The Political Battle Field In Cassandra Clare's Shadow World and YA

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Submitted to the Department of Literature
School of Humanities
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College
State University of New York

May 2023

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Introduction

Many people in today's society are quick to write off fantasy and young adult novels as books without substance. They say things such as, "Why would anyone want to read anything that is not set in the real world" and "aren't those books for kids." I have quippy retorts to both of those questions. For the first one, when people tell me that they only like books set in the real world, I tell them that is because they have not been to the fake one yet. For the second one, I either kindly say that they can be enjoyed by all ages or, if I am in a mood, I stare blankly and ask, do I look like a kid to you? Those are just short answers to get people off my back though. The things that people say about the young adult and fantasy genres are actually hurtful. These genres mean so much to not only me, but to so many other kids who grew up on them. The kids with no friends, who would read alone at lunch, who need an escape, who have decided that they want more then what the real world handed them. It can not stay easy to discount these genres when they do so much for young people. How is it that I can prove to people that these books matter? Well they offer educational material. It is hidden in these books in the same way that people bake healthy food into desserts. Focus on the learning and real world parallels. *The Shadowhunter Chronicles* is a collection of books. The characters are beloved by kids everywhere, but the stories that these characters tell hold so much information. I know that specifically *The Dark Artifices* trilogy holds a lot of political information. It is a fun and engaging trilogy that is both young adult and fantasy, but it also teaches children about corrupt government takeover. It sounds strange putting all of those things together, but it works so well in practice. So well that kids devour the books and barely realize that they are learning about politics. Just like eating a brownie with secret spinach baked in.

Primary texts

The “shadow world” is a world created in the mind of, author, Cassandra Clare. It is a world that exists in secret in the real world, thus classifying these books as urban fantasy. Shadowhunters are a race of demon hunters. They have been blessed by the angel Raziel to have special and heightened abilities and weapons to help them in their fight. They have a hidden city that serves as the capital for their species, called Alicante which is in the hidden country of Idris. Those who are not of the shadow world (ordinary people) are referred to as mundanes.

The Shadowhunter government is known as the Clave. There are two main political figureheads of the Clave. There is the Consul, who is the main leader and makes executive decisions for the laws of the Shadowhunters. There is also the Inquisitor, who carries out trials and enforces the laws. In *The Dark Artifices*, the Shadowhunters have split into a kind of bipartisan system. There is the Cohort (the main villains) who support tradition and a purified Shadowhunter bloodline. On the other hand, there is everyone else (they do not have a group name). They support the progression of the race embracing Downworlders. It is also worth a mention that the Cohort is not just a few people. The Cohort us first mentioned years before *The Dark Artifices* begins. It is because of this that The Cohort is known to have a well established grown following.

Downworlders is the name for all those in the shadow world who are not Shadow hunters. Downworlders is a collective name encompassing Warlocks, Vampires, Werewolves, and Faeries. The Shadow hunters have had a difficult past with Downworlders. There has been a lot of inherent racism in the past with Shadowhunters thinking themselves above Downworlders. In the past, Shadow hunters would mass kill Downworlders and keep items and parts of bodies of the Downworlders that they kill for spoils. In the time of *The Dark Artifices* the discourse between Shadow hunters and Downworlders is much more civilized. Downworlders are now

being included in the Shadowhunter council which creates laws that all in the shadow world must abide by. The Cohort continues to carry racist ideals towards Downworlders where as the others support Downworlders and their inclusion with Shadow hunters. They want to register Downworlders to keep track of them and their actions as though they are not free beings. The Cohort explicitly state that they wish to purify the race. They want to outlaw Shadow hunters from marrying outside the bloodline. This includes Downworlders and mundanes. This is especially important to readers of the chronicles because one of the main protagonists from the first trilogy is engaged to a warlock and fans heavily support this couple.

On top of this, there is an act in place called the cold peace. This is a political act that targets Faeries specifically. In the most recent Shadow hunter war (The Dark War) faeries allied against Shadow hunters. Faeries were denied a seat on the government counsel. Faeries were denied the privileges that other Downworlers were given. There were some half Shadow hunter half Faeries who were either exiled or left for dead. They were exiled and left for dead despite the fact that they never went had been raised as Shadowhunters and never went against them. They were treated as villains due to half of the blood that runs through their veins. Blood that they did not choose to have and have never even been allied to.

Nationalism, Fascism, and Inclusive Democracy

What is a nation? It is a large question with no definite answer. Some people may define a nation by lines drawn on a map or globe, but it is so much more A community is needed to have a nation. A nation is also the group of people who inhabit the space. A nation comes from culture. A nation comes from past. A nation comes from language. There are fundamental problems with those ideas though. For example, not all people who are American citizens speak English. Does that mean that they are not part of the nation? They are still Americans. How can

one define a nation as complex of America? Beginning with Native Americans, taken by the English, fought for by the colonials. It is also the place where immigrants came. Immigrants from Italy, Ireland, South America, and more. All of the people who live in this nation come from different backgrounds.

Fascism, at its core, is an authoritarian idea and social system that encourages and demands division between peoples. This division can be between nations, races, and more. In the books, fascism is presented in two main ways. The most obvious it the division of races. This is a very well-known form of fascism that can be seen in the real world and that is no surprise because, "fascism is essentially the attempt to ensure the rule of monopoly capitalism in its purest, most untrammeled, most invulnerable form" (Eagleton, 1). This is a very serious and real topic that is presented in Clare's books. She takes the reality of fascism and mixes it with the fantasy of her world to present the idea of fascism in a new way that is easier for younger readers to grasp. There are Shadowhunters that view their own race as superior to that of other Downworlders (warlocks, faeries, vampires, and werewolves). The fascism comes through in how some Shadowhunters chose to speak about and separate themselves from Downworlders. There is a lot of negative language flung at Downworlders and a lot of Shadowhunters only speak to Downworlders if they need something from them. The separation goes as far as exiling a Shadowhunter child who is half faerie. This race-specific fascism causes another divide. It creates a divided people. There is a divide between Shadowhunters who are friends with Downworlders and those who are blatantly again themst. While a lot of the people who create this divide try to justify their actions, they end up causing more harm. Fascism is an extremist idea that causes such a severe divide that it can lead to even bigger cracks and, at least in this circumstance, civil warfare.

The book also presents the idea of inclusive democracy. Inclusive democracy is a relatively new conception of democracy. In short, it is what it sounds like. It is a democratic system that is inclusive of all people regardless of race, social/economic standing, disability, etc. This concept is introduced in the book in a very interesting way and also justified by the text. In the text, the consul, who is one of the main leaders of the Shadowhunter government, makes a point of allowing convicted criminals to vote along with all the other Shadowhunters. The criminals are still seen as people and do deserve their opinions to be heard, which pushes an idea of inclusivity among Shadowhunters. This offers a very stark contrast to fascism because the criminals who are included are fascists who try to actively exclude others. The justification used mainly hinges on what excluded votes might mean. If all of the votes of these criminals who share ideals are excluded, there is always the idea that the only reason a vote went one way or the other is because of who was allowed to cast a vote. Inclusive democracy attempts to stop voting pools being oversaturated by certain people. It attempts to allow the chips to truly fall where they may because of the majority and not voting manipulation. While it sounds very simple, it is not. Many politicians are happily manipulating voting pools to sway in their favor. For example, if voters with disabilities do not tend to vote for your party, you do not worry about making sure that people with disabilities can get to voting sites. In an inclusive democracy, however, all people are still people and deserve the constitutional right to vote no matter the circumstance, even criminals.

As nationalistic ideas spread through America, more forms of media bring up problems that are related to extreme nationalism. It can be seen in films, television, and, of course, books. To explore these ideas, it is first important to lay out what nationalism is. In short, nationalism is an idea that promotes a nation's self-interest. While that sounds fine on its own, it can open up a

whole can of worms. When a nation promotes its interest, does that make it exclusionary of anyone who is not part of that nation? When looking at extreme versions of nationalism, the answer is yes, it is exclusionary. When this happens, there are instances of putting down people who disagree or are viewed as others. That on its own is a large issue. While nationalism is supposed to hold a nation together, it often causes a divide that can lead to civil warfare.

In Clare's Dark Artifices novels, the main antagonist(s) that is seen is the nationalistic group, The Cohort. This group attempts to defend their idea of what the perfect Shadowhunter nation should be. This includes purifying a Shadowhunter bloodline. While that idea alone shows breeds hate and prejudice towards other races, such as warlocks, fairies, vampires, and werewolves, other prejudices are spread by The Cohort too. Clare uses this group to comment on nationalism and extremist rightwing concepts within the world of her creation. The Cohort specifically targets the openly gay character Alec Lightwood and his relationship with, warlock, Magnus Bane. They condemn it for not only being interracial, bu for being queer. This makes a big impact because Alec is one of the most diverse characters in Clare's work. Alec represents people who are different and "the other" in Clare's work. One of The Cohort members outright says, in regards to Alec, "[H]e's a filthy pervert" (Clare 827). This is targeting towards the idea and representation of other. While this mirrors a lot of nationalist ideas that are being spread in politics and news today, it also could partially be inspired by Clare's original inclusion of Alec. Clare says in an interview with the Independent, that she originally had a lot of pushback against the first book that Alec was included in. Publishers wanted him cut out. Barnes & Noble put a 'sexual content' warning on the book because of it. Some big box stores only refused to carry it.

Text Analysis

I chose to analyze a longer-sized passage from the end of the trilogy. In this passage, the reader gets to see not only a Shadowhunter political meeting in action but also the extreme lengths that the Cohort (the extremist prejudiced Shadowhunter group) and their leader, Zara Dearborn, will go to in order to push their agenda. The meeting starts with the current Consul (leader of the government) recapping the Cohort's crimes. She starts, "'The Clave was nearly taken over by extremists who would have driven us into isolation and self-destruction. And everyone who stood back and allowed this to happen- through inattention, through apathy and overconfidence-' Her voice shook. 'Well. we are all guilty" (Clare 824). While the Consul explains that what the Cohort has done is wrong, she also wants to acknowledge that the government and its attention to extremist movements and prejudices have not been good enough and effectively shows readers how the Cohort was able to carry out most of its crimes. This shows the readers that there has not been enough action taken by their justice system to the point where the people had to take justice into their own hands in an attempt to jail members of the Cohort. This is a big idea that can be seen in American government in modern times. Often times when people think that the government is not listening or is falling short, people take action through protest which is similar to a sort of protest group created by the main characters who attempt to battle the Cohort. To clarify, there is also a list of specific crimes that have been confessed to by Cohort members The Consul explains, "'They have been tested by the Mortal Sword and confessed to their crimes. They sent Dane Larkspear to murder other Shadow hunters, and were thus directly responsible for his death… they murdered Oskar Lindquist so that a demon might take his place at a meeting held at the Los Angeles Institute. Led by Horace Dearborn, this group used lies and intimidation to try to lead the Clave into a false alliance with Faerie" (Clare 825). While the readers are aware of all of these crimes, having read about them

happening in the previous 800 pages, I think that writing out all of these crimes serves not only as a good reminder to the readers but also helps to magnify just how intense and extreme the Cohort is while also mimicking a court of law in which the judge reads out the crimes before sentencing the accused. The text shows that the Cohort went to lengths that crossed lines and were ultimately wrong and illegal (such as murdering other Shadowhunters because they have opposing ideals and power) in the name of saving their government and upholding their law. The crime of having a demon take a murdered Shadow hunter's place is especially twisted considering that Shadow hunters are sworn to rid the world of demons. It is crimes like these that also seem very relevant with media now showing how people with power broke the very laws that they swore to uphold. (I am not sure that the next part will be put into the paper because I do not want to show too much bias) This seems very much so like what has been seen of the previous commander and chief, Donald Trump. He is currently under trial for multiple broken laws including, but not limited to, wire fraud, witness tampering, and conspiracy to defraud the government. These are not small infractions. A president swears an oath of office before they officially serve. In this oath, they promise to uphold and remain faithful to the constitution and laws of the country. This is similar to how Shadow hunters are outlawed from spilling the blood of other Shadow hunters. This oath and laws were broken by the person who swore to uphold them. This is similar to how Horace Dearborn, a Shadow hunter political leader, sent one of his followers, also a Shadow hunter, to kill two Shadowhunters that threaten his ideals.

During this passage of turmoil and what seems to be division, there is also a lot of goodness taught in the books by the protagonists. While all of the aforementioned meeting chaos is happening, the Consul also announces that after dealing with sentencing the accused Cohort member that she will be stepping down. This offers the readers a chance to witness the

nomination and voting for a new Consul. The most interesting part of seeing this though, is seeing that in the vote, there is an attempt to actively show fairness. This is done by letting the accused criminals (Cohort members) vote. They point out that if they do not get a vote, "'they will always be able to say that whoever the new Consul is, they were elected because the majority had no voice. The Cohort has always flourished by telling the lie that they speak for all Shadow hunters- that they say the words that everyone, would speak if they could. Now we will test that lie. All Shadow hunters *will* speak. Including them'" (Clare 825). This shows a lot about what the Shadowhunter government is attempting to stand for. It stands for fairness and unity among the people of their civilization. After this is explained, the novel shows even more interesting treatment of the accused. The Consuls says that,

"'The Cohort imprisoned loyal Nephilim and sent others to their deaths,' said Jia after a withering glance at Zara. 'We were brought to the brink of civil war.'... you might think I want to punish them severely, strip their Marks and sent them into the mundane world the so despise. But we must consider *mercy*. So many of the Cohort are young, and they were influenced by misinformation and outright lies. Here we can give them a chance to again rejoin the Clave and redeem themselves. To turn from the path of deceit and hate and walk once again in the light of Raziel.'"

In an attempt to keep the Shadowhunter people united, Jia wants to keep the members of the Cohort active, but in a positive way.

The above quotation also presents ideas of misinformation to readers. So, whil this quotation shows a further attempt to stay united as a people, it shows a parallel with how many young people can be persuaded to think in certain ways in today's political climate. Jia mentions that they are young and were misinformed and told lies. With social media being a big piece of

today's political landscape, misinformation, and lies are very easy to spread. This easily can and does persuade a lot of young people to believe and think certain things that are more damaging than they realize.

On top of all of the aforementioned reasons that this quotation is important it also makes a strong case for villain redemption. The above quote also teaches younger readers to pass kindness as opposed to judgment. It shows that even the worst of villains have a chance for redemption. While Clare has also touched on this idea in her previous novels, it was never clearly shown how much people need to believe in the redemption and reform of others. Unfortunately, by the end of this novel, these characters do not see redemption, but bringing up the possibility is enough to show that kindness should not be disregarded even in the face of hate.

One important part of this passage is how Clare manages to present her message. The meeting is chaotic, high-stakes, and very intense. Clare adds some statements that not only are relevant but are also very clearly stated viewpoints about political prejudice. They are spoken by the newly elected Clave member and returning character, Alec Lightwood. He states calmly that,"'[O]pen political engagement is very different from disavowing any relationship to Downworlders in public while conspiring to murder with them behind the backs of the people you're meant to be governing'" (Clare 826), and, "'If prejudice sidetracks us, we may all die'" (Clare 829). While these are helpful points to put in the plot, they are not surrounded by fantasy names and places. This helps younger readers to read them as clear-cut lessons to take away from the novel. Clare also makes a very bold choice by using the word "prejudice". Seeing this word used will help some readers, who may not know, learn exactly what political prejudice is and how it operates. These are lessons that do not just apply to the fictional Shadowhunter government, but practically all governments that preach fairness and unity. Without much

mention of the fantasy world that these quotations come from, it is very easy to see these quotations as lessons that Clare put in the novel to express positive and important political views that she wants to instill in the minds of younger readers. They are also coming out of the mouth of an already beloved protagonist. When young readers hear clear and firm lessons coming from a character they know and trust, it can do just as much as hearing a lesson from their parents It is moments like these where Clare seems to attempt to teach more than entertain.

As the passage continues there are representations of political pushback and tribalism among the ShadowhuntersAfter a decent amount of discussion and a mostly civil election, members of the Cohort show a pushback that I view as very similar to situations of pushback that can be seen from extreme right-wing Americans. Without discussion or consideration, they immediately state, "'[W]e refuse to recognize Alec Lightwood as Consul!' shouted Manuel. 'We stand for our old traditions, for the way things always have been and always should be!'" (Clare 831). "[T]he twenty or so guards were making no effort to stop the Cohort… somehow, Emma realized, the Cohort's allies had planted guards who were sympathetic to their cause… then Zara raised her dagger and put it to her throat" (Clare 831). Not only does this mirror the recent American government in a very clear way of not accepting a person who was elected into a position of power, but it also helps to illustrate the nationalist ideas that the Cohort stands for with the mentioning of an old tradition. One very clear thing that this part of the novel shows is the idea of tribalism that is very prevalent in the American government today. The mentality of us versus them is very extreme in both real life and in these books. It can be seen that the Cohort does not even miss a beat before rejecting Alec Lightwood as the new Consul. All that seems to cross their heads is that he is not on their side so he cannot be good. It is this idea of black and white, good and bad, that pushes the Shadowhunters to near civil war. So, although I feel that

Clare is mostly teaching a lesson, I think that her depiction also partially acts as a warning. It warns young people about what might happen if this type of mentality continues.

Clare does not just push her political agenda in this passage though, she shows an important opposition. The passage seems to get extreme after this and the Cohort is starting to go off the rails with specifically planted guards and daggers raised to the throat. There is also a speech speaking from the Cohort leader Zara in which she says, "'You have harmed yourselves enough with your foolish and shortsighted vote. We are acting to save Alicante from corruption and the glass towers from ruin.'" (Clare 832). This quotation is an important inclusion because it helps the reader understand Zara a little bit more. It shows that though her actions are wrong that she honestly believes that she has been acting for the greater good. While Zara is a manic and deluded character, I think it is a very wise choice of Clare to show an opposing side of her argument so that the readers can have a better scope of why people might go to lengths like those that the Cohort does.

Clare continues to escalate the plot and the characters start to go to the extreme. The scene finally meets its climax with a side character Cohort member's suicide and Zara proclaiming,

> "'[W]e are willing to die for our beliefs and Alicante. We will not leave. We will spill Shadowhunter blood, yes. Our own blood. We will cut our own throats and die here at your feet. Either you will go or we will wash this room clean in our blood… can you build your new Clave on the blood of dead children… you said you would show mercy. If you let us die, every time you step into this room from this moment onward, you will be walking on our corpses'" (Clare 832-833).

This is a very intense quotation with quite graphic imagery. This quotation works in a lot of ways. First of all, it pushes forward an idea that has been linked with the Cohort for the entirety of the novel, which is control and manipulation through fear. This is a way of gaining control and power that has been mused on throughout the book. Secondly, it sets up a completely unstable political landscape for readers to ruminate on before Clare explores it further in her next Shadowhunter series. This is important because it allows the reader to think of possibilities. It presents the readers with questions such as how one diffuses an internal war. These are intense questions being presented to growing and learning adolescents. Third, it uses intensity in a way that tells the reader, this is not a joke. The imagery of a room washed with blood and stepping on corpses makes the readers look at this through a more serious lens. The vivid imagery makes the story all the more realistic. Putting the images in these hyperbolic, yet vivid terms, in a way, forces the reader to see the story as real. Clare uses this imagery to make the story as real as possible.

The graphic imagery in the quotation also continues a trend in young adult novels and it is a teaching to for the readers. While some of this graphic imagery may be seen as a bit too intense for young readers, I do not think that it is much more than some of the violence seen in fairytales written for much younger children. The fact that this mature type of imagery is being targeted toward children who are just starting to emerge into adulthood seems like the best age group. This is teaching kids that they are getting older and that it is time for them to take a good look at the world in not only its sanitized kid version. It starts to expose growing kids to more mature content that grows with them. Some of this type of violence can also be expected due to the more recent trend in violence in young adult novels. Young adult novels such as *The Hunger Games* have gained major popularity and acclaim despite its extreme violence. Despite that though, it

shows the reader that just because it is a fantasy book and it is not real that the content is still important and worth appreciation and contemplation.

Genre Deep Dive

While looking at the pages that the author put forth is important, there is also a lot that can be learned by zooming out and looking at fantasy (especially that for young adults) as a genre overall. Young adult fantasy can do a lot to shape young readers and teach them about life. This genre tends to not be considered very important or impactful to readers by readers of more serious fiction. That is largely due to how it has been branded in mass media. Due to the popularity of some major young adult series such as *Twilight* a lot of people will hear the term young adult and think that it is all about some hot supernatural being. People tend to connect young adults with romance geared towards teenage females but do not understand that romance is a different genre all in itself. While many of these books also include supernatural beings, they also tend to be grouped under the term fantasy. This just is not the case and does not cover what the genre is. There has been a lot of confusion and misinformation. If these are just confusions and generalizations, what does fantasy have to offer as a genre?

While these generalizations are mostly seen with young adult fantasy, fantasy, in general, is still highly misunderstood. Many people do not view the genre's literary value simply because it is 'not real.' This is a very frustrating argument because just because a story is not real or based in the real world, it does not mean that the main themes, lessons, etc. do hold not real-world application. Typically, "the concept of the fantastic is to be defined concerning those of the real and the imaginary: and the latter deserve more than mere mention" (Todorov 25). Todorov is arguing that although the imagined fantastic is not to be ignored, it is also related to places, experiences, etc. that are real. Fantasy novels create landscapes and stories that teach the reader

to navigate the real world more effectively. Fantasy usually presents intense and poignant ideas, but places them in an engaging and easy to easy-to-swallow since usually presenting these ideas in a familiar reality can hit too close to home and end up being triggering. Fantastical literature has even been used in children's mental health institutions. Doctors state that "YA literature helps us explore themes shaping our patients' ideas and identities that are sometimes too jarring to talk about directly" (Lynn, Usher 1). Fantasy is more than just a mode of delivering stories of reality. It helps readers learn and begin to understand intense topics in a separate, almost omniscient way. By using fantasy the author de-realizes the world and can help to focus attention on the lessons being presented.

The fantastical has been debated by even the earliest philosophers, such as Plato. Scholars state that "[D] despite the effort to trace a clear disciplinary separation between theoretical knowledge, empirical facts, and literary narratives, philosophical imagination, and fictional fantasy thus have been often contradictorily interwoven in theoretical treatises with the result of anticipating both utopian worlds and violent dystopias" (Calloni 3). To brush off the fantasy genre is to ignore the vast uses and lessons that it offers. It is impossible to separate fantasy from reality. Authors are told to write what they know and so although they may be crafting a fantasy story, there must be at least a small piece of the author's reality woven in. Authors cannot know about vampires, angels, and demons. What they can do, is take personal experience, or ideas that they have seen in the real world and place it in the mode and backdrop of their choosing. They can gear these stories toward a specific age group whether that be fairytales for toddlers or Shadow hunters for young adults. Using a fantasy lens though offers a chance to look at some of the violence in the world due to battles and when looking at these violent moments, "[A]n experience of pain or revulsion is inevitably accompanied, among rational beings, by a sense of

awareness and at least an elementary perception of causes and effects" (DeBoer 4). This means that books do not have to be reality-based to teach the same lessons. As long as the reader has a connection to the story and character, as well as an understanding of the events, the genre can be looked at more as a backdrop. In many instances, younger people who need to learn about life will have an easier time not only understanding these books but connecting to them because they are still filled with intrigue and fun that young people enjoy. While many people will mark this genre as a form of escapism, it tends to be the opposite. It is truth-telling. Just because these events did not happen does not make the merit they hold any less real.

The Shadowhunter Chronicles also acknowledge fantasy as a form of truth. I think that this point can be best illustrated by a quotation that is seen throughout Cassandra Clare's works. She constantly writes, throughout most of her books, that, "all the stories are true" (Clare). That is her plainly stating that her stories are a form of truth-telling. Whenever a character in one of her books tries to brush something off as just an old story and not true, it comes back to that quotation. When Clare shows a government going corrupt, it is true. When a character shows disdain for others who belong to a different race than their own, it is true. Fantasy is a fantastical form of reality that many people do not understand fully. When a person picks up a fantasy book, it rarely is just going to be about a disinterested or hormonal girl trying to pick between a hot vampire and a hot werewolf. Even in books like *Twilight* though, there can even be seen political lessons about a harsh governing system with The Volturi. It is about time that people go into books with the mindset that all the stories are true.

On top of fantasy though, *The Shadowhunter Chronicles* are also in the young adult genre. There is a lot of confusion and misinformation about what exactly the young adult or YA genre is, which is a major reason why it is discounted. A lot of this confusion and lack of

definition is because it is a relatively new type of genre. The idea of categorizing genres based on genres group (ex. young adult, middle grade, new adult) is a more contemporary way to sort books. This way of looking at books only emerged recently, specifically, "[T]he arrival of J. D. Sallinger's (1951) *Catcher in the Rye* nearly 50 years ago introduced adults and adolescents to a character that had not made much of an appearance in American letter- the teenage voice. Gonce was the desire for sweet and innocent fantasy (first dates, learning to drive, fun at the prom), and in came the often harsh and unforgiving reality of adolescent lives (Hayn, 2). Categorizing books this way casts wide nets about what books may qualify for each category. When categorizing due to age group, the main criteria are the age of the main characters, and how appropriate or inappropriate the content may be for people of certain ages. When the lines are so blurred, it is easy for people to take a book that is known as YA and assume that the whole genre is similar to that sort of book. I believe that the book that most people associate YA with is *Twilight*, by Stephenie Meyer.

When *Twilight* started to blow up, the genre tag it got was a young adult. Many people, specifically of the older generations, had never heard of young adult literature before. This ended up tying the book with the genre in people's minds. Unfortunately, *Twilight* came along with the phenomenon known as "twilight fever." A fun new term used to talk about hormonal teenage girls obsessing over how hot vampires and werewolves are. All of this is not to say that *Twilight*, teenage girls, or scoffers are to blame for the bad reputation that YA carries. It is just to show that there is a big connection to most people between the term young adult literature, and hormonal teenage girls, reading what some may consider "trashy" romance.

Knowing all of that, it is easy to see why there may be some confusion surrounding what YA is. People have assumed that they knew what YA was without looking any further than

twilight fever. It confuses and, “this confusion has led to some teachers and parents to believe that YAL [young adult literature] is little more than cheap, pulp novels- the kind of stuff English teachers ought to teach their students to avoid” (Crowe 1). The sad truth is that people who have this confusion do not see the abundance of novels that are geared towards teenagers, thus being considered YA, that actually carry a lot of important messaging.

This is where books like Clare’s come into play. While romance and conventionally attractive characters do play a role in her novels, they are only secondary to the social and political dialogue that Clare artfully weaves into her content. Clare even says herself in an interview, speaking about her books, “tThey’revery classic urban fantasy – they’re stories about teens growing up and being surrounded by supernatural threats and demons and there’s a lot of mythology and whatnot. But for years and years, they were treated as romance novels. And it drove me nuts” (Clare interview). She makes it clear that her books and their genre, young adult urban fantasy, were discounted from the beginning and not treated as what they are. This, of course, is not to say that romance is a step-down, but it simply is a different genre. People have been looking at her books as something that they are not. Whether they are looking at them as a completely different genre, or looking at them through a filtered perception of YA, fantasy, or YA fantasy.

Looking at young adult fantasy as its subset of previously existing genres is also very important to understand how these books are perceived, as opposed to what they are. First, notably,t this subgenre is the combination of two already unappreciated genres. Therefore, it also will generally be looked down upon by the public. So, many people look at these books and see them incorrectly. What is the correct way to see them? I think that the target audience is important in answering that question. Books that are YA are specifically targeting kids aged

13-18. What may an author attempt to do with their novel by targeting that audience? The simple answer is to teach. It is known that books teach important lessons and when teaching young adults, the main lessons that come across are big life lessons that help to broaden the reader's worldview as they grow.

Text Analysis #2

To look closer at Clare's political fiction, there is another scene from *Queen of Air and Darkness* that focuses heavily on political activism. In this scene, the protagonists, Julian and Emma, are holding a meeting for Shadohunters and Downworlders who share their sentiment to help plan a way to restore hope and work against the Cohort. This section is most important when looking at how these books inspire political actions. Julian and Emma had been through the wringer at this point in the book. They have suffered loss, betrayal, and near death, and continue to have a deadly curse hanging over their heads. All of this considered, they never stop fighting and working to make a change. No matter what the world throws at them, they continue to fight in the bleakest of times.

At first, Julian explains why he has brought the Shadowhunters and Downworlders together saying, "'[W]e can't fight the Cohort alone,' he added. 'They're part of us. Part of our government. They're not and outside threat like Sebastian was. We need these allies. You'll see'" (Clare 635). This all starts with Julian emphasizing inclusive democracy where everyone affected deserves a voice, in this case, Downworlders. The lack of inclusive democracy is shown when even the Downworlders, specifically the faerie Kieran, acknowledge how grateful he is to be included. He says to the crowd, "'I thank you on behalf of my people for calling Downworlders to the table as equals. You are right. None of us can do this alone" (Clare 636)

Clare continues to use this opportunity of a plot point to its fullest potential. The character Cameron Ashdown had been a side character up until this point and makes another brief appearance. It is well established at this point that his family is swayed more toward the Cohort's values. Emma knows this and is glad that he came. The interaction is nice where "[H]e looked surprised as she bore down on him and caught his hands in hers. 'Thank you for coming, Cameron,' she said. 'Thank you for everything.' 'The rest of my family doesn't know,' he said" (Clare 640). This is although a small moment, a very impactful one. Many young people in the world tend to follow in their family's lead when it comes to political alignment and values. To see a young person who differs from his parent's beliefs is not seen often. Cameron represents every kid who thinks and/or feels differently than their parents. He represents independent thought and how it is still important to express one's opinion. He knows that he would get in trouble if his parents knew that he was attending this meeting. Despite that, he knows that his voice still deserves to be heard and that every person counts. In taking this small moment to acknowledge free thought and contrary beliefs to one's family, Clare opens a door for her young readers to think for themselves.

After those small moments, larger blocks of text take the forefront of importance as the meeting finally begins with Julian leading the charge. He begins,

"'I won't drag out any explanations or introduction. You know who I am. You know my sister and brother; you know Aline Penhallow and Emma Carstairs. You know that Aline's mother, our Consul, has been illegally taken into custody. You know that Horace Dearborn has seized power in Idris-' 'He was voted in,' said Kwasi Bediako, the warlock Emma had noticed before with the white spider mark on his face; Cristina had whispered to her that Bediako was the High warlock of Accra. 'We cannot pretend otherwise.' 'No one *voted* for him to throw my

mother in jail,' said Aline. 'No one *voted* for him to remove the Consul from power so he could be in charge'" (Clare 644-645).

Right at the beginning he wants to restate the important facts. Specifically, the fact that a head political figure, the Consul, has been taken into custody. Keep in mind, that the Consul was the only person in a high enough position of power to fully oppose Horace Dearborn who has seized power. While he was voted in, it was not unlike how Caesar took power in Rome. When a society is in disarray and danger, he strikes taking advantage of a weakened political system. What Julian then goes on to acknowledge is very relevant in modern-day politics. A leader can say and do anything to get votes, but what they do after winning is up to them. I doubt that the majority of Americans voted for Donald Trump to insight violence at the Capitol Building. The only difference between the real and the literary is that one is fictional. It is someone doing something that, not only is illegal but is not what people thought would happen when they voted for him. It is a blatant exploitation of power. That is harped on my Clare, through Julian.

While the jailing is just one instance, it is not lost how the Cohort is affecting Shadowhunter society in full. Julian expresses this by saying,

> "'Everyone- all of us here- have always accepted a certain amount of prejudice from the Clave as normal, through choice or necessity.' The room was quiet. No one disagreed, but there were many eyes cast down, as if in shame. 'Now the Cohort has changed what we thought of as normal,' Julian said. 'Never before have Downworlders been driven from Idris. Never before have Shadowhunters jailed other Shadowhunters without even the pretense oftrialal'" (Clare 645).

This block of text sheds light on sad truths that are all too real. A lot of people in America accept a small to moderate amount of prejudice as the norm. People expect prejudice. Nobody likes it,

but it is so ingrained in the world and history that it is almost impossible to get rid of prejudice. It just takes a group like the Cohort or a leader like Donald Trump to add intensity and stress to these already wrong prejudices. When they are highlighted they are noticed. When deportation became putting people in cages. When dislike of Downworlders became a matter of racial cleansing. By showing these topics in this way, especially in these specific words, Clare lets her readers know that not only is this prejudice wrong now that it is even worse than it was, but it was also bad, to begin with. It says do not turn a blind eye to the problems until they end up so bad that we have to pay attention to them. Tolerance is not acceptance and should never be taken as such.

One thing that Clare has spoken about when addressing the politics in this series is how she wanted to emphasize how the Cohort preys on fear. She makes good on this with the quotation, "'[T]here are a lot of people who follow the Cohort who are scared. I don't want to hurt those people, and their fear is real'" (Clare 645-646). I think that this quotation specifically brings up a point that a lot of people tend to forget. The general idea is that people vote for and follow someone who they like and believe in. This one line shows that that is not the case for everyone. A lot of people vote for people because they think it is the lesser of evils. A lot of people vote because they are scared of the repercussions that may occur if they become an opposition. Especially in this situation, most of the people who have spoken out against the Cohort have been in situations where they are a minority voice, despite being in the majority of Shadowhunters as a whole, who do not want the Cohort in power. It makes the issues even more complex by adding the layer of innocent people who are just afraid. Can everyone who follows the Cohort be equally persecuted? Does it make a difference if a person regrets their vote even

after the fact? Can it matter after the person that they helped put in power has already committed atrocities?

There is also a brief moment where there is talk of dismantling the Shadowhunter government. That is where the scale would tip to an extreme leftist view which can also be dangerous. It is making sure that the rebellion is acting to restore equality as opposed to acting to gain power or for personal gain. This is quickly shut down by Julian as he explains,

> "'We're not suggesting destroying the government,' Julian said. 'We're saying it's being destroyed right now, already, from within. The Clave was built to give all Shadowhunters a voice. If we are all voiceless, then it is not our government. The Law was enacted to protect us and to allow us to protect others. When Laws are bent and broken to put the innocent in danger, then it is not our Law. Valentine wanted to rule the Clave. Sebastian wanted to burn it down. We only want to return our rightful Consul to power and to allow the government of Shadowhunters to be what it should be- not a tyranny, but a representation of who we are and what we want'" (Clare 646).

He talks about upholding the Law. For reference, there is a Shadowhunter motto that is stated over and over. It says, "The Law is hard, but it is the Law." So, the Law is no small thing to Shadowhunters. The equivalent to them upholding the Law is Americans upholding the Constitution. He boldly speaks the truth by calling the farce created by the Cohort a tyranny. For a lot of young readers, this may be the first time that they are introduced to what tyranny is, let alone a tyranny plot line. It is a reference for them to look at tyranny and possibly be able to recognize it in real life. That one word adds an immense amount of educational value. Also, yet again there is the importance of inclusive democracy brought up. It is not enough that everybody is included in this meeting. Their voices must be heard in the government who's Law directly

affects them. Going back a bit, this is a society with ingrained prejudice that has been tolerated. These people have been conditioned to believe that their voices do not matter and will never be heard. Julian speaks truth and hope by reminding them that democracy includes everybody. Each voice matters. Each vote matters. On top of that, every single person deserves to be heard despite how many times they may have been told otherwise. Julian is reminding everybody what the ideal democracy is.

One thing that Julian does well, is cover all of his bases when it comes to why people should care. He shuts down questions before they even arise. For example, he has the foresight to mention, "'[W]e've had bad members of our government before,' said Julian. 'But this is different. They've broken the system that might fix the situation'" (Clare 649). It is Julian putting points in such clear words like this that helps to make these topics easier for younger readers to understand. This is not a government textbook. It is a fantasy book about fictional people who the readers care about. The political battle played out in an easy-to-understand and easy-to-swallow way. Using plain terms like this makes the whole situation less polarizing for younger readers because it is not so intense that they can not understand. Clare really understands her audience and writes out this plot line the way she does for them to understand and learn.

After these pages of political discussion, Clare writes a quotation that helps to not only remind everybody reading that this is the fantasy Shadowhunter world but also to wrap it all up in just one sentence. The quotation goes, "'[T]hey [the Cohort] care so much about their prejudice, their imagined purity, and their Laws, that they have forgotten our mandate: *Protect this world from demons*'" (Clare 651). This line is powerful. With all of the politics, it can be really easy to forget what these books are about. They are about fighting evil and fighting for

happiness and justice. Julian just shows that the Cohortise is not being Shadowhunters anymore. They have forgotten their promises. They have become drunk on power and self-righteousness. They have, somewhat, become like the very demons that they have vowed to protect the world from. It is such a masterfully crafted picture of corruption.

Conclusion

Looking at not only examples from *The Shadowhunter Chronicles*, a young adult fantasy collection but also the research about how people are starting to interact with both young adult and fantasy genres proves the importance of these books for young people. Books in these genres are doing so much for young people. They are teaching them about interacting with their own government. They are explaining hard topics in simple ways that are not traumatizing, but also not over-sanitized. Books like these were a constant companion for me growing up the same way they are for kids now. It is what I learned from these books that helped me to develop into the person that I am today. During developmental ages, *Harry Potter* taught me that love is powerful and that one person can make all the difference in the world. *Throne of Glass* taught me that although trauma is difficult and hardening, it does not have to destroy the compassion inside a person. *A Court of Mist and Fury* taught me that although it is hard, that joy can be found after the devastation. *Six of Crows* taught me that finding and choosing family can surpass blood ties. *The Shadowhunter Chronicles* alone holds too many books with too many lessons to put into words easily. All of these books and more hold so much importance to be pushed aside because they are “not real” or “for kids.” Young adult fantasy will always be important to the people who read and learn from it and it is time for the rest of the world to realize that as well.

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