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The Hunger Games

A Feminist Approach through Gender Performance

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to examine and analyse Suzanne Collins's dystopian trilogy *The Hunger Games* from a feminist perspective. It will explore the portrayal of various characters in the series, both male and female, with a special focus on the protagonist Katniss Everdeen. In essence, the analysis will revolve around gender performance, gender expectations and gender formation, and the way the author challenges the reader regarding traditional gender roles by inverting expected gender performances and empowering many of the female characters. The thesis will also depict the protagonist's ability to oscillate between feminine and masculine qualities, and how she is able to act out expected female qualities, such as weakness and frailty whenever she sees it fit, and to take on a more rational, individual and vigorous role whenever it is necessary. Moreover, the thesis attempts to portray how the author challenges the whole idea of there being a traditional and original female gender, and how she plays with the view of a perfect female specimen.

As background for this analysis, and to portray the difficulties and challenges women have had to endure to be treated equally with men, both on the literary arena as well as in life, a brief history of feminism, feminist literature and feminist writers will be portrayed. In addition, as background for theoretical thought on gender and identity formation, a range of early and contemporary theorists will be presented and compared. The main gender theorist that will be thoroughly analysed and frequently used to substantiate the analysis is the highly influential feminist pioneer Judith Butler. Her theory of 'gender performativity' has been ground-breaking for the perception and definition of gender identity, and is of great relevance to this study.

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1 Introduction

"I stare in the mirror as I try to remember who I am and who I am not," said Katniss Everdeen in the first book of the *Hunger Games* trilogy (2008, 450), and hereby contributed to awakening a new generation, making people rethink, discuss and redefine gender, gender roles and identity. The *Hunger Games* series revolves around the female protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, who voluntarily takes her younger sister Prim's place in the televised competition *The Hunger Games*; a combat in which two adolescents from each of the state Panem's twelve districts are haphazardly drawn to fight each other to all the competitors but one are dead. Collins has explained that the plot in her works was a result of inspiration from watching reality show competitions and war footage. In addition to creating a setting based on these shows, she borrowed ideas from both the Roman gladiatorial games and the Greek myth of Theseus, where Athens was forced to send fourteen young people to confront a Minotaur (Sellers, 2008). However, since the traditional hero in similar settings in most cases is male, e.g. like *1984*, the *Lord of the Rings* and the *Maze Runner*, Collins, through her works, challenges her reader regarding traditional gender roles. She plays continuously with the reader's perception of what is viewed as conventional, and she alters the reader's notion of gender roles leaving the male competitor, Peeta Mellark, from District 12, to act as the domestic, feeble and sensible romantic, whereas Katniss is the one who is equipped with physical strength, and who is rational, clever and vigorous. Collins thus challenges Marx's theory of stable gender identities, accents the feminist of Freud's gender dualism psychology, and deconstructs, like Derrida, 'phallogocentrism'.

This thesis seeks to examine, analyze and explain the expectations, performances and formations of gender in various social settings in the dystopian society of Panem, and to depict how Suzanne Collins lets her protagonist Katniss Everdeen cynically act out her expected weakness and frailty when she sees it fit, and to take on a more rational, individual and vigorous role whenever it is necessary. Collins also challenges the whole idea of there being a traditional and original female gender, and plays with the view of a perfect female specimen. She lets Everdeen become a hybrid, a mixture of both genders, as they are traditionally perceived; belonging to what Homi K. Bhabha labels a *third space*.

By inverting the gender roles in her novel, and by placing a female protagonist in a male chauvinist war-driven setting and plot, Collins also parodies and mocks traditional gender expectations, in that she lets her protagonist take advantage of the mixture and combination of masculine and feminine sides that she entails. She has the qualifications of a skilful hunter at the same time as she is presented - and performs as an epitome of not only female but also male fashion. Simultaneously, as she portrays herself as an innocent and ignorant girl from the district, she appears as a lethal killer, successfully portraying a bi-gendered role throughout the entire series.

Although the series is foremost a depiction of the challenges found in a future dystopian society, it has also come to be an important voice in the feminist debate, letting the protagonist seize the role as a feminist icon and a role model for young girls all over the world. Even though gender and identity have been heavily discussed, defined and debated over the last century, the crave for a wider and adjusted definition has become stronger, especially during the latest decade. The traditional definitions and notions of gender are now, perhaps more than ever, in need of being redefined. In an article about female characters in the Irish Times, Sally Green emphasizes the importance of being displayed to strong female characters like Katniss Everdeen both for girls and boys, because not only are they *role models for girls, but they're also role models for boys*. Green is also of the opinion that *the lack of strong female characters in fiction that boys read and films they see, prevents some boys from knowing that it's ok to have a girl as their leader*, and stresses that *[w]e need to help boys see that it's ok for a girl to be stronger and more powerful than them, and that it doesn't make boys weak* (Green 2018). Laura M. Bell, a blogger in Huffington Post, also points to how it suddenly was tolerable and even popular for a boy to read about a female protagonist, and claims that *The Hunger Games made it acceptable for boys to embrace a female perspective. In doing so, it opened the floodgates to dystopians with female main characters and a broader readership base* (Bell 2014).

Many of the great philosophers have tried to establish an alternate definition of gender, and have tried to define it into entailing more than the conventional and classical ones related to natural sex. Marx, for one, commented in the sixth of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, that

Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations. Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real

essence is hence obliged: 1. To abstract from the historical process and to define the religious sentiment regarded by itself, and to presuppose an abstract — isolated - human individual. And 2. The essence therefore can by him only be regarded as 'species', as an inner 'dumb' generality which unites many individuals only in a natural way.

(Marx (1845), *Theses on Feuerbach*)

Marx argued against this view, and stated that identity or human nature is nothing more than that what is constructed in relation to others. It can therefore never be perceived as universal and stable, but must be seen as established in a definite social and temporal formation.

Sigmund Freud, however, asserted in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (1923-25) that biology is the key determinant of gender identity, he also claimed that each child has both a masculine and a feminine disposition. He believed that there is no natural gender, but that gender is formed on the basis of with which parent the child chooses to identify him- or herself. If the child relates mostly to its father, it will bring about the masculinity in the child's character. If it identifies more with its mother, on the other hand, it will give rise to the more feminine traits in the child's character, whereas Jacques Derridá, on the other hand, believed that identities, as they traditionally are defined, do not really exist. He asserted that identities are simply constructs of the mind, primarily of language, and that all is dependent on something outside themselves, something that is absent and contrasting (*Margins of Philosophy* (1982); pp 21-25). Although, many of the theories presented by these thinkers seem out-dated, they form the basis of the redefinition of gender. Marx' identity construction, Freud's rejection of the natural gender, Bhabha's 'third space' as well as Derridá's theory that identity is constructs of the mind, are all theories that contribute to alternate and redefined perceptions of what gender is.

The portrayal of gender roles is interesting to observe through literature, in particular, because the characterization and narrative position of these roles disclose the author's perception of what gender is, and how it is constructed. However, historically, most fictional literature that has been published has been written by men, and most protagonists have thus been male. In addition, the depiction of women have mostly been made by male authors, and consequently from a male perspective; a perspective that Derridá labels *phallogocentrism*, i.e. *a structure or style of thought, speech, or writing (often considered as typical of traditional western philosophy, culture, or literature), deconstructed as expressing male attitudes and reinforcing*

male dominance (Oxford dictionaries 'phallogocentrism'). Ancient works such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by Homer, both estimated to have been written as early as the end of eighth century BC, and earlier works for YA readers like Mark Twain's *Complete Short Stories; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954), J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) as well as the more recent *A Game of Thrones* series (George R. R. Martin 1996-2011) are all written by men, mainly present male heroes, and are thus all examples of the phallogocentric tradition of the Western canon.

Fortunately, during the 20th century, more female authors entered the scene, also presenting Young Adult (YA) heroic literature, and the narrating of women from a female perspective became more commonplace. Virginia Woolf, for one, became an important female contributor to changing the canon when she in 1929 published *A Room of One's Own*, where she criticized the Western canon, the scarcity of female authors, the lack of depiction of women's everyday lives, and where she emphasized that creativity is dependent on freedom, both financial and intellectual, and that it therefore is essential that women have their own money and a room that is their own (encyclopaedia.com 'Virginia Woolf'). Nevertheless, female protagonists have been hard to come by, and in current heroic novels, such as the abovementioned *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the *Harry Potter* series the main characters have all been male, as opposed to the *Hunger Games* trilogy that presents Katniss Everdeen as a specimen heroine for today's youth.

Hence, since there has been a severe lack of female protagonists in YA literature, it has been difficult to study varieties within the portrayal of women and their role in the societies in which they are set, and thus the discussions revolving their gender and gender formation have been few. Suzanne Collins however, the immensely successful woman behind the *Hunger Games* series, consisting of the books *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009) and finally *The Mocking Jay* (2010), has been able to present a feminist character in the creation of her dystopian trilogy, and has hereby contributed to the establishment of a gender neutral literary environment.

To take a step back, and look at Collins' background, she is known as an American author and screenwriter, born 1962, who in the early 1990s started her career working with children's television. However, even though she was widely recognized within the area of children's TV, her reputation grew excessively with her entering the YA arena, first with the bestselling fantasy/war series, *The Underland Chronicles*, and finally in publishing *The Hunger Games*

(*HG*) series (2008-2010). The series has received a tremendously positive response, not only among YA readers, but among adult readers as well. It has sold over 100 million copies worldwide, and has appeared on bestseller lists ever since it was published in 2008 (suzannecollinsbooks.com). In addition, unlike many authors, Collins has managed to equally astonish both girls and boys, even though the protagonist in this dystopian series is female.

The dystopian literature might perhaps offer a better arena for feminism, in that it is able to flip the table, and create a setting where it is possible to turn the hierarchy of the world upside down, and thus makes the reader able to see inequality and injustice in clarity. Letting oneself be absorbed in a society, where women are treated or act equally to men, without it seeming staged and unnatural, is beyond a thought experiment, it is a powerful relief.

To illustrate the struggles and difficulties that women have had to endure to be treated equally with men, and to have their voices heard both in society and through literature, the history of feminism, feminists and feminist literature will be presented in the next chapter. Moreover, a range of various important theorists and critics will be portrayed to provide background, give support to- and justify theories regarding identity and gender roles.

Two of the most noticeable gender theorists dealt with in this thesis are Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, who have both played a significant part in stirring up the conventional notion of sex and gender, and who have contributed to social change through their important works. The existentialist and feminist, Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) gave human history a feminist perspective through her work *The Second Sex* (1949), where she criticized women's role as the second and less important sex in society, and made an attempt to redefine the term 'gender' to be something that you require rather than something you are born with. However, the most significant theorist and the one most dealt with in this thesis is Judith Butler (b.1956), an American professor and literary critic, who through her works became highly influential in political philosophy, ethics and especially in the fields of feminist, queer and literary theory. She first became known for her critical work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), and later *Bodies That Matter* (1994), (Snl.no, Judith Butler). These works build and elaborate on Beauvoir's theories, and explain gender as performative acts that depend on dominant societal norms. Beauvoir and Butler are both acknowledged as pioneers within feminist theory, which is looked upon as an extension of feminism, however with more emphasis on theoretical and philosophical discourse. It focuses on analyzing gender inequality,

in areas such as discrimination, (sexual) objectification, patriarchy, oppression and stereotyping (Moi 117).

In addition, the thesis also portrays earlier theorists such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Derridá and Homi K. Bhabha, who are of great importance philosophically, because their theories were some of the first to break the ideological ground for new thought about gender and identity. Their theories have by many been used as a basis for further analyses, and in this case gender and identity issues. Their ideas will separately be dealt with in chapter 3.

Feminist theorists have distinguished sex from gender, and have created a debate around traditional and popular explanations of how sex demands specific social meanings for women's experience. Suzanne Collins is in many ways able to substantiate Butler's and Beauvoir's theories regarding gender performance and gender formation in her *HG* series, and this thesis will give an account of how Collins is able to demonstrate their theories. However, to give a proper description of the development of feminist theory, the next chapter will deal with the history of feminism and feminist writers.

2 Feminism – a brief history

“I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves.”

(Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ch.4)

Traditionally and historically, women have been regarded and treated as inferior to men, often with religious justification, and the term ‘feminism’ can be perceived as a type of opposition against all kinds of patriarchal dominance in every aspect of life. Feminists have endeavored to get rid of all kinds of sexual oppression, and critically question equality and justice within conventional patriarchal social orders. Feminism has for many decades, if not centuries, been related to political activism and movements, where the focus has varied from woman suffrage, the right to education and work, women’s control of their own body in matters of the use of contraceptives and self-determined abortion, to aiming at ridding the society of sexual harassment.

Feminist activism has also affected the way women have been portrayed in literature, and in order to understand how their role has developed throughout times, it is important to take a closer look at some of the women who have made a difference in changing not only the way women are characterized in literary works, but also in entirely changing women’s role in society. For centuries and all over the world, women have let their voice be heard regarding sexual inequality. What today is labelled feminist literature can be traced back to the early 15th century, with the publishing of the Italian and French author Christine de Pisan’s most acknowledged work, *The House of Women* (orig. *Le tresor de la cite des dames*, 1405), which presents women as important and appreciated members of society (Allen 2006). Complaints, hopes, demands and needs have been articulated in all kinds of forms; speeches, letters, poems, novels and songs, to speak out for women’s rights. Literature has furthermore been used as a means to influence, persuade and provoke readers, and thus to raise questions and awareness regarding identity and gender. Very often, the aim has been to reduce gender discrimination, to raise political interest and to make political statements in this matter, and the effort made to gain equal rights is known as *feminism*.

Feminism is defined as “the theory of the political, economic, and the social equality of the sexes or organized activity on behalf of the theory of women’s rights and interests” in the Merriam-Webster dictionary (Merriam-Webster, “feminism”). The Collins dictionary defines it as “the belief and aim that women should have the same rights, power, and opportunities as

men” (Collins Dictionary, “feminism”), whereas the Cambridge Dictionary determines it to be “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state” (Cambridge Dictionary, “feminism”).

The historical development of feminist conviction theory and organized activity has later been defined and categorized into three different key periods, so called ‘waves’, *first-* (19th to early 20th century), *second-*(1960s to early ‘80s) and *third wave feminism* (early 1990s and ongoing). During these feminist movements, feminists have campaigned and fought to ensure women the right to vote, to work, get equal pay, and to be able to govern their own body. Feminists have also, in addition to the above-mentioned political matters, worked for the right to education, to social integration and the equal rights within marriage, to have access to legal abortion, maternity leave, and to be protected from rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment. (Echols 1989), (Kroløkke, Sorensen (2005).

Moreover, the ongoing #Me Too campaign, initiated by Tarana Burke in 2006, with the purpose of revealing the extent of sexual harassment, exploded in October 2017, when actress Alyssa Milano encouraged women to post #*Me Too* as their social status to visualize the enormous problem (Guerra, Cristela 2017). Despite the fact that numerous women through centuries have attempted to alter women’s position and role in society through activism and through literature, and even though laws and norms have changed for the better, this campaign shows that the need of working for equal rights and equal treatment is still not over, quite on the contrary.

2.1 First Wave Feminism

Women are very slow to rouse, but once they are aroused, once they are determined, nothing on earth and nothing in heaven will make women give way; it is impossible.

(Emmeline Pankhurst, 1913)

If we look at the historical development of feminism in broad terms, it can be dated back to the French Revolution in 1789. Due to its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, that still ring supreme for feminist action as much as universal human rights movements, it has been

seen as the arena where the first demands for women's rights were raised. However, in Britain, First Wave Feminism can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when one could observe organized work initiated by Barbara Bodichon (1827-1891) and Bessie Rayner (1829-1925), who organized meetings, where they discussed topical issues, which were to be published in the *English Women's Journal*. These issues revolved around women's inequalities in social and legal matters. Even though these ladies are said to be among the first ones who initiated organized work in order to change the system, they were most likely aware of the fact that there already had been women, however in a much smaller scale, who had addressed this issue much earlier. One example is Anne Knight, (1786-1862), who in 1847 established the Female Political Association, petitioned parliament and demanded votes for women. Another example is Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858), who in 1851 met in the Westminster to argue for women's right to vote (*Wojtczak 2002*).

Still, a significant political change first came about late in the 19th century with the emergence of the Suffragette Movement, led by Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) (Kettler). Pankhurst fought for women's right to vote, and was the founder of the Women's Social Political Union (WSPU) in 1903. The members of the union were known as the Suffragettes, whose slogan was "deeds not words". Their leader Emmeline Pankhurst and many of the other women often operated with militant tactics to achieve their goals, and were often imprisoned for their civil disobedience.

However, in 1918, after women joined the war effort, working in factories and ensuring that men could fight on the front, government was convinced by their contribution, and finally women were given limited suffrage by Parliament in the Representation of the People Act of 1918, (i.e. women over 30 who owned land). Later that year, another law made it possible for women to be elected to Parliament as well, and in 1928, shortly after Pankhurst's death, women were granted full voting rights (parliament.uk)

Moreover, in the USA, the fight for women suffrage was long and hard, and lasted for almost a hundred years. It was initiated by the convention in Seneca Falls in New York in 1848 and lasted until vote was won in 1920 (Campbell 1989, p.14). The wave is to a large extent to be associated with white, well-educated, middle-class women, who focused on women's right to vote, and who after WWI accused their government of being undemocratic. They criticized their country, blaming the government for not upholding freedom and democracy and for lagging behind Germany, where suffrage was already granted women in 1919 (Campbell 1989). The era and their work can be characterized as a period of various types of political

actions, from peaceful demonstrations to more militant tactics like marches, parades and picketing.

To gain vote for women was extremely controversial during this era, and speaking publicly was viewed as discourteous and masculine. A woman's place was in the home, attending to her husband's and children's needs. However, some of the cunning arguments used in women's public persuasion embraced these highly respected values, and said that due to women's expertise and natural maternal talent regarding motherhood and domesticity, they would improve and enrich politics and carry out their roles as housewives and mothers even in a more excellent manner. In addition, arguments regarding the law stated that since men and women in the Constitution were to be regarded as equal, it meant that if women were denied the right to vote, they would, in legal terms, be denied full citizenship. Eventually, the arguments carried through, and suffrage was granted women in 1920 (Campbell 1989, p.14).

2.1.1 Early feminist literature

One of the most important and crucial weapons in the battle for equality has been the use of literature. For many centuries, women have used literature as a means of expressing their view of inequality and the discrimination of women. It has not only been a weapon in the struggle to achieve equal rights, equal treatment and opportunities, but also as a means of enlightenment and influence regarding women's experience with the aim to completely alter the conventional attitudes of the entire society (thoughtco.com).

However, due to male dominated- or phallogocentric societies, in Jacques Derridá's words, and consequently women's inferior position, the tradition of women writing has for centuries to a large extent been ignored. Women's history is thus mainly told through male voices, upholding their inferior position, something that may have been one of the key factors to the slow progress in the struggle for equal rights, opportunities and, as a consequence, mutual respect. In spite of this, however, there are quite a few women who through their writings have made a significant difference in influencing their readers to such an extent that it over the centuries has led to tremendous changes both in political as well as social structures. Many of these women were objects of harsh critique, harassment, imprisonment and even death sentences for publically stating their opinions. One of the most important feminist books of all times must be Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which, according to Rachel Holms, has inspired human rights thinking for as long as

three centuries. It is a great feminist text, not only due to the values that it presents, but also because it has *sufficient wit, wisdom, energy and eloquence to inspire change beyond its time, perhaps beyond the imagination of its author.* (Holms, The Guardian 2014, *Top 10 Feminist Books*). Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) must also be addressed as works of great inspiration and change, and which will all be presented more thoroughly further down. Earlier inspirational writers will be dealt with firstly.

2.1.1.1 Jane Anger

One of the women who is viewed as one of the earliest writers of feminist theory is Jane Anger, who in 1589, during the Renaissance, wrote *Jane Anger, Her Protection for Women* as a response to the pamphlet *Boke, his Surfeyt in love* (published 1588). The latter published pamphlet criticised women for being morally corrupted, and Jane Anger wrote a full-scale defense for women, speaking up for women as the righteous and purer sex, who could only be demoralized by men who mislead them. The pamphlet was published by the British essayist Ja. A. Gent., and even though the text had a feminine voice, the gender of the author was questioned. There is no evidence, however, to whether the essayist was female, or if her name was a strikingly appropriate pseudonym, but if so was the case, she would have been the first Englishwoman to have published an essay debating gender issues (encyclopedia.com "Jane Anger").

2.1.1.2 Rachel Speght

On the other hand, Rachel Speght (1597-?), was the first woman registered, who under her own name published a pamphlet speaking up for women. She was an English poet and gender critic who publicly addressed Joseph Swetmen in his misogynistic *The Araigntment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (London, 1615). In her pamphlet, she disputes his use of irony and mocking on women's behalf, and rather emphasizes women's worth in a response to his denouncing of them. She argues that it would be blasphemy to consider women evil or inferior by nature, since God created woman as an equal partner to man. Even though she might not have been a defined feminist, her writing demonstrates courage and

involvement regarding women's equality in matters of salvation and education (Lewis 2017), (Bartholomae 2001, 61-64).

2.1.1.3 Olympe de Gouges

An additional and noteworthy woman fighting for gender equality was the French playwright Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793), who literally died for the cause due to her critique regarding equality for women (Lewis 2017). In 1791, she wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen*, built on the National Assembly's *Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, an open critique of the exclusion of women who were not granted citizenship, regardless of the fact that they eagerly took part in the French Revolution (1789). De Gouges claimed her right to be an active citizen, to openly speak up for women's capability and reason, and refused to be silent on the Rights on Woman. Due to her asserted conspiring and delirious behaviour, she was arrested by the Jacobins and Girondists and beheaded in 1793 (Lewis 2017).

2.1.1.4 Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97), however, is an English woman who is known to many as the mother of feminism. Her life consisted of long periods of unhappiness and struggle, but it also held elements of happiness and joy. Through her life, she encountered numerous situations related to oppression, neglect, betrayal and abuse of women, and personally experienced the afflictions that both marriage and childbirth might include. Nevertheless, or perhaps due to this, she became an accepted intellectual and critic, who through literature, both prose and factual, mainly argued for the rights of women to be educated (Lewis 2017). She is renowned as the author of one of the most significant documents written for women's rights, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1791), written in the wake of the French Revolution. It is considered to be her main work among a large number of publications, which explored issues regarding women's right to be educated, women's equality, women's status and the role they had both in public and private life concerning both political and domestic rights. She firmly believed that educating women would not only enlighten women, but also eventually ensure

them equality (Lewis 2017). In the introduction of her work, she criticizes earlier books written about the reform of education for women:

I attribute [these problems] to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men, who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers ... the civilised women of this present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.

(*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 1791, Introduction)

In chapter 12, she also suggests that a national education system should be established, and that it should be run as mixed sex schools (British Library, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’). She addresses the same issues as Virginia Woolf later heavily emphasizes, also in arguing for the importance of women’s right to have an income of their own.

Although her work was well received among her liberal friends, it was generally not well responded to in its time of publication, and her reputation was severely damaged when her memoirs were published by her husband William Godwin, and her first daughter Fanny Imlay’s suicide, and her second daughter Mary Godwin’s elope were both ascribed to their mother’s feminist values. Due to her squandered reputation, it took almost fifty years for a new edition of her work to be published, and with the second edition of 1844, the editor has hopefully added in his introduction:

During the last few years, however, the public mind has made considerable progress towards the attainment of juster views on this subject ... We may indulge the hope, that, ere long, women will be in some degree emancipated from the degraded and demoralized condition to which the caprices or the passions of the opposite sex have hitherto condemned them. (Ibid.).

Even though it is more than two centuries since Mary Wollstonecraft’s publication, her words still echo in feminist movements today, and she has been a huge inspiration for feminists and feminist writers all over the world.

2.1.1.5 Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Another renowned women's rights activist, who partook in organizing the 1848 woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, is Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902). In spite of fierce resistance, she insisted on putting forward a demand for women's suffrage. The demand is known as the *Declaration of Sentiments*, and had its origin in the *Declaration of Independence*. It was made to correlate the women's movement to the struggles of the Founding Fathers. This statement, addressing the oppression of women both politically and socially was unsurprisingly met with severe hostility, and is today looked upon as the beginning of the women's rights movement in the USA (Cokely, 2017). Stanton is therefore considered to be one of the mothers of woman suffrage.

After the convention, she continued to travel around the country holding speeches and lectures concerning women's suffrage. Together with Susan B. Anthony, she founded the organisation National Woman Suffrage Association (NSWA) in 1869, which later joined another feminist group, and merged into the National American Woman Suffrage Association, where she held the position as president until 1890 (Biography.com, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton").

2.1.1.6 Virginia Woolf

In the beginning of the 20th century, however, Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), one of the most influential writers regarding feminist criticism made her appearance. She was a modernist writer, who is considered to be one of the pioneers within feminist literature and criticism. *A room of One's Own* (1929) in particular is an essay, which addresses the inequalities and differences between men and women regarding education and the opportunity to write. She points to the fact that since women do not have their own money, they lack both power and the position to buy a room of their own. This has further led to a systematically restrain of women's creativity throughout the ages, since women's work did not get equal praise or attention, and was hardly ever published (Lombardi 2016).

Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time . . . (Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* 1929; 112).

Woolf is through this work recognized for having exposed the whole domain of modern feminist criticism, and is credited for breaking the entire gender taboo (Lombardi 2016). In her fantasy biography *Orlando* (1928), which was written as a parody in order to be well received by that time's audience, she also examines gender performativity and gender fixity (wordpress.com "Gender performativity in Virginia Woolf's Orlando"). The famous and well-known opening of the novel reads: 'He – for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it – was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor' (11), and later in chapter four that '[clothes] change our view of the world and the world's view of us' (132). These suggestions have later been theorised by Judith Butler, and are very much in accordance to her theory of gender performance. Woolf's ideas are thus also in accordance to what might be suggested in Collins's *HG* series.

Woolf heavily criticized the patriarchal attitude, the neglect of feminine literature, and shed light upon the uncountable stories never told, which again has led to a depiction of women through male voices, and in most cases as sexual beings in relation or non-relation to men. It was her literary style, the stream of consciousness, characteristic for modernist literature that enabled her to do so, in that she could make use of her own personal thoughts, and thereby reveal opinions and feelings on the matter (Lombardi 2016).

2.2 Second Wave feminism

Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression.

(Nelson Mandela 1994, The O'Malley Archives")

Woolf's works and ideas belong perhaps more to the second wave feminism than to the first, even though the time of publications does not correspond with the categorization of the two periods. This might be because second wave feminism is mostly related to the women's liberation movement, which mainly took place during the 1960s and early 1970s. In the USA, this movement arose in the wake of many other movements, such as students' protests, anti-Vietnam - , lesbian and gay - and civil rights movements. The second-wave feminism is defined as radical feminism, and predominantly revolved around "women's oppression", and was a period characterized by collective political activism and militancy (Kroløkke, Scott

2005, *Three Waves of Feminism: From Suffragettes to Grrls*). Whereas the first wave feminists focused on suffrage for women, the second wavers addressed the patriarchal defined society, and devoted themselves to ‘liberation’ from its oppressiveness. Their aim was to focus attention on inequality created on behalf of the female body itself, and how the perception of gender differences actually has been constructed (Ibid.).

Second wave feminism comes in many forms, and according to Julia Wood (1994), the question is not whether you are a feminist or not, but rather what kind of feminist you are (p.106). Among some of the most noteworthy feminist groups, however, we find the Redstockings and the New York Radical Feminists. These groups were activists, carrying out their critique regarding women being objects and victims of a patriarchal society, who were oppressed by a commercialized beauty culture (Freeman 1975). They put issues like sexuality, family and reproductive rights on the agenda, and focused attention on domestic violence and marital rape issues. The first battered women shelters and rape crisis were organized and established during this period, and they managed to bring to pass changes in the divorce and custody law, as well as drawing attention to inequalities at the workplace (Britannica.online “Second wave feminism”), (Davis 2017).

2.2.1 Modern feminist literature

The feminist writers of the 20th century completely changed how society had traditionally viewed women. Topics like sex, prostitution, abortion, education and work were thoroughly explored and heavily debated, and the history of women’s subordination in a patriarchal society came to be profoundly criticized. To understand how these women contributed in changing the society, it is important to look at issues that some of these women put forward.

2.2.1.1 Simone de Beauvoir

For the feminists of the second wave, Simone de Beauvoir’s main work, *The Second Sex* (Le Deuxième Sexe, 1949), became a work of great importance. One of her most famous quotes, which also can be perceived as the focal point of the second wave, was *one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman* (1949; 267/The Second Sex 1971; 295). She argued that women could not be truly liberated until there was a change in the structure of the patriarchal society.

She stated the fact that women were acting the way they were, because of how they had been taught and socialized to be and act like. She meant that viewing women as having an eternal feminine nature was dangerous, and a way for men to oppress and exclude women from their knowledge, their work, careers and consequently their power. Even the expression ‘woman’s nature’ occurred oppressive to de Beauvoir, because women were encouraged or even forced to deal with femininity, motherhood and domestic chores rather than involve themselves in politics and technology or in matters of any external concern. She even called motherhood an enslavement of women, being instructed to concern themselves with their ‘divine nature’. ‘Given that one can hardly tell women that washing up saucepans is their divine mission, they are told that bringing up children is their divine mission’ (Simone de Beauvoir, 1982). This was a way of portraying women as second-class citizens, hence the title of her book: *The Second Sex*. Simone de Beauvoir’s idea of feminism was not to reject anything masculine in society, but rather to transform society’s nature and women’s role in it. Her work and relevance to this thesis will be further elaborated on and separately dealt with in chapter four.

2.2.1.2 Betty Friedan

Another key second wave feminist, who also became a spokesperson for women’s liberation, and who in many ways is seen as the initiator of the second wave feminism, is Betty Friedan, who combined theory with activism. Her most renowned work on the subject is *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), a book that was one of the most important and influential texts on feminism during the 1960s (Encyclopaedia Britannica ‘Betty Friedan’). The book addresses ‘the problem that has no name’, and depicts the plight of the American woman during the 1950s and 60s.

“In almost every professional field, in business and in the arts and sciences, women are still treated as second-class citizens. It would be a great service to tell girls who plan to work in society to expect this subtle, uncomfortable discrimination--tell them not to be quiet, and hope it will go away, but fight it. A girl should not expect special privileges because of her sex, but neither should she "adjust" to prejudice and discrimination”

(Friedan 1963, *The Feminine Mystique* 508)

The book focuses attention on the increasing unhappiness and discontent among housewives, which in many cases seemed to lead to identity crisis. In a series of interviews, she discovers that the women feel socially pressed and forced into fulfilling an idealized role of domestic femininity, a ‘feminine mystique’, a romanticized view of women as homemakers, which was encouraged and exploited through media, education and academic theories. In her work, Friedan concludes that women are unable to develop into independent beings as long as they only function as housewives, and that both men and women should avoid pursuing the ‘feminine mystique’, and rather be encouraged to seek self-completion and –realization through education. Betty Friedan’s book has encouraged women to pursue another way of life than family and domesticity, and has helped change society in a fundamental manner (Michals 2017).

2.3 Third-Wave Feminism

Yr a big grrrl now; you’ve got NO REASON NOT TO FIGHT!!!

(Bikini Kill)

Even though it might be difficult to define the exact shift of feminist waves, the third-wave feminism can be traced back to the mid-1990s in Washington. It emerged among the Generation Xers, born in the 1960s and 1970s, who profited from their previous generation’s fight for equality between the sexes. It literally can be said to have entered the stage with the appearance of the Riot Grrrl bands, who have represented a feminist subculture that have connected feminist consciousness with the use of punk music and politics (Garrison 2000, 142). They went up against music scene sexism and encouraged the ethic of punk regarding an anti-consumer do-it-yourself attitude. Using music as an alibi, the Riot Grrrls arranged meetings and national conferences on a regular basis, and walked in the footsteps of their previous generation of feminists, encouraging women to partake in discussions regarding both music and their encounter with sexism, body image and identity. They were known to be activists who performed and published their messages to the public (British library. Riot Grrrl). Some of the most known Riot grrrl bands are Bikini Kill, Bratmobile and Heavens to Betsy, who address issues such as sexuality, patriarchy, domestic abuse, rape, racism and female empowerment (Hutchinson 2015).

Even though the first- and second wave feminists came a long way regarding legal rights and protections, the third wavers felt discontent with women's position, and the group's main focus in recent decades has thus been to finish the work that their previous generations initiated (Britannica.com).

Because many of the women initiating the Third Wave Feminism were born and raised by women of the second wave, they were raised with expectations of success and opportunities for women, at the same time as they were made aware of the impediments produced by sexism, racism and classism. Their fight against the patriarch society was characterized by the use of irony in matters of sexist, racist and classist symbols, their focus on survival in matters of violence and grassroot activism and radical democracy in their battle against continued exclusion.

What has largely motivated third-wave feminists has been the urge to establish and develop a feminist theory and politics that recognizes opposing experiences and that dismantles categorical thinking. Instead of certainty, they have welcomed ambiguity, inclusion and exploration. (Rebekka Walker xxxiii, in Kroløkke p.16), thus challenging various and unconventional views of womanhood and encountering manifold intersections regarding matters like race, sex, gender and class (Walker 1995; 138).

Third-wave feminism is in many ways unorganized and chaotic, in that there is not one kind of feminism, but many, which in themselves are complex and chaotic. In the USA, it is common to label this era Grrrl feminism, whereas it in Europe is labelled new feminism. Their common denominator is the redefinition of feminism, and their work is closely associated with the consequences of globalization and the reconstruction and reorganization of power in the world. In many ways, it also reflects the many and differing interests, attitudes and viewpoints among feminists all over the world, and attempts to create global alliances between the wide variety of groups that have emerged (Kroløkke 2005, 18).

What has defined the third-wave feminists is not necessarily their theoretical and/or political positions, but rather their strategy of using performance, mimicry and turmoil to create attention regarding their cause. Their effort has been focused around redefining women from being on one hand weak and passive, virginal and faithful, or on the other hand dominant, demanding and slutty, to be proven confident and decisive, strong and in charge of their own sexuality (Kroløkke 2005; 18).

The important outcome of the Riot Grrrl movement is that it has gathered not only young women but also men to speak out against oppression, abuse and sexism. It has also found a new arena where young people can be reached to be reminded that oppression and sexism still need to be fought, and that each individual still needs to fight for her right to define herself. In the case of the Riot Grrrl movement its audience has been reached through performance, for others, as presented here, it is vital to use literature as the most important arena to awaken new and older generations, and to contribute to gradually changing the values in society, in this matter appreciating equal treatment among the sexes and among the different genders.

2.3.1 Current feminist literature

The literary landscape of today is in western societies wider and more open than ever before, and criticizing male dominated cultures does not require bravery or anonymity, nor is it looked upon as controversial or associated with any form of taboo. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the fight for gender equality has come to a halt. Ideas, philosophies and theories are continuously being outlined, and these help meet the agenda of improving women's conditions in society.

2.3.1.1 Judith Butler

One of the most renowned theorists who has played an important part in modern feminist theory is the previously mentioned gender theorist Judith Butler. She is known to be very critical towards previous feminist theorists, and she has felt it necessary to reconsider and redefine gender identity. She presented a theory that gender was something that was performed rather than something natural or biological. She brought about this essential feminist shift in her works *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), and her books have been an inspiration to emerging movements which have dealt with queer and transgender politics, and have been the theoretical reference to “performance third-wave feminism”. Her views are built on the sex/gender distinction presented by Simone de Beauvoir, who claimed that *one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a whole that produces*

this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine (249).

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler explains that whereas sex is determined by nature, gender is constructed by culture and politics, and is therefore imposed. She asserts that due to this, acts, gestures and enactments are performative, because they are manufactured and preserved with the use of corporal signs and other discursive means, and in that way suggesting that gender is fabricated as an interior essence (1990; 136). As will be thoroughly portrayed, discussed and analyzed in this thesis, is how Collins makes use of Butler's theory of gender performance and gender formation in the portrayal of her protagonist. Katniss Everdeen entails both feminine and masculine qualities, and she makes use of these qualities in areas where they are required, and her performance thus creates a debate to whether she is some sort of hybrid between the two sexes.

Beauvoir's focus on women's sexuality and the consequences of living in a patriarchal society, as well as Butler's critique of the idea of a universal experience of womanhood have gained great attention and have been of significant importance for feminist progress and regarding the redefinition of gender. As mentioned in connection to Beauvoir, both of these women's works and theories will be dealt with more thoroughly in chapter 4.

2.4 Fourth Wave Feminism?

Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength.

G.D. Anderson (author, videographer and feminist)

During the 21st century, it seems that third wave feminism has shifted into a fourth wave. Using the internet as an increasingly important arena, contemporary feminists have changed the focus from legal equality to a sort of discrimination which in many ways is more difficult to define and measure, and thus more difficult to fight. It deals with issues ranging from pay gap, stereotyping and preference of male applicants on the job market to sexual harassment and sexual aggression.

In an examination of feminist history made by Elasaïd Munro (2013), second wave feminism is described as an era where the focus was to get rid of the gender stereotypes, and to convince men that feminism was of equal importance to them. What was unfortunate during this era, though, was that all women were viewed as a homogenous group. However, third

wave feminism is characterized as a period that has been shaped by academic investigations of queer theory, which has resulted in a greater understanding and acceptance of bisexual and trans identities. Still, it has been criticized for aiming attention at the liberation of the individual, creating micropolitics, rather than setting a political agenda, thus making it more difficult to make formal changes (Munro 2103; 22-23).

2.4.1 Social media as digital battleground

Fourth wave feminism, on the other hand, is seen as more of a ‘call-out’ culture. Feminists use social media as an arena where they challenge sexism and misogyny. Social media has made it easier to gather a global community of feminists, promoting and boosting the discussions and actions (Munro, 23), and Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, among many, have been important digital battlegrounds regarding digital activism. Still, this kind of activism seems to create disagreement among feminists regarding which matters should be focused on.

One of the more recent global campaigns that has gained massive support, and that has created an international debate is the #MeToo hashtag on Twitter. Although the phrase was originally initiated by African American woman rights activist Tarana Burke in 2006, the support escalated immensely when actress Alyssa Milano posted it as a Twitter hashtag when Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was accused of sexual assault. She requested other women to do the same in order to demonstrate the problem of sexual violence (Guerra, Cristela 2017).

According to a study made by Mendes, Ringrose and Keller (Mendes et al. 2018), hashtag feminism has developed into one of the most popular methods of feminist activism. It appears to raise feminist awareness, and seems to create a new wave of solidarity. With hashtags like #BeenRapedNeverReported and #MeToo, the focus seems to have turned from a personal to a structural problem. However, women have also experienced harassment for posting on anti-rape hashtags, but they still feel it is safer to contribute in feminist activism on Twitter and other online platforms, rather than on the street, in workplaces and schools or among family and friends. Even though their findings expose a complex picture of the effects of digital activism, it looks as if the hashtag campaigns may have the effect of leading to shifts in

consciousness and in laying the grounds for a common social change and a more equitable society (Mendes et al 239, 241-242).

To understand the challenging perspective that Collins takes in her depiction of Katniss Everdeen in her creation of the Hunger Games, it is imperative to know and understand the struggle that women have had in their fight for equality, both legally and socially. Theory and findings presented in this chapter, will be assigned to the study of Katniss Everdeen and other characters in the trilogy in chapter 5, in matters of performance, expectations and formation of gender in its dystopian society. The next chapter, however, will discourse on theorists on whom these women have based their theories.

3 Early theorists of the human psyche

Many modern gender theorists generally base their ideas on earlier theorists' findings and conclusions, and the discussion of the relation between mind and body is one that never ceases to take new directions. Although many of the early theorists may be ridiculed today, they designed groundbreaking ideas in their time, which have functioned as foundation for newer and more developed ideas in more recent time. This chapter will present three of the most noteworthy philosophers of the 20th century, who are of great importance as a foundation for the later developed theories regarding gender and gender performance. The three chosen are Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Jacques Derridá (1930-2004) and Homi K. Bhabha (b.1949).

3.1 Sigmund Freud

The great question that has never been answered and which I have not been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is 'What does a woman want?'

(Sigmund Freud.

Quoted in Ernest Jones (ed.), 468)

One of the most significant theorists of modern times is the Austrian neurologist and founder of the psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who developed some of the most outstanding theories regarding the human psyche (Jay) and thus presents the foundation of theories on which many modern theorists base their later elaborated or contradictory studies. In introducing new theories, Freud was able to alter people's mindset, and he is still regarded as highly important in the field of psychology. He is acknowledged for many of the psychological terms that are used today. Terms like the *Oedipus Complex*, the theory of how the mind is structured as the *id*, *ego* and *super-ego*, based on how the critical and moral side of the human psyche struggles to overcome the uncoordinated and instinctual one, as well as his theories of *the unconscious* and *the subconscious* have become general knowledge (Mannoni 2015; 49-51, 152-54).

In his discussion of sex and sexuality, Freud radically introduces children's sexuality, how it is related to – and affected by parental affection, and how sex, fantasy, love, in conjunction with ambivalence, are consciously and unconsciously on humans' minds. He was of the

opinion that sexuality is both a person's weakness and strength, and that it is what motivates and measures us more than anything else. Also, in the matter of gender, he was open for alternative definitions. As an example, we might read in a letter from 1935, when he quite controversially responded to an anxious mother, who wanted to cure her son of his homosexuality, that *[h]omosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness [...]*, (1951; 787). He also stated that *we are accustomed to say that every human being displays both male and female instinctual impulses, needs, and attributes, but the characteristics of what is male and female can only be demonstrated in anatomy, and not in psychology* (Freud and Riviere 1930, 1994; 35).

Freud's deconstruction and redefinition of sexuality and gender was the initiation of a debate that has been met with both enthusiasm and fierce critique, and is a matter, which most probably never will be concluded. Even though he has been heavily criticized for his condescending view of women, his theories have been received as essential, due to the insight they have provided regarding women's sexuality and gender identification. He provocatively stated that *women oppose change, receive passively, and add nothing of their own* (1925), and asserted that women suffer from *penis envy*, and simply regarded women as men who lack penises. Due to this alleged deficiency, he was of the opinion that women always feel inferior to men. Women will therefore always strive to reach up to men's level, but that, according to Freud, is a matter that is completely irresolvable (Freud, Strachey 1975). Freud's theories came about at a time when women had far less position in society than men, and he did therefore not receive as much criticism as he would have in more modern times. His ideas and findings regarding women were consequently not viewed as particularly degrading or discriminating, but rather in accordance to the phallogocentric society that he was a part of at the time. Simone de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex* thus became a radical critical response to Freud's theories.

3.2 Jacques Derridá

However, *phallogocentrism* was a new term that was introduced within critical theory and deconstruction. *Phallogocentrism* is defined to be *a structure or style of thought, speech, or writing (often considered as typical of traditional western philosophy, culture, or literature), deconstructed as expressing male attitudes and reinforcing male dominance; phallogocentrism*

implicitly communicated in or through language (oxforddictionaries.com). It is assigned to the Algerian-born French philosopher Jacques Derridá (1930-2004), and is defined by Derridá himself as *the system of metaphysical oppositions* (1978; 20). He was of the opinion that this system has been prevalent in Western philosophy, which up until recent times solely has been written by men. His works *Of Grammatology* (1976) and later *Writing and Difference* (1978), where he criticized binary oppositions and dichotomous thought, have been highly influential regarding feminist deconstructive philosophy. Derridá asserted that Western philosophy was built around *classic dualities*; male/female, man/woman, white/black, where one term is always superior or above the other. He stated that the superior term is above the other because it is viewed as the original, and is the one that came first. Therefore, the other part of the binary construction would be looked upon as subordinate and inferior. The superior term has traditionally been the one seen in relation to the *phallos* and the *logos*; hence the term *phallogocentrism* (oxforddictionaries.com). Derridá claims that the oppositions are unnatural and a part of a [...] *violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other [...] or has the upper hand* (1981; 41). The other and subordinate term is represented as *the Other*, and is, according to Derridá chaotic and unformed. Thus, he was of the opinion that there is inequality in language itself, since woman appears inferior to man.

Derridá also asserted that in our phallogocentric society *there is no one place for women* (1979; 70), which does not entail that she has a fixed static identity, but rather that she is able to move inside and outside of masculine and feminine boundaries. Derridá labels this movement *dance*, and claims that it is empowering woman, rather than viewing it as *synonymous with powerlessness or fragility* (McDonald, Derrida 1982; 69). He was, however, also of the opinion that in her struggle to position herself and reverse the power structure in society, woman loses either way. Derridá asserts that [...] *she knows that such a reversal would deprive her of her power of simulation, that in truth, a reversal of this kind would [...] force her just as surely into the old apparatus* (Derridá, Agosti 1979; 61). That means that if she seeks to turn the tables, and tries to deprive man of his sexual power, she would nonetheless end up as a subject to the masculine power structure. If, however, she decides not to operate within this structure, it is to her benefit, because she avoids being subject to it, at the same time as she is not weakened. Derridá thinks that a woman's power is the capability of accessing the masculine arena when or if she wants, and still not make herself subject to it (72).

Furthermore, Derridá is known to be the founder of *deconstruction*, where he criticized both literary and philosophical institutions. His attempt was to create a new understanding of the difference, or *differánce* that splits our self-consciousness, and above all an attempt to carry out justice. Derridá criticizes how philosophy has always sought to reduce the world in order to explain it. He asserts that structuralism is caught in “metaphysics”, a network of assumptions, concepts and attitudes to the world , and is critical to “*structuralist gesture*”, which he claims to be common to all theoretical or philosophical thought (Waugh 303). In Derrida’s developing the concept deconstruction, he questions the idea of “a single truth”, and argues against the statement that interpretation involves the *hermeneutical recovery of a specific meaning or message disclosed by a particular text* (Waugh 312).

Derrida seeks an alternative to the deconstruction of “metaphysics”, and states:

You can’t (or you shouldn’t) simply dismiss those values of dwelling, functionality, beauty and so on. You have to construct, so to speak, a new space and a new form, to shape a new way of building in which these motifs and values are reinscribed, having meanwhile lost their external hegemony (Waugh 318).

In this way, he explains how deconstruction is a way of reorganizing concepts and ideas that we might have taken for granted, dismantling their established authority in order to do something different with them. (Waugh 304). So in order to deconstruct the notion of woman, you firstly have to accept the subordinate term, then you must stir up the binary, and finally generate the differences. Altogether, Derridá, argues that identities, as they traditionally are defined, do not really exist. He asserts that identities are simply constructs of the mind, primarily of language, and that all is dependent on something outside themselves, something that is absent and contrasting (1982; pp.21-25).

Derridá’s theories can to some extent be found in the depiction of several of the characters in the HG series, and especially the protagonist. Since her character is portrayed as having both female and male qualities, it is difficult to define her as belonging to either of the two sexes. Reorganizing and deconstruction is in her case necessary.

3.3 Homi K. Bhabha

One of the more modern critical thinkers and theorists, who has explored and developed theories within post-structuralism and the fields of psychoanalysis, is the Indian English literary and cultural critic Homi K. Bhabha (b.1949). Although his terminology more or less derives from ideas and terminology developed by both Freud and Derridá, among others, many of his theories and ideas have been viewed as profoundly unconventional. Nonetheless, they have been immensely influential, foremost in the area of colonial, post-colonial, and globalized culture. However, although the main part of his work concerns post-colonialism, his ideas have also been an inspiration within a vast amount of other areas, such as human rights, theology and feminist theories, to mention a few (Huddart). His theories about *third space*, *hybridity*, *ambivalence*, *mimicry* and *in-betweenness* (Bhabha 1994) have later been transferred to concern gender theory, in order to dissolve the conventional notion of gender binaries.

The *Third Space* is explained by Bhabha as a scope that appears between colliding cultures (1991). He asserts that it is an area of negotiation and translation, and that *by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves* (Bhabha 1994 p. 38-39). It is a liminal space *which gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.* (Bhabha 1990; 211). In this *Third Space*, or *in-between* scope, other and new forms of identities arise and change, and will always be in a continuous state of developing. It also opens up for the idea that every person is unique in the way that she is a *hybrid* or a mixture of various identity factors. Bhabha asserts that the third space is where a person is able to locate her own culture. And it is perhaps in this *third space* that Katniss Everdeen with her mixed qualities is able to *locate* herself. Bhabha states that when being placed in between two borders, or two or several cultures, one finds oneself in a position, which cannot be defined by either one of the two cultures. *For it is by living on the borderline of history and language, on the limits of race and gender, that we are in a position to translate the differences between them into a kind of solidarity* (Bhabha 1994; 170). The third space can therefore be seen as a manner of articulation, where a productive space is being described, instead of solely a reflective one. Such a space will bring forth a new and alternative possibility, a space that can be described as *interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative* (Bhabha 1994). This creates new

ideas of cultural meaning, and makes limitations of defined boundaries indistinct. Moreover, this results in questioning defined and acknowledged categorizations of culture and identity. This hybrid third space, Bhabha states, is an undefined position where the meaning or representation of a culture has no *primordial unity or fixity* (Bhabha 1994). It can in many ways be compared to the abovementioned *differánce*, which was coined by Derridá, where divergence is acknowledged and recognized, allowing new ways of thought.

Bhabha is also renowned for his theories regarding *mimicry*, and foremost regarding colonial mimicry, and the ambition of the colonist to reconstruct the colonized into an *Other*, that for the colonist would be recognizable. In order to construct such a reformed version, the colonized would need to make use of *mimicry*, i.e. to imitate the colonist's actions and culture. However, this reformed version of the *Other*, would never be able to come forth as the *original*, but as an adaption into something that is *almost the same, but not quite* (Bhabha 1984; 86). Bhabha asserts that *mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal* (1994; 122).

What Bhabha means by this, is that it is a process of negotiation, i.e. something that needs to be agreed on, and further states that *[m]imicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the other as it visualizes power* (1994; 122). This entails that mimicry is a type of performance that reveals what is artificial about every symbolic expression of power, and the mimicking of particular codes related to a culture, would show how hollow these cultural codes actually are.

The abovementioned men all lay the foundation for many of the identity – and gender theories that have been presented in modern times. The next chapter will deal with two of the most acknowledged gender theorists of the 20th century, who both drew on ideas and theories that these men developed. Even if they did not completely agree with their findings and conclusions, they made use of their analyses as foundation for thoughts and ideas that they further developed.

4 Two groundbreaking gender theorists

The most acknowledged theorists concerned with the human psyche, gender and identity were up until the mid 20th century almost exclusively men. However, in the wake of feminist activism and changes in society, more women came to be widely recognized due to their radical theories. The theories of two of these women, and one more than the other, will be assigned considerable weight in this thesis, due to their relevance within the field of gender performance and gender construction. The two women in focus are evidently Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler.

4.1 Simone de Beauvoir

On the day when it will be possible for woman to love not in her weakness but in strength, not to escape herself but to find herself, not to abase herself but to assert herself — on that day love will become for her, as for man, a source of life and not of mortal danger.

(Simone de Beauvoir 1949; 669)

One of the most significant and highly influential feminist- and social theorists of the 20th century is the French Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), who was not only acknowledged as a successful writer, but also as an intellectual, an existentialist philosopher, a feminist and a political activist (Bergoffen 2010). Her most renowned work is her study of *The Second Sex* (1949), an essential work of feminist philosophy, where she analyses the treatment and oppression of women through history. Although her treatise was met with controversy and indignation among conservative people and perhaps Catholics in particular, (the book was actually banned by the Vatican, and came on the *List of Prohibited Books* (du Plessix Gray), she became a huge inspiration for feminists all around the world. She also inspired the works of other feminist theorists, and many have used her theories as a basis for their own studies. Judith Butler claimed that de Beauvoir was the first to distinguish between *sex* and *gender*, because she treats the term *woman* as an idea or a construct, instead of as an individual or as one being a part of a group. Thus, instead of being born into an identity, *gender* is an identity one gradually acquires (Butler 1986; 35-49).

The essence of de Beauvoir's theory is to reveal how man has seized the sublime role of *the Self*, in which he is the absolute and essential core, the very origin of human. De Beauvoir asserts that in this way, man oppresses woman, because he defines her as an opposition to himself. Man has seized the role of the subject, whereas woman is viewed as an object, or, to put it in Beauvoir's words, as *the Other*. Hence, man becomes the fundament, the finished and the extraordinary. In contrast, we find woman, who, in comparison to man, becomes an object, who is considered inessential, inadequate and unfinished. Man is presented and expected to be the one to act and create, who is the inventive one, whereas woman is portrayed and perceived as the passive and introverted one, and as only having the desire for man to save her.

Through her work, de Beauvoir seeks to map this phallogocentric attitude, and not necessarily make woman crave her position as an active and creative individual. However, indirectly, she attacks Freud's claim that *women oppose change, receive passively, and add nothing of their own* (1925). Beauvoir asserts that *[a] human being is not anything. He is to be measured by his acts* (1989/1949; 257). She emphasizes that the image we have of what a human being is, can only be distinguished through how a person behaves. That means that the social identity of a human being really has got nothing to do with the sex she is born with, but is seen as the product put together by culture and norms, which is variable historically, and is what we consider as being feminine or masculine. She wants to point out that since sex is what we are born with, whereas gender is determined by culture, gender is something that we become. Therefore, it is not possible to detachedly define the female gender, she points out that there is no such thing as an objectively defined woman, but stresses that *"to pose a woman is to pose the absolute Other (...)"* (253). In her opinion, defining woman is to view her in contrast to something else, an opposing parallel, or something greater.

Moreover, de Beauvoir asserts that women are often portrayed by men as being *mysterious*, by Freud included, as mentioned in the previous chapter: *The great question that has never been answered and which I have not been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is 'What does a woman want?'* When men fail to understand aspects of women's behaviour, women are often provided with a sense of mystery. Beauvoir claims that literature always falls short regarding the depiction of women as *mysterious*. Women can be portrayed as odd and mystical when we first encounter them, but as soon as we get a closer look at their character, the mystery disappears. Their secrets are revealed, and they become rational and distinguishable. This does not mean, though, that women's diversity, richness or

intensity is lost, rather it is a request that their behaviour, sentiment and passion should be built upon truth rather than projecting it to some kind of mystery. Beauvoir claims that instead of admitting that he is ignorant in his comprehension of a woman, a man seems to create a mystery outside of himself. Thus, if a man finds that it is impossible to find the secret essence of what he believes is femininity, the reason would be that there in fact is none.

De Beauvoir certainly introduced and problematized several issues regarding sex and gender, which have been central to feminist analysis. However, where she seems to embrace and favour gender and neglect the body, one of her most acknowledged successors, Judith Butler, who based many of her theories on de Beauvoir's studies and findings, sought to do quite the opposite.

4.2 Judith Butler's discussion on gender.

Through her works *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), and later *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1994), Judith Butler has become a mouthpiece and representative for new feminism, women's studies, lesbian and gay studies and queer theory. The introduction of her idea and notion of gender as performance has been viewed as radical and revolutionary, and has laid the foundation for a completely different understanding and perception of what gender is. With her complex and detailed engagement and theory, she has not only paved way for further emancipation of women, but also for an entirely new ideology.

The formerly supposed notions of sex and gender as biologically determined are rejected by Butler. She thus follows Beauvoir in her division between biological sex as assigned at birth and the construction of gender depending on societal and temporal influences, and Derridá's deconstruction of gender binaries . She also renounces the belief in binary opposition of sex and gender, and that there are specific traits and qualities that determine its identity. She is rather of the opinion that sex and gender are created in a social setting, and that they are variable and shifting, and suggests a set of *periodic practices based on performative theory of gender acts that disrupts the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame* (1990; xxxi).

However, in order to understand Katniss Everdeen's role in the Hunger Games series, it is important to elaborate on what is understood by the concept 'gender'. The term has been

discussed, more or less thoroughly, by all of the abovementioned theorists, however the definition of it is much more complex to determine than one should imagine. The definitions are thus manifold, because it is difficult to find one explanation to how the term gender is to be understood and interpreted.

The Oxford Advanced English Dictionary has a number of definitions regarding the term 'gender'. The first definition of relevance is defined as *males or females viewed as a group*, and also *the property or fact of belonging to one of these groups*. A more extended and sufficient definition of the term is listed under *Psychology and Sociology*, and defines the term as *the state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones; the collective attributes or traits associated with a particular sex, or determined as a result of one's sex. Also: a (male or female) group characterized in this way*.

The Oxford online dictionaries have also attempted to give a more explanatory approach, by stating that gender can be defined as *[e]ither of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. The term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female*. This definition is to a certain degree in accordance to Butler's theories of gender performance, but does not elaborate on the varieties, such as fluid gender identities, for instance (Oxford English Dictionary).

The Collins Dictionary, on the other hand, has tried to give a broader definition of the concept, by splitting it into three different interpretations. The first one states that *gender is the state of being male or female in relation to the social and cultural roles that are considered appropriate for men and women*. In the second one, gender is defined as *a countable noun, which can be used to refer to one of a range of identities that includes female, male, a combination of both, and neither*. Finally, it is identified as a variable noun, which is used by *[s]ome people [to] refer to the fact that a person is male or female as his or her gender* (collinsdictionary.com).

The latter definitions point out that the term 'gender' is defined as something different than a person's biological or so called assigned sex. A person's biological sex, includes medical factors, and is dependent on chromosomes, hormones and genitals. Sex is generally given two options; male or female, and does not take into account any social or cultural distinctions. Gender, however, involves much more complex definitions, as attempted above. According to

both de Beauvoir and Butler, in defining gender, it is important to take into consideration both societal, temporal and cultural aspects, as well as the individual's personal notion of self.

Gender must be understood as a modality of taking on or realizing possibilities, a process of interpreting the body, giving it cultural form. In other words, to be a woman is to become a woman; it is not a matter of acquiescing to a fixed ontological status, in which case one could be born a woman, but, rather, an active process of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting received cultural possibilities (Butler 1986, 36).

That means, that you can to some extent determine or choose your own gender. It is not automatically a natural connection between body and gender, i.e. that even though a person's biological sex is female, it does not necessarily entail that the body has to demonstrate so called 'feminine' qualities.

As a foundation for her theories, Butler makes use of Sigmund Freud's perception of how identity is shaped on the basis of what is viewed as normal. Butler's theory of gender as performance, or gender performativity, entails the idea that rather than being natural or biological, gender is constructed through repetitive performances. These performances are formed in terms of bodily and non-verbal discourse, and can never be stable or coherent. Gender is not something that is visible, or something that is determined by nature, neither can it be classified through language or symbols, or patriarch history. Gender is something that we put on, that we "wear", acts that we perform every day, whether it is anxiously or with pleasure. *Gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender (1990, 140).* These acts might express a personal or often cultural history of received meanings. Butler argues that *[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being (1990, 45).* Nevertheless, she explains that gender identity is not a personality that anybody chooses to become. Gender is imitating other people's behaviour unintentionally. An individual's gender is construed through a set of gender norms; norms that have been manufactured and constructed over time, and which have developed into a kind of bodily pattern, which eventually are effectuated and defined as that what constitutes the sex, i.e. the effect of the recurring procedures. The individual is thus *constituted internally by differentially gendered Others and is, therefore, never, as a gender, self-identical (2004, 133).* This imitative method is not free-willed, but rather a *compulsory*

practice, a forcible production (1993, 231), which is meant for the outside world, i.e. recipients who respond to this *repeated stylization*. Butler thus claims that the concept of a so-called natural gender cannot exist outside a social setting. She elaborates on the fact that gender is formed on the basis of culture encounter, and is the series of acts that are done or performed. The sum of these acts gives an impression of our perception of what it is to be a man or a woman. However, our actions are not carried out because we consider ourselves women or men, but quite on the contrary, we consider ourselves women or men because of the ways we act.

Acts, gesture 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, (1990, 417).

We perform these acts, and fabricate them through body language, ‘corporal signs’, and other means of communication, leaving the gendered body to only exist in the act of performance, and as a manufactured reality, and thus create an illusion that regulates our notion of gender. (173). However, Judith Butler asserts that *the distinction between expression and performance is crucial*. This means that we cannot understand gender as a role, which conceals or expresses an ‘interior self’. In this way, genders can be neither true, nor false, neither apparent nor real (528).

We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or something that is simply true about us, a fact about us, but actually it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time, so to say gender is performative is to say that nobody really is a gender from the start (Butler, interview 2011).

That implies that gender cannot be viewed in the light of a stable, discontinuous set of acts, but is actually dependent on social temporality (1990; 392). That means that these acts might and will vary in their setting. Gender is not a stable identity or arrangement of actions. It is defined in time, and must be analyzed as historically determined conditions, structures and identities (snl.no, ‘Judith Butler’). Butler elaborates on this, stating that

[p]erformativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular

'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death (95).

Performativity is also related to an individual's sexuality. Butler states that it is not possible to *be* a certain sexuality. She asserts that your sexuality can be performed, however, by repeating, imitating and even parodying actions. These actions include gestures, movements and various styles, which create an illusion of an existing "self". In conjunction with gender in general terms, sexuality is, according to Butler, a matter of discourse. She thinks that sexuality even through deployment is discursive. It occurs from linguistic formations, which Butler sees as the effect of performance. The concept of one type of sexuality must always be viewed in the light of another. Butler illustrates performative gender with a personal example: *Since I was sixteen, being a lesbian is what I've been* (1993, 310-311). Her example illustrates that there is a distinct difference between being something and to be "*being*" something. She emphasizes that even being something is actually something we perform. This implies taking up a role that one understands in the way that it is performed. We keep repeating what we suppose ourselves to be. We take up a role, which can be conceived in turns of how we perform it. The role that we assume helps us stabilize our identity, and might betray our uncertainty regarding our identity in that we feel that we must continuously repeat our actions to "keep it going".

Butler thus also modifies Freud's view of the concept's relevance to lesbianism, where he claims that lesbians model their acts on how men behave, because that is the ideal, and what is considered to be the norm (Freud 1905). Instead, she claims that all gender, has an embodied perception of gender norms, and thus acts performatively. She states that gender is a part of a cultural code, and illustrates it by bringing in drag performers. The drag performer imitates, parodies and radicalizes the concept of gender, and aims at diminishing the 'true' identities regarding sexuality and gender. Drag performing is a good example of the difference between the body's anatomy of the person performing it and the gender, which he performs (1990, 187). Here the 'outside' appearance gives the image of femininity, while the essence, the body, is actually masculine. Simultaneously, the symbolism is quite on the contrary. It suggests that the body is masculine, and the 'inside' is feminine. However, drag parodies cannot be thought of as parodying the original, but rather what we understand the original to be, the very notion of it, and thereby an imitation *of the myth itself* (188).

Both de Beauvoir and Butler have paved way for alternative perceptions of gender, and have opened up for other theories and studies regarding gender performance and gender construction. The next chapter will, on the basis of these women's principles and theories, mainly deal with the analysis of the female protagonist in the Hunger Games series. It will also comment on other important characters that shed light upon their ideas and that are important as comparison or contrast to the main character.

5 Analysis – *May Your Gender be Ever in Your Favour*

The theme of turning hierarchies and erasing inequalities might be some of the reason why the enthusiasm and passion for literature within the dystopian genre has in general increased remarkably among youth and young adults over the last two decades. The genre has fascinated millions of readers worldwide, and the growing interest can be assigned to several authors. In any case, the genre is far from new, and we can find examples of it dating as far back as the 19th century. Many renowned authors approached the genre during the 20th century, and in the tradition of the Western canon, most novels in this genre as well have been written by men, such as George Orwell with his futuristic novel *1984* (1948) and William Golding with his masterpiece *Lord of the Flies* (1954). In the 21st century, we find Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006, which also earned him the Pulitzer Prize in 2007), (BBC April 17, 2007), followed by the equally popular James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* (2009, filmatized 2014). However, towards the end of the 20th century, Margareth Atwood released her novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), where she raises feminist- and gender issues, questioning women's role and status, and creating a discussion about the treatment of women in modern society, and she thus became an important contributor to feminist literature. In 2017, the novel was made into a tremendously popular film series, and the oppressed handmaids from the series, wearing white bonnets and red dresses have in recent demonstrations come to symbolize inequality and oppression. Moreover, Veronica Roth's successful *Divergent* (2011) also brought about reflections on feminism, and her strong, brave and powerful female characters have contributed to empowering women's position in literature.

Even though the former of these authors have experienced tremendous success regarding their works, they have not achieved the massive interest that the 21st century has seen with the latter, i.e. *The Lord of the Rings*, *Divergent* and the *Hunger Games* series. However, the interest in the fantasy genre initially boomed with the overly popular works of J.R.R. Tolkien. Tolkien published *The Hobbit* in 1937 and *The Lord of the Rings* in 1954, but it was not until the late 1960s that his works came to be popular in the USA. The popularity that Tolkien achieved with his works also affected the literary genre as a whole, and helped create the ongoing wave of fantasy literature (Shippey 2000). Moreover, the massive and expanding interest of the genre can as a matter fact largely be seen in relation to the publication of *The Hunger Games*. Suzanne Collins overwhelmed her audience with her works, and not only was

her young audience astonished, but the film industry also saw the potential profit that could be achievable by producing films of this overly popular material. In honour of Collin's birthday, August 10 2015, MTV had nine YA authors describe how they had been influenced and inspired by her series. Michelle Krys, who wrote *Hexed* (2014) and *Charmed* (2015), declared that "Katniss inspired me to write strong female characters who don't succumb to stereotype. She isn't a stony, unfeeling, action figure. She's tough, but she's also vulnerable and confused, compassionate and humble. She proves that complicated women who experience a vast spectrum of emotions can be leaders of a revolution too." (Tejeda 2015). Romina Russell, the author of the *Zodiac* series (2014) said that "[t]he Hunger Games' introduced a heroine whose transformation transformed her world. Reading the books, I was captivated by how Suzanne Collins was able to create a character who's so intricately tied to the world around her. I love that Katniss doesn't really belong to herself, and that powerful connection between character and setting is something I very much aspire to achieve in my own series, 'Zodiac'". (Tejeda 2015). The following analysis will attempt to convey the origin of these opinions.

The Hunger Games series is set in the state of Panem, which is a post-apocalyptic country divided into twelve districts. Panem is a totalitarian regime, run from the Capitol by a harsh dictatorship, where the male autocrat and chauvinist Mr Snow functions as president. As a punishment for earlier rebellions, and to prevent their subjects from any further revolt against the regime, the rulers demonstrate their ultimate power by arranging a live broadcasted annual competition, where 24 boys and girls, two from each district, are haphazardly chosen to combat in an arena, and fight each other until every competitor but one is dead.

In the first book of the trilogy, *The Hunger Games* (2008), we meet the two protagonists, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark. They are both from District 12, the poorest district in the country, and are the two who are going to represent their district in the Games. Peeta is randomly drawn as the male representative, whereas Katniss, panic-stricken, volunteers after learning that her 12-year old sister is the one chosen as the female competitor. Following the selection is their struggle to find practical and mental methods to endure and survive in the arena. Surprisingly, the two end up winning the Games together, rebelliously manipulating the Gamemakers to change the rules of the Games, and thus jeopardizing their own, as well as their people's future.

In book number two, *Catching Fire* (2009), the Capitol demonstrates that Miss Everdeen's rebellion has not gone unnoticed, and as a response to her defiance, the rulers introduce a new

competition, a Quarter Quell, which is to mark the 75th anniversary of the Games. In this competition, the competitors are all previous winners of the Games, and the Capitol thus disregards the rules that no former victor needs to participate in the Games again. The personal rebellion of Miss Everdeen, which we witnessed in the first book, develops into an organized revolution through cooperation between some of the former competitors and outside agitators. They manage to sabotage the Games, destroy the entire arena and escape to District 13, a district they thought was demolished by the authorities. The consequences are disastrous, though. The Capitol is able to capture Peeta, and District 12 is completely annihilated.

In *The Mockingjay* (2010), which is the third and final book of the series, we meet Miss Everdeen as the symbol and leader of the revolution. After having regained power in the districts, the rebels are on a mission to assassinate President Snow, overthrow the government and install Coin as the new state leader. Miss Everdeen is faced with devastating challenges, having to face a brainwashed Peeta, who has been manipulated into hating her, and into wanting her dead. Even worse, she must witness her sister being killed in a bomb attack, which she at first thinks is initiated by the authorities, but which turns out to be staged by the future president Coin instead. She therefore decides to use her opportunity to kill Coin instead of President Snow. She escapes punishment for her actions, and the trilogy ends with her marrying Peeta Mellark, having two children and retiring to District 12, where she is trying to recover from the traumas that she has been exposed to.

The *Hunger Games* series can be read from many angles, and the books raise many issues and topics for discussion, e.g. it cannot go unnoticed that there are severe class differences and immense social inequalities in the state of Panem. The structure of its society can in many ways be compared to how Marx and Engels depict the bourgeoisie in their Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels 1848) where the Capitol is in possession of the wealth and means of production over all the districts of the state, and thus oppresses and exploits its citizens. This oppression and exploitation is an example of the power that pervades the series. Power is also gained through the rebels' use of Katniss as the symbol of the revolution, the *Mockingjay*. Through her, the oppressed people are able to find strength to go against the oppressors, to revolt, and, despite sacrifice, loss, suffering and pain, ultimately regain control and power.

The series also brings up the importance of strength, not only regarding physical survival skills and the ability to endure harsh and inhumane conditions, but also courage and mental endurance, and the belief in oneself and one's capabilities. These capabilities are in accordance to Freud's personality theory, where he claims that parts of a person's personality work to counteract basic urges and strive to conform to the demands of reality. This strength is foremost portrayed through Miss Everdeen, and thus presents her as the ideal heroine, a feminist role model for her younger readers, and she hereby serves as a tribute to female competence and ability.

The classic love triangle is for many also an important theme in all three books, but the series is not reduced to handling that as the predominant issue. Naturally, expectations and excitement is created as the reader awaits Miss Everdeen's decision and choice. What for some is perhaps more exciting as the story builds up, is whether she will choose any of the two boys at all. Her character suggests that rejecting both might be an option, as well. However, her choice in the end of the story might thus be received as a disappointment.

However, more importantly for this thesis is the theme of feminism and gender roles, which is the focal point of this thesis, and which will be dealt with thoroughly in the following paragraphs. The novels are pervaded with a feminist undertone, where the women and the girls are the ones who are presented as pillars of strength, resourceful and independent, however not necessarily flawless. They stand out as symbols of hope and bring about the discussion of gender expectations and gender formation.

5.1 Katniss Everdeen's gender construction

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.

(Judith Butler 1990; 179)

The intriguing and, for some, thought-provoking character of Katniss Everdeen is and has been up for debate in many fora and from many perspectives. She can be read on a vast range of levels, and can be subjected to a range of theoretical approaches analysed using theories by many a literary critic. Collins chooses to challenge her readership/readers audience in the creation and presentation of Katniss, and forces the reader to redefine the conventional concept and definition of what a heroine is, which qualities a heroine should possess and whether these qualities fit the protagonist. Collins disputes the stereotypical gender roles, and portrays men and women in the trilogy in an unconventional and atypical manner. Katniss challenges established ideas of gender neutrality in young adult fiction, just like Butler's *Gender Trouble* contributes to change the intellectual discourses on gender balance. Throughout the series, it becomes evident that gender is constructed through performance, and the main characters are never portrayed as having a *stable and fixed identity*.

If one views the Hunger Games trilogy from a feminist perspective, it is easy to get the first impression that Collins describes a setting that in many ways portrays a progressive society of gender equality or, more correctly labelled, gender neutrality. Even though we experience the districts as immensely different regarding social class and standard of life, men and women seem to be equally treated regardless of gender within their own districts and in relation to their profession, their role in society or within their families. Moreover, there do not seem to be any masculine or feminine ideals. Toughness, bravery and strength seems to be no more valued than softness, sensibility and self-sacrifice in both men and women, girls or boys, and therefore, it highly contrasts our own gender-restricted society.

In District 12, for instance, we meet female coal miners, and may think their performance quite controversial, since mining traditionally has been a male profession, due to its requirement of physical strength. Here both men and women work equally hard, regardless of their physical preconditions, and we initially consider them equal. The residents in the districts do not appear to focus on gender roles or gender norms, and they all act in accordance to what is necessary that they do, instead of being restricted by assigned roles based on what is regarded as suitable for - or expected of their gender, suggesting from a Marxist view that capitalist exploitation is gender blind. Even among the city dwellers in the capitol of Panem gender equality appears to be the norm, due to the fact that it seems to be just as common among men to overdress in extravagant garments and wear an impressive amount of make-up as it is among women. This can be seen in direct relation to Butler's reference to the effect stylisation of bodies has, and that women and men hence equally

convey the impression of being superficial, indifferent, nonchalant and even merciless regarding the brute situation of the participants of the Hunger Games. Their main concern appears to be the contestants' entertainment value, in matters of appearance, attire and performance, and their enthusiasm originates from the idea of the Games as a festive occasion. The TV broadcasting of the Hunger Games plays a significant part in portraying the contestants as stable and defined. In addition to being dressed by their stylists, the Gamemakers' editing and clippings gives the contestants a stylisation that applies to how the audience should view them, not only in matters of gender, but also in matters of abilities. TV thus establishes an 'abiding gendered self', created through discourse, and not by the contestants themselves.

Even the tributes, the contestants of the Games, appear to be treated in the same manner. Despite their inequality in matters of age, sex, physical capacity and potential, they all have to face the same hardships, obstacles and inhumane challenges. Most contestants give the impression of operating quite cynically, killing their rivals in cold blood, seeing it as the only solution to getting out of the arena alive. No concern or mercy seems to be given the fact that some of the contestants are simply young children. In this way, the plot is set in a more or less gender neutral environment, leaving the characters to be defined by their performances rather than a socially constructed gender.

Furthermore, in addition to the gender neutrality depicted in the series, we are left with the impression that Collins succeeds in empowering women's position and role by allowing her female protagonist to stand out as a strong, bold, and independent woman, who represents the very symbol of resistance to the patriarchal system as we know it. She plays the part as an individualistic heroine, who rejects the feeling of being underrated, and who carries enough confidence to believe that she is capable of defeating the system. Since Katniss is the protagonist of the story, it is only natural that she is the one who holds the most complex qualities of all the characters in the Hunger Games series. Her character is highly dynamic, and develops considerably throughout the series. Her performance is quite unconventional, compared to traditional female heroines in literature, and can be described as a mixture of what is customarily portrayed as both feminine and masculine. Hence, her performance has been studied and debated thoroughly, explaining her mindset and actions by analysing her background.

Katniss's life during this series can be seen as a journey, where the mission is to find herself, her own identity. Her father is in many ways the one who sets her out on her journey, and his death is one of the more obvious reasons to why she develops in the way that she does. She carries her memories of him as a kind of manual, and makes many of her decisions based on what she thinks would have been his solutions to the challenges that she encounters. Making use of his skills and foremost his wisdom enables her to develop her own, and to endure the harsh conditions in life. *As long as you can find yourself, you'll never starve* (HG 52). These words were actually uttered when Katniss's father made her acquainted with the plant 'katniss', the root after which she is named, and was first of all meant as a piece of advice to how she can nurture herself physically. Metaphorically, however, her father's wise words symbolize the answer to how she can survive and endure mentally. On her journey to accepting the many sides of her own personality, she has to find a balance between her stoic persistence and her emotions, and when she feels she is on her way to get lost, she clings to her father's advice. She is *constituted internally by differentially gendered Others and is, therefore, never, as a gender, self-identical* (Butler 2004; 133). She realizes, as Butler emphasizes, that her personality, and thus her identity, is in constant change, dependent on with whom she interrelates, and how she thereby is viewed.

Katniss is only eleven years old, when her father dies in a tragic mining accident, and as a reaction to her husband's death, Katniss's mother has a nervous breakdown and goes into an almost catatonic state. Katniss is involuntarily placed in the position of being the sole caretaker of her family, and is the one who has to be strong and responsible. Due to her mother's inability to provide for her daughters, Katniss takes over both her mother's and her father's responsibilities, and functions as both caretaker and provider. She nurtures both her sister and mother, and tends to them by providing everything from food and protection, to compassion and love. Katniss resembles her father in nature, and she follows in his footsteps from a very early age. He was the one who taught her how to use a bow and arrow, and who thus gave her the tool that eventually made her able to nurture her family when he passed away. At first, she was somewhat perplexed and baffled, but as the situation grew more desperate, and her family was seriously starving, her resourcefulness came forth, and she began to detect opportunities rather than obstacles. In that way, she was able to prevent her entire family from famine or, even worse, death.

It was slow-going at first, but I was determined to feed us. I stole eggs from nests, caught fish in nets, sometimes managed to shoot a squirrel or rabbit for stew, and

gathered the various plants that sprung up beneath my feet. Plants are tricky. Many are edible, but one false mouthful and you are dead. I checked and double-checked the plants I harvested with my father's pictures. I kept us alive.

(Hunger Games 62)

Already at this point, we observe that Katniss takes on a more masculine role. She assumes the role as *the man of the house*, not only in taking on the duties that her father had as a man, but in addition, by *performing* like a man. Katniss comes out as a resourceful girl, and quickly learns how to benefit from her skills. She spends her entire day hunting, gathering plants and even engaging herself in illegal trade; actions that are all considered to be meant for men rather than women, and certainly not young girls. When she goes hunting, she wears her father's jacket, and even hides her braid under her cap, as if she knows that she is performing another role. Already in this situation, it becomes obvious that Katniss is aware that it is *the various acts of gender [that] create the idea of gender* (Butler 1990; 140), and that the confidence in herself as a family provider is dependent on the way she is performing her role.

Resourcefulness is probably Katniss's most vital strength, and is the main cause for her survival at the arena during the Hunger Games. Without her ability to make use of her limited resources, and to predict possible dangers, she would not even have survived the first night in the woods. However, this kind of rational, cunning and inventive quality is in literature and film tradition normally linked to male characters, such as Huckleberry Finn and Robin Hood, or even James Bond and MacGyver, and the abilities and skills of this girl make us cheer even harder for her, because she on beforehand is doomed to die before the Games have even started. Katniss is portrayed as smart, clever and rational, and she carefully organises, plans and carries out her actions. Collins manages to create a realistic hope among her readers when it comes to viewing Katniss as a possible and realistic winner of the Games. This credibility is gradually established through the portrayal of Katniss's multiple qualities. The initial encounter we have with her is as the responsible and caring older sister of Prim, who for the first time in her 12-year life is going to be among the young girls and boys who are at risk of being chosen for the Hunger Games. We instantly learn that Katniss's empathy and motherly concern for her sister overshadows her own fear of being picked as one of the candidates this time. She is trying to calm her sister by talking to her in a gentle and soothing voice, and she makes sure that she is properly dressed, clean and at her best behaviour before the reaping. She thoroughly demonstrates her empathy and maternal instincts in her sensible behaviour,

and when her worst fear is finally realized, and her sister is reaped as a tribute for the Games, she additionally shows herself as self-sacrificing and selfless in that she voluntarily takes her sister's place. This courageous move is done without hesitation or reflection, and appears as complete impulse, something that immediately unveils her altruistic personality. The reapers consider her irrational and overly sure of herself, but the only thing she can think of is that she has to protect her little sister from being slaughtered in the arena.

In some districts, in which winning the reaping is such a great honour, people are eager to risk their lives, and the volunteering is complicated. But in District 12, where the word tribute is pretty much synonymous with the word corpse, volunteers are all but extinct”.

(Hunger Games 27)

Katniss's selflessness also appears in the arena, when she jeopardises her own safety to protect Rue, the little defenceless girl from District 11, who reminds her of her own sister Prim. Observing Rue's interest and admiration for her awakens Katniss's maternal instincts, and she sees it as her mission to take care of her, and make sure that the brutal and barbaric tributes from especially District 1 and 2 do not get their hands on her. Unfortunately, she is not able to prevent Rue from eventually being killed. However, her motherly and empathetic attitude comes to the surface again when we learn about the dignified way she treats Rue during and after her death, covering her body with flowers and singing her lullabies. This is not done for her own benefit, but rather as a contrasting act of humanity in the midst of a savage and crude environment. Her Antigone act of human decency does not go unnoticed, though, and in addition to receiving bread as a gratitude from the sponsors of District 11, her life is spared when she confronts the powerful male tribute, Thresh, who comes from the same district as Rue.

Butler would probably not agree to Katniss's act as an act deriving from a maternal instinct, because it would have to imply the 'maternal body as bearing a set of meanings that are prior to cultural itself' (Butler, 1989: 105–106). As described above, Butler is of the opinion that an individual's development is dependent on culture and created by societal norms, and not values that one is assigned by birth.

However, despite Katniss's introvert and solitary nature, she is soon chosen as a symbol of rebellion. In her desperate attempt to save her sister from a certain death, she is instantly noticed as a fearless agitator, brave enough to confront and defy the reapers, and above all, courageous and self-sacrificing enough to sign up as a volunteer for the Games, taking the risk of becoming a martyr. Seeing a poor girl from District 12 stepping up against the authorities, creates optimism among the oppressed people, who have succumbed many decades ago, and who now cling to a new-born hope that this girl, this determined and fearless rebel, might be their weapon in a battle they thought was lost a long time ago.

Katniss does not appreciate the attention and the role that she gets due to her courageous behaviour, and although she seems fearless, calm, collected and even stoic at times, she is intimidated by the thought of being in the limelight. She is not familiar with social codes and expectations, and therefore becomes suspicious, nervous and uneasy when she is exposed. Coming from a home with a mother who, due to her psychosis, completely shut out her children, she is not accustomed to revealing her thoughts or innermost feelings, and does initially not understand what is expected of her.

Katniss's reactions and behaviour substantiates both Butler and Beauvoir's claims of how a person's personality is constructed and formed through cultural and temporal influence and expectations. Her personality is formed as a consequence of earlier experiences, and as a result of the necessary actions she has had to take, not only to be able to survive herself, but also to save her family.

However, even though Katniss is viewed and portrayed as an agitator, and even though she is exposed to numerous murder attempts, she never initiates attacks herself. She only kills in self-defence or whenever it is an absolute necessity. The only exception is at the final of the trilogy, when she out of revenge and hatred has asked to be the one who gets to kill the former President Snow herself. To everybody's surprise, though, she has decided to use the opportunity to kill President Coin instead, former president of District 13 and leader of the Second Rebellion against the capitol, because she has become conscious of the fact that she is as murderous and ruthless as the former. She has realized that letting Coin take over as the new president, is not going to improve the situation for the citizens of Panem. Even though Coin seems to be on Katniss's side, and their common goal has been to overthrow the government, Coin would only act and misuse her position as yet another cruel and inhumane dictator. Therefore, in order to save her own people, Katniss realizes that it is necessary to

take her out. Katniss is expected to kill Snow, and has also believed that it has been her personal aspiration, because Snow represents evil, and by killing him, evil will be eradicated. However, evil is not represented by man, or men, but is within human nature, and the performance that Coin has presented towards the end, has revealed that she is unfit to be the leader that is able to lead Panem into the shift that its citizens have hoped for. The surprising act of killing Coin in cold blood, makes Katniss appear even more masculine. She has previously killed only in self-defence, or whenever she has regarded it as an absolute necessity, and her taking the game even further, makes her step out of the performance and the act that she has played through the last part of the Games.

However, if Katniss were a boy or a man, she would most probably have been eliminated already in the 74th Annual Hunger Games. She would have been looked upon as an agitator and thus a potential threat to the regime, and the Gamemakers could easily have eliminated such a danger. However, since she is a girl, it is not expected that she will be capable of gaining the kind of power or influence that she eventually does. The innocence related to the female gender blindfolds the authorities and helps covering up for what she is actually capable of doing. Considering all the qualities she beholds may make many claim that Katniss is some kind of hybrid. Even her gender-neutral name suggests that she could be passing as both female and male. However, Collins is able to substantiate Butler's theory in her portrayal of Katniss, because she lets Katniss act out and develop her own personality, based on what she desires and depending on what is necessary and desirable for her as a *person*, not due to her being a *woman*. She is more concerned with what and who she needs to be in order to accomplish and endure the diverse and complex situations she encounters, than caring about how she appears according to what is expected of her gender. Therefore, her acts are what define her, not her sex.

In addition to her inner qualities, though, Katniss is physically very attractive. In the beginning of the story, she is completely unaware of her stunning beauty, because she has never taken an interest in stylish appearance. Nor has she previously used her appearance to her own benefit. Her clothing has always been dark, heavy and protective, and her face natural and unbeautified. She has long, uncontrollable and beautiful curls that she keeps braided for practical reasons when she is out hunting, or whenever her mother gets to tend it. On their journey to the Capitol, Effie Trinket complains about her behaviour, and blames her for not being able to act like a 'proper' woman. However, when she is brought in and made ready for her presentation, she is genuinely amazed by the work Cinna, her stylist, is able to

do on her, and is intrigued by the effect her made-up appearance seems to have on people; especially the audience in the arena. When Katniss discovers how she can operate her beauty to her benefit, though, she takes advantage of it, and makes use of it as her own capital, exploiting the entertainment value that she has acquired. In this matter, she makes use of her ability to, in Butler's words, parody the female gender, and mimic what is expected of her as a girl, because she understands that it is necessary if she wants to succeed.

All of Katniss's qualities, roles and even performances might be viewed as an embodiment of metamorphic gender duality and multi-sexuality. She oscillates between roles traditionally viewed as male or female, and challenges gender boundaries. She is put under pressure from numerous angles, and there are expectations of this girl on many levels. Everything from being a daughter and an older sister, a dedicated friend, a lover, a media celebrity, a role as head of the family in the first book, to being assigned the role as *The Girl on Fire*, and finally the leading rebel, *The Mocking Jay*, creates her character. She becomes a result of her responsibilities and expectations. She becomes a radical character in contrast to the others depicted in her environment, and because of her qualities, she is the one who is able to confront and dispute the present social order. Katniss is hereby one of the characters who through her performance questions the definition of male and female, because she is neither, or, more correctly put, both. She is something in between, a mixture of all. Katniss operates as a powerful character in what Bhabha terms the 'third space'. Butler, however, approaches this topic in her work *Gender Trouble* (1990), where she states that Katniss turns into *something that disrupt[s] the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion[s] their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame* (1990; x). Throughout Collins' Hunger Games trilogy, Katniss calls into question the validity of binary gender categories, like male vs female, masculine vs feminine and heterosexual vs homosexual, and hereby arises as a radically new gender-balanced character.

What is positive for Katniss, though, is that she does not necessarily have to take her gender-empowered performance into consideration. She, along with the authorities, is actually unaware of the danger she poses regarding the continuation of the political structure in Panem. Even though she mocks both the audience and the authorities in taking advantage of their view of her as a romantic schoolgirl in love, she is unaware that it most probably has saved her life at several occasions. Both during the 74th Hunger Games and during the Quarter Quell in the 75th, her rebellion is not taken seriously enough, and certainly not as severely as it actually turns out to be. Katniss does not intend to trigger a rebellion, though. She is just

being disobedient and insubordinate, because she detests the injustices perpetuated by the Capitol, and her only way of showing it is to silently revolt whenever she can.

When I was younger, I scared my mother to death, the things I would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule our country, Panem, from the far-off city called the Capitol. Eventually I understood this would only lead us to more trouble. So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts."

(*Hunger Games* 6).

Collins' portrayal of *Katniss* thus demonstrates what Simone de Beauvoir many decades earlier accentuated in *The Second Sex*, when she claimed that *[a] human being is not anything. He is to be measured by his acts* (1949; 257). Therefore, in pointing out that a person can only be defined by behaviour, it is not possible to objectively define her. Collins also seems to aim at contradicting this objectification by making *Katniss* take the leading position in her story, by making her the most resourceful character, and by making her one of the most important agents in the rebellion. In this manner, Collins manages to depict women as subjects. Not only *Katniss Everdeen*, but also women such as *Johanna Mason*, the winner of the 71st Hunger Games, whom we encounter in the third Quarter Quell in *Catching Fire*, and *Alma Coin*, the former president of District 13, and leader of the Second Rebellion of the Capitol, who is introduced in *Mockingjay*. Collins portrays them as independent, resourceful human beings, without viewing them in light of something better or superior. They are all capable of enduring the difficulties they face, and are willing and able to make sacrifices in order to uphold or improve their position. None of them fit into the stereotypical description of women in literary works from the 20th century, nor are they depicted as submissive or subservient or portrayed as physically weaker or inferior to men.

The non-stereotypical portrayal of women also comes forth in the discussion regarding *Katniss's* sexuality. In her discussion of gender, Butler states that it is not possible to *be* a certain sexuality. Your sexuality can be performed, however, by repeating, imitating and even parodying actions. When we observe *Katniss's* performance in the various relations she is involved in, we can see that she oscillates between acting out masculine and feminine performances, depending on with whom she interrelates. With *Peeta*, for instance, her performance is often more masculine than feminine. A typical example of a masculine feature

with Katniss is the portrayal of her as the hunter. Katniss does not only possess the role as a hunter in her home district, she also uses her unique skills as an archer in the arena as well, where her accurate and precise aim afflicts both humans and animals. In this way, she signals strength, self-sufficiency and doughtiness, which are all typical male traits.

Katniss's masculine traits and skills are in strong contrast to how we observe Peeta. Peeta is more of a gentle, careful artist, with a very sensitive nature. Previous to the Games, he has never set foot outside the district, he is brought up to follow orders and he has a more aesthetic sense than Katniss. He bakes, he frosts cakes and decorates them skillfully. Even in conversations, he is much more articulate. Peeta is much better at expressing his emotions than Katniss is, both privately as well as publically. In addition, he has developed better social and verbal skills and is genuinely romantic. Peeta represents the other part of the gender swap, and his performance is very often more feminine than masculine, and his qualities seem to be enhanced when he operates together with Katniss, as is the similar case with her. Thus, when Peeta interacts with Katniss, they appear to exchange gender, based on how gender is traditionally perceived. We observe them in numerous situations where Katniss is the one who comes to his rescue, acting out as the resourceful and collected character, who is able to provide protection and sanctuary. Katniss produces and carries out tactical and cunning plans and solutions, and seems essentially more determined to survive than him. Peeta tries to avoid threats for as long as possible, whereas Katniss faces them almost without hesitation. In addition, Katniss is quite emotionally closed and introverted, far less romantic and more taciturn than he is, and has no interest in displaying her innermost feelings – not even to herself.

However, the role that Katniss takes up when she is with Peeta is quite in contrast to how she acts around Gale. Gale is undoubtedly the one who resembles Katniss the most. He is her definite equivalent. Like Katniss, he is strong and protective. They share the same background, experiences and losses, they have felt hunger and desperation, and they have both been the providers of their families, since Gale also lost his father in the mining accident. He has hunted illegally together with her outside the fence, he has shared and celebrated her achievements, and been the one who has supported her when she has failed. Gale and Katniss share the same passion, the same fury and the same interests. He has in many ways filled Katniss's father's shoes, and has walked together with her, side by side, held the same position as her, and has never needed any explanation to why she has acted the way she has.

When Katniss interacts with Gale, she tones down her masculine traits, and lets him be an equal, or even the one to nurture her. Gale gives Katniss what she offers to Peeta. She feels secure with him, and does not have to worry that he does not have her back, or that he is not able to take care of himself. In addition, they do not have to articulate their thoughts or feelings, they know, they are basically soulmates. Hence, it would be likely that Katniss ends up with Gale as her husband, since he clearly is the one who resembles her the most. With Gale, she does not have to question anything. They understand each other's feelings and consequently each other's choices.

Gale gave me a sense of security I'd lacked since my father's death. His companionship replaced the long solitary hours in the woods. I became a much better hunter when I didn't have to look over my shoulder constantly, when someone was watching my back...Being out in the woods with Gale...sometimes I was actually happy.

(Hunger Games 113)

This observation reveals Katniss's ability to balance her character, oscillating between being the one in charge and in control to letting herself be taken care of, allowing herself to relax and leaving the responsibility to somebody else. In this case, it is Gale, whom she depends on, because he carries many of the same values and qualities as her, since they have the same background and many of the same experiences.

However, in the course of the Games, and also after, when she learns how it is appreciated that she is looked upon as Peeta's sweetheart, she soon starts manipulating her position. She puts up an act, and presents a performance of what she thinks might give her the best acquirements and advantages at the arena when it comes to receiving necessary and even crucial gifts from sponsors. Her conduct appears to be quite cynical, although she seems unaware of Peeta's true feelings for her. She thinks he is performing the same act, and is therefore triggered into increasing her efforts in using her skills. For her it is not cynicism, it is pure survival strategy, since she early in the Games acknowledges the fact that she will never persevere without the assistance of well-heeled contributors. Thus, she ridicules people's soft-heartedness when it comes to a good love story, because even though her feelings might be growing for Peeta, she cynically controls what she does and says when the

world (and the Capitol) is watching. This allows her to play with her audience, and she takes advantage of the way they let themselves be manipulated by their naïve idea of there being a romance taking place in such a violent setting. She is conscious of the fact that her being in love increases her chances of survival. In this matter, she plays on her feminine qualities, and trusts Peeta in joining her act, because he appears to control this performance.

Still, when it is starting to dawn on her that Peeta's feelings for her might be genuine, she gets suspicious and uneasy, and does not know how to cope with how this newly acquired knowledge affects her. She questions her own thoughts and feelings, and is not able to interpret her own reactions. Her emotions have been stunned ever since she lost her father, resulting in her too early becoming the provider of her family, and she has never allowed herself to open up to anybody. Even towards Gale, whom she has had by her side as a kindred spirit her entire life, she becomes confused. All of a sudden, it is necessary and expected of her that she considers - and reflects on the type of relationship they have. They have always had a mutual understanding and a common interest in hunting, but they have never, as far as she is concerned, had any romantic relation. Furthermore, it has never been at issue to analyse Gale's position in her life. He has always been present, and has always been someone that she could rely on, a friend and a partner. Now that she has been put in a position where she has to measure the two young men up against each other, she feels bewildered and frustrated, because the two entail completely different qualities, and it would be quite unreasonable to compare them. It is absurd to have to consider which one of the two she feels more strongly about.

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

(Hunger Games 107)

The lack of romance and Katniss's own questions regarding her feelings opens up for a debate concerning her sexuality. Emotional reflection seems to be an area that Katniss does not master, and it makes her uneasy and insecure, and she never actually demonstrates any romantic or sexual desires. Perhaps it implies that she is asexual. If so, these tendencies might be seen already in the very beginning of the first book, when she reveals to Gale that *[she]*

never want[s] to have kids (HG 9). Even if this proclamation is not very strong as evidence, it might be more convincing when the reader learns that she obviously feels discomfort with sex as she realizes that there is a possibility of having to see Peeta naked when she tends his wounds. She admits that it *makes [her] uncomfortable* (HG 256). It is not only Peeta's nudity that startles her. She also feels uneasy about her own nakedness. This becomes clear, when her prep team works on her, and she has to calm herself by thinking that *they're so unlike people that I'm [not] self-conscious* (HG 62). She never seems to be attracted to any of the characters that she encounters, not even to Finnick, who obviously is viewed as a sex symbol, and she observes herself that *I can't argue that Finnick isn't one of the most stunning, sensuous people on the planet. But I can honestly say he's never been attractive to me*" (CF 209). She quite clearly does not have any physical attraction to him. Actually, she even finds it awkward when she meets him the first time, because *[...] he's got so much bare skin exposed* (CF 208). The indication of her asexual tendencies is also strengthened due to her lack of interest for women. Her aversion towards nudity is not only suggested in this analysis, but is even noticed among the contestants in the Games, when learning that she neither responds to the nudity of Finnick nor of Johanna Mason's, in their attempt to distract her.

Katniss is used to managing practical issues concerning how to get food on the table for her entire family, how to develop new and cunning hunting techniques and how to make use of the scarce plants she is able to gather. She is also quite used to figuring out how to circumvent the peacekeepers when she illegally hunts in the woods, and with being concerned about how she and her family can manage to survive another winter in the cold. In these areas, however, she can find practical solutions, because they are a result of skillfulness, experience and talent. The emotional terrain, on the other hand, is insubstantial and to some extent ungraspable to her, she vacillates between passion and reason, and she is both convinced and terrified about the fact that revealing her feelings will weaken her position, and consequently result in her losing the Games.

Katniss does, however, engage herself in reflections about how she feels about both Peeta and Gale. Nevertheless, she only treats them as objects of romance. She never reveals any sexual affection or expresses any desires. In fact, when Gale grabs her face and kisses her in the woods (CF 27), she does not kiss him back. The incident does not appear desirable to her at all. She is caught by surprise, becomes uneasy and involuntarily lets out a noise, coming from the back of her throat. In addition, she compares Gale's hands with snares, indicating that she feels ambushed and trapped like an animal. Even when she and Peeta share bed to comfort

each other on their way to Panem, their relationship continues to stay non-sexual. Her response in romantic matters indicates that Katniss seems compelled to make use of mimicry to seem reliable as a girl in love. According to Bhabha, however, through mimicry, she can never display what is 'original'. Her performance would only appear as 'almost the same, but not quite' (1984; 86). These acts do not appear natural to her, and during the Games it is necessary for her performance to recall acts of love and passion that she has observed between her parents to be able to seem genuine, and thus gain sympathy among the viewers. Butler emphasizes that because societies have their unwritten norms and restrictions regarding gender performance, society tends to "regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right" (1990, 178). That means that not to master the binary codes might entail danger, and might in Katniss's case even lead to death. So when she notices that immediately after she has kissed Peeta, she receives medicine for Peeta, she can almost hear her mentor Haymitch's sarcastic grunt

"You're supposed to be in love, sweetheart. The boy's dying. Give me something I can work with!" And he's right. If I want to keep Peeta alive, I've got to give the audience something more to care about. Star-crossed lovers desperate to get home together. Two hearts beating as one. Romance

(Hunger Games 305).

It is crucial that she follows up the audience's perception of Peeta and her being sweethearts, and although she feels rather uncomfortable with it, she recalls Haymitch's comments on the matter:

Who cares? It's all a big show. It's all how you're perceived. The most I could say about you after your interview was that you were nice enough, although that in itself was a small miracle. Now I can say you're a heartbreaker. Oh, oh, oh, how the boys back home fall longingly at your feet. Which do you think will get you more sponsors?

(164).

However, when Katniss eventually becomes conscious of the fact that the two men in her life crave a different set of qualities from her, it makes her question her own behaviour and her own motives. She becomes afraid of realizing what kind of significance they have in her life, but finally, she acknowledges that there is an emotional side to her, and she dares to let her guard down. Although she does not experience sexual attraction, she accepts love and

compassion, and lets it become a part of her. She is finally able to realize that her emotional side can be used as a strength rather than a weakness. Still, she is not blinded by her emotions, and her actions are not affected by any irrational impulsiveness. She appears stoic and balanced, and is determined not to let herself or her actions be manipulated by the media, or, perhaps even more importantly, by the Capitol.

Consequently, when Katniss finally makes her choice between Peeta and Gale, it appears surprising and even confusing, since it seems more likely that her decision would fall on Gale. Nevertheless, her reasons are just as rational as the other crucial decisions she makes in life, and she describes her choice as inevitable.

That what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that.

(*Mockingjay* 388)

A dandelion is hardly a metaphor that is traditionally used to describe a man in literary works. Flowers are traditionally used to portray women and their beauty. Thereupon, it is once again clear how Katniss views Peeta. Peeta is the one upholding and performing the soft and feminine qualities that are essential in enduring the harsh environment they are surrounded with. Katniss realizes that if she is going to be able to create a future that makes sense, that has a meaningful content, she has to choose the person that has the ability to shine light upon her life, no matter how dark it may seem. She needs Peeta in her life, as a partner and as the father of her children, because he is the only one that can perform an act that makes her believe that things will be better. After all the hardships that Katniss has had to endure; the loss of both parents, one physically, the other mentally, the loss of her sister and several friends, betrayal, pain and agony, she is locked in a mode where hatred, fury and resentment keeps her going. Gale cannot bring her out of that. He carries the same anger and the same avenging nature. Peeta is the only one who can lead her in the right direction. He is the one who is able to encourage her and pull her out of her darkness. He offers stability and the rebirth of life itself, and is the very symbol of hope. Katniss is dependent on someone who can manage to make her see that despite all cruelty and despite all loss, it is possible to look ahead and to find joy, meaning and love. And that person is not Gale, it is Peeta. In finding

herself and defining her own identity, she realizes that Peeta is the one who is able to bring out her strength, and he is thus, in accordance to Bhabha's *location of culture*, when he asserts that *[it] is the in-between space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.* " (The Location of Culture 1994; 37), the 'culture' that makes her construct the identity in which she feels more comfortable.

Katniss does not literally tell Peeta that she loves him. It is only insinuated, and instead of uttering the actual word 'love', she chooses to focus on his question. In that way, she does not have to deceive anyone, not Peeta, and not herself. According to Butler's theories, Katniss thus performs on the basis of the following sentiment: *: If what 'I' want is only produced in relation to what is wanted from me, then the idea of 'my own' desire turns out to be something of a misnomer. I am, in my desire, negotiating what has been wanted of me* (Butler 1990, xi). In order to endure, or even survive, Katniss needs to adjust to the cultural and hereby heteronormative gender identity, i.e, she needs to portray that what she wants is a romantic relationship with Peeta. It is not necessarily a fact that she truly loves Peeta, but since it is expected of her that she ought to pursue a relationship with him, she is open for the idea that it might be what she actually wants herself. However, she is not convinced, but still, she acts as if it were the truth.

5.2 Gender formation in reality TV

In addition to displaying an alternative gender neutral arena in her *HG* series, Collins mixes the ancient Roman concept of the spectacular and brutal gladiator competitions with the more modern concept of reality television. Reality shows is nothing new for Collin's readers. On the contrary, they still are surprisingly popular, and a part of everyday entertainment, especially for young adults. Shows like *Big Brother*, *Expedition Robinson*, *The Bachelor*, as well as the televised police hunt of the murderer OJ Simpson have gathered not only young people, but also entire families, around the television, and infamous murderers like OJ Simpson take on a legendary status as if he were a part of a tragic Hollywood story. The fascination of observing other people's most intimate privacy appears to have turned into a form of voyeurism. To observe participants or ordinary people being exposed to humiliation,

conflict and conspiracy has become highly intriguing, and has also come to be expected as a natural part of the concept.

Collins goes a bit further, though, and creates a new and more ruthless microcosm, which through its broadcasting becomes a vicious and crude horror show for the citizens of Panem, because it involves merciless violence and death, and is a show that they are obliged to watch. As readers, we become a part of the audience, and are also able to observe the relationship that arises between the Gamemakers and the contestants, in addition to the relationship between the contestants and the audience. Hence, it is possible to analyze the effects the cameras have on the contestants, since we are allowed into their private premises. The additional extended view that is portrayed through Katniss's limited omniscient angle, gives the reader the ability to observe how and why the dynamic characters oscillate between feminine and masculine performances, dependent on expectations and demands. Butler raises the question *What is the moment or mechanism of gender construction? And, perhaps most pertinently, when does this mechanism arrive on the cultural scene to transform the human subject into a gendered subject? Are there ever humans who are not, as it were, always already gendered?* (Butler, 1990, p.111). Collins creates a stage for Katniss to perform on, an arena where she evolves and develops her character in accordance with the preconditions that she has at the arena. As Katniss enters the battleground of the Hunger Games, it is obvious that she becomes aware of the fact that she is constantly under surveillance, not only by the Gamemakers, but also by the audience. Thus, quite early in the competition, she starts acting out a role intended both to protect herself, to lead the Gamemakers on and to create a relationship with the people watching. This makes her put on a different kind of behaviour, which gives her a new kind of identity; an identity she is in need of to be able to endure, survive or, even better, win the Games.

Katniss does not create her televised identity on her own. She has quite a few people who take part in the recreation of her identity. First of all, she is physically reshaped and modified by her stylists, and foremost Cinna, who introduces her to fashion and make-up, and who has his own idea of how he wants her to appear in the arena. Cinna is skillful and experienced, and he knows the effect that clothes and make-up can have on people. He knows how to manipulate an audience with fashion and style, and is also fully aware of the importance of the initial presentation of the contestants from each district. He has carefully observed how first impressions can create both advantages and disadvantages for the contestants, and his job is to

make sure of the former for Katniss and Peeta. The glamorous and extraordinary dresses that Cinna dresses Katniss up in enhances her feminine beauty, but even though she admires her attire, they are not picked out for her after Katniss's choice. She wears them because it is a necessity, not because she wants to. The stylization of her as a highly attractive woman does not portray her own identity. It is a staged performance, created for her audience, and thus functions as a kind of drag performance.

Initially, during the prep team's transformation of her, Katniss finds herself in an extremely uncomfortable and estranged situation. The treatment that she gets from her prep team when she arrives Panem is completely unfamiliar and bizarre to her, because she has previously never let any stranger dress her up, and now she is no longer in control of her own body. This leaves her defenseless and exposed, and she feels deprived of her dignity: *My legs, arms and torso, underarms and parts of my eyebrows have been stripped of the stuff, leaving me like a plucked bird, ready for roasting. I don't like it. My skin feels sore and tingly and intensely vulnerable. (Hunger Games 75).*

However, even though Katniss is everything but materialistic and superficial, she feels intrigued and enthralled by the extravagancy and luxury that she encounters in the capital. For a moment, she lets herself be overly fascinated by the transformation that her prep team has been able to make on her, and, as is also the situation with her stylists, almost cannot believe that what she observes in the mirror is another version of herself: *For a while, we all just stare at me. "Oh, Cinna", I finally whisper. "Thank you."* (Hunger Games 146).

Katniss admires her new look, and she even acts like a cheerful and overjoyed schoolgirl when she twirls her magnificent dress on stage. This portrayal of Katniss gives the reader a demonstration of what Butler described as *the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original* (1990, p. 31), in that Katniss parodies her own gender by letting herself step in and out of butch/femme identities. It also displays the illusion of gender identity as a *fixed inner substance* (187). She allows herself to dwell in a moment of bodily fascination, and forgets for a while why she is there and why the team has made her appear like she does.

Even though she is intrigued by Cinna's artistic transformation of her, Katniss does not let herself be blinded by the deceptive belief in the importance of bodily beauty. On the contrary, she soon realizes that this transformation has made her into a sexual object. She feels like a ludicrous spectacle, an artifact created to amuse the audience. In addition, when Peeta live, on

stage, announces his lifelong love for her, she is infuriated and frustrated, because she realizes that the focus now is on a potential romance. She strongly believes that his broadcast may weaken her position, and will make her appear a ridiculous romantic figure.

Since Katniss is taken by surprise, and without her consent has been branded as a romantic schoolgirl, she feels that she has lost her foothold and the identity that she wants to portray to the audience of the Games. She does not want to seem inferior and weak, and draw the attention as an easy target. However, Haymitch, her personal advisor, is able to calm her down, by reassuring her that Peeta's love declaration is actually a benefit for both of them, because they now can perform an act in the arena that will appeal to the audience. Being loved makes her desirable and interesting, and them, as couple, more sympathetic. Because they are looked upon as a romantic couple, they are now able to stand out from the crowd, and will be followed closely, because they have added a different kind of expectation from both the audience, the sponsors, as well as the Gamemakers. The expected love affair of Katniss and Peeta increases their odds in the arena, because people get enthusiastic, and become more invested in their lives. Katniss reluctantly acknowledges that she has to go along with Haymitch's advice, although acting in love and being romantic is unnatural for her. She lets the new situation become a part of her perceived identity. This backs up Butler's statement about how identity is being produced and reproduced all the time, and that it is dependent on environment, setting, expectations and pressure. It gradually also dawns on Katniss that her being branded does not necessarily bring her down. She is able to come to terms with her physical transformation, and she realizes that her new appearance does not necessarily change who she is, and does not redefine her identity. What she needs to cling to is who she really is and where she is coming from. Instead, it becomes clear to her that she can use her appearance as a capital in the Games, and that it might provide a range of benefits for her. Because, as she observes, *the Hunger Games aren't supposed to be a beauty contest, but the best-looking tributes always seem to pull more sponsors (Hunger Games 58)*.

Changing her physical appearance and acting in love does not change Katniss's gender identity. Butler states that *[i]t would be wrong to think that the discussion of "identity" ought to proceed prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that "persons" only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility (1999, 22)*. Even though Katniss previously has had what seems a more masculine performance, it does not mean that she has reinvented herself, now that she has embraced qualities that are more feminine. Butler asserts that identity and gender are

embedded in each other, and that one has to move beyond the idea of the binaries of masculine and feminine, and instead add the various components to each individual. Hence, Katniss wanders in and out of character, allowing herself to play the role that has been assigned to her, realizing that as long as she keeps her self-consciousness, it is acceptable to act in accordance with – or even contradictorily to the expectations people have regarding her role. Katniss's acknowledgement, and consequently her performance, is clearly in accordance to Butler's theory, and is in many ways an example of how third wave feminists have tried to reclaim womanhood. It is a clever portrayal of how it is not contradictory for a woman to be physically attractive at the same time as she is strong and resourceful. Beauty does not equal weakness and frailty. Quite on the contrary, Katniss proves that it is quite possible to possess practical skills, be clever, cunning and beautiful at the same time. It is in a woman's right to be both gorgeous, seductive and sexy, and at the same time stand up as resourceful, confident, determined and completely in control of her own sexuality. At the same time, she takes a stand against the idea that personal qualities are related to physical appearance. She proves that being a poverty-stricken and ragged girl from the outskirts is not necessarily an impediment for succeeding in life. Being honest, determined, anti-submissive, in addition to being a compassionate and devoted friend has lead her much further than physical attractiveness would ever have enabled her to do.

Katniss makes a statement out of this already as they are presented to the audience at the arena. All the contestants are to wear attire that is supposed to represent the industry of their district, and since Katniss and Peeta represent District 12, the poorest and the least popular district in Panem, they are expected to be dressed up in clothes that portray them as miners, which usually leaves the stylists with limited opportunities. By making use of sensational flammable attire and astonishing make-up, however, in addition to instructing them about holding hands, her creative stylist, Cinna, is able to make Katniss and Peeta astound the audience, and to ensure that the people of Panem really notice them. There are many advantages with being noticed. Not only will they receive a lot of positive attention and expectations from the inhabitants of the districts, they might also gain support and necessary aid from sponsors, as well as benefits in the arena from the Gamemakers. If they become a popular couple among the audience, their entertainment value will be high, and the producers might therefore organize the premises to their advantage. At the same time, Cinna has made Katniss and Peeta come out as sympathetic in that they appear as a team. They stand out as a warm, strong and astonishing couple, rebelliously standing together, as opposed to their more

reserved and cold competitors. In this manner, they also demonstrate that gender is constructed through performance, and they validate Butler's rejection of stable and fixed identities.

Moreover, by presenting them this way, Cinna has taken part in creating a whole new identity for Katniss in particular. She is now known and labelled as "The Girl on Fire", the ravishing and steady and strong girl, who even endures burning flames. With this label follows expectations and responsibility. As a result of these portrayals, Katniss has been given two roles to carry out, and that is before the Games have even started. She has to perform the act as the strong and competent fireball, and simultaneously pretend to be the misfortunate and forever doomed part in a love affair. In order to convey a plausible performance, Katniss has to make use of mimicry at times, because she does not always have her heart in her acts, nor does she have any personal experience in romantic matters.

In agreeing to putting on the act of being a sympathetic girl in love, appearing both powerful, strong, beautiful and feminine at the same time, Katniss parodies gender in the way Butler explains it when describing drag performance; she *effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity* (1990; 174), and, by imitating both the male and female, rejects the notion of the 'original' gender identity. Moreover, Butler states that you cannot affect any inner core by the performativity. This is observable with Katniss, because she is highly aware of her own performance, and uses it actively for manipulation and as a strategy of survival. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler explains that *[p]erformativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability [...]* (1993; 95). This means that Katniss in this particular setting and in this particular environment is *performing* strength and the condition of being in love. She is reiterating acts that are expected of her to appear as if she actually holds these qualities. She makes use of mimicry in the situations where she does not have any experience. She copies the actions that she remembers that other people have performed. This means that what she does, or performs, is almost the same, however not quite, because it does not come naturally, but appears as an imitation of what she considers these performances to be. These performances are forced on her in the way that she is constantly under observation, and she is constantly under evaluation. Her life literally depends on her being able to pull through her performance, entailing that she has to act according to what is expected of her gender and not always by impulse or reason.

What is interesting to observe, though, is that she does not find it necessary to mimic anything when she is out of the arena and off the cameras. The shaping of her identity inside the arena is dependent on what she needs to display in public. Outside the arena, when the cameras are off, she needs to find back to the core of her inner self. What becomes more complicated, however, is that her inner self is under constant change; it is dynamic. Through the trilogy, Katniss changes gradually, however quite dramatically, advancing and evolving from being *The Girl on Fire* in the first book of the trilogy, to being the rebellious *Mockingjay* and Peeta's fiancée in the second book, and eventually ending up as, what initially is perceived, the nemesis and leader of the final battle of Panem. In the beginning of the series, Katniss seems completely unaware of her own identity and how her acts may be perceived by others. Her only concern has been to be able to provide for her mother and sister, and make sure that her poor family did not freeze or starve to death. Nor has she been aware that in taking on this role, she has performed a role in accordance to what conventionally has been assigned to men, and that she has appeared masculine and strong. These qualities have been natural and a necessity for her to hold, because the one who has provided for her family before is no longer present. Since her mother has been unable to put on this strength, and since Katniss in her mother's mental absence realizes that she is the one to depend on now. Both Butler and Beauvoir would have explained her dynamic personality as a result of circumstantial influence, whereas Freud most likely would have explained her acts as a sign of fatherly identification and penis envy, and found that her gendered acts would be formed out of a need to identify herself with him rather than with her mother. In *Catching Fire*, Katniss has, more or less involuntarily, been made aware of how her acts and appearance both can affect others as well as be to her advantage. She therefore puts on a more reflected performance, making use of mimicry in areas where her planned actions do not come naturally or feel comfortable. She still seems young and inexperienced, though, and it is not until the last book that we see that she cynically takes personal action, forming the future for the residents of Panem. Towards the end, she finally comes to terms with herself, deciding who she needs to be, and settling in a position that both for her and Peeta, in addition to astounded readers, seems highly traditional; marrying, having children and settling as farmers on the countryside. Although it took many years for Katniss to settle and accept the role as a parent, the message still seems to be that one is not fully complete until one bears children and finds a spouse to share one's life with. The epilogue thus appears to withdraw from the strong feminist tendencies that seem so consistent throughout the entire series in the way that Katniss gives in

to the traditional gender roles, and seizes to uphold her ability to hold both masculine and feminine qualities.

5.3 Analysis of other important characters

Not only Katniss comes out as a powerful woman with masculine qualities. Several of the other women portrayed in the series also appear as strong and resourceful.

5.3.1 Alma Coin

The leader and president of District 13, Alma Coin, is one of them. Coin, however, is a rather non-developing character in the series, but still comes forth as a very masculine and ruthless leader. She does not seem to have any extenuating qualities to soften her character, or that even might suggest, in conventional depictions, that she is female.

She's fifty or so, with gray hair that falls in an unbroken sheet to her shoulders. [...] Her eyes are gray, but not like those of people from the Seam. They're very pale, as if almost all the color has been sucked out of them. The color of slush that you wish would melt away.

(Mockingjay 19).

Being the president of District 13, making her in charge of the rebellion against the Capitol, obviously entails that she is revolting against the tyrannical and corrupt regime. However, that does not mean that she is good-natured and amiable. Quite on the contrary, she is a militant and crude leader, narcissistic and arrogant, and willing and capable of doing whatever is necessary to break the Capitol. She even views Katniss as a threat in her aim for power, and as we incredulously witness her manipulation and exploitation of Katniss, as well as the sacrifices she is willing to make in order to achieve her goals, it becomes evident that she is no better than President Snow.

What has been proposed is that in lieu of eliminating the entire Capitol population, we have a final, symbolic Hunger Games, using the children directly related to those who held the most power

(Mockingjay 431).

The performance that Coin acts out only seems to correspond with conventional masculine qualities. She does not oscillate between feminine and masculine performances, but is portrayed almost as fixed, and in accordance to Butler's idea that gender is something you do, and not something you necessarily are, as she states in the first chapter of *Gender Trouble* (1990). *[G]ender proves to be performance that is constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed* (1990; 33). However, (whether it was Collin's intention or not,) Alma Coin does not come out as a gender-neutral character, but rather as a male character carrying a woman's appearance and name.

5.3.2 Johanna Mason

Johanna Mason is another one of the characters who come out as strong and cunning. She appears in the 75th Games, the Quarter Quell, as the only female victor from District 7, who won the 71st Games. Johanna's skills lie with her handling of axes, due to her district's main industry, namely lumber. The axe is in itself a very masculine weapon, but Johanna has no problems handling it. Johanna has suffered severe loss, and her experiences have made her hard and cynical. She has also learnt how to take advantage of other people's naïvety, and in order to gain sympathy, she presents herself in the beginning of the Quarter Quell as weak and famished, whereas she in reality is rather calculating and devious. Johanna and Katniss take an immediate dislike to each other, but are forced together in an alliance in the Games, and eventually end up as rebels of the same cause. In contrast to Alma Coin, Johanna's character is quite dynamic. As we observe her in the beginning, she is brutal and displays *a wicked ability to murder* (Catching Fire, 214). She is portrayed as courageous and almost untouchable by the Capitol, since the Capitol took out her entire family, and she thus has nothing more to lose. However, after being kidnapped, terrorized and tortured by the authorities, she is reduced to an anxious little girl, afraid of the water, and in need to be soothed and reassured by Katniss. Johanna has a much more valid character in the portrayal of her as a bi-gendered or gender-neutral character. Her masculine traits are apparent in her behaviour in the beginning, when she acts rebelliously, cynically and overly sure of herself. In addition, she uses vulgar language, and has no intention of hiding her hostility towards everyone involved in the Games. Nevertheless, she is also portrayed as exceptionally good-looking with a strong sexual confidence. She is very much aware of her feminine power, and she uses it to distract

the other contestants. In comparison to Katniss, Johanna seems much more confident and sure of herself, and seems to intentionally oscillate between the masculine and feminine more often and with more certainty than Katniss. Towards the end of the series, though, we learn that she is broken by the authorities, and that she is in need of comfort, reassurance and compassion. These traits reveal frailty, and are conventionally considered to be feminine.

5.3.3 Cressida and the women from the Hob

One of the other female characters that can be said to hold very masculine qualities is Cressida, who fled with her film crew from the Capitol to District 13 to join the rebellion. Cressida is a highly qualified film director who shoots the *Mockingjay* documentary. She is portrayed as fearless and rebellious with a *shaved head tattooed with green vines* (*Mockingjay*; 85). She follows Katniss, portraying a unique loyalty towards her, and is a part of the action, involving explosions and shootings, risking her life to ensure that they get top quality footage of the rebellion. She could easily have been ‘one of the guys’, and does not display any typical feminine traits, and is like Alma Coin and other more static masculine female characters portrayed more like a man, who in the end seems to be both invulnerable and invincible, coming out of the rebellion unscathed.

Other women in the series, however less designated characters that are also depicted as masculine, are, among several, to be found among the traders in *the Hob*, the black market. Rooba, for instance, serves as the merciless butcher, whereas Greasy Sae occupies herself as the cook in the Hob, and Ripper makes her living as an illegal bootlegger. The masculine traits and qualities that these last mentioned women carry, are all evaluated on the background of their actions and by the positions that they hold. Since fearlessness, rebellious attitudes and cynicism, especially in warfare, are all qualities that are traditionally linked to male agitators, these women do not go unnoticed. Nor is it common to meet devious women in masculine trades like butchers or in illegal trading. Their characters are not dynamic or developing in any particular manner, nor do they take up much space in the story. However, given the fact that they are women, the portrayal of them might intrigue the reader, due to the unconventional role that they are given. Are these women simply men disguised with female names?

According to Butler, these women are only performing what traditionally through discourse and culture is *perceived* as masculine. Butler asserts that *gender proves to be performance—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed* (1990, 25). That means that a person only is what she does - *there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results”* (1990; 25).

5.3.4. Effie Trinket

Effie Trinket is another one of the more noticeable female characters. She is employed by the authorities, and carries the role as ‘reaper’ in District 12, i.e. she is the one responsible for the selection of the district’s tributes. In addition, she is the advisor and escort of the tributes on the train to the Capitol. Initially, Effie Trinket is portrayed as extremely superficial and posh, with little or no empathy or understanding of the hardships that the citizens of the poorer districts have to endure. Nor does she understand the anxiety of the tributes and their relatives as they are drawn for the Games. Quite on the contrary, she views the Games as the highlight of the year, presenting it as a festive and joyous activity, and cannot understand the ones who do not treat the occasion with excitement and enthusiasm. One of her efforts is thus to encourage the tributes and create a positive atmosphere. Her lack of compassion makes her stand out, not only as cynical and cold-hearted, but also as simpleminded and ignorant. Effie is uniquely interested in fashion and make-up, and she is extremely extravagant and eccentric. Her character is in many ways ridiculed in the series, because of her materialistic and shallow perspective and values. However, in the Capitol, she is viewed as a fashion icon with ambitions of a better and higher career. She is overly punctual and possesses impeccable manners.

Effie Trinket’s behaviour and appearance is what defines her, and the depiction of her therefore makes the reader view her as an unsympathetic, superficial and cynical parody of a woman. Butler states that *insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has effectively refused the multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of ‘women’ are constructed* (1993; 20). Effie clearly has read and interpreted the cultural signs for what is expected of her as a woman in the Capitol, and what is required of her to fit in to the environment. If she were to behave differently, she would be

viewed as an 'Other', and consequently not be accepted by society. However, both in *Catching Fire* and in the *Mocking Jay*, she develops as character, and the reader is presented with another side of her, where she seems to have developed sympathy for her tributes, and has grown to care for them. As the reader observes her during the rebellion, learning that her sympathy and support now lies with the agitators, it becomes evident that she is confused and unable to keep up her performance. Without access to fancy costumes, wigs and make-up, she is forced to step out of the role of what she previously defined as the feminine ideal. She seems to be able to adapt to the behaviour and their way of being of the women in District 13. Her previous feminine performance alters, and gender performance becomes transparent, as we observe that she seeks social alliance in taking up a different kind of behaviour.

All books in the Hunger Games series have a strong focus on beauty and behaviour ideals regarding both men and women. Both Katniss and the other female characters literally perform different perceptions of femininity and sexuality. In addition, Collins stirs up these expected notions when she supplies many of the female characters with what traditionally are considered masculine qualities, whereas some of the male characters (however not many) are given female ones. She hereby accentuates the manufacturing of what is considered 'correct' gender expression. However, it is important to observe that Butler is of the opinion that the performance precedes the performer. It is not really a performance per se, because there is no actor. The acts, however, constitute *the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core* (1990; 173). That means that an individual cannot decide which gender she wants to be. Gender is not something one can choose; rather it is constructed by the sum of all the repeated acts one performs. However, in presenting an impressive range of Butlerian bi-gendered and empowered women in her novels, Collins is able to challenge the phallogocentric order as we know it. She hereby contributes to an important change in the traditional Western canon.

6 Conclusion

Feminism and radical gender presentations in the *Hunger Games* series can undoubtedly be applauded in many ways. Collins manages to stay true to her protagonist almost throughout the entire series, in portraying her as a courageous and independent girl, who refuses to be rejected and depreciated. The moment when Katniss furiously shoots the arrow at the game officials' dinner table, because she detests being ignored, we understand that this is a girl who craves justice and attention, and who demands to be heard and to be treated fairly.

Furthermore, Collins uses Katniss to build a character that suggests a new and bi-gendered individual that is able to succeed when it comes to breaking down the binary opposition between male and female. Katniss is able to challenge and break down not only the conventional gender roles, but also the entire patriarchal society.

Collins is also to a great extent successful when it comes to suggesting women's capabilities and potential in that she presents not only her protagonist, but also several of the other female characters in the series as strong, independent women, whose performances can be seen as crossing traditional gender roles. She challenges the reader's conventional perception of traditional gender roles, and plays with crossing gender boundaries and reversing gender expectations. However, as soon as Katniss enters the Games, it becomes noticeable that it is both unacceptable and quite impossible for her to continue to be who she is, i.e. not to act in accordance with female gender performance when displayed. She realizes that if she is to endure the situation that she has been forced into, and if she is going to stand a chance in surviving the inhumane competition that the Hunger Games entails, she needs to present herself as something that she is not. She needs to put up an act that will provide her with enough sympathy from the Gamemakers and the audience to give her advantages and necessary tools in her struggle to make it as long as possible, she needs to act more *female*.

In realizing that she is able to master such a role play, an acting accordingly, over and over again, Katniss substantiates Judith Butler's theories, when she suggests that gender is performance, and that sex and gender are created in a social setting, and that they are variable and shifting, and suggests a set of *periodic practices based on performative theory of gender acts [...]*. Katniss also helps enhance Butler's theory that gender identity is not a personality that anybody chooses to become, but that gender is to imitate other people's behaviour without a purpose. She takes advantage of the conventional notion that we have of the various

gender norms that Butler claims have been established over time, and which have developed into a pattern that defines someone's gender. Katniss does not change her identity by performing these acts, but simply mocks and parodies gender, because she simply participates in a play, due to the fact that her performance is literally a matter of life and death.

Nevertheless, the series is filled with a notion of female empowerment and promises of alternative endings to the traditional stories of male heroes and saviours rescuing feeble and helpless women. We are predicted with the assumption that we finally will be left with the conclusion that the phallogentric and patriarch society has finally come to an end; that gender equality is eventually reality. We witness Katniss's bravery and extraordinary capability to endure both mental and physical strain, and observe her remarkable ability to lead an entire society into victory over a brutal dictatorial regime. We praise her for being able to show such immense strength at the same time as she demonstrates compassion, empathy and patience, and are delighted that she steered clear of being sexually objectified. Therefore, when it dawns on us that Collins is not going to succeed in carrying through our expectations, the disappointment is immense. The assumption of gender equality seems to have been based on what is basically observed on the surface. In the end, when Katniss marries Peeta and bears his children, we realize that she has eventually surrendered and relinquished her individuality and sense of self. She falls into the traditional pattern of domesticity, silences herself and settles for a life that she initially never dreamed of. She convinces herself that choosing family life is merely a survival strategy, and that her utopian belief in an ideal and bright life is only a game, concluding that *there are worse games to play* (*Mockingjay* 390).

However, the ending should really not come as a surprise. Already when Peeta announces that she is bearing his child, Katniss takes a step back. This is a clear foreshadowing of Katniss's surrender in the end. Even before we read the epilogue, it becomes evident that she is going to end up doing exactly what is expected of her, not by the reader, though, but by the patriarchal society in which she lives, and which we as readers initially thought was a society that portrayed equality. In the beginning of the series, when women and girls are presented as mine workers, hunters and traders, it creates a notion of a society that seems to have succeeded in creating gender equality. However, after closer reading, it becomes apparent that these women have only taken on these tasks because their husbands or fathers are dead, and the only chance that they have of survival is to take over as providers. The roles that women generally have in the poorer districts of Panem are the ones that entail traditional domestic chores, being wives and mothers, tending their homes and caring for their children. They are

not really expected to take jobs outside their homes, and when or if they do, it is only in certain trades, or because it is an absolute necessity.

Katniss's retreat to District 12 after the riot is a necessity, due to her psychological condition. She is traumatized, distressed and depressed, and her restitution is dependent on her stepping away from all noise and chaos. Nevertheless, as she gradually recovers, we do not witness that she becomes her *old self*. She seems to have capitulated and abandoned the girl she once was. Was it really necessary for her to choose family life? If love, marriage and children never were among her dreams, she might instead have pursued her desires now that she finally is able to live in a country that eventually is free of its oppressors. Where is her bow and arrow? Where is her passion for hunting or her desire to wander carelessly in the woods? She could be hiking in the woods, hunting without being afraid of being caught and punished, without being afraid of jeopardizing her entire family's safety. She wouldn't have to strain herself to portray qualities that she is not comfortable with, and last but not least, she would not have to act like she is in love. Instead, we witness her as a housewife, and a mother, who has not just settled, but also completely resigned.

The famished but resourceful girl that we meet in the first book of the *Hunger Games* who through the series evolves into a resolute and calculative rebel and leader gives the reader hope and expectations that it is just as possible for girls and women to become heroines and victors as it is for men. Hence, Collins does to some extent succeed in the creation of a more or less perfect female specimen. She is able to let Katniss portray a balance and mixture between genders that is admirable, and places her in a *third space* of Butler's gender theory, in Derrida's deconstruction of binarism, and hence in an *in-betweenness* that does not appear strange or different. Quite on the contrary, it is welcomed and celebrated, because we have waited and yearned for it. However, Collins does not follow through. She does not complete her creation of the perfect bi-gendered character. She loosens her grip, and lets Katniss retreat in to heteronormative gender expectations. Even though it happens gradually, Katniss settles for a life that is designed for Peeta and the rest of the heteronormative society. And as she describes it herself:

It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly. When I first felt her stirring inside of me, I was consumed with a terror that felt as old as life itself. Only the joy of holding her in my arms could tame it. Carrying him was a little easier, but not much (Mockingjay 389).

So what is the message here, then? Was Katniss just a pawn in a play? Was the idea of dismantling gender expectations just a romantic illusion that was impossible to follow through? Or is it perhaps so that the rebellion would not have had a victorious outcome if it were not for the fact that it was led by a girl? The answer to all these questions is probably 'yes'. If Katniss were a boy, her defiance and lack of discipline would have been noticed and quelled quite quickly. She would probably have been taken out already in the first Games. However, since she is a girl, it is unexpected and perhaps even intriguing that she behaves in the way that she does. Quite early in the series, she becomes aware of it herself, and she cynically takes advantage of the expectations that are connected to her sex, and thus mocks the Gamemakers, her potential sponsors, the society, and even President Coin. And the reader enjoys it. However, as disappointing as it is, it seems as if Katniss has been taken advantage of even by the author herself. After the rebellion is over and the government has been overthrown, she loses her position, her strength and changes her personality, settling in traditional and expected manners.

Consequently, we are left with a heroine that seems to substantiate Butler's idea that gender identity is nothing more than a performance. She even explains in the epilogue that she needed to bear a child to be 'tamed'. As if the acts that defined her as crossing gender boundaries were something that were out of control, and that needed to be adjusted in to fitting a desired pattern. If so, the message the reader finally is left with is that it is dangerous to be viewed as something different, and, in Beauvoir's words, as an *Other*, and that it therefore is crucial to conform to an identity that is considered acceptable to the rest of the society.

Alternatively, it could be that Katniss plays by Derridá's rules, when he claims that if a woman seeks to take the power of man, [...] *she knows that such a reversal would deprive her of her power of simulation, that in truth, a reversal of this kind would [...] force her just as surely into the old apparatus* (Derridá, Agosti 1979; 61), and that she decides not to perform in accordance to such a system, because she wants to prevent herself from being a subject to the very same system, at the same time as she can remain strong. In this way, she can enter the masculine arena at any time, if it is desirable, and still not be under the authority of any other.

Suzanne Collins is nevertheless able to invert traditional male-gravitating literature, presenting Katniss Everdeen as an alternative heroine to the traditional male-dominated

canon. She has been able to fascinate both boys and girls with her empowered and self-determining women. Through their performances, these women demonstrate the possibility of a new social order, and thus an imaginative template of feminist identification for a new generation, and can therefore be considered as a highly important contribution to feminist literature.

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