

Female Heroism and the Myth of Sacrifice for Creation in Suzanne Collins'

Mockingjay

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English Language and Literature

Second Subject Thesis

February 2015

Tampereen yliopisto
Englannin kieli ja kirjallisuus
Kieli-, käännös- ja kirjallisuustieteiden yksikkö

SULKAKOSKI, JENNI: Female Heroism and the Myth of Sacrifice for Creation in Suzanne Collins' *Mockingjay*

Sivuainetutkielma, 43 sivua

Helmikuu 2015

Tutkielmassani tarkastelen naissankaruutta ja uhrausmyyttiä amerikkalaisen kirjailijan Suzanne Collinsin tieteiskirjallisuuden novellissa nimeltään *Mockingjay* (2010). Novelli on viimeinen osa Nälkäpeli-trilogiassa. *Mockingjay* kertoo nuoresta tytöstä, Katniss Everdeenistä, joka nostetaan suuren kapinan symboliksi ja kapinaa eteenpäin vieväksi sankarittareksi. Vertailen naissankaruutta ja miessankaruutta toisiinsa sekä sitä miten uhrausmyytti ilmenee novellissa.

Teoreettisena taustana käytän Judith Butlerin teoriaa sukupuolen esittämisestä ja Halberstamin teoriaa naismaskuliinisuudesta. Butlerin mukaan sukupuoli määräytyy sen mukaan miten kukin esittää sen eikä sen mukaan kumpaan sukupuoleen syntyy. Halberstamin mukaan naismaskuliinisuus ilmentyy silloin, kun nainen joutuu väkivaltaiseen ja tukahduttavaan ympäristöön. Tämän seurauksena nainen kovettaa itsensä ja muuntautuu ympäristön mukaiseksi – maskuliinisemmaksi.

Tutkimuksen keskeinen pääväite on se, että Collinsin kirjasarjassa esiintyvä sankaritar pyrkii toteuttamaan itseään naissankarina, mutta silti hänet lopulta alistetaan naisten stereotyyppiseen alistujan asemaan. Vaikkakin kirjan naishahmot samalla haastavat tieteis- ja fantasiakirjallisuuden stereotyyppioita naiseudesta, ilmenee äitiys kirjassa sekä psykologisella että yhteiskunnallisella tasolla.

Tutkimuksen loppupäätelmänä voi pitää sitä, että kun naisellisuus usein stereotyyppisesti yhdistetään passiivisuuteen ja haurauteen, Collins muuttaa vanhanaikaisen kuvan passiivisesta äidistä tai kreikkalaisesta uhrautuvasta sankarittaresta voimakkaaksi äidilliseksi sankarittareksi. Katniss herättää muissa ihmisissä voimaa ja uskoa vaikuttaessaan heihin myötätuntonsa ja hyvytensä avulla, joka herättää muissa luottamusta. Tavallaan Collins on kääntänyt oletetun voimarakenteen fyysisesti vahvan soturin ja psyykkisesti vahvan äidillisen hahmon välillä. Katniss voidaan nähdä äitinä niin metaforallisesti kuin kirjaimellisesti. Häntä pidetään kansan äitinä ja lopuksi hänestä tulee kahden lapsen äiti.

Avainsanat: Collins, tieteiskirjallisuus, naissankaruus, uhrausmyytti, naismaskuliinisuus

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1 Introduction

In this second subject thesis I will focus on how the ideas of female heroism and the myth of sacrifice for creation are constructed in the American author Suzanne Collins' *Mockingjay* (2010). Traditionally, heroism is connected with masculine qualities and therefore it is interesting to view how Collins creates her heroine of the story; does she follow the traditional masculine model of heroes in literature or does she create her own model of a female hero? While analysing this I will concentrate on the protagonist of the story, Katniss Everdeen. As the themes of my thesis' discussion strongly belong to female identity, I consider it reasonable to briefly discuss how other female characters challenge and comply with the system of gender performance in the novel to some extent.

My study is located in feminist studies and popular culture studies, and therefore, I will use theories of the construction of gender and popular culture to deconstruct the female identity in the novel. My discussion is premised on one of the central tenets of third wave feminism, which is to further explore the position of women in popular culture. *Mockingjay* (2010) is the final novel to Collins' earlier novels *The Hunger Games* (2008) and *Catching Fire* (2009) in the Hunger Games trilogy¹. I will refer to these previous novels to some extent as I see the gender representation as a continuum rather than an individual happening taking only place in one of the novels.

If a girl or a woman likes to do things which are stereotypically labelled as men's, such as play sports, climb trees, go on adventures, or prefer boys as companions, is she labelled as a tomboy, in other words something unusual? A tomboy is a girl who acts like a boy, and as such, challenges some theories of sex-typing. In the old days she might have been regarded as an oddity but no longer in today's Western world. Nowadays it is no longer considered unusual for girls to dress like boys, play with cars or do something else that has traditionally been considered exclusive to men. In Western society, many parents teach their children to have a healthy perspective on

¹ From now on the novels will be referred to as *MJ*, *HG* and *CF*.

gender roles, for example by giving them a mix of dolls and cars to play with in order to avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Devor (quoted by Carr Lynn 1998, 531) notes that behaviour often used to define tomboyism, such as “rough-and tumble play or intense energy expenditure; preference for stereotypical boys’ toys and male playmates; lack of interest in clothing and adornment; lack of interest in infants, motherhood, and marriage[...]”, are not normal features of the “female gender role”. According to Lynn Carr (1998, 531), studies of tomboyism in empirical literature have been somewhat ambiguous. According to her (Carr 1998, 531), as some argue that tomboyism is a case of cross-gender or masculine identification (Carr refers to Bur, O’Neil, and Nederend’s study in 1996), others assert that it is better to be categorised as androgynous and performing traits of both masculinity and femininity while choosing the best sides of both “identities” (Carr refers to Plumb and Cowan’s study in 1984). Feminist analyses of tomboyism have also been ambiguous. Carr (1998, 531) finally concludes that the idea of ‘tomboy’ is associated with both the subversion of gender roles and the perpetuation of an oppressive, dichotomous gender system.

Gender scholar Jack Halberstam, originally Judith Halberstam, studies the social, literary, historical and political positions of masculine women in one of his works called *Female Masculinity* (1998). Halberstam focuses on the topics of tomboys and female masculinity. Halberstam argues that whenever adolescent girls express attributes traditionally considered masculine, there often lies oppression or punishment of alternative masculinities behind it. According to him (1998, 1–2), female masculinity is “a way of representing oneself in a manner that challenges the dominant discourse on gender and sexuality”, which suggests a view of men being masculine and women feminine.

Furthermore, as Halberstam (1998, 45) discusses the idea of tomboy, he argues that it depends much on the “bearer’s” age how her masculinity is experienced by others. A young girl with masculine attributes is less threatening than an adult woman with similar ones. As an adult she

differs too much from the stereotypical picture of a woman and therefore others may take her masculinity as a sign of danger to society when she grows up. Furthermore, Halberstam also argues that female masculinity mainly functions as a form of social rebellion or a sign of sexual alterity. (Halberstam 1998, 9.) I find Halberstam's view about the oppression somewhat questionable and narrow, although, it would be based on a thought of the 'objective view' in sociology studies by Èmile Durkheim. Durkheim (1858–1917) argued the same as Halberstam but much earlier in his doctoral dissertation "The Division of Labor in Society" (French: *De la division du travail social*) in 1893 (his doctoral dissertation was later translated in English in 1997).

Durkheim is generally cited as the principal designer of modern social science and father of sociology who studied the influence of socialisation on the individual. His most important argument is that society has a strong influence on the individuals who need to adapt to an already determined fixed society. More precisely said, each person becomes a product of their society. This view reinforces Halberstam's view about the male oppression that results in female masculinity but also gives a Marxist twist for the idea that it is society that overrules the individual. Considering Durkheim's account, Halberstam's view of the oppressed girls becoming masculinised due to their violent environment or upbringing sounds reasonable. Hence, if the social environment is hostile towards an individual, the individual would become hostile towards the environment and anyone being in it, which could further be viewed as a survival strategy in society. Considering a "different" female sex or tomboys from this point of view, they may have encountered oppression and violence for their womanhood, and therefore, they have taken up performances of manhood as it is easier to cope with it in a difficult environment.

The story in *Mockingjay* (2010) takes place in a post-apocalyptic world in a country called Panem, the remainings of North America after a catastrophic civil war. Panem is divided into twelve districts controlled by the superstate Capitol. The Capitol is a tyrannical dictatorship led by President Snow who holds a total dominance over Panem through his army, punitive system,

propaganda and the Hunger Games. The story starts when sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen volunteers for her little sister Primrose in the Games in *HJ* (2008). The Games are a symbolic act of penance for the twelve mistreated districts' past uprising that failed. By this the Capitol wants to show its absolutism and supremacy over the other defeated districts. As a punishment each district is required to send a young tribute of both sexes to the annual killing game that is broadcast live throughout Panem as a reminder of the Capitol's ultimate power. The choice of tributes is done through a drawing called the 'Reaping'. This metaphor of reaping is clearly associated with death and it symbolically describes the subhuman act of reaping children to death as the "lucky" ones, whose names are drawn, have to fight against each other in the arena until death.

In *MJ* Katniss becomes the symbol of a revolution with both military ability and compassion. She awakens the hope of a dictatorship-free Panem among the rebels. Its title "mockingjay" refers to the first uprising when the Capitol created genetically modified animals which would help them win the war against the other districts (see section 4.2). Katniss is chosen as the uprising's face and symbol – she is chosen or better said forced to become the heroine of the districts. In this last novel Katniss suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder after her experiences of several traumatic events in the earlier novels. As post-traumatic stress disorder is often connected to the military context it could typically be masculine in our world as it is a realistic fact of any soldier who has been to war and experienced serious injuries and/or the threat of death. This only reasserts her role as a strong woman, and therefore, I will analyse her role as a heroine. In my opinion it is essential to study representations of gender because they affect the way how we see women and men. I am especially interested in studying how genders are performed in popular culture because it affects people's perceptions of gender due to its popularity.

2 Violent Milieu Igniting Female Masculinity

In this thesis I will argue that Collins' characters challenge long-held ideas about what qualities create masculinity. Furthermore, I will also argue that Collins' female protagonist performs the concept of *female masculinity* described by Jack Halberstam. According to Halberstam (1998, 5), female masculinity is born from the violent and oppressive surroundings. Considering Collins' novel, the military context of survival in the Games and the repressive regime could be seen as the grinding outside power in the Hunger Games series that creates the necessity for female masculinity.

This harsh milieu could be understood as a possible context for the birth of a character that embodies female masculinity – the trilogy's protagonist Katniss Everdeen. The ideas of subordination, killing and survival could be seen as central themes in the novel as the main characters are dominated and subordinated by the superstate. Similarly to the era of the Roman Empire, people in the subordinated districts are regarded as slaves who occupy the social statuses of homeslave, bodyslave or gladiator. In Collins' trilogy homeslaves are called Avoxes whose tongues are cut out for committing crimes against the Capitol. Bodyslaves are victors who survive the Games and who are forced into prostitution after the Games by threatening their loved ones by death:

“President Snow used to... sell me... my body, that is,” Finnick begins in a flat, removed tone. “I wasn't the only one. If a victor is considered desirable, the president gives them as a reward or allows people to buy them for an exorbitant amount of money. If you refuse, he kills someone you love. So you do it.” (MJ, 198.)

Gladiators are the young tributes who are sent to the killing arena in order to kill each other for the pure entertainment of the Capitol's inhabitants. This, furthermore, strengthens the idea and allusion of the Roman Age's “bread and circuses” (latin *panem et circenses*²) where slaves and gladiators were sent to the arena to fight until death in front of the Roman people. The whole event offered a

² “Provision of the means of life and recreation by government to appease discontent the formula for the well-being of the population, and thus a political strategy” (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

wide variety of shows such as chariot races, sport events and killing of conquered countries' people and exotic animals. Panem et circenses was a strategical instrument in the hands of rulers to keep their citizens peaceful and happy.

The allusions to ancient Rome do not however stop here. As I see it, there are also other resemblances to the time period as the idea of revolting slaves taking place in *MJ* is similar to the tale of Spartacus and the major slave uprising against the Roman Republic. The historical uprising ultimately resulted in a war called the Slave War (73-71 BC) (Fields 2009, 4). According to Martin Cohen (2007, 11), Spartacus was later idealised by Marxist historians and writers as a freedom fighter of the masses and "leader of the genuine social revolution in Roman history" that however ended in the slaves' defeat to Romans.

Nevertheless, the historian whom Cohen cites (Winkler) argues the following: "Spartacus and his companions sought to break the bonds of their own grievous oppression. There is no sign that they were motivated by the ideological considerations to overturn the social structure." (quoted in Cohen 2007, 11.) According to this, what Spartacus wanted was freedom and not to reform Roman society as Marxist thinkers thought. Similarly, this could also be interpreted in Collins' trilogy as the other districts construe Katniss and Peeta's attempt of a common suicide by eating deadly berries as an act of a rebellion rather than as an act of undying love like the Capitol interprets it in *HG*. Nonetheless, neither side's interpretation is right as Katniss' only true aim with their attempt of suicide was to survive and avoid certain death. Like Marxist thinkers, other districts behold her act as a symbol of a revolution though it does not have any greater meaning. As a result, similarly to Spartacus, Katniss is portrayed as the hero of the oppressed ones and the face of the uprising. According to Martin Cohen (2007, 2-3), Spartacus' rebellion has been a major inspiration to and featured in literature, television and many films. I can see Spartacus' influence in *MJ*.

In a written interview, Collins admits that Rome and gladiators was one of her inspirations as Plutarch's work *The Life of Crassus* was an important source for her trilogy. In Plutarch's work she

studied many of the historical gladiators from pre-Christian times (before Rome started to throw Christians to lions), especially the slave and gladiator Spartacus, and the popular media about him. In her studies she found a three-levelled pattern in each gladiator paradigm: “(1) a ruthless government that (2) forces people to fight to the death and (3) uses these fights to the death as a form of popular entertainment.” (Blasingame 2009, 727.) It is evident that Collins uses this same pattern in her fictional world.

The trilogy is most definitely set in a dystopian world as the story takes place in a military and war context of oppression and survival. According to Naomi Stankow-Mercer (2009, 91), dystopias depict imaginary places, societies or realities. In those realities a part or the whole population lives dehumanized and often fearful lives in oppression, and/or in a horrific political, socioeconomic, or ecological environment (Stankow-Mercer 2009, 91). This fits the picture of the society illustrated in Collins’ novels. Although the subordination applies to both sexes in the ruled districts apart from the Capitol, it could however be argued that the majority of women have, nevertheless, the stereotypically and traditionally understood subordinated social statuses in *MJ*. They are wives, mothers and nurturers who stay at home as men do hard physical labour or have higher social statuses of, for example, chief, mayor or president (except President Coin who is a woman). The oppressive context could also be viewed as potentially empowering to women, especially to those girls and young women who are sent to the arena in the Games, given that fighting and war demands physically and mentally tough soldiers with skills of violence. In that event, Èmile Durkheim’s argument of society moulding individuals would be fulfilled in *MJ*.

According to Valerie Frankel (2013, 22) Collins crafts a world that is most disturbing because of its ugly truth as it actually criticises today’s society by reflecting our own world of today – children starve and the government spies on its citizens. Frankel compares Collins’ fictional world and the Games with Adolf Hitler’s concentration camps in Germany. Frankel argues (2013, 22) that the arena is only a smaller version of a concentration camp as the districts are larger ones. Another

similarity to the concentration camps is that people are condemned to suffer for the crimes of their ancestors as the subordinated districts are punished for their ancestors' uprising: "The electrified fences, the starvation and rationing, the people's utter helplessness when brutal taskmasters and soldiers arrive all echo our darkest moments in history" (Frankel 2013, 22). I thoroughly agree with Frankel. Stankow-Mercer (2009, 91) argues that "a dystopian work demonstrates to the reader how a fictional reality can critique contemporary society by taking conditions, and contradictions, in that society to extremes". Considered from this perspective, the text might either criticise women's place in today's society, the cruelty of people towards others or the media and people's views on life in general.

The female protagonist of the novel is a "dystopia-girl" who has to cope with the low standard of living. According to M. Keith Booker (cited in Rothman & Zemler 2014), the archetype of dystopia-girl grew from two distinct literary traditions; mainstream dystopian literature and teen-girl stories. Whereas the mainstream dystopian literature had adult, male protagonists such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell 1949), stories aimed at teenage girls had young, powerful girls, for example *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll 1865) or *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum 1900). Alice and Dorothy made way to characters such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Xena the Warrior Princess and other heroines. (Rothman & Zemler 2014.) Booker (Rothman & Zemler 2014) suggests that the reason for the emergence of the *Hunger Games* series might be economic forces. Also the success of the series is heavily based on the expectation that teenage girls read more books than boys in general. That is why the protagonist in books similar to *Hunger Games* trilogy is mostly a female character.

Booker remarks that it seems like a reasonable idea from the marketing standpoint to have teenage-girls as protagonists. Veronica Wroth, the author of a book similar to the *Hunger Games* trilogy called *Divergent* (2012), points out in an interview that it is not only economic forces but also time, culture and demand for a female hero. Nowadays young women do not content themselves with merely being in the story, they want to participate in it as well as heroes. (Rothman

& Zemler 2014.) However it is vital to point out that though these books have lots of girls as readers they are not about romance. Instead they are more about war, political manipulation, society and how awful it is. In my opinion these are relevant themes in today's society.

3 Gender in Focus

In this section I will elaborate further on the theoretical background that I will use in my analysis later on. Theories of representation and construction of gender, and popular culture are useful in my analysis. Furthermore, it is also fruitful to have a look at how other studies have discussed tough women characters in popular culture as they link to the subject of this thesis. My main focus is on how gender is produced, and therefore, I will firstly introduce Judith Butler's concept of gender as performance in section 3.1. My purpose is to use her thinking as a theoretical tool while analysing my themes in the novel. After that I will continue with a different context, namely popular culture, and demonstrate how feminists have studied popular culture according to Dominic Strinati in section 3.2. Finally, I will shortly discuss theories of tough women in fantasy and science fiction in section 3.3.

3.1 Gender as Performance

'Performance' as a word is connected to acting, theater and films. Furthermore, the word can also be used of our acts and performances which take place in our everyday life. The idea of performance as an everyday act is nothing new as one of Shakespeare's characters also points out in *As You Like It* (1600): "All the world's a stage / All the men and women are merely players" (2.7, 139–140). Although performance can be studied in different aspects, I will concentrate on how gender is seen as performance.

When discussing gender it is important to begin by distinguishing sex and gender as the concepts are often mistakenly taken as synonyms. Sex is biological and its dependents are reproductive organs. We are born as women or men. Gender is socially constructed and it consists of the ideas we generally view as masculine and feminine. For example, if you are a man you can have the appearance of a woman. (Leavy and Trier-Bieniek 2014, 2.) When gender identity and gender roles are raised as an issue, one way to think about them is to consider the concept of *doing gender*. The concept developed by West and Zimmerman was introduced in 1987 and it refers to the ways how people present themselves with respect to masculinity and femininity. (Leavy and Trier-Bieniek 2014, 5.)

According to Leavy and Trier-Bieniek (2014, 5), West and Zimmerman got their idea of “doing gender” originally from Harold Garfinkel’s case study made in 1967. The person whom he observed was Agnes, a transsexual who had been raised as a boy but who later became identified as a woman at the age of 17. Garfinkel made observations of the ways how Agnes adopted in order to pass as a woman. (Leavy and Trier-Bieniek 2014, 5.) West and Zimmerman called this a “sex category” which means that people categorise a person to a gender based on how they perform their gender. One way to ‘perform one’s gender’ is for example to show it by one’s outer appearance: “any other distinguishing characteristics that a culture has declared appropriate for men and women” (Leavy and Trier-Bieniek 2014, 6). Leavy and Trier-Bieniek (2014, 6) argue that Judith Butler applied Garfinkel’s study (as well as the work of Simone de Beauvoir and Sigmund Freud) to her concept of *gender performativity*.

Since the publication of one of the key works of contemporary feminist theories, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler became a very central feminist critic. In her book Butler questions what gender is, how it is produced and reproduced, and furthermore, what are its possibilities. The most important argument in her book is that gender is

real because we *perform* it. Butler's ideas have become essential in the study of gender, queer theory and the politics of sexuality in culture.

According to Butler "gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed". (Butler 1999, 33.) In other words, gender is interpreted by the actions that you take in public places and not as something that you are born with. Furthermore, Butler argues against the idea that gender is a natural state as she questions real womanhood and manhood, and therefore, she challenges the whole concept of gender stating that

[i]f the inner truth of gender is a fabrication, and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true or false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity. (1999, 174).

Whereas the mainstream feminist theories considered the experience of being a woman as the most important factor in the formation of the female identity, Butler (1999, 44) sees behaviour as a far more important factor than experience. Unlike previous critics in the earlier days, Butler refuses the view that genders only exist by 'being' and instead prefers the idea that genders are more like an outcome of doing certain acts. Butler argues that people are not born in a certain gender but instead born in a culture that has its own rules for how to act like a woman or a man. (1999, 44.) These rules are then performed through repetition and imitation. In that case, gender is not a natural state but rather "an act which has been rehearsed" and this is why Butler questions essentialism by studying how gender is constructed to look like something innate (Butler 1988, 526).

Butler's concept of *gender performance* describes how genders are constructed as repeated acts. Butler argues that gender is more like "an identity tenuously constituted in time [...] through a stylized repetition of acts" (1999, 179):

acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or

identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (Butler 1999, 173.)

Hence, the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated as gender is considered as an act. According to Butler (1999, 178), repetition is something that you have learned observing the society and genders around you. This repetition creates the image of a gendered self but however fails to present the gender as “the original” as it is a copy itself. The repetition makes gender seem natural but can cause an artificial impression. For example, what is considered as “true” and “original” gender identity is often parodied in the form of cross-dressing³ and drag shows (1999, 174).

Butler (1999, 174) compares drag performances to performing gender as they dramatise gestures and body language in performing and constructing gender. To be precise, these drag performers imitate gender: “[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender self” (Butler 1999, 175). Drag queens tend to overact in their performances and this gives an extravagant picture of women. Therefore it may expose the original identity that gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin, which is a very postmodern idea. Consequently, people want to express their inner gendered self with their outer appearance, outer behaviour and outer acts.

When gender identity is discussed, Butler (1999, 178) points out that we do not create our own gender identities as it is more likely to be forced upon us. Butler believes that “as a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences” (Butler 1999, 178). When and if a person fails to perform their gender correctly we punish them within contemporary culture. Thus, as the gender system is not natural, the gender system controls individuals in order to restrain them from trying to challenge the gender system. Butler sees the whole gender system as questionable, as according to her (1999, xxiii), “naturalized knowledge of gender operates as a preemptive and violent circumscription of reality”; more precisely, hostile

³ Illustrating the act when an individual dresses up and conducts oneself as a representative of the opposite sex within a particular society (Merriam-Webster, 2014). However, this does not have anything to do with one’s sexual orientation as it does not imply transgender identity or sexual, fetishist or homosexual behaviour.

gender norms formulate what will and will not be considered as normal or abnormal; what will and will not be considered to be proper or improper masculinity or femininity. She considers the whole naturalised notion of gender that gender performance creates, as a supporter to masculine and heterosexist power. (1999, xxiii).

According to Butler, by performing genders people reflect cultural norms, or various expectations that the surrounding culture considers normal for men and women at a specific historical time. Furthermore, Butler takes the field further when she argues that these so called norms are indeed heteronormative. In other words, heterosexual orientation is what is deemed normal for a society.

3.2 Feminist Popular Culture Study

As the Hunger Games trilogy is a product of popular culture, I see it relevant to present some central facts about feminist popular culture study in order to combine gender studies with popular culture studies. Feminist popular culture studies have mainly studied the representation of women, women as audience and producers of popular culture, and most importantly, popular culture as a “feminine” phenomenon. Popular culture has presented women mainly in traditionalistic manners. In the following I will introduce Dominic Strinati’s and other scholars’ views on how popular culture is connected to gender issues.

Dominic Strinati discusses in his book *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (1995) that in the long run, we have seen how the image of the “self” in society has changed in various ways and there have been certain social rules. Today, however, identity is seen as more transformable than ever before and society is more open towards those who stand out from the mass. According to Strinati (2004, 183–184), twenty or thirty years ago popular media studies often suggested that mainstream culture was a backwards-looking force that was against social changes and one that tried to push people back into traditional categories of gender. Mass media has

represented women by means of cultural stereotypes which serve to reproduce traditional sex roles. Women have been represented as subordinate, passive and deformable, whereas men have been represented as subordinating, active and aggressive. Women have performed minor, secondary roles, whereas men have performed important, major roles. According to Strinati, these matters suggest how popular culture has confirmed the altruistic view of traditional sex roles and inequality. (2004, 184.)

However, in time the traditional image of a housewife has been emancipated and replaced by a self-confident, feisty and independent woman – in the most extreme case she is the manifestation of girl power. Especially in the 90s, TV series produced action heroines such as Xena the Warrior Princess and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. (Strinati 2004, 184.) According to Magoulick (2006, 733), most scholars argue that the fictional Xena and Buffy actually were realisations of feminist ideals at that time. Joanne Morrale (cited in Magoulick 2006, 733) claims that Xena is one of the first TV shows that offers a picture of a woman “in the role of the archetypal hero on a quest”. Here Xena offers a parody of gender itself when some episodes dismantles the notion of gender roles by making fun of characteristics and conventional events which are often connected with femininity and women, such as beauty contests. (Magoulick 2006, 733.) Nowadays, I can see how the idea of a feisty supergirl has grown into a manifestation of a powerful mother figure who can move the masses by her goodness, care and empathy.

Returning to Strinati, he argues that the change on how to view gender is not only restricted to women. As the image of femininity has taken a new direction, the image of masculinity has taken a wider point of view as well: “the masculine ideas of absolute toughness, stubborn self-reliance and emotional silence have been shaken by a new emphasis on men’s emotions, need for advice and problems of masculinity”. (2004, 184.) In *MJ* the idea of people forced to sell their bodies is not only limited to women as also men are forced into prostitution (MJ, 198). Although there are cases of inverted traditional gender roles, the old gender categories have not been shattered. The new

images have not completely replaced the traditional view but instead offer a wider space for a greater diversity of identities which are not committed to a certain gender identity only.

The representation of women in contemporary culture is indeed a complex issue. Nevertheless, according to Milestone and Meyer (2012, 112), there are a few general points to conclude it. The most significant one is that representations matter as they are not only images and words but also reflect and encourage certain ways of thinking of and acting in relation to women: “This applies whether women continue to be seen as carers of children through their role as mothers, whether they are judged by their physical appearance regardless of other achievements or whether they are denied victim status because they have been behaving in ‘unfeminine’ ways” (Milestone & Meyer 2012, 112). Representations of women are undoubtedly diversified, practising new roles and new identities but traditional images and norms nevertheless continue to exist and compounds powerful influence.

According to Bieniek and Patricia Leavy (2014, 3–4), social constructions both exclude and include as they show and tell what is considered as normative and what as “deviant”. This phenomenon can in its worst form become oversimplified, for example our ideas of masculinity and femininity become stereotyped and overgeneralised. Leavy and Trier-Bieniek (2014, 4) further argue that social constructions create a gender binary where masculinity and femininity are seen as polar opposites in today’s society. Considering gender socialisation in a smaller scale, one must also consider *gender identity* as they relate closely to each other. Gender identity is how a person views oneself with respect to masculinity or femininity and how this view of the self leads to the enactment of or resistance to socially ascribed gender roles (Leavy and Trier-Bienik 2014, 5). In general, gender roles dictate what is acceptable for women and men in terms of behaviour, dressing, preferences, and so on.

3.3 Tough Women and Heroines in Fantasy and Science Fiction

Deborah Kaplan (2009) discusses how the image of girls in the fantastic has changed over the last 155 years. According to her (Kaplan 2009, 266) girls and young women have been represented as active or vital characters in fantastic and science fiction since the modern introduction of the genre. Whereas in other genres women have often played secondary roles of sidekicks to the boy heroes, in fantasy fiction the representation of female characters is wider with independent heroines who embody differing personalities and strengths. (Kaplan 2009, 266.)

Kaplan gives an overview of strong female characters who are presented in fantasy fiction starting from its earliest roots in the oral tales later recorded by the Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault. According to her (Kaplan 2009, 267), The Grimms and Perrault had a tendency to show their girl heroines in a desexualised and weak way after the oral tales were written down in their modern-day versions. The process of giving voices back to the women characters has continued ever since, “from the virginal pure children of Victorian authors to sexually and physically empowered heroines of modern feminist retellings” (Kaplan 2009, 267.). As an example, Angela Carter’s short story “The Company of Wolves” (1979) is a reincarnation of the classic fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood* (originally “*Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*” 1698) by Perrault and later retold by the Grimms. Carter’s version is intended for a more adult public by its content of sexual and hidden societal allusions to contemporary living and unwritten rules of stereotyped genders. Carter changed the passive protagonist to a sexualised active doer in her collection of retellings *The Bloody Chamber and Other Short Stories* (1979).

According to Kaplan (2009, 272), it was not until 1963 when science fiction gained a renowned female protagonist in the form of Robert A. Heinlein’s Podkayne in *Podkayne of Mars: Her Life and Times*. Until then science fiction had mainly had only male characters. However, although Heinlein’s Podkayne made way for female characters in science fiction genre, Podkayne’s character has also been widely criticised as being “an overly weak character in a didactic tale” that suggests

that a woman's place is at home taking care of her children and husband. (Kaplan 2009, 272.) Kaplan points out that science fiction for younger adult and adult readers often addresses questions of a changing society. Moreover, the girls in the books have the frequent need to address questions of gender identification and their place in society: "A broad sath of top-notch books all place adolescent girls in situations where self-identification through physical appearance and attractiveness are called into question" (Kaplan 2009, 272–273). Collins' female protagonist fits this pattern; she does not feel comfortable in the feminised role given to her by the Capitol and President Snow. They have a whole prep team to do a total makeover for her in order to make her as an adorable, funny little girl who would not hurt a fly, and hence, would not be a possible threat to the superstate Capitol:

I've been in the Remake Center for more than three hours. [...] My legs, arms, torso underarms, and parts of my eyebrows have been stripped of the Muff, leaving me like a plucked bird, ready for roasting. I don't like it. My skin feels sore and tingling and intensely vulnerable. (HG, 57.)

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. (HG, 58.)

The idea of Katniss being surrounded and undressed by strange people puts her in the most vulnerable and fragile position. Kaplan (2009, 271) discusses another heroine named Lyra Belacqua who is "the almost-feral heroine" of Philip Pullman's steampunk-style fantasy trilogy *The Golden Compass* (1995). Kaplan argues that although she is an active protagonist in the trilogy's first volume she later on becomes more of a passive follower by the third. Kaplan (2009, 271) further states that the reason why Lyra is such an active protagonist in the first is novel is her "brutish innocence" that appeals to other characters in the story and moves them in some way. This is also the same reason why she becomes more like a secondary character in the later volumes. In my opinion, this resembles Collins' protagonist Katniss who is at first attracted by many because of her

innocence and goodness but as the story continues she becomes more vulnerable and more like a walking advertisement, the symbol of a new uprising against the totalitarian Capitol.

Frankel argues (2010, 4) that “the true goal of a heroine is to become this archetypal, all-powerful mother”. Thus, she also points out that many heroines set out on rescue missions to restore their shattered families. “Though they redeem beloved ones or potential husbands, they work as hard as any fairytale hero. And they do it without swords.” (Frankel 2010, 4.) This fits with the interpretation of Katniss as a motherly figure for the revolt and the oppressed people.

4 Gender Discussion and Female Identity in Collins’ work

In this chapter, I will discuss how gender is constructed and “performed” in the novel. More precisely, I will analyse how they challenge and comply with the system of gender performance. In order to do so I have applied Judith Butler’s concept of performing gender presented earlier in section 3.1. I will begin my analysis by discussing the conventions of the traditionalistic representation of the sexes by comparing and contrasting Katniss to her counterpart Peeta in section 4.1. Thereafter, I will discuss those female characters who perform female masculinity in section 4.2. Finally, I will end this chapter by briefly viewing those female characters who are more passive and traditional in their gender performance resembling more traditional femininity in section 4.3. By dividing some of the novel’s main female characters into two groups I want to demonstrate Halberstam’s idea of how a violent milieu ignites female masculinity.

4.1 How Gender is Discussed

In the following I will draw some brief conclusions about the juxtaposition between the female protagonist Katniss and her male counterpart Peeta Mellark when analysing their gender performances. Katniss is an independent, free thinking and brave woman. She is a hunter and food

bringer for her family. These characteristics might stereotypically and traditionally be viewed more as male traits as even the old saying “man of the house” also refers to a male sex. She is the strongest and oldest child, and she knows she has a duty towards her family. However, the idea does not only resemble the idea of manhood as it also gives the idea of motherhood:

[...] all I knew was that I had lost not only a father, but a mother as well. At eleven years old, with Prim just seven, I took over as head of the family. There was no choice. I bought our food at the market and cooked it as best as I could and tried to keep Prim and me looking presentable. Because if it had become known that my mother could no longer care for us, the district would have taken us away from her and placed us in the community home. (HG, 32–33.)

As early as eleven years old she had to take the role of a mother – her surrounding society forces her to take on the gender identity of a female. She does it in order to keep them safe away from the community home. Here, Butler’s (1999, 178) argument of gender performance being more likely to be forced upon us than being something that we create is valid. However, as soon as she grows up in the story and there is no more danger of being separated from her family, she starts venturing the woods and doing things which are stereotypically considered as gender performances of men.

Peeta Mellark, a hometown boy, is chosen as the male tribute to the Games. Contrary to Katniss, her antagonist Peeta is not the oldest nor the strongest in his family. Contrary to Katniss’ family his family is wealthy and they do not lack of food. Therefore, he does not have to go hunting in the woods. Peeta works in their kitchen as a baker and cake decorator. This is one of the biggest stereotypes for women. The role of bread, cake and homemaker has traditionally been exclusively restricted to the female. In *HG* Katniss steps up for her little sister and takes her place in the Games during the reaping. This could be seen as an act of bravery similar to knights in old fairytales as they sacrifice themselves for a better cause in a heroic manner. This seems to be anomalous as Katniss asserts: “Family devotion only goes so far for most people on reaping day. What I did was the radical thing.” (HG, 31). Whereas Peeta is called forward to take his place in the reaping, none of his older brothers offer themselves to save him. As a boy you are expected to take care of yourself which gives a stereotypical idea between sexes.

Before the Games, they have to give interviews on the live-TV shows. The tributes' main goal is to win the public's interest because their success in the games depends on how the audience perceives them. Peeta is naturally lovable and likeable whereas Katniss is said to be "too hairy, too manly" and moreover "too uninteresting" if she is her true and natural self. Although she undergoes a total transformation from a tomboy to a girly-girl in the hands of their prep team, she is still considered "as romantic as dirt" (HG, 163) according to their mentor:

"You *are* a fool," Haymitch says in disgust. "Do you think he hurt you [by declaring his love to you before the cameras]? 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." [...] "But we're not star-crossed lovers!" I say. Haymitch grabs my shoulders and pins me against the wall. "Who cares? It's all a big show. It's all how you're perceived." [...] "Which do you think will get you more sponsors?" (HG, 163.)

Although her outer appearance has changed into more feminine, she is still considered as unfeminine for her gender performance. This would fit with Butler's argument of a heterosexual society that only approves women who do gender performances of womanhood and men who do gender performances of manhood. According to Butler (1999, 179) gender performances illustrate how genders are constructed as repeated acts – behaviour is one of the biggest facts. Katniss is uncomfortable with her new looks and what others expect from her. Acting like a lady is unnatural to her. Later on in *CF* (2009) she is punished for performing masculine gender performance on their Victory tour. They want her to be a girly, naïve and harmless girl in order to end the riots in the districts:

[...] you were pretty good, too, with the love-crazed schoolgirl bit. The people in the Capitol were quite convinced. Unfortunately, not everyone in the districts fell for your act," he says. (CF, 24–25).

Although the trilogy presents Peeta as the vulnerable one, he however changes in *MJ*. While being captured by the evil Capitol, he is brainwashed to kill Katniss and becomes more dangerous than ever before. Whereas Peeta becomes more dangerous, dominating and masculine, Katniss becomes more unsure, subordinated and emotional. The idea of women and men switching their

“roles” is not only evident in their actions, performances or manners but also as in their occupations and ranks in the novel. Women have high social statuses (for example Alma Coin, a female president) but also low social statuses as an Avox or the stereotypical social status of a woman (being at home, making food and taking care of children). The society in the novel is not patriarchal as the subordination of sexes is not clearly present. To give an example, prostitution is not restricted to women as also men are forced into sexual acts: ““President Snow used to... sell me... my body, that is,” Finnick begins in a flat, removed tone.” (MJ, 198). Finnick is a good-looking man and similarly to Katniss and Peeta a survivor from previous Games. Consequently, gender roles are not restricted to sexes but can also be reversed as the possible ideas of a masculine woman and a feminine man are present in the novel.

4.2 The Female Masculine

I argue that the context of war and survival described in Collins’ *MJ* both enables and is a major factor when constructing female identity in the novel. The imbalance depicted in the dystopian world and the demand of more soldiers could be seen as an empowering trigger to female masculinity. The demand of women in men’s positions makes it possible for some women in the novel to be active doers instead of remaining in the stereotypical passive role of woman.

The story is told from the protagonist Katniss’ perspective reflecting her inner thoughts and worldview. It is unclear in the beginning of the first novel whether the first-person voice is a man’s or a woman’s. At first this creates an idea of an androgynous character. The narrator’s voice is callous, observing and summing things up from a mind that might stereotypically be labelled as man’s point of view: “I take it in my hands, pull out the arrow, and hold the puncture in the crust to my nose, inhaling the fragrance that makes my mouth flood with saliva. Fine bread like this is for special occasions.” (HG, 8). However, as the narration continues the reader soon gathers that Katniss is indeed a ‘she’ which gives a feminine face to the until now seemingly androgynous

character. Nevertheless, *MJ* does not give the oldish idea of a stereotypically viewed subordinated or passive woman in fictional patriarchal societies but instead gives the idea of a strong and modernised woman.

As the main character is not depicted as a traditional female figure, her characteristics might be interpreted as more likely to belong to a man than a woman. Considering the theories of Butler's *performing gender* and Halberstam's *female masculinity*, Katniss does seem to copy male performance that she has seen and adapted in her environment. However, during the novel she does seem to transform into a more motherly figure which is traditionally considered to femininity than masculinity.

In the beginning of the novel Katniss is depicted as a reserved and distant character that does not contribute to the traditional and stereotypical image of femaleness. Although she does not express herself much outwardly, as the story is told from Katniss' perspective, the narration however provides a deeper understanding of what goes on in her head. After her father's death in a coal mining accident, her mother suffers a severe depression and therefore Katniss is forced to become the head of the family at a young age. This and the Games could be seen as a triggering cause to her need for female masculinity. In a way, the surrounding society and milieu molds her to "its" own needs. Physically and mentally speaking, Katniss travels a long and heavy journey along the whole trilogy as she is forced to vary her identity from one to another depending on the situation, the oppressive power and environment. During the trilogy she has several roles which she has to absorb – a daughter, a sister, a tribute in the Games as "the girl on fire", as a star-crossed lover after the Games, a winner, a soldier, and finally as the symbol of the revolution – the Mockingjay.

The word 'Mockingjay' is a bird in the novel, a hybrid of mockingbirds and jabberjays, not meant to exist in the first place. It is told in the story that jabberjay was a species created by the Capitol to function as eavesdroppers on the rebels in the past. However, as the rebels soon noticed

the jabberjay's function, they took advantage of the situation and turned it against the Capitol. As a result, jabberjays were released in the wild to die off but nevertheless they survived and mated with mockingbirds. Their offspring were called mockingjays. These mockingjays have lost their ability to imitate conversations but not their ability to sing tunes – if the tune is beautiful enough to please them: “Not just a few notes, but whole songs with multiple verses, if you had the patience to sing them and if they liked your voice.” (HG, 52.) In one interpretation Katniss could be seen as a mockingjay – people try to influence her with their “songs”, their ideas, and furthermore try to pressurise her into different roles to act and repeat their sayings (like a jabberjay). However, regardless of their pressure and the outside powers, she acts and goes her own ways and selects the information she wants to use for her own liking and purpose (like a mockingjay).

As Katniss varies between these different “masks”, she has to constantly pay attention to how she is being perceived by others in order to keep herself and others alive. Ultimately the Capitol molds Katniss while they make her perform a role, first as a worthy tribute as a “girl on fire” in *HG* and after the Games as a “star-crossed lover” in *CF*. In the final novel Katniss is again in the making as she is used by another powerful force, a rebel government's district called District 13. Other female characters who I consider as female masculine are those who are put in the Games and sent to the war zone. They are set in a hostile environment where they have to kill in order to survive. In *MJ* Katniss is saved by District 13 but also controlled by it:

The compartments had the disadvantage of being underground, the clothing was identical and the food was relatively tasteless, but [...] these were minor considerations. They were safe. [...] This enthusiasm was interpreted as kindness. But a man [...] leaked the real motive to me. “They need you. Me. They need all of us. A while back, there was some sort of pox epidemic that killed a bunch of them and left a lot more infertile. New breeding stock. That's how they see us.” (MJ, 9.)

The life in District 13 is supervised and very similar to their previous living conditions in District 12. The citizens get their forearms tattooed with a schedule for the day's “to dos” in fading ink: certain activities at a specific time during a 24-hour day. (MJ, 21.) The ideas of a constant pressure of living in fear and the supervised harsh environment give allusions to the military life or

concentration camps. This kind of threatening and demanding environment only reasserts the idea of a violent milieu igniting female masculinity in Katniss and other female characters who later on address themselves as soldiers: “Those over fourteen have been given entry-level ranks in the military and are addressed respectfully as “Soldier”” (MJ, 9).

After the war is finally won in *MJ* and others expect Katniss to kill the Capitol’s president in a public execution, she rejects the gender performance of female what others expect from her (of obeying orders and being subordinated). She makes her own decision and kills the leader of the rebellion instead. Considering Milestone’s and Meyer’s (2012, 112) argument about women being neglected for their victim status because they have been behaving differently to the behaviour or performance of their natural sex is therefore valid in *MJ*. Acting in a stereotypically unfeminine way and doing what Katniss wants to do, she is denied the victim status because she has done the gender performance of male. As a result she is put under house arrest and isolated from the outside world for weeks.

While comparing the societies and environments of District 13 and the Capitol they prefer different kinds of gender performances. As in District 13 they train both sexes to be physically hard soldiers for war, the Capitol believes there is no need to do that as they think no one would ever attack them for their supremacy. Instead, both sexes decorate themselves with makeup, tattoos and piercings, and focus on such matters as clothing and food. As the Capitol is a welfare state with a strong belief in themselves, they do not train their youngsters for war contrary to District 13. As according to Butler (1999, 179) everyday doings can be considered as repeated acts, stereotypically viewed, the majority of the Capitol’s citizens do gender performances of female and the majority of District 13’s citizens do gender performances of male.

4.3 The Traditional Feminine

All the female characters in *MJ* do not contribute to female masculinity as there are also those who express traditional femininity. However, the limited scope of my study prevents me from going more deeply into the matter and therefore I merely point out that there are also characters (both female and male) who do not perform only masculine roles but also feminine roles. Some of the female characters, for example Primrose Everdeen and Mrs Everdeen, illustrate the presence of traditional gender roles that contrast the nontraditional gender roles, for example of the female masculine Katniss.

Primrose and her mother are both more conventionally feminine female characters than the female characters in active roles. Primrose is a kind, sympathetic girl who takes care of others and who has got “the ability of healing”. Being a sweet girl she does all the domestic chores and takes special care of their family pets; Buttercup the cat and Lady the goat. Prim is similarly to her mother a nurturer and a healer unlike her big sister. Everybody adores her in the trilogy as Katniss notes that “People deal with me, but they are genuinely fond of Prim. Maybe there will be enough fondness to keep her alive.” (HG, 46). Katniss is extremely protective of her little sister: “I protect Prim in every way I can, but I’m powerless against the reaping” (HG, 63). She sees Prim as something delicate and easy to crush. This power-relationship could suggest the idea between a protective masculine character and a passive, fragile feminine character. However, the role of their age difference must also be noticed here – the older one protects the younger one. Although Katniss succeeds in saving her little sister from the reaping as she sacrifices herself by taking Prim’s place, she cannot however save her from a certain death as Prim is killed by parachutebombs: “Gradually, I’m forced to accept who I am. A badly burned girl with no wings. With no fire. And no sister.” (MJ, 406.)

It is still interesting that although Prim and Mrs Everdeen are evacuated to a harsh environment (District 13) in *MJ* they nevertheless remain in their gender performance of

femaleness. They are not active in the same sense as Katniss. Yet they do not train for physical contact in war like Katniss but instead they train to be nurses and doctors. Although they are in District 13, they are in a sense “allowed” to train themselves as healers because similarly to the context of war and the military, people in those occupations are also needed in war.

5 A Hero of Necessity – Some are Born Heroes, Some are Reluctantly Made

In the following I will discuss how the novel represents the idea of Katniss being a hero of necessity. The idea of Katniss performing the role of Mockingjay, the image and the symbol of a revolution, lifts her up in a hero’s position. Kaplan (2009, 266) argues that young women have been represented differently in fantasy and science fiction compared to other genres. In fantasy and science fiction women perform active and vital roles. They do not content themselves with being merely sidekicks to boy heroes but instead represent independent and strong heroines. In my opinion it is interesting to view how Katniss is portrayed as a shero; is she depicted as a sidekick, the embodiment of a traditional masculine male hero usually portrayed in fantasy and science fiction (being therefore a copy of a male hero) or is she a feminine version of a hero in other words a *shero*⁴?

In one interpretation Katniss resembles much a mythical heroine called Atalanta of Greek mythology. Although most of the heroines depicted in Ancient Greek literature take on the role of a self-sacrificing maiden, there are still some exceptions: Amazons or similar like women who grew up in harsh environments (Garrison 2000). According to Moncrieff’s description of Atalanta, Atalanta seems to be a masculine woman:

[Atalanta] grew man-like and hardy, careless of wind or weather, not less bold than beautiful, skilled to handle bow and spear, and more willing to face the fiercest beast than to listen to tender words. All her heart was set on hunting and strenuous exercises, and she thought of men only as comrades in sports, at which few could surpass her by strength or courage. (Moncrieff 1912, 91–92.)

⁴ “A woman regarded as hero. Blend of she and hero.” (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

Collins' protagonist Katniss had her childhood in a grim and violent environment that most probably affected her characteristics similar to Atalanta – growing man-like and hardy, skilled to handle bow and considering men only as comrades in sports. However, there are also differences between these two strong characters. Whereas Atalanta was “more willing to face the fiercest beast than to listen to tender words” (Moncrieff 1912, 91–92), Katniss becomes more approachable as the trilogy goes on. She even tries to influence people with words rather than violence.

Returning to the idea of heroism in the novel I can see some allusions to the legendary freedom fighter Spartacus and his tale. Similarly to Spartacus and his rebels (during the Slave War in 73–71 BC), Collins' *MJ* depicts a similar kind of scenery with its evil oppressors (the Capitol), slavery and the cruel behaviour toward the mistreated districts which are also the main factors why the war ever started. However, what distinguishes Collins' shero from Spartacus is that whereas Spartacus was a fearless and an accomplished leader in warfare, Katniss is a girl who is constantly in a wrong place at a wrong time. She is forced to put on a show before the TV cameras in order to light up hope and militancy (propaganda) for the rebels, and also to awake fear in the Capitol. As Spartacus is portrayed as the ultimate masculine figure in literature and history it is interesting to compare him with Katniss.

Whereas some could argue that Katniss is a masculine character, I somewhat question her masculinity and activeness in the novel. As the narration gives Katniss' point of view I argue that the outside powers only “use” her as the symbol of the upcoming rebellion as a result of her refusing to kill Peeta in *HG*. As it becomes evident in the narration, Katniss and Peeta's act of eating deadly berries never meant to have any deeper meaning of defying the Capitol's power nor taking the power in their own hands. Instead it was an automatic reaction of refusal to kill each other in the Games. In that case, she is only used by outside powers in order to gain the power for themselves (President Coin wants to have the power for herself) and therefore considered as a piece in a game rather than the hero.

Unknowingly, Katniss is the spark for the rebellion but not the fire that drives it forward. Although Katniss is a fictional character it is interesting to compare her with another historical character, Joan of Arc, as they both are female freedom fighters and the same subject of female heroism that I am studying has been studied of Joan of Arc. Fifteen years earlier Marina Warner (2000) wrote a book about the image of female heroism in Joan of Arc. According to her Joan was regarded firstly as a patriot and secondly as a saint on a sacred mission sent by God. Joan was deeply devoted to her mission in that she firmly believed in. The martyrdom is evident in her. She had “the passion and the inspiration that guided her”. (Warner 2000, 255.) Contrary to Joan, Katniss doubts her mission several times and is unsure about whom to trust. Even in the end of *MJ* as she is supposed to execute the Capitol’s dictator Snow, she changes her mind right before the kill and aims her deadly arrow at the rebellions’ president Coin instead (MJ, 434).

In the beginning of the novel it becomes clear from the narration that the hero’s part was not what Katniss desired for herself. All she ever wanted was to be left in peace after playing her part in Games:

What they want is for me to truly take on the role they designed for me. The symbol of the revolution. The Mockingjay. It isn’t enough, what I’ve done in the past, defying the Capitol in the Games, providing a rallying point. I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution. [...] I won’t have to do it alone. They have a whole team of people to make me over, dress me, write my speeches, orchestrate my appearances – as if *that* doesn’t sound horribly familiar – and all I have to do is play my part. Sometimes I listen to them and sometimes I just watch the perfect line of Coin’s hair and try to decide if it’s a wig. Eventually, I leave the room because my head starts to ache or it’s time to eat or if I don’t get above ground I might start screaming. I don’t bother to say anything. I simply get up and walk out. (MJ, 12.)

This does not reinforce a picture of a strongminded warrior with a quest but rather gives a picture of someone who is reluctantly made to play her part. At first Katniss feels numb and lost: ““What am I going to do?” I whisper to the walls because I really don’t know“ (MJ, 11); “To become the Mockingjay... Could any good I do possibly outweigh the damage?” (MJ, 15). At first, she does not understand her own importance to the cause of the uprising. But after her conversation with her little sister Prim she changes her mind:

“Tomorrow morning, I’m going to agree to be the Mockingjay,” I tell her. “Because you want to or because you feel forced into it?” she asks. I laugh a little. “Both, I guess. No, I want to. I have to, if it will help the rebels defeat Snow.” [...] “Katniss, I don’t think you understand how important you are to the cause. Important people usually get what they want.” (MJ, 40.)

After their conversation Katniss understands that there seems to be some kind of a power reversal between her and District 13 as it is now she who has the upper hand in the game. Now it is her turn to set the rules for others and not the other way around. Katniss makes a list of all the things she considers as necessities to be agreed on before she will accept the role of being their Mockingjay.

The rebels need a spark to start the war against the Capitol and Katniss with her sincere actions in the Games offer them a compassionate, motherly figure who could be their “Joan or Arc” in their Holy War against the oppression and injustice in their world. My argument of Katniss being a hero of necessity is validated in the end of the novel as District 13 and the rebels win the war against the monstrous Capitol. When it is finally peace people forget about her and her deeds, their once vaunted own Mockingjay. Firstly, after killing president Coin she is put under house arrest and isolated from the outside world for weeks. This reinforces the idea that as soon as the war is over they have no more use for her. Contrary to what might have been expected to happen to a hero after a victory, no glorious victory songs are sung nor any rewards given. Regardless of all the sacrifices Katniss makes, and although she was the spark that made the war to burst into a fire, she is neglected in the end. Collins’ figurative language describing the act of letting go of their saviour is almost symbolic after she returns in the bedroom after shower: “Back in the room, I find the Mockingjay suit has disappeared. In its place is a paper robe” (MJ, 437). No need for the Mockingjay anymore. The plain paper robe could be seen as symbolising something unimportant. Now she can return to her own self – as a nameless and faceless person before the Games. Doctors declare her as mentally ill she is sent back to her home district. Badly traumatised by all the horrors she confronted in the Games and along the war, her identity has dramatically changed from what it was in the beginning of the trilogy in *HG* – from a caring character into a disoriented and

traumatised person. In the following I will give some brief examples from both novels to validate my reasonings. In *HG* she feels compassion especially towards her sister:

Her name is Prim. She's just twelve. And I love her more than anything. (HG, 156.)

As Katniss takes Prim's place in the Games she gives instructions to her family before she is taken away:

“Well, you have to help it this time. You can't clock out and leave Prim on her own. There's no me now to keep you both alive.”(HG, 43.)

And then the Peacekeeper is at the door, signalling out time is up, and we're all hugging one another so hard it hurts and all I'm saying is, “I love you. I love you both.” (HG, 44.)

The Peacekeepers are back too soon and Gale asks for more time, but they're taking [Gale] away and I start to panic. “Don't let them starve!” I cry out, clinging to his hand. (HG, 48.)

The thought of that scruffy old Buttercup posting himself on the bed to watch over Prim comforts me. If she cries, he will nose his way into her arms and curl up there until she calms down and falls asleep. I'm so glad I didn't drown him. (HG, 65.)

Buttercup⁵ is Prim's cat that Katniss hates but yet tolerates as Prim loves him unconditionally. Despite the hate, Katniss however saves him because she knows how important he is to Prim (MJ, 16). She could have saved something of more value but she takes Prim's feelings before all. She takes other people's needs into account.

However, when her little sister dies in the last novel the sympathy and the care that she feels towards others decrease and she feels numb:

The ones I loved fly as birds in the open sky above me. Soaring, weaving, calling to me to join them. I want so badly to follow them. The ones I hated have taken to the water, horrible scaled things that tear my salty flesh with needle teeth, Biting again and again. Dragging me beneath the surface. (MJ, 408.)

“Let me die. Let me follow the others,” I beg whatever holds me here. There's no response. Trapped for days, years, centuries maybe. Dead, but not allowed to die. Alive but as good as dead. (MJ, 408.)

⁵ When Prim brought Buttercup home as a kitten it had its belly swollen with worms. Katniss refused to feed another mouth and even tried to drown him. However, she had to let him stay as Prim begged and cried. (HG, 4.)

As her most precious one is gone she feels it is no sense to continue. When the war is finally over the rebels vote for a new upcoming Games. This time the reaping would be done to the Capitol's children. In normal case she would have been against the proposal for the sake of humanity but after Prim's death her feeling of empathy has been replaced by another feeling – vengeance: "I vote yes... For Prim." (MJ, 432). In the end of *MJ* Katniss feels rejected by others and is even ready to go to such lengths as to take her own life:

"My name is Katniss Everdeen. Why am I not dead? I should be dead. It would be best for everyone if I were dead..." (MJ, 375.)

"The surveillance makes almost any suicide attempt impossible. Taking my life is the Capitol's privilege. Again." (MJ, 375.)

"I no longer feel any allegiance to these monsters called human beings, despise being one myself." (MJ, 377.)

The sense in these examples show how hollow and dissatisfied she feels towards others and herself. After being exploited and used by bigger powers she is dumped like a burned cigarette stepped on and smashed to the ground.

6 The Idea of a Motherly Champion

The first glance of Katniss being a motherly hero is seen when she shows empathy towards her worst rivals in the Games in *HG*. Whereas most of the other tributes desire to stay alive and kill each other, she becomes friends with some and unknowingly awakens sympathy among the viewers in other districts. One of these occasions takes place when she buries a killed girl named Rue in a bed of flowers in the Games. The act of an affectionate and emotional burial makes Katniss a compassionate figure on the TV screen. This could be seen as a statement to other districts of the Capitol's cruelty of sacrificing children. In *MJ* Katniss' gender performance depicts a more motherly figure as she starts to feel more and more responsibility and sympathy towards other districts. At the beginning of the trilogy in *HG*, she only feels responsibility towards her mother and little sister

Prim. However, as the story continues and people die mostly because of her actions as she in a sense started the uprising, she feels it is her responsibility to continue in her role of Mockingjay.

In *MJ* Katniss is portrayed as a saint, a martyr and the “mother of people”. Similarly to another historical person, mother Theresa, people follow Katniss because of her kindness, sympathy and humanity which are rare things in the novel’s cruel world of Panem. There are several parts which illustrate the idea of Katniss being a motherly champion in *MJ*. In part one she is sent to one of the beaten districts, District Eight, in order to make TV propaganda against the Capitol. Katniss and a mixed team of TV crew and soldiers travel with a hovercraft to District Eight. Immediately, she wants to go and see the injured people in the hospital. There, in the middle of all the dying and wounded, people recognise her and seek protection and courage in her:

I hear my name rippling through the hot air, spreading out into the hospital. “Katniss! Katniss Everdeen!” The sounds of pain and grief begin to recede, to be replaced by the words of anticipation. From all sides, voices beckon me. I begin to move, clasping the hands extended to me, touching the sound parts of those unable to move their limbs, saying hello, [...] It’s the sight of me, alive, that is the inspiration. [...] Hungry fingers devour me, wanting to feel my flesh. (MJ, 106–107.)

For the first time, Katniss understands her own importance to the rebels and a better world of Panem. Her maternal side fully awakens:

I begin to fully understand the lengths to which people have gone to protect me. What I mean to the rebels. My ongoing struggle against the Capitol, which has so often felt like a solitary journey, has not been undertaken alone. I have had thousands upon thousands of people from the districts at my side. I was their Mockingjay before I accepted the role. (MJ, 107.)

People have accepted her as their saviour and their shero long before she had accepted it herself. Hence, it could also be interpreted that the role was indeed forced upon her. Even here in the following block quotation, the rebels (read the TV crew filming Katniss for propaganda) use Katniss’ goodness, tears and fury in order to rally and pour more gasoline on the uprising:

“Katniss,” she says, “President Snow just had them air the bombing live. Then he made an appearance to say that this was his way of sending a message to the rebels. What about you? Would you like to tell the rebels anything?” [...] “I want to tell the rebels that I am alive. That I’m right here in District Eight, where the Capitol has just bombed a hospital

full of unarmed men, women and children. There will be no survivors.” The shock I’ve been feeling begins to give way to fury. “I want to tell people that if you think for a second the Capitol will treat us fairly if there’s a ceasefire, you’re deluding yourself. Because you know what they are and what they do.”[...] “*This* is what they do! And we must fight back!” (MJ, 117–118.)

All in all, Katniss’ narration is one of the difficult lines between selflessness and selfishness, justice and injustice, liberation and enslavement. Being the mother of the revolution and freedom bringer to people she is feminine, protective and caring. However, she is also the fire that can burn everything and everyone down with her. As she is willing to burn the whole world to the ground for the sake of her beloved ones she also condemns many innocent lives to death, whether she recognises it or not. In order to liberate the enslaved people many innocent people die on the way. Therefore she could also be considered as the “death bringer” as well as the “life bringer”. Even though the image of her might be as a kind and caring mother it must not be undermined that as the face of a revolution she must, inevitably, also be the mother of death.

It is easy to miss Katniss’ increasing ruthlessness and brutality as the trilogy continues from *HG* to *MJ*. The Games must have had a great impact on her personality. She grows from a naïve girl to an independent fierce woman who due to her traumatic memories suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder which further affects her character in *MJ*. For all her goodness, Katniss cannot return to being the girl who hunts down with her bow in the woods. She has travelled too far in the story as her character has grown up mentally. She has witnessed too much manipulation, torture and massacres – the evilness of people. When pondering more about *her* story, it is not as gratifying and straightforward as the reader might think at first. It is not a tale of a powerless girl becoming powerful at the end but rather a tale about how an individual is used as a pawn by society or bigger powers. The Marxist idea about society ruling over individual in *MJ* is again reinforced.

In conclusion, it is an interesting fact that as femininity is often stereotypically combined with passivity and fragility, Collins seems to alter the long lived idea of a passive mother or a Greek self-sacrificing heroine to a powerful mother not being powerful physically but instead having the power

of awakening compassion among others and driving people to action. In a way, she has turned the supposed composition of power between a powerful warrior and a motherly figure. Katniss can be seen as a mother through metaphor and literally in the end of the novel as she gives birth to two children. Considering this picture of power relations, Collins is not the only one of today's authors who uses the idea of a powerful mother. One of the most well-known authors in fantasy literature, American novelist George R. R. Martin also uses this idea in his series of epic fantasy *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996–). In Martin's third book *A Storm of Swords* (2011) a character called Daenerys Targaryen is similarly to Katniss being portrayed as a motherly compassionate figure who is powerful in her kindness and goodness that affects people in their actions. Nowadays there are lots of strong mother figures in myth and tradition. Maternity is a source of power and influence.

7 The Myth of Sacrifice for Creation in *Mockingjay*

Finally, I will end my thesis by discussing how the novel represents the idea of the myth of sacrifice for creation through its female protagonist. The myth of sacrifice for creation is about the self-sacrificing heroines in Ancient Greek literature who sacrifice themselves for the common good. Whereas male heroes are viewed as heroes, female heroines (representing female heroism) are ultimately analysed as martyrs. According to Ancient Greek literature, the main role of the female heroine was of sacrifice. Female characters were self-sacrificial in nature for the good of others. (Garrison 2000.) As Greek heroines did their acts of self-sacrifice, male heroes went on quests or fought monsters. Male heroes are depicted as the courageous and strong men who fought their ways to glory. After their victorious deeds they were praised and remembered with songs. Although Greek heroines did their deadly choices for the sake of others they are yet treated of a lesser importance to male heroes. (Garrison 2000.) According to Garrison (2000), it is a crucial factor that Greek heroines did their deeds and sacrifices of one's own accord, and therefore they can be considered as saints and martyrs.

When considering Collins' protagonist from this point of view, she does not fit the Greek pattern of a heroine as she does not do it of her own will but is rather forced to play her part as a hero, as the face of the rebellion by threatening her beloved ones. As I already pointed out in my theory part in section 3.3 where I presented the updated idea of how a shero is represented in fantasy and science fiction, the true goal of a shero is to become an archetypal, all-powerful mother who is usually set out on rescue missions in order to restore their shattered families (Frankel 2010, 4). This idea is represented in *MJ*. Nevertheless, Katniss does however follow the Greek pattern of a self-sacrificing woman to the point whenever her beloved ones are in danger of death. Some of these examples are following; when she takes her little sister's tribute place in the Games (in *HG*), when she rushes between her best friend Gale and a deadly whip (in *MJ*) or when she decides to start her own personal avenger trip to kill President Snow (in *MJ*). However, the act of self-sacrifice is not fulfilled as she is always somehow saved by the bell before possible death.

The idea of sacrifice is evident in *MJ*. However, it is not only evident in this last novel as it is also a very central theme in the whole trilogy starting with the first act in the beginning of *HG*: "With one sweep of my arm, I push her behind me. "I volunteer!" I gasp." (*HG*, 26). Similarly to ancient Greek mythology as Elise Garrison (2000) discusses the act of self-sacrifice often being motivated by the desire to protect their loved ones, Katniss does the heroic act and saves her younger sister from the Games by sacrificing herself:

Then something unexpected happens. At least, I don't expect it because I don't think of District 12 as a place that cares about me. But a shift has occurred since I stepped up to take Prim's place, and now it seems I have become someone precious. At first one, then another, then almost every member of the crowd touches the three middle fingers of their left hand to their lips and hold it out to me. It is an old and rarely used gesture of our district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means goodbye to someone you love. (*HG*, 29.)

At first people do not appreciate nor pay any extra attention to her but when she does this act of sacrifice she is suddenly noticed. As Katniss herself points out in the narration "now it seems I have become someone precious" (*HG*, 29). In *MJ*, Katniss decides to be the face and symbol of the

uprising for the sake of others – the same theme of self-sacrifice for the common good is repeated. At first she is reluctant but when she realises how much is at stake, she complies to it: “It was my arrow, aimed at the chink in the force field surrounding the arena, that brought on this firestorm of retribution. That sent the whole country of Panem into chaos.” (MJ, 5–6.)

Though Katniss has her callous moments, for example when she discusses sending the beaten Capitol’s children to the new Hunger Games after winning the war against the Capitol (MJ, 432), she is a motherly hero. She sympathises with the rebellions but also the Capitol’s citizens. The idea of motherhood can further be seen in the end of the trilogy as though Katniss is the active doer in the whole trilogy in comparison with Peeta (the more passive one) she however returns to the stereotypical and traditional gender role of female as she is “forced” to take the role of a mother in the end. Through a feministic point of view, it could be interpreted that as Katniss is indeed a ‘she’ all the honour and glory that might have been offered to a male hero is deprived from her because of her sex. She does not gain any significant position of a leader despite her significance in the war but is instead thrown into the stereotypical gender role of woman as a housewife and a mother.

This could be interpreted as an allusion to our history during World War I and II when men went to war and women took up their occupations. When men left for war factories were left empty and the war needed more munitions, ships, airplanes and staff in the auxiliary services. Therefore, women took up the positions of men in factories and other stations which were until that day considered as a “man’s job” whereas woman’s place was stereotypically at home with children. (Trey 1972, 40.) Working in the labor force was hard but they managed it. However, when the war ended the returning soldiers wanted to have their jobs back. Trey (1972, 40) argues that women did not switch their role but instead they increased their position as housewives and developed a consciousness as a “worker”. If they were mothers they saw working in factories as a way to bring food on the table. Furthermore, the propaganda during those days proposed a very nationalistic

agenda and women wanted to serve their country too⁶. They extended their role from housekeeping to factories. However, as the war ended women who had worked in factories were sent back home and therefore forced back in their former roles of housewife and mother.

The war, the violent milieu ignited female masculinity and gave women the opportunity to show what they could do. Here I see a resemblance with Collins' heroine Katniss Everdeen. She does, in one interpretation, *sacrifice* herself throughout the trilogy. In the beginning she sacrifices herself for her little sister. In the second novel she sacrifices herself again for the Games so that her loved ones could be safe. In the last novel she sacrifices herself for a common good – for the uprising so that people would for once and all be free from all the tyranny and injustice they had lived until that day. In the end she sacrifices her body to be impregnated by Peeta. In the beginning of the first novel and the end of the last novel it becomes clear from the narration that Katniss does not want any children: ““I never want to have kids,” I say”” (HG, 11). She does not want children because she is scared that there will be new Games in the future. However, Peeta wins her over after persuading her for 15 years: “It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly.” (MJ, 454). In that case it could be considered as a gender issue if considered from the point of view that Katniss subordinates herself under Peeta's masculine dominance and complies with his likings. In a way, she sacrifices her own dreams, own will and body for the sake of a man.

Katniss does indeed sacrifice herself for others many times but she does not however die while doing the acts of self-sacrifice, whereas the heroines in Greek mythology died. There seems to be allusions of the pattern of female heroes in Greek mythology in Collins' story but the climax is missing as the act of dying, death, is missing. This might have something to do with the marketing of the novel. Nowadays, especially in America, it is highly unlikely that the mainstream would want to read a book that has a dramatic ending. In Shakespeare's days it might have been

⁶A poster of “Rosie the Riveter” was done with the slogan “We Can Do It!” to motivate and boost women's worker morale. This poster was done by J. Howard Miller in 1942 for Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company. The poster has become one of the most well known posters of World War II. Women were encouraged to take wartime jobs during the WWII but when the war ended, many women were forced to leave their jobs to the returning veterans. (The National Museum of American History 2015. Web.)

more popular than today when considering some of his plays: *Romeo and Juliet* (believed to have been written between 1591–1595) where star-crossed lovers take their own lives as their final act of love or *Hamlet* (between 1599 and 1602) a tragedy that ends with an entire royal family lying dead on the floor. Nowadays, we have Walt Disney and Hollywood films that tend to have happy endings for marketing purposes.

8 Conclusion

In this thesis I have analysed the representation of female heroism and the myth of sacrifice for creation in Suzanne Collins' *Mockingjay* (2010). In my discussion I have discovered that performativity is an important part when constructing one's gender identity. Through different performances one is able to influence how one is perceived by others. By tradition, heroism is connected with masculine qualities and though Collins' female heroine follows the traditional model of a masculine male hero to some extent, she also has feminine characteristics which ultimately contributes to a more feminised version of a hero as a motherly champion.

Collins' novel plays with the traditional gender roles as the heroine in the trilogy is a teenage girl. Instead of a patriarchal alpha male hero saving damsels in distress, *MJ* portrays a heroine who saves masses with her goodness and empathy. Other female characters are portrayed in a somewhat differing manner; whereas some comply with the traditional sex role of women, some do not. As the story is set in a military and war context of oppression and survival, the surroundings could be viewed as potentially empowering and triggering to female masculinity given that the war and the military demand both physically and mentally tough soldiers with skills of violence. Female characters who are put in the Games and sent to the war zone are set in a hostile environment. They are forced to kill other people in order to survive. Katnis and President Alma Coin could be considered as female characters who embody female masculinity in the novel. In order to kill out of necessity they have to become callous, unemotional. Alma succeeds in this but not Katniss. The

female president in the novel is not put in the Games but she is the female leader of the liberation movement in the military District 13 and can therefore be considered as one of the female masculine characters as she could be seen to have a true power of control. Female characters who do not comply with this view of masculinity and violence are portrayed in a somewhat more traditional sex role of women. They take care of others and stay “safe” at home from the battlefield taking up statuses of healers and nurturers.

In conclusion, by reversing gender roles Collins revolutionises the oldish thought about all gender stereotypes and portrays modern-day characters to which many can relate to. Girls can be tough boys and boys can be emotional or sexualised. Genders should neither be considered as the sole identifier of an individual nor to have any socially fixed stereotypes. Regardless of sex or gender we are all human and genders should be considered as labels rather than rules. In *Mockingjay* the characters’ mentalities and feelings do not restrict to certain genders or sexes but instead both sexes are allowed to feel and think as they prefer.

However, towards the ending as the war finally ends and a time for peace begins, all women, also Katniss, are “forced” back to their traditional roles of wives and mothers. This could be interpreted as an allusion to our history in WWI and WWII when the war gave women the opportunity to show what they could do. As men went to war women replaced their places in factories. As the war ended women were sent back to their homes to reclaim their old social statuses in society as wives, child carers and householders. Halberstam’s (1998) argument of the oppressed girls becoming masculinised due to their violent environment is fulfilled in *MJ*. Like the context of war enables women to take physical action and perform masculinity according to Halberstam, the harsh environment of war and military in the trilogy demands female masculinity from its protagonist in order to survive and therefore also affects the construction of female identity in the novel.

When discussing the idea of heroism in the novel, Katniss inherits the mantle of Spartacus in one interpretation. She is part freedom fighter, part political revolutionary and part reluctant hero by necessity. The tales of Spartacus and Katniss could hypothetically be considered as iterations of the same story about rulers and impose coersive power of individuals rising up against them. These heroes do not wish to set themselves up as new tyrants. They only seek the opportunity to determine their own lives and let others do the same.

The myth of sacrifice for creation is also evident in the novel as Katniss sacrifices herself for a common good, for the uprising. For once and all, people would be free from all the tyranny and injustice they had lived until that day. Although she completes these acts of self-sacrifice several times, she does not follow the pattern of self-sacrificing heroines described in Ancient Greek literature. Whereas the heroines in the Greek mythology die while doing this selfless act of self-sacrifice, Katniss is always somehow saved by the bell while other people around her die. I presume this might have something to do with the marketing of the novel. If the protagonist dies or the novel has an unhappy ending it will probably get bad reviews and would not be as popular with a tragic ending. All in all, Frankel's (2010, 4) argumentation that "the true goal of a heroine is to become this archetypal, all-powerful mother" is fulfilled in Suzanne Collins' *MJ*. The novel is an updated version and representation about how a heroine is portrayed for the girls of today's younger generations.

If Collins suggests women's position in society with her novel, it could be interpreted that women try to have their voices heard but after society has taken advantage of them, they are slowly forced back to their stereotypical social statuses as muted homeslaves similar to the Avoxes in the novel. If this is the case, Collins could be considered as a feminist author to some degree though the message is hidden deep between the lines in the text.

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