative structure in the thinking of English-speaking people. And of other people as well" (109), as various contemporary romance novels, in addition to canonical classics such as *Pamela*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*, have been translated for a world-wide market. Narratives that depict women's freedom thus hold a significant space in the literature market. The Romance novel, or rather romance narratives, arguably transcends cultures, as it puts women's needs and desires in its core.

Gothic novels and Romances continue to provide entertainment for women of all ages and backgrounds, however very few critics have taken them seriously enough to study them in detail (Modleski 1). For instance, the first academic attention to popular romance fiction has emerged considerably later than to other forms of genre fiction (Kamblé et al. 6). Selinger, in his 2007 article "Rereading the Romance", explains how scholars that were the first to seriously analyze romance novels, such as Regis in *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, examined how previous scholarly attention treated the genre and its readers "with ambivalence at best, and often with undisguised contempt" (309-10). This prejudice to the genre was, and is, arguably due to the lack of knowledge of the Romance genres and their associated codes, tropes, and themes. The dangerous lover narrative, utilized in much Romance fiction in the twentieth century, had evolved as a prevalent narrative in Erotica, which made it easy to assume the two to be the same. The contempt for romance narratives is conceivably rooted in the fact that

many disapprove of the themes and tropes depicted in them, as they are viewed by many as having a negative effect on the readers' perception of love.¹ Yet, Krentz argues that readers are able to differentiate between what is real and what is fiction (2). As we immerse ourselves in Romance fiction and before we examine the dangerous lover in contemporary fiction, it is therefore important to note the history of the genre associated with the dangerous lover narrative and controversies surrounding it – because as the popularity of romance fiction increased, so did its criticism.

Misguided Critique?

“It is a truth, as they say, universally acknowledged that romance novels are badly written” (Selinger “Literary approaches” 297)

Because of the generalization of romance narratives, the dangerous lover narrative finds itself misinterpreted by those with limited knowledge of it, as the narrative contains themes and tropes that are identifiable in both Romance and the descendants of the Gothic – Gothic romance and Erotica. Barlow and Krentz suggest that Romance novels are criticized for plot elements and devices that occur multiple times (17). For instance, the reason many critics fail to acknowledge largely all urban fantasy written by women is that their works often contain one or more romantic narratives – romantic sup-plots – even if the story is not fixed around it (Ramos-García 142). Thus, the structures, conventions, and clichés that are associated with the romance genre overall, are also the arguably a reason behind the critical dismissal of popular romance (Selinger 296). Lutz states that “[o]nce one is attuned to the dangerous lover formula, one begins to see it everywhere; the erotic outcast burns brightly through the history of ideas as well as the history of “trash,” the “escapist,” the ephemeral” (xi). Most notably, it is identifiable in hybrid genres of the romance, such as the Paranormal Romance, Urban Fantasy, and the newly coined Romantasy.

The Romance genre is contestably by many, both readers and critics, disregarded as “junk”, and this has much to do with a male-dominated literary establishment (Modleski xxi), which is recognized by a majority of scholars who research and write about Romance fiction. Krentz, who is a well published author of Romance, also notes that society labels the romance novels as trash, and its readers as “unintelligent, uneducated, unsophisticated, or neurotic” (1). Thus, traditionally, the critical reader has denied any personal involvement with Romance novels (Eagleton 117). This debate is not just recent – a result of the flux of Romance novels on contemporary best-seller lists – but discussions regarding “women’s literature” have been prevalent since before the publication of *Jane Eyre*. Women writers themselves have voiced criticism of women’s popular literature long before the feminist critics of the 1960s and 1970s (Regis 3). George Eliot, or rather Mary Ann Evans, voiced her fears in her work “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists”, published in 1856, writing that these “lady novelists” were making it more difficult for female writers of ‘serious’ fiction to be acknowledged (by men) (Modleski xxvi). This women’s criticism, and arguably ‘self-criticism’, was in all

¹ Susan Quilliam, a licenced therapist, explains in her article “He seized her in his manly arms and bent his lips to hers...’. The surprising impact that romantic novels have on our work” that she believes reading romance affects young readers perception of romantic relationships, having taken notice of this in her clients (181).

probability written out of self-defense and the fear of men's power to destroy their literary reputation and professional credibility (Modleski 4).

According to Eric Selinger's chapter in *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Romance Fiction*, the majority of criticism aimed at Romance novels regard the reoccurring themes and tropes found in many romance narratives – such as the dangerous lover. The criticism against the occurring themes and tropes in Romance novels is a peculiarly *modern* anxiety, which Mark McGurl explains to be "one with roots in the 'crisis of indistinction'" surrounding the novel in the middle of the nineteenth century, the period when high-art and mass-market fiction began to diverge in authorship, audience, reputation, and aesthetics (qtd. in Selinger "Literary approaches" 302-03). Regis explains:

"despite popular romance novels of the twentieth century might appear on the *New York Times* Best Sellers List, [...] they are never reviewed in the newspaper itself. Other popular forms - mystery, science fiction, and horror - are. Romance novels are excluded, I suspect, because of an ignorance of the form itself and of the sensibility" (207).

Selinger rephrases the notion "to the educated ear these sound the same," to "I lack the genre-specific competence that would let me [tell] the difference" ("Literary approaches" 305). Arguably, taking Regis's report into account as well, criticism towards the romance genre is because of readers', and critics', lack of knowledge of the genre. Ramsdell, in *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre*, includes an entire chapter dedicated to "Advising the Reader", which is meant to help librarians' knowledge of Romances, as "good working knowledge of the literature is necessary – something that not [all] have, or won't admit they have, particularly in the area of Romance fiction" (25). This illustrates that those with conceivably broader knowledge of literature also tend to disregard knowledge of the Romance genre, which possibly is due to the fact that the genre is broad – containing many sub-genres, which many struggle to differentiate.

Evidently, there is a critical dismissal of the structures and clichés of the Romance and its related narratives. Even though this dismissal based on sameness has been addressed previously regarding other popular genres as well – some of them being Science Fiction and detective stories (Selinger, "Literary Approaches" 302) – Romance novels and narratives associated with them continue to endure an overall generalization and scrutinization (Regis 5). Ramos-García illustrates this as she points to the dismissal of Urban Fantasy by male critics. She suggests that "[t]he reason many critics ignore them or dismiss largely all urban fantasy written by women is that their works often contain a romantic narrative, be it ever so small part of the story" (142). In light of this, there is a widespread agreement by those who research the Romance and romance narratives, that both critics and readers are guilty of generalizing all that which associates itself with Romance.

This generalization of the Romance is often directed to the female protagonist; however, it is not the defining characteristic of a romance – it is rather the organized action, and what Regis illustrates in her eight essential elements of the romance narrative. The moral fantasy of the Romance is "that of love triumphant and permanent, overcoming all obstacles and difficulties" (Cawelti qtd. in Regis 21). According to Regis, the attacking the of the Romance genre, and the stable forms associated with it, discounts "and

perhaps even [...] den[ies], the most personal hopes of millions of women around the world" (207). Although, Science Fiction and Mysteries, genres which also contain female protagonists and romance sub-plots, such as Brandon Sanderson's Skyward series, have, according to Ramsdell gained an aura of acceptability, however, for Romance it is by some deemed permissible, even a professional duty, to denigrate the genre (32). Krentz contends that in Romance the success of an individual author is not based on how well she writes by conventional standards, "but on how compellingly she can create her fantasy and how many readers discover they can step into it with her for a couple of hours" (4) – a notion similar to how women of the nineteenth century found an escape in the domestic novels, which asserts the role fiction maintain within the life of many women throughout the last centuries.

There are thus limits to the Romance genre, as novels of other genres that incorporate the romance formula as a sub-plot often are mistaken as Romance novels. In romance narratives of the twentieth century, there are no guarantees that they encompass all of Regis's eight essential elements of the Romance, making it more difficult for those working with literature categorizing novels which adapt certain elements of romance narratives – such as the dangerous lover narrative. In many instances, novels of other genres are mistaken for Romance novels due to them containing some or all of Regis's eight essential elements of the Romance, *Jane Eyre* being one of them. However, having a novel contain a romance sub-plot does not make it a Romance novel (Regis 50). The mistaken categorization has as mentioned much to do with readers' knowledge of the genre, or rather lack of knowledge. Ultimately, this leads to inaccurate interpretations, and the reader fills in missing romance elements by either applying them to situations existing in the novel, or by applying a hidden romantic meaning to actions in the story (Regis 48).

Blurred Lines – Genreblending

Genres are under constant change, and with the flourish of publications and mass-production of things that sell, new genres emerge that provide readers with more genre specific stories – they know what they get when they buy it. This is the case with the newly emerged Romantasy – a fusion of Romance and Fantasy. As mentioned in the outline of the research paradigm of this thesis, there are no mentions of Romantasy when searching for scholarly secondary material on the subject, however, this is because of the previous categorization of Romantasy novels in the two overlapping sub-genres of Paranormal Romance and Urban Fantasy – both in which the dangerous lover narrative is frequently used.

Providing precise definition for romance subgenres has its difficulties, yet Ramos-García in her chapter "Paranormal romance and urban fantasy" in *the Routledge Companion for Popular Romance Fiction* provides a definition of the two subgenres, as well as discussing their complexity. The Paranormal Romance is defined as "Romance novels in which fantasy worlds or paranormal or science fiction elements are an integral part of the plot" (RWA qtd. in Ramos-García 141), often with a setting and characters that are 'different'. Thus, we see remnants of the Gothic in the Paranormal Romance (Ramsdell 213). It is in this 'different', and 'other', character where we can identify the dangerous lover, and his 'otherness' is rooted in the supernatural. Whereas Rochester in *Jane Eyre* is signified as an 'other' in terms of his distance from society, the dangerous lover in the paranormal romance is an 'other' because of his supernatural abilities (Ramos-García 141), even though he might not be the only character in the story that has one. An example of a

novel that is famously associated with the genre is the *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer. The defining of Urban Fantasy, however, is trickier, as there are no accepted definitions or determined authors belonging to the genre. However, Ramos-García points to a definition in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) which states that “[u]rban fantasies are normally texts where fantasy and the mundane world intersect and interweave throughout a tale which is significantly about a *real* city” (Clute and Grant 975 qtd. in Ramos-García 142), however, it is not to be confused with Magical Realism due to Urban Fantasy’s supernatural elements transpiring that of Realism. Even though there are no determined authors belonging to Urban Fantasy, a book series that fits into the suggested definition is *The Mortal Instruments* by Cassandra Clare. Despite the resistance by critics to define and address distinction between the two subgenres, Ramos-García argues that their basic difference is how they create very distinctive narratives and generate specific reader expectations (143).

One of the similarities of both subgenres is how they both utilize serial narratives. Serialization of narratives is not a new phenomenon, despite its growing in popularity in recent times. It is by definition an ongoing narrative released in successive parts, often including the refusal of closure (Hayward 3; Goris 2). According to Jennifer Hayward’s *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audience and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Opera*, the serial form has incepted the mass-market culture ever since the nineteenth century, maintaining a dominant position as a mode in Western literary tradition ever since (1; 2). Originally, single works were split up into installments, as is the case with *Jane Eyre*. Now, in the today’s consumer mass-market, serial narratives are effective in keeping audiences engaged with the story (Hayward 3). Thus, readers can be engaged in the whole trajectory of a romance narrative over multiple volumes. As a result, readers might have to wait to see their favorite characters get together, or keep them at the edge of their seats as the author might divide the characters from each other at the end of one novel – then having to wait until the next publication for the resolve. The serialized narrative thus enables forced interruptions, creating a demand they subsequently feed because of how they appeal to readers’ primordial narrative desire to know what happens next (Goris 2), even though they might have expectations as to what will happen due to genres’ associated narratives.

John Hannay, in *The Intertextuality of Fate*, argues that expectations surround narratives constitute a sense of “fatedness,” as readers recall similar stories and discover their similarity to the other works of fiction they are reading at the moment (qtd. in Stoneman 181). Both Paranormal Romance and Urban Fantasy create such expectations, nevertheless in different ways. Whereas Paranormal Romance is closely linked to the HEA expectation in each installment, the Urban Fantasy is not constrained by it. Additionally, in terms of narrative positioning, Paranormal Romance may shift the point of view from novel to novel, however, Urban Fantasy is narrated exclusively from the point of view of the same protagonist in the entirety of the series; often first-person narrator, with the happy ending of each installment based on the resolution of a non-romantic conflict (Ramos-García 144). However, when the serialized narratives contain romance sub-plots, even though Urban Fantasy is not constrained by the HEA of a romance narrative, readers, as mentioned, with a lack of knowledge of various genres, might confuse one thing for another.

All things considered – genreblending, failed categorizations, overlapping sub-plot narratives, and readers’ expectations and lack of knowledge – it is understandable that ‘new’ genres emerge frequently in the popular spheres.²

Romantasy

When readers find a book they thoroughly enjoy, it is understandable that they search for similar stories and themes, but may struggle to find exactly what they are searching for because of the blurred lines of various romance subgenres and narratives that are not consistent to only one genre. What this results in is the inventing of new terms to fit these specific stories, as a means to facilitate searching for and identifying stories that readers want to read based on their wants and expectations. While genreblending has been around for years, it has according to Ramsdell expanded exponentially in the past decade or so when readers are faced with a flourish of creative stories – romantic suspense, vampire chick-lit, and magical-laced historicals – that expand the romance genre but defy easy categorization (31). Because of this, themes and tropes previously associated with the dangerous lover narrative in Paranormal Romance and Urban Fantasy ultimately shifted in, having the dangerous lover becoming associated with a ‘new’ subgenre – Romantasy.

As a result of its newly found popularity, there are no determined definitions of the subgenre, however, as mentioned in the thesis’s research paradigm, Ramsdell provides an outline for “Fantasy Romance”:

“These stories are Romance’s nod to the larger Fantasy genre. Drawing heavily on legend, myth, fairy tales, and folklore, these inventive tales send their characters out into strange, often magically infused worlds to fulfill a quest, do battle with any number of dark forces, slay a dragon (unless it’s a good one), undo a curse, save the realm, or accomplish any number of similar, heroic objectives, all the while keeping the romantic relationship between the two main characters at the center of the story” (90).

As an avid reader of books associated with the newly coined term, one can argue that Romantasy possesses other qualities besides a fantasy storyline with romance elements at its center. Romantasy contestably possesses and adapts elements of various genres and subgenres, as well as incorporating significant plots, themes, and tropes from said genres additionally. In its world-building, Romantasy makes use of its ties to the Fantasy genre, and its love story finds its inspiration in romance narrative – most notably that which depicts the dangerous lover. However, it also draws narrative elements from Erotica, or what McAlister explains as Sexy Romance (214). In light of the fact that Romantasy is heavily associated with Romance – being a subgenre of it – and containing elements derived from Erotica, which’s “hero [also embodies] both hero and villain characteristics” (Lutz 93), Romantasy may also include detailed scenes of sexual activity with the dangerous lover (Kamlé et al. 2). It adapts an element of erotic romance where love and desire exist or come to exist simultaneously, collapsing together sexual desire and romantic love (McAlister 214). This largely follows the trajectory of the romance narrative presented by Regis, and thus takes place after the confession, which

² Modleski examines the similar emergence of the genre “chick-lit” in the second edition of *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women*, which arose, gaining popularity, due to desires of the youthful portion of the population (xxi).

then often is followed by a physical union in addition to the emotional connection. Moreover, the intensity of the sex is categorized by readers by using 'spice levels', with more 'spicy' novels ultimately containing more scenes depicting sex, sexual activities, and overall sexual tension.

In novels associated, and linked, with Romantasy, the, often, female protagonist finds herself in situations where she has to save the world, and her ally is, more often than not, the dangerous lover in the story. Additionally, they are, more often than not, soulmates, which is often conveyed through the narrative element of "mates," where the characters are naturally drawn to each other – it is nature, not themselves, pulling them towards each other.

However, considering that Ramsdell's book was published in 2017, before the coining of the term Romantasy, one can argue that Romantasy is what Ramsdell defines as Fantasy Romance, only more evolved. What is special about this subgenre is how its associated novels often are written within the conventions of another specific genre – Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series being one of them. Similar to the case of *Jane Eyre*, because of how Maas's epic fantasy series possesses narratives readers associate with Romantasy, the books are read as something different than first intended. It is an epic Fantasy with an underlying heroic quest plot, conventionally associated with the genre, however, because of the central love story, readers place the romance element as an equal to the fantasy.

Chapter 3. The New Home of the Dangerous Lover

Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Roses* tell us the story of Feyre Archeron, navigating through courtships, her transformation from human to Fae, and battles to save her world from ruin, all whilst attempting to find her true self. Feyre grows up in prosperity in the mortal lands until her father's bankruptcy, resulting in the family – her, her two sisters and her father – being forced into poverty. Feyre takes it upon herself to step up as the family's provider, and learns to hunt as a means to feed them. This leads her to encounter and kill a wolf near the Wall separating the mortal realms from the faerie land, Prythian. The wolf turns out to be a faerie man, and his High Lord, Tamlin, comes and makes Feyre forsake the human realm and live in Prythian, either with him or by herself. Tamlin takes her to his Spring Court, where she finds herself residing alongside her enemies, as she cannot survive there on her own. However, flowers start to bloom, and Feyre grows feelings for her captor, only to later learn that he has been looking for a human girl to fall in love with him, as a means to break his curse. Feyre, having fallen in love with Tamlin, attempts to break said curse, but is then captured by Amarantha and her lackey Rhysand, and forced to endure three life-threatening trials to prove her love for Tamlin. However, Rhysand decides to help Feyre, doing so by offering her a deal – healing her deadly wound in return for her accompanying him in his Night Court one week each month after her trials. In a dramatic turn of events, Amarantha kills Feyre after she is able to break the curse, however, because of Feyre ending Amarantha's tyrannic 50-year rule, all High Lords of Prythian gift some of their life-essence to Feyre – resurrecting her as High Fae, but she also inherits a portion of their various powers when she is transformed. Returning to the Spring Court, Feyre has to deal with Tamlin's changed behavior and her bargain with Rhysand, which leads her down a different path – her own self-discovery and empowerment, explored in two of the following installments of the fantasy series; *A Court of Mist and Fury* and *A Court of Wings and Ruin*.

Before examining the protagonist's love interests as variations of dangerous lovers, it is important to acknowledge aspects that has affected the dangerous lover narrative. When compared to the dangerous lover narrative in *Jane Eyre*, the narrative is now more centered in the imaginary rather than realist. Having the dangerous narrative take a hold in novels situated in fantasy worlds allows readers to create a sense of distance from the plot, all whilst still keeping readers engaged through first-person narrator – it is a Fantasy, whilst still enabling the subjective aspect to come forth. Similar to Paranormal Romance, the fantasy realm of *A Court of Thorns and Roses* provides the reader with a sense of safety because of the distance to the 'otherness' (Ramsdell 215), or, in other words, the dangerous lover himself.

Whereas narratives of the nineteenth century sought to depict young innocent women defending their virginity against the attacks of a seducer (Modleski 4), often a charming dandy or alluring stranger, the narrative of today is far more liberating in terms of women's sexuality and female empowerment in regard of gender. As the dangerous lover is associated with Romantasy, detailed scenes of sexual activity occur, much due to the fact that the dangerous lover narrative has become typical when portraying erotic desire (Lutz xi). In her introduction to *Dangerous Man and Adventurous Women*, Krentz writes that a strong theme in Romance novels is female empowerment; The heroine must force him to acknowledge her power as a woman – the woman emerges as the victor, always. It is with her gentleness, courage, and intelligence "she brings the most dangerous creature on earth, the human male, to his knees" (Krentz 5). When mixing in

the element of fantasy, enabling the male to take on qualities to make him even more dangerous, the empowerment given to the female protagonist, being able to 'tame' him, becomes even more apparent. A reason for this is that the dangerous lover is far more dangerous than a mortal man, as he has supernatural abilities and she does not. Compared to *Jane Eyre*, the dangerous lover is naturally far more dominating than a mortal man. Evidently, the dangerous lover's strength also symbolizes the power of the heroine, as she is the only one who is able to conquer him (Donald 81).

When examining the dangerous lover character in *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, a central inquiry is identifying *who* he is – is he located in Tamlin or Rhysand, or are they both dangerous lovers? When comparing the two to its definition, they are both dangerous lovers – mythical 'others' whose past is a myth for Feyre, as they are supernatural beings with unnaturally long lives. In regard to the dangerous lover, they occlude time in their ownership of infinity – they have lived ages, an eternity, even though they still *appear* to be young (Lutz 57).

"The dangerous lover steps out of a mythical real; [...] his dangerousness lies in the unknowability of the past itself, particularly the past of myth. His dangerousness is located in fantasy, in ways that his subjectivity is not representative of some concrete reality, but in changeability, imagination, reformulation" (Lutz 4).

The character of Tamlin is the first of Feyre's two love interests in the novels, though, in regard to the dangerous lover narrative, Tamlin is arguably more similar to that of Richardson's *Pamela*, with a case of Stockholm Syndrome as she is basically abducted but then falls in love with him, St John in how he will only do what is expected of him, and the Rochester that existed before Jane – the Mr. Rochester who traps his wife in the attic. Comparatively, Rhysand is the presumed accomplice to Amarantha, and believed to torment Feyre out of malice towards Tamlin, but who turns out to be Feyre's destined mate and whose actions have been intentionally misleading.

The Beast and *his* Beauty

When reading *A Court of Thorns and Roses* in terms of the protagonist's love interests, the story can be split into two storylines – the doomed love of human Feyre and High Lord Tamlin, and the fated love between High Fae Feyre and High Lord Rhysand.³ Yet, they both fit into the dangerous lover narrative in different ways. We first encounter a 'beauty and the beast' retelling, where "the scarred, wounded, or otherwise damaged hero [is] redeemed by love" (Ramsdell 28), which's definition draws similarities to that of the dangerous lover narrative. We expect Tamlin to be a princelike character with the allusions to the familiar narrative; the curse upon the land – masking them all thus hiding their true self, and Tamlin being a shapeshifter taking on the appearance of a beast. Because of the preconditioned allusions we have to his character, as most readers of Romantasy are arguably familiar with for instance the 1990s Disney animation of the tale, we are preconditioned to root for him and them together. That said, throughout the discourse of Feyre and Tamlin's relationship, Rhysand is introduced as an alluring dangerous villain, or rather a hero-to-be. Krentz expresses that "a sense of danger, of

³ It is also worth pointing to the intertextuality between Feyre and Jane Eyre, as well as Rhysand and Rochester. As *Jane Eyre* functions as a blueprint for the dangerous lover narrative in Romantasy, the union of Feyre and Rhysand is arguably foreshadowed also in their names.

risk, is created in the books by the fact that the hero plays two roles: he is both hero and villain. The challenge the heroine faces is unique to romance fiction. She must find a way to conquer the villain without destroying the hero." (8). Applying this to the narrative of the dangerous lover in *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, Feyre must be able to tame the villains in Tamlin and Rhysand, however, she is only able to do it to one of them.

Tamlin is an enemy of Feyre at the beginning of the novel, when she is taken by him from her home, showing up in his shapeshifter form: A beast with a "maw full of fangs" (ACOTAR 33). Only when they arrive in his mansion, he shifts to his true form; "his face seemed young", "golden hair" and "strange green eyes" (ACOTAR 50; 51), which's description alludes to that of the dandy dangerous lover and Prince Charming, only he is masked, although she still finds him alluring; "I couldn't ignore the sheer male beauty of that strong jaw, the richness of his golden-tan skin. He was probably handsome – if he ever took off that that mask" (ACOTAR 71). During the beginning of her stay they bicker at each other, which is to be expected as she killed his friend and she feels as a prisoner, however, as noted in regard of *Jane Eyre*, one can view this bickering as game-playing, adding tension to what blooms between them. They first become friends, but desire starts to form, which ultimately transforms into love. He tells her of his cruel father and two older brother who "fortunately or unfortunately, [...] were all killed by the High Lord of an enemy court" (ACOTAR 177). The feelings between Feyre and Tamlin arises in Feyre's empathy towards Tamlin. She feels sorry for him being lonely in his position, and having all this responsibility all alone, and having to grow up in an abusive home. "You're not your father [...]. You never made me feel like a prisoner" (ACOTAR 219). On the other hand, Tamlin feels sorry for her shortcomings – he pities her. The natures of their feelings are misaligned. Whilst she feels sympathetic towards him, he pities her mortal state, thus wanting to protect her; "I want you here, where I can look after you – where I can come home and know you're here, painting and safe" (ACOTAR 206). Ultimately, this protective nature is what drives Feyre away from Tamlin after they return from Under the Mountain – Feyre is no longer a human in need of protecting;

"That girl who had needed to be protected, who had craved stability and comfort ... she had died Under the Mountain. *I* had died, and there had been no one to protect me from those horrors before my neck snapped. So I had done it myself. And I would not, *could not*, yield that part of me that had awoken and transformed Under the Mountain" (ACOMAF 121).

With the discourse of Tamlin displaying controlling behavior, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* does not defer from addressing and problematize aspects that are associated with the dangerous lover narrative, as it criticizes the abusive behaviors apparent in Feyre's relationship with Tamlin. We first believe him to be her match, but this shifts as he cannot change his ways in order to help Feyre when she tries to heal from her trauma. Instead of attempting to help Feyre navigate and familiarize herself with her new form, he opts to shut her in – expressing abusive and controlling tendencies. Depictions of abusive relationships in romance narratives are heavily debated subjects, especially those who romanticize them. Julia T. Wood's study "The normalization of violence in heterosexual romantic relationships: Women's narratives of love and violence" expresses that the established gender narrative of women needing men is problematic, and problematize it in regards of women adapting this narrative to narrate themselves and their own experiences (Wood 243). "Prince Charming is strong, powerful, sure of

himself, and commanding. These characteristics of the ideal man in the fairy tale script are not unlike the characteristics of men who are violent toward women" (Wood 244). Nevertheless, interpreting *A Court of Thorns and Roses* as a fairytale retelling, its plot thus rooted in optimism and magic, allows for more space in healing of trauma (Jorgensen 7), and, therefore, more time for Feyre to escape an abusive partner. Having their relationship ultimately fail due to Tamlin's changed behavior, symbolizes and marks a change within dangerous lover narratives – abusive and controlling behavior is no longer accepted, and it conveys that the better option is possibly waiting elsewhere.

Feyre is first drawn to Tamlin because of his protective and arguably animalistic nature – it is here his inherent dangerousness lies, in his possessiveness. He is what she needed at that point in her life – a protector – after having to provide for her family; "A protector - that's who he was, and would always be. What *I* had wanted when I was cold and hard and joyless; what *I* had needed to melt the ice of bitter years on the cusp of starvation" (ACOMAF 103). St John and Tamlin are similar in this sense – they are what the protagonist needs in that moment. Whereas St John helps Jane as she flees from Thornfield, providing her with lodgings and an occupation and helping her find herself (with her lost family and connection with her uncle), Tamlin helps Feyre believe that she can be loved and protects her when all she has done until then is protect everyone other than herself. However, he shows her that he is not capable of changing, and thus his unwillingness to be able to adapt to her newfound status as High Fae. When they return to the Spring Court, now also engaged, Tamlin appears to pay no heed to Feyre's constant nightmares from the traumas inflicted upon her Under the Mountain; "He never woke when the nightmares dragged me from sleep; never woke when I vomited up my guts up night after night. If he knew or heard, he said nothing about it" (ACOMAF 8). This results in Feyre feeling that she cannot tell him everything anymore – she cannot confide with him, as he disregards her feelings. Additionally, he refuses to let Feyre go outside of the mansion, becoming more and more obsessive over the thought that someone might come and take her from him – especially Rhysand.

After Feyre has made two visits to Rhysand and the Night Court as agreed in their bargain, Tamlin begins to display controlling and abusive tendencies. Most significantly, he resorts to contain her in their house by creating a magical barrier that only Feyre cannot exit, which triggers Feyre's trauma after being locked up Under the Mountain. Comparing to *Jane Eyre*, the equivalent would be Mr. Rochester locking up Jane, triggering her traumas from Gateshead. Him succumbing to his fears of losing her inflicts more trauma upon Feyre; emphasized with her repeating in her head "He'd locked me in here", "He'd locked me in. He'd sealed me inside this house," "I was trapped. I was trapped inside this house," "He'd trapped me in here; he'd *locked me up*", "I couldn't get out; I couldn't get out; I couldn't get out" (ACOMAF 123; 124). This arguably also alludes to Rochester locking up Bertha. In other words, Tamlin is to Feyre as Rochester was to Bertha – not able to be the man she needed him to be. Moreover, it is Tamlin's behavior that, ironically, drives Feyre away to Rhysand. Even though their relationship is one of both passion and betrayal, their wants and needs for each other are different, similar to that of Rochester and Bertha and St John and Jane, rather than Rochester and Jane. When Feyre eventually leaves Tamlin, he is not able to respect her decision, contrary to Rochester and Jane. Tamlin resorts to aligning himself with the villain, the King of Hybern, who seeks to destroy the mortal realms – Feyre's home – and enslave the humans. He provides him with safe passage through his court in return for the King of Hybern retrieving Feyre from Rhysand. This results in tragedy, and the King of Hybern

not only traps Feyre, but also retrieves her sister – turning them into High Fae. “He’d sold us out. Sold out Prythian – for me. To get me back” (*ACOWAR* 20). Ultimately, Tamlin inflicts a great deal of trauma upon Feyre because of his inability to respect her decision, even when she tells him she left “because I was going to *die* in that house” (*ACOMAF* 595), illustrating that she would have ended up as Bertha. Moreover, when presented with a chance to show his changed behavior, whilst Feyre infiltrates his court after he aligns himself with the King of Hybern, he lashes out when she agitates him, “[h]e exploded” (*ACOWAR* 69), causing Feyre physical harm. Significantly, this is the reason to why she is not able to conquer him – their ‘natures’ are not the same, and the longing and lies within their relationship does not function to create a thrill, but rather creates a tragedy. She cannot accept him when she cannot see evidence of her own compassion and gentleness in him (Krentz 5).

Love as Homesickness

“The structure of this uncanny situates a sense of strangeness in the heart of what is one’s own – the true love and final destiny in an other whose enemy-like surface at first repels. But, in that it discloses, the heroine also feels that it is something that has been ‘there’ all along but that she has concealed” (Lutz 34).

When one of Tamlin’s courtiers meets Feyre upon their arrival at the Spring Court he tells her that “[her] eyes are like stars” (*ACOTAR* 53) – though it signifies nothing then, it foreshadows what is to come; Feyre’s love and union with Rhysand. In her research on the dangerous lover, Lutz gives reference to Freud and his work on the uncanny, stating that “Love is homesickness” (qtd. in Lutz 48). Rhysand is High Lord of the Night Court, “perched in a frozen mountainous spread of darkness and stars” (*ACOTAR* 116), and having Feyre drawn to that which alludes to Rhysand expresses her subconscious search for him. Moreover, while Feyre was still living in the mortal realms – before being brought through the Wall – Feyre was painting “stars and the moon and clouds and just endless, dark sky [...]” (*ACOMAF* 488). Throughout the first novel, when Feyre is growing closer to Tamlin, the story is filled with allusions to Rhysand with Feyre’s love for the starry night and fiery cold. To love the dangerous lover is in many ways to love the uncanny – to love something ‘other’ that ultimately leads the subject into something known, and familiar (Lutz 33). In other words, when Feyre opens up to loving Rhysand, she unlocks another part of herself, that which have been hidden but always there. Combined with the Heideggerian idea that authentic homes are “secret”, the romantic heroine’s ‘authentic’ self lies in a hidden love. Having Rhysand then share some of Feyre’s compassion – them both being caring for others less fortunate than them, and them bonding over their dreams for the world – she is ultimately more receptive of his love, as she is able to see evidence of her own compassion in him (Krentz 5).

Coupled with how the dangerous lover sees himself in the heroine, Rhysand is the holder of the secret which may lead her to her final “home” – her destiny, and fate (Lutz 33); “Home. Home had been at the end of the bond. [...] Not Tamlin, not the Spring Court, but ... Rhysand” (*ACOMAF* 526). The natural pool Tamlin and Feyre bathed in, when her lust for him started to take hold, “look[ed] like starlight” (*ACOTAR* 159), and when she walks into Tamlin’s garden she cannot help but notice how “[t]he moonlight stained the red petals a deep purple and cast a silvery sheen on the white blooms” (*ACOTAR* 170). In both cases, it is Tamlin who ‘shows’ these places to Feyre, which arguably also foreshadows that Tamlin drives Feyre away into Rhysand’s arms. When meeting

Rhysand, Feyre “discovers what will be, in the logic of the romance, her true self, her essential being, but which she initially regards as a deeply threatening other” (Lutz 33), illustrated in her infatuation with him during their first encounter.

“Everything about [him] radiated sensual grace and ease. High Lord, no doubt. His short black hair gleamed like a raven's feathers, off-setting his pale skin and blue eyes so deep they were violet, even in the firelight. They twinkled with amusement as he beheld me” (ACOTAR 189).

Rhysand’s attractiveness is thus situated not only in his uncanniness as a High Fae, but it lays in also his dangerousness – he is “[t]he most powerful High Lord in history” (ACOMAF 149). His dangerousness lays also in his directness, and Feyre sense this from the moment they meet. “[He was] a predator sizing up his prey” (ACOTAR 190).

Rhysand is similar to Rochester in their direct speech towards the protagonist, however, in trend with contemporary romance, his narrative discourse is not only sexually insinuating, but rather sexually explicit. In light of the fact that Romantasy adapts elements from Erotica, the passion and longing between dangerous lover and heroine is further enhanced with erotic scenes told from a first-person narrator – the heroine herself. Much of the game-playing in the novels are associated with the erotic scenes between the two, as well as their teasing and bickering through their mental bond, with his dangerousness adding an element of tension itself – we are constantly aware of his capacity to destroy her if he wants to, both physically and mentally. When they are reunited after Feyre has infiltrated and brought havoc to the Spring Court, Rhysand watches her from the threshold taking a bath as she bathes off the dirt from her dangerous journey back. “But Rhysand made no move to pounce, even when I toweled off and brushed by tangled hair. As if the restraint ... it was part of the game, too” (ACOWAF 137). With this, Feyre displays the desire to be ravished, which is apparent in dangerous lover narratives where he possesses supernatural abilities (Lutz 85). Even during serious scenes, such as the meeting of High Lord where they discuss the awaiting war, Rhysand makes sensual comments through their bond – “*Cruel, beautiful High Lady*, he purred [through the bond], eyes twinkling” (ACOWAR 433), adding sexual tension between them in scenes that are neither romantic nor happy.

Many romance narratives are though rooted in realism, such the one we encounter in *Jane Eyre*, where the hero is symbolically ‘inside’ the heroine – through symbolisms and metaphors, whereas in *A Court of Thorns and roses*, Rhysand is inside of Feyre in a more literal sense. His mental powers enable him to enter her mind, however, because of the bond that was established between them Under the Mountain, the mating bond, and her inheriting all High Lords’ powers after being resurrected – his included – she is also able to enter his. Additionally, their mating bond results in an expected fatedness of their love – their love is a force of nature, similar to how Jane explains her love for Rochester. Moreover, it is through their mental bond much of their mutual lust for each other come forth. Lutz explains that these secret communications, such as that through Feyre and Rhysand’s bond, are one of importance in dangerous lover narratives, as they provide us – readers – with the hidden facts of their relationship (35). Yet, similar to Rochester and Jane, there is an element of obstacle in Feyre and Rhysand’s relationship, which also is located in the heroines’ views on herself – she feels bad for moving on from Tamlin so quickly, but she believes that she does not deserve to be loved after having to kill someone during her trials Under the Mountain: “I was *nothing*, and my soul, my eternal

soul, was damned" (*ACOMAF* 42). However, again, it is in the misunderstandings, the prohibitions, and partings, desires are enhanced (Eagleton 115), and having Rhysand help Feyre overcome her self-doubt functions to bring them closer and making their love for each other grow stronger.

Coupled with the homesickness, having there be a metaphorical, yet at the same time literal, aspect bringing them together – their bargain and their mating bond – illustrates the romantic sublime of the dangerous lover – the depth of his desire and passion exceeds the bounds of any satisfaction (Lutz 63). However, this might lead the dangerous lover into doing meaningless evil in order to maintain control, yet, he is still 'healed' by the heroine (Lutz 76). It is through their bond that Rhysand keeps an eye on Feyre and her whereabouts, but it is also where Feyre challenges him and his views – where she is honest with him and 'tames' him, similar to Jane and Rochester. In other words, it is in their dialogue through their bond we encounter their most honest dialogue, and the location of the primary battlefield for the conflicts between them (Barlow and Krentz 22). He lets her in, and by doing so he enables her to civilize him, as she convinces him to let his true self show and no longer put on a cold exterior towards others and no longer be an outcast.

Lutz expresses that "[t]he eroticism of homesickness settles around the desire for one who restlessly pines; who searches always for something long gone; who, in a word, desires" (48), which is the case for both Rochester and Rhysand – they are both missing something, a home, as one of the possible roads to redemption for the dangerous lover, Rhysand, is finding a home in the beloved (Lutz 50). Similar to the Byronic figure, Rhysand's hell is situated in memory, and it is only finding his beloved that may heal his tormented soul. After Feyre learns that they are mates, Rhysand tells her his whole life story – one filled with torment and struggles, all done in attempts to spare and shield his friends during war and his Court during Amarantha's rule. Again, his tragedy already happened before the story begins, homogenous to the dangerous lover character (Lutz 56). He reveals his story to her after being at the brink of death, which Lutz suggests "illuminates the fragility and mortality of the beloved and the ache of bodily existence" (Lutz 41), and ultimately brings forth the full confession, followed by Feyre's realization of her love for him. "And there it was. A future [with Rhysand]" (*ACOMAF* 513). However, he also tells her that when he learned her name Under the Mountain "it was like an answer to a question I'd been asking for five hundred years" (*ACOMAF* 525). He states this during what is arguably the declaration in the series' romance narrative – one of Regis's eight essential elements, whose function is heightened with their first sexual intercourse taking place after she accepts their bond and his confession. With his declaration and confession of his past, he draws both the reader and the heroine into the untouchability and unknowability of his mind (Lutz 65), conveying how he has longed for her all his life – his home.

"My Equal"

The biggest contrast between Tamlin and Rhysand, and them as dangerous lovers, is how one wish only to conceal her from the world in hopes to never lose her again, while the other lets Feyre grow and become accustomed to her new life as High Fae– one viewing her as property and the other views her as his equal. Both are dangerous lovers; however, one wins and the other loses, and this has much to do with how they treat the heroine after her transformation into High Fae.

Feyre shares numerous similarities with Jane, most notably in her transformation from being who she thinks she should be – only doing what is expected of her – to being who she truly is, who she is 'destined' to be. Furthermore, Rhysand plays a pivotal role in Feyre's transformation in regard to her needing someone who can accept how she has become – accepting of her transformation, and helping her on her way. Additionally, both Feyre and Jane want to be of help; Feyre wants to be of help in the coming war, and Jane wants to be of use to Mr. Rochester, both restless when that wish is ignored. When Feyre is taken to the Night Court, she is provided with tasks and a purpose, contrasting what she was allowed, or rather not allowed, to do in the Spring Court. One can argue that Feyre relationship with Rhysand hinges on her transform into High Fae, as she would probably remain with Tamlin otherwise. This is due to how human Feyre was more similar to Tamlin, and his character as a dangerous lover, as she was in greater need of his protection in her mortal state. But, as she transforms, she turns to need someone who challenges and helps her grow into her newfound form. When Feyre returns to the Spring Court after accepting the mating bond and marrying Rhysand, she describes her old room which once had been filled with roses was now overrun with vines "curved and slithered over the walls" making it resemble "a tomb" (ACOWAR 11) – a tomb representing who she was, and that she no longer sees a place for herself in there. Her transformation is complete, but Tamlin is not accepting it.

Even though Feyre first falls for Tamlin, it is the fiery cold and Rhysand who proves to allure her. Having Feyre fall for the flowery and bright Spring is conditioned in us, due to its allusions to familiar stories, but also because of the allusions to the feminine or female aesthetic. Conceivably, we are brought to favor the feminine imagery, with its association to what is good and compassionate. However, having her then rather be drawn to that which is cold and dark, functions not to scorn all things feminine (Modleski 3), but rather emphasize her transformation into her true self, and not protecting herself from Rhysand's seduction and her embracing it.

Throughout the novels, most notably in the first installment, Rhysand is portrayed as a morally ambiguous character, who's intentions are mostly hidden up until the point of his confession to Feyre. It is in his confession he gives reasons for all the choices he has made, and what his choices has cost him – being labeled as an outcast by his fellow High Lords. This has much to do with Rhysand appearing to take on the role as Amarantha's lackey, presumably helping her keep the other High Lords at bay with his powers. Because of this, when introduced, he takes a forefront role in the story, as his motives stay hidden from both us and the protagonist, however, Feyre senses that his cold exterior is only a façade. One can thus argue that the evolved dangerous lover is one with an inherent kindness, but hidden behind a cold exterior – concealed by his unwillingness to open himself completely to another person, which is the case with Rhysand. He sensed when he met Feyre that it might be dangerous, conceivably that it might lead to the unravelling of his true motives and her demise.

"I knew we were on dangerous ground, somehow. [...] I think I knew what you were. And I didn't let myself admit it, because if there was the slightest chance that you were my mate ... They would have done such unspeakable things to you, Feyre" (ACOMAF 523).

With the introduction of Feyre to his world, Rhysand is faced with the road to his redemption and his dreams, which he fully understands when their mating bond snapped

into place after Feyre's transformation, but he is also faced with the fear of losing her in the process. However, Feyre convinces him to show the rest of Prythian that they are united and share who he truly is when they are at the brink of war – in a means to not only save themselves, but also the rest of the world.

Moreover, in contrast to Tamlin, Rhysand, emphasizes that Feyre has always had a choice and was willing to have her stay with Tamlin if that was what she wanted:

"I was willing to lose my mate to another male. I was willing to let them marry, if it had brought her joy. But what I was not willing to do was let her suffer. To let her fade away into shadow. And the moment that piece of shit blew apart his study, the moment he *locked her in that house...*" (ACOWAR 145).

As mentioned, this was not the case with Tamlin, who sold out her and her family in order to get her back, not only disrespecting her wishes of not being with him but also causing her more harm. Ultimately, this is because Tamlin wishes Feyre to be someone she is not. In other words, he wishes to tame *her*. As previously states, this does not work due to their misaligned natures. Tamlin, similar to St John, suppresses himself as a result of his beliefs – both adhere to doing things as they 'should' be done, adhering to societal expectations of them. For St John this is connected to his Christian faith, while for Tamlin, it is driven by a commitment to uphold and maintain tradition; doing things his father's way, even when the customs are outdated and cruel. "That's the way my father did it, and his father, and the way my son shall do it" (ACOMAF 92). Moreover, Tamlin excludes Feyre in his decision making and rather makes choices for her. For human Feyre this was not a problem, as she was not accustomed to his world and their ways of doing things, however, it does work for the transformed Feyre who values being given choices and making decisions for herself based on her own beliefs. In contrast, Rhysand always lets her make her own choices; "My choice. It had always been my choice with [Rhysand]" (ACOWAR 132), and "I knew that one word from me, and he'd go flying off into the crisp night. That if I shut the door, he'd go away and not push it" (ACOMAF 515). Ultimately, in the dangerous lover narrative there has to be an element of mutual respect between heroine and hero, which is why Feyre ends up with Rhysand. When Rhysand tells Feyre of the meaning behind his tatted knees, he tells her "*That I will bow before no one and nothing but my crown*" (ACOMAF 375). Yet, illustrating her taming of him, and Rhysand viewing Feyre as his home, he bows for her – "his equal" – "[his] queen" (ACOMAF 531; 621), never to be sidelined.

Conclusion

By utilizing examples from close readings and conceptualizations from scholarly aspects regarding romance narratives, despite there being limited research on the Romantasy subgenre, one can identify how Brontë's *Jane Eyre* functions as a template for the love relations in Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series, as Mr. Rochester functions as a prototype for Lutz's male dangerous lover character whom we encounter in the characters of Tamlin and Rhysand.

Central to the narratives of the dangerous lover is the notion of female empowerment – apparent in the dangerous lover narrative in regard to the heroine being the only one with the power to tame the hero/villain. Lutz's dangerous lover character derives from the Gothic, and we can identify its predecessor in Richardson's *Pamela*, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, but most notably the character derives from Mr. Rochester in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane tames the uncanny Mr. Rochester – a Byronic hero, who hides from her a riveting past, and attempts to lure her into marriage. In this courtship, we – the readers – are Jane's confidantes; her innermost thoughts are conveyed, and we are provided with Jane's perception of Mr. Rochester's allure. She eventually overcomes their obstacles and tames her 'master' with her wits and cleverness – making him realize that he needs her, that her love is his redemption in life. This narrative turn – the man now dependent on the woman – is an important aspect of the dangerous lover narrative, with the heroine being the only one to provide them with their final freedom.

The dangerous lover narrative thus evolved in the twentieth century and became associated with the Romance, as the writers of the genre adapted the narrative from Erotica. This incorporation of the dangerous lover narrative into a scrutinized genre, such as the Romance, due to the formula being recognizable and frequently used, ultimately resulted in the criticism of the dangerous lover formula. This also resulted in other works that utilized the dangerous lover narrative being mistaken for Romances. However, because of the role Romance fiction has in women's lives, the dangerous lover narrative became popular, and new subgenres continue to emerge as a result of women's search for specific narratives – driven by wanting a specific experience, which included those that convey stories with a dangerous lover, such as *A Court of Thorns and Roses*. One can identify Mr. Rochester in both of Maas's dangerous lovers, however, they are different versions of him. Tamlin is the angry Mr. Rochester who locks up his wife in the attic because of their misaligned natures, while Rhysand is the Mr. Rochester that needs Jane, or rather Feyre – thus Rhysand being the one she is able to tame. Their love is rooted in homesickness, shared beliefs, and erotic lust, but most importantly a sense of mutual respect in the end – they respect each other as equals.

Examining and identifying Lutz's dangerous lover character in novels of personal sentiment has proved to be both gratifying and enlightening, as I've gained knowledge on both narratives associated with the Romance and the effect of adapting romance codes to other genres. Because of this, it would be rewarding to further examine how the dangerous lover narrative specifically affects the perception of non-romance literature with romance sub-plots that are written by women compared to those written by men.

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Appendix. Relevance for Teaching

Reading and working with literature are essential in the English second-language classroom, their importance emphasized by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training as one of the Core Curriculum's basic skills (NDETa). Moreover, one of the core elements of the English subject is working with texts in English, which is an overall focus in all grades where English is taught. Being able to "read, analyse and interpret fictional texts in English" and "read, discuss and reflect on the content and language features and literary devices in various types of texts, including self-chosen texts" are also mentioned as some of the subject's competence aims in VG1 (NDE Tb).

The topic of this dissertation is relevant for teaching in the regards that it opens discussions surrounding genre and genreblending, enabling in-depth learning and investigations of various narratives that appear in multiple genres, as well as discussions surrounding prejudices over both narratives and genres as a whole. This does not have to strictly regard Romance, but also other genres. An approach to this could possibly be to have the students choose their own novels, and identify narrative structures and codes that are utilized by the author, and compare these to other students who chose a novel of a different genre. From there it would be possible to enter discussions of gender and literature, as one will arguably encounter prejudice based on gender, as noted in this thesis, in addition to examine the relation between book trends on social media apps and the formulas they encounter.

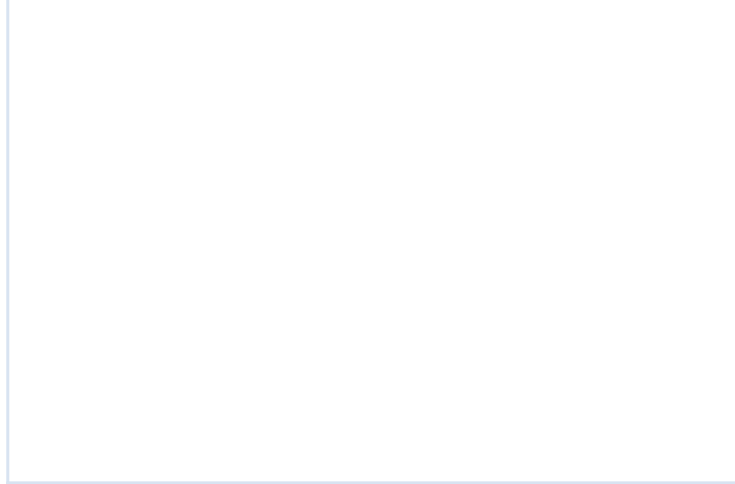
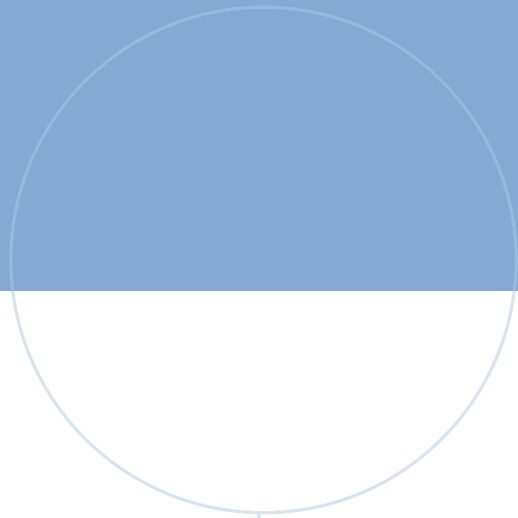
I believe that working and engaging with fictional texts is neglected in the English second-language classroom, however, this is based on my own experiences. Nevertheless, approaching the fictional texts more critically – examining them, and making notes of authors' choices in use of formulas and codes – could hopefully open students' attention to other ways of reading literature. We already examine the structure of non-fictional text, for instance by analyzing their use of ethos, pathos, and logos, and the way forth is arguably to approach fiction more similarly, as fictional texts also use their own formulas. By doing this, one could thus incorporate even more competence aims into projects where students engage with fictional texts.

Lastly, I would like to note how I found working with canonical classics in a different way than solely analyzing it as an independent work as engaging for myself. It enabled me to utilize the theoretical competence I have gained during my studies, which I also believe will aid me in my teaching in future classrooms.

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