THE TREND THAT'S CATCHING FIRE: ADOLESCENT DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE AS FEMINIST SOCIAL COMMENTARY

by

Wyshona Danyelle Lawson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Radford University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English.

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Daniel Woods, Ph.D.

May 2014

April 23, 2014
Date

Dr. Daniel Woods
Thesis Advisor

4-23-14
Date

Dr. Michele Ren
Committee Member

4-23-14
Date

Dr. Robert Williams
Committee Member

4-23-14
Date

Abstract

In *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Suzanne Collins uses a dystopian view of the future to critique the society in which we live today. She does this through the female protagonist Katniss Everdeen, who is a female character with some stereotypically male-identified qualities.

Furthermore, the medium of young adult literature is possibly one of the most important aspects of this study since the readers of this type of novel will be the future leaders of this and other countries around the world.

By exploring the history and characteristics of young adult literature in Chapter 1, the reader gains a working knowledge of the foundation of the genre being studied. Examples from *The Hunger Games* trilogy will be outlined as to how, exactly, the trilogy exemplifies the genre of young adult literature. Chapter 2 focuses on science fiction and dystopic literature and how the trilogy once again exemplifies characteristics of that genre. Chapter 3 explores the feminist social commentary in the novel through the main character of Katniss Everdeen with respect to her being a female character with several traditionally male-identified qualities, how women in Panem portray normative gender roles and how Katniss does not adhere to normative gender roles, feminist care ethics in Panem and in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, and the relationship between Peeta and Katniss in the trilogy and why it is such a different type of relationship than is usually seen in a young adult novel.

Wyshona Danyelle Lawson, M.A.
Department of English, 2014
Radford University

Dedication

I dedicate this to my family, who has been so very patient and understanding with me as I have pursued my second master's degree, and who are always so loving and supportive.

I would also like to dedicate this to all the empowered women and girls of the world and to those who could be. There is a Katniss in us all, and if there isn't—there should be.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and mentorship of Dr. Daniel Woods. Without his guidance, this thesis would not have been the work that it is, and I truly appreciate everything he has helped me with this past year. I know it could not have been easy to take on a student's thesis when he had never met that student, and I know words cannot adequately express my gratitude for his leap of faith in me.

I also want to thank Dr. Michele Ren and Dr. Robert Williams for agreeing to be a part of this committee as well. They, too, had never met me face to face, and I am grateful to them as well.

To many members of the Radford University English Department whom I have been given the opportunity to work with during my journey here, thank you for the knowledge you have imparted, the patience you have possessed, the kind words you have relayed, the Skyping you have allowed, and the friends you have become.

I also wish to thank Claire Hall and Lindsey Kamerer for their guidance and cheerleading. I am very proud to say that I came through the English program with you two ladies, and I hope our futures are bright indeed.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii
Dedication iii
Acknowledgements iv
Table of Contents v
List of Tables v
Introduction 1
Chapter 1: Young Adult Literature and *The Hunger Games* Trilogy 4
History 4
Definition and Characteristics 7
The Hunger Games Trilogy 12
Chapter 2: Dystopic Visions: How *The Hunger Games* Trilogy Burns Bright 22
Dystopias 22
History and Social Commentary 26
The Hunger Games Trilogy 30
Chapter 3: Feminist Social Commentary: Katniss and Panem 35
History and Background 35
Stereotypical Male-Identified Qualities 38
Panem and Normative Gender Roles 47
Feminist Care Ethics in *The Hunger Games* Trilogy 52
The Unconventional Relationship Between Katniss and Peeta 56
Chapter 4: Conclusion 64
Works Cited 66
Works Consulted 72
Appendix A: *The Hunger Games* Trilogy Districts and Industries 77

List of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of Young Adult Novels 10
Table 2: Totalitarian Regime Characteristics 28

Introduction

Suzanne Collins was flipping through television channels one night when she saw a reality television game show where teenagers were competing for a prize of one million dollars. On another channel was coverage of the Iraq War. Collins later shared that these "two things began to sort of fuse together in a very unsettling way, and there is really the moment when I got the idea for Katniss' story" (Harris Online).

The story of *The Hunger Games* is not just a story of twenty-four different teenagers who are forced to fight to the death every year while their friends and family watch on television. It is the story of a corrupt government that oppresses and starves the majority of its population, bullies them into submission, and has this farce of a reality competition to remind them what will happen if they ever try to rebel against the government again. It is also the story of a United States of America that is now called Panem. This former United States has been flooded by rising sea-waters and contorted by landmasses changing shape, possibly by global warming and technological advances that humans employ. Modern society as we know it has been destroyed. The Dark Days in the novel are not exactly specified, but there are inferences as to what caused the problems that Panem now has.

It is a bleak, dystopic vision of the future, where children are forced to kill other children, where the government has totalitarian rule, and where one small gesture can cause you death and your family devastation. And from this vision comes a girl, Katniss Everdeen, the character who is referred to as "the girl on fire," who unwittingly, and even unwillingly, starts the sparks of a revolution.

It is a story that weaves young adult literature together with science fiction and

dystopian literature and provides a social commentary on various topics in today's contemporary society. Collins has created in Katniss a unique character, who, through her thoughts and actions reveals a truly empowered vision of feminine power. Truthfully, "as more female authors write quality science fiction and the number of strong female characters in these works begins to grow, this gender-related preference is beginning to change" (Bucher 204), and stronger female protagonists are beginning to emerge. Katniss is one of these characters, and through her eyes, the reader sees the corrupt patriarchal world of Panem and what needs to change in this world.

Chapter 1 investigates and discusses the importance of young adult literature in today's world, and makes the case that books being published in the genre of young adult literature have themes and lessons as important as contemporary adult literature being published today. Young adult literature is a genre rich with talented writers, and is not just books about sparkly vampires or teenage angst, although some books do happen to be about those things. Young adult literature is a smart, stylish genre that more and more adults, young adults, and tweens are reading. Chapter 1 will illustrate that the field of young adult literature is an important genre with important themes for the future of academia and the world. It will also exemplify how *The Hunger Games* trilogy is an excellent example of young adult literature and why it appeals to audiences of adults and young adult readers.

The key aspects of Chapter 2 are centered on science fiction and dystopic literature and how the trilogy once again exemplifies characteristics of that genre. While dystopian/post-apocalyptic literature has often been considered a social commentary, the emergence of the young adult novel as a social commentary is a relatively new idea. In

the world of academia, many view young adult novels as unimportant or "just for kids," which is an inadequate designation. When young adults study dystopian young adult literature as a social commentary, they should be able to critically observe the world around them and analytically question the decisions that their leaders and they themselves make. *The Hunger Games* trilogy is an excellent model to typify this type of literature.

Chapter 3 explores the feminist social commentary in the novel through the main character of Katniss Everdeen. Katniss Everdeen is a female protagonist who defies normative gender roles, and yet is still a caring, empathetic individual who adheres to the feminine care ethic. She does not conform to the traditional love triangle that so many young adult series fall prey to, but she brings hope to the future of the world through the children she has at the end of the series. She is a role model for the young women of contemporary society, and through the feminist social commentary in the novel, the patriarchy of Panem, and therefore, our own contemporary society, is very clear.

Suzanne Collins has crafted a smart, intricate body of works that does not condone war or violence, but also does not condone women being second place in society. Katniss exemplifies that a woman can be smart and strong, she can have morals and be ethical, she can be independent and stubborn, she can be beautiful and pure of heart, she can be kind and giving, she can be in charge of her sexuality and love more than one person, and she can be pure and imperfect. She is human. She is woman. Hear her sing.

Chapter 1: Young Adult Literature and *The Hunger Games* Trilogy

What are you reading? In today's society, this question could be met by various answers by numerous people, from mystery to romance to bestseller. Or, the answer could be a young adult novel. In 2012, 55% of adults that purchased a book, purchased a young adult novel, and 78% of the time, they were purchasing this book to read themselves (*Publisher's* Online). This begs the questions: what is young adult literature exactly, and why, in the last few years, has it gotten so popular?

History

For the majority of the history of literature, the history of young adult literature coexisted with the history of children's literature, and only in the last sixty years has been deemed a separate genre. However, "children's literature as we now identify it was becoming an established marketing genre in the mid-18th-century" (Stevenson 188). Picture books and didactic books were a normal part of a child's, especially a rich child's, every day life. The books of that time period, and for the next two hundred years, were designed somewhat to teach a lesson (Stevenson 179-181). The lessons ranged from listening to your parents to the fact that a child should be clean. Alphabet primers with each letter of the alphabet correlating to specific words starting with that letter were also popular books, equating sounds in the child's mind. Men were the principal writers and publishers, until the "late 18th century [when] the growing number of women entering the world of children's literature and development" (Stevenson 190) expanded. As women began writing children's books, endearing characters such as Peter Rabbit and The Velveteen Rabbit appeared; the appearance of personified woodland creatures changed children's literature from simple lessons to endearing tomes. Thus, the history of

children's, and thus, young adult literature, began. Up to this point in history, there were very few, if any, books written to appeal to adolescents. Adolescents could read books for children, or they could, if they could acquire them, read books for adults, and then there was the problem of whether or not they could comprehend all of the material in the adult books and whether some of the material was age appropriate. The young adult developmental stage of reading was all but ignored until the 1960's.

In the 1960's young adult literature truly had its genesis:

> Before the advent of YAL in the late 1960s, Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, Tom Swift, and the adventures of Frank Merriwell were considered teen literature. These novels avoided controversial topics such as sexuality, substance abuse, divorce, and death. They focused on one socio-economic class, for the most part—white middle-class teenagers engaged in white middle-class activities. Many literary critics considered them superficial…and they were never part of the school curriculum. (Herz 9).

The 1960's brought the publication of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders,* Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War,* Paul Zindel's *The Pigman,* Robert Lipstye's *The Contender,* Ann Head's *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones,* and *Go Ask Alice* written by Anonymous occurred. The publication of Judy Blume's books followed these books closely, and librarians promoted "the new young adult literature…to high school or college students, while students in sixth and seventh grades were still being directed to the children's collection" (Bucher 5). The reason? These books dealt with such topics as killing a peer, masturbation, bullying, drug abuse, and premarital sex. With the topics in these books, it is easy to see why librarians would steer younger readers away from these books, but one

might ask: why would they steer older readers towards these books? One only has to look at society to realize that teenagers are going to experiment, they are going to be faced with peer pressure, and they are going to have difficult decisions to make in their lives. With novels to help guide them, and characters to either emulate or realize the mistakes inherent in the decision of those characters, young adult literature is rich with those experiences.

Young adult literature grew as a genre from the sixties through the eighties, but then it hit a slump. What was considered the "jazz" of American writing—"an American gift to the world" (Cart 3), by 1994, was "clearly at risk for extinction" (Cart 54). There were several factors for this. Since the '80s when the serials of Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys had gotten a reboot, and the Sweet Valley Franchise, the Babysitter's Club, and the Fear Street and Goosebumps books had risen in sales, those readers had grown up, and the younger readers were not interested in those types of books anymore. In 1990, the *School Library Journal* reported that "even the biggest publishers seldom do more than a dozen or so YAs a year" (Cart 53). Unfortunately, "there was only a limited amount of time and risk that publishers were willing to take with developing new authors" (Cart 53). As a result, Linda Zuckerman of Harcourt, Brace publishers predicted "the YA field would continue to diminish" (Cart 53). Combined with school library budgets branching out to buy technology instead of books, and public libraries facing budget cuts as well, that young adult literature did indeed seem to be dying did not go unnoticed:

> If young adult literature [were] to have a future, it must be more than formula-driven fiction that begins and ends with a problem. It must be as

> real as headlines but more than the simple retelling of fact. It must also be enriched by the best means literature can offer [and] must take creative (and marketing) risks to present hard-edged issues of relevance so that it may offer its readers not only reality but also revelation and, ultimately, that desired wisdom. (Cart 55-6)

Then, a mini baby-boom happened. "America's teen (twelve to nineteen) population spiked significantly, growing 16.6 percent from 1990 to 2000, when it totaled 32 million" (Cart 57). As the youngsters came of age, they began to ask for something to read. Librarians and teachers put out the call and writers answered. Young adult novel writing was not dead. The growth continued. "Since its beginnings in the 1960s, young adult literature has come a long way in its quest for respectability and acceptance. More and more teachers and library media specialists have recognized the need for and the value of quality literature that speaks directly to the interests, needs, and desires of adolescents (Bucher 19). Thankfully, teachers and librarians always seem to be on the side of the reader, or young adult literature might have met its demise.

Definition and Characteristics

What does young adult literature have that children's literature and adult literature don't have? The readers! Many critics believe "young adult literature helps younger adolescents find themselves in books and begin to think critically about literature, [and] older adolescents use young adult literature to help them explore social issues and examine their role in society" (Bucher 9). With that in mind, it is not difficult to see how young adult literature continued to grow. Young adult literature, similarly to women's and ethnic literature that says something "about the characteristics and preoccupations of

genders and nations" says something about what is it like to be a human who is not a child but not yet an adult (Coates "Young" 316).

This type of literature is also a way for young readers to contextualize trends in culture, access "moral, social, and cultural problems" (Coats "Young" 318), and help them figure out what to value and how to live their life "responsibly and responsively" (Coats "Young" 320). Since this is something everyone goes through, or went through, this is a very universal understanding. In addition, "well-written young adult literature provides adolescents with considerable reading enjoyment; assists in the development of their sense of self; allows them to explore life experiences and realities; and help[s] them understand the many joys, trials, successes, and problems of life [it] has earned a respected place between children's and adult's literature" (Bucher 1). This is how young adult literature is different from children's and adult literature.

However, what young adult literature is, exactly, is still a bit of a conundrum. "There is really no consensus among publishers, librarians, teachers, reviewers, and booksellers about exactly what young adult literature is" (Bucher 4). For years, books that today are considered young adult literature were shelved with children's literature until librarians and bookstore owners realized that the adolescent readers were, for the most part, refusing to browse the children's literature shelves. In some books stores and libraries, it is labeled as young adult, or teen fiction, and in others, it can be found as teen series or adolescent or juvenile fiction (4). *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature* defines young adult literature as "literature in prose or verse that has excellence of form or expression in its genre" (Bucher 8), and for the purposes of this paper, that definition will serve.

Another aspect of young adult literature, as noted by Patty Campbell, a young adult critic for *The Horn Book Magazine* is that "there are 'risk-taking, exciting books being published'" (Bucher 9) in the young adult genre. Remember that 55% of the books bought for people in the age range of 12 to 55 in 2012 were young adult novels (*Publisher's* Online), so it stands to reason that the subjects of these novels would have to be exciting and risk-taking. "Some literary critics (Hipple, 2000; Moore, 1997) note the excellence in some contemporary young adult literature" (Bucher 9). While there is a plethora of young adult literature out there, almost 10,000 new titles alone in 2012 (The Online), a reader has to be discerning. Many young adult authors "reflect mastery of the novel form combined with well-crafted writing" (Herz 11). Like all literature, not all 10,000 titles are going to be great. Teachers and critics agree that it should not have watered down style or content but be "sophisticated, artistic, and compelling" (Bucher 10). While some readers will devour every book about vampires, whether the books are quality literature or not, some readers will be more selective. Moreover, "as YAL gained popularity among teenage readers, the literary talents of the authors also became more evident. YAL authors incorporated into their books the same elements as those in adult novels: a consistent point of view, a significant setting, a well-delineated but not complicated plot, vivid characterization, realistic and lively dialogue, and an attractive style" (Herz 10). For those who do have a judicious eye, the books that are well written stand above others, much like adult literature and children's literature.

As young adult literature has developed through the years, there have been a collection of characteristics that have come to define what should be in a young adult

novel. Table 1 displays what those characteristics are; although, it should be noted, not all young adult novels contain every characteristic. In addition to the characteristics listed, it is also important to note that young adult literature must stay abreast of current developments because "teens…have instant access to images, information, and communication [that] teens did [not] 10 years ago (Coats "Young" 323). Teenagers are not stupid, and they know when someone is trying to put one over on them, so to speak. Writers of the genre have to be careful that they write as if they are a young adult who is in the "know" of contemporary culture, not as an adult who is trying to talk down to young adult readers or dumb down what he or she is writing. This illustrates that "the literature isn't a single, fixed organism" (Stevenson 192) but an ever evolving genre that will continue to grow as culture grows and changes. As the teens in the culture change, so do the types of novels that are published. Young adult literature, unlike children's and adult literature, which does not change on such a great scale, "is not static. It is changing along with the students who read it and the society in which it is written" (Bucher 19).

Table 1: Characteristics of Young Adult Novels

Characteristics of Young Adult Novels
"It should reflect young adults' age and development by addressing their reading abilities, thinking levels, and interest levels" (Bucher 10).
"It should deal with contemporary issues, problems, and experiences with characters to whom adolescents can relate. This includes topics such as dealing with parents and other adults in authority; facing illness and death; dealing with peer pressure, specifically relating to drugs, alcohol, and sexual experimentation; and facing the realities of addiction and pregnancy" (Bucher 10).
It "should consider contemporary world perspectives, including cultural, social, and gender diversity; environmental issues; global politics; and international interdependence" (Bucher 10).
"It reflects their experiences with conflicts, focuses on themes that interest young people, includes young protagonists and mostly young characters, and has language common to young adults" (Bucher 10).
The "point of view must have the limitations of an adolescent perspective (Bucher 10)"
They "use less graphic details while still conveying the reality of the situation" (Bucher 11).
"The role of parents in adolescent literature is one of the defining characteristics of the genre." Parents are either absent so the protagonist can have an adventure, although the protagonist "usually returns to some sort of parent-based home by the end of the narrative" or dead, or present and either supportive or not supportive (Trites 54-5).
Usually, "the key player is still, more often than not, a figure who positions him or herself as cultural outsider" (Coats "Young" 319; 326).

This outsider "must rebel . . . in order to grow" (Coats "Young" 319; 326).
The practice of "employing a wise adult to guide a confused adolescent is so commonplace in adolescent literature that it is practically invisible even to many trained readers (Trites 80)"
Generally, in YAL, "two teenagers feel sexually attracted to one another [and] the action is occasionally blocked during a stage in which each character thinks the attraction is unrequited. The characters eventually communicate and express their attraction" (Trites 84-5).
"Death and grief are, indeed common topics in" (Trites 188-9) young adult literature.
"In adolescent literature, death is often depicted in terms of maturation when the protagonist accepts the permanence of mortality, when s/he accepts herself as Being-towards-death" (Trites 188).
Death in YAL is also immediate, untimely, violent, unnecessary, and brings about a tragic loss of innocence (Trites 188-9).
And "most young adult literature closes with a message of possibility and resilience" (Coats "Young" 319; 326).

(Table compiled from information from Bucher 10-1; Coats "Young" 319; 326; Trites 54-5; 61, 80; 84-5; 120-1; 188-9)

Thankfully, fiction imitates life, which changes with the times:

> As a body of literature, YA fiction is organized around the same sorts of tensions that preoccupy the physical bodies and emotional lives of its intended audience: tensions between growth and stasis, between and ideal world we can imagine and the one we really inhabit, between earnestness and irony, between ordinary bodies and monstrous ones, and, perhaps most importantly, between an impulsive individualism and a generative ethics of interconnectedness. (Coats "Young" 316)

That is one of the most relevant reasons that young adult literature is important in today's society. Children's literature very much speaks to the child and the experiences the child goes through. Adult literature gives the adult reader many avenues to peruse when they are reading. According to Bucher, young adult literature should include "topics such as dealing with parents and other adults in authority; facing illness and death; dealing with peer pressure, specifically relating to drugs, alcohol, and sexual experimentation; and facing the realities of addiction and pregnancy" (10). Without young adult literature, the readership of ages 12-19 would be left without the guidance that the richness of young

adult novels can give and that they might not be able to find if they are reading adult novels or children's literature during this time period.

More importantly, though, the young adult books being published today are worthwhile because they are some of the smartest books on the market. Unfortunately, "[w]e still pay more critical scholarly attention to *Antigone* (Sophocles, c 442) and *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) than we do to the potentially life-changing books our teens read on their own" (Coats "Young" 315-6). Why is more scholarly attention paid to *The Great Gatsby* or *Antigone* when some of the books published in the young adult genre in the past decade have centered on such topics as nuclear holocaust, psychological aptitude profiling, removing the ability to feel love from life, totalitarian governments, complete loss of natural resources due to environmental turmoil, cloning gone wrong, world wars, and other serious topics that some adult books are not writing about with such panache and vigor? It is difficult for some to step away from the canon they have taught from for so many years and try something new. But, Roberta Trites suggests "when we investigate how social institutions function in adolescent literature, we can gain insight into the ways that adolescent literature itself serves as a discourse of institutional socialization" (22). Meaning, if we look at what could happen, especially from the viewpoint of a teenager, it gives perspective. Later we will discuss how young adult novels can be social commentaries on today's contemporary society.

The Hunger Games **Trilogy**

The Hunger Games trilogy reflects the characteristics of a young adult novel/series in many ways. In 2008, the first book of the trilogy was published to much acclaim in the media world. In addition to being named a *New York Times* Notable Book

and a *School Library Journal* Best Book of 2008, the novel topped the *USA Today, New York Times,* and *Wall Street Journal* bestseller lists. *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*, the second and third books in the trilogy, received parallel critical acclaim as well (Scholastic Online). The books have now been adapted into movies, and the first movie in the series "opened to an enormous $152.5 million, which ranks third all-time behind *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* ($169.2 million) and *The Dark Knight* ($158.4 million). Remarkably, it debuted above all of the *Twilight* movies, and it also topped *Alice in Wonderland* ($116.1 million) for highest debut ever for a non-sequel (Subers Online). The movie adaptation of *Catching Fire* garnered "an estimated $161.1 million in the U.S." (Vary Online), was the highest ranking November debuted movie ever beating *Twilight: New Moon*, and the highest ranking 2D movie to date, just squeezing by *The Dark Knight Rises* (Vary Online).

The trilogy follows Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen-year-old girl who lives in the postapocalyptic ruins of the world once known as North America, now called Panem. She has provided food for her family by illegally hunting in the woods outside the allowable boundaries of District 12 for the past five years. She has extreme prowess with a bow and arrow. As the trilogy opens, it is Reaping Day, the day when one boy and one girl from each of the twelve districts will be chosen as a Tribute to fight to the death in the annual Hunger Games in the Capitol. When Katniss's sister Prim is chosen as Tribute, Katniss volunteers in her place. After successfully navigating the first Games, saving herself and her fellow District 12 Tribute Peeta, whom she has grown close to, Katniss realizes that she has shown defiance to the Capitol and its president by allowing

two Victors in the Games. This causes civil unrest in Panem, and ignites a rebellion that is sweeping the nation.

Katniss is made the unwilling symbol of the rebellion, and is even pulled back into the Hunger Games for the Quarter Quell, the 75th anniversary of the Games. She maneuvers her way through the second Games, and then she manages to blow up the arena with her weapon of choice, the bow and arrow. She is rescued by the rebels, and is asked to be the Mockingjay, the official symbol of the rebellion. Peeta (the male tribute from Katniss's district and her eventual love interest) is captured by the Capitol, and then hijacked (brainwashed) by them to think that Katniss is dangerous to him instead of someone he loves. Peeta is finally rescued, and Katniss is given a chance to go to the Capitol city and maneuver her way to President Snow's mansion to assassinate him. On the way there, she sees her sister Prim, who District 13 has brought in as a medic. Prim is administering care to children who have been injured by bombs that Katniss thinks President Snow dropped. More bombs are then dropped, and Prim is killed. Katniss then deduces that District 13 and President Coin sacrificed the lives of those children in order to capture President Snow and end the war. Instead of assassinating President Snow as she is directed to, Katniss kills President Coin of District 13 and ends the totalitarian regime that Coin planned to continue in Panem. After a grieving period, Katniss begins to heal.

The characteristics of young adult novels are varied and can be found in Table 1. Katniss and *The Hunger Games* trilogy exemplify these characteristics. The "point of view of a young adult novel must have the limitations of an adolescent perspective" according to Bucher (10). The narrative must reflect the adolescent experience with

conflicts and themes that interest young people and have young, or mostly young characters, with a language that is common to young people (10). In the novel, the narrator, Katniss Everdeen is a sixteen-year old girl who has taken care of her mother and twelve year old sister for the past five years since her father was killed in a mining accident. She is a fairly normal girl who speaks like an authentic sixteen year old girl would speak, calling her sister "little duck" because her shirt always comes untucked in the back (Collins *The* 15), but also sounds sarcastic when she comments that "Prim sounds about a thousand years old when she speaks" (Collins *Mockingjay* 151). Katniss is also a pragmatist who hates her sister's cat merely because he is another mouth to feed (*The* 4). On the surface, Katniss appears to be a pretty normal sixteen-year-old girl.

In young adult literature, "the key player is still, more often than not, a figure who positions him or herself as cultural outsider" (Coats "Young" 319). Katniss lives in the Seam of District 12, where the poorer, coal-mining families live. She does not think she belongs in town, except maybe for the Hob, which is District 12's black market where she sells her illegally garnered hunting kills. When she volunteers as tribute for Prim she notes that: "almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and holds it out to me. It is an old and rarely used gesture of our district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means good-bye to someone you love," and she feels that she has become "someone precious" to her district (Collins *The* 24).

Trites informs that the practice of "employing a wise adult to guide a confused adolescent is so commonplace in adolescent literature that it is practically invisible even to many trained readers" (80). Although Katniss does not truly think he is informed,

Haymitch Abernathy, her mentor, is a cunning individual, and actually has a hand in planning the Victors' break out of the arena aspect of the rebellion, and consistently appears to have her best interests at heart (Collins *The* 24; *Catching* 323). Katniss also realizes at the end of the trilogy that she and Haymitch are just alike. She fully realizes this when, after President Snow has been captured and President Coin suggests that the Capitol's children be put into a Reaping for future Hunger Games as retaliation for the crimes of the past, Katniss votes yes for the Games, and Haymitch does, too (*Mockingjay* 370). The other adult that serves as a mentor for Katniss is her stylist, Cinna. Cinna, unbeknownst to Katniss, is part of the rebellion (*Mockingjay* 43), and almost from the moment she meets him, he is like a father figure to her. She trusts him. He knows how to play up her strengths, and he asks to be assigned to District 12 (*The* 64). He is the one that gives her the nickname "the girl who was on fire" (67) that follows her through the rebellion, and it is his words of "I'm still betting on you" (*Catching* 262; *Mockingjay* 370*)* that remind Katniss what the rebellion is for and what she is supposed to do.

Trites also explains that "death and grief are, indeed common topics in" YAL (188-9) as they are in real life. She reminds us that "[i]n adolescent literature, death is often depicted in terms of maturation when the protagonist accepts the permanence of mortality, when s/he accepts herself as Being-towards-death" (188). In addition, death in YAL is also often immediate, untimely, violent, unnecessary, and brings about a tragic loss of innocence (Trites 188-9). For Katniss, when she decides she will make sure Peeta wins the Games, she accepts being-towards-death. She knows she will not make it out of these Games alive if she keeps Peeta alive, and she accepts that. Death throughout the trilogy is quite violent and untimely. Several examples of this would be the violent

deaths of Rue (Collins *The* 233), Cato (339), Cinna's beating that leads to apparent death (*Catching* 267), Mags (301), Nuts (332), Boggs (*Mockingjay* 276-80), Messalla (308), and Finnick (312). While these deaths are not described in gory detail as they might be in an adult novel, the point is driven home that these are violent, unnecessary deaths that happen either in war sport or war.

Another one of the most successful tropes in literature is a conflict that centers on the relationship of the protagonist with a love interest. Generally, in young adult literature, "two teenagers feel sexually attracted to one another [and] the action is occasionally blocked during a stage in which each character thinks the attraction is unrequited. The characters eventually communicate and express their attraction" (Trites 84-5). *The Hunger Games* trilogy exemplifies this characteristic in the protagonist Katniss and the boy who loves her, Peeta Mellark. Katniss has known Peeta since she was young, and she has felt indebted to him since he threw her burnt loaves of bread when she was starving (Collins *The* 30). What she does not realize is that Peeta has been in love with her since they were children. He even tells Haymitch, "She has no idea. The effect she can have" (91). Situating Peeta, the boy, as the person who loves, and has loved Katniss from afar for years, while Katniss, the girl, is clueless to his feelings, is a bit of a spin on a traditional protagonist love interest in young adult literature, though. In most young adult literature, or in any media production in the contemporary world, the female character tends to be the character with unexpressed or unrequited feelings. Peeta declares his love for her before they enter the arena, and during the Games, she and Peeta pretend to be madly in love (130; 253; 261; 281). The catch is that Katniss does grow to care for Peeta and realizes that she does not "want to lose the boy with the bread" (297).

Katniss has been so busy caring for her family that caring for a boy has never really entered her scope of thinking until Peeta opens her eyes to what a reciprocal caring relationship could entail. When President Snow threatens the life of everyone she loves, the wedding of Katniss and Peeta is planned to help squelch the rebellion (29; 133). Then, the Quarter Quell is announced, and Katniss and Haymitch devise a plan to make sure that no matter what, Peeta has to make it out of the Games alive, which means that she will have to die (212). Katniss has come to care for Peeta so deeply that she knows saving him would be the right thing to do, even though it will mean her death. Traditionally in literature, it is the male that sacrifices himself for the damsel. In the second Games, when she uses the arrow to blow apart the arena, and Peeta is captured, Katniss feels so much guilt that she can barely function (*Mockingjay* 116), so she turns to Gale, her childhood friend and hunting companion who has recently revealed his romantic feelings for her, in her time of confusion (198). This exemplifies the blocked stage the characters in young adult literature face when they think the attraction from the other character is unrequited. Katniss realizes that she hates that Peeta hates her because he finally sees her as she sees herself—violent and deadly (232; 244). Peeta unwillingly hates Katniss because he has been hijacked, but their feelings are blocked, nonetheless. Peeta doesn't let Katniss eat her nightlock when she kills Coin (373), and he tells her he cannot let her go. Peeta's confession that he will not let Katniss kill herself, even though his mind is still damaged, is a testament to his feelings for her. Eventually, as the republic begins to build, their love grows back (388). Peeta tells her that he will be with her "always" (314). They communicate and express their love, even in the midst of the turmoil they face in their lives.

In addition to the aforementioned characteristics, the role of parents in young adult literature is a paramount quality. According to Trites, "the role of parents in adolescent literature is one of the defining characteristics of the genre" (55). Parents in young adult novels are either absent so the protagonist can have an adventure, although the protagonist "usually returns to some sort of parent-based home by the end of the narrative" or dead, or present and either supportive or not supportive (Trites 54-5). The variation of parental unit definition would seem to indicate that parents are not a big deal within young adult novels, but the opposite cannot be more true. Since parents are the base of a person's life, the two people that, theoretically, bring a person into the world and shape who they are, the figure of a parent and his or her role within a young adult novel is of vital importance because of the developmental age of the young adult. Within the three novels, the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, definitely has conflicts with parental figures. Although there are other adults she has conflict with, such as her District 12 mentor, Haymitch Abernathy, and President Snow from the Capitol, this example will focus on a more traditional conflict, her mother.

From the first novel, *The Hunger Games*, Katniss has a conflict with her mother, who "sat by, blank and unreachable, while her children turned to skin and bones" after her husband died (Collins *The* 8). Katniss finds it very hard to forgive her mother for giving up when her father died and putting everything on the shoulders of the then eleven-year-old girl. Katniss and her friend Gale, while they contemplate running off before the Reaping in the first book, even joke they cannot because they have so many kids—his brothers and sisters and her sister Prim. "And you may as well throw in our mothers, too, because how would they live without us" (Collins *The* 9) she quips.

Katniss has quite a bit of responsibility because of her mother's depression and subsequent neglect. When Katniss is chosen for the Reaping, she reprimands her mother, telling her, "'Listen to me. Are you listening to me? You can't leave again…You can't clock out and leave Prim on her own…You have to promise me you'll fight through it!' My voice has risen to a shout. In it is all the anger, all the fear at her abandonment" (Collins *The* 35). Katniss's words to her mother are more along the lines of what a mother might say to a child, encouraging them to fight, if her tone were different. Later in the novel, she admits that she "had taken a step back from [her] mother, put up a wall to protect [herself] from needing" (Collins *The* 53), and now she is afraid she will die without setting things right. When she is in the Games and injured, Peeta is stroking her cheek, and she thinks it is her mother's hand. "I don't push it away as I would in wakefulness, never wanting her to know how much I crave that gentle touch" (Collins *The* 290). Katniss's relationship with her mother is extremely convoluted, and since she has been the adult for at least five years, hunting and gathering for the family, trying to be the child again is difficult for her. It should be noted, though, that her mother does worry about her. When Peeta chokes Katniss, Prim is sitting by her bedside, and Plutarch wants her to leave. Prim says, "No. If you force me to leave, I'll go directly to surgery and tell my mother everything that's happened. And I warn you, she doesn't think much of a Gamemaker calling the shots on Katniss's life. Especially when you've taken such poor care of her" (Collins *Mockingjay* 179-80). Katniss's mother does love her, even if Katniss won't always let her show it. At the end of the trilogy, Katniss returns to District 12 without her mother, who goes to District 4 to become a nurse, and it is many long months of grieving for herself, her family, and everything she has done before she can

"dial the phone number, and weep with her" mother over Prim and everything else that has happened to this family (Collins *Mockingjay* 387). The reader can assume, since Katniss's life is relatively happy at the end of the novel, that she and her mother have worked through their conflicts as well as can be expected in this world where they live, which consequently is another characteristic of young adult literature, an optimistic ending.

The Hunger Games trilogy exemplifies many aspects of young adult literature; however, like most young adult literature, the novels are so much more complex than the name "young adult literature" implies. The trilogy is rich with themes and theories that young adults and adults alike can read and examine with a critical eye.

Chapter 2: Dystopic Visions: How *The Hunger Games* Trilogy Burns Bright

Science fiction is a genre of literature that deals with, principally, the "impact of actual or imagined science on society or individuals" according to *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Merriam Online), but it is also a type of literature that "allows readers to enter imaginative worlds that are full of endless possibilities" (Bucher 185). Science fiction stories do not have to be set in the future, because science fiction is what some critics like to call writing of a "counterfactual [nature]: not things as they actually are, but as they might *be*, whether in the future, in an alternative past or present, or in a parallel dimension" (Roberts *The* 9). That is one of the interesting aspects of science fiction—the imagined world could occur at any time, with the added aspect of technology.

Science fiction literature is literature that has the "impact of actual or imagined science on society or individuals" (Merriam Online). Science fiction is set in a universe or on a planet like Earth where the rules of science apply, and if there is "metal, plastic, and/or heavy machinery," it is science fiction, and it can be set in the future (Bucher 189; Roberts *The* 9). *The Hunger Games* trilogy takes place in a futuristic vision of North America, but because it is science fiction, there are many gadgets that do not exist today.

Dystopias

A subgenre of science fiction is utopic or dystopic fiction. Utopic or dystopic science fiction is "located in another world or existing as a community in our own world" (Bucher 189). "The concept of 'utopia,' which dates from antiquity, is developed in modes as disparate as fiction, philosophy, theology, epistemology, praxis (as living experiments), political philosophy, and critical theory" (Rogan 308). *Utopia* was written

by Sir Thomas More and published in 1516 (309), and his story of this so-called perfect world began an onslaught of perfect-world narratives, although the term means no place.

In a utopia, you have a society that superficially embodies perfection, on a political, religious, sexual, social, economic level, or all of these (Bucher 189). The term no place is fitting since there is truly nowhere on earth all of these things exist at the same time. It is "a completely idealized space" (Rogan 309). A utopia, for a writer, is a place where he or she can start with a blank slate, and inscribe a world that "is intended to estrange the contemporary reader from their conditions of existence, thus allowing them to see their own world in a new light" (Rogan 309). The theory, as with many science fiction narratives, is that if you see the perfectness in this utopia, you will realize the wrongs in your own world and attempt to fix them.

To contrast with a utopia, "a dystopia is a repressive or totalitarian society" (Bucher 189). However, literary dystopias do "not reject the possibility of social change, although it must come slowly and through the grassroots efforts of ([and] often problematically [for]) diverse individuals" (Rogan 313). The individual who tries to take down the totalitarian society has a difficult job in every piece of dystopian literature, even failing in some instances. Dystopias are broken into categories as well. There is the critical dystopia that "critiques certain negative practices or institutions within the fictional society" (Booker "On" 7). There is also the antiutopia, which is "a utopia that has become twisted or flawed" (Bucher 189). Authors use antiutopias and dystopias to "show the need to balance perfection and freedom, and pain and sorrow with joy and humanity" (Bucher 189), as well as the need to "explore their hopes and fears for human society" (Bucher 189). People are not perfect, and there is no perfect world, but most

people realize that the world we live in today could be a much better place, which is why the idea of a utopia and dystopias are so prevalent. And, finally, there is the "eutopia or 'positive utopia' [which] is 'a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived'" (Rogan 309). The eutopia is what people usually think of when the word utopia is bandied about in conversation, since most people believe utopia to equate to perfect place instead of no place.

There are four times in history that dystopian literature has become extremely popular in the publishing world. The French Revolution is considered the first dystopic turn (Claeys 110), and socialism and eugenics helped fuel the second turn in the late 19th century (Claeys 111). While the first two waves of dystopic literature were fueled by events, the last two, according to critics and literary historians, were fueled by writers: H.G. Wells and his writings are considered responsible for the third phase (Claeys 112), followed by Huxley with *Brave New World,* and, finally, with Orwell's dystopic vision in *1984* (Claeys 115-125). Some might argue that with the onslaught of dystopias that have been published in the last five years, we have a fifth turn happening. An "important new trend in recent dystopian fiction is the growing importance of the genre of young adult-fiction" (Booker "On" 12).

An exposition of how the world came to be in the state it is in is needed in a piece of dystopian fiction. This "explains how the shift in control came to occur, with the end result being changed societal norms or a government now run by corporations, totalitarian dictatorships or bureaucracies" (NCTE Online). In *The Hunger Games* we

learn that floods, fires, storms, droughts, and disasters ravaged the place that was once known as North America. War came later for the people and resources that were left. Panem, a new country, rose from the ashes of the war, and a shiny new Capitol and thirteen districts were created. The Capitol promised "peace and posterity to its citizens" (Collins *The* 18). Then, there was an uprising that the Capitol refers to as the Dark Days. The districts rose "against the Capitol. Twelve were defeated, the thirteenth obliterated" (18). The Treaty of Treason was enacted and new laws for peace were put into place. One of these laws was The Hunger Games, which declared: "In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes to participate" (18). The tributes are imprisoned in an arena, which can be anything from frozen wasteland to desert for days to several weeks. They fight to the death until one victor remains (18).

The trilogy has a plethora of gadgets that are not present in today's world as well as quite a bit of advanced technology. In the Capitol, there is not only a shower that can soap you up and shampoo you, but also a dryer that dries you afterward (75). You punch numbers into the wall and food is brought to you on a whim (75). When Katniss is living in District 13, which she and most of Panem thinks has been obliterated, the reader learns that you place your arm into a spot in the wall every morning, and your schedule is tattooed on your arm in ink that washes off every night when you shower. Your meals have just enough calories to sustain you from one meal to the next based on your height and weight ratio (*Mockingjay* 18*;* 35). Of course, the most obvious example is probably the arena of the Hunger Games themselves, where the tributes are faced with obstacles such as fireballs that target the tribute (*The* 174), tracker jackers, which are like yellow

jackets but with poison that targets the fear centers in your brain and can kill you with too many stings (185), muttations, a play on the words mutation and mutt (*The* 331; *Catching* 308; *Mockingjay* 305), force fields (*Catching* 278), poisonous fog (297), a tidal wave (318), raining blood (320), a spinning island (333), jabberjays (340), street land mines (*Mockingjay* 276), a black wall of moving tar (278), barbed wire nets (279), flesh eating rats (308), and a skin melting force field (308). There are also medicines to heal a person from horrible injuries incurred if they make it out alive (*The* 348; 350; *Mockingjay* 4; 178), and treatments to make you whole and pretty again (*The* 350; *Mockingjay* 349).

Although the worlds presented are not necessarily realistic, they are not wholly beyond the bounds of possibility. It is important to remember that writers of science fiction novels in the past have predicted plane and space travel, the Internet, and tablet/iPad use, so things writers devise should be looked at analytically. "While main stream fiction glorifies the status quo, science fiction seemingly singles it [the status quo] out as the villain" (Bloch 104). Science fiction also "challenges readers to think about the past, present, and future" (Bucher 187) so that they can, hopefully, live better in the world today. As a whole, "YA novels tend to be more interrogative of social constructions, as well as critical of the notion of a responsive universe beyond what might be readily identified as social institutions (Coats "Young" 322), so young adult science fiction novels are a double dose, so to speak, of what young people should look for in the world of the future.

History and Social Commentary

Science fiction writing is usually dated to begin with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, shortly followed by Robert Lewis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*,

although there are other works predating those novels that include space travel, alien encounters, utopian speculations, and explorations of future worlds (Roberts *The* 3). In addition, writers of science fiction often write "for political purpose or to critique the problems in current society" (Bucher 187). Writers choose to write in the science fiction genre to propose answers to these critiques because it possibly offers a safer buffer since science fiction worlds aren't realistic fiction.

For young adult readers, science fiction is a type of reading that can give "an opportunity to escape from the difficulties and tedium of everyday life and enter a world that is based on current science as well as trends and technology" (Bucher 186). Since many young adults today thrive on technology, science fiction would seem to be a logical reading choice for a majority of them. If well-written, science fiction usually "both warns and teaches readers to build the future they want, based on logic and knowledge" (Bucher 187). Young adult science fiction could be the perfect platform to inform young readers concerning social aspects of their contemporary society and how to analytically examine the outcomes of future choices for that society.

Dystopian literature has "served as a prophetic vehicle, the canary in the cage, for writers with an ethical and political concern for warning us of terrible sociopolitical tendencies that could, if continued, turn our contemporary world into the iron cages portrayed in the realm of utopia's underside" (Baccolini 2). World War II "seemingly caused science fiction writers to suddenly emerge as rebels and prophets, and science fiction became the vehicle for social criticism" (Bloch 101-2). Writers began to provide warnings that the "future might in fact be dark indeed" (Booker "On" 3).

One must assume that, as readers, we should be aware of the world in which we live so that societies that build in literature do not replicate in the real world. This, of course, has happened in history before. There have been totalitarian leaders in history, and there are totalitarian leaders in power throughout the world right now. Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin were leaders of totalitarian regimes. North Korea is still under totalitarian rule (Encyclopedia Online), as is Burma (Myanmar) (Kurlantzick Online; MNT Online). For characteristics of a totalitarian regime, which is one of the prevalent characteristics of dystopian literature today, see Table 2.

Table 2: Totalitarian Regime Characteristics

Totalitarian Regime Characteristics
A one party state with "hegemony over the secret police, and a monopoly over economic, cultural and informational sources"
A "technological basis to centralized power"
A "willingness to destroy large numbers of domestic 'enemies' in the name of the goals of the regime"
A "use of 'total terror' to intimidate the population and ensure complete loyalty"
A "willingness of the regime to annihilate all boundaries between the individual and the party/state, by destroying most intermediary organizations and politicizing any which remain"
A "'totalist' philosophy or ideology which demands absolute loyalty and sacrifice, and the absolute submission of the citizen to the party/state; leaving no part of life unpoliticized"
A cult of leadership

(Chart compiled from Claeys 119-20)

Dystopian literature "can be seen as the epitome of literature in its role as social criticism" (Booker "Introduction" *Dystopian* 3). It is literature that:

> situates itself in direct opposition to utopian thought, warning against the potential negative consequences of arrant utopianism. At the same time, dystopian literature generally also constitutes a critique of existing social conditions or political systems, either through the critical examination of the utopian premises upon which those conditions and systems are based or through the imaginative extension of those conditions and systems into

different contexts that more clearly reveal their flaws and contradictions. (Booker "Introduction" *Dystopian* 3)

In general, dystopian fiction differs from science fiction in the specificity of its attention to social and political critique" (Booker "Introduction" *The* 19), and "the modern turn to dystopian fiction is largely attributable to perceived inadequacies in existing social and political systems" (20). The Hunger Games trilogy is most assuredly a volume of works that exemplifies social commentary in many forms. Dystopias "present worst-case-scenario futures—proto-fascist, racist, sexist US police states and ecological crisis—as the backdrop for…characters' struggles for survival" (Rogan 313).

In a totalitarian regime, there is a one-party state with "hegemony over the secret police, and a monopoly over economic, cultural and informational sources" with a "technological basis to centralized power" (Claeys 119). This is true in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. In the trilogy, the police are referred to as Peacekeepers. They are the people with the authority within the districts who are supposed to keep order. The Peacekeepers in Twelve are almost as hungry as the residents, so they usually turn a blind eye to any illegal hunting, even though it means that residents are armed (*The* 5-6). Rue tells Katniss that a Peacekeeper killed a mentally handicapped boy for eating food he grew in District 11 (202; 204). When Katniss and Peeta are on the Victory Tour, and the old man in District 11 does Rue's salute to Katniss, the Peacekeepers shoot him in the head in front of the crowd (*Catching* 61-2). After they return from the Tour, new Peacekeepers are sent to District 12, and Gale is tortured for hunting (104-5). Darius, the old Head Peacekeeper, is made an Avox (a person whose tongue is cut out as

punishment) for not being a good enough Head Peacekeeper (217). The Peacekeepers are cruel, vicious people on the Capitol's payroll.

The Capitol also has a monopoly over all resources—cultural, agricultural, economic, and informational. Each district has a specific industry (see Appendix A), and each district is surrounded by a large barbed wire, usually electrified fence and some with watchtowers (*Catching* 55; 157). The Capitol's aim is to keep the districts separate so that they cannot share resources and power. The Capitol also has, until the rebellion at least, sole control over the television broadcasts. From the Reaping to the actual Games, every part of The Hunger Games is treated the way the world today might treat the Olympics or a celebrity reality show (*The* 19; 124-130), and there are times that the citizens of Panem are told they have to watch televised programs, such as when the Quarter Quell is announced (*Catching* 169-73). Footage of the ruins of District 13's Justice Building, which still smolder from the toxic bombs, plays randomly for people who have a television to keep on all the time to watch (Collins *The* 83).

***The Hunger Games* Trilogy**

Characteristics of dystopian literature, besides having totalitarian regimes in place, center on the protagonist and his or her life. Dystopian stories are often centered on survival, oppression, and rebellion (Kendall Online). In *The Hunger Games,* Katniss Everdeen has to do many things for survival. One of them is "trespass" in the woods surrounding District 12 so that she, her mother, and her sister always have sufficient food (Collins *The* 5). Because her father is dead, and her family is poor, Katniss has to enter her name in the tesserae, which is one "meager year's supply of grain and oil for one person" (13). For each extra time, you enter your name into the Hunger Games' Reaping.

The entries are cumulative for each year you enter, so in the novel, Katniss's name is in the Reaping twenty times (13), although that is not why she is chosen for the Hunger Games—she volunteers to save her sister (whose name is only in the Reaping pool once). In addition, she has to fight for her life in not one, but two Hunger Games against twenty-three other tributes. This most assuredly illustrates the dystopian characteristic of survival.

Standard of living for the upper classes in dystopian societies is usually opulent, while the middle and lower class people struggle to survive, usually on a level much worse than anything seen in contemporary American society (Kendall Online). People in Katniss's district have survived on wild dog soup (Collins *The* 11), while others in the district have died of starvation, although starvation "is never the cause of death officially. It's always the flu, or exposure, or pneumonia. But that fools no one" (28). In contrast, the people in the Capitol, and by extension on the Capitol's train, have hot, running water, a convenience people in the Seam only have if they "boil it" and Katniss has never had a shower before (42). In the Capitol, people have elaborately dyed hair or humungous wigs (18), dye their skin every shade of the rainbow, have glittering tattoos (62), and eat and drink as much as they want at parties because a bit of a special tonic allows them to throw it up and start all over again (*Catching* 79*)*. The difference in lifestyles is so drastic that Katniss remarks they are "so unlike people" (*The* 62). And truly, the opulence that these people are used to makes them a different class of people from the people in the districts altogether, and that is the point.

The protagonist in dystopian literature is sometimes referred to as the hero, and there can be variations on this protagonist. The protagonist (a) can feel intuitively that

something is wrong with the society and set out to change it, because he or she believes that it is possible to overthrow a dictatorship, or simply escape the misery in which he or she lives; (b) may sometimes think the world in which he or she lives is bad, but does not really think there is much he or she can do about it; at other times, he or she may think that things are not so horrible where he or she lives and that things should be left alone; or (c) "is the high-standing, accepted hero, who is part of the Utopian perception of the dystopia, but eventually discovers or comes to understand how wrong society has become and either attempts to change it or destroy it" (*What* Online). In *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Katniss exhibits the second type of protagonist, the one who sometimes thinks the world in which he or she lives is bad, but does not really think there is much he or she can do about it (*What* Online). At the beginning of the first novel, Katniss's friend Gale urges her to "leave" before the reaping (*The* 10), and Katniss feels like the "conversation [is] all wrong" (10). Even though she does not like living at the edge of starvation, she wants to know how they could survive with all his brothers and sisters and her mother and sister in the wild. It seems too enormous a task to try when they have relative safety in District 12. The protagonist meets the person in charge of the dystopia (NCTE Online; Kendall Online). President Snow shows up at Katniss's house and threatens her because she "outsmarted his sadistic Hunger Games, made the Capitol look foolish, and consequently undermined his control" (*Catching* 18). "A counter-narrative develops as the dystopian citizen moves from apparent contentment into an experience of alienation and resistance" (Baccolini 5). This happens after President Snow threatens Katniss and everyone she loves, and after the new Peacemaker in the district tortures Gale, she finally realizes that things are not going to change in Panem until someone does something about

it. She tells Haymitch, "I want to start an uprising" (*Catching* 127). Eventually, the protagonist also puts his or her hope in a person or a group of people who are not under the leader's control (NCTE Online; Kendall Online). President Coin is the President of District 13, which was bombed, but only on the surface. District 13's residents have been living underground for seventy-five years, waiting for the right time to strike back at the Capitol. They made a deal with the Capitol during the Dark Days, when the rebels from Thirteen were able to take control of the government. They aimed nuclear weapons at the Capitol and struck a deal: "They would play dead in exchange for being left alone" (*Mockingjay* 17). Another aspect is that the people who are not under the leader's control were once a part of the world where the protagonist lives, but they have now escaped or were exiled (*What* Online). For Katniss, these people are the rebels, led by President Coin and somewhat by Gamemaker Plutarch Heavensbee. Plutarch tells Katniss, "you are the mockingjay, Katniss. While you live, the revolution lives" (*Catching* 386), and though she is reluctant to be the symbol of the revolution, she finally realizes it the least of all evils (*Mockingjay* 31). "The dystopian protagonist's resistance often begins with a verbal confrontation and the reappropriation of language since s/he is generally prohibited from using language" (Baccolini 6). In District 8, when there is a sneak bomb attack on a hospital of wounded men, women, and children, Katniss shoots a propos (a propaganda video) with a message for Snow: "Fire is catching! And if we burn, you burn with us!" (*Mockingjay* 100). The text of a dystopian novel doesn't usually have a happy ending, but the young adult dystopian protagonist is more successful than protagonists in adult dystopias in overthrowing oppressive regimes (Booker "On" 14), or escaping from the world where he or she was being tyrannized. When Katniss realizes

that it was probably District 13 and not the Capitol that killed the children, and consequently Prim, in front of Snow's mansion, instead of assassinating Snow as she was supposed to do, she kills Coin instead (*Mockingjay* 360; 372). When her trial is over, and they let her live since they might need her should "another [war] spring up" (378). At the end of the novel, you see Katniss watching two children playing in the meadow: hers and Peeta's children. She knows she will have to tell them about everything one day, such as why she has nightmares, or why she still has to catalog things in her head repetitively, like a game. But, her final comment is that "there are much worse games to play" (390) than listing the good things people do in life, much worse games, and she's lived them.

As you can see, dystopian literature "provides a very accurate mirror of our own problems, and of our own beliefs which fail to solve these problems. Gazing into that mirror, we all might find it profitable to indulge in a bit of reflection" (Bloch 121). *The Hunger Games* trilogy characterizes dystopic literature wonderfully.

Chapter 3: Feminist Social Commentary: Katniss and Panem

While feminist criticism "examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women" (Tyson 83), science fiction feminist writers have "contributed to the development of literary theory that incorporates s[cience]f[iction] and gender" (Donawerth 222). These stories explore new worlds, create needed social machinery, and evaluate technology, but are not just stories "'about…Man and women' but 'myths of human intelligence and adaptability'" (Donawerth 222). The feminist critical dystopia is a subgenre of literary utopianism, and "has become a major form of expression of women's hopes and fears [in] the dystopian genre" (Cavalcanti 47). By using the feminist critical dystopia as a feminist critique, many writers are able to express the problems still evident in today's patriarchal society and supply hope for how those problems can change in the future.

History and Background

As the twentieth century dawned, the feminist utopia broadened. Bartkowski explains: "The shift in perspective from the late nineteenth- to late twentieth-century utopian critiques is the shift from capitalism and its discontents to patriarchy" (Roberts *A* 67). Novels stress issues of "mothering and relationships" (77) as well as a use of "postapocalyptic setting to valorize female power" (109), and "the woman healer [who] triumphs in this landscape of adversity" (110). In *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Suzanne Collins creates a feminist social commentary of today's contemporary world that not only valorizes female power in Katniss Everdeen, but exemplifies how a female such as Katniss, who does not conform to normative gender roles, can heal a broken world.

Since the publication of the *Twilight* series, there has been an onslaught of young adult romances where the protagonist is a female who has to be rescued by the male. Indeed, not only does she have to be rescued by him, she usually falls in love with him for no discernable reason other than his good looks, and there is always some reason that he is dangerous to or for her. In *Twilight*, Edward wants to drink Bella's blood because it is described as his own personal crack. She is placed in peril several times throughout the trilogy and cannot save herself until she is turned into a vampire, which happens when she is dying during childbirth—another moment of intense peril for her since she is having a half vampire/half human hybrid child. In *The Iron King* series, Meghan is the daughter of Oberon, king of the Summer Fairies, and falls in love with the prince from the Winter Fairie court. Meghan is told when she enters Fairy land not to make any deals with any fairies, yet she does, repeatedly, and Prince Ash has to save her, repeatedly, from dragons and iron horses and all sorts of other perilous beasts. In the *Fallen* series, Luce falls in love with Daniel, who is a fallen angel. She, in fact, has fallen in love with him lifetime after lifetime of hers until she realizes that he is a fallen angel, and when that fact is revealed to the Luce-character-in-the-past, she is killed because of Daniel's transgressions, and Luce's soul is recycled to a new body until Daniel can find her again and try to save her from being horribly killed over and over again, and there is nothing that she can do about it.

The female who has to be rescued is a classic trope that has been around for ages, but just because a trope has been around forever does not mean it should be perpetuated. These female protagonists are not empowered, and some have no confidence at all. They are not very good role models for young girls in society today. Consequently, this new

fiction that valorizes female power is "doubly welcome; the best of it has enthralled its young readers while also providing powerful role models for them" (Brown 25). Girls in society today should look towards gaining empowerment, and empowerment has, as Brown notes, girls "gaining confidence in themselves" (Brown 27). When describing women in science fiction and fantasy movies, novels, and video games, Ghezal Hamidi notes "it's not quantity we're after. What we all want, and should strive for, is better quality in the way women are included" (Hamidi Online). Truthfully, "as more female authors write quality science fiction and the number of strong female characters in these works begins to grow, this gender-related preference is beginning to change" (Bucher 204), and stronger female protagonists are beginning to emerge.

Women in sci-fi and fantasy movies and games "are often provocatively dressed, one dimensional, and only intended to augment the role of the male lead" (Hamidi Online). It is not difficult to discern why *The Hunger Games*, albeit a novel and not a movie or game, garnered an American Library Association's Amelia Bloomer recommendation for feminist fiction (Henthorne 18). In the novel, the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, is a champion of feminist critics as she breaks patriarchal boundaries. Traditionally, throughout literature and character development of females in literature, female characters were not supposed to challenge authority directly, while some might argue that the literature has given them "fewer opportunities for rebellion" (Lem 120). Many critics have called for more characters like the early Jo of *Little Women*, the Jo before she married, because many believed she lost "some of her willfulness and individuality" when the marriage occurred (Lem 120). Judy Simons refers to these characters as "literary tomboys" who display "gender dissidence" because girls need an

alternative means of fulfillment that "traditional 'gender propriety' curtails" (Lem 120). Empowered female characters are what Simons is calling for. And "empowerment often occurs only after some overt act of rejection or rebellion against the status quo" (Brown 28). Unless the narrative gives voice for such a rebellion against the status quo, such empowerment is never going to happen. Katniss Everdeen is a female protagonist who defies normative gender roles, and yet is still a caring, empathetic individual who adheres to the feminine care ethic. She does not conform to the traditional love triangle that so many young adult series fall prey to, but she brings hope to the future of the world through the children she has at the end of the series.

Stereotypical Male-Identified Qualities

What is interesting about Katniss Everdeen is that she exhibits both masculine and feminine qualities. "Male-identified qualities such as 'control, strength, competitiveness, toughness, coolness under pressure, logic, forcefulness, decisiveness, rationality, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and control over any emotion that interferes with other core values (such as invulnerability)' are viewed as valuable, worthy of achievement and emulation, and are culturally rewarded" (Lem 122). Contrasted with the male-identified qualities are the qualities traditionally associated with femininity: "cooperation, mutuality, sharing, compassion, caring, vulnerability, a readiness to negotiate and compromise, emotional expressiveness, and intuitive and other nonlinear ways of thinking" (Lem 122). "As a 'male-identified' female character, Katniss capitalizes on patriarchal values that privilege traditionally masculine characteristics while leveraging other, gender-appropriate qualities in ways that appeal to all readers (Lem 118).

Katniss exemplifies the stereotypically male-identified qualities that Lem

outlines, such as control over one's emotions, forcefulness, coolness under pressure, rationality, and logic thinking (Lem 122). Katniss shows extreme control over her emotions when she will not cry after she volunteers for Tribute. "'Prim let go,' I say harshly because this is upsetting me and I don't want to cry. When they televise the replay of the reapings tonight, everyone will make note of my tears, and I'll be marked as an easy target" (Collins *The* 23). She is also very forceful in her ideals. When thinking about her family she says "I kept us alive" (Collins *The* 51), and there is a great deal of pride in that statement. But the most striking male-identified qualities that Katniss possesses are her logic, coolness under pressure, rationality, strength, self-sufficiency and autonomy (Lem 122).

Katniss is pragmatic and analytical (Henthorne 82-3). Practicality is something that Katniss does not lack. Her pragmatic mind tried to drown Buttercup the cat when Prim brought him home because the last thing she "needed was another mouth to feed" (Collins *The* 3). When Peeta Mellark is chosen as the male tribute, and Katniss remembers that he is the boy that gave her hope when she was destitute, she truly feels for a moment as if the odds are *not* in her favor, but then pragmatically thinks "*There will be twenty-four of us. Odds are someone else will kill him before I do"* (33). And even though she has been hunting outside the fence of District 12 for five years, she always listens for the hum that would indicate that the electricity has been reactivated before crossing the boundary (*Catching* 6). After the rebellion and the regimes have ended, she also has the idea for the logbook where she and Peeta and Haymitch put "all the details it would be a crime to forget" (*Mockingjay* 387) concerning every person that died related to the Games she and Peeta were in, the rebellion, and every Tribute Haymitch was

forced to mentor. These examples of pragmatism, of practicality, are something that Katniss exhibits throughout the entire trilogy. These are reasonable, rational, and serviceable thought processes and actions that reveal the nuances of her character.

She is also, in addition to being pragmatic, analytical. In her first Games, she decodes Haymitch's messages about what to do with Peeta by the gifts he sends (Collins *The* 261), and figures out that Haymitch will not send her water because she is close to finding it on her own (169). Her mother's plant book that her father added to not only saved her life when she, Prim, and her mother were starving (Collins *The* 50), but the book also enables her to recognize nightlock later in the novel (318). This saves her life and Peeta's (345). When Rue comments that the Careers are not hungry, Katniss realizes that for the first time in the Games, she has a "plan that isn't motivated by the need for flight and evasion. An offensive plan" (Collins *The* 207). The Careers are the Tributes that usually volunteer for the Games and are from the wealthier districts. For most of their lives they have been better fed, and even though it is technically against the rules, they have trained before they volunteer for the Games. Most Careers are from District 2. For a detailed look at the wealthiest districts and industries in each district, see Appendix A. The fact that she goes on the offensive is not something the Careers expect at all, and it does upset the balance of the Games for the Careers.

By watching Foxface navigate the landmines around the Careers' food, she realizes how to sever the rope to free the apples and blow up the food supply (220-221). In her second Games, she remembers Haymitch's words to her about who is her real enemy (*Catching* 378). She can access who uses strength versus strategy versus evasion among her opponents (Coats "Complicating" 152). She knows that Foxface is not strong,

but that she is crafty, whereas Thresh is extremely strong and agile, and that Cato seems to be strong and cunning. She watches people the same way she watches prey in the woods. She also moves between conjecture, observation, and action "to escape the Quarter Quell arena by bringing down the force field" (Henthorne 85). And it is through her analytical thinking that she realizes Prim was killed by the death traps made in District 13 (Collins *Mockingjay* 357). By being inside Katniss's mind, the reader is able to glimpse the cognitive processes of her analytical mind as she turns over the problems and possible solutions to each and every situation she is in. "Katniss's penchant for acting upon a hypothesis, assessing the results, and then rehypothesizing serve her again and again" (Henthorne 83). Without her analytical mind, she would be another helpless female protagonist, but with it, she emerges as a new type of protagonist for the 21st century.

Mentally, Katniss is as strong as any man, although living in a patriarchal society makes her doubt herself at times. After her father is killed, her mother becomes depressed. The family is starving, and Katniss is afraid that she and Prim will be sent to a community home, where the children are often beaten. "I could never let that happen to Prim…So I kept our predicament a secret" (Collins *The* 27). She makes sure that she and Prim are clean before they leave for school each day, and even though they eventually get to the point of starvation, she pulls them out of it. Gale's father is dead as well, and although his mother is not depressed, Gale is male, and being male in a patriarchal society gives one an advantage. Because of his maleness, Gale probably had less fear that his siblings would be taken away from him than Katniss did that Prim would be taken away. She is female and he is male, and in a patriarchal society female means

lesser, and less able to take care of younger siblings in a situation of this nature, so she had to hide things and scrape by in order to keep her family intact. "If it had become known that our mother could no longer care for us, the district would have taken us away from her" (27) is how Katniss phrases it. One can assume that Gale and his mother would have been in the same predicament. Hazelle washes clothes. Katniss's mother, when she finally pulls herself out of her depression, acts as community doctor or nurse. Surely, Katniss's mother would have made more money or barters from people by doing that type of work than Hazelle would have washing clothes in an impoverished district. Yet, Katniss is "terrified" that she and Prim will be taken away (27). However, after thinking through the situation, she realizes that she is not weak and not pitied. "What effect do I have? That I'm weak and needy?...my game is first-class. No one pitied me" (Collins *The* 91)! By realizing that no one pitied her, and that she was able to pull herself out of the situation, Katniss knows that she was strong enough mentally to get the job done.

When she volunteers for Tribute, facing almost certain death, she does not cry. "I have just enough time to release the small, choked sound in my throat and compose myself. I put my hands behind my back and stare into the distance" (Collins *The* 25). The fortitude to remain emotionless is not something one would usually equate with a woman since women are stereotypically "emotional" (Lem 122). During the interviews before the Games, Caesar Flickerman tells her that the crowds love her spirit. She thinks, "My spirit. I'm not sure exactly what it means, but it suggests I'm a fighter. In a sort of brave way" (Collins *The* 121-2). Her mental fortitude does make her brave. If she was not mentally strong, she would not have volunteered for Prim in the first place, let alone

led a rebellion. Peeta's brothers did not volunteer to take his place. It is very rare for anyone to volunteer for Tribute unless it is a Career (22). She even admits when she is standing on the stage, "What I did was a radical thing" (26). However, Katniss does not think that she is brave, or radical, or an extremely different type of person. She is just protecting her sister. The fact that she is not conceited is another credit to her. Additionally, she does not run away when she sees Peeta's leg wound like she did so many years ago when the burn victim was brought to her mother and Prim (Collins *The* 256). Katniss knows that she has to keep Peeta alive in order to stay alive herself. She mentally girds herself against the revulsion and horror she feels against the wound to assist him so that she can help herself. Moreover, Katniss is stubborn (Collins *The* 275). While people might usually view being stubborn as a negative trait, Katniss's stubborn traits enable her to drug Peeta and make it to the feast so that she can get his medicine. The medicine makes him better, and enables him to make it to the end of the game with her.

During the Games, after a fireball has hit her leg, Katniss is in agony, but she does not stop. She finds water, she keeps going, and eventually, she is sent medicine. She knows that "Pity does not get you aid. Admiration at your refusal to give in does" (Collins *The* 179). Her mental capacity to keep going when the odds are against her is proven time and time again throughout the series, but she never seems to realize the effect her determination has on people. Peeta even comments upon this before the Games. This is the reason that Katniss is made the symbolic Mockingjay. She is so mentally strong, she *does not* realize the effect she has on people, and that is the reason the rebellion needs her on their side. Ironically, "Katniss's ingenuity, cleverness, quick

and strategic thinking ultimately" (Lem 124) saves the lives of everyone in Panem when she kills Coin. Her mental capabilities enable her to prevail through tough situations.

Not only is Katniss mentally strong, she's physically strong as well. During the training sessions, she examines the other Tributes. "While I'm thin, I'm strong. The meat and plants from the woods combined with the exertion it took to get them have given me a healthier body than most of those I see around me" (Collins *The* 94). She knows she is strong because she has worked hard to bring home the meat for her family. During the Games, Katniss is able to scale a tree like a squirrel, leaving the Careers and Peeta far away on the ground (Collins *The* 181). While this is mostly due to her slight frame, according to her, it is also from the strength of practice. "You have to know where you place your hands and feet" (182). If Katniss had not been in the woods for the past five years hunting and gathering, she would probably have been killed by the Careers at that moment. "Before the games, she is her family's hunter and gatherer, so she uses her prowess with a bow and arrow to survive in the arena" (Coats "Complicating" 152). Katniss feels she is good with a bow and arrow, but Peeta declares that she is "excellent" to which her suspicion is aroused. "Don't underrate yourself," (Collins *The* 89) Haymitch tells her. Women in patriarchal societies constantly underrate themselves in situations, whether it be the workplace, education, or relationships because girls have been programmed to fail (Tyson 87), and for someone that Katniss is not sure she trusts to endorse her makes her extremely suspicious. Why would Peeta, and then Haymitch, stand up for her when no one else has before? And, as any female would, Katniss begins to question: He "obviously meant to demean me. Right? But a tiny part of me wonders if this was a compliment. That he meant I was appealing in some way"

(Collins *The* 93). She decides to persevere, though, and does not underrate herself. She cuts down the tracker jacker nest (Collins *The* 190), goes back for the bow and arrows even though she is hallucinating from the tracker jacker venom (Collins *The* 192), gets Peeta into the stream to clean his leg wound, even though she has to roll him (Collins *The* 253) and tourniquets his leg on top of the Cornucopia so he does not bleed to death (Collins *The* 338). These are physical feats that Katniss completes without thinking twice. By completing these tasks, she is either helping save herself, or Peeta. "Katniss's skill and fortitude—both in self-preservation and in mercy—drive the narrative" (Lem 123). These feats of physical strength illustrate that Katniss is a force to be reckoned with.

Not only is Katniss strong and intelligent, she's independent as well. Her independent nature, unfortunately for President Snow, leads to rebellion. "Rebelliousness and defiance are closely associated in our culture with masculinity and tend to be discouraged for women. But Katniss knows her objectives and trusts her instincts, refusing to blindly follow authority" (Miller 148). Haymitch lets Katniss know that the people of Panem want to know about her, but she balks. "But I don't want them to! They're already taking my future! They can't have the things that mattered to me in the past" (Collins *The* 117). Her refusal to subject herself to the authority of the people and the sway they could have for her in the Games is very much a part of her independent personality. She does not want them to know who she truly is inside because they do not deserve to know. In the first Games, she does not want to align with anyone, and only aligns with Rue because Rue reminds her of Prim. In the Quarter Quell, she wants Mags, Beetee, and Wiress to be in her alliance. Like any independent person, she does not want

to rely on others for support unless it absolutely necessary. Even at that, she chooses the physically weakest people to align herself with because she does not want to owe anyone anything.

Maybe one of the most striking scenes in the trilogy to indicate her independent rebelliousness happens even before she enters the arena. It happens during her personal training session:

> Suddenly, I am furious, that with my life on the line, they don't even have the decency to pay attention to me. That I'm being upstaged by a dead pig. My heart starts to pound. I can feel my face burning. Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemakers' table. I hear shouts of alarm as people stumble back. The arrow skewers the apple in the pig's mouth and pins it to the wall behind it. Everyone stares at me in disbelief. 'Thank you for your consideration,' I say. Then I give a slight bow and walk straight toward the exit without being dismissed. (Collins *The* 101-2)

And for her act of rebelliousness, which at the time, was probably viewed as fire or spirit, she earned an 11 out of 12 (108), which was sure to get her sponsorship. Katniss comments at one point that she is "hopping around like some trained dog trying to please people I hate" (Collins *The* 117), which is one of the reasons she pulls the nightlock berries out at the end of the first Games. She knows they have to have a Victor, and if she and Peeta both threaten to kill themselves, she figures that they will have to let them both win (345). And she is right. But what she does not realize is that the country that has been in limbo, on the edge of war, viewed her act as one of "defiance" (*Catching* 21),

although, at the time, she assures President Snow any act of rebellion on her part was accidental and she was just trying to save her life and Peeta's (18). The irony, though, is that saving two lives in The Hunger Games is rebellion, and by doing that, by being independent in nature, Katniss sparked a revolution that she did not know how to control. She wonders, later in the novel, "Who else will be dead if I don't satisfy President Snow" (41)? What Katniss then realizes is that no matter what, Snow cannot be pacified, and the rebellion is going to happen anyway, so she has to do what she has to do to stay alive and keep those that she loves alive. That independent nature keeps her going. "Besides, it isn't in my nature to go down without a fight, even when things seem insurmountable" (Collins *The* 36). And she does not give up, although, at times, in the trilogy she wants to. She even tries to commit suicide at one point. But, because she is independent, Katniss eventually pulls herself back. However, her actions fueled the revolution, and because of that, "she can be regarded as a radical figure, one that challenges the ideological foundation of Panem itself" (Henthorne 45).

Panem and Normative Gender Roles

Sex and gender are two different socially constructed categories. "According to Foucault, Western cultures have separated sexuality from sex as a way to regulate it" (Trites 86). Girls are dressed in pink, and boys are dressed in blue from a very young age. "Identity politics are a social construction. That is, they are defined by discourse, not biology. Social constructions play a determining role in how we perceive ourselves politically. Gender, it has been argued, is a political construct, constructed to repress women" (Trites 46). Boys are given military toys to play with to promote manliness and aggression, while girls are given dolls to promote nurturing. "In Western civilization, for

example, caring for dependents, preparing family meals, wearing make up, and being empathetic are considered feminine, whereas bread-winning, making household repairs, building muscle, and being protective are considered masculine" (Miller 150). If a man cooks, or wears makeup, society tends to think of him as less manly, or possibly gay. If a woman works construction or is a female body builder, she is usually not considered an ideal female specimen by the status quo of society.

Katniss "is [an] emergent critical thinker grappling with numerous injustices contextualized by her gender" (Coats "Complicating" 152). In his book, *The Gender Knot,* Allan Johnson writes that "society is patriarchal to the extent that it 'promotes male privilege by being *male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered*" (Lem 121). While it appears that women and men serve like "roles of power in the Hunger Games trilogy" (Arrow 95), appearances can be deceiving. "According to Simone Beauvoir, it's in being gendered, or limited to what's defined, as feminine, that women are positioned as not just different from men but also inferior to them. Women are positioned as the 'other,' lacking agency and the ability to make choices and impose them on the world" (Miller 151). More so than other women of her district and nation, Katniss is aware that as a female, she will lack agency in her society unless she fights for it.

In District 12, women seem to usually work in the home, taking care of the children, while the men work in the mines. The exception is if the family owns a shop. This holds true for the other districts as well, except maybe for District 11's agricultural and District 8's factory work, and if women are teachers, such as District 8's Twill, or nurses, such as Katniss's mother, which are traditional "female" occupations. There are female miners in District 12, such as Bristel, but even from what little detail Katniss

gives us about the miners, the numbers seem to be overwhelmingly male (Arrow 49-50). If Panem is a society where men and women truly hold like power, why do more women not work in the mines? It is because Panem is not a society where men and women hold like power. It is a patriarchal society, and District 12, especially, is being used as a social commentary for how some women in the contemporary world mirror the women in District 12. "The Capitol uses social and economic class to create division between the districts. Being the most affluent, Districts 1, 2, and 4" (Henthorne 47) are generally hated by all the other districts, and the other districts usually disregard District 12, which is the poorest district. By separating the districts, not only by barbed wire, but by economic standing, the Capitol has created a class structure that it hopes is very difficult to break, even if the barbed wire were ever to come down, furthering the power of the state, and thus, the patriarchy.

Of course, "the ways in which women are differentiated from men in [the] trilogy might seem unremarkable since it reflects the gender norms of the culture in which [we] live" (Henthorne 48). Women are still paid "roughly between fifty-five and eighty cents, depending on ethnicity and age, for every dollar earned by men" in America" (Tyson 85). The Hunger "Games…are constructed so as to reinforce patriarchy as well, not only separating male from female, but privileging the former" (Henthorne 49-50). There are more boy Victors than female victors, and two Districts have only one female Victor alive—District 7 and District 12 (Catching Fire 191). While females do win The Hunger Games, it seems that males win more often. Is this because they have a greater physical strength than most female Tributes? Do the jobs that the male Tributes have in the districts give them an advantage? Regardless, fewer females make it out of the arena

alive. In today's contemporary society, women wear make up and fancy clothes and men are make up free and wear suits. "In our culture, gender differences can be seen in the application of makeup and in the types of cosmetic surgeries women and men undergo . . . . But in the Capitol, it's all the same for women and men" (Miller 153). Gender may be more fluid in Panem, especially in the Capitol (Arrow 108). "Like all the other district pairs, Katniss and Peeta dress identically for the opening ceremonies. The best-looking tributes—and not just the best-looking *females*—are rewarded with sponsorships" (Miller 153). But, as we know, people in the Capitol have more freedom than people in the districts.

In Panem, women are "expected to be wives and mothers first, entering the working world only rarely and then in only a certain set of vocations (Henthorne 48). "Gender proves to be one of the most effective means the Capitol has of dividing people against each other within districts, proscribing not just different vocations but different behaviors for men and women" (Henthorne 47). Nowhere in the districts would it be necessary for a male to be a fashion designer or a member of a prep team as Cinna and Flavius are. However, in the Capitol, those types of jobs are coveted. Effie Trinket does not seem to have family ties of any kind and is able to flit around the country with her Tributes and go from party to party. But even "rich and famous victors like Katniss are limited in what they are allowed to do. Katniss, like all survivors of the Games, is forced to develop a 'talent' that she can talk about when interviewed, and the list of the talents the Capitol provides for her" (Henthorne 48) includes stereotypical female duties. Katniss relates "I don't have a talent, unless you count hunting illegally, which they don't …Cooking, flower arranging, playing the flute. None of them took" (Collins *Catching*

39). Collins juxtaposes stereotypical female duties—cooking and flower arranging—of which Katniss could care less, with a traditional male pastime—hunting—of which she is actually passionate about to illustrate her difference from most females around her.

This is contrasted to District 13, which has long been separate from the rest of Panem, yet keeps its original name. "District 13 seems especially gender-neutral, with no distinction between women and men in either their wardrobes or their roles (Miller 153). Coin is the President, and she is every bit as conniving and heartless as President Snow is. Ironically, even though her name means nourishing (Frankel, ch. 4) or giving to the poor (Dictionary "Alms" Online), Alma Coin is not a nourishing or beneficial person for District 13 to have as its leader, since she plans to implement the same type of government that President Snow already has in place when she takes power. Everyone over the age of fourteen, boy or girl, is addressed as Solider, and women and men assume the same duties when their units are sent on combat missions" (Miller 153). The only concern that District 13 seems to have for a woman is for Katniss, and that is because she is the Mockingjay, and could die, which would harm the rebel cause (Collins *Mockingjay* 76). "Compare this to the United States, where women make up only about 20 percent of the military and are officially excluded from direct combat (Miller 153-4). It seems in America, it does not matter if you are pregnant or not, you are almost treated as if you are just because you have a womb. Even though Katniss is told not to go into combat, she does (Collins *Mockingjay* 97), and is slightly successful, although she has no training, which furthers Collins' social commentary on the patriarchal world as a whole. Given training, women can be just as competent as men on the battlefield. District 13 is an example in the novel to illustrate that a part of Panem does exist where men and women

can be equal, even though things are still not perfect there, either.

While Katniss does possess many qualities that are usually attributed to masculinity, she is also endowed with many feminine qualities as well. She is a healer. She nurses Peeta in the cave and tourniquets his leg. She mothers Rue and protects Prim. She constantly doubts her feelings about Peeta and Gale. She thinks she should apologize to the Gamemakers when she shoots the arrow into the pig. But, the focus here will be on Katniss's empathy, which goes hand in hand with the feminine care ethic.

Feminist Care Ethics in *The Hunger Games* Trilogy

The "most important feminist gesture may be its emphasis on empathy" (Coats "Complicating" 153). Empathy is when you can understand and share the feelings of another person. "Katniss performs every action she undertakes in the entire series for the benefit of someone else" (Arrow 34). "Katniss volunteers to go in Prim's place because her devotion to protecting her sister runs much deeper than anyone in District 12 believes is morally required, not because she's compelled by some abstract moral principle that's equally binding on everyone" (Averill 164). Katniss tells the reader that what she did was "radical" (Collins *The* 26). Some feminist thinkers "argue that the care that motivates Katniss's decisions is [a] valid basis for moral decision making. The moral theory they have developed has come to be known as *feminist care ethics* or simply the *ethics of care* (Averill 165-6).

The feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan refutes Immanuel Kant's moral reasoning in her book *In a Different Voice.* She critiques the work of her mentor, Lawrence Kohlberg, who used the Kantian model of human moral development. While Kohlberg believed that there are several stages that humans go through while becoming

moral, mature, reasoning beings who can apply and understand principles impartially, "men tended to score consistently higher than women on the scale of moral development" (Averill 166) testing. Gilligan did not think that this meant women were beings with inferior moral reasoning. "Instead, she proposed that what this result reveals is that many women simply reason *differently* from the impartial way that philosophers like Kant and psychologists like Kohlberg take as their moral ideal" (Averill 166). She argued that different does not mean bad or inferior, either, and coined the phrase "'justice perspective' to designate the abstract, impartial framework for moral reasoning that Kant and Kohlberg favored" (166-7). An example of this would be the encounter between Thresh and Katniss. Thresh hears Clove saying that Katniss aligned with Rue. Because Katniss was kind to Rue, because she sang to her and covered her, buried her in flowers, and because Thresh knows that Rue, who was only twelve, did not deserve to die, he lets Katniss live "Just this one time" (Collins *The* 288) because it is the just thing to do. Katniss, on the other hand, would probably have let Thresh live unless it had come down to him and her at the end. She even thinks that if she and Peeta cannot win, that she hopes Thresh does, because he is from Rue's district. She would have let him live, regardless (307). The way that Katniss's moral decisions are made is guided by what Gilligan calls the "care perspective" (Averill 167). This is also exemplified by how Gale and Katniss view war. When they are trying to take the Nut, Gale thinks they should start an avalanche and trap everyone inside without giving them a chance to surrender because District 12 was not given a warning. "We watched children burn to death and there was nothing we could do" (Collins *Mockingjay* 204), he passionately yells at Lyme and the others in the room. But Katniss, who knows what mining accidents look like, cannot

condemn the people in the Nut to that. When she tries to appeal to Gale's sense of community, since he is also from Twelve he says, "Is that everyone's problem? That our enemies might have a few hours to reflect on the fact that they're dying instead of just being blown to bits" (205)? Katniss knows that in reality, these are "deeds that can never be reversed" (205), and she wants no part of it. The empathy she feels with the people in the Nut, even though they are the enemy, is very typical of the type of caring a woman would stereotypically have.

The ethical care perspective is more typical of women, and many psychologists and philosophers believe "that the only valid approach to moral reasoning is the justice perspective" (Averill 168), so those psychologists and philosophers "often question or undermine women's moral reasoning ability" (168). When men are confronted with a moral quandary, they seek solutions by focusing on an abstract moral principle. Women faced with the same situation turn attention to, typically, "the concrete responsibilities and emotional bonds that arise out of particular caring relationships" (Averill 168). When Katniss aligns with Rue, Katniss thinks that she "can almost hear Haymitch groaning as I team up with this wispy child. But I want her. Because she's a survivor, and I trust her, and why not admit it? She reminds me of Prim" (Collins *The* 201). Even though Haymitch might not have aligned with Rue for the same reasons, Katniss likens Rue to Prim, and because of that, she wants to protect her. She sees the survivor in Rue, and because she cares for Prim, she comes to care for Rue. "While recognizing the importance of impartial moral rules, the care perspective, or feminist care ethic, never loses sight of the fact that our moral lives aren't lived in the rarefied space of abstract principles, but right here on the ground, where things get messy and complex and

concrete relationships matter" (Averill 168). After her father dies, Katniss is the sole provider for her family, and they are starving. "I couldn't walk into that room with the smoky fire from the damp branches I had scavenged at the edge of the woods after the coal had run out, my hands empty of any hope" (Collins *The* 29). Like many women in the world, Katniss knows that if she fails, she does not just fail herself, she fails her family. She has to provide for Prim. She is devastated to know that she is failing them because they are starving because she loves them.

The belief that people in need deserve "more than just the protection of their rights [and that] their needs should elicit a caring response from those of us who are in a position to help" (Averill 170) is a position of care ethicists. After Gale is tortured, Katniss knows that everyone she loves is in danger. "This is the thing to remember when fear threatens to swallow me up. What I am about to do, whatever any of us are forced to endure, it is for them" (Collins *Catching* 123), Katniss realizes when she decides that she has to fight to help Prim and all the young people of Panem. She knows it is too late to help Rue, but she can make a difference for others. "*Ethical caring* occurs when our memories of past experiences of natural caring—as both givers and recipients of care—help us to recognize the goodness of caring relationships" (Averill 171-2). Katniss tells Peeta that she can "never seem to get over owing" him for the bread he gave her when they were younger, to which he explains that she needs to let it go, that they were just children. He does not understand that the act of giving her bread almost literally brought her back from the dead, and if he had not done that for her then, she would not be here for him now. When she asks him why he did it, he cannot get her to understand that, even then, he was in love with her, even though he will not tell her the words (Collins *The*

293). "And apparently, I have not been as oblivious to him as I imagined either. The flour. The wrestling. I have kept track of the boy with the bread" (Collins *The* 93). Through the trilogy, Peeta opens something in Katniss that was lost when her father died. Although she cares for people, she rarely lets anyone care for her. His love saved her when she was eleven, and it is Peeta's words, although Katniss's actions, that save them at the end of the first Games. The goodness of caring relationships can form bonds that last forever if you will allow yourself to let them. Because Katniss possesses empathy, she is allowed to think "beyond binaries and disrupt the social constructs of both gender and injustice" (Coats "Complicating" 153). Katniss most assuredly is a character that can be applied to the ethics of care principle.

The Unconventional Relationship Between Katniss and Peeta

Furthermore, the trilogy complicates "gender binaries of masculine and feminine in [their] portrayal of war and romance" (Lem 118) and draws from these two "generic traditions (war stories and heterosexual romance) in ways that appeal beyond all gender lines" (Lem 118). The love triangle that many try to see in *The Hunger Games* trilogy between Katniss and Peeta and Gale is not traditional by any young adult standards. "By stripping away some of the conventions of a traditional romance, Collins invites readers of both genders and trans-genders, who might not be apt to favor love stories, to mine the novel for clues about what the characters feel, as opposed to what they must demonstrate for onlookers" (Lem 126).

When Peeta has been hijacked, and he is trying to get his memories back, he and Katniss have a conversation about kissing in the arena. He tells her, "'Didn't seem very genuine on your part. Did you like kissing me?" he asks. 'Sometimes,' I admit. . . .

'What about Gale?...And it was okay with both of us? You kissing the other?' he asks. 'No. It wasn't okay with either of you. But I wasn't asking your permission,' I tell him" (Collins *Mockingjay* 231-2). Katniss's refusal to ask permission to kiss one boy and then the next, and still be seen as pure by not only the audience in the propos but, in truth, by the people that surround her is a staggering feat, not only in the literary world, but in the contemporary world as well. When a girl strings more than one guy along in life, she is traditionally called a tease, or worse. When a boy does the same thing, he is, colloquially, a player, and is not seen as doing anything wrong in the eyes of society. By putting Katniss in this position of power over her love life, Collins has introduced an interesting new trope for the female protagonist.

Katniss, interestingly, is also the one who proposes marriage to Peeta. "Back in our old quarters in the Training Center, I'm the one who suggests the public marriage proposal. Peeta agrees" (Collins *Catching* 73). Although she does not do this with a romantic slant, and more of a pragmatic angle because she thinks it will help save their lives, she is still the one to propose, and Peeta agrees, or, says yes. Having the female propose marriage, even in 21st century America where women are considered extremely liberated, is very rare. Positioning Katniss as the leader in the relationship, while the proposal might be fake, puts her in a great position of power in the relationship. While Katniss may not be overtly sexual, she is also not going to ask permission for whom she wants to love. "She cannot decide which of the two she loves. Katniss recognizes that emotions are not binaries and that empathy is messy. She rejects traditional gender roles, and she loves more than one person, exploding the binaries inherent in classic love triangles" (Coats "Complicating" 153).

Earlier in the novel, Katniss tells Gale, "I always felt wrong kissing him because of you" (Collins *Mockingjay* 197), even though she claims there is nothing romantic between Gale and herself, and she claims that she is not jealous of the girls whispering about Gale at school (*The* 38; 10). Despite her claims, when she is alone in the arena during the first Games, before she reunites with Peeta, she longs for Gale (112), and after she and Peeta are Victors, and Peeta realizes that she was acting out a showmance and leaves her alone, she misses Peeta (373). Katniss refuses to choose either man, so she remains "independent of both, much to their consternation" (Henthorne 32). When they are hiding in Tigris' shop, trying to make it to Snow's mansion, Peeta and Gale have a conversation about Katniss. She is amazed that they are amiable, "almost like friends" (Collins *Mockingjay* 328), and Gale even mentions earlier that things would be easier if he could hate Peeta (*Catching* 185). Peeta asks Gale whom he thinks Katniss will finally choose, and Gale says, "Katniss will pick whomever she thinks she can't live without" (329). This is a very cold assessment. There is no talk of love or devotion in the choosing. Katniss's reaction is that she "can survive just fine without either of them" (330), although the end of the novel eventually belies that comment.

Collins refuses to define Katniss "through her sexuality" (Henthorne 49). When Coin asks whether she wants Gale for her new on screen lover or whether she wants to continue on with the star-crossed lover story she had with Peeta, Katniss is shocked. "The implications that I could so readily dispose of Peeta, that I'm in love with Gale, that the whole thing has been an act…The very notion that I'm devoting any thought to who I want presented as my lover, given our current circumstances, is demeaning" (Collins *Mockingjay* 40). Katniss's anger that anyone should care, let alone dictate, who her lover

is illustrates that Collins is trying to shake things up in the young adult world of love triangles.

However, just because Katniss is not defined by her sexuality, that "is not to suggest that the other characters in the book do not try [to] impose heterosexual norms upon her" (Henthorne 49). It is Peeta who first concocts the story of the star-crossed lovers (Collins *The* 130), although he does it to help Katniss, who Haymitch declares was about as "romantic as dirt" beforehand (135). President Snow makes her wear her wedding dress in the interviews (*Catching* 250). In the Quarter Quell, Finnick mentions her pregnancy (283) and equates it with her emotional outburst.

Despite the fact that people keep trying to pigeonhole her into one category, she keeps hopping around, much like the mockingjays that stop singing when she starts. She will not be pinned down by one definition. She resists "society's expectations and demands by refusing to enter into a genuinely romantic relationship with either Peeta or Gale, a refusal the two men find maddening" (Henthorne 49). Gale, who thinks Katniss will only kiss him when he's in pain, thinks he stands no chance against the hijacked Peeta (Collins *Mockingjay* 197), but Katniss does admit she loves Gale in *Catching Fire* when she kisses him, but right after she thinks this, she says to herself "I really can't think about kissing when I've got a rebellion to incite" (125-6), and then calls Peeta on the phone. As Collins depicts Katniss in this dichotomous relationship with these two boys she further complicates this heroine and the trope of the love triangle that YA literature sees so often.

Despite everything that she has accomplished both in the arena and for the rebellion, people still assume that finding the correct mate is the most important thing to

her. In a patriarchal society like Panem, it is unimaginable that a woman would refuse to subordinate herself to a man and so patriarchy constructs a heteronormative narrative for her" (Henthorne 49). After Katniss has her conversation with Snow and finally realizes that Coin is going to use her to further the totalitarian regime that Panem has lived under for years, she reaches out to Haymitch for help. He, instead of taking her seriously, asks, "What is it, sweetheart? More boy trouble" (Collins *Mockingjay* 362), which leads Katniss to burrow herself into a cocoon of silk dresses, and she comments that she is a "caterpillar in a cocoon awaiting metamorphosis" (363). The seriousness of the situation that she needed to discuss with Haymitch was once again boiled down to her relationship status, as if that is all she ever has on her mind, when, in truth, Katniss always has so much more on her mind that Gale and Peeta.

When Katniss emerges from the closet, she then is submerged in a bath, from metamorphosis to baptism almost. And then, she is prepared by her prep team to assassinate President Snow. However, when she exits the mansion, it is not Snow that she assassinates; it is Coin. With the assassination of Coin, although a woman, and the subsequent death of Snow who chokes on his own blood (Collins *Mockingjay* 364; 372; 373), "patriarchy ends in Panem with the defeat of first the Capitol and then the oppressive regime that would replace it, and, therefore, Katniss is not longer defined by her choice in [a] mate" (Henthorne 61). She is free to choose whomever she pleases because there is no one to tell her who is the right person to choose, or if there is a right person to choose. The Hunger Games, and everything they represent, are dead, and the future, devoid of an oppressive patriarchy, is ahead.

Katniss and Peeta "offer something that Gale and Katniss never could have: a

partnership that helps us imagine an alternative to dominant romance narratives and a way of valuing both masculine and feminine roles, regardless of who fills them" (Miller 159). Some argue that throughout the novels, Katniss and Peeta essentially played the gender role that would be "assumed by the other in Western culture. Katniss is the sole provider for her family; she hunts, she fishes, she's terrible with emotions…Peeta bakes, nurtures Haymitch, nurses a lifelong schoolyard infatuation, and is emotionally self-aware" (Arrow 98). Peeta paints, he is the one who cries when they are reaped, but above all else, Peeta is very introspective, and he loves Katniss. It is through Peeta's love that Katniss is able to come back to herself in the end and rebuild herself. While one bakes and one fishes, one paints and the other hunts, it does not matter. They complete each other, and that type of partnership, an equality of helping each other, is being commented upon in the trilogy as well.

Katniss reveals at the end of the the novel "that 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" (Collins *Mockingjay* 388). With Peeta, whose name is synonymous with bread, with life, who, ironically has mirrored the turmoil of Panem through the entire trilogy (Arrow 225; Frankel, ch. 2), Katniss has found rebirth. Peeta's last name is Mellark. "Mellark might be a portmanteau (or squashing-together) of 'meadowlark,' a nature symbol like so many names of District 12. The lark is a symbol of merriment and joy" (Frankel, ch. 2), creativity, hope, happiness, and good fortune (Arrow 224). At the end of the trilogy, while things are not perfect, the children do bring

hope for a new tomorrow. They play with joy. They are happy, even if their parents do have bad days. Peeta also brings joy and happiness to Katniss.

Traditionally in literature, the male character is the character that is fiery in roles, while the female character is passive and cajoling. Katniss and Peeta turn those roles on their heads. Katniss, while strong and independent, is also empathic. Peeta, while emotive, is physically strong as well, and the only thing he cajoles from her is love. The two are a perfect match in both inner and outer appearances. With Gale, Katniss would have burnt up, her flame extinguished too soon. With Peeta, the Girl Who Was on Fire combines with Boy with the Bread, and like the toasting in District 12 that bonds a couple together in matrimony (Collins *Mockingjay* 249), they're perfect together. And "in the midst of a postapocalyptic scenario…a man and a woman who, despite the obstacles they face…fall in love and bear a child…for hope" (Roberts *A* 111). Katniss claims that it took at least fifteen years for Peeta to convince her to have a child (Collins *Mockingjay* 389). She remained steadfast at the beginning of the trilogy that she never wanted children, but her reasoning was that she could not bear for a child to be reaped and enter the Games, not because she never wanted children at all (*The* 9). She was terrified when she felt the baby inside of her, but "the joy of holding her in" (*Mockingjay* 389) arms tamed the terror.

The hope that the children bring to her life is part of the rebirth that Peeta brings. So, Katniss does not give up. "Instead, she plans to become her children's teacher, using her personal history to prepare them for what may lie ahead. In this way, she maintains her autonomy and identity long after the action of the trilogy has concluded" (DeaVault 197). "I'll tell them how I survive it. I'll tell them that on bad mornings, it feels

impossible to take pleasure in anything because I'm afraid it could be taken away. That's when I make a list in my head of every act of goodness I've seen someone do" (Collins *Mockingjay* 390). By reiterating the good things in life, and how they overpower the bad, Katniss will teach her children how to thrive in the new world.

Katniss has a partner that does not try to change her, but compliments her in every way. "Female characters no longer have to choose between saving the world and attending to maternal duties. Katniss Everdeen is more than capable of accomplishing both" (DeaVault 197). And that is the kind of role model that all females, no matter their age, need in their life.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Suzanne Collins posed this question on YouTube when the first movie in *The Hunger Games* trilogy hit theaters and was receiving backlash for the violence within it: "What do you think about choices your government past or present, or other governments around the world make?...Was there anything that disturbed you because it reflected aspects of your own life, and what can you do about it"(Harris Online)? And while she was referencing violence, the concentration of this paper has been the social commentary of women within the context of an adolescent dystopian novel.

What if you lived in a world where you were forced to wear a confining garment that covered your entire body? There is only a tiny slit for you to see out of, and it is difficult to breathe at times in this garment, but if you do not wear this garment in public, you face persecution including physical and mental abuse. What if you lived in a society where your sexual freedom is taken away, and the organs associated with that freedom were mutilated beyond visual comprehension to guarantee your purity? What if you were a man and these things happened to you? These types of atrocities happen to girls and women all over the world every day, and yet, there is very little done to stop these things from happening. "Telling a story in a futuristic world gives you this freedom to explore things that bother you in contemporary times" (Hudson Online) Collins has said.

Because of the age frame of young adult readers, the literature they read "exerts a powerful influence over its readers at a particularly malleable time in their identity formation" (Coats "Young" 315-6). And in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, the monsters that Katniss faces are of the social order (Arrow 128). A social commentary on how "the state apparatus controls the social order and keeps it running" (Baccolini 5) through the

vehicle of a young adult novel is a genius idea. One "might say that adolescents are at a threshold of emotionally engaged understanding that makes them particularly susceptible to the development of a generative identity, especially if that kind of identity support is found in their cultural and artistic artifacts" (Coats "Young" 327). If a young adult can read about the injustices found in novels like *The Hunger Games* trilogy and question those same injustices in their own societies, it's possible that revolutions of a peaceful nature can start to happen toward change.

Why did Collins choose a female protagonist? "Having a female protagonist in a gladiator story, which traditionally features a male [is] an unexpected choice" (Hudson Online), she openly admits, but also confirms that whenever she writes a story, she hopes it appeals to both boys and girls (Hudson Online). And if a male protagonist had volunteered for Prim, the plot would have been the same as mentioned earlier—another male rescuing another female. Katniss is different. She rescues. She fights. She survives. Not only did *The Hunger Games* trilogy appeal to boys and girls because Katniss is a female character who does not conform to normative gender roles, but because she is strong, she is a survivor, and she is a true role model—not just for girls, but for all people.

Fortunately, in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Suzanne "Collins appears to have succeeded in the seemingly impossible task of creating 'the most important female character in recent pop culture history'" (Lem 121). And we thank her for it.

Works Cited

Aleccia, JoNel. "Broke and Ashamed: Many Won't Take Handouts Despite Need." *nbcnews.com.* 23 Mar. 2013. Web. 6. Apr. 2014.

Arrow, V. *The Panem Companion: An Unofficial Guide to Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games: From Mellark Bakery to Mockingjays.* Dallas: Benbella, 2012. Print.

Averill, Lindsey Issow. "Sometimes the World is Hungry for People who Care: Katniss and The Feminine Care Ethic." *The Hunger Games and Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason.* Eds. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 162-176. Print.

Baccolini, Raffaella and Tom Maylan. "Dystopia and Histories." *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination.* Eds. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Maylan. New York: Routledge, 2003. 1-12. Print.

Bloch, Robert. "Imagination and Modern Social Criticism." *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism.* Ed. Davenport, Basil, et. al. Chicago: Advent, 1969. 97-121. Print.

Booker, M. Keith. "Introduction: Utopia, Dystopia, and Social Critique." *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism.* Westport: Greenwood, 1994. 1-23. Print.

---. "On Dystopia." *Critical Insights: Dystopia.* Ed. M. Keith Booker. Ipswich: Salem Press, 2013. 1-15. Print.

Brown, Joanne and Nancy St. Clair. *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult Literature, 1990-2001.* Lanham: Scarecrow, 2002. Print.

Bucher, Katherine and KaaVonia Hinton. *Young Adult Literature: Exploration, Evaluation, and Appreciation.* 2 ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2010. Print.

Cavalcanti, Ildney. "The Writing of Utopia and The Feminist Critical Dystopia: Suzy McKee Charnas's Holdfast Series." *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination.* Eds. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Maylan. New York: Routledge, 2003. 47-67. Print.

Cart, Michael. *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism.* Chicago: ALA, 2011. Print.

Claeys, Gregory. "The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley, and Orwell." *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Ed. Gregory Glaeys. Cambridge: UP, 2010. 107-134. Print.

Coats, Karen and Roberta Seelinger Trites. "Complicating Gender Binaries." *Girls' Literary Experiences In and Out of School: Learning and Composing Gendered Identities.* New York: Routledge, 2013. 141-. Print.

Coats, Karen. "Young Adult Literature: Growing Up, In Theory." *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature.* Ed. Shelby A. Wolf. New York: Routledge, 2011. 315-329. Print.

Collins, Suzanne. *Catching Fire.* New York: Scholastic, 2009. Print.

---. *Mockingjay.* New York: Scholastic, 2010. Print.

---. *The Hunger Games.* New York: Scholastic, 2008. Print.

DeaVault, Rodney M. "The Masks of Femininity: Perceptions of the Feminine in *The Hunger Games* and *Podkayne of Mars.*" *Of Bread and Blood and* The Hunger

Games: *Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy.* Eds. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. Jefferson: McFarland, 2012. 190-198. Print.

Dictionary.com. "Alms." Dictionary.com 2014. Web. 7 Apr. 2014.

---. "Tesserae." *Dictionary.com.* 2014. Web. 23 Mar. 2014

Donawerth, Jane. *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction.* Ed. Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint. New York: Routledge, 2009. 214-224. Print.

Encyclopedia Britannica. "Totalitarianism." *britannica.com.* 16 Jun. 2013. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.

Frankel, Valerie Estelle. *Katniss the Cattail: An Unauthorized Guide to Names and Symbols in Suzanne Collins'* The Hunger Games. USA: Amazon Digital Services, 2012. Kindle file.

Hamidi, Ghezal. "Science Fiction is no Long a Boys' Club." *Salon.com*. Salon Media Group, 31 Aug. 2013. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

Harris, Dan and Ben Forer. "Meet the Woman Who Created 'The Hunger Games.'" *World News.* 21 Mar. 2012. *ABC News.com.* Web. 2 Sept. 2013.

Henthorne, Tom. *Approaching the* Hunger Games *trilogy: A Literary and Cultural Analysis.* Jefferson: McFarland, 2012. Print.

Herz, Sarah K. and Donald R. Gallo. *From Hinton to* Hamlet: *Building Bridges Between Young Adult Literature and the Classics.* Westport: Greenwood, 2005. Print.

Hudson, Hannah Trierweiler. "Q&A with Hunger Games Author Suzanne Collins." *scholastic.com.* Scholastic, Inc., 2014. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.

Kendall, Jennifer. "Dystopian Novels and Teens: Frequently Asked Questions." *childrensbooks.about.com*. 2014. Web. 7 Apr. 2014.

Kurlantzick, Josh. "The New Totalitarians—Burma and the Rebirth of a Terrible Idea." *carnegieendowment.org*. The Boston Globe, 2 Oct. 2007. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.

Lem, Ellyn and Holly Hallel. "'Killer' Katniss and 'Lover Boy' Peeta: Suzanne Collins's Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading." *Of Bread and Blood and* The Hunger Games: *Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy*. Eds. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. Jefferson: McFarland, 2012. 118-127. Print.

Miller, Jessica. "'She Has No Idea. The Effect She Can Have.': Katniss and the Polictics of Gender." *The Hunger Games and Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason*. Eds. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 145-161. Print.

Merriam-Webster. *Science Fiction. www.merriam-webster.com.* An Encyclopedia Britannica Company. 2014. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

MNT (Myanmar News Today). "Burmese military regimes as a Totalitarianism." *myanmarnewstoday.com*. 2 May 2011. Web. 14 Apr. 2014.

NCTE. "Dystopias: Definitions and Characteristics." *readwritethink.org*. 2006. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

Publisher's Weekly. "New Study: 55% of YA Books Bought by Adults." *publisher'sweekly.com*. PWxyz, LLC., 13 Sep. 2012. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

Roberts, Adam. *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*. Ed. Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint. New York: Routledge, 2009. 3-12. Print.

Roberts, Robin. *A New Species: Gender and Science in Science Fiction.* Urbana: U of I Press, 1993. Print.

Rogan, Alcena Madeline Davis. *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction.* Ed. Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint. New York: Routledge, 2009. 214-224. Print.

Schneiderman, R.M. "Why Do Americans Still Hate Welfare?" *nytimes.com.* The New York Times Company, 10 Dec. 2008. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.

Scholastic. "Books of Note: The Hunger Games Trilogy." *scholastic.com*. n.d. Web. 7 Apr. 2014.

Stevenson, Deborah. "History of Children's and Young Adult Literature." *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature.* Ed. Shelby A. Wolf. New York: Routledge, 2011. 179-192. Print.

Subers, Ray. "Weekend Report: 'The Hunger Games' Devours $152.5 Million." *boxofficemojo.com.* 25 Mar. 2012. Web. 7 Apr. 2014.

The New York Times Company. "The Power of Young Adult Fiction." *nytimes.com*. 28 Mar. 2012. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature.* Iowa City: UI Press, 2000. Print.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide.* 2 ed. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Van Dyke, Christina. "Dicipline and the Docile Body: Regulating Hungers in the Capitol." *The Hunger Games and Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason.* Eds. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

250-264. Print.

Vary, Adam B. "'The Hunger Games: Catching Fire' Breaks Twilight's Record For Biggest November Debut." *buzzfeed.com.* 24 Nov. 2013. Web. 7 Apr. 2014.

What Makes a Novel Dystopian? libraryschool.libguidescms.com. 17 Dec. 2013. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

Zunes, Stephen. "Occupy Fizzled, but Made 99% a Force." *cnn.com.* 17 Sep. 2012. Web. 6 Apr. 2014.

Works Consulted

Abate, Michelle Ann. *Bloody Murder: The Homicide Tradition in Children's Literature.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2013. Print.

Barkman, Adam. "'All of this is Wrong.': Why One of Rome's Greatest Thinkers Would Despise the Capitol." *The Hunger Games and Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason.* Eds. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 265-276. Print.

Booker, M. Keith. *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism.* Westport: Greenwood, 1994. Print.

Christienbury, Leila. "Leaving Home to Come Home: The Hero's Quest in *Great Expectations* and Three Young Adult Novels." *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics.* Vol. 1. Ed. Joan F. Kaywell. Norwood: Christopher-Gordon, 1993. 117-126. Print.

Clemente, Bill. "Panem in America: Crisis Economics and a Call for Political Engagement." *Of Bread and Blood and* The Hunger Games: *Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy.* Eds. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. Jefferson: McFarland, 2012. 20-29. Print.

Critical Insights: Dystopia. Ed. M. Keith Booker. Ipswich: Salem Press, 2013. Print.

Curtis, Claire P. *Postapocalyptic Fiction and the Social Contract: "We'll Not Go Home Again."* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010. Print.

Collins, Suzanne. "Author Suzanne Collins on the Heavy Message of *The Hunger Games*." hungergamesmovie.org. 24 Mar. 2012. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

Daughters of Earth: Feminist Science Fiction in the Twentieth Century. Ed. Justine Larbalestier. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2006. Print.

Despain, Max. "The 'Fine Reality of Hunger Satisfied': Food as Cultural Metaphor in Panem." *Of Bread and Blood and* The Hunger Games: *Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy.* Eds. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. Jefferson: McFarland, 2012. 69-78. Print.

Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide. Ed. M. Keith Booker. Westport: Greenwood, 1994. Print.

Gottlieb, Erika. *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001. Print.

Harris, Dan and Ben Forer. "Meet the Woman who Created 'The Hunger Games.'" *abcnews.com*. World News, 21 Mar. 2012. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

Holmes, Linda. "What Really Makes Katniss Stand Out? Peeta, Her Movie Girlfriend." *npr.org*. National Public Radio, 25 Nov. 2013. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

Kapurch, Katie. "Girlhood, Agency, and Pop Culture Literacy." *Girls' Literary Experiences In and Out of School: Learning and Composing Gendered Identities.* New York: Routledge, 2013. 107-122. Print.

LaBatt, Rhonda. *The Hunger Games: The Unofficial Study Questions - Designed for Personal Reflection, and For Use by Book Clubs or Small Groups.* USA: Amazon Digital Services, 2012. Kindle file.

Lesesne, Teri S. "Exploring the Horror Within: Themes of Duality of Humanity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Ten Related Young Adult Novels." *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics.* Vol. 2. Ed. Joan F.

Kaywell. Norwood: Christopher-Gordon, 1995. 187-198. Print.

---. "War! What is it Good For? *A Farwell to Arms* and Young Adult War Novels." *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics.* Vol. 3. Ed. Joan F. Kaywell. Norwood: Christopher-Gordon, 1996. 171-184. Print.

Lyon, David. *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society.* Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1994. Print.

Merrick, Helen. *The Secret Feminist Cabal: A Cultural History of Science Fiction Feminisms.* Seattle: Aqueduct, 2009. Print.

McDonald, Brian. "The Final Word on Entertainment: Mimetic and Monstrous Art in *The Hunger Games." The Hunger Games and Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason.* Eds. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 8-25. Print.

Monseau, Virginia R. *Responding to Young Adult Literature.* Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1996. Print.

Moore, John Noell. *Interpreting Young Adult Literature: Literary Theory in the Secondary Classroom.* Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1997. Print.

Moylan, Tom. *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia.* Boulder: Westview, 2000. Print.

No Place Else: Explorations in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction. Eds. Eric S. Rabkin, Martin H. Greenberg, and Joseph D. Olander. Carbondale: Southern IU Press, 1983. Print.

Olthouse, Jill. "'I Will Be Your Mockingjay.': The Power and Paradox of Metaphor in The Hunger Games trilogy." *The Hunger Games and Philosophy: A Critique of*

Pure Treason. Eds. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012. 41-54. Print.

Pavlik, Anthony. "Absolute Power Games." *Of Bread and Blood and* The Hunger Games: *Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy.* Eds. Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark. Jefferson: McFarland, 2012. 30-38. Print.

Rice, Linda J. *What Was it Like?: Teaching History and Culture Through Young Adult Literature.* New York: Teacher's College, 2006. Print.

Rosen, David and Aaron Santesso. *The Watchman in Pieces: Surveillance, Literature, and Liberal Personhood.* New Haven: Yale UP, 2013. Print.

Russ, Joanna. *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction.* Bloomington: IU Press, 1995. Print.

---. *What are We Fighting For?: Sex, Race, Class, and the Future of Feminism.* New York: St. Martin's, 1998. Print.

Sambell, Kay. "Presenting the Case for Social Change: The Creative Dilemma of Dystopian Writing for Children." *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults.* New York: Routledge, 2003. 163-178. Print.

Sands-O'Conner, Karen. "The Quest for the Perfect Planet: The British Secondary World as Utopia and Dystopia." *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults.* New York: Routledge, 2003. 179-195. Print.

Sobel, David. "Feed the Hunger." *orionmagazine.org*. Orion Magazine, Nov./Dec. 2012. Web. 23 Jan. 2014.

Soter, Anna O. *Young Adult Literature and the New Literary Theories: Developing Critical Readers in Middle School.* New York: Teacher's College,

1999. Print.

Supernatural Youth: The Rise of the Teen Hero in Literature and Popular Culture. Ed. Jes Battis. Lanham: Lexington, 2011. Print.

Utopia and Dystopia. *Dystopian Elements and Characteristics - Basic Building Blocks of Dystopia. utopiaanddystopia.com.* n.d. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

Watts, Elizabeth L. "*Antigone* and Young Adult Literature: Perspectives on Courage." *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics.* Vol. 4. Ed. Joan F. Kaywell. Norwood: Christopher-Gordon, 2000. 187-200. Print.

Women and Utopia: Critical Interpretations. Eds. Marleen Barr and Nicholas D. Smith. Lanham: UP of America, 1983. Print.

Young Adult and Adolescent Identity Across Cultures and Classrooms: Contexts for the Literary Lives of Teens. Ed. Janet Alsup. New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Appendix A: *The Hunger Games* Trilogy Districts and Industries

THE HUNGER GAMES TRILOGY DISTRICTS AND INDUSTIRES RICHEST DISTRICT IN GREEN, SECOND IN BLUE, THIRD IN RED	
DISTRICT	INDUSTRY
ONE	LUXURY GOODS
TWO	STONEWORK/GRAPHITE/WEAPONS/PEACEKEEPERS
THREE	ELECTRONICS/HARDWARE/SOFTWARE/EXPLOSIVES
FOUR	FISHING AND LUXURY SEAFOODS
FIVE	POWER AND ELECTRICITY
SIX	TRANSPORTATION (MAKING OF)/POSSIBLY MEDICINES
SEVEN	LUMBER/LOGGING/FORESTRY
EIGHT	TEXTIILES AND CLOTHING
NINE	FOOD PROCESSING
TEN	LIVESTOCK/RANCHING/DAIRY PRODUCTS
ELEVEN	AGRICULTURE
TWELVE	COAL MINING
THIRTEEN	NUCLEAR WEAPONS (REPORTED AS GRAPHITE)
CAPITOL	NO INDUSTRY—FORTESS CITY

(Table compiled from information learned from the trilogy— Collins *Catching; The; Mockingjay*)