UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA NACIONAL

INSTITUTO NACIONAL SUPERIOR DEL PROFESORADO TÉCNICO

En convenio académico con la Facultad Regional de Villa María

LICENCIATURA EN LENGUA INGLESA

Tesis de Licenciatura

HEROINES IN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS IN FEMALE GENDER STEREOTYPING

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2020

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Dissertation

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To the most important teachers in my life:

Luciana –

since the moment you came into my life, you have helped me bring out the best of me, even in chaotic times. One lifetime is not enough to thank you for choosing me as your mom.

Laura –

you have been, are and hopefully will be my constant guide and support in my journey into self-discovery. I thank the Universe for having you in my life every single day.

I love you both to infinity and beyond!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude:

To Dr Juan Ferretti, who gave me the opportunity to finish this pending subject in my life after such a long time.

To Dr Gastón Javier Basile, who agreed to be my tutor through this dissertation without knowing me and with my extensive corpus of reading, and whose advice, guide and encouragement have been invaluable.

To Rita Correa, who has always been so kind, considerate and diligent.

To Damián, who has always insisted on my worth and encouraged me to aim for the stars.

To Romina, who has taught me with her example what it is like to go after your dreams. And who has silently and respectfully encouraged my professional growth all along.

To Silvana, who has also taught me that with a clear purpose in mind, dreams come true.

To my brother, who has been so supportive unknowingly.

To my mother and my father, who have always encouraged me to go after what I like, backing me in every step of the way.

To Laura again, who has reminded me all the way that the Universe provides if we make our part and follow what our hearts dictate.

To Luciana once more, who has supported and encouraged me through thick and thin during the writing of this dissertation and, in particular, life.

And last but not least, to me: girl, how much you have grown during these twelve years. You have set things in motion which cannot be stopped now: the sky is the limit! You deserve all the good that you desire. And finally, YOU DID IT!!

María Paula Gravano
October 2020

ABSTRACT

Young Adult literature is a category which was originally intended for adolescent readership, yet it has also attracted children and adults due to its exploration of universal themes, including life and death, the transition from childhood into adulthood, identity formation, love in all its gamut of experiences, the development of one's emotions, and the questioning of the status quo. This type of literature witnessed a significant increase at the beginning of the XXI century with the worldwide success achieved by the publication of the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), which encouraged the writing of other best-selling Young Adult works, such as the gothic love story *Twilight* (2005-2008) and the dystopias *The Hunger Games* (2008-2010) and *Divergent* (2011-2013). Despite the fact that these popular series address topics which particularly interest Young Adult readers, the portrayal of their characters also represents societal expected gender identities and behaviours whether intended or not. For this reason, and with the recent heightened awareness of the influence of patriarchy and heteronormativity in literature, it becomes imperative to re-read these internationally acclaimed literary texts more critically from a perspective which includes both feminism and gender theory. The purpose of the present dissertation is to examine whether the characterisation of the leading female characters in the Young Adult literary sagas of *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* reinforce gender stereotypes. A detailed analysis of the four series reveals that not only female gender stereotyping is consolidated in these works but also the characterisation of the heroines does not ultimately subvert the hegemonic patriarchal heteronormative parameters despite clear attempts at challenging traditional female role models. The study also confirms that both the publishing market as well as the literary tradition and specific subgenres of Young Adult literature partly determine the representation of the leading female characters of the sagas under study.

Key words: Young Adult literature, feminism, patriarchy, male gaze, gender theory, performative theory, heteronormativity, gender roles, stereotypes, gender stereotyping, love, marriage, motherhood, oppression, capitalism, publishing market

RESUMEN

La literatura juvenil es una categoría que fue originalmente pensada para lectoras y lectores adolescentes, pero también atrajo al público infantil y adulto debido a su tratamiento de temas universales, tales como la vida y la muerte, la transición de la niñez a la adultez, la formación de la identidad, el amor en toda su gama de experiencias, el desarrollo de las emociones propias, y el cuestionamiento del status quo. Este género de literatura evidenció un incremento significativo al comienzo del siglo XXI con el éxito mundial alcanzado por la publicación de la serie de *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), lo cual alentó la creación de otras novelas juveniles de gran venta, como la historia de amor gótica *Twilight* (2005-2008) y las distopías *The Hunger Games* (2008-2010) y *Divergent* (2011-2013). A pesar de que estas series populares tratan temas que son de particular interés para el público adolescente, la descripción de sus personajes también representa identidades y conductas de género socialmente esperadas ya sea intencionalmente o no. Por esta razón, y con el reciente crecimiento de la toma de consciencia sobre la influencia del patriarcado y la heteronormatividad en la literatura, es fundamental re-leer estas obras literarias aclamadas internacionalmente desde una perspectiva crítica que abarque el feminismo y la teoría de género. El objetivo de esta tesis es analizar si la caracterización de los personajes principales femeninos en las sagas juveniles de *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games* y *Divergent* reafirma los estereotipos de género. Un análisis detallado de las cuatro series demuestra que no sólo los estereotipos de género femenino se ven consolidados en estas obras sino también que, a pesar de los claros intentos de desafiar los modelos tradicionales femeninos, la caracterización de las heroínas no subvierte en última instancia los parámetros hegemónicos, patriarcales y heteronormativos. El estudio también confirma que tanto la industria editorial así como la tradición literaria y los subgéneros de la literatura juvenil específicos determinan parcialmente la representación de los personajes femeninos principales de las sagas analizadas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

These days there seems to be popular consensus among adults that adolescents' increasing use of technological devices has proved highly detrimental to their interest in reading literature. Nevertheless, a careful analysis of the statistics produced by the publishing industry reveals that the volume of current publication of Young Adult literature – that is, literary works aimed at people between twelve and eighteen years old – has increased exponentially in the last decade in particular (Cart, 2016, pp. 9-11). The reason for this escalation can be partly put down to the diversification of new literary narratives and formats which have emerged due to the advance of the digital era, such as comic books, journals, diaries, letters, MP3 audiobooks, podcasts, e-books, blogs, fanfiction and the social networks (Bucher & Hinton, 2014, p. 5). When considering the technological media teenagers employ to read, one may conclude that it is of minor importance as Young Adult literature addresses themes which are universal: the coming of age, love, sexuality, family, work, poverty, death, duty, sacrifice, and morality. Furthermore, with the evolution of society, awareness has been raised on more controversial yet vital issues; for instance, people with disabling conditions, reproductive rights, cruelty and crime, harassment and abuse, racial violence and LBGTQIA+ perspectives. Due to the diversity of its topics, the consumption of Young Adult literature has been encouraged substantially as it appeals not only to adolescents but to younger and older generations as well. Although literature specifically written for adolescents came into being during the 1960s, there have always existed literary works which have generated interest in this age group. For example, Young Adult classics include Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* (1865), Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954). In 1967, there appeared the first two literary works which were targeted for young adults in particular: S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* and Robert Lipsyte's *The Contender*. The production of stories addressed to this age group fluctuated in the following decades until one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of publishing occurred: the publication of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in 1997 (Cart). This intriguing story of a young wizard in search of his own identity while being immersed in the eternal fight between good and evil resulted in the development of a complex narrative divided into six more books (1998-2007) which addressed universal themes extremely appealing to

adolescents. With the rebirth of interest in Young Adult literature, the following publishing sensations were the gruesome Gothic love story created by Stephenie Meyer under the name of *Twilight* (2005-2008), and the dystopian worlds of Suzanne Collins in *The Hunger Games* (2008-2010) and Veronica Roth in *Divergent* (2011-2013). All these XXI century series were written by women who explored sensitive topics relevant to young adults: the transition from childhood into adulthood, friendship, family life, life and death, love, romantic and sexual interest, individuality and identity formation. For adolescents, defining their identity is one of the central themes in their lives given that their development into adulthood is intrinsically connected to socially established expectations about gender issues. Taking into consideration that the sagas of *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* have exerted – and still exert – enormous impact on young adult readership, and that during the last decade special attention has been directed to women's oppression caused by patriarchy and heteronormativity, careful examination of the representation of their leading female characters seems to be mandatory in an attempt to prove whether their characterisation actually challenges or reinforces the socially expected gender stereotypes.

1.1. Research question and hypotheses

The objective of the present dissertation will be to address the extent to which the characterisation of the leading female characters in the Young Adult sagas previously mentioned perpetuate gender stereotypes from the perspective of feminist and gender theory. This analysis will be guided by the following research question,

> To what extent does the characterisation of the leading female characters in the Young Adult literature sagas of *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* reinforce gender stereotypes?

From this question, the following guiding hypotheses can be derived,

- The characterisation of the leading female characters in the Young Adult Literature sagas under analysis largely reinforces gender stereotypes.
- Despite clear attempts at challenging traditional female role models, the characterisation of the leading female characters does not ultimately subvert the hegemonic patriarchal heteronormative parameters.

- The demands of the publishing market partly determine the characterisation of the leading female characters.
- The literary tradition and specific subgenres of Young Adult Literature of the sagas under analysis partly influence the gender representation of the leading female characters.

1.2. Organisation of the present work

The present study will be organised in three subsequent chapters. The first will provide the theoretical framework within which the analyses have been performed, which will in turn be divided in three subsections. The first of these will offer a definition of what Young Adult literature encompasses as well as a description of its history, characteristics, sub-genres and themes, with a special focus on the definition of one's identity during adolescence, in particular the development of gender identity. Feminism will be addressed in the following subsection, with careful attention being directed to its history, variations, and principles. Finally, gender theory will be discussed, with its different theories of development and behaviour and its definition of gender roles and stereotypes, and its description of gender stereotypes, particularly female ones. The following chapter will be divided into four subsections. Each will be comprised of a description of the saga under analysis, with an emphasis on its publication, public reception, plot summary, narrative composition, sub-genres and themes. They will also include the analysis of the most salient gender characteristics of each heroine rendered by literary criticism. Then, each subsection will concentrate on the analysis of Hermione Granger from *Harry Potter*, Bella Swan from *Twilight*, Katniss Everdeen from *The Hunger Games* and Tris Prior from *Divergent* according to the concepts developed in the theoretical background. The final chapter will provide a conclusion in which the reading hypotheses posed in this introduction will be contrasted with the analysis of the characterisation of each leading female character.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

Young Adult literature can be defined as a category published with the intention of being read by and marketed for readers between twelve to eighteen years old (Risku, 2017, p.

13). However, it must be noted that the reading public for this type of texts extends as young as ten and surpasses eighteen into adulthood. As a matter of fact, Risku claims that the works within this category can defined as *crossover literature*, as their "potential readership … can be equally relevant to children and adults alike" (p. 25).

Different terms have been used to refer to this type of writings, such as *teen novel*, *juvenile literature*, *junior novel*, *juvie*, *adolescent literature*, *teenage books* or *teen fiction* (Pace Nilsen & Donelson, 2009, p. 24). Among these, the most popular name adopted is *Young Adult Fiction*. Nevertheless, Bucher and Hinton (2014) claim that there are limitations to this term as "contemporary young adult literature is more than fiction" (p. 5). Many adolescents read nonfiction (i.e., biographies or magazines), graphic novels (like comics or picture books) and even literature which is not in print format (such as audiobooks, podcasts and MP3 downloads). For this reason, the term *Young Adult (YA) literature* will be used to refer to this type of literary works throughout the present dissertation.

2.1.1. The history of Young Adult literature

Traces of YA literature can be found in the Bildungsroman from the XIX century. This type of genre was "a formative novel about a protagonist's psychological and moral growth from their youth into adulthood" (*MasterClass*, 2019). The term originated in Germany, and it is translated as "a novel of education" or a "novel of formation". The story typically centres on the maturation process of the protagonist, who is usually inexperienced at the beginning of the narrative. Generally, the leading character is emotionally disturbed by a loss or tragedy and is thus pushed into a search for meaning, a journey which tests the protagonist in various ways. During this journey, the main character gains maturity, gradually and with difficulty. Eventually, the protagonist undergoes a moment of epiphany and finds their place in society by accepting its rules and values, having the maturity and knowledge to continue with their life (*Study.com*, n.d.; *Literary Devices*, n.d.).

In addition, the history of YA literature can be connected to the history of how children and young adults have been perceived. Before the 1800, literature for children and young adults was mostly religious as they were considered small adults with a short life expectancy who would be meeting "the wrath of God" soon (Pace Nilsen & Donelson,

2009, p. 41). With the development of the urban society and the improvement in medical conditions, it was no longer necessary for children and young adults to start working at an early age. For this reason, books still reflected adult values and fashions, but of this world: it was possible now to experience satisfying life here on Earth.

Between the 1860s and 1890s, works such as *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll, *Little Women* (1868) by Louisa May Alcott, Treasure *Island* (1883) by Robert Louis Stevenson and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) by Mark Twain gained young adults' attention. These works had not been originally written for adolescents, but their themes of childhood, coming of age, marriage, family, work, poverty, death, duty, honour, sacrifice, and morality appealed to this egalitarian group.

However, it was not until the 1960s that YA literature separated from children and adult literature. In the year 1967, S. E. Hinton's published *The Outsiders* and Robert Lipsyte published *The Contender*, two of the first novels which directly addressed YA readership as they depicted the problems of growing up and touched on relevant issues to YA readers in the contemporary world (Bucher & Hinton, 2014, p. 5). Topics like gang activity, racism, abortion, homosexuality, drug abuse, and "not-happily ever after" endings made the 1970s the first Golden Age of YA literature. By the middle of the 1990s, with the inclusion of YA books in high school classrooms, a new generation of consumers emerged as well as theme-based short story collections. Furthermore, "books began to reflect the interactivity and connectivity of the digital world with shifting perspectives, diverse voices, and even multiple genres within a single book "(p. 6).

The arrival of the XXI century saw an explosion of YA literature. Cart (2016, p. 6) states that as books had multigenerational appeal, the age range became extended. As more established adult authors wrote YA literary fiction, new important book awards for this type of literary category were created. YA titles first published abroad were imported and printed, while graphic novels and comics became a vital force in the field. New kinds of genres emerged, such as nonfiction. Authors experimented with new narrative techniques (for example, novels in the form of e-mails, letters, verse, or linked short stories) and a new LGBTQIA+ literature (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning) materialised.

However, the most important trend of the first decade of the XXI century was the rebirth of the genre of fantasy as a result of the success of the *Harry Potter* books (1997 – 2007), which is considered one the of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of publishing. The seven *Potter* books sold more than 375 million copies and were translated into sixty-five languages. Cart claims the *Harry Potter* saga was responsible for the emergence of YA books which were part of a series with four hundred pages or more in length each. Until that moment, YA books had been restricted to a maximum of only two hundred pages, in the belief that teenagers' attention span was short (p. 8).

Cart (p. 9) continues describing that after the *Potter* phenomenon, the next publishing sensation was the paranormal romance *Twilight* written by Stephenie Meyer in a four-volume saga (2005 – 2008). It was in turn followed by Suzanne Collin's *Hunger Games* trilogy (2008 – 2010), which reintroduced readers to the dystopian novel as well as the next phenomenon, the *Divergent* books of Veronica Roth (2011 – 2014).

It cannot be denied that since YA literature was identified as a separate literary category in the 1960s, it has grown exponentially. According to Peterson, "the number of Young Adult titles published more than doubled in the decade between 2002 and 2012 — over 10,000 YA books came out in 2012 versus about 4,700 in 2002" (2018, p. "The YA Book Market Place", para. 1). Several reasons can be attributed to this phenomenon. To begin with, most successful YA books share an emotional intensity which is "commensurate with the raging hormonal intensity of the genre's intended audience", namely adolescents ("What is exactly a YA book?", para. 3). However, the high emotional stake as well as its variety of themes appeal to adults as well. Cart (2016, p. 12) states that much of the value found in YA literature is "in how it addresses the needs of its readers" who are beings in transition between childhood into adulthood, in constant growth and change while searching for their identity. In addition, YA literature is relevant to its audience's lives as it serves two purposes: on the one hand, it offers readers an opportunity to see themselves reflected in its pages while at the same time it fosters understanding, empathy, and compassion for individuals who are unlike the reader. Moreover, YA literature tells its readers the unadorned truth, however unpleasant it might be, providing them with information to confront adulthood with its rights and responsibilities. For all these reasons, YA literature has become a commodity in the market economy.

Risku (2017, p. 10) indicates that today's production of literature is inherently connected to the business of book publishing, which considers literary works a product of consumption. Consequently, the publishing industry exercises power over the production of new works, deciding which ones to print, promote and distribute. Publishers are conscious that YA fiction is a distinctively market-based phenomenon not only for its thematic appeal to the YA generation but also for the increasing economic resources that adolescents have gained since the middle of the XX century. Publishers have also appraised the impact of multimedia and social networking on teenagers, and have thus developed new platforms and ways of narrating, like transmedia storytelling, apart from film and TV adaptation and promotion. According to Peterson, the internet has expanded the opportunities for young adults to connect to the authors they admire by means of direct live connections or social networks ("Digital distraction", para. 1-2). If YA literature is perceived as a product of consumption and is ruled by the laws of the market, then it follows that literary works will be largely produced to meet the demands of its YA readers/consumers.

In this brief history of YA literature, it can be appreciated how this category has matured (Bucher and Hinton, p. 7) and how it has expanded due to economic interests. More complex characters, subjects and situations have been incorporated as well as more complex themes: cruelty and crime, personal abuse, racial violence, LBGTQIA+ perspectives, the homeless and people with disabling conditions. Different types of narrative formats are being used, including journals, diaries, and letters and more technological ones, such as audiobooks in MP3 format and podcasts, e-books, blogs and the social networks. It can thus be concluded that, as a literary category, YA literature is in constant change, as its readership is.

2.1.2. Characteristics

As YA literature is targeted for pre-teens and teenagers, it reflects their experiences and themes of interest. The main protagonist is usually an adolescent who generally narrates in the first person in order to establish intimacy and connection with the reader. Third-person narration is possible, as long as the description of what the leading character says and thinks is included on account of the point of view: it must have the limitations of an adolescent perspective (Bucher & Hinton, p. 10). In general, in YA literature "young

people play important roles even if they aren't the main characters" as "teenagers like to read about other teenagers" (Pace Nilsen & Donelson, p. 27).

Another characteristic of YA literature is that the young main character solves the problem or becomes the heroine or hero of the story. "When the focus is on a young protagonist, readers are encouraged to identify with the characters and to see what is relevant to them" (p. 28). Parents as well as other adults are not central to the stories so that the young heroine or hero can take credit for their own believable, but still challenging, accomplishments (p. 33).

A third characteristic in YA literature is that it is fast paced: its narrative is immediate as teenagers want to know what happens next. Plots are well-structured, and they include time shifts and differing perspectives as well as secrecy, surprise and tension. Strong emotions such as love, romance, sex, horror, and fear "are best shown through a limited number of characters and narrative events and language that flows naturally while still presenting dramatic images" (p. 30).

Furthermore, YA literature deals with emotions that are important to adolescents as protagonists face the same challenges that readers are experiencing. For example, acquiring more mature social skills, accepting the changes in one's body, achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults, preparing for sex, marriage and parenthood, selecting and preparing for an occupation, developing a personal ideology and ethical standards, or assuming membership in the larger community. In short, different aspects of "achieving an identity" (p. 36).

Moreover, Bucher and Hinton (p. 11) describe YA literature as *transitional literature*: it functions as a bridge between literature for children and traditional literary canon. Its works are generally shorter than the ones for adults, "sometimes less complex in structure, but often well-written and tightly constructed".

2.1.3. Sub-Genres

YA literature cannot be conceived as a single genre: because of its varieties of themes, many genders may overlap within one piece of YA literary work. Several classifications have been elaborated, such as those by Bucher and Hinton (2014), Gibbons et all (2016)

and Johnson (2018). The following categorisation does not intend to be arbitrary, but it has been designed to act as guidance for the analysis of the literary texts in the present dissertation.

In YA *fantasy* novels, magic or supernatural elements are present as well as an adventure or quest narrative. In an *urban fantasy*, a hidden magical world is intertwined with human reality. The *paranormal* novel generally describes a romance between a paranormal character and a human character.

YA *science fiction* frequently revolves around technology and/or world-building in the future, making the reader question what the future could result in. *Dystopian* stories are generally set in a more sinister version of the world after an apocalyptic event, when a new civilisation and government have already been established. This new system is usually corrupt and oppressive by means of technology, so the young protagonists must overthrow its power, while confronting adult dilemmas such as death.

YA *crime* and *mystery* stories typically centre on a crime – most often, a murder – that must be solved by means of a series of clues. Related to these is the *thriller***,** which contains elements of adult thriller/horror stories with less atrocious details. Creating tension and suspense is the most important factor in thrillers, whereas in *horror fiction* confronting the readers' terrors is.

Contemporary realistic fiction (or the *problem* novel) is set in a realistic, modern-day world, and its plots, themes and characters reflect the problems and challenges faced by many adolescents daily. It is usually written from the first-person point of view, and the focus is on the characters' personal growth.

Some YA readers also enjoy books about *adventure* as their plots are normally fast-paced and full of excitement. *Humour* is another genre preferred by this egalitarian group in order to escape their everyday life problems while being entertained.

Romance is one of the most important genres present in YA literature, generally featuring a romantic relationship at its core. Set in a contemporary, past, future, dystopian or paranormal world, this type of literature frequently presents an emotional narrative with certain obstacles for lovers to overcome. For example, a love triangle between one girl

and two boys. However, it should be noted that most of the times romance is present as a sub-plot within other genres. Furthermore, relationships between family and friends are also depicted.

Other YA literature genres which can be identified are *historical fiction* (with narratives set in the past, usually during a significant moment in history), *biographies* (which explore the frustrations, obstacles, and achievements in the lives of all kinds of people), *non-fictional* or *informational* books (which include topics with an appropriate reading and interest levels as well as many photographs and other illustrations), *poetry*, *drama*, and *short stories* (which are written in a direct language and which address their contemporary concerns and daily interests). *Comic books*, *picture books*, *graphic novels*, and *magazines* are also part of the young adult literary canon as teenagers have grown accustomed to these formats in the era of visual and digital literacies.

2.1.4. Themes

Adolescence is "the period of transition between childhood and adulthood" (Allen & Waterman, 2019), and it includes both changes to the body and the way a young person relates to the world. As a consequence, teenagers experience many physical, sexual, cognitive, social and emotional changes which are reflected on YA literature in the form of a wide variety of themes (Gibbons et all, 2016; Risku, 2017).

Issues related to mental and physical health are depicted for the purpose of offering insight and developing empathy towards conditions such as depression, eating disorders, disabilities, (terminal) diseases, alienation or even suicide. In connection with health, a topic present in YA literature is the use of substances like alcohol or drugs in order to demonstrate the causes of this type of behaviour in adolescents as well as offering realistic perspectives on the dangers of substance abuse and addiction.

The relationship between individuals and institutions is another recurring issue in YA literature, as institutions shape people from childhood into adulthood. Themes such as political injustice, questioning the status quo, racism, global politics and environmental issues can be found within this type of literary work. The first institution human beings are part of is the family, another topic in YA literature which most of the times challenges the ideals of the "perfect family" and provides different perspectives on family life.

Related to these are issues such as the roles of the mother and the father, (teenage) pregnancy, family conflicts, adoption, divorce, changes within families, psychological and physical violence or even sexual assault.

This is intimately connected with another reoccurring theme in YA literature: relationships, from friendship or romantic partners and all the gamut of topics related (such as loyalty, betrayal, trust, peer pressure, sexual awakening, the first kiss, the first sexual encounter, and sexual experimentation) to more controversial issues, such as bullying or gender identities. With the increasing awareness on this last theme, sexual and gender identity is steadily growing in YA literature, in an attempt to help teenagers to either define or embrace their own identity or develop empathy towards the LGBTQIA+ community. It should be noted that gender is one of the aspects considered in the development of one's identity, which is a central theme to stories in YA literature as this is the result of issues connected with growing-up such as coming-of-age stories, rites of passage and negotiations about one's developing identity. In other words, defining one's identity usually deals with the "edges" of being between childhood and adulthood, life and death, humanity and inhumanity (Risku, p. 19). The depiction of the development of identity, and gender identity in particular, will be analysed in more detail in the following sections.

2.1.4.1. Developing one's identity

Identity is one of the most important themes in YA literature because one of the central dilemmas in adolescence is resolving one's true self. According to Letourneau (2017), YA literature may address this conflict from five different angles. It can show identity formation as a complicated choice, as protagonists discover that the decision to determine their self can be particularly difficult. At the same time, they also realise "how complex and ever-changing one's sense of self can be" but once they understand who they are, "that knowledge can be empowering beyond words" ("Angle #1," para. 1).

Letourneau claims that a second possible angle to identity formation is connected to self-acceptance: learning to be comfortable with one's character while seeking acceptance from others. Group belonging is a crucial part of adolescent identity development: teenagers want to be included and be accepted (Koss and Tucker-Raymond, 2014, To Find Acceptance, para. 1). This is intimately connected to Letourneau's third angle,

which is the one of identity crisis: when protagonists have to decide between their true identities and those expected by others, either because they must play a certain role in a specific situation at a particular moment, or because they are forced to adopt a certain behaviour which is opposite to their own beliefs. This is related to the fourth angle proposed by Letourneau which is "hiding one's true identity" ("Angle #4," para. 1): main characters have to hide the part of themselves that society regards as unacceptable. They may need to assume new identities and explore what it might be like to be someone else (Koss and Tucker-Raymond, To Be Anonymous, para. 1). Lastly, Letourneau describes the fifth angle which is "the fantastical twist on identity" ("Angle #5," para. 1), in which magic or fantastic aspects are included to one of the previously mentioned angles in order to complicate the situation for the protagonists.

These different angles of identity formation in YA literature described by Letourneau reinforce Flannelly's idea that "external interactions shape identity" (2017, p. 2). This means that even though identity and image-of-self are related to the individual, they depend largely on the external environment and its inhabitants. Flannelly claims this is possible thanks to the notion of the "looking glass self" described by Coats: how "our sense of identity emerges through how we imagine others see and react to us" (p. 2).

> The image in the mirror may be of one individual, but reflects a multitude of experiences, people, and choices. Young adults become who they are, what they identify as, by their interactions with landscapes, grief, parents, peers, and illnesses, whether on purpose or by default. (Flannelly, 2017, pp. 2-3).

This is also connected to the idea exposed by Nikolajeva that "adolescence is a period of human life when the brain, still more intensively than before, learns to recognise and attribute mental states to ourselves as well as other people" (p. 86). In other words, adolescents' identity is formed by how they are raised and the environment in which they are reared. If, according to Coats, "the primary goal of identity construction in contemporary culture is recognition from others; ultimately, what we desire is to matter to the people who matter to us" (Flannelly, p. 13), then it follows that interactions with parents and peers are vital to identity formation. "Parental interactions that lead to identity formation are pivotal in a young adult's life because every character has parents, whether present or not" (p. 17). These exchanges either enhance or destroy self-image. Interactions with equals are very important too because adolescents regard "the opinions of their peers superior to any other opinion" (p. 10). Characters develop their identities in

accordance with their beliefs of what their equals consider acceptable. “While each character is interacting with their peers and fashioning their identity based on these interactions, their peers are also going through the same process” (p. 10).

Nikolajeva also claims that in order to accelerate identity formation, characters are placed in extreme situations, such as mental or physical illness, or living under terrible oppressive conditions (as cited in Flannelly, p. 18). The emotions which arouse from these traumatic experiences contribute to identity construction as characters explore who they are and who they want to be (p. 21). The development of social, or higher cognitive emotions, such as love, hatred, jealousy and guilt, have to be learned and trained, and they always involve more than one individual (Nikolajeva, p. 101). Ethical issues arise from this as well, as ethics and social justice are connected with emotions and empathy. “Identity formation includes the understanding of ethics and the development of ethical principles that will regulate our behaviour throughout our lives” (p. 102).

2.1.4.2. Gender identity

As stated above, adolescence is a stage in life when young adults are searching to define themselves. With the rapid visible physical changes occurring during this period, distinct gender differences become evident. At the same time, the media plays a significant role in transmitting society’s culture to teenagers. As a result, “how genders are portrayed in young adult literature contributes to the image young adults develop of their gender roles and the role of gender in the social order” (Jacobs, p. 19). Gender representation in YA literature has an impact on adolescents’ attitudes and perceptions of gender-appropriate behaviour in society. “Gender stereotypes in literature can prevent young adults from reaching their full potential as human beings by depriving them of suitable role models and reinforcing age-old gender constraints in society” (p. 20).

According to Peterson (1996), there has been a growing tendency towards the promotion of gender equality in YA literature, “and many authors are using female protagonists who are confident, determined, and intelligent” (p. 3). More recently, Bucher and Hinton (2014) have noticed that YA literature has begun to include gay and lesbian perspectives. Some of today’s characters question their identities, and a few are even multidimensional, facing transgender themes in a credible way (pp. 46-47). However,

Bucher and Hinton also claim that YA literature normally depicts individuals in stereotypical ways: “girls who are overly concerned with their clothes, hair, makeup, and figures or who are victims in need of a male’s help; men who are unable to express emotions or show fear” (p. 47). By resorting to gender stereotypes, young adults are deprived of a variety of strong alternative role models, and thus their perceptions and attitudes develop in binary oppositions: female/male, homosexual/heterosexual, normal/abnormal. For this reason, some critics claim that readers should be as conscious as possible about the gender constructions and societal expectations encountered in YA literature in order to read these works from a critical standpoint (Robinson, p. 19).

With a view to studying the gender representation of the female protagonists of the different sagas in this dissertation, useful concepts related to YA literature will be considered. Apart from examining the specific sub-genres the series belong to and the themes present in them, particular attention will be drawn to the way in which the protagonist’s identity development is depicted, as well as how gender is represented based on the notions provided by feminist and gender theories, which will be subject to analysis in the following subsections.

2.2. FEMINISM

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, *feminism* is “the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes” (Brunell & Burkett, 2019). However, this seems to be an oversimplification of the term: feminism involves more than the awareness of the differences of opportunities, rights and power between women and men and the set of activities intended to achieve equality. As a matter of fact, there is no single definition of *feminism* as it is a complex notion which varies in meaning and connotation for people from different generations, ethnicities, sexual orientations, social classes, nationalities, and identities (Pasque & Wimmer, n.d., p. 4). The reason for this is that feminism is a dynamic notion which has borrowed ideas from other theories and has adapted them to its own rapidly evolving necessities (Tyson, 2006, p. 94).

2.2.1. The history of Feminism

Although the struggle for women’s rights and interests is worldwide, its history originated

in the West, where females “were confined to the domestic sphere while public life was reserved for men” (Brunell & Burkett, 2019).

There is little evidence in ancient history of complaints against the inferior status of women in connection with men. Although there were some attempts at feminist criticism during the early middle ages, it was during in the XVIII century that females started demanding liberty, equality and natural rights applied to both sexes, inspired by the ideals supported by the Enlightenment. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, proposing that women and men should be given equal opportunities in education, work and politics as they are equally rational. Although they are socially trained to be irrelevant, women do not only exist to please men (Influence of the Enlightenment, para. 3).

Liberal principles from these times became an important political weapon in the struggle for female suffrage, which became the main objective of *the first wave* of feminism (The suffrage movement). Liberal feminists sought the abolition of inequalities within the democratic system. The fight to achieve the right to vote continued for more than seventy years. Yet once it had been accomplished, the feminist movement could not come to an agreement as to what their next objective would be. In the end, it divided into different groups with diverse objectives (The post-suffrage era).

During the first half of the XX century, the two world wars were waged and, consequently, women had to replace men in the workforce because males were fighting at the front. However, the instant World War II came to an end, females were made redundant and sent back home. Once more in history, women were publicly considered “reserve labour force, to be called on in case of emergency and laid off as soon as the crisis was over” (Castro, 1990, p. 7).

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex*, a book in which she discussed the treatment of women throughout history. In it, she claimed that “one is not born a woman, but rather becomes, a woman”, meaning that females are expected to act according to socio-cultural standards established by males who have been historically in power. Men act on, change and give meaning to the world because they are independent while women are dependent beings controlled by circumstances and, especially, men. (Tyson, 2014, p. 96).

Beauvoir's thoughts provided the foundations for the emergence of *the second wave* of feminism, which took place during the 1960s and 1990s (Pasque & Wimmer, n. d.). Inspired by the beliefs behind the anti-war and civil rights movements, women's struggle was perceived as class struggle. In the beginning, its focus lay on formal equality by the law and females in the workforce: its objectives were to guarantee equal pay for equal work, equal job opportunities and expanded child-care services. In time, this second wave of feminism would question patriarchy, family, reproductive rights, sexuality, domestic violence, custody and divorce laws, and even the development of gender and language research focused on discrimination and sexist versus inclusive language (Litosseliti, 2013, p. 23).

However, as feminism evolved, it became clear that it was largely defined and led by educated middle-class white women, creating an ambivalent relationship with women of other classes and races. White feminists claimed that gender was the reason why they were excluded from participation in social and economic life; but black women claimed that they also had to confront racism besides sexism. For black feminists, being black and female was different from being black and male or even white and female. White women were as much the oppressor as white men (Brunell & Burkett, The race factor).

Further to this, it was not until the 1980s that feminists in the West started interacting with women in developing countries, who had to endure forced marriage, female infanticide, widow burning or female genital cutting. Towards the end of the XX century awareness of the existence of minority groups increased as well as the differences in issues between Western and Eastern feminism (The globalization of feminism).

This resulted in *the third wave* of feminism with more critical, constructivist and post-structuralist theoretical paradigms. It emerged in the 1990s and was influenced by postcolonial and postmodern thinking (Pasque & Wimmer, p. 13). Its purpose was to question, reclaim and redefine the ideas, words and media that transmitted notions about womanhood, gender, beauty, sexuality, femininity and masculinity, among other concepts (Brunell & Bukett, The third wave of feminism, Foundations). "'Third-wave feminism' was concerned with the diversity, multiplicity, performativity, and co-construction of gender identities within specific contexts and communities of practice, and on the politics of power construction and subject positions" (Litosseliti, p. 23). The

idea to invert sexist, racist and classist symbols, fighting patriarchy, was possible due to the greater economic and professional power and status achieved by women of the second wave as well as the expansion of these new ideas as a result of the circulation of information by means of technological advances. One of the biggest contributions from this wave was the work of Judith Butler and her theory that gender is performative. "Gender is something that one performs or does continuously rather than one associated naturally with the body" (Parvathi, 2017, p. 44). This concept will be developed further on in the present dissertation.

Around 2012, *the fourth wave* of feminism emerged when there were public denunciations of sexual crimes such as the Jimmy Savile sexual abuse scandal in the UK and the case of gang rape and fatal assault in Dehli, India (Brunell & Burkett, The fourth wave of feminism). This wave is distinguished from the previous ones in the use of the social media to highlight and address issues such as sexual harassment, body shaming and rape culture, among others, as well as the necessity of women to discuss these topics without reserve. Different campaigns have developed across the globe, such as *Everyday Sexism Project*, *No More page 3*, *Stop Blind Sexism*, *Mattress Performance*, *10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman*, *#YesAllWomen*, *the 2017 Women's march*, *the 2018 Women's march*, *#MeToo*, *He for She* and *Ni Una Menos*. The purpose of these campaigns is to denounce all the powerful men in politics, business, entertainment and the news media who have sexually harassed others.

2.2.2. Variations of Feminism

As the history of feminism is complex and varied, different conceptualizations, or variations, of feminism have emerged (Pasque and Wimmer, p. 15). The following classification represents those movements with important concepts which are relevant for the purposes of the present dissertation.

Liberal/Egalitarian feminism is a traditional perspective that was established as a part of the first wave of feminism. It is a reformer movement characterized by a moderate attitude as it struggles for equality within the existing democratic society. For liberal feminists, equality can be achieved if existing institutions are improved by making them more equal and less discriminatory (Boucher, 1984, pp. 64-66). "Modern liberal feminists argue that patriarchal society fuses sex and gender together, making only those jobs that

are associated with the traditionally feminine appropriate for women to pursue" (Pasque & Wimmer, p. 16).

Social/Marxist feminism is based on the theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, incorporating the perspective of social justice as well as socioeconomic differences. For socialist feminists, female oppression is defined as class oppression. Women are functional to the system: they support capitalism by providing workers while consuming its products. The family is designed to reproduce capitalist ideas. Gender equality is thus achieved by working to end both economic and cultural oppression (Boucher, 1984, pp. 66-73).

Radical feminism considers that economic oppression is secondary to biological and sex oppression. For radical feminists, biology determines oppression, the first division of labour being childbirth and child-rearing. Men are the enemy, and patriarchy is the necessary framework that enables other forms of oppression due to the low value it assigns to feminine qualities. If society placed a higher value on feminine qualities, then there would be less gender oppression and more acceptance on multiple forms of gender expression (Pasque & Wimmer, p. 17).

Multicultural feminism suggests that "while all women are subject to patriarchal oppression, each woman's specific needs, desires, and problems are greatly shaped by her race, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, educational experience, religion, and nationality" (Tyson, 2004, p. 105). It should not be used as an umbrella term for historically and culturally distinct feminist perspectives as patriarchy operates differently across societies. In fact, in order to promote *sisterhood* (the psychological and political bonding among women based on the recognition of common experiences and goals), it is necessary to include "respect for and attention to individual differences among women as well as an equitable distribution of power among various cultural groups within feminist leadership" (p. 105).

Lesbianism addresses both the "psychological, social, economic, and political oppression fostered not only by patriarchal male privilege, but by heterosexual privilege as well" (Tyson, p. 323). It perceives itself as true feminism, as it claims that true solidarity and love can only exist between women. Heterosexuality is an institution which

oppresses women as they are linked to men both economically and emotionally (Castro, p. 107).

2.2.3. Feminist Principles

Due to the eclectic nature associated with feminism, a careful selection of concepts has been included in this subsection which will the base for the analysis of female gender stereotyping in the sagas examined in the present dissertation. The notions of *patriarchy* and its political-ideological construct of males' biological superiority to females (bell hooks, 2010; Wood, 2009) as well as Simone de Beauvoir's portrayal of woman as *man's Other* and as an *immanent object* (1949) will be of use in the study of the development of female gender identity. Another concept which will be discussed is the one Laura Mulvey described as the *male gaze* (1999) which is directly related to women's perception of their physical appearance as objects to be looked upon. The *myth of the maternal instinct* (de Beauvoir, 1949; Valenti, 2007) together with marriage or *the construct of the family* will also be analysed in connection with Ginette Castro's description of love as a means of oppression (1990). Moreover, Lois Tyson's depiction of herself as a *recovering patriarchal woman* (2006) will also be considered in order to explain the reason why women seem to have reinforced patriarchal beliefs throughout history.

Feminism has hitherto been described as a complex set of ideologies and theories which propose the equality of the sexes. It is precisely on the term "sexes" that feminists concentrate on. The definition of the word *sex* is "the sum of features by which members of species can be divided into two groups – male and female – that complement each other reproductively" (Brunell & Burkett, 2019). This indicates that sex is what biologically differentiates members of a species. Feminists acknowledge these differences exist among human beings, but they do not adhere to the belief that these dissimilarities make women naturally inferior to men. This sexist belief is the main tenet of *patriarchy*, the political-social system which insists that men are biologically superior to women and are thus entitled to dominate and rule over them by various forms of psychological terrorism and violence (bell hooks, 2010, p. 1).

Feminism distinguishes between the word *sex,* which is the biological constitution as female or male, and the word *gender*, which is the cultural programming as feminine or

masculine (Tyson, 2006, p. 86). Therefore, feminine and masculine are gender categories which are economically, politically, socially, culturally and psychologically constructed by patriarchy. Tyson claims that "while biology determines our sex (male or female), culture determines our gender (masculine or feminine)" so the word *gender* refers to behaviour that is socially programmed as women and men. The first reference to this distinction was made by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949: by claiming that one becomes a woman, she meant that feminine behaviour is not biologically inherent but socially learnt.

The moment woman is defined only by her difference from male norms and values, she is objectified and marginalized, thus becoming what de Beauvoir named "the man's Other": she is not a person in her own right. She is less than a man as she is not a fully developed being as he is (p. 96). Throughout human history, man has occupied the role of the free independent subject. In opposition, he sees woman as an object with value as a sexual partner but a dependent being. She completes him because she herself is incomplete. Man has projects, activities and accomplishments whereas woman just has man. Man shows transcendence: he is active, creative, productive and powerful. In contrast, woman shows immanence: she is interior, passive, static and immersed in herself.

This contrast between men's transcendence and women's immanence is also addressed by Irigaray as the *male gaze*: "the man looks; the woman is looked at" (Tyson, p. 102). If man looks, then he is in control as he holds the power to name, rule and explain the world. Woman, on the contrary, is "merely an object to be seen". The term *male gaze* was coined by the British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (1999), who took the term *gaze* explored by Jacques Lacan as the contrast between image and self-image: how a person is looked at from all sides in opposition to how they see themselves from their own narcissistic point of view (p. 836). Michel Foucault added the notion of power to the concept of the *gaze*:

> when the gaze occurs, which can be at any point in time, there is always a subject, the gazer, and an object, the one who is gazed upon, and that the object always has to self-regulate in order to please the subject who might or might not be looking. (Tsatsa, 2013, p. 6)

Tsatsa further explains that according to Mulvey, "when a subject views an object the gaze occurs and there is inevitably an asymmetry of power between them" (p. 6). If "The

'gazer' is the subject, and therefore has more power than the 'object', who is being looked at" (p. 11), then the gazer has a higher ranking in the power hierarchy. For Mulvey women self-regulate and conform their behaviour and looks to please men because females know they will always be the object judged by males (Tsatsa, p. 11).

If woman as the Other is an object, this implies that she is inert and that she can be looked at and used accordingly. Patriarchal society has historically made decisions on the use of the body of females, even appropriating its products (Guillaumin in Tyson, p. 99). Women have been deprived of their sense of individuality, independence and autonomy, thus being manipulated physically and emotionally. Costumes and styles have been functional to the constructions of bodies as inert. Moreover, decisions on sexuality and reproductive rights have been made in the name of women because of their biological reproductive function.

It is this reproductive function which has enslaved females, as they have been perceived as closely connected to nature due to their physical biological functions, namely the ability to give birth to human beings. Women are supposed to want to have babies; it is their "natural" inclination (Valenti, p. 152). For this reason, they are associated with a nursing aspect and a natural desire to become mothers. However, nurturing is not biologically linked to sex, and both women and men have similar emotions related to caregiving (Brannon in Tyson, p. 110). De Beauvoir was one of the first feminists to argue that the maternal instinct is a social construct, as not all women want to have children or feel comfortable being mothers. As a matter of fact, motherhood causes oppression as childbirth and childrearing affect the availability for women to become part of the labour force. Castro claims that the myth of the maternal instinct, which patriarchy has defined as *the* function of women, has also served to divide females from each other, condemning those who have consciously decided not to produce offspring (p. 80).

The myth of the maternal instinct has also laid the foundation for marriage, the "construct of the family" (Castro, p. 80). Family is the "patriarchal unit" which exercises oppression on women on multiple levels: by economic dependence, psychological annihilation, sexual exploitation, childbearing and housework (Boucher, 1984, p. 77). Marriage reproduces the micro dimension of society. By doing unpaid work, females reproduce society. Family is thus a socially constructed institution with the clear purpose of reproducing capitalist ideas. According to Delphi (in Tyson, p. 98), marriage is a labour

contract that ties women to unpaid twenty-four-hour-long domestic work which is perceived by men as unimportant and involving less time. As a result, females constitute an oppressed class as they are subordinates within families regardless of the socioeconomic class they belong to. Moreover, marriage and family life impose women's sexual obligation in addition to their obligation to care for frail members of the family as well as for healthy male members, thus appropriating women's time (p. 99). Marriage and family life prevent females from achieving intellectual growth and freedom as patriarchy encourages them to invest themselves in the accomplishments of their husbands and sons, in particular (p. 97). Even though today women have a bigger participation in the workforce, their duties at home with the family remain unaltered in the great majority of the households.

The concept of "love" attached to marriage and sexuality is also central to the oppression of females (Castro, p. 83). Romance and love have been imposed on the biological link between women and men as another means of submission. Love has the political function of persuading the oppressed to accept their oppression. In today's society, love is corrupt because it occurs in a context of inequality. If women are dependent on men, then they will seek emotional and economic security in a romantic relationship. Love and status are inseparable, and females will submit to any male demand in search of any material, emotional, physical, psychological, political or social needs.

In summary, the word patriarchy means "rule by the fathers" (Wood, 2009, p. 31), which suggests that in a patriarchal culture, the ideology, structures, and practices have been created by men. As it has already been stated, patriarchy shapes the values in culture and both women and men are socialized into this system. For this reason, Tyson defines herself as a "recovering patriarchal woman" (p. 85) – "a female who has internalized the norms and values of patriarchy" and who has been trained "*not* to see the ways in which women are oppressed by traditional gender roles" (p. 86). She is "recovering" though as she is questioning these precepts. In a sense, the majority of females today are recovering patriarchal women, becoming aware of the inequalities imposed on them by men and how unconsciously they are reproduced.

It can be then concluded that feminism as a political, social and ideological movement is a dynamic concept which is constantly redefining itself. For this reason, a specific number of its tenets have been selected in this subsection which will be of use in the

analysis of the portrayal of the female leading characters of the sagas which are part of the present dissertation. Simone de Beauvoir's concepts of woman as man's Other and as an immanent object will serve as reference to the heroines' gender identity formation. Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze will be considered in connection with the protagonists' perception of their physical appearance and the manner in which men objectify them in the series. Marxist views of women as functional to the capitalist system, radical feminists' views on patriarchy and marriage, family and motherhood, Castro's concept of love and oppression, and lesbian viewpoints of heterosexuality as an economically and emotionally oppressive institution will also be useful when the leading characters' life choices are examined. In addition, the authors of the sagas will be analysed with reference to Tyson's definition of herself as a recovering patriarchal woman in order to verify whether the heroines they depicted challenge patriarchal ideology and female stereotypes or not.

2.3. GENDER THEORY

It was during the second wave of feminism that a distinction was recognised between sex and gender. Beauvoir's famous proclamation that one is not born a woman but becomes one implies that gender differences are socially produced. As a matter of fact, the majority of feminist and gender literature define sex as a biological category and gender as a socially constructed one. Wood (2009) claims that "sex is a biological classification, whereas gender is a social, symbolic system through which a culture attaches significance to biological sex" (p. 35).

Even though biology influences how females and males develop, it does not determine their behaviour or personality, or how certain behaviours are valued by members of a specific culture. The psychological and sociocultural characteristics associated with the biological sex is referred to as *gender* (Crooks, 2005, p. 41). More specifically, gender is "a social, symbolic construct that varies across cultures, over time within a given culture, over the course of individuals' life spans, and in relation to the other gender" (Wood, pp. 23-24). It is acquired from infancy, with structures and practices which reinforce society's prescriptions for female and male identities and behaviours. Whereas biological sex is inherent in a person's nature, gender is a social construct determining people's behaviour in accordance with their gender. For this reason, feminism has used gender

to analyse and denounce the “social construction of inequalities between the sexes” (Vigoya in Bruins, 2018, p. 7).

In short, the objective pursued by gender theory is “to analyse the constructed inequalities between the sexes by examining how expectations around gender are created and what the relationship is between individuals and the social constructions that shape their gender” (Bruins, p. 7).

2.3.1. Theories of Gender Development and Behaviour

According to Wood, there are four types of theories of gender development and behaviour (pp. 38-63).

The first one focuses on the biological bases of gender, attributing masculine and feminine qualities and abilities to genetics and biology. Biologically speaking, human beings are usually classified into male or female according to their external and internal genitalia. These combined with other sex markers are determined by one pair of chromosomes: females usually have XX sex chromosomes whereas males have XY sex chromosomes. *Biological theory*, then, is valuable in giving general information about genetic and biological factors which may affect physiology, thinking and behaviour in women and men. However, these theories do not describe individual females and males.

A second group of theories of gender focus on interpersonal factors which influence the development of femininity and masculinity. *Psychodynamic theories* explain this as the result of the earliest relationship established by an infant with their primary caretaker, usually the mother. Her feminine or his masculine identity, including gender, is defined fundamentally by the influence of this relationship, which is central to human development (Wood, p. 46). *Psychological theories* of gender development “emphasize the power of others’ communication to teach lessons about gender and to provide models of masculinity and femininity” (p. 51). There are two complimentary explanations as to how this is achieved: on the one hand, gender identity is absorbed in response to external stimuli. But, on the other hand, it is developed according to the models children choose to learn feminine or masculine behaviour (pp. 48-49).

Cultural theories of gender concentrate on the influence of culture in the development of femininity and masculinity by "showing how social expectations and values about the sexes are systematically taught to individuals" (Wood, p. 55). *Symbolic interactionism* states that gender is socially created and sustained through communication. "Learning gender occurs as others define children by sex and link sex to social expectations of gender" (p. 53). This is possible owing to the roles assigned to women and men. "A role is a set of expected behaviours and the values associated with them" (p. 54). Roles are external to individuals as they are defined by the society they live in. But in order to be effective, they must be internalized by individuals. Once the cultural scripts for gender are internalized, there rises the awareness that there are different roles for women and men as well as the unequal values assigned to them.

The fourth set of theories offer critical perspectives on gender based on cultural ideology. Critical theories of gender attempt to identify how "dominant groups manage to privilege their interests and perspectives and impose them on less powerful groups" (Wood, p. 55). The aim is to empower oppressed groups and change dominant patterns and ideologies underlying them.

One of these theories is known as *standpoint*. According to this, societies are composed by different groups that are organized in social hierarchies. The higher members in the hierarchy want to maintain their power, thus perpetuating their beliefs from their perspective. Those in subordinate groups, such as women, minorities, gays and lesbians, people in lower socioeconomic class, intersexuals, transsexuals, and others, need to understand the people in power, thus developing less biased and distorted views about how society operates.

Queer theory criticizes the conventional binary categories of identity and cultural views of "normal" and "abnormal," particularly in relation to sexuality (p. 59). It questions the dominant concept of heteronormativity, which is the assumption that heterosexuality is normal and normative and all other sexual identities are abnormal. Heteronormativity implies that gender is a binary category, and it is regulated by the heterosexual norm, which can be described as "traditional gender arrangements and lifelong monogamy" (Hofstätter, 2012, p. 18). Heterosexuality also refers to "a structure of power throughout various non-sexually connoted contexts in social and cultural spheres" which "explains a basic (hierarchical) structure in social units and institutions such as kinship, marriage

and family relations, as well as relations of friends, people at work, etc." (p. 18). In other words, heteronormativity is "the heterosexual norm framing the construction of gender as a binary category. Heteronormativity is not limited to the sexual dimension but is a structural force throughout social organizations" (p. 19). Thus, queer theory defines individual sexuality as a fluid, fragmented and dynamic collective of possible sexualities, and it stresses that they are socially constructed. Sexuality may vary over the course of a person's life, or even over the course of a week, because human sexual desire is constituted by many factors other than the binary choice of partner along heterosexual/homosexual lines. For example, the definition of one's sexuality might be based on one's preference for someone older or younger, or for a single partner or a group activity. It might also be based on such oppositions such as orgasmic/nonorgasmic, in private/in public or spontaneous/scripted. It may even be based on one's preference for particular acts, sensations, or physical types (Tyson, p. 336). Apart from sexuality, queer theory includes ethnicity, class, gender and other non-binary aspects in the construction of a person's identity. For this reason, to define a person by one of these factors is misleading as there are many different ways of being a woman, a man, gay or straight.

When the views of queer theory are integrated with those of performative theory, they challenge and destabilize cultural categories and the values attached to them, pointing out the insufficiency of binary categories of female/male, feminine/masculine, gay/straight, and normal/abnormal (Wood, p. 62). *Performative theory* argues that gender is generated through performance or expression. Gender identity is constituted by the "repeated performance of specific ritualized acts (both bodily and discursive)" (Butler in Litosseliti, 2013, p. 62). This means that gender is not an internal reality but rather a phenomenon which is produced and reproduced all the time, by doing and acting in a certain way. Its most important theorist Judith Butler explains that "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time" (1988, p. 523). Butler agrees with Simone de Beauvoir in that biological sex is distinct from gender. According to Butler, there are three different dimensions in one's identity: anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance (1990, p. 137). The first is biologically determined, whereas the latter are cultural. One can recognise oneself as one gender, but act and look like the other. This is the reason why there are feminine men and masculine women. However, even though individuals can be linked to a certain gender, feminine or masculine, depending on their behaviour, they generally perform it

“according to (or against) the norms established by society” (Butler in Hartvik, 2018, p. 6). These performances are always collaborative as they are accomplished in particular social contexts and times, beyond individual experiences.

Butler disagrees with Simone de Beauvoir when she claims that nobody is born a woman. For Butler, nobody can be born a gender because gender does not exist until it is performed. Gender is not a noun but a verb. Gender is “a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing” (2004, p. 1). This means that a person does not choose freely to enact one sex or the other because gender is determined from the moment a newborn baby is identified as a girl or a boy. Thus, the child can only re-enact the suitable norms for the gender assigned. Butler adds that “through performativity, dominant and non-dominant gender norms are equalized” (2004, p. 209), reinforcing her idea that this repeated performance “is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame” (1990, pp. 178-179). For this reason, deviating from the expected gender norms has punitive consequences (1988, p. 522). She even states that it is impossible to establish the origins of these acts, which are entirely imitative (1990, p. 138) because they have been performed for a very long time. Therefore, if one’s acts are perceived as female, then one’s gender identity will be female. The slightest change in the expected acts of one gender would change people’s perception of that individual.

2.3.2. Gender roles

Crooks (2005) defines a gender role as “a collection of attitudes and behaviours that are considered normal and appropriate in a specific culture for people of a particular sex” (p. 42). This indicates that people are expected to fulfil certain attitudes and behaviours according to what is considered socially appropriate. Hence feminine and masculine are the socially appropriate behaviours expected from women and men respectively in a given culture at a specific moment in time. To give an example, the roles of women have varied in history and they even fluctuate from society to society: a middle-class white woman in Argentina is different from a middle-class white woman in Europe or Africa. It can be inferred then that gender roles are acquired by means of the process of socialization. In this way, “society conveys behavioural expectations to the individual” (p. 59) by means of different agents of socialization from the early stages of human development.

The first agent of socialization human beings are born into is the family, so it is in it that they become gendered. It has already been discussed that children learn gender roles without explicit teaching because they observe and emulate others whom they see as models, and because these models give them feedback for the different behaviours they adopt. It is in this view that Crooks (2005) affirms that the first carers, generally the parents, are "the shapers of gender roles" (p. 59). They demonstrate the different expectations they have about gender by means of verbal and non-verbal communication with infants: the language they use, the types of games (both toys and physical games) they encourage children to play, the physical contact they have with infants as well as its frequency, the kinesics (facial and body motion) and paralanguage they use to give feedback to children, the way they interact with others, and even the physical appearance they adopt and encourage their offspring to adopt. According to Gill, Esson and Yuen (2016), "descriptions of dress and style in the adult world are often overladen with comments on the degree to which the clothing invokes the 'correct' moral order regarding gender" (p. 33). In this way, children develop their gender identity, that is, their psychological perception as either female or male, which may not match their biological sex.

It should be noted that even though the first years of development are important in shaping gender, gender identity may change over time as infants interact with other agents of socialization who may embody alternative versions of femininity and masculinity. For example, Gill, Esson and Yuen (2016) state that preschool "provides what is often the first example of the child's encounter with the ways in which gender becomes institutionalized" because it is the place where gender issues "provoke physical and social division" (p. 34). This oppositional stance between female and male becomes less rigid as infants grow through school, but it does not disappear. They also claim that children without schooling may be not compelled by gender strictures, but they may be subject to gender representations in religion, television and other media.

Gender-role expectations become stereotypes the moment they become widely accepted and individuality stops being respected.

2.3.3. Stereotypes

Crooks (2005) defines a stereotype as “a generalized notion of what a person is like that is based only on that person’s sex, race, religion, ethnic background, or similar criterion” (p. 54). According to Naomi Ellemers (2018), “stereotypes reflect general expectations about members of particular social groups” (p. 276). When stereotyping, there is a tendency to “overemphasize differences between groups and underestimate variations within groups” (p. 277). A possible explanation for this is the deeper analysis conducted by McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears (2004) in which they claim that stereotypes are shared normative group beliefs which save energy and aid explanation (pp. 2-5). Stereotypes are formed according to the views or norms of the social group the perceiver belongs to in an attempt to recognize, remember and respond to the significant amount of information contained in the world. In order to comprehend and act in accordance with the stimuli present in an effortless and fast way, the perceiver needs to categorize this information by detecting similarities and differences. However, this capacity for information processing frequently causes erroneous assumptions of the world. By generalising, it ignores detailed and specific information associated with individuals. Stereotypes are generally negative, but they may also be positive (Stangor, 2009, pp. 2-3) or neutral, reflecting neither positive nor negative evaluative connotation (Hogg & Abrams, 1998, p. 67).

There are several reasons why stereotypes are created (McGarty, Yzerbyt & Spears, pp. 7-8). As stated above, stereotypes help the perceiver clarify the world. They can also simplify the volume of stimuli from the surrounding environment in order to comprehend reality. Self-enhancement may be another motivation, as accentuating differences may serve two different purposes: to contribute to a positive outgroup social identification or to reflect self-serving biases. Stereotyping may also serve pragmatic functions, either by reflecting people’s propensity to follow social rules in order to be able to interact with others, or by avoiding categorisations which would threaten their identity either as individuals or as part of groups. One last possible reason of the existence of stereotypes is that they can serve to maintain the status quo.

The manner in which stereotypes are produced has been subject to comprehensive study as they involve behaviours which are not based on objective evidence. McGarty, Yzerbyt and Spears (2004, pp. 8-11) state that the concept behind the formation of

stereotypes is called the *illusory correlation*, the phenomenon by which the perceiver establishes a relationship between two variables (such as people or behaviours) even though that relationship does not exist. According to Hamilton and Gifford (1976), the *distinctiveness-based illusory correlation* is observed when a false association is formed based on the presence of rare occurrences which have captured the perceiver's attention. Nonetheless, stereotypes can also be the result of the *expectancy-based illusory correlation* (Hamilton & Rose, 1980). They may form due to people's pre-existing expectations about the differences between social groups. One possible hypothesis for this is called "the kernel of truth" (Oaks et al, 1994): stereotypes emerge from actual differences between groups, which in turn are overemphasized. A second possibility is that stereotypes may actually be self-fulfilling prophecies (Snyder, 1981). They may affect the manner in which people in the ingroup perceive themselves and make them behave accordingly, thereby accentuating the differences with the outgroups. However, it should be noted that stereotypes may form without the presence of stimulus information. According to McGarty and colleagues (p. 11), this is due to the idea of *differentiated meaning*, which is the process by which perceivers interpret the stimulus information without relying on notions of distinctiveness.

2.3.3.1. Gender stereotypes

As shown above, gender roles are the activities or behaviours which are associated with women and men in a specific culture at a given time. When certain beliefs and attitudes about femininity and masculinity are ascribed to these roles, they become gender stereotypes (Brannon, 2000, p. 2). In other words, gender roles are the basis for gender stereotypes, "generalised views or preconceptions about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, men and women" (*UN Human Rights*, 2019). Gender stereotyping is the practice of ascribing certain attitudes, characteristics or roles to females and males based on their membership to a social group.

Brannon (2000) uses Deaux and Lewis's model of gender stereotyping to describe its components, which are physical appearance, traits, behaviours and occupations. The central component from which stereotypes emerge seems to be physical appearance, and this generally affects the inferences made about the others. Yet, although each aspect may vary independently, "people make judgments about one based on

information about another, to form an interdependent network of associations" (p. 184). Deductions about gender-related characteristics arise from this network.

Gender stereotypes are very influential, and the reason for this is that they allow individuals to quickly comprehend others' status in order to recognize them as in-group o out-group members (Glick & Fiske, 1999, p. 202). Historically, this social categorization for gender has been seen in binary terms, comparing and contrasting women and men. Ellemers (2018) claims that "gender categorizations are immediately detected, are chronically salient, seem relatively fixed, and are easily polarized" (p. 2). For this reason, the formation of stereotypes and the reinforcement of the differences between women and men persist in time (p. 3).

It is true that gender stereotypes may be helpful for rapid assessment of unknown individuals' behaviour or for quick understanding of the differences among large groups of people. But although this perception is suitable in general terms, it overlooks the defining characteristics of specific individuals (Ellemers, p. 4; Wood, p. 123). Claiming that women are emotional and weak whereas men are rational and strong distorts people's perceptions, especially when this is not true of the whole members of the category. When stereotyping, overestimation and underestimation occur. Perceptions about gender differences may be accurate in average group judgements, but it may be inadequate for individuals within those groups.

As in the case of gender roles, "gender stereotyping begins early in development and results in children holding rigid rules for gender-related behaviour" (Brannon, p. 26), and it becomes more flexible with development toward adulthood. However, although cognitive processing simplification helps children to make sense of their surrounding world, stereotyping is not necessary for adults as it may develop into prejudice and discrimination.

2.3.3.1.1. Female gender stereotypes

Several authors have analysed female gender stereotypes from different perspectives. Gill, Esson and Yuen (2016) note that women have been traditionally "understood to be primarily good, obedient, docile children, helpful to their mothers from whom they learned their domestic role". It is necessary that they are pretty but not too sexy as they must

wait to be selected by a prospective husband because heterosexual marriage is the accepted norm. Cultural artefacts reinforce the idea that men are the actors and leaders while women are the followers. Men are taught physical skills and excellence because they are adventurous whereas women learn about interpersonal relationships because they look, watch, and wait to be chosen (pp. 1-2).

Ellemers (2018) describes gendered expectations held by female stereotypes. She claims that communality is the stereotypical domain of women, while their relevant behaviours are warmth and caring for others. They normally neglect professional achievement because they prioritise the family (p. 281). Furthermore, Brannon (2000) claims that historically there has been two beliefs about women: the doctrine of the two spheres and the cult of true womanhood. The doctrine of the two spheres states that women and men have their separate areas of influence. “For women, the areas of influence are home and children, whereas men’s sphere includes work and the outside world” (p. 161). Brannon divides the cult of true womanhood into four cardinal values: piety, which implies that true women are naturally religious; purity, which means that true women are sexually uninterested and they do not use harsh language; submissiveness, which suggests that true women are gentle, tactful, quiet, timid, weak, dependent and aware of others’ feelings; and domesticity, which signifies that true women are neat in habits and their domain is in the home (pp. 161-164).

According to Tyson (2006), “*traditional gender roles* cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive” (p. 85). Patriarchy generally undermines a behaviour by describing it as feminine. If femininity is associated with frailty, modesty and timidity, then women are disempowered in the patriarchal real world: they cannot be financially successful or extremely intelligent and they cannot have strong opinions or a healthy appetite for anything, not to mention assert their rights (p. 88). Women can only have two identities: “the good girl” (also known as “madonna” or “angel”) or “the bad girl” (commonly named “whore” or “bitch”). The former “accepts her traditional gender role and obeys the patriarchal rules” (p. 89) and for this reason, she is placed on a pedestal. She is “modest, unassuming, self-sacrificing, and nurturing” (p. 90), with no needs of her own because she is completely satisfied by serving her family. Bad girls “violate patriarchal sexual norms in some way: they’re sexually forward in appearance or behaviour, or they have multiple sexual partners” (p. 90). They are used and discarded because “they don’t

deserve better, and they probably don't even expect better" (p. 90). Women are naturally born to be passive; if they are not, then they are not really women (p. 100).

This stereotypical image of women is closely related to the idea of sexism, that is, prejudice based on gender or sex, described by Glick and Fiske (1999). They argue that having power over women, men depend on them in order to raise their children and thus maintain the status quo. This creates ambivalent attitudes toward females: on the one hand, unfavourable attitudes that justify men's higher status by means of dominance, which is known as *hostile sexism*. Yet, on the other hand, subjectively positive attitudes masqueraded in paternalistic justifications such as feelings of protectiveness, the belief that men are women's providers, and the notion that they are incomplete without females because they are males' "better half", which is referred to as *benevolent sexism* (p. 211).

In her book *Gendered Lives*, Julia Wood (2009) gives a more detailed description of female gender stereotypes in various aspects of life. She quotes Spence and Buckner (2000) when she states that "to be feminine is to be physically attractive, deferential, emotionally expressive, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships. … 'Real women' still look good, adore children, and care about homemaking" (p. 24). Psychological theories claim that women are dependent on others rather than being autonomous and independent (p. 51). For this reason, they are frequently defined by relationships with others or by appearance (p. 119). Wood assures that although nowadays women do not tend to adopt their husbands' names, "in Western culture, a woman who doesn't marry historically has been viewed with sympathy or pity" (p. 120). Wood also distinguishes stereotypes in feminine speech communities (p. 127-128): communication is considered a primary way to develop and maintain relationships with others, establishing equality, supporting others and encouraging them to speak. Feminine speech is responsive and tentative, and it has a personal, concrete style. According to Wood, "women are more sensitive to nonverbal communication; display more overt interest, attention, and affiliation; constrict themselves physically; are given and use less space; use touch for affiliative purposes but are touched more; and restrict body gestures more than men" (p. 155).

Additionally, Wood argues that there are two different versions of femininity today (pp. 177-183): one that suggests that women can have access to any job and egalitarian marriages with liberated men and non-sexist children. But at the same time, a

contradicting message is transmitted as few women are offered job opportunities in the highest levels of personal life, while battering and sexual abuse is rising according to crime statistics. Moreover, the majority of women have careers but still do most of the housework and childcare while they face the pressure to be young and beautiful imposed by the media. Along these lines, five views of femininity and womanhood can be distinguished today: the importance of appearance, which means that women are desirable if they are pretty, slim and well dressed; the demand to be sensitive and caring; the negative treatment inflicted by others, which includes social aggression among girls; the need to be a superwoman, which implies to have a successful career and to be an excellent homemaker and mother; and the fact that there are multiple ways to define femininity and womanhood, which will raise both approval or disapproval, depending on the point of view.

Wood also describes the stereotypes present in gendered close relationships (pp. 210-219). Women are seen as interpersonally sensitive, creating closeness in dialogue, by fostering emotional expressiveness, personal disclosures, depth and breadth of knowledge, and attentiveness to the evolving nature of the friendship. In addition, gendered roles are salient in heterosexual romantic relationships. The cultural script for romance states that "feminine women are desirable, that they should facilitate conversation, generally defer to men, but control sexual activity, and that they should assume primary responsibility for the relationships" (p. 219). Cultural gender expectations about desirable partners consider beauty and nurturing qualities in women, who generally perceive sexual behaviour as more closely linked to emotional involvement. Females tend to focus on relationship dynamics, as "ongoing conversation about feelings and daily activities is a primary way to express and enrich personal relationships (Peretti & Abplanalp, 2004)" (p. 221).

In addition, Wood identifies different stereotypes of women in the workplace (pp. 232-235). The first type described is woman as sex object as females are judged based on their appearance or actions. Woman as mother is a second stereotype which has both figurative and literal forms. The figurative version expects women to take care of the "emotional labour" for everyone: "to smile, exchange pleasantries, prepare coffee and snacks, and listen to, support, and help others (Basinger, 2001; Bellas, 2001)" (p. 233). The literal form perceives women who have children or plan to have offspring as less professional than men or women who are not mothers, which in turn may become a self-

fulfilling prophecy. The third stereotypical image is woman as child: females are less mature, less competent and less capable than adults, so they are "protected" from challenging work. But in fact, they are excluded from promotion, rises and personal development. The last generalisation is woman as iron maiden: these females are professionals who are ambitious, directive, competitive, and sometimes tough but because of these characteristics, they are considered unacceptably unfeminine. Regardless the stereotype chosen, they are barriers to hiring and promotion.

In media, Woods claims that white women are the norm and ideal (pp. 258-270). Black females are represented negatively, as mammies, jezebels, matriarchs, and welfare mothers, while Asian women and Latinas are represented as exotic and sexualized. The most traditional stereotype is women as sex object, and the feminine ideal is young and thin, preoccupied with men and children, and focused on relationships and housework. Media reinforces the idea that females are desirable if they are beautiful. So, if they want to be desirable, they must transform themselves. Relationships are generally depicted in heterosexual terms, with women who depend on men because they are the competent authorities who save or care for less-capable women. In addition, females are the primary caregivers: they are homemakers, mothers and wives. They are also represented as victims and sex objects, with males as aggressors. The moment women are encouraged to develop beauty, sexiness, passivity and powerlessness, they are objectified and dehumanised.

The psychoanalytical feminist Nancy Chodorow (1979) specifically concentrates on the stereotype of woman's "mothering". She claims that the reason why females are mothering and nurturing is because of the biological fact that they can produce offspring. Due to the historical division of labour, women's roles are "basically familial, and concerned with personal, affective ties" (p. 178) because they have been relegated to the private, domestic world of the home. As a result, the child's first caretaker is generally the mother. But women are also the moral mothers of men, so females have to nurture and care for them in the same way as they do with their children. Thus, women's lives have been defined by their mothering, caring and nurturing features. Chodorow even adds that "women's work in the labour force tends to extend their housewife, wife, or mother roles" (p. 180). As a matter of fact, Ellemers (2018) states that females prioritise their children once they are born, diverting their attention from work (p. 7). Wood (2009) explains that the concept of maternal instinct is "a set of attitudes and behaviours that

arise out of women's frequent location in domestic, caregiving roles" (p. 57). She even describes the present-day "mommy myth": the belief that motherhood is an idyllic experience in which mothers enjoy their children endlessly, want to spend all their time with them and never shout at them, engaging in happy adventures. As a matter of fact, many mothers find day-to-day mothering overwhelming, several women are not fulfilled by becoming a parent, and numerous men enjoy nurturing. As discussed above in the section on feminism, to become a mother is not a natural inclination of women as motherhood is a social construct (De Beauvoir, 1949; Castro, 1990; Tyson, 2006; Valenti, 2007).

For the purposes of the present dissertation, different concepts from gender theory will be taken into consideration in the analysis of the female protagonists of the different sagas. Gender theories with a focus on interpersonal characteristics will be of use as the development of femininity will be seen in the relationship established by the heroines with others. Besides, the concept of gender roles developed by cultural theories will be used to account for the stereotypes represented by the main female characters. The notion of heteronormativity, with its assumption of heterosexuality as the preferred sexual orientation in society, will be instrumental in the examination of the heroines' choices about their personal lives. In addition, performative theory will help conceptualize the way in which the leading female characters learn to behave in a certain way in order to conform to specific societal patterns and expectations.

In order to analyse gender-stereotyped traits regularly associated with women present in the different series, the model of the components of gender stereotyping developed by Deaux and Lewis (1984) will be the groundwork for the analysis of the female protagonists in the sagas. Stereotypes related to physical appearance and its importance in the portrayal of the heroines will be one of the aspects to be examined, as well as those personality traits associated with females as passive, docile, submissive, disempowered and dependent on men financially, emotionally and sexually. Attention on the depictions of women in terms of the "good girl" and the "bad girl" will also be considered, with the benevolent sexist attitude which regards women as "damsels in distress" and "children" in need of protection. The behaviours the main female characters adopt towards others as nurturers will be also analysed, particularly their roles as primary caregivers, homemakers, mothers and wives in the domestic sphere. Finally, the focus

on heterosexual marriage as the default choice of the heroines in the sagas as well as their tendency to focus on interpersonal relationships will be also subject to analysis.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE SAGAS AND THEIR LEADING FEMALE CHARACTERS

3.1. *HARRY POTTER*

Harry Potter is a series of seven urban fantasy novels written by the British author, film and television producer, screenwriter and philanthropist J.K. Rowling. Desiring to be a writer from an early age, twenty-five-year-old Rowling first conceived the idea of this wizarding world in 1990 while she was waiting for a delayed train from Manchester to London King's Cross.

The first book of the series was called *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and it was published in 1997. Even though the publishers targeted children aged nine to eleven, the book attracted a wide adult audience as well as younger readers (Allsobrook, 2003). The story of this wizard developed into six more novels: *Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). In general, the books have found immense popularity, critical acclaim and commercial success worldwide (King, 2000; Nel, 2001; Penrod, 2001; Eccleshare, 2002; Flanagan Knapp, 2003; Fox, 2006) and they have received numerous awards (*Bloomsbury*). They have become the best-selling book series in history as they have sold more than 500 million copies worldwide and they have been translated into eighty languages (*Wizarding World*, 2018). The saga was adapted into eight financially and critically successful films which were released between 2001 and 2011. Due to the enormous success of the books and films, the *Harry Potter* franchise has continued to expand into different formats: a sequel play called *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* which premiered in London in 2016; a travelling exhibition of props, costumes and other artefacts from the films; a studio tour in London; a digital platform called *Wizarding World* (previously known as *Pottermore*) on which J.K. Rowling updates the series; a pentalogy of spin-off prequel films based on the guide book *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find them*; and themed attractions known as *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter* in several Universal Parks & Resorts amusement parks around the world. In 2016, the total value

of the Harry Potter franchise was estimated at $25 billion, making *Harry Potter* one of the highest-grossing media franchises of all times (Meyer).

Harry Potter is set in the United Kingdom between 1991 and 1998. The story revolves around Harry Potter, a lonely orphan boy who lives in the fictional town of Little Whinging, Surrey, with his abusive aunt, uncle and cousin. The day he turns eleven, he discovers that he is a wizard as he is invited to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, an elite school of magic set in Scotland for students aged eleven to eighteen.

Harry discovers that there is a hidden secret wizarding world which exists parallel to the non-magical ordinary one known as the world of “muggles”. Harry is also told that his parents were wizards who did not die in a car accident but were murdered by Lord Voldemort, a dark warlock obsessed with power who wanted to become immortal, overthrow the wizarding governing body known as the Ministry of Magic and subjugate all wizards and muggles. Harry witnessed his parents’ deaths as a baby, and Lord Voldemort tried to kill him, but thanks to the love of Harry’s mother, the curse rebounded and it made Voldemort disappear gravely weakened while leaving a lightning-shaped scar on Harry’s forehead. For this reason, Harry is a celebrity in the wizarding world.

At Hogwarts, Harry discovers his true place in the world, and he makes his two best friends: Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley. He also learns that Lord Voldemort wants to return to finish his conquering plan. During the saga, Harry develops through his adolescence, overcoming magical, social and emotional problems while preparing himself for the final confrontation with Lord Voldemort.

The *Harry Potter* series is written in the third person limited from the point of view of the male protagonist, Harry Potter. The books are examples of the urban fantasy genre, where the magical world is intertwined with the human one. There are elements of adventure, thriller and romance, but the saga is mostly considered a Bildungsroman, a coming-of-age story, as it focuses on the psychological and moral growth from youth to adulthood of the main protagonist and his friends. Themes such as the development of one’s identity, confronting one’s fears, the effect of grief, loss and death on young adults and immortality are represented throughout the saga in the way Harry, Ron and Hermione mature.

Although the story is based on magic, the status quo is questioned as the relationship between individuals and institutions is challenged. One example of this is the manner in which the Ministry of Magic manipulates the information provided to the wizarding society. Lord Voldemort's fanatical belief in the superiority of the wizards with pure blood addresses issues such as prejudice, racism, bigotry based on social class, violence, hatred, abuse of power, corruption, and oppression. The fact that Harry is completely resolved to confront him at any cost demonstrates courage, sacrifice and selflessness. However, he can achieve this thanks to his friends' assistance, which reinforces the importance of the community working together.

This is directly connected with the perpetual fight between good and evil, of which Harry is a symbol. In fact, he represents duality in life: all human beings are capable of virtuousness and malice; the question is how each person chooses freely to live, accepting the consequences of such choices. But decisions must be informed, hence education in any form equals empowerment in the series.

Another theme present in *Harry Potter* is love. One of its most important representations is in the form of mother's love, especially embodied in Lily Potter's self-sacrifice to save Harry from Lord Voldemort's death curse. This is intrinsically connected with the concept of love and family, which is mostly portrayed positively in Ron's family and negatively in Harry's adopted family. Romantic love is depicted in the form of stable heterosexual relationships, and as part of the growth of the characters. But there is no reference to sexual awakening in the characters, as the growth of romantic relationships is innocently represented, focusing mostly on the first kiss. Love and friendship are portrayed by the relationship of the trio Harry, Ron and Hermione, which also addresses questions about loyalty, trust, betrayal, trust, peer pressure and bullying.

Although the leading character in these urban fantasy novels is Harry Potter, his female companion Hermione Granger has attracted special attention in the manner her character explores issues associated with gender, especially because she is presented from Harry Potter's male narrative perspective (Riddell, 2016, p. 73). Some critics assert that Hermione can be considered a feminist role model while others state that she is subservient to the male characters in the story.

To Iyer (2013), Hermione is “a feminist icon” who is part of a story which reflects the gender roles and sexism present in today’s world. As she is a confident female hero who displays extraordinary intelligence, she resists every female stereotype, and no derisive comment interferes with her pursuit of knowledge. Her emotional and intellectual brilliance saves Harry and Ron in numerous opportunities. The reason why she may not excel in fighting or flying skills is that her strength lies in knowledge. Being the daughter of muggles, Hermione is also an emblem of equality for she is genuinely concerned about treating magical and non-magical creatures with care.

Along similar lines, Dresang (2002) believes that the *Harry Potter* saga reflects “a patriarchal, hierarchical world” where “the social structure of this magical world as it relates to gender is closer to reality than it is to a vision of a better world” (p. 238). Hermione has been described as a “highly intelligent, overachieving, somewhat annoying student” who learns to “reconcile her love of learning with the limitations of life” and as an activist with social concerns on behalf of an oppressed class, the house-elves (pp. 221-222). Nevertheless, her role conforms to female stereotypes through the language employed to describe her hysterical, fearful and whining behaviour. In addition, at the beginning of the series, Hermione is dependent on Harry and Ron. But as the story progresses, she subverts the more stereotypic aspects of her personality and becomes a stronger and more independent character (pp. 240-241). She “grows beyond the stereotype of the weak woman / geek and gradually attains abilities usually attributed to male heroes” (Mikulan, 2009, p. 290). To Dresang, “Hermione is a strong, intelligent, thoughtful, compassionate female who is not only assisting he males with whom she has an interdependent relationship but also working to become her own agent as well as a catalyst for social change” (p. 242).

Hallén (2019) is another critic who regards Hermione’s development throughout the saga as her road towards independence. She claims that since Hermione is a muggle-born woman, her “background and origin, and her gender put her into the category of being an individual with a multiple subordinate-group identity, as well as a woman in a man-dominated world” (p. 5). In other words, she is doubly oppressed because she is a woman and because she was born into a muggle family. For this reason, she is constantly trying to prove herself in every possible way. She does not accept the existing rules but rather opposes them. This accounts for the fact that she breaks the rules every time she adheres to what she believes in. “She learns to combine her social knowledge

… with her logical thinking and intellect" (p. 18). She strives for her own accomplishments, regardless other people's opinions for her. She objects to society's generally desirable view that girls "should be sexually appealing and loyal, weak and suggestible" and stresses "the fact that she is rational, decisive and analytical in her choice of priorities" (pp. 14-15).

However, for Tsatsa (2013), although Hermione is "portrayed as an individual with much inner strength", she knows that "she will always be the object, and therefore always be the one getting her appearance judged by the boys (the subject)". Hermione understands that she has to "satisfy the male gaze" (pp. 10-13). She also shows signs of stereotypical feminine behaviour in the way she expresses her emotions, mostly sadness, concern and anxiety. In addition, she is only accepted as a friend by Harry and Ron when she is placed in a vulnerable situation. It is true that Hermione is an essentially independent teenager who solves problems relying on her own knowledge and skills. As a matter of fact, she frequently saves her male friends on account of her intelligence and reasoning. Yet, as she grows into a woman, she realises that at times the secret of a woman's success is to depend on males to some extent. For this reason, she exhibits both masculine and feminine characteristics while breaking and not breaking gender norms (p. 17).

Tsatsa (pp. 19-20) also describes an interesting variation in Hermione's character. At the beginning of the series, she boasts about and competes in knowledge. But as the series evolve, she becomes insecure of herself and her expertise. The reason for diminishing herself is that her knowledge is used to help others rather than herself. She is secondary to the boys, just the hero's helper. She does not use her knowledge of magic to further her own interests but rather to help Harry. The trio is always addressed as "Harry, Ron and Hermione" because she is subservient to her male friends (Mason, 2016). However, although Dresang claims that Hermione is "a second hero", she has "her own quest to follow" (p. 224). In a similar manner, Gagulić (2016) assures that Hermione does not confront Lord Voldermort because he is "Harry's arch-nemesis, not Hermione's" (p. 14). Riddell cites Bell (2012) when she claims that "the true anti-Voldemort is Hermione Granger, the scholar and most notably, the organizer. Organization is the single most effective and arguably the only effective tactic to use against an established institutionalized power system" (p. 46).

Additionally, Riddell alleges that Hermione's intelligence subverts gender roles: "readers are shown that the masculine hero cannot conquer the evil forces at work without the skill, knowledge, and strength of his female counterpart" (p. 42). Hermione can respond effectively to hazardous situations owing to her mental agility, compassion and composure. She manages to challenge traditional gender roles every time she behaves independently of what her male classmates and academic superiors think. Even though she encounters situations where her gender might make her vulnerable, she is not significantly altered by them (pp. 47-49). Bullinger (2015) assumes that "such vulnerability, evidence of a developed emotional side, is not only a feminine trait in the series" as signs of vulnerability can be observed in male characters as well. For example, when they cry (p. 59).

Furthermore, Bullinger is of the opinion that "Hermione blends stereotypically masculinized and feminized traits: she is loud, nagging, bossy, intelligent, and plain, and this amalgamation offends her traditionally oriented peers" (p. 57). Yet, at the end of the saga, in the epilogue, she is denied her full potential as she adheres to patriarchal gender stereotypes by marrying Ron and having two children (p. 67). Riddell states that despite the fact that Hermione is shown to be a brave, independent, strong and intelligent character, she does not break "female" stereotypes but rather strengthens "the concept of a gender binary by embodying "male" stereotypes" (p. 64). Gagulić also acknowledges this, but she states that even though Hermione ends up in a heteronormative marriage, she achieves a successful career first by going back to school to finish her formal education and in time by becoming the Minister of Magic herself (p. 12).

Generally speaking, the *Harry Potter* novels are full of elements which attract all types of readership: the fantastic world of magic intertwined with present-day reality in easily identified locations constitutes the perfect setting for a story about the never-ending fight of good versus evil among young characters who are defining their identity in their path towards adulthood. Gender identification is part of this search, so it is important to identify the stereotypes portrayed by the characters. Even though Hermione is second to Harry, she is one of the main protagonists and, from the foregoing discussion, it may not be a fortuitous coincidence that she is female and that she is muggle-born. This leads to the relevant question this present dissertation is trying to respond to: whether her characterisation as a representative of two oppressed classes might conform to

stereotypical conventions about women or not and whether her role succeeds in rising above embedded gender stereotypes.

3.1.1. HERMIONE GRANGER

With a renewed interest in YA literature due to the worldwide success of the *Harry Potter* series during the first decade of the XXI century (Cart, 2016), close attention was directed to Hermione Granger, the secondary main character. Her portrayal is enticing from a gendering perspective as the story is narrated from the third person limited point of view of the male protagonist, Harry Potter. At the beginning of the series, Hermione is a highly intelligent eleven-year-old witch from a muggle (=non-magical) family. On her journey to her first year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, she meets two pure-blood boys who later become her best friends: famous Harry Potter and awkward Ronald Weasley. As the story unfolds, she becomes an active participant in the fight against Lord Voldemort and his quest for power, subjugation and immortality while she defines her gender identity in the patriarchal wizarding world. Many critics consider that she is an example of female independence (Dresang, 2009; Mikulan, 2009; Iyer, 2013; Hallén, 2019) whereas others view her growth as development towards male subservience (Tsatsa, 2013; Mason, 2016; Bullinger, 2015; Ridell, 2016). These different perspectives contribute to the debate about the possibility of her stereotypical characterisation as a representative of two oppressed classes (namely, muggles and females) and of the reinforcement of gender stereotypes by the development of her role.

The *Harry Potter* saga is a typical example of a Bildungsroman since it focuses on the psychological and moral growth from youth to adulthood of the main protagonists, namely Harry, Ron and Hermione. As Hermione's description is provided by Harry, there is not much insight into her mental processes and thoughts during the development of her identity. One intrinsic characteristic of her personality is her passion for reading, learning and studying (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 84, p. 115, p. 175, 182; *The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 147, p. 184, p. 227, p. 254, The Prisoner of Azkaban, p. 57, p. 164, p. 236, p. 244, p. 264, p. 275, p. 315; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 55, p. 79, p. 108, p. 155, *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 255, p. 390, p. 503, p. 651; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 176, *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 95, p. 126, p. 162). She dislikes flying (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 114; *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 414; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 53) and has difficulty in accepting her mistakes (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 111; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 716). Yet

she swells with pride when she proves to be right (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 529). From the beginning of the series, her intelligence, her logical thinking and her sense of justice are deeply ingrained in her identity. As a matter of fact, Hermione does not hide these characteristics (Letourneau, 2017), which are accentuated as the story progresses even though they make her the object of mockery (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 254; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 244; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 573). She shows her intelligence in the careful attention she directs to reality (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 214) without neglecting any source of information, even if this is against her beliefs – "It's best to know what the enemy are saying," she says (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 225). Nevertheless, she eventually learns that the constant search for knowledge can be dangerous without a clear purpose in mind (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 300, p. 430). Her acute sense of reasoning allows her to discover hidden meanings (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 213; *The Half-Blood Prince*, pp. 279-280; *The Deathly Hallows*, p.123) and even acknowledge when someone wants to manipulate her (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 229, p. 567). She has such comprehensive knowledge that she can even question the course contents of a subject (*The Order of the Phoenix*, pp. 241-243). As she is well-informed, she develops a strong sense of justice, defending her convictions and acting accordingly regardless the cost. On many occasions she does not agree with Harry or Ron's behaviour, being critical of them or even ordering them around (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 132, p. 198; *The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 89; *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 151; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 291; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 189, p. 215, pp. 222-223, p. 319, p. 336, p. 708, p. 746; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 172, p. 194, p. 220, p. 241, p. 375; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 235, p. 435, p. 521, p. 641). This is the reason why she is considered a source of authority, and she is frequently compared to strict teachers (*The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 84, p. 85; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 119, p. 226). Studying also develops her logical thinking, establishing relationships among facts and drawing conclusions (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 230; *The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 233; *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 110; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 97; *The Order of the Phoenix*, pp. 732-735; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 193, p. 240, pp. 537-538; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 286-287, p. 307). This logic helps her defend herself against people who discriminate against her (*The Goblet of Fire*, pp. 262-263) but it also makes her laugh at others, like Ron and his fear of spiders (*The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 155). It is true that, as Iyer (2013) has put forth, Hermione is a confident female hero who displays extraordinary intelligence always in pursuit of knowledge despite derisive comments against her. In the end, it is her intellectual brilliance which saves Harry and Ron in numerous opportunities. But, as Tsatsa (2013) also claims, even

though at first she boasts and competes in knowledge, as the series evolves, she becomes insecure of herself and her expertise because external interactions shape her identity (Letourneau, 2017). When Harry claims that she is better than him, she says, “Books! And cleverness! There are more important things -- friendship and bravery” as if she were not a loyal friend or brave (*The Sorcerer’s Stone*, p. 231). She believes that Harry is a better wizard than her and, for this reason, he should teach her and their friends Defence against the Dark Arts: “You beat me in our third year — the only year we both sat the test and had a teacher who actually knew the subject.” (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 326). Even though her intelligence saves Harry in numerous opportunities, towards the end of the saga it is Ron the one who becomes more functional to Harry’s quest (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 471; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 76, p. 437, p. 583, p. 622). Ultimately, Hermione destroys a piece of Voldemort’s soul because Ron thinks “she should. She hasn’t had the pleasure yet” (p. 623). Tsatsa believes that the reason why Hermione diminishes herself is that she has used her knowledge to help others than herself. If this is analysed from de Beauvoir’s perspective (1949), Hermione has discovered that in the patriarchal wizarding world, women are man’s Other and as such they complete men. When a woman shows agency, determination and intelligence, she is punished in different ways (Butler, 1988). It is true that some characters recognise that she is “all honourable and trustworthy” (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 353) and the cleverest witch of her age (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 346), “always top in everything" (*The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 93) and with “her heart in the right place” (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 274). However, many male characters see her as a nightmare (*The Sorcerer’s Stone*, p. 137): an intense “bossy know-it-all” (*The Sorcerer’s Stone*, p. 130; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 383) who thinks all teachers are “saints” (*The Sorcerer’s Stone*, p. 146); an insufferable show-off (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 126, p. 172) with the deeply ingrained habit of answering questions correctly (*The Deathly Hallows*, p. 127) that never admits if she is wrong (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 265; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 495). She is even described as “not unintelligent, but painfully limited. Narrow. Close-minded” (*The Deathly Hallows*, p. 410, p. 434) because she is logical and only believes on the basis of solid evidence. Nevertheless, she does not suffer from an identity crisis given that she remains true to her beliefs: she has never been “one for popularity” (*The Cursed Child*, p. 94). However, the development of her identity evidences that adolescents’ identity is formed not only by their family but also by the community members and the environment in which they are reared. As a consequence,

she learns that female self-acceptance can be severely attacked in a world named, ruled and explained by males.

The first and most direct manner in which Hermione is chastised is through her physical description. According to the model for gender stereotyping developed by Deaux and Lewis (Brannon, 2000), appearance is the central component which generally affects the inferences made about others. Harry's first appreciation of Hermione's eleven-year-old looks is that she has "lots of bushy brown hair, and rather large front teeth" (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 83; *The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 55; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 35, p. 282, p. 293; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 62; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 301; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 45, p. 280). External interactions make her aware of this characteristic since her beauty is compared to that of "a chipmunk" (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 205). Her appearance repeatedly suffers as a punishment for aiding Harry: she is converted into a cat (*The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 225), her teeth are enlarged (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 194), the press defames her "plain but ambitious" self for seducing Harry (p. 330), her hands are hurt as a result of slander (pp. 350-351), and she gets a brilliantly purple black eye for using a magical telescope (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 98). The worst punishment inflicted on Hermione is when she is physically tortured and a scar is left on her neck (*The Deathly Hallows*, p. 466, p. 489). To add insult to injury, she is further objectified when she is later forced to transform into her torturer in the quest for Voldemort's destruction (*The Deathly Hallows*, p. 523). Whenever she is physically chastised, she feels embarrassed since she has become conscious of the male gaze: Tsatsa (2013) claims that she knows that she will always be the object to be judged by men. She confirms this when she listens to her male friends discussing how to choose a girl to attend a ball at Hogwarts – she concludes "basically, you're going to take the best-looking girl who'll have you, even if she's completely horrible?" (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 256). This might be the reason why she self-regulates her appearance and has her teeth straightened and shrunk for this dance, despite her muggle parents' refusal at the use of magic to improve her looks (p. 263). As a matter of fact, she spends three hours to style herself for the ball, which results in her being admiringly gazed,

> But she didn't look like Hermione at all. She had done something with her hair; it was no longer bushy but sleek and shiny, and twisted up into an elegant knot at the back of her head. She was wearing robes made of a floaty, periwinkle-blue material, and she was holding herself differently, somehow - or maybe it was merely the absence of the twenty or so books

> she usually had slung over her back. She was also smiling - rather nervously, it was true - but the reduction in the size of her front teeth was more noticeable than ever; Harry couldn't understand how he hadn't spotted it before. (p. 268)

The fact that everyone gapes at her change of appearance and does not attack her assures her that men regulate the world for they are the subjects who approve of the objects, i.e. women. Nevertheless, she challenges this conception when the following day her hair is bushy again, claiming that styling it is “way too much bother to do every day" (p. 282). Besides, she does not like being regarded as an object a male would most miss (p. 329). However, the epitome of her objectification can be observed when she grows into a seventeen-year-old young woman and walks through non-magical London. Some muggle drunken men wolf-whistle at her and yell “Fancy a drink? Ditch ginger [Ron] and come and have a pint!” (*The Deathly Hallows*, pp. 163-164). In addition, she is even lusciously addressed by other wizards: “Delicious girl . . . What a treat . . . I do enjoy the softness of the skin. . . .” (p. 447), with the implication that if they had the possibility, they would physically abuse her. In this manner, Hermione unconsciously learns that she has to self-regulate and adjust her behaviour and looks to please the patriarchal world she is part of.

According to Dresang (2002) and Iyer (2013), Hermione is a feminist icon whose personality is strong, intelligent, thoughtful and compassionate. By means of her strength and intelligence, she is able to assist her two male friends with whom she has established an interdependent relationship while her thoughtfulness and compassion turn her into an agent for social change. However, a more careful examination at the second component of Deaux and Lewis’ model of gender stereotyping evidences that in the development of her personality she discovers that in order to be accepted in the patriarchal hierarchical wizarding world she must perform the expected female role of a vulnerable dependent woman. Although Harry and Ron consider her pushy personality a nightmare at the beginning of the series, they eventually accept her as their friend when she is placed in a defenceless situation since she is attacked by a troll (*The Sorcerer’s Stone*, p. 140). In truth, their friendship develops because she holds herself responsible for endangering herself so that Harry and Ron are not punished for rescuing her (p. 142), a situation which could have been avoided had she not heard Ron speaking badly of her (p. 137). Besides, there is an additional educational benefit in cultivating a friendship with her as she can help them with their studies (p.144, p. 186; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 229, p.

651; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 449). From this moment on, Hermione adopts the stereotypical female role of the woman who invests herself in the accomplishments of her male friends. Apart from overloading herself with Harry and Ron's work, she also discovers that in order to shore up friendship it is sometimes necessary to break the rules: "Hermione had become a bit more relaxed about breaking rules since Harry and Ron had saved her from the mountain troll, and she was much nicer for it" (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 144). For this reason, and many times against her strong sense of justice, she makes magic she is not allowed to do, defends her friends endangering herself, confronts teachers, and even steals hidden books and food (The Sorcerer's Stone, p. 194; *The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 156*; The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 129, p. 146, p. 293, p. 326, p. 362; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 237, p. 393; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 736, p. 749; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 232; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 101, p. 287). As she grows into adulthood, she acquires the personality characteristics of a "good girl" who is modest, unassuming, self-sacrificing and nurturing (Tyson, 2006). For example, she feels embarrassed every time she is appraised for her intelligence (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 247; *The Chamber of Secrets*, p 116; *The Deathly Hallows*, pp. 118-119, p. 425). Even though she is brave enough to accompany Harry in his quest against Lord Voldemort, she still shows vulnerability by repeatedly performing the role of a damsel in distress in need of male help or comfort (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 273, p. 292; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 79; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 696; *The Half-Blood Prince*, pp. 112-113; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 95, p. 97, p. 165, p. 171, pp. 209-210, p. 231, p. 480, p. 485, p. 526, p. 572, p. 632, p. 643). It is true that she is capable of recognising men's intentions to manipulate her (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 229) and their sexism when she tells Harry that "the truth is that you don't think a girl would have been clever enough" (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 538) and Ron that she does not need him "fighting her battles for her " (*The Cursed Child*, p. 362). Yet, in the end, she becomes emotionally dependent on men, especially her love interest Ron, as a true woman should. After all, she herself suffers what happens to "bad girls" when they defy socially expected gender behaviours: not only are her looks attacked but she is also slandered when the press implies that she is dating two boys at the same time, thus referring to her as a "scarlet woman" (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 331). For this reason, she receives very offensive hate mail: she is insulted, hexed and treated badly (p. 350, p. 353, p. 354). In moments such as this, it is her decision not to react but rather depend on men's defence in order to survive in the patriarchal magical world (p. 400). It can also be stated that Hermione becomes dependent on males because she represents the minority in the group: she is the only

girl. Mason (2016) claims that the trio is always addressed as “Harry, Ron and Hermione” because she is subservient to her male friends. The only time when they are addressed to as "Hermione, Harry, and Ron” is by Dumbledore (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 294). There might be two possible reasons for this: the benevolent sexist chivalrous attitude of addressing her first because she is a “lady”, or Dumbledore’s acknowledgement of her agency, independence and importance because, according to J.K. Rowling, he is also part of an oppressed group: homosexuals (Coggan, 2019).

Dresang (2002) claims that Hermione’s role conforms to female stereotypes through the language employed to describe her hysterical, fearful and whining behaviour, which is the third component for gender stereotyping in the model developed by Deaux and Lewis. Yet, contrary to Dresang’s statements, Hermione does not subvert more stereotypical aspects of her personality as her behaviour is clearly influenced by the gender expectations held in the patriarchal wizarding world. She stereotypically expresses her dislike towards sports, Quidditch in particular, and the competitiveness it fosters (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 108; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 574; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 105, p. 318), and she takes up knitting in her quest for social change (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 255). As she is gendered in a sexist society, her reactions become more stereotypical as the saga advances and she grows into a woman: she covers her face or blushes if she is embarrassed (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 375; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 186), she looks horrified when she is scared (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 96; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 427, p. 452, p. 454), she hugs effusively when she is happy (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 62), she becomes jealous of other girls (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 162, p. 165), she storms out when she is angry (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 260, p. 274, p. 280, p. 354; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 293, p. 299-300, p. 374), and she bursts into tears when she is emotional, angry or impotent (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 233; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 66, p. 448, p. 701, p. 757; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 310; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 126, p. 145, p. 197 , p. 308, p. 441, p. 567). She reinforces female stereotypes when she provides Harry and Ron the insights into the female mind (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 459, p. 460, p. 572), when she assigns gender to people according to their handwriting (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 195), when she ignores boys in order to attract them (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 351, p. 373), or when she does not want to sleep alone out of fear (*The Deathly Hallows*, p. 174, p. 176). She fulfils her role as a nurturer since she is in charge of housework activities, such as decorating and cooking (*The Deathly Hallows*, p. 201, p. 204, p. 277, p. 292, p. 315) even though she complains

that “I’m always the one who ends up sorting out the food, because I’m a *girl,* I suppose!” (p. 293) and can answer back at boys for criticising her “female” skills (p. 167). The most striking evidence that Hermione has become a patriarchal woman (Wood, 2009) is her attitude towards sisterhood, the psychological and political bonding among women based on the recognition of common experiences and goals (Tyson, 2004). Although she suffers patriarchy personally for she lives in a world where women must be weak, emotional and submissive, Hermione criticises others girls vehemently. She does not approve of girls giggling loudly (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 716), talking about boys (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 162) or with a strange or conceited behaviour (*The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 134; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 97; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 262, p. 345; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 91). Yet, she sides with girls who defy gender stereotypes (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 170) and comforts and advises her girl friends (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 86; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 647) though she might eventually quarrel with them over a boy (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 530).

In Hermione’s transition from childhood into adulthood, all her behaviour and personality traits are present in the manner in which she is characterised according to the fourth component of the model of gender stereotyping (Deaux & Lewis, 1984): namely her occupations as a child, a teenager and an adult. In her growth from childhood into adolescence, Hermione’s priority is studying as she considers it the instrument to acquire knowledge and be respected. Being an exceeding student is her primary concern while her worst fear is failing exams (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 310; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 100). She becomes such a reliable source of information that Harry and Ron constantly depend on her intellectually (*The Half-Blood Prince*, pp. 373-374), and she feels particularly exhilarated when she is complimented on by teachers (*The Sorcerer’s Stone*, p. 107; *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 346; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 152, p. 369). Due to the fact that she qualifies as “the cleverest witch of her age”, she becomes a teacher for Harry and Ron, who should be cognizant of magic as he was brought up in a pure-blood home (*The Sorcerer’s Stone*, p. 145; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 289). In her third year, she even resorts to time travelling in order to be able to study more subjects (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 57, p. 300, p. 395). The reason for all this effort to learn more might be that, as Hallén (2019) explains, she is the representative of two oppressed groups: females, on her condition as a woman, and muggles, as she was born into a non-magical family. She is conscious of this double oppression; ultimately, she is physically tortured by Voldemort’s followers rather than Harry or Ron (*The Deathly*

Hallows, p. 489). As a consequence, the only possibility available for a female witch of non-magical origins in a world ruled by pure-blood male wizards is intellectual development and, with strenuous effort though hopefully, success in the workplace. However, from a patriarchal perspective she will always be man's Other, emotionally dependent on men because she herself is incomplete on her own.

Her responsibility and sense of justice contribute to her occupation as a prefect at Hogwarts during her fifth year (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 162, p. 170), while she continues to develop the most revolutionary role she adopted in fourth year: an activist for the oppressed. During *The Goblet of Fire*, Hermione starts questioning the status quo by considering that house-elves are treated like slaves (pp. 80-81). As it has already been stated, she can easily recognise discrimination and oppression as she herself is doubly subjugated by her gender and origin. She supports elves' rights and fair treatment (p. 87, p. 90, p. 100, p. 119, p. 125; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 110, p. 159, p. 255; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 453; *The Deathly Hallows*, pp. 197-198): she believes they should be paid and get holidays, sick leaves, pensions, among other fringe benefits (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 118). In the end, she founds S. P. E .W. (Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare), an organisation in defence of elves' rights which questions their standing in wizarding law and elf legislation (pp. 145-146). Different people try to warn her about elves' reluctance to their freedom (p. 173, p. 246), but she claims that this is so because they are "uneducated and brainwashed" (p. 156). She is frequently disregarded in her quest even by her close friends (p. 208, p. 238; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 76, p. 256, p. 303), although she does not take into consideration their derisive comments. As a matter of fact, as she grows into adulthood she sympathises with other oppressed groups, like giants, werewolves, centaurs and goblins (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 282, p. 393; *The Order of the Phoenix*, pp. 170-171, p. 754; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 506).

Bell (in Riddell, 2012) claims that Hermione not only is a scholar but also the true organizer of the war against Voldemort because organization is the single most effective and arguably the only effective tactic to use against an established institutionalized power system. This might be the reason why as an adult, and in keeping with her responsible and dedicated personality, she becomes the first Minister of Magic from a non-magical family while she is married to Ron (*The Cursed Child*, p. 45). During her adolescence it was suggested that she could become an Auror (a highly trained law enforcement official for the Ministry of Magic) because her "mind works the right way"

(*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 369). Nevertheless, this is not her true calling: she envisions taking S.P.E.W. further (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 228) but not as a lawyer: she expects to "do some good in the world" (*The Deathly Hallows*, pp. 123-124). People sometimes wonder what life would have become if different choices had been made, and in Hermione's case this can be observed in the sequel *The Cursed Child* (2016). Due to the development of the plot of this play, time travelling affects history and two different alternate timelines are created. Both Hermione's stereotypical occupations are based on different aspects of her personality: in one she has become a teacher (p. 170) while in the other she is a rebel against the status quo (p. 242). As an educator, she is described as teaching Defence against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts owing to her passion for studying and learning, but she has grown into a mean single woman who still harbours feelings for Ron. As an undercover rebel against the status quo, she is presented as magnificent looking with faded clothes and blazing eyes. In this alternate reality, she is a co-warrior with Ron who assures that they keep "fighting on. Hiding in plain sight. Doing our best to tickle their nose hairs. Granger here is a wanted woman. I'm a wanted man" (p. 246). This portrayal originates in her strong sense of justice which leads to her death in defence of her convictions (p. 256). The depiction of the different occupations she might perform as an adult is highly stereotypical as there seems to be only three possible options for a female character with such intelligence, determination and agency: she excels in her profession as a married woman, or she becomes a lonely bitter teacher who longs for the love of her life, or a rebel sentenced to death for defending her beliefs.

Even though Hermione becomes a mother in the epilogue of *The Deathly Hallows*, her mothering, caring and nurturing characteristics are developed throughout the saga in the evolution of her relationship with Harry and Ron. Hermione becomes their moral mother (Chorodow, 1979) in her journey towards adulthood, and in this manner she is gendered into society's expectations. Due to her intelligence and devotion for learning, she assumes the form of the voice of Harry and Ron's conscience, constantly reminding them what right and wrong is (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 123; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 252; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 289, p. 364, p. 589, p. 605, p. 681, p. 682; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 180). Her mothering attitude is present every time she protects them in their studies, in their relationships, or in their fight against Voldemort (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 223; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 299; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 272). Her protective nature towards them extends to such degrees that it is not necessary for her to be physically present to warn them against danger (*The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 290). She

conducts herself as their real mother when she separates Harry and Ron in a fight, as if she were separating her two little children (*The Deathly Hallows*, p. 309), or when she nurses them through illness (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 230; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 346). As a matter of fact, Ron finds her similar to his own mother (*The Order of the Phoenix*, pp. 159, p. 378).The fact that she is concerned with affective ties can be observed in her awareness of others' needs and the gifts she chooses for her loved ones, for example. She always selects presents which are of use to the receiver (*The Sorcerer's Stone*, p. 160; *The Chamber of Secrets*, p. 212; *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 11; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 266; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 501, p. 503; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 114). As a true woman should, she constantly cares about her loved ones, even if this means disregarding her own needs (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 121, p.151; *The Goblet of Fire*, p. 19, p. 55, p. 95, p. 139; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 737). In addition, her emotional attachment grows parallel to her constant worry about them. For this reason, she does not hesitate to set the limit if necessary (*The Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 190, p. 225, p. 232, p. 275; *The Goblet of Fire*, p 121, p. 141, p. 241, *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 63, p. 183, p. 286, p. 708, p. 733; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 89, p. 114, p. 193, p. 400; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 548, p. 646). It is true that on many occasions she is punished for this attitude with Harry and Ron's indifference, but as a good mother does, she forgives them and continues nurturing their relationship. Other characteristics of her mothering attitude are her empathy and sympathy towards others (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 97, p. 172, p. 293; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 74, p. 230, p. 499, p. 855; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 230, p. 251; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 215, pp. 323-324, p. 329), and the fact that she is completely satisfied by serving her loved ones while she rejoices in their accomplishments (*The Goblet of Fire*, 225; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 107, p. 117, p. 226).

It has already been stated that the main theme of the *Harry Potter* series is the impending fight between good and evil in the wizarding world. However, another important theme represented in the story is the different forms love can take: familial, friendship or romantic. In Hermione, the three are intertwined. Based on the evidence from the text presented so far, one may argue that Hermione becomes emotionally dependent on Harry as if he were his brother and on Ron as his romantic partner. Her affective subservience to Harry increases in such a considerable manner that she suffers from guilt at breaking his wand accidentally when she was trying to save him from almost certain death (*The Deathly Hallows*, pp. 348-352). As far as romantic love is concerned, it is represented in a heteronormative manner: all couples are heterosexual and

monogamous – girls are told that love potions work “for up to twenty-four hours at a time depending on the weight of the boy in question” (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 120). Fulfilling heteronormative expectations, and despite popular belief that brilliant Hermione’s love interest would lie in heroic Harry, she falls in love with Ron, her funny, insensitive and immature friend. Despite their frequent quarrels and her appreciation of him as having “the emotional range of a teaspoon” (*The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 459), she develops strong feelings for him, thus reinforcing the two archetypal popular beliefs that “opposites attract” and “you have to be cruel to be kind”. At the beginning of the series, there is little reference to Hermione’s sexual awakening. She has a crush on a famous wizard teacher in *The Chamber of Secrets*, behaving as is stereotypically expected from a girl: outlining his lesson in little hearts (p. 95) and sleeping with his note under her pillow (p. 228). However, she is not regarded as desirable by boys until she is fifteen, when a famous Quidditch player and outstanding student from another school called Viktor Krum shows interest in her (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 206). At first, she has mixed feelings for him: she considers he is “really grumpy” (p. 54) but brave (p. 74). The reason for this ambivalent behaviour is that she already expresses romantic interest in Ron, who does not realise her inner emotions. As a matter of fact, it is difficult for him to consider that a boy would be captivated by her: “Just because it's taken you three years to notice, Ron, doesn't mean no one else has spotted I'm a girl!”(p. 260). He even suggests that Krum’s regard for her is that he is trying to get some benefit of their relationship (p. 274). Even though there is little reference to her dating Krum (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 288), she behaves in such a girlie manner in his company that she forgets her primary objectives in life, such as defending elves’ rights (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 270). She feels flattered that he invites her over the summer to visit him, but blushes because of the effect this might produce in Ron (p. 331, p. 467; *The Order of the Phoenix*, p. 332; *The Deathly Hallows*, p. 143). In actual fact, she constantly shows her jealousy at Ron, especially with other girls’ presence (*The Goblet of Fire*, p. 67, p. 327, p. 467; *The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 93). Her feelings for Ron become evident when he starts dating a girl (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 226, p. 227, p. 223, p. 232, p. 282, p. 300, p. 400, p. 449): she starts behaving in archetypal ways to attract him, such as ignoring him or dating a boy she does not like to make him jealous (p. 305, p. 313, p. 317). From the moment Ron starts having problems with his girlfriend (pp. 425-426), his relationship with Hermione becomes more stereotypical: Ron behaves gallantly towards Hermione (*The Half-Blood Prince*, p. 647; *The Deathly Hallows*, p.142, p. 147, p.162), who starts emotionally depending on him more (p. 50, p. 76, p. 160), looking at him in such a way that “there was such tenderness

in her expression that Harry felt almost as if he had surprised her in the act of kissing him" (pp. 274-275). More disagreements occur between them (p. 310, p. 312, p. 380, p. 384, p. 388, p. 406) yet, in the end, she surrenders to him during the Battle of Hogwarts:

> "You mean we ought to get them [the elves] fighting?" asked Harry.
>
> "No," said Ron seriously, "I mean we should tell them to get out. We don't want any more Dobbies, do we? We can't order them to die for us —"
>
> There was a clatter as the basilisk fangs cascaded out of Hermione's arms. Running at Ron, she flung them around his neck and kissed him full on the mouth. Ron threw away the fangs and broomstick he was holding and responded with such enthusiasm that he lifted Hermione off her feet. (p. 625)

It is Ron's concern for elves' welfare during the battle the last proof activist Hermione needs to show him her intense feelings, underwriting the stereotypical idea that female public display of emotions is justified when there is emotional involvement.

In a patriarchal heteronormative world, such a clichéd relationship culminates in marriage with two children: a boy and a girl who, according to Ron, has thankfully inherited Hermione's brains (*The Deathly Hallows*, p. 756). Their marital partnership is more fully described in *The Cursed Child*: their roles have remained mainly the same since Ron is the funny parent while Hermione is the strict mother who sets the limit (p. 15). Gagulić (2016) states that even though Hermione ends up in a heteronormative marriage, she achieves a successful career first by finishing her formal education and becoming the first Minister of Magic born in a muggle family. In addition, she does not adopt her husband's name and her children are addressed by both surnames: "Granger-Weasley" (p. 24). However, she is punished once gain for being an "iron maiden" – an ambitious, directive and competitive woman (Wood, 2009): she has marital trouble because Ron accuses her of dedicating herself to her career. When reflecting about this with Harry, she wonders, "Do you think there's a point where we made a choice — parent of the year or Ministry official of the year?" (p. 46). This proves the female stereotype described by Ellemers (2018) that women who prioritise their family life divert their attention from work. Hermione challenges the "mommy myth" (Wood, 2009): she is not satisfied by her role as a mother and, even though Ron enjoys nurturing (p. 247), he expects her to devote her time to child-rearing in the domestic sphere. Yet, despite all the trouble, he wishes to renew their marriage vows:

> HERMIONE *(melting slightly)*: You want to marry me again?

> RON: Well, we were only young when we did it the first time and I got very drunk and — well, to be honest, I can't remember much of it and . . . The truth is — I love you, Hermione Granger, and whatever time says — I'd like the opportunity to say so in front of lots of other people. Again. Sober. (p. 299)

This insistence on marrying Hermione soberly for a second time also reinforces the concept of eternal love: they fall in love when being teenagers and continue to do so after many years of a marriage with difficulties. An idea which is also supported in the two alternative realities presented in the play: in both they still feel attracted to one another (p. 201, p. 255), and in one of these they actually die together (p. 256).

Bullinger (2015) claims that Hermione is an androgynous character because she blends stereotypically masculinized and feminized traits: Rowling created a female character who is loud, nagging, bossy, intelligent, and plain, defying the patriarchal wizarding world. Yet, in the end, the writer decided that Hermione should adhere to patriarchal gender stereotypes by marrying Ron and having two children. The reason for this might be found in the writer's personal experience: when she wrote the series, she was a recently divorced single mother in her thirties who might have been encountering herself the difficulties that women who defy existing gender expectations are presented with. Apart from that, she is a confessed literature lover and as such, she must have been brought up in the XX century literary tradition. She has acknowledged that the source of inspiration for Hermione in *The Sorcerer's Stone* was herself: "Hermione is loosely based on me. She's a caricature of me when I was eleven" (*Gradesaver*, para. 4). It could be assumed then that she never stopped writing about Hermione from her own standpoint as a woman living in a patriarchal heteronormative world. After all, adopting the pseudonym "J.K." was a marketing strategy to attract readers from both sexes – her agent had discovered that boys would be unlikely to read a book written by a woman (*The Scottsman*, 2003). This might also be the reason why Rowling did not include any reference to other types of romantic love in the seven books – if the publishing industry is regulated by the consumers' demands, in the times when the *Harry Potter* series were written (between 1997 and 2007), there was an incipient recognition of LGTBQIA+ rights which might not have appealed to the majority of the readers. By the time *The Deathly Hallows* was published, there was more public conscience of minority representation in works of art, and this might be the reason why weeks after the last book was published, Rowling acknowledged that one of the most important characters in the saga, namely

Professor Dumbledore, was homosexual (Siegel, 2009) in what could have been an attempt to please a growing condemning LGTBQIA+ readership even despite the lack of reference to his sexual orientation in the text.

In conclusion, the analysis of the character of Hermione Granger shows that it is very difficult for a secondary main female character to challenge gender stereotyping for a number of reasons. First of all, because she is described from Harry's point of view, so she is presented as the hero's helpmate according to his own patriarchal beliefs. Secondly, due to the fact that she holds the representation of minority groups in the trio double-fold: she is a female and she is muggle-born. Thirdly, although she starts the saga as a highly empowered girl, who is clever enough to guide Harry in his development as a hero, the moment she starts her friendship with Harry and Ron, she realises that in order to survive in the hierarchical wizarding world it is necessary to become engendered. Otherwise, there are punitive consequences if the expected roles are challenged. And last but not least, by depending emotionally on males, and eventually settling into a heteronormative monogamous marriage, she reinforces the stereotype that the default choices for heroines who excel in intellect and agency is either conform to the stereotype or die alone, as the alternate timelines in the sequel reveal.

3.2. *TWILIGHT*

Twilight is a tetralogy consisting of YA fantasy romance novels written by the American novelist Stephenie Meyer when she was in her thirties. With no previous experience as an author, the idea of this paranormal love story reportedly occurred to her when she dreamt about a vampire boy who fell in love with a human girl but thirsted for her blood (Grossman, 2009; *CNN*, 2009; *CBS*, 2009).

The first book of the series, *Twilight*, was published in 2005, and it was considered one of the best children's books that year (Brown and Roback, 2005). Three more novels were released in the successive years: *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007) and *Breaking Dawn* (2008). Until November 2011, the series had sold more than 120 million copies around the world and had been translated into thirty-eight languages, Stein, 2011). Despite the immense popularity of the books, critical reception has been mixed. Positive reviews have claimed that the story captures the perfect teenage feeling of sexual tension and alienation, comparing its crossover appeal to that of *Harry Potter* (Craig,

2006; Kirschling, 2008; Arado, 2008; Bosman, 2008). Although negative reviews have described its writing as poor (Hand, 2009; Keroes, 2009; King, 2009; Browne, 2011), the major controversy centres on how the saga promotes, normalises and idealises an emotionally and physically abusive relationship (Butler, 2009; McMillan, 2009; Stewart, 2009; Gleiberman, 2009). Five film versions of the tetralogy were developed between 2008 and 2012, all of which achieved enormous commercial success.

Twilight is set in the city of Forks, Washington, the USA, around 2005. The story starts when seventeen-year-old Bella Swan moves to this town to live with her father in order to allow her mother some privacy now that she has remarried. The moment Bella sees Edward Cullen in the school cafeteria she is immediately captivated by him. In time, she discovers that Edward and his family are a vampire coven who feed on animal blood rather than human blood. Bella and Edward fall in love, despite his mixed feelings towards their relationship because he considers himself a danger to Bella as he is strongly attracted to her blood. He even tries to leave her, but to no avail. It is during this time that Bella develops a close friendship with Jacob Black, a fifteen-year-old Quileute boy who happens to be a shape-shifter in the form of a wolf, vampires' natural enemy. Despite her strong feelings for Jake, she decides to get married to Edward and become a vampire. On their honeymoon, she gets pregnant with a half-vampire, half-human girl. Bella practically dies giving birth to Renesmee yet Edward saves Bella by converting her into a vampire as he injects his venom into her heart. However, it remains open to question whether Renesmee is a danger to the secrecy of the vampire world or not.

The *Twilight* saga is written in the first person from the point of view of the female protagonist, Bella Swan, except in the epilogue of *Eclipse* and the period of Bella's pregnancy in *Breaking Dawn*, where the first person point of view shifts to Jacob Black. The novel is a romance combined with elements of a paranormal fantasy as the love story develops among humans, vampires and werewolves. As a consequence, these novels address questions about good and evil, life and death, mortality and immortality, suicide, fear, secrecy, language and communication and the questioning of the status quo.

Love is, nonetheless, the most important theme throughout the tetralogy. Apart from the forbidden love story between Bella and Edward, romantic love is present in the majority of the heterosexual relationships among humans, vampires and werewolves. Other

types of love are also depicted: love for the family, love in friendship, unconditional love and self-sacrifice for the loved ones. The love triangle among Bella, Edward and Jacob also represents another important theme in the saga: choices. Choices have consequences, and the characters in *Twilight* are willing to accept from changing their lifestyles to welcoming their own deaths.

Bella's decision to become a vampire also explores the issue of the development of her identity. As a human, Bella has been quite lonely and she has always felt that she is weak and clumsy. The moral dilemma she goes through between choosing Jacob (life) or Edward (death) makes her mature and raises her consciousness of how she desires to live the rest of her life as she feels she was born to be a vampire. Getting married, having a baby and becoming a vampire are the rites of passage that Bella goes through in order to become an adult. Transformation is also a rite of passage for the Quileute tribe, and the maturity and awareness that grows from it can be observed in the development of Jacob Black's identity.

Family is another major topic in the tetralogy. The concept of the perfect family is represented by the vampires and the Quileute tribe. In Bella's human family divorce is present, and the roles of parents are challenged portraying her mother as immature and her father as detached but dependent on Bella's skills as a housewife. Adoption is depicted in the unconventional way Edward's family was created and contradictory perspectives of marriage are discussed: Edward considers that matrimony symbolises commitment, whereas Bella maintains that it involves fighting and unwanted pregnancy. It is true that Bella's pregnancy is unexpected, and that she had dismissed motherhood when she chose Edward, but when she feels Renesmee moving inside her, she immediately develops maternal feelings towards her.

In these novels, sexuality is largely represented in connection with love and desire. At first Bella and Edward are attracted to each other because of their appearances: his looks, voice and sight turn him into a god-like figure for Bella, while she is overwhelmingly sensuous to Edward because of her blood. Everything is new to them: they are each other's first romantic relationship. Due to Edward's upbringing and his fear of hurting Bella, they practise abstinence until they get married. Even though Bella enjoys sexuality as a human being, it becomes intensified after she transforms into a vampire.

Another theme present is that mental suffering causes physical suffering. The epitome of this can be observed the moment Edward leaves Bella in *New Moon*: she physically feels a hole in her chest and she even has hallucinations with him when she faces danger. There is more evidence of the power of the mind and the control it can exert when Edward chooses to have a romantic relationship with Bella despite being attracted to her blood, or when he does not succumb to Bella's sexual advances. Bella shows great mental skills and mental health when, as a newborn vampire, she restrains from drinking human blood, when she faces dangerous vampires, and when she allows Edward to read her mind.

The *Twilight* saga has received severe criticism due to the gender stereotypes it portrays. The majority of the critics agree on the fact that the female protagonist Bella Swan reinforces patriarchal feminine stereotypes (Rocha, 2010; Hayes-Smith, 2011; Eddo-Lodge, 2012; Hofstätter, 2012; Ray, 2012; Rydstedt, 2012; Snider, 2012; Charlebois, 2014; Hendricks, 2014). She is the typical "damsel in distress": she is passive, weak, clumsy and in need of protection. She is fragile both in her appearance and in her reactions. As she has no control over her emotions and reactions, she constantly needs to be protected by any male figure, especially Edward. She is also stereotypically feminine in her interests and activities. She prefers reading and studying to sports and cars, and she is always cooking and cleaning (Snider, pp. 131-132).

According to Hendricks, Bella is "is the most dangerous character in the entire novel" as she is "the literary incarnation of the patriarchal woman" (p. 10). When Bella is first introduced in *Twilight*, she is depicted as an intelligent, rational and independent girl. She was placed in an advancement placement program at her former school, handles school and homework with ease, writes papers on Shakespeare and misogynism, and decides to move across the country to a new town where she manages her everyday life by herself. However, the moment she meets Edward, she starts losing her independence and power as she has found true love (Rydstedt, p. 12). She continues being intelligent, but only as second to Edward, becoming completely dependent on him (Hendricks, p. 9).

Rydstedt (2012) claims that Bella is subordinate to Edward physically as well as emotionally and intellectually. As a damsel in distress, she is constantly saved not only by Edward but by many other men in the saga. Besides, she is frequently carried around,

which implies that she is passive. Edward lifts Bella up because he wants to, without her permission, thus depriving her of her power, treating her like an object and infantilising her. Treating her like a child also involves taking care of her emotionally and intellectually. Bella repeatedly refers to Edward's mental superiority, and both of them often question her mental capacity and judgement. Her happiness is centred on Edward who regularly orders Bella around, which indicates that she is compliant, submissive and yielding (pp. 11-13).

According to Ray (2012, pp. 23-24), Bella falls prey to Edward's controlling paternalistic behaviour because she is a "victim" of a non-traditional family. Not only is she a divorced couple's child, she has also grown to be her parents' caretaker, so she acts like a child around men for guidance and protection as she is in need of fatherly love and attention. Charlebois (2014) states that Edward's parental role goes to such an extent that it "controls Bella through unilateral decision making which infringes on her freedom" (p. 6). But Bella does not consider his behaviour dominating; on the contrary, she is pleased by his attentiveness. She cannot realise she is the victim of an abusive relationship. Hendricks (2014, pp. 5-8) claims that the two major components in an abusive relationship are emotional abuse and stalking. Bella is emotionally abused every time Edward demeans her thoughts, calls her "a magnet for trouble" or blames her for seducing him. And she is stalked every time Edward has free access to her house and her bedroom particularly, listens to her conversations, follows her in his car, or saves her.

How Bella is manipulated in an abusive relationship is clearly observed in the way her sexuality is treated. As a matter of fact, her sexuality is repressed when Edward defines the relationship's sexual parameters (Charlebois, 2014, p. 5). Bella is represented as the sexual aggressor because she wants to consummate her relationship with Edward. She is thus irrational and unable to exercise self-restraint. According to Ray (2012), she is a "bad girl" who personifies "the stereotypical temptress while the man [Edward] is the one who must resist her feminine wiles" (p. 40). For this reason, Bella is punished for exploring and enjoying her sexuality as a woman in different ways: by practising pre-marital abstinence, by being manipulated into marriage, by being hurt during her first sexual encounter which results in being denied sex afterwards. The epitome of punishment for enjoying her sexuality is her pregnancy with a half-human, half-vampire child placing great physical strength on her body, forcing her to drink blood for survival,

bruising her and breaking her ribs. The lurid description of Renesmee's birth can be read as an extension of Bella's physical chastisement for exploring and enjoying her sexuality (pp. 45-46).

Because of her determination to have her baby, Bella has also been regarded as an anti-abortionist with a pro-natalist, pro-life and pro-choice stance (Eddo-Lodge, 2013; Silver, 2010). She disregards the possibility of an abortion even though she knows she cannot survive her baby. Once more, she depicts another characteristic of a 'good woman': she self-sacrifices for the ones she loves (Snider, 2012; Hofstätter, 2012; Silver, 2010). This is intrinsically connected with the role of the caretaker she clearly shows throughout the saga. Bella keeps secrets for the good of her loved ones, sacrificing herself every time they are in danger. She even comforts Edward for his bruising her after their first sexual encounter, and she develops "nurturing maternal love" with her daughter's pregnancy (Rocha, 2014, p. 277). It is not surprising that her superpower as a vampire is the ability to protect all those around her from evil, danger and harm with her womb-like shield (Silver, 2010, p. 134).

According to Rocha (2014), Bella ends up as a domesticated female vampire in her role as wife and mother. As Bella Cullen, she is Edward's wife and Renesmee's mother. It is only after she abandons her human life and fulfils the roles as wife and mother that Bella gains satisfaction with her beauty. Before she became a vampire, she undervalued herself because her appearance did not conform to vampire standards. So she needed romantic relationships to give her value. After she becomes a vampire, when she has cemented her role as wife and mother, she is able to see herself as beautiful. She literally has to die to achieve the beauty ideal and to view herself as valuable (pp. 274-278). She has transformed from the ugly duckling to the beautiful "swan" (Hofstätter, 2012, p. 51).

The author of the saga, Stephenie Meyer (2008), has dismissed these negative criticisms, arguing that Bella is "a damsel in distress" because of her frailty as a human being. In Meyer's view, *Twilight* is not another story of teenage infatuation but rather a story about choice, which is the foundation of modern feminism. Ultimately, Bella chooses to be with Edward because she is truly in love with him. In fact, she becomes empowered through her choice to become a vampire. However, Ray (2014) claims that "Bella does not find empowerment by resisting the norms of patriarchal society, but instead by choosing to accept her stereotypical place within it—as a wife and a mother"

(p. 60). Bella wants to transform into a vampire because she wants to spend eternity with Edward, not because she prefers this type of lifestyle. It is quite probable that if she had not fallen in love with Edward, she would not have chosen to be a vampire. She "does not become an empowered version of herself when she transforms into a vampire; she actually becomes a feminized copy of her male lover" (p. 65). Even if she had chosen Jacob over Edward, she would have still made the patriarchal choices of love, marriage and motherhood. Charlebois claims that Bella achieves empowerment "through self-sacrifice and heterosexual monogamous marriage": her "increased power is not the result of personal effort but stems from her attachment to a man and conformity to socially constructed notions of normative families" (Wilson, 2011, in Charlebois, 2014, p. 6).

With such critical analysis of the saga, the pertinent question to pose is why the *Twilight* series has enjoyed such remarkable success among young adults. One possible reason might be that *Twilight* is similar to a fairy tale but with sordid details. The theme of forbidden love is carefully explored, and the description of Bella and Edward's rising sexual tension is graphic. Besides, the fantasy of eternal true love is also a romantic concept developed in the context of vampires, who are considered highly sensuous creatures in the literary world. Teenagers may feel identified with these topics, and especially with the description of Bella Swan as an ordinary girl. The extent to which the *Twilight* saga reinforces patriarchal gender stereotypes or otherwise addresses the question of feminine agency and empowerment will be discussed shortly.

3.2.1. BELLA SWAN

Bella Swan is generally considered a female protagonist whose portrayal reinforces patriarchal feminine stereotypes according to critics such as Rocha (2010), Hayes-Smith (2011), Eddo-Lodge (2012), Hofstätter (2012), Ray (2012), Rydstedt (2012), Snider (2012), Charlebois (2014) and Hendricks (2014). *Twilight* is essentially a Gothic love story which revolves around Bella, a seventeen-year-old girl who is captivated by a vampire called Edward and, in order to spend eternity with him, decides to become immortal herself. Numerous examples of gender stereotyping are present in the text, particularly in connection with the romantic relationship between Bella and Edward. Bella is completely mesmerised by Edward's charm and makes all her decisions in relation with him, whose condition favours her obsession. However, the controversy lies whether

she behaves in this way because, as the author of the saga claims, it is her own choice (Meyer, 2008), or her decisions are shaped by society's prescriptions for gender identities and behaviours.

The main characteristic of the development of Bella's gender identity is its romanticised fantastical twist: she decides to become a vampire out of unconditional love. She does not suffer from an identity crisis because she cannot reconcile her true self with others' expectations (Letourneau, 2017). In her case, external relationships shape her identity as its development is based on her dependence on men, in particular, her boyfriend Edward. She does not conceal her true self; rather, she desires to alter it to become Edward's equal (*Twilight*, p. 510). Consequently, her ultimate objective in life is clear: she yearns for immortality to spend eternity with Edward based on the romantic notions of vampirism and eternal love. For this reason, Bella constantly describes herself as inferior to Edward considering that she is "nothing special": she is weak, stupid, slow and helpless; just enduring and surviving (*Twilight*, p. 38, p. 292, p. 296, p. 396, p. 482; *New Moon*, p. 125, p. 204, p. 253, p. 367, p. 390, p. 466; *Eclipse*, p. 232, p. 515, p. 671; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 415). As "just" human, she is an average mediocre seventeen-year-old girl: a good student, never at the top of the class; not athletic, artistic, musical or talented in any way (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 337). She generally perceives herself as "clumsy" and with "bad luck" (*Twilight*, p. 11, p. 226, p. 248, p. 522; *New Moon*, p. 21, p. 267, p. 351; *Eclipse*, p.99, p. 412, p. 601; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 8), characteristics which become her self-fulfilling prophecy as it is reinforced by others. Her immortal boyfriend specifically defines her as "a magnet for trouble" (*Twilight*, p. 221; *New Moon*, p. 400; *Eclipse*, p. 32, p. 95) on so many occasions that she fears she is going to be "the world's only clumsy vampire" (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 453). While she considers herself similar to her father, as both are not comfortable with expressing their emotions out loud and repress "unpleasant things" (*Twilight*, p. 7, p. 178; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 83), she is exactly the opposite to her mother due to her timidity, responsibility and sensibility (*Twilight*, p. 113). In contrast to her mother, Bella feels that she is a coward (*Twilight*, p. 30, p. 41, p. 99). Yet her actions under dangerous situations prove the contrary, especially if her loved ones are at risk (*Twilight*, p. 170, p. 479; *New Moon*, p. 112, p. 187, p. 370, p. 469; *Eclipse*, p. 591; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 595, p. 631, p. 647). Bella exercises self-determination in every decision she makes: she does not lose her independence and power on dating Edward as Rydstedt (2012) states. However, her agency is defined by her stereotypical notion of love which subordinates her to Edward. As Hendricks (2014) claims, after she starts her

relationship with Edward, she remains intelligent, rational and independent, but only as second to him, without understanding his interest in her. For this reason, from the moment she meets him, her change begins in order to become his equal. For example, she starts enjoying cold and snow (*Twilight*, p. 39, p. 478, p. 502), her favourite gemstone varies according to the colour of his eyes (*Twilight*, p. 247), and she forgets the type of films she likes (*New Moon*, p. 102). Her desire to spend eternity with Edward makes her always willing to be transformed (*Twilight*, p. 536; *New Moon*, p. 453; *Eclipse*, p. 287, p. 333). This proves that she is not afraid to decide for herself and accept the consequences of her choices (*Twilight*, p. 149; *Breaking Dawn*, pp. 19-20). By deciding to become a vampire, she exercises her agency, enhancing her self-image. As a matter of fact, she romanticises vampirism as she attributes not only immortality to this condition but also strength, speed and beauty. It is true there are drawbacks to this lifestyle, like being wild, bloodthirsty and childless (*Eclipse*, p. 26; p. 368; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 31), yet she disregards them: she claims her own personal universe is Edward (*New Moon*, p. 542) and that, without him, she is like an empty shell, a vacant condemned house (p. 222).

That Bella defines her gender identity in relation to others, especially males, is clearly perceived in one of the climactic moments in the story when she is faced with the dilemma of choosing between Edward and Jacob, her best friend, as a life partner. She admits that there are two parts of her: Edward's Bella and Jacob's Bella (*Eclipse*, p. 653). Edward's Bella is a "little middle-aged child" responsible for her choices and their consequences (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 20) while Jacob's Bella is less mature and more reckless (*Eclipse*, p. 249). As a characteristic example of man's Other (de Beauvoir, 1949), she defines her identity in contrast with males, selecting her indispensable part: the rational one, performing the corresponding roles accordingly. In truth, her choice seems to be the correct one because the moment she becomes an immortal and enjoys its benefits, she claims, "It was amazing now … It was like I had been born to be a vampire. … I had found my true place in the world, the place I fit, the place I shined" (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 588). Nevertheless, she still feels inferior to Edward because she seems to lack a supernatural power (p. 473, p. 520). However, this negative description of herself does not correspond to others' perceptions. For example, she is described as having no sense of her own self-interest (*Twilight*, p. 480) and being "very good with weird" (*New Moon*, p. 329). She does not hold grudges (*Eclipse*, p. 225) yet she is bad at lying (*Twilight*, p. 4, p. 63, p. 330; *New Moon*, p. 245; *Eclipse*, p. 401, p. 563). She has a strong sense of self-preservation (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 463, p. 848) and for this reason

she excels at surviving (*New Moon*, p. 549), holding still at stressful situations (*Eclipse*, p. 193). Eventually, she becomes the superhero of the day because with her recently discovered shielding superpower she is able to protect her loved ones (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 842). Nonetheless, despite these positive appraisals, she still cannot "see [herself] clearly" (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 838).

The reason why Bella cannot recognise her positive characteristics is that she is extremely conscious of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1999). Therefore, one of her most stereotypical gender traits is the constant negative reference to her appearance, which is the first component of Deaux & Lewis's model of gender stereotyping (Brannon, 2000). It has already been discussed that she permanently views herself as "shamefully plain" in comparison to all the vampires in the series (*Twilight*, p. 272; *New Moon*, p. 69). At some moment in her life, she has become aware that a woman is generally measured by her looks, and she equals beauty with power: she has been witness to the vampires' appeal to humans (*Twilight*; p. 177). Beauty parameters in the story are described from Bella's point of view only, which are partial due to her fascination with vampires' attractiveness, especially Edward's. At the beginning of the saga, she describes herself as ivory-skinned with brown eyes and hair. Although she is slender, she does not physically fit in (*Twilight*, p. 10). She considers that she is "absolutely ordinary" (*Twilight*, p. 226), and that every female – human or vampire – looks better than her (*Twilight*, p. 113, p. 329, p. 354; *New Moon*, p. 28, p. 343, p. 395, p. 496; *Eclipse*, p. 165, p. 177, p. 208; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 46, p. 53). This is the reason why she portrays Edward in superlative terms, such as "breathtakingly beautiful" (*Twilight*, p. 19, p. 20, p. 45, p. 52, p. 83, p. 92, p. 93, p. 127, p. 235, p. 238, p. 244, p. 285, p. 301, p. 386, p. 487, p. 490, p. 516; *New Moon*, p. 4, p. 68, p. 69, p. 248, p. 258, p. 301, p. 469, p. 507, p. 528, p. 548, p. 552; *Eclipse*, p. 177, p. 209, p. 355, p. 482; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 27, p. 54, p. 368, p. 413, p. 459, p. 536, p. 539, p. 546, p.). Even though he is a murderous preternatural being, she considers him an "angel" (*Twilight*, p. 68, p.186, p. 260, p. 283, p. 337, p. 369, p. 487; *New Moon*, p. 4, p. 301, p. 520, p. 565; *Eclipse*, p. 100, p. 442, p. 492; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 6, p. 26, p. 120, p. 823) and a "god" (*Twilight*, p. 221, p. 276, p. 315, p. 371, p. 386; *New Moon*, p. 7, p. 69). His extraordinary beauty lowers her self-esteem and, consequently, she feels hideous (*New Moon*, p. 481) and incapable of even being beautiful as a bride: no matter how much she is styled, she will always look plain compared to him (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 46). For this reason, she cannot recognise herself when she looks at herself in the mirror dressed as a bride (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 63). She

comes to terms with her appearance when she becomes a vampire, even though she experiences ambivalent feelings,

> My first reaction was an unthinking pleasure. The alien creature in the glass was indisputably beautiful … She was fluid even in stillness, and her flawless face was pale as the moon against the frame of her dark, heavy hair. Her limbs were smooth and strong, skin glistening subtly, luminous as a pearl.
>
> My second reaction was horror.
>
> Who *was* she? At first glance, I couldn't find my face anywhere in the smooth, perfect planes of her features.
>
> And her eyes! Though I'd known to expect them, her eyes still sent a thrill of terror through me.
>
> All the while I studied and reacted, her face was perfectly composed, a carving of a goddess, showing nothing of the turmoil roiling inside me. And then her full lips moved. (*Breaking Dawn*, pp. 447-448)

She gains confidence with Edward's praises as she has learned that the male gaze is important in a world where females need to please males who are in a higher position in the power hierarchy (Tsatsa, 2013). This is the reason why others' obsequious remarks flatter her, even if she receives compliments from males she dislikes (*Twilight*, p. 226; *New Moon*, p. 182; *Eclipse*, p. 253; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 63, p. 130, p. 718, p. 749, p. 783, p. 784).

As far as her personality and behaviour are concerned (Deaux and Lewis in Brannon, 2000), Bella fulfils most of the female stereotypes in the XX-century literary tradition: she is passive, docile, submissive, disempowered, and dependent on Edward financially, emotionally and sexually. As discussed earlier, since their paths cross, he becomes the centre of her universe and she thus subordinates every aspect of her life to him (Rydstedt, 2012). Bella exemplifies de Beauvoir's concept in that she completes Edward, being herself incomplete. Physically, she depends on him because of her human clumsiness and weakness, and her proneness to trouble. She also is dependent on him when she transforms into a vampire for he needs to teach her how to control her strength, hunt and fight (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 436, p. 462, p. 643). Intellectually, he is superior to her because he has studied more as he has lived a hundred years longer than her (*Twilight*, p. 310, *Breaking Dawn*, p. 543). Besides, both consider there is a problem in her mind because he cannot hear her thoughts (*Twilight*, p. 191; p. 196; *New Moon*, p. 304; *Eclipse*, p. 135; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 103, p. 644, p. 672). Emotionally, she is dependent

on him because she is “irrevocably” in love with him, and therefore she is subservient to his wishes. Hidden under the benevolent sexist view (Glick & Fiske, 1999) that Bella is “his better half” and needs to be protected against danger because of her human fragility (*Twilight*, p. 336; *New Moon*, p. 533; *Eclipse*, p. 86, p. 252, p. 535; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 7, p. 111), Edward manipulates her. His manipulation ranges from seducing her (Twilight, p. 98, p. 292) and deciding for her in different situations (*Twilight*, p. 413, *New Moon*, p. 69; *Eclipse*, p. 55, p. 87) to coercing her into marrying him (*Eclipse*, p. 100) and concluding that she must not continue with her pregnancy (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 151). He expresses ambivalent feelings towards his inability to hear her thoughts (*Twilight*, p. 223) but, in actual fact, Bella’s mind-muteness grants her the independence to decide according to her desires, such as consummating her relationship with Edward while still being a woman, becoming a vampire and having her baby (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 97, p. 398, p. 401). By exercising her agency in her decisions (*Twilight*, p. 510; *New Moon*, p. 40, p. 527, p. 555, p. 583; *Eclipse*, p. 289; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 12, p. 178, p. 262, p. 528) she also manipulates Edward. However, all her decisions are grounded on the paternalistic belief that, as man’s Other, she can cannot exist independently from male support. Ray (2012) states that Bella seeks fatherly love and protection from the men around her because she is the victim of a non-traditional family (*Twilight*, p. 3, p. 50). This is demonstrated by Edward’s protective and domineering behaviour towards her which continually infantilises her: feeding her, carrying her, singing her to sleep, taking her to see her friend, leading her in dance, reprimanding her and even asking others to “babysit” her (*Twilight*, p. 176, p. 179,p. 337, p. 341, p. 525; *New Moon*, p. 505 ; *Eclipse*, p. 60, p. 209, p. 254, p. 338; p. 452; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 110, p. 116). This is the reason why Bella has unconsciously learned that in a patriarchal world man exercises power while woman reaches compromises by performing certain roles in order to fulfil her wishes. In Tyson’s views (2006), she is the “good girl” who helps in the house, studies, works, and celebrates her loved ones’ accomplishments. Nevertheless, by being idealised by all the men in the saga, Bella is objectified and marginalised and, as a consequence, ordered around. Yet, due to the fact that she is determined to achieve her objectives, she yields to male wishes, forcing the men around her to do as she desires. She is a “dangerous creature” as Edward remarks (*Eclipse*, p. 490) because she exercises her agency by manipulating men. However, the reason behind this manipulation in her relationship in particular is the patriarchal belief that she is the heroine of a fairy tale (*New Moon*, p. 573; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 536), romanticising the fact that she is involved with an inherently dangerous creature. In addition, Bella’s behaviour

and occupation are closely associated owing to the fact that she eventually becomes a wife and a mother and does not need to work because she marries someone rich. This reinforces Castro's (1990) concept that love and status are inseparable, and females will submit to any male demand in search of any material, physiological or emotional needs. Even though Bella decides for herself, these decisions are based on stereotypical female acts that she performs repeatedly (Butler, 1988). She is always man's Other, gladly performing her roles as a female, without transcending Edward.

According to Crooks (2005), Gill, Esson and Yuen (2016) and psychodynamic theories, the development of gender is the result of the relationship established by an infant with their primary caretakers, and Bella's background follows this rule. Even though hers is not a conventional type of family as her parents are divorced, it trains her into the manners of a docile obedient girl while she becomes her parents' caretaker. Reneé, her mother, is outgoing and brave, yet immature, selfish, irresponsible and slightly eccentric (*Twilight*, p. 113; *Eclipse*, p. 47, p. 70). Despite her childish behaviour (*New Moon*, p. 38), she fulfils the role of the caring mother given that she truly knows Bella's personality. Charlie, on the other hand, is the stereotypical father who cannot cook, watches sports, goes fishing at weekends and expects the difficult part of parenting to be performed by women (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 21). By moving in with him, Bella learns her stereotypical role as a wife (*Twilight*, p. 32, p. 38, p. 158, p. 159, p. 318; *New Moon*, p. 22, p. 94, p. 133, p. 141, p. 149; *Eclipse*, p. 4, p. 75, p. 344), feeling guilty at leaving Charlie to cook for himself when she gets married (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 62). Bella has grown up between these two gender role models, and behaves accordingly. For this reason, Hendricks (2014) describes Bella as "the literary incarnation of patriarchal woman". Her sexist views on life are stereotypical: she is not into sports or cars, adheres to girl talk with her friends (*Twilight*, p. 158, p. 161; *New Moon*, p. 101, p. 105; *Eclipse*, p. 211; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 6), believes men in particular are "crabbier when they're hungry" (Twilight, p. 200), sympathises with her father's worries over her dating Edward (*Twilight*, p. 243, p. 320), finds boys "a mystery" (*New Moon*, p. 352) and considers that her father and his friend "gossip like old women" (*Eclipse*, p. 14). Romeo is one of Bella's favourite characters in Shakespeare's plays (*New Moon*, p. 17) and she blames Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* for the misfortunes rather than Heathcliff (*Eclipse*, p. 30). In addition, her sense of self-preservation leads her to protect her loved ones, always prioritising them before herself, thus developing caring and nurturing features as a true woman must (Brannon, 2000). She constantly hides her feelings in order to avoid others' suffering (*Twilight*, p. 4, p. 333,

p. 466; *New Moon*, p. 95, p. 261, p.383; *Eclipse*, p. 580; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 77, p. 78, p. 271, p. 420, p. 423, p. 440 p. 647). As a matter of fact, Jacob describes her as a "classic martyr": "She'd totally been born in the wrong century. She should have lived back when she could have gotten herself fed to some lions for a good cause." (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 207). Nevertheless, the most dangerous stereotypical beliefs she holds are in connection with love, matrimony and maternity.

The concepts of love, marriage and motherhood are intertwined in this tetralogy. As stated above, love is the most important theme throughout the text, and even though affection for family, friends and couples can live harmoniously (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 84), romantic love is mostly represented in heteronormative ways: all relationships are monogamous and heterosexual, consummated within the socially accepted institution of marriage, and despite the Gothic elements. The only dysfunctional relationship is that of Bella's parents, who are divorced and have not behaved like parents according to patriarchal beliefs. A fantastic love triangle emerges as one of the most important subthemes because Bella has to decide between a vampire and a werewolf as life partners. In the end, she settles for the most stable yet stereotypical romantic version: the "glory of the first love" which makes one's stomach be full with butterflies (*Twilight*, p. 96, p. 327). To her, love, life and meaning are together (*New Moon*, p. 78). Since Bella describes love in hyperbolic terms, she admits that it can break a person as it is irrational: "the more you loved someone, the less sense anything made" (*New Moon*, p. 353). She does not dote on Edward because of his beauty or wealth but rather because he is the most loving, unselfish, brilliant and decent person she has ever met (*Eclipse*, p. 118). Their love resembles another subordinating type described in the novel as male werewolves' imprinting. When a male werewolf imprints on a female, she becomes his object of love and therefore the centre of his existence as he has been designed for that object (*Eclipse*, p. 188). This kind of love is oppressive in itself because it conditions both parties: males for the imposed fascination and women for the tacit acceptance of that objectification. Bella seems to be imprinted on Edward as their lives are "twisted into a single strand. Cut one, and you cut both" (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 414). They are "unconditionally and irrevocably and, to be honest, irrationally" in love with each other (p. 94) and, for this reason, one lifetime is simply not enough for her (p. 30). Her life truly began the first days she spent with Edward (p. 442) and, once all the difficulties are overcome, they continue "blissfully into this small but perfect piece of our forever" (p.

850), thus reinforcing the stereotypical romantic notion in the pure joy found in the ecstasy of eternal love.

The excessive value allotted to romantic love oppresses Bella to such an extent that she constantly justifies Edward's domineering attitude towards her. As a matter of fact, Hendricks (2014) states that theirs is an abusive relationship because it exhibits stalking and emotional abuse. All throughout *Twilight* Edward stalks Bella on the pretexts of intimacy and protection (*Twilight*, p. 53, p. 185, p. 238; *Eclipse*, p. 140). Nevertheless, Bella does not consider hers a "controlling, abusive teenage relationship" as Jacob suggests (*Eclipse*, p. 240). On the contrary, she feels "a strange surge of pleasure" when she discovers Edward has been stalking her (*Twilight*, p. 185, p. 244, p. 316). He also emotionally abuses her on many occasions: he ignores her (p. 73), underestimates her (p. 68), holds her responsible for her misfortunes (p. 421, p. 430), and leaves her considering her safety (*New Moon*, p. 74). He always lays the blame on her whenever she does not act according to his wishes (*Twilight*, p. 94) and he appraises her by calling her his "brand of heroine" (p. 289). He even admits that it took him great strength not to kill her the first time they met (p. 292). Rather than feeling horrified by these abusive attitudes, Bella justifies them stereotypically regarding them as signs of true love, even though she realises his complete domination over her is unhealthy (p. 77). Despite her realisation of his dangerous nature, she feels flattered at his remark about kissing her as "enjoying the bouquet while resisting the wine" (*Twilight*, p. 331; *Eclipse*, p.18). The influence he exercises on her is so profound that she does not question the reason why in *New Moon* he abandons her. On the contrary, the explanation she offers for his difficult decision is that "it never made sense for you to love me" (p. 531). Even though his departure means that she loses "the truest of true loves, … a whole future, a whole family, the whole life that I'd chosen" (*New Moon*, p. 412), she justifies him on the grounds that "he had only been trying to save me when he'd left, trying to save my soul" (*New Moon*, p. 549). Additionally, she blames herself for her reckless behaviour and pain during his absence (*Eclipse*, pp. 33-34). She even justifies Edward and his family's protective attitude as they are "trying to keep me safe. … their hearts are in the right place." (*Eclipse*, p. 160). She also feels compassionate for the suffering and the pain caused to him by the scent of her blood – as if she could control this – (*Twilight*, p. 209, p. 294), and appreciates the "Herculean effort" he makes to be with her (*Eclipse*, p. 18). As a matter of fact, as in any gendered close relationship (Wood, 2009), Edward always expects Bella to assume primary responsibility for their relationship and end it (*Twilight*,

p. 261). Yet although she sometimes feels like a science experiment due to his inability to read her mind (*Twilight*, p. 264), she exercises her agency and decides to remain with him, and even feels complimented at the prospect of being held hostage by him (*Eclipse*, p. 458).

It is under the romanticised concept of love that Edward proposes to Bella. As a matter of fact, he uses love as a pretext to coerce her into marriage when she asks him to turn her into a vampire and have sexual intercourse with her as a human. To early XX-century patriarchal Edward, love equals marriage (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 16), yet to early XXI-century Bella "*marriage* and *eternity* are not mutually exclusive or mutually inclusive concepts" (*Eclipse*, p. 296). She believes that the idea of marriage disturbs her because she has been raised by her mother in particular to shudder at the thought of it (*Eclipse*, p. 489), confirming Crooks' assertion that family is an important shaper of gender identity (2005). She even worries about others' conclusions as to their reasons for marriage: the stereotypical belief of unwanted pregnancy (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 15). However, she agrees to marry him owing to her understanding of the value of marriage to a-hundred-and-seventeen-year-old Edward (p. 16) and, more importantly, to her craving to tie herself to him in every human way before becoming an immortal (*Eclipse*, p. 666; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 24). She decides to abide by the rules imposed on by Edward in order to achieve her objectives, even if this means placing his needs before hers. Once more, Bella realises that in a world ruled by men, sometimes it is necessary to behave according to their gender expectations.

Considering that Edward manipulates Bella with matrimony in exchange for sex and immortality, they have their first intimate encounter once they are married (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 97). This fulfils the patriarchal stereotype that for a good girl sexual intercourse is appropriate under the institution of matrimony for the purposes of reproduction (Tyson, 2006). Even if you marry at the young age of eighteen, the XX-century socially expected behaviour is marriage rather than living in "sin" (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 18). However, the truth is that Bella challenges the stereotype of the pure sexually uninterested woman owing to her sexually forward behaviour (Brannon, 2000). During their pre-nuptial relationship, she openly expresses her burning desire for Edward, who constantly controls their sexual behaviour owing to the implied danger should he lose control. According to Ray (2012) and Charlebois (2014), Bella is depicted as "the bad girl", "the temptress" who is irrational and unable to exercise self-restraint, and who wants to

consummate her relationship with Edward regardless the cost. From the first time he accidentally touches her, she feels “as if an electric current had passed through us” (*Twilight*, p. 46). When he describes that he feels “hungers I don't even understand, that are foreign to me," she admits that “I may understand *that* better than you think,” even though she has never been in a romantic relationship before (p. 300). Bella’s sexual awakening is clearly depicted in her reaction to their first kiss: “Blood boiled under my skin, burned in my lips. My breath came in a wild gasp. My fingers knotted in his hair, clutching him to me. My lips parted as I breathed in his heady scent” (p. 305). However, she loses consciousness the second time they kiss (p. 346). She habitually behaves in this erratic contradictory manner during the saga: whenever he touches her or kisses her, either her heart goes wild or her breathing stops (*Twilight*, p. 363, p. 378, p. 498, p. 499; *New Moon*, p. 16, p. 54, p. 510, p. 532, p. 549; *Eclipse*, p. 199, p. 255, p. 283, p. 481, p. 483, p. 493; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 438, p. 565). She is so confident with her sexuality that they have been going out for some hours when she wonders whether sexual intercourse is possible for them. He dismisses the idea due to her human fragility yet he wants to know her experience in this matter, which she admits is non-existent as for her, love and lust essentially “keep the same company” (*Twilight*, pp. 335-336). Once more, she reinforces female stereotypes due to her perception of sexual behaviour as more closely linked to emotional involvement (Wood, 2009). From this moment on, and contrary to sexist beliefs, he is the one who sets the limits and decides to practise abstinence despite the fact that he is sexually attracted to her – "I may not be a human, but I am a man" (*Twilight*, p. 337). Throughout the series, Bella acts as “a villain in a melodrama” (*Eclipse*, p. 485), violating patriarchal sexual norms by being sexually forward in her behaviour.

As Bella wantonly deviates from the expected gender role of the pure girl, she suffers punitive consequences (Butler, 1988). At first, her sexuality is repressed when Edward defines the relationship’s physical parameters. In one of the many times she reacts effusively at his kiss, he breaks off and tells her "You'll be the death of me, I swear you will" (*Twilight*, p. 394). He blames her for her reaction and lack of restraint which undermine his self-control, yet he patronisingly justifies her behaviour on the grounds that she is ruled “by her hormones” (*New Moon*, p. 55; *Eclipse*, p. 202, p. 488; *Breaking Dawn*, p. 116). Bella’s graphic assertion to him that "I'm going to spontaneously combust one of these days" (*Eclipse*, p. 201) demonstrates that she is depicted as a “bad girl” (Tyson, 2006). For this reason, her punishment for such open sexual behaviour is

abstinence and coercion into marriage. Another way in which she is chastised for enjoying her sexuality is after their first sexual encounter. As the story is narrated from Bella's point of view, her first feeling after intercourse is complete satisfaction at their physical compatibility: "Fire and ice, somehow existing together without destroying each other. More proof that I belonged with him" (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 99). However, her joy does not last long when she realises that Edward feels guilty for bruising her during the act due to his supernatural force. On seeing his discontent, her first natural instinct is to blame herself as "the product of a lifetime of insecurities" (p. 99). She does not remember pain during sexual intercourse but pleasure at his tight grip. Once more, she justifies his behaviour on the grounds that sex with him is the best memory she has ever had (p. 107). Besides, being physically challenged as she was,

> I'd definitely had worse [bruises]. There was a faint shadow across one of my cheekbones, and my lips were a little swollen, but other than that, my face was fine. The rest of me was decorated with patches of blue and purple. I concentrated on the bruises that would be the hardest to hide—my arms and my shoulders. They weren't so bad. My skin marked up easily. By the time a bruise showed I'd usually forgotten how I'd come by it. Of course, these were just developing. I'd look even worse tomorrow. That would not make things any easier. (p. 108)

She enjoys her sexuality so much that she does not realize how aggressive he can become while having sex (p. 132). She is again punished for delighting in her libido when he refuses to get intimate again before she becomes a vampire. In the end, and due to her constant tempting insistence, he learns how to control his force and she is able to start taking pleasure in her sexuality. It is at this moment that the ultimate manifestation of punishment is inflicted on her: she becomes pregnant with a half-human, half-vampire girl who is too strong for her to bear in her fragile body. Charlebois (2014) states that the lurid description of her pregnancy and daughter's birth can be read as an extension of Bella's physical chastisement for exploring and enjoying her sexuality. She literally has to give her life in a painful manner in exchange for her baby in order to be transformed into a vampire. Once she becomes an immortal, her sex drive is intensified; all experiences with Edward are sexually heightened in her (p. 438, p. 461, p. 467, p. 472, p. 474). If the theory developed in the story that when a person becomes a vampire their most distinctive senses are heightened (*Twilight*, p. 332), then this demonstrates that Bella was a sexually active girl as a human. Their first sexual encounter after becoming a vampire proves that she has become Edward's equal: "No caution, no restraint. No

fear—especially not that. We could love *together*—both active participants now. Finally equals." (*Breaking Dawn*, p. 539). She feels ecstasy in her new life, always ready to kiss him, and when she finally develops the ability to allow him to see her thoughts, she chooses their most sensuous moments together:

> the way it felt when he'd held me in the meadow… every precious moment from the island… his cold hands touching our baby through my skin… And the sharp memories, perfectly recalled: his face when I'd opened my eyes to my new life, to the endless dawn of immortality… that first kiss… the crystal-clear memory of the first night of my new life… lingering on the details. (pp. 848-850)

The comfort and ease with which Bella describes her sexuality along the saga seems to be the only stereotype she challenges as a YA female protagonist even though she suffers the corresponding punishments for such deviant behaviour before she lives "happily ever after".

Apart from acting as the epitome of punishment for enjoying her sexuality, Bella's pregnancy and motherhood also serve the purpose of adhering to the social construct of the maternal instinct (de Beauvoir, 1949; Chorodow, 1979; Castro, 1990; Tyson, 2006; Valenti, 2007). Before pregnancy, Bella disregards maternity and even considers adoption should she ever feel the need to become a parent *(Breaking Dawn*, p. 31, pp. 149-150). However, the moment she gets pregnant, she starts having premonitory dreams about her child without realising this (p. 117). This reinforces the stereotypical belief that women have a natural inclination towards motherhood as they can produce offspring. However, the reason why discovering her pregnancy has been "the biggest moment" of her life is not her desire to become a mother but rather that she imagines the baby as "a tiny Edward in my arms" (p. 145). This is the reason why she always addresses the baby as a boy and never considers it might be a girl (p. 150, p. 151, p. 213, p. 219, p. 343, p. 367, p. p. 368, p. 369, p. 389, p. 395). Surprisingly though, for the first time in their relationship, she fears Edward's behaviour as she decides to continue with her pregnancy despite his arbitrary decision for abortion on the grounds of her imminent death (p. 151). Due to this determination to have her baby, Bella has also been regarded as an anti-abortionist with a pro-natalist, pro-life and pro-choice stance (Eddo-Lodge, 2013; Silver, 2010). As a matter of fact, she fails to consider the possibility of an abortion even at the risk of her own death because this is Edward's baby, not because she believes that the unborn have the human right not to be intentionally killed.

Nevertheless, she stereotypically behaves as a mother is socially expected since she prioritises the baby's well-being rather than hers. As Bella assures that she had never really cared about having a baby (p. 124), Edward assumes that a maternal instinct has developed in her. For this reason, he proposes a more outrageous solution: that Jacob gets Bella pregnant, objectifying her once more and depriving her of her freedom to decide for her body. Yet she justifies his reaction one more time since she is hurting him "so much" with her decision (p. 214). As a good typical mother with a self-sacrificing nature, she is willing to do anything for the baby, such as drink blood (p. 279) and eventually die for her (pp. 399-400). Once she is a newborn vampire, her mothering protection increases significantly (p. 443) and her baby becomes her first and foremost priority (p. 544). She is caring, nurturing and protective,

> There had to be a way to save her, even if that was the only thing I could do. Suddenly, I knew that this was all I wanted anymore. The rest I would bear if I had to, but not her life being forfeited. (p. 638)

It is true that she has difficulty in considering herself a mother as she archetypically believes that women develop mothering feelings because they have nine months to get used to the idea (p. 545). Eventually, she manages to reconcile the two gender stereotypical roles which complete her as a woman: those of a wife and a mother (Ray, 2014) - "The days were not long enough for me to get my fill of adoring my daughter; the nights did not have enough hours to satisfy my need for Edward." (p. 591). Bella also stereotypically believes that women who do not have children cannot understand "the passion of a mother for her child" (p. 695). The nurturing characteristics of maternity developed in her can also be perceived in her superpower as a vampire, which is connected to her mind-muteness. She protects her loved ones by projecting a force which surrounds her and functions as a shield (p. 667) in the shape of a mother's womb (Silver, 2010),

> The shield blew out from me in a bubble of sheer energy, a mushroom cloud of liquid steel. It pulsed like a living thing … Everything underneath the flexible iron shield was suddenly a part of me … exhaled in relief when I felt Edward's brilliant light within my protection. (pp. 776-777).

Motherhood increases in her the feeling of protection for her loved ones, in the stereotypical manner expected in XX-century literary tradition.

It has already been claimed that the reason why *Twilight* has appealed to YA readership might be precisely the fact that it depicts the stereotypical romantic story of eternal true

love in a fantastic Gothic context where immortality becomes a possibility. On the one hand, the portrayal of Bella as an ordinary girl and Edward as a highly sensuous vampire and their forbidden relationship is highly enticing due to the fact that romantic relationships are "a major cause of strong emotions in adolescence" (The National Youth Mental Health Foundation, 2012, p. 1). On the other hand, the story challenges the concept of mortality, which echoes adolescents' belief that they are immortal and exempt from death (University of Rochester Medical Center, Teen, para. 3). Due to this attractive financial potential, the industry, which was looking for the next sensation after the *Harry Potter* series (Cart, 2016), decided to publish the novel. At the time, Meyer, the author, was in her thirties and she was a member of the Mormon Church. For this reason, the Mormon beliefs of female passivity and domesticity as well as a conservative ideology surrounding sexuality, marriage, and childbearing are present in Bella's stereotypical depiction (Snider, 2012, p. 129). The fact that the story is centred on Bella and Edward marrying and becoming parents implies their Mormon divine destiny (Hofstätter, 2012, p. 45). Bella cannot escape the gender roles she is expected to perform in the XX-century heteronormative patriarchal Mormon society Meyer has written about.

When questioned about the negative criticism Bella received on the grounds of her submission to males, Meyer (2008) claimed that Bella's story is about choice, which is the foundation of modern feminism. Ultimately, she chooses to be with Edward because she is truly in love with him. In fact, she becomes empowered through her decision to become a vampire. However, a detailed analysis of Bella's evolution throughout the saga shows her decisions are shaped by society's prescriptions for gender identities and behaviours. It is true she exercises her agency by choosing what is best for her when situations are imposed on her. Yet experience has taught her that in a world named, ruled and organised by men, certain roles are expected from her as a woman in order to achieve her objectives. Ultimately, she becomes a wife and a mother because she lives in a society where the norm is life within a monogamous heterosexual family. She has grown into a patriarchal woman, dependent on males financially, emotionally and sexually. She decides to become a vampire because she is defined by her relationship with Edward; she marries him in order to explore and enjoy her sexuality within socially expected parameters; she decides to have her baby because it is part of Edward. She never questions the sexist beliefs behind male condescending attitudes towards her, and she willingly abides by the gender constraints imposed on her. She would have behaved in this manner even if she had chosen Jacob as a life partner. She cannot avoid the

sexist behaviour she has been gendered into. After all, deviating from the expected gender norms has punitive consequences, many of which she vividly experienced herself.

3.3. *THE HUNGER GAMES*

The Hunger Games is a trilogy consisting of YA dystopian novels written by the American author and screenwriter Suzanne Collins. Even though Collins had written children's books as well as television programmes on the Nickelodeon network and *The Underland Chronicles* (2003 – 2007) for adolescents, she achieved enormous literary success with *The Hunger Games* when she was in her mid-forties.

The series' first book, *The Hunger Games*, was released in 2008, and it became a New York Time best-seller as well as its first sequel, *Catching Fire*, which was published in 2009. The last sequel, *Mockingjay*, released in 2010, led all American bestseller lists on its release. Overall, the series has sold more than 65 million print and electronic copies in the United States alone (Hall, 2014), and it has also been sold into 56 territories in 51 languages to date. As far as critical reception is concerned, the series has generally received positive reviews (King, 2008; Meyer, 2008; Zevin, 2009; Rollie, 2009; Carpenter, 2010; Knight, 2010). Four film versions of the trilogy were developed between 2012 and 2015, which became the second highest-grossing film series based on YA books, after the *Harry Potter* series in North America. Worldwide, it is the third highest-grossing film series based on YA books after the film series of *Harry Potter* and *The Twilight Saga* (Griffin; The Numbers).

The Hunger Games is set at an unspecified time in the future after ecological disasters led to the rising of sea levels and destroyed the United States as it is recognised physically and politically today. Geographically located on the west of North America, the country of Panem emerges as a totalitarian system controlled by the police force, known as the "Peacekeepers". Panem consists of its capital city, the "Capitol", surrounded by 13 districts, twelve of which specialise in different products for the benefit of the Capitol. At the beginning of the trilogy, District 13, which used to specialise in military-industrial production, does not exist as it had been destroyed seventy-four years before for leading a rebellion against the Capitol's oppression. The Capitol managed to control the civil war which erupted, by bombing District 13. In order to avoid further rebellions, it instituted

“The Hunger Games”, a yearly televised contest in which twenty-four adolescents between 12 and 18 are sent to an arena and forced to fight to death until a single victor remains. Each district is forced to provide two “tributes”, one male and one female, who are selected publicly by lottery in a ceremony called the “Reaping”.

The trilogy begins the day of the Seventy-Fourth Reaping, when Katniss Everdeen volunteers to take her sister’s place in the Hunger Games. Katniss is a sixteen-year-old teenager from the coal-mining District 12, one of the poorest in Panem. Peeta Mellark is the male tribute selected to participate in the Games for District 12, who has also been secretly in love with Katniss for a long time. Their “star-crossed” love story sets in motion a series of events developing in *Catching Fire* which will lead to a revolution against the Capitol in *Mockingjay*, with Katniss being converted into the symbol of the rebellion.

The *Hunger Games* series is written in the first person from the point of view of Katniss Everdeen. Apart from the dystopian genre, romance is a sub-genre throughout the novel: Katniss’ love interest revolves around her friend and hunting partner, Gale Hawthorne, and her unconditional long-time lover, Peeta Mellark. But this love triangle (together with issues such as the first kiss and sexual awakening) is not the only important theme in the trilogy – family is another recurring topic: Katniss’ doubt as to whether having children in such an oppressive context; her relationship with her mother and her sister Prim; her role as the “breadwinner” of the family after her father’s death; and the importance of her father in her life.

Not only are roles questioned as far as relationships are concerned but also those of political institutions. Panem is presented as a country under a totalitarian system controlled by President Coriolanus Snow, a dictator who exerts class oppression in order to maintain power. This is made possible by the manipulation of the media, which provides entertainment regardless the cost. Even Katniss, who at first rebels against the Capitol for her own survival, is converted into a symbol of the rebellion in order to question the status quo.

There are also issues connected with growing up and the development of one’s identity, as the main characters are adolescents trying to survive in an unjust political system established by adults. Becoming eligible for the Hunger Games pageant can be considered a rite of passage, and the edges of being between life and death and

humanity and inhumanity are present throughout the trilogy. The influence of humans on the environment is also a minor but an important issue as Panem with its unfair political system came into being after ecological disasters destroyed the world as it had been known so far.

Themes connected with mental and physical health are also present, such as depression owing to bereavement exemplified in the reaction of Katniss' mother after her father's death. Post-traumatic stress is described in the victors' reactions after participating in the Games, and psychological violence and mental manipulation are present when fear conditioning is used on Peeta, or Katniss is made to believe that her sister is being tortured by means of "mutts", genetically enhanced animals. The abuse of substances like alcohol and drugs is also a theme in the trilogy as ways of dealing with post-traumatic stress. Sexual assault and prostitution are also depicted as means by which the Capitol has used some victors after the Games, as well as the physical violence exerted in the pageant itself.

Katniss Everdeen is a character in YA literature who has been the focus of special attention as a female protagonist and has been critically analysed from contrasting viewpoints. According to Riddell (2016), "Katniss is the imperfect hero" who performs both masculine and feminine roles (p. 20). As masculine traits, she displays self-sufficiency, courage, individualism and roughness (Parvathi, 2017, p. 45). She hunts, fights and becomes her family's "breadwinner" on her father's death; she defies the government, leads a rebellion and overthrows the existing power. However, another integral part of her personality is her ability to feel empathy and her desire to protect the ones she loves. Even though she claims that she does not want to have children, she develops maternal and nurturing qualities which become important in her relationships and make her the symbol of the rebellion (Hartvik, 2018, p. 8-9). For Bruins (2018), this fusion of nurturing and political awareness shows evidence that Katniss is in fact an androgynous character, adopting the most appropriate gender role in order to survive, prioritising self-preservation and the safety of her loved ones (p. 28-31).

Boissoneau (2014) also describes Katniss as androgynous when she chooses her actions in order to defy the existing political system. But he also describes her as 'asexual' as she shows discomfort with the sexuality implied by nudity. Katniss "feels a vague discomfort with no traceable source when she sees or thinks about herself or

others naked" (p. 11). Besides, Katniss treats both Gale and Peeta as "objects of romantic, rather than sexual, affection" (p. 12). The expressions she uses to describe her feelings towards them are "solely romantic, unaccompanied by sexual attraction" (p 12). Katniss' physical relationship with Peeta is also platonic: they just share the bed to comfort each other after their nightmares, but their relationship remains non-sexual (p. 13).

According to Neira (2017), "Katniss represents a type of female character who not only does not live by, or identifies with, traditional standards of her gender but who also defies patriarchal expectations, thus questioning the legitimacy of gendered ideals of womanhood" (p. 19). As a matter of fact, she claims that Katniss represents "a new type of female who does not have to be feminine to feel like a woman". Her character questions and re-examines the concept of *woman*, stating that a person is not limited by their own body and gender identity (p. 35).

In addition to this, Lopez-da Silva (2016) claims that Katniss is "in fact a young girl stripped of her agency and made to perform traditional gender roles" (p. 13). Without her knowledge and consent, her body is utilized not only by the status quo but also by the rebels. From the moment she becomes a tribute, she loses control of her body, which is created, trained, undermined and used in the name of the rebellion (p. 32).

From a more critical standpoint, Parvathi (p. 47) describes Katniss as misogynistic, since throughout the trilogy, she despises feelings of vulnerability for considering them female characteristics which must be eliminated in order to achieve masculinity and, thus, power. Katniss dismisses femininity as something to do with gossiping and clothes. She does not cry in public, she does not show empathy towards other women and she does not admit her feelings for Peeta. She even rejects pregnancy, one of the states in which women are considered most vulnerable (p. 48). Nevertheless, the moment "she quits her masculine performance, she is reverted back into a feminine role with no power" (p. 5).

Along similar lines, Thaller (2016) claims that in fact Katniss seems to be a feminist heroine as "in her independence, fierce courage, and emotional self-control [she] *appears* [emphasis added] to serve as symbols of direct opposition to patriarchal values and gender conventions" (p. 5). She *appears* to do so because when she marries and has children with Peeta at the end of the trilogy, she "abandons her individuality, quiets

herself, and begrudgingly enters a domestic heterosexual and reproductive relationship in order to serve the same values she seemed to have once directly opposed" (p. 5). For Thaller, Katniss is a character "who lacks agency, choice, and the freedom to be true to herself and to pursue her inner desires" (p. 12). As a feminist heroine, Katniss reinforces patriarchal values, gender constraints and women's submission to men.

However, for Neira (2017), this final turn of events at the end of the trilogy shows that "the way in which the characters perform their gender evidences that women and men do not need to behave a certain way to assert their gender identity" (p. 61). Bruins argues that "although Katniss, Peeta, and their children conjure the image of a typical nuclear family at first, the ending of the trilogy does not show a complete return to gender norms" (p. 33). With the cost of the psychological aftermath of the war, Katniss continues hunting and providing for her family. The fact that she marries and chooses to be a mother shows that for the first time in her life, she is not performing a role for her own survival or the safety of those around her. She feels now safe enough to pursue a relationship in her own terms.

The analysis made by Gilmore (2013) is interesting in that she states that "the character of Katniss reinforces what pop culture foists upon women every day; it is dangerous to be an 'Other'. In order to survive … one must conform to cultural, primarily defined as heteronormative, gender identities." (p. 13). In short, Katniss chooses to be a mother due to Peeta's desire because she has performed "gender for the gaze of others for so long that it is now impossible to separate her from the masculine patriarchy that demands it" (p. 11).

On balance, *The Hunger Games* saga proves to be one of the most popular series in YA literature for a variety of reasons. With a complex plot in the first person which combines elements of a dystopia and romance, themes which directly address young adults' dilemmas, and a female protagonist as Katniss Everdeen who challenges feminine and masculine roles, this series may exert direct impact on young adult readers who are in search of their gender identity. Whether the series reinforces feminine gender stereotypes or not is the central question which will be analysed in the next subsection.

3.3.1. KATNISS EVERDEEN

Katniss Everdeen is a representative example of a YA dystopian heroine: at the start of the trilogy, she is a sixteen-year-old girl who has already been forced to be her family's provider because of her father's death five years before, living under an oppressive hierarchical system which dictates the course of her life. By the end of the series, although she is eighteen, she has undergone such traumatic experiences that have transformed her into a woman capable of deciding how to live according to her own standards. In effect, Katniss' journey to maturity and knowledge is evidenced in this post-apocalyptic Bildungsroman. Yet the question remains whether her life choices are founded on her personal experience and beliefs, or they conform to society's stereotypical ideas about gender identity and behaviour.

The development of her identity can be observed throughout the saga as she learns that becoming her true female self is a complicated choice (Letourneau, 2017), especially when certain roles are socially expected in specific situations at particular moments. The search for her identity is accelerated by the fact that the story unfolds under authoritarian regimes which preside over the supposedly common good, which is not always in Katniss' self-interest. At the beginning of the trilogy, she is conscious that the quality of life in her hometown is appalling – "District 12. Where you can starve to death in safety," (*The Hunger Games*, p. 7) she says ironically. Yet she also understands that publicly criticising the rulers of her country may lead to more inconveniencies. For this reason, she says,

> I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts. Do my work quietly in school. Make only polite small talk in the public market. Discuss little more than trades in the Hob, which is the black market where I make most of my money. Even at home, where I am less pleasant, I avoid discussing tricky topics. Like the reaping, or food shortages, or the Hunger Games. Prim [her younger sister] might begin to repeat my words and then where would we be? (p. 7)

At such an early age, she has already discovered that there are moments in life when it is necessary to conceal one's thoughts and play the roles required for the sake of self-preservation, regardless how submissive or demeaning they are, especially for females (Butler, 1988). Consequently, Katniss constantly performs different gender stereotypical acts depending on the situation she is placed in. Contrary to expectations, this

submissive attitude does not define her identity as, on many occasions, she wonders what her true self is: “I stare in the mirror as I try to remember who I am and who I am not” (*The Hunger Games*, p. 364), “I do not know who this person is” (*Mockingjay*, p. 30). As a rule, she judges herself severely based on society’s expectations from her: she describes herself as not cocky, witty, funny, sexy, mysterious (*The Hunger Games*, p. 118), soft or sociable (*Catching Fire*, p. 14, p. 215). She claims that she is like a squirrel (*The Hunger Games*, p. 181) with little ability to watch suffering, introduce herself or tell a friend from an enemy (*Catching Fire*, p. 107, p. 193, p. 363). She considers herself unforgiving (*The Hunger Games*, p. 198), selfish, inarticulate (*Catching Fire*, p. 111, p. 116), nuts, violent, distrustful, manipulative, deadly and utterly worthless (*Mockingjay*, p. 62, p. 98, p. 116). One possible reason behind this negative self-perception might be that she has matured in a society where femininity is stereotypically equated with frailty, modesty, sensitivity, emotional expressiveness, attentiveness and affiliation. At the same time, she has the capacity to recognise that she is a fighter (*The Hunger Games*, p. 122) who has power and, for this reason, cannot be easily manipulated (*Mockingjay*, p. 39, p. 107). The realisation of this significant component of her identity empowers her and assists her in the construction of her political and personal independence. Yet she also discovers that even though masculine women can exert their own agency, there are certain female roles to be performed according to the patriarchal norms established by the society she lives in. Moreover, deviating from these expected norms has punitive consequences (Butler, 1988). For this reason, the roles she adopts vary according to society’s expectations about the situations she encounters.

The roles she performs throughout the series are considerably influenced by her physical appearance, which is the central component from which stereotypes emerge according to the model of gender stereotyping developed by Deaux and Lewis (Brannon, 2000). As the story develops, Katniss realises that men have a higher ranking in the power hierarchy and, for this reason, their perceptions rule gender norms and in turn influence female opinions. As a consequence, Katniss’ looks are perceived through her male-tinted eyes because the narrative is written in the first person from her point of view. In her first description, she compares herself to her best male friend Gale. “He could be my brother. Straight black hair, olive skin, we even have the same gray eyes” (*The Hunger Games*, p. 9). She acknowledges that she bears no resemblance to her blond and blue-eyed mother and sister. Yet she is not embarrassed by this; on the contrary, she considers that her mother and sister “always look out of place” (p. 9) because they differ from the

people in their community. She always wears a braid in her hair and, as far as her clothing is concerned, she indicates preference for manly items, such as shirts, trousers and leather hunting boots (p. 5). She later states that she has a special attachment to her deceased father's hunting jacket as well as the bow and arrow he made for her (p. 29). These few allusions to her appearance suggest that she disregards looks, an idea which is reinforced during the saga: she sees herself as a fourteen-year-old girl (*The Hunger Games*, p. 349) to whom clothes bore "to tears" (*Catching Fire*, p. 42) and whose hair length is "a matter of complete indifference to" her (*Mockingjay*, p. 107). However, the Hunger Games teach her that women are objects which men gaze upon (Mulvey, 1999). Consequently, if women want to be desirable, they must transform themselves and be complimented on by men. Part of Katniss' society – in particular, the Capitol – considers that appearance is of major significance, especially if assistance is required in the arena (*The Hunger Games*, p. 58). In order to be considered attractive, she ascertains that cleanliness, the shape of the nails and a hairless body are relevant, and that preparing to look as society expects is a time-consuming endeavour (p. 61). She also discovers that the process of beautification can be painful as her skin becomes sore, tingling and intensely vulnerable. Moreover, she is told that she now "almost looks like a human" and that she is going to be absolutely gorgeous once Cinna, her appointed stylist, has finished fashioning her (p. 62). This implies that her appearance is dishevelled and needs improvement, an impression that Katniss has never had. When she realises the importance of looks for her self-preservation, she follows her stylist's recommendations: before the Games, she puts her head up high when she parades with Peeta, her fellow male tribute, in front of the Capitol (p. 70) and she twirls in her dress during the interview broadcast (p. 128). For the interview after winning the Games, she wears a dress which makes her look both girlish and innocent (p. 353). But in fact, she regrets this type of attire, as can be evidenced in her thoughts about Peeta's clothes: "I wish Cinna had given me a similar outfit, I feel so vulnerable in this flimsy dress" (p. 355). Yet she understands that she must play the role of a helpless girl madly in love for survival. However, it is during *Catching Fire* that she realises that styling for the Games holds a direct relationship with gender,

> I get to spend the morning having the hair ripped off my body while Peeta sleeps in. I hadn't thought much about it, but in the arena at least some of the boys got to keep their boy hair whereas none of the girls did. (p. 45)

She wonders why Peeta and other male tributes are not "plucked and scoured and massaged and anointed" until they are raw as she is (p. 46). She even resents comments

as to how her appearance could be altered to make her “more special”: she wonders whether people in the Capitol “really have no idea how freakish they look to the rest of” the people (p. 46). Every time she is fashioned, she feels “like dough, being kneaded and reshaped again and again” (p. 77). But her uttermost disappointment comes in *Mockingjay* because, as the symbol of the revolution, she is styled in such a way that she resembles a woman whose “body seems larger in stature, more imposing than mine. Her face smudged but sexy. Her brows black and drawn in an angle of defiance” (p. 39). She cannot recognise herself even though she is “the best-dressed rebel in history" (p. 28). As Lopez-da Silva (2016) states, from the moment Katniss volunteers as a tribute, she loses control of her body, which is first used in order to maintain the status quo and then to support the rebellion. Nonetheless, Katniss is conscious of this manipulation and she still decides to conform to it to protect her loved ones and to survive. However, she resents being fashioned from the beginning, and describes herself best when she is allowed to prepare as she prefers: she knows that rebels recognise her because of “the damage, the fatigue, the imperfections” (*Mockingjay*, p. 49). In Foucault’s words (in Mulvey, 1999), as the series develops, Katniss realises that her survival depends on society’s gaze so she self-regulates her appearance and her behaviour in order to please those subjects that look upon her. In the Capitol, women are physically expected to be dyed, stencilled and surgically altered, as well as carefully made up and elegantly dressed. However, in patriarchal heteronormative Panem, although female appearance varies according to the reality of each district, they are expected to be humble, loving, nurturing, interpersonally sensitive, emotionally expressive, always smiling and financially and emotionally dependent on men, yet controlling sexual activity as for them it is closely connected to emotional involvement (*The Hunger Games*, p. 63, p. 75, p. 115, p. 118, p. 120, p. 251, p. 256). Katniss learns to behave according to Panem’s male gaze, but her true personality differs from this gender stereotyping.

As a matter of fact, Neira (2017) assures that Katniss re-examines the concept of *woman* as she is not weak, passive, docile or submissive, thus subverting the second component of the model of gender stereotyping, namely personality traits (Deaux & Lewis, 1984). She constantly defies the existing oppressive system, and she frequently acts according to her priorities in life: in *The Hunger Games*, she volunteers as a tribute in place of her sister Prim (p. 23) and she threatens to eat the deadly berries with Peeta for self-preservation (p. 339). In *Catching Fire*, she throws the arrow at the dome of the arena as an act of defiance against the existing authoritarian system (p. 353) and in *Mockingjay*

she overthrows another potential oppressive regime (p. 157). However, she is presented in terms of the "good girl" as she is modest and unassuming: Peeta maintains that "she has no idea. The effect she can have" (*The Hunger Games*, p. 91; *Mockingjay*, p. 138). She is also depicted as self-denying and nurturing when she hunts for her loved ones even at the risk of being punished (*The Hunger Games*, p.6, p. 28; *Catching Fire*, p. 339; *Mockingjay*, p. 163), or when she demands Peeta's salvation in *Catching Fire* for considering him a natural leader for the revolution (p. 166). Her self-sacrificing and protective nature can also be appreciated in her realisation that her death in battle would be functional for the revolution (*Mockingjay*, p. 227). Furthermore, she acknowledges her caring attitude when she claims that her natural instinct is to protect those who are emotionally damaged (p. 217). Katniss' stereotypical depiction as self-sacrificing, caring and nurturing precisely contains the personality traits which exert a profound influence on her choices. As a woman, Katniss is disempowered from the moment all her decisions are conditioned by the rules and the expectations of the society she lives in. She is constantly forced to perform the accepted stereotypical gender roles according to the situation she encounters urged by her survival drive: she is portrayed as a girl "madly in love" to justify her intention to eat the deadly berries (*The Hunger Games*, p. 350), she is forced to become a bride in order to maintain the status quo, she has to pretend to be pregnant to try to get the Quarter Quell cancelled (*Catching Fire*, p. 70, p. 239), she is depicted as a confused expecting girl with no idea of the conspiracy against the existing regime, she is described as a poor unstable girl plucked by the rubble to be the leader of the rebellion, not a great thinker or the mastermind, she is acknowledged as the "girl who survived the Seam and the Hunger Games and turned a country of slaves into an army of freedom fighters", and she even has to be presented as a hopeless, shell-shocked lunatic to justify her last act of rebellion against another oppressive government (*Mockingjay*, p. 12, p. 125, p. 160). All these contradictory roles are stereotypical as they are based on the patriarchal depiction of a female of young age emotionally ruled by her hormones. Nonetheless, she obediently performs them in order to survive and to protect her loved ones.

However, Katniss challenges the stereotypical notion that women depend on men to subsist in relation to financial income given that she provides for her family first by hunting and then by winning the 74th Hunger Games (*Catching Fire*, p. 6). It should be noted that being her family's breadwinner is accepted in the patriarchal society she lives on the grounds of her father's death and her mother's depression (*The Hunger Games*, p. 28).

In spite of this financial autonomy, her emotional dependence on males can be witnessed as subtly and steadily growing from the beginning of the story. As a child, she depends on her father who is the one who supports the family both financially and emotionally. At twelve, she starts depending on her best friend Gale as they share the traumatic experience of losing their male progenitors in a mine explosion and having to become providers for their families (p. 11). Eventually, and most importantly, she becomes emotionally dependent on Peeta, the male tribute from District 12, because, as she explains, "since my father died and I stopped trusting my mother, no one else's arms have made me feel this safe" (*The Hunger Games*, p. 295). In this manner, Katniss is presented as a child to whom Peeta gives a sense of protection (*Catching Fire*, p. 39; *Mockingjay*, p. 143). She relies on him because he saves her from starvation, makes her look desirable for sponsors (*The Hunger Games*, p. 32, p. 130), comforts her when she has nightmares, sacrifices his whole life for her (*Catching Fire*, p. 69, p. 328), defends her in the Capitol, warns her about the bombing of District 13, and is finally tortured and psychologically manipulated to make her abandon the rebellion (*Mockingjay*, p. 12, p. 56, p. 69). These apparent selfless actions on Peeta's part are examples of benevolent sexism (Glick & Fisk, 1999) as they cause Katniss to subtly and slowly become emotionally subordinate to him to such an extent that, when she ultimately acknowledges she loves him, one might wonder whether the real explanation for this is that, as Gale points out, he "won her over" (*Mockingjay*, p. 139) or because external expectations (including the readers') become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Katniss' behaviour as another component from the model of the gender stereotyping is described as misogynist by Parvathi (2017) on the grounds that Katniss equals femininity with vulnerability, gossiping, clothes, marriage and babies. It is true that Katniss associates crying with weakness and does not want to be perceived as frail (*The Hunger Games*, p. 24) and, for that reason, she does not cry in public (*The Hunger Games*, p. 25, p. 35, p. 41, p. 284). When she cannot hold back her tears, she either weeps on her own (*The Hunger Games*, p .103) or covers her face (*The Hunger Games*, p. 305, p. 362). In addition, apart from disregarding female acts such as gossiping and discussing clothes (*The Hunger Games*, p. 42, p. 54), she does not usually perform stereotypical activities such as cooking, storytelling or talking about herself (*Catching Fire*, p. 200, p. 263, p. 358). Moreover, she does not adhere to becoming a wife and mother under such terrible oppressive conditions (*The Hunger Games*, p. 10, p. 307, p. 366; *Catching Fire*, p. 43, p. 173, p. 240). In fact, she performs stereotypical gender acts in order to survive:

"All I was doing was trying to keep Peeta and myself alive. Any act of rebellion was purely coincidental" (*Catching Fire*, p. 17). It has already been discussed that in a world where she was forced to become her family's breadwinner, she has learned that power relies on masculine acts. She has realised that, as Simone de Beauvoir (1949) claims, woman is man's Other, belonging to the domestic sphere while men act on, change and give meaning to the world. She is prompted to act or else her family will die:

> "at the time, all I knew was that I had lost not only a father, but a mother as well. At eleven years old, with Prim just seven, I took over as head of the family. There was no choice." (*The Hunger Games*, p. 28)

Due to her nurturing instincts, she has already discovered that in a patriarchal world where women depend on men, females are allowed to adopt male roles for survival should men die. She has realised that men hold the power to rule and do while women are immanent, just like her mother first depended on her father and now depends on her. She does not question marriage and motherhood because she believes they are social constructs which oppress women, an idea that has been put forth by De Beauvoir (1949), Chorodow (1979), Castro (1990), Tyson (2006), Valenti (2007) and Marxist feminists. She challenges the notion of motherhood because of her protective nature: she does not want her children to be killed either by starvation or by the status quo (*The Hunger Games*, p. 10, p. 307, *Catching Fire*, p. 43, p. 240). Riddell (2016) claims that Katniss has to learn to perform both masculine and feminine roles for her self-preservation and the safety of her loved ones. She is both a nurturer and a protector: she naturally safeguards those she loves, even at her own expense. A good example of this can be observed in *Catching Fire*, when she decides to act according to the wishes of the establishment by agreeing to marry Peeta in order to protect her family (p. 27, p. 70). She is self-sacrificing as she constantly thinks of the others' good rather than hers, another stereotypical characteristic of a "good girl", with no needs of her own because she feels completely satisfied by serving others (Tyson, 2006).

This protective and nurturing character of hers is directly related to her occupation, which is the fourth component of Deaux and Lewis' model. As her father taught her how to hunt, on his death she becomes a hunter and is thus able to support her family. As a matter of fact, owing to her excellent hunting skills, she manages to survive the arena twice, and eventually become a soldier for the rebellion (*Mockingjay*, p. 12). Yet, once more, she selects these occupations owing to her sense of communality (Ellemers, 2018): there is no reference to her own desires for professional achievement because she prioritises

the well-being of her loved ones. She becomes a hunter out of the necessity to feed her family; she becomes a soldier and the leader of the rebellion because the people in the districts have sided with her struggle against the Capitol. Nevertheless, she is conscious that she is being manipulated, especially by becoming the symbol of the rebellion (*Catching Fire*, p. 360). And yet she fulfils these roles because they are instrumental to her (*Mockingjay*, p. 16). However, she admits that once the revolution is finished, her financial future will not be as a member of the government (*Mockingjay*, p. 114). As a matter of fact, at the end of the trilogy she continues hunting to provide for her family (*Mockingjay*, p. 163).

As is generally the case with YA literature, a stereotypical love triangle develops in the course of the series, as Katniss' love interest pivots between her friend Gale and her long-time lover and fellow tribute Peeta. It is not until the end of *Mockingjay* that readers are told that Katniss settles on Peeta as her life companion, on whom she depends emotionally because he gives her hope (*The Hunger Games*, p. 33; *Catching Fire*, p. 166, p. 227, p. 316; *Mockingjay*, p. 163). However, this relationship pattern shows a clear consistency with the concept of heteronormativity and its assumption that heterosexual relationships are normal and normative (Wood, 2009). The love triangle revolves around the female protagonist's heterosexual choice between two different opposing male figures: Gale represents the typical masculine man while Peeta shows more feminine characteristics. The concept of lifelong monogamy as a heterosexual norm is also implied in this triad as she can only opt for one of the two male characters for the rest of her life. Another patriarchal belief exemplified in this gendered close relationship is that it is not possible for an independent woman to exist without a man because she is always incomplete in some aspect. From the beginning of the story, Katniss' major priority in her life is her family's survival (*The Hunger Games*, p. 107) and this is the reason why she has not had "much time or use" for romance (p. 296). She even tells Gale that there is no room for romantic love in her life as fear is the only strong emotion in her since she volunteered for her sister in the Games (*Catching Fire*, p. 92). However, she learns that women's worth is judged according to their love lives when her relationship with Gale and Peeta is minimised to "boy trouble" (*Mockingjay*, p. 18, p. 154). She feels so affronted at Gale's implication that, in the end, she will choose "whoever she can't live without" with no "indication that love, or desire, or even compatibility will sway" her that she assures that she "can survive just fine without either of them" (p. 141). She is aware that every emotion in her life has been "taken and exploited by the Capitol or the rebels" (p.

141). Nevertheless, she finally fulfils Gale's prophecy by staying with Peeta, reinforcing the patriarchal notion that without a man, women are incomplete, as de Beauvoir states. Even if a female provides for herself financially, she cannot exist without male emotional and sexual support. As a matter of fact, along the series there is little evidence about the development of Katniss' sexuality, as her relationship with Peeta is described in platonic terms and both him and Gale are presented as objects of romantic love for her, as Boissoneau (2014) highlights. Katniss is portrayed as a pure girl, who feels uncomfortable with nakedness, whether it is hers or other people's (*The Hunger Games*, p. 64, p. 252; *Catching Fire*, p. 201, p. 210, p. 211, *Mockingjay*, p. 52, p. 159). Even though Katniss and Peeta kiss frequently because of their "star-crossed" love story, and they share the bed fully clothed to accompany each other through nightmares (*Catching Fire*, p. 69), there are only three moments in the course of the series when she describes sensations which might be interpreted as signs of her sexual awakening: "This is the first kiss where I actually feel stirring inside my chest. Warm and curious. This is the first kiss that makes me want another" (*The Hunger Games*, p 294); "The sensation inside me grows warmer and spreads out from my chest, down through my body, out along my arms and legs, to the tips of my being" (*Catching Fire*, p. 329); "And eventually his lips. On the night I feel that thing again, the hunger that overtook me on the beach, I know this would have happened anyway" (*Mockingjay*, p. 163). In the epilogue, there is a reference to Katniss and Peeta's consummation of their relationship:

> They play in the Meadow. The dancing girl with the dark hair and blue eyes. The boy with blond curls and gray eyes, struggling to keep up with her on his chubby toddler legs. It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly. When I first felt her stirring inside of me, I was consumed with a terror that felt as old as life itself. Only the joy of holding her in my arms could tame it. Carrying him was a little easier, but not much. (*Mockingjay*, p. 164)

The protagonists have become the parents of a girl and a boy, thus conforming to the heteronormative stereotypical image of the nuclear family expected by patriarchy. This may also lead to the assumption that they got married because Katniss stereotypically equates marriage to offspring, another patriarchal belief attached to the image of the pure good girl who marries for reproductive purposes (*The Hunger Games*, p. 307, p. 366; *Catching Fire*, p. 240). In Castro's views (1990), Katniss is oppressed by Peeta's love when she submits to his demand for children. She self-sacrifices once more,

prioritising his needs before hers, as, in Brannon's words (2000), a true woman should. But her reluctance at motherhood is intrinsically connected to the fear she has always felt that her own children should die of hunger or undergo the traumatic experience of participating in the Hunger Games. Different plausible explanations may be offered for Katniss' re-evaluation of motherhood. Bruins (2018) claims that she agrees to mothering because she feels that now the world is safe and her children will be able to live freely. However, it might be the case that once again her self-denying nature emerges as she places other people's needs before hers, especially from "the boy with the bread" to whom Katniss owes her life, as she constantly reminds readers throughout the saga (*The Hunger Games*, p. 33, p. 136, p. 288; *Mockingjay*, p. 68). Another possible reason why Katniss is subdued into heterosexual monogamous domestic family life is that she continues performing the roles society and readers expect from her. Family and motherhood are the default choices for this heroine who grows into adulthood under patriarchal society's attentive gaze. She already knows that she can be punished when she challenges expected gender norms. After all, her sister died during her struggle to overthrow the existing oppressive power. In this view, adopting a stereotypical heteronormative gender identity serves for self-preservation in a world where there are "worse games to play" (*Mockingjay*, p. 163).

There might be another reason why Katniss agrees to mothering at the end of the saga which is connected to her relationship with her own parents, especially her mother. According to Crooks (2005) and psychological theories, the first carers, generally the parents, are the shapers of gender roles by means of verbal and non-verbal communication with children. Katniss has been reared by a family whose mother depended on her father for financial and emotional support. As a consequence, Katniss has developed certain expectations regarding parental obligations to children, which her mother fails to fulfil on her husband's death: she does not provide for her children. This is the reason why Katniss grows resentful and distrustful towards her mother at her abandonment (*The Hunger Games*, p 36). Adolescence is essentially a moment in a person's life when parent authority is questioned, so the attitude shown by Katniss's mother has a deeper impact on Katniss' identity formation as a woman. This is the reason why she prefers to be compared to her father, whose blood "quickens during a hunt, not an epidemic" (*Catching Fire*, p. 300). In her personal experience, femininity is a symbol of vulnerability, immanence and dependence on men. The influence of her mother as a female role model in unison with the severe social and economic conditions have made

Katniss apprehensive towards motherhood. However, in her process of maturation, Katniss realises that her mother suffered from “a crushing depression” (p. 29) after her father’s death, a mental illness she could not prevent from developing. She has learned that “sometimes things happen to people and they're not equipped to deal with them” (p. 29), especially if you are a woman who has always depended on others for protection. As she grows into adulthood, Katniss realises that her mother has also re-enacted the suitable norms assigned to her gender, and has not been able to develop an independent identity of her own. She has acted according to the emotional resources which patriarchy has provided her with. She notices that her mother only seems to be herself when she heals people (*The Hunger Games*, p. 53). This might be the reason why she accepts her mother’s denial to go back home with her after the revolution in order to set up a hospital in another district (*Mockingjay*, p. 161). Katniss has eventually accepted her mother with her strengths and weaknesses and, in this manner, she has also reconciled with the idea of becoming a mother herself.

There is no doubt that Katniss Everdeen is a representative YA protagonist since she is an adolescent narrating the story in the first person who becomes the heroine as she rebels against the totalitarian system she lives in. Throughout the saga, her process of maturation leads to the development of her identity as an adult. Adolescents may feel identified with Katniss as she challenges the status quo while confronting family issues, mental and physical health problems, death and bereavement, post-traumatic stress and, most importantly, love and romance in such a demanding context. Due to the fact that she questions the existing social and political system, she also exemplifies what a dystopian protagonist should be. By means of her perspective, she helps readers recognize the negative aspects of the unjust world she lives in. She feels she is trapped in this harsh reality and, as a consequence, she wishes to escape from it (*Catching Fire*, p. 90). However, as a general rule, dystopias are considered critiques of current issues of humanity and society, such as the use of propaganda and the establishment to manipulate and control society, the exacerbation of the common good to the detriment of individuality and independent thought, the worshipping of a political figurehead or concept, the illusion of society as a perfect utopian world, or the unfair hierarchical system imposed by wealth and gender. Therefore, Katniss’s submission into heteronormative marriage and motherhood may be perceived as feminist criticism on the roles which women are forced to perform in the present-day world. But, as a matter of fact, Collins’ purpose when writing the book was to denounce the hardships that soldiers

undergo during wars, the consequences suffered by people and the manner in which information is manipulated by governments in the media (2014). This is the reason why Katniss and Peeta's post-traumatic stress is accurately described, each of them trying to handle it in the best possible manner (*Catching Fire*, p. 51, p. 68, p. 81, p. 148, p. 179, p. 227). Their relationship deepens owing to their survival instincts: "that's what you and I do. Protect each other," she tells him (*Mockingjay*, p. 128). This is the reason why she commits herself to Peeta: they share traumatic experience and help each other survive emotionally. This might also explain why gender stereotypes remain unchallenged at the end of the saga, despite the fact that Katniss possesses both masculine and feminine traits, and she defies the stereotypical portrayal of heroines who wish romance, marriage and motherhood when she does not even want to play her role as Peeta's girlfriend (*The Hunger Games*, p. 134). Nevertheless, she eventually becomes a wife and a mother because

> what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that. (*Mockingjay*, p. 163)

Katniss has been conceived by a female writer in her mid-forties influenced by the XX-century literary tradition with misogynistic values. The society she is described to live in is totalitarian, patriarchal and sexist, as it categorizes its population according to wealth, appearance and gender. Stereotypical roles are expected from its citizens: men are the providers and protectors of the family while women are the mothers and carers, depending financially, emotionally and sexually on males. However, the main objective of the rebellion is to challenge the existing oppressive government, not its patriarchal and sexist constitution. As a consequence, at the end of the saga, even though Katniss is allowed to keep her masculine traits, she cannot escape the oppressive patriarchal institution of the family because her identity has developed around challenging totalitarianism, not its misogynistic system.

Another reason why Katniss reinforces heteronormative stereotypes might be connected to the influence exerted by the publishing market and the readership the story is directed to. As discussed above, YA literature is considered a product of consumption and, as such, is ruled by capitalist values. If the market always searches for the best manner to

meet the demands of its consumers, then it follows that stories will be customised according to readers' expectations. As a consequence, in *The Hunger Games* saga gender stereotypes remain unchallenged owing to the fact that, in a patriarchal heteronormative world, women are expected to fall in love with a protective man, get married and have children in order to achieve happiness and be fulfilled. Even though there have been advances towards female empowerment recently, in Western culture unmarried women are still viewed sympathetically or pitifully (Wood, 2009). In Katniss' case, this situation is aggravated by the fact that she has been deprived of her family of birth: both her father and sister have died, and her mother and best friend have decided to continue with their professional lives away from her (*Mockingjay*, pp. 161-162). She is incomplete now that she has been left alone in the world, so she must be fulfilled by setting up her own nuclear family, with a husband, a girl and a boy (*Mockingjay*, p. 164). The most suitable male to cater for her needs is Peeta, the "boy with the bread", who has also been left on his own by his family's demise throughout the series. He has always been devoted to Katniss, and his love is so overwhelming that it cannot be altered by the Capitol's many attempts. Furthermore, apart from understanding her due to their shared traumatic past, he represents hope for Katniss. The description of his devotion and commitment to Katniss allows him to win over not only Katniss but also the readership, who expects these lonely souls to live together "happily ever after".

Towards the end of the saga, Katniss describes herself as "a badly burned girl with no wings. With no fire. And no sister" (*Mockingjay*, p. 149). Physically, she says that she is "like a bizarre patchwork quilt of skin" (p. 149) because of the scars the final battle in the revolution has left on her. As a matter of fact, the metaphor of the "patchwork quilt" might be applied to her identity as well. For two years, she has performed contradictory roles for survival: she was a poor girl who hunted to survive, a selfless volunteer tribute at the Hunger Games, a devoted girlfriend, a frightened pregnant newlywed, a rebellious soldier, a selfish leader and even a shell-shocked lunatic. These different roles she has performed in order to survive have turned her into this patchwork girl who can now decide how to live her life according to her own standards. Despite having endless possibilities for her adult life, she conforms to the heterosexual norm and becomes a wife and a mother. It is true that Katniss defies typical female stereotypes as she is not interested in physical appearances, men and children and she is not focused on relationships and housework. She is a strong, confident, determined and intelligent teenage girl who is capable of defying and overthrowing an oppressive regime. However, a more detailed

analysis in the evolution of her character shows evidence that her portrayal does reinforce female stereotypes in a subtle manner, especially those corresponding to the XX century patriarchal belief that woman is man's Other and as such depends both emotionally and sexually on males. As she is nurturing, caring and self-sacrificing, she self-regulates the acts she performs for the others' gaze in order to survive and protect her loved ones. This is the reason why, when she is punished for acting according to her own will with her sister's death, the default possibility left in her life is to submit herself to a man who has been depicted as the embodiment of the unconditional lover, thus appealing to the audience's inner desire of the perfect companion for her in the hope of the completion of Katniss's self within the patriarchal unit of the family.

3.4. *DIVERGENT*

Divergent is a trilogy consisting of YA dystopian novels written by the American author Veronica Roth. Being a novice writer, Roth wrote the first book of the series during the winter break of 2011, when she was a twenty-three-year-old senior student at Northwestern University (*Goodreads*, 2011).

The first book of the series, *Divergent*, was released in 2011, and it became popular among young adults, remaining at number six on *The New York Times* Children's Chapter Books Best Seller list for eleven weeks (*New York Times*, 2011). Its sequel, *Insurgent*, was published in 2012, and the end of the trilogy, *Allegiant*, was released in 2013. The saga has received mostly positive reviews although it has been generally compared to *The Hunger Games* trilogy for its dystopian genre (Dominus, 2011; Kraus, 2011; Volpe & Coffey, 2012; Kirkus Review, 2012; Busis, 2013; Volpe, 2013). However, readers have criticised *Allegiant* severely owing to the protagonist's death (Aurthur, 2014; White, 2013; *Goodreads*, 2013). Three film versions of the trilogy were developed between 2014 and 2016, and though *Divergent* and *Insurgent* were commercially successful, *Allegiant* (which was based on the first half of the book) was negatively reviewed (Fritz, 2016; *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2016). For this reason, the producers considered turning the second half of the book into a TV series, yet the project was cancelled due to lack of interest on the part of the cast and the network executives (Aurthur, 2018; Pena, 2018).

Divergent is set in post-apocalyptic Chicago at an unspecified time in the future. At the beginning of the trilogy, the city is enclosed by a fence and its society is divided into five factions, according to citizens' aptitudes and values, in order to prevent them from exercising their independent will and to maintain population's safety. Each of these factions represent one value: Dauntless focuses on bravery, Erudite centres on intelligence, Candor revolves around truth, Amity is based on kindness and Abnegation concentrates on selflessness. Every year, on Choosing Day, all sixteen-year-olds must choose one faction to dedicate the rest of their lives to. It can be the faction they were born into or a different one. In the selected faction, they go through a period of initiation which they must complete so as not to become "factionless" and thus live in poverty on the streets, performing the unpleasant jobs in society that others prefer not to do. In order to help teenagers with their choice, the day before Choosing Day they take an aptitude test and, based on its outcome, they are told which faction is the most appropriate for them. If the results are inconclusive, this means that a person may belong to more than one faction. People who do not fit into the faction system are called *Divergent*, and they are considered a threat to society because they cannot be controlled.

The trilogy starts the day Beatrice Prior, a sixteen-year-old born into Abnegation, takes her aptitude test. Her results are inconclusive as she is Divergent: she shows aptitudes for Dauntless, Erudite and Abnegation. In the end, on Choosing Day she decides to join Dauntless, changing her name into Tris. In her new life, Tris falls in love with her Divergent trainer, Four; learns what Divergence is; and discovers that the disrupted faction system is part of a genetically manipulated experiment. Tris is thus faced with the task of overruling this oppressive system so that the people in Chicago may live according to their independent will.

Divergent and *Insurgent* are written in the first person from the point of view of the female protagonist Tris Prior, while *Allegiant* is in the first person but from two different points of view: Tris and Four alternatively. Dystopia and romance genres are equally combined as the love relationship between Tris and Four develops in a political oppressive context where the rigid social structure and its conditioning according to virtues lead to the struggle for power. The questioning of the status quo is present, as well as the political injustice which arises from the tendency human beings display towards discriminating against those who are different.

This is intrinsically connected with the topic of identity: in such an oppressive context which indicates people who they are, Tris must develop her identity since she does not fit into one single category due to her Divergence. The question which the trilogy addresses as far as this topic is concerned is what constitutes identity: is it values, family, physical appearance, social groups, actions or genes? Other concepts developed are those connected with fear, courage, bravery and selflessness.

The relationship between Tris and Four brings into focus the themes of romantic love, women and sexuality: Tris has to overcome her own issues with intimacy (owing to her Abnegation upbringing) and her self-consciousness about her body in order to be able to enjoy her sexuality with Four, for whom this is also his first experience. But issues such as the first kiss, sexual awakening and the first sexual encounter are not the only ones present in Tris and Four's relationship: questions about loyalty, betrayal and trust are also present throughout the saga in a relationship where both are learning to become adults in a changing world where there seems to be no place for them. Gender identities can be vaguely appreciated in other romantic relationships, with two references to two homosexual couples who are not central to the story.

Family is another recurring issue throughout the trilogy. The most important principle in this societal system is "Faction before blood", which means that loyalty should be to the faction rather than the family. However, the saga shows how the family's influence shapes a person's identity. Even though at first sight Tris's choice of faction might seem an act of rebellion against the family (as typically teenagers do), there is evidence of their influence on the construction of Tris's identity especially in the type of choices she makes despite the guilt she feels. As a matter of fact, the final decision which determines Tris's destiny in the trilogy is conditioned by her love for her family.

Violence is also displayed in the saga in a variety of forms. Dauntless' training is ferocious as initiates are made to fight against one another ruthlessly. The class system the society is organised in causes discrimination, which in turn results in struggles for power among adults and bullying among teenagers from different factions. Physical attack and sexual assault are perfectly legitimate in order to win a competition. Genetic manipulation causes violence the moment it determines whether people have pure or damaged genes and classifies them accordingly. War itself is inherently brutal.

In connection with war, death emerges as another major theme. It is present in all possible forms: as the casualties in a war, as suicide, as sacrifice, for self-defence, for murder and for power. The feelings connected with death are also present: bereavement, fear and guilt. If becoming aware of life and death is a sign of coming of age, Choosing Day can be considered a rite of passage, showing change from childhood into adulthood. And this is also connected to the idea of choices: the taglines for *Divergent, Insurgent* and *Allegiant* are "one choice can transform you", "one choice can destroy you" and "one choice will define you" respectively. In other words, every choice has consequences whether these are intended or not.

When the character of Tris Prior is analysed, the majority of the critics agree that she can be considered an example of a feminist protagonist in search for her own identity. According to Wardani and Praseyeto Ningrum (2017), Tris, as well as other female characters in the saga, disprove Simone de Beauvoir when she claims that men are the subject and women are the object because in this trilogy females can do what males do. Tris can choose the faction she wants to belong to in the same manner her brother does. When she joins Dauntless, she receives the same training as male initiates. Even though her body is weak because she has no muscle, she can gain strength through physical exercise. This proves that apart from being "strong, smart, brave and resilient" (p. 10), Tris has the same rights, abilities and opportunities as men do. She can live independently without male control (p. 15).

Due to this, Green-Barteet (2014) states that Tris redefines "what it means to be a young woman" (p. 49). At the beginning of the trilogy, she performs the gender roles she is expected to fulfil according to the faction she is in. But the moment she recognises the oppressive system she is part of, she rebels, not only rejecting these roles, but also claiming individual autonomy and subjectivity. The only way to overcome the enforced subjugation is by becoming a fully self-sufficient individual. Tris develops into an autonomous subject because she is a rebel.

To Lopez-da Silva (2016), Tris is "a protagonist who truly defies traditional gender roles" (p. 2) in the sense that "she exercises agency in choosing to be in the warrior faction, how to dress and to get tattoos" (p. 30). As a matter of fact, the attention given to Tris's small slender body is centred on the training she needs to become a warrior, not on aesthetics. She disregards her looks – every decision she makes as far as her body is

concerned has an emotional reason. For example, she decides to have tattoos done in honour of her family and she even cuts her hair herself after her mother's death. "Hence, Tris's control over her hair, her clothing, and her body is demonstrative of her agency over her body, which in turn leads to her agency over her actions" (p. 25). She always exerts her authority even though others undermine her because of her childlike appearance. She is a true leader, making big decisions, devising strategies and gaining respect despite being physically small. She subverts the traditional gender roles by which men lead and women follow (p. 27).

Lopez-da Silva also claims that Tris has "the intelligence to compartmentalize her emotions and think rationally – and that includes putting her relationship with her boyfriend Four in second place" (p. 29). She does not let her feelings for Four influence her judgement. Even though Four is two years older than she is, she refuses to play "the damsel in distress" (p. 30), and thus he always follows her, respecting her and her authority, acknowledging her strengths and supporting her as a leader. Bruins (2018) states that as for Tris romance is secondary to her personal needs, at the end of the trilogy she can sacrifice herself consciously, "thereby risking a romantic relationship that is so often portrayed as all-important for adolescent women in young adult fiction" (p. 42).

Bruins also claims that Tris "takes on the masculine role of a fighter, but otherwise remains feminine in the expression of her gender, thereby forming an androgynous gender identity" (p. 42). In other words, she chooses which gender role to perform depending on the situation she is in. In her rebellion against the status quo, she employs both masculine and feminine characteristics. As a matter of fact, she manages to overthrow the existing oppressive system the moment she gives her life for her brother Caleb in a selfless act out of love (p. 45). Her strength relies on the stereotypically female role of a nurturer rather than a masculine one, thus proving that it is "the feminine impulse to nurture" the one who leads her "to rebel against the forces that oppress" her, "signifying how a typically masculine political awareness can be brought about by a feminine characteristic such as caring for loved ones" (p. 58).

For Jennings (2017), Tris is a girl made of a sense of community, self-determination and agency who is exploring her emerging sexuality and dealing with the separation and loss of her mother (p. 102-113). This means that family and romantic partners contribute to

her identity formation. As a matter of fact, that Tris is able to overcome her fear of intimacy with Four leads to her overcoming political oppressions, which suggests that "male-female heterosexual relationships are an integral part of the protagonists' growing political awareness and agency, as well as their construction of identity as a whole" (Bruins, p. 58). By pairing Tris up with a straight male, the novel "inadvertently reiterates contemporary cultural practices and underlines the assumed importance of romantic relationships in the lives of adolescent women" (p. 59).

It is hardly surprising that the *Divergent* trilogy has fascinated many young adults all around the world. The varying themes included in the series directly address its readers, in particular those connected with the search for identity and discovery of sexuality. In her search for her own identity, Tris emerges as a teenage protagonist who challenges gender roles, resorting to both femininity and masculinity to overthrow an oppressive discriminatory system. Even though it has been claimed that by choosing her new identity as "Tris" she appears to be fragmenting herself (Bruins, p. 41), throughout the course of the trilogy it can be observed that all these different fragments integrate in such a way that they eventually constitute her identity as daughter, sister, lover, nurturer, teenager, warrior, leader and, above all, girl/woman. What remains to be debated is whether she eventually perpetuates or rejects the stereotypes underlying these roles.

3.4.1. TRIS PRIOR

Tris Prior is another archetype of a YA female leading character in a dystopia: at the beginning of the trilogy, she introduces herself as Beatrice, a selfless sixteen-year-old girl who lives in a society where individuals are classified into factions according to their aptitudes and values. During the three months the story is narrated, Beatrice confronts different complex situations which lead to her rebellion against the existing oppressive regime. By the end of the series, she has become Tris, the saviour of the disrupted faction system which used to rule her society. Due to the agency she exercises throughout the saga, many critics have described Tris as a genuine feminist character who acts independently from men (Green-Bartet, 2014; Lopez-da Silva, 2016; Jennings, 2017; Wardani & Praseyeto, 2017; Bruins, 2018). However, her behaviour is surrounded by controversy concerning the extent to which her autonomous agency is separate from female gender stereotyping.

Even though the story is fast-paced as the destiny of a community is reshaped within three months, it contains every element characteristic of a Bildungsroman. The narrative centres on Tris's maturation process along a journey which tests her in various ways. At the start of the trilogy, Beatrice recognises that identity formation is a complicated choice (Letourneau, 2017) because she is certain that she is not as selfless as is required by her faction of birth. She has been hiding her true identity (*Divergent*, p. 10, p. 16, p. 28) in order to conform to a political system which subjugates its citizens by categorising them according to fixed values and aptitudes in an apparent free choice made at the early sensitive age of sixteen as "without a faction, [they] have no purpose and no reason to live" (p. 24). From the beginning, she suffers from an identity crisis as she is compelled to decide between her family (and society's) expectations and her own. In the end, she resolves to prioritise herself and settles on a different faction where she can enjoy freedom (*Insurgent*, p. 92). In this search for her true identity, she adopts "Tris" as her name and discovers that she is brave, selfish, cruel and ferocious (*Divergent*, p. 44, p. 308, p. 352). However, even if Tris's change of faction might be perceived as an act of rebellion against her family (and society), while the story develops she realises that "we never leave our old factions behind" (*Allegiant*, p. 141). For this reason, in the same manner her new name is a fragment of her birth name, her family and their education constitute part of her identity and her essence as their teachings emerge unconsciously every occasion she is "put to the test" (*Divergent*, p. 287). In addition, in this journey to self-discovery, she learns that her first instinct is self-preservation (p. 256) and that she has characteristics which are supposed to belong to other factions. In the end, her Divergent mother explains to her what *Divergence* means,

> "our minds move in a dozen different directions. We can't be confined to one way of thinking, and that terrifies our leaders. It means we can't be controlled. And it means that no matter what they do, we will always cause trouble for them."
>
> I feel like someone breathed new air into my lungs. I am not Abnegation. I am not Dauntless.
>
> I am Divergent.
>
> And I can't be controlled. (*Divergent*, p. 336)

Tris rejoices in this unique characteristic as she aspires to be in control of her life, even if that means that she will be the instrument of her own destruction (*Insurgent*, p. 53). Yet as she embraces her Divergence, she realises that personal resolutions have consequences whether intended or not. It is true that choices can either transform or

destroy a person but, in the end, they define them. *Divergence* is just a characteristic in her DNA: it does not determine (*Allegiant*, p. 365) or form her identity (p. 911). She becomes aware of the discrimination underlying the faction system and wonders "if we can just be friends or lovers or siblings, defined instead by the choices we make and the love and loyalty that binds us" (p. 273). She is certain that she is not alone because she has friends and she is in love; she knows where she comes from and she is sure that she does not want to die (p. 279). She is conscious that she has been reckless and has risked her life in many opportunities because she had difficulty in accepting the consequences of her actions (*Insurgent*, p. 56, p. 63, p. 72, p. 96). Nevertheless, she acknowledges that the serious challenges she has met in life have been necessary for her personal growth and development (*Allegiant*, p. 827). Moreover, she realises that she is willing to self-sacrifice for the greater good (p.662) because "when you have to choose between two bad options, you pick the one that saves the people you love" (p. 952). In this way, she reinforces the female stereotype of women as interpersonally sensitive and, despite her self-determination and agency to overrule the prevailing oppressive system, her main preoccupation revolves around relationships with her loved ones. This supports Jennings's (2017) claim that family and romantic partners contribute to Tris's identity formation. Contrary to Bruins's statement that Beatrice fragments her identity when she shortens her name to "Tris" (2018), by the end of the saga, her identity has developed cohesively in one single direction: deciding for herself depending on her caring and nurturing emotions towards others.

Brannon (2000) assures that the most important component of Deaux and Lewis's model of gender stereotyping is appearance because it generally affects the inferences made about the others. The portrayal of Tris's physical appearance supports this assertion and its relationship with Mulvey's concept of the male gaze (1999). Lopez-da Silva (2016) affirms that attention to Tris's small slender body is centred on the training she needs to become a warrior, not on aesthetics. As a consequence, she always manages to exert her authority even though others discredit her because of her childlike appearance. However, there is evidence in the story that Tris recognises her subordination to an asymmetry of power due to men's disdainful allusions to her features. As she exercises her agency by choosing to be a warrior, she deviates from the expected submissive gender norms (Butler, 1988) and she is consequently punished by men in derogatory reference to her appearance: she is told that she is "plain" (*Divergent*, p. 28), "skinny" but "heavy" (*Insurgent*, p. 128), and that she has no pretty face (*Divergent*, p. 130). She

is ridiculed for looking younger than her age (p. 28), and she is assaulted both physically and verbally because of excelling in her training as a fighter: “A heavy hand gropes along my chest. “You sure you’re sixteen, Stiff? Doesn’t feel like you’re more than twelve.” The other boys laugh.” (p. 215). Even Four, her boyfriend, considers that Tris is pale, small (*Allegiant*, p. 18), thin, plain and unremarkable (p. 353). Nevertheless, he also acknowledges that she has a warm wiry body and he especially highlights that her eyes are stern, insistent and beautiful (p. 979). He does not love her because of her physical appearance: he is attracted to her by her personality. For this reason, he supports any changes in her looks; for example, when she cuts her hair short after her mother’s death (*Insurgent*, p. 13). As a subject to the male gaze, Tris has learned that in a world regulated by men, females are desirable if they are beautiful, so appearances are important in order to attract males. This accounts for the delight she takes in discovering that she can seduce the opposite sex (*Divergent*, p. 151), thus disproving Lopez-da Silva’s theory of Tris’s indifference to her looks. Every time she tries to exert her agency in her patriarchal society, she is regarded as not such a pretty object to be desired, even though beauty standards are not specified explicitly in the text. References to beauty parameters are described from Tris’s point of view, which are to be tall, thin, with dark skin, short hair and high cheekbones (*Divergent*, p. 11, p. 47, p. 53; *Insurgent*, p. 26, p. 47, p. 68, p. 102, p. 126, p. 168; *Allegiant*, p. 366, p. 529, p. 834). Her stereotypical ideas do not correspond to her physical description: she assures that she has “a narrow face, wide, round eyes, and a long, thin nose” and that she looks like a girl despite her age (*Divergent*, p. 10). In her own words, she is “birdlike, made narrow and small as if for taking flight, built straight-waisted and fragile” (*Insurgent*, p. 23). She realises that her brother is more good-looking than she is (p. 11; *Insurgent*, p. 72) and she knows that her face is “plain” compared to her mother’s (*Divergent*, p. 337). She even acknowledges that her voice sounds “high and weak” compared to other men’s (*Insurgent*, p. 74). She perceives that physical training makes her stronger but steals her body’s softness (*Divergent*, p. 133). She admits that she is not the prettiest or most desirable (p. 305) yet she discovers that she can be “noticeable” by means of makeovers (p. 74). She has already learned that if she wants to be desirable, she must transform herself so, as a result, she self-regulates her appearances and selects tighter and sexier outfits, even for battle (*Insurgent*, p. 140). Yet physical transformation can be possible as far as some aspects are concerned since there are traits which cannot be altered; for example, height. Therefore, she longs to be taller (*Allegiant*, p. 905): “if I was tall, my narrow build would be described as “willowy” instead of “childish,” and he [Four] might not see me as

a little sister he needs to protect" (*Divergent*, p. 239). Because of the underlying asymmetry of power represented by the male gaze and her own stereotypical ideas about beauty, she wonders why a boy as handsome as Four takes an interest in her (*Divergent*, p. 257; *Allegiant*, p. 366). She is conscious of her looks because she has been looked "not in the greedy way that a man looks at a woman, but cruelly, scrutinizing every flaw" (*Divergent*, p. 134). This might be the reason why she feels embarrassed by her nudity apart from her inhibited upbringing (p. 107, p. 135, p. 307; *Insurgent*, p. 43; p. 149) and needs to be reassured by Four the first time she undresses in front of him. She has been ridiculed on so multiple occasions that a self-conscious feeling of inferiority has developed in her. She has become the gazer's object of admiration and, consequently, needs his approval in order to accept her appearance.

As far as her personality is concerned, Tris seems to defy gender female stereotypes as she is not passive, docile or submissive (Green-Bartet, 2014; Lopez-da Silva, 2016; Jennings, 2017; Wardani & Praseyeto Ningrun, 2017; Bruins, 2018). Crying, a stereotypical emotional attitude related to women, is despised by Tris as she considers it a sign of vulnerability (*Divergent*, p. 50, p. 141, p. 135, p. 183, p. 218, p. 222, p. 234, p. 277, p. 343, p. 365; *Insurgent*, p. 36, p. 57, p. 121, p. 132, p. 135; *Allegiant*, p. 319, p. 624). Nonetheless, in her path to the development of her own identity, she realises that "we cry to release the animal parts of us without losing our humanity" (*Insurgent*, p. 113) and starts showing others she can cry (p. 112; *Allegiant*, p. 692). Another manner in which Tris defies gender stereotypes is that she does not like asking for help (*Divergent*, p. 36). Wardani and Praseyeto Ningrum (2017) state that Tris disproves Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as man's Other: apart from being "strong, smart, brave and resilient", Tris has the same rights, abilities and opportunities as men do, living independently without male control. However, she learns that in a world where females are socially expected to be emotional and weak, she will be discredited especially by males on the grounds that she is a "little girl" (*Divergent*, p. 207; *Insurgent*, p. 22, p. 25, p. 75). She lives in a patriarchal world where women are dominated by men on the grounds of physical superiority. For this reason, others consider that she is "a little girl who is stressed out to the point of paranoia" (*Insurgent*, p. 75). Even though this patronising attitude angers her, she realises that her childlike physical appearance can be the object of ridicule and, consequently, certain personality traits can be attributed to her which are not part of her true identity. However, if she desires to achieve her objectives, she sometimes has to perform demeaning stereotypical roles: she must

pretend to be weak in order to avoid being attacked (*Divergent*, pp. 222-223), or to be a foolish girl trying to seduce her instructor in order to avoid being punished for disobeying societal rules (p. 227).

Tris's personality is more accurately described when the point of view of the story is exchanged to Four in *Allegiant*. He acknowledges Tris's person behind her childlike appearance: he admires her for her strength (p. 353), her talent for being right about people, her magnetism (p. 674) and her curiosity (p. 770). In his words, she is stern, tough, worn and mature (p. 774). However, his benevolent sexist attitude (Glick & Fiske, 1999) of placing her on a pedestal consolidates Tris's stereotype as the "good girl" in constant need of his protection (*Divergent*, p. 105, p. 108, p. 111, p. 134, p. 201, p. 216; *Insurgent*, p. 23, p. 83, p. 105, p. 115; *Allegiant*, p. 125). Eventually, he realises that she can defend herself due to her physical and emotional strength (*Allegiant*, p. 510), but this does not imply that she is not capable of being hurt (*Divergent*, p. 279; *Allegiant*, p. 834). In a world ruled by patriarchy, an independent determined woman like Tris intimidates any man who is used to holding power. This is the reason why Four behaves contradictorily towards her: he can be either the cruel instructor or the concerned boyfriend (*Divergent*, p. 278). It is difficult for him to accept Tris's agency and independence and, when he cannot control her, he accuses her of wanting to destroy herself (*Insurgent*, p. 87), of wanting to be a heroine disregarding his feelings (p. 102), and of being a petty jealous sixteen-year-old girl (*Allegiant*, p. 689). His most disturbing declaration about Tris is the ambivalent feelings awakened in him by her reaction towards fear:

> "My first instinct is to push you until you break, just to see how hard I have to press," he says, his fingers squeezing at the word "break." My body tenses at the edge in his voice, so I am coiled as tight as a spring, and I forget to breathe.
>
> His dark eyes lifting to mine, he adds, "But I resist it."
>
> "Why…" I swallow hard. "Why is that your first instinct?"
>
> "Fear doesn't shut you down; it wakes you up. I've seen it. It's fascinating."
>
> He releases me but doesn't pull away, his hand grazing my jaw, my neck. "Sometimes I just…want to see it again. Want to see you awake." (*Divergent*, p. 240)

If Tris actually defied traditional gender roles, she would recognise the veiled violent threat in Four's paternalistic justifications and stop developing any romantic interest in

him. Yet rather than feeling distrust towards him, Tris excuses his behaviour on the grounds that "he did what he did because he believed in my strength" (*Divergent*, 279). She even admits that she has been able to mature due to his support: she realises "how strong I have become, how secure I feel with the person I now am, and how all along the way he has told me that I am brave, I am respected, I am loved and worth loving "(*Allegiant*, p. 751). Subordinated by the concept of romantic love (Castro, 1990), she is persuaded of her own worth by Four's condescending feelings rather than by her own beliefs and accomplishments. By disregarding the patriarchal oppression exerted by Four's apparent caring attitude, Tris perpetuates the female stereotype of defining herself according to the compliments received from her significant other.

Tris's behaviour is the third component in Deaux and Lewis' model to be analysed, which is closely related to the fourth component, her occupation. Bruins (2018) highlights that she chooses which gender role to perform depending on the situation. She performs masculine acts when she wants to overthrow the disruptive faction system, but her behaviour in her close relationships is based on stereotypical female characteristics. In general, warriors are brave, aggressive and ruthless fighters who are committed to a greater cause than their own lives (Wood, 2009, pp. 272-273). Although Tris shares these characteristics as a fighter, her priority is not overruling the existing regime but saving the lives of the people she loves. She behaves in this manner because of her self-sacrificing, nurturing and caring attitude. This is the reason why she intervenes in unfair situations (*Divergent*, p. 86, p. 129), risks her life for the benefit of the ones she loves (p. 356), saves them (p. 361), feels guilty for the deaths she has caused (*Insurgent*, p. 32, p. 55), denies her position as a leader (p. 88), and ultimately self-sacrifices (*Allegiant*, p. 911). Green-Bartet (2014) claims that Tris develops into an autonomous subject because she is a rebel. Nonetheless, her rebellion is motivated by her sense of communality (Ellemers, 2018) and her necessity to protect the people she loves. As it has already been discussed, there are moments when she performs certain stereotypical gender roles in order to achieve her objectives, such as engaging in girl talk to bond with her friends (*Divergent*, p. 281; *Insurgent*, p. 43). But, as a matter of fact, her priorities in life are conditioned by her nurturing feelings and her relationship with others, especially her loved ones.

In effect, gender stereotyping is particularly present in Tris's relationship with her boyfriend Four and her family and the concepts of heteronormativity and love.

Throughout the saga, romantic relationships are generally presented along the heterosexual monogamous norm; there are only two indirect references to homosexual couples which are not central to the story (*Insurgent*, p. 167; *Allegiant*, p. 723). In addition, love is used as a means of oppression (Castro, 1990) as Tris determines her course of action based on her affections: she seems to be completely satisfied by serving those she loves regardless her own necessities. Although Tris is a girl who challenges gender stereotypes in her fight against the existing oppressive system, her romance with Four serves as an example of a typical adolescent relationship. Her insecurity as a female can be observed in her self-consciousness about her appearance and her jealousy. She feels inferior to Four in terms of beauty due to the male gaze, and consequently fears that other beautiful women might be of interest to him (*Divergent*, p. 167; *Allegiant*, p. 366, p. 529). She stereotypically assumes the primary responsibility for the relationship when she refuses to sit on a male friend's lap (*Divergent*, p. 289), thus fulfilling the role of a true pure woman who does not violate patriarchal sexual norms (Brannon, 2000; Tyson, 2006). Moreover, she constantly idealises Four even though he mistreats her on the grounds that she is "strong" (*Divergent*, p. 279). She admits that "he is not sweet or gentle or particularly kind. But he is smart and brave, and … he treated me like I was strong" (p. 221). She obediently accepts his patronising attitude masqueraded as admiration and feels even more attracted to him when she discovers his Divergence as this means that now they can be paired (p. 250). She behaves stereotypically as an adolescent with him at first as she gets easily distracted by him (p. 113, p. 201, p. 204), she resorts to him for help when she is in danger (pp. 120-121), she grabs his hand furtively (p. 212), and she runs away when she feels rejected by him (p. 263). The depiction of their love story adheres to the romantic convention of the "soul mates": after their first kiss, she claims that they were meant for each other – "if we had both chosen differently, we might have ended up doing the same thing, in a safer place, in gray clothes instead of black ones" (p. 258). The absolute certainty of this statement is not only oppressive but also hyperbolic, considering that their relationship has developed within fifteen days. It is true that as the story progresses, Tris and Four quarrel because they are two teenagers who develop their love affair while they are trying to define themselves in an unjust world. But eventually Tris comes to depend emotionally on Four, and thus she becomes his Other, contrary to what Wardani and Praseyeto Ningrum (2017) claim. Even though he makes her feel small and she feels intimidated by him at first (p. 78), she eventually falls in love with this self-reliant, successful,

aggressive eighteen-year-old fighter who makes her feel safe (p. 367), steadies her (*Insurgent*, p. 9) and constantly reassures her worth.

As far as Tris' sexuality is concerned, even though she was raised to condemn public displays of affection, she is represented as a girl who is curious at her own sexuality (*Divergent*, p. 70). She manages to give detailed descriptions of her sexual awakening which include from stirring sensations (p. 53, p. 61, p. 72) to more realistic descriptions about the feelings aroused in her by Four: "something about him makes me feel like I am about to fall. Or turn to liquid. Or burst into flames" (p. 116). As their relationship progresses, her physical experiences with him are more sexually vivid (*Divergent*, p. 222, p. 284, p. 309; *Insurgent*, p. 104, p.122; *Allegiant*, p. 60, p. 71, p. 183). However, an innocent good girl like her fears a more intimate relationship since she stereotypically assumes that a strong assertive man like Four has certain expectations about sex (*Divergent*, p. 299). Contrary to her expectations, he admits that he is a virgin as well but he still assures her that he is reliable and can be trusted (p. 306), fulfilling the stereotypical role of the sexually-experienced man despite his timidity, inexperience and fear at the prospect of a sexual encounter with her (p. 309). Once she gets to know him more deeply, she consents to intercourse, reinforcing the stereotypical belief that women perceive sexual behaviour as closely linked to emotional involvement (Wood, 2009). The description of their first (and only) intimate encounter is described from Tris's point of view:

> His hands clutch at my shirt and I am removing it and then I remember, I remember that I am small and flatchested and sickly pale, and I pull back.
> He looks at me, not like he's waiting for an explanation, but like I am the only thing in the room worth looking at.
> I look at him, too, but everything I see makes me feel worse—he is so handsome, and even the black ink curling over his skin makes him into a piece of art. A moment ago I was convinced that we were perfectly matched, and maybe we still are—but only with our clothes on.
> But he is still looking at me that way.
> He smiles, a small, shy smile. Then he puts his hands on my waist and draws me toward him. He bends down and kisses between his fingers and whispers "beautiful" against my stomach.
> And I believe him. (*Allegiant*, pp. 832-834)

She is so self-conscious about her appearance that she needs Four's reassurance of her beauty in order to enjoy her sexuality. The reason for this might be that as she was ridiculed when being assaulted for being "flastchested", she becomes embarrassed by her nudity. She, who has been sexually forward in her behaviour towards him on multiple occasions, behaves as a pure woman is expected and needs him to enhance her confidence to take pleasure in such an intimate moment. She stereotypically describes him as "strong, and lithe, and certain" (p. 836), an overconfident man despite his sexual inexperience whose masculinity reassures her femininity. "I know I am like the blade and he is like the whetstone - I am too strong to break so easily, and I become better, sharper, every time I touch him" (p. 837). She comes to the conclusion that they choose each other every day because theirs is the kind of love that "makes you more than you were, more than you thought you could be" (p. 833). From her point of view, they have helped each other out because of the circumstances they have confronted. It is true that she describes a stereotypical romantic idea of love which subjugates her from the point of view of how she regards herself and her accomplishments (Castro, 1990). However, this does not determine the choices she makes for her life. As Lopez-da Silva (2016) and Bruins (2018) indicate, Tris considers romance secondary to her personal needs and consequently she is willing to sacrifice herself consciously. She understands that there are more urgent priorities than "playing house with" Four (*Insurgent*, p. 45). Despite such a stereotypical gendered close relationship, Tris finally subverts the XX-century cultural generalization of the importance of romance in the life of a female teenager as she affirms that if she dies, Four will be able to continue with his life, "not at first. But you would move on, and do what you have to" (p. 103).

The type of love which conditions Tris's decisions is the one she experiences for her family. A genuine heroine does not challenge the stereotypical nurturing belief that family (in any of its forms) is a woman's first and foremost primary concern (Castro, 1990). Tris does not consider Four part of her family for the reason that their relationship is incipient when it abruptly ends. They are together as a couple for six weeks approximately, so there is no time for her to contemplate the possibility of a family or even motherhood with Four. As a sixteen-year-old girl who has lived in the same faction all her life, her first agent of socialization has been her stereotypical nuclear family constituted by her loving parents and her older brother, and their influence is evident throughout the series. From the moment she realises that embracing her true self involves leaving them, she feels guilty (*Divergent*, p. 11). Although there are moments when she asserts her difference

from her parents (p. 85) without any worries about their opinions of her decisions (p. 140), she longs for their acceptance, especially her father's (p. 150, p. 345). Moreover, her greatest fear is to be responsible for her family's death (p. 300) so her only priority is to protect them. She chooses the affective ties to her family over any other type of love or political belief. As the story progresses, Tris acknowledges her parents' pure love in a politically oppressive context (*Allegiant*, p. 426). In accordance with the belief that progenitors protect their offspring above all, Tris's mother and father die in order to defend her (*Divergent*, p. 337, p. 358). Both are her gender role models, and this is the reason why she wants to honour their deaths despite the cost (*Insurgent*, p. 108, p. 125, p. 140). Once they have passed away, her only remaining family relation is Caleb, her brother. Due to his condition as the elder male sibling, he used to order her around during childhood (*Divergent*, p 16). As a teenager who has been gendered in a patriarchal world, Caleb behaves according to his personal needs and beliefs, disregarding his family's interests. He is a man living in a society where faction comes before blood (p. 41). Therefore, he is entitled to keep secrets from Tris (p. 45, p. 142) and to even betray her and practically have her executed (*Insurgent*, p. 118). From that moment on, Tris experiences ambivalent feelings towards him (*Allegiant*, p. 41, p. 122, p. 123, p. 468, p. 568, p. 822). However, she recognises that her brother belongs more to her parents than to her (*Allegiant*, p. 140) since she cannot avoid being subjugated by familial love. For this reason, and given that she still wishes for her parents to be proud of her, she must save him. Besides, in her own words, Caleb is part of her foundation (*Divergent*, p. 265) and he is the only family she has left (*Insurgent*, p. 73). She justifies his betrayal on the grounds that he loves her even when he hurts her (*Allegiant*, p. 830). Once more, Tris accounts for male mistreatment masquerading it as stereotypical feelings of brotherly love. Yet she sadly admits that Caleb is willing to sacrifice himself due to the guilt he feels for the consequences of his past actions; he does not do it altruistically for her (*Allegiant*, p. 896). However, in the end, she voluntarily sacrifices in his place. One possible explanation for this is in Bruins' (2018) statement that Tris gives her life for him because she is capable of a selfless act out of love. It is not a casual coincidence that the female leading protagonist of this series is precisely a girl who has been educated in the value of altruism by the first shapers of her identity. She decides to replace him in the final suicidal mission because in Caleb she sees

> the brother who told me to make my own choices, the night before the Choosing Ceremony. I think of all the remarkable things he is —smart and

> enthusiastic and observant, quiet and earnest and kind. He is a part of me, always will be, and I am a part of him, too. (*Allegiant*, p. 911)

In this manner, she demonstrates her love despite his betrayal (p. 898). Another reason why she decides to substitute for her brother might be that she acts exactly like her parents did for her (*Insurgent*, p. 165), sacrificing herself for the greater good. Because her mother has been her female role model, Tris has learnt what real sacrifice is,

> That it should be done from love, not misplaced disgust for another person's genetics. That it should be done from necessity, not without exhausting all other options. That it should be done for people who need your strength because they don't have enough of their own. (*Allegiant*, p. 945)

Another possible explanation for her resolution might be the implied legacy her father left her when he thanked her for protecting Caleb moments before his death (*Divergent*, p. 357). As a caring nurturer seeking for her father's approval, protecting her brother has become her first priority. However, from a more radical feminist perception, the decision to die in place of her brother might conceal the veiled assumption that death is the only possibility available for a female who defies society's gendered expectations. In a world which is named, ruled and explained by men, there is no place for a woman who is capable of agency, self-determination and bravery. Either she conforms to the roles she is supposed to perform, or she is punished with death (Butler, 1988). Four disguisedly acknowledges this when he says, "I suppose a fire that burns that bright is not meant to last" (*Allegiant*, p. 981).

According to Green-Barteet (2014), Tris redefines what it means to be a young woman in YA literature. She becomes a self-sufficient individual exercising the same rights, abilities and opportunities men enjoy (Wardani & Praseyeto Ningrum, 2017). As the leading character in a Bildungsroman, along her process of maturation, Tris realises that choices have consequences whether intended or not, and that responsibility must be assumed for these. She appeals to YA readership because she has to make difficult decisions connected with crucial issues for teenagers such as the family, politics, moral beliefs, violence, romance, love and sexuality. At the same time, she emerges as the heroine in this YA dystopia because she acknowledges she lives in a faulty society, which classifies citizens based on discriminatory beliefs, categorising people according to their DNA, considering some purer than others. By rejecting these stereotypes, Tris becomes empowered, and when she discovers that she can overrule this oppressive system, she sacrifices herself for her loved ones. In an interview with MTV, Veronica

Roth, the author of the saga, explained that death is the only possible end for Tris given that she finally understands what being an adult implies by making a grown-up decision out of love and self-sacrifice (Wilkinson, 2013). It is important to mention that even though Roth was in her twenties when she wrote the saga, she herself has confessed to embrace Christianity, a religion which adheres to male supremacy in the image of God and the teachings of Jesus. According to *The Bible*, one of Jesus' last commands was "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35, New International Version). For this reason, even though there are no overt religious references in the text and Tris subverts feminine roles by proving that there is no limitation to females' abilities, the fact that she dies in place of her "brother" precisely subtly reinforces the stereotypical belief of love and self-sacrifice as a means of salvation in the same manner Jesus sacrificed for "man"kind. In addition, it is also no casual coincidence that when both a man and a woman have to decide to sacrifice for the common good, it is the selfless female who volunteers: "I love my brother. I love him, and he is quaking with terror at the thought of death" (*Allegiant*, p. 911). Tris places her brother's interests before hers and self-sacrifices despite the fact that she has decided that

> I don't want to die anymore. I am up to the challenge of bearing the guilt and the grief, up to facing the difficulties that life has put in my path. Some days are harder than others, but I am ready to live each one of them. (*Allegiant*, p. 827)

Yet, in the end, her parents' altruistic teachings lead her to a suicidal mission, thus reinforcing the concept put forth by Crooks (2005), Gill, Esson and Yuen (2016) and psychodynamic theories that the carers during the first years of development are influential in shaping gender identity.

Owing to her dramatic end, Tris can also be considered a female protagonist who challenges female stereotypical roles in connection with the publishing market and readership's expectations. It has already been claimed that, as products of consumption ruled by capitalism, YA sagas such as *Divergent* generally satisfy the readers' demands. Nevertheless, Tris's death proves that there are times when the publishing industry respects the wishes of authors who focus on the development of the story rather than the readers' desires. Due to the fact that many YA fans' reactions to Tris's demise were highly negative (Aurthur, 2014; White, 2013; *Goodreads*, 2013), alternative endings were

written, most of them describing Tris's life in a heteronormative monogamous relationship with Four (*FanFiction.net*; *Wattpad*; *Stephanie Ziel*). The reason for this patriarchal choice might be in connection with adolescents' perceptions on the loss of life and romantic relationships developed from their gendered upbringing within XX-century parameters. As far as death is concerned, the University of Rochester Medical Center explains that one of the main themes in teenagers is "feeling immortal or being exempt from death. Their realization of their own death threatens all of these objectives. Denial and defiant attitudes may suddenly change the personality of a teen facing death" (Teen, para. 3). For this reason, Tris's passing reminds adolescents of their own mortality. The anguish generated by this turn of events is increased by the depiction of Four's feelings of grief and numbness at her demise (*Allegiant*, p. 978, p. 983, p. 985, p. 990, p.1000, p. 1001, p. 1004, p. 1010, p. 1031, p. 1032). According to the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, "romantic relationships are a common topic of conversation, a significant source of preoccupation and rumination, and a major cause of strong emotions in adolescence" (2012, p. 1). They contribute to teenagers' emotional autonomy, identity formation, strong emotions management, the development of communication and interpersonal skills as well as intimacy. The fact that Tris dies in place of her treacherous brother and leaves Four in such pain makes it more difficult for YA readers to accept the reasons for her self-sacrifice. In Western culture, since childhood, people are raised in beliefs about romantic love which are truly defied by Roth's end to the saga. If the ultimate purpose of YA literature is identification with adolescents' feelings and experiences, then it is no surprise that YA readers have disliked this end considering the fact that Tris decides to embark on a suicidal mission in order to show her love for her brother. YA readers might believe it is unfair for her to exchange the prospect of a beautiful life with such a stereotypically ideal man as Four for a brother who has never actually shown brotherly love to her. Once more, she fulfils the role of the nurturing and caring woman whose primary concern is her family's well-being.

The analysis of Tris Prior in the *Divergent* series partially confirms critics' claim that Tris is a heroine who defies gender stereotypes. It is true that she is assertive, brave, determined, sexually active, and adheres to her beliefs whether the rest agree or not. Nevertheless, the ulterior motives behind her feminist character reinforce the female stereotypes behind her individuality. She develops her identity in accordance with the gendered role of the self-sacrificing, nurturing woman who will protect her family

regardless her own necessities. Since she is objectified by the male gaze, she acknowledges her beauty through other people's eyes, and thus she self-regulates her appearance to please them. In addition, she behaves like a stereotypical insecure teenager when she establishes a steady heteronormative intimate relationship with a mature paternalistic eighteen-year-old boy within two months. However, when she eventually grows into a woman capable of enjoying her agency in all aspects of her life including her sexuality, she self-sacrifices because of the love she feels for her family. Tris challenges female stereotypes when she becomes a fighter and sexually advances her boyfriend. Nonetheless, in a patriarchal heteronormative world, the default option for such a rebellious character is death as there is no place for someone who defies gender stereotypes, just as Tris does.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1. Analysis overview

The main objective of the present dissertation has been to address the extent to which the leading female characters in YA literature reinforce gender stereotypes, namely in the best-selling sagas of *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*. The depiction of these heroines was examined from the perspective of specific concepts developed in the theoretical framework. In connection with YA literature, attention was focused on the characteristics of the subgenres of urban and paranormal fantasy, romance and dystopia as well as the theme of gender identity formation. From feminism, a number of notions were considered, specifically woman as man's Other and as an immanent object (de Beauvoir, 1949), her functionality within the capitalist system (Marxist feminism), the male gaze (Mulvey, 1999), patriarchy and marriage, family and motherhood (radical feminism), sisterhood (multicultural feminism), love as a means of oppression (Castro, 1990), heterosexuality as an economically and emotionally oppressive institution (lesbianism), and the implications of being a recovering patriarchal woman in this day and age (Tyson, 2006). As far as gender theory is concerned, the most important tenets centred on were those related to gender theories with a focus on interpersonal characteristics, gender roles (cultural theories), heteronormativity (queer theory), performative theory (Butler, 1988, 1990, 2004), the model of the components of gender stereotyping (Deaux & Lewis,1984), stereotypes related to physical appearance, personality traits (females as passive, docile, submissive, disempowered and dependent

on men financially, emotionally and sexually), woman as “the good girl” vs “the bad girl”, woman as “a damsel in distress” and “a child” in need of protection (benevolent sexism), behaviours (female roles as primary caregivers, homemakers, mothers and wives in the domestic sphere), heterosexual marriage as a default choice for women, and female tendency towards focus on interpersonal relationships.

Although their stories differ greatly, the foregoing content analysis of the characterisations of Hermione Granger, Bella Swan, Katniss Everdeen and Tris Prior has corroborated the main hypothesis which anticipated that their depictions would reinforce female gender stereotypes. It has been stated that gender identity is a complicated choice in an adolescent’s life as it is shaped mainly by three factors: family upbringing as well as the community and the environment they are reared in. Difficulties with self-acceptance might lead to an identity crisis, which may cause teenagers to hide their true selves. As the heroines of Bildungsromans, Hermione, Bella, Katniss and Tris experience difficulties in defining their identities within the gender binary expectations held by the patriarchal sexist societies they live in. The manner in which they realise their true selves vary, but the four female protagonists learn that certain stereotypical gender roles must be performed in order to survive in the hierarchically organized binary male world. As man’s Other, women are mostly psychologically and emotionally incomplete without men. Through the sagas, they realise that being an active, determined and independent female threatens male power, and this questioning can lead to severe punishment. For this reason, Hermione encounters marital problems with Ron due to her dedication to her work while Bella suffers from a terrible pregnancy which ends in her death for enjoying her sexuality. In addition, Katniss is chastised with her sister’s death even though she succeeds in overthrowing the status quo. However, Tris embodies the epitome of punishment for a strong-willed female when at the end of the series she is shot to death by a man. The four female characters discover that choices have consequences whether intended or not, and for women the consequences can be severe as their integrity can be physically, psychologically or emotionally attacked. For example, Hermione is frequently ridiculed for her sense of justice whereas Bella is held responsible for endangering herself. Katniss’s feelings are constantly manipulated while Tris is sexually assaulted as part of a male attempt to kill her. For these females it is then necessary to become gendered within the expected patriarchal social parameters of the binary societies they live in, whether it is the wizarding world, cold overcast Forks, segregationist Panem or post-apocalyptic Chicago.

The most obvious example of how women are disciplined can be observed in the first component of the model of gender stereotyping: physical appearance. It has already been stated that this is the central component from which stereotypes emerge, and it generally affects the inferences made about the other components: personality traits, behaviours and occupations. As the four stories develop, their leading female characters become conscious of the influence that the male gaze exerts on their looks and behaviours. They are objectified the moment men gaze upon and judge them since males hold the power to name, rule and explain the world. Due to this asymmetry of power, Hermione, Bella, Katniss and Tris understand that as objects they always need to self-regulate and conform their appearances and behaviours to please their subjects, i.e. men. Hermione exemplifies this clearly as she is described from Harry's perspective: she becomes the object of negative criticism the moment Harry sets eyes on her. She is never described as mentioning anything about her appearance herself, but she is conscious of the "limitations" of her looks and she even tries to conform to the socially expected beauty parameters by changing them through magic. In addition, as she cannot be paralleled due to her high intelligence, every time she is physically attacked, her appearance suffers the consequences. Bella, Katniss and Tris's descriptions are portrayed from their own perspective as the stories are written in the first person narrative, and they are severely critical of themselves: the three heroines have developed such high beauty standards that they believe they cannot meet them, despite other people's perceptions. Bella's ideal is extremely high and undeniably controversial because the epitome of beauty for her is the one displayed by vampires, preternatural deadly predators specially designed to attract humans, their prey. Tris also believes in an ideal of beauty which she cannot attain, yet in her case this is the result of the constant demeaning reference made to her appearance. The only manner in which males generally undermine her independence, assertiveness and authority is by disregarding her looks. Katniss is the only character of this quartet who is indifferent to her appearance owing to the fact that her main priority in life is the survival of her loved ones. Yet she discovers that subsistence in the patriarchal binary world of Panem also depends on good looks, whatever they might be. All this evidence demonstrates that whether explicitly (Hermione, Katniss and Tris) or implicitly (Bella), the four heroines need to stereotypically self-regulate their appearances in order to be accepted by others, especially by the males they develop a romantic interest in.

As far as the first subsidiary hypothesis – to wit, that despite clear attempts at challenging traditional female role models, the characterisation of the leading female characters does not ultimately subvert the hegemonic patriarchal heteronormative parameters – the analysis has shown that when personality traits – the second component of the model of gender stereotyping – are taken into consideration, Hermione, Bella, Katniss and Tris share the same discovery in their journey into adulthood: only "good", submissive, docile and vulnerable girls are welcomed by patriarchy. A good girl might be financially independent, as is the case with Hermione, Katniss and Tris, but she will always be emotionally and sexually dependent on men. The benevolent sexist belief that women are men's better half and need their constant protection is present in the depiction of the evolution of the personality of the four characters. As Hermione grows up, she becomes more vulnerable and therefore dependent on Harry and especially Ron, her love interest. Bella is constantly infantilized by Edward on the pretext of her protection due to her fragile human condition. This is the reason why she willingly transforms herself into a vampire: to be subserviently equal to Edward eternally. Katniss emotionally depends on Peeta for survival as they both share the same traumatic experience. Despite her autonomy, Tris's confidence in her own worth increases considerably because Four acknowledges so. Yet the moment she exercises her free will, she is murdered at the hands of a man. Once more, these heroines reinforce the stereotype that the only possibility for a self-sufficient woman is to become submissive to men in order to survive in a world ruled by patriarchy. Otherwise, she will be punished with death for such questionable temperament.

Personality traits condition people's behaviour, which is the third component of the model of gender stereotyping. Nevertheless, behaviour is also is influenced by external expectations as can be evidenced in the four heroines' actions. Since these females are nurturing, caring and protective, they behave in such a manner that they prioritize their loved ones' needs while disregarding their own. In order to protect Harry and Ron, Hermione willingly breaks the rules despite her strong sense of justice while Bella always risks her own life in order to protect Edward and her daughter respectively. Katniss performs whatever demeaning role she is asked for in order to nurture her loved ones, especially her sister, whereas Tris selflessly sacrifices herself for the happiness of Caleb, her brother, and Four, her boyfriend. All the female protagonists adhere to the cult of true womanhood in the sense that they are dependent and aware of the feelings of their loved ones, always placing others' needs before theirs, even if this involves acting against their own beliefs or risking their own lives.

Though the four heroines differ in the occupations they adopt, they are all archetypal according to the model of the components of gender stereotyping. The most straightforward example is Bella, who does not need to work because she marries a wealthy male vampire. For this reason, she happily fulfils her roles as a wife and a mother, despite the fact that they are imposed on her. Once her part as the symbol of the revolution concludes, Katniss continues providing for her loved ones as a hunter, becoming the breadwinner of the family she has formed with Peeta, thus caring for their well-being. Despite her short age, Tris dies a rebel fighter due to her sense of communality and her need to protect her loved ones. However, of the four characters, Hermione is the only one who actually develops a professional career, becoming the first Minister of Magic from muggle origin. Yet there is evidence in the text that this choice has negative consequences for her as, ultimately, she defies gender expectations in the patriarchal wizarding world: she is stereotypically questioned for devoting more time to her career than to her family, which results in marital problems with Ron. Even in the alternative realities described, the professions Hermione adopts are archetypal: she becomes either a bitter teacher or a lonely rebel, with unrequited love interests in both cases. The different occupations adopted by the four leading female characters validate the preconceived notion that women's life decisions are always subject to the interests of their loved ones: Bella as a wife and mother, Katniss as a hunter, Tris as a fighter and Hermione as a Minister of Magic, a teacher or a rebel. When they decide to opt for an occupation according to their own interests, they are punished, as Hermione exemplifies in any of the three chosen professions by being emotionally chastised in her relationship with Ron.

Romantic love is another common theme stereotypically depicted by the four chosen sagas in a heteronormative monogamous manner; *Divergent* is the only series which makes veiled reference to homosexual love. The notion of the type of love developed in the four series is that of eternal, joyous love enjoyed by "soul mates": a heterosexual couple who is destined to be together for the rest of their lives. For instance, after nineteen years, Hermione remains married to her school sweetheart, her first serious heterosexual romantic relationship, who now wants to renew their wedding vows. Bella becomes a vampire in order to spend eternity with Edward, her first and only true love while, for the first time in her life, Katniss falls for the incarnation of the perfect male companion who brings peace to her life. Although Tris's short relationship with Four

develops within fifteen days and is the first one for both, she is perfectly aware that their love was predestined in this or any other reality they would have found each other in. Though Hermione and Katniss slowly develop intense feelings for their significant others, Bella and Tris are swept off their feet instantly by both Edward and Four, both developing a notion of love which is highly hyperbolic. The four love stories comply with the popular sayings that "opposites attract" and "you have to be cruel to be kind". Brilliant big-toothed Hermione is frequently treated disdainfully by awkward red-haired Ron, whereas poor transient Bella is stalked, manipulated and physically hurt by rich eternal Edward. In order to defend cool-headed hunting Katniss, sensitive baking Peeta describes her as a confused expecting girl with no idea of the conspiracy to overthrow the existing unfair system. Not to mention selfless small Tris is mistreated on many occasions by intimidating muscular Four, who even threatens her disguisedly. However, the four heroines paternalistically justify these sexist attitudes, interpreting them as signs of true love. In addition to this, although their sexual awakenings are described differently due to their ages and the focus of the sagas, all of them are triggered by "the glory of the first love". The four protagonists perceive that sexual behaviour is closely linked to emotional involvement, because they only share physical intimacy with their romantic interests when they feel a deep connection with them, whether this connection has strengthened during years or simply weeks. They generally assume primary responsibility for the relationships and control sexual activity with the exception of Bella. She is the only character who challenges the stereotype of the "pure girl" and is openly forward in her sexual advances, being depicted as the "temptress" frequently undermining Edward's will, who is the one who establishes the sexual parameters in the couple. This is an attitude which is punished in many ways, the epitome of which is her dangerous pregnancy culminating in her daughters' lurid birth and Bella's human death. Bella must be chastised because she consents to sexual intercourse for the purposes of pleasure rather than for reproduction, as she believes pregnancy is not possible for her given that Edward is a preternatural being. Another character who is forward in her sexual advances but to a lesser degree than Bella is Tris, whose demise might be also interpreted as punishment for enjoying her sexuality with Four with no reproductive purposes in mind. As a matter of fact, the description of the protagonists' sexual behaviour corroborates the archetypal assumption that pure women engage in sexual activity in order to continue the species: both Hermione and Katniss have children of their own in time, without any apparent physical burden. When women enjoy their sexuality for the sake of their pleasure, they are either hurt (as Bella) or killed (as Tris).

Furthermore, one might argue that the four protagonists reinforce the notion of romantic love as a means of oppression: females willingly and romantically submitting to any male demand in search of any material, emotional, physical, psychological, sexual or reproductive need.

If love is employed for coercion and the purpose of sexual behaviour is the reproduction of the human species, it might be stated that the institution of the family is used as a means of class oppression which reproduces the capitalist system in all these sagas. Both Hermione and Katniss settle on a nuclear family, having a boy and a girl as children. Both had never considered pregnancy as an option before: Hermione never mentioned her need to fulfil her role as a mother whereas Katniss had a negative view on childbirth due to the unjust word she lived in. Yet in the end, they both start a family, with all the inconveniences that might arise. Bella also never thought of marriage and motherhood as an option in her life: she had been brought up to revolt at the idea of matrimony due to her parents' divorce and her caring for them. But her emotional and sexual subservience to a patriarchal hundred-and-seventeen-year-old being gendered at the beginning of the XX century leads her to marriage and eventually motherhood. Tris has no thoughts about marriage or children about Four for two reasons: she is sixteen years old and she dies before she even starts considering this possible outcome for her life. However, she has been reared in a stereotypical nuclear family, with her loving parents and her older brother. This is the reason why her final decision is based on this familial love and her need to protect her brother. In this manner, the leading characters reinforce the stereotype that women become fulfilled the moment they settle with a man and have children. Women without male partners are pitied, so their default choices are either to start a heterosexual monogamous relationship and have children, or die.

The concept of woman's "mothering" as her natural inclination is also conventionally illustrated in the four series: either by conforming to the stereotype or being questioned for rejecting it. The most representative example is Bella, who, for most part of the saga claims that motherhood is not as important to her as spending eternity with Edward. However, the moment she discovers she is going to have a baby, her "maternal instinct" surfaces to the extent that she rigorously protects her pregnancy, even from Edward. In Katniss's case, her negative idea of motherhood is entertained all throughout the saga: she does not want her children to suffer the abuses caused by the oppressive system she lives in. More subtly, she may also feel apprehension towards maternity because of

the attitude her mother adopted after her father's death. Yet in the end she decides to become a mother because of Peeta's insistence, unable to refuse the paternalistic need of "the boy with the bread". Although Hermione behaves as Harry and Ron's moral mother during their teenage years, as a grown-up woman she is depicted as an "iron maiden", challenging the mommy myth: she develops a successful career as being a mother is not her priority. This is the reason why she is questioned for her devotion to her work, thus reinforcing Ellemer's stereotype that women cannot equally enjoy a flourishing career and family life. Nevertheless, the character who best represents the concept that family must be woman's first priority in life is Tris: she is selfless enough to sacrifice her life in the name of her family – her brother in particular. Due to her upbringing in a stereotypical loving heterosexual monogamous nuclear family, her love for Four becomes second when she needs to protect her brother, even though he has betrayed her and risked her life before. Safeguarding her family is her major concern although there is the possibility that some time in the future she might start her own family with Four. Once more, the four female characters show evidence that the first and foremost priority in a woman's life should be the family and motherhood, even if this entails death.

The second subsidiary hypothesis – namely, that the demands of the publishing market partly determine the characterisation of the leading female characters – has also been substantiated by the foregoing analysis on the development of Hermione, Bella, Katniss and Tris's gender identity. It has already been established that the chosen sagas are intended as products of consumption, and as such they are ruled by the laws of the publishing market. Therefore, stories directed at YA readership must address issues connected with the readers' particular interests and experiences. For this reason, topics such as life and death, identity formation, the transition from childhood into adulthood, love, sexuality, bereavement, family and the questioning of the status quo are important themes developed in these series. Given that these stories were written in several books, the readership's reaction might have influenced the writing of the plot, affecting the characters' decisions. Ultimately, the majority of readers may have been raised under patriarchal beliefs themselves. For this reason, as Hermione is gendered into binary adulthood, the readership would expect her to become a successful witch and, at the same time, get married and have children. The intense love story Bella and Edward share would presuppose that she finally becomes a vampire in order to spend eternity with him – the plot is elaborated in such a manner that she is the one capable of transformation in order to enjoy eternal love. Katniss has suffered so much since the

moment her father died that, after surviving the revolution, she deserves a happy ending with an ideal man who is capable of overcoming the tampering of his memories out of his unconditional love for her. All these endings have been judicious from the point of the publishing market not only because they have met readers' expectations but also because they are also functional to the capitalist system: they reproduce the idea of family as the "patriarchal unit" while they are products of mass consumption themselves. The exception to this is Tris's tragic outcome, a finale designed according to the evolution of the character from the author's perspective and respected by the publishing industry. Nevertheless, YA readership criticized the author's decision severely and aggressively. General discontent gave rise to alternative endings which were written in fanfiction, many of which met the sexist gender expectation of Tris settling down and starting a family with Four. The influence of the market on the publishing industry on this saga in particular can be further demonstrated by the fact that the negative criticism received by the end of the series affected the continuity of the film version, which was suspended. This serves to prove that the characterisation of these leading female characters seems to have been influenced by the demands of the publishing market, and this might have also been the reason why such active independent females such as Hermione and Katniss become subservient to the patriarchal capitalist system they live in by complying with the socially approved gender expectation of settling down in a heteronormative monogamous nuclear family.

The third subsidiary hypothesis which suggested that the literary tradition and specific subgenres of YA literature of the sagas under analysis would partly influence the gender representation of the leading female characters has been confirmed as the gender representation of the heroines provide certain stereotyped templates that may have pre-determined their characterisation. As a novel of formation, the *Harry Potter* series is centred on the development of Harry Potter himself, who is accompanied by Hermione Granger in his transition from childhood into adulthood. As the hero's helper, she is expected to be Harry's moral mother, instrumental to his needs and regarded within the sexist values established by the patriarchal wizarding society she is part of. Becoming an adult involves certain ritual acts which cooperate with the perpetuation of the capitalist system, such as studying academically, finding a steady job, getting married and producing children. Hermione conforms to this yet the moment she does not prioritize her family over her work, she is severely questioned. The *Twilight* saga is a romance novel with Gothic elements of a paranormal fantasy and, as in any worthy love story, a

love triangle develops: the awkward girl stereotypically falls in love with the graceful boy although she is coveted by another fearless boy who seems to be more appropriate for her kind. Yet, the graceful boy's love is so pure that she decides to abandon everything for him – even herself. She falls for the conventional outcome of this fairy tale which is full of Gothic sensuous elements, such as vampires, werewolves and supernatural fantasy. Both *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series are dystopias: stories set in negative futuristic worlds where the political oppression of the classes forces the heroines to challenge the existing tyrannical status quo. These leading female characters are supposed to exercise agency, determination and independence, and lead a revolution against the existing totalitarian regime. Yet as they are man's Other, they need emotional support from males, who are the ones who steady and give confidence and courage to them. For this reason, once all the adversities are overcome, these females are expected to spend the rest of their lives with them. Otherwise, they must die. This is the reason why Katniss starts a family with Peeta while Tris dies for exercising her political independence. This evidences that there are specific literary traditions of the twentieth century which provide the subgenres here discussed with certain stereotyped templates which partially shape the gender representation of Hermione, Bella, Katniss and Tris.

4.2. Final conclusion

In conclusion, it might be argued that all the hypotheses formulated at the beginning of this dissertation have been proved to be correct. In the first place, the main hypothesis – namely, that the characterisation of the leading female characters in the YA literature sagas of *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* largely reinforce gender stereotypes – has been confirmed from the perspective of feminism and gender theory as the heroines' depictions show that in a world named, ruled and explained by men, women need to perform certain expected roles if they desire to achieve some agency of their own. Women are man's Other, depending on them emotionally and sexually above all. This is the reason why Hermione zealously subordinates herself to Harry and especially Ron, Bella is subservient to Edward in all aspects of her life, Katniss is emotionally dependent on Peeta and Tris's behaviour is influenced psychologically by Four and Caleb.

The first subsidiary hypothesis which proposed that despite clear attempts at challenging traditional female role models, the characterisation of the leading female characters does not ultimately subvert the hegemonic patriarchal heteronormative parameters has also been proved to be correct by the foregoing content analysis. It is of no significance whether a woman has to juggle her deepest wishes with the socially accepted gender binary expectations like Hermione, change herself completely to live in eternal perfect bliss like Bella, abandon her fundamental beliefs for survival like Katniss or die if she wants to adhere to them like Tris. She must conform to socially expected behaviour if she desires to satisfy at least some of her innermost desires. In this manner, Hermione can only be successful in her professional career as long as she is married to Ron; Bella can only live "happily ever after" once she becomes a vampire; and Katniss can only find the "life of a victor" and be left to herself if she settles for family life. The most rebellious of the four, Tris, who is determined to fight for what she believes in, dies fulfilling the mandate "family comes first" which has been forced on her by the patriarchal society she lives in.

The second subsidiary hypothesis has also been substantiated as it has been proved that the demands of the publishing market have reinforced female gender stereotyping in these series. A large number of the people who belong to the patriarchal society for which these sagas have been designed believe that women truly fulfil themselves when they get married and have children, just like Hermione, Bella and Katniss do. The moment this expectation is subverted, harsh criticism arises and interest in the saga is lost. The best example of this is the readers' negative reaction at Tris's death, causing severe criticism towards the author and the writing of different endings in fanfiction with a more traditional binary patriarchal heteronormative closure: Tris setting up family with Four. This hostile reception also generated a loss of interest in the film versions of the saga, the last of which was cancelled before the start of the shooting.

As for the last subsidiary hypothesis – namely, that the literary tradition and specific subgenres of YA literature of the sagas under analysis partly influence the gender representation of the leading female characters –, the analysis has shown that in these stories there are specific stereotyped templates on gender representation provided by the subgenres they have been written in which have reinforced female stereotyping. Hermione, Bella and Katniss develop their gender identity towards women's ultimate goal: the reproduction of the capitalist system by producing offspring. There is no place

in the world for a woman like Tris, who is independent enough to question the status quo and does not even consider the possibility of the continuation of the species.

A critical reader might wonder the reason why female gender stereotypes in these four sagas were not challenged more forcefully as they were created by female authors. One possible explanation for this might be that the books were written between 1997 and 2013, and conceptions on feminism and gender representation varied greatly within that time span, yet more consciousness on these matters has developed from that moment till present day. Apart from that, it requires constant self-introspection to recognize the patriarchal beliefs ingrained in one's constitution and detect the manner in which they are unconsciously perpetuated. This proves that despite the fact that Hermione, Bella, Katniss and Tris are depicted as strong female characters, they are patriarchal women as sexist stereotypes are complex to alter substantially. This does not imply that these series should not be read: on the contrary, they are very well designed and written, and they address many issues which are relevant to YA readership. However, a word of caution must be given to readers as awareness must be raised in connection with the stereotypes reinforced by the leading female protagonists while taking into consideration that they were created in particular contexts and under certain demands. In the era of Comprehensive Sexuality Education, criticism towards stereotyping should be welcomed, but under the assumption that nowadays our lives are spent in a recovering patriarchal world.

4.3. Limitations of the present study

As it has been already stated, the content analysis of the sagas examined in this dissertation has been performed from the feminist and gender perspectives of this age and day, which might expose important limitations as to female stereotyping as these books were written in times when issues about gender representation were just beginning to see the light. Reading these sagas critically without understanding the time and context in which they were written might cause a negative response towards these works which may result in contempt for and maybe even rejection of them. It is not the aim of the present dissertation to tarnish the positive image these works have created for many generations. Nevertheless, it is true that literature functions as a cathartic manifestation of life, and it is precisely the purpose of YA literature to deal with themes with which YA readership might feel identified. So the eye must be trained to detect any

demeaning stereotypical belief and question it, but with the awareness of the context and time in which these works were written. These series should not be demonized because they were written at a moment in history when awareness of gender issues was just beginning to be encouraged.

Secondly, the present study has been limited to analysing the reproduction of female gender stereotypical depictions in only four YA sagas, which is a very small sample within the YA literary world. As it has already been stated by Cart (2016) and Peterson (2018), the number of YA books has increased exponentially during these first two decades of the XXI century, with many different works dealing with a variety of feminist and gender issues and written by different types of authors. A detailed analysis of other YA books and sagas under these theories might prove illuminating in further research as to the manners in which gender representation might have been presented as well as the evolution of gender representation during these last twenty years.

In addition, the present research only examined the characterisation of the heroines in *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*; it did not analyse the depiction of other females in the stories in order to focus the attention on the protagonists. Further research can be developed on other female characters in each series in order to validate whether the reinforcement of gender stereotyping applies to all the women, and explain the reasons why the authors might have depicted the heroines as they did. However, as stated in the literature review, gender theory involves more concepts than just female gender stereotyping, such as other types of gender, class or ethnicity. Expanding the gender spectrum might also be another thought-provoking aspect to be examined as analysing stereotyping from male and other non-binary gender representations would demonstrate.

Lastly, it might also be interesting to study each author's works in order to examine the stereotypical gender representations conveyed by them and to corroborate the extent to which these representations have been influenced by the writers' personal beliefs, have been developed according to the demands of the publishing market or have been influenced by the literary tradition and specific subgenres of literature. Another interesting aspect of this line of research might be to explore the evolution in gender representation in the development of the authors' writing styles.

As can be appreciated, a multiple variety of lines of research can be conducted with YA literature precisely because this type of literature, feminism and gender theory are dynamic notions which are in constant evolution in the era of Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

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