

**ABSTRACT**

**THE YOUNG FEMALE ADULT IN SUZANNE COLLINS'S *THE HUNGER GAMES*  
TRILOGY**

**Submitted by**

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The study focuses on Y.A literature with dystopian themes. Dystopian worlds provides an alternative universe in which the characters act out every aspect of their identity and beyond it, from gender to age to sexuality, in a manner wholly different from stereotypical realities. By upending the reality of the world that is currently in existence, the dystopian setting opens up possibilities for the characters to have identities that would not be able to exist in fixed realities. Anne Balay examines gender bending in Y.A fiction:

A growing body of children's literature engages the question of how to do gender. This may not seem surprising, since kids' narratives have long been used to delight and instruct by teaching and reinforcing gender norms. (6)

While the narratives focus on the empowerment of young female characters, it is important to remember that these narratives take place in a fictional context which requires the subordination of 'all' young people. The Y.A novels promote the power of choice for young women by representing the female protagonists as critically engaging with their fictional society.

Suzanne Collins was born on August 10, 1962 in Hartford, Connecticut. She completed her Bachelor of Arts degree from Indiana University in 1985 with a double major in theater and telecommunications. As a result of the significant popularity of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Collins was named one of Time magazine's most influential people of 2010 (Skurnick n.pag) Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy are titled respectively *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010). A study of the trilogy shows how Y.A literature attempts to analyze the representation of young adults, particularly female young adults in a dystopian setting. Within Suzanne Collins's best-selling series *The Hunger Games* trilogy, traditional gender roles are subverted and characters are able to explore beyond assigned roles of gender characterization.

*The Hunger Games* takes place in a nation known as Panem, established in North America after the destruction of the continent's civilization by an unknown apocalyptic event. The nation consists of the wealthy Capitol and twelve surrounding, poorer districts under the Capitol's control. District 12, where the trilogy begins, is located in the coal-rich region. The Hunger Games consist of the brutal lottery of taking one underage girl and boy from each district to pit them against each other in an arena over a number of weeks until one survivor remains to be declared the victor. The games are there to remind the Districts of the past rebellion when District 13 was supposedly destroyed. They are there to fulfill the Capitol's sadistic form of punishment. This is broadcasted as live television across all of Panem. The Capitol is lavishly rich and technologically advanced but the twelve districts are in varying states of poverty.

Each book in *The Hunger Games* trilogy has three sections of nine chapters each. The trilogy is narrated by 16-year-old Katniss Everdeen from District 12. In *The Hunger Games*, she volunteers for the 74th annual Hunger Games in place of her younger sister, Primrose. The male tribute chosen is Peeta Mellark, Katniss's former schoolmate who once gave her bread from his family's bakery when her family was starving.

Katniss and Peeta are taken to the Capitol, where their mentor Haymitch Abernathy instructs them to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the other tributes. Before the games begin, the tributes are publicly displayed to the Capitol audience in an interview where they show their various charms in order to obtain "sponsors". These sponsors are sometimes their one chance against life and death because of their ability to send gifts such as food, medicine, and tools to favoured tributes. During this time, Peeta reveals on-air his longtime unrequited love for Katniss who believes this to be a ploy to gain an upper hand in the games.

Nearly half the tributes are killed on the first day in the arena. Katniss relies on her well-practiced survival skills and develops an alliance with Rue, a twelve year girl from the agricultural District 11, while Peeta appears to have joined forces with the tributes from the richer districts known as the Careers. Katniss's alliance with Rue is brought to an immediate end when Rue is killed by another tribute, who Katniss then kills in self-defence with an arrow. Katniss sings to Rue until she dies, and spreads flowers over her body as a sign of respect for Rue and disgust towards the Capitol. This act is one of her many small ways of defying the Capitol. She is never once on the offensive but rather only acts in defense. This small level of humanity she shows about herself pulls the heartstrings of the Capitol audience and thus, they force the Gamemakers to change certain laws in the games.

Katniss and Peeta's image as "star-crossed lovers" in the minds of the adoring Capitol audience incited a rule change announced midway through the Games which ensures the survival of each district tribute couples. Katniss eventually finds Peeta and nurses him back to health, acting the part of a young girl falling in love to gain more favour with the audience and, consequently, gifts from her sponsors. When the couple ultimately remains as the last two surviving tributes, the Gamemakers reverse the rule of the game in an attempt to force them to kill each other. Katniss, in another act of defiance against the Capitol, retrieves highly poisonous berries known as "nightlock" found in the arena and offers some to Peeta. She knows the Capitol need to have at least one victor and both she and Peeta decides to take that away from the Capitol knowing there will be tremendous repercussions by the Capitol people on the system.

This prompts the Gamemakers to announce that both of them would be the victors. Afterwards, Katniss is warned by Haymitch that she has now become a political target after openly defying her society's authoritarian leaders so publicly. With her victory and survival

of the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games, Katniss finds herself thrust into political issues that she has no part in before

In *Catching Fire*, Katniss and Peeta return home to District 12 which they will soon leave again to start the "Victory Tour" of the country. President Snow visits unexpectedly and tells Katniss that when she defied the Capitol with Peeta, her actions sparks off rebellions in the other districts. He tells her, "...people viewed your little trick with the berries as an act of defiance, not an act of love. And if a girl from District Twelve of all places can defy the Capitol and walk away unharmed, what is to stop them from doing the same?" (21).

Katniss and Peeta travels to the twelve districts hoping to placate the growing rebellion as President Snow threatens Katniss's family. To try to settle the threat against Katniss's family, Peeta proposes to Katniss during an interview. Despite this, the rebellion continues to spread. For the 75th Hunger Games, twenty-four victors from previous years are forced to compete once again. This is the third occurrence of the "Quarter Quell": an event that allows the Capitol to introduce a twist in the games. As the only female victor from District 12, Katniss is forced to participate again.

During the Games, set in a jungle with a saltwater lake, Katniss and Peeta join up with other tributes- Finnick Odair, Mags, Johanna Mason, Beetee and Wiress. In the final chapters, after Wiress is killed in a battle with the Careers, Katniss helps Beetee execute his plan which is to harness the lightning that signals the turn of every twelve hours in the middle of the arena. Beetee's plan is to harness the lightning to electrocute Brutus and Enobaria, the two other remaining Careers tributes from District 2. With the chaos that ensues within the final chapters of the novel, Katniss instead directs the lightning at the force field that contains them in the arena which results in her temporary paralysis as well as the force field breaking down.

When she awakens, she learns that Peeta, Enobaria, and Johanna have been captured by the Capitol, and is informed that there had been a plan among half of the contestants to break her out of the arena. The book ends with Katniss' best friend, Gale informing her that, though he got her family out in time, District 12 has been destroyed.

In *Mockingjay*, the final book of the trilogy, Katniss is manipulated by the leader of District 13 President Alma Coin and eventually agrees to be "the Mockingjay" a poster child for the rebellion, but only on the condition that District 13's President Coin vows to grant immunity to all of the past Hunger Games tributes, including Peeta Mellark and Finnick's lover Annie Cresta, and to reserve for Katniss the right to personally kill President Snow once he is captured. District 13 has been able to thrive underground, undetected by the Capitol. Katniss and the rebels eventually succeed in extracting Peeta from the Capitol's grasp but they discover that Peeta has been "hijacked", a brutal form of brainwashing that induces extreme fear. Peeta has been programmed to hate and fear Katniss.

President Coin sends Peeta along with Katniss in battle even though he is still unstable. This made Katniss believe that Coin wants her dead because she is difficult to control. With a hand-picked squad and Katniss in the lead, they advance towards the Capitol to the President's mansion.

As Katniss and her squad reach the President's mansion, a hoverplane drops parachutes carrying bombs that explode among a group of trapped children. The rebel medics which includes Katniss' sister Prim rush in to help the injured children but a second wave of firebombs explodes, taking out the medics. Prim is killed. However, the rebels manage to win the war. Katniss became convinced that rather than establishing a republic governed by representatives from each of the districts, President Coin intends to assume Snow's power and maintain the status quo, which she learns from the now prisoner Snow. Her suspicion of

President Coin grows as she further proposes a last Hunger Games with the Capitol children including Snow's grand-daughter to punish the Capitol for their past atrocities. To throw President Coin off her tract, she agrees to this proposal.

On the day Snow is to be executed, Katniss shoots Coin instead, killing her. Katniss immediately attempts suicide, but Peeta stops her and she is arrested during the ensuing riot. After the riot, Snow is found dead. Katniss is ultimately relocated to the ruins of her home in District 12 where she suffers from acute depression. Months later, Peeta and some other District 12 natives also return there. To help Katniss recover, they start writing a book together as a process of healing. By helping overthrow Snow and assassinating Coin, Katniss has preserved the possibility of Panem transitioning to a representative form of government.

In the epilogue, set twenty years later, Katniss and Peeta have two children symbolizing hope that future generations will benefit from the sacrifices of their parents. Katniss dreads the day her children learn about their parents' involvement in both the Games and the war. The series ends with Katniss' somber reflection that "There are much worse games to play."(*Mockingjay* 398)

## **Chapter-1 Introduction**

The first chapter Introduction puts into perspective the title of the dissertation "The Young Female Adult in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* Trilogy". It examines the role of a Y.A female character in a fictional world where she can employ both her physical and emotional strengths. It highlights how Y.A literature provides a positive result for gender development.

Angela Hubler states the importance of being exposed to different types of Y.A literature (perhaps even those that do not have strong female protagonists) because all reading

can make an impact on the reader. The readers are enabled “to reflect upon the process of gender-role socialization, and thus to take an active role in the construction of her own identity” (91).

Unlike past Y.A series geared towards teenage girls like *The Babysitter’s Club* series (1986-2000), *The Twilight Saga* (2005-2008) and *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* series (2003-2011), Y.A dystopian novels are more than love triangles, hairstyles or popularity. Instead, the Y.A dystopia does what all great science fiction sets out to do: it holds up a mirror to our world, acting as a tool for social critique. The fantasy elements present in Science fiction also provides for the Y.A authors to explore themes like sexuality, race and gender without established constraints.

Katniss performs her gender roles for the Capitol but she does not let it become a part of her characteristics. To Katniss, the roles given to her are merely performances. With her character as a Y.A dystopian protagonists, the study focuses on the representation of Y.A females and the evolution in the process of an emerging empowered young female adult.

As authors Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Clair writes in their important book *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult Literature* (1990-2001) on empowered girls in Y.A fiction:

Within a web or network that constitutes a community, they make a place for themselves through meaningful contributions to it, nurturing others without sacrificing their own selves. They come to know themselves and they resist letting themselves be defined by others... They are courageous, enthusiastic, and determined” (49).

## **Chapter-2 The Female as Weapon of Change**

The second chapter of the dissertation studies how through her development over the course of a novel or a series, a strong female Y.A protagonist embraces her attributes, even the traditionally ‘weak’ feminine ones, breaking stereotypes and using her voice to change the world for herself and others in her environment. She is empowered by her own actions and finds success without emulating masculine power or undermining it (Hall 7).

Y.A literature provides an important space for young adults to examine their emerging and constantly evolving selves. “Engagement with story is life-affirming; it puts us in touch with the world, with one another, and with our essential selves” (Goldstein and Phelan, 33). This quote illustrates the importance of connection. Y.A female readers connect with the protagonists of the trilogy Katniss Everdeen as she has to constantly fight for her and family’s survival. She has strength of character that projects onto the readers that transcends her fictional state.

When a female character is turned into a weapon, she becomes powerful enough to pose a genuine threat to those who originally subjugates her; and whose continued presence in a position of power relies on her continued subordination. Their attempts to continue her oppression are met with resistance, and the power they imbue in her becomes a method with which she can exercise agency in her own way; reworking the power hierarchy of the fictional world to accommodate the agency and autonomy that the young character wishes to express. Katniss Everdeen overthrows both President Snow and President Coin to make way for a new Panem, weaponized with her bow and arrows, both in and out of the games:

There, resting on a mound of blanket rolls, is a silver sheath of arrows and a bow, already strung, just waiting to be engaged. That’s mine, I think. It’s meant for me (*The Hunger Games* 149).

In their book *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult Literature* (1990-2001) Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Clair disclose that female empowerment needs to help girls "find strength by valuing positive feminine characteristics instead of striving to be as competitive, assertive, and powerful as boys, even though societal norms tend to endorse those latter qualities".(48) Strong female protagonists in current Y.A literature empower themselves and value all of their traits, whether they are traditionally considered to be masculine or feminine. They take what is traditionally seen as "unheroic" for female characters and instill it with different ideals. Despite being non-realistic texts, there is a clear theme of empowerment and rejection of female subjugation in Y.A literature.

### **Chapter-3 The Young Adult Female and Emotions**

The third chapter of the dissertation locates the importance of emotions in the characterization of a Y.A female protagonists. With Katniss Everdeen as example, it is easy to observe how her actions are based on her emotions. This chapter also executes how when one defines emotions in a Y.A female, it is not necessarily equivalent to the romantic aspect. Romance novels are generally directed towards the female audience and though they are liberating in terms of sexuality, it limits the female readers to one end i.e *love*. The culmination of love with the desired love partner fulfills the life of the female protagonist. The 'love' becomes her ending, her universe and shadows everything that the protagonists had achieved so far.

In Y.A dystopian fiction, female protagonists do not achieve wholeness with her emotional progress in 'love'. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss succeeds in overthrowing the dictatorial leadership of President Snow and President Coin before she can think about her relationship with Peeta Mellark. It is only after she achieves freedom for herself and Panem that she grants herself freedom to pursue any emotional attachment to Peeta. Before, all she

could think about was her survival and the survival of her loved ones. In *Catching Fire*, when Gale confesses his love for her, she replies:

I can't think about anyone that way now. All I can think about, every day, every waking minute since they drew Prim's name at the reaping is how afraid I am. And there doesn't seem to be room for anything else. If we could get somewhere safe, maybe I could be different. I don't know. (97)

Everything Katniss has been through with the Hunger Games, pretending to be in love with Peeta and being the face of the rebellion as the 'Mockingjay' was in order to keep Prim safe. She is Katniss' s greatest love in life. Katniss finds peace in Prim and she is the core cause behind her many actions. It is interesting to note that Katniss's greatest love in the trilogy is not one of the male characters. She has no need to fall in love with Peeta or Gale for her to find courage to defy situations.

Strong female protagonists, such as Katniss Everdeen of Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, have made an impact in the current market of young adult literature. They bring changes to both romance and projection of young adult female emotions by blending gendered traits and science fiction genres into something completely new and experimental. As unlikely as girls may be as dystopian heroes, they can be the most effective examples of overcoming not just the oppression they face in their own societies but the patriarchal system that is common in the fictional societies in which their stories are written. Girls like Katniss, once forced to be either just like the boys, perhaps more subservient or overly feminine, comprise now a wider range of characteristics and roles.

These empowered female characters subvert the traditional hero narratives of masculine traits and brute force. They use feminine traits like compassion and emotion to create change and to empower others. They validate that emotions are imperative when it

comes to young females. The hero paradigm of being inexplicably masculine is subverted. The new heroine paradigm gives space for female characters to be heroines with feelings and none the weaker for it.

#### **Chapter -4 Girls on Fire: Struggle for Self**

The fourth chapter analyzes the other female characters of *The Hunger Games* trilogy along with their relationships to Katniss Everdeen. Characters like Katniss's mother, sister Prim and Greasy Sae are more docile in their portrayal. Though they do not physically handle weaponry like Katniss to join the rebellion, they nonetheless contribute their talents whether it is by healing or cooking for the masses. Characters like Cressida and Johanna Mason actively enter the fray. They are rebellious in nature and it shows as they contribute in bringing down the dictatorship of President Snow.

If one were to look through the well-established tradition of male dystopian authors like H.G Wells and George Orwell, one does not need to scrutinize closely in order to reach the conclusion that such tradition contributes towards the marginalization of female characters and silencing female voices. Although male authors or at least some of them criticise tyranny of patriarchal systems throughout their novels, hoping for a more perfect world order, rarely do they believe that a female heroine would be capable of confronting the power system or have any political influence to introduce changes in the society she is trapped in. The idea of a female antagonist would have seemed even more nonsensical.

President Coin's character is introduced in *Mockinjay* as a female antagonist. The presentation of a female villain according to Amanda Rodrigues, "...this embodiment of a nontraditional representation of matriarchy in Coin is refreshing. She is decisive, smart, and calm when under attack and always thinking about the greater good of the people". (Rodrigues n. pag) However, at the same time she is just as ruthless as President Snow

towards getting her objective. President Snow sees this at the end and concludes that he had undermined the leader of District 13. In a conversation with Katniss, he tells her:

“My failure” says Snow, “was being so slow to grasp Coin’s plan. To let the Capitol and districts destroy one another, and then step in to take power with Thirteen barely scratched...But I wasn’t watching Coin. I was watching you, Mockingjay. And you were watching me. I’m afraid we have both been played for fools”. (*Mockingjay* 357)

This chapter attempts to locate the role the female characters play in bringing about the new world order. YA dystopian series with strong female characters illuminate on how capable young girls can be in the roles of heroes and roles that can be considered outside of their assigned stereotypical comfort zone. They are warriors, hunters, friends as well as girlfriends and mothers. They challenge gender-roles and expectations.

In relation to *The Hunger Games*, because Panem is under a totalitarian state, everyone performs a role for the benefit of the governing power who becomes the interacting audience. Everyone is assigned roles from Districts to occupation. They are all under the eye of President Snow who rigidly puts up this system. There is little space for individuality. This is evident in how he treats Katniss, the girl who attempts to show her individuality in front of many Capitol audiences. He adamantly tries to destroy her spirit first and when that failed, even goes as far as destroying the District she lives in.

Katniss’s search for her independent self is complicated by the layers of audiences who watches Katniss progresses through the games and even after she won her first Hunger Games. There is the Panem audience, consisting of viewers in the different districts from which the tributes are collected. She firstly has to perform as the brave, self sacrificing girl who volunteers to take her sister’s place in the games. Then the girl who wore the ‘flames’ earning her the nickname ‘the girl on fire’, a girl who defied her lowly social status by

coming from a lowly district like District 12 and gaining the Capitol's approval and admiration. In the arena, she had to play the part of the love struck girl, one half of the 'star-crossed lovers' with Peeta and the girl who was much too in love with Peeta to notice anything political going around her.

Katniss Everdeen has multitude of roles to play in the trilogy. These varied roles throw her world into chaos. Thus, throughout the trilogy, she creates disaster resulting in a war. She accepts the roles and facade thrown at her without really understanding their depths. However, at the very ending of *Mockingjay*, when she is finally rid of her last role as the 'Mockingjay' and after assassinating President Coin, she leaves space for a new world order in her wake. The new Panem would not have prying eyes anymore and no one would have to perform roles forcibly assigned to them. By giving peace back to everyone, a role Katniss was comfortable in, she finally has peace with herself.

## **Chapter-5 Conclusion**

The final chapter concludes the points highlighted in the dissertation Female characters emerging in contemporary YA fiction are not traditional and submissive characters. The young women in current Y.A dystopian fiction often take on roles that are traditionally meant for young men, but they infuse some femininity into their roles in order to become empowered, subverting the idea that 'femininity' equals the weaker. For instance, Katniss puts on various types of clothes to put emphasis on the role she plays. She puts on clothes that can burst into flame to accentuate her role as the 'girl on fire' and special armory to distinguish her as the 'Mockingjay'.

Females in YA dystopian novels have the same nearly unlimited possibilities that males have had throughout the history of the literature, and the current wave of strong heroines have shown that there are multiple ways to be a young woman who is able to hold

her own power, even in a male-dominated world. The study reveals how girls relates to the protagonist as an individual who desires societal acceptance and this desire helps in the acceptance of themselves in a contemporary patriarchal society

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**THE YOUNG FEMALE ADULT IN SUZANNE COLLINS'S *THE HUNGER GAMES*  
TRILOGY**

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*Submitted*

*in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of  
Master of Philosophy in English of Mizoram University, Aizawl.*

*2016*

**DECLARATION**

**Mizoram University**

**June, 2016.**

**I, Lydia Lalduhawmi, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any other University or Institute.**

**(Candidate)**

**(HEAD)**

**(SUPERVISOR)**

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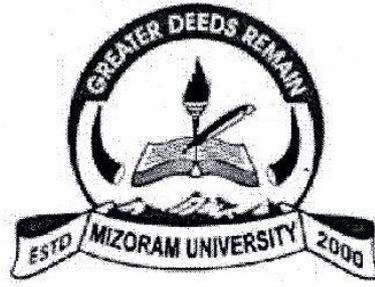
First, I thank the Almighty God for his blessings and guidance during the course of my research.

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**CERTIFICATE**

**This is to certify that “The Young Female Adult in Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games* Trilogy” written by Lydia Lalduhawmi has been written under my supervision.**

**She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigation. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor part of it was ever submitted by any other University for any research degree.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Young Adult literature or Y.A is a fiction that is written and published for young adult readers and teenagers. Y.A literature uses a wide array of themes that appeal to the targeted readers which includes identity, sexuality, race, gender and science fiction. The genre is slowly carving itself a niche in the world of literature. Authors or readers of the genre define the term as literature aimed for readers between sixteen years of age to twenty five years. The subject matter and plot lines regarding Y.A literature are consistent with the age and the experience of an average teen. They are also social novels; aimed to modify and prevent the breakdown of communication amongst young generation.

Y.A literary scholars argue that in most of the contemporary fiction, young people are constructed as passive and submissive but a close analysis of popular Y.A literature that deals with dystopian themes demonstrate that the young protagonists in Y.A literature are represented as capable of engaging meaningfully in the fictional power hierarchy.

The study focuses on Y.A literature with dystopian themes. Y.A novels have started blooming rapidly from the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These contemporary Y.A novels have recently attracted the reading public. Dystopian themed novels particularly among the readers of Y.A novels are rapidly gaining popularity with the most famous of them earning Hollywood contracts. In *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* (1994), Keith Booker calls attention to the alternating power of science fiction, in particular dystopian fiction. Recalling Darko Suvin's definition of 'cognitive estrangement', Booker argues that dystopian literature estranges readers by disclosing evils already present in contemporary society "through shocks of recognition in a different contexts". For instance, *The Hunger Games* trilogy draws upon the individual's fear of dictatorship, total government censorship,

surveillance of mass media and exaggerating them to a point that readers have no choice but to reflect on their own immediate contemporary societies.

Why, one may wonder does the dystopian novels which have been popular since the 1800's suddenly gained importance? Why do Y.A novelists focus on this genre? Why, on such a morbid genre does a young adult reader have renewed curiosity? Also known as anti-utopias, dystopias are often designed to critique the potential negative implications of certain forms of utopian thought. However, dystopian fiction tends to have a strong satirical dimension that is designed to warn against the possible consequences of certain tendencies in the real world of the present. (Herman 99)

"Just like adolescence is between childhood and adulthood, paranormal, or other, is between human and supernatural," said Jennifer Lynn Barnes, a young adult author, Ph.D. and cognitive science scholar. "Teens are caught between two worlds, childhood and adulthood, and in Y.A, they can navigate those two worlds and sometimes dualities of other worlds." "It's not surprising that Y.A is always dealing with transformation, whether it be realistic or supernatural," author and publisher Lizzie Skurnick said. "It's the only genre that can always be both. It shows teen life in full chaos. And that means constant change."(Strickland n. pag)

Significantly, the presence of hope distinguishes the Y.A dystopias from traditional fiction with dystopian themes. This optimism teaches adolescents that they have something to hold onto and urges them to improve their situations, if necessary, just like the protagonists do. Suzanne Collins ends the trilogy on a hopeful, albeit ambiguous note, signifying that their societies have undergone permanent change. In contrast, earlier works with dystopian themes like George Orwell's *1984* do not offer such optimistic endings. Unlike such dystopias which are often dark and pessimistic about the nature of man, however dystopias for Y.A focus on

heroism and the struggle to survive. Y.A dystopias offer a sense of hope and promotes an active attitude, “often viewed as essential for young readers” (Sambell 251), which makes these stories function somewhat like cautionary tales. They exaggerate aspects of the contemporary world in order to make the audience think critically.

Most Y.A dystopian novels function as “critical dystopias,” where the characters exist, usually unknowingly, in an oppressive society until they find out there exists an alternative society – a utopia outside their own world. This encourages the characters, through the author, to develop a counter-narrative that challenges hegemonic structures that seem to be innate and necessary to maintain order. Their resistance is two-fold – first, they challenge the physical space and boundaries of their constructed world, and second, the youth also challenge aspects of their identity that have been constructed by adults. Analyzing dystopian fiction provides for discussions about ways that youth experience is treated as monolithic, and that under certain conditions all youth can be controlled. For educators, dystopian novels problematize aspects of youth identity that are treated as normative in schools and in society.

Unlike past Y.A series that generally portray teenage girls involving in love triangles like *The Babysitter’s Club* series (1986-2000), *The Twilight Saga* (2005-2008) and *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* series (2003-2011), Y.A dystopian novels are more than love triangles, hairstyles or popularity. Instead, Y.A novels with dystopian themes are like science fiction. They act as a mirror to our world and also as a tool for social critiquing.

A majority of Y.A novels are written by women in which the focus is about girls who are teens or in their late teens (young- adults.) Gender plays an important role in the message that these authors are trying to express. Feminist literature is filled with the subversive action of female characters. What these Y.A novelists attempt to do is reconstruct a female identity

which subverts her male counterpart before she is considered a ‘woman’. When the female protagonist attempts to fight the regime which requires her subordination, she is often repurposed as a tool or weapon to maintain the power-holders’ control. The disempowerment of young people in these narratives acts as a catalyst for action, and this action often involves a re-structuring of the narrative world or the overthrowing of a corrupt regime which could be constructed as a masculine based system of authority. In this way, young characters in particular, young women are portrayed as active, engaged individuals capable of toppling oppressive social orders. Readers can observe that ‘humanity’ is at the core of these novels.

Most Y.A dystopia novels feature teenage girls who subvert stereotypes and conventions of their fictional realities as much as the real world, challenging gender roles and qualities. For instance, their female protagonists often take on what had traditionally been masculine roles. Instead of being just a by-stander – they fight, investigate, infiltrate, rescue, protect and lead. Resilience, resourcefulness, venturing to hope in a world that crushes not only hopes but any chance of individualism – these are the themes that are contained and taught in Y.A dystopias.

In some sense, Y.A literature with dystopian themes seems to be made for female heroines because preserving oneself with an overwhelming system of oppression on which one also depends has been the lot of women for a millennia. What is new is the way in which the fight is portrayed. There have been psychological and mental fights against systems of oppression precipitated by adult women. Y.A heroines are portrayed as warrior figures who take up real physical tasks of rebellion.

Suzanne Collins was born on August 10, 1962 in Hartford, Connecticut. She completed her Bachelor of Arts degree from Indiana University in 1985 with a double major in theater and telecommunications. As a result of the significant popularity of *The Hunger*

*Games* trilogy, Collins was named one of Time magazine's most influential people of 2010 (Skurnick n.pag). In an interview for the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Collins said, "...*The Hunger Games* were very intentionally created to characterize current and past world events, including the use of hunger as a weapon to control populations. Tyrannical governments have also used the techniques of geographical containment of certain populations, as well as the nearly complete elimination of the rights of the individual" (Blasingame n.pag). To date there are more than 16 million copies of all three books in circulation in the United State and *The Hunger Games* has spent more than 160 consecutive weeks in the New York Times bestseller list.

In an interview with Hannah Trierweiler Hudson on *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Collins remarks about what draws her to writing with science fiction themes as:

Telling a story in a futuristic world gives you this freedom to explore things that bother you in contemporary times. So, in the case of *The Hunger Games*, issues like the vast discrepancy of wealth, the power of television and how it's used to influence our lives, the possibility that the government could use hunger as a weapon, and then first and foremost to me, the issue of war.(Taylor & Baker 25)

The novels in the trilogy are titled *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010). The novels have all been developed into movies and gained tremendous success even as a movie franchise. The first two books in the trilogy are New York Times best sellers, and *Mockingjay* topped all US bestsellers lists upon its release.

The books have been described as 'a fever dream allegory of the adolescent social experience'- also known as the battle field of the high school cafeteria, but their author Suzanne Collins dismisses this out of hand. In a rare interview in the New York Times Magazine, she explains: 'I don't write about adolescence. I write about war. For adolescents.'

Hailing from a bloodline of servicemen, -her father was deployed to Vietnam when she was 6- she is well versed in her topic. In *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins honors her father's tradition of teaching young people about the realities of war: 'If we wait too long, what kind of expectations can we have?' She says, 'We think we're sheltering them, but what we're doing is putting them at a disadvantage.' (Taylor and Baker 35)

This study attempts to analyze the representation of young adults, particularly female young adults in Y.A dystopian novels. Within Suzanne Collins's best-selling series *The Hunger Games* trilogy, traditional gender roles are subverted and characters are able to explore beyond assigned roles of gender characterization. This study will attempt to show how YA literature can present a new type of female role model, significant because "women and girls learn gender-specific ways of reading and construct and reconstruct specific kinds of interpretive communities, literary practices, and identities" through the literature they interact with on a daily basis (Rogers 142)

*The Hunger Games* takes place in a nation known as Panem, established in North America after the destruction of the continent's civilization by an unknown apocalyptic event. The nation consists of the wealthy Capitol and twelve surrounding, poorer districts under the Capitol's control. District 12, where the trilogy begins, is located in the coal-rich region. The Hunger Games consist of the brutal lottery of taking one underage girl and boy from each district to pit them against each other in an arena over a number of weeks until one survivor remains to be declared the victor. The games are there to remind the Districts of the past rebellion when District 13 was supposedly destroyed. They are there to fulfill the Capitol's sadistic form of punishment. This is broadcasted as live television across all of Panem. The Capitol is lavishly rich and technologically advanced but the twelve districts are in varying states of poverty.

Each book in *The Hunger Games* trilogy has three sections of nine chapters each. Suzanne Collins's main sources are drawn from classical and contemporary issues. The main classical source of inspiration, according to Collins came from the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Minos had forced Athens to sacrifice seven youths and seven maidens to the Minotaur in a large labyrinth as punishment for past deeds. A contemporary source of inspiration was Collins's recent fascination with reality television programmes. She relates this in *The Hunger Games* and denotes that they are not just entertainment, but also a reminder to the districts of their rebellion.

The trilogy is narrated by 16-year-old Katniss Everdeen from District 12 who volunteers for the 74th annual Hunger Games in place of her younger sister, Primrose. Katniss only has Gale Hawthorne, her hunting partner and one of the few people she trusted to rely on to keep her family from dying of starvation. The male tribute chosen is Peeta Mellark, of Katniss's former schoolmate who once gave her bread from his family's bakery when her family was starving.

Katniss and Peeta are taken to the Capitol, where their mentor who remains perpetually drunk, Haymitch Abernathy instructs them to watch and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the other tributes. "Stylists" are employed to make each tribute look his or her best. During the Hunger Games, all citizens of the Capitol watch in horror and hope as their own representatives struggle to survive. They are devoid of the humanity that the other struggling districts grew up with. Even Katniss Everdeen notices this superficiality early on in meeting her prep team:

Venia and Octavia, a plump woman whose entire body has been dyed a pale shade of pea green, rub me down with a lotion that first stings but then soothes my raw skin...I stand there, completely naked, as the three circle me, wielding tweezers to remove

any last bits of hair. I know I should be embarrassed, but they're so unlike people that I'm no more self-conscious than if a trio of oddly colored birds were pecking around my feet (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 62).

Katniss's stylist, Cinna, is the only person at the Capitol with whom she feels a degree of connection. Cinna is eventually the one who gave Katniss the face of the Mockingjay, her ultimate role as a weapon against the Capitol. Before the games begin, the tributes are publicly displayed to the Capitol audience in an interview where they have to attempt to appeal to the television audience and show their various charms in order to obtain "sponsors". These sponsors are sometimes their one chance against life and death because of their ability to send gifts such as food, medicine, and tools to favoured tributes. During this time, Peeta reveals on-air his longtime unrequited love for Katniss who believes this to be a ploy to gain an upper hand in the games.

Katniss who in her entire life has only her strength to rely on cannot understand emotions like romance at first glance. When all her time is dedicated to providing for her sister Prim and mother for their survival, Katniss has no time to interact with the opposite sex on a superficial level. She discards emotions that she feels are not needed for her survival.

Nearly half the tributes are killed on the first day in the arena. Katniss relies on her well-practiced survival skills to remain unharmed and concealed. She develops an alliance with Rue, a twelve year girl from the agricultural District 11 who reminds Katniss of her younger sister Prim, while Peeta appears to have joined forces with the tributes from the richer districts known as the Careers. However, when he has the opportunity to kill Katniss, he instead saves her from the others. Katniss's alliance with Rue is brought to an immediate end when Rue is killed by another tribute, who Katniss then kills in self-defence with an arrow. Katniss sings to Rue until she dies, and spreads flowers over her body as a sign of

respect for Rue and disgust towards the Capitol. This act is one of her many small ways of defying the Capitol. Readers observe throughout the trilogy, that what Katniss fought for the hardest to keep her humanity intact because Katniss refuses to take part in the ruthless killings of each other in the games. She is never once on the offensive but rather only acts in defense when her life is threatened. This small level of humanity she shows about herself pulls the heartstrings of the Capitol audience and thus, they force the Gamemakers to change certain laws in the games.

Katniss and Peeta's image as "star-crossed lovers" in the minds of the adoring Capitol audience incited a rule change announced midway through the Games which ensures the survival of each district tribute couples. Katniss eventually finds Peeta and nurse him back to health, acting the part of a young girl falling in love to gain more favour with the audience and, consequently, gifts from her sponsors. Even while she is acting like a young girl in love, Katniss methodically calculates her moves, taking into account what their District 12 mentor Haymitch Abernathy might make her do. She shares endearing kisses with Peeta for the audience, particularly the sponsors. Thus, one continues to be engrossed with this linear characteristic of Katniss Everdeen throughout the first novel of the trilogy.

When the couple ultimately remains as the last two surviving tributes, the Gamemakers reverse the rule in an attempt to force them to kill each other. Katniss, in another act of defiance against the Capitol, retrieves highly poisonous berries known as "nightlock" found in the arena and offers some to Peeta. She knows the Capitol needs to have at least one victor and both she and Peeta decides to take that away from the Capitol knowing there will be tremendous repercussions by the Capitol people on the system. Katniss also thinks that death would be better than killing Peeta, as it would be difficult for her to meet Peeta's parents when she returns to District 12.

This prompts the Gamemakers to announce that both of them would be the victors. Although she survives the ordeal in the arena and is treated to a hero's welcome in the Capitol, Katniss is warned by Haymitch that she has now become a political target after openly defying her society's authoritarian leaders so publicly. With her victory and survival of the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games, Katniss finds herself thrust into political controversy that she has no part before. She finds it hard to believe that a young insignificant Seam girl from District 12 can have any impact in the minds of the District people to flame an entire revolution.

Looking through feminist lens at Katniss Everdeen's character, one finds she has no overt feminine qualities. Her role in the family is taking over her father's role after his death which can be seen as the failure of the established patriarchy. At the age of eleven, she became the head of the house. With hunting, trading and keeping the house in order, Katniss as a child has a very strong hold to clasp. She becomes too practical and blind to anything that is not important to her and her family's survival.

In *Catching Fire*, Katniss and Peeta return home to District 12 which they will soon leave again to start the "Victory Tour" of the country. An act, Katniss deems as cruel and unnecessary as each Victor visits all the surrounding Districts somehow symbolizes celebrating the brutality of the games. President Snow visits unexpectedly and tells Katniss that when she defied the Capitol with Peeta, her actions sparks off rebellions in the other districts. He tells her, "...people viewed your little trick with the berries as an act of defiance, not an act of love. And if a girl from District Twelve of all places can defy the Capitol and walk away unharmed, what is to stop them from doing the same?" (Collins, *Catching Fire* 21). He also warns her to keep away from Gale, her supposed cousin using him as leverage to control her.

President Snow could see Katniss's potential threat even before she herself realizes it. "Katniss Everdeen, the girl who was on fire, you have provided a spark that, left unattended, may grow to an inferno that destroys Panem". President Snow turns out to be quite prophetic as Katniss indeed becomes a huge factor in the rebellion that destroyed Panem.

Katniss and Peeta travel to the twelve districts with the Capitol hoping to placate the growing rebellion as President Snow threatens Katniss's family. To try to settle the threat against Katniss's family, Peeta proposes to Katniss during an interview. Despite this, the rebellion continues to spread. Even though Katniss does not know at the time, a strong rebel base in District 13 already exists so it is improbable that any act on Katniss's part would be sufficient to stop the uprising.

For the 75th Hunger Games, twenty-four victors from previous years are forced to compete once again. This is the third occurrence of the "Quarter Quell": an event that allows the Capitol to introduce a twist in the games. Knowing her ongoing enmity with President Snow, Katniss suspects that this is the President's attempt to kill her off even though she has no way of proving it. Katniss decides that she will devote herself to ensuring that Peeta becomes the Quarter Quell's victor while Peeta conspires with their mentor to do the same.

During the Games, set in a jungle with a saltwater lake, Katniss and Peeta join up with other tributes- Finnick Odair, Mags, Johanna, Beetee and Wiress. Wiress proves her genius by revealing to Katniss that the arena is arranged like a clock, with all of the arena's disasters occurring on a timed chart. Katniss however does not trust the other tributes as she is in no position to do so before.

Katniss always feels compassion when she sees someone weaker than her in constitution. Even though the Careers who are tributes from District 1, 2 and 3 want to form alliances with her, she does not. Katniss's cause always goes to the people she can

sympathise with – people who are taken advantage of by the Capitol. Since District 1, 2 and 3 are taken care of by the Capitol; she feels they are just as bad as the political complex.

In the final chapters, after Wiress is killed in a battle with the Careers, Katniss helps Beetee execute his plan which is to harness the lightning that signals the turn of every twelve hours in the middle of the arena. Beetee's plan is to harness the lightning to electrocute Brutus and Enobaria, the two other remaining Careers tributes from District 2. With the chaos that ensues within the final chapters of the novel, Katniss instead directs the lightning at the force field that contains them in the arena which results in her temporary paralysis as well as the force field breaking down.

When she awakens, she learns that Peeta, Enobaria, and Johanna have been captured by the Capitol, and is informed that there had been a plan among half of the contestants to break her out of the arena. The book ends with Katniss' best friend, Gale informing her that, though he got her family out in time, District 12 has been destroyed. He tells her, "Katniss, there is no District 12" (*Catching Fire* 391).

Till the second book in the series, readers and critics often comment on the repetitiveness of Katniss's character complaining that Katniss's show of her characters are not varied enough to establish her as a rounded character. Her emotions are mostly fueled by fear and rage and if spurred she appears to have actions that are always tinged with anger. There is little in her that appears feminine and therein lays the question – Does a Y.A female character have to shed every part of her feminine traits to dominate her place as a Dystopian protagonist? Certainly, there is room for improvement in the character makeup of Y.A female protagonists. A Y.A female protagonist should also embrace what has stereotypically been considered female to rise above the set conditions. She should be made of sugar, spice and everything nice while wielding a deadly knife.

In *Mockingjay*, the final book of the trilogy, Katniss is manipulated by the leader of District 13 President Alma Coin and eventually agrees to be "the Mockingjay" a poster child for the rebellion, but only on the condition that District 13's President Coin vows to grant immunity to all of the past Hunger Games tributes, including Peeta Mellark and Finnick's lover Annie Cresta, and to reserve for Katniss the right to personally kill President Snow once he is captured. Katniss and the rebels eventually succeed in extracting Peeta from the Capitol's grasp but they discover that Peeta has been "hijacked", a brutal form of brainwashing that induces extreme fear. Peeta has been programmed to hate and fear Katniss. After he attempts to kill her, he is kept restrained under heavy guard at all times.

Peeta Mellark throughout the series has a mild role compared to his female counterpart. He plays the adoring admirer, the faithful friend, the self-sacrificing lover and the patient suitor. Action-wise his roles are few and far between. In both the Hunger Games that he and Katniss have been in, his identified role has been to protect Katniss and assure her survival, doing this all in the name of love. He is portrayed as sentimental, sensitive and more perceptive than Katniss, a true reversal of roles that have been stereotyped in both the genders.

President Coin sends Peeta along with Katniss in a battle even though he is still unstable. This made Katniss believe that Coin wants her dead because she is difficult to control. Katniss throughout the trilogy fights to assert herself as an individual. With a hand-picked squad, and Katniss in the lead they advance towards the Capitol to the President's mansion. When they reach the heart of the Capitol, they seek refuge with Tigris, an ex Hunger Games stylist and a rebel sympathizer.

During this time, Gale and Peeta have a conversation about Katniss which highlights her turbulent mentality. They cannot solidify who Katniss loves more with Gale ending the

conversation with,"Katniss will pick whoever she thinks she can't survive without". This cements the fact that Katniss first and foremost, always worries about her survival. Eavesdropping on this, Katniss is furious. "It's a horrible thing for Gale to say, for Peeta not to refute. Especially when every emotion I have has been taken and exploited by the Capitol or the rebels". (Collins,*Mockingjay* 338) she is angry because two of her closest friends consider her to be devoid of human feeling.

As Katniss and her squad reach the President's mansion, a hoverplane drops parachutes carrying bombs that explode among a group of trapped children. The rebel medics which includes Katniss' sister Prim rush in to help the injured children but in a deliberately inhumane strategy, a second wave of firebombs explode, targeting the medics. Prim is killed. However, the rebels manage to win the war. Katniss became convinced that rather than establishing a republic governed by representatives from each of the districts, Coin intends to assume Snow's power and maintain the status quo, which she learns from the now prisoner Snow. Her suspicion of President Coin grows as she further proposes a last Hunger Games with the Capitol children including Snow's grand-daughter to punish the Capitol for their past atrocities. Katniss can see the cycle beginning again with new horrors. To throw President Coin off her tract, she agrees to this proposal.

On the day Snow is to be executed, Katniss shoots Coin instead, killing her. Katniss immediately attempts suicide, but Peeta stops her and she is arrested during the ensuing riot. After the riot, Snow is found dead. Katniss is ultimately relocated to the ruins of her home in District 12 where she suffers from acute depression. She is looked after by Greasy Sae who occasionally tries to get her to do some kind of activity. Months later, Peeta and some other District 12 natives also return there to help Katniss recover, he is patient and kind, even planting primrose bushes outside Katniss's victor's house. They started writing a book together as a memorial and as a process of healing. Peeta has gradually recovered memories

of his love for Katniss. She too embraces her love for Peeta, recognizing her need for his hope and strength. By helping overthrow Snow and assassinating Coin, Katniss has preserved the possibility of Panem transitioning to a representative form of government.

In the epilogue, set twenty years later, Katniss and Peeta have two children symbolizing hope that future generations will benefit from the sacrifices of their parents. Katniss dreads the day her children learn about their parents' involvement in both the Games and the war. The series ends with Katniss' somber reflection that "There are much worse games to play." (*Mockingjay* 398)

Y.A literature do not only show the females as capable of physical actions but it also gives the males a chance to broaden in terms of emotional capabilities. While Katniss has no cutlery skills, Peeta is a skilled baker, mixing beautiful colours icing his cakes. Katniss's earliest memory of Peeta is when he intentionally burns some bread so that he would have to throw it away and she could have it. Katniss forgets about this incident until she sees Peeta chosen as the second tribute for the Hunger Games.

To this day, I can never shake the connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope, and the dandelion that reminded me that I was not doomed. (*The Hunger Games* 32)

Katniss likens Peeta to the dandelion throughout the trilogy. To her, it represents hope and spring. Spring signifying the rebirth of nature after winter when she could hunt again and there were enough forest greens and fruits to feed her family. In the epilogue of *Mockingjay*, she muses:

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. (*Mockingjay* 388)

When Peeta loses his memory from being, “hijacked” by the Capitol, Katniss tries to remind him by saying:

“You’re a painter. You’re a baker. You like to sleep with the windows open. You never take sugar in your tea. And always double- knot your shoelaces”. (*Mockingjay* 271)

Peeta’s is not portrayed as a conventional masculine character. He is strong with beautiful blond curls and blue eyes, and possesses many traits one would associate traditionally with femininity. He is artistic, intuitive, and sentimental, is not afraid to cry in front of an audience and wears his heart on his sleeve. He is emotionally vulnerable in a way that masculine gendered heroes often are not.

Peeta also has a witty way with words which is an important tool for him. He connects easily to people but this is detrimental in gaining sponsors in the games. Unlike Gale, Peeta often needs help from those around him to get by – especially Katniss. She comes to his rescue many times, and he would not have survived the Games without her. Even in his relationship with Katniss, he is undeniably straightforward. He confesses his feelings freely and is “wounded” when he thinks she does not feel the same. He even bakes her favourite cheese buns every morning and delivers it to her house in Victor’s village.

Jessica Miller in her essay, ‘She Has No Idea. The Effect She Can Have: Katniss and The Poilitics of Gender’ says:

Gale fits the stereotype of rugged masculinity but Katniss chooses Peeta, the baker, along with the dandelion, the sunlight and warmth-and she not only chooses him but protects and rescues him time and again. (Dunn and Michaud 148)

Miller further talks about how Collins buck the popular culture trend of the helpless girlfriend who needs saving by her significant other. Although Katniss is represented as the strong one, she still needs Peeta's warmth and decency.

Even their postwar domestic life bucks gender expectations: Peeta begs for children and Katniss relents; Peeta bakes and Katniss hunts. The romance between Katniss and Peeta offers a welcome foil to the many romances in popular culture that hew closely to the expectations stereotypical of femininity and masculinity. . (150)

By choosing an unconventional masculine partner who will support her in her unconventionally feminine ways, Katniss can perhaps be said to have a feminist marriage - One where she can hunt while Peeta bakes, the boundaries of gender blurs and they share parenting responsibilities. Outside of Panem's fictional world, Katniss's choice of Peeta also sends a powerful message to millions of Y.A readers- that being the 'boy with the bread' is acceptable and that one does not need to be aggressive and strong to establish one's identity as a male.

Dystopian literature provides an alternate universe in which the characters act out every aspect of their identity and beyond it, from gender to age to sexuality, in a manner wholly different from stereotypical realities. By overturning the reality of the world that is currently in existence, the dystopian setting opens up possibilities for the characters to have characteristics that would not be able to exist in fixed realities. Anne Balay examines gender bending in Y.A fiction:

A growing body of children's literature engages the question of how to do gender. This may not seem surprising, since kids' narratives have long been used to delight and instruct by teaching and reinforcing gender norms. (6)

The modern fantastical and dystopian novels representing this new type of female role model are significant as “women and girls learn gender-specific ways of reading and construct and reconstruct specific kinds of interpretive communities, literary practices, and identities” through the literature they interact with on a daily basis (Rogers 142). The girl who assumes certain boyish behaviors and limits her feminine traits, is obviously not a phenomenon limited to recent dystopian novels. Louisa May Alcott's Jo March of *Little Women* (1868) and Harper Lee's Scout Finch *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) are two classic examples of literary tomboys before the twenty-first century.

So tomboys, to loosely define the new female protagonists of Y.A literature are not a new literary occurrence, but there is something different about this new reincarnation of these types of characters. Written for a generation that has become desensitized to violence and chaos in a way that no other has before, these new tomboys have to be able to keep up or surpass the male characters in that fictional realm as well. They can defend themselves mentally and physically, they are on par with wit and question the validity for human life as well as their male counterparts in other series.

In Y.A dystopian fiction, however, there is always scope for a radical restructuring of the fictional oppressive society. Victims in this type of fiction can express their agency by tearing down the power hierarchy as it stands, and then rebuilding it to accommodate a new structure that favours the marginalised characters. This is a particularly rigid system in dystopian fiction, where a radical restructuring of the social order is considered a narrative staple; this is important from a reader's perspective because it makes the removal of the

oppressive regime an expected conclusion of the plot. The reader is, in effect, rooting for the protagonist to ‘fix’ the world of the narrative. *The Hunger Games* pushes the narrative drive towards a paradigm-altering war, which would either overthrow the government or bring worse oppression to the districts in retaliation. When President Coin, the leader of the rebels, attempts to continue using the oppressive method of her predecessors by killing children in the Hunger Games, Katniss murders her to ensure that the new social structure does not include that particular form of discipline. It is this demonstration of agency that places Katniss firmly in a warrior form because the character ensures the creation of a social order which does not marginalise, objectify or oppress youth. It is asking youth to speak out and to demonstrate against established realities.

Young adult literature can have a positive effect on identity development. “Girls’ reading can play a role in their construction of female identity” (Hubler 90). Hubler argues that reading is not and should not be a passive activity, and because of this, it can be an important space for exploration and growth. Hubler offers an example of one of the young women she interviewed for her study on young girls and their connection to reading young adult literature. She states the importance of being exposed to different types of young adult literature (perhaps even those that do not have strong female protagonists) because all reading can make an impact on the reader. “Her reading enabled her, to reflect upon the process of gender-role socialization, and thus to take an active role in the construction of her own identity” (Hubler 91). Even young adult literature that might, at first glance, be considered problematic can be something to critique from a critical, if not feminist standpoint and therefore lend itself to being an important space, still, for exploration.

In a number of ways, Katniss’s gender is androgynous (Lem and Hassel 122, Pulliam 176) because she performs both traditional masculine and feminine roles. Katniss, Green-Barteet argues, represents the gender norms of masculinity more than those of femininity. As

a female protagonist, her masculine qualities make her both a strong, identifiable character as well a potential victor of the Games. Most importantly, she is the provider of the family, the head of the family. With the death of her father, the established patriarchy in her family is broken down as well. Katniss is free to establish and blur her gendered roles.

Katniss is capable of illegally hunting for game in the woods beyond her district's fence and certainly capable of shooting a squirrel perfectly through the eye. She acts a semi-parent to her sister Prim and sometimes her mother. Prim's wellbeing and survival are Katniss's "single most powerful motivating force" (Mitchell 131). Not only does Katniss show maternal instinct towards her sister after her father's death, as evident from her offer to volunteer as tribute instead of Prim, but she "becomes both mother and father to Prim," essentially filling both voids which her father's death and "her mother's disengagement with life" left in the family (*The Hunger Games* 131).

As she is the main provider, Katniss's greatest concern while competing in the Hunger Games is about her family's survival:

What are they doing now, my mother and Prim? Were they able to eat supper? ... Is my mother holding up, being strong for Prim? Or has she already started to slip away, leaving the weight of the world on my sister's fragile shoulders? (*The Hunger Games* 53)

Katniss frequently wonders about her mother and Prim in the arena how they would survive without her, especially in the beginning of the Games before the instinct for self-preservation has taken over her mentality. Her determination to win the games came from her promise to Prim that she would win the games and come back to her. During the Games, too, Katniss's fluidity of gender is her strength. The boundaries of gender are blurred by every step she took and analysed for her survival. Her admiration for weapons, especially bows,

illustrate that self-preservation is one of her primary concerns: “I’ve been itching to get my hands on them for days” (*The Hunger Games* 101), Katniss thinks as she spots the weapons in the Capitol’s archery station. As she is very attached to her father’s old bow at home which he had taught her how to use, she is also impressed by the craftsmanship and advanced technology of those provided in the Training Center. This trait of showing admiration for machinery and armaments are never reflected in the first Y.A centered works that depicts young girls with plastic personalities.

Furthermore, typical of Katniss is her ability to refrain from showing emotions and unwillingness to publicly show vulnerability. She hides her emotions better than Peeta and Gale. For this reason, she refrains from crying after volunteering as a tribute because she believes showing tears will make her “an easy target. A weakling” (*The Hunger Games* 23). Her strength in her world of constant poverty becomes her only solace as the reality crashes down on her. She does not want to give ammunition to the other tributes from the other Districts. She also hides her fear during the Capitol bombing of District 13 assuming herself that as the ‘Mockingjay’, people look at her for security. She puts on a brave facade. She furthermore “remains emotionally detached throughout much of the narrative” in *The Hunger Games* and, whenever emotion does seep through, it is generally anger instead of sadness (Lem and Hassel 122-123).

She frequently looks at herself critically as if she is watching from an outsider’s perspective, clearly the result of her awareness of surveillance. Katniss’s world before and especially after the games is devoid of privacy. In sum, her ability to perform different gender roles and her blurring of the gender boundaries is Katniss’s power (Mitchell 129) because it enables her to survive in the wilderness of the first arena, and to become a potential victor by playing along with the romance between her and Peeta.

According to Jennifer Mitchell, Katniss is probably the most fluid character in the trilogy, “constantly shifting gender identity” between playing various roles (Mitchell 128), but Peeta’s gender is similarly complicated. As the baker’s son who decorates the cakes, he is not as good a survivor as Katniss and cannot exactly provide for himself, but at the same time he is physically able. Moreover, he presents himself as “identifiably male” and, consequently, Katniss as “identifiably female” when he openly reveals his crush on her (Mitchell 133). This is what attracts so many readers to the characters of *The Hunger Games* trilogy. There are no set boundaries to which one character is destined to play his/her gender. The trilogy has girls comfortable with weapons and boys who delight in baking.

Although Katniss initially looks after a wounded Peeta in the arena, they easily change roles when Katniss is hurt. A significant difference between the two is that Peeta is concerned with preserving his identity and morals, whereas Katniss’s main instinct is one of self-preservation.

Nevertheless, Katniss’s self-preservation is crucial because it enables her and Peeta to survive two Games. Furthermore, because Collins “defies gender segregation in her story” (Lem and Hassel 121), her trilogy appeals to both a female and a male audience, something which Lem and Hassel remark is significant because so many things, from toys to books, have been traditionally gendered from childhood. In a world where gender is rigidly performed, Collins produces a work that teenagers of both sexes can read without the embarrassment of peer pressure. For instance, Y.A novels are often targeted to teenage girls while teenage boys do not often pay attention to them as initially because they contain limited themes of romance, fashion and have little to deal with what young boys could safely consider ‘manly’.

Similarly, Suzanne Collins's trilogy defies genre norms and stereotypes, combining coming-of-age elements with traditionally gendered themes such as romance, war, and adventure. Katniss's muddled gender is thus an asset to the trilogy, making her a strong protagonist identifiable to a variety of audience.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908 -1986) once wrote, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Butler 273), and femininity is something taught and learnt during childhood and puberty. It is like a "vocation", a full-time job which requires study and education provided by society. Katniss, too, is not born feminine, and instead learns the tricks of femininity while under dire circumstances. Her gender performance during the Games is crucial to her survival, but it is not something that comes naturally to her. She is coached by Effie Trinket 'for presentation' where Katniss describes how she is put in a full-length gown and high-heeled shoes. Since the Capitol people lives leisurely, it is common for them to dress extravagantly. This pressure is put on Katniss while she had to perform her 'femininity'.

Judith Butler (1956- ) is famous for considering gender roles as only a performance, rather than something inherent to woman. She argues that those performances occur according to enigmatic but collective agreements on what the construct of gender constitutes, and those who "fail to do their gender right" are punished for their nonconformity. (Butler 523) Katniss undergoes a transformation to look more feminine, and is encouraged to act this part during pre-Games interviews because the Capitol audience expects femininity from her and will not identify with her if she rejects this performance. She must act according to "a set of meanings already socially established" (Butler 191). The Katniss loved so much by the public is only a performance of her identity. She must perform proper gender roles to appeal to the public and prevent being punished for nonconformity. She is desperate before the interview with Caesar Flickerman and she tells Cinna, her stylist:

I'm awful. Haymitch called me a dead slug. No matter what we tried. I couldn't do it. I just can't be one of those people he wants me to be. (*The Hunger Games* 121)

Katniss performs her gender roles for the Capitol but she does not let it become a part of her characteristic. She embraces her role as a hunter but when they try to force her to show her femininity, she does not do it as if it came naturally to her. To Katniss, the roles given to her are merely performances. Because she does not embrace this assigned role, Katniss Everdeen is independent to choose her roles. She is empowered.

As authors Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Clair writes in their important book *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult Literature* (1990-2001) on empowered girls in Y.A fiction:

Within a web or network that constitutes a community, they make a place for themselves through meaningful contributions to it, nurturing others without sacrificing their own selves. They come to know themselves and they resist letting themselves be defined by others...They are courageous, enthusiastic, and determined” (49).

As denoted earlier, the study focuses on the study of the representation of young female adults in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy from a feminist perspective. It examines the evolution of the Y.A female taking into consideration different processes of evolution that are required in the emergence of a new young adult female.

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## THE FEMALE AS WEAPON OF CHANGE

Feminism has led to the increased empowerment of females not only in fiction but in real life as well. Feminism in Y.A literature teaches young people to support equality between the sexes by subverting gender roles in a language that they can readily comprehend. Subsequent critics have often named the problems at the heart of feminism in different ways: oppression, exploitation, discrimination, inequality and exclusion, sexism, misogyny, chauvinism, patriarchy and phallism (Shinn 47). Yet all of these terms circle a common terrain: that of the restrictions associated with women's social opportunities. Believing in, and encouraging the power of the voice of youth is an important feminist value.

The teenage characters in young adult literature grapple with various issues in the search for their own voice and identity. In this process of the coming of age, these characters are often confronted by predetermined discourses of identity such as race, class, or gender and must negotiate power dynamics that are defined by others, while simultaneously defining themselves.

Through her development over the course of a novel or a series, a strong female protagonist embraces her attributes, even the traditionally "weak" feminine ones, breaking stereotypes and using her voice to change the world for herself and others. She is empowered by her own actions and finds success without emulating masculine power or undermining it. She is human through and through (Hall 7).

How these characters came into their acceptance of identities through resilience, resistance, or acceptance of societal norms in various ways are of crucial importance to examine because Y.A literature can serve as a creative exploration of the feminist themes of power, identity, and difference. "Nonanalytic and nonrational forms of discourse, like fiction

or poetry, may be better able than other forms to convey the complex life experiences of one group to members of another” (Mc Cann 220).

YA literature provides an important space for young adults to examine their emerging and constantly evolving selves. “Engagement with story is life-affirming; it puts us in touch with the world, with one another, and with our essential selves” (Goldstein and Phelan 33). This quote illustrates the importance of connection. Powerful connections with characters in literature can serve to make the tumultuous transition into adulthood less abrasive as well as provide a context to begin understanding the current location of young adulthood. Literature is powerful and should be heralded as such. Young adults are smart people, capable of engagement with complex issues providing the pillars of tomorrow.

Feminist philosopher Judith Butler argues that gender is a performance, rather than a biological imperative (Butler 522). While the nature of gender is fluid, and based mainly in societal and cultural performance, the prevailing method of patriarchal culture is to divide people into two groups: male and female, with different performances ascribed to each gender. There are male and female restrooms, dormitories, film categories, etc. This creates a gendered binary within our society, which also invites an adversarial relationship where one gender is subordinate to the other, in this case almost always the feminine gender. When women begin to learn to negotiate their identity within a masculine dominated culture, they may find themselves limited by the gendered performances available to them because they need to navigate the complexities of what is seen as masculine and feminine and identify themselves with reference to masculine gender power (Whelehan 141).

Society in Panem is distributed into districts. Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of the narrative belongs to the lowest which is District 12 where majority of the population are coal miners. Katniss Everdeen faces constant identity construction and reconstruction by

authorities, the removal of her bodily agency, and age-based discrimination that objectifies her and her fellow young people to the point where they are no longer human. Instead, they are represented as tools and weapons to ensure complicity within the ruling regime of Panem. She becomes the sole bread winner of her family, her father lost to a mining accident. Katniss hunts, a trait taught to her by her father which is illegal. She is a teenage girl whose obligation is that of overthrowing a dictatorship, saving lives of thousands of people and at the same time, trying to gain some semblance of a humane life for herself. All throughout the narrative, her bow and arrow becomes a representation of her strength.

There, resting on a mound of blanket rolls, is a silver sheath of arrows and a bow, already strung, just waiting to be engaged. That's mine, I think. It's meant for me.  
(Collins, *The Hunger Games* 149)

Katniss's emotional makeup seems to centre around survival and survival of the ones she loves. In *The Hunger Games*, when the Gamemakers change the rules of the game to accommodate more than one victor, Katniss immediately thinks of Peeta not in terms of romance but of gaining more 'sympathetic sponsors' so that both of them will make it out alive.

The star-crossed lovers... Peeta must have been playing that angle all along. Why else would the Gamemakers made this unprecedented change in the rules? ... All I've done is managed not to kill Peeta. (247)

While contemporary society is fraught with media images of how teenage girls should preserve their physical bodies, it is refreshing to see YA writers taking on concepts of girlhood where physical appearances are not important to the girl characters that they created. No matter how much fancy Capitol couture that Katniss is compelled to put on, her individuality is never covered. The clothes highlight her strong attributes rather than

transforming her into something she is not. Rather than an array of superficial products that a non-fictional teenage girl would supposedly want, Katniss is more concerned about her bow and arrows. It is Cinna who sees through her fiery nature, the first to strengthen her image as the 'Mockingbird', which is perfect for Katniss as she thrives to survive.

A mockingbird is just a songbird. A mockingjay is a creature the Capitol never intended to exist. They hadn't counted on the highly controlled jabberjay having the brains to adapt to the wild, to pass on its genetic code, to thrive in a new form. They hadn't anticipated its will to live. (*The Hunger Games* 92)

When Katniss is forced to wear a wedding dress by President Snow for the Quarter Quell, Cinna also sees through what the President meant by his threat.

I suppose since I was the greatest offender, my pain and loss and humiliation should be in the brightest spotlight. This, he thinks, will make it clear. It's so barbaric, the president turning my bridal gown into my shroud, that the blow strikes home, leaving me with a dull ache inside (Collins, *Catching Fire* 248).

While Katniss is able to wield her power, she can never do so autonomously because her image is always contingent on operating within the fictional power structure, which privileges the adults. There is a clear difference in YA fiction between power and agency. While Katniss appears to hold a lot of power in the relationships she has with the adults in the narrative, this power is tempered by the recognition that she is unable to wield it for her own purposes. She has no agency in these relationships until the later stages of the narrative when her feminist care ethic requires that she finds a way to express agency or remain morally accountable for the acts performed by the adults using her image. Essentially, the more Katniss is shown to be engaging in caring behaviours, the more she is shown feeling that it is necessary to perform as an active agent and make herself morally accountable for the choices

she makes. Katniss becomes a symbolic representation of the Mockingjay – a hybrid songbird, born from the jabberjay which is a genetically-altered Capitol invention and wild mockingbirds, whose power and resilience lie in their ability to form lasting connections with other species and thrive in a new form.

When a contemporary young reader begins to engage with YA literature, she begins identifying with female characters that are strong, independent and intelligent, sometimes fighting wars and re-establishing societies. The majority of fictional heroines in YA literature today represent different aspects of feminist ideals, but still wind up fixating their identity in the context of their relationship to a man. Barnes observes that though Katniss Everdeen is powerful and independent in her own right, the other characters and readers of the books are always speculating about her and Peeta's romantic entanglements, not necessarily overshadowing the narrative, but still distracting from it (Barnes 15).

Katniss, in particular, seems androgynous during the initial stages of *The Hunger Games* until she is paired with Peeta Mellark, forcing her to adapt her gender performance to comply with the Capitol's views of femininity (Miller 149). Although female gendered performance in YA is leaning towards less traditionally feminine traits like fighting in wars and overthrowing dictatorships, a young woman in YA fiction is still judged by her relationship to her love interest and her identity within the narrative is dependent on how she negotiates the binary relationship between male and female, where she sits in the gendered hierarchy, and how she performs her femininity with regards to masculinity. Katniss is put up in dresses when presented to the audiences of the Capitol and gets rewarded with sponsors when she plays the role of girl in love. In addition to this, she has to perform roles assigned to her by the Capitol.

“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” (*The Hunger Games* 118).

By enforcing certain codes of behaviour and dressing the Hunger Games tributes in provocative or juvenile costumes, the Capitol is portrayed as maintaining its body focus on the children of the twelve Districts and exerting control over Panem; disempowering young people by objectifying them. In learning to perform in predictable ways Katniss begins to gain power in the fictional context, but this power is frequently usurped and manipulated by the adult characters who threaten her care circle.

Strong Y.A female protagonists rebel against patriarchy in the environment in which they are created. Authors create characters that are already undermining gender norms and then depict them fighting against other unfair systems. Such defiance features prominently in dystopian literature, where governments go to extremes to impose their wills upon citizens. Girls with strong characteristics may be filtering into dystopian literature because such characters may find new ways to subvert the power structures in the novels. Feminist characters in fiction find their own power, but the power mentioned is very different from that which is used to oppress them.

In addition to analyzing power in Y.A literature, Seelinger-Trites argues that Y.A literature is a postmodern project. Y.A literature emerged as its own field in the late 1960s, during the same time as postmodernism. “I would submit that young adult literature has exploded as an institution in the postmodern era because although it affirms modernity’s belief in the power of the individual, even more it very self-consciously problematizes the relationship of the individual to the institutions that construct her subjectivity” (20)

Female protagonists in contemporary YA dystopia tends to speak through a first person narrative voice, making a symbolic connection with the readers by allowing them

direct access to her thoughts and feelings. In *The Hunger Games* trilogy too, readers can hear Katniss's thoughts and musings as she narrates. Everything the readers can connect to are through the eyes of Katniss Everdeen. The protagonist is typically in her late teens from the age of fifteen to seventeen and, although she may have a few close friends remains fairly distant from her social group due to certain circumstances which does not have to do with self esteem.

So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts. Do my work quietly in school. Make only polite small talk in the public market. Discuss little more than trades in the Hob, which is the black market where I make most of my money (*The Hunger Games* 6).

Surliness, brooding, hyper intelligence or street smarts, and an unwillingness to recognise her own physical beauty are also common character traits for females in Y.A dystopia. The female protagonist's position as outsider allows her the opportunity to critically engage with the social hierarchy, usually through a catalysing event which takes place early in the narrative such as a family tragedy which sets the young woman on the path to re-organising the fictional social regime. Katniss also loses her father in the District 12 mines and as a District 12 citizen, the lowest in the social hierarchy, she can observe with clarity. It is her father who had shown her how to hunt.

The power-holders in the narrative attempts to suppress the rebellion of the Y.A female protagonist, and when this does not work, they often appropriate her power towards their particular purposes. For instance, President Snow threatens to kill Katniss's family and Gale if she does not quell the spark that started to incite rebellion in the different districts. He wanted it to seem as if the stunt she pulled with the berries in the games was not because of her rebellion against the games but her infinite love for Peeta. He attempts to incite her as a

stupid girl in love against the spreading image of her as the girl who dares attempt to defy the rules of the games and in turn the Capitol.

Ultimately, the female protagonist resists these attempts to make her complicit in her own disempowerment by turning her power and abilities against her oppressors. Through the weaponization of young women, in the case of Katniss Everdeen with her bow and arrows contemporary Y.A narratives examine and interrogate the ability of a young character to exhibit agency in a world where they are perceived as dependent on the adult power-holders in the narrative for assistance and guidance.

In *The Hunger Games* trilogy, the power-holders use both the regulation of appearance and limitation of bodily agency to control the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. The institution of the Capitol is designed to disempower young characters by objectifying them; turning them into weapons against the Districts and each other. When Katniss wins her first Hunger Games, she becomes a symbol of rebellion against the Capitol: the mockingjay. In order to prevent a war, the Capitol and President Snow attempt to appropriate Katniss's image for their own uses, enlisting Katniss herself as a conspirator in this endeavour. However this backfires on them. Katniss is not easily controlled. She does not trust adult figures in power and therefore, doubts and questions their actions.

In terms of emotion, Katniss through her relationship with Peeta is reduced to the stereotypical 'star-crossed lover' whose only crime against the Capitol is falling in love with her fellow tribute. This gender performance is used by President Snow to demonstrate that Katniss does not mean to rebel against the regime. He takes control over her image, and forces her to play along and smile for the cameras by threatening her mother, sister and Gale.

From the president's point of view, I've ignored Peeta and flaunted my preference for Gale's company before the whole district. And by doing so made it clear I was, in

fact, mocking the Capitol. Now I've endangered Gale and his family and my family and Peeta, too, by my carelessness (*Catching Fire* 28).

Katniss assumes that President Snow will insist that she and Peeta have children, and that he will eventually send her children to the Games. So by insisting that her connection with Peeta remain publicly visible, Snow is maintaining his power over Katniss through a kind of reproductive terrorism, rendering pregnancy both terrifying and beyond her control. Even in the last chapter of *Mockingjay* after everything has ended and there is peace, Katniss still feels the fear of reproduction.

It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly. When I first felt her stirring inside of me, I was consumed with a terror that felt as old as life itself (Collins, *Mockingjay* 389).

Reproductive freedom is a contemporary feminist concern which often finds its way into dystopian cautionary tales. The idea of unavoidable, male-enforced pregnancy and reduction of the female to her biological imperative while ignoring her status as a thinking human being is particularly terrifying when one considers the various biological freedoms which have been denied women in the past, and continue to be denied to this day. The trilogy promotes the power of choice for young women by representing the female protagonists as critically engaging with their fictional society.

By the end of *Mockingjay*, Katniss is reduced to speaking through actions and reclaiming her image through silent body politics; killing President Coin instead of President Snow and taking control of her uterus back from those who had reduced her to her biology. Coin's plan to hold one final Hunger Games using Capitol children to follow the same line of thinking as the Hunger Games run by the Capitol using District children: thus denoting that young people are used as disposable tools for vengeance and control. Killing Coin represents

Katniss's ultimate rejection of the body-focus which is imposed upon her and every other young person in Panem. Katniss's decision to become a mother during the epilogue of the series is a reflection of her growing physical autonomy. Her children represent a choice which, until that point, has been made for her. Katniss's internal monologue throughout the epilogue indicates that although Peeta may have pressured her into having children after they are married, her continued refusal until she is ready establishes that the ultimate decision and the ultimate power over her reproductive rights lay with Katniss.

The Capitol of Panem is under the dictatorship of President Snow who is a representation of the oppressing masculine gender. For the duration of the trilogy, he goes out of his way to manipulate Katniss every way he can. He keeps her on a leash using the lives of the people she loves as collateral. Katniss even has to 'volunteer' for the games in exchange for her sister – an indirect form of manipulation since the Games are considered as tradition by that point. The act of volunteering to save her sister could be interpreted as masculine or feminine: while men are traditionally the protectors of the family, there is also the trope of the mother who will do anything for her child. Katniss although she is Prim's sister has to act as Prim's mother, thus denoting the strong bond between sisters.

From the beginning of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is set up as a girl who rejects femininity and embraces a typically masculine strength. She and Gale have to be breadwinners for their families since the death of their fathers; they hunt illegally in the woods in order to acquire food and to make some money (*The Hunger Games* 12). Hunting and providing for the family are typically masculine activities. Katniss is forced to take her father's place due to her mother's breakdown at first but one perceives the ease into which she makes her transition between a male role of hunting and gathering and fostering and empathetic like a mother in a female's given role. The girl sees her mother as weak due to her

inability to care for her children, and she fights against that image of femininity by taking on masculine behaviors.

Katniss's masculine behavior at the beginning of the novel echoes the way that romantic heroines reject femininity when the reader is first introduced to them. Katniss avoids girlishness because it does not fit into her life where she has to struggle to survive and take care of her family. She does not know how to smile and charm. What is evidently clear in *The Hunger Games* is that there is a clear role reversal with the characters regarding typical gendered traits. Katniss who is a female is almost brutish in sentiment, clueless with romantic love and keen only with survival. On the other hand, Peeta and the other boys are allowed to exhibit a broader range of masculine and feminine characteristics (Kathryn 30). Instead of simply pursuing romance, girls can fight wars and change their societies, and instead of simply fighting wars, boys can care about relationships. Peeta bakes and appreciates the small beautiful things that he comes across. He becomes Katniss's strongest supporter, a reversal of roles when Katniss is at the forefront of the war.

I think... you still have no idea. The effect you can have." He slides his cuffs up the support and pushes himself to a sitting position. "None of the people we lost were idiots. They knew what they were doing. They followed you because they believed you really could kill Snow (*Mockingjay* 325).

Girls and boys in current Y.A fiction can have loving relationships and at the same time take part in the action. Katniss also sense this sensitive side of Peeta and it is this that makes her open up to him.

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 a dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that

means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on. . . And only Peeta can give me that (*Mockingjay* 388).

Katniss begins to grow in power as her emotional attachments became stronger. As she begins holding herself more morally accountable throughout the series, her strength lies in her ability to pull herself from the body focus enforced upon her by the Capitol and District 13 : “[t]o show them that I’m more than just a piece in their Games” (*The Hunger Games* 244) Katniss’s character development through *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* centres on her challenges with these authority figures and her own desire for autonomy within the narrative universe.

In their book *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult Literature, 1990-2001*, Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Clair admit that all the main characters in Y.A literature are empowered in some way through their maturation. Therefore, female empowerment needs to help girls "find strength by valuing positive feminine characteristics instead of striving to be as competitive, assertive, and powerful as boys, even though societal norms tend to endorse those latter qualities".(48)

Every aspect of Katniss’s life became like the Hunger games to other people who wants to manipulate her. As a young girl, it is not surprising that she is swayed. Her level of understanding cannot after all be compared to that of an adult. Katniss in the Hunger Games became a spectacle – an entertainment in the form of reality TV to be broadcasted for all of Panem. She is pulled into different directions by her own sense of right and wrong. Emotionally, sometimes she seems rather stunted but her affections are abundant towards her little sister.

By winning the 74th Hunger Games, she somehow incites rebellion into the minds of the lower cases of the Districts. Because of this, President Snow forces her to keep up her

rehearsed love affair with Peeta Mellark to quench the spark of the rebellion. Clearly, even Snow knew that the fire that started from Katniss's small rebellion could not stop so easily; he uses and abuses his power to oppress her. He is determined to punish her for challenging the social order of Panem.

Katniss Everdeen symbolizes the face of the rebellion. She is made into 'The Mockingjay', the leader who rallies the poorer districts together against the cruelties of the Capitol. Even though she is a leader Katniss is stifled by other characters vying to take advantage of her and also Peeta's affection for her though she never comprehends the idea of romantic love.

In *Mockingjay*, Katniss and the people she loves are no longer in District 12. District 13 took them in as refugees and it is here that Katniss is given another role – another mask to cover her freedom and individuality. She is coerced into becoming the 'Mockingjay, a figurehead for the cause of the rebellion. Accepting the role meant she can ensure the lives of Peeta and Johanna Mason, a fellow tribute. Her true feelings are expressed to her sister. When her sister asks : "Because you want to or because you feel forced into it?"

Katniss answers: "Both, I guess. No, I want to. I have to, if it will help the rebels defeat Snow" (34).

The exchange for Peeta and Johanna Mason's life is carried out between her and President Coin, the leader in District 13. President Coin represents the adult female who is otherwise empowered. However, President Coin's relationship with Katniss can also represent the gap of communication that could otherwise happen between teen and adult females. There is a generation gap. Snow cannot comprehend the minds of a teenage girl like Katniss. To her, Katniss is obstinate. Likewise, Katniss thinks President Coin is manipulative and not entirely trustworthy, a fact with every teenager who seems to be wary of the adult

figure in power. By defeating both President Snow and President Coin, Katniss defeats the masculine oppressor and the incomprehensible adult woman. Their deaths gave a chance for Katniss to break free of her bonds. Katniss ultimately becomes the representation of the 'teenage girl', a person who should be appreciated for her individuality.

It is in the last few chapters of *Mockingjay*, the last book of the trilogy that Katniss once and for all breaks free from the clutch of manipulation and oppression. By killing President Coin she finally establishes her individuality on solid ground. In the process of accepting herself and her decisions, she reconstructs the social world around her. By stopping President Coin, Katniss ensures that a favourable system will govern Panem from then on. It is when Katniss comprehends and understands the worth of herself that there is inevitable change in the power dynamics.

The point of my arrow shifts upward. I release the string. And President Coin collapses over the side of the balcony and plunges to the ground. Dead. (372).

The most thrilling concept that *The Hunger Games* introduces to Y.A readers is that Katniss Everdeen ultimately accepts herself in the end as a young adult who is able to carry her own power. Katniss's body stops being a weapon for others to manipulate. She is in charge and in possession of herself bringing about change in herself and others around her. This process is vital to young adult readers who are finding their own awakenings. Katniss Everdeen becomes not only a character but ultimately a role model. She accepts all of herself, broken as she is.

That's when I make a list in my head of every act of goodness I've seen someone do. It's like a game. Repetitive. Even a little tedious after more than twenty years. But there are much worse games to play (*Mockingjay* 398).

*The Hunger Games* trilogy seeks to instill active actions into young readers. Since Y.A dystopian novels are generally read by young people of both genders, they are made up of characters that are not passive. Passivity is denied (Younger 77).

One can find in Katniss a heroine worth praising. She blurs the gender lines and offers a picture of a heroine whose practical “tomboy” nature seems to win over femininity. Therefore, Katniss simultaneously attracts both those who are seeking to break the mold and those too scared to do so. Almost immediately after the first book was published in 2008, a “cult fandom sprung up” around America (Dodes n.pag).

Somehow, Katniss appeals to a huge audience, attracting all four quadrants: men, women, boys, and girls. She is fierce, funny, loyal and even occasionally agreeable. One reviewer notes, “I loved the character. Katniss—especially in the first book—is everything we want our heroes to be: capable, generous, and able to make the hard decisions.” “She is the one propelling the story. . . . She is a wonderful mix of vulnerability and strength,. . . She’s not a gung-ho heroine who storms in and takes no prisoners but at the same time she is not overly intimidated by the people around her.” Her desire to rebel, to assassinate President Coin in *Mockingjay*, and to break the law are all excused when one considers the bravery and heroism necessary to lead such an uprising. Katniss’s Byronism only wins her esteem with the audience (De Lint n.pag).

Strong female protagonists in current Y.A literature empower themselves and value all of their traits, whether they are traditionally considered to be masculine or feminine. They take what is traditionally seen as “unheroic” for female characters and instill it with different ideals. The appropriation of power by the female protagonist leads to a re-structuring of the narrative world by creating an opportunity for her to actively and critically engage with the power-holders. When the female character is turned into a weapon, she became powerful

enough to pose a genuine threat to those who originally disempowered her; and whose continued presence in a position of power relies on her continued subordination. Their attempts to continue her oppression are met with resistance, and the power they imbue in her becomes a method with which she can implement action in her own way; reworking the power hierarchy of the fictional world to accommodate the agency and autonomy that the young character wishes to express. Despite being non-realistic texts, there is a clear theme of empowerment and rejection of female subjugation in Y.A literature.

Thus, the protagonist Katniss Everdeen becomes an excellent example as a Y.A dystopian character empowered as a weapon for change. By critically engaging herself in both gendered norms, Katniss promotes the power of change and breaks down the prevailing culture of male heroes.

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## THE YOUNG ADULT FEMALE AND EMOTIONS

Feminist literary critics have, in the past three decades, worked diligently to identify women's texts that had almost been lost to obscurity. As women's voices from the past have been rediscovered and made available by modern women, history and female achievements in literature and in other disciplines are being revisited. At the same time, modern women writers are finding and trusting their own authentic voices to tell their stories to others through fiction, biography, autobiography, poetry, and informational narratives. The contemporary generation of girls and young women is the first to have access to such a range of resources.

While it is the general opinion for stereotypical males to think that species of the feminine gender are invariably weaker in terms of emotions, Y.A authors tend to subvert this idea by making 'feelings' the powerhouse of their protagonists. Katniss Everdeen seems to be calculative and cold but she is also ruled by her emotions but this does not render her character as negative. Her emotions act as a catalyst to help her carry out actions. Fashion magazines of contemporary society analyse and dissect the female emotions as negative by labeling with words like 'over-sensitive' or 'feminine flaws' but Y.A protagonists escape this.

In Y.A dystopian novels, reality is constructed in such a way that the Y.A female protagonists have ample chance to exert their physical strength. This perhaps is to show their equal stance where they have once been undermined. From mere spectators and backups, they are upgraded to roles of leaders and heroines. They are no longer physically weaker females but are now able to draw on their own physical strengths.

Katniss Everdeen is a hunter. She hunts to feed her mother and younger sister. This stance goes back to the start of civilization, when the first settlers began using the method of

agriculture and cultivation of crops. The men began to hunt whereas women were designated to become farmers, bearers and home-makers. Katniss's role upsets this set order of designated roles. By her expertise with hunting, she carves herself a niche in what is traditionally considered a man's role. She is comfortable in her role and does not seem forced to it. Her fluidity with her role as provider of the family endears her to readers.

However, Katniss's role between her female self and masculine traits are what confuse her emotions. She is brutish, at best. She discards what she considers unnecessary feminine emotions for survival. She envisions her younger sister, Prim as the female, stereotyping her as dainty, weak and fragile. This causes a friction in her identification make-up. She cannot reconcile what she considers her masculine traits with her feminine traits and this causes imbalance and uncertainty within her but she restrains herself from feeling any excessive emotions.

In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss tries hard to hide her emotions from others. She does not endear herself to the public and audience even though it was detrimental to her survival. With sponsors at stake on her behaviour, even with additional warning from her mentor Haymitch, she could not open up to the farce of the brutal reality show. It is only with Peeta's help that even the audiences of the Capitol are able to connect with her on a more personal level. Her 'love-line' with Peeta makes her more approachable and inviting. When Peeta announces his love for her on the televised interviews before the games, Katniss's reaction is of anger. She, who is pretty sharp in different aspects of survival, does not understand 'attraction' in its very basic form.

"You are a fool", Haymitch says in disgust. "Do you think he hurt you? That boy just gave you something you could never achieve on your own".

"He made me look weak!" I say.

“He made you look desirable! And let’s face it, you can use all the help you can get in that department. You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he wanted you...”.

(Collins, *The Hunger Games* 135)

When Katniss shows her emotions to the people she considers as enemies, she thinks it is vulnerability that they see. She hates to be seen as weak. But it is always when she shows her feelings and in the portrayal of her feelings that she gains loyalty from others. She is very real. She hates the bubble that the Capitol people lives in and does not want to be herded in like them. This shows a reaction against stereotyping. She feels like she is putting on a show when they want her to act and please other people.

The image that the Capitol assigns to Katniss and the image that she sets aside for herself are very different. She is all shiny, plastic and a silly girl in love in the public – a typical stereotype of the image assigned to teenage girls by social media in contemporary society. Katniss Everdeen’s existence alone becomes the ideal image for teenage girls who want to defy stereotyping. Even the ability to control her emotions became an example for teenage girls who are often described as over- emotional. In the reaping of the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games, Katniss has volunteered to take Prim’s place in the games. She is frightened but is reluctant to show even this aspect of herself to the Capitol audience.

Katniss is hardened by the society she lives in. This is evident even in the open pages of the first book of the trilogy as she talks about her sister’s cat, Buttercup. She tells us matter-of-factly :

He hates me. Or at least distrusts me. Even though it was years ago, I think he still remembers how I tried to drown him in a bucket when Prim brought him home. Scrawny kitten, belly swollen with worms, crawling with fleas. The last thing I needed was another mouth to feed. (*The Hunger Games* 300)

Katniss is cavalier about the life of a kitten. She understands too clearly that the resources of the household cannot stretch to accommodate even one more mouth. Prim, her younger sister can afford to be innocent as Katniss works hard to keep her in innocence. She could beg and cry to keep the cat because she does not understand its true cost. Katniss works very hard to provide for the cat as well even though she has no affection for it. In fact, Katniss's description of her own relationship with the cat sounds like she is incapable of feeling the innocence of love that the cat would demand. Katniss observes:

Sometimes, when I clean a kill, I feed Buttercup the entrails. He has stopped hissing at me. Entrails. No hissing. This is the closest we will come to love. (*The Hunger Games* 5)

Even before she is thrust into the Games, Katniss has already dealt with the trauma of losing a father who was the main provider of the family. With the death of Katniss's father, the set patriarchy of her family dissolves and she inevitably has to give herself this responsibility. After her first Hunger games, she became even more reluctant to emotionally connect with anyone else. She is terrified that President Snow would manipulate her loved ones and in turn, compromised her position as well.

In *Catching Fire*, when Gale confesses his love for her, she replies:

I can't think about anyone that way now. All I can think about, every day, every waking minute since they drew Prim's name at the reaping is how afraid I am. And there doesn't seem to be room for anything else. If we could get somewhere safe, maybe I could be different. I don't know. (Collins, *Catching Fire* 97)

Katniss has no space to confront her worries like the uncertainty of the future and survival and even her ability to move past her various traumas. She became more and more

emotional with the progress of the trilogy. *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* have shown readers a Katniss Everdeen who is suffering, who is emotional and stronger, perhaps even strong because she is emotional. Emotional female characters have always been portrayed with underlying weaknesses, it is not so for Y.A dystopian female characters. The emotions they liberate are utilized to make them stronger and this aspect of their distinctiveness have made them more genuine in their characterization.

Females have always been the focus of literary works as protagonists with romantic elements in them. These works are understood as the 'romance' genre where the majority of the work deals with the female protagonist occupying herself with falling in or out of love. This is considered weak and silly in a society dominated by the masculine gender. The subject however, becomes tiresome as there is no real representation of female characters aside from the romantic elements, just stereotypical representation of females.

Most romance novels follow similar storylines. The female protagonist finds herself developing emotionally and sexually. It is true that romance novels acknowledge the hidden from public sexuality of women but what it does not show are the physical strengths that women possess. Certain characteristics are comparable, as Janice A. Radway locates in her book *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*. She observes that all protagonists commence by rebelling against their femininity, either possessing more masculine than feminine traits or participating in typically male-oriented activities, whereby their femininity is shunned for them to be on levels with their male-counterparts. Radway explains this as:

Although it is tempting to interpret this distaste for women as evidence of female masochism and of a desire to see feminist tendencies succumb to the power of love, it can be explained more fully by connecting it with the heroine's and the reader's

impulse toward individuation and autonomy, a step that must be taken, at least within patriarchy, against the mother, that is, against women. (Radway 124)

Despite the protagonist's attempts to rebel against female gender norms, she is ultimately shown with stereotypical femininity. Radway notes that "the initial attempts to challenge gender do not threaten the reader, in large part because the fact of her true femininity is never left in doubt ....She is always portrayed as unusually compassionate, kind, and understanding"(125). Romance novels though liberating for women in terms of sexuality limits them to one end i.e *love*. The culmination of love with the desired love partner fulfills her life. It is as if nothing else matters anymore. The 'love' becomes her ending, her universe and shadows everything that the protagonists had achieved so far.

In Y.A dystopian fiction, female protagonists do not achieve wholeness with her emotional progress in 'love'. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss Everdeen represses her emotions because she feels it is a hindrance to her survival. Katniss's womanhood only becomes clear cut and defined when she plays the role of Peeta's love interest. One can see a different side of Katniss as she performs her roles: one who blows kisses, smiles widely, waves with excitement, and one who becomes much more animated. However, Collins does not let the readers forget that this is a performance. It is as if Katniss is saying the stereotypical manners of girls are a farce. As she is bound by the terrors of the games to perform her femininity, the manners and emotions of teenage girls are a performance that is bound to them by the rules of the masculine world.

Initially skeptical, Katniss eventually sees the merit in using romance with Peeta to make herself look more sociable. It means she will get more assistance during the competition. Essentially, she adopts this persona as a performance. During the games, she continually reminds herself to take action for the "cameras in the way a girl in love would act,

whether that means tender kisses, gentle caresses, affectionate glances, or fighting desperately to keep her lover alive when he is grievously injured.” (Dunn & Michaus 137)

Katniss’s normally unfeminine qualities include her lack of awareness of herself and occasionally her emotions. She is inexperienced about attraction to the opposite sex as she does not have the leisure for it. If given a chance, perhaps it can be constructed that teenage girls would be happy to hold more responsibility if their already assigned roles permit them to.

Peeta hints at how he feels about Katniss, saying “People will help you in the arena. They'll be tripping over each other to sponsor you.... She has no idea. The effect she can have" (The Hunger Games 91). He thinks highly of her and notices everything that she does not identify. He even admits that she is more accomplished than him physically. However, he does not feel vulnerable to her strength just as he does not make Katniss vulnerable over her lack of emotions. The lack of recognition of one's own appeal is one way in which Katniss relates to romantic protagonists in ‘romance’ novels. She has no chance to think about her femininity because she has so many other things to struggle with. Her world is constantly threatened with chaos and thus, the idea of romantic indulgence is the farthest thing from her mind. Peeta is one of the few who can see through Katniss's tough exterior.

At the advice of their mentor Haymitch Abernathy, Katniss and Peeta have to act like they have a relationship before the Capitol audience and President Snow as well. The forced interactions with Peeta lead to more uncertainty in Katniss about her feelings for her friend Gale which she does not consider in the least bit as romantic. As she has no leisure to socially interact, she also does not know the basics of the opposite sex and attraction. She muddles over her feelings and admits to herself:

...being in the woods with Gale ... sometimes I was actually happy. I call him my friend, but in the last year it's seemed too casual a word for what Gale is to me. A pang of longing shoots through my chest (*The Hunger Games* 112).

With the narrative being told from Katniss's point of view, the readers can sense the genuine uncertainty Katniss has over her emotions towards Gale. She does not know if their partnership in hunting will eventually lead to something more than the status of hunting partners or if it is building them into something like brother and sister. Even as she ponders over her feelings towards the two, she does not essentially act on an impulse. She also does not pressure herself to form real romantic relationships. Later, Katniss considers the bonds she has forged with Gale and Peeta:

I can't help comparing what I have with Gale to what I'm pretending to have with Peeta. How I never question Gale's motives while I do nothing but doubt the latter's. It's not a fair comparison really. Gale and I were thrown together by a mutual need to survive. Peeta and I know the other's survival means our own death. How do you sidestep that? (*The Hunger Games* 111)

The relationships that Katniss has with both boys arise out of necessity. She and Gale hunt for their families, feed their hungry mouths and make sure that their siblings are kept out of the games by letting them take out as little 'tesserae' as possible. She and Peeta have to interact because they are the two tributes for District Twelve. They have to act as lovers for them to gain a ground against the most popular Careers in the games. She has not been able to interact with either of them in a completely neutral and passive situation. It becomes easy to sympathize with Katniss as in her existence in a totalitarian society; there is no space for her emotional stability or development.

Unlike Peeta, Katniss is not good at performing her assigned role as a silly girl in love. She detests and defies it by continually dropping the act when audiences are not around. She indirectly punishes Peeta by hurting his feelings as he had genuine emotions towards her. She finds it extremely difficult to show her authentic emotions, let alone ones that she is pretending to have.

In her first Hunger Games after the rules had been changed to accommodate two victors, she is required to act like she is in love with Peeta once she finds him again and has to care for his wounds. She does not do this out of romantic interest for Peeta but out of a moral responsibility. She feels that she owes Peeta for many things and she cannot bear the thought of returning to District 12 when she has the ability to try and save the both of them. At first she is reluctant, ignoring his whispered request for a kiss to play up the romance. Later, she tries to perform the romance by giving Peeta a quick kiss. Haymitch works out a system with Katniss despite the fact they cannot directly communicate; he sends some broth from a sponsor, and Katniss "can almost hear his snarl. 'You're supposed to be in love, sweetheart. The boy's dying. Give me something I can work with!'" (*The Hunger Games* 261). Even as she plays the role of the frantic girlfriend with a dying boyfriend, she channels their mentor in her mind to help her complete her role. Katniss does not have an epiphany about her undying love for the wounded Peeta as there would have been in 'romance' novels.

After Katniss starts to establish a more steady relation with Peeta and after they became the final two living tributes in the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger games, the rule allowing for two victors is changed to the original of only allowing one victor. As popular as Katniss and Peeta's romance is with the Hunger Games audience, the Capitol cannot allow such a drastic change to the system that has govern them for so long. It is highly improbable that the rules could change for the fancy of one teenager's romantic impulses. Katniss realizes :

They never intended to let us both live. This has all been devised by the Gamemakers to guarantee the most dramatic showdown in history. And like a fool, I bought into it (*The Hunger Games* 342).

The romance between Peeta and Katniss undermines the system of the Hunger Games by bringing tributes together instead of pitting them against each other. In this way, Katniss also uses her assigned romantic role to indirectly defy the Capitol. Romantic love is used to undermine the patriarchal order of Panem. For the Gamemakers, forcing them to fight to the death would have been intense enough to grab the attention of the audience. Katniss considers whether it would be possible for them to avoid killing each other, and she concludes that “They have to have a victor. Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers's faces. They'd have failed the Capitol .... If Peeta and I were both to die, or they thought we were ... “(*The Hunger Games* 344). There has to be a winner for the Games in order for the viewers to see anything constructive in an event that kills off twenty-three young people from across the country and so that citizens can feel some measure of hope that will keep them from revolting against the Capitol's rule. This facade of having a victor every year and awarding the victor with riches is a way the Government keeps its Capitol community from seeing the cruelty and barbaric actions involved in the Games.

Due to her understanding of the Games structure, Katniss is able to take away some control from the people who are controlling her life in the arena. She continually finds small ways to play with the hearts of viewers to show them the brutality behind the existing power system. She comes up with a plan where she and Peeta will eat poisonous berries so that they die and leave no survivors of the Games. She plays the part of the young girl in love that would rather die together with her love than having to kill him. Just as they put the berries in their mouths, an announcement is made declaring both Katniss and Peeta the victors of the

Hunger Games (*The Hunger Games* 345). Katniss's plan works and the Capitol is forced to let both tributes live so that there will be survivors for the audiences to adore.

Katniss despises her government for forcing children into the Games, and she acts on her feelings. The act of eating the berries is empowering for Katniss because it allows her to change her fate and to affect a greatly unfair societal system. Katniss's supposed romance with Peeta is able to start a chain reaction that results in a rebellion against the established institution. Their act of 'romance' keeps both her and Peeta alive as 'victors' both times in the 74<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games and it is her commitment and courage to fight not only for her life but Peeta's life that sparks the rebellion. With the role she plays, citizens of the various Districts begin to feel the renewed connection of humanity among them. 'Romance' does not become one female's fulfillment but the birth of a new social order.

In order to make up for her actions in the arena in her first Hunger Games, Katniss has to make everyone believe that she is pursuing a romance with Peeta. For her interview with Caesar Flickerman after the Games, Cinna puts her in 'an unassuming yellow dress' to make her appear as girlishly innocent as possible to counter the possible threats that were beginning to form against her. Katniss observes, "...I feel so vulnerable in this flimsy dress. But I guess that was the point". (*The Hunger Games* 362)

During the interview, she plays up the role of the girl in love. She gives Flickerman halting answers. She says that, after hearing that the original rule change could allow them both to live, she called out Peeta's name "maybe ... because for the first time ... there was a chance I could keep him" (*The Hunger Games* 368). She claims that she "just ... couldn't bear the thought of ... being without him" when she needs to defend the double suicide attempt (369). The pauses in her answers are interpreted as hesitations while she tries to decide what to say in order to sound authentic in the role that she was assigned. She also pauses during

her interview to appear overcome with emotion and not able to complete her sentences. She tries to appear emotional and generally feminine so as to keep the Capitol's audience considerate to her and Peeta's conditions and to try to eliminate the idea of her being a threat to the country. She uses the idea of a traditionally assigned role of a teenage girl to mask her actions of defiance. This action on her part shows what a farce stereotypical notion of teenage girls are. As important as it is for Katniss to fight against the unfairness of the Capitol, it is also important to play along with them so that they do not suspect her motives.

Katniss typically ignores her emotions which are not necessary for her survival, so when she faces Peeta's and Gale's attraction all at once, she does not know what to do with them or how to act on it. Peeta does not understand her confusion because he is more open about his feelings and has openly shown them. This once again emphasizes the dynamic in their relationship where Katniss is more 'masculine' and Peeta is more 'feminine' with both of them subverting assigned gender roles. He does the waiting for Katniss reveal her emotions. In contemporary society, women are typically considered more open, sociable and in tune with their emotions. In *The Hunger Games* and most other Y.A dystopian novels, it is not so. Katniss is a closed- book, she does not babble about how frightening it is or how hurt she is. Compared to her, Peeta and Gale are more open in showing their emotions.

Katniss battles not only the unreasonable system that puts her and her family in poverty but also the psychological effects it has on her. She cannot think about starting a family because she cannot bear the thought of her future children participating in the brutality of the Hunger Games. She is bombarded by too much chaos that she does not have time to care about her sexuality. She is confused about what she feels with regards to Peeta's affections and is too frightened to put labels on it. She cares deeply enough for him that she does not want to deny him of on having a family or other things he may wish. Katniss requires time to process what happened during the Games so that she could determine what

she wants but under the ever present eye of the Capitol even the surfacing of individuality was impossible. When she has no time even to reflect on herself, Katniss has no time to ponder over her attachment to someone else. Her performance of love for Peeta has her confused as to which of her emotions are real, like that is induced by the need to survive in the games or to satisfy the Capital and the audience throughout Panem.

Katniss can only openly show her emotions when she acts autonomously. She connects best when she acts naturally. In *Mockingjay*, after she agrees to be the face of the rebellion as the ‘mockingjay’, Katniss still has reservations about the identity assigned to her. To challenge the Capitol, District 13 decides to make revolutionary ‘propos’ to counter the Capitol on their anti-rebellion television broadcasts. Katniss fails dramatically to deliver her rehearsed lines. It is only in battle that she is able to genuinely issue an ultimatum to the Capitol after she witnessed the suffering and despair going through the different districts. “Fire is catching!... And if we burn, you burn with us!”(*Mockingjay* 100)

Katniss has kept herself together relatively well in spite of everything she has been through. She has not lost control over her panic attacks and she has been able to restraint herself from going mad altogether. However, the death of her sister near the end of the novel pushes her over the edge. She is severely burned by the explosion that claims her sister's life while she tries to help Capitol children hurt by a previous round of bombs. She has to deal at once with the physical and emotional pain of having her skin healed and trying to wrap her mind around the loss of Prim. She is in extreme pain, emotionally and physically but never once is she in denial over her sister's death. This shows how strong Katniss's mentality is – she does not try to divert herself from the pain instead she is strong enough to understand her pain. While she is in the hospital recovering, her thoughts are jumbled as she bears the pain of losing Prim:

there's much pain but there's also something like reality .... These things frighten me, and I try to return to the deep to make sense of them. But there's no going back. Gradually, I'm forced to accept who I am. A badly burned girl with no wings. With no fire. And no sister. (*Mockingjay* 350)

Everything Katniss has been through with the Hunger Games, pretending to be in love and being the face of the rebellion as the 'Mockingjay' was in order to keep Prim safe. She is Katniss' s greatest love in life. Katniss finds peace in Prim and she is the core cause behind her many actions. It is interesting to note that Katniss's greatest love in the trilogy is not one of the male characters. She has no need to fall in love with Peeta or Gale for her to find courage to defy situations. This adds to the depth of Katniss's character.

Prim looks at Katniss as a mother, a father and a sister, her responsibility tripled. However, even as the Mockingjay, Katniss could not prevent her sister from facing harm. Prim's death deals Katniss a massive blow to her already fragile psyche and she has to really try to control her sanity as not to lose control of reality this time. Before, it is the thought of keeping Prim safe that always puts her back into focus. It also forces Katniss and Gale apart permanently. She finds out that Gale may have been the mastermind behind the trap that was intended for the citizens of the Capitol but ended up killing Prim and others. This became Katniss's strongest association with her former friend that will forever leave a mark:

Even now I can see the flash that ignites her, feel the heat of the flames. And I will never be able to separate that moment from Gale (*Mockingjay* 367).

The two friends have been already on the point of separation by their disagreements on how to most effectively bring a revolution to Panem. Gale, like his name suggest is violent and his prevailing methods of violence finally breaks Katniss away from him. She has experienced enough anger and fire in her time through two Hunger Games and has even

experienced the brunt of most of it. With the addition of the effects of war in the country, it is no wonder that she does not want to be constantly reminded of the act that kills her sister and the young man who fashion the bomb. In the end, Gale is no better than President Snow and the people of the Capitol as he is capable of using any means for the desired effect. Katniss chooses not to stay with someone who symbolizes the violence of the previous regime, and instead she accepts Peeta, a young man who offers the optimism and peace that new leadership could bring. She breaks the cycle of negativity that she fought against in favor of something better not just for her, but for her country as well.(Hall 67)

Katniss has been seen as powerful and strong throughout most of the trilogy, and she exercises this power with two last occasions. Firstly, she casts her votes with a group of other surviving tributes on whether or not to hold a final Hunger Games using the children of the Capitol as punishment of years of crime against the Districts, at the suggestion of President Coin (*Mockingjay* 369). She could see the new side of President Coin sliding comfortably into a new role of dictatorship and understood that her life depends on her willingness to follow the new leader. Katniss considers her reasoning for voting for or against the need to hold a new Hunger Games, though she finds it somewhat pointless:

All those people I loved, dead, and we are discussing the next Hunger Games in an attempt to avoid wasting life. Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change now" (*Mockingjay* 370).

Katniss can only see the continuing cycle of people oppressing and killing each other. She votes to hold one last Hunger Games to make up in some small way for the loss of Prim and to throw President Coin off her scent, Haymitch votes with her and their votes carry the decision to put Capitol children into the arena one last time in order to send a message to the people of the Capitol. She behaves as if she is loyal to President Coin even as she begins to

doubt her ability to rule in a way that could benefit everyone's freedom. She finds it odd that as punishment; President Coin is willing to further sacrifice lives of innocent Capitol children.

Katniss barely has time to consider what she has voted for when she is whisked away to a ceremony where she will assassinate President Snow to signal the end of the war and the prosperity of the rebels. She thinks about the sort of leader President Snow is and compares him to President Coin. She recalls a conversation she had with Snow where he says "we had agreed not to lie to each other" (*Mockingjay* 372). In this conversation, he made her realise that it is on President Coin's orders that the bomb which has killed Prim and many other innocent children is given. Katniss realizes that, while sinister, Snow does not blatantly lie and manipulate her in the ways that President Coin has done. He has always been direct about his antagonism with Katniss. She decides and instead uses her arrow to take out President Coin ensuring that with her death the birth of a more stable regime would be born. She is eventually acquitted of the crime due to the psychological damage she has undergone from being in two Hunger Games and a war. Though Katniss has done something that is morally inappropriate by shooting the woman who is suppose to be the new President of Panem instead of the man she is suppose to assassinate, she has saved the country from following a similar trajectory to the one they face under President Snow.(Hall 68)

Strong female protagonists, such as Katniss Everdeen of Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy, have made an impact in the current market of young adult literature. They bring changes to both romance and projection of young adult female emotions by blending gendered traits and science fiction genres into something completely new and experimental. As unlikely as girls may be as dystopian heroes, they can be the most effective examples of overcoming not just the oppression they face in their own societies but the patriarchal system that is common in the fictional societies in which their stories are written.

Y.A dystopian novels with female protagonists have taken what have been traditionally neglected young female figures and molded them into characters worth dissecting.

These empowered female characters subvert the traditional hero narratives of masculine traits and brute force. The use of feminine traits like compassion and emotion to create change and to empower others renews the value of these traditionally feminine traits. They validate that emotions are imperative when it comes to young females. The hero paradigm of being inexplicably masculine is subverted. The new heroine paradigm gives space for female characters to be heroines with feelings and they are not any weaker for it. Strong female protagonists show readers that anyone can have the power to change their world.

Girls like Katniss, once forced to be either just like the boys, perhaps more subservient or overly feminine, comprise now a wider range of characteristics and roles. They became complex and confusing characters but this roundedness of their characteristics gives satisfaction to the readers. Furthermore, Peeta and other male characters are allowed to exhibit a broader romance of masculine and feminine characteristics. Instead of simply pursuing romance, girls can fight wars and change their society, and instead of simply fighting wars, boys can care about relationships and explore untypical traits. Girls and boys in current Y.A science fiction can have loving relationships and at the same time take part in the action. Female characters are at the war front, not 'safe' in their homes waiting for the soldiers to come home. These female characters offer more possibilities not only for themselves but for the people who read about them. The readers can evolve with the way in which feminine and muscular gender is normally viewed.

Katniss and the female characters like Prim, Rue and Johanna Mason in *The Hunger Games* trilogy are important because they offer different versions of girlhood, as well as new

examples of female power. Katniss Everdeen is able to incite a national rebellion simply by pulling out a handful of poisonous berries. She can be both masculine and feminine, with her hunting prowess and her lack of emotions, femininity and compassion and kindness towards others. Katniss's greatest strength comes from her seemingly feminine actions and from her self-empowerment. She is more realistic than her predecessors in both science fiction and romance because, like ordinary people, she has to balance the problems of her society with her relationships with Peeta and Gale. Her romance with Peeta makes her a better person than she is on her own. Katniss shows that anyone can act in such a way as to impact a whole society, the traits that are often considered to be the weakest can be one's strongest assets, and even emotions can be empowering.

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## GIRLS ON FIRE: STRUGGLE FOR SELF

Dystopian governments always rely upon two things in order to maintain the status quo: fear and the careful control of information. In this bleak kind of society, kindness, connection and comradeship breed the possibility of a threat. Within a tightly-controlled environment that places the advantage of the few elites at the expense of the common masses, kindness, building connections and comradeship becomes dangerous virtues as it can fuel the subversive urge to defy. It could create bonds that could not be controlled by fear. The collective would stand more firm than the singular, as in the instance of all the Districts against the Capitol. Katniss Everdeen's prowess with the bow and arrows are admired by many but it is her ability to connect and show kindness with others in her surroundings that further endear her to all. The people of the Districts are ready to follow her as a leader in the rebellion because of her humane characteristics. They see her as their comrade – someone who fights with them instead of someone who is taking advantage of their cause.

Dystopian stories give readers a complex, dark and interesting world to focus on. Y.A dystopian series with strong female characters illuminate on how capable young girls can be in the roles of heroes and roles that can be considered outside of their assigned stereotypical comfort zone. They are warriors, hunters, friends as well as girlfriends and mothers. Their roles are not lacking to their respective male counterparts. They challenge gender-roles and expectations. Y.A dystopian series deviates well outside assigned roles. They make girls believe that Prince Charming does not have to exist for them to escape their assigned 'towers'. They can fight, manipulate, be brave and witty while juggling a boyfriend, keeping in fashion and still having enough time to make new acquaintances.

The majority of *The Hunger Games* trilogy consists of female characters. They are important in changing the social order of Panem, as much as Katniss Everdeen is. They help

and assist her physically and mentally, giving and drawing on her strength. These female characters, though their characteristics are not scrutinized like Katniss stand on their own two feet, denying to remain silent and invisible.

Before she is drawn into the games, Katniss immediate environment is influenced by her mother, sister Prim, her friend Madge and Greasy Mae. They are all very different in terms of their individualities but this consequently adds to Katniss's progress in character. Initially, in *The Hunger Games*, one finds that Katniss's image of her mother is not kind. After their father's death in the mines, Katniss observe her mother withdraw into herself leaving her two daughters to fend for themselves. This, however indirectly helps Katniss to be independent.

From a women's point of view, Katniss's mother can be seen lacking in strength and character. She contributes little in terms of the rebellion against Panem. She lacks the drive for anything once her husband dies. "I try to remember that when all I can see is the woman who sat by, blank and unreachable, while her children turned to skin and bones. I try to forgive her for my father's sake. But to be honest, I'm not the forgiving type." observes Katniss of her mother's incompetence.(Collins, *The Hunger Games* 9)

What Katniss Everdeen does not comprehend is that her mother is also strong in her own rights. She represents the characterization of heroines in a typical romance novel – a woman who gains her strength from the love she gets from her partner and who becomes undone with the end of the romance. Even in the social structure of District 12, Katniss's mother once belonged to 'the small merchant class that caters to officials, Peacekeepers, and the occasional Seam customer', a class above Katniss's father who was a miner. Her family runs the local apothecaries since no one was able to afford professional doctors. Katniss redeems her mother in her love for her father as she observes that she must have loved him

enough to leave her more comfortable merchant class to marry him. However, once the father dies, Katniss's mother is reverted to a mourning shell of her former self. Her roles are minute and few. She cannot bear to return to District 12 even after the war as it contains too many memories of her younger daughter. Both mother and daughter cannot reconcile over their differences even at the end of the trilogy.

However, even when she is lethargic and languid, Katniss's mother does not forget her talent for healing and the use of medicinal herbs. She does not tragically die from a broken-heart. No, she is definitely stronger than that. She does not succumb to her depression. Though her importance is denied by Katniss, she becomes involved in the rebuilding of the districts after the war. With the awakening of the new social order, Katniss's mother also awakens from her self-inflicted shell. She participates actively as a healer. When Gale after a flogging by the new Peacekeeper is brought to her, Katniss observes:

I'm filled with awe, as I always am, as I watch her transform from a woman who calls me to kill a spider to a woman immune to fear. When a sick or dying person is brought to her...this is the only time I think my mother knows who she is. (*Catching Fire* 111).

Many of Katniss's ideals and motives come from her sisterly and sometimes, motherly affection towards her younger sister, Primrose Everdeen. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss volunteers as tribute in place of her younger sister, who is coincidentally named after a pretty flower. The primrose flower is a fragile and dainty flower, a parallel that can be seen in Primrose's character itself. Another parallel provided is that as fragile as it seems, Primroses have medicinal purposes which can be used in alternative medicine as a possibly effective aid in treating nerve damage. Primrose Everdeen herself has inclinations towards healing others, a trait she inherits from her mother and a trait that surpasses Katniss. The

shortened version of her name, Prim meaning formal or proper also places her in stark contrast with Katniss's rebellious attitude.

Prim is the most important leverage that the Capitol has over Katniss. In the Hunger Games Quarter Quell, the Gamemakers use a jabberjay to stimulate her fear by making the bird imitate Prim's voice as if she was tortured. President Snow also blackmails her using Prim and her mother as leverage. Throughout the series, Katniss's strength lies in her younger sister, not an opposite sex character which always has been the norm before contemporary YA surfaces.

Primrose Everdeen also has sensitivity which does not easily come to Katniss Everdeen. Katniss observes:

I look at my little sister and think how she has inherited the best qualities our family has to offer: my mother's healing hands, my father's level head, and my fight. There's something else there as well, something entirely her own. An ability to look into the confusing mess of life and see things for what they are. (*Mockingjay* 184)

Primrose becomes a line between Katniss and her humanity. It is Primrose who begs Katniss to let her keep the stray cat Buttercup when they hardly have enough to eat and in turn, after Prim's death it is the cat that is Katniss's only companion when she is sent into exile after she assassinates President Coin. Primrose is a physical manifestation of one of the reasons why Katniss agrees to become the face of the rebellion. Fragile as she seems, she holds Katniss's sanity in her hands. When situations became unbearable for Katniss, it is to Primrose she goes to for counsel. So, it does not come as too much of a surprise that Katniss's sanity deteriorates after Prim's death.

Prim even though the younger of the two sisters is very understanding of Katniss's emotional levels. She accepts that Katniss is more comfortable with actions and she does not try to compete physically. Instead she finds herself being the level-headed one, the calmer one who can view a situation from a third person's point of view. She feels comfortable in being physically weaker but does not consider herself useless as she knows how to heal. Katniss in turn never feels emotionally stunted even when she leans to Prim for emotional support.

What is interesting about the two sisters is that they are complete opposites as individuals. Katniss's strength lies in her ability to hunt, decisions made on impulse and lack of trust on the people not of her immediate surroundings. Primrose on the other hand, does not have physical strength to speak of. She is peaceful where Katniss is violent and in situations, she is calm and collected. Though younger, she has the ability to look at incidents and analyse it calmly.

Greasy Sae, though someone of little consequence in the series however, is prominent as someone who shapes Katniss's character. She is a "bony" old woman who sells bowls of hot soup at the Hob, the black market in District 12. Katniss and Gale Hawthorne would often trade with her as she would consistently buy their kills, even wild dogs. She, like the rest of the people in the district struggles for a living. She is one of the few people that Katniss considers as kind-hearted and without a hidden agenda. Greasy Sae has no motive for being kind to Katniss and this makes her unforgettable in Katniss's eyes. It is Greasy Sae who starts up a collection in the Hob to help sponsor Katniss and Peeta during the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games. Katniss, after she becomes rich with the spoils of the first games repays her kindness by continuing to shop in the Hob and making it a point to visit as many vendors as possible. Greasy Sae is resourceful as she is even able to survive after the Peacemakers burns down The Hob, the place where she conducts her daily business.

When Haymitch calls people together to tell stories of Katniss that inspires them as they were making the war propos in District 13, Greasy Sae is among them. She also looks after to Katniss after the war when Katniss is sent into exile. She knows Katniss's character and tells her to go hunting to try to shake Katniss out of her mourning and self-imposed exile inside her house. She is an old woman of strength in character. In poverty-stricken District 12, she is able to survive on selling her odd-ends soups.

Katniss's whole life deals with her struggle for survival. Even as a child she knew how the world functioned and how cruel the Capitol was. It is one of the reasons why she guards and closes herself emotionally from other children even at a young age. Her only friend is Madge Undersee, the mayor's daughter. Madge is a minor pale character. Her only contribution is giving Katniss's the mockingjay pin as a token for the Hunger Games. This however became Katniss's symbol and the face of the rebellion against Panem. Even though they are merely acquaintances, their relationship changes into friendship after Madge gives Katniss the mockingjay pin. Katniss describes her afterwards as quiet, brave and kind. Perhaps, one can imagine that Madge sees Katniss's potential even before the others did. She is one of the few people who Katniss thinks positively about, a person who is good to her without motives.

Effie Trinket plays a prominent role throughout the trilogy. She is the escort of the District 12 tributes. Her responsibilities include drawing the Hunger Games tributes names every year on the day of the reaping and subsequently escorting them to the Capitol. In District 12, she is ridiculed for her Capitol accent, fashion and outlook on the games. She often concludes the reapings with her famous line, "Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favor!" She represents everything about the Capitol that Katniss hates – the class of people who lives in luxury and takes delight in the brutality of the games.

Effie Trinket appears to be extremely superficial – with her colourful clothes and hair, face paints and penchant for proper manners. Her priorities seem out of line even to third party observers. At the beginning of the trilogy, it is evident that she views Katniss and Peeta as little more than civilised people. She tells them on the train as they speed towards the Capitol, “At least you two have decent manners. The pair last year ate everything with their hands like a couple of savages. It completely upset my digestion”. (*The Hunger Games* 45) When Katniss and Peeta are worried about the possibility of their impending death, she worries about etiquette and the presentation of the tributes and the way they are broadcasted before national television. She thinks that the tributes should be grateful for the luxuries afforded them before the games begin in the arena. Like many other Capitol people, she is in denial over the cruelty of the games and glorifies the parts that suit her sensibility. She sees the games as just fun entertainment.

However, Effie is described as having a “keen instinct” by Katniss, and seems to be at least partially aware of the political uproar caused by Katniss and Peeta’s attempted suicide in the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games. Effie Trinket does not contribute to the changing of the social order. She however, became a perspective of Capitol blood that Katniss can connect to. In *Catching Fire*, Effie Trinket begins to view Katniss and Peeta as more than tributes. She is noticeably less excited at the reaping of the 75<sup>th</sup> Quarter Quell Hunger Games knowing Katniss will have to participate again as the sole surviving female victor in District 12. She begins to connect emotionally to Katniss as the trilogy progresses and start to see her and Peeta as more than a job or as a source of entertainment.

Both Katniss Everdeen and Effie Trinket benefit from the bond that was created during their shared time together. Katniss has always detested the Capitol people and everything that they stand for. She begins to understand that her hatred towards the Capitol people collectively is unfounded and thereafter begins to focus only on the corrupted system

and the Capitol leaders. Katniss learns and begins to understand that Capitol dwellers like Effie Trinket are also under the same system and are just as dispensable as the people of the Districts. Once they rid each other of the assigned roles given to them by the Capitol, they are able to find some semblance of humanity in each other. This adds to the richness of their mental makeup.

In *Catching Fire* after the opening ceremonies of the 75<sup>th</sup> Quarter Quell Hunger Games, Johanna Mason is introduced. In her first Hunger Games, Johanna plays the role of a weakling, feigning hunger and fatigue when in reality, she is sly and cunning. Katniss describes her as having a “wicked ability to murder”. She is adept with an axe as she comes from District 7 where the main assigned occupation is lumber. She rebels provocatively against the Capitol. Even before the war broke out, she is very vocal about her displeasure against Capitol protocol as she herself claims that the Capitol has nothing to threaten her with as all of her loved ones are dead. Katniss admires, albeit reluctantly Johanna Mason for her ferocity and bravery.

In terms of disposition, she is most similar to Katniss than all the other female characters introduced in the trilogy. Perhaps due to the similarity in attitude, they do not like each other. They would only give each other a grudging respect to each other. Johanna thinks that Katniss is not capable of leading the rebellion but since she is idolized by the rebels, she has no choice but to lend Katniss a hand since their goals are still the same. She does her best to protect Katniss in the Quarter Quell games arena.

In the arena, she brings Beeta and Wiress to Katniss following Haymitch’s request. She and Katniss take part in Beetee’s plan to electrocute the remaining victors who are not on their side by taking Beetee’s wire as instructed. When the force field of the Quarter Quell’s arena collapse due to the electrocution, Johanna knocks out Katniss and cuts the tracker out

of her arm. She sacrifices herself so that Katniss could be rescued by the rebels who have formed a base underneath District 13. Her captivity in the Capitol as a rebel is brutal. She is soaked in water and then tortured with electro-shocks, punishment devised by the Capitol. Even after she is rescued, Katniss recalls that Johanna looks ill, bruised, covered in scabs and had her hair shaved due to her prolonged torture as a captive.

In District 13, Johanna is trained as a soldier so she can fight in the rebellion alongside Katniss. The two suffered and form a bond in training and later became roommates since they both need the support from each other. When Johanna undergoes the test to see if she is ready for battle, her fear of water that has developed because of the torture from the Capitol plays against her, and she goes into shock and is deemed unfit to fight. Katniss gathers pine needles for her so she can be reminded of home, the only sentimental exchange between the two. Before Katniss leaves to participate in the war, Johanna makes Katniss promise to kill President Snow for her, a promise which Katniss does not fulfill.

Johanna Mason has very few redeeming qualities to connect her to the readers. She is volatile and angry throughout her appearance in the series. She is a person whose little stability in the world is threatened, thus leading her to lash out at what is considered dangerous to her survival. She is like a wounded feline, with raw emotional wounds that does not have time to heal before the next attack comes. As she does not have support from loved ones or trust in anyone, she faces her problems alone unlike Katniss who has many to support her. However, torture by the Capitol could not dampen her spirit. Even though her body is not fit to fight, she wants desperately to join the rebellion.

In 1979, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar sees a breakthrough in feminist criticism with their work *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. In the 700 page text, Gilbert and Gubar uses the figurehead of Bertha

Mason as the so-called ‘Madwoman in the Attic’ to present arguments about perceptions towards female literary characters during the time.

According to Gilbert and Gubar, all female characters produced by male authors can be categorized to have two typical characters, who is either the “angel” or the “monster” in character. “Angel” characters are usually pure, dispassionate and submissive – an ‘ideal’ figure of a woman manufactured in a man’s mind belonging to a male-dominated society. “Monster” female characters are in sharp contrast with the “Angel” characters. They are sensual, passionate, rebellious, and decidedly uncontrollable – characteristics which define Johanna Mason to the hilt.

Johanna Mason’s character, in *The Hunger Games* trilogy would have fallen under the “Monster” category. However, in contemporary society, she represents females who are passionate and brave about their causes. She is not considered ‘mad’ even though she became mentally unstable from being tortured. Just as scars and defects of war on men are considered trophies of war, her instability can be considered her war trophy. She does not hide even if others consider her dangerous because of her instability. She is able to survive until the end.

Furthermore, Johanna Mason does not find her peace in a man at the end. It is not love for a man that redeems her to the readers but her budding friendship with Katniss that saves her from her self-inflicted emotional imprisonment. Losing nothing of her “Monster” qualities that makes her a self-made woman; she opens herself to a new future with her sisterly and platonic bond with another female, showing Y.A readers the importance and the redeeming qualities that can lie between female bonding.

During her first Hunger Games, Katniss came across 12 year old Rue, District 11 tribute. Rue has successfully formed an alliance with Katniss after warning her about a nest of tracker jackers. Katniss who does not trust even Peeta, her fellow District 12 tribute whole-

heartedly accepts Rue replacing her as Prim. Her time with Rue is when she feels safest in the Hunger Games arena, her protective instinct replacing a portion of her survival instinct. In *The Hunger Games*, Rue is described as having dark skin and brown hair, small and invisible among the other older, deadlier tributes but Katniss does not dismiss her because of this factor. She sees Rue's acceptance of herself in her invisibility and agility and Katniss admires her for that.

Rue has easily trusted Katniss when she sees that Katniss was wearing a mockingjay pin. When Katniss asks why, she replies:

I have a few that are my special friends. We can sing back and forth for hours. They carry messages for me. (*The Hunger Games* 210)

Stirred by her female instinct to nurture and protect the young girl, Katniss reveals in her relationship with Rue, the potency of intuition. In the high-intensity environment of the arena where most other tributes gang up to sabotage others, these two shrewd female characters fuse together a friendship of collaboration and trust.

Little Rue, whose perspective is pure and not tainted by the Capitol, likens Katniss to the Mockingjay. To Rue, Mockingjays are a source of peace in their chaotic district. District 11 to which she belongs, takes care of the farms and orchards that feed the Capitol. When Katniss surmise that they must have more to eat than District 12, Rue replies, "Oh, no, we're not allowed to eat the crops". Their district mayor is stricter than the overall security in District 12. In such a condition, Mockingjays became Rue's only source of comfort and peace which she likens to Katniss, a bird whose spirit and existence that the Capitol cannot erase.

Mockingjays are birds created through the mating of jabberjays- muttated spy birds created by the Capitol and female mockingbirds. The existences of these birds are a mistake

indirectly created by the Capitol. Mockingjays are described as being tough as rocks, being able to thrive in almost any environment. Mockingjays have a certain level of symbolism in the world of Panem. To the Capitol, it represents their failure that refuses to be forgotten as the birds continue to reproduce and thrive. Perhaps this is why the rebels adopt the Mockingjay as their symbol – to remind the Capitol of the durability of the Mockingjays. Not only does the Capitol fail to kill off their own creation, but it turns itself into something better- a wonderful songbird. The jabberjay mating became a symbol of justice.

Katniss feels strongest and bravest when her emotional strings are pulled. Putting someone like Rue, who even at first appearance is very much a child into the Games added fuel to the fire of hatred that Katniss has for the Capitol system. When Rue got attacked, Katniss sings to her until she dies. As a memorial, Katniss covers her in white flowers, indicating to the Capitol that Rue was more than a piece in their sadistic games. Through her empathy, she exposes the cruelty of the Capitol's lust for bloody entertainment. Katniss's hatred towards the Capitol grows tenfold when Rue died as Rue's and Prim's images are always linked into her mind. When the time comes for her to leave the scene in order for the Capitol's hovercraft to collect their game, she hesitates:

I can't stop looking at Rue, smaller than ever, a baby animal curled up in a nest of netting. I can't bring myself to leave her like this. Past harm, but seeming utterly defenseless. To hate the boy from district 1, who also appears so vulnerable in death, seems inadequate. It's the Capitol I hate, for doing this to all of us. [...] Then I remember Peeta's words on the roof. "Only I keep wishing I could think of a way to... to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their games." And for the first time, I understand what he means. "I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own.

That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I. (*The Hunger Games* 222-234)

Katniss sense of justice grows more as she meets more people. Rue is one of the people who touch her emotions intensely. Katniss' simple act of kindness, in saying a last goodbye to a friend and giving her a symbolic funeral, functions as a clever act of rebellion on another level: she uses the panoptic structure of the Capitols' games to send a message; both to the folks at home in the Districts and to the Gamemakers themselves that her spirit will not be broken. This unbreakable spirit is the spirit that defines YA female protagonists.

As the victors of the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games, she and Peeta have to take a victory tour visiting all the Districts in which they will give public performances. Their response is with 'a scripted thank-you note provided by the Capitol' but refuses to be programmed like this and adds a tribute to Rue's family:

"Everything beautiful brings her to mind. I see her in the yellow flowers that grow in the Meadow by my house. I see her in the Mockingjays that sing in the trees. But most of all, I see her in my sister, Prim". (Collins, *Catching Fire* 61)

This ability of connecting genuinely and emotionally with people is what President Snow now feared most. Her sentimental speech earns her respect from the District 11 residents. Adopting the District 12 hand- symbol of respect, Katniss stands before the crowd and says, "Every person in the crowd presses the three middle fingers of their left hand against their lips and extends them to me. It's our sign from District 12, the last good-bye I gave Rue in the arena" (*Catching Fire* 61). The connection she develops with the crowd solidifies their image of her as the new face of the budding rebellion.

Cressida is an active female character during the rebellion, introduced in the third of the trilogy *Mockingjay*. She is a resident director who joins the cause along with her camera crew, Castor and Pollux. Her main role is to follow Katniss Everdeen throughout her expedition in the rebellion so that they could make numerous propos across Panem in order to encourage strength and morale among the rebels.

Cressida, unlike many of the Capitol-born rebels, is unfazed by the poor living conditions of District 13 and the devastations of war, which makes her become a good film director. Abandoning her comfortable lifestyle back in the Capitol, she is dedicated to the rebellion. Katniss herself is impressed by the fearlessness of Cressida and her team in making sure to get top-quality footage of the 'Mockingjay' despite the dangers which they would not face if they had stayed comfortably in the Capitol. She likens Cressida to her Hunger Games stylist Cinna, the only Capitol person she respects and trusts whole-heartedly. She says that, like Cinna, they did not just do their work, they take pride in it.

Cressida's propos of the Mockingjay contribute greatly to the general morals of the rebels. Less than a day after the bombing in District 8, Cressida and her team put together the first Mockingjay propo and airs it several times. The propos have dramatic results, with the rebels rallying anew in all districts and taking total control of Districts 11 and 3. Even though Cressida was born and raised in the Capitol, she sees through the farce of the Capitol's ruling system. She chooses to believe Katniss's lie that President Coin has given Katniss the task of killing President Snow and does not question her. She has a clear perspective and though she could see through Katniss's lie, she chooses not to question Katniss and whole-heartedly trusts the young girl.

If one were to look through the well-established tradition of male dystopian authors like H.G Wells and George Orwell, one does not need to scrutinize closely in order to reach

the conclusion that such tradition contributes towards the marginalization of female characters and silencing female voices. Although male authors or at least some of them criticise tyranny of patriarchal systems throughout their novels, hoping for a more perfect world order, rarely do they believe that a female heroine would be capable of confronting the power system or have any political influence to introduce changes in the society she is trapped in. The idea of a female antagonist would have seemed even more nonsensical.

President Alma Coin is the note-worthy female antagonist in the trilogy. Heroines in the first dystopias were neither meant to criticise the world order nor empowered for such an ordeal which often creates an image of them as loyal, submissive, terrified and victimized subjects to the state order. President Coin subverts these stereotypical portrayals. She survives and helps District 13 survive when the Capitol tries to destroy their District to the ground. She has a husband and a daughter, who had died during the pox academic. Even then, she does not withdraw from society but has enough courage to move on and rally her people until they are thriving again. She is the leader of the rebellion, funding Katniss and offering help to the Districts all over Panem.

President Coin is the president of District 13 .While President Snow remains the antagonist of the trilogy, President Coin plays the true antagonist in *Mockingjay*. Initially she seems to support the rebellion's agenda but Katniss later learns that she has only revenge in her mind, using the rebellion and Katniss for her own ends. She is ready to use everybody around her to reach her desired end.

Certain critics of Y.A dystopian novels like Amanda Rodriguez have claimed that portrayals of female antagonists are still stereotypical. For instance, Y.A female antagonists seems to have parallel common characteristics. A Y.A female antagonist is often coldly calculating, middle aged, icily beautiful and a villainess – or, at the very least, a highly

misguided leader whose blind devotion to a rigidly depersonalized or somehow 'perfected' world forms the basis of the conflict with the female protagonists.

To mention in passing some other female antagonists of contemporary Y.A dystopian novels, readers come across characters like Jeanine Matthews of the *Divergent* trilogy (2011-2013) by Veronica Roth, Queen Levana of *The Lunar Chronicles*(2012-2015) by Marissa Meyer, Natasha of *The Bone Season*(2013) by Samantha Shannon and Ava Paige of The Maze Runner series (2009-2016) by James Dashner. These characters like President Coin are cold, calculating women who became obsessed with their respective causes and does not stop to question the morality behind their actions as they fight for their gain. They are rigidly one-sided personalities with little humanity in their characteristic profiling. However, these characters can also serve as a type of sexist shorthand for a society gone horribly wrong. Does this not mean that society is still stuck with the rigidly defined ideals of femininity for middle-aged women? However, Amanda Rodrigues writes to counter this point,"...this embodiment of a nontraditional representation of matriarchy in Coin is refreshing. She is decisive, smart, and calm when under attack and always thinking about the greater good of the people". (Rodrigues n. pag)

As the people in different Districts looks at Katniss as a symbol for the rebellion, President Coin has her rescued from the arena following the 75<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games. She seeks to control Katniss as others have tried before her. However, since Katniss is wary of the leader figure, she does not feel compliant towards President Coin. Like the other rebels, Coin needs Katniss to don the label of Mockingjay and help fuel the districts into rebellion. She could not connect to Katniss on a personal level. Her view of Katniss is not so much different than how the Capitol people views the citizens of the Districts. They are not really human beings, but objects assigned with roles for the gratification of the people with more power. At the Capitol, Katniss and the other tributes are entertainments, a way for the Capitol people to

satisfy their perverse sentimentality. To President Coin, Katniss could see herself as only a weapon, that too an unstable one because she could not follow orders without questioning the order.

During the final hour of the war, just as Katniss and her squad are about to enter the Presidential quarters, a hovercraft marked with the Capitol's seal materializes and rains down scores of silver parachutes on the children barricaded inside the quarter's fence. The children were kept there to gain advantage against the rebels. Katniss observes:

Even in the chaos, the children know what silver parachutes contain. Food. Medicine. Gifts. They eagerly scoop them up, frozen fingers struggling with the strings. The hovercraft vanishes, five seconds pass, and then about twenty parachutes simultaneously explode. (*Mockingjay* 346)

From her vantage point, Katniss can see that the two sides of the war are thrown off by the brutality that had just happened. She sees rebel medics sweeping in to care for the injured children and among them her sister Primrose who gets caught as the rest of the silver parachutes went off. Katniss became unhinged after Prim's death. She learns the truth behind the bombings in her last conversation with President Snow:

"My failure" says Snow, "was being so slow to grasp Coin's plan. To let the Capitol and districts destroy one another, and then step in to take power with Thirteen barely scratched...But I wasn't watching Coin. I was watching you, Mockingjay. And you were watching me. I'm afraid we have both been played for fools". (*Mockingjay* 357)

Katniss deduces this as a plan by President Coin to keep Katniss under control- to push her completely over the edge of sanity by making her wholly and completely hate Snow's regime. This deduction causes her to lose complete faith in President Coin who she

was wary about from the beginning. Katniss was suppose to fire the arrow at Snow's public execution but instead assassinates President Coin who has started to take control of new Panem, thus ending another regime of a would-be tyrant.

President Coin does not have a personal grudge against Katniss Everdeen but since she could not control Katniss without Katniss questioning her leadership, there develops an uneasy hostility between the two. Katniss knows that President Coin needs her to be the face of the rebellion and is smart enough to demand favours in return which includes immunity for Peeta and several other tributes and ensuring Prim's minute happiness by gaining space for Buttercup, their stray cat a litter-box in their space in District 13. Considering Coin's ulterior motive, Katniss's demands seem more humane solidifying the difference between the two female's characters – the embittered woman and the young girl whose greatest weapon lies with her emotions.

The people of Panem views Katniss Everdeen through their television screens. Since modern television is full of programs documenting 'realities' from various participants, this approach is incorporated to give the trilogy a more realistic and modern feel. Reality is constructed for the viewers of Panem as demonstrated by Katniss and Peeta's forced romance. Reality shows promise to collapse the distance that separates those on either side of the screen by cultivating the fantasy that it really could be unscripted not realising that everything could be edited depending on directors and camera angles. An important feature of reality shows is its use of audience participation. These features of 'Reality' shows of using people chosen from the viewing audience and the use of audience participation—mark a shift in the relationship and identity construction for both viewers and the on-screen participators.

In reality television, the relationship between spectator and contestant revolves around the spectator's search for "moments of authenticity" when contestants are 'really' themselves in an unreal environment" (Bourdon 70). Both producers and the audience know that exposure of the authentic intimate will lead to a show's success; the real draw of the Reality TV game is therefore not so much the structured game of the show, but the emotional game that contestants inevitably play because of their constant interaction under stressful circumstances. Privacy is also lost with the terms of reality shows.

In relation to *The Hunger Games*, because Panem is under a totalitarian state, everyone performs a role for the benefit of the governing power who becomes the interacting audience. Everyone is assigned roles from Districts to occupation. They are all under the eye of President Snow who rigidly puts up this system. There is little space of individuality. This is evident in how he treats Katniss, the girl who deign show her individuality in front of many Capitol audiences. He adamantly tries to destroy her spirit first and when that failed, even goes as far as destroying the District she lives in.

Katniss's search for her independent self is complicated by the layers of audiences who watches Katniss progresses through the games and even after she won her first Hunger Games. There is the Panem audience, consisting of viewers in the different districts from which the tributes are collected. She firstly has to perform as the brave, self sacrificing girl who volunteers to take her sister's place in the games. Then the girl who wore the 'flames' earning her the nickname 'the girl on fire', a girl who defied her lowly social status by coming from a lowly district like District 12 and gaining the Capitol's approval and admiration. In the arena, she had to play the part of the love struck girl, one half of the 'star-crossed lovers' with Peeta and the girl who was too in love with Peeta to notice anything political going around her. She even had to pretend to be pregnant to gain the Capitol's audience sympathy to fight for her and Peeta's life.

Constructing one's identity according to the desires of the entertainment industry is a matter of life and death for Katniss, who moves through identity construction by adhering to the reality television process of molding her "true self" to a reality television persona. Katniss does this by creating moments of authenticity for the audience during moments of conflict. Her successful identity construction will be either validated or rejected by these viewers who reward or punish contestants based on their actions. However she fails terribly when she tries to this scripted being. There is no peace for her when she portrays a role for an audience.

However, Katniss wants to hide her true 'self' from the Panem system and the viewers. The first of these moments comes when she runs from a forest fire deliberately set by the Gamemakers in order to force Katniss to engage with other contestants. As she examines a resulting wound Katniss admits, "I almost fainted at the sight of my leg. The flesh is a brilliant red covered with blisters" (*The Hunger Games* 178). Katniss recognizes that this is a moment in which her true character will be revealed to Panem viewers:

I force myself to take deep, slow breaths, feeling quite certain the cameras are on my face. I can't show weakness at this injury. Not if I want help. Pity does not get you aid. Admiration at your refusal to give in does" (*The Hunger Games* 179).

Her ability to recognize an audience's reaction stems from her knowledge of the Reality show game genre (Fisher 28). Because she has watched the Hunger Games throughout her childhood, she knows how Panem viewers react to plot twists, and also how these twists can be used for her own survival on the show (Wright 102). Katniss imagines how Panem viewers would watch her, and she behaves accordingly. She watches their gift-giving behavior and uses her own actions to influence their future behavior. This is possible because she has previously been a spectator. And so a cycle of interaction occurs: she learns

how to be a contestant from having been a Panem viewer and having participated in the audience/tribute relationship in the past (102).

Katniss Everdeen has multitude of roles to play in the trilogy. These varied roles throw her world into chaos. Thus, throughout the trilogy, she creates disaster resulting in a war. She accepts the roles and facade thrown at her without really understanding their depths. However, at the very ending of *Mockingjay*, when she is finally rid of her last role as the 'Mockingjay' and after assassinating President Coin, she leaves space for a new world order in her wake. The new Panem would not have prying eyes anymore and no one would have to perform roles forcibly assigned to them. By giving peace back to everyone, a role Katniss was comfortable in, she finally has peace with herself.

In video games, characters of the feminine gender are over sexualised and does not have strong points. They are also often not major characters. According to Christian Lule, in “the film industry females comprised 15% of protagonists, 29 of major characters, and 30% of all speaking characters. Only 13% of the top 100 films featured equal number of major female and male characters, or more major female than male characters”.

According to Lule, with the sudden commercialization of Y.A in books and movies, these Y.A adaptations are both appealing to the female and male readers “Thankfully, some of these (films) stepped up to task of representing strong, positive female characters, such as *The Hunger Games* Katniss Everdeen – not just ‘the girl on fire’ but the character that represents positive feminist ideals”(n.pag) Katniss’s characteristics does not focus only on romance, is not sexually objectified and portrays strong heroine characteristics for the Y.A generation.

Katniss Everdeen’s character as a ‘Girl on fire’ lays the groundwork for other emerging strong Y.A female protagonists. She is a complex, dark and interesting character

who deviates well out of Y.A female assigned roles. Just as she burns down the dictatorship of President Snow, she is also able to burn down stereotypical characterization of females in *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

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## CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to analyze the representation of young adults, particularly female young adults in Y.A dystopian novels. Within Suzanne Collins's best-selling series *The Hunger Games* trilogy, traditional gender roles are twisted and manipulated and characters are able to subvert traditionally assigned roles.

Panem has created their own gender norms and expectations, which happens to follow the same structure as many other patriarchal societies. While gender may seem to be a solid foundation to which everyone should adhere to, it is actually “in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed” (Butler 519).

According to Judith Butler, gender is “an identity tenuously constituted in time... gender is instituted through the stylization of the body” (519). With this recognition of temporal transformation in something as socially acknowledged as gender, one can realize that gender is merely a social construct, not defined by a person's biological nature. This case is solidified by Katniss Everdeen. She is expected to perform a gender role according to her environment. When she is paraded in front of the audiences of the Capitol she is clad in long dresses and skirts. However, this does not hide the fact that she is also a hunter who is able to wield her deadly bow and arrows.

Panem itself is clearly a convoluted society. The Capitol sacrifices young adults and children in televised death matches for pure enjoyment and to seek total control. The Capitol has forced many of the Districts into high levels of poverty while the Capitol residents gorge on every available luxury. The Capitol even enforces slavery through the indentured Avox's – citizens who have broken the law and are turned into slaves and the sexual exploitations of Finnick and the other attractive tributes. While there appears to be a sense of freedom within the Capitol when it comes to gender and its performance, they are still undeniably stuck

within the traditional gender roles found within other patriarchal norms. Even though everyone in the Capitol dresses in avant-garde fashion, males are still somewhat expected to be providers, leaders and masculine, while females are expected to be submissive, yet attractive. These expectations are driven upon the young adults in the tributes within the games. This is illustrated through the protagonist of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Katniss Everdeen. She does not exemplify the stereotypical feminine traits one would expect of a teenage girl in a patriarchal society. Observing her family dynamics, she clearly is the head of the household after her father's untimely death. Her mother became almost catatonic and could barely react to standard situations or provide for the family. This role was then thrust upon Katniss and in turn, she does a wonderful job of making sure that her family has the basic necessities to survive on.

In order to manage this role, Katniss adopts many “masculine” hobbies such as hunting and the ability to clean her kills, as well as “masculine” qualities, all in order to cope and survive. For example, she hides her emotions in many situations, such as when she says goodbye to Prim and her mother in the beginning of *The Hunger Games*. In this scene, she thinks:

I don't want to cry. When they televise the replay of the reappings tonight, everyone will make note of my tears, and I'll be marked as an easy target. A weakling. I will give no one that satisfaction (Collins, *The Hunger Games* 22).

Once she becomes a tribute, it is the formidable task of her stylists and team to ‘feminize’ and soften her strong and forceful persona. Katniss, although she is no enthusiast of this situation, recognizes the need to impersonate the qualities of a “feminine” woman. She embrace her performance of a typical and desirable female within the Panem culture as she is

aware that in order to survive the Hunger Games, she will need the backing and support of her fans, and successively, her sponsors.

The games were not only a test of survival; they were also a political and sociological struggle. Katniss and her team believe that if she was to portray a spinning and giggling girl, she would become more personable and likable, which in turn would give her a higher chance at surviving the games. So she tries hard to smile and simper in front of the Capitol audience when she truly felt disgusted by their excitement in sending her and the other victors to their death. If she is to act as her emotionless and intimidating self, she feels that she would be stereotyped as a “harmful, menacing presence,” as opposed to the conforming and non-intimidating “benefactor” the Capitol expects her to exemplify (Valverde 264).

Throughout the trilogy, Katniss struggles with identity as she is performing a role which she does not feel naturally comfortable. While she may dress the part, it is evident that she is reluctant with her role. She feels forced to play the role of a ‘female’ when she has been perfectly comfortable as a ‘female’ to look like one but still able to have activities like hunting.

According to Simone de Beauvoir, “one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman” (35). Gender norms are not biologically inherent; they are discovered through societal pressures and are repeated to agree with their peers. Gender norms are present to please the prevailing sex in society who is almost always one of the masculine gender. As stated by Butler, “to become a woman is a purposive and appropriative set of acts,... a 'project'... to assume a certain corporeal style and significance” (36).

Peeta recognizes her discomfort and assist Katniss in arguably her only ‘damsel-in-distress’ moment within the trilogy which is the publicized interview with Caesar Flickerman before the games began in *The Hunger Games*. She then became extremely desirable by the

Capitol and its sponsors when Peeta confesses his love for her during the interview. Within this moment, she became a female worth appreciating. If lovable and endearing Peeta find the testy and incorrigible woman attractive, the Capitol people surmise that there must obviously be something lovable behind Katniss's rough exterior. It is interesting to note that when the tributes competed for scores, Katniss' high score is also found to be coveted. The score portrays their chance of survival within the games, but it also counteracts the expected gender norms of a submissive female.

Turning to the male tribute from District 12, Peeta Mellark also challenges the gender norms establish within this model of patriarchal society existing within Panem. While readers recognise Katniss as the more "masculine" partner in the relationship, Peeta portrays more of the traditional "feminine" qualities amongst the two of them. Instead of being stoic and distant like Gale, the other rival for Katniss's affection, Peeta is not afraid to express his emotions and feelings. While Katniss refuses to cry in the scene of separation in *The Hunger Games* for fear of appearing weak, she notices:

"Peeta Mellark, on the other hand, has obviously been crying and interestingly enough does not seem to be trying to cover it up" (48).

Throughout *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Peeta is often seen as having the weaker, less-coveted masculine traits, and is repeatedly compared to the more masculine traits established in Gale's disposition as a hunter and provider. Connell's study notices that there is a difference in the levels of masculinity between working-class blue-collared men and middle-class white-collared men (Connell 75). Connell observes that masculinity is defined by independent men who rely on their potency to support their fellow peers. The conflict can be observed between Gale's profession as a miner and Peeta's as the son of a baker. Peeta would not be considered a beneficial partner for Katniss due to his 'always having enough',

while Gale must constantly find means for the everyday survival of himself and his family (*The Hunger Games*, 293).

Even with his lack of traditional masculine traits, Peeta survives the brutal games. Instead of relying on his actions, he uses his intelligence. While Katniss relies on her ability and talent in the arena, Peeta only has his intelligence to support him. While preparing for the games with the other tributes, he exposes antagonistic behavior and is able to deceit the stronger tributes into letting him into their pack. When he is injured and unable to move in his first Hunger game, Peeta camouflages himself with his skills acquired from “those hours decorating cakes” (*The Hunger Games*, 249). He does not have to resort to merciless violence like several of the other tributes to triumph in the games.

Through the rest of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Peeta is portrayed as a mild mannered character with no desire for violence. When he is imprisoned by President Snow in *Mockingjay*, he attempts to call for a ceasefire. This aspiration for peace is what makes Peeta compassionate, a characteristic that obviously confuse Katniss as she has observed little kindness all through her life. Gale, on the other hand, is accepted by many as he is portrayed as being characteristically dominant and is unafraid to take actions to attain his goal. This representation of masculinity fits well within the confines of the military base in District 13. According to Connell, “violence on the largest possible scale is the purpose of the military... [and] is important for the definition of hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 192).

Female characters emerging in contemporary YA fiction are not female characters in male roles, nor are they cliched, overly feminine beings. The young women in current Y.A dystopian fiction often take on roles that are traditionally meant for young men, but they infuse some femininity into their roles in order to become empowered, subverting the idea that ‘femininity’ equals the weaker. For instance, Katniss puts on various types of clothes to

put emphasis on the role she plays. She puts on clothes that can burst into flame to accentuate her role as the 'girl on fire' and special armory to distinguish her as the 'Mockingjay'.

Y.A dystopian novels have subverted the portrayal of emotions in a female character. Rather than being a negative influence, emotions for a Y.A female character becomes the force behind actions that alter the course of the novel. Katniss's sense of justice is what makes her accept the role of the 'Mockingjay'. She performs her roles in a way to show that emotions often considered to be weakest can be one's strongest asset.

Females in YA dystopian novels have the same nearly unlimited possibilities that males have had throughout the history of the literature, and the current wave of strong heroines have shown that there are multiple ways to be a young woman who is able to hold her own power, even in a male-dominated world. The study reveals how girls relates to the protagonist as an individual who desires societal acceptance and this desire helps in the acceptance of themselves in a contemporary patriarchal society.

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## APPENDICES

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>NAME OF CANDIDATE</b>  | <b>: Lydia Lalduhawmi</b>  |
| <b>DEGREE</b>   | <b>: M.Phil.</b>   |
| <b>DEPARTMENT</b>   | <b>: English</b>   |
| <b>TITLE OF DISSERTATION</b>  | <b>: The Young Female Adult<br/>in Suzanne Collin's <i>The<br/>Hunger Games</i> Trilogy.</b> |
| <b>DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION</b><br>(Commencement of First Semester) | <b>: 30.07.2015</b>  |
| <b>COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND<br/>SEMESTER/ DISSERTATION</b>                | <b>: 01. 01. 2015</b>  |
| <b>APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL-</b>                                   |  |
| 1. BOS  | : 15. 05. 2015   |
| 2. SCHOOL BOARD   | : 21. 05. 2015   |
| 3. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE  | : MZU / M.Phil / 218 of 21.<br>05. 2015  |
| 4. DUE DATE OF SUBMISSION   | : 30.05.2015   |
| 5. EXTENSION IF ANY   | : 1.06.2016-30.06.2016<br><br>(For the duration of one<br>Semester)                          |

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**Educational Qualifications:**

| Class   | Board/University   | Year of passing               | Division/Grade  | Percentage   |
|---------|--------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| X       | MBSE               | 2007                          | I   | 66.4%  |
| XII     | MBSE               | 2009                          | II  | 52.8%  |
| B.A.    | Mizoram University | 2012                          | II  | 52.13%   |
| M.A.    | Mizoram University | 2014                          | I   | 61.87%   |
| M.Phil. | Mizoram University | Course work completed in 2014 | I<br>'A' Grade<br>Awarded. 10 pt.<br>Scale grading<br>System, 'A'<br>Corresponds to<br>6-6.99 pts | Corresponds to<br>68% in terms of<br>Percentage<br>conversion. |

**M.Phil Registration No. and Date: MZU/M.Phil./218 of 21.5.2015**

**Other Relevant Information:**

1) Attended and participated in International Seminar entitled ' Indigeneity: Expression and Experience', organised by the Department of English, Mizoram University on 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> Febuary 2016.

2) Awarded UGC – MZU Fellowship for the tenure of eighteen months from the date of admission on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2014

3) Currently working on M.Phil dissertation entitled, “The Young Female Adult in Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games* Trilogy” under the supervision of Dr. Lalrindiki T. Fanai, Associate Professor, Department of English, Mizoram University.