

Reweaving the Branches: A Practice-Based Inquiry into an Accessible Adaptation
of *The Mabinogion's* Four Branches for a New Adult Readership

Isabella Anton (BA Hons, MA)

Supervised by: Dr Paul Wright, Dr Peter Mitchell

Submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural
Studies

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

2026

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed*Isabella Anton*..... (candidate)

Date 8th August 2026.....

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed*Isabella Anton*..... (candidate)

Date 8th August 2026.....

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository.

Signed*Isabella Anton*..... (candidate)

Date 8th August 2026.....

STATEMENT 3

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

In line with UWTSD guidance, Generative AI has been used in this thesis for the following purposes:

		YES	NO
RESEARCH	I used Generative AI to support my research, including searching for bibliography, using tools to summarise, compare and interrogate materials.	☒	☐
STRUCTURE	I used Generative AI to support structuring my thesis submission, including creating a draft argument structure, identifying parts and headings, etc.	☐	☒
PROOFREADING	I used Generative AI to check my own text/creation for grammatical and syntactical mistakes, including translation and rephrasing of your own work within specific standards.	☒	☐
WRITING	I used Generative AI to create text for submission.	☐	☒
CREATIVE	I used Generative AI to create creative materials, such as images.	☐	☒

PROGRAMING	I used Generative AI to create and check code.	☐	☒
NONE	I did not use any type of Generative AI support. This includes research support, structure support, writing/proofreading support and creative support.	☐	☒

Signed *Isabella Anton* (candidate)

Date 8th August 2026.....

Acknowledgements

I want to express my absolute gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Paul Wright, who consistently supported and encouraged me throughout this process, and to Dr Peter Mitchell. My heartfelt appreciation goes to my external examiners, Dr Sarah Reynolds and Dr Alexia Casale, whose comments were essential in helping me to refine the ideas and arguments presented in this thesis. Lastly, I extend my deepest thanks to my beta readers.

Note for External Examiners

In light of your insightful feedback on my initial submission, I have devoted considerable effort to refining and strengthening my positional arguments and creative practice. As a result, the resubmission may appear significantly different from the original. This transformation is intentional, as I aimed to shift my perspective and approach.

Keywords: New Adult (NA), Romantasy, Fanfiction[-esque], Accessibility, Readability, Adaptation, Reimagining, Mabinogion, Creative Writing, Cultural Studies, Wales, Mythology, Self-publishing.

Contents

Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Research Question	6
Research Aims	6
Chapter 1. Branching Beyond Barriers: Engaging with Accessibility and Adaptation.....	10
Chapter 2. Weaving Together New Adult, Romantasy, and Fanfiction- <i>esque</i>	15
Chapter 3. The Root of this Research: Cultivating Practice-Based Methodologies	19
Conclusion.....	27
Reference List.....	29
Appendices.....	33
Appendix 1 – Methodology Implementation.....	34
Example A1.1 – The Golden Bowl (Easy Use).....	34
Example A1.2 – Gorsedd Arberth (Mildly Complex Use)	38
Example A1.3 – Rhiannon’s Backstory (Complex Use).....	41
Appendix 2 – Responses to Examiners	46
A2.1 Narrative Perspective, Focalisation, and Descriptive Ambiguity and Clarity.....	46
A2.2 Readability, Sentence-Level Control and Creative Polish	52
A2.3 Stakes, Set-Up, Pay-Off, and Emotional Momentum	55
A2.4 Worldbuilding Specificity and Originality	58
Appendix 2 References	61
Appendix 3 – Beta Reader Reviews.....	62
A3.1 Beta Reader 1 (2022) – Mabinogion-Literate Reader.....	62
A3.2 Beta Reader 2 (2024) – NA Myth Novice Reader	62
A3.3 Beta Reader 3 (2026) – Welsh Native Reader.....	62
A3.4 Beta Reader 4 (2026) – Welsh Native Reader.....	62
Appendix 4 – Secondary Research (Novel Bibliography)	64
Appendix 5 – Secondary Research (Bibliography)	69

Abstract

This project critically examines and creatively explores how the Four Branches of *The Mabinogion* might be reimagined for a contemporary New Adult (NA) readership by adapting them into a self-published NA Romantasy novel that draws on the conventions and reader expectations defined here within fanfiction-*esque* writing. It adopts and critically reflects upon *accessibility* as a writing and design principle; conceives questions of fidelity to source material as dynamic (Hutcheon, 2006); and applies a practical NA framework from Halverson (2014) to reimagine culturally significant myths for twenty-first-century commercial categories. It critically and creatively engages with the challenge of accessibility as a three-part adaptive strategy addressing *narrative accessibility*, *material accessibility*, and *cultural accessibility*. I aim to contribute significantly to understanding the interrelationships among NA fiction, Romantasy, and fanfiction-*esque* writing, positioning them as productive frameworks for creating adaptations that invite an NA readership in self-publishing. I define the term fanfiction-*esque* as equivalent to commercial, legally original works that import fanfiction modes (trope-based scaffolding, emotional shorthand, episodic intensity, and participatory paratexts) without making use of protected Intellectual Property (IP). The suffix *-esque* seeks to account for a shift in the nature of the novel, which forms the creative component of this thesis, differentiating it from fanfiction, which is predominantly seen as a community practice, and positioning the novel within a commercial context (self-publishing) by operationalising accessibility through existing NA and fanfiction tropes. In this context, fidelity is understood in terms of thematic continuity rather than textual duplication. My methodological criteria for this dynamic adaptation are determined by a critical reflection upon the nature of NA functions. My aims are to make the Four Branches emotionally and structurally accessible to NA readers; to preserve their *mythic textures*, *ethical contours*, and *narrative endpoints* through dynamic fidelity, which, nonetheless, prioritises the understood demands of the NA readership, and to reimagine their themes and character arcs through Arnett's (2015) psychological framework of emerging adulthood. Finally, the project applies these theoretical and methodological frameworks to create an NA Romantasy, *The Arbiter of the Gods*, and evaluates the effectiveness of this approach through practice-based reflection and beta reader feedback.

Introduction

This thesis critically and creatively explores the supposition that the Four Branches of *The Mabinogion*¹ can be accessibly² reimagined for a contemporary New Adult (NA) readership by adapting source material into an NA Romantasy novel that draws on fanfiction-*esque*³ writing practices. It utilises *accessibility* as a writing and design principle; conceives fidelity as dynamic rather than fixed; and offers a practical framework (informed by critical work on the nature of NA fiction and emerging adulthood psychology)⁴ for adapting culturally significant myths for consumption within twenty-first-century commercial, self-published fiction categories.⁵

In [Chapter 1](#), I investigate the challenges of adapting *The Mabinogion* – with particular focus on the Four Branches – for contemporary NA audiences, and situate my creative practice within broader scholarly debates in adaptation studies.⁶ This thesis frames fidelity as dynamic: a commitment to thematic and cultural contours rather than linguistic or structural replication ([Hutcheon, 2006](#); [Fehrle et al., 2019](#)). I adopt accessibility as the guiding ethical and methodological principle for adapting NA Romantasy to my intended readership, even if or when there may be tension between it and the assumed demands of fidelity.⁷ I understand *accessibility* here as a three-part adaptive process concerned with: (1) *narrative accessibility* (clarity of plot/structure; legibility of themes and story arcs, etc.), (2) *material accessibility* (typography/design and e-book functionality), and (3) *cultural accessibility* (ethical mediation across translation, adaptation, and, possibly, living traditions).⁸ In practice, this means being conscious of and navigating what preservation means to me, and attempting to signify it through what I call here *mythic textures*⁹, *ethical contours*¹⁰, and *narrative endpoints*¹¹ while adapting forms (voice, structure, and production) to the expectations of contemporary categories and platforms.¹²

The episodic composition and the ‘extremely complex’ narrative structures characteristic of *The Mabinogion* (whether original or adaptations) can appear fragmented and dense to contemporary readers, who are, arguably, more accustomed to cohesive, novelistic forms of storytelling ([Francis, 2017](#)). Interpreting the source text(s) requires specialist medievalist

expertise – a level of knowledge that is unreasonable to expect of an NA reader. Therefore, adaptation serves as a mediating practice: reshaping the source material into different forms and, as a result, seeking to make it more accessible to readers outside specialist communities, even as judgments about where adaptation shades into appropriation remain a matter of potential concern. This places the adapter (myself) at the centre of the discussion, foregrounding the motivations, risks, and responsibilities involved in transforming a culturally significant text. It is argued, of course, that adaptation reshapes a source while retaining clear links with it, whereas appropriation reworks it more radically, placing it in new contexts with only faint or obscured connections ([Sanders, 2016](#); [Rees, 2024](#)). Yet, despite their assumed differences, adaptation and appropriation are derivative acts ([Hutcheon, 2006](#)); they participate in a wider network of cultural exchange in which ‘originals’ and rewritings coexist and mutually inform one another ([Sanders, 2016](#)). I position my work as an act of reimagining that seeks to make the Four Branches of *The Mabinogion* both accessible and compelling to a contemporary NA readership through self-publishing.¹³

[Chapter 2](#) argues that New Adult fiction, Romantasy, and fanfiction-*esque* writing are structurally and culturally interdependent, and any discussion of one implicates the others. New Adult fiction is defined as a ‘writer-reader spawned, self-publishing-driven’ category aimed at emerging adults, whose lives are shaped by what [Arnett \(2015\)](#) terms the ‘Big Three transitions’ into adulthood: responsibility, independence, and financial autonomy ([Halverson, 2014](#); [McAlister, 2021](#); [Pattee, 2017](#)). Because many NA writers occupy the same developmental and generational space as their readers, the category is characterised by a horizontal rather than a top-down relationship between author and reader. Following [Pattee’s \(2017\)](#) notion of the horizontal pipeline, I suggest that this generational alignment not only facilitates accessibility (allowing readers to project themselves more readily into fictional scenarios) but also parallels [Hutcheon’s \(2006\)](#) concept of adaptations as functioning laterally rather than vertically. This connection helps frame NA’s adaptive strategies as a way of making complex or historically dense material legible for a contemporary readership. How such strategies might be employed in practice is exemplified by St. Clair’s NA mythology novel, [A Touch of Darkness \(2021\)](#), which will be explored as a point of comparison in this chapter. The chapter additionally situates Romantasy within this landscape. The Romantasy category

emerges as a hybrid in which emotional intimacy and erotic content are woven into fantasy settings ([Moreci, 2025](#)).¹⁴ Its formation and reception remain shaped by the long-standing stigma attached to Romance as ‘lowbrow mass culture’ ([Michelson, 2022](#)). Associated with a predominantly female readership¹⁵ and marked sexual content, Romantasy has negotiated this stigma through both its marketing and its reception within NA fiction. Social media spaces such as BookTok¹⁶ have transformed this assumed stigma into a driver of innovation, enabling readers and writers to form participatory subcommunities around so-called ‘spicy’¹⁷ narratives and tag-driven¹⁸ hybrid romantic forms. Following others who have situated Romantasy as a hybrid form, I accept the existing claim that Romance’s long-standing stigmatisation as feminised mass culture, while simultaneously operating within that stigma (through social-media-driven participatory reading practices), reworks its cultural effects into a source of innovation, visibility, and market power within NA fiction. This hybridisation is also present in fanfiction and fanfiction-*esque* writing, which are community-centred, adaptive practices that reconfigure existing source material into new, transformative works. Fanfiction-*esque* writing draws on its fanfiction origins as commercially produced, legally original works which incorporate fanfiction modes (trope-based scaffolding, emotional shorthand, episodic intensity, participatory paratexts) without using protected Intellectual Property (IP).¹⁹ The suffix -*esque* is employed, here, as an intentional marker of the shift from community practice to a self-publishing, commercial context which seeks to operationalise accessibility through shared tropes (to reduce the effort required to navigate complex worlds), and recasts fidelity through the demands of emotional and/or thematic continuity rather than textual duplication ([Fehler et al., 2019](#)).²⁰ Commercially successful examples of this approach, as I have noted, include St. Clair’s [A Touch of Darkness \(2021\)](#) and Gornichec’s [The Witch’s Heart \(2021\)](#); my novel is closer to the former. *The Arbiter of the Gods* (AOTG) and *A Touch of Darkness* are similar in that both are NA Romantasy adaptations that reimagine myth through accessible narrative strategies, have morally grey male leads, and high-stakes emotional arcs.²¹ Employing [Halverson’s \(2014\)](#) NA character frameworks and trope-based motifs (see the table in [Chapter 3](#)) also arguably makes the culturally dense source material legible and engaging to contemporary emerging adult readers. I chose Welsh rather than more commonly used Western mythologies (such as Greek and Norse) to seek to enhance its visibility within contemporary Romantasy. Throughout, I argue that this convergence of NA, Romantasy, and fanfiction-*esque* writing enables both accessibility and potential market profitisation.

Finally, [Chapter 3](#) builds on sociocultural understandings of emerging adult psychology to examine how NA writing practices and assumptions have informed my adaptation of the Four Branches of *The Mabinogion*. Drawing on [Deborah Halverson \(2014\)](#), I critically examine how NA fiction typically combines a casual, conversational register with a narrative voice that is, arguably, more mature and self-reflective than that of young adult (YA) fiction.²² Key linguistic features in such work, then, arising from the sociocultural labelling, include: a shifting sentence rhythm that alternates between clipped, staccato beats and longer introspective passages; vocabulary that remains broadly accessible to my reader while signalling expanding cognitive horizons; a tone of emerging confidence; and ‘casual formality’, in which informal speech patterns are used even in conventionally formal settings. Together, these features reflect the tension between what is held to be lingering adolescent thinking and the growing self-awareness of early adulthood. In my creative practice and critical reflections, I make use of [Halverson’s \(2014\)](#) ‘11 Traits and 9 Ingredients’, alongside [Arnett’s \(2015\)](#) ‘Big Three transitions’, as the structural and thematic frameworks for character construction. Mapping the NA framework and emerging adulthood psychology onto my text does not replace or diminish the demands of fidelity; rather, it establishes the dynamic parameters within which fidelity operates within my creative piece. Since I am not reproducing authentic medieval narrative structures, diction or an exercise in translation, fidelity is seen not as a competing principle but a dynamic one. My concern is to ensure that, even as the characters’ story arcs are reimagined through NA conventions, the adaptation aims to preserve the *mythic textures*, *ethical contours*, and *narrative endpoints* of the Four Branches. The NA framing, therefore, does not fundamentally dilute fidelity; it operationalises it by providing a contemporary lens that seeks to make the source’s themes and content legible and resonant to NA readers. In practice, this requires an active awareness of what preservation means in my positionality as an adaptor, and an ability to navigate that preservation through those adaptive strategies I employ within my creative piece (see [Appendix 1](#)). The chapter further details my methodological criteria: (1) *Responsibility* (do the *ethical contours* respect the cultural values that are evident within the source material to many Welsh people, and acknowledge mediation?); (2) *Accessibility* (does it account for the *narrative* and/or *cultural accessibility* of source material?); and (3) *Resonance* (does it transmit *mythic textures* and/or *narrative*

endpoints?). Finally, considerations based on a small number of beta reader²³ responses from a Mabinogion-literate reader, a myth-novice NA reader, and two Welsh natives provide preliminary evidence that these strategies produce a coherent, accessible, ethical, and engaging adaptation for the intended audience.²⁴

Research Question

How can the Four Branches of *The Mabinogion* be accessibly reimagined for a contemporary New Adult readership, within self-publishing, through a practice-based adaptation that employs dynamic fidelity and fanfiction-*esque* writing?

Research Aims

- (1) To develop a three-part model of *accessibility* (narrative, material, cultural) through a practice-based methodology of dynamic fidelity using *mythic texture*, *ethical contour*, and *narrative endpoints* as principles for adapting the Four Branches.
- (2) To critically examine and thereby add new insights into the interrelationships between (self-published) New Adult fiction, Romantasy, and fanfiction-*esque* writing as frameworks for accessible adaptation.
- (3) To apply these frameworks in the creation of a New Adult Romantasy adaptation – *The Arbiter of the Gods* – and analyse its effectiveness through practice-based reflection and beta-reader evaluation.

¹ *The Mabinogion* is a collection of eleven medieval Welsh tales that are derived from two manuscripts: the 'White Book of Rhydderch (Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 4-5), dated c.1350, and the Red Book of Hergest (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Jesus College III) – dated between 1382 and c.1410... [that] deal with Celtic mythology, Arthurian romance, and a view of the past as seen through the eyes of medieval Wales' (Davies, 2007). I use Sioned Davies' modern English translation as my primary source for adaptation because I do not read Welsh. This necessarily introduces an additional interpretive layer: my engagement with the Four Branches is mediated by Davies' linguistic, stylistic, and editorial decisions, which shape tone, pacing, and meaning in ways that may differ from those of the medieval manuscripts. As a result, any claim to 'fidelity' cannot be understood as fidelity to an unattainable textual original, but rather to the collection of themes, images, ethical tensions, and narrative movements that survive through this mediated version. My model of dynamic fidelity, therefore, treats fidelity as operating at the level of meaning, function, and effect rather than at the level of direct linguistic or structural reproduction. Throughout the thesis, when referring to fidelity, I mean this as my commitment to preserving the *mythic textures*, *ethical contours*, and *narrative endpoints* (see footnotes 9, 10, and 11) that Davies' translation foregrounds, while acknowledging that these elements are already interpretive selections shaped by translation. See Chapter 3 for examples and Appendix 1 for methodological implementation.

² My approach to the question of accessibility draws upon readability studies (Chall & Dale), in which accessibility refers to the degree that a text can be understood, read at an optimal pace, and experienced as engaging by its intended readership (DuBay, 2004).

³ Hellekson and Busse (2006) propose that fanfiction is a 'community-centred creation' where the source material is adapted and made accessible (typically electronically) by and for fans (Hutcheon, 2006; Kirk, 2011;

[Fehrle et al., 2019](#); [Price, 2022](#)). Building on this understanding, I introduce the [-esque] suffix. The suffix performs two functions: (1) continuity, in that fanfiction's adaptive, accessibility-driven, and reader-centred methods remain active; and (2) boundary-setting, in that these strategies no longer arise from a shared communal ownership of source texts, but from a deliberate mobilisation of fanfiction-derived techniques and methods to enhance readability, narrative clarity, and emotional immediacy for commercial purposes.

⁴ I draw on the work of [Deborah Halverson \(2014\)](#) in [Chapter 3](#). [Jeffery Arnett \(2015\)](#) theorises 'emerging adulthood' through his framework of the 'Big Three transitions', highlighting what he sees as the intergenerational pressures associated with the transition from adolescent to mature adult thinking and reasoning. These 'Big Three transitions' are: taking on responsibility, making independent decisions, and achieving financial independence.

⁵ I use the term 'category' instead of 'genre' as an umbrella term for NA, as this allows me to include subgenres (and specifically for this thesis, Romantasy) under the NA umbrella ([Jensen, 2019](#)).

⁶ Hyperlinks have been incorporated throughout this essay to enhance accessibility and facilitate efficient navigation.

⁷ The primary target readership is New Adult readers, but the secondary target (the average reader) is also considered. Throughout this thesis, when referring to a 'reader', I am doing so with the primary readership in mind. An average reader, or more simply, someone who reads for pleasure (leisure reader), is someone who reads 'of [their] own free will, anticipating the satisfaction [one] will get from the act of reading. It also typically refers to reading that ha[s] begun at someone else's request (Clark and Rumbold, National Literacy Trust, 2006)' ([Department for Education, 2012](#)). In this thesis, accessibility is tailored to a category-literate primary readership, with additional design considerations for general readers who may lack prior knowledge of *The Mabinogion*. As such, adaptive decisions centre on ensuring legibility for the primary audience while keeping the text approachable for secondary readers.

⁸ Since my engagement with the Four Branches is mediated through [Sioned Davies' \(2007\)](#) modern English translation, this has direct implications for both my aims and creative practice. As an aim, it means that fidelity cannot refer to linguistic reproduction of the medieval text, but to the preservation of the thematic, ethical, and mythic meanings that survive through Davies' interpretive choices. As a creative practice, it requires transparency about this mediation and a method for checking what is being preserved, altered, or reinterpreted. Accordingly, [Appendix 1](#) includes comparative examples that align a passage from Davies' translation with the corresponding adapted passage in *The Arbiter of the Gods*, followed by a brief note explaining the context surrounding the adaptation; as well as a breakdown of (1) what element(s) of the source I sought to retain (*mythic texture, ethical contour, and/or narrative endpoint*), (2) how *accessibility* is applied (*cultural, material and/or narrative*), and (3) how secondary research guides the adaptive decisions I make. This establishes a clear, traceable line from source translation → methodology and research → creative output.

⁹ By the term *mythic texture*, I mean the adaptable motifs, images, symbols, settings and figures given to a story, which embodies a recognisable 'mythic' *feel*. In relation to adaptation studies, this aligns with Hutcheon's notion of 'transcoding', where adapters translate the work's functions and affective qualities rather than its verbal surfaces ([Hutcheon, 2006](#)). It also corresponds to what [Sullivan III. \(1989\)](#) describes as the retention of mythic signifiers which carry cultural meaning across forms. An example of how I have used mythic texture in my novel is the consistent Welsh setting (*Annwfn, Llansteffan, Narberth*) and figures (*Pryderi, Hafgan, Blodeuedd, Goewin*).

¹⁰ The term *ethical contours* refers to the shape of value-laden questions, duties, harms and redresses that organise an adapted tale's moral content, insofar as that can be determined. In adaptation theory, this corresponds to what [Sanders \(2016\)](#) identifies as the adapter's responsibility to the ideological and cultural frameworks embedded in a source text, and to [Hutcheon's \(2006\)](#) argument that all adaptations involve interpretive repositioning. This understanding aligns with [Rees \(2024\)](#), who emphasises the ethical stakes of altering culturally significant narratives in contexts where appropriation may be a risk.

An example of how I have used ethical contouring in my novel appears in Branwen's account of domestic abuse. In both the Four Branches and my novel, the harm done to her is unacceptable, and she is freed from her situation, allowing her to heal (to an extent).

¹¹ The term *narrative endpoints* refers to the destinations of a character, theme, or plot development. In adaptation theory, this aligns with [Hutcheon's \(2006\)](#) emphasis on preserving narrative logic and thematic purpose even as form changes, and with [Nash's \(2021\)](#) distinction between transformations that maintain a coherent telos and those that radically reorient the source. My approach echoes [Francis \(2017\)](#), who notes that modern Mabinogion rewritings often reshape narrative structures while retaining recognisable endpoints that preserve thematic continuity. An example of how I have used narrative endpoints is apparent in Efnysien's death. Within the Four Branches, he dies after entering the Cauldron of Rebirth, and his heart is split in two.

Though adapted within my story, Efnysien still dies for his transgressions, but by Anwen's hand penetrating his chest and squeezing his heart in two.

¹² Schober ([Fehler et al., 2019](#)) and [Sanders \(2016\)](#) add that our understanding of adaptation and how it is produced, disseminated, and engaged with is evolving in response to new technological developments.

¹³ Self-publishing is more than a mode of dissemination in this project; it is a creative and cultural framework. As discussed throughout this thesis and within [Appendix 2](#), the conventions of NA fiction emerged through self-publishing and reader communities and share affinities with Romantasy and fanfiction-esque writing practices, particularly in their emphasis on reader participation, emotional immersion, gradual revelation, and inferential worldbuilding. These practices shape expectations regarding narrative voice, exposition, pacing, and reader engagement, thereby informing both my adaptation strategy and stylistic approach ([Hellekson and Busse, 2006](#); [Halverson, 2014](#); [Price, 2022](#)). My reimagining of *The Mabinogion* is consequently influenced not only by adaptation theory but also by the reading and writing practices associated with self-published NA fiction/Romantasy and the broader ecosystem of reader–writer exchange in which it circulates (see [endnote 16](#)).

¹⁴ [Moreci \(2025\)](#) defines Romantasy as a hybrid genre in which the romantic relationship and fantasy plot can be split 60/40, depending on whether the writer aims to create a 'Fantasy Romance' (40% fantasy and 60% romance, focusing more on characterisation and the couple) or 'Romantic Fantasy' (60% fantasy and 40% romance, leaning more toward plot-driven narratives and world-building) ([p.15](#)). The romantic and fantasy are structurally inseparable, with high-stakes external conflict, fantasy elements that directly shape the central relationship, and a required HEA/HFN (Happily Ever After/Happy For Now) resolution. Moreci argues that successful Romantasy integrates world-building, character transformation, and plot so that the romance drives the narrative as fundamentally as the fantasy framework, culminating in a climax that resolves both the external threat and the emotional arc.

¹⁵ In 2017, 82% of romance readers were women ([Romance Writers of America, 2024](#)).

¹⁶ BookTok is a TikTok sub-community devoted to book-related content, sustained by reviewers and authors promoting books. Recent academic exploration into the area by [Balling and Martens \(2024\)](#) examines the platform's dynamics and industry disruption: how TikTok's affordances reshape the relationships between publishers, booksellers, and readers, and how marketing strategies have changed. [Niebling \(2025\)](#), as well, has focused on BookTok's cultural movement around consent and identity, focusing on the ideological content of Romantasy: what these books say about consent, gender, trauma, and body politics, and how communities interpret those messages. Together, they show that the Romantasy boom on BookTok is simultaneously a cultural movement around consent and identity ([Niebling, 2025](#)) – as seen in NA – and a commercial disruption of the traditional publishing industry ([Balling and Martens, 2024](#)) – mainly through self-publishing.

¹⁷ 'Spicy' is an informal, culturally driven descriptor used to scale narratives, scenes, or stylistic elements that are deliberately bold, provocative, or emotionally heightened (e.g. sexy, erotic or hot) that is dependent on the reader's preference (as there is no universal standard). [Moreci's \(2025\)](#) Romantasy writing guide states that the 'difference between steamy and erotic romance, [is that] sometimes the romance community refers to steamy romance as "spice" and erotic romance and/or erotica as "smut"' ([p.130](#)). Discussions of this topic predominantly appear in literary industry blogs, author-run platforms, and journalistic articles rather than in peer-reviewed academic literature ([Anna, 2024](#); [Rowlands, 2024](#); [Knight, 2024](#); [Davies, 2025](#)). This absence of *academic* engagement indicates a notable gap in the scholarly literature on digitally mediated romance and Romantasy cultures, which has only recently been addressed by [Balling and Martens \(2024\)](#) and [Niebling \(2025\)](#) but still requires further exploration.

¹⁸ Tag-driven discovery implies that content is visible, accessible and mediated through specific digital tags. These tags function as classificatory markers within platform algorithms: selecting a tag retrieves a curated stream of content associated with that label. For example, my novel might be indexed through tags such as #enemiestolovers, #wales, #romantasy, #mabinogion, and #welshmythology. A user who clicks on #welshmythology, for example, would be presented not only with other books but also with artwork, animations, explanatory posts, and broader paratextual material related to Welsh myth. Similarly, more specific content-signalling tags (such as #triggerwarning [#tw], #mfm, #mpreg, or #SA) function as disclosure and orientation mechanisms, enabling potential readers to identify thematic elements or relational dynamics in the novel before engaging with it.

¹⁹ Differences in perceived quality also contribute to fanfiction-*esque* writing practices. Because fanfiction-*esque* work is more frequently published on self-publishing platforms, authors often lack the financial infrastructure typically available in traditional publishing. As a result, aspects such as grammar, structural refinement, copyediting, and design may not reach the same level of professional polish, as each entails significant financial costs (e.g., paid proofreading, editorial services, or design support) ([Writers' Guild of Great](#)

[Britain, 2022](#)). These economic constraints could also explain why many self-published works circulate primarily in digital formats, as producing and distributing physical books entails substantial additional costs. Although crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter or GoFundMe offer avenues for financing these processes, they require considerable time and sustained labour (resources that many writers, particularly those publishing alongside other employment, may not possess). For clarity, I note that because my novel forms part of a doctoral submission, professional proofreading and editing services have *not* been used to comply with the university's Research Ethics and Integrity Policy ([UWTSD, 2026](#)).

²⁰ The *-esque* framework highlights a shift in how we evaluate writing, moving away from traditional views of 'good' and 'bad' toward a model focused on accessibility, emotional impact, and alignment with readers' expectations. As shown in [Appendix 2](#), characteristics typically seen as weaknesses (such as loose grammar, ambiguity, or the use of common tropes) are instead employed as intentional strategies in the reader-oriented, commercially applicable style of NA and fanfiction-*esque*. In this context, fidelity is not judged by how closely a text replicates its source material but by how effectively it recreates emotional and thematic continuity. This indicates a shift from community practices to a more structured, market-oriented narrative form.

²¹ St. Clair's [A Touch of Darkness \(2021\)](#) exemplifies Romantasy's adaptive logic by reworking the Hades/Persephone myth through trope-driven romantic scaffolding that integrates emotional intimacy, sexual tension, and politics mediated through the supernatural. Romance functions not as an add-on but as a structuring force through which the heroine's self-formation, ethical reasoning, and negotiation of agency evolve in tandem with mythic conflict. By preserving essential mythic elements (such as divine hierarchies, fate, and the cyclical themes of death and rebirth) and adapting them to resonate with contemporary NA readers, the romantic and mythic content serves as interdependent narrative forces. These elements are reinterpreted in light of concerns relevant to modern NA audiences, including autonomy, desire, and consent. Yet, St. Clair does not seem to rely on an intermediary source, instead drawing from shared cultural knowledge of the Persephone and Hades myth. This distinction underpins our differing methodologies, as I work directly with the source material.

²² Informal, accessible stylistic choices (such as the use of clipped syntax, rapid dialogue, and informal phrasing - see [A2.2](#)) within my novel coexist with sustained ethical and interpretive complexity ([A2.3](#)), a balance supported by beta-reader responses indicating strong engagement and immersion across diverse readerships.

²³ Beta readers are people who are *not* editors or professional critics. They read a manuscript solely to provide feedback to the author at no cost ([Halverson, 2014](#); [Reedsy, 2022](#); [Moreci, 2025](#)).

²⁴ Only four beta readers' responses have been considered within this thesis. The potential to collect and critically reflect upon a larger sample of reviews after self-publication could be explored in future work.

Chapter 1. Branching Beyond Barriers: Engaging with Accessibility and Adaptation

As [Francis \(2017\)](#) observes, the episodic structure of *The Mabinogion* may appear fragmented to contemporary readers, who are more likely to expect greater narrative integration and structural coherence. I agree with his additional characterisation that its narrative conventions are ‘extremely complex’ ([p.313](#)). This complexity can be attributed, in part, to the differing cultural and literary expectations that distinguish medieval audiences from modern readers. One might therefore argue that the responsibility lies with the reader to familiarise themselves with medieval narrative conventions before attempting to read *The Mabinogion*. Conversely, the average reader cannot be expected to become a medievalist merely to grasp the broader cultural nuances underpinning these folktales; the interpretive labour required to understand the cultural and narrative logic of the Four Branches should not be imposed on contemporary NA, or any other, readers. My argument does not assume that readers are (or ought to be) interested in medieval cultural specificity; rather, it recognises that such specificity underpins the tales’ ethical and mythic significance. As an adaptor, I arguably bear responsibility for mediating these deeper structures so that the resulting narrative is both accessible and, in some sense, faithful to the source material, even for readers who approach the text primarily for its NA Romantasy qualities rather than its medieval origins ([Sanders, 2016](#)). Thus, I treat *accessibility* as a three-part adaptive construct: (1) *narrative accessibility* (clarity of plot/structure; legibility of themes and story arcs, etc.), (2) *material accessibility* (typography/design and e-book functionality), and (3) *cultural accessibility* (*ethical contouring* across translation, adaptation, and, possibly, living traditions). Rather than replicating source structures, I aim to preserve *mythic textures*, *ethical contours*, and *narrative endpoints* through *Responsibility*, *Accessibility*, and *Resonance*, while adapting to the capabilities and interests of contemporary NA readers. My adaptation does not attempt to replicate authentic medieval surfaces, because doing so would reduce accessibility for contemporary NA readers and would not meaningfully preserve the text’s significance. Instead, I seek to preserve the mythic, thematic, and ethical resonances of the tales while reconfiguring their form (voice, structure, and category conventions). This practice underpins my model of dynamic fidelity. As a non-Welsh-speaking adapter working through a modern English translation ([Davies,](#)

[2007](#)), I recognise the risks of simplification and unintentional appropriation.²⁵ My intention is not to claim ownership of the Four Branches, but rather to engage with them thoughtfully and in a manner that seeks to honour their origins while making them accessible to contemporary NA readers active in self-publishing spaces. To address this, I adopt accessibility not only as a stylistic goal but also as an ethical framework guiding my adaptation of the source material (see [Chapter 3](#) for examples of what this means in practice).

Much of the discourse around adaptation suggests that fidelity is inherently fluid, shifting in accordance with the adaptor's interpretive stance and the specific ways they engage with the source text ([Rodway, 2018](#); [Fehler et al., 2019](#); [Hutcheon, 2006](#)). [Hutcheon \(2006\)](#) poses three orienting questions for adaptors: (1) 'Why would anyone willingly enter this moralistic fray and become an adaptor?' (2) 'What motivates adapters, knowing that their efforts will be compared to competing imagined versions in people's heads and inevitably be found wanting?' and (3) 'Why would they risk censure for monetary opportunism?' ([p.86](#)). My responses to these questions, framed through my practice and positionality, are as follows:

- (1) I willingly became an adaptor because I am drawn to reimagining historical narratives, settings, and ideas, and The Four Branches of *The Mabinogion* offers an opportunity for the advancement of my work. My method involves choosing the option I believe best accounts for the *mythic texture*, *ethical contour*, and *narrative endpoint* (see [Appendix 1](#)), supported by secondary research (see [Appendix 4](#) and [5](#)) for contextual verification, and, only when NA reader expectations precede these concerns, they may not be met.²⁶ I rely on Davies' modern translation of the Welsh myths because I do not read Welsh. This, of course, introduces a layer of mediation that complicates claims to fidelity. My version of the source material is therefore at least third hand, filtered through Davies' linguistic and editorial choices. However, I contend that fidelity is in some sense an illusion, even when working from the original texts, because these narratives were derived from oral traditions that were inherently fluid and subject to variation from storyteller to storyteller ([Davies, 2007, pp.xiii-xvii](#)). Therefore, every written version – whether medieval manuscript or modern translation – represents an interpretive act rather than a fixed, authoritative original. Equally significant in my decision to adapt the Four Branches is the marked absence of an adapted NA text based on Welsh mythology.

While works such as Alan Garner's [*The Owl Service* \(1967\)](#) and the [*New Stories from the Mabinogion: the Complete Series* \(2017\)](#) from Seren Books have engaged with this material, there remains a notable gap within NA fiction: no existing narratives have adapted these mythic tales into forms that speak directly to emerging adults, and particularly those who consume self-published material.²⁷ My adaptation thus emerges from both personal creative interest and recognition of an underexplored space in the literary market, creating an opportunity to introduce these stories to a new generation through a voice attuned to their experiences.

- (2) Because these tales are not widely known beyond Wales or specialist academic circles, twenty-first-century readers have little basis for comparison aside from other mythological traditions. While some Welsh readers and scholars may have varying degrees of familiarity with *The Mabinogion*, my readers typically have not encountered these narratives, but could, if through adaptation rather than the medieval text itself. Readers may approach my novel before the original tales or their translations, turning to the 'original' (if at all) only afterwards to explore the divergences between my reimagining and the source material. This dynamic contrasts sharply with the cultural saturation of Greek and Norse mythology within Western media, where figures such as Loki or Thor are instantly recognisable – if not through mythological knowledge, then through their presence in popular culture, especially film and comics ([Marvel Entertainment and Studios, 2025](#)). By contrast, figures such as Arawn, Rhiannon, or Matholwch are less visible in twenty-first-century mainstream cultural consciousness in part because they are seldom presented within an accessible, contemporary Welsh mythological canon.²⁸ As a result, my adaptation effectively introduces these figures to readers as 'new' mythic entities.
- (3) Hutcheon's question is particularly compelling in the context of contemporary digital culture, where creative work is subject to near-constant scrutiny and critique. In an environment in which virtually any cultural product, regardless of intention or audience, is met with both approval and disapproval, the possibility of attaching monetary value to creative labour becomes an additional, but not necessarily primary, consideration. I believe most writers, particularly those working in fanfiction where monetisation is absent, are primarily motivated by a desire to engage imaginatively with stories they love. Our creative impulse precedes financial reward, and while some authors may welcome

critical feedback, others remain indifferent to readers' objections or discomfort with specific, perhaps even taboo, themes. For most creators, myself included, the intrinsic pleasure of storytelling remains the primary driving force, with economic compensation a secondary concern. From my perspective, the scale of readership is less important than the fact that some readers (whether 50 or 1 million) might choose to enter the imaginative world I have constructed; yet even a nominal payment signifies a willingness to value that experience. The act of pricing creative work inevitably shapes its perceived legitimacy since goods that are free or inexpensive are often assumed to be inferior. This cultural logic complicates the relationship between artistic value and economic value. Thus, while the 'monetary opportunism' Hutcheon identifies is an aspiration shared by many creators (given the material necessities of living), it also requires careful negotiation when producing work that must circulate within both aesthetic and commercial economies. Thus, I seek to commercialise (self-publish); hence, I am working within *fanfiction-esque* writing.

As I have noted, in response to these questions (and to the Externals' concerns in [Appendix 2](#)), much of the discourse in the field suggests that there is no inherently 'correct' way to adapt a source ([Hutcheon, 2006](#); [Sanders, 2016](#); [Rees, 2024](#)). Yet, appropriation is often understood negatively to mean moving further from the 'original' text, entering new cultural or ideological contexts through critique, commentary, or radical reworking; its gestures to the source can be subtle or partially obscured ([Sanders, 2016](#)). If we accept Hutcheon's view that creation is tied to the adaptor, then the choices I make in *The Arbiter of the Gods* (discussed in [Chapter 3](#) and [Appendix 1](#) and [2](#)) could be considered appropriative or ethically contentious, particularly because my approach to the problematic question of fidelity is deliberately dynamic. This then raises the ethical quandary of borrowing or changing a culturally significant text, such as *The Mabinogion* ([Rees, 2024](#)). In adapting the Four Branches, my ethical decisions centred on balancing respect for the source material with the needs of NA readers. Each adaptive choice is tested against three criteria: (1) *Responsibility* (do the *ethical contours* respect the cultural values that are evident within the source material to many Welsh people, and acknowledge mediation?); (2) *Accessibility* (does it account for *narrative* and/or *cultural accessibility* of source material?); and (3) *Resonance* (does it transmit *mythic textures* and/or *narrative endpoints*?). As previously noted, when these demands seemed to be in tension with the

reader expectations associated with NA Romantasy, as I understand them, these have won out. I sought to make aspects of Welsh mythology contained within the source material legible to non-specialist audiences without erasing their cultural specificity. My methodological choices, from selecting themes to determining reader foreknowledge, aim to balance creative innovation with cultural responsibility.

²⁵ I refer here to Davies's modern English translation as the primary adaptive foundation for my work. Although I consulted earlier translations – most notably those by [Lady Charlotte Guest \(1937\)](#) (originally published from 1838-1845) and by [Gwyn and Thomas Jones \(1949\)](#) – I ultimately chose the twenty-first-century translation, recognising that Davies's edition offers the most linguistically current, critically informed, and stylistically accessible rendering for the purposes of my adaptation.

²⁶ As demonstrated in [Appendix 4](#), the majority of the materials I draw upon (such as blogs, informal articles, and visual sources) are non-scholarly in nature. It is through the interpretive and creative application of these sources within my methodological framework (see [Chapter 3](#)), along with my primary research, that the depth of the character, setting, and/or imagery is ultimately produced.

²⁷ [Morgan's \(2012\)](#) discussion of Wales gives a good account of the nation's deep historical and cultural foundations, particularly its rich corpus of folklore and mythology. While I acknowledge that claiming the absence of prior adaptations comparable to my own may appear to rest on a straightforward statistical observation, when the scope is limited to twenty-first-century literary production – especially within the emergent category of NA fiction – the assertion is defensible. Given that traditions function as potent cultural instruments (shaping collective identity, legitimising institutions, structuring social practices, and mediating the relationship between the past and the present), my reimagining of the Four Branches can be understood as part of a long-standing cultural continuum. In this sense, my adaptation aligns itself with the creative lineage of earlier interpreters who have likewise engaged with and rearticulated these foundational narratives.

²⁸ Other examples include [Seren Books' \(2017\)](#) Mabinogion adaptations or [Quin's \(2019\)](#) Welsh deity guide.

Chapter 2. Weaving Together New Adult, Romantasy, and Fanfiction-*esque*

In this chapter, I examine how the categories of NA, Romantasy, and fanfiction-*esque* writing are interdependently situated within sociocultural contexts of writing communities. I consider the importance of fanfiction as a community practice and have adopted the term ‘fanfiction-*esque*’ writing to denote commercially original works that use fanfiction modes without relying on protected IP. The suffix [-*esque*] indicates that fanfiction’s adaptive, accessibility-driven, and reader-centred methods remain active; and that these strategies no longer arise from a shared communal ownership of source texts, but from a deliberate mobilisation of fanfiction-derived *techniques* and *methods* to enhance readability, narrative clarity, and emotional immediacy for commercial purposes ([Fehler et al., 2019](#)), particularly within the self-publishing industry. [Halverson \(2014\)](#), [McAlister \(2021\)](#), and [Pattee \(2017\)](#) agree that NA fiction is a ‘writer-reader spawned, self-publishing-driven category’ intended for an age range usually between the 18–30 demographic.²⁹ The thematic focus of NA centres on ‘adult firsts’ and the formation of an adult identity. Individuals navigating this transitional period are commonly referred to as *emerging adults*. [Jeffery Arnett \(2015\)](#) theorises ‘emerging adulthood’ through his framework of the ‘Big Three transitions’, highlighting what he sees as the intergenerational pressures associated with the transition from adolescent to mature adult thinking and reasoning. These ‘Big Three transitions’ are: taking on responsibility, making independent decisions, and achieving financial independence. They can manifest in varying ways, depending on sociocultural and economic factors. For NA authors, incorporating their own transitional experiences to resonate with readers (who are typically at the same developmental stage), arguably, creates a ‘horizontal link’ of understanding ([Pattee, 2017](#)). Rather than adopting a top-down generational perspective, the author occupies a proximate (if not directly lateral) position to the reader, fostering a sense of shared generational identity. As suggested by [Pattee \(2017\)](#), an understanding of this is essential to ensuring the accessibility of NA content to readers, as it facilitates a generationally aligned exchange between authors and readers. Consequently, readers can more easily project themselves into situations explored in a text and, in doing so, construct a bridge between it and their own experiences. Readers (and critics) who fall outside NA’s intended demographic may struggle

to comprehend its cultural and generational significance because they do not share the experiential parameters of emerging adulthood ([Klems, 2013](#); [Wills, 2016](#); [Warren, 2019](#); [Nicolas, 2021](#)). Similarly, this dynamic applies to the Romance category. Romance literature is widely consumed by female readers, and arguably, *because it is*, it is 'widely considered lowbrow mass culture' ([Michelson, 2022](#)), as I note above. Given that romance is a prominent theme in NA literature, its stigmatised reputation is twofold. This reputation is, arguably, one contributing factor in writers' gravitation toward digital platforms; the other is the immediacy and accessibility these platforms afford for reaching the NA market. In this context, these platforms function as participatory cultural spaces for readers and writers who have taken over sections of them, creating literary subcommunities. BookTok (a TikTok sub-community devoted to book-related content) is sustained by reviewers and authors promoting books, most commonly 'spicy' narratives. The sub-community has expanded to include NA content, evolving the category from merely 'college stories' into a range of hybridisations ([Makhijani, 2023](#)). Romance continually tests its own thematic boundaries, at times blurring distinctions with Erotica.³⁰ Both [Nottingham \(2024\)](#) and [Michelson \(2022\)](#) suggest that Erotica focuses more on the character(s) 'sexual journey', while Romance is about 'emotional intimacy'.³¹ For example, St. Clair's NA novel, [A Touch of Darkness \(2021\)](#), adapts the Persephone/Hades myth through a contemporary lens. While emotional intimacy is the driving theme in the text, erotic scenes mark this mythological retelling as a Contemporary Romantasy or 'Forbidden Romance'. Her novel provides a useful comparator for *The Arbiter of the Gods* because both reimagine culturally significant mythological material through the conventions of NA Romantasy. Each reframes a mythic narrative (Greek in St. Clair's case and Welsh in mine) through a character-driven story which prioritises the developmental concerns of emerging adults, consistent with [Halverson's \(2014\)](#) account of NA writing. Both deploy familiar Romantasy tropes, such as the morally grey, powerful male love interest, slow-burn romantic escalation, and the integration of romance with supernatural world-building, thereby using trope-based scaffolding to enhance narrative accessibility. Such elements (romance and sexual narrative additions) are not only permissible but thematically coherent since the category's adaptive logic depends on the dynamic fidelity between preserving essential *mythic textures* and adapting them to resonate with contemporary NA readers. In each novel, romantic and mythic content are mutually fundamental: the heroine's self-formation, negotiation of agency, and ethical decision-making evolve in tandem with her engagement in a high-stakes magical

environment. This shared structural logic illustrates how NA Romantasy adapts myth for modern readers, translating dense cultural material into a form that is both accessible and, potentially, commercially viable. Such adaptive strategies reflect a wider cultural pattern of reworking established narratives for new audiences, a practice also common in fanfiction. The fanfiction community is predominantly composed of adaptive writers who reconfigure existing source material into transformative works ([Hutcheon, 2006](#)). [Hellekson and Busse \(2006\)](#) define fanfiction as a ‘community-centred creation’ – like NA – in which the source material is adapted and made accessible (typically electronically) by and for fans ([Hutcheon, 2006](#); [Kirk, 2011](#); [Fehrle et al., 2019](#); [Price, 2022](#)). This accessible freedom of creation and expression has driven demand, incentivising readers to consume such media and motivating writers to produce it. Given the absence of financial barriers and institutional gatekeeping, fanfiction exists within an environment of largely unrestricted creative (and editorial) autonomy, enabling authors to experiment freely with narrative and thematic possibilities, regardless of how niche or socially taboo those possibilities may be. Yet, even within fanfiction communities, responses to adaptive practices can be controversial for both writers and readers. Scholars of fanfiction variously characterise the practice as a transgressive or, conversely, as an expression of fan loyalty – an ambivalent position that may be framed as either affirming or contesting the authority of the source text ([Hellekson and Busse, 2006](#); [Kirk, 2011](#); [Magnifico and Jones, 2025](#)). I contend that fanfiction is best understood not as a simple act of boundary violation (appropriation) or loyal devotion, but as a negotiated, transformative practice in which transgression and (necessarily dynamic) fidelity coexist, enabling both cultural critique and affective investment in source texts (if readers choose to engage with the originals afterwards). Because fanfiction writing draws on participatory modes characterised by experimentation and transformative reinterpretation, it carries risks when transposed into mainstream publication – particularly where the adapted material is culturally specific. These risks include flattening of traditions not my own. To address this, I position fanfiction-*esque* writing within an ethical framework. The term fanfiction-*esque* is used to suggest a kind of accessibility achieved through familiar tropes, emotional immediacy, reader-friendly narrative shorthand, and shared general assumptions about what is important in a text and how it is written, while also ensuring cultural responsibility by maintaining the *mythic textures*, *ethical contours*, and *narrative endpoints*, with interpretive choices grounded in secondary reading rather than aesthetic convenience, as I have noted. Through these

measures, fanfiction-*esque* techniques enhance the accessibility of narrative content, aligning them with my broader commitment to ethical, dynamic fidelity.

²⁹ Debates about the NA age band vary across contexts (e.g., 18–25; 18–26; 19–25), reflecting market and developmental frames ([Halverson, 2014](#); [McAlister, 2021](#); [Moreci, 2025](#)). I would like to propose extending the age band from 18–32 due to the psychological developments the primary reader is still undergoing ([Arnett, 2015](#); [Gallagher, 2025](#)).

³⁰ Although category innovation can involve boundary-testing, my treatment of culturally specific Welsh motifs adheres to a do-no-harm ethic: avoiding what might be seen as unnecessary eroticisation, resisting reductive cultural flattening, and foregrounding transparent sourcing and mediation.

³¹ [Moreci \(2025\)](#) has a similar argument that Romance is the development of emotional intimacy, but extends her definition of Erotica: ‘Erotic romance is often conflated with erotica, and while they overlap, they’re not exactly the same. Erotica is a genre of fiction that follows a sexual fantasy; the characters can fall in love, but they certainly don’t have to. Erotic romance, on the other hand, is the merging of erotica and romance...Basically, your characters have loads of wild sex, and they also fall in love along the way’ ([p.130](#)).

Chapter 3. The Root of this Research: Cultivating Practice-Based Methodologies

[Halverson \(2014\)](#) argues that NA authors employ a distinctive narrative ‘beat’ that emerging adults find more comfortable as they transition from late adolescence to early adulthood. In contrast to the more marked syntactic shifts often found in YA fiction, NA fiction retains sentence structures familiar to teenage readers; however, its narrative voice is considered more nuanced, mature, and self-reflective. A defining feature of NA dialogue is its distinctly ‘casual quality’ ([Halverson, 2014](#)).³² In NA fiction, even in conventionally formal environments (such as a university lecture hall, a workplace meeting, a church, or even in a historic setting), a character’s speech remains informal and conversational, characteristically interweaving slang, pop cultural-allusions, and idiomatic phrasing with a growing consciousness of adult obligations and the broader social expectations upon an emerging adult ([Halverson, 2014](#); [Arnett, 2015](#)). The resulting narrative voice, compared to YA, is simultaneously accessible and subtly elevated, articulating the assumed tension between youthful spontaneity and the emerging professionalism that characterises early adulthood. In my case, adopting a NA voice does not mean seeking to replicate medieval diction, of course; rather, it aims to preserve *cultural* and *material accessibility* for emerging adults through the combined use of embedded dialogue and an accessible narrative voice to deliver the NA dynamic fidelity to a contemporary audience (see Appendix [1](#) and [2](#)).

The process of adapting the Four Branches into my novel proved both challenging and (relatively) unproblematic. The complexity inherent in the process lies in the imaginative labour and critical decision-making required to navigate the relationship between the source material and the creative piece (including secondary research), while seeking to address the questions and concerns noted above. Nevertheless, it was simultaneously easy because of the inherent richness of the Four Branches, which are filled with mythic and fantastical elements (e.g., magic, cauldrons, shapeshifting, giants, and their Welsh setting)³³, providing an abundant pool of material. In addition to utilising the techniques, devices and general approach of accessible fanfiction-*esque* writing (as outlined in [Chapter 2](#) and further explored

in [Appendix 2](#)), I integrated and made use of Halverson's '11 Traits and 9 Ingredients'³⁴ and Arnette's 'Big Three transitions' as structural and thematic frameworks.

	Traits (t): characteristics	Ingredients (i): themes
1	Have high expectations for themselves that don't always match reality	Main characters in the NA range (18-25)
2	Have a generally positive sense of well-being	Themes related to Identity Establishment
3	Are optimistic about themselves even if they're grim about the world at large	Independence as a story driver
4	Have a yearning for independence that clashes with their inexperience	A self-focused perspective
5	Are breaking away from their teen social status, building an identity from scratch	Heightened sense of change and instability
6	Feel intense loyalties to family, friends, school, and self	Clash of high expectations and harsh reality
7	Are self-focused	Peer-heavy social circles
8	Are experimental and take risks	Significant romances
9	Are unstructured and working on self-accountability	NA-relevant circumstances
10	Have generally shed parental support and thus need support of friends in a new way	
11	Are still undergoing active brain development	

The characterisation of Anwen, my novel's protagonist, arises from three guiding principles: (1) dynamic fidelity to an NA character, (2) engagement with her characterisation in my previous novel, and (3) the creative and structural demands of NA Romantasy. Anwen is a wholly invented NA character and maps to trait 4/ingredient 4, trait 9/ingredient 5, and trait 6/ingredient 7. She exhibits egocentric ideals and prioritises her personal welfare over the collective concerns or well-being of her people (4t/4i). She undergoes pivotal transformations three times: (1) when she decides to marry Pryderi ([Chapter 9](#)), (2) when Branwen dies ([Chapter 33](#)), and (3) when she becomes the new Arbiter ([Chapter 52](#)). She finds her 'found family' in Hafgan, Branwen, Nysien and Napellus (6t/7i); navigates and re-evaluates her perspectives on life (5t/6i); and falls in love (8t/8i). The same frameworks have been applied to Hafgan, Branwen, Nysien, and Pryderi, as well as to ethically engage with the source material (*Responsibility*).³⁵ Hafgan's self-imposed standards are often high and sometimes attainable; however, he falls short often (6i/1t), for example, in the subplot centred on his struggle to safeguard his people. He relies on his friends for emotional support (7i/6t) and is

the first to fall in love with Anwen (8i/8t). Nysien demonstrates a sense of well-being and a commitment to continuous self-improvement; content with the natural progression of events (2i/2t/3t). At the end, he becomes one of the Seven Gods and moves independently of Hafgan to show his growing independence, rising from Hafgan's second-in-command into the primary leader role (7t/2i). Branwen mirrors Nysien's general contentment with life; however, the impact of her past trauma makes her heavily dependent on her friends and brothers for emotional support (6t/7i). Pryderi is dedicated to destroying Hafgan and is a morally grey character, focused solely on himself and his goals (7t/4i). His resignation at the end, without retaliation against Anwen, shows his efforts to take accountability for his actions (9t); the reader's judgment as to whether to agree or disagree with his actions remains a matter of individual judgment.

These characters and their respective narrative circumstances depend on their integration into the story, and achieving this requires deliberate methodological decisions. Here, the idea of *Responsibility* is non-negotiable, meaning adaptive choices must satisfy *Responsibility* and at least one of the other criteria. While determined by my own creative interests in and understanding of the NA reader expectations, particularly within self-publishing, dynamic fidelity is encoded as a repeatable method. My novel incorporates numerous instances drawn from [Davies' \(2007\)](#) translation, including – but not limited to: Rhiannon and Pryderi's backstories, Blodeuedd's reason for being able to transform into an owl, Manawydan's romantic interest in Rhiannon, The Cauldron of Rebirth, Math and Goewin's marriage, Hafgan's healing abilities, and Branwen's death. In accordance with this method, for example, I adapt Blodeuedd's (Bloom) tale: her origins remain the same³⁶, but after Gwydion's curse, she spends decades mastering transformation; recognised by Arawn, she receives territory and founds the *Fflora* (beings whose lineage draws upon other mythological creatures, most closely resembling dryads or wood nymphs). She replicates the magic that made her, rooted solely in the desire for kinship rather than Math and Gwydion's one of domination. This culminates in the establishment of her territory as a sanctuary for women. Therefore, *Responsibility* is acknowledged through her origins, and *Resonance* is achieved by preserving the ethics of her restricted autonomy and reframing her agency as self-authorship, thereby reflecting modern readers' expectations of societal discourse on gender roles within the

category (an example where NA demands trump those of more narrowly defined fidelity) ([Niebling, 2025](#)). This use of dynamic fidelity, arguably, allows the myth's moral tensions to survive in a legible form for an NA readership.

Another example of the complex creative decisions undertaken here concerns the ways in which the *mythic texture* of The Cauldron of Rebirth is engaged with. Given the absence of a description of the cauldron within the Four Branches, I drew upon Davies' version:

'I [Matholwch] was hunting in Ireland one day, on top of a mound overlooking a lake called the Lake of the Cauldron. And I saw a large man with yellow-red hair coming out of the lake with a cauldron on his back' ([Davies, 2007, p.26](#)).

This is the first reference to a cauldron in any of the Branches, leading me to assume it is the Cauldron of Rebirth. This is only substantiated pages later when the narrator states that '[t]he Irish begin to kindle a fire under the Cauldron of Rebirth' ([Davies, 2007, p.32](#)). These fragments of description provided sufficient understanding for me to reimagine the Cauldron as variable in scale and responsive to the caster's needs in accordance with a Romantasy reader's expectations ([Moreci, 2025](#)). Further into the Second Branch, I adapted Efnysien's backstory of breaking the Cauldron of Rebirth. He instigates the breaking by throwing his nephew, Gwern, into a fire, killing him. This prompts the Irish and Welsh to fight one another, and for the Irish to light a fire and to throw bodies into the Cauldron to bolster their forces:

Then they threw the corpses into the cauldron until it was full, and they would get up the next morning fighting as well as before except that they could not talk ([Davies, 2007, p.32](#)).

Upon recognising the gravity of his transgression, Efnysien seeks to end the fighting by pretending to be one of the dead Irishmen and throws himself into the Cauldron. In doing so, he fractures it into four pieces and ultimately breaks his own heart ([Davies, 2007](#)). This is why in *The Arbiter of the Gods*, bringing the pieces of the Cauldron back together is a plot driver, and in my adaptation, Anwen kills Efnysien by squeezing his heart in two. However, using this material has larger implications within my novel. By adapting this imagery and integrating it into my version of the Cauldron of Rebirth, my story carries broader consequences for those who enter the Cauldron and live. Efnysien loses his voice, which follows the original tales, but

he also loses his magic ([Chapter 13](#)). When Anwen enters, she gains power far greater than anything in *Annwfn*, with the caveat that she loses her voice *and* becomes infertile – stakes that carry long-term implications and will resonate with NA readers given familiar discourse around childbearing ([Chapter 52](#)).³⁷ In this case, then, I would argue that all three criteria are met through this reimagining: *Responsibility* to the source ([Davies, 2007](#)) is met; *Accessibility* evokes the magical rules and stakes for the reader; and *Resonance* is retained through the resurrection and the cost implications of entering the Cauldron.

Not all tales or their associated imagery required such extensive adaptation and reimagining because their features translated easily into my narrative. Paratextual cues and information are embedded in the dialogue and scenes, allowing them to remain readable without prior knowledge of *The Mabinogion*. These optional (meaning their omission would not materially alter the central narrative) intertexts (names, symbols, asides) reward readers with prior knowledge without penalising newcomers. This dual approach operationalises accessibility while sustaining source visibility. For example, within the Four Branches, Manawydan and Rhiannon's marriage is intertwined with Rhiannon's journey to move on from Pwyll's death ([Davies, 2007](#)). To foreshadow this development in *The Arbiter of the Gods*, I embed a subtle intertextual cue from Nysien to Manawydan ([Chapter 49](#)), which establishes their eventual relationship:

"That's one gorgeous goddess," Mana smiled, smacking Nysien against his chest with familiarity.

Nysien almost playfully pushed him away, as he would have done to Branwen, but held back. The two were too much alike. "You know she's married..." he quipped.

Mana ducked as an arrow of ice whizzed past his head, leaving it to strike one of the soldiers behind him, his smile broadening. "I can wait!" ([Anton, 2026, p.218](#)).

Other themes and imagery that work in a similar way are: Arawn's depiction as a huntsman ([Chapter 5, First Branch](#)); Pryderi's hobby as a craftsman ([Chapter 11, Third Branch](#)); Hafgan as the antagonist ([Chapter 13, First Branch](#)); shapeshifting humans into animals ([Chapter 31,](#)

[Fourth Branch](#)); Math's love for Goewin ([Chapter 46, Fourth Branch](#)); and Rhiannon being depicted astride a horse ([Chapters 47 and 49, First Branch](#)).

The responses of beta readers would suggest the overall success of my methodological approach.³⁸ A Mabinogion-literate beta reader reported exceptionally high enjoyment, noting strong immersion and engagement ([Beta Reader 1, 2022](#)).³⁹ They emphasised the effective reworking of source characters, expressing unexpected comfort with the reinterpretation of the mythic content despite a usual preference for what might be termed a higher degree of fidelity. Their response foregrounded character appeal (particularly towards Hafgan) and highlighted the narrative's use of moral reversal. The reader further praised the vivid imagery, the credibility of the action, and the magical and sexual sequences, reflecting an invested, emotionally responsive reading stance. I interpret this as an effective demonstration of the frameworks and criteria established in this thesis, indicating that my ethical responsibilities in adapting the source material have been met appropriately and with methodological integrity. My second beta reader, an NA reader, reported high engagement ('couldn't put the book down') and emphasised character appeal, with the reader's colloquialisms of 'thot' and 'babe' signalling affective investment typical of BookTok discourse ([Beta Reader 2, 2024](#)).⁴⁰ In a later follow-up, they admitted to attempting the original source material via audiobook but said they could barely make it through the First Branch, given its complexity. This suggests that my novel is effectively meeting key expectations of accessibility and NA Romantasy, eliciting precisely the reader engagement, attachment, and discourse-aligned enthusiasm that the category and contemporary reading communities value. Finally, feedback from two Welsh native beta readers reinforces the effectiveness of my adaptive approach. The first reader reported strong enjoyment and immersion, particularly praising the integration of Welsh mythology and the vivid depiction of *Annwfn* ([Beta Reader 3, 2026](#)). Their response foregrounds sustained character investment, especially in relation to Anwen's emotional trajectory. They further noted the inclusion of Narberth as a point of personal significance, demonstrating how culturally and geographically specific mythic material can deepen affective engagement. Their expressed attachment to Pryderi indicates that my reinterpretation of this mythic figure successfully cultivates sympathy while reimagining his origins. Taken together, this response supports my claim that the adaptation balances dynamic

fidelity in a manner that is both ethically aligned with the source material and effective in generating reader immersion and attachment for a contemporary audience. Feedback from the second Welsh-native beta reader reinforces *The Arbiter of the Gods'* effectiveness in delivering an immersive, culturally grounded mythic adaptation. The reader highlighted strong engagement with the narrative, particularly praising the seamless integration of Welsh mythology and the vivid construction of *Annwfn*, which contributed to a sense of authenticity and immersion ([Beta Reader 4, 2026](#)). Their response emphasises sustained emotional investment in Anwen, whose lack of magic heightens both the stakes and the narrative's affective depth. The reader also identified the novel's cultural grounding as a key strength, noting that its use of Welsh place, tone, and myth felt natural and unforced. Additionally, their reactions to Pryderi underscore the effectiveness of his characterisation in generating ambiguity and unease, while they believe Arawn serves as a more transparent counterpoint. Some minor areas for refinement were noted, including occasional density in the description and the potential to establish narrative stakes earlier. Overall, this feedback supports the argument that *The Arbiter of the Gods* successfully balances mythological dynamic fidelity with reader engagement and narrative confidence.

³² While [Halverson's \(2014\)](#) observation regarding the 'casual quality' of NA dialogue is frequently discussed in terms of register and narrative voice, the category may also be understood as exhibiting a broader relaxation of form. This relaxation operates not only at the level of diction and syntax but also through flexible focalisation, scene-driven chapter structures, script-like dialogue presentation, unmarked perspective shifts, delayed exposition, and a tolerance for grammatical irregularities, with narrative momentum and emotional immediacy prioritised over formal literary conventions. As demonstrated in *The Arbiter of the Gods*, these features and style suggest that reader expectations within NA encompass departures from traditional prose norms that extend beyond language choice alone (see [Appendix 2](#)).

³³ While the strategy risks appearing as a superficial transfer of content ('Welsh' framing), it deliberately draws upon a culturally sedimented, mythopoeic imaginary that critics identify with Wales, which is said to be a 'narrative landscape of mythology, legend, and folktale' ([Sullivan III, 1989](#)) and functions as a 'palimpsest' between lived reality and the mythic ([Watson, 2014](#)). This positioning thus functions as a pre-understanding oriented towards a specific interpretive mode: one attuned to enchantment, pre-modern ontologies, liminality, ancestral memory, and the supernatural. These anticipatory understandings, arguably, increase narrative accessibility by providing readers with a conceptual map of the story-world, while also deepening affective investment by drawing on widely shared mythopoetic imagery and aligning with the *mythic textures* I employ.

³⁴ While well established within the schematics of NA, it should be noted that Halverson's framework can be applied to other categories (or genres).

³⁵ Because Anwen is a fully constructed NA protagonist rather than an adaptation of a mytho-historical subject, the ethical stakes involved in situating her are, arguably, substantially lower than those associated with characters inherited from the Four Branches.

³⁶ Blodeuedd ('Bloom' in *The Arbiter of the Gods*) is fashioned by Math and Gwydion out of the flowers of broom, meadowsweet, and oak (a detail that explains why she smells of those fragrances in *AOTG*) for the purpose of marrying Lleu Llaw Gyffes. Unhappy with this, Blodeuedd engages in an affair with Gronw Pebr and plots with him to kill Lleu with a poisoned spear, resulting in Gwydion (Lleu's uncle) transforming her into an owl as punishment. Ultimately, her name originates from *Blodeuwedd* (Flower-Face) ([Davies, 2007](#)).

³⁷ Contemporary societal discourse continues to engage with the topic of childbearing, making it relevant to NA readers. According to the [Office for National Statistics \(2025\)](#), projected family sizes in England and Wales are declining, and women born in the 1980s are having children later (around age 31) compared with their mothers' generation, born in the 1950s, who typically had children at approximately age 26. Projections further suggest that women born in 2007 (the daughters of this 1980s cohort) are likely to begin childbearing at around age 35. Among women born in 1993, 44% had become mothers before age 30, compared with 58% of those born in 1965 and 81% of their presumed grandmothers' generation, born in 1938 ([ONS, 2024](#)). Collectively, these figures demonstrate a clear trend toward lower fertility and later childbearing, a shift increasingly reflected across contemporary literature and media.

³⁸ The areas addressed here by the beta readers do not inherently correspond to the issues identified by the examiners (see [Appendix 2](#)). Instead, beta readers note that the broader themes of narrative strategy, genre conventions, and adaptation methods offer strong immersion, emotional engagement, and cultural resonance. This suggests the successful execution of my methodological approach rather than deficiencies in my writing craft.

³⁹ See [Appendix 3](#) for original quotes.

⁴⁰ As part of the revision process, this beta reader also participated in an in-person editing session during which the novel was projected onto a television display and reviewed using the Read Aloud function in Microsoft Word, while simultaneously following the text in hard-copy format. By conducting this review with a member of the fanfiction and Romantasy community, I was able to observe and evaluate their emotional responses, solicit feedback regarding narrative clarity, trope implementation, and grammatical accuracy, and verify the positive reader engagement anticipated for my primary target audience.

Conclusion

This thesis defines *accessibility* in relation to questions of *narrative*, *material*, and *cultural* mediation and explores ways to achieve dynamic fidelity through fanfiction-*esque* mechanisms assumed familiar to the New Adult readership, within the self-publishing space. The creative component, *The Arbiter of the Gods*, demonstrates how significance is preserved as forms change, and beta reader feedback provides initial evidence that this model is both accessible and culturally respectful. I seek to work reflexively, viewing accessibility as more than a question of stylistic choices, and instead framing it as a guiding ethical, aesthetic, and methodological imperative for decisions about structure, voice, design, and presentation. I demonstrate that NA, Romantasy, and fanfiction-*esque* writing form an interdependent nexus. Within this, NA's horizontal writer-reader relationship, Romantasy's hybridisation as part of digital platform cultures, and the migration of fanfiction-*esque* production from fan communities into self-publishing arenas, together, have the potential, at the level of the adapted text, to render mythically dense material accessible to emerging adults. Methodologically, the creative component applies Halverson's '11 Traits and 9 Ingredients' and Arnett's 'Big Three transitions' to character and plot design, allowing me to address key themes in a reader-oriented way: identity formation, independence, emotional risk, and accountability. Throughout the iterative writing process, I have sought to apply the three criteria of *Responsibility*, *Accessibility*, and *Resonance* while also aiming to preserve *mythic texture*, *ethical contours* and *narrative endpoints*.⁴¹ These frameworks underpin a series of targeted adaptive choices. Guided by them, my work seeks to reward Mabinogion-literate readers while remaining fully intelligible to those unfamiliar with, or even not particularly interested in, the source material for its own sake. Taken together, this approach seeks to position *The Arbiter of the Gods* as a case study in how Welsh (medieval) mythology – which has been, and continues to be, reimagined in other contexts – can be re-situated within contemporary NA Romantasy while remaining both commercially viable and culturally responsible. By foregrounding the adapter's (my) rationale and openly negotiating the tension between adaptation and appropriation, the thesis offers a replicable model for myth adaptation that treats accessibility, generational horizontality, and fanfiction-*esque* practice as key tools for transmitting underrepresented mythologies to new audiences.

⁴¹ I contend that these strategies expose lingering theoretical and practical issues, consistent with those evident in other adaptive practices, and I anticipate further scholarly engagement with and expansion of these frameworks.

Reference List

- Anna, C. (2024). *Is the Spicy Books Trend Ruining Good Literature?* [online] The-plottery.com. Available at: <https://www.the-plottery.com/blog/is-the-spicy-books-trend-ruining-good-literature>.
- Anton, I. (2026). *ANTON_1201792_AOTG Novel_PhD_Aug2026*.
- Arnett, J.J. (2015). *Emerging Adulthood: the Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Balling, G. and Martens, M. (2024). BookTok Helped Us Sell It: How TikTok Disrupts Publishing and Fuels the #Romantasy Boom. *Convergence The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*. doi:10.1177/13548565241301271.
- Beta Reader 1 (2022). *Just a Check-in*. [Email].
- Beta Reader 2 (2024). *Review of Book*. [Facebook Messenger].
- Beta Reader 3 (2026). *Arbiter of the Gods!*. [Email].
- Beta Reader 4 (2026). *The Arbiter of the Gods*. [Teams Chat].
- Davies, S. (2007). *Mabinogion*. Oxford University Press.
- Davies, M. (2025). Romantasy: Why it's Happily Ever After for Romance Books. *BBC News*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c75r6kq2pdwo>.
- Department for Education (2012). *Research Evidence on Reading for Pleasure Education Standards Research Team*. [online] gov.uk. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284286/reading_for_pleasure.pdf.
- DuBay, W.H. (2004). *The Principles of Readability*. [online] Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED490073.pdf>.
- Fehrle, J. and Schäfke, W. (2019). *Adaptation in the Age of Media Convergence*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Francis, M. (2017). Rewriting the Mabinogi. *New Writing*, 15(3), pp.311–321. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2017.1403457>.
- Gallagher, J. (2025). Four pivotal ages in your brain's development revealed in new scientific study. *BBC News*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgl6klez226o>.
- Garner, A. (1967). *The Owl Service*. 1st ed. London: Collins.

- Gornichec, G. (2021). *The Witch's Heart*. Titan Books (UK).
- Guest, C. (1937). *The Mabinogion*. London, J.M. Dent & Co.; New York, E.P. Dutton & Co. Reprint.
- Halverson, D. (2014). *Writing New Adult Fiction*. Writer's Digest Books.
- Hellekson, K. and Busse, K. (2006). Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays. Jefferson: Mcfarland & Co.
- Hutcheon, L. (2006). *A Theory of Adaptation*. [online] Routledge.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203957721>.
- Jensen, K. (2019). *Do Teens Get Pushed Out of YA Books When It's Called A Genre?* [online] Book Riot. Available at: <https://bookriot.com/ya-is-not-a-genre/>.
- Jones, G. and Jones, T. (1949). *The Mabinogion*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons (Everyman's Library).
- Kirk, J. (2011). Transgression and Taboo: The Field of Fan Fiction. *Research Portal (King's College London)*, 3, pp.147–158.
- Klems, B. (2013). 'New Adult': The Next Big Thing? [online] Writer's Digest. Available at: <http://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/new-adult-the-next-big-thing>.
- Knight, L. (2024). Children Exposed to 'spicy' Adult Fiction by BookTok Influencers. *The Observer*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/feb/17/tiktok-children-exposed-to-spicy-adult-fiction-booktok-influencers>.
- Magnifico, A.M. and Jones, K. (2025). Theorizing Fanfiction: the Importance of Remixed Social Genres Composed on the Internet. *Computers and Composition*, [online] 75, p.102916. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2025.102916>.
- Makhijani, P. (2023). How TikTok Has Transformed Romance Publishing. *Publishers Weekly*, 270(45). p.16.
- Marvel Entertainment. (2025). *Marvel Comics*. [online] Available at: <https://www.marvel.com/comics>.
- Marvel Studios (2025). *Marvel Studio Films*. [online] Marvel Entertainment. Available at: <https://www.marvel.com/movies>.
- McAlister, J. (2021). *New Adult Fiction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Michelson, A. (2022). Pushing the Boundaries: Erotic Romance and the Symbolic Boundary Nexus. *Poetics*, 94, p.101729. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2022.101729>.

- Moreci, J. (2025). *How to Write Romantasy: Blending Fantasy and Romance into One Heart-Stopping Adventure*. Random House.
- Morgan, P. (2012). From a Death to a View: the Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period. In: *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.43–100.
- Nash, M. (2021). Adaptation: Essence, Originality and Radical Transformation. *Springer eBooks*, pp.83–100. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73674-3_6.
- Nicolas, S. (2021). *The History and Future of New Adult Books*. [online] BOOK RIOT. Available at: <https://bookriot.com/history-and-future-of-new-adult-books/>.
- Niebling, L. (2025). Consent capital: From Romantasy’s “Alpha male archetypes” toward a new cultural theory in post-digital storytelling. *New media & society*. doi:10.1177/14614448251375107.
- Nottingham, C. (2024). *TikTok - Make Your Day*. [online] www.tiktok.com. Available at: <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZGeaqCr1c/> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2024].
- Office for National Statistics (2024). *Childbearing for Women Born in Different Years, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics*. [online] Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/bulletins/childbearingforwomenbornindifferentyearsenglandandwales/2021and2022>.
- Office for National Statistics (2025). *Childbearing for Women Born in Different Years, England and Wales*. [online] Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/bulletins/childbearingforwomenbornindifferentyearsenglandandwales/2023>.
- Pattee, A. (2017). Between Youth and Adulthood: Young Adult and New Adult Literature. *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, 42(2), pp.218–230. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2017.0018>.
- Price, L. (2022). Fanfiction, Self-Publishing, and the Materiality of the Book: A Fan Writer’s Autoethnography. *Humanities*, 11(4), p.100. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3390/h11040100>.
- Quin, H. (2019). *Gods and Goddesses of Wales - a practical introduction from story to magic*. Moon Books.
- Reedsy (2022). *What Is a Beta Reader? How to Find and Work with an Author’s Best Friend*. [online] Reedsy. Available at: <https://blog.reedsy.com/beta-readers/>.

- Rees, C. (2024). Adaptation, Appropriation and Translation - Dancing cheek to cheek, or leading on a merry dance: Understanding textual adaptation as a dynamic between dancers. *Litera:dil,edebiyat ve kültür araştırmaları dergisi*, 34(2).
- Rodway, S. (2018). The Mabinogi and the Shadow of Celtic Mythology. *Studia Celtica*, 52(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.16922/sc.52.4>.
- Romance Writers of America (2024). *About the Romance Genre*. [online] www.rwa.org. Available at: <https://www.rwa.org/the-romance-genre>.
- Rowlands, R. (2024). *Writing Romance: What Are Heat Levels?* [online] Rachel Rowlands, Editor & Author. Available at: <https://racheljrowlands.com/2024/03/07/writing-romance-what-are-heat-levels/>.
- Sanders, J. (2016). *Adaptation and Appropriation*. 2nd ed. London; New York: Routledge.
- Seren Books (2017). *New Stories from the Mabinogion: the Complete Series*. Seren.
- St Clair, S. (2021). *A Touch of Darkness*. Naperville, Illinois: Bloom Books.
- Sullivan III., CW. (1989). *Welsh Celtic Myth in Modern Fantasy*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- UWTSD (2026). *Research integrity and ethics*. [online] *The University of Wales Trinity Saint David*. Available at: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-integrity-and-ethics>.
- Warren, A.L. (2019). Kiss and Sell: Is There a Market for Erotica in 18- to 25-year-olds? *Interscript*, 2. doi:<https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.2398-4732.003>.
- Watson, D. (2014). Welsh Mythology and Folklore in Popular Culture: Essays on Adaptations in Literature, Film, Television, and Digital Media edited by Audrey L. Becker and Kristin Noone (review). *Film & History*, 44(1), pp.58–59.
- Wills, J. (2016). Wills Watson Little [Interview].
- Writers' Guild of Great Britain (2022). *Self-publishing: A step-by-step guide for authors*.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Methodology Implementation

Below are comparative examples that align a passage from Davies’ translation with the corresponding adapted passage in *The Arbiter of the Gods*, followed by a brief note explaining the context surrounding the adaptation; as well as a breakdown of (1) what element(s) of the source I sought to retain (*mythic texture, ethical contour, and/or narrative endpoint*), (2) how my working idea of Accessibility is applied (*cultural, material and/or narrative*), and (3) how secondary research guides the adaptive decisions I make. This establishes a clear, traceable line from source translation (ST) → methodology and research → creative output (CO).

Note: These three examples are not exhaustive but give an account of how easy or complex my methodology was to apply. This is informed by my primary research (see [Reference List](#)) and relevant secondary research, which support these specific examples (see [endnote 26](#) for context, and Appendices [4](#) and [5](#) for full lists).

Example A1.1 – The Golden Bowl (Easy Use)

Sioned Davies’ The Four Branches (source translation [ST])	<i>The Arbiter of the Gods</i> (creative output [CO])
But he [Pryderi] could see in the middle of the floor, as it were, a well with marble-work around it. At the edge of the well there was a golden bowl fastened to four chains, over a marble slab, and the chains reached up to the sky, and he could see no end to them. He was enraptured by the beauty of the gold and the fine workmanship of the bowl. And he went to the bowl and grabbed it. But as soon as he grabs the bowl, his hands stick to it and his feet stick to the slab on which he was standing, and the power of speech is taken from him so that he could not utter a single word. And there he stood. (p.40)	As they walked closer, they could make out a well, fashioned from thick stone, with marblework around it. At the edge of it was a golden bowl fastened to four chains over a marble slab, their length reaching up to the heavens, so far that they couldn’t see an end to them... Hafgan tried hard to stand, but Anwen had to half-drag him over until he slumped onto the marble. As he clasped the sides of the golden bowl to steady himself, he froze, the golden bowl working as a Venus flytrap to keep anyone looking to liberate the well’s contents from doing so. Hafgan couldn’t move, nor speak, nor hear, nor see anything around him. It was a fate worse than when they had been left senseless in the mist, but a nice reprieve from the insanity that plagued his body. (pp.114-15)
Author’s Note	
Once I encountered the fantastical description of the well and its surrounding landscape, I knew immediately that I would incorporate it into my CO. The well is, in fact, the only element I reproduced directly from the ST without altering its imagery or descriptive detail, as there was no need to for the	

fantasy element. I also sought to preserve the implications of touching the well, since in the ST it constitutes one of the clearest and most explicit instances of magic at work. Retaining it verbatim allowed me to maintain both the *mythic texture* and the supernatural logic of the original narrative.

Element(s) Retained		
<i>Mythic Texture</i>	<i>Ethical Contour</i>	<i>Narrative Endpoint</i>
The <i>mythic textures</i> of the motifs (enchanted objects, sacred thresholds, immobilising magic) remain unchanged, and the CO presents not a diluted version but a directly transcoded mythic texture, demonstrating how mythic images retain their cultural power even within a new narrative structure. 1. Direct replication of the well's supernatural architecture The imagery I use is almost verbatim, preserving the marblework, the bowl, the chains, and their impossible vertical reach; preserving a core mythic image whose surreal, otherworldly quality is central to the ST. 2. Maintenance of the well's enchantment logic In both ST and CO, touching the bowl results in an instant, irreversible immobilisation, functioning as a threshold object whose beauty masks its peril, echoing Welsh Celtic motifs of enchantment, temptation, and entrapment. 3. Continuation of the <i>Annwfn</i>'s eerie stillness Pryderi's muteness and paralysis in the ST becomes Hafgan's inability to move, speak, hear, or see in the CO; sustaining the uncanny stasis that marks the well as a site where time and	While the underlying magic functions similarly, the moral stakes shift (ST the well punishes trespass and desire, while CO enacts containment and justice), yet both maintain clear <i>ethical contour</i> rather than flattening it into spectacle. 1. Fidelity to culturally significant imagery Because the magical well is one of the clearest manifestations of magic in the Four Branches, I treat it with heightened care, reproducing it faithfully and avoiding reducing the culturally significant motif to a mere aesthetic embellishment. 2. Preservation of the ST's metaphysical logic I retain the cause-and-effect enchantment: contact with the bowl = magical paralysis. This respects the internal logic of the Welsh mythological tradition, maintaining its structure rather than appropriating it for unrelated aesthetic purposes. 3. Ethical restraint through minimal alteration By altering only the character involved (Pryderi → Hafgan) and the emotional framing, I prioritise dynamic cultural fidelity over narrative convenience.	Though their teloi differ (ST leads to broader mythic conflict while CO advances character-driven stakes and interpersonal resolution), in both cases the bowl operates as a narrative hinge, immobilising a character to shift the plot into its next phase and maintaining a coherent narrative destination for the scene's supernatural intervention. 1. The well becomes a plot-critical mechanism rather than a mythic trap alone - In the ST, the endpoint is Pryderi's entrapment and the consequences that follow. - In the CO, Hafgan's paralysis becomes a pivotal narrative turn that affects character relations and plot stakes. 2. The well becomes a structural hinge in the CO It functions as a moment of immobilisation that halts forward momentum, creates vulnerability, and forces Anwen to respond in ways that develop her agency. This aligns the endpoint with NA Romantasy's emphasis on relational tension and mutual responsibility. 3. The enchanted paralysis reinforces <i>Annwfn</i>'s danger

agency collapse, which is one of the most potent <i>mythic textures</i> in the source.	Such restraint demonstrates ethical sensitivity to the ST as a potential, living cultural text. 4. Avoiding sensationalism I resist the temptation to escalate or dramatise the magical punishment beyond what the tradition warrants. Instead, I depict Hafgan’s paralysis as equally absolute and integrated into his character arc.	The endpoint signals to readers that <i>Annwfn</i> is governed by powerful, non-negotiable magical laws. This contributes to long-term worldbuilding, shaping reader expectations for subsequent supernatural encounters.
Accessibility		
<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
I believe my handling of the well episode demonstrates high cultural accessibility through careful ethical engagement with one of the most symbolically charged magical events in the Four Branches. <i>Cultural accessibility</i>, therefore, emerges from faithful visual replication, preserved magical structure, and ethically restrained adaptation. 1. Ethical fidelity to culturally significant imagery The well is one of the most explicitly magical and visually striking scenes in the ST. By reproducing its architecture almost verbatim (stone, marblework, golden bowl, four sky-reaching chains), I preserve a culturally resonant image without appropriative distortion. 2. Preservation of the original’s metaphysical logic The enchantment operates identically in both texts:	While the ST uses medieval-style syntactic density, my CO incorporates several strategies that improve the material accessibility of the episode for modern and digital readers. <i>Material accessibility</i> is therefore achieved through modernised sentence design, segmentation, and digital-friendly readability. 1. Contemporary prose structure My CO uses shorter clauses, contemporary vocabulary, and more streamlined sentence architecture that enhance readability on screens and avoids the cognitive heaviness of the ST’s prose style. 2. Clear segmentation of action The CO breaks the scene into: - descriptive set-up, - character interaction, - moment of entrapment.	The well scene becomes more narratively accessible for contemporary readers through several adaptive choices. Thus, <i>narrative accessibility</i> emerges through emotional framing, functional clarity, and integration into the plot’s stakes and structures. 1. Transforming an episodic medieval event into a purposeful plot moment In the ST, Pryderi’s entrapment is part of a larger cycle of events and may feel episodic to modern readers. In my CO, the event serves a clear, narratively coherent function (Hafgan’s brief escape from madness and his sudden paralysis). 2. Integration with character psychology I add an emotional framing, giving readers a clear sense of: - how Hafgan experiences the event - why it matters

touching the bowl → immediate paralysis and muteness. Maintaining this functional integrity respects the Welsh mythological worldview rather than using the image merely as decorative fantasy. 3. Recontextualising the episode without overwriting cultural meaning I embed the scene into my CO (Hafgan's entrapment rather than Pryderi's), but the cultural logic of magical consequence remains intact. This strikes a balance between respecting the cultural source and integrating it into my novel's character arcs. 4. Avoiding sensationalisation I keep the tone solemn, uncanny, and ritualised by avoiding spectacle, exaggeration, or humorous subversion. This maintains the seriousness appropriate to a living cultural tradition.	3. Screen-reader and e-reader compatibility The CO avoids: - long-chained clauses - archaic syntax - embedded dependent structures This facilitates accessibility for assistive technologies (screen readers) and for readers on mobile devices. This readability scaffolding supports e-book ergonomics such as scrolling, highlighting, and chunked comprehension. 4. Visual clarity through simplified description The well's description is concise and visually oriented, which is ideal for digital reading, where readers benefit from concrete, quickly parsed imagery rather than dense conceptual phrasing.	- how it affects Anwen's immediate decisions This produces thematic legibility unavailable in the ST's abrupt presentation. 3. Clarity of magical cause-and-effect The CO explicitly explains <i>what</i> happens and <i>why</i>: - touching the bowl triggers the trap - it immobilises all senses (movement, speech, hearing, sight), - and it functions as a protective mechanism for the well. This clarity aligns well with narrative expectations in NA fantasy. 4. Enhanced orientation for readers unfamiliar with the Mabinogi I remove the need for readers to understand Pryderi or the mythic context. The scene stands alone as a self-explanatory magical event, not requiring external knowledge.
--	--	--

Example A1.2 – *Gorsedd Arberth* (Mildly Complex Use)

Sioned Davies’ The Four Branches (source translation [ST])		The Arbiter of the Gods (creative output [CO])			
Once upon a time Pwyll was at Arberth, one of his chief courts, where a feast had been prepared for him, and there was a large retinue of men with him. After the first sitting Pwyll got up to take a walk, and he made for the top of a mound that was above the court, called Gorsedd Arberth. ‘Lord,’ said one of the court, ‘the strange thing about the mound is that whatever nobleman sits on it will not leave there without one of two things happening: either he will be wounded or injured, or else he will see something wonderful.’ (p.8)		The portal in Narberth, known as <i>Gorsedd Arberth</i> , resided deep within the forest. The townspeople knew of the place, but none could ever find it without the portal’s permission. Some believed that if they did, they would become rich beyond their wildest dreams, while others thought it was where the Fae-folk took the people they kidnapped. A bit of both was true, though of those who had unfortunately stumbled upon it, no one had yet lived to confirm either tale. (p.45)			
Author’s Note					
It may appear that little continuity exists between my CO and the ST, given that the defining feature of the <i>Gorsedd Arberth</i> in the ST is Rhiannon’s appearance on horseback. Because this episode did not serve the structural or thematic requirements of my narrative, I instead retained a deeper functional principle drawn from the ST: the notion that one who sits upon the mound will ‘see something wonderful’ is, in fact, transported into another realm. I reinterpreted this mechanism by reframing the <i>Gorsedd Arberth</i> not as a physical mound but as a portal facilitating movement to and from <i>Annwfn</i> . This reconceptualisation required that knowledge of the portal be restricted to the chief courts, who alone possess awareness of <i>Annwfn</i> , thereby justifying its selective visibility and limited accessibility. Nonetheless, I sought to preserve a <i>mythic texture</i> within the broader world-building: villagers possess only fragmentary, folkloric awareness of the site, recognising it as a place where inexplicable events occur without understanding their true cause. In alignment with vernacular storytelling traditions (where unexplained phenomena are frequently attributed to fairies), I employed this folklore as the most plausible interpretive framework available to them.					
Element(s) Retained					
Mythic Texture		Ethical Contour		Narrative Endpoint	
The <i>mythic texture</i> is preserved through liminality, folk belief, and the aura of enchantment (even though the portal is reimagined to suit NA fantasy conventions). 1. The transformed yet recognisable <i>Gorsedd Arberth</i> In the ST, <i>Gorsedd Arberth</i> is a liminal mound where one may be <i>wounded</i> or <i>see something</i>		My CO demonstrates ethical awareness by retaining the cultural logic of Welsh myth while responsibly reconfiguring its narrative function. 1. Dynamic fidelity rather than literal replication I retain the function (transport to another realm) rather than the spectacle (Rhiannon’s arrival) because the latter does not serve my narrative.		The <i>narrative endpoint</i> of my CO’s <i>Gorsedd Arberth</i> is a structurally significant portal that propels character arcs and realm-crossing events while preserving the original’s thematic core of encounter with the marvellous. 1. The mound’s ‘wonder’ becomes a portal to <i>Annwfn</i>	

<i>wonderful</i>. Whereas in the CO, it becomes a portal hidden in the forest (still liminal, still dangerous or wondrous), but rendered through a Romantasy lens. 2. Folk knowledge and rumour The villagers possess a fragmentary, folkloric awareness, mirroring the way medieval audiences often encountered myth through oral tradition. Their superstition that ‘fairies take people’ echoes the ST’s association of the mound with supernatural encounters. 3. The persistence of the uncanny Both versions preserve the sense that the site is unpredictable, enchanted, and potentially perilous, sustaining the mythic ambience even as the mechanism of transport changes.	2. Respect for cultural specificity By limiting knowledge of the portal to those who would plausibly know of <i>Annwfn</i>, I avoid trivialising sacred or mythic knowledge. 3. Avoiding appropriation through contextual grounding I consciously avoid treating Welsh myth as mere aesthetic decoration. Instead, I embed the adapted element within social structures (courts vs. villagers), folk belief, and narrative logic. 4. Maintaining alignment with vernacular traditions Using ‘fairies’ as the villagers’ explanation reflects genuine Welsh storytelling patterns, not a generic fantasy cliché.	In the ST, the endpoint is a marvellous encounter (e.g., Rhiannon). Whereas in the CO, the narrative endpoint is translocation between realms, serving as a structural anchor for the plot. 2. Restricted accessibility shapes narrative power dynamics Only the chief courts in both the CO and ST can access or locate the portal. This creates narrative tension, hierarchical knowledge, and a controlled gateway into the supernatural. 3. The portal becomes a driver of plot movement It is not simply an atmospheric feature. It functions as a plot catalyst, shaping character journeys, stakes, and worldbuilding. 4. Villager folklore creates narrative foreshadowing Their misunderstandings set the stage for future revelations about my CO’s <i>Annwfn</i>. This also echoes the way mythic sites in the ST foreshadow transformation or danger.
Accessibility		
<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
<i>Cultural accessibility</i> in my CO is maintained by translating Welsh mythic logic into forms that modern readers can intuitively understand, while preserving culturally rooted knowledge structures and folkloric reasoning.	<i>Material accessibility</i> is improved as my CO’s language, structure, and formatting support the ergonomics and technical demands of digital reading environments.	<i>Narrative accessibility</i> in my CO is secured by transforming the symbolic medieval event into a structurally coherent, category-legible plot device that supports thematic clarity and reader orientation.

1. Retaining core Welsh mythic logic I preserve the functional principle of the <i>Gorsedd Arberth</i> as a liminal site where contact with <i>Annwfn</i> occurs. This keeps the Welsh myth's worldview intact, even though the mechanism is reimagined as a portal. 2. Using recognisable cultural frameworks for folk interpretation The villagers' attribution of strange events to fairies mirrors Welsh Celtic folkloric traditions, grounding the mythic site in culturally appropriate oral-tradition thinking while remaining intelligible to modern readers. 3. Maintaining stratified cultural knowledge Only the chief courts know the portal's secret, mirroring how sacred or esoteric knowledge is socially restricted in many mythic systems. This avoids cultural flattening and preserves the hierarchical texture of the original mythology.	1. Presenting the portal description in clear, contemporary prose Modern syntax, vocabulary, and formatting increase readability for digital audiences, particularly NA readers who often access texts on e-readers. 2. Structuring information in digestible segments suitable for e-book navigation The CO's description is concise and formatted for scannability on digital platforms (short paragraphs, clean punctuation), aligning with concerns such as skimming, bookmarking, and highlighting. 3. Avoiding dense exposition that burdens digital reading flow The CO eliminates the ST's conditional prophecy-style phrasing, replacing it with a streamlined description. This improves readability on small screens and reduces cognitive load. 4. Maintaining semantic clarity that aids screen-reader compatibility Contemporary phrasing, fewer embedded clauses, and clear referential nouns support accessibility technologies (such as screen readers, text-to-speech, and reading aids), which are increasingly central to e-book use.	1. A clearer and more legible narrative function The ST's description of the mound is ambiguous: "wounded or see something wonderful." Whereas my CO translates this into a coherent mechanism (a portal to <i>Annwfn</i>) whose role in the plot is immediately understandable to contemporary readers. 2. Alignment with category-familiar structures In NA Romantasy, portals function as standard structural devices for introducing world-crossing, conflict, and character development. This improves thematic legibility: readers can instantly grasp how <i>Annwfn</i> fits into the protagonist's arc. 3. Stratified layers of knowledge that guide reader orientation • Characters who know the truth (courtiers) • Characters with partial understanding (villagers) • Characters entering <i>Annwfn</i> directly (protagonists) This layered exposition allows readers at different levels of category familiarity to follow the mythic logic. 4. Integration into the protagonist's NA developmental arc The portal supports themes of identity, agency, and self-determination, which are core NA
--	---	--

		concerns, thereby clarifying the plot's purpose and emotional stakes.
--	--	---

Example A1.3 – Rhiannon's Backstory (Complex Use)

Sioned Davies’ The Four Branches (source translation [ST])	<i>The Arbiter of the Gods</i> (creative output [CO])	
Rhiannon summoned wise and learned men. And when she thought it better to accept her punishment than argue with the women, she accepted her punishment. This is what it was: to stay at that court in Arberth for seven years. And there was a mounting block outside the gate—to sit by that every day, and tell the whole story to anyone whom she thought might not know it, and offer to carry guests and strangers on her back to the court if they permitted it. But rarely would anyone allow himself to be carried. And so she spent part of the year. (p.17)	Whispers about her past treatment still circulated: how she had been wrongly accused of killing her son when he was a babe and was exiled to the village gates. She was forced to tell those who passed by what she had done, reliving it over and over. Rumour was that she’d even carried a man on her back up to the castle as extra punishment. She’d been exonerated years later, but Anwen would never forget the tale. Her brothers used it to threaten her when she displeased them. (p.12)	
Author’s Note		
When I first read the account of Rhiannon’s punishment in the ST, I was struck by the interpretive potential of that storyline. Though my focus is not on retelling her story, I still wanted to incorporate a parallel backstory within my CO. I envisioned it such that anyone outside Dyfed’s court would lack access to the full account of events; the truth would survive only in fragmented form, mediated through rumour, conjecture, and hearsay. Consequently, I reframed the episode as a cautionary tale circulating within broader communities: a narrative intended to warn that transgression could result in being relegated to the gates, where individuals are tasked with transporting others to and from the court. This recontextualisation also serves a functional narrative purpose: it becomes a tool that Anwen’s brothers deploy against her, both socially and psychologically, particularly in childhood, when such threats would have carried significant emotional weight. This not only offers the reader a deeper understanding of Rhiannon’s background but also illuminates Anwen’s own circumstances and the underlying reasons for her profound desire to leave her familial home.		
Element(s) Retained		
Mythic Texture	Ethical Contour	Narrative Endpoint
The <i>mythic textures</i> of key motifs (punishment, figures, storytelling) remain recognisable in my CO, which preserves the feel of myth by: retaining Rhiannon’s presence as a culturally transmitted	My CO’s <i>ethical contour</i> rests in respecting the gravity of Rhiannon’s punishment, preserving its cultural complexity, and reframing it responsibly	The <i>narrative endpoint</i> is not Rhiannon’s punishment itself, but the <i>function</i> of its memory: it shapes Anwen’s emotional

legend, maintaining the ritualistic structure of her punishment, and embedding her story in communal memory shaped by rumour and moral instruction. 1. The enduring presence of Rhiannon as a mythic figure Although the CO does not retell her story, Rhiannon remains a living narrative presence, filtered through communal memory. Her beauty, her divine status, and her unjust punishment preserve her mythic aura. 2. The transformation of punishment into communal folklore In the ST, Rhiannon's punishment (sitting at the gate, recounting her 'crime,' offering to carry travellers) is both humiliating and ritualistic. I retain this as a folkloric cautionary tale, echoing the oral-tradition transmission of Welsh myths. 3. Mythic distortion through rumour The villagers' partial, distorted understanding (e.g., the rumour that she 'carried a man on her back') mirrors how myths mutate in living cultures and introduces a mythic texture of uncertainty, where truth and story blur. 4. Continued visibility of thresholds and gates In both versions, the gate functions as a liminal space of judgement and social exposure, an archetypal motif in Welsh Celtic storytelling.	through the lens of rumour rather than authoritative appropriation. 1. Avoidance of sensationalisation Rather than reproducing Rhiannon's ordeal as a dramatic spectacle, I ethically reframe it as second-hand communal knowledge, reducing the risk of appropriating or trivialising a culturally significant episode. 2. Respect for narrative uncertainty and oral variation I allow her story to appear in its fragmented, rumoured form, reflecting how myths circulate in living communities rather than presenting a falsely authoritative retelling. 3. Preserving the injustice without exploiting it Rhiannon's wrongful accusation remains intact, but I avoid moral voyeurism and instead focus on how the story is used socially. I did this as a sensitive approach to a narrative involving public shaming and gendered punishment. 4. Situating the adaptation within a culturally coherent framework I believe I have ethically mediated between the ST's formal version and my CO's folk-memory version, acknowledging that not all readers would 'know' the myth in its scholarly form.	development, enforces community norms, and builds a textured, morally complex world. 1. It becomes a cautionary tale shaping social behaviour The story functions as a mechanism of social control, used by Anwen's brothers to discipline or frighten her. - This mirrors the ST's use of public shame and reinforces communal expectations around obedience and transgression. 2. It contributes to Anwen's psychological formation The tale becomes one of the formative stories of Anwen's childhood; a foundational memory that informs her desire to leave her household and her fear of punitive authority. 3. It adds depth to worldbuilding By circulating in incomplete, rumoured forms, the story demonstrates how history, myth, and gossip shape community identity and moral boundaries. This gives my world a layered sense of social memory. 4. It creates intertextual resonance with the ST Though I do not repeat Rhiannon's narrative, I use it to establish thematic parallels: - wrongful accusation - public exposure
---	--	--

		• coercive punishment • control exercised through narrative retellings This deepens the thematic fabric of my CO without duplicating the narrative.
Accessibility		
<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
My CO maintains <i>cultural accessibility</i> by translating a culturally charged episode into a mediated folk memory, exercising ethical restraint and preserving the social logic of myth transmission. 1. Mediating the myth through community retellings Instead of reproducing the entire ST episode, I ethically adapt Rhiannon's punishment as communal folklore. This acknowledges how Welsh myth exists not only as a literary text but also as an evolving tradition shaped by rumour, memory, and social usage, reflecting the living pathways through which myth circulates. 2. Preserving the injustice while refraining from direct dramatisation Rather than staging Rhiannon's humiliation in full detail, I let her story enter as a mediated fragment. This avoids appropriative spectacle, treats the culturally sensitive narrative with restraint, and retains the moral gravity of Rhiannon's wrongful accusation (while allowing characters to encounter it through culturally plausible means).	<i>Material accessibility</i> is improved by my CO's sentence design, formatting, and streamlined exposition, which make the mythic backstory materially accessible to contemporary digital readers. 1. Presenting the backstory in clear, contemporary prose Modern syntax, vocabulary, and formatting increase readability for digital audiences, particularly NA readers who often access texts on e-readers. 2. Structuring information in digestible segments suitable for e-book navigation The CO's description is concise and formatted for scannability on digital platforms (short paragraphs, clean punctuation), aligning with concerns such as skimming, bookmarking, and highlighting. 3. Reduction of embedded dialogue and courtly formal phrasing The ST's formal register ('And so she spent part of the year') can slow electronic reading, while my CO adapts the information into accessible prose that flows efficiently on modern layouts.	<i>Narrative accessibility</i> is achieved by embedding the myth in character-driven backstory, ensuring it clarifies motivations and themes without overwhelming the plot. 1. Reframing the punishment as a legible backstory, not an intrusive subplot Instead of reproducing the entire ST episode, I integrate it as background knowledge that informs character psychology. • This keeps the main narrative streamlined. • Readers understand its relevance immediately. 2. Thematic clarity I translate a complex mythic event into a clearly legible theme: • Punishment • Injustice • Coercive control • The threat of social expulsion These themes resonate directly with Anwen's circumstances, reinforcing narrative coherence. 3. Increased reader orientation

3. Maintaining the social function of the tale In the ST, Rhiannon's punishment is a form of public shaming; while in the CO, it survives as a cautionary narrative used to police behaviour (e.g., Anwen's brothers invoking it). - This keeps the cultural <i>function</i> of the story intact while ethically adapting its form. 4. Cultural distance acknowledged through narrative epistemology The tale is framed as a story 'from outside Dyfed's court,' acknowledging that: - not every character has authoritative knowledge of the ST - myths travel unevenly across communities - partial knowledge <i>is itself</i> culturally authentic This keeps the myth embedded within a believable social ecosystem, allowing the reader to gain deeper insight into the worldbuilding.	4. Maintaining semantic clarity that aids screen-reader compatibility Contemporary phrasing, fewer embedded clauses, and clear referential nouns support accessibility technologies (such as screen readers, text-to-speech, and reading aids), which are increasingly central to e-book use.	Because the information is presented as known <i>rumour</i>, readers easily understand: - who knows what - how the story circulates socially - why it matters emotionally This eliminates the risk of overloading readers with unfamiliar mythic detail. 4. Character-motivated framing heightens emotional stakes By making Rhiannon's punishment a childhood story used to discipline Anwen, I create: - immediate emotional accessibility, - a direct link between myth and character arc, - and a clear <i>narrative endpoint</i> (explanation of Anwen's desire to leave home) This ensures contemporary readers understand <i>why</i> the myth matters in my story.
--	---	--

Secondary Research	
Informed All	Fulcher, G. (1997). 'Text Difficulty and Accessibility: Reading Formulae and Expert Judgement'. <i>System</i>, 25(4), pp.497–513. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/s0346-251x(97)00048-1. Lobb, M.K. (2024). 'What Is Romantasy, Anyway?' [online] <i>Writer's Digest</i>. Available at: https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-fiction/what-is-romantasy-anyway.

	Nissen, T.I., Edelman, E.A., Steinmark, L., Logan, K. and Reed, E.K. (2023). 'Microlearning: Evidence-based education that is effective for busy professionals and short attention spans'. Wiley. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/jgc4.1809. Parker, W. (2005). <i>The Four Branches of the Mabinogi</i>. Oregon House, Ca: Bardic Press. Parker, W. (2010). <i>Mabinogion</i>. [online] www.mabinogion.info. Available at: https://www.mabinogion.info/. Rodway, S. (2018). The Mabinogi and the Shadow of Celtic Mythology. <i>Studia Celtica</i>, 52(1). doi:https://doi.org/10.16922/sc.52.4. Watson, D. (2014). Welsh Mythology and Folklore in Popular Culture: Essays on Adaptations in Literature, Film, Television, and Digital Media edited by Audrey L. Becker and Kristin Noone (review). <i>Film & History</i>, 44(1), pp.58–59. White, D.R. (1998). <i>A Century of Welsh Myth in Children's Literature</i>. Google Books. Bloomsbury Academic.
Only for AP1.1 (The Golden Bowl)	The Salisbury Museum. (2022). <i>Wilton Hanging Bowl - The Salisbury Museum</i> . [online] Available at: https://salisburymuseum.org.uk/collections/wilton-hanging-bowl/ .
Only for AP1.2 (Gorsedd Arberth)	The Dyffryn Nantlle Website (n.d.). <i>Places Mentioned in the First Branch of the Mabinogi</i> . [online] Nantlle.com. Available at: http://www.nantlle.com/mabinogi-saesneg-places-mentioned-in-the-first-branch.htm .
Only for AP1.3 (Rhiannon's Backstory)	Dol Celeb. (2020). <i>Rhiannon, grande cavalière celte, femme de Pwyll et mère de Pryderi</i>. [online] Available at: https://www.dol-celeb.com/heros/rhiannon/. Pinterest. (n.d.). <i>140 Best Mabinogion ideas mabinogion, alan lee, alan lee art</i>. [online] Available at: https://www.pinterest.co.uk/danieldardanus/mabinogion/.

Appendix 2 – Responses to Examiners

During my initial viva, approaches to the ‘craft’ of the writing within the creative output were discussed. I appreciate the examiner’s close engagement with my manuscript and the concerns they raised. This appendix responds to the examiners’ comments on a range of interrelated major issues; however, it does not cover the consideration of a number of localised decisions.

A2.1 Narrative Perspective, Focalisation, and Descriptive Ambiguity and Clarity

EE summary concern:

The novel needs a more controlled narrative perspective and more vivid, specific descriptions rather than abstract scene-setting. There are two specific areas the EE highlighted within their comments that will be addressed:

[T]here are times when there’s insufficient scaffolding for the reader to understand what’s happening, particularly as regards the Brotherhood, Tree of Life and other elements at the beginning. Without understanding the Tree of Life, it’s hard to grasp the stakes or how this weaves into the rest of the story. How does the festival relate to the Tree of Life being killed? If it’s such a big deal, then why aren’t we seeing consequences and plans in mitigation? ([PG11, p.6-7](#))

The candidate has struggled with certain crucial elements of writing craft such as narrative perspective for example. While omniscient narration allows the writer to travel where she likes, this privilege should not be executed at the expense of clarity. ([PG11, p.11-12](#))

Response:

Narrative Perspective

In relation to concerns about narrative perspective and necessary scaffolding, I would like to clarify that the elements identified are intentional writing choices which I understand in terms of NA’s and fanfiction-*esque*’s communal writing practices rather than possible weaknesses in craft. Rather than immediately framing the Tree’s death in terms of policy, strategy, or mitigation, the narrative foregrounds deferral, suppression, and ritualised normalcy as central thematic concerns. The festival’s incongruity is not an unresolved narrative gap but seeks to reflect the imagined society’s response to crisis, in which celebration functions as both a distraction and a form of control. Additionally, my novel intentionally withholds full

explanatory detail of the Brotherhood and Tree because it is the third instalment in the series. The partial disclosure is designed to signal to readers who encounter *AOTG* independently that a broader narrative world is already in motion. Given my position as a self-published writer without access to formal marketing services, this strategy emerges as a practical and deliberate intervention. By integrating nuanced suggestions of a broader narrative world, I not only facilitate cross-promotion of my novels but also hope to foster an atmosphere of narrative intrigue. The resulting ambiguity is intended to function as an invitation rather than an omission: readers may choose to continue engaging with *AOTG* as a standalone text or seek out the preceding novels for greater contextual depth.

Focalisation

While I recognise that moving beyond a single focal consciousness can undermine clarity, my use of shifting perspective is an intentional stylistic choice rather than a limitation of technique. A comparable example of this approach can be seen in Scarlett St. Clair's [*A Touch of Darkness* \(2021\)](#), in which perspective shifts throughout the narrative:

"No," she said, and he nodded, carefully pulling his arm free of her grasp. He crossed the room, Persephone assumed to put distance between them. ([St. Clair, 2021, p.45](#))

That's when Hades pulled away. His eyes were alight with a need she felt deep in her core, and they struggled to catch their breath. For a long moment, they remained still. Hades hands were still under her robe, gripping her thighs. Neither of them was sure what to do — she wouldn't stop him if he continued. His fingers were dangerously close to her core, and she knew he could feel her heat. Still, if she gave into this need, she couldn't say how she might feel after, and for some reason, she didn't want to regret Hades. ([St. Clair, 2021, p.90](#))

The clause in the first example is external narration that describes an observable action ('he nodded, carefully pulling his arm free'). Then, the next clause frames that action as her interpretation rather than a narrative fact ('Persephone assumed to put distance between them'). The verb 'assumed' is doing the work, placing it under what seems like an objective narration into inside Persephone's mind. In the latter example, the perspective shifts mid-paragraph from Persephone's subjective perception ('a need she felt deep in her core') into an omniscient register ('they struggled,' 'neither of them was sure what to do'), collapsing two distinct interiorities into one narrative voice.

Echoing St. Clair's approach, *AOTG* deliberately mobilises shifting perspectives to resist confinement within individual subjectivity.

"I [Pryderi] can say with all my heart that these past weeks have shown me the kindness and selflessness Anwen bestows onto those around her. I could not imagine a more suitable wife, partner, and lover." Anwen's face flushed as she smiled next to him. "Please join me in welcoming my new wife-to-be, Anwen!" ([Anton, 2026, p.71](#))

Hafgan stood, no longer able to keep still, and paced the back of his chair. Anwen could see the vein that popped on his forehead, his jaw tightening as he held back from throttling her then and there. *Gods, he is handsome*, she thought, then quickly shooed it away. ([Anton, 2026, p.93](#))

My departures from singular focal positions and the moments in which information exceeds what a focal character could plausibly see or know are purposeful expansions of narrative scope. In the second extract, participial phrases and perception verbs anchor the narration in Anwen's viewpoint while still asserting knowledge of Hafgan's internal emotions without, hopefully, distancing the language, collapsing external detail and assumed intention into a single narrative voice.

In a way which, I believe, is consistent with comparable texts, overall, my writing relies on fluid, often unmarked transitions between perspectives, presenting subjective experience and interpretation as stable narrative fact. This is designed to generate tension between immediacy and omnipresence, rather than to uphold rigid perspectival coherence.

[Descriptive Ambiguity](#)

By allowing meaning and consequence to emerge gradually rather than being explicitly foregrounded, I hope my novel invites the reader to experience disorientation as a lived condition rather than comprehend it at a safe explanatory distance, as is the case in NA fantasy writing. Sarah J. Maas's [A Court of Thorns and Roses \(2016\)](#) similarly withholds key information about faerie politics, the Treaty, and the nature of the 'blight', revealing these elements only gradually. Taking the Treaty as a focal case, it is initially presented to the reader as the foundational historical accord that ended hostilities between the fae and human realms, resulting in a physical wall separating the two territories:

Our territory was too small and poor to maintain a standing army to monitor the wall with Prythian, and we villagers could rely only on the strength of the Treaty forged five hundred years ago...We all knew, deep down, that there was nothing to be done against the faeries. We'd all been told it, regardless of class or rank,

from the moment we were born, the warnings sung to us while we rocked in cradles, the rhymes chanted in schoolyards. ([Maas, 2016, p.27](#))

This agreement is further elaborated to include a crucial stipulation:

A life for a life. Any unprovoked attacks on faerie-kind by humans are to be paid only by a human life in exchange. ([Maas, 2016, p.37](#))

This clause serves as the central narrative catalyst, providing both the justification for Feyre's forcible relocation to Prythian and a moral framework that frames her predicament as an obligation. However, this plot engine is fundamentally undermined, disclosing to the reader (and Feyre) that:

[It] was all a lie. There was no provision for that in the Treaty. You can kill as many innocent faeries as you want and never suffer the consequences. ([Maas, 2016, p.283](#))

Again, I would contend that the communal writing practices and reader assumptions within NA and fanfiction-*esque* influences my choice to prioritise immersive and experiential engagement over immediate exposition. I am trusting ambiguity as a productive interpretive mechanism and favouring the gradual revelation of the world's rules, risks, and hierarchies through the characters' own encounters. Arguably, then, this is not an absolute question of the 'quality' of the writing (as either 'good' or 'bad'), but the choice reflects my sense of the expectations of the community at which the work is aimed. Feedback from my beta readers suggests that this use of description is consistent with their expectations. Within *AOTG*, for example, the building plot of the broken cauldron and its pieces has been set up since early chapters:

Pryderi let him go, recovering his composure. "That *cythraul* gains more followers each day. If we do not get the Cauldron mended before they mount their attack, there will be heavy losses on both sides, when really there is only *one* who needs to die." ([Anton, 2026, p.30](#))

Arawn's directive for Anwen to recover the pieces of the cauldron is presented as deliberately opaque to both Anwen and the reader at this point:

"It's a piece of the Cauldron."

Its edges were jagged, and a line of gold, runic script ran along each side. Judging by its size, the whole thing, complete, was no larger than a soup pot.

Arawn cocked an eyebrow at her. "I'm glad you can't feel its magic. It's good you came to *Annwfn*."

“Good?” she asked, incredulously.

“Yes, cause now we know you can retrieve the rest of them.”

([Anton, 2026, pp.63-64](#))

It is only through the gradual incorporation of alternative narrative perspectives throughout the following chapters that the broader strategic intent, understanding and underlying coherence of this plot are explained:

“The Cauldron is made of dark magic,” Branwen jumped in. “As powerful and old as The Tree of Life and The Great God himself. It brings the dead back to life, but far from what you or I would call living. It’s been used in the past many times to raise undead armies.” ([Anton, 2026, p.92](#))

“We’ve seen the Cauldron’s magic first-hand in the War...Millennia ago, we were all vying for each other’s territories. It was a bloody war that ravaged hundreds of thousands of lives in *Annwfn*. Arawn used the Cauldron then to quell all our forces.” ([Anton, 2026, pp.97-98](#))

“You see, you have no magic, meaning there is nothing else that will interfere with the Cauldron’s magic if you are the one to bring its pieces together. It is your death that will bring prosperity to the other Divine Courts and me, and break Hafgan, all at once.” ([Anton, 2026, p.215](#))

Ultimately, through Arawn’s own disclosure, both Anwen and the reader, hopefully, come to understand the full picture:

“Did you think there was no point to any of this?” he asked. “I wanted to teach you—mould you. You have so much potential...”

Anwen held her mouth in horror. She didn’t want to hear it. “You did all of this for me? You killed so many people so I could learn...? What?” ([Anton, 2026, p.229](#))

This structure of *AOTG* reinforces my commitment to immersion over exposition by allowing meaning to emerge cumulatively rather than immediately. The fragmented introduction of the Cauldron plot demonstrates how I privilege character-bound knowledge and delayed understanding to align the reader’s experience with Anwen’s own limited viewpoint. This approach seeks to embrace ambiguity not as a flaw, but as an intentional interpretive space in which readers actively assemble coherence over time. In this sense, the text reflects reader-response dynamics, in which meaning is not fixed at the point of introduction but co-produced through progression, expectation, and hindsight, in line with similar examples familiar to the community of readers (as affirmed by beta-reader engagement).

Descriptive Clarity

I acknowledge that certain sections required clarification (particularly where shortfalls may fall outside the wider argument yet do not align with the general parameters of NA writing) and, notwithstanding points made elsewhere in this appendix that suggest change is not always necessary, I have made targeted revisions to address these areas (see the table of examples below for comparison).

Original (Anton, 2024)	Revised (Anton, 2026)
The first night of the festival went without a hitch. Anwen and her mother’s planning was applauded by all who attended the grand feast, which marked the commencement of the festival. It was a time to forget the woes of the world and celebrate their lives in that moment. The Olde Hall was packed with friends and family, and their friends and their family. Hounds chased around people’s legs as they raced in and out of the room, and the lit candles above hung on enchanted spider’s webs, allowing the festivities to go on into the night. Fresh food and drink filled the tables, the partygoers gobbling it down as fast as the servants could replace each dish. (Chapter 4, p.21)	The first night of the festival went without a hitch. It was a time to forget the world's woes and celebrate their lives. The Olde Hall was packed with friends and family, and their friends and their family. Fresh food and drink filled the tables, the partygoers gobbling it down as fast as the servants could replace each dish. Hounds chased around people’s legs and raced in and out of the room. Lit candles hung on enchanted spiders’ webs, allowing the festivities to go on into the night. A fire roared from the other side of the hall where a suckling pig was being roasted with wild garlic and fresh thyme, yet Anwen could barely feel the heat. She felt smaller than she had in years, her place far from where she usually sat. Her hand stilled on her goblet, and the wine within was shining like rubies as it caught the candlelight. (Chapter 4, p.15)
“Wonderful, is it not?” Pryderi asked as he pulled her towards the collection of fairy pools, their waters crystal clear. Anwen gasped as she took in the beauty before her. Small bubbles popped as they reached the surface. If she were to wade into it, it would reach up to her knees. Around the bank and boulders, vines and beautiful flowers grew, but that wasn’t what held her attention. In the centre of the spring was an entryway of enchanted wood, branches of dark grain intertwined against the verdant backdrop of the forest. Stairs led from below the water up to it. Pryderi’s house crest was carved into the base while another—one that Anwen didn’t recognise—was visible from the archway’s pinnacle. (Chapter 12, p.53)	Around the pools' banks, vines, boulders, and beautiful flowers grew. Bubbles popped as they reached the surface of the water. In the centre of the main pool was a set of marble stairs that led from the water up to an enchanted entryway. Its arch was made of dark-grain branches that intertwined, making them stand out against the verdant backdrop of the forest. At its top, a house crest of a wolf with mighty stag antlers was carved, its unnerving eyes looking down on those who would enter. (Chapter 12, p.45)
She had found a conservatory on the outskirts of the garden, large enough to host the grand	Anwen had found a conservatory on the outskirts of the garden, large enough to host

Original (Anton, 2024)	Revised (Anton, 2026)
affair she desired, and was amazed by the crystal-clear glass that covered the thick, floating marble columns that decorated the interior. She'd never seen such large sheets that were strong enough to hold up the intricate marble facade that only magic could accomplish. (Chapter 16, p.69)	the grand affair she desired, and was amazed by the crystal-clear glass that surrounded its thick, marble columns. She'd never seen such large sheets of glass that were strong enough to hold up the intricate marble... something only magic could accomplish. (Chapter 15, p.59)
Anwen floated rather than walked her way down the stairs of the castle and into the manicured gardens. As her and Siriol rounded the hedges, she was swept away at how magical the conservatory looked in the night. Lights floated calmly in every direction, as if they were stars plucked from the sky for this very event and had them dance for her alone. She could hear the thrum of laughter and chatter which melded intricately with the musicians inside the conservatory, whose notes could be heard through the many open glass doors. (Chapter 18, p.79)	Anwen floated rather than walked down the castle steps and into the manicured gardens. She could hear the thrum of laughter and chatter, which melded intricately with the musicians inside the conservatory, their notes carrying through the many open glass doors. As she and Siriol rounded the hedges, she was swept away by how magical it looked at night. Lights floated in every direction, as if they were stars plucked from the sky and had danced for her alone. (Chapter 17, p.69)

A2.2 Readability, Sentence-Level Control and Creative Polish

EE summary concern:

The creative component needs stronger craft, including clearer prose and stronger editorial control.

Key issues concern lack of precision in word choice (e.g. 'She could see the condescension in his eyes as they lingered on certain places too long'), inappropriate use of prepositions (e.g. 'Her eyes froze towards him'), issues with homonyms (e.g. plain versus plane), and confusing use of pronouns (n.b. pronouns relate to the last appropriate character, so if there are multiple female characters in a scene, make more use of names to ensure that when you use 'she', you are referring to the most recently named female character). (PG11, p.7)

The central problem is not a matter of genre or style, but of clarity of expression and writing craft. The text is littered with typos and errors in spelling, punctuation, syntax and grammar. In this respect, the candidate has not demonstrated an advanced level of editing and proofreading skills... The use of action as a dialogue tag is generally considered poor style in professional writing... Narrative structure is another problematic area. In the broadest terms, the chapters often follow scenes rather than carefully structured storytelling

units; several chapters are as short as a page... the result is a fragmented narrative that is closer to screenwriting than fiction writing. ([PG11, pp.11-13](#))

Response:

Readability

I would like to clarify that, beyond addressing issues that materially affect meaning or comprehension, I have chosen *not* to eliminate all surface-level errors or irregularities within the text. This decision reflects the realities of my novel's intended category, readership, and mode of circulation, rather than any lack of awareness of editorial standards.

Regarding grammatical deviation, I have chosen to prioritise voice and accessibility over corrective conformity. The intended reader does not approach this text with expectations of technical perfection, nor does the NA category conventionally demand it. Imposing such standards retroactively would risk misaligning my work with its audience and flattening the pacing that is central to its appeal.

Sentence-Level Control and Creative Polish

NA writing frequently adopts clipped, fragmentary sentences and blunt, conversational phrasing and tagging that prioritise immediacy and attitude over formal grammatical completeness. These constructions, while technically incorrect, heighten tension and character voice, aligning with NA reader expectations of intensity and pace. For comparison, in K.A. Knight's [Den of Vipers \(2020\)](#), scenes are largely driven by rapid-fire, minimally tagged dialogue, often with overlapping or interruptive exchanges and little intervening description. This creates a deliberately breathless, immediate pacing novel (even when speaker attribution or syntactic clarity is loosened):

"He's going to puke," I observe calmly. "Nah, faint," Garrett counters.

"Both," Kenzo interjects, and we all watch as Ryder starts on the next finger, carefully and coolly.

Kenzo was right, the guy pukes. I skip away to avoid it, and then he passes out, landing in his own vomit. Fuck. I hand over a hundred and so does Garrett. Ryder sits back on his heels and waits for him to wake up. ([Knight, 2020, p.151](#))

Minor errors, loosened constructions, and informal syntactic choices are frequently tolerated, and in some cases unnoticed, by the intended readership so long as narrative momentum and

emotional clarity are maintained. The table below highlights a few examples from Knight's novel.

	Area	Explanation
Chapter 15	If I'm lying, if he's innocent...but things like innocence doesn't exist anymore... (pp.82-83)	The plural 'things' should grammatically take the plural verb 'don't'.
Chapter 33	I can smell my own blood. It coats the air, as do my screams . (p.262)	While 'screams' is plural, the construction creates a slight parallel error with the singular 'it' (blood) coating the air.
Chapters: 1, 19, 33, 59	Ryder might be the face, Garret might be the enforcer, the muscle... (Chapter 1, p.2) I palm my gun and notice Garret sneaking up behind the man... (Chapter 19, p.128) "And me being on you—" She sighs. "Fuck, I'm sorry, Garret ." (Chapter 33, p.266) D uses it, Kenzo blocks it, Garret unleashes it, by Ry? Ry lives in it. (Chapter 59, p.444)	The name of one of the main Vipers is spelt with two 't's throughout the vast majority of the book (Garrett), but it frequently drops to one 't' in specific scenes (Garret).

AOTG is positioned within NA, a category that (in self-publishing) operates under different reader expectations from those assumed by traditionally published texts. My novel's script-like qualities, heavy reliance on dialogue, use of action within dialogue tags, and scene-driven chapters are therefore not indicators of insufficient craft but rather conscious alignment with reader expectations. Below are examples of issues that may be grammatically incorrect but are likely to be overlooked by the intended reader.

	Acceptable Grammatical Errors within NA	Grammatically Correct Version
Chapter 5	Time passed slowly, the serene field washing away the tension in her body until she was ready to rejoin the others on the hunt. (p.20)	Time passed slowly, and the serene field gradually washed away the tension in her body until she was ready to rejoin the others on the hunt.
Chapter 8	"They were talking about <i>me</i> ," she confessed , her breath hitched in her throat. (p.32)	"They were talking about <i>me</i> ," Anwen replied , her breath hitched in her throat.
Chapter 13	"Her spirits are low," the Matron reassured him . (p.50)	"Her spirits are low," the Matron said .

Chapter 17	One by one, Anwen was introduced to everyone , their welcomes and well wishes seeming to relax her more and more as the night went on. (p.72)	One by one, Anwen was introduced to everyone . Their welcomes and well wishes seemed to relax her more and more as the night went on.
------------	---	---

A2.3 Stakes, Set-Up, Pay-Off, and Emotional Momentum

EE summary concern:

The creative work needs clearer stakes, a stronger set-up, and a more effective pay-off. There is a specific area highlighted here that will be addressed:

For instance, does Anwen guess that if she survives the cauldron it will be, like Efnysien, without her voice and her fertility? If she doesn't know what she's risking, then the sacrifice is harder to engage with emotionally. ([PG11, p.6](#))

Response:

Narrative Stakes and Emotional Pay-Off

Within NA, narrative stakes and emotional pay-off are conveyed by the protagonists through contextual knowledge and sustained thematic pressure, encouraging the reader to infer significance through their active engagement with the material rather than through explicit articulation. The emotional pay-off likewise depends on implication and recognition, prompting the reader to trace consequence and sacrifice across the narrative as a whole rather than within a single explanatory moment. In this way, the clarity of the stakes, narrative preparation, and payoff is embedded structurally and symbolically rather than achieved through direct foregrounding. A comparable strategy operates in several respects in Paul Krueger's [Last Call at the Nightshade Lounge \(2016\)](#), though I focus here on the narrative structure of Vincent's video. Vincent's pre-recorded message functions as a structural container for the novel's thematic concerns. Rather than recounting plot events, it articulates principles that the narrative has already dramatised:

First things first: there's a reason our job description is bartending first, demon slaying second. It's service, Bailey. Whether it's an old fashioned or an ass-kicking, you're serving it up. That's why I put you behind the counter for a few days before I took you out on the street. I wanted you to see who you were protecting. I wanted you to appreciate what the job means. What *your* job means. ([Krueger, 2016, pp.225-226](#))

The term 'service' recurs here as a thematic key, and its interpretive weight depends upon the accumulation of prior narrative detail: Bailey scrubbing toilets, memorising cocktail recipes, navigating a crowded bar, and gradually recognising that the ostensibly mundane labour of bartending underpins the ostensibly extraordinary labour of demon-slaying. The novel establishes this connection across numerous earlier episodes, such that the video's affective force derives not from its explicit content but from the reader's recognition of those training sequences. Vincent's final injunction – 'don't go it alone. That was my mistake' ([Krueger, 2016, p. 227](#)) – resonates, arguably, because the reader has already witnessed his isolation: his tendency to work alone, his festering resentment towards Garrett, and his eventual loss of sight in pursuit of an unattainable formula. The video requires no elaboration, as the narrative has already done that work. The emotional pay-off depends on the reader recognising these patterns of sacrifice and consequence across the narrative.

I employ a comparable structural logic within *AOTG*, wherein each recovery of a cauldron piece escalates the magnitude of the sacrifice required (both symbolic and material). In the retrieval of the first piece, Anwen is compelled to negotiate with Llywd/Not-Llwyd. The demanded exchange (Marged's necklace) serves ostensibly as the price for her companions' survival. Though not explicitly revealed, this transaction is a calculated deception orchestrated by Arawn, whose true aim is to assess Anwen's willingness to relinquish the last vestige of her mundane attachments:

Anwen didn't give it a second thought as she jerked the chain from her neck and held it out for him to see. "And the piece?" she bartered, lips tight, remembering what they'd come for. ([Anton, 2026, p.117](#))

With the second piece, the stakes intensify considerably. Here, the sacrifice is no longer a tangible object but an irreplaceable loss: the death of a close companion. Arawn, having foreseen the events at the ridge, subjects Anwen to an emotional ordeal intended to test her resilience in the face of profound grief, thereby deepening the moral and psychological cost of her quest:

Anwen had been prepared to face another trial, to give up another part of herself in exchange for the piece.

She gripped for her necklace... She couldn't think of anything more to give than what had already been taken. ([Anton, 2026, p.165](#))

The acquisition of the third piece, held by Pryderi, introduces a more implicit form of sacrifice. Rather than an explicit offering, the cost manifests as Anwen's forced re-entry into a space of betrayal and mistrust. Having lost faith in both Pryderi and Efnysien, she must willingly expose herself (physically and psychologically) to danger:

"I'll go," she said. "Pryderi won't expect me to be a spy." ([Anton, 2026, p.177](#))

Finally, Arawn presents the last piece in conjunction with a culminating trial: the act of reassembly itself. Here, the sacrifice becomes existential and epistemological. Anwen confronts not only the overwhelming power of the completed cauldron but also the potential erasure of her lived experience in Annwfn, and the moral burden of abandoning those still subject to divine forces. The decision to proceed entails a relinquishment of certainty, belonging, and security:

She stared at the three chests before her. If possible, she never wanted to open them. She knew the power *one* piece held, but *four*... She didn't want to forget her time in *Annwfn*. She didn't want to lose her voice. But she couldn't fathom leaving all those who were still vulnerable in the hands of the gods behind her, especially if there wasn't going to be an Arbiter around. ([Anton, 2026, p.230](#))

Throughout, I deliberately resist overdetermining the narrative's interpretive framework, instead inviting readers to infer significance through the interplay of action, implication, and thematic resonance. This approach, I hope, encourages active engagement, positioning meaning as co-constructed with the reader rather than passively received, in a way that, again, is consistent with the expectations of the community for which I am writing.

Emotional Impact

Regarding the examiner's specific observation that the emotional impact of Anwen's sacrifice was previously weakened by insufficient clarity around what she understood she was risking, I agree with this. In response, I have revised the cauldron sequence to make Anwen's internal awareness and uncertainty clearer. The scene now foregrounds her knowledge of Efnysien's fate and her fear that survival may come at a comparable cost, particularly regarding her voice. By clarifying that Anwen enters the ritual with at least a partial understanding of these possible consequences, the sacrifice is repositioned as an informed and emotionally fraught decision rather than a vague act of devotion:

Anwen looked at Efnysien. Would she end up like him? She wasn't concerned with having no magic; it was nothing new to her, but her voice... She wouldn't be able to communicate, like Enysien could, or *sing*. She'd already given up so much in *Annwfn*, and it seemed determined to take more. Why? Why was he doing this? She looked again at the bodies below, and then back to Arawn, finally understanding. ([Anton, 2026, p.230](#))

These changes strengthen my narrative's stakes by aligning external action with Anwen's final internal conflict, allowing the reader to experience the tension between fear, duty, and self-loss alongside her. As a result, the set-up for the sacrifice is clearer, and the emotional pay-off is earned through the articulation of risk and turmoil.

Additionally, I felt the depiction of Anwen and Hafgan's relationship required further development, which led to the incorporation of an additional chapter ([Chapter 40](#)). This expansion enhances the emotional impact of their relationship for the reader, offering a more nuanced understanding of both their physical and domestic dimensions that characterise their newfound relationship:

He set Anwen down long enough to conjure steaming water and bubbles, then collected her again. He settled them both into the water, Anwen falling asleep in his hold while he cleaned her, dragging the washcloth methodically over her body. He did the same for himself and was about to dry them both off when Anwen squeaked in protest.

Hafgan used all his willpower not to take her again then and there—they'd just gotten clean for fucks sake. Instead, he disentangled himself from her, letting her sleepily lounge in the water as he dried, dressed, and sat on the bed.

Moments later, Anwen woke, feeling the emptiness around her. Sudsy bubbles popped as she stepped out, Hafgan watching from the bed as those same bubbles slipped down from her hips to the floor. He was glad he could appreciate her like this. ([Anton, 2026, pp.185-186](#))

A2.4 Worldbuilding Specificity and Originality

EE summary concern:

The worldbuilding should be less derivative, more specific, and more original in its presentation.

While genre conventions of YA and NA fiction tend to prioritise dialogue over the other narrative modes, *The Arbiter of the Gods* is also a fantasy novel, a genre that requires a significant investment in world-building. This is the

weakest element of the novel, as the lack of description precludes the creation of a 'vivid and continuous' fictional reality. ([PG11, p.12](#))

Response:

I acknowledge the examiner's concern regarding worldbuilding, particularly the expectation that fantasy should present a densely realised and continuously vivid fictional environment. However, my novel's approach deliberately emphasises depth, layering, and internal coherence rather than sustained surface description. *NA fantasy* can work by establishing its worlds through implication, recurrence, and readerly inference, trusting the audience to construct a coherent mental model from limited but precisely deployed detail. In such texts, worldbuilding operates cumulatively rather than pictorially.

For example, in Hannah Nicole Maehrer's [Assistant to the Villain \(2023\)](#), the world of Rennedawn is not exhaustively described but is instead revealed through Evie's everyday interactions (such as the casual references to the Valiant Guards, enchanted beings like Kingsley the magically enhanced frog, and the bureaucratised functioning of the villain's manor) allowing readers to infer political structures, magical systems, and social hierarchies without extended exposition. Expanding on Kingsley as an example, his nature is never explained in a lore dump. He appears when Trystan (The Villain) simply pulls a frog from a pouch and states:

"This is no ordinary frog," he reasoned. "He can... understand and communicate with humans as well as if he were one." ([Maehrer, 2023, p.11](#))

Subsequently, Kingsley's crown and his name are introduced with equal nonchalance, and the implications for the magical world are conveyed through subtle moments. When Trystan explains why men pursued him: 'Remember, magical animals sell for a high price' ([p.81](#)), this single line establishes an entire illegal, lucrative, and predatory market for enchanted creatures. Additionally, Kingsley holds up limited communication signs (OUCH, DANGER, BAD IDEA, HALP), revealing the system underpinning magical understanding: it is physical, constrained, and treated as an ordinary office accessory. Finally, the most profound revelation occurs in an offhand internal thought that is disclosed in a single reflective sentence:

For if Kingsley was a prince once more, The Villain knew how stark his inadequacies would feel against his old friend's benevolent chivalry. ([Maehrer, 2023, p.328](#))

My novel's worldbuilding is not derivative but selective: it draws on similar conventions of the category while resisting the assumption that vividness is synonymous with descriptive abundance. The spatial logic of the world (specifically, how locations relate to ritual, power, and consequence) is intended to be internally consistent even when description is restrained. For example, in *AOTG*, each Divine Court has its own distinct portal rather than a single generic Otherworld threshold. Pryderi's portal sits in a fairy pool, entered via marble stairs rising from water, while Hafgan's, in Elendi, is chiselled from limestone on a craggy hill, cracked and non-functional. The portal's physical substance communicates the god's standing before any dialogue does:

Its arch was made of dark-grain branches that intertwined, making them stand out against the verdant backdrop of the forest. At its top, a house crest of a wolf with mighty stag antlers was carved, its unnerving eyes looking down on those who would enter. ([Anton, 2026, p.45](#))

In the mild weather, the portal in Hafgan's Divine Court, Elendi, could be seen from where they stood, up on one of the craggy hills. Unlike Pryderi's, his portal was chiselled from limestone. It still held Arawn's sigil at its peak, and to match it, Hafgan's crest of a ring of thorns with a crescent moon at its centre, though the portal itself was cracked and no longer worked. ([Anton, 2026, p.102](#))

Another example is the introduction of Arberth Castle by proportion alone. The castle is not described by its stone, its towers, its battlements, or its layout:

Lavish, hedged gardens and a gravelled path led up to a magnificent castle. The castle was twice the height of Llansteffan's, though it was hard to tell as a tree thrice the size of the castle sprouted from its centre to shade the whole structure in flowers, fruits, and leaves. Stained glass in every imaginable colour reflected the summer sun above them, casting its hues across the white marble hallways within. ([Anton, 2026, p.46](#))

The sole descriptor is relational: 'twice the height of Llansteffan's, though it was hard to tell as a tree thrice the size of the castle sprouted from its centre'. Two comparative ratios do the work of a page of architectural description. The intention is for the reader's imagination to co-create my world rather than receive it fully pre-assembled. Finally, beta reader feedback indicates that the world is intelligible, coherent, and emotionally resonant, suggesting that this approach has proven effective in practice (see [Appendix 3](#)).

In conclusion, the *AOTG*'s worldbuilding operates through detail that privileges structural coherence, symbolic resonance, and readerly participation over exhaustive exposition. Rather

than diminishing the vividness of the fictional environment, this approach reconfigures it as something emergent: assembled through patterns of recurrence, relational description, and affective stakes. By situating meaning within implication rather than articulation, my narrative invites readers to actively construct and inhabit my world, thereby deepening immersion through engagement rather than spectacle. Consequently, *AOTG* aligns with a broader contemporary shift in NA fantasy toward inferential worldbuilding, demonstrating that richness need not be measured by descriptive volume but by the consistency, suggestiveness, and interpretive openness of the narrative design.

Appendix 2 References

Anton, I. (2024). *ANTON_1201792_AOTG Novel_PhD_Nov2024*.

Anton, I. (2026). *ANTON_1201792_AOTG Novel_PhD_Aug2026*.

Knight, K.A. (2020). *Den of Vipers*. Dark Knight Publishing.

Krueger, P. (2016). *Last Call at the Nightshade Lounge*. Quirk Books.

Maas, S.J. (2016). *A Court of Thorns and Roses*. Bloomsbury.

Maehrer, H.N. (2023). *Assistant to the Villain*. Entangled: Red Tower Books.

Reynolds, S. and Casale, A. (2025). *Exam Board Report Form PHD (PG11)*.

St Clair, S. (2021). *A Touch of Darkness*. Bloom Books.

Appendix 3 – Beta Reader Reviews

A3.1 Beta Reader 1 (2022) – Mabinogion-Literate Reader

[A]ll I can say is that it's fantastic, I thoroughly loved it! I think it is a compelling story and you have used *The Mabinogion* characters brilliantly... I feel completely at ease with [how you used them] and to be honest, I wasn't sure if I would, as I tend to want to see/get to the authentic, true facts of historic events/characters/stories... I could go on and list loads of aspects I really liked, but I think really all you need to know is that I think it's a great structure, the characters are well developed – I even fell for Hafgan myself! And a fab twist, him not being the baddie – just goes to show there's always two sides! The imagery is amazing, and I think the fighting, magical and intimate 'scenes' are believable and moving.

A3.2 Beta Reader 2 (2024) – NA Myth Novice Reader

Couldn't put the book down and read it in two days! The magic was amazing, and as a thot at heart, I'm here to certify that Hafgan is an absolute babe. My biggest annoyance is when book series change POV, but with this one, I prefer it. Overall, this was more my vibe.

A3.3 Beta Reader 3 (2026) – Welsh Native Reader

I have really enjoyed it. I especially like how you have woven the Welsh mythology into the story, and the way the world of *Annwfn* is coming through is really engaging. Anwen is a great character as well. I have found myself really invested in her journey. I was also so excited to see Narberth included (as that is where I live), so that was a really lovely touch for me personally. Also... I may have developed a slight soft spot for Pryderi!

A3.4 Beta Reader 4 (2026) – Welsh Native Reader

I have now worked my way through *The Arbiter of the Gods* and I just wanted to say how much I have genuinely enjoyed it. You have created such a rich and immersive world, and I really love how you have woven the Welsh mythology into the story in a way that feels natural rather than heavy. It also feels like a real step on from your earlier work. I really liked how the ideas around Jade and magic have been developed into something much bigger in scope here, especially with *Annwfn* and the whole Divine Court. It all feels more layered and confident. From a Welsh perspective, it honestly feels really well grounded. The use of place, tone, and mythology just feels right, and it never felt forced or over-explained. It still has that sense of being rooted in Wales, which I think is really important, especially with a story like this. Anwen is such a strong central character. I found myself really rooting

for her quite early on, and the 'no magic' angle adds so much to her journey. There is something quite emotional about her position and it definitely kept me invested in what was going to happen next. I also really liked the contrast between the different worlds, and how *Annwfn* is introduced. It feels vivid and thought through, and you can tell how much care has gone into building it. The dynamic with Pryderi is really interesting as well... there were definitely a few 'omg what is he actually up to, you sneaky, SHE IS NOT YOUR VESSLE' moments for me as things started to unfold! I actually found myself thinking that Arawn might be a better match for Anwen. He feels much more honest in how he interacts with her, even if he is more intense, whereas Pryderi feels a bit too controlled and HIS INTENTIONS ARE NOT RIGHT - also find myself with like a crucifix with him 🛐 like back off!! If I was being picky, I would just say that in a few places the description gets quite dense, so tightening that slightly might help keep the pace moving, particularly when the tension is building. There are also moments where bringing the stakes out a little earlier could make things feel even more gripping. Overall though, it is such an imaginative piece of work and you should be really proud of it. You can really see how much time, thought, and effort has gone into it and I cannot wait for you to write more!!

Appendix 4 – Secondary Research (Novel Bibliography)

- Anon, (2020). *Medieval Town Wallpapers*. [online] Available at: <https://wallpaperaccess.com/medieval-town>.
- Barrand, C. (2017). *How The Welsh Bury Their Dead: Death Superstitions And Death In Wales*. [online] Spooky Isles. Available at: <https://www.spookyisles.com/supersition-death-wales/>.
- Black, E. (2006). *Dryads in Celtic Mythology*. [online] little-details.livejournal.com. Available at: <https://little-details.livejournal.com/1221646.html>.
- Britannica (2019). Musical performance - The Middle Ages. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/art/musical-performance/The-Middle-Ages>.
- Carradice, P. (2012). *Welsh courting customs*. [online] BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/wales/entries/a0ed7c27-49f3-3137-b615-aacfdd874637>.
- Davies, S. (2007). *The Mabinogion*. Oxford University Press.
- Dol Celeb. (2020). *Rhiannon, grande cavalière celte, femme de Pwyll et mère de Pryderi*. [online] Available at: <https://www.dol-celeb.com/heros/rhiannon/>.
- Ellis, C.J. (2020). *An Illustrated Guide to Welsh Monsters and Mythical Beasts*. [online] Kickstarter. Available at: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/collettejellis/an-illustrated-guide-to-welsh-monsters-and-mythica>.
- Encyclopedia Britannica. (2020). *Metalwork - Lead*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/metalwork/Lead>.
- Evans, M. (2015). The Mabinogion: Wales' monsters and mythical beasts. *BBC News*. [online] 29 Dec. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-34859676>.
- Eveland, T.R.J. (2018). *List of Medieval Textiles, Furs & Leather Fabric*. [online] The Medieverse: Tim's Realistic 'medieval' FANTASY Blog. Available at: <https://timothyrevelevand.com/2018/08/14/medieval-textiles/>.
- Fordham University (2017). *Cauldron · Medieval London Objects · Medieval London*. [online] medievallondon.ace.fordham.edu. Available at: <https://medievallondon.ace.fordham.edu/exhibits/show/medieval-london-objects/cauldron>.

- Goldade, J. (2018). *Cultural Spotlight: Welsh Funeral Traditions*. [online] Frazer Consultants. Available at: <https://frazerconsultants.com/2018/01/cultural-spotlight-welsh-funeral-traditions/>.
- Hodson, J. (2002). *The Smell of the Middle Ages*. [online] www.triviumpublishing.com. Available at: <http://www.triviumpublishing.com/articles/smellofthemiddleages.html>.
- Mary Elizabeth May (2017). *Aconitum napellus (Monkshood): A Purple Poison*. [online] Poison.org. Available at: <https://www.poison.org/articles/why-is-monkshood-considered-a-poison--174>.
- Mersey, D. (1997). *Medieval Welsh Warriors and Warfare*. [online] www.castlewales.com. Available at: <http://www.castlewales.com/warfare.html#:~:text=As%20mentioned%20above%2C%20the%20main>.
- Mittleman, J. (2020). *Medieval Naming Guides: Welsh, Cornish, and Breton*. [online] www.s-gabriel.org. Available at: <https://www.s-gabriel.org/names/pceltic.shtml>.
- Modern Farmer. (2018). *7 Smokable Plants You Can Grow That Aren't Marijuana*. [online] Available at: <https://modernfarmer.com/2018/07/7-smokable-plants-you-can-grow-that-arent-marijuana/>.
- North Wales Wildlife Trust (2020). *Water mint*. [online] www.wildlifetrusts.org. Available at: <https://www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/wildflowers/water-mint>.
- Oxford Reference. (2021). *Cythraul*. [online] Available at: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095656725>.
- Parker, W. (2010). *Mabinogion*. [online] www.mabinogion.info. Available at: <https://www.mabinogion.info/>.
- Pinterest. (n.d.). *23 Welsh monsters and mythology ideas | mythology, mythical creatures, creatures*. [online] Available at: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/clotrex/welsh-monsters-and-mythology/>.
- Pinterest. (n.d.). *40 WALES IN WORDS ideas | words, wales, welsh*. [online] Available at: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/wescelt/wales-in-words/>.
- Pinterest. (n.d.). *140 Best Mabinogion ideas | mabinogion, alan lee, alan lee art*. [online] Available at: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/danieldardanus/mabinogion/>.
- Prince, F. (2017). *How Table Manners as We Know Them Were a Renaissance Invention*. [online] [Nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com). Available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/magazine/2017/03-04/table-manners-renaissance-catherine-de-medici/>.

- Quotes, W.F. (n.d.). *Mabinogion Quotes: top 8 famous quotes about Mabinogion*. [online] www.wisefamousquotes.com. Available at: <https://www.wisefamousquotes.com/quotes-about-mabinogion/>.
- Schwarez, J. (2017). *What are smelling salts?* [online] Office for Science and Society. Available at: <https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/health-you-asked/what-are-smelling-salts#:~:text=They%20called%20it%20%22sal%20ammoniac>.
- Shakespeare, A.-P. (2019). *What Made Welsh Archers Among the Most Feared in Europe?* [online] Medium. Available at: <https://medium.com/@andrewpaulshakespeare/what-made-welsh-archers-among-the-most-feared-in-europe-1defd4dd258>.
- Shea, L. (n.d.). *Medieval Cutlery - Life in Medieval Days*. [online] Lisa Shae. Available at: <https://lisashea.com/lisabase/writing/medieval/cutlery.html#:~:text=There%20were%20two%2Dtined%20forks>.
- Sinclair, H.R. (2016). *A Writers Guide to Monkshood*. [online] I Am HR Sinclair. Available at: <https://www.iamhrsinclair.com/2016/07/18/a-writers-guide-to-monkshood/>.
- Snell, M. (2010). *Medieval Clothing and Fabrics*. [online] ThoughtCo. Available at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/medieval-clothing-and-fabrics-1788613>.
- The Dyffryn Nantlle Website (n.d.). *Places Mentioned in the First Branch of the Mabinogi*. [online] Nantlle.com. Available at: <http://www.nantlle.com/mabinogi-saesneg-places-mentioned-in-the-first-branch.htm>.
- The Mabinogion Summary. (n.d.). [online] www.bookrags.com. BookRags. Available at: <http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-the-mabinogion/objectsplaces.html#gsc.tab=0>.
- The Salisbury Museum. (2022). *Wilton Hanging Bowl - The Salisbury Museum*. [online] Available at: <https://salisburymuseum.org.uk/collections/wilton-hanging-bowl/>.
- Torheim, T. (2019). Were there dryads (or something similar) in Celtic, Welsh, Norse, etc. mythology? What folklore was built around nature from the 1200s-17... [online] Quora. Available at: <https://www.quora.com/Were-there-dryads-or-something-similar-in-Celtic-Welsh-Norse-etc-mythology-What-folklore-was-built-around-nature-from-the-1200s-1700s>.
- Unconventional Wedding. (2019). *All About Celtic Weddings- History, Handfasting And More! Unconventional Wedding*. [online] Available at: <https://unconventionalwedding.co.uk/celtic-weddings-history-handfasting-and-more/>.
- welshgirlsnames.co.uk. (2013). *Welsh Girls Names Letters I to Y*. [online] Available at: <https://welshgirlsnames.co.uk/names-i-to-y/>.

- White, D.R. (1998). *A Century of Welsh Myth in Children's Literature*. Google Books. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Wikipedia Contributors (n.d.). *Ceffyl Dŵr*. [online] Wikipedia. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceffyl_D%C5%B5r.
- Wikipedia Contributors (2020). *Cŵn Annwn*. [online] Wikipedia. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C5%B5n_Annwn.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Cairn*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cairn>.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Carnwennan*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnwennan>.
- Wikipedia. (2023). *Efnysien*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efnysien>.
- Wikipedia. (2024). *Cyhyraeth*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyhyraeth>.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Eisteddfod*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eisteddfod>.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Gwyllgi*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwyllgi>.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Gwyllion*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwyllion>.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Holidays in Wales*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holidays_in_Wales.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirteen_Treasures_of_the_Island_of_Britain#Dyrnwyn.
- Wikipedia. (2021). *Tylwyth Teg*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tylwyth_Teg.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Welsh mythology*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_mythology#Mythical_creatures.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Welsh mythology in the arts and popular culture*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_mythology_in_the_arts_and_popular_culture.
- Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Ysbryd*. [online] Available at: <https://cy.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ysbryd>.
- Woodland Trust (2019). *A-Z of British trees*. [online] Woodland Trust. Available at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees/>.
- www.britannica.com. (n.d.). *Belvedere Architecture*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/art/belvedere>.

www.merriam-webster.com. (n.d.). *Definition of VIELLE*. [online] Available at:
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vielle>.

Wyman, A. (2014). *Welsh Fantasy and Arthurian Dreams: The Art Conceptor behind The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*. [online] Ashley Wyman. Available at:
<https://ashleywyman.weebly.com/the-golden-age-of-illustration/alan-lee-1947-2014>.

Appendix 5 – Secondary Research (Bibliography)

- Anton, I. (2016). *The Exploration of New Adult Fiction and Its Move to Cross Adult Literature*. Dissertation.
- Anton, I. (2018). *To Those Who Never Knew*. IBellaAnton Books.
- Anton, I. (2019). *To Those Who Survive*. IBellaAnton Books.
- AO3 (2024). Tags FAQ | Archive of Our Own. [online] archiveofourown.org. Available at: https://archiveofourown.org/faq/tags?language_id=en.
- Armitt, L.J. (1992). Pushing Back the Limits: The Fantastic as Transgression in Contemporary Women's Fiction. [online] Available at: <https://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/2887/>.
- Bawarshi, A.S. (2003). 'Genre and The Invention of The Writer Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition'. Utah State University Press.
- Blair, K.L., McKenna, O. and Holmberg, D. (2022). 'On guard: Public versus private affection-sharing experiences in same-sex, gender-diverse, and mixed-sex relationships'. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, p.026540752210906. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075221090678>.
- British Library. (2024). British Library Research Repository. [online] Available at: <https://bl.iro.bl.uk/?locale=en>.
- Buchsbaum, S.B. (2022). 'Binding fan fiction and reexamining book production models'. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 37. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2022.2129>.
- Candy, L. (2020). *The Creative Reflective Practitioner: Research through Making and Practice*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cart, M. (2016). *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, An Imprint Of The American Library Association.
- Chadwick, K. (2023). 'SOARING STORIES: From romantasy to retellings and from flying creatures to interstellar travel, the sweep of SFF continues to forge new reading pathways that expand the genres while reconfirming time-honored tales'. *Library Journal* (1976), Library Journals, LLC, Vol.148 (11), p.19.
- Coccia, E. (2022). 'Femslash Fan Fiction's Expansive Erotic Imaginary'. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, [online] 8. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2022.2205>.
- Copyright Alliance (2016). 'What Is Fair Use?' [online] Copyright Alliance. Available at: <https://copyrightalliance.org/faqs/what-is-fair-use/>.

- Creamer, E. (2024). 'A genre of swords and soulmates: the rise and rise of "romantasy" novels'. The Guardian (online), London (UK): Guardian News & Media Limited.
- Deane, K. (2024). 'Romance Self-Publishing and UK Legal Deposit'. British Library. doi:<https://doi.org/10.23636/tyc4-k218>.
- Department for Education (2012). 'Research Evidence on Reading for Pleasure Education Standards Research Team'. [online] gov.uk. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284286/reading_for_pleasure.pdf [Accessed 20 Oct. 2019].
- Fabrizi, M.A. (2016). *Fantasy Literature: Challenging Genres*. [online] Rotterdam: Sensepublishers. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-758-0>.
- Fulcher, G. (1997). 'Text Difficulty and Accessibility: Reading Formulae and Expert Judgement'. *System*, 25(4), pp.497–513. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0346-251x\(97\)00048-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0346-251x(97)00048-1).
- Gagné, T. and McMunn, A. (2023). 'Mental health inequalities during the second COVID-19 wave among Millennials who grew up in England: Evidence from the Next Steps cohort study'. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, [online] 327, pp.23–30. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2023.01.101>.
- Garcelle, P. (2023). 'On Sensitivity Reading: the what, how, and why'. [online] Cambridge School Classics Project Blog. Available at: <https://blog.cambridgescp.com/sensitivity-reading-what-how-and-why>.
- Kaufman, L. (2012). 'Beyond Wizards and Vampires, to Sex'. The New York Times. [online] Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/22/books/young-adult-authors-add-steaminess-to-their-tales.html?_r=3&.
- Kennedy, K. (2022). 'Fan binding as a method of preserving fan fiction'. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 37. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2022.2107>.
- Kirk, J. (2011). 'Transgression and Taboo: The Field of Fan Fiction'. *Akademisk Kvarter (Academic Quarter)*, 3, pp.147–158.
- Lobb, M.K. (2024). 'What Is Romantasy, Anyway?' [online] Writer's Digest. Available at: <https://www.writersdigest.com/write-better-fiction/what-is-romantasy-anyway>.
- Martínez-Priego, C. and Romero-Iribas, A. (2021). 'The Emotions Behind Character Friendship: From other-oriented emotions to the "bonding feeling"'. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 51(3). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12277>.

- MasterClass (2021). 'Traditional Publishing vs. Self Publishing: Pros and Cons'. [online] Available at: <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/traditional-publishing-vs-self-publishing> [Accessed 13 Feb. 2024].
- MigBird (2021). 'I think I've figured out what "fanfiction-esque writing" is'. (Plus, tips on how to surpass it.). [online] Reddit. Available at: https://www.reddit.com/r/FanFiction/comments/ot3sbm/i_think_ive_figured_out_what_fanfictionsque/?rdt=34518.
- Minkel, E. (2024). 'The Emerging Art of "Fanbinding"'. [online] Atlas Obscura. Available at: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/fanbinding-fanfiction-bookbinding>.
- Mohammed, J.A. and Jacob, F. (2021). 'Marriage Discourses: Historical and Literary Perspectives on Gender Inequality and Patriarchic Exploitation'. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.
- 'New Adult Fiction: Mastering Genre Writing' | NY Book Editors. (2015). NY Book Editors. [online] Available at: <https://nybookeditors.com/2015/11/new-adult-fiction/>.
- Nissen, T.I., Edelman, E.A., Steinmark, L., Logan, K. and Reed, E.K. (2023). 'Microlearning: Evidence-based education that is effective for busy professionals and short attention spans'. Wiley. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/jgc4.1809>.
- O'Sullivan, J. (2024). 'Who's Reading Romantasy?' Publishers Weekly, 271(17).
- Parker, W. (2005). *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*. Oregon House, Ca: Bardic Press.
- Patalay, P. and Gage, S.H. (2019). 'Changes in millennial adolescent mental health and health-related behaviours over 10 years: a population cohort comparison study'. International Journal of Epidemiology, 48(5). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyz006>.
- Piemonte, J.L., Gusakova, S., Nichols, M. and Conley, T.D. (2020). 'Is Consent Sexy? Comparing Evaluations of Written Erotica Based on Verbal Sexual Consent'. Psychology & Sexuality, pp.1–23. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2020.1769161>.
- Pratt, L. (2012). 'Construction of Writerly Identity in a 12th Grade Class'. [online] Available at: https://www.academia.edu/20017882/Construction_of_Writerly_Identity_in_a_12th_Grade_Class [Accessed 12 Jun. 2021].
- Rasula, J. (2021). 'Genre and Extravagance in the Novel'. Oxford University Press, pp.1–22.
- Roy, G. (2019). 'How to Write a New Adult Romance Novel'. [online] Writing Tips Oasis - A website dedicated to helping writers to write and publish books. Available at: <https://writingtipsoasis.com/how-to-write-a-new-adult-romance-novel/>.

Shayna (2024). 'IM SO TIRED!' TikTok. Available at:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@shaynaslibrary/video/7380450642168466693> [Accessed 16 Aug. 2024].

The Economist (2024). 'Romantasy brings dragons and eroticism together. At last.' The Economist (Online).

UWTSD Library. (2024). UWTSD Library Resources. [online] Available at: librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk.

Watson, V.M. (2013). 'Censoring Freedom: Community-Based Professional Development and the Politics of Profanity'. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(3), pp.387–410. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2013.808096>.

Writers Online (2025). *How to Write Romantasy*. [online] Writers Online. Available at: <https://www.writers-online.co.uk/how-to-write/how-to-write-romantasy/>.