

Fantasy Characters in Sarah J. Maas's Book Series

A Court of Thorns and Roses

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na fantasy postavy a archetypy, které představují v knižní sérii Sarah J. Maas *Dvůr trnů a růží* (ACOTAR). Cílem práce je prozkoumat subverzi archetypů postav Feyre, Tamlina a Rhysanda v kontextu literárních rámců definovaných Josephem Campbellem a Christopherem Voglerem, a analyzovat, jak se jejich role, vycházející z archetypálních vzorců, v průběhu románů vyvíjejí a odchylují od tradičních narativních struktur. Poznatky této analýzy ukazují, že Maas zavedený archetypální rámec kompletně nezavrhuje, ale místo toho přizpůsobuje a znovu dané archetypy interpretuje, čímž umožňuje postavám vybočit z očekávaných vzorců. Postavy buď začínají jako rozpoznatelné archetypy, které se postupně vyvíjejí a odchylují od původních očekávání, nebo jejich příběhy v průběhu vyprávění vybočují z tradičních narativních vzorců.

Klíčová slova: archetypy, Joseph Campbell, Christopher Vogler, fantasy, *Dvůr trnů a růží*, Sarah J. Maas

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis focuses on the fantasy characters and the archetypes they represent in Sarah J. Maas's book series *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (ACOTAR). The aim of the thesis is to explore the subversion of the archetypes of Feyre, Tamlin, and Rhysand within the literary frameworks defined by Joseph Campbell and Christopher Vogler, and to analyse how their roles, derived from archetypal patterns, evolve and deviate from traditional narrative structures throughout the novels. The findings of this analysis reveal that Maas does not completely reject the established archetypal framework but rather adapts and reinterprets these archetypes, which allows the characters to subvert expected structures. The characters either begin as recognizable archetypes that gradually evolve and subvert the original expectations, or their stories deviate from traditional narrative patterns as the narrative progresses.

Keywords: archetypes, Joseph Campbell, Christopher Vogler, fantasy, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, Sarah J. Maas

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INTRODUCTION

Across many cultures and historical periods, storytelling has relied on recurring characters. Figures like the hero, the villain, or the mentor are some of the archetypes that appear in stories throughout history, from mythology and folklore to modern literature and film.¹ These familiar roles not only serve as recognizable patterns that help structure the narrative, but they also shape reader's expectations and the way in which stories are told or understood.

Recently, however, contemporary literature has started to move beyond simply repeating these patterns. As storytelling evolves, so do the characters, and authors tend to lean towards redefining and challenging these familiar roles. The character may begin as a recognizable archetype, but throughout the narrative can transform into various archetypes or even abandon their archetypal role. One of the examples is Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (ACOTAR) series, which works with well-known archetypes and reimagines them.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first three provide theoretical background, while the final three present an analysis of chosen novels. The first chapter introduces the fantasy genre and outlines the history and development of the genre.

The second chapter deals with archetypes and discusses them from both psychological and literary perspective. Firstly, the idea of archetypes by Carl Gustav Jung is introduced, and expanded by Carol S. Pearson's approach. Then the chapter continues on to present archetypes in literature by Campbell and Vogler.

The third chapter of this thesis introduces the author of the series, Sarah J. Maas, and provides an overview of the plot of each book in the series. Chapters four through six then deal with the analysis of the characters of Feyre, Tamlin, and Rhysand, respectively.

This thesis aims to prove, through the analysis of Feyre, Tamlin, and Rhysand in Sarah J. Maas's ACOTAR series with the use of the archetypal theories of Joseph Campbell and Christopher Vogler that these characters either initially embody recognizable archetypes but evolve to subvert the associated expectations, or their overall narrative progression diverges from traditional archetypal narratives at multiple points.

¹ 1. Margaret Mark and Carol S. Pearson, *The Hero and the Outlaw: Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001). 11.

1 FANTASY

“Fantasy is the ultimate guilty pleasure.”² The ability of fantasy works to transport its readers into a world of mythical creatures, magic, and extraordinary adventures is what captivates vast audiences. It is a complex genre that started out almost everywhere from the origins of ancient myths, legends, and fairy tales³ and where imagination expands beyond the limits of reality. That is just as Mathews puts it; “fantasy enables us to enter worlds of infinite possibility. The maps and contours of fantasy are circumscribed only by imagination itself.”⁴

Today, fantasy is one of the biggest and most popular literary genres in the world; however it used to be the “neglected cousin to both sf and horror.”⁵ For much of its history, fantasy was often seen as a lesser genre that was not mature enough and was dismissed as mere escapism or juvenile fiction. This is supported by Stableford who says that fantasy literature “was something that adults ought [to] put away with other childish things.”⁶ However, over time, the genre was able to break free of these perceptions and embraced its greatest potential – the capacity to explore a wide range of possibilities, where the power of imaginations can reach beyond the limits of reality and expand into an entirely new world.

These endless opportunities give readers a chance to dive into complex subjects like identity or morality. As Mathews further notes, it creates a narrative space where timeless, classic mythic patterns can merge with modern experiences of individuals, allowing the readers to explore stories that combine ancient themes and archetypes with modern struggles.⁷

However, as Mathews says, it is precisely “its association with imagination and with desire [that] has made it an area difficult to articulate or to define,”⁸ as the human mind can create anything – no matter how strange or impossible. What further complicates the efforts to establish clear boundaries is that fantasy literature incorporates a wide range of subgenres, each with its own unique and distinctive characteristics, such as high fantasy,

² Lucie Armitt, *Fantasy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 1.

³ Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.

⁴ Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, 1.

⁵ Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James, *A Short History of Fantasy* (Farington: Libri Publishing, 2012), 5.

⁶ Brian Stableford, *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), xxxvii.

⁷ Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, 1.

⁸ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2009), 1, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203130391>

urban fantasy, or dark fantasy. All these subgenres have specific features that are common for that specific subgenre, including settings, themes, or tones. High fantasy, for example, typically takes place in entirely fictional worlds and often involves grand quests, while urban fantasy merges supernatural elements with contemporary settings.⁹ Dark fantasy, on the other hand, uses darker themes, often incorporating horror-like elements.¹⁰ Furthermore, the genre frequently overlaps with other genres such as science fiction, mystery or mythological narratives.

What sets fantasy apart, however, is that its world operates on and deliberately uses elements that break and ignore natural laws and defy logical explanations. Moreover, magic “plays an important role in many fantasy narratives”¹¹ which opens the doors to new worlds and endless adventures. Fantasy narratives almost always have events of mythic proportions that can’t take place in this world; scenarios and entities that are hardly ever possible.¹² The combination of its ability to explore the impossible and focus on concepts beyond logic and rationality is what sets it apart from similar genres, like science fiction which also explores the impossible but also offers (logical) explanations or it rationalizes the fantastical elements.¹³ In contrast, fantasy proudly embraces the unexplainable. By allowing the impossible to remain unexplained, it creates a space for the supernatural where it can thrive without the need for rationalization.

1.1 History of Fantasy

As Stableford states, “Storytelling is much older than literature.”¹⁴ Before the invention of writing, oral traditions served as the main way of sharing knowledge and ideas, and through which the fantastical stories could be passed down through generations. These stories did not take place in the reality of the “here and now”, but instead existed in the reality of a world of myth and magic – a place that we all know as the world of “once upon a time.”¹⁵ In other words, since these tales were not set in the everyday world, they were not bound by the limitations of what was a fact and what wasn’t.

⁹ Stableford, *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature*, 198.

¹⁰ Ibid., 97.

¹¹ Armitt, *Fantasy*, 22.

¹² Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 3.

¹³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁴ Stableford, *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature*, xxxviii.

¹⁵ Ibid., xxxix.

Many of these pre-literary stories and their earliest written forms often included gods, spirits, heroes, and mythological creatures.¹⁶ The roots of fantasy can be traced to mythologies of various cultures, including, for example, Greek, Roman, Chinese, and Egyptian mythologies which were full of supernatural events.¹⁷ Early tales like the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and Homer's *Odyssey* are often mentioned as some of the first texts that contain fantastical elements and blend the supernatural beings with the mystic travels of heroes.¹⁸

The invention of writing changed the history of fantasy. As Stableford observes, "the prehistory of stories retains a good deal of its mystery,"¹⁹ but the invention of writing allowed for the preservation and expansion of these oral traditions. As Stableford describes, "the overwhelming majority of the stories that became visible to history once writing had been invented were fantasies in the Chaucerian sense: strange and supernatural."²⁰ Early written narratives often followed the supernatural elements of oral tales and blended myth with newly "forged" history. The process of transcription not only became a first step in their preservation but also allowed them to be "recycled" or further transformed and reshaped so that these stories could change in order to fit into new and changing contexts, age, and audience.²¹

These fantastical elements and themes further continued throughout the medieval period in the form of chivalric romances, such as the stories of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table.²² The narratives about Arthur, like the work *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) by Sir Tomas Malory, included supernatural beings and other magical figures like wizard Merlin, heroic quests for the Holy Grail, with themes of love and adventure.²³ By the thirteenth century these stories were extremely popular throughout Europe.²⁴

The Enlightenment period brought a significant shift in cultural, political, and literary opinions which led to a decline in fantasy's popularity. Literature of this era turned more toward realism, and favoured reason, and scientific knowledge, and over

¹⁶ Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 7

¹⁷ Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, 2.

¹⁸ Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 7.

¹⁹ Stableford, *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature*, xxxviii.

²⁰ Ibid., xxxviii.

²¹ Ibid., xxxix.

²² Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 9.

²³ Ibid., 10.

²⁴ Ibid., 9.

the supernatural forces.²⁵ As Stableford explains, before this period, “the realistic and fantastic elements of literature coexisted harmoniously,”²⁶ but the Enlightenment refined these ideas and helped to create a more distinct division between realistic and supernatural storytelling.²⁷

However, despite the focus on rationalism, the fantastic continued in genres such as the gothic novel that blended realism with horror and the uncanny, or romance and that was created as a response to the Age of Reason during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.²⁸ *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) by Horace Walpole is regularly referenced as the origin of Gothic literature, marking a turning point in the exploration of the fantastic and extraordinary, and paving the way for works like Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), or the works of Edgar Allan Poe.²⁹ At the same time, the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen and other writers became main contributions to the foundation of modern fairy tales, maintaining ancient folktales and embedding supernatural elements into popular culture.³⁰

Modern fantasy practically began in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, with the writers George MacDonald and William Morris, who are often credited as the pioneers of modern fantasy.³¹ It were MacDonald’s works such as *Phantastes* (1858) and *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) that made a difference in the modern fantasy by blending intricate otherworld landscapes and elements of fairy tales with exploring of themes of spiritual growth and redemption.³² The first work, a portal fantasy where a young man is drawn into a faerie world where he embarks on a series of adventures, is often regarded as one of the first fantasy novels for adults.³³ Another important and influential work is Morris’ *The Well at the World’s End*, which was first published in 1896. This novel’s setting abandoned the known real-world geography and historical events, rather creating one of the earliest fully invented imaginary (secondary) worlds in fantasy literature. As

²⁵ Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, 2.

²⁶ Stableford. *The A to Z of Fantasy Literature*, xlii.

²⁷ Ibid., xliii.

²⁸ John Clute and John Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (London: Orbit, 1999), 821.

²⁹ Ibid, 424.

³⁰ Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 14.

³¹ Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, 16.

³² Clute and Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 603.

³³ Ibid., 332.

Mendlesohn and James describe, in his works “Morris constructs a world as if it is the only world that exists.”³⁴

However, what shaped the modern fantasy genre the most were the works of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis which came to the literary scene in the middle of the 20th century. Both of these authors, close friends and members of the literary group Inklings, were interested in mythologies and previously written fantasies, especially those of Morris and MacDonald.³⁵ While Lewis became best known for his children’s fantasy series *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956), Tolkien built on the legacy of Morris’ fictional world, and was creating his own secondary world, complete with its own languages and cultures, for decades. Tolkien’s works *The Hobbit* (1937), *The Lord of the Ring* (1954), and *The Silmarillion* (1977) not only established the epic structure and themes of modern fantasy but his secondary world also became a model on which later writers would base their own imaginary worlds.³⁶ As Clute and Grant state, by creating such a sophisticated world of the Arda with its own mythology, history, and geography even accompanied with a detailed map “LOTR marked the end of apology. No longer was it necessary for fantasy writers to feel any lingering need to ‘normalize’ their secondary words by framing them as traveller’s tales or dreams.”³⁷ Tolkien’s work demonstrated fantasy’s ability to construct complex narratives and immersive worlds, which marked one of the most important milestones in writing of fantasy.

The late 20th-century fantasy evolved beyond the established model of epic quests and started to focus on themes such as identity, gender, or skin colour. An example of this shift is Ursula K. Le Guin. Although primarily a science fiction writer, her fantasy series *Earthsea* (1968–2001) “remains her best-known and best-loved work.”³⁸ In this series Le Guin introduced a full secondary world, not only with its own geography and cultures but also full of magic, wizards and creatures such as dragons.³⁹ Mendlesohn and James argue that the *Earthsea* books explore three significant elements, with the first being the power of magic and true names.⁴⁰ Mathews explains that “Earthsea’s magic is based on

³⁴ Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 22.

³⁵ Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 44.

³⁶ Clute and Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 951.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 951.

³⁸ Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 91.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

language”⁴¹ and describes the rules of power in *Earthsea* series: “Each entity has its ‘true name,’ and those who know and call the name control the entity.”⁴² Mendlesohn and James further state that the other two elements introduced in *Earthsea* are political⁴³ – specifically, gender and skin colour. Unlike many other works, the *Earthsea* series features the main protagonist, Ged, and his people with brown skin, while white-skinned people are found only in foreign lands.⁴⁴ The gender dynamics in *Earthsea* also play a critical role. Although the first three books are largely dominated by male characters, where only they can practice magic,⁴⁵ as the series progresses, Le Guin begins to challenge these gender norms, and attempts “a certain ‘correction’ of the male-oriented fantasy world of the earlier books.”⁴⁶

As Mendlesohn and James note, modern fantasy has become “more diverse than ever”⁴⁷ over the recent years. Popular series such as J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* (1997–2007), George R.R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996–present), Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* (2005–2020) or *The Witcher* (1986–2024) by Andrzej Sapkowski went on to become some of the best-selling fantasy series and played a key role in making fantasy major force in global literature and media – television and film – drawing in a broad and diverse audience of all ages.

Contemporary fantasy has significantly evolved in the 21st century. One of the biggest trends is the rise of LGBTQ+ representations, as seen in works like Samantha Shannon’s *The Priory of the Orange Tree* (2019) or *The Song of Achilles* (2011) by Madeline Miller. Another of contemporary fantasy trends which enriched the genre is incorporating non-Western culture, as for example R. F. Kuang’s *The Poppy War* trilogy (2018–2020) which blends fantasy with Chinese history. What also helped reshape the genre was the boom in young adult (YA) fantasy, with works like Leigh Bardugo’s *Shadow and Bone* series (2012–2014), Holly Black’s *The Cruel Prince* and its series *The Folk of the Air* (2018–2021), or *The Mortal Instruments* series (2007–2014) by Cassandra Clare captivating young readers. Recent years also saw a rise in the popularity of romantasy (a mix of fantasy and romance), where works like *The Fourth Wing* from *The*

⁴¹ Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, 135.

⁴² Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, 138–139.

⁴³ Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 92.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Clute and Grant, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 573.

⁴⁷ Mendlesohn and James, *A Short History of Fantasy*, 165.

Empyrian series (2023–present) or the *Crowns of Nyaxia* series (2022–present) are becoming trends on social media.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ananyaa Bhowmik , “Fantasy Novels in 2023: Trends, Features, and the Future,” Bay to Bay News, January 12, 2024, <https://baytobaynews.com/stories/fantasy-novels-in-2023-trends-features-and-the-future,125669>.

2 ARCHETYPES

As the second part of this thesis deals with characters and their archetypes in the literary series ACOTAR, it is important to first establish what archetypes are. The concept of archetypes was first proposed by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung as a part of his larger theory of the collective unconscious. He believed that the human unconscious can be divided into two layers – the superficial layer of personal unconsciousness and the deeper layer of collective unconsciousness.⁴⁹

According to Jung, archetypes are universal and are deeply rooted in the shared experience of humanity. He referred to them as “the contents of the collective unconscious,”⁵⁰ which implies that these archetypes are recurring themes and patterns that influence how people perceive the world.

He further explains, that archetypes are “unconscious images of the instincts themselves, in other words, they are patterns of instinctual behaviour”⁵¹ This means archetypes are not just abstract symbols and ideas but are linked to natural human instincts that influence how we behave and respond to situations. For example, the archetype of the “mother” symbolizes nurturing and providing care, while the archetype of the “father” typically represents authority and protection. These archetypes and their associated traits influence our cultural expectations and perceptions of these roles.

Archetypes serve as models or patterns for human behaviour and are frequently seen in myths, dreams, and stories such as fairy tales across various cultures.⁵² Jung noted that the archetypes are “an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived and it takes colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.”⁵³ In simple terms this means that while archetypes are universal, the way they show up in someone’s life depends on that person’s life experiences, culture, and perspective.

Jung also described these patterns – archetypes – as “a vital and necessary component[s] in our psychic economy,”⁵⁴ which emphasizes their role in the structure

⁴⁹ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

of the mind. It connects us to our instincts and helps us to balance unconscious instincts with conscious awareness.⁵⁵

2.1 Archetypes in Psychology

Carl Jung identified numerous archetypes within the collective unconscious, which he believed to be universal patterns and symbols shared across humanity. Many psychologists and Jungian analysts, including chartered psychologist and psychotherapist Patricia Duggan, list and emphasize four of Jung's main archetypes:

The Self represents the integration of the conscious and unconscious within an individual – the personality as a whole.

The Shadow is the personal unconscious as a whole. It represents the repressed or denied aspects of the self, including darker traits such as anger, jealousy, or fear, and is often projected onto others.

The Persona represents the face mask, the “role” or façade that people present to the outside world and which reflects the expectations of the society.

The Anima is the feminine aspect in men and **the Animus** is the masculine aspect in women. They represent the inner opposite gender traits, the “true self”, that balance the psyche.⁵⁶

Besides these four core archetypes, Jung described other archetypes of the collective unconsciousness that influence human relationships and roles. Some of them are: the Mother, the Old Wise Man, the Trickster, or the Child. The Mother symbolizes protection and nurturing, but it can also manifest as destructive. The Old Wise Man (or Woman) represents wisdom and guidance and often offers support and knowledge in times of crisis. The Trickster can be the manipulative, chaotic but also playful and unpredictable figure that challenges norms and exposes flaws in established systems.⁵⁷

Since then, many authors and psychologists have built on Jung's foundational work and further expanded and refined his ideas. One of the most influential figures to expand on Jung's work is Carol S. Pearson. She first introduced the six archetypes in her book *The Hero Within* (1986) and further developed them in *Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve*

⁵⁵ Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 160.

⁵⁶ Patricia Duggan, “Common Dream Archetypes,” Centre of Applied Jungian Studies, last modified October 16, 2013, <https://appliedjung.com/dream-archetypes/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World (1991), creating a 12 archetype system.

She identifies the following archetypes:

1. The Innocent
2. The Orphan
3. The Warrior
4. The Caregiver
5. The Seeker
6. The Lover
7. The Destroyer
8. The Creator
9. The Ruler
10. The Magician
11. The Sage
12. The Fool⁵⁸

Pearson defines the Hero's Journey as a deeply personal and transformative process. She states that "the hero's journey is first about taking a journey to find the treasure of your true self, and then about returning home to give your gift to help transform the kingdom – and, in the process, your own life."⁵⁹ This journey is about internal growth, self-discovery, and the eventual integration of wisdom into one's life. Pearson categorizes this process into three main stages: **Preparation**, **Journey**, and **Return**, each of which is represented by four archetypes.⁶⁰

The Preparation Stage consists of four archetypes that help individuals adapt to society and be good moral people. The journey begins in innocence, where the hero is trusting and hopeful. This state of optimism and security is represented by the **Innocent** archetype. When their idealistic world is shattered, they transition into the **Orphan**, who experiences betrayal, abandonment, and a desire to regain safety. This archetype teaches the hero resilience and to rely on themselves. The **Warrior** emerges to regain safety and stability. This archetype is driven to win and represents discipline and the courage to

⁵⁸ Carol S. Pearson, *Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World* (HarperOne, 2012), Introduction. Kindle.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

overcome challenges to achieve their goals. Lastly, the **Caregiver** is generous and compassionate and helps the hero to learn how to take care not only of others but themselves as well. These archetypes shape the hero's early experiences and prepare them for the journey.⁶¹

The Journey Stage represents the phase of transformation and self-discovery. At this point, the warrior begins searching for change and a better life and transforms into the **Seeker**. However, the journey is often not easy and without pain. The **Destroyer** represents the need to let go in order to grow and causes change and transformation. Out of this suffering emerges the **Lover**, who symbolizes emotional connection and commitment. The final archetype in the Journey Stage is the **Creator**, whose role is to help the hero create, accept, and express their new true self in the world.⁶²

The Return stage marks the final phase, where the hero reintegrates into the world with renewed purpose and wisdom. As heroes return, they take responsibility for their life and become the **Ruler**, who seeks order and uses their new wisdom to create a harmonious life and order. This is where the **Magician** comes in and helps the hero to use their power to heal and transform themselves and their world. The next archetype, the **Sage**, is crucial at this stage. As the Sage values truth, their role is to help let go of subjectivity and achieve a state of nonattachment. Finally, the **Fool** teaches the importance of not taking life too seriously and embracing life with joy, spontaneity, and humour. This stage signifies the completion of the journey as a changed individual.⁶³

2.2 Archetypes in Literature

In literature and literary criticism, the archetypes are considered repeating patterns, characters, or themes, present across various literary works.⁶⁴ Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye presents the archetype as “a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a

⁶¹ Pearson, *Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World*, Introduction.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Meyer Howard Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 8th ed. (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 13.

whole.”⁶⁵ These archetypes can manifest as any of the many repeating patterns we know, for example, the tragic hero, the wise mentor, the Holy Grail, or the redeeming quest.

Two, of probably the most famous and influential, authors that were concerned with archetypes in literature were American mythologist Joseph Campbell and Christopher Vogler.

Joseph Campbell, in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), explored the concept of archetype through the “monomyth” or the hero’s journey – a universal narrative structure that is defined by recurring archetypal characters and events. Christopher Vogler was heavily inspired by Campbell. He adapted Campbell’s Hero journey and other archetypes in *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* (1992), which serves as a guide for writers. He describes archetypes as masks that reflect human nature and that characters temporarily wear to progress in the story.⁶⁶ For Vogler, archetypes are not fixed roles, but dynamic and flexible functions, which allow the character to take different roles depending on the story’s needs.⁶⁷

2.2.1 Hero

Heroes (and their female equivalents Heroines) are the most common characters in fantasy. People usually expect them to be brave and strong individuals, but they can be driven by various motivations and emotions such as idealism, despair, anger, or revenge – that is what makes them more reliable.⁶⁸ However, according to Vogler, what truly makes Hero a Hero is sacrifice.⁶⁹ He describes a hero as “someone who is willing to sacrifice his own needs on behalf of others, like a shepherd who will sacrifice to protect and serve his flock.”⁷⁰ That implies that the Hero should be ready and willing to do anything to protect their people or fulfil their quest or goal. This sacrifice usually includes giving up something dear to them or their group, even if it is their own life.⁷¹

The Hero is a central figure in the Hero’s Journey. In Campbell’s monomyth, the Hero begins in a familiar world, after being called to adventure, the Hero “ventures forth

⁶⁵ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 365.

⁶⁶ Christopher Vogler, *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writer*, 3rd ed. (Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions, 2007). 24

⁶⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁷¹ Ibid., 31.

from the world of common day into region of supernatural wonder,⁷² and ultimately ends the journey with triumph.⁷³

Campbell divides the Hero's Journey into three main parts – the departure, the initiation and trials, and lastly, the return.⁷⁴ Each of these parts of the journey is broken down into several detailed subparts. Overall, there are 17 stages in Campbell's Hero journey including stages such as the Call to Adventure, Refusing the Call, the Belly of the Whale, the Road of Trials, the Atonement with the Father,⁷⁵ the Crossing of the Return Threshold or the Refusal of the Return.⁷⁶ Christopher Vogler worked with Campbell's Hero Journey and simplifies the journey into 12 stages:

1. Ordinary World,
2. Call to Adventure,
3. Refusal of the Call,
4. Meeting with the Mentor,
5. Crossing the First Threshold,
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies,
7. Approach to the Inmost Cave,
8. Ordeal,
9. Reward (Seizing the Sword).
10. The Road Back,
11. Resurrection,
12. Return with the Elixir.⁷⁷

At some point throughout the journey, the Hero comes face to face with either real or symbolic death, and there are multiple ways, how the Hero can deal with it. They can succeed and live or die – either failing or willingly sacrificing themselves for a cause or to save someone else's life. They might also transcend death and later be reborn again, or they might lose something or someone dear to them – a friend, a loved one, or a family member.⁷⁸

⁷² Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 3rd ed. (Novato: New World Library, 2008), 23.

⁷³ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 28-29

⁷⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 29

⁷⁷ Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 8.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 32.

As Vogler states, “The Hero archetype represents the ego’s search for identity and wholeness.”⁷⁹ It can be said that their transformation and inner development are reflected through the Hero’s journey, since while undergoing the journey “Heroes [not only] overcome obstacles and achieve goals, but they also gain new knowledge and wisdom.”⁸⁰ There are many kinds and varieties of Heroes, such as willing or unwilling Heroes, tragic Heroes, Anti-heroes or loner Heroes. Moreover, the Hero does not always have to be only a positive character but might represent the dark side.⁸¹

2.2.2 Mentor

The Mentor is the helper of the hero. They are usually a positive character that assists the hero, trains them, and prepares them for their upcoming journey or task.⁸² It is the “Wise Old Man [or Woman] of myths and fairy tales whose words assist the hero through the trials and terrors of the weird adventure.”⁸³

Sometimes, the hero must be motivated into doing something. This is precisely another of the Mentor’s functions; to help the hero overcome their fear, and inspire and motivate them, either by showing them the way of doing something or by giving them a gift. On top of that, the Mentor serves as the ‘moral compass’ or the conscience of the hero.⁸⁴ Similarly to heroes, Mentors can represent the negative side of the ego, and there can be various kinds of Mentors as well, including dark Mentors, who mislead us, fallen ones, or willing and unwilling Mentors.⁸⁵

2.2.3 Ally

The Ally is usually the hero’s friend, partner, or companion. It is someone who accompanies them on their travels, helps, comforts, and supports them with their tasks or gives advice to them. Allies are important figures in the story, as they often “bring the best” out of the hero and humanize them, which makes the hero more likeable and

⁷⁹ Vogler, *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 29.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁸¹ Ibid., 34.

⁸² Ibid., 39.

⁸³ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 6.

⁸⁴ Vogler, *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 42.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 44.

relatable.⁸⁶ Allies do not necessarily have to be only humans. They can be an animal that the hero saved or helped earlier in the story, or a spirit protector.⁸⁷

2.2.4 Herald

The Herald functions as some type of messenger or an announcer. They are usually the ones who come (most often) at the beginning of the story and bring big and important change to the hero's life. The Herald can manifest in various shapes and forms, such as a piece of information, an animal, a new person, or thing.⁸⁸

The change that the Herald brings into the hero's life, the "message", is usually the Call to Adventure. However, it is not always a literal call. It may be an invitation, a challenge, a motivation, or an action or decision that must be made.⁸⁹ Heralds can be any type of character – negative (villain), positive or neutral.⁹⁰

2.2.5 Threshold Guardian

The Threshold Guardian represents the challenges or obstacles that the hero must overcome during his journey. Threshold Guardians are usually neutral figures, as they are not the main villains but rather their helpers and soldiers. Sometimes they can also be secret helpers of the hero.⁹¹ These figures serve as tests for the hero and the hero can overcome them in multiple ways, like run away, deceive the guardian, or befriend them and turn them into allies.⁹²

2.2.6 Shadow

The Shadow archetype is usually the antagonist or main enemy/villain of the story, whose goal is usually to defeat the hero. The Shadows are the hero's opposites and they represent the dark negative side, secrets, mistakes, or repressed feelings, such as guilt, anger, or trauma.⁹³ However, they do not have to be only or completely evil. Having a weakness or expressing positive traits makes them more vulnerable, and therefore also more reliable and likeable.⁹⁴ Their role in the story is to bring conflict and challenge the hero.⁹⁵

⁸⁶ Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 71.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 74.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁹¹ Ibid., 49.

⁹² Ibid., 50.

⁹³ Ibid., 65.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 67.

2.2.7 Shapeshifter

Shapeshifters are often the opposite sex and romantic partner of the hero. They are characters whose mood, behaviour, characteristics or appearance often changes.⁹⁶ Because of their constantly changing behaviour, they bring doubt and uncertainty, which makes the hero question their loyalty.⁹⁷ In fairy tales they are often the characters of witches and wizards.⁹⁸

2.2.8 Trickster

The archetype of the Trickster is a representation of troubles, mischief, and desire for change. They are usually jokers and clowns that bring laughter and comical relief, point out imbalance and hypocrisy, and bring the hero back down to earth.⁹⁹ Tricksters may be neutral figures or the allies and helpers of the hero or the villain.¹⁰⁰

This chapter has introduced the concept of archetypes, as first proposed by Carl Jung, emphasizing their role in collective unconsciousness and their influence on human behaviour. Jung identified core archetypes such as the Self or the Shadow, which influence identity and the way individuals interact with the world. Carol S. Pearson later expanded on this concept, introducing twelve archetypes that represent different stages of personal growth and transformation.

In addition to their psychological significance, archetypes are also essential for storytelling. Joseph Campbell's *Hero's Journey* and Christopher Vogler's adaptation of these ideas illustrate how recurring character roles and narrative patterns appear across literature and mythology.

⁹⁵ Vogler, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 66.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 59.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 59.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 77.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 78.

3 SARAH J. MAAS

Sarah Janet Maas, more commonly known as Sarah J. Maas, was born on March 5, 1986, in New York City and has become one of the most influential voices in modern fantasy literature. She is best known for her fantasy series *Throne of Glass* (TOG), *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (ACOTAR), and *Crescent City* (CC). Her novels have collectively sold over 38 million copies all over the world and have been translated into 38 languages, making her one of the best-selling authors of the 21st century.¹⁰¹

Maas displayed her love for storytelling early on. She began her journey as a writer in her teenage years when she first created the character Celaena Sardothien, the heroine assassin of *Throne of Glass*. She first published the story on FictionPress, where it gained significant attraction, prompting her to pursue a professional writing career. Her official debut novel, *Throne of Glass*, was released in 2012 and its success launched a series of seven books. This marked the beginning of her career as a prominent voice in young adult (YA) fantasy. Later, her *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series, which debuted in 2015, received widespread praise, expanding her influence within the YA fantasy, as well as her reach into the realm of adult fantasy, which further secured her place in the genre.¹⁰²

3.1 Influences on SJM

Maas has been a vivid reader of fantasy since her teenage years, often stating that the works of Robin McKinley and Garth Nix were what got her into the genre. McKinley's *The Hero and the Crown* (1984) and Nix's *Sabriel* (1995) played a big role in influencing her, especially through their portrayal of strong heroines and immersive, fantastical worlds.

¹⁰³ Maas later continued to read many works of YA and adult fantasy authors such as J. K. Rowling, Suzanne Collins, Tamora Pierce, J. R. R. Tolkien, Patricia A. McKillip, and Anne Bishop, who further influenced her as a writer.¹⁰⁴

Additionally, Maas has mentioned that music, particularly classical compositions and movie scores, also inspired her during her writing process. Beyond literature and

¹⁰¹ Sarah J. Maas, "About the Author," Sarah J. Maas, accessed November 28, 2024, <https://sarahjmaas.com/about/>.

¹⁰² Gary Swaby, "How Sarah J. Maas' Journey to Success Began at Sixteen," Redita!, November 26, 2021, <https://www.rediva.com/2021/how-sarah-j-maas-journey-to-success-began-at-sixteen-author-biographies/>.

¹⁰³ "Interview with Sarah J. Maas," Writers & Artists, September 25, 2013, <https://www.writersandartists.co.uk/advice/interview-sarah-j-maas>.

¹⁰⁴ Steph Bowe, "Interview with Sarah J. Maas," October 11, 2009, <http://www.stephbowe.com/2009/10/interview-with-sarah-j-maas.html>.

music, Maas draws inspiration from visual art, especially through platforms like Pinterest, travel, history and movies.¹⁰⁵

3.2 ACOTAR

The romantasy series *A Court of the Thorns and Roses* follows Feyre Archeron, a 19-year-old mortal huntress, who struggles to keep her impoverished family alive. In the first book of the same name, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, Feyre's story begins when one winter day she kills a wolf, unaware that it is an immortal faerie disguised as an animal. Soon after, a terrifying beast named Tamlin – a powerful High Fae and the High Lord of the Spring Court – takes her to the land of the immortal fae Prythian as a punishment. Over time, Feyre and Tamlin fall in love, but she also discovers that his court is cursed by cruel fae queen Amarantha. To save him, Feyre faces deadly trials Under the Mountain, scarifying herself and dying in the process. However, she is resurrected as a High Fae with powers from the seven High Lords of all courts.

In *A Court of Mist and Fury*, Feyre struggles with trauma from her experiences Under the Mountain. At the same time, her relationship with Tamlin becomes controlling and oppressive. In an unexpected twist, she leaves with Rhysand, the High Lord of the Night Court, where she finds freedom and a place for healing. Their bond grows as they prepare for war against Hybern, who wants to enslave the humans. At the end of the book, Feyre accepts Rhysand as her mate and becomes the High Lady of the Night Court.

The third book, *A Court of Wings and Ruin*, focuses on the approaching war between Prythian and Hybern. Feyre and Rhysand unite all seven Prythian courts and battle with the tyrannical King to protect both the fae and the mortal realms. In the end, the battle leads to Hybern's defeat, but not without many sacrifices, including Rhysand's temporary death.

The novella *A Court of Frost and Starlight* serves as a bridge between the original trilogy and the spin-off books. It shows the aftermath of the war and focuses on healing and rebuilding character's lives.

¹⁰⁵ "Interview with Sarah J. Maas," Writers & Artists, September 25, 2013, <https://www.writersandartists.co.uk/advice/interview-sarah-j-maas>.

A Court of Silver Flames focuses on Feyre's sister Nesta Archeron. After the war, Nesta struggles with guilt and trauma, but thanks to her training and romance with Night Court's warrior Cassian she finds her strength again.

4 FEYRE

Before beginning the character analysis, it is important to clarify the archetypal framework on which this part of the thesis is based. While the theoretical section presented several perspectives on archetypes, the analysis primarily draws on Joseph Campbell's concept of the Hero's Journey, Christopher Vogler's expansion on it, and Vogler's archetypes. The main archetypes this analysis will focus on are: the Hero, Shadow, and Ally.

Feyre Archeron is the protagonist of *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series, especially then of the main trilogy. She is, however, not the classical hero. Unlike the traditional hero archetype, who is called to adventure and (perhaps after some reluctance) accepts their destiny, Feyre does not willingly choose to be a hero – she is forced and thrown into it by circumstances. She is a hero because of desperation, first and foremost driven by her need to survive rather than by a desire to save others or gain power and knowledge. She is not called to adventure by prophecy or destiny – she is dragged into it by force. Most heroes are chosen or special. Feyre is none of these things. She is just a starving mortal girl who wants to survive.

At the start of *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, she is hunting in the woods near her village – she is cold, hungry, and burdened by the survival of her family, knowing that if she fails to get some food, her father and sisters will starve. Although she is the youngest and only 19 years old at the beginning of the story, Feyre is the sole provider for her impoverished family, as she had promised her dying mother that she would take care of them. She is determined to protect them, even if it may be out of obligation.

Every time I looked toward a horizon or wondered if I should just walk and walk and never look back, I'd hear that promise I made eleven years ago when she wasted away on her deathbed. Stay together, and look after them. I'd agreed, too young to ask why she hadn't begged my elder sisters, or my father. But I'd sworn it to her, and then she'd died, and in our miserable human world—shielded only by the promise made by the High Fae five centuries ago— in our world where we'd forgotten the names of our gods, a promise was a law; a promise was currency; a promise was your bond.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Sarah J. Maas, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023). 16.

In spite of taking care of her family, she is the least valued and the most taken for granted. Her father, broken and apathetic, only sits in front of a fire with his broken leg, and her sisters hardly ever lift a finger to help her around their little cottage. In one instance, she reflects on the unfairness of her situation, thinking, “Were it not for me, we would starve. Were it not for me, we’d be dead.”¹⁰⁷

In Campbell’s Hero’s Journey, the Call to Adventure is often a moment of destiny – the hero is chosen or summoned by a higher force (or some sort of Herald), that presents a problem or a quest to fulfil, or beckons toward something greater.¹⁰⁸ However, Feyre does not long for greatness – she longs for enough food to survive the winter. She never even considers herself a potential hero; there is no longing for adventure. This is different from the typical structure of the monomyth, as in many traditional narratives, the protagonist is chosen by destiny because they are special or undergoes adventure to seek power or knowledge. Feyre is not destined for anything; rather she is dragged into it, being chosen by accident and circumstances.

Her Call to Adventure is not mystical and grand, it is a punishment. Her journey begins with violence when she kills a Fae in wolf form in the woods. Before killing the wolf, for a few moments, she considers the possibility of the wolf being a faerie, but the animal “*looked like a wolf, moved like a wolf.*”¹⁰⁹ On top of that, she almost desperately needed to get some food and couldn’t let the wolf (or the doe she initially wanted to hunt) get away or even eat her, so she decided that “wolf or faerie, it didn’t matter,”¹¹⁰ since, after all, “it was the forest, and it was winter.”¹¹¹

Her actions, however, set things into motion, as they have unintended consequences – this killing to survive is what drags her into the Fae world of Prythian, and when Tamlin, the High Lord of Spring court, comes to her cottage and demands her life in exchange for the one she took, she sees him as a monster. She is full of resentment but because she has no other choice except death, she leaves with him, determined to get back to her family.

[...] any hope of escaping lay in somehow sneaking up on him. With his hearing, I doubted I’d get a chance anytime soon, at least until he believed I was docile. If I tried to attack him or fled before then, he would destroy my family for the sheer enjoyment of it. Then he would find me again, I

¹⁰⁷ Maas, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand*, 48.

¹⁰⁹ Maas, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, 5

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8

had no choice but to go. And then, later, I might find an opportunity to slit the beast's throat. Or at least disable him long enough to flee.

[...]

I loosened my grip on the hilt of my remaining dagger and stared into those green eyes for a long, silent while before I said, "When do we go?"¹¹²

Nevertheless, she is forced to stay in Prythian. After spending some time there, Feyre slowly learns how to adapt to it. And, since Tamlin reassures her that her family has been taken good care of, she even stops worrying about them, letting go of her promise to her mother. With a certain freedom and opportunity she never really had before, she finally pursues her hobby – painting – and allows herself to be happy, eventually even falling in love with Tamlin. During the celebration of Summer Solstice, she shares a moment with him, confessing that she never believed in the possibility of a better life until now. For the first time, she begins to imagine happiness for herself.

Not so long after the Solstice, Tamlin gets visited by Rhysand, the High Lord of the Night Court, who serves under Amarantha – a cruel and tyrannical Fae who rules over Prythian and who had put a curse on Tamlin and his court. During his visit, Rhysand discovers Feyre and realizes she may be a key to breaking Tamlin's curse. Unaware of the full extent of danger Feyre is in, she is soon sent back home by Tamlin, as a way to protect her from Amarantha.

Shortly after arriving home and learning what had happened to the Beddard family, she worries for Tamlin's life, ultimately deciding to head back to Prythian to save him. After her sister Nesta asks her, what she can do since she is only a human, Feyre responds with: "I don't care ... But I've got to try."¹¹³ Her response shows her determination and willingness to sacrifice herself for those she loves – she does not know how she will succeed, or whether she will survive. This decision marks a shift in her character arc and her growth as a hero. Early in the series, she acted out of the need to survive, but here, she willingly chooses to fight.

When she returns to the Spring Court, she finds Tamlin's manor completely devastated, with Tamlin and everyone gone, and realizes that she is late. In the house, she meets her faerie maid, who tells her the truth about the curse that has fallen on Prythian,

¹¹² Maas, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, 39.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 272.

and eventually leads determined Feyre to the entrance of the cave tunnel leading to Under the Mountain, where is Amarantha's court located.

Feyre's time Under the Mountain is one of the most important moments in her journey. Here she does not only confront physical death but also the death of her humanity. Here she faces Amarantha and is forced to endure her three trials, each once a full moon, in order to save Tamlin. At this stage, Feyre is no longer the reluctant hero. Instead, she has become a warrior, a fighter, stating: "I came to claim the one I love,"¹¹⁴ determined to face the challenges and save Tamlin no matter what.

During the three-month period, she is held prisoner, and forced to endure torture, starvation, and degradation. She is broken physically, emotionally, and psychologically, each trial breaking her down further. In her last trial, Feyre faces the most devastating challenge yet – she has to kill three innocent faeries to save Tamlin and all of Prythian. Each kill shatters her more and more, yet she endures the pain, as she is driven by love and desperation. Although she wins, successfully completing all of Amarantha's tasks, Amarantha refuses to honour their deal and brutally kills her. As a gift of gratitude for her sacrifice, all of the High Lords give Feyre a piece of their power to resurrect her and bring her back as a High Fae.

Although her transformation into a High Fae at the end of this ordeal mimicks the traditional rebirth of a hero, it diverges from classic narratives where the hero emerges stronger and victorious, with a sense of glory and triumph. She is reborn, but rather than feeling empowered, Feyre emerges haunted and traumatized.

After the Ordeal stage, the traditional hero is often rewarded. In the classic Hero's Journey Monomyth, the hero returns with the elixir – be it with peace and return to normalcy, power or knowledge, or even a (magical) object. Feyre's return to the Spring Court with Tamlin should complete her journey – she has defeated the villain and reclaimed her love, conforming to the traditional signs of a hero's success. However, unlike the classical hero, Feyre does not return in a way of the traditional Monomyth. In the traditional Hero's journey, the hero returns home, a place where they belong, and joins back into the society, finds their place again, with their newfound wisdom or power. But Feyre's world has changed – she has been transformed from a human into a High Fae, and she cannot return to her past life. The Spring Court, which has become her home, is a place

¹¹⁴ Maas, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, 297.

she feels she no longer belongs. She does not rise stronger, she is not healed; she is emotionally numb and broken, haunted by the consequences of her actions, and suffering from PTSD and survivor's guilt.

The second book, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, opens with Feyre thinking in her dream: "Maybe I was always broken and dark inside."¹¹⁵ As she wakes up from her nightmare about her killing the faeries Under the Mountain, she vomits in the bathroom, wishing she wouldn't feel anything:

I wished I felt nothing.

I wished my human heart had been changed with the rest of me, made into immortal marble.

Instead of the shredded bit of blackness that it now was, leaking its ichor to me.¹¹⁶

She is collapsing from within and falling apart. She cannot eat, she cannot sleep, and she cannot paint, sometimes balancing on the feeling of apathy. She did not die only in the physical sense but in the psychological as well.

However, despite feeling broken, and wishing she would not feel like that, she does not regret it. She is consumed by her trauma, by what she experienced, and by her actions that led to her current state. But still, she does not regret it. She loves Tamlin, she let herself burn for him, done that to save him. As she reflects on it, she realizes what she sacrificed: "For him, I had done this—for him, I'd gladly wrecked myself and my immortal soul. And now I had eternity to live with it."¹¹⁷

Wishing to spend her now immortal life with him, she accepts Tamlin's proposal to marriage. Although on her wedding she feels nothing but anxiety. Overwhelmed by a crushing sense of dread, as she slowly approaches the altar, the weight of it all – the crowd, the dress, her trauma – becomes unbearable. She panics, halting in her steps, not because she would not love Tamlin, but because she has lost herself.

I forced my gaze up, to Tamlin, his shoulders back, head high.

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

...

I was a murderer and a liar.

¹¹⁵ Sarah J. Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023).1.

¹¹⁶ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 7.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 7.

...

I was going to fall apart, right there, right then and they'd see precisely how ruined I was.¹¹⁸

Though aware of her trauma, Tamlin does not help her recover. Haunted by his own trauma, fear, and obsession, he tries to protect her and keep her safe – by locking her in the house. However, instead of feeling safe, Feyre is suffocated: “Alone in my bedroom, I realized I couldn’t remember the last time I’d truly laughed.”¹¹⁹ Her lover who was once her saviour was now her captor.

Every time Feyre wants to leave the house, tries to reason with Tamlin, begs him to let her go beyond the manor’s grounds or to the nearby village to help, he refuses. When she learns he and Lucien are leaving for the border, she asks to go with them, and after being turned down once more, Feyre decides to stand up for herself and her need for freedom. She thinks:

The girl who needed to be protected, who have craved stability and comfort... she had died Under the Mountain. *I* had died, and there has been no one to protect me from those horrors before my neck snapped. So I had to do it myself. And I would not, could not, yield that part of me that had awoken and transformed Under the Mountain [...]

I was not the human girl who needed coddling and pampering, who wanted luxury and easiness. I didn’t know how to go back to craving those things. To being docile.¹²⁰

Feyre is determined to get out of the house and argues that she is coming along no matter what Tamlin thinks, no matter if he agrees or not. But Tamlin is driven and blinded by his need to protect her. He refuses to listen and uses his power to lock her in the house, trapping her within the walls of his estate. When she is trying to leave the house and instead crashes into an invisible resistance, she realizes with dread: “I was trapped inside this house. I might as well have been Under the Mountain; I might as well have been inside the cell again—I couldn’t get out; I couldn’t get out; I couldn’t get out.”¹²¹

Overwhelmed by panic, Feyre is being reminded of her horrible experiences. She unintentionally summons her fae powers and cocoons herself in darkness, lying on the floor, in a desperate attempt to protect herself and to keep herself from completely

¹¹⁸ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 41–42.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 123–124.

shattering. She is ultimately saved by Mor, Rhysand's cousin, and taken to the Night Court.

Feyre's escape from the Spring Court marks one of the most important turning points. Up to this point, she has been just a shadow of the person she once was – she is haunted by trauma and suffocated under Tamlin's control, slowly wasting away, without anyone helping her. She leaves to find freedom that has been taken away from her. "I did know that if I stayed in that manor, if I was locked up one more time... it might finish the breaking that Amarantha had started."¹²² The Night Court becomes her refuge, a place for her to feel safe, not because it would just immediately erase her pain but because here she can live without overbearing expectations of how she should act or what to wear, of who she should be. At the Night Court, Feyre is not treated as something fragile or a broken thing to be fixed. Unlike the Spring Court, here she is not shielded and controlled. Instead, she is accepted for who she is, she is offered friendship, patience, understanding, and – most importantly – choice.

After only a short time spent in the Night Court, after seeing Velaris, Feyre begins to realize the differences between the Spring Court and the Night Court – the differences in how much freedom she had there, of what she was allowed to see and visit.

"I'm thinking that I must have been a fool in love to allow myself to be shown so little of the Spring Court, I'm thinking there's a great deal to that territory I was never allowed to see or hear about and maybe I would have lived in ignorance forever like some pet.["]"¹²³

One of the important moments in Feyre's healing process is when she goes into Weaver's cottage to reclaim Rhysand's ring. As she is about to leave, she is discovered and has to fight hard to escape, forcing her way out of the chimney, she becomes stuck and she panics. Nevertheless, she is able to stop her spiralling, reminding herself that she is strong and capable of getting out: "I was not a pet, not a doll, not an animal. I was a survivor, and I was strong. I would not be weak, or helpless again. I would not, *could not* be broken. Tamed."¹²⁴

However, she is not healed yet – after being confronted by Rhysand about that she gave up: "You forgot that strength and that you can burn and become darkness, and grow claws.

¹²² Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 128.

¹²³ Ibid., 156.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 226.

You forgot. Stopped fighting,”¹²⁵ she realizes that she wants to live. And because Tamlin would not stop trying to get her back, she writes him a letter, telling him she left for good. When she is asked about it, the emotions overwhelm her, and she starts to break down. She remembers the feelings she once had for Tamlin, but now, realizes how it had blinded her as well. She had given up everything for him and now sees she fought far harder for him than he did for her. And in that moment, the weight of it all crashes down on her and the guilt and pain she carried within herself emerges:

And maybe I was exhausted and broken, but I breathed, “I killed them.”

I hadn’t said the words aloud since it had happened.

[...]

My hands slackened as another shuddering sob worked its way through me. “It should have been me.”

And there it was.¹²⁶

When Feyre breaks down, Rhysand tells her: “You will feel that way every day for the rest of your life[.] ... You can either let it wreck you, let it get you killed like it nearly did with the Weaver, or you can learn to live with it.”¹²⁷ After this, slowly, Feyre begins to realize that her trauma does not define her, begins to accept what happened to her and what she did, and finally starts to heal from it.

When she finds out that Rhysand is her mate, she feels betrayed at first because he hasn’t told her and she asks Mor to take her somewhere she can be alone, where she can think. There, she does that, she thinks, and then she paints again – it is something she had not done in months, something she could not do, it is a sign that she is indeed healing. She painted decorations everywhere, and in the middle of it, she had “painted them. Bits and pieces of Mor, and Cassian, and Azriel, and Amren... and Rhys.”¹²⁸ While staying alone at the cabin, she starts to see a future for herself:

I would go home to Velaris, where I would finally walk through the artists’ quarter, and enter those shops and galleries and learn what they knew, and maybe—maybe one day—I would open my own shop. Not to sell my work, but to teach others. ... And I would go home at the end of every day exhausted but content—fulfilled.

Happy.

¹²⁵ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 268.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 513.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 298.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 508.

I'd go home every day to the town house, to my friends, chock full of stories of their own days, and we'd sit around that table and eat together.
And Rhysand... would be there.¹²⁹

When Rhysand comes to the cabin looking for her, she lets him inside, listens to his whole story, and realizes that the reason why she didn't slip away when she was killed by Amarantha was because of the mate bond, by which she was hanging like a thread: "Home had been at the end of the bond ... Not Tamlin, not the Spring court, but... Rhysand."¹³⁰ She then decides she is going to accept him as her mate and tells him: "And now I want you to know, Rhysand, that I love you. I want you to know ... that I am broken and healing, but every piece of my heart belongs to you. And I am honoured—*honoured* to be your mate."¹³¹

At the end of *A Court of Mist and Fury*, it is revealed that she has become a High Lady. In many traditional narratives, female heroes often end as consorts, queens, or supporters, and that is also the case with the females in the world of Prythian. As Feyre has previously learned, if a female marries the High Lord, she does not become a High Lady – she is only a Lady, a consort, not his equal.

However, when Feyre and Rhysand discuss her powers, he reveals to her, that there could be one:

"If I didn't know any better, I'd say you and Tamlin were doing a very good job of pretending you're normal. That the powers you're displaying aren't usually the first indications among our kind that a High Lord's son might become his Heir."

"I'm not a High Lord."

"No, but you were given life by all seven of us. Your very essence is tied to us, born of us. What if we gave you more than we expected? ... What if you could stand against us—hold your own, a High Lady?"

"There are no High Ladies."

His brows furrowed, but he shook his head. "We'll talk about that later, too. But yes, Feyre—there can be High Ladies.[...]"¹³²

And with that, at the end of the second book Feyre secretly becomes a High Lady. Rhysand's equal in both title and influence. She is not his subordinate, as she would be to

¹²⁹ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 513.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 526.

¹³¹ Ibid., 529.

¹³² Ibid., 73.

Tamlin if she married him. To Rhysand, she is equal in every way. She is allowed, and even encouraged to question him, something that is not common at other courts.

When Feyre leaves with Tamlin to save her family, Rhysand reveals this fact to his Inner Circle, saying that Feyre is “Not consort, not wife. Feyre is High Lady of the Night Court,”¹³³ and further explains that she made this choice to protect her people.

Feyre Archeron, the protagonist of *A Court of Thorns and Roses* subverts the Hero archetype and the Journey at multiple stages. She is not destined for greatness, unlike the typical “chosen one”. She fights for survival, not to gain power. Her return from Under the Mountain does not bring her triumph, but trauma. Her ascension to High Lady redefines power and breaks gendered leadership roles – she is not a consort, but an equal partner and leader. Her journey is one of healing through empowerment, love, and friends, not contest and power. Similarly, her greatest battle is with herself.

¹³³ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 620.

5 TAMLIN

At the beginning of the series, Tamlin, the High Lord of the spring court, represents the “fairy tale prince”, fitting the classical Beauty of the Beast trope (a story on which is the first book loosely based). Cursed by Amarantha for his refusal to be her lover, he seeks a way how to free himself and his whole court from it. There is one cruel condition under which he could achieve it – if a human girl who despises faeries and kills one of their kind – one of his own men – falls in love with him and tells him before 49 years are over, he will be free. Day after day, he tried, but with no luck.

As the end of the time given by Amarantha is nearing, one final attempt to break the curse is made; a faerie in a wolf form is sent to the human lands and by coincidence killed by a human girl – Feyre.

Tamlin brings Feyre to the spring court under the pretence that it is required by the treaty – she must give her life in exchange for the innocent one she took. At first, Feyre despises him and sees him as her captor. However, it quickly becomes clear that Tamlin represents the Ally archetype. Though he could have treated her cruelly, he treats her nicely and with respect, providing her with food, luxury, and the space to do whatever she wants to do – something she did not really have before in the mortal lands, where her only goal was survival and keeping her family alive.

While he is initially motivated by the curse, he offers her a safe and comfortable place to live and his actions toward Feyre are ones of support, respect, care, and kindness. He acts as the protector, the ‘knight in shining armour,’ the Ally who protects Feyre from danger. Tamlin’s bravery and willingness to face danger to protect Feyre are apparent when he saves her from the dangerous faerie creatures – the Naga – that are trying to hunt and kill her.

His actions are also driven by his growing affection for Feyre. His protective nature can be seen again when he tells her: “I don’t want you to live somewhere else. I want you to live here, where I can look after you—where I can come home and know you’re here, painting and safe.”¹³⁴

As the story progresses he eventually becomes her love interest; Feyre falls in love with him, precisely thanks to his kindness and how he treats her, as it is completely

¹³⁴ Maas, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, 206.

different from her initial imaginations of what the fae are like. And she finally allows herself to be happy, to imagine a better life – something she never even dreamed of. Yet, Feyre never tells him face to face she loves him, thus she is not able to break the curse of which she has no idea. Worried for her life after being discovered by Rhysand, Tamlin sends her home on the last day before the 49 years he had to break free in an attempt to keep her safe. The following day, he is ambushed and captured by Amarantha.

Despite being sent away, Feyre, driven by love, returns and determined to save Tamlin ventures Under the Mountain, where she confronts Amarantha. She wins and frees Tamlin but at the cost of her life.

As she is brought back to life as a high fae, at the end of a court of thorns and roses, Feyre and Tamlin return to the spring court with the promise of happily ever after.

In *A Court of Mist and Fury*, Tamlin's character begins to dramatically shift and subvert from the classical "fairy tale prince" and the Ally archetype. Rather than a happy reunion, or Tamlin's love being the hero's reward, he becomes the obstacle that Feyre must overcome. He still sees himself as Feyre's protector: "'You are—you're everything to me,' he said thickly. 'I need... I need you to be all right. To know they can't get to you—can't hurt you anymore.'"¹³⁵ However, his protective nature turns suffocating, as he is trying to shelter her from everything rather than prepare her how to defend herself: "You don't *need* to train. I can guard you from whatever comes our way."¹³⁶

As he is controlled by his own trauma and fear of losing her, Tamlin becomes both possessive and obsessive, his love turns toxic. It becomes a cage; he restricts her movements, forbidding her from even freely roaming their land: "'It's not safe,' Tamlin said, [...] 'Especially not for you.'"¹³⁷ And he eventually locks her in the house.

It was a desperate attempt to keep her safe, to keep things as they were before everything fell apart. He was so consumed by his need to protect her that he didn't realize he was hurting her in the process. Tamlin's shift from a loving protector figure to a controlling captor reflects elements of the Shapeshifter archetype – a figure who changes, often unpredictably. At this moment, his love turns into an obstacle, and the Ally archetype is subverted, as he is not the one offering support and companionship anymore. His love

¹³⁵ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 23.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

was not malicious, but it was unhealthy. He was so scared of losing her that he essentially created the exact situation he feared.

Apart from the overprotectiveness at the Spring Court, Tamlin's obsession with Feyre is also evident in the way he is convinced that Rhysand has kidnapped her and therefore is willing to get her back no matter what. Disregarding her letter or when she refuses to return with Lucien to the Spring Court, he turns to seek help with the king of Hybern and essentially shifts into the role of the antagonist, one of the forms of the Shadow. And that is how Feyre's former lover now becomes her enemy:

I took a step toward Tamlin. "What have you done?"

The King of Hybern said from his throne, "We made a bargain. I give you over, and he agrees to let my forces enter Prythian through his territory. And then use it as a base as we remove that ridiculous wall."

...

Tamlin held out a hand. "Feyre." An order—like I was no better than a summoned dog.¹³⁸

After he gets Feyre back, he is happy but sorry for how he treated her and he apologizes, stating he was wrong and wishes to start over. Yet, this does not change anything; his apology is too late to repair the damage and pain he caused to Feyre, not to mention, that it was partially because of him that Feyre's sisters were forcefully transformed into High Fae. When Feyre leaves with him back to the Spring Court it is only to save her friends and family, swearing revenge on everyone responsible. In *A Court of Wings and Ruin*, Feyre fulfils her promise, ultimately bringing destruction to Tamlin's court from within.

Although Tamlin spends the majority of the third book as the antagonist – the enemy who works with Hybern – there are moments where he redeems himself. One is that despite being heartbroken by Feyre's revenge and betrayal, he does eventually fight on the right side against Hybern. And before the final war, he is also the one who helps Feyre and Azriel escape from Hybern's camp, when they come to rescue Elain, who was stolen by the magical Cauldron – it is a sign that after everything, he still loves Feyre.

However, his final act of redemption is when he helps resurrect Rhysand, who gave all of his power (and strength) to Feyre so that she can destroy the Cauldron which eventually dries him of his life. As Feyre weeps over Rhysand, realizing what he sacrificed, and pleads for the High Lords to save him as they saved her – by giving him a

¹³⁸ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 594.

droplet of their power – Tamlin, despite everything, steps forward. With his final words, he wishes Feyre well: “Be happy, Feyre.”¹³⁹

With this act, Tamlin redeems himself enough that his character shifts from the antagonist. However, unlike the “prince” and the Ally he once was at the beginning of the series, Tamlin has become a tragic figure, one that could be considered an anti-hero. Vogler describes this kind of Hero as “flawed Heroes who never overcome their inner demons and are brought down and destroyed by them.”¹⁴⁰

In both of the sequels of the main trilogy, Tamlin is just a broken reflection of his former self. When Rhysand pays him a visit, in *A Court of Frost and Starlight*, he discovers that “The pink roses that had once climbed the pale stone walls of the sweeping manor house were nothing but tangled webs of thorns,”¹⁴¹ and Tamlin has become a “haggard male”¹⁴² who was “Broken. Utterly broken.”¹⁴³ Tamlin’s state deteriorates even more in *A Court of Silver Flames*, where he is described as:

[...] a beast [that] prowls these lands now. A beast with keen green eyes and golden fur. Some people think the beast has forgotten his other shape, so long has he spent in his monstrous form. And though he roams these lands, he does not see or care for the neglect he passes, the lawlessness, the vulnerability. Even his manor has fallen into disrepair, half-eaten by thorns, though rumors fly that he himself destroyed it.”¹⁴⁴

Tamlin’s journey is a tragic one; a sign that love can be the one thing that can lead to the downfall. Tamlin starts as an Ally, initially offering Feyre support and protection. However, his character quickly subverts from this archetype. His fears turn his need to protect obsessive and his love into something toxic and possessive. At this point, he reflects the elements of the Shapeshifter archetype, as he transforms from Feyre’s lover into an obstacle. His shift from Ally to antagonist shows how someone who is a noble figure at first can instead of helping the hero grow become a challenge that holds them back. By the end of his arc, Tamlin is neither a traditional Ally nor a clear-cut villain. He becomes a tragic anti-hero, who is represented by his flaws and broken by his own fears.

¹³⁹ Sarah J. Maas, *A Court of Wings and Ruin* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023). 670.

¹⁴⁰ Vogler, *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, 35.

¹⁴¹ Sarah J. Maas, *A Court of Frost and Starlight* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023). 87.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁴⁴ Sarah J. Maas, *A Court of Silver Flames* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023). 164.

6 RHYSAND

When Rhysand is formally introduced in the first book, he fits the archetype of the Shadow — dark, powerful, manipulative, morally ambiguous, and feared by many. He is the bad guy who is a loyal servant to Amarantha, the tyrannical self-proclaimed Queen who holds power over the fae lands.

His early interactions with Feyre seem to confirm his role of the shadow. During his visit to Tamlin's court, he presents himself with a confidence that borders on arrogance, and appears to revel in mocking Tamlin. His cruelty is also shown when Feyre realizes: "Rhysand—he'd been the one to send the head. As a *gift*. I flinched."¹⁴⁵ After Feyre is discovered, she is absolutely terrified as he uses his powers on her to get her to tell him her name. When Tamlin pleads with Rhysand not to tell Amarantha about Feyre, Rhysand makes both him and Lucien bow in front of him and beg, seemingly enjoying their humiliation.

Rhysand is also present Under the Mountain, where he continues to act cruel and loyal to Amarantha, appearing to delight in Feyre's humiliation. After her first trial, from which she emerged victorious yet heavily injured, he visits her in her prison cell where she is held in-between the tasks – only to serve his own interests, offering a bargain that would grant her healing in exchange for staying with him. Feyre negotiates, but ultimately agrees and they settle on one week per month.

"I'll make a trade with you," [...] "I'll heal your arm in exchange for *you*. For two weeks every month, two weeks of my choosing, you'll live with me at the Night Court. Starting after this messy three-trials business."

[...]

"The second option—and the one only a fool would take—would be for you to refuse my offer and place your life, and thus Tamlin's, in the hands of chance."¹⁴⁶

After this, he toys with Feyre, telling her "Amarantha plays her games ... and I play mine. It gets rather boring down here, day after day."¹⁴⁷ He then starts to use her as his escort to parties, taunting both her and Tamlin, and making her drink faerie wine to humiliate her.

¹⁴⁵ Maas, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, 236.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 331–332.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 341.

While Rhysand's actions seem to be cruel on the surface, later it is discovered that he did not drug Feyre to expose and humiliate her but to shield her mind from all the atrocities that were happening Under the Mountain.

Towards the end of the first book, there is a hint that there is more to Rhysand than had initially seemed. Not only that he does not reveal who was partaking in the attempted uprising but he is also the one that kills Amarantha. Later he explains to Feyre his reasons:

“Because when the legends get written, I didn’t want to be remembered for standing on the sidelines. I want my future offspring to know that *I* was there, and that I fought against her at the end, even if I couldn’t do anything useful.”¹⁴⁸

Yet, it is only in *A Court of Mist and Fury*, that his true actions and intentions are revealed and Rhysand transcends from a villain into one of the heroic figures of the series. It is explained that his decision to play the villain, to play the role of Amarantha's favoured pet was all to ensure the survival of his people, to protect those he loves, and keep Velaris in secret.

“Other cities,” he says calmly, “are known to the world. Velaris has remained secret beyond the borders of these lands for millennia. Amarantha did not touch it, because she did not know it existed. None of her beasts did. No one in the other courts knows of its existence either.”¹⁴⁹

To protect his beloved city and keep it a secret, he takes on a mask before the rest of the Courts. In doing so, he reflects certain elements of the Shapeshifter archetype – a character that moves between roles and identities. In front of the rest of the world, he plays the role of a cruel High Lord of the Night Court and lets them think that the Court of Nightmares represents the whole Night Court in order to both survive and protect those he loves.

In reality, however, Rhysand rules the Night Court with fairness and equality, involving his Inner Circle. His rule is based on trust rather than fear. His relationship with his people can be seen when he walks through the city with Feyre:

No one avoided him—no one whispered about him or spat on him or stroked him as they had Under the Mountain.

Rather, the people that spotted him offered warm, broad smiles. Some approached, gripping his hand to welcome him back. He knew each of them by name—and they addressed him by his.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Maas, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, 413.

¹⁴⁹ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 144.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

Apart from this, he is also someone who plays an important role in Feyre's healing process, when she is rescued from Spring Court and brought to the Night Court. During this time, he also reflects some elements of the Trickster archetype – he embodies the desire for change. He challenges Feyre's worldview and becomes a catalyst for her transformation. He does not view her as fragile, he does not coddle her. Instead, he gives her the freedom she needs and that she never got from Tamlin.

Besides the Trickster, Rhysand also embodies the Mentor archetype. He trains Feyre and supports her emotionally. He never tries to take away her pain, he does not rescue her from it, but he gives her the space, support, and guidance she needs to slowly heal herself, and lets her reach for him when she is ready. From her first moment in the Night Court, he offers Feyre back her freedom and independence, reminding her: “You are no one's subject,”¹⁵¹ and helping her to heal and reclaim her old self.

On top of that, Rhysand's love for Feyre is never forced on her. The love in Spring Court – Tamlin's love – was suffocating. It showed her that protection could be a possession and that love could destroy. In the Night Court, the love is different. It is the love she finds in her friends, her found family, who stand beside her, and offer her support and understanding.

Unlike Tamlin, who initially appears as the ally and love interest but later embodies many toxic traits associated with obsession and control, in Rhysand's case, love is neither a prize nor an obstacle – it is a partnership. In contrast to Tamlin, who sees Feyre more like a possession, Rhysand treats her as his equal in every way, emphasizing that everything is her choice: “You might be my mate... but you remain your own person. You decide your fate—your choices. Not me. You chose yesterday. You choose every day. Forever.”¹⁵²

In the traditional hero's journey, the hero defeats the villain, but in this case, Feyre leaves Tamlin's love and instead finds her true self with Rhysand. That is a deviation from the expectations of the hero-villain relationship, as it is Tamlin not Rhysand, who becomes the one Feyre must overcome. Rhysand empowers Feyre, which does not make him the villain but an ally.

What ultimately makes him transform into the Hero archetype is his sacrifice. Be it the fact, that he willingly played Amarantha's pet for fifty years, so that he could protect

¹⁵¹ Maas, *A Court of Mist and Fury*, 74.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 577.

those he loves, or his final sacrifice in *A Court of Wings and Ruin*, where he willingly gives all his power and life to help Feyre save Prythian. His willingness to die for Feyre, for his people and family, and for the greater good is proof of his deviation from the shadow archetype, whose goal is often power and control, into the Hero.

Rhysand's transformation from the anticipated villain into a hero is one of the biggest subversions in ACOTAR. When he is first introduced, he fits the archetype of the Shadow – he is dark, powerful, and manipulative. Yet, this presentation is a deliberate misdirection. As the story progresses he is revealed as someone who protects and values freedom and choice, reflecting aspects of the Shapeshifter by taking on a different role to protect his people. He also embodies elements of the Trickster, as he encourages Feyre's change. Rather than being the opposite of the hero or hero's opponent, he becomes the hero's greatest Ally and Mentor, helping Feyre heal and empower her with understanding, freedom, and love. Rhysand's journey is not one of redemption, but one of revelation. He was never a true villain – he only played that role to protect the people he loves and cares about, and as he ultimately sacrifices himself he becomes the true hero.

CONCLUSION

This thesis was concerned with the archetypes of the fantasy characters of the ACOTAR series. It has examined how Sarah J. Maas subverts these traditional archetypal roles by focusing on the analysis of the characters of Feyre, Tamlin, and Rhysand. By using the literary theory of archetypes in literature introduced by Joseph Campbell and expanded by Christopher Vogler, the analysis has demonstrated that the characters either initially begin as recognizable archetypes but later evolve in ways that subvert the initial expectations associated with these roles, or that their whole journey differs from the traditional narratives at various stages of their narrative.

Feyre, a protagonist, started as an ordinary character whose initial goal was only to try to survive and provide for her family. She does not initially begin the adventure by choice but later transforms into a hero who sacrifices her life to save others. However, her journey does not end with triumph and reward, as is typical for the Hero's Journey, but with trauma. Her evolution is one of healing, but in the end, she redefines the gender and power roles present in the series.

Tamlin, who at first appears to the reader as the love interest and protector, reveals traits that subvert the traditional Ally archetype, as his need for control and fears of losing Feyre transform him into an antagonist. While he is able to redeem himself, he does not regain the role of his initial archetype but rather appears as the broken tragic hero.

Rhysand initially portrays the archetype of Shadow, but as the story continues he is revealed to embody the elements of Trickster and Shapeshifter, becoming an Ally and Mentor, who supports Feyre in ways that Tamlin never did. His ultimate evolution into a Hero is marked by his sacrifice to save the world.

This thesis showed that Maas does not disregard or abandon archetypal structures, but rather works with them in ways that allow for a more flexible approach to character development. Instead of strictly following the traditional patterns, her characters diverge from the familiar roles. This approach allows for the characters to be more complex and developed. Ultimately, this thesis has met its objective by illustrating how Maas's *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series deliberately subvert the archetypal roles.

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