

**Narratological functions through the female lens:  
the cases of *The All Souls Trilogy* and *The Winternight Trilogy***

**Las funciones narrativas desde una perspectiva femenina:  
los ejemplos de las trilogías *All Souls* y *Winternight***

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**Resumen**

Este artículo ofrece un análisis comparativo de dos reconocidas trilogías fantásticas escritas por mujeres y con protagonista femenina, la trilogía *All Souls* de Deborah Harkness y la trilogía *Winternight* de Katherine Arden. Al poner el foco en un análisis cualitativo de las funciones narrativas desde la teoría narratológica estructuralista y a través de las acciones de los personajes principales (héroe/villano), el artículo considera que la heroína demuestra una motivación personal en ambas trilogías, que resulta en un impacto más amplio de su misión en lo colectivo. La motivación personal aparece relacionada con la protección de la familia y la subyacente construcción de una percepción particular del afecto. Esta motivación modifica los roles tradicionales y el impacto de las funciones narratológicas en otros personajes, y ofrece una alternativa de las relaciones de poder.

**Palabras clave:** narratología, literatura comparada, heroína, Trilogía de *All Souls*, Trilogía *Winternight*.

**Abstract**

This paper offers a comparative analysis of two acclaimed fantasy trilogies by women writers, *The All Souls Trilogy* by Deborah Harkness and *The Winternight Trilogy* by Katherine Arden. By focusing on a qualitative analysis of structural narratological functions

through the actions of the main characters (hero / villain), the article argues that the hero displays a personal motivation in both trilogies, which results in a larger impact of their mission. The personal motivation appears to be linked to the protection of family and the underlying construction of a unique perception of affection. This motivation modifies the roles and the impact of functions on other characters, while offering an alternative in power relations.

**Keywords:** Narratology, comparative literature, female hero, *The All Souls Trilogy*, *The Winternight Trilogy*

## 1. INTRODUCCIÓN

When Forbes published their 2019 bestselling authors, J.K. Rowling once again topped the list, with an estimate profit of 92 million dollars (Cuccinello and Shapiro). Alongside other issues, such as the predominance of English language authors in the bestselling lists, this announcement could be considered to illustrate two trends in the contemporary literary industry. On the one hand, the ubiquitous inclusion of fantasy and young adult/children's fiction in these lists (Nielsen Bestseller Awards, "The top 100 bestselling books of all time") and, on the other, the increase of the presence of female writers in the field of fantasy and sci-fi publications ("Best Fantasy Books of 2020", "Book Release Dates").

This female presence might not appear to represent a new trend, as Ursula K. Le Guin already addressed the gendering of certain types of literature and the anticipation specific outcomes to stories (Le Guin 36) while she also generated some of the most representative pieces of science-fiction and fantasy of the last century by rethreading the framework presented in traditional narratology (Malmgren). In historical examples, contemporary literary criticism arguably considers fairy tales as literary pieces that present equal agency and decisiveness in male and female protagonists (Campbell 4) or could even represent criticism of the patriarchy (Ashley). Literary examples such as Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* or Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* dystopias have been amply studied from a feminist perspective and generate a critical role for the female protagonist (Woloshyn et al, Stillman and Johnson). While data on comics and superheroes indicate there is still a long way to go in way of equal representation (Shendruk), a hypothesis takes shape: is fantasy a fertile ground for female creation to reshape the representation of female protagonists? Can it be a space where the creation is not only based on rewriting the typical male hero story by switching the hero's gender or modernizing a fairy tale (Campbell 5) and open a discussion for a new perception of heroism altogether?

This paper intends to address this question by analyzing the narratological functions of characters and their link to the stories' structural units through a qualitative comparative interpretation of two contemporary fantasy trilogies written by female authors: *The All Souls Trilogy*, by Deborah Harkness and *The Winternight Trilogy*, by Katherine Arden. Differences and similarities can indicate causal inferences to be contrasted and complemented in further research. In this case, the use of narratological functions optimizes the search for variations in the structure of the story telling. For this reason, the characters, as operating within narratological functions, are examined with the intention of pinpointing deviations. To complement this analysis, traditional characters which are consciously subverted in their roles are also analyzed. The evaluations intend to pinpoint recurrent themes in the change of narratological functions and their relationship to the larger contemporary literary context.

## 2. THE CONTEXT

The two trilogies are selected due to their similar contextual productions, albeit being examples of two different generations of creators. Both authors are white women from the United States, who have completed higher education degrees. Deborah Harkness was born in 1965 in Philadelphia, studied humanities in college (specializing in History of Science and Medicine) and lived abroad while studying at Oxford University. She has completed an MA and a PhD and is currently a Professor at University of Southern California ("Deborah Harkness", "Deborah Harkness. Professor (teaching) of History"). Katherine Arden was born in 1987 in Texas and currently lives in Vermont. Arden has studied modern languages (French and Russian) in college and has lived and worked abroad in Europe and Russia ("Katherine Arden").

While *The All Souls Trilogy* was published from 2011 to 2014, *The Winternight Trilogy* was completed from 2017 to 2019, pointing to significant differences in the age of the authors at the time of their productions. Both trilogies are based on specific historical moments and, to an extent, integrate existing historical characters. *The Winternight Trilogy* is set in 14<sup>th</sup> century Muscovy and culminates in the historical battle of Battle of Kulikovo in 1380, while *The All Souls Trilogy* is set in both contemporary Oxford and Elizabethan London.

Both trilogies incorporate preexisting folklore or mythological creatures. *The All Souls Trilogy* is focused on the dynamics between three groups of creatures through history (Vampires, Witches and Daemons), while *The Winternight Trilogy* builds upon traditional Russian fairy tales and folklore, mostly *Father Frost*. Arden commented:

I had a book of Russian fairy tales growing up. I absolutely loved it and read it until it fell apart. I had this background interest in Russian fairy tales before I went to Russia, but living in Moscow really deepened and enhanced my interest in Russian literature. When I came back and wanted to try to write a novel, basing it in Russia made sense for these reasons. (“Katherine Arden”)

The inclusion of historical settings and elements that are recognizable as part of a collective’s *mythos* (folk tales, legends and archetypes) might aim to “confuse our notions of the boundary between the possible and the impossible” (Wolfe 80) with “allusions that seem intended to confound the ‘impossibility’ of the setting” (Wolfe 80), effectively rewriting through fantasy the context of the historical moment they reflect and engaging in a conversation with genres that are supposedly rooted in ‘the possible’, such as fiction.

The trilogies have received critical acclaim, with Arden being the recipient of the Goodreads Choice Awards for Best Fantasy (2017, 2019), Hugo Award for Best Series (2020), and Goodreads Choice Awards Best Debut (2017), and Harkness being the recipient of Goodreads Choice Awards Favorite Books (for *A Discovery of Witches*, 2011), Goodreads Choice Awards Best Debut (2011) and Goodreads Best Fantasy, 2014, besides being a New York Times bestseller. Both trilogies are the debut work in the fantasy genre of their respective authors. As far as fandom impact, *The All Souls Trilogy* has a wiki fandom site, including 115 pages on September 2020 (“All Souls Trilogy Wiki”), while Katherine Arden’s website includes a fandom gallery. *A Discovery of Witches* has been adapted to television by Sky/Sundance, released in 2018 (“Deborah Harkness”) and *The All Souls Trilogy* has its own convention dedicated to both academic and esoteric research related to the trilogy (Allsoulscon.org).

### 3. NARRATOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS

#### a. The Hero

Both trilogies present a female protagonist in the role of the hero. Campbell (1949) considers:

The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one’s visions, ideas, inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. (18)

However, both trilogies offer a unique perspective on a hero who integrates elements of the fiction novel, bringing together the collective and striving towards self-fulfillment with constant examples of the awareness of the role of the protagonist in the developing story. Harkness highlights how her intention in the trilogy was to “explore from the very first page of the series the truly traditional basis of family: unqualified love and mutual responsibility. That is certainly the meaning of family that my parents taught me” (Harkness et al. 9).

Both heroes, Diana Bishop and Vasya Petrovna, unwillingly participate in feuds for power and ultimately deconstruct traditional structures (the Convention in *The All Souls Trilogy*, the division between Christianity and paganism and the political structure of Muscovy in *The Winternight Trilogy*) to complete a larger mission. The purpose of the mission does not represent the function of ‘the hero is recognized’ (Propp 62), but the generation of a balance that does not settle into binary opposites, instead, it provokes a new order. It could be considered to reflect Todorov’s theory (Todorov 29-30) of narrative.

In the case of *The All Souls Trilogy*, the recognition of the hero does appear as a function, when Diana Bishop displays the extent of her power the Convention through her assimilation of The Book of Life (The Book of Life 625) and the use of her weaver powers in the battle against Peter Knox and Benjamin (The Book of Life 657-662), but the collective impact of her mission affects all creatures. In the case of *The Winternight Trilogy*, the recognition of the hero does not take place in the eyes of the other main characters, however, it influences the outcome of the Rus’ war through the ‘invisible’ participation of the Chyerti. In both cases, ‘the hero is recognized’ becomes a minor function contingent to the completion of the tasks themselves and their impact on the larger environment.

Nonetheless, in both trilogies the mission itself stems from the instinct to protect and belong to family and, consequently, to protect the relationship generated between the female protagonist and a secondary male protagonist who appears initially as an ambivalent character and ultimately becomes a co-hero due to his link to the female hero. This co-hero, Matthew Clairmont in the case of *The All Souls Trilogy* and Morozko in *The Winternight Trilogy*, experiences transformation through the relationship, with the resignification of many of the actions and viewpoints prior to this connection. Both hero characters (male and female) help each other develop through the story.

A personal drive that could be defined as ‘protection of family’ appears to be the recurrent call to action for both female protagonists. Therefore, the hero does not fit the ‘seeker’ or the ‘victimized hero’ character (Propp 36). Following narratological parameters, the ‘resolution of the task’ is linked to protecting others and ‘the individual’ drive of keeping the family safe, at whatever the cost, results in a bringing together of the collective. Vasya

connects different spheres from her experience and family: the church through her brother, the Chyerti, ghosts through her grandmother and gods, while she also links the domestic female space and the military male space. In *The Bear and the Nightingale*, she runs away from home because is being sent away to a convent and she wants to stay in the area to protect her family:

“The dead are walking,” Vasya whispered. “The domovoi will disappear if I am gone. My family will die if they send me away. I don’t know what to do” (*The Bear and the Nightingale* 247)

*The Girl in the Tower* opens with chapters dedicated entirely to the sociopolitical position of Vasya’s siblings and the immediate impact the arrival of Konstantin to Moscow has on them. In the meantime, Vasya is at a broken home after the death of her father. She has helped her people overcome the threat of Medved (and Konstantin) but they shun her in return, so she decides to dress up as a boy and visit the world. She encounters the increasingly present Tartars, who threaten the Prince of Moscow’s throne and saves some girls from their grasp. Here, her connection to family begins again:

Sasha was only half-aware. The pale, smudged creature before him could not be his younger sister.

*Absolutely* not. His sister Vasilisa must by now be married to one of her father’s sober, earnest neighbors. She was a matron, with a babe in arms. She was certainly not riding the roads of Rus’ with bandits at her back. No. This was some boy who resembled her, and not Vasya at all. His younger sister could never have grown tall and gaunt as a wolfhound, nor learned to carry herself with such disturbing grace. And how could her face bear such a stamp of grief and steady courage? Sasha met the newcomer’s stare and he *knew* - Mother of God, he knew that he was not mistaken. He could never - not in a thousand years- forget his sister’s eyes. (*The Girl in the Tower* 117)

Much as in the first book, a conflict arises between the knowledge Vasya holds of the deeper conflicts of power, and her position in this conflict, while creating very aparent conflicts in her family, as they have to cover for her lie. She is aware of these issues when conversing to Morozko:

“I want freedom,” she said at length, almost to herself. “But I also want a place and a purpose. I am not sure I can have either, let alone both. And I do not want to live a lie. I am hurting my brother and sister.” She stopped abruptly and turned. “Can you solve this riddle for me?” (*The Girl in the Tower* 234)

There is a noteworthy detail in the construction of the female hero in *The Girl in the Tower* and it is that she is constantly compared to her grandmother, Tamara. Tamara appears as an instrument used by one of the villains, Kaschei the Deathless. However, when her family is threatened (Vasya and Masha), Tamara steps in to defend them, regardless of the cost. By stating this pattern, Arden skillfully integrates the aforementioned drive 'protection of family' as a linking quality that threads together the heroic deeds of the female characters. The presence of this drive can also be observed in *The All Souls Trilogy*. Diana connects creatures in an unorthodox family structure and binds diverse collectives in different moments of time. The impact of this search for happiness and fulfillment, in both cases linked to the family, unites opposites and unfolds the global impact of the mission of the hero. Her family grows around her, and she is considered throughout the trilogy as the gravitational force of the different collectives. Her function is defined by her role, which requires creatures to confront their differences and work together.

One of the key elements in the definition of 'family' in *The All Souls Trilogy* is motherhood, exemplifying a trend found in other narratives written by female authors. Maternity has been considered a key element and has proven to be a factor that influences the development of female characters in other fantasy pieces. According to Kniesler, in the *Harry Potter* saga, for example, Narcissa Malfoy's function in the story shifts drastically precisely due to the fact that the main instinct and motivation of the character is maternal love, and this drives her to accomplish deeds which could be deemed heroic. This complicates the character classification, considering the "attempt to determine whether Narcissa can be classified as a villain, or if she is simply an adversary" (Kniesler 269).

The construction of the concept of family is active in both trilogies, albeit more sophisticated in *The All Souls Trilogy*. Diana and Matthew chose to mate, effectively creating an unbreakable bond in *A Discovery of Witches*, unleashing a conflict in a world where creatures are not allowed to create relationships. Their relationship is described through carnal intimacy, sharing of knowledge, constant support and mutual admiration. When they travel in time in *Shadow of the Night*, they build their own nuclear family, officially marry with the blessing of Matthew's father, Phillipe, and adopt members and friends into their household while suffering the loss of a child through a miscarriage. The presence of family in Diana's thoughts is constant and is equivalent to her worries about situations with the search for The Book of Life and conflicts with the Convention. While in Prague, Diana highlights how her adoptive family is in her thoughts when she mentions how she "missed Annie's cheerfulness and wide-eyed approach to the world, as well as Jack's unfailing ability to get

himself into trouble” (Shadow of the Night 423). With the creation of an official public family, the Bishop-Clairmont family, Matthew highlights that:

The secret is that I may be the head of the Bishop-Clairmont family, but you are its heart,” he whispered. “And the three of us are in perfect agreement: The heart is more important.” (Shadow of the Night 447).

This main motif of family protection and, subsequently, self-fulfillment generates numerous selfless actions and character connections, and contrasts with one of the main themes when analyzing heroes, which is “issues of power” (Campbell 2014 12). In these cases of a female hero, shared power resolves conflicts and illustrates a greater strength. In this way, the understanding and recognition of “‘female hero’ is a positive term in its ability to highlight and celebrate her femaleness in tandem with her heroism - and with heroism more broadly” (Campbell 2014 7) is displayed, in the conversation of these constructs with the larger perception of heroism. It also links to a distinct ideology towards the concept of bonding (love and relationships), born from a female perspective, which is stated throughout the trilogies and is linked to loyalty and trust. Diana speaks about this perception in relation to children: “All that children need is love, a grown-up to take responsibility for them, and a soft place to land” (Shadow of the Night 279) and in relation to adults “If you truly love someone, you will cherish what they despise most about themselves” (The Book of Life 279). Vasya voices her unwavering love for her family members, and they express the same towards her. Her love for Morozko is seen to grow and develop throughout the trilogy, and they both save each other on several occasions and share thoughts, mistakes and hopes. They build it slowly, as Morozko mentions:

Love is for those who know the griefs of time, for it goes hand in hand with loss. An eternity, so burdened, would be a torment. And yet—” He broke off, drew breath. “Yet what else to call it, this terror and this joy? (The Winter of the Witch 163)

It is when love is understood as the opposite (therefore, as possession, subordination or as built on fear) where the definition of love in *The Winternight Trilogy* can be seen clearly and is illustrated in *The Bear and the Nightingale*. As Medved speaks to Konstantin, he mentions: “-Wanting despite yourself, and hating where you love.” The voice sighed. “Oh, you are beautiful” (The Bear and the Nightingale 167), highlighting how this definition of love entitles ownership and dominion, which brings pain when not achieved.

## b. The Villain

Both trilogies offer diverse villains, with a main subjacent one (Medved in *The Winternight Trilogy* and Benjamin in *The All Souls Trilogy*) who is often connected to the other villains, as Benjamin is to Peter Knox or Medved is to Konstantin.

Both female protagonists have lost parents prior to the actions of the story, Diana having lost both her parents and Vasya having lost her mother. A villain proves to be an agent in these deaths of family members, with Peter Knox being responsible for the death of Diana's parents and her aunt Emily, while Medved kills Pyotr in *The Bear and the Nightingale*. The death of Diana's parents and Pyotr can be considered sacrificial to protect and save the rest of the family.

The main motivation for the villains seems to be that they covet the female hero's power and abilities. There are differences, since in *The Winternight Trilogy* Vasya becomes an element in the eternal fight between brothers at the time the story is set. As is commented in *The Winter of the Witch*: "you denied both the winter-king and his brother, didn't you? You made yourself a third power in their war" (104). The combination of villains in both trilogies, and including Kaschei the deathless, fulfill most of the functions proposed by Propp in relation to the female hero: they assume a disguise (Konstantin as a benevolent priest, Peter Knox as a worried and respected member of the witches); they cause harm to other members of the family; the hero and the villain join in direct combat; the hero is tortured and branded by the villain.

Additionally, in both cases the co-hero is directly related to the villain. In *The All Souls Trilogy*, Matthew and Benjamin are father and son (as Matthew transforms Benjamin into a vampire); in *The Winternight Trilogy*, Medved and Morozko are brothers. Since the female hero becomes romantically involved with the co-hero, not only does the aspect of power interest the villain, but also the availability of an element that can directly harm their opponent. Benjamin displays this in *The Book of Life* while torturing Matthew:

Given enough time - and vampires have plenty of that - I will be able to witness every touch you've bestowed upon her. I will know what brings her pleasure as well as pain. I will know the power she wields and the secrets of her body. Her vulnerabilities will be as open to me as if her soul were a book." Benjamin stroked Matthew's skin gradually increasing the circulation to his neck. "I could smell her fear in the Bodleian, of course, but know I want to understand it. So afraid, yet so remarkably brave. It will be thrilling to break her.  
*Hearts cannot be broken*, Matthew reminded himself. He managed to croak out a single word. "Why?" (474).

By constructing this combination, both Arden and Harkness are highlighting the role of co-hero, since the villain also impacts upon Morozko and Matthew through many of the previously enumerated functions. This combination also has a dual reading to the villains' motivation: mainly, power; secondly, revenge.

I would also like to highlight the character of the stepmother. Although it is dramatically different in each of the trilogies, nonetheless, they both subvert the traditional function of the stepmother in fairytales, which would be the villain.

In *The Winternight Trilogy*, Anna Ivanovna becomes the main character's stepmother after her marriage to Vasya's father, Pyotr. Anna is presented as an impressionable character who becomes fascinated by Konstantin, the power-seeking priest who fulfills the function of the false hero to Anna and a secondary villain to Vasya.

Anna has the power of vision, the ability to see the traditional protecting spirits of Russian folklore. She considers them 'demons' and reacts harshly when she realizes Vasya has her same power of vision. Following the original story of Morozko (in English "The Story of King Frost"), she plans to either marry Vasya or send her to a convent. The reader is not invited to view the character with animosity, however, but with a complex pity and whose actions prompted that other women of the household "looked at each other and slowly shook their heads" (*The Bear and the Nightingale* 71).

Her perception of the vision as a burden is clear from the moment she is introduced.

Pyotr's house was alive with devils. A creature with eyes like coals hid in the oven. A little man in the bathhouse winked at her through the steam. A demon like a heap of sticks slouched around the doorway.

In Moscow, her devils had never looked at her, never spared her a glance, but here they were always *staring*. Some even came quite close, as though they would speak, and each time Anna had to flee, hating the puzzled stares of her husband and stepchildren. She saw them all the time, everywhere - except here in the church. (*The Bear and the Nightingale* 71)

She finds solace in the church and in Konstantin who is enthralled by Vasya, creating an unwilling affective triangle.

Anna saw the girl and the priest, their steady mutual regard, and her furious face turned redder than ever. She put all the strength of her arm into the sharp willow. Vasya stood still for it, biting her lip bloody. But the tears welled, despite her best efforts, and hurried down her cheeks. Behind Anna, Konstantin watched, wordless. (*The Bear and the Nightingale* 117).

Her ultimate death as a sacrifice to free the primary villain of the story, Medved, fulfills the function of 'Villain is punished' without resolving the conflict: Anna ceases to be an agent

in the narratology of the story, but her demise precipitates the presence of another, more powerful, villain.

The stepmother character in *The All Souls Trilogy*, is Diana. By mating with Matthew, she effectively becomes the stepmother of Matthew's (vampire) child Marcus Whitmore. Not only is she immediately willing to bond with him, but her inclusion in a thousand-year-old family with firm traditions fosters numerous changes in a very short amount of time, offering space for the growth of several of the members. Marcus becomes the Grand Master of the Knights of Lazarus and consummates a relationship with a human partner, Phoebe Taylor. Since Diana appears as the hero *and* the stepmother she is an example of how the conventions of the genre can be challenged through retelling (Williams 255).

Lastly, although there is not much depth in the relationship between humans and creatures in *The All Souls Trilogy*, *The Winternight Trilogy* points out an ultimate villain, and the ability to tarnish the function of the 'wedding' (Propp 63) or celebration of the story's conclusion: the public opinion. *The All Souls Trilogy* points towards a similar function when it refers to witch hunting and the dwindling presence of creatures. The public opinion is clearly manipulated in *The Bear and the Nightingale* against Vasya and is ever-present as her characters breaks expectations and displays agency. Morozko defines it as:

“Men fear what they do not understand”, murmured the Bear. “They hurt you. They beat you, spat on you, put you in the fire. Men will suck all the wilderness out of the world, until there is no place for a witch girl to hide. They will burn you and your kind.” (The Winter of the Witch 104).

### c. Additional Characters and Functions

The aim of this last section is to point out contemporary deviations from traditional narratology, to invite consideration on how this can shape the functions and the characters. The concept of love, the main drive to the task of protecting family by both heroes is supported and stated by other characters. An example can be seen through the love stated by Fernando Gonçalves's unwavering loyalty to his lost mate:

“You were father's mate!” Gallowglass protested. “You are as much a de Clermont as Ysabeau or her children!”  
Fernando carefully shut the oven door. “I am Hugh's mate,” he said, his back still turned. “Your father will never be a past tense to me.” (The Book of Life 9)

*The All Souls Trilogy* integrates issues of inclusiveness and exclusiveness in both the construction of the division between creatures and humans, as well as in the relationships displayed. On the one hand, “Harkness [...] crafts her supernatural creatures scientifically”

(Szanter 116) albeit with complaints and contrasting information from geneticists and the scientific community (Szanter 117), as it is the possession of an extra chromosome or extra chromosome pair that affecting whether the character will be human (no extra), daemon (one extra) vampire or witch (both have two extra). The inherent villainism of vampirism is withdrawn as “the human never physically dies, as is the case with many vampire narratives. Nor does the human become infected with vampirism, which is usually the case for more traditional vampire mythologies” (Szanter 121). This distinct feature allows the possibility of addressing mental disabilities, integrated in *The All Souls Trilogy* through the introduction of blood rage since “Phillipe likens blood rage to a mental disability” (Szanter 122) and how it is addressed and treated in the story.

On the other hand, there are numerous homosexual relationships in the story, which do not appear to affect any of the stories’ functions. This could represent a meaningful step towards normativity, representing the last stage of integration as considered by Butler since “one or more characters happen to be gay - but their sexuality is not the crux of the story” (“The Portrayal of Trans People...” 17)

Lastly, non-human interaction is a key element of both stories, with Vasya creating a connection with horse Solovey and Diana with her familiar fire Drake Corra. The relationships represent both service and independence of the non-human characters, and the female hero decision-making on how to develop these friendships engages with their moral compass.

#### 4. LIMITATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

Although the narratological and comparative analysis optimizes the conditions to find deviations in the traditional folkloric tale, and albeit their inspiration, neither of these trilogies is strictly folklore. Fantasy has been taught through narratology (Chester 2016) and examined through narratology (Campbell 2014), since the character types that operate within narratological functions tend to be well-defined. Nonetheless, this paper joins other research (Helford 2016; Campbell 2014) in illustrating how fantasy offers, in fact, the depths of reading and sophistication of the novel and they are part of a corpora “superseding the worlds of myth, of epic poetry, and oral storytelling” (Parrinder 2015 xv), following the premise that comparative study is proposed by Propp as genres “mingle” (100) and by Campbell (1949) as a way to find an essence that can be taught about myth and storytelling (xxii).

This assertion points towards the wider discussion on genre. And while in library science “fantasy novels are normally imaginary tales about the struggle between good and evil in

non-real or fictional settings” (Omar 95) and “heroes usually have superpowers that enable them to destroy villainous creatures and save the world and the human race” (Chester 94-95), the boundaries between fiction, fantasy and science fiction are in constant discussion (Suvin 2000, Petzold 1986) as is the development within each field.

The qualitative comparative analysis of the two trilogies presented also has its limitations. Additional elements of the trilogies can be focused on and discussed. With the object of completing the comparative study, nuances of some of the elements analyzed have been condensed and a closer examination could bring up additional narratological functions. In the larger context, a broader sample of publications would need to be explored to confirm whether the findings proposed in the paper are generalized or distinctive. However, the success of these two trilogies can be used as an example to view the flexibility of narratological functions in the fantasy genre and to explore them through a gender lens.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Although the analyzed sample can be considered insufficient to define a literary movement and additional studies would be required to infer causal relations between these narratological trends and other examples, several interesting issues are reflected that can be applied in critical reading activities.

On the one hand, character depiction applied to narratological functions can be subverted by the division of power. The heroes depicted in these trilogies chose to have other characters partake in responsibilities, muddling the differences between the functions of co-hero, helper and donor through the division of agency. Whether or not this sharing is directly linked to the femininity of the hero is presented as an open discussion. The analysis considers that the female heroes of *The All Souls Trilogy* and *The Winternight Trilogy* share power and responsibility linked to the search for their own fulfillment, which is connected to protecting and preserving their family relationships. This effectively presents unique traits in the hero character and subverts the general motivation of hero stories presented by traditional narratology.

The inclusion of the romantic relationship in both trilogies influences this motivation. With previous works of female writers in the fantasy field, especially in the young adult section, including the element of the love triangle as a main theme (*Twilight Saga*, *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, *The Mortal Instruments*) or as a secondary element (*The Hunger Games*), a larger topic for research is presented: has inclusion of love and romance become a requisite for a female hero story? Is it this element what sets a distinction between fantasy productions through a gender lens?

As Butler comments, “not only do we view fictional characters as people, but we also respond emotionally to them” (“Literary Studies Deconstructed” 49). It is for this reason that representation is paramount for the reader. However, *The All Souls Trilogy* and *The Winternight Trilogy* not only present female hero characters, but these characters contest many of the traditional functions of narratology and offer a stepping stone to understand future developments of fantasy literature.

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