

## Enchanting the Masses: Fairy Tale Dystopias and Allegorical Diversity

The enduring popularity and underlying darkness of fairy tales make them prime candidates for synthesis with another prominent YA genre, the dystopia. Fairy tales, however, suffer from a history of reinscribing European hegemony and featuring numerous lily-white princesses. Thus, dystopian fairy tales, with their spirited female leads, nestle comfortably in the canon of novels with strong, subversive heroines that, unfortunately, circumvent the topic of race. These novels dance around the complications of heterogeneity by offering fantastic renderings of diverse characters for the typically white (or passing-as-white) heroines to encounter.

Despite these drawbacks, I argue that the fairy tale is actually a clever way to complicate the prevalent whiteness in contemporary YA lit. Because of their accessibility, fairy tales can ease readers into a complex conversation about race through allegorical diversity. Two recent works in particular serve as examples of fantastical diversity in dystopian novels. Stacey Jay's *Of Beast and Beauty* follows the vein of feminist fairy tales by subverting the female role, but it also uses the dystopian touchstones of political strife and class hierarchy to paint an allegorical picture of contemporary race relations. In this tale, the Beauty and the Beast learning to love one another does more than break an enchantment: it changes the political paradigm of the planet. Similarly, Marissa Meyer's *Lunar Chronicles* tetralogy uses well-known fairy tales to explore a science-fiction conflict between the residents of Earth and those who dwell on the moon. As in *Of Beast and Beauty*, the potential salve for racial hostility seems to be the merging—both friendly and romantic—of different ethnicities or species. In the *Lunar Chronicles*, a cyborg Cinderella changes the world not only by accepting the help of those who are different from her, but also by appreciating and harnessing her own difference.

Paired with dystopias, then, fairy tale revisions offer a course for change: they reach masses of readers and present diversity through fantasy. While allegorical diversity may not offer a solution to the dearth of diversity in popular YA fiction, it does invite conversation about difference and provide direct corollaries to contemporary problems.