

# ★ WANTED ★

## DEAD OR ALIVE

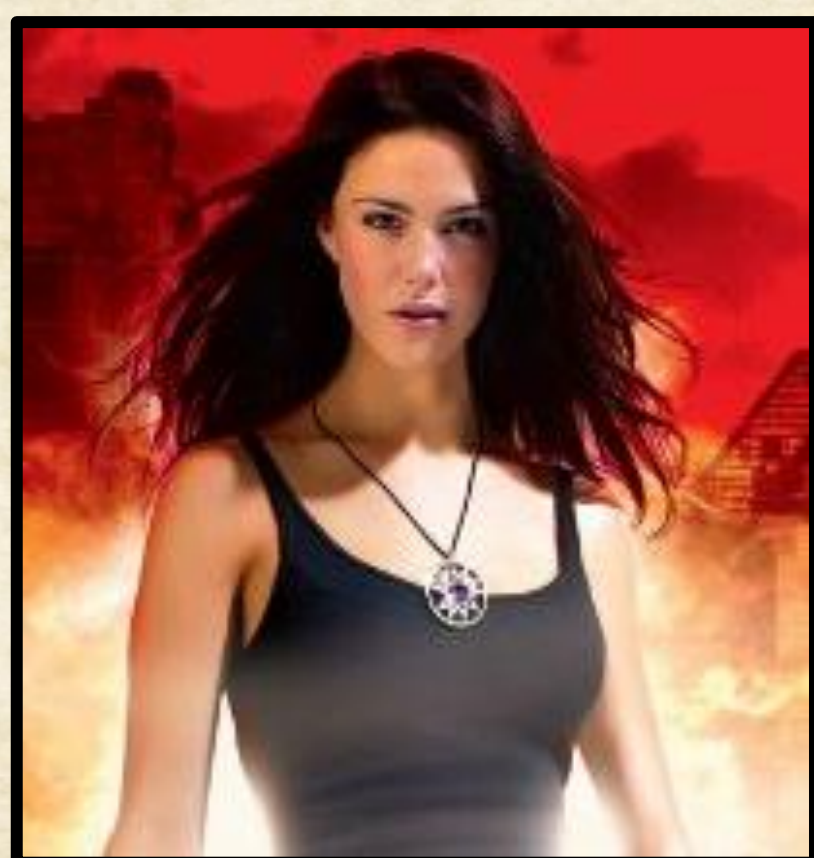
### WOMEN (AND GIRLS) OF THE OTHERWORLD

Many urban fantasy authors began writing for adults before going on to write for a young adult audience. Some YA urban fantasy series are situated strictly within the young adult form – these series make use of a set of tropes which become recognizable as young adult urban fantasy. However, there are some series which crossover between the adult and young adult forms and blend tropes from each.

Kelley Armstrong does something similar yet different. As with other urban fantasy authors, Armstrong began writing for adults. The Women of the Otherworld series began in 2001 with *Bitten* and continued for thirteen novels. We begin our journey with Elena, the only known female werewolf in the Otherworld. Throughout the initial thirteen books several different female characters (and a couple of men) narrate their own stories. The series includes short stories, short story collections, novellas, as well as two graphic novels. Different perspectives abound throughout.

In 2008, still in the middle of her adult Otherworld novels, Armstrong offers yet another perspective – the teenage girl. Two trilogies, a duology and more short stories followed, but unlike other authors who have gone on to write young adult works, all of Armstrong's texts are set within the same universe, expanding her world with each new addition.

With all of these texts set within the same universe, to read all stories of the Otherworld, the reader must crossover between the adult and young adult works. Through a huge cast of characters, as well as the sheer number of novels and stories, Kelley Armstrong has created a universe for both adult and young adult readers.



#### ELENA MICHAELS

- Adult heroine
- 30 in first novel *Bitten*
- Werewolf
- Appears in Women of the Otherworld and Otherworld YA
- Mother to Kate and Logan in Otherworld YA duology

#### SAVANNAH LEVINE

- Young adult → adult heroine in adult series
- First appearance when 12 years old in *Stolen*
- Grows up throughout the series
- Witch/sorcerer
- Appears in Women of the Otherworld and Otherworld YA

#### CHLOE SAUNDERS

- Young adult → adult in YA duology
- 15 years old in *The Summoning*
- Genetically modified necromancer
- Appears in Darkest Powers, Darkness Rising and Otherworld YA
- Adult in later stories

#### MAYA DELANEY

- Young adult heroine
- 16 years old in *The Rising*
- Genetically modified skin-walker
- Appears in Darkness Rising
- Growing up in later stories

#### KATE DANVERS

- Child in adult series → young adult in YA series
- Born and grows up throughout original books
- 16 years old in *Wolf's Bane*
- Werewolf
- Daughter of Elena and Clay
- Appears in Women of the Otherworld and Otherworld YA

As Sandra Beckett describes, “crossover” refers to literature that crosses from child to adult or adult to child audiences’. Discussing adult-to-child crossover fiction, specifically authors who connect their novels for adults and young readers, Beckett discusses how ‘an author’s adult works often throw light on his books for young people’, but that there are also some authors who ‘actually connect their novels for adults and young readers in such a manner that they constitute an interwoven oeuvre that cannot be divided into two separate corpuses’. Kelley Armstrong’s Otherworld is such a narrative.

Armstrong’s narrative blurs many boundaries. The reader encounters multiple narrators, multiple perspectives, multiple series and multiple monsters. Importantly for my research, Armstrong’s vast universe also allows for multiple experiences of adolescence to be explored, which develop and become increasingly more diverse throughout.

Whilst the first young adult novels are very typical of YA urban fantasy, by the duology things start to look a little different. For the first time, we hear directly from one of the teenage boys in the narrative. We have a non-heterosexual narrator. Female sexuality is more fully explored. A transgender character is included.

Whilst the adult Otherworld is marked as complete on her website, Armstrong still returns to the Otherworld. The series now spans more than twenty years, four series and more than eighty stories, and with no definite ending the narrative is fluid, open to change and ever more possibilities, and increasingly more diverse characters. Armstrong’s Otherworld universe is open to crossovers, open to the blurring of boundaries, open to readers both adult and young adult.

#### SUPERVISORY TEAM

Dr Mark Jones, Dr Aidan Byrne and Dr Daisy Black

#### SOURCES

Beckett, Sandra L., *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009)

——— ‘Crossover Literature’, in *Keywords for Children's Literature*, ed. by Lissa Paula and Philip Nel (New York: New York University Press, 2011), pp.58-61.

All images taken from Kelley Armstrong book covers. From left to right: *Becoming* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010), *Spell Bound* (New York: E P Dutton, 2011), *The Complete Darkest Powers Tales* (Ontario: KLA Fricke Inc, 2017), *The Rising* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), *Wolf's Bane* (Ontario: KLA Fricke Inc, 2019).

## ★ ★ ★ REWARD! ★ ★ ★

APPROACH WITH EXTREME CAUTION!

IMMEDIATELY CONTACT

SARAH SPROSTON

S.SPROSTON@WLV.AC.UK

@URBANFANTASYPHD

FACULTY OF ARTS, BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES