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Convention and Defiance:
The Female Hero's Performance of Gender Roles
in the *Hunger Games* and the *Divergent* series



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INTRODUCTION

When the first *Hunger Games* film was released in theatres, the overwhelming consensus was that, for the first time, a female heroine who defied traditional gender norms had finally broken through the invisible patriarchal barrier. Katniss Everdeen was touted as the 16-year-old warrior who “brought down the system with a bow and arrow”. (Moore, 2012) Appealing to both women and men, the *Hunger Games* novels by Suzanne Collins have “sold more than 65 million copies in print and digital formats in the U.S., and have been sold into 56 territories and 51 languages to date”. (Scholastic 2014). The first *Hunger Games* film “raked in an estimated \$155 million in its opening weekend ... giving it the third-best debut in North American box office history”. (Daniel 2012) The following year, *Catching Fire* “trounced the competition over its first weekend at the box office, pulling in an estimated \$161.1 million”. (Smith 2013) In fact, a Google search of “gender” and “*Hunger Games*” generates articles on the films from the most popular publications with the following headlines: “How *The Hunger Games* Challenges Old Hollywood Expectations about Gender Roles: Peeta Mellark, Damsel in Distress” (Willmore 2014); “*The Hunger Games* is Challenging Gender Stereotypes – by Empowering Boys” (Bell 2014); “What Really Makes Katniss Everdeen Stand Out? Peeta, Her Movie Girlfriend” (Holmes 2013); or, “*The Hunger Games* Gender Role Revolution” (Seltzer 2013). While these headlines may seem innocuous, they actually highlight a worrying trend of “postfeminism”, namely, patriarchal acceptance; these were articles written by women, who are subconsciously reinforcing gender stereotypes by claiming that Katniss is an

archetypal male and Peeta plays the role of “movie girlfriend” because he has feelings, paints, and bakes. Furthermore, these observations are based on the films, rather than the novels, which, upon further examination, expose a very different picture of the warrior Katniss.

Katniss Everdeen starts out the trilogy – comprised of *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), and *Mockingjay* (2010) – as a 16-year-old from District 12 in the dystopian nation of Panem (formerly the United States). The nation is divided into the Capitol, inhabited by the rich; and outside of the Capitol, there are 12 districts, and each district is responsible for a certain trade (Katniss’s district’s trade is mining). Later in the trilogy, it is revealed that District 13, headed by Alma Coin, had not been wiped out (as the Capitol had the other districts believe), and in fact been building up an army in anticipation of a rebellion. Because of a previous war, in which the Capitol prevailed, there are annual Hunger Games, in which two children, a male and a female, are drawn from the entire population to compete in a so-called “game” at the end of which one emerges victorious after killing off the other children. The Games are held in a sophisticated, completely fabricated arena designed and manipulated by Gamemakers, and the Games, as well as the events leading up to it, are televised. The purpose of the Games is to remind the districts of the Capitol’s merciless power. However, after the name of Katniss’s sister, Prim, is drawn, she impulsively volunteers to take her place, unaware that by doing so, she cements her fate as the symbol of the rebellion, the Mockingjay.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the less popular *Divergent* series by Veronica Roth has a protagonist who truly defies traditional gender roles. *Divergent* (2011) – followed by *Insurgent* (2012) and *Allegiant* (2013) – is set in dystopian

Chicago, which is a walled community created by genetic engineers to test if it's possible to create a society where everyone lives harmoniously. To achieve this, they placed the inhabitants into five factions based on predominant personality traits: Abnegation (selflessness); Amity (peacefulness); Dauntless (bravery); Erudite (intelligence); Candor (honesty). However, there are a few who exhibit several traits, and those are called Divergents – and Tris Prior happens to be one.

Tris Prior is a confident, tenacious 16-year-old who willingly takes on the role of a rebellion leader. While there is a love story between Tris and her boyfriend and fellow warrior and rebellion leader, Tobias, known as Four, the relationship is truly rooted in love, not performance (as is Katniss and Peeta's relationship). However, there are not as many pop culture articles or academic essays on the warrior Tris – perhaps because the series itself is not written as fluidly as the *Hunger Games*, nor do the film counterparts have such popular leading actors which universal sex appeal.

Considering that the English language is engendered, it comes as no surprise that both pop culture writers as well as academics have missed the glaring performance of traditional gender roles in the *Hunger Games* trilogy, and have seemingly ignored that defiance of traditional gender performance in the *Divergent* series. Rather, critics' insistence on ascribing gender traits as "feminine" and "masculine" are indicative of "patriarchal binary thought, which might be defined as seeing the world in terms of polar opposites, one of which is considered superior to the other". (Tyson 2006, 100)

Sociologist Laurel Richardson further explains that "differential attitudes and feelings about men and women [are] rooted in the English language ... First, in terms of grammatical and semantic structure, women do not have a fully autonomous,

independent existence; they are part of man”. (Richardson 1981, 120) She also points out that “Women of all ages may be called *girls* ... They are encouraged to remain childlike, and the implication is that they are basically immature and without power. Men can become men, linguistically, putting aside the immaturity of childhood”. (Richardson 1981, 121, original emphasis) Additionally,

the presumed incompetence and immaturity of women are evidenced by the linguistic company they keep ... Men do exist as an independent category capable of autonomy; women are grouped with the stigmatized, the immature, and the foolish. Moreover, when men are in human groupings, they are invariably first on the list (“men and women”, “he and she”, “man and wife”). This order is not accidental but was prescribed in the sixteenth century to honor the worthier party. (Richardson 1981, 122)

To further prove this point, a search of the words “girl” and “boy” from Dictionary.com generate the following definitions and examples:

Girl: noun

1. a female child, from birth to full growth.
2. a young, immature woman, especially formerly, an unmarried one.
3. a daughter: *My wife and I have two girls.*
4. *Informal: Sometimes Offensive.* a grown woman, especially when referred to familiarly: *She's having the girls over for bridge next week.*
5. a girlfriend; sweetheart.
6. *Older Use: Usually Offensive.* a female servant, as a maid.
7. *Older Use: Usually Offensive.* a female employee, especially an office assistant.

Boy: noun

1. a male child, from birth to full growth, especially one less than 18 years of age.
2. a young man who lacks maturity, judgment, etc.
3. *Informal.* a grown man, especially when referred to familiarly: *He liked to play poker with the boys.*
4. a son: *Sam's oldest boy is helping him in the business.*
5. a male who is from or native to a given place.
6. **boys**, (*used with a singular or plural verb*)

- a) a range of sizes from 8 to 20 in garments made for boys.
 - b) a garment in this size range.
 - c) the department or section of a store where these garments are sold.
7. **boys**, military personnel, especially combat soldiers:
Support the boys overseas.

Both Richardson's analysis, and the above definitions, are crucial when examining Katniss' and Tris's behavior, pop culture and the academic critics' essays about them, and the mindset of the authors of the *Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series when writing their female protagonists. As evidenced by the current definitions of "girl" and "boy", there is still a subconscious notion that women are less than men – less mature and less capable. The definition of "boy" mentions that the word is used to describe a male child *less than 18 years of age*, whereas the definition for girl does not make that distinction – because a grown woman in her 30's can still be referred to as a "girl". Another current use of "girl" is that of a girlfriend – a partner of a boy or a man, which is indicative of a lack of autonomy. Furthermore, the examples given for the words "girl" and "boy" also highlight gender roles: "my wife and I have two girls" versus "Sam's oldest boy is helping him in the business". But perhaps the most striking bit of the definition of "boy" is the final example: *especially combat soldiers: support the boys overseas*. Thus, the internalized association of a fighter – a warrior – is with the masculine, because "to think warrior in the Western tradition is to think male ... Males have the warrior built in to strengthen them, while females have been misled into believing that the warrior's power historically and biologically belongs only to men". (Jones x, 2005) Therefore, by examining something so basic as the definition of the word "boy", we can hope to

have a glimmer of understanding as to why critics keep touting Katniss Everdeen as a “masculine” heroine.

While in the Humanities, it is common knowledge that “gender cannot be equated with biological differences between human females and males ... [the] building blocks of gender are *socially constructed statuses* ö that fact seems to be lost on the masses. (Lorber 1993, 55, emphasis added) Rooted in language, the male/female dichotomy is alive and well, despite the pervasive notion that society has current entered a “post-feminist” era, in which women have control of their bodies; and this “control” can be seen on various media platforms, where the most “followed” women are the ones who have subjected themselves to the judgment of the public. As Lois Tyson asks, “Why is it so difficult for women to recognize their own subjugation, let alone do something about it? Beauvoir points out that, unlike other oppressed groups... there is no historical record of women’s shared culture, shared traditions, or shared oppression”. (Tyson 2006, 97) Tyson then posits the most honest revelation, and perhaps a glimpse into the psyche of women today:

I call myself a patriarchal woman because I was socially programmed, as are most women and men, *not* to see the ways in which women are oppressed by traditional gender roles. I say that I’m recovering because I learned to recognize and resist that programming. For me, such recognition and resistance will always require effort – I’m recovering rather than recovered – not just because I internalized patriarchal programming years ago but because that program continues to assert itself in my world. (Tyson 2006, 86, original italics)

Admittedly, I, too, am a patriarchal woman. My first encounter with the *Hunger Games* series was with the films, then the books. Because of that, I already had the film interpretation, and the critics’ hailing of the supposedly flipped gender roles, clouding my initial reading of the novels. Only after reading the novels several times

over did I realize that Katniss Everdeen is in fact a young girl stripped of her agency and made to perform traditional gender roles – and much that is done via her stylized body that is paraded before a televised audience, similar to pageantry. However, in the film version, this is not as pronounced, mainly because the role of her stylist Cinna is significantly reduced in the films, and the film audience does not access Katniss's inner monologue as do readers.

My first encounter with the *Divergent* series was also through the films, then the novels – but after having seen and read the *Hunger Games*. While *Divergent*'s plotline is more convoluted, I paid particular attention to Tris, and noticed a striking difference in her character: while Tris is small in stature, young, and trying to figure out who she is, she has control over the search for her identity. More importantly, she is confident and certain that she is right (which she usually is), refuses to let other rebellion leaders belittle her and derail her quest for truth; most importantly, she does not perform traditional gender roles.

Because of all of this, I aim to utilize theories, historical facts, and data to expose Katniss Everdeen's performance of traditional gender roles and how Tris subverts those roles, as well as the extent of critics' engendered readings of both series and what that reveals about contemporary attitudes towards gender. In particular, I will be framing this analysis with Laura Mulvey's film theory of the male (spectator) gaze and voyeurism; Judith Butler's psychoanalytic theory of gender and performance; and the newly-emerged feminist Surveillance Studies, that tie the idea of the spectator's gaze/voyeurism to gender performance as it pertains to the current state of female sexuality and media.

These two trilogies have topped bestseller lists and topped box office records; and perhaps what has drawn millions to these novels is that in dystopian literature, the troubling customs of modern society are illuminated. Of course, what makes these novels and their silver screen counterparts so important is that art – specifically storytelling – highlights what is bubbling beneath the surface. Fiction, and the visual media and commentary it inspires, is a reflection of reality. By delving into these works, the strides that have been made in the movement for gender parity can be revealed – as well as the progress that has yet to be made.

1. BODY AND PERFORMANCE

1.1. The Spectacle and the Gaze

ō Ÿ g " J w p i g t " I c o g u " c t g p ø v " c
but the best-looking tributes always seem to pull more sponsors ö 0
(Collins, Hunger Games 58)

When examining instances of the male spectator gaze at play in the 20th and 21st centuries, beauty pageants immediately come to mind. As Mulvey states,

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (Mulvey 1975, 4)

As such, young women – often late teens to the cut-off age of 25 years old (in pageantry) – willingly let millions of people judge their bodies that have been waxed, molded, and starved for a televised audience. Convincing themselves of their “female

empowerment” they subject themselves to the male gaze, and perform the role of the docile, oftentimes unintelligent girl in exchange for scholarship money and career opportunities. As is observed in feminist Surveillance Studies “women are framed as empowered and agentic, situating them as complicit in invitations to the male gaze”. (Dubrofsky and Magnet 2015, 11) Similarly, the female tributes’ bodies in the Hunger Games are manipulated and prepped for the Capitol’s viewing pleasures – though instead of money, they’re competing for sponsors to give them food, water, and other survival supplies while in the arena. These practices reflect the “postfeminist spirit of agency and empowerment via preparation of the body in anticipation of the male gaze” (Dubrofsky and Wood 2015, 99) Yet, the fact that that exact performance is simulated in the Hunger Games is unacknowledged.

As in pageantry, Katniss is assigned a coach and a style team that alter her body and teach her how to play the role of the likeable, traditionally feminine tribute during the televised pre-Arena programs. Cinna, her coach (and a member of the rebellion), molds Katniss into the perfect tribute. Katniss describes their first encounter, when, after asking for a moment of silence to assess his new blank canvas, he “walks around my naked body, not touching me, but taking in every inch of it with his eyes. I resist the impulse to cross my arms over my chest”. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 64) This scene, in which Cinna, an adult man, is taking apart the naked body of a malnourished 16-year-old girl, marks the beginning of Katniss’s bodily manipulation, and the stripping of her agency. Katniss’s discomfort, highlighted by her desire to cover her vulnerable, adolescent body, juxtaposed with Cinna’s gaze, displays the troubling power dynamic that is at play throughout the entire trilogy – for

the “male gaze regulates and structures its objects within a social-historical system of gendered domination”. (Dubrofsky and Wood 2015, 97)

Thus, Cinna’s appraisal of Katniss’s body, and his subsequent plans for its public display, exemplifies the theory of the male gaze, where “the man looks; the woman is looked at. And it is the one who looks who is in control, who holds the power to name things, the power to explain the world and so to rule the world ... women are merely tokens, markers, commodities in a male economy”. (Tyson 2006, 102) Further asserting his power and cementing his ability to execute his vision, he states “dreamily” that “I want the audience to recognize you when you’re in the arena ... Katniss, the girl who was on fire”. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 67) Without Katniss’s knowledge and consent, Cinna takes control of her body and utilizes it as a tool to conceptualize his various strategies of visual rebellion. This is also supported by Mulvey’s assertion that

the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man’s role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen. The man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralize the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. (Mulvey 1975, 63)

Thus, Cinna is the active man, pushing the story forward and presenting Katniss to the audience, eager for her stylized body.

1.2. Body Manipulation

ō K " h g g n " n k m g " f q w i j . " d g k p i " ünø g c f g f "
(Collins, *Catching Fire* 166)

Images of scantily-clad, hairless, thin women are projected through every visual platform in contemporary culture. Consequently, the idea of the hairless, altered female body has been normalized in Western society. Women shave, wax their pubic area, and use contouring techniques when applying makeup that drastically change faces, to fit the current beauty ideals. As the practices in the decadent Capitol mirror those in the real world, Katniss is subjected to that those exact manipulations throughout the entire trilogy. Her body, makeup, and outfits are designed by Cinna and his team of stylists – Venia, Flavia, and Octavia – to gain sponsors, and suit the rebellion's agenda.

Katniss's alterations are thorough and extremely crucial to the plot, and begin even before she meets Cinna. In *The Hunger Games*, she describes how

I've been in the Remake Center for more than three hours and I still haven't met my stylist. Apparently he has no interest in seeing me until Venia and the other members of my prep team have addressed some obvious problems. This has included scrubbing down my body with a gritty foam that has removed not only dirt but at least three layers of skin, turning my nails into uniform shapes, and primarily, ridding my body of hair. My legs, arms, torso, underarms, and parts of my eyebrows have been stripped of the stuff, leaving me like a plucked bird, ready for roasting ... I don't like it. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 61)

In *Catching Fire*, she undergoes the same treatment: "While Venia reinvents my eyebrows and Octavia gives me fake nails and Flavius massages goo into my hair;" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 36); later, Katniss is

... plucked and scoured and anointed until I'm raw.

Flavius lifts up my chin and sighs. 'It's a shame Cinna said no alterations on you'.

'Yes, we could really make you something special,' says Octavia.

(Collins, *Catching Fire* 48)

And in *Mockingjay*, where even though the plot is centered entirely around the rebellion, Katniss's body is still manipulated for the camera before, during, and after the battles:

Beauty Base Zero turns out to be what a person would look like if they stepped out of bed looking flawless but natural. It means my nails are perfectly shaped but not polished. My hair soft and shiny but not styled. My skin smooth and clear but not painted. Wax the body hair and erase the dark circles, but don't make any noticeable enhancements ... As a rebel, I thought I'd get to look more like myself. But it seems a televised rebel has her own standards to live up to. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 60)

Even at the end of the novel, when Katniss has suffered burns on most of her body, she is still molded into the appealing Mockingjay character:

Flavius performs some beauty miracle on my hair, managing to even out the front while getting some of the longer locks to hide the bald spots in the back. My face, since it was spared from the flames, presents no more than the usual challenges. Once I'm in Cinna's Mockingjay suit, the only scars visible are on my neck, forearms, and hands. Octavia secures my Mockingjay pin over my heart and we step back to look in the mirror. I can't believe how normal they've made me look on the outside when inwardly I'm such a wasteland. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 365-366)

In a moment where Katniss is scarred – mentally, emotionally, and physically – the manipulation she has to undergo is dehumanizing. She is not seen as a young woman who has suffered immensely; rather, she is seen as a symbol.

What is most troublesome about these rituals is that they not only reflect current trends, but they have been so internalized that every critic has overlooked how this is part of Katniss's gender performance. She is subjected to the pain of bodily alterations, like waxing (a literal example of the stripping of her agency), which renders the female body as *docile* and *childlike*. Moreover, the fact that this process is described in length and has not been addressed, nor criticized, by author Suzanne

Collins, or by the majority of academic critics, is a huge indication that makeup and waxing rituals have been normalized. When Venia, Katniss's waxer, exclaims in disgust upon seeing Katniss's natural body, "you're just so hairy!" (Collins, *Hunger Games* 61) she is reflecting the general consensus that a hairless body is not only prettier but also normatively feminine.

This pervasive notion causes daily annoyances and stresses, and self-esteem issues, that lead women to spend thousands on laser hair removal. In fact, researchers Tiggeman and Hodgeson pointed out that "one particular aspect of the ideal that has received relatively little research attention or theorizing is the prescription for smooth, hairless skin. This is most likely because the practice of removing unwanted body hair is so normative in Western cultures as to go unremarked". (Tiggeman and Hodgson 2008, 889) Additionally, the idea of a hairless pubic region causes women to subject themselves to painful waxing, and even more worryingly, hypersexualizes a hairless vagina, characteristic of little girls, not of adult women; and the troubling consequence of that being that both women and men are uncomfortable with the adult vagina in its natural state. Tiggeman and Hodgeson further find that

Body hair is in fact an indicator of sexual maturity for both men and women, and its removal is not universal across cultures. But for women in Western societies, "femininity" is somewhat paradoxically associated with a lack of body hair. (Tiggeman and Hodgson 2008, 889)

Thus, the removal of Katniss's body hair serves several purposes: to render her as childlike, to undermine her as a young woman, and strip her of her identity; all with the intention of making her seem more beautiful – and sexually desirable to the

sponsors, and less of a threat to President Snow. This concept is further reinforced by Venia when she reassures Katniss that

... ‘by the time Cinna is done with you, you’re going to be absolutely gorgeous!’
‘We promise! You know, now that we’ve gotten rid of all the hair and filth, you’re not horrible at all!’ says Flavius encouragingly.
(Collins, *Hunger Games* 62-63)

In contrast, while Katniss’s prep team “erase [her] face with a layer of pale makeup and draw [her] features back out” to include “huge dark eyes, full red lips” and cover her body “in a powder that makes [her] shimmer in gold dust”. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 120), Peeta undergoes little to no bodily manipulation, because “men’s bodies are not blank slates”. (Connell 1999, 104) Rather, Cinna designs an outfit for Peeta that includes long black pants and heavy black boots, to which Katniss thinks “I wish Cinna had given me a similar outfit, I feel so vulnerable in this flimsy dress. But I guess that was the point”. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 362) Hence, even the clothing given to Katniss symbolizes her lack of agency – she is made to wear “flimsy” material to make her look as unthreatening as possible, while Peeta is allowed to wear clothing of sturdy material and an intimidating color. Yet another instance illustrates Cinna’s engendering of clothing choices and bodily manipulations:

‘Cinna was up working late on organizing your garment car. He must have ordered a hundred outfits for you. Your evening clothes are exquisite. And Peeta’s team is probably still asleep.’
‘Doesn’t he need preparing?’ I ask.
‘Not the way you do,’ Effie replies.
What does this mean? It means I get to spend the morning having the hair ripped off my body while Peeta sleeps in. I hadn’t thought about it much, but in the arena at least some of the boys got to keep their body hair whereas none of the girls did.
(Collins, *Catching Fire* 47-48)

As this treatment of Katniss and Peeta's bodies is a reflection of current body altering trends, it demonstrates that "according to the principles of the ruling ideology and the physical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification". (Mulvey 1975, 63) However, Katniss's tone is not one that demands change – it is one of acceptance.

1.3. The Body as an Agenda

“The woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen” (Mulvey 1975, 62)

In both the novels and the films, the pre-Arena preparation takes up a substantial amount of pages and screen time. While there is more detail in the novels – and indeed, Katniss's prep team Venia, Flavius, and Octavia have more pages devoted to their work on Katniss's body – the message in both mediums is that Katniss has to be dressed a certain way according to the agenda: pleasing the Capital and President Snow by presenting a harmless, childlike girl dressed in pastels, or galvanizing the masses by presenting a fierce, warrior woman dressed in black. With Cinna at the helm, Katniss is readily transformed into the fierce, “sexy” warrior, or the vulnerable little girl. After Katniss's first instance of thoughtless defiance – her refusal to let Peeta die for her in the Arena and her convincing him to pretend to swallow poisonous berries so that they can both emerge as victors – Cinna is then forced to exercise damage control. He puts her in “an unassuming yellow dress across his arms ... the padding over [her] breasts, adding curves that hunger has stolen from

[her] body”. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 354) Because Katniss’s act was not part of the rebellion plan, Cinna has to dress Katniss as a harmless little girl, draped in a sunny color. This is, in fact, acknowledged by Katniss:

My hair’s loose, held back by a simple hairband. The makeup rounds and fills out the sharp angles of my face. A clear polish coats my nails. The sleeveless dress is gathered at my ribs, not my waist, largely eliminating any help the padding would’ve given my figure. The hem falls just to my knees. Without heels, you can see my true stature. I look, very simply, like a girl. A young one. Fourteen at the most. Innocent. Harmless. Yes, it is shocking that Cinna has pulled this off when you remember I’ve just won the Games. This is a very calculated look. Nothing Cinna designs is arbitrary. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 355)

The rebellion leaders know that in order to appease President Snow, they must make Katniss seem as though she did not intend to defy him directly (which she did not). In the Arena, she developed an attachment to Peeta, and did not want to feel guilty if she allowed him to die so that she could live. Thus, the little girl make-under is suiting but the fact remains that she did not chose the way she dressed – Cinna did.

However, in *Catching Fire*, the harmless little girl act is changed in order to rally the marginalized and starved districts outside of the Capitol. To achieve this, Cinna designs an outfit that relays that message to President Snow and the audience:

I do not see a girl, or even a woman, but some unearthly being ... the black crown, which now appears red-hot, casts strange shadows on my dramatically made-up face. Katniss, the girl on fire, has left behind her flickering flames and bejeweled gowns and soft candlelight frocks. She is as deadly as fire itself. ‘I think... this is I what I need to face the others’. ‘Yes, I think your days of pink lipstick and ribbons are behind you,’ says Cinna. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 207)

Thus, when the agenda changes, Cinna alters Katniss accordingly, because “Master stylist Cinna understands that pleasing spectacle presented upon a female body can be

a crucial component of resistance, and the creation of the ever-fashionable Mockingjay becomes a visual site for resistance to the Capitol”. (Pharr and Clark 2012, 16) Cinna is aware of the power of Katniss’s body, and the different message that can be visually conveyed depending on the venue and situation. Even after Cinna’s death (because President Snow finally noticed? the impact that his designs were having on fueling the rebellion fire in the districts), he left designs and instructions on how to remold Katniss’s body during the actual war. Katniss explains how the prep team “has to make me pretty and *then* damage, burn, and scar me in a more attractive way;” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 59, original italics). Even when the fighting is underway, Katniss learns that “there’s a special order for me. But it’s merely that I skip the military haircut because they would like the Mockingjay to look as much like the girl in the arena as possible at the anticipated surrender. For the cameras, you know”. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 252) Tellingly, Katniss acknowledges that “Everyone’s so excited, so pleased with their work”. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 70) In that one statement, Katniss’s lack of agency is highlighted. She is not in charge of her body; she does not choose how to alter her body – whether to keep or body hair or leave it; she does not choose the color or fit of her clothing. She is not her own work of art – she is a product of everyone else’s work.

1.4. The Performance

ð Y j c v " v j g { " y c p v " k u " h q t " o g " v q " v t w n { " v c m g " q
 of the revolution. The Mockingjay í I must now become the actual leader, the face,
 the voice, the embodiment of the revolution í " V j g { " j c x g " c " y t q n g " v g c
 make me over, dress me, write my speeches, orchestrate my appearances óand all I
 have to do is play my part ö 0
 (Collins, *Mockingjay* 10-11)

When examining Katniss's behavior with the knowledge that she never has any control over her own image, Judith Butler's gender performance theory can be applied, for "the effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body, and hence must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self". (Butler 1990, 179) With the help of Cinna and the stylist team making Katniss look the part of a harmless teenaged girl or a fiery warrior, she is then coached into performing her given role. When she first arrives in the Capitol in the first *Hunger Games* novel, her mentor, Effie, has to teach her how to shed her District mannerisms and adopt those of the Capitol:

We go to my room and she puts me in a full-length gown and high-heeled shoes ... and instructs me on walking. The shoes are the worst part. I've never worn heels and can't get used to essentially wobbling around on the balls of my feet ... when I finally conquer walking, there's still sitting, posture – eye contact, hand gestures, and smiling. Smiling is mostly about smiling more. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 115)

As is expected of modern women, Katniss is supposed to learn how to walk in heels, and most importantly, smile. The gender performance coaching continues when Katniss is forced to try on different personality traits: "it's clear I cannot gush. We try me playing cocky, but I just don't have the arrogance. Apparently I'm too "vulnerable" for ferocity. I'm not witty. Funny. Sexy. Or mysterious. By the end of the session, I am no one at all". (Collins, *Hunger Games* 118) And, as Katniss is "no one at all" she is the perfect candidate to be molded into the symbol of the rebellion.

Along with Cinna and Effie, the other major player in Katniss's molding is her District 12 mentor, Haymitch. While initially reluctant to take Katniss as a serious

contender (because of her surly attitude and his constant drunkenness), he realizes that in Katniss, he has the perfect rebellion symbol. He is the driving force in Katniss's performance as Peeta's loved-up girlfriend, advising her that the Hunger Games is "all a big show. It's all how you're perceived ... now I can say you're a heartbreaker. Oh, oh, oh, how the boys back home fall longingly at your feet. What do you think will get you more sponsors?" (Collins, *Hunger Games* 135) As a former Hunger Games winner, Haymitch knows the importance of gaining sponsors in order to survive in the arena. However, he also has to make sure that Katniss performs because her survival ensures the success of the rebellion.

Because Katniss leaves for the Games as a young girl who has never experienced love, she has to think of other instances where she has seen people in love, and *mimic that performance*. As Butler points out, "the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and a re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established ... indeed, the performance is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame". (Butler 1990, 178-179) Thus, throughout the trilogy, Katniss's performance of being in love is crucial to the plotline, and her inner monologue exposes her confusion at having to perform that role:

Never having been in love, this is going to be a real trick. I think of my parents. The way my father never failed to bring her gifts from the woods. The way my mother's face would light up at the sound of his boots at the door. The way she almost stopped living when he died. "Peeta!" I say, trying for the special tone that my mother used only with my father. He's dozed off again, but I kiss him awake (Collins, *Hunger Games* 261)

She repeats the performance after Peeta confesses to Katniss that he has loved her for years (with the result being that the sponsors send them food and medical supplies);

and she does so after both she and Peeta are allowed to live after the Hunger Games and give their first interview upon their return: “I sit so close to Peeta that I’m practically on his lap, but one look from Haymitch tells me it isn’t enough. Kicking off my sandals, I tuck my feet to the side and lean my head against Peeta’s shoulder”. (Collins, *Hunger Games* 361) At that point, Katniss is aware that her performance ensures both her and Peeta’s survival, because “gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end, the term ‘strategy’ better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs. Hence, as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences”. (Butler 1988, 522)

Haymitch continues curating Katniss’s performance of the besotted girlfriend in the second novel when he orders her to “stay in love”. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 222) However, in the third novel, the actual two leaders of the rebellion – Plutarch Heavensbee, the Gamemaker who orchestrated the plot of the second novel, and Alma Coin, the president of the supposedly devastated District 13 who aims to become president of all of Panem once Snow is defeated – are the ones who mandate that Katniss resumes the lovestruck teenager in the midst of the war: “I think we should continue the current romance. A quick defection from Peeta could cause the audience to lose sympathy for her”, says Plutarch. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 39) Coin later warns Katniss “you’d better perform”. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 41)

Indeed, the effort it takes in creating the screen-ready Katniss requires a full team of adults who realize the importance of audience manipulation, and the type of character who can influence the masses. As Effie informs Katniss

‘Plutarch and I have been talking about how on earth we can pull this off. We think that it might be best to build you, our rebel leader, from the outside... *in*. That is to say, let’s find the most stunning Mockingjay look possible, and then work your personality up to deserving it!’, she says brightly. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 44)

The language Effie uses serves to undermine both Katniss’s looks and personality, with the message that Katniss inherently does not have anything to contribute and must be first dressed (by Cinna) into looking desirable, and then made to perform whichever role deemed necessary. Not only is this manipulation troublesome because she is a young girl, but also because she is a soldier; yet, outside of the arena, she is barely allowed to fight because her sole purpose is to remain a symbol. Rather than building up her fighting skills and training her to conceptualize military strategy, her natural warrior impulses are suppressed. This is stated outright when Katniss’s Hunger Games tribute and war engineer, Beetee, designs arrows for her to be used in combat, saying “You see, they wanted me to design a bow based purely on looks. As part of your costume, you know? But I kept thinking, *What a waste?* I mean, what if you do need it sometime? As more than a fashion accessory”. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 69) Despite the fact that Katniss is exceptional with a bow and arrow, and even though before the games and rebellion she used her skills to hunt and ensure that her family always had enough to eat, she is forced to *pretend* to be a fighter. In fact, this can be seen in current military practices and brochures, where

Although women are depicted as soldiers and Marines, they continue to be represented as fragile and gentle, photographed in violent roles at a substantially lower rate than men. The male Mythic American Warrior is tough and combative; his female counterpart demonstrates her patriotism by joining the military but also preserves femininity and only sometimes takes on physically aggressive roles. (Nelson 1999, 192)

Thus, Katniss is just the picture of a warrior, only shooting her arrow (made possible by Beetee) when she is given permission. She is the huntress made tame by a team who repaint her face, wax her body, and train her to perform. As Sara K. Day points out in one of her critical essays on the *Hunger Games*,

Foucault not only illustrates the means by which a body is made docile but also illuminates the possibility of docile bodies becoming dangerous; in other words, soldiers' bodies simultaneously conform to the standards set forth by their society and possess the potential for danger and destruction through warfare. The adolescent woman's body, I would argue, represents a more implicit pairing of docility and danger, both in contemporary Western culture, and in dystopian novels, in that the adolescent woman is expected to conform to specific physical requirements that ultimately position her as a threat that may be monitored, controlled, or exploited by the social system in which she lives. (Day 2014: 77)

The danger that Katniss's body poses is a running thread throughout the novel, picked up by both the rebellion leaders and President Snow. But because this glaring bodily manipulation and performance has gone largely unnoticed in both academic and pop culture, the question that still must be asked is what are the messages conveyed to readers in this way? If Katniss's bodily alterations and her performance of the love-struck girlfriend and the warrior are considered to be so normative that they go unnoticed, then does that mean that these social rituals and performances have been so internalized that readers – and author Suzanne Collins herself – are unaware of their adverse effects? What's even more alarming is that, as in current society, Katniss's body and performance are also projected onto the screen – in both the novels and the films. As research into these rituals and performances being streamed through visual mediums have concluded,

the messages they convey about femininity are often rigid and constricting, presenting only select examples of who women are, how they look, and how they behave in romantic relationships. In uniting research across several fields, we

saw the sweeping effects that exposure to these images may be having on these girls, shaping their notions about gender and about themselves. (Ward and Harrison 2005, 15)

Perhaps this is the psyche of the patriarchal woman manifested; and perhaps this can be an insight into why criticism of *The Hunger Games* has been so engendered. As patriarchal women (and men), critics have overlooked the various theories that apply to the female body – especially the adolescent female body, how it poses a threat to patriarchal ideals, and must therefore be made into a blank slate so that it can be controlled and manipulated, and subsequently, subjugated.

2. AGENCY

2.1. In Search of Identity

*ō N q q m k p i " c v " o { u g n h " p q y " k u p ø v " n k m g " u g g k p t
someone else for the first time. Beatrice was a girl I saw in stolen moments at the
mirror, who kept quiet at the dinner table. This is someone whose eyes claim mine
c p f " f q p ø v " t g n gō ø u g " o g = '
(Roth, Divergent 87)*

When comparing the agency of female protagonists in contemporary dystopian YA literature that have adapted for the silver screen, Tris Prior of the *Divergent* series is the exact antithesis of Katniss Everdeen. In the entire trilogy, the attention given to Tris's body is centered on the training required to become a skilled fighter in Dauntless, not on aesthetics. Unlike Katniss Everdeen, whose body is waxed and made up, Tris's body is left alone, allowing her to choose what to do with her body, and most importantly, her identity, because "Roth has created a dystopian world in which gendered stereotypes seemingly matter little... as a result, Tris has

been conditioned to believe her physical appearance, something with which most teenage girls are preoccupied, is of little importance”. (Green-Barteet 2014, 43)

In stark contrast to the pages devoted to Katniss’s body and clothing, there is little to no mention of Tris’s body other than the training she needs to undergo to build her small and underfed frame. Rather, the five factions in the *Divergent* series have each a distinct dress code. Tris’s faction, Abnegation, selflessness, and so their dress code of loose, simply grey clothing is what Tris grew up wearing. However, when she makes the switch to Dauntless, she dons the black clothing associated with that faction. Even so, her decision to leave the comfort and familiarity of her faction is indicative of her agency over the search of her identity. As she settles into her new faction, she decides to mark the first step in the discovery of who she is:

A bird sketch holds my attention. I never intended to get pierced or tattooed when I came here...maybe there is a way to honor my old life as I embrace my new one. ‘Yes,’ I say. ‘Three of these flying birds.’ I touch my collarbone, marking the path of their flight – toward my heart. One for each member of the family I left behind. (Roth, *Divergent* 90)

As a homage to her past and her present, Tris chooses to permanently ink her body – for herself, and certainly not because it was mandated. She directly acknowledges that after getting a second tattoo of the Abnegation symbol, because “that symbol is a part of my identity, and it felt important to me that I wear it on my skin”. (Roth, *Divergent* 316) The other mention of Tris’s look is in the second novel, *Insurgent*, where after the death of her mother, Tris feels compelled to cut her hair:

I see a sewing kit on the dresser. In it are two colors of thread, red and yellow, and a pair of scissors. I feel calm as I undo the braid in my hair and comb it again. I part my hair down the middle and make sure that it is straight and flat. I close the scissors over the hair by my chin...I cut in as straight a line as I can, using my jaw as a guide. The tricky part is the back, which I can’t see very well,

so I do the best I can by touch instead of sight. Locks of blonde hair surround me on the floor in a semicircle. I leave the room without looking at my reflection again. (Roth, *Insurgent* 16)

Rather than having a team of stylists to ensure that she is perfectly coiffed, Tris takes it upon herself to cut her hair – not for vanity’s sake, but as a mark of the next stage in her identity. Not only is Tris’s cutting of her hair in contrast to Katniss, but also goes against contemporary beauty norms in the real world. The hair industry is a multi-billion dollar enterprise that succeeds on overcharging women for haircuts. Not only does Tris not bother to have someone else cut her hair so that it is evenly cut in the back, she finishes cutting her hair without a look back. By doing so, she demonstrates that she could not care less about her looks – her hair cutting held an emotional significance rather than a superficial one. Hence, Tris’s control over her hair, her clothing, and her body is demonstrative of her agency over her body, which in turn leads to her agency over her actions, because “only by overcoming cultural conditioning regarding their sexuality... can girls gain the agency required to become women, leaders, and heroes”. (Day 2014, 75)

2.2. Calling the Shots

ō K " c o " F k x g t i g p v 0 " G ϕ f " K " e c p
(Roth, *Divergent* 442)

Tris’s control over her own path is apparent almost immediately; in fact, on the very second page of *Divergent*, she states “I will decide on a faction; I will decide the rest of my life; I will decide to stay with my family or abandon them”. (Roth, *Divergent* 2) Of course, her decision to join Dauntless, her determination to become a

skilled fighter, and her curiosity leads her to discover that Jeanine Matthews, leader of the faction Erudite, is planning to take over the factions by getting rid of Divergents – people who do not fit into one particular faction, thus disrupting the status quo. In order for Jeanine’s mission to be successfully carried out, she utilizes a simulation serum that can control Dauntless soldiers. As Tris herself is a Divergent and in the Dauntless faction, she takes it upon herself to stand up against Jeanine, and in one instance describes how Jeanine looks at her with “a vicious, predatory stare. She wants to rip me to pieces. I can’t lie down in submission now. I have to become an attack dog too”. (Roth, *Divergent* 358) She then makes the choice to destroy the simulation, which cements her place as a rebellion leader.

Once Tris chooses to take on the responsibility of leading, the language she utilizes underscores her agency. She claims, “I’m Divergent. I’m whatever I choose to be” (Roth, *Insurgent* 266) and comes up with strategies to find truths, “[puzzling] over needles and serums and simulations, trying to inhabit the minds of my enemies”. (Roth, *Insurgent* 201) And when she goes to Erudite headquarters so that Jeanine stops killing innocent people, she states that “where I go, I go because I choose to”. (Roth, *Insurgent* 318) Tris the one who comes up with the plan to reset the leaders’ memories so that they don’t reset the memories of the people in the factions. As she declares, “I belong to the people I love, and they belong to me – they, and the love and loyalty I give them, form my identity far more than any word or group ever could”. (Roth, *Allegiant* 455)

2.3. Asserting Authority

õ K h " { q øvtr'luth, yop hav'è to demand it ö 0
(Roth, *Insurgent* 41)

Despite the fact that the other faction and rebellion leaders undermine her because she appears to be so childlike, Tris always asserts her authority. She is positive that she is right, and, like men in charge, demands to be taken seriously. She makes the big decisions, devises the strategies, and lets the others know that even though she is physically small, she is just as deserving of respect as everyone else. While most major decisions – especially during war – are made by men in modern society, Tris is actually the true leader, and everyone acknowledges that. Thus, she subverts the traditional gender roles by which men lead and women follow – she refuses to play the role of the childlike, clueless, unthreatening girl. In contrast to the real world, where “leadership positions pull male; only 13.9% of executives and just 9.5% of high-level politicians were women”, (Smith, Choueiti and Pieper, 2014: 25) Tris takes up the leadership mantle.

This can be seen in her refusal to allow others to belittle her, such as when Kang, the faction leader of Candor, claims that Tris is too traumatized to think logically about an attack on Erudite:

‘... I can’t launch an attack based on a little girl’s speculations’.

I stand statue-still, unable to understand that he could be so stupid. My face burning. *Little girl*, he called me. A little girl who is stressed out to the point of paranoia. That is not me.

(Roth, *Insurgent* 222, original emphasis)

But rather than letting Kang’s patronizing statement sway her, she maintains her position and ultimately convinces him that they must band together to defeat Jeanine.

Tris also encounters a similar attitude from another faction leader, Marcus, when she informs him that he needs her help in order to defeat Erudite. After he also belittles her, she informs him

‘I don’t know where you get this delusion that I’m useless, but that’s what it is,’ I snap. ‘And I’m not interested in hearing about it. All I want to say is that when you stop being delusional and start feeling desperate because you’re too inept to figure this out on your own, you know who to come to.’ (Roth *Insurgent* 244)

Tris’s control is also demonstrated when Jeanine can’t find a serum to control Tris; Tris tells her “You have *failed*. You can’t control me! ... You will *never* be able to control me”. (Roth, *Insurgent* 375, original emphasis) Tris is not afraid either to upset her loved ones in her quest to defeat Jeanine, joining together with Marcus, her boyfriend’s abusive father, to uncover the message that the founders of the factions left behind: “I have to help Marcus, if there is even a chance that he is telling the truth. I have to work against the people I love best. And right now, I have to lie”. (Roth *Insurgent* 424) Of course, Tris’s instinct is right, and by working with Marcus, she is able to uncover the founding faction leaders’ message, which reveals that the world beyond the faction walls is real and waiting for them. By the third novel, Tris encounters yet another villain, David, who controlled everything in the factions and gave Jeanine the serum that started the whole rebellion. When he offers to have her learn from him because she’s genetically pure, she knows that “If someone offers you an opportunity to get closer to your enemy, you always take it. I know that without having learned it from anyone”. (Roth *Allegiant* 324) Tris’s self-assurance is what enables her to control everything from her identity, to her rise as a warrior, and finally a leader. She possesses inherent abilities that allow her to see through people, and she

has the intelligence to compartmentalize her emotions and think rationally – and that includes putting her relationship with her boyfriend Four in second place.

2.4. When Love is Not Everything

õ U j g " f q g u " p q v " c n n q y " j g t " h g g n k p i u " h q t " l
responsibility to her faction influence her ö 0
(Green-Barteet 2014, 47)

In contrast to Katniss's impulsive actions triggered by her feelings for Peeta and Gale, Tris does not let her love for Four cloud her judgment. In fact, when “she knowingly risks her relationship with Four and relinquishes any security associated with remaining with her faction, Tris does so of her own accord”. (Green-Barteet 2014, 47) Even though Four is two years older than she (he's 18 and she is 16), she “[takes] the lead, Tobias silent at my side”. (Roth *Insurgent* 4) After she betrays Four by working with his father Marcus, she reassures him that “I am exactly who you think I am. And right now, I'm telling you that I know ... I *know* this information will change everything”. (Roth *Insurgent* 503-504, original emphasis) As feminist scholar Miranda Green-Barteet points out, “through deceiving Four and deciding to uncover the truth on her own terms, Tris rejects the societal controls that have prevented her from knowing herself and ... becomes a fully autonomous subject”. (Green-Barteet 2014, 47) This is seen in the various interactions between Tris and Four when she tells him: “you can let me be the judge of what I can handle” (Roth *Allegiant* 29); later on, she says “coldly”: “Remember what happened the last time you didn't trust my ‘snap judgements’? ... You found out that I was right”. (*Allegiant* 273); and once more she stresses her point: “I was right. I was right, and you didn't listen. Again”. (*Allegiant*

300) Because Tris refuses to play the damsel in distress, or collaborate with Four's plans when she disagrees with them, he respects her and her authority, ultimately admitting "You were right". (Roth *Insurgent* 521). He also offers her support and is aware of her ability to guide others, telling her that people "listen to you", (Roth *Insurgent* 171) and without her "the rest of us have no hope". (Roth *Insurgent* 206)

Tris Prior is short, slender, and initially described as weak when she first begins dauntless training. While Katniss's attractive physical attributes are used to her disadvantage, Tris's less appealing appearance does not stop her. She exercises agency in choosing to be in the warrior faction, how to dress and to get tattoos. There is no mention of her removing any sort of bodily hair. Indeed, the only time her hair is mentioned is when she chooses to cut her hair short. The few times she wears makeup is when she chooses to let her best friend Christina put some eyeliner on her for a night out with their Dauntless friends. Tris's beauty never comes into question when addressing her leadership. Additionally, her small stature is focused on when training her to *become* a warrior, not when grooming her to sometimes look the part of a warrior, as is the case with Katniss. Most importantly, Tris is ever manipulated by anyone – she is in charge of rebellion strategies, commands respect from everyone, and does not let her love for Four get in the way of *her* agenda. Thus, Tris embodies the true leader.

2.5. A Piece in the Game

ō W p n k m g " e j c t c e v g t u " y j q " c t g " c y c t g " q h " v j
importance of their actions, Katniss acts from instinct, unaware of the secondary
implications í Katniss acts only because her sister is chosen ö 0
(Risko 2012, 88)

When comparing agency and leadership, it is important to note that unlike Tris, Katniss is not informed that she is part of the larger strategy until the rebellion leaders are forced to tell her – and that is only because she botches their plans by destroying the arena in *Catching Fire*. Not only are her body and actions manipulated into being more childlike, but her agency is also stripped by the rebellion leaders to render her completely childlike; everyone chooses to keep information from her for “her own good” and chastises her whenever she reacts – the way parents react with impulsive children. She is made aware of this at the very end of the second novel: “It’s an awful lot to take in, this elaborate plan in which I was a piece, just as I was meant to be in the Hunger Games. Used without consent, without knowledge”. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 385) She reiterates her anger and confusion in the beginning of the third novel listing how, in reference also to Peeta, “the rebels used us as pawns? How my rescue was arranged from the beginning? And finally, how our mentor, Haymitch Abernathy, betrayed us both for a cause he pretended to have no interest in?” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 21-22) Yet, despite being made aware, she is still lacking in agency. In one of the more revealing – and undermining – scenes in the final novel, both Haymitch and Plutarch take turns convincing the rebellion team that Katniss is capable of being the Mockingjay symbol and will not ruin their military strategy by impulsively going rogue:

It took the whole of this morning for [Haymitch] to convince the others of my limitations. That I can’t pull it off. I can’t stand in a television studio wearing a costume and makeup in a cloud of fake smoke and rally the districts to victory. It’s amazing, really, how long I’ve survived the cameras. The credit for that, of course, goes to Peeta. Alone, I can’t be the Mockingjay. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 73)

Unsurprisingly, Plutarch continues with

I want everyone to think of one incident where Katniss Everdeen genuinely moved you. Not where you were jealous of her hairstyle, or her dress went up in flames or she made a halfway decent shot with her arrow. Not where Peeta was making you like her. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 74)

In this exchange, several troubling issues are highlighted: Katniss's personality is not likeable, and the only aspects truly likeable about her were her body, hair, and clothing; she is incapable of performing, and most importantly, she is incapable of properly undertaking the one job she is assigned – being the Mockingjay symbol – because she needs Peeta.

Therefore, from the very moment Katniss becomes a tribute, she loses control of who she is. Her body is created Cinna's, trained by Haymitch, and undermined and used by Plutarch and Coin, for

Katniss embodies someone else's definition of the Mockingjay, she shifts from ownership of the persona to a more passive recipient of the designation ... because [the dress] is Cinna's "fantastic and reckless" act and not Katniss's, it strips her agency and usurps her place within the rebellion. She remains a symbol rather than its leader; she is sent to incite the crowds and rally them to the cause rather than to fight for the cause itself. (Montz 2012, 145)

Even when Katniss tries to convince Coin to let her fight, Coin's second-in-command, Boggs, tells her

'We all know you're smart and brave and a good shot. But we need soldiers in the field' ...
Suddenly, I see myself through [Boggs's] eyes. A smallish seventeen-year-old girl who can't quite catch her breath since her ribs haven't fully healed. Disheveled. Undisciplined. Recuperating. Not a soldier, but someone who needs to be looked after. (Collins, *Mockingjay* 234)

The difference between the way Katniss – and others – see herself when compared to Tris is striking. While Tris, who is incidentally the same age as Katniss, demands her place in battle, Katniss realizes that the soldiers do not have faith in her abilities. In fact, Katniss is only given the chance to become the leader because Boggs is mortally injured, and before dying he orders her to continue the rebellion mission of going to the Capitol and killing President Snow. When eventually Snow is captured and Katniss is given the ‘honor’ of shooting him, she exercises her first agentic action: shooting Coin dead instead. However, she does so because her conversation with Snow prompts her realization that Coin is another version of Snow, and her look of amusement at his execution is what triggers the release of Katniss’s arrow. She lacks agency even at her own trial, which is resolved without her presence by Plutarch and Dr. Aurelius, men who present her as a “hopeless, shell-shocked lunatic” (Collins, *Mockingjay* 378). Indeed, the argument that women are irrational – or hysterical – has been historically used to demean women’s decisions and actions, and this most certainly comes into play here. Even after Panem enters a peaceful period, Katniss knows that “The truth is, no one quite knows what to do with me now that the war’s over, although if another should spring up, Plutarch’s sure they could find another role for me”. (Collins *Mockingjay* 378-379)

CONCLUSIONS

In every media platform, the female body is displayed. On Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and of course in television series and reality TV, women are performing traditional gender roles. One cannot open an app or turn on the TV without seeing

famously altered bodies such as Kim Kardashian and Emily Ratajkowski. What's most interesting about these women, however, is that they are self-proclaimed feminists, exercising their right to show their naked bodies to the world. It is so common to see the female body, either whole or fragments, in commercials, on billboards, and in magazine spreads. Therefore, it is no surprise that during summer 2015, when Rihanna debuted her misogynistic music video for "Bitch Better Have My Money", she was met with both praise and criticism. Vogue.com columnist Karley Sciortino wrote:

It's good to normalise the female body. In so many music videos where you see nudity, it's framed in these really specific ways: abstract female body parts just looking hot. When Rihanna's naked she isn't posing in a hypersexual way, she's covered in blood and she'll cut your dick off. She looks powerful, but it's almost casual, normalised. It's about showing a powerful representation of the female body, where women are in charge of the way that they're being viewed. (cited in McVeigh 2015)

However, the issue at hand was not Rihanna's body, which was not completely naked, and was mostly covered in blood – but *her treatment of the other woman in the music video*. Rihanna sought her revenge on a man by targeting his wife, hanging her by her ankles while topless, abusing her, forcing her to take drugs, and eventually killing her. But the fact that she was met with praise for her fearlessness and pride in her body is proof that "postfeminism so sneaky and so noxious: Men don't even have to subjugate women anymore, because women have so thoroughly internalized the ideologies that *we do it to ourselves*". (Petersen, 2015, emphasis added) Fueled by this twisted logic, the objective in feminist Surveillance Studies underscores how "postfeminism" is a

discourse as well as a popular cultural context where gender inequality is no longer an issue, leaving a space for intensified and troubling stereotypes of femininity to thrive. The current cultural context of postfeminism implies that ...

enabling representations of women who willingly subject themselves to the gaze a form of agency. In so doing, women are both lauded (empowerment in self-representation) and responsible for consequences of the display. (Dubrofsky and Wood 2015, 99)

The consequence of believing that battery for artistic purposes is a celebration of feminism and agency is a subconscious mindset that is regressive rather than progressive. As such, when one truly dissects the *Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series, it is important to also figure out if the authors intentionally wrote their characters in the hopes of underlining current attitudes towards gender. While Collins recognizes, albeit through Katniss, that it is not fair that she needs to be “plucked bare like a chicken” while Peeta does not need to undergo any sort of bodily alterations, she does not acknowledge gender at all when interviewed about themes that she hoped to address when writing these novels. In a 2010 interview for *Huffington Post* with writer Hillel Italie, Collins revealed that the themes she wanted to underline with the novels were war, reality television, and the lengths humans would go to in order to obtain food because humans are depleting earth’s resources and causing global warming.

Perhaps the 53-year-old Collins, an “army brat” who has grown up with hypermasculine figures, has internalized patriarchal ideals to the extent that she is unaware of just how much her protagonist plays the role of the traditionally docile female. According to diverse interviews, Collins first came up with the idea for *Hunger Games* while watching television and flipping back and forth between news reports cover war and reality TV. Collins has stated that the *Hunger Games* are “stories of honor and courage in the worst of times”, and “*The Hunger Games* series is an exploration of ‘unnecessary’ war and ‘necessary’ war, when armed rebellion is

the only choice”. (Italie 2010) She further elaborates on her mindset when writing the *Hunger Games*:

One of the reasons it’s important for me to write about war is I really think that the concept of war, the specifics of war, the nature of war, the ethical ambiguities of war are introduced too late to children. I think they can hear them, understand them, know about them, at a much younger age without being scared to death by the stories. It’s not comfortable for us to talk about, so we generally don’t talk about these issues with our kids. But I feel that if the whole concept of war were introduced to kids at an earlier age, we would have better dialogues going on about it, and we would have a fuller understanding. (in Margolis 2010)

One can draw the conclusion that because Collins does not acknowledge Katniss’s body alterations, or gender performance, that she has internalized notions of traditional gender roles and rituals, and therefore did not intend on making a statement by devoting so much to Katniss’s body, dress, and performance.

This lack of awareness is also seen in the multitude of engendered criticism of the *Hunger Games*, such as that by English and Women’s Studies professor Tom Henthorne when he claims “Katniss ultimately challenges the authoritarianism of both the Capitol and District 13 by refusing to perform any of the roles they assign her”. (Henthorne 2012, 3); and “Katniss’s continual transgression of gender boundaries makes her a radical figure, someone capable of challenging the social order from the outside, effecting change in a way that no other person can”. (8) Ellyn Lem and Holly Hassel also write that “Katniss is most powerful when she embraces masculine ways”. (Lem and Hassel 2012, 124). Pop culture journalists Eliana Dockterman and Suzanne Moore hail Katniss as a masculine heroine when they write that “She leads a rebellion against the totalitarian government. And she saves the lives of her suitors — not the other way around. (Notice the swapping of gender roles: Peeta bakes, Katniss hunts.)”

(Dockterman 2013), and “She makes her bow and arrows to bring down the system. Nothing is said about gender. She is taller than one of her partners and it's her physical and mental prowess that we root for”. (Moore 2013) Ergo, Thus, Katniss's inner monologue, Collins lack of awareness of Katniss's performance of traditional gender roles, and the above engendered criticism prove that the gender binary is still at the forefront of Western culture.

Veronica Roth has also never made a point of how Tris subverts gender roles. The 27-year-old Roth is part of Generation Y, which might explain why Tris's being agentic is not a statement that Roth intended on making because what else would a woman be but agentic? In fact, according to a 2013 Cassandra Gender Report that surveyed 900 respondents,

Gen Ys and Zs consider conventional attitudes toward gender to be outdated, restrictive, and even insulting. They are expanding and reworking the definitions of masculinity and femininity, while placing less importance on one's sex in terms of how they act and dress ... Six in 10 say that men and women do not need to conform to traditional gender roles or behaviors anymore. (Cassandra Report 2013)

However, statistics prove that a double standard still exists: women are hypersexualized across all media platforms, and “it is apparent that many potential consequences may fall from the media's overemphasis on sexual and gender-role stereotypes”. (Ward and Harrison 2005, 15) Only time will tell whether current attitudes towards gender are truly changing, or if this is another example of internationalized postfeminism.

The *Hunger Games*, and to a lesser extent, the *Divergent* trilogies, have been worldwide phenomena, generating much-needed conversations, and fueling the dystopian craze. The importance of these works is that

the writing of a novel generically as a dystopia formally foregrounds cognition as part of the conventions of its reading and implies an authorial position that literature can effect social change by altering the consciousness of its readers, who will act in the world differently as a result of their new understanding. (Murphy 1990, 27)

Thus, by examining both the engendered critique of the *Hunger Games* and the *Divergent* series in conjunction with thought trends in pop culture, we can truly see the current attitudes that hinder, and encourage, gender parity.

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