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Magic and Reality in Fantasy Literature

A Comparative Study of Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell and The Night Circus

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Thesis Abstract:

This thesis delves into the world of fantasy literature, focusing on Susanna Clark's *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (2004) and Erin Morgenstern's *The Night Circus* (2011). Drawing from Farah Mendlesohn's categorization of fantasy literature in her book *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), the study explores the five different categorizations: portal quest fantasy, liminal fantasy, immersive fantasy, intrusion fantasy and irregulars. Through a detailed analysis of Mendlesohn's framework, this thesis examines how these categories manifest in the selected novels.

This thesis also focuses on the portrayal of magic, roles of magicians, the intersection of reality and enchantment, and the narrative techniques found in the novels to highlight the captivating nature of the respective fantastical realms.

Furthermore, this thesis explores the educational potential of these novels, proposing that they stimulate intercultural competence and critical thinking among students. By challenging conventional narrative structures, Clark and Morgenstern's novels foster imaginative exploration and reflection.

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Introduction:

Considering the vast number of fantasy novels that exist in the world of today, along with numerous works of literature where the genre of fantasy is either a sub-category, or a seamlessly integrated element of the narrative, it becomes evident that the idea of imaginative storytelling continues to captivate readers and constantly push the boundaries of creative expression. To be more specific, the genre of fantasy is significant in the methods of approaching creative expression. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien showcases the perspective much more gracefully in his 1939 essay *On Fairy Stories*, “but in such “fantasy,” as it is called, new form is made; Faerie begins; Man becomes a sub-creator” (11). The quote from Tolkien is only a small part of his essay that attempts to argue for the importance of the fantasy genre. The quote above does not highlight the other points that Tolkien makes, which includes fantasy literature’s contribution to linguistic exploration and his idea of sub-creation. For instance, he talks about sub-creation as an art form in his essay, stating that “art, the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation” (23). However, Tolkien, the man often deemed as the father of modern fantasy literature, makes an important analysis within his essay *On Fairy Stories*, namely the idea that the author and the reader become active participants in creating a much more irregular world from our own. Tolkien’s idea, that both the author and the reader work together to form a world beyond reality, exemplifies the collaborative nature of fantasy literature that is brought forth in Farah Mendlesohn’s book *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, published in 2008. Mendlesohn’s argument for the categorization of fantasy narrative methods opens a discussion that tackles the dynamic and multifaceted nature of fantasy literature within academic discourses. Ultimately, both Tolkien and Mendlesohn’s analysis reveal a vast area of exploration that requires thorough research, as well as the opportunity to ask questions regarding the role of the readers and the author within fantasy novels.

In light of this, the focus of this thesis lies in the exploration of *The Night Circus* (2011) by Erin Morgenstern and *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (2004) by Susanna Clarke, two highly recognized fantasy novels in the world of fantasy fiction. More specifically, this thesis aims to examine the portrayal of magic, and the fantastic, through the intricate systems set up by the authors. In order to investigate the depiction of the fantastic, within their respective novels, this thesis will view how the authors integrate methods showcased in the different categorization of the fantasy genre, seen through the lens of Farah Mendlesohn’s work *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008). By analyzing how the authors conceptualize, present, and

integrate the magical elements into the narrative, the thesis will untangle the complex structure of fantasy novels. This study also delves into the roles of magicians as well as the intersection of reality and enchantment, that is shown within their fantasy realms, to allow a richer understanding of how these elements help shape the narrative and the readers' experience. Moreover, by investigating the distinct writing techniques and narrative structures employed by the two authors, the aim is to shed light on the nuanced layers of storytelling found in the fantasy genre. However, this thesis requires an approach that manifests an understanding of the educational relevance in a school setting. Hence, using the Norwegian English curriculum, this study will discuss how Clark's novel enhances the teaching of intercultural competence, and how Morgenstern's novel can help students deconstruct and reflect over a text efficiently. This thesis will argue for the relevance of the novels through an individual exploration of the fantastic, and highlighting the novels' abilities to enhance students' imagination.

Despite the many questions that are often asked about the concept of 'fantasy' and its fellow term 'genre', the one that ultimately comes up is the question of what qualifies being labeled as a part of the fantasy genre. The term genre originates from the French word *Genré*, and because French is so closely connected to Latin, it is often associated with the Latin word *Genus*. Despite its rich origins, the term genre, simply put, in French means kind or style, which is incredibly underwhelming in terms of how it is used in the English language. The Oxford English dictionary (OED) defines it as "a particular style or category of works of art; esp. a type of literary work characterized by a particular form, style, or purpose" (OED 2023). However, Tzvetan Todorov makes an important statement, in his book *The Fantastic* (1973), regarding genre and how it's more than just "classes of texts" (161). According to Todorov, "genres exist as an institution that they function as *horizons of expectation* for readers, and as *models of writing* for authors" (163). The dual roles suggested by Todorov, when it comes to genre, in a sense provides a more accurate understanding of how to perceive the term when in discussion about its literary sense. That is to say that Todorov believes that genre exists for two purposes when talking about the literature realm. The first is what he deems as the 'horizon of expectations' that are created for the readers. The reader will have expectations regarding content, style, and conventions of a particular work based on the genre its classified under. However, the same can be said for the author as well in what Todorov calls the 'models of writing'. Models of writing for authors suggests that the genre acts as a framework for crafting the author's work. By choosing a set genre, the author may adhere to the

conventions, tropes and expectations that are associated with the genre but also, of course, choose to blend it with different genres. The point that comes forth regarding the subject of genre, is that there are many complexities associated with how an individual should engage with the term. It is crucial to set a boundary on the understanding of the term genre to be able to comprehend the fantasy genre as whole.

By following Todorov's explanation of the term genre, what would be preferable is to also adhere to Todorov's description of the *fantastic* genre. However, Todorov's description of the fantastic sets it apart from that which is often classified as uncanny or the marvelous, this creates a limit on what works can be labeled as fantastic. Despite the boundary on the term fantastic, by Todorov, the French philosopher does make a point when he states:

“The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. The concept of the fantastic is therefore to be defined in relation to those of the real and the imaginary: and the latter deserve more than a mere mention” (25).

In other words, Todorov explains that the hesitations stem from how an individual is used to natural laws of our world but is suddenly faced with something that does not align with that understanding of the world. Furthermore, Todorov's emphasis on 'the real and the imaginary' showcases how the genre exists in-between what can be explained realistically (the real) and what exists purely in the realm of imagination (the imaginary). It is an influential definition on the fantastic but not one that includes numerous works that incorporate the supernatural as a part of an everyday occurrence in the work of literature. The level of hesitation in high fantasy and fairy tale novels might not be as prevalent and therefore, according to Todorov's definition, will not be labeled underneath the category of fantasy. On the other hand, academic writers, such as Farah Mendelsohn, challenge Todorov's notion of fantasy by introducing their own theoretical frameworks. The fundamental proposition being advanced by introducing Todorov's theory is that the fantasy genre is vast and complex to fully be able to utilize the term in its rightful role.

Through the acceptance of the idea that the term *fantasy genre* itself is not a simple canvas painted in black and white, the perspective on the topic should also be considered more thoroughly. *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* by Susanna Clarke, as well as *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern, are just two of the novels to be chosen from the sea of fantasy novels

available to the public. However, fantasy fiction is incredibly important to study. Moreover, it is necessary to make clearer analysis on the impact that fantasy fiction has on a person.

Stubna explains in his research, *The Fantasy Fiction Viewed Through the Lens of Psychology of Literature* (2019), about how fantasy fiction has an influence when it comes to the cognitive functions of an individual. He states that in a fantasy work “the storyline usually takes place in an unrealistic (fictional) world, allowing the author to express the intended message without creating defense responses related to sensitivity of readers to certain (religious, political, worldview and others) themes and political correctness” (6). By creating a story that is surrounded in the supernatural, and that which is seen as unnatural, the readers and the author themselves are able to set themselves away from a lot of what an individual is bound to. Moreover, Stubna also makes the point that:

“Adolescents, above all, find in extraordinary fantasy stories an opportunity to identify themselves with protagonists performing significant acts for the good of the community they are part of, as well as with characters living in an unconventional way or putting in practice their utopian ideals of social life” (6).

Not only does fantasy fiction help to dismiss boundaries on people in their everyday lives, but for adolescents, it can help them find and explore their identity through such works of literature. From a pedagogical perspective, I believe that fantasy fiction is a necessary addition in schools that will not only develop students reading comprehension and their critical thinking but also give enough stimuli to the students to not feel the same sense of boredom often experienced in everyday life. The argument I am putting forth is that the relevance of the novels *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* and *The Night Circus* go beyond the need to study their innovative method of approaching the idea of magic and their employment of narrative techniques, although both hold great significance. The justification for my choice is influenced by the more egocentric aspiration to write about fantasy literature written by women, as the field has, for an extended period of time, been dominated by men. The more common fantasy authors that often garner the public's attention include Tolkien, Brandon Sanderson, Patrick Rothfuss, George R.R. Martin, and so forth. The exception is Joanne Rowling, the author of *Harry Potter*, as well as the author Veronica Roth for her work *Divergent*, where both have a wide range of fans through their novel series. That is not to say that recent years have not included numerous female writers, who have gained a significant amount of recognition. However, if we were to step away from the more well-trodden paths of fantasy literature, we would find authors such as Clarke and Morgenstern who have carved

their own distinct niches within the genre. Highlighting and studying the extraordinary works of authors, who do not necessarily fall under the category of the most recognized fantasy authors, is an important endeavor. It acknowledges the wealth of talent and creativity that exists beyond the mainstream and provides a platform for exploring the unique contributions of women in fantasy literature.

Chapter 1: Farah Mendlesohn Theory on Magic:

Farah Mendlesohn's *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) provides an analysis of the genre of fantasy and discusses the various rhetorical strategies used within these works of literature. Although the fantasy genre is often overlooked or dismissed, in an academic setting, her book seeks to illustrate a thorough examination of the rhetorical techniques used in literature that fall underneath the genre of fantasy. Furthermore, her in-depth analysis of the fantasy genre advocates for the literary merit of such novels. *Rhetorics of Fantasy* also contributes to a greater understanding of the engaging and immersive narratives that tend to be associated with works of literature pertaining to the fantasy genre. Her work opens a discussion within the field and promotes critical thinking that suggests readers should examine the choices that authors make, as well as the impact of those choices.

Farah Mendlesohn separates the construction of fantasy literature into, essentially, four categories, to which she suggests that each category incorporates the fantastical elements into the narrative with vastly different approaches. Mendlesohn classifies the four categories as portal quest fantasy, intrusive fantasy, liminal fantasy and immersive fantasy (14). She states that in the portal quest fantasy literature the readers are "invited through into the fantastic" (14). Meanwhile, in the intrusion fantasy literature "the fantastic enters the fictional world" (14). The categories of fantasy, that Mendlesohn builds, also differ in a somewhat similar aspect whereby liminal fantasy, she states, is the type of literature where magic "hovers" in the corner of our eyes (14). Mendlesohn includes immersive fantasy as the last part and suggests it is the fantasy literature where the readers are not allowed an escape from (14). However, this only provides a surface level of explanation for their differing narrative approaches when incorporating the element of fantasy. Therefore, it is essential to look further within the arguments she provides in her book *Rhetorics of Fantasy*.

The portal quest fantasy is the first category she analysis and explains that it tends to follow a structure that often separates two worlds, in other words, creating a portal, used as a synonym for separation, that the characters will enter. Mendlesohn suggests that portal quest fantasies have two separate worlds, where the fantastical is distant in the beginning (2). Such suggestion does not mean that the fantastical doesn't exist in the world unless the character travels through some sort of portal, just that the characters have been unaware, so far, in their life about the fantastical in their world. Mendlesohn also argues that one of the key structures in portal quest fantasy is to create a "companion-audience" which are linked to the main character (1). This creates, for the reader, a dependency on the protagonist to provide what is seen, however when there is a need for a historical explanation or an intricate analysis, it is often through a character that tends to fall into the role of "sage, magician, or guide" (7). Furthermore, Mendlesohn claims that there are similar thematic elements within a portal quest fantasy (3). For instance, the state of the place, which a character may find themselves in, will indicate the morality of that place. This is important to note, because Mendlesohn puts a lot of emphasis on the fact that portal quest fantasies limit subversive reading. Ultimately, portal quest's distinct method of separating one world from another, and the limitation on subversive reading, are two of the ways portal quest fantasy separates itself from immersive fantasy.

For the category of immersive fantasy, Mendlesohn points out one key difference that overall sums up the immersion: the world building that fully envelops the readers. Unlike portal quest fantasy, immersive fantasy has an absence of portals or boundaries that separates the fantastical from what might otherwise be considered "normal". Moreover, the relationship between the readers and the protagonist also changes. As such, she claims that the readers need to accept "what they know as the world, interpreting it through what they notice, and through what they do not" (60). Once more, the immersive category separates itself through its aspect of allowing the readers to interpret the text more freely than a portal-quest fantasy. That is to say, the reader has more autonomy in interpretation, rather than having to believe everything that is shown or said through the protagonist. She also argues that a somewhat reappearing theme within immersive fantasy literature is containment (89). Mendlesohn infers the idea that the theme of containment is the aspect that makes the fantasy world genuine and fully realized. In other words, the immersive fantasy literature distinguishes itself from the other categories because it puts the reader in a place where the idea that anything beyond the boundaries of the fantasy world, is not real.

In *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Mendlesohn has a very specific order in how she chooses to introduce the fantasy categories, intrusion fantasy being third on the list is not a coincidence. Mendlesohn explains that intrusion fantasy is very similar to that of the portal quest fantasy, and, in fact, she considered writing about it before immersive fantasy due to the similarities between the two (114). The reason that Mendlesohn chooses not to do so is because of Brian Stableford's view on intrusive fantasy. In Stableford's perspective, the intrusive fantasy, "ipso facto begins in a simulacrum of the real world" (114). However, Mendlesohn argues that intrusive fantasy can be present in immersive fantasy as well (114). Her perspective on intrusive fantasy is much more flexible. It offers the possibility of intrusive fantasy being manifested in various sub-genres and settings within the fantasy world. While this is a reasonable understanding of intrusive fantasy, the category is still very similar to that of the portal quest fantasy. The reason is that both share near identical elements and narrative structures. Despite their similarities, they also have differences that separate the two of them into different categories. For example, where portal quest fantasies focus on entering the fantasy world from the 'real' world, through something like a portal, the intrusive fantasies can occur within the realm of the pre-existing fantasy world. In other words, while both categories deal with disruptions to what is considered 'normal', intrusion fantasy deals with an intrusive force or elements that challenges the established order of the world. Intrusion fantasy, while sharing qualities that makes it similar to portal quest fantasy, leads the discussion to liminal fantasy, which has very distinct characteristics.

Liminal fantasy, according to Mendlesohn, is the type of fantasy books that "estranges the readers from the fantastical" (182). Regarding what Mendlesohn refers to when she uses the term 'estrangle', there are several meanings behind it. For starters, Mendlesohn claims that liminal fantasy creates a sort of difference in interpretation of the fantastical between the readers and the characters. Furthermore, she plays into the idea that liminal fantasy challenges the conventional 'expectations' of how the fantasy elements should be (187). This might require the readers to have knowledge in the fantastical prior to reading liminal fantasy in order to not feel that sense of 'estrangement' that new readers of the genre might feel. In this sense, liminal fantasy challenges our existing knowledge on fantasy, and what the readers may perceive as the 'usual' way in which fantasy should be written. Due to this, much like how Mendlesohn states, in some ways, perhaps liminal fantasy is the "purest form of the fantastic" precisely because it requires reading strategies from the other categories (245). Yet,

this does not exclude the other exceptions within the categories Mendlesohn has set up for the fantasy genre.

Mendlesohn doesn't ignore the fact that there exist works of literature within the fantasy genre that do not necessarily fall into only one of these categories but are rather what she deems as "irregulars". Essentially, categorizing a genre into four groupings follows a strict no-exception rule which is generally unproductive and pointless when the discussion is about literature. This stands especially true for fantasy as the genre in itself requires the author to take on a very creative approach and mindset that contradicts the logic of our world.

However, despite this reservation, the irregulars don't necessarily fall out of the categories. Mendlesohn suggests that they, instead, incorporate one or more of the categories within itself instead of following a linear structure (247). That is why when a reader takes on an analytical approach to a fantasy novel, to refer back to the four categories set up by Farah Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, would not be inadequate. Therefore, Mendlesohn provides a framework for a more critical approach to the understanding of fantasy literature.

Chapter 2: *The Night Circus*

2.1- Introduction

In 2011, a few days after the publication of *The Night Circus*, Claire Messud wrote in an article for *The Guardian*, "I was compelled by the world itself – by its saturated colours and textures, its unexpected smells and tastes" (6). In the article written for *The Guardian*, Messud starts her review by explaining her impatience for the fantastical. Messud, the author of the novel *The Emperor's Children* (2006), also admits that she has "abandoned many novels" due to the fact that the premises were not to her liking (1). Nevertheless, within the same article written for *The Guardian*, she did not hesitate to state her fascination with the world portrayed in *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern. In many ways, Claire Messud explained the feelings evoked by reading *The Night Circus* perfectly to the audience, especially her emphasis on Erin Morgenstern creating a world of illusions more realistic than that of "many a realist fiction" (1). Regardless of the many people who, just like Claire Messud, were also smitten with the "saturated colours and textures" portrayed in *The Night Circus*, the novel also won the Alex award in 2012 and spent seven weeks on *New York Times* best seller list. The key composition aiming to be conveyed is the consistent and widespread

attraction of Erin Morgenstern's novel. *The Night Circus* does not only pertain to one individual's taste but has also gathered much critical acclaim and commercial success over the years. The recognition of *The Night Circus* not only solidifies its place in the heart of many readers, but it also, arguably, can be viewed as a literary phenomenon that blends fantasy with universal appeal.

The Night Circus (2011) by Erin Morgenstern is a novel that explores the very unique interplay of magic and love, but also that of destiny within the boundaries of the fictional circus: Le Cirque des Reves. In the novel, Morgenstern delves into the consequences that arise from a duel of magic between the illusionist Celia Bowen, and the magician's apprentice Marco Alisdair. The duel is set in the fantastical tapestry of a magical circus that analyses the themes of competition, collaboration and the boundary between reality and illusion. With the circus being the protagonists' stage for magical feats, the competition unfolds within a span of many years. Both Celia and Marco become romantically involved and are due to discover the consequence of the duel regarding their choices. *The Night Circus* is a very rich story written with mesmerizing storytelling that blends elements of romance, fantasy and mystery.

This chapter undertakes an exploration of *The Night Circus*, focusing on the system of magic and the fantastical elements set up by Morgenstern. The elements to be viewed, by way of an analysis, include the duel between Celia and Marco, the use of the term 'magic', and the circus' role as a space of the supernatural. The magic system set up by Morgenstern is emphasized in its connection to Mendlesohn's theory of fantasy literature in her book *Rhetorics of fantasy* (2008).

A breakdown of the roles of the characters inhabiting the world of *The Night Circus* is preformed to understand their function in societal structures, power dynamics, and symbolic use in light of the themes found in the novel. The exploration reveals the underlying connection between the characters and the influence of cultural and historical contexts. The complex boundary between reality and illusion within Le Cirque des Reves reveals a compound interplay of what is considered ordinary, and the aspect that is considered 'supernatural'. Chapter three investigates how *The Night Circus* challenges conventional perceptions of reality, using a character like Isobel who grapples with the thin line between perceived 'actuality' and 'magic'. Beyond the idea that fantasy novels are used for escapism, the analysis covers the reader's role in the creation of the fantastical that forces the audience to question their own perceptions. Whereas the non-linear narrative structure is explored in its way of heightening the fantastical in the novel.

2.2- The System of Magic and Fantastical elements

The more important methods Erin Morgenstern utilizes to be able to create a fantasy novel, which establishes its relevance to the world, is the creation of a system. To help further develop the perspective given, the system that is being referred to is a set of so called ‘rules’, made in order to create a semblance of balance in the world of fiction established in her novel. Morgenstern does not adhere to certain restrictions that are clearly expressed in *The Night Circus*. That is to say, *The Night Circus*, although clearly having a magical system, does not necessarily have a restrictive system. Fantasy elements viewed through the lens of the magic system and magical elements within *The Night Circus*, are one of the key methods that create the scenic atmosphere often associated with the novel. The important factor is to be able to distinguish the very subtle elements crafted within the novel to create the atmospheric, and colorful scenes that make *The Night circus* a valuable fantasy novel.

Perhaps one of the more apparent mystical elements viewed in the story of Marco Alisdair and Celia Bowen, is the formation of the challenge that suggests an immersive world. Farah Mendlesohn, in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), states that for immersive fantasies “it must assume that the reader is as much a part of the world as are those being read about” (59). To highlight the quote of Mendlesohn, the second chapter of *The Night Circus*, known as *A Gentlemen’s Wager*, becomes relevant. The character Hector first hints to the challenge through his dialogue “I was hoping you might be up for a game. It has been far too long since we’ve played” (15). The dialogue, belonging to the father of Celia Bowen, is the first mention of the challenge that will inevitably be one of the main plot points of the novel. The significance of the dialogue comes forth when the reader comes to understand that not much more information is given about the challenge until nearing the end of the novel. This directly aligns with Mendlesohn’s idea of establishing an immersive fantasy, “the world should be described, not explained, and the vision should come first, elaboration later, forcing the readers to construct the world from hints and glimpses” (112). The mystery behind the challenge is further developed as Hector’s method of convincing the man in a grey suit to become a participant of the challenge is to showcase Celia’s ability to destroy a watch without touching it (16). The selling point, for the man in the grey suit, is when Celia manages to fix the watch, as though nothing happened to it, via the same means she had used to destroy it (16). However, the only reaction to the very unnatural occurrence is a simple compliment of acknowledgement from the man in the grey suit. Up until the point discussed so far, the term ‘magic’ has not once been used, nor has it been referred to when speaking about the ability

Celia Bowen possess, despite the importance of her abilities to the challenge proposed by Hector. The challenge is supposedly seen as simply a normal ‘game’ for the two characters introduced, and it does not necessarily garner the attention of something being amiss within the novel. Mendlesohn suggests that “...the perspective of the protagonist must mediate any information delivered: what he understands is all that can be described to us, even if we can add in additional detail” (112). In other words, with the lack of narration that explicitly states the peculiarity of the challenge, the reader is forced to perceive it as something that is just there. The reader’s acceptance of the challenge, despite all of the mysteries behind it, is the first hint to what Farah Mendlesohn refers to as immersive fantasy. The avoidance of characters using the term ‘magic’ is another point that further develops the idea that *The Night Circus* falls into the category of immersive fantasy.

The concept of magic within *The Night Circus* is not actually explicitly referred to as *magic* by the users of the ‘magic’, that is one method Morgenstern uses to add the fantastical to the novel. Earlier, in the discussion of the challenge, it was suggested that the term ‘magic’ had not been used to describe the unnatural abilities possessed by Celia Bowen. It is necessary to clarify that in this context, the ‘unnatural abilities’ refer to what is unnatural in the real world rather than that of the fictional world of *The Night Circus*. To build upon the omnipresent magical elements in *The Night Circus*, terminology employed by the characters has the author adding layers of interest to the narrative. For instance, the first time that a character deliberately refers to the extraordinary abilities possessed by Marco Alisdair as magic, of the supernatural, is by Isobel. The character Isobel does so by stating “you’re a magician”, in reference to an action Marco does that is deemed as ‘impossible’ by her, to which Marco replies with, “I don’t think anyone has called me that before” (42). The dialogue between the characters indicates two things, the first is that the characters lack a term, to which they agree, that fully sums up the extraordinary abilities. The second indication is that ‘magic’ is ambiguous, it is a part of the world, but the extent of it and the role of it, is unknown. The deliberate absence of direct terminology shows a choice done by Morgenstern to blur the line between the natural and the supernatural. Mendlesohn argues, in *Rhetoric of Fantasy*, that the novels she uses, for her exemplification of immersive fantasy, are novels where “the degree to which the bare bones of world-building as a relationship with the protagonists is central to the rhetorical tone of the novel” (68). In other words, because the novel has arguably more than two different protagonists, that which experience ‘magic’ in very different settings, the intentional avoidance to use the term *magic* heightens the mystique around it. The mystique

behind the magic is what aligns with Mendlesohn's notion that "...the fantastical is seamlessly integrated into the fabric of the narrative without overt explanations" (112). The strategic use of language fosters a sense of ambiguity and wonder that encourages the readers to explore the nuances of the magical system in the world of *The Night Circus*. The choice to not use a very standard term, in a fantasy fiction, emphasizes the unique nature of the realm and invites the reader to delve deeper into fantastical tapestry.

From all the fantastical elements found in *The Night Circus*, the one that stands out the most is the circus itself, and in many ways, the circus acts as a portal. Although the story is established by several plot points, which include the challenge, the love story between Celia and Marco, and not to mention the other participants of the circus, the place where most things happen is the circus. Le Cirque des Reves is described, very simply, as "the circus of dreams" to highlight its mystical nature in the beginning of the novel (6). Indeed, the characters Celia Bowen and Marco Alisdair by no means hold back in order to show that the circus is very much so a place of dreams. Having declared earlier that the challenge is an important factor that creates the immersive experience in the novel and the term magic is a source of mysticism, it comes as no shock to argue that the circus, as a place of happening, is the most fantastical element within the story. The magic within the circus, being highlighted by its nature as a portal, separates the natural world from that of the uncanny. For instance, the circus is made up of around thirty or so attractions, as in both tents and entertainers, each with their role to keep the atmosphere of the circus going. Furthermore, despite there being many attractions in the circus, the ones that stand out the most are all influenced by either Celia or Marco's unnatural abilities. An example of this would be the 'ice garden', that was described, through the protagonist Celia Bowen's perspective as, "the air itself is magical. Crisp and sweet in her lungs as she breathes, sending a shiver down to her toes that is caused by more than the fore warned drop in temperature." (148). Another example is the labyrinth, which is a collaboration of both Celia and Marco using their abilities to create an endless changing place. The labyrinth is described as place with "...dizzying network of chambers, interspersed with hallways containing mismatched doors. Rooms that spin and rooms with glowing chessboard floors. One hall is stacked high with suitcases. In another it is snowing." (296). There are many other spaces within the circus with equal descriptions of something unnatural or fantastical happening, however if we were to look away from just the object of a physical place, there are also entertainers who demonstrate the magical atmosphere of the circus. A good show of an entertainer in the circus is one of the protagonists: Celia Bowen who is seen

as the illusionist of the circus that is capable of transforming "...one audience member's pocket watch from metal to sand and back again" (140). All of the instances, exemplified above, of magic being used within the structure of the circus, undeniably makes it a place of the unnatural. Hence, why the circus, in the words of Mendlesohn in *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, acts as a portal that "...is about entry, transition, and exploration" (2). To further build upon the idea that the circus works as a portal, seen in many fantasy novels, Mendlesohn states that the,

"...protagonist goes from a mundane life, in which the fantastic, if she is aware of it, is very distant and unknown (or at least unavailable to the protagonist) to direct contact with the fantastic through which she transitions, exploring the world until she or those around her are knowledgeable enough to negotiate with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm" (2).

In the quote above, arguably, the third narrative voice of *The Night Circus*, near perfectly fits the description provided by Mendlesohn. The character that is being discussed is namely Bailey Clark, one of the more important characters in the novel. If one were to follow the argument that Mendlesohn provides in the issue of portal-quest fantasies, then Bailey Clark is the literal view that Mendlesohn argues for. The reason is due to how Bailey is one of the only characters, who is given a narrative perspective, with no association or awareness of magic until the arrival of the circus. In fact, Bailey describes the circus as "...nothing he had ever seen. The lights, the costumes, it was all so different. As though he had escaped his everyday life and wandered into another world." (59). The idea that Morgenstern specifically states that, with the entrance of the circus, Bailey feels as though he has "wandered into another world" is perhaps the strongest indication to the circus acting as a portal in the way that Mendlesohn suggests. Moreover, from Mendlesohn's quote earlier, the protagonist should also be able to eventually manipulate the fantastical realm that they have found themselves in. In which case, Bailey does indeed end up doing exactly that with the circus as he becomes the circus' "Caretaker" through a bind created by Marco (457). Essentially Bailey becomes the anchor to that which keeps the circus to the real world, proving his role to further the argument that the circus is a portal to the magical. The decision to refer to the circus as a 'circus of dreams' is a brilliant choice by Erin Morgenstern, due to the very nature of a place that cannot be explained through ordinary means.

2.3- Roles of Magicians in *The Night Circus*

Understanding Erin Morgenstern's choice of characters exhibits a deeper understanding of cultural and historical contexts, which the author has been influenced by during the process of creating them. The roles, that have been given to the characters, showcases the layers of symbolism inhabiting *The Night Circus*, and as well as the deliberate choices between the characters and their given roles to the whole of the plot. The well-structured and well-developed characters are debatably at the very top of the pyramid of practices Morgenstern makes use of to portray magic in the fantasy genre of her novel.

Widget and Poppet Murray being born as twins is a choice by the author that shows the reappearance of associations in the establishment of giving birth to twins, often seen in numerous cultures around the world. Juliana de Nooy, in her book *Twins in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (2005), wrote that "the topic of twins and doubles appears made to order for a psychoanalytical reading, with its easy links to the mirror stage, narcissism, the uncanny, separation anxiety, sibling rivalry, the false self, projection of the unconscious, and exteriorization of inner conflict (2). As a matter of fact, Nooy is not wrong in her statement regarding the use of twins due to the "easy links" to numerous situations but most importantly to their link of "the uncanny". For the idea that twins are often associated with the supernatural is seen in many cultures, throughout history, where twins are often connected to divinity which can be seen in many myths. For instance, Apollo and Artemis are perhaps one of the more known twins in mythology for representing the sun and the moon, essentially two opposites in every possible way. Moreover, in modern society, the belief in zodiac signs and astrology has grown exponentially, and within it is the northern star Gemini that represents a pair of twins, often being the twins Castor and Pollux in Greek mythology (Britannica 1). However, there are other cultures that do not necessarily view twins in such positive light, rather, twins have been seen as a bad omen to come. In the ancient time, Yoruba, a location in Nigeria, the tribe residing there would "... reject and even sacrifice newborn twins" (Leroy 134). The practice of sacrificing the twins stemmed from a place where the Yoruba tribe viewed the twins of being able to "... bestow happiness, health and prosperity upon their family," but also "...bring about disaster, disease and death," (Leroy 134). The idea that pairs of twins have such capabilities brought mixed reaction of joy and fear to the families that birthed the pairs. The point that is to be viewed through the examples given above, is the constant show of twins as beings often seen in the light of the uncanny, depending on what culture is being described. Because of the many myths and superstitions around the idea of

twins their stories are "... told and retold with astonishing frequency in contemporary culture" (Nooy 1).

Having established the idea that twins, in different cultures throughout the world and history, are symbols of the supernatural, the relevance of Poppet and Widget being born as twins is brought forth. Morgenstern fully utilizes the sibling's existence through their identity as twins by providing numerous occasions of the uncanny throughout the novel. For instance, the time in which Poppet and Widget were born into the world of *The Night Circus* creates a symbol of duality that mystifies the twins' existence, and the duality also builds a sense of expectance to their role in the story. In *The Night Circus*, "...six minutes before midnight, Winston Aidan Murray is born." While on the other hand, "...seven minutes after midnight, his sister, Penelope Aislin Murray," is born (119-120). The order of the twins' birth is separated by the simple time split between 'before midnight' and 'after midnight' which is debatably one of the key points to their connection with the uncanny, and their future role, due to their very peculiar, yet coincidental, arrival of being born on two separate days despite their identities as twins. Moreover, in many ways, the birth of the Murray twins also acts as a form of foreshadowing in the disclosure of their identities as 'fraternal twins'. Although it is possible to assume that the very peculiar coincidence of the twins being born between the 'after' and 'before' of midnight is simple just *that*, a coincidence, to which Morgenstern happened to decide to include the manner of their birth in the novel, however by doing so, the duality themes that are constantly shown between the two would end up being overlooked. Aside from the fact that the Murray twins' births are separated between two different days, the reality is that the twins are separated by several other factors such as their gender, abilities, personality, and their different responsibilities within the circus. One example of their duality is found in the Murray twins' different abilities, Widget says that his sister Poppet "... reads the stars," and goes on to further explain that "...it's the easiest place to see the future" therefore confirming that his sister is able to read the future of a person (248). On the other hand, despite the idea that twins tend to share similarities in both appearance and personality, Widget's abilities are found in what poppet explains as him being able to "... see the past" of people, he does so in a method different from his sister's stargazing. Widget explains that he can see the past "on people" and that "...the past stays on you the way powdered sugar stays on your fingers. Some people can get rid of it but it's still there, the events and things that pushed you to where you are now" (250-251). The Murray twins' birth orders also bleed into their abilities as a befitting reasoning for why Widget happened to be the one born with the

ability to see the past, while Poppet was born with the ability to read the future, this is clearly seen in the narrative as Morgenstern writes, “Widget born just before midnight, at the end of an old day. Poppet following moments later in a new day only just begun” (158).

Furthermore, if the discussion is turned to their personalities, the clear distinct individuality is another showcase of their duality within the story as Widget is described as being “...quite perceptive,” in the way that “...not one person in a hundred, perhaps even a thousand, notices as much,” (480-481). On the other hand, where Widget’s character is written with a tendency to focus on his hunger and uncanny perception to the truth, Poppet’s character is often seen along with her difficulties. What is suggested by including Poppet’s difficulties, are the numerous occasions that she fails to be able to procure results in an area that her brother might be capable of. One such occasion is Poppet’s dialogue regarding the reading of tarot cards, where she says that “...I can’t read tarot cards at all, but Widget can” (248). In another instance, Poppet explains that “...I can’t see anything as clearly as I used to. It’s all bits and pieces that don’t make sense. Nothing here has made any sense for a year and you know it.” in reference to her ability to read the future (414). Despite Poppet’s difficulties in the area of her abilities, Widget does not seem to indicate sharing the same hardships as his sister and rather has a good control of his powers. Juliana de Nooy explains, in her book *Twins in Contemporary Literature and culture* (2005), that “...twins tend to represent the solution rather than the problem. Rather than creating division, they provide a means for surmounting it” (115). In other words, Nooy suggests that despite the numerous works of literature throughout history where twins have been a source of representing division and rivalry, in more modern works of literature, the opposite is becoming more consistent. Poppet and Widget are a very good example of what Nooy suggests, as despite their differences, instead of being the reason for the circus to split, it is their abilities that come together to be able to create a path where Bailey follows to help the circus. The method that the twins are able to convince Bailey to follow the Circus is seen when Poppet gives Bailey a glass bottle that is able to reproduce a nostalgic feeling of a tree that is important to Bailey (342-343). Poppet explains that Widget was the one that gave her the bottle to then in return give it to Bailey because Widget wanted him “...to be able to keep your tree with you” in the case that Bailey chooses to join them (343). On the other hand, Poppet plays into her role of convincing Bailey to join by telling him, “...if you don’t come with us, there won’t be any more circus. And don’t ask me why, they don’t tell me why” (341). What Poppet is referring to when she states “they don’t tell me why” is the very stars that are the source of her abilities to read the future, which means that both Widget’s ability to read the past and her ability to read the

future is key factors to saving the circus later. The twin's duality of past and future, as well as their abilities being crucial for the saving of the circus, falls perfectly align with Nooy's suggestion of twins representing the solution in contemporary literature, that is also what makes their roles as magicians in *The Night Circus* is so compelling and crafty by Morgenstern.

2.4- Intersection of Reality and Enhancement

Despite *The Night Circus* being a fantasy novel, the very combination of the real world and the enchanted world is one of the key factors to why the novel is extremely admirable. *The Night Circus* is not only made up of a portal system that separates the real and the magical, but the novel is also developed in a carefully constructed manner through other means as well. Some of which include the very interesting characters that constantly challenge the balance of what can be considered real and fiction. However, aside from the characters that the readers are forced to view the fantastical from, *The Night Circus* is also constantly intersecting what is known as reality and the enchanted in the narrative, whether that intersection is easily detectable to the reader or not. Therefore, exploring the method to which Morgenstern explores this subtle, yet very persistent, crossing of actuality and the supernatural is crucial to develop the study of fantastical, as a whole, within the realm of *The Night Circus*.

As stated above, *The Night Circus* challenges the intersection of reality and enhancements through the different characters represented within the novel. In this case, a good example would be the fortuneteller Isobel who illustrates a very thin line between tricks and what can be labeled as magic. Fortunetellers, depending on the person you ask, can be viewed as capable of doing some sort of magic even in the real world (our world). Faith Wigzell, in their paper *Traditional Magic or European Occultism*, explains that in Russia one would believe that "...over more than six decades of Soviet education and propaganda, belief in magic and fortune-telling would have withered away. In fact, for all their zeal, Soviet efforts to combat 'superstition' met with only partial success." (64). Wigzell argues that places such as Russia are still participating in fortune-telling due to the belief in it, and states that the most practiced version of fortune-telling "...today are tarot and astrology" (60). In fact, one of the more famous countries to incorporate the belief in fortune-telling, not only in their day-to-day life, but also in a lot of their entertainment industries, is South-Korea. Andrew Eungi Kim writes in his paper, on the *Nonofficial Religion in South-Korea: Prevalence of Fortunetelling and Other Forms of divination (2005)*, that:

“Without suggesting that Koreans are predisposed to accept things passively or they lack critical independent judgment to take concrete actions to change reality, there is a conspicuous tendency among Koreans to believe in fate and divination, both of which are derivatives of shamanism.” (285-286)

Eungi further explains the phenomenon in the use of fortunetelling among Koreans through the “...belief in divination,” as the people’s “...wish to learn about the best course of future action to ultimately fulfill one's wishes.” (286). Eungi highlights the vast practice of the art of predicting futures to be a result of how modern Koreans seek “...fortune tellers' advice for personal concerns ranging from health and wealth to marriage.” (286). However, Andrew Eungi Kim also points to the existence of nearly “300,000 practicing fortune tellers in the country,” that he deems are the bigger reason for the constant desire to find an answer through the practice of fortune-telling (286). Regardless of what the background is, to the undeniable reliance on fortunetelling is in today’s society, the truth of it is that the Koreans, and the Soviet Union’s attempt to extinguish fortunetelling, are simply a means to further exemplify the very apparent belief in fortunetelling, not in just these two countries, but in several other places on earth as well.

To make matters even more coherent, ironically, the character Isobel, in *The Night Circus*, is a fortuneteller who partakes in tarot readings with her own set of cards. However, despite the very real belief in tarot readings in today’s society, within the world of *The Night Circus* it remains ambiguous, in other words, the act of tarot card reading is usually never outright claimed to be magic. What is to be explained by that statement, is the fact that when we speak of tarot reading and astrology, the words used are not necessarily words such as magic, supernatural, or the fantastical. Rather, according to the webpage *Astrology.com*, that prides itself on being the world’s leading astrology media brand, they are more invested in using terms such as numerology, in reference to their belief that “...numbers hold value, both numerical and spiritual”, and that the relationship between numbers and an individual is summed up in the term “mystic nature”. The use of words such as mystic, mysterious, spiritual and psychic are the more common words associated with astrology and tarot card readings, not terms such as magic, supernatural, and enchantment. If one were to view it from the perspective of *The Night Circus*, even Isobel herself states that what Marco had done was “...actual magic disguised as stage illusions” indirectly giving the perspective that she does not necessarily believe what she does is ‘actual magic’ (99). Yet, despite the ambiguous nature of Isobel’s capabilities, in the circus she accurately predicts Bailey Clark’s future role

as a character of importance for the future of the circus (210). Aside from the correct prediction of Bailey's future, Isobel also casts a charm on the circus to "... prevent two conflicting sides from causing damage to each other or their surroundings. To keep the scales from breaking." (349). Although this simple charm, brought together through the knots and ribbons tied by Isobel, successfully holds the balance of the circus for a long period of time, both Isobel and Marco assumed the charm had little to no influence on the circus. Marco even states that, "...the charm Isobel put over the circus, over you and me. I knew about it, I could feel it. I didn't think it was doing much of anything but apparently it was" (349). This suggests that even Marco was unsure of what capabilities Isobel is in fact able to produce, and whether or not her actions actually had an impact on a space surrounded by what the characters seem to consider to be real magic. To put the idea, discussed so far, into perspective, Isobel is a character that constantly traverses between reality and enchantment, and she forces the reader to question their own perspective of what is known to be the truth in comparison to what is assumed to be the fantastical, in the context of *The Night Circus*.

Another key property, within the world of *The Night Circus*, that highlights the cross between reality and enchantment in a method most exemplary, is the joining of the circus' patrons also known as the Reveurs. The Reveurs in *The Night Circus* are the patrons of the circus but also "...the formation of a kind of club, a society of lovers of the circus" (179). While initially one might assume that the Reveurs are simply just patrons of the circus that Morgenstern added to showcase the popularity of the circus in the world of *The Night Circus*, the Reveurs are a deliberate addition to the story to further delve into the mysteries of the circus itself. What is suggested, is that the Reveurs act as a part of the circus by being equally mysterious and enchanting, but simultaneously, they are what connects the magical world of the circus to reality. To further understand the point that is being discussed, Tzvetan Todorov argues in his book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975) that "...the fantastic produces a particular effect on the reader, - fear, or horror~ or simply curiosity - which the other genres or literary forms cannot provoke" (92). The relevance of Todorov's understanding of how the fantastic *becomes* the fantastic, through the perspective of a reader's developed curiosity, also directly aligns with how the Reveurs engage with the circus in *The Night Circus*. In other words, the Reveurs are deeply attached to the circus through their fascination of the temples, as well as the people performing in the circus. These performances, which often tend to lack a sensible explanation to how those entertainment acts are truly possible, through their understanding of the real-world laws, capture the Reveurs'

curiosity in a way that cannot be simply mimicked in another atmosphere that is not the circus portrayed through the novel. Due to the similarity between the idea that Todorov provided, regarding the readers' curiosity establishing the fantastic, and the Reveurs' curiosity to the function of the circus, arguably the same effect is established. What is to be understood is that through the same method, in which a readers' reactions can influence a genre, the Reveurs' reaction and existence influence the fantastical nature of the circus in the novel. However, it is crucial to understand that the Reveurs' reactions aren't to be misunderstood to be simply through their curiosity and fascination of the Circus. No, the true reactions of the Reveurs are not only their formation of the unofficial club, made to appreciate the joy that the circus brings with other patrons, it is also through the "...fashion trend amongst the rêveurs" (176). Morgenstern constantly uses colors to separate important statements within her novel, one of which was the character's determination to keep the circus with only the colors "...striped in white and black, no golds and crimsons to be seen. No color at all, save for the neighboring trees and the grass of the surrounding fields." (3). In the case of the Reveurs, the color that Morgenstern chooses to use, to separate their existence to that of the performers who use only dark colors, is the bright color of scarlet. The reason for the choice of having the circus patrons use a dash of red in their outfits, when attending the circus, is through the perspective the character Herr Thiessen provides "... he wears a scarf in a brilliant scarlet, to distinguish himself from it as well, as a reminder that he is at heart a spectator, an observer." (177). To put it differently, the clear separation between the Reveurs, where your average person is simply attending an entertainment show, and the performer with uncanny abilities is what forms a very specific cross between the intersection of reality and enchantment in *The Night Circus*.

2.5- Writing Techniques and Narrative Structure

After having discussed the many factors involved in the creation of the novel *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern, those of which emphasize the roles of magicians, the intersection of reality and enchantment, but also the elements of magic within the novel, this section concerns itself with the writing. The last section of this chapter revolves around analyzing the novel, links with the exploration of how Morgenstern uses a non-linear timeline to her advantage, and how her choice of using several perspectives, through different characters, add to the influence of why *The Night Circus* is a well-written fantasy novel. Understanding the narrative structures and techniques employed by Morgenstern also grants the comprehension of the layers of symbolism and the thematic depth of *The Night Circus*. By dissecting

Morgenstern's narrative complexity, the readers of the novel gain an insight into character developments and motifs that are not necessarily always directly portrayed, rather the author offers an endless interpretation of the deeper message of every carefully considered pick.

What many readers may often first be made aware of, when the discussion falls on *The Night Circus*, is the very apparent lack of a linear timeline. Not all novels or works of literature have the authors choose to include the date of time of an event, or situation the authors have written about within the novel. The reason for such avoidance is often contributed to the fact that many authors wish their stories to be timeless, in the sense that they may adhere to a larger audience when the interpretation, of the time the story takes place in, is left to the readers. There are also other cases where the authors choose to focus on the themes of the novel that are general to the public no matter the time that the situation may take place in, instead of focusing on the historical context that does little to nothing for the feelings the author may wish to convey. On the other hand, the opposite is also very much true as authors often include the timeline of the plot in order to convey themes that directly align with a certain period of time. There are many methods to which an author may use to indicate the time something takes place in, such as the description of fashion styles indicative to time periods where those types of styles were more commonly used. Some authors are more direct with the time every chapter is set place in, including the year, month and day in the beginning of the chapter to give the readers an overview of the situation. Erin Morgenstern employs a more direct method of showing her audience the time every chapter is set place in, as every chapter starts with either both the month and the year, or the year(s) that the chapters fall into. More specifically, Morgenstern's creation of a timeline in *The Night Circus* falls into the category of nonlinear narrative structure. Jaclyn A. Reed in his thesis *The Time Helix: Nonlinear Narrative Structures and the Paradox of Delayed Simultaneity* (2022), explains that:

“...these out-of-order story structures interrupt the typical way that we think about time as chronological or a progression of earlier to later events. These out-of-order, or achronological, stories also create a contradictory reading experience that works in two ways, both of which convey a delayed simultaneity.” (iv)

The delayed simultaneity, suggested by Reed, is a crucial understanding of how Morgenstern, in fact, does delay the expectations of the readers in what is inevitably needed to be clarified to her readers. To put the idea of delayed simultaneity into perspective, in *The Night Circus* the chapter *Hidden Things Concord, Massachusetts, October 1902*, the point of view befalls

on Bailey who is portrayed through his hope to see the circus again, especially after his encounter with his love interest Poppet. The chapter ends with Bailey noticing that the circus is back, "...when he finally looks up from his book, Bailey is so shocked by the sight of the black-and-white striped tents in the field that he nearly falls out of the tree." (113). Despite the anticipation of the reunion between Poppet and Bailey once more, the next chapter is called *Opening Night I: Inception London, October 13 and 14, 1886*, which takes place six years prior to the chapter before, and provides the perspective on the night that the Murray twins were born. Rather than providing the expected reunion as a chronological timeline, like many novels would, Morgenstern delays the anticipated event through the portrayal of an entirely different, yet relevant, event. Reed also distinguishes between novels with out-of-order structure into two categories:

"The first way is to present readers with events that are happening at the same time in the story but are read in a delayed fashion. The second way is to present readers with events that are not happening at the same time but are told to the reader as if they were simultaneous." (iv)

At the establishment of *The Night Circus* not following a linear narrative structure, using the viewpoint given through Reed's description of two types of achronological stories, arguably Morgenstern's novel falls into both of the suggested methods by Reed. After having provided examples of the jump between year 1902 and then back to 1896 in *The Night Circus*, the second method is easier to assume as a part of how Morgenstern chooses to write her story, as the events don't take place at the same time but may feel as though they are. To further understand, Reed suggests that one should view it through "...a box of loose puzzle pieces, which must be reassembled without reference to an original picture" (iv). That is to say that where the meeting of Bailey and Poppet is clearly important to the overall plot of *The Night Circus*, as well as the birth of Murray twins in order to understand the capabilities possessed by the twins, the understanding of such relevance will not be established until much later in the book. Reed's example of using a box of puzzle pieces, to give a clear view of the position a reader falls into when reading a nonlinear narrative structure, is a well-formed suggestion in light of how Morgenstern constantly provides pieces of a puzzle the reader is forced to build, without the original picture to look back to. Therefore, *The Night Circus* uses the second method of telling events, not happening at the same time, to feel as though they are. Similar to the fact that the birth of the twins being presented, right after the meeting between Bailey and Poppet, as a symbol of their birth being connected to the distant future, as though the events

had been decided on at the same time.

On the other hand, to go back to how Reed also mentioned the first method being the authors' way to "...present readers with events that are happening at the same time in the story but are read in a delayed fashion." (iv). While the jump between years can go from past to future, and then future back to the past, Morgenstern is not shy of repeatedly visiting an event throughout the chapters in *The Night Circus*. Which is to say that several times the same year is repeatedly brought back into the story, more often than not, being viewed through the perspective of a different character from that which the event or date was initially seen through. For instance, in the end of part one of *The Night Circus*, the last chapter is called *Hidden Things: Concord, Massachusetts*, which takes place in October 1902 (106). The *Hidden Things* chapter is, as earlier mentioned, seen through the perspective of Bailey and is the meeting between him and Poppet (106). On other hand, in part two of *The Night Circus*, Morgenstern reintroduces the readers to October 1902 in her chapter *Oneiromancy: Concord, Massachusetts*, which not only is the same date and place at the previous chapter of 1902 but also the continuation of Bailey finally getting to visit the circus again, which was how the previous chapter had left the readers anticipating (133). Furthermore, the repetition of continuing the events of October 1902 is not something that only happens once throughout the novel, in fact Morgenstern goes back to writing about the events of October 1902 approximately twelve times. The reason behind the repeated continuation of the specific time of October 1902, can be deduced to be functioning as something the readers may consider to be the 'present' timeline. The rest is of the years function only to provide context throughout the reveal of the events taking place in October 1902. The reason for such conclusion is that 1902 serves as the latest year in the novel, aside from 1903 being the last chapter that functions as an ending to the story. To better explain the technique, Morgenstern may, for example, switch between writing first about 1902 and then back to 1895 then vice versa, however she does not ever exceed the year 1902. The only time Morgenstern does finally provide information of the year after 1902, which is to say the year 1903, is only at the end of the novel and serves as the last chapter of the book. Reed in his thesis on *The Time Helix* (2022), while discussing the novel *The Clockmaker's Daughter* by Kate Morton, argues that the chapters jumping to the past, similar to *The Night Circus*, act as "...sub-plots that reveal that this novel is not just another romantic story of boy meets girl," (170). While the argument is specifically directed toward Morton's novel, the reality is that the same can be said of *The Night Circus*. That is if the year 1902 is to be considered the main plot point, whereas all the

other years are to be considered as the ‘sub-plots’ that exact the idea that *The Night Circus* certainly isn’t just a romance story between Celia Bowen and Marco.

Moreover, Reed also explains in their thesis that:

“...the plots of these contemporary time novels are simultaneously resolved and revealed: the unraveling of these novels does not necessarily produce a straight-forward story line (or plot), but rather a series of tangled knots that readers must stop and unpick for themselves in order to knit the story together (resolved), a story which may end up being more about a particular state of affairs than the specific events that have been narrated (revealed).” (60)

Certainly, the quote above applies also to *The Night Circus* in many ways, which can be viewed through a rich cast of characters with different impacts on the circus itself. That is to say that while *The Night Circus* does focus a lot on the romance between Marco and Celia, as well as Bailey and Poppet, the majority of the story is not centered around them. On the other hand, applying a single focal point to *The Night Circus* is arguably extremely pointless as the novel contains too many elements to be simply resorted to a single one. Just as Reed suggests, the reader is forced to “unpick” the tangled knots in the narrative that makes up the story of *The Night Circus* to truly determine the entirety of the novel. In the case of *The Night Circus*, the narration is constantly shifting between characters, not to mention, between events that are entirely seen through only one character’s perspective. One such example is the death of Tara Burgess in *The Night Circus*. Tara along with her sister Laine are responsible for the development of the atmosphere of the circus, explained as provided in the quote below:

“...the mark of the Burgess sisters is more subtle, though it permeates almost every aspect of the circus. The scents, the music, the quality of the light. Even the weight of the velvet curtains at the entrance. They have arranged each element to appear effortless.” (167)

The Burgess sisters were a part of the creation of the circus and play a relatively important role in making the circus appear mysterious and vibrant. However, despite the fact that they possess no such capabilities on the likes of Marco, Celia, Poppet and Widget they still suffer from the unexplainable happenings in the circus as a consequence of Celia and Marco’s competition. Furthermore, the death of Tara Burgess, as well as her perspective, introduces the readers to the fact that something is happening in the circus which is not normal. In fact,

Tara is perhaps the first character to officially voice her concerns regarding the circus out loud, explaining it through her dialogue with Mr. Barris: “I tried to talk to Chandresh, but it was like we were speaking two different languages. I do not like sitting idly by when something clearly isn’t right. I feel ... not trapped but something like it, and I don’t know what to do about it.” (190). Yet, despite the fact that there are clear indications throughout several characters’ perspective, along with Tara, the moments such as the death of Tara, are what forces the readers to officially concern themselves on how the smaller events played into the character’s death. Another way of looking at Tara’s death is by viewing how her peculiar, suggested to be suicide, death is significant for the overall story. Thus, the reader is once more left to ‘untangle knots’ to pick out the story from the nonlinear narrative structure viewed through different characters and time events.

The question of how Morgenstern’s choice of using a nonlinear narrative structure plays into the element of fantasy, to heighten the experience of reading *The Night Circus*, is understood more properly through Mendlesohn’s idea of intrusion fantasy. As suggested earlier, in section 2.2 *The System of Magic and Magical Elements*, the establishment of *The Night Circus* pertaining to both a portal quest fantasy and immersive fantasy was discussed through the exploration of the circus’ role and the competition between Marco and Celia. However, through the discussion of nonlinear narrative structure and Morgenstern’s use of different perspectives throughout the novel, the argument provided is the fact that *The Night Circus* also includes elements of intrusion fantasy. Mendlesohn writes that “...the rhythm of the intrusion fantasy is a cycle of suspension and release, latency and escalation, hesitation and remorselessness. It can be constructed within the plot, within the description of the text” (115). Which is to say, through the argument that the nonlinear narrative structure, seen through Reed’s suggestion, causes a delay in the readers perception of events happening at the same time allows the pattern between intrusion fantasy to be viewed more clearly. In other words, the intrusion fantasy that is “...constructed within the plot, within the description” of *The Night Circus* is debatably seen through the nonlinear narrative structure the novel possess. Not to mention, Mendlesohn points to the reader’s role in intrusion fantasy and argues that:

“This disregard for the rules is one reason why the protagonist/reader position can be summarized as “confused.” The generically irrational fantastic keeps the protagonist/reader off balance, and without control of the situation (even when such control is posited as part of his eventual destiny).” (180-181)

The point to be made is that the irregular system of time structure in *The Night Circus* causes that very same “confusion” in readers which Mendlesohn explains in her book *Rhetoric of Fantasy*, which simply put, is another reason why *The Night Circus* is also an intrusion fantasy. Furthermore, Mendlesohn’s argument that “...the narrative leads always toward the acceptance of the fantastic, by the reader if not the protagonist” furthers the discussion that the nonlinear narrative structure, discussed so far, is crucial in how Morgenstern has been successful in writing a fantasy novel that is beneficial to study (115). The reason behind such deduction falls into the understanding that through the narrative method used by Morgenstern, *The Night Circus* very much is an intrusive fantasy, and therefore the narrative leads the reader “...towards the acceptance of the fantastic” (Mendlesohn 115). Thus, the methods seen in both the writing and narration, that Morgenstern has used in her creation of *The Night Circus*, are what makes the novel so compelling.

2.6- Conclusion

Having come to the end of the chapter discussing the novel *The Night Circus*, the conversation led so far has resulted in an in-depth analysis of several perspectives to which the novel is capable of showing its readers. The complexity of *The Night Circus* reveals a thematic depth and narrative involvement which intensify the novel’s fantastical elements. Through the exploration of the magic and the system in the novel, the perspective given in how the competition and avoidance of direct use of the term ‘magic’ in character dialogue, contributes to the immersive nature of the novel. Moreover, the existence of the circus itself, is argued to behold properties that suggests the novel also falls into the category of a portal-quest fantasy.

Through the lens of character analysis, specifically the role that Poppet and Widget play, the connection between social contexts and fantastical elements found in *The Night Circus* is opened. Their roles are determined by the bond shared between common tropes found often in many contemporary novels. However, seeing as the twins were not the only relevant characters in the discussion of the fantastical in *The Night Circus*, Isobel and the Reveurs provided another perspective of what could be considered the uncanny and what can be considered reality. Isobel’s character blurs the lines between magic and illusion through her identity as a fortuneteller. Meanwhile, the Reveurs serve as a bridge between the magical world of the circus and the mundane reality. In the last section of the chapter, the examination of Morgenstern’s writing techniques and narrative structures provided an insight into the

novel's very captivating storytelling method. The nonlinear timeline, with its many perspectives and different events, invites the reader to truly unpack the mystery of the circus and its characters. This narrative complexity by Morgenstern crafts the rich nature of the novel that keeps the readers engaged in the fantastical world she has built.

Additionally, the idea that through the narrative exploration, *The Night Circus* does not only hold properties of only immersive and portal-quest fantasies, but also with that of intrusion fantasy, is what truly brings the understanding behind its success to light. Through the circus' arena, the non-linear narrative and the rhythm of suspension and release, the writing techniques create confusion and an intrusion fantasy. As the confusion that Mendlesohn associates with intrusion fantasies is shared through the irregularity of the narrative structure found in *The Night Circus*. Thus, the readers are further pulled into the novel's enchanting world, and a better understanding of how Morgenstern portrays the fantastical in her novel is formed.

Chapter 3: Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell

3.1 - Introduction

The Novel *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* was published in 2004 by the author Susanna Clark and was deemed "... an exceptionally compelling, brilliantly creative, and historically fine-tuned piece of work" (Brad Hooper). Indeed, Clark spent nearly 10 years on gathering and perfecting her novel before it was published and successfully winning The Hugo Awards (Pauli). The Hugo Award was not the only award that Clark's novel won, but her novel also had a show created based on her work as well, yet despite the many discussions revolving around the novel, the question to be wondered, is what makes the magic of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* so compelling?

In many ways, the plot in Clark's novel is arguably a very standard setting in which the magician Norrell attempts to return magic back to England along with his fellow student Jonathan Strange. As many would assume, the mission of returning magic to the land proves to be much more difficult than initially assumed, and their attempts are foiled by a strange man, also a fairy, with thistle down hair. However, standardizing such novel only to the initial plot is a mistake that will overlook the intricate relationships between the characters and the

very complex structure of the plot. While initially one may assume that Jonathan and Norrell are the focus of the story, in many ways, Stephan the servant, Lady Pole and Arabella are what allows the story to be continued.

As such, this chapter focuses on Susanna Clark's novel *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, where the novel contrasts itself from *The Night Circus* in its use of the term magic. As well as how Clark manages to have both an immersive and intrusive fantasy in a different method from that of Morgenstern. This chapter discusses the role of Norrell, and how he bonds the magic to Celtic influence, and how Arabella is the connection to liminal fantasy. Furthermore, in the section of reality and enchantment, Clark's use of historical events and incorporation of the fantastical are used to further the understanding of the immersive and compelling story telling of the novel. At last, the idea that *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* follows a non-linear timeline, contrary to popular belief, is explored alongside the idea that the structure of the novel is similar to a biography.

3.2- The System of Magic and Magical Elements

In the discussion of *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern, the argument that the novel lacks certain types of restrictions, in how the author chooses to portray her idea of the fantastical elements, was explored. However, that viewpoint, of expressing the fantastical without limiting the possibilities in *The Night circus*, is something that can be further understood through the examination of how Susanna Clark chooses to show the fantastical with forms of restrictions in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*.

Despite the constraints practiced by Susanna Clark, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norell* still contains many of the same elements as its counterpart, *The Night Circus*.

Where the word magic is avoided and hidden behind other terms to describe the uncanny in *The Night Circus*, in Susanna Clark's novel the opposite is done. That is to say that if Clark is to differ in Morgenstern's method of showing the fantastic, it would be that Clark does not shy away from the question- but what is magic? There are many aspects to prove this argument, beginning with the fact that Clark has created an entire backstory for the explanation of magic, and its uses throughout the reimagined history of her novel. However, the most reoccurring explanation or associations made with the fantastical, is the existence of fairies. While Clark writes the story through a very linear timeline, unlike *The Night Circus*, most of the context, and the readers' understanding of how magic is perceived in the world

built by Clark, is actually portrayed through the footnotes. Therefore, while initially introduced to the existence of fairies, often through terms such as ‘fairy servants’, the actual first description is seen through one of Clark’s footnotes: “The first passage which Mr Segundus read concerned England, Faerie (which magicians sometimes call ‘the Other Lands’; and a strange country that is reputed to lie on the far side of Hell.” (17). The footnote provides the first clear understanding that there are realms within the world of *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*, one of which is the Faerie land. On the other hand, the description of the fairies’ characteristics is also found in that same footnote described as such:

“...the fairy had a great multitude of names, honorifics, titles and pseudonyms... wicked creatures who did not always know when they were going wrong. To this Martin Pale briefly and somewhat enigmatically replied that not all Englishmen have the same size feet... Fairies (as everybody knows) are beyond the reach of the Church; no Christ has come to them, nor ever will –and what is to become of them on Judgement Day no one knows. According to Pander Cold Henry meant to enquire of Pale if there was any hope that fairies, like men, might receive Eternal Salvation... Based on this Pander goes on to attribute to Pale a rather odd belief that Heaven is large enough to hold only a finite number of the Blessed; for every Englishmen who is damned, a place opens up in Heaven for a fairy.” (17)

Now, through the information that the footnote gives, the comprehension of what fairies are is made much clearer, compared to how magic was practically labeled as tricks in *The Night Circus*. Fairies are understood to be other beings living in a completely different realm that do not necessarily follow the same religious protocols that the humans live by. However, in the passage above, Clark does not dismiss the opportunity to ponder on the idea that fairies, much like humans, are perhaps just another species that are to be judged as any other human is.

Furthermore, in light of the discussion of how Clark forms restrictions on the function of the fantastical in her novel, the more apparent showcase of such idea is the fact that both the characters Jonathan and Norrell, throughout the majority of the novel, are concerned mostly about the *possibilities* that magic can provide. In other words, perhaps the entire reason for their existence, within the realm of the novel, is to ponder on and show the potential and limitation of magic, which was a practice that had nearly died out in their time. For example, whereas Jonathan wishes to learn more of the many things that he could potentially do through his understanding of magic, Norrell puts limitations on them both by warning of

consequences that can arise in such indulgences. For example, one of Jonathan's major concerns was the issue of the King's Road where he is warned against, several times, by both his wife Arabella and even Sir Walter. In one of Jonathan's dialogues, he replies to Sir Walter that he "... lectured me long enough upon the subject. But you do not let me finish! I merely name possibilities. I shall not go upon the King's Roads." (705). Thus, proving the point that Jonathan, despite being asked to let the matter go, is still caught up in pondering the potential he might come upon if he were to walk the King's Road. The urge to walk on the King's Road is not forgotten, and eventually Jonathan will end up walking that road.

However, the point is that throughout the story, Jonathan continues to ponder on possibilities, and each time he taps into that potential, providing the reader of just how much, that which is considered fantastical, is possible. The possibilities of magic, also the fantastical, in *The Night Circus* is not explored to the extent that has been done so in *Jonathan Strange and Mr.*

Norrell. The same can be said for the limitations shown as Norrell does the opposite of what Jonathan does. Norrell explains that "...almost all respectable sorts of magic are perfectly achievable without assistance from any one! What have I ever done that has needed the help of a fairy?" (299). Therefore, Norrell confirms the theory that there is a limited capability for humans in the area of magic and deems that this falls into the category of "respectable magic". Although the idea of what respectable magic is not fully clear, Clark gives several examples of what is not respectable (because it requires fairies or is only managed by a fairy) throughout the story which then in turn puts restrictions on what can be achieved. Still, Norrell also proceeds to further prove his point by exclaiming that "...there are some sorts of magic which are entirely impossible without fairies. There may be times -- and I sincerely hope that such occasions will be rare --when you and I shall have to treat with those pernicious creatures." (300). The end result of what this discussion is to bring forth, is the idea that where fantastical is treated as a mystery and kept so in the world of *The Night Circus*, the opposite is true of the world of *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* because the idea of the fantastical is constantly inquired into. Therefore, bringing us to the next point on how Clark's novel falls into Mendlesohn's theory of fantasy literature.

Mendlesohn argues that *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* is in fact first and foremost an immersive fantasy and also an intrusion fantasy, which does indeed align with the construction of the novel. As mentioned earlier, both Clark and Morgenstern's novels differ on many fronts, there are aspect to them that make them actually a lot more similar than initially believed. For instance, in section 2.2 the argument at front was that the avoidance of

using the term 'magic' is what made *The Night Circus* specifically fall into the category of immersive fantasy, yet on the other hand, Clark's discussion of magic in her novel is what makes *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* also an immersive fantasy. Mendlesohn explains, in *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, that in Clark's novel "...magic is presented as both utterly normal and an intrusion." (164). To tap into what is suggested by such proposition, what Mendlesohn is arguing for is the fact that Clark successfully manages to make the characters "...take for granted the fantastic elements with which they are surrounded; they must exist as integrated with the magical (or fantastic) even if they themselves are not magical; they must be "deeply competent with the world they know" (xxi). That is to say that not only do the footnotes, as discussed earlier, provide relevant information to the readers, which is readily accepted by the characters, but such method clarifies the fact that Clark's characters are indeed taking the fantastical elements for granted. Moreover, the characters of the world of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* are also very much informed of the world they know, which is proven by how Jonathan and Norrell explore the possibilities and limitations of magic. Thus, those features of Clark's novel are why Mendlesohn argues that *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* is an immersive fantasy through its "... ability to construct a complete world in which much that is different is taken for granted" (164).

Unlike its counterpart of immersive fantasy, discussing the proposal that *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* is an intrusion fantasy is fairly more complex. The reason for such complication stems from the fact that Mendlesohn describes intrusion fantasy as "...straightforward: the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back whence it came, or controlled" (115). However, such prospect provides an opposition directly to the idea that *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* is in fact also an immersive fantasy. This is in part due to the fact that the fantastical, as discussed earlier, is taken for granted in the world of the novel, therefore it cannot 'disrupt normality' when the normality is the acceptance of the fantastical. To put it lightly, the intrusion is in turn not necessarily the fantastical, as we tend to understand it, but rather it is hidden in a more complex construction. Mendlesohn argues that "...all the magic in Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell is intrusion/disruption. Magic is always portrayed as being brought into the controlled and mannered world of society" (165). However, although such conversation on what classifies as the disruption felt in Clark's novel is fairly reasonable, from another perspective it is not the magic, per se, that makes her novel also consist of elements of intrusion fantasy, but more so how each character experiences a different sort of intrusion. For instance, for the

character Stephen, he himself acts as a sort of disruption to the normalcy of the English society. The narrative describes Stephen's existence as such:

“But in Stephen's case it was all the more extraordinary since Stephen was a negro. I say "extraordinary", for is it not generally the case that a negro servant is the least-regarded person in a household? No matter how hardworking he or she may be? No matter how clever? Yet somehow Stephen Black had found a way to thwart this universal principle.” (174)

The explanation above very clearly sets Stephen Black as an anomaly within the world of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, as he already disrupts the ‘normality’ of the society. Therefore, in retrospect, Stephen, threading on the boundary of the fairy realm and human realm, is not just a fantastical intrusion into the world of the novel but also a continuation of the disruption already there within the societal fabric. That is to say that Stephen's presence questions the norms and expectations of the conventional hierarchy of the English society (as perceived in the novel). Thus, while magic is indeed a significant factor to the disruption of Clark's novel, the intrusion through diverse experiences of the characters is another method of receiving such disruption. The method of infusing the magic and social constructs to function as an intrusion in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* enriches powerfully the depth of Clark's novel.

3.3- The Roles of Magicians in Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell

In the case of *The Night Circus*, many characters do not have equal part in the decomposition of the plot, however, Clark's novel contains several characters of equal significance. Which is why choosing a few among the detailed and well written characters in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* does pose as a challenge. Despite such circumstances, the characters chosen for the sake understanding the significance of the fantastic genre are both Mr. Norrell and Arabella Strange, two deeply opposite personalities, yet hold close connections to fantasy aspect of the novel.

Norrell's role in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* is not only to highlight the difference between the methods of using magic in the world of the novel, but he also shows Celtic influence, which is often seen in the fantasy genre. The Celtic culture, and Ireland in particular, have always been a subject of fancy in fantasy novels, the reasons have to do with popular works that have set a trend in modern literature. Norrell's role tends to align with

numerous hints to the influence of Celtic culture which may not necessarily be what the author had attempted, but due to how the modern fantasy genre is often written, such influences become invisible to the readers. Perhaps one of the best examples to the influence of Celtic culture is in the works of J.R.R Tolkien. K.A Laity, in *Imagining the Celtic Past in Modern Fantasy (2023)*, argues that because of influential works of authors, such as Tolkien, the use of Celtic culture has become so consistent in the fantasy genre that those threads "...become indistinguishable from fantasy genre tropes, and thus functionally invisible to many fantasy readers and even fantasy writers or critics" (196). That is to say, that the normalization of using Celtic myths and stories within the genre has hindered people to see the correlation of Celtic culture within numerous works. Norrell's role in the story, in fact, provides a very subtle, yet undeniable connection through the character's opposition in using fairies to help with performing magic. In fact, Norrell's hatred of fairies becomes one of the main disagreement points between him and Jonathan, and he went as far as to say that people "...would still have been wrong to wish for the company of fairies. A more poisonous race or one more inimical to England has never existed." (72-73). The reason to his spite for the fairies is that the people in the novel "...believe that magic begins and ends with fairies" which in turn means that people don't "...consider the skill and learning of the magician at all" (300). K.A Laity argues in her paper that Norrell's magic is "...about logic, rationality and a lack of mysticism" (13). In which the cold rationality of Norrell's modern magic is an "...attempt to root out this Celtic emotionalism." (13). The significance of Celtic Emotionalism is seen through K. A Laity's argument that Celtic influence is identified by *affect*, essentially meaning at the end of the novel "...magic has returned to its Celtic roots and the diverse community of magicians are left to untangle its mysteries while the warring magicians remain, 'Behind the sky. On the other side of the rain', (1000) having themselves become the Other" (Clark 27). That is to say, Norrell's character acts as a form of dichotomy within the narrative, he showcases the clash between rationality and mysticism. Furthermore, Norrell's role shows a subtle influence of Celtic culture which often permeates the fantastical realm of the novel.

Arabella Strange, the sweet and gentle wife of Jonathan Strange, is not only there to play the role of damsel in distress, but she actually connects the novel to the characteristics of liminal fantasy. When Arabella visits Sir Walter Pole and is preoccupied with observing paintings in his home, she states, "...where does all this light come from? . . .It is almost as if it shines out of the paintings, but that is impossible." (335). Moreover, when Arabella was in a

conversation with Sir Walter Pole's wife, Lady Pole, the narrative will again hint to the fact that she feels something is not right:

“...Arabella did not quite understand. It was as if something in one of the paintings had moved, or someone had passed behind one of the mirrors, and the conviction came over her once again that this room was no room at all, that the walls had no real solidity but instead the room were only a sort of crossroads where strange winds blew upon Lady Pole from faraway places.” (339)

Despite how magic is considered to be very normal in the world of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* and to Arabella, whose husband constantly uses magic on a daily basis, her character acts startled by the peculiar things she witnesses in Sir Walter Pole's house. However, despite her slight worry and the sense of oddity she feels, Arabella does not end up telling her husband of anything that happened, nor about eccentricities of Lady Pole. In fact, Arabella dismisses all that Lady Pole had said, in favor of claiming it as the ramblings of a mad person:

“After much deliberation she decided that a promise to a person in their senses ought to be more binding than a promise to someone out of their senses. For, after all, what was to be gained by repeating the nonsensical ramblings of a poor madwoman? So she never told Strange what Lady Pole had said.” (344)

In the discussion of liminal in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008), Farah Mendlesohn argues that “... the liminal fantasies, the form that I recognize most easily as fantastical are the fantasies of irony. In these, we are presented with the obviously fantastical, and watch while the protagonists ignore it or respond in ways that feel dissonant” (191). In the case of Arabella, such dissonant is clearly portrayed by her own dismissal of something she had clearly stated to be “impossible” and “strange” which directly alludes to what Mendlesohn says about liminal fantasies. Furthermore, Arabella is one of the few characters to hear the sounds of a bell and in the narrative perceives the bell to sound “... very sad and far-away and it brought before her imagination all sorts of melancholy scenes” (341). Through the narrative we learn that Arabella sees the bell's sound as:

“... bleak, wind-swept fens and moors; empty fields with broken walls and gates hanging off their hinges; a black, ruined church; an open grave; a suicide buried at a lonely crossroads; a fire of bones blazing in the twilight snow; a gallows with a man swinging from its arm; another man crucified upon a wheel; an ancient spear plunged

into the mud with a strange talisman, like a little leather finger, hanging from it; a scarecrow whose black rags blew about so violently in the wind that he seemed about to leap into the grey air and fly towards you on vast black wings” (341).

Which to the reader is arguably a clear hint towards the raven king, mentioned numerous times within the story, also often referred to as the “black king” (70). The Raven king is also the most prominent figure attached to the fantastical within the realm of the novel, who Strange went as far as to claim being where “... all English magic comes from” (299). Yet, despite how much of an influence the Raven King has, and despite how clearly the feelings raised by the sound of the bell hints towards such a consistent character within the realm of the novel, Arabella does not ever make the connection at all, nor does she ever think the fairies to have anything to do with it. The sort of dissonance seen in the role of Arabella is similar to what Mendlesohn explains:

“...both we and the family see fantasy, but we see it in different contexts and interpret it differently. We place the absurd in different moments, but doubt because the family seems to question whether anything truly fantastical has happened at all. We could even see this as an immersive fantasy because the protagonists take it all for granted. Except that they do not.” (182).

Which is in reference to what Mendlesohn suggests is the difference between liminal and immersive fantasy. In other words, in an all-immersive fantasy, everything that is shown through the protagonist’s perspective is all that the reader can assume and accept, more likely than not, all the fantastical is accepted as normal in that world. However, in the liminal fantasy, Mendlesohn argues that the fantastical is still seen as “improper” by the reader and characters, despite how the fantastical can be viewed as somewhat accepted in their world (192). In which case, Arabella’s character is a good example of how to integrate properties of liminal fantasy within a novel, making *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* a lot more complex in structure from what the first impression might indicate to.

3.4- The Intersection of Reality and Enchantment

In the context of the intersection of reality and enchantment, Clark’s novel goes above and beyond to integrate the fantastical into a historical setting. The fact that *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* is set in the Regency era of the years 1807 to 1817 and includes numerous historical figures is no secret at all. However, Clark’s blend of reality into events that have

indeed taken place, according to historical records, is arguably one of the main reasons why her novel is such an influential work.

Unlike *The Night Circus*, where the aesthetics of the Victorian era play a major role in shaping the novel, Clark's novel takes place during the Regency era and focuses more on the social and political standings of the era.

(As mentioned, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* starts the first chapter beginning from the autumn of 1806 to January 1807, and the last chapter ends on February 1817 (Clark 3-993).) In between 1806 and 1817, several significant events took place that were of importance to England, many of which have been included in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. One such event is the madness of king George III who was, according to Britannica, declared in 1811 as "...violently insane. The doctors continued to hope for recovery, but Parliament enacted the regency of the prince of Wales (the future George IV) and decreed that the queen should have the custody of her husband. He remained insane, with intervals of senile lucidity, until his death at Windsor castle." (Britannica). The madness of George III is used in Clark's novel in order to portray the connection between insanity and the perception of the fairy realm.

Strange only started to take note of the fairy with the silver hair after which his visit to the king prompted him to start noticing that what the king was saying was not simply bursts of madness, "...he continually came back to the silver-haired person whom only the King could see. He tried to recall what exactly the King had said about this person, but he could recall nothing beyond the simple fact of his silver hair." (465). Later on, Jonathan makes the connection as he explains that madness had a bond to magic because "...it was something to do with the sympathy which fairies feel for madmen –that and the fact that madmen can perceive fairy- spirits when no one else can" (757). Only through Jonathan's understanding of the effects of madness is he able to craft a spell that allows him to traverse the human realm into the fairy realm and find that his wife, once thought dead, is actually alive.

In another case, the Napoleonic wars also only officially ended in 1815 and are a major part of the development of magic as well as Jonathan's rebellion towards Norrell's 'English' magic. The clarification of Norrell wishing to deny fairy magic, and only use 'respectable' magic, was made clear earlier in the section discussion the role of the magicians. Jonathan being the direct disciple of Norrell made him be forced to allude to the wishes of his mentor, especially because Norrell was in possession of "...all the books that were ever written upon magic" (151). However, only when Jonathan is sent to war is he finally able to separate himself from his mentor's whims and be able to freely engage with magic as he wishes, in

fact he was pushed by the Duke of Wellington to try harder. The Duke of Wellington, also known as Arthur Wellesley, was a real figure who was an Irish commander in the British army during the Napoleonic wars who also won the Peninsular war, to which Jonathan takes part in (Britannica). In the context of the novel, Wellington goes as far as to say to Jonathan that "... you are here I shall take the opportunity to explain to you the great nuisance which you and the other gentleman have been to the Army." (375). Lord Wellington's words causes Jonathan to make "... a list of all the sorts of magic which Norrell and he had done for the Admiralty and tried to decide which would suit Lord Wellington best." (376). Wellington goes so far to suggest creating a road "...along the Roman pattern, with a nice ditch upon either side to drain off the water and good flat stones well fitted together on top" (389). The road is only one of the many creative methods he encourages Jonathan to partake in magic that is different from the bad weathering the magicians had thrown at the French previously. At last, Jonathan ends up relying on a spell done by the Raven King himself to revive the dead to receive answers they needed to win the war "...then one by one the corpses revived and began to speak in a guttural language which contained a much higher proportion of screams than any language known to the onlookers." (424). As a reminder, such form of magic, that not only relies on spells used by fairies, but also falling into the category of 'non-respectable' magic, was something that Norrell strongly disagreed with as Jonathan "...was in some anxiety lest Mr Norrell get to hear of the magic he had done at the ruined church at Flores de Avila." (426). However, had Jonathan not taken part in the war, many of the spells done by Jonathan would not have been something that the readers would've know is possible in the world of the novel. Furthermore, the characters themselves would continue living in the restricted life of possibilities instead of acting on the theories. Therefore, the Napoleonic wars, as well as the character of Wellington, play a huge role in seeing this development, especially in Jonathan, from using magic to create illusion and then using magic to talk to corpses.

There are many other situations in which Clark uses the historical fact and settings to the advancement of the fantastical in her novel. The blend of both reality and enchantment in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* goes so well that the reader might actually start to question the possibilities of certain distortions of events to have actually taken place. The reinterpretation of the fantastic into historical events encourages creative expressions that make a rich and immersive narrative, which feels both grounded in reality and infused with enchantment.

3.5- Writing Techniques and Narrative Structure

Whereas *The Night Circus* includes a narrative structure that follows a non-linear timeline and makes use of poetic language that is colorful and vibrant, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* exudes its fantastical elements through other writing techniques and narrative structures. However different the two novels may be in their methodology, by understanding their chosen techniques, can the fantasy genre within them truly be appreciated.

The Night Circus shifted its years back and forth along with a change in character narratives that highlighted the novel's mystical vibe, Clark's novel follows a linear timeline but at the same time it doesn't. If one were to read *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* only through the actual plot, and not the many footnotes of extra information, one may assume that the timeline of the novel is a simple linear structure. For instance, Edward J. Maloney in his work *Footnotes in Fiction: A Rhetorical Approach* (2005), explains that the use of footnotes in Susanna Clark's novel are:

“... a good example of this type of synthetic textual play. While the notes may achieve the effect of making the reader aware of the text's synthetic aspects, this effect is lessened by Clarke's attempt to make the novel as realistic as possible in order to normalize the concept of magic as a scholarly pursuit rather than a fantastic possibility” (67).

Certainly, Clark does indeed make the fantastic in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* seem as realistic as possible through her use of footnotes, she also, with the use of her footnotes, “...indicate that the story in the body of the text is not the entire story to be understood by the reader, extending the narrative frame anachronistically and spatially” (89). However, what Edward J Maloney fails to point out, regarding the footnotes that Clark uses in her novel, is that time is a key aspect of their function. The footnotes in Clark's novel play with the concept of time within the narrative by offering glimpses of past and future events that take place outside the main plot, but also reference an event that will take place during the time frame of the main plot, functioning as extra information to the reader. One example of such play on time is shown in chapter five: *Drawlight*, which takes place in the events before Jonathan Strange is introduced into the story, in fact he is yet to have discovered magic, however in footnotes the reader learns that “... Mr Norrell's pupil, Jonathan Strange, loathed it so much that he tore his copy into pieces and led it to a tinker's donkey, see Life of Jonathan

Strange by John Segundus” (75). The reader knows for fact that Jonathan is an important character in the novel, if not for the very convenient title: *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, yet such character is only first presented in a footnote that hints towards a future still inaccessible to the reader. Moreover, in one footnote, Clark writes, “...four years later during the Peninsular War Mr Norrell’s pupil, Jonathan Strange, had similar criticisms to make about this form of magic” (137). In the footnote, not only does Clark disclose the future of Jonathan’s participation in the war, but she also inserts his, much later, response to the vision magic Norrell was conjuring up of the French, “... this art of making pictures is the most imprecise in the world” (137). Both the footnotes shown so far hint to a future event, not yet understood by the reader, and the event does happen, Jonathan later explains about the visions as such: “Whenever someone or something needs to be found, Lord Wellington is sure to ask me to conjure up a vision. It never works.” (416). Essentially, what happens is that time within the narrative is not as linear as assumed when future happenings are discussed much earlier in the novel through the footnotes, which in turn functions in a similar method to *The Night Circus*’ non-linear narrative. However, Clark’s use of footnotes to create a more scholarly approach to the fantastic is not the only method she uses.

The entire novel of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* works as a biography and an academic text about the revival of magic in the world of the novel. Although it is very clear to the reader that Clark’s novel is a fictional story, the use of footnotes, insertion of the author, as well as the direct addressment of the reader in the plot makes the novel appear as a biography. For instance, Clark writes, “...it would tire my reader's patience to rehearse the many winding arguments by which the gentlemen of the York society came to sign Mr Norrell's agreement.” (28). In the quote, Clark directly addresses the readers and explains that not every information is required to be known and even goes so far as to write, “...I will allow the reader to judge the justice of this portrait of Mr Norrell’s character” (29). Furthermore, Clark directly makes the narrator explicitly tell the reader that they too are aware that this is another chapter within the novel: “But in case you should imagine that this chapter will treat of none but disagreeable persons, it ought to be stated at once that, whereas malice was the beginning and end of Laurence Strange's character” (162). A case of self-insertion of the author into the realm of the novel can be seen through the narrator directly stating their own opinion: “The best grocer's in Town is Brandy's in St James's-street. I am not alone in that opinion” (193). The narrator will also make claims such as “...I dare say...”, “...I think...” or even “I hope” in the context of the plot. Adding in the footnotes, along with the mentioned characteristics

above, proves the meticulous way that Clark has resorted to make *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* an incredibly immersive fantasy novel, and arguably makes the novel seem almost like a biography. Rodrick J. Barman, who is a biographer, explains in his work *Biography as History* (2010), that "...biography acted in our early years as an entry way into the past. Learning about the lives of important individuals provided knowledge and understanding of particular historical periods." (62). Officially, the identity of the narrator is not stated in the novel, and the reader is left to consider whether the narrator is the author Susanna Clark, or maybe the narrator is another character in the world of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. However, something that is clear is that the narrator is "providing knowledge and understanding" of the historical periods that are mirrored in our real world, just reimagined with fantasy elements. In the case of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, the novel nearly follows the exact structure of a narrative biography to a fault, such as where Barman explains that narrative biographies "...is to be presented as a descriptive account of its course from birth, through adolescence, maturity, and old age, to death." (65). Which, although not necessarily the same case for Norrell's character, does align with Jonathan's presentation in the novel. For instance, Clark dedicated nearly an entire chapter to the past of Jonathan and his relationship with his late father Laurance strange "...some thirty years before Mr Norrell arrived in London with a plan to astonish the world by restoring English magic" (159). In fact, the chapter provides the reader with Jonathan's mother's death and all the way to his father's death, and to his connection with his wife Arabella, even letting us know how he proposed to her. Moreover, while the novel doesn't follow through all the way until the end of his life, it does end on how Jonathan and Norrell were able to restore magic to England, thus following the idea of a biography giving information of particular "...historical periods" (62). Therefore, not only is Clark inserting the fantasy through the use of different themes, historical facts and through a developed system of magic, but she also creates a fantastical universe through vast methods of techniques and narrative structures.

3.6- Conclusion

To conclude the chapter on *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, the novel stands as a great work within the genre of fantasy, offering several different methods on incorporating the fantastical. Essentially, through the exploration of the magical systems that differs from *The Night Circus* in the readily acceptance of the fantastic into the realm of the novel, can one understand the essence of why Mendlesohn views the novel first and foremost as an immersive fantasy. However, at the same time, Clark proves through her characters, such as

Stephen, that the intrusion is more than just the magic seen throughout the novel, but also the disruption of normality despite how accepted the fantastic is in the realm. Moreover, the role of the character Norrell, through the lens of K.A Laity, is more than a simple protagonist seeking to revive English magic, but also shows us a deeper connection to Celtic influence in modern fantasy novels, which is often overlooked. On the other hand, a character such as Arabella, viewed often as a damsel in distress, is in fact the very thread that allows the reader to view the novel as liminal fantasy, in the way that Mendlesohn describes it. By seamlessly integrating historical events and figures into the narrative does Clark intersect reality and fiction in a way that leaves us wondering to what the fictional parts really are. The method of using George III madness and the Napoleonic wars, shows the way Clark explores the possibility of how magic in the world of reality, showcasing a depth to the story.

In contrast to *The Night Circus*, which focuses on aesthetics of a certain era, Clark's novel uses the social and political landscapes of the regency era to highlight the narrative with historical contexts, allowing the readers to fully immerse themselves into the story. The use of footnotes presents the story as a biography and academic text, creating a function that further draws the reader into the world of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. The innovative storytelling and the attention to detail creates a believable narrative that challenges the readers' understanding of reality and leaves a lasting impact long after the final page is read. Thus, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* demonstrates the power of fantasy novel through a storytelling that transports the reader into a scenery of the familiar and fantastical, making the novel a timeless piece of literature.

Chapter 4: Navigating the Enchanted Realms: Unveiling Educational Insights in Fantasy Literature.

“It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading. Something that will stretch their imaginations- something that will help them make sense of their own lives and encourage them to reach out toward people whose lives are quite different from their own.” (Torrens)

In 1977, Kathrine Paterson published her most famous work known as *The Bridge to Terabithia*. In the novel, she stated that the book was written for her son David Paterson, after an accident had taken away the life of her son's friend Lisa Hill. The novel itself contains

themes of fantasy as well as escapism, that were incorporated into the novel as a means of heightening an understanding for a tragic event in the eyes of a reader. It is an understatement when an individual praises Kathrine Paterson as a successful author with incredible stories. Nevertheless, although it is true that Kathrine possesses various aspects that make her an influential person, the inclusion of her in this paper is prompted by a seemingly minor yet significant act of writing. Namely, the statement that Kathrine Paterson first starts with before following along the story of *The Bridge to Terabithia*. “I wrote this book for my son David Lord Paterson but after he read it, he asked me to put Lisa's name on this page as well, and so I do” (Paterson 3). It is in the consideration of this quote that one may grasp at the depth to which a child can truly phantom a work of literature. In other words, David Paterson, who was born 1966 could not have been older than the age of eleven when he first let his mother know his wish to include Lisa's name in the novel (considering the publishing date of *The Bridge to Terabithia*). The importance of this piece of information lies in the mindset, which Katherine Paterson is often associated with, that can be seen from the quote, “It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading” (Torrens). David Paterson's request symbolizes the way that literature can forge connections and lasting impressions which supports Katherine Paterson's view of giving children “Something that will stretch their imaginations- something that will help them make sense of their own lives and encourage them to reach out toward people whose lives are quite different from their own” (Torrens). While the source remains elusive, the quote's continuous proposal of a value of impact on young minds that a work of literature can have, specifically with a genre such as fantasy, still persists to this day.

This didactical chapter has an aim to unravel some of the important aspects of fantasy literature in an educational setting. More specifically, *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* by Susanne Clark and *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern can serve as more than just fantasy novels that provide a sense of mysticism and pleasure through reading. While it is always an option to choose which novel an individual wishes to read in the vast field of literature, in an educational setting the choices can be a lot less. There are numerous situations and possibilities that an educator needs to consider before suggesting a work of literature. Therefore, by suggesting *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* as well as *The Night Circus*, the opportunities for analysis and exploration of works of literature, in an educational setting, may help build a unique perspective in students.

Firstly, by studying *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* in a school setting, the teacher can implement the achievement of intercultural competence. According to Utdanningsdirektoratet:

“By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, students are to acquire language skills and knowledge about culture and society. In this way, students develop intercultural competence, so that they can relate to different ways of living, mindsets and communication patterns. Students should form a basis for seeing their own and others’ identity in a multilingual and multicultural perspective.” (Dypedahl et al. 82)

The importance of intercultural competence is very evident in the Norwegian curriculum for the right reasons too, which is why there are also numerous methods of going about it. However, by using *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, for instance, not only are the students required to read through the historical events of the Regency era, allowing a perspective on the old English society, but as mentioned in section 3.4, Clark uses the social and political situations of the time to connect the fantastic to the events. Such incorporation was seen through George III madness which was then deemed as a method to see the fairy realm. Not only does Clark write about the reactions of the people around the king, during his downfall into madness, but she does so through a means of distorting reality. The reason why such method of distorting reality becomes such an important factor is seen through what Stubna discusses in his paper *The Fantasy Fiction Viewed Through the Lens of Psychology of Literature* (2019):

“...the storyline usually takes place in an unrealistic (fictional) world, allowing the author to express the intended message without creating defense responses related to sensitivity of readers to certain (religious, political, worldview and others) themes and political correctness. The fantastic uses fiction to make possible a deeper look under the surface of reality. The fiction actually seems to tell a certain story with the aim of telling a completely different story.” (5)

Through the very relevant point that Stubna makes, the relevance of Clark’s novel truly shines. Just the fact that the novel is labeled as fantasy, makes the character Stephen, as a black man in the English society, at a time where slavery was still not illegal, seem less like the major focus of the story, not more than that of Norrell and Jonathan reviving magic.

Which in turn will create an opportunity of discussion regarding characters and social norms in a certain type of society, without directly pointing a finger to the specific intercultural competence one wishes to enable in students. Moreover, because of the many themes and significant characters found in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, that create these different fantasy structures provided by Mendlesohn, the students themselves can be challenged in discovering connections, none of which can truly be refuted as long as there is a reasonable perception. Furthermore, Dypdahl and Bøhn argue that "...fictional texts describing the inner thoughts of the main character may provide a good opportunity for gaining insight into the mental patterns of someone else" (90). In other words, through the factor of arguing for the idea that Clark's novel functions very similarly to that of a biography, the argument made by Dypdahl and Bøhn becomes another reason for why the novel serves to heighten intercultural competence. Since a biography serves to be "... neither critical of their subjects nor profound in their analysis" (Barman 62). Therefore, using *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* in an academic setting, with the focus on intercultural competence, is very relevant with consideration to what the Norwegian curriculum actually wishes to achieve.

Secondly, the suspense found in *The Night Circus*'s functions to stimulate a student's ability to deconstruct a text and reflect on the characteristics. In section 2.5, where the argument brought forth was that the timeline of *The Night Circus* operates to delay an expectation of a situation that will inevitably have to be discussed at some point, once more, in the novel. Stubna actually writes about how fantasy novels are "...considered to be predominantly an adventure/action genre, providing readers primarily with intense emotional experiences (suspense, excitement, surprise, astonishment, awe, compassion, anger, etc)" (5). Which in the non-linear timeline of *The Night Circus* has already been proven to create such form of suspense, ultimately triggering a feeling that events in the novel happen at the same time. Moreover, Therese Tishakov explains that in the subject of genre with that of literary works, in genre pedagogy "... the model text is taken apart, and key characteristics such as the text's structure and language features are drawn attention to" (183). One of the examples, that Tishakov uses to explain the process of studying genres through such method, is through ghost stories which Tishakov says that "...students may point to features such as frightening events and the inclusion of ghosts as being typical of this type of stories" (Dypdahl et al. 183). Tishakov also brings up the point that teachers can use the students' descriptive language and then add more to it, for instance asking them "...how suspense is used in this genre" (Dypdahl et al. 183). Tishakov's example aligns perfectly with the discussion of how

The Night Circus in fact does trigger “intense emotional experiences” in the way that Stubna points out, and that the suspense is found in the construction of the timeline of the novel. However, that is not to say that the suspense is the only factor that suggests why *The Night Circus* stimulates such response. In fact, in the intersection of reality and enchantment, which remarks on the aspect of Morgenstern’s novel to include the questioning of what is to be considered fantasy, also factors into this idea. The reason for such can be viewed through the lens that Stubna provides:

“The inclination of human mind to selectively focus only on certain objects, phenomena or events, and to acknowledge and assess their function (or subjective relevance) based on limited input data (instincts, previous experience and knowledge, etc.) determines the subjective nature of human perception and individual interpretations of the world” (3).

In other words, much like how Isobel is a fortune-teller in *The Night Circus*, which is considered a fantasy novel, the reality is that fortunetellers exist in our world too, but the human mind is subjective in what we perceive as magical. The topic on the border of reality and fantastic, that can be used in the same manner that Tishakov wishes for teachers to help students deconstruct the text, would function effectively. Thus, when choosing a text that the students are to study and deconstruct in order to understand the layers behind the chosen genre, *The Night Circus* could play as a good option.

Lastly, one of the major reasons why *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* as well as *The Night Circus* are reasonable novels to consider in an academic setting is because we should “...stretch their imaginations”. Christian Carlsen explains that:

“...it is useful to think carefully about the workload attached to reading activities. Especially when the main objective is to increase the students’ interest in literature, too much obligatory, for example, through extensive written analysis or book reports, will be counterproductive. The main emphasis when working with literature should be on making students enthusiastic about reading.” (213)

In other words, the most important aspect of choosing a novel that the students will read, is to be mindful of the extra work that will be associated with the novel. The reason why Clark and Morgenstern’s novels are relevant in the context of this decision, is because the novels are irregulars in the category of fantasy that they fall into. Mendlesohn has written extensively on

the four categories of the fantasy genre: liminal, immersive, intrusive and portal quest. However, the most important, also somewhat another category, is the irregulars, which has been determined to fall into neither one single category, but rather use two or more in the structure that they have been written in (Mendlesohn 246). While the novels don't necessarily fall into all the categories, the thread between portal-quest and immersive fantasy are evident in *The Night Circus*. The thread between intrusion and liminal are also very valid in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. In other words, Clark and Morgenstern don't follow a common pattern to the exact, rather there is an incredible vast opportunity of exploration in the realms of the novels, making them much more entertaining than the average novel. Furthermore, some of the most popular literature works have been fantasy novels such as *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* (Dypedahl 216). Although there are many reasons for the popularity of such books, arguably Stubna makes a relevant point when he states that:

“Adolescents, above all, find in extraordinary fantasy stories an opportunity to identify themselves with protagonists performing significant acts for the good of the community they are part of, as well as with characters living in an unconventional way or putting in practice their utopian ideals of social life.” (6).

Through *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* as well as *The Night Circus*, the lack of perspective within the novels is one of the last concerns, as clearly each novel doesn't follow the signature protagonist's view only. Therefore, if one were to take the consideration of adolescents enjoying the opportunity of relating to the characters of the stories they read, both Clark and Morgenstern's novels allow there to be an inclusion in the number of readers who can entertain themselves with such connections.

“...the fictional world in fantasy books is often depicted as eutopia or dystopia. Modern fantastic literature, especially science-fiction, describes the world not just for what it is, but also for what it could be. It depicts it in both good and bad, based on our hopes or our fears, the world we desire, or the one we reject” (Stubna 6).

The worlds that are similar to our own, yet so different in Clark and Morgenstern's novel craft an extensive story with influences from numerous places. Whether such influence can be seen in characters such as Norrell who connects the reader to Celtic culture, or the Murray twins who are in part a result of several historical associations with the uncanny. Despite the history of the Regency era and that of the Victorian era, both novels play on the idea of 'what if' or

‘what could be’ allowing the readers to truly work their minds on possibilities, in which the “...stories do not necessarily contradict reality but may be just its mental alternative model – factual or symbolical” (Stubna 7). As such, both Clark and Morgenstern’s novels, if used in a proper manner, truly embody Katherine Paterson’s idea of giving the students something that is actually really worth reading.

To summarize everything that has been stated so far, the didactical chapter is an important part of the thesis, that bridges the gap between fantasy literature and the Norwegian curriculum. In shortening the gap between the two, this paper, to an extent, holds true to the vision that Katherine Paterson is associated with. The chapter seeks to prove that *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*, as well as *The Night Circus*, are works of literature that stretch students’ imaginations, helps them make sense of their own lives, and encourages them to reach out towards the diverse lives of others. Through the necessary role of developing students’ intercultural competence, the novel *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* works the extensive intersection of social and political understanding along with the fantastical, without the burden of real-life associations. On the topic of helping students deconstruct a text and find the threads that align with the genres of the text, *The Night Circus* works as an example text for such possibilities, not only in its use of suspense but also through its challenge of reality and fantasy. *The Night Circus* poses as creative work to use in a classroom, and have the students truly deconstruct the text in the sense of what perceptions the subjective mind has. Similarly, both Clark and Morgenstern’s novels are written with a number of structures seen in their narrative, as well as their many different social influences, allowing the students to have a vast field of research areas that may interest them to choose from. The idea of encouraging students to strive for something different in their lives beyond what we already know, is what makes the novels appealing to use in an academic setting.

5- Conclusion

This thesis has explored the multifaceted nature of fantasy literature through the novels *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (2004) by Susanna Clark, and *The Night Circus* (2011) by Erin Morgenstern. In chapter one, the book *Rhetorics of Fantasy* by Farah Mendlesohn was discussed in light of the five categories of fantasy perceived by the author as the structure that most fantasy literatures adhere to. In the chapter, the categories of fantasy through Mendlesohn's perception, are given a thorough review as a brief introduction to their formal composition, in order to be further understood in prospect of discussing the chosen novels for this thesis. The categories discussed were portal quest fantasy, immersive fantasy, intrusion fantasy, liminal fantasy, and lastly what Mendlesohn refers to as the irregulars. The portal quest fantasies were understood to introduce the fantastical through a portal or a gateway, while the immersive fantasies integrated the fantastical as a part of the world without a sense of mysticism. On the other hand, intrusion fantasies include the fantastical through a sense of disruption to the normalcy perceived by the characters, and the liminal fantasies function to blur the line between reality and the fantastical. Lastly, the irregulars, while not necessarily a separate category, function to classify works of literature that use more than one type of category to build their structure, essentially toying with the norms for the fantasy genre.

Through the understanding of Mendlesohn's classification of the fantasy genre comes chapter two that examines *The Night Circus* using her categorization. In chapter two, the portrayal of the magic system of *The Night Circus* is discussed with the focus on the challenge between Celia and Marco. The challenge is seen through its immersive nature lacking an explanation from the characters and seeming to be naturally accepted, which aligned with Mendlesohn's view of immersive fantasies. Such perspective was furthered by the lack of using the term 'magic' in the novel, in which the capabilities were rather perceived as illusions instead of something uncanny or supernatural. On the other hand, through Bailey's entrance into to the circus, acting similarly to a portal, the chapter explored how such entrance to the fantastical also falls into Mendlesohn's category of portal quest fantasy. Furthermore, in the section discussing the roles of magicians in *The Night Circus*, the twins Poppet and Widget play an important role due to their association with the uncanny. Using Juliana de Nooy's theory on twins in contemporary literature, the section focuses on shedding light on the constant reappearance of twins in both a part of cultures and modern media as beings of supernatural abilities throughout history. Contemporary novels use twins as a means of being the solution to the issue, in which Poppet and Widget fall perfectly into such aspect, clarifying the

influence of Morgenstern using specifically twins for the role. In the section inspecting the intersection of reality and enchantment, the fortuneteller Isobel is used to question the nature of understanding the supernatural through the perspective that her practices are not considered as unnatural in the real world, yet the notion of magic is deemed as rather fictional. In that same section, the idea that Reveurs act as the perception of the circus, where the shows are perceived as something not normally seen in the world of *The Night Circus*, through their curiosity, the circus becomes the fantastical. Furthermore, I argued that Reveurs' dress code specifically forms the very separation of the enchanted circus, and the audience of the ordinary reality, showcasing Morgenstern method of intersection. Lastly, the section exploring Morgenstern's use of writing techniques and narrative structures, to create a compelling fantasy story, is viewed through the non-linear timeline of the novel. The line of reasoning falling onto the shifting timeline and narrative structure as a cause for confusion within the readers, ultimately becoming the form of disruption found in Mendlesohn's description of intrusion fantasy.

In chapter three, the novel *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* is explored through the same structure found in chapter two but also through a comparison of the methods viewed in *The Night Circus*. In the section on the system of magic and fantastical elements, the argument provided is the that where Morgenstern's novel excels in mystifying the fantastical and avoiding explanations of it to create an immersive fantasy experience, the opposite is argued for Clark's novel. To which the constant prying into the fantastical and the questioning of the possibilities within the novel, despite the acceptance of the existence of magic, is precisely why the novel functions as an immersive fantasy. However, through Mendlesohn's perspective of Clark's novel also being an intrusion fantasy, the view that the disruption of the characters' personal experiences being another reason why the novel falls into intrusion fantasy was also explored. In the section regarding the role of magicians, the understanding of Norrell's character, as more than just an opposition to Jonathan, functioned similarly to Poppet and Widget as both showcased a similar cultural influence, more specifically that of Celtic culture in modern fantasies. On the other hand, this thesis argues that Arabella, who is not necessarily a magician, works to connect the novel to liminal fantasy through her dissonance in understanding the fantastical, perceiving differently from the reader what essentially should be common in the world of the novel. Through the intersection of reality and enchantment, Clark's novel is argued to create a balance between real historical events and the fantastical to create a more believable fantasy novel. Unlike *The Night Circus*, where

the aesthetics of the Victorian era are used to heighten the fantastical feel of the novel, Clark is analyzed to use historical facts, such as George III madness, to integrate the fantastical in a creative and immersive narrative, that uses both reality and enchantment. On the discussion revolving around the writing techniques used by Susanna Clark to create a compelling magical narrative, the focus of the section lay in the exploration of the idea that Clark's novel also does not follow a linear timeline. Arguing that by essentially spoiling future events of the novel, through the footnotes Clark uses in the novel, the same functions seen in *The Night Circus*' timeline are seen again in *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. Furthermore, I highlight the idea that Clark structures her novel similarly to that of a biography, which shows the numerous methods she uses to both integrate and develop her system of magic.

In chapter four, I incorporate Clark and Morgenstern's novel with the perspective of an educational setting. The section argues that because Clark's novel is similar to that of a biography, the students can learn intercultural competence without making it obvious to them that is what the teacher wishes to achieve. Moreover, I argue that the suspense found in Morgenstern's novel works to stimulate how a student deconstructs and reflects over a text. At the end, I discuss that both Clark and Morgenstern's novel are relevant precisely because they can serve to stretch a student's imagination through the irregularity of the novels' structures.

Despite the exploration of the fantastical within Clark and Morgenstern's novels, this thesis does have limitations. Both novels are vast in methods of integrating fantasy in much more detailed ways that simply cannot be completely analyzed within this thesis. Furthermore, although Mendlesohn's perception of fantasy categories are incredibly crucial to study and apply to novels, such classification can be limiting due to the many new modern fantasy literatures that do not adhere to such structures. For instance, in the same that Tolkien's use of Celtic cultures within his fantasy novels has set a trend in modern literature, there are many other trends that continuously keep getting born, that directly go against the structures provided by Mendlesohn. By claiming these structures as irregulars, due to having some similarities between two or more fantasy categories, will undermine the trends that could potentially be studied in the field of fantasy. Moreover, the romanticizing of magic in literature is not something discussed in this thesis, which should be considered in this field of research. Recognizing such limitations, however, is what can further the development of understanding the very intricate and complex structure of fantasy novels, highlighting the importance of the genre in the creativity of human imagination.

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