



## THE HEROIC JOURNEY OF TESSA GRAY IN CASSANDRA CLARE'S *THE INFERNAL DEVICES*

G. SHARMELY

Ph. D Research Scholar, P.G & Research, Department of English, V.O. Chidambaram College,  
Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, India

### ABSTRACT

Fantasy is a genre where heroes can show off their skills and earn respect through feats such as defeating dragons, reaching their destinations unscathed while being hunted by armies, and solving prophecies that tell how the enemy can be defeated. The heroine stands between several roles, that of a special person who has the power to defeat dark forces and as a fighter who trusts only herself. Modern heroines are warriors who fight on their own. Cassandra Clare, a famous fantasy writer worked for several years as an entertainment journalist for the Hollywood Reporter before turning her attention to fiction. This article attempts to explore the heroine's journey of the protagonist Tessa Gray in Cassandra Clare's *The Infernal Devices*.

**KEYWORDS:** Chosen One, Fantasy, Heroic Journey, Monomyth, Shadowhunters, Steampunk Novel, The Infernal Devices, Young Adult

### INTRODUCTION

The heroic character has become one of the most important elements, as supernatural and futuristic elements allow exploration of all kinds of traits and decisions that create the idealized state which heroes represent. The several tasks presented throughout the hero's journey transform the characters into heroes. Heroine's journeys are also common in fantasy, produced mainly in fairytales rather than in the longer epics. Anderson's "The Little Mermaid", the myths of Demeter Cupid and Psyche or and Persephone are all perfect heroine's journeys.

Heroines are being modelled in recent fantasy literature, they give the impression that after all their achievements they can only settle for second place. The heroic female characters could be said to disappear from the public scene, whereas heroes become mentors for the next generation or guardians to protect the future; they gain thrones or leadership in their society. In *Brave*, Merida is one of the few heroines who will later gain a throne. In literature, heroines are growing importance. As heroes have been the most important figure in fantasy literature so far, heroines take them as role models; however, heroines introduce some differences in how they relate to the heroic journey. Clary Fray from *The Mortal Instruments* and Tessa Gray from *The Infernal Devices* by Cassandra Clare are an apt example.

Most heroines in fantasy literature are intended for young adult readers. Young adult fantasy literature is a genre that has regained popularity in the last decade after the success of the *Harry Potter* series. Heroines allow female readers to identify with a strong character, but they are also defining how to discover one's identity from beyond a shallow archetype and narrow roles. This new depth is derived from the development of some of the now more complex heroines. One of the most important traits of heroes is that they are warriors, a role that society has not entirely deemed acceptable for females.

But warring heroines also exist. In recent years, heroines are starting to compete against heroes and to define the heroic for females.

With the appearance of the *Twilight* series, much attention was turned towards heroines. *The Hunger Games*, though it arguably belongs to science fiction, showed an interesting heroine who stood in stark contrast with Bella, the heroine of *Twilight*. Bella has to be rescued and protected by her vampire boyfriend; whereas Katniss is completely independent, able to face the competition of the Hunger Games. The fantasy heroine has finally stepped up. This character has been present for a long time, but in the last decade it has gathered more attention as it is being developed to represent the ideals of feminism. Cassandra Clare writes urban fantasy novels about the demon-fighting Shadowhunters. She adds that her series are a combination of urban fantasy, adventure and romance.

Cassandra Clare's Shadowhunters novels encompass the bestselling series *The Mortal Instruments*, *The Infernal Devices*, *The Dark Artifices* and the upcoming *The Last Hours* series and *The Bane Chronicles* etc. The Shadowhunters are a magical race of beings who are half angel and half human. Their attempt to protect the world from demons and other supernatural forces are portrayed in all the Shadowhunters novels. Like many works of fantasy, Cassandra Clare's series *The Infernal Devices* offers a strong young woman commencing on the heroine's journey and fits into the monomyth theory. *The Infernal Devices* follow Campbell's hero cycle, fusing magic and mythology touch us deeply on an emotional level and urge us to find order and meaning in our world. Cassandra Clare acknowledges that she was deliberately writing a classic hero's journey and that it centers around a female heroine named Tessa Gray instead of a male hero.

The monomyth, or the hero's journey, is the common motif of a broad category of tales that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, and in a crucial crisis wins a victory, and then returns home changed or transformed. The concept was introduced by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), who described the primitive narrative pattern as follows:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (23)

In Cassandra Clare's *The Infernal Devices*, the protagonist Tessa Gray with her supernatural powers protect the world from demons and other supernatural forces. Cassandra Clare inquires her readers as, "Ever since you discovered the Shadow World, haven't you secretly wanted to be a hero? To be the most special of a special people? In our own way we each wish to be the hero of our kind". (2)

The classic heroine's most typical quest is rescue of family members. The protagonist Tessa begins her tale on a quest to save her brother. Upon her arrival in London, she is kidnapped by the Dark Sisters, who force her to learn her untapped ability. Tessa learns to change shape and discovers she is more than human. On a deeper level, she comes to know the nature of death and understand people's thoughts through her transformations. These are the skills the heroine must absorb to grow from child to woman:

The period when one begins to realize that one isn't running the show is called adolescence, when a whole new system of requirements begins to realize that one isn't running the show is called adolescence, when a whole new system of requirements begins announcing itself from the body. The

adolescent hasn't the slightest idea how to handle all this, and cannot but wonder what it is that's pushing him – or even more mysteriously, pushing her. (Campbell 142)

The emotional change is represented by supernatural powers - the heroine is developing new impulses, new skills, and new ways of interacting with the world. Her task is discovering how to use them. Cassandra Clare in her *Enchanted Inkpot* explains that,

In writing about Tessa, I can make literal the experience, which is often strong in adolescence, of feeling that your identity is fluid and shifting, that you're not sure who you are yet – that you're someone different every time you look in the mirror. (2)

Angels symbolize an ascending spiritual principle, and Tessa's is doubly strong, as it is on a protective amulet. It reflects her quest for identity and purpose. The angel is her dying mother's gift, like the gifts of many saintly dying mothers in fairytales. Like those gifts, its powers provide a kind of protection from beyond the grave, like a true guardian angel. The clockwork angel is Tessa's talisman, but her powers aid her as well. When Tessa escapes from her evil mentors, the Institute is like the normal world by comparison. The Institute is surprisingly prosaic, with dinner at seven. "Everything was tasteful and very ordinary" (*Clockwork Angel* 67). The Shadowhunters are stunned by Tessa's powers. In fact, Tessa's origins and abilities are a mystery to them.

In the Institute, Tessa begins to discover who she wants to be and learns about the magical world. Will gives her the *Shadowhunter's Codex* to further this, a magical book for the questing heroine. Indeed, she and Will quote a library of books to each other and Will advises her that he gains courage by pretending to be a character in a book. In *Clockwork Prince*, he tells her that their shared love of books is what has turned to real love between them. Reading her letters enabled him to feel with her. "I dreamed what you dreamed, wanted what you wanted – and then I realized that truly I just wanted you. The girl behind the scrawled letters" (*Clockwork Prince* 468). Tess is enraptured – she had always dreamed of someone truly knowing, understanding, and loving her.

Shadow moments can occur when facing one's opposite – when Tessa and Jessamine speak in the park, for instance. However, to truly have the ultimate Shadow experience in fantasy, one puts on another's guise – the real way to walk in his or her shoes. Camille is everything Tessa is not – ancient and wise, sensual, and also comfortable with her magical powers. Tessa takes Camille's ruby pendant and transforms into the vampire. At least momentarily, she experiences the chill of death. However, she also discovers what it is to be an ancient, titled, sophisticated Downworlder – all she is not but one day must become. Camille is a worldly political adversary. She is sexually forward and boasts that Magnus is her lover. She carries herself proudly like a queen. Pretending to be her, Tessa gets to lead Will around on a leash and experience dominant sexuality. In the raid, she feels Camille's sensual memories of Magnus and channels her imperiousness for the first time. Finally, she fires a pistol at the vampire patriarch De Quincey. When she sees Nate in chains, she feels the most rage. As she reflects later, however, the rage was like a gift from Camille, not from herself.

At the end of the day, she reflects that it was a day of firsts, the first time she used her power as a valuable tool and the first time she fired a pistol. Camille, like the Dark Sisters, has taught her much about female power. At book's end, she uses her shapeshifting to trick Mortmain into believing that she is dead. She faints from the shock of near death and has a descent into death and return. Tessa awakens more confident, to discover she is a powerful woman in charge of her own destiny.

Tessa's gift is shapeshifting, and she uses it to discover who she is, trying on different roles as she wonders who the Tessa underneath really is. The mystery of origins and uncertainty about her parents casts all into confusion. Mortmain's comment that there is no Tessa Gray continues to haunt her. She acts calm and capable and stereotypically feminine to achieve her goals. In Yorkshire, Tessa finds herself playing a role with her own face, a situation that terrifies her. Her clockwork angel, a powerful protector of mysterious origin, is a clear symbol for the stronger part of himself.

Perception and appearance are keys in the heroine's journey. As *Clockwork Prince* continues, Tessa tries on Jessamine's persona, a girl she regards as a delicate fairy princess. Underneath the lovely surface, however, she feels her "rage and longing and bitterness" (*Clockwork Prince* 262). Jessamine, as she soon discovers, is married, while Tessa is struggling with her feelings for Jem and Will. Though Tessa has behaved disgracefully, as she fears, Jessamine's secret marriage to an enemy of the Clave is far worse. As Jessamine, she finds herself at a ball straight out of her last novels. However, like the vampire ball, this one is corrupted – evil and filled with enemies. In this way, she has entered the patriarchal stronghold. She must charm Nate, much as she charmed De Quincey at the previous ball. After playing the part, she finds herself mesmerized by Will and kisses him passionately, forgetting her loyalties. It is heady and delightful to cast off responsibility and be another Jessamine.

In the battle of *Clockwork Prince*, Nate grabs Tessa. She thinks to herself that he is bigger and faster "but there is one thing I can do that he cannot" (383). She transforms into him and orders the automatons to seize her brother. By transforming into him, Tess takes his power over the machines and uses it to save her friends. Nate is killed by his own automaton, in a blast that hurts Tessa in a reflection of her painful emotional devastation. Caught between these roles – spoiled feminine and spoiled masculine, Tessa realizes she doesn't want to imitate Jessamine or Nate. However, she is becoming more confident in her shapeshifting power, eager to experience others' emotions as a way of discovering herself. In *Clockwork Prince*, Tessa transforms into the warlock John Shade. This transformation affects her more than any, trapping her inside. With her new knowledge of her demon father's powers, she at last faces her warlock nature.

After Tessa loses Nate, her Aunt Harriet, another good mother, visits her in a dream and forgives her for Nate's death. She tells Tessa that lies "are like a cancer in the soul. They eat away is good and leave only destruction behind" (*Clockwork Prince* 395). Aunt Harriet also informs Tessa that she still has family – a suggestion that let the Shadowhunters into her heart. This, like the clockwork angel itself, is a momentary blessing from the perished good mother, a moment of protection and hope on the heroine's tumultuous journey.

The love triangle is also central to the story. Tessa sees Will as a shapechanger just as she is – a kind and thoughtful one moment, vicious in the next. Frequently, the protagonist sees his or her love as a shapechanger reflecting the mystifying mood changes the other person undergoes. The reason behind Will's inconsistency is only explained to Tessa at the end of *Clockwise Prince*, after she is committed to Jem. Jem gives her his family ring when they pretend to be engaged, then later gives her his mother's jade pendant when they begin a real engagement.

These too are talismans: a ring symbolizes commitment, thought there are deeper meanings as well. Jung said that a circle symbolizes the totality or the psyche, while a square suggests terrestrial matter and reality. A protective circle for a person can take the form of a ring, bracelet, necklace, or crown. As such, the round jade pendent, like Will's anniversary bracelet, is a token of protection and personal power along with commitment. Tessa's angel necklace also adds to her protective circle. Tessa wears Jade pendent with her angel, strengthening her divine connection just as she has strengthened through Jem's love and faith.

Tessa's main enemy is the Magister, who symbolize all the evil strength of patriarchy – he calls himself her creator and wants to marry her and use her power for his own aims. Further, he is the corruptor of Nate, wielder of the cruel Dark Sisters. At the same time, he is the child of the warlocks, one who knows everything about the magical world Tessa must discover. He reveals her powers to her and forces her to train in them. Without him, she would never discover who she is or meet the Shadowhunters. The magister himself is a masculine force, but he wields a number of feminine ones. The cruel Dark Sisters are his employers. He has given birth to the monstrous creature with Shadowhunter runes and skin over a metal body. Further, his symbol is the Ouroboros, an ancient symbol depicting a serpent eating its own tail.

Tessa is on the quest to discover within herself – she is questing from the girl who believes she is human to the warlock who will live forever and astound the world with her shapeshifting magic. This quest takes her into her origins as well as her future – the ever cycling circle. Before battling, Tessa has a respite as she dreams of the angel Ithuriel and receives his blessing. The brief time before the battle allows Tessa to decide who she wants to become. With the closest males to her, Will and her angel offering their love, Tessa is strengthened for the coming battle. The heroine must come to understand the power of death as well as life frequently in the dark stronghold, she encounters the death – dealing mother and learns from her. Instead, Tessa faces Mortmain and turns into the avenging angel of the God. Tessa's power is shapeshifting and saving her friends, but it is also wielding power of the power of the death.

Mortmain traps the angel Ithuriel and tries to create new beings. Mortmain is trying to subvert the natural order and take the power of birth and creation for himself. As Tessa says, "Life is the province of heaven. And Heaven does not take kindly the usurpers" (*Clockwork Princess* 461). Tessa reaches into the angel pendant and changes into a towering figure of light and power. Mortmain the patriarch has no chance against her. Tessa slays him, and his unnatural automatons die. In this one gesture, all of her friends are saved. Further, Tessa has always had the guardian angel and the shapeshifting power even from her birth. Only through adversity and facing the enemy has she come to know it, and grown so powerful that the patriarchy cannot stand against her. She crushes Mortmain in her fist, and he and his army crumple to nothing.

Tessa cannot bear the dark power she has harassed and collapses. Tessa ends the story by having children though she care for her dying husband, Will, as the circle of life spins ever onwards. In *The Infernal Devices*, Tessa Gray uses her special gift, channeling other characters and essentially 'becoming' them to help the Shadowhunters fight Mortmain, De Quincey, demons, automaton armies and black magic. Tessa is essential to the main quest of the series which is the destruction of evil by the forces of God.

## REFERENCES

1. Brissey, Breia. "Cassandra Clare Talks 'Clockwork Prince' and Reveals What's Next for her Infernal Devices, Mortal Instruments Series" *EW.com's Shelf Life* 8 Dec. 2011. Web. 19 April 2016. <<http://shelflife.ew.com/2011/12/08/cassandra-clare-clockwork-prince-infernal-devices>>.
2. Cashdan, Sheldon. *The Witch Must Die*. New York: Basic Books, 1999. Print.
3. Clare, Cassandra. *Clockwork Angel*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010. Print.
4. ---. *Clockwork Prince*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011. Print.
5. ---. *Clockwork Princess*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013. Print.

6. ---. "Interview: Cassandra Clare." *The Reader's Quill*. 6 Nov 2008. Web. 19 April 2016  
<<http://www.readersquill.com/2008/11/interview-cassandra-clare.html>>.
7. Cross, Sarah. "The Art of War." *Shadowhunters and Downworlders*. Ed. Cassandra Clare. Texas: Benbella Books, 2013. 20 – 34. Print.
8. Frankel, Valerie Estelle. *From Girl to Goddess: The Heroine's Journey through Myth and Legend*. North Carolina: McFarland and Co., 2010. Print.
9. ---. *Myths and Motifs of The Mortal Instruments*. Hamden: Zossima Press, 2013. Print.