

**KATNISS' FLUID IDENTITIES:
GENDER PERFORMANCE AND MEDIA INFLUENCE
IN THE *HUNGER GAMES* TRILOGY**

by

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of gender performativity through the influence of reality television in Suzanne Collins' trilogy: *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, and *Mockingjay*. Using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and media and communication theories to construct my critical framework, this study examines the development of the protagonist Katniss Everdeen's performance over the course of the trilogy. For each novel, this research explores a specific role Katniss is assigned and how the role is influenced by gender interpretation and the presence of cameras. The study examines how Katniss' performance and interpretation of gender change with each role. Additionally, the concept of liminality, or the ambiguous space of transition, is explored with regards to how Katniss navigates her way between performance and reality. This trilogy satirizes contemporary culture's obsession with reality television, and this study provides an understanding of how performativity plays a significant role in our everyday lives.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, R. Loo.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Motivating students to read is one of the daily struggles I experience as a high school English teacher. While some students are avid readers who speed through pages, often there are those who have never read a complete book in their lives or who grapple with the challenge of completing a class novel. As a result, a book that has the ability to grasp the attention of a young generation and echo through its culture is a powerful thing. Knowing that young readers are willing to line up around the block for *Harry Potter* book releases or enjoy gossiping about the adventures of sparkling vampires strikes an emotional chord with me as both reflect the shift in young adults increasingly choosing to engage in reading. These books have produced an active culture that goes beyond the literature: fan fiction, movies, clothing, make-up lines, and even theme parks have grown from the roots of such books. This popular culture phenomenon not only functions as a marketing tool for the literature, but also creates excitement in the reading experience itself. Consequently, the launch of Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* series interested me as I once again witnessed a surge of attention towards reading and interest in discussing these texts in my classroom.

I am fascinated by the creation of these literary phenomena. Such popularity functions not only to create a culture of fans, but also to encourage a culture of readers. I find the *Hunger Games* phenomenon particularly interesting in that Katniss, a female protagonist, appeals to both male and female readers. In my experience, I have seen male readers generally gravitate towards male protagonists, making personal connections to these literary heroes. A study by Kropp and Halverson at the University of Georgia supports this as they examined the reading preferences of

boys and girls with regards to gender stereotypes. Their studies showed that “[g]irls preferred the story with a female character and a ‘feminine activity’ and least preferred the story with a masculine activity. For boys the reverse was true” (qtd. in Langerman 133). Katniss’ character, in addition to the trilogy’s bleak dystopian setting and mesmerizing plot, create a well-rounded narrative that captivates readers in an emotional reading experience.

Instead of my needing to prod students to pick up this trilogy, I found that these books “sold” themselves. Surveying my students and watching some of them immerse themselves in *Hunger Games* culture helped me understand what literary elements appeal to young adult readers. The violence and action attract readers seeking adventure, yet the romantic love triangle speaks to those who are sensitive at heart. Moreover, the themes of the trilogy are relevant to topics we discuss in class. *The Hunger Games* trilogy presents the themes of action and change with a strong emphasis on social justice. Encouraging students to be responsible, global citizens is an important part of my job, and I feel that this series provides students with the inspiration to think beyond themselves and look at the roles they can play within society.

Katniss plays several roles throughout the series such as the martyr, the protector, the romantic, and the symbol of rebellion. Her fluid identities make her a complex character. What is unique about Katniss’ situation is that her popular reception by the fictional society in the books is mirrored in the reception of the protagonist and the trilogy in the reading culture of our world, as her personal attributes are appealing and relatable to young adult readers. I have also noticed that students connect with Katniss due to the fact that she is a reluctant hero. Her vulnerability, fear, and insecurity make her relatable, while her athletic skill and determination make her admirable. Her flexibility when it comes to different roles as well as her reliability makes Katniss a well-rounded character.

Understanding what literature appeals to young adults is both my passion and my job. I strive to gain a greater sense of what literature captures the interests of young readers as well as what literature has the potential to shake popular culture at its core. I feel that this study has helped me develop greater insight into the role heroines play in literature as well as their influence on young readers. Moreover, I feel my research has enabled me to become a better educator and has provided me with the skills to continue to identify literature that appeals to reluctant readers.

1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

My study attempts to understand, within the selected primary texts of the *Hunger Games* trilogy, how performativity and media shape gender. I explore the relationship between theories of performativity and media to see how they affect one another and how this is portrayed and depicted in the character of Katniss through the trilogy. Because identity is constantly shifting and being reinvented, I explore how gender can be affected through these changes.

My research addresses the following questions:

1. How can Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity be used to explore the development of Katniss' character over the *Hunger Games* trilogy?
2. How can communication theories addressing media and reality television be used to cast light on Katniss' performance of specific roles?
3. How does Katniss perform femininity for the media throughout the trilogy?

1.3 The Significance of the Study

Existing scholarship on *The Hunger Games* trilogy is relatively meager, due to the fact that the books are quite new. Pharr and Clark's book of critical essays as well Dunn and Michaud's book of critical essays examining the philosophy behind the *Hunger Games* are the only two collections of scholarly essays in existence today. While some essays have touched on Butler's theory of performativity, Katniss' performance of gender identity over the course of the trilogy has not yet been examined. My research, through a close reading of the trilogy, explores the development of Katniss' character. Although it is generally understood that reality television features an element of performance (Couldry; Corner; Skeggs and Wood), few scholars have made the link between media theories and the trilogy. My research examines the connection between gender performance and how it is shaped by the reality television environment.

The fact that Katniss is such a strong female character is an important factor in my study. Many books that are enjoyed by both male and female readers often feature male protagonists as noted in Schultheis' study conducted at Kent State University. After surveying 110 eleventh grade students (64 of which were female, while 42 were male), Schultheis found that "64 percent of the protagonists in the [favourite] books chosen by females were male, while 90 percent of the books chosen by males featured male protagonists" (Summers 245). Examining gender construction and portrayal helps me discover what makes Katniss an appealing female character. Moreover, exploring the entire trilogy helps me understand how authors reinvent and develop their characters in order to keep fans enthralled and loyal.

Because reality television continues to play an increasingly important role in mainstream media, my research looks at Collins' use of reality television as a medium for Katniss to grow as a character. Unlike previous research, my analysis examines the connection between Katniss'

gendered identity and how it is performed due to the presence of cameras. Because the trilogy is quite new, my research also considers the ways, in which Katniss' performance and interpretation of gender changes throughout the three novels, which has also not been considered. My research focuses on the specific roles that Katniss chooses in each novel and examines how she develops and negotiates gender identity through the course of the trilogy.

1.4 Rationale and Criteria for the Selection of Primary Texts

I chose to focus on Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy because it is written for young adult readers, a reading audience that I work with on a daily basis. Furthermore, this series has inspired a fan culture and continues to gain popularity with each movie release. Gary Ross, director of the film adaptation of the *Hunger Games*, explains that the trilogy has crossover appeal transcending the young adult genre. He states: “[b]ecause teenagers are on the cusp of adulthood, they’re grappling with a lot of issues that in adult books are resolved but teenagers are still beginning to explore” (qtd. in Paul 11). Issues such as identity and relationships are still relevant in adulthood, and Collins does an effective job of addressing these issues in her trilogy.

With the help of social media, teenagers have outlets such as Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, and various online forums to share their passion for the trilogy. Curwood and Fink explain that these outlets, or affinity spaces, allow fans to critically engage with the story through writing fanfiction, producing art and videos, and designing role playing games (417). I have noticed these online spaces power young readers' excitement. Another reason this trilogy appeals to a wide audience of readers is its flexibility in terms of genres. While it is rooted in dystopian literature, the storyline draws upon elements of multiple genres. Pharr and Clark explain that the

trilogy is often contradictory in its genres as it can read as “a war story that is as well an antiwar treatise, a romance that is never undeservedly romantic, a science fiction adventure that also serves as grim social satire, an identity novel that is compellingly ambivalent about gender roles, and—like other great epics—a tragedy depicting the desperate human need for heroes and the terrible cost of heroism” (9). Collins provides a multi-faceted narrative, with various aspects targeting a broad spectrum of readers.

I made a purposive selection of my primary texts as I wanted to focus on Katniss’ development throughout the trilogy. I feel that Collins’ trilogy does something that other dystopian literature does not; it features the negative ramifications of reality television as social commentary. While technology is a main facet of dystopian literature, I feel that reality television is something that has not been explored sufficiently, considering the significant role it holds in North American society.

I considered other titles as primary texts, but decided against including them in the research study. M. T. Anderson’s *Feed* (2002) shows the downfall of society due to mass consumerism and advertisements. Anderson’s novel offers interesting media criticism that I am interested in, but I wanted to focus on the use of reality television. Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* (2011), *Insurgent* (2012) and *Allegiant* (2013) explore similar themes to those of Collins. With a strong female protagonist and similar action-packed adventure, the *Divergent* and *Hunger Games* trilogies attract similar audiences. However, my goal is to look at one character over the course of the trilogy through the critical lenses of performativity and reality television, and I decided that Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy best suited my study.

Performativity, especially concerning gender, is a prominent issue that my students face. I find that adolescents are extremely concerned with how they present themselves and how they

are perceived by their peers. Fully aware of how they are being seen, there is an element of performativity in their everyday lives. Head explains that socialization is a significant factor in the development of gender. He states that “society expects boys and girls to behave differently and social pressure tends to force people to conform to these expectations” (42). Having socially determined rules creates a base from which young adults can understand gendered behaviour. This extends to how young adults perform and interpret gender. With performativity being such a prominent aspect of the trilogy, it is important to explore Katniss’ use of gender performance. Although gender equality has come a long way, the fact that readers and critics choose to celebrate Katniss, with emphasis on her being a female protagonist shows that we have not reached complete gender equality.

Packed with action and suspense, the books read easily, but it is the underlying messages and social critiques that provide another dimension of value and lend the trilogy to in-depth analysis. In her science fiction dystopian society, Collins details the means by which the government of Panem, the Capitol, controls the population through celebration, fear, and media. Collins uses satire to highlight the chilling control reality television holds over her fictional society, which brings a new subject and dimension to young adult literature. The idea that the characters are aware of the camera’s presence changes our understanding of who the characters are. Here, the idea of performativity comes into play, with Katniss forced to adapt herself into different roles for the camera.

Hunger Games (2008), the first novel of the trilogy, features a gladiator-like fight to the death with a modern twist. The Hunger Games is an annual event held by the Capitol as a means to control society. Two tributes from each district are selected to fight for survival. As young tributes from each district struggle to survive for the viewing pleasure of Panem, Katniss

emerges as a fierce competitor. She makes herself stand out initially by volunteering to take the place of her younger sister Prim. Her success is in part due to her ability to be flexible with her identity, using her knowledge of the games and awareness of her audience to her advantage. She emerges as a co-victor with Peeta, another tribute from District 12 who acted as her ally. Their victory is controversial, as their fake double suicide attempt is seen as rebellious on the part of the Capitol. Throughout the games, the fabricated romance between Katniss and Peeta helps keep the audience enthralled, and in turn, continues their sponsorship, which is essential for survival. At the novel's resolution, Katniss and Peeta return home, unsure of their futures with regards to their relationship as well as their safety from the government.

The second novel, *Catching Fire* (2009), explores how Katniss uses her existing knowledge of performance to survive yet again. Beginning with the Victory Tour, President Snow informs Katniss that she must convince him and the rest of Panem that her actions in the last Hunger Games were based on love and not on rebellion. Katniss has the added pressure of performing the role of Peeta's devoted lover, while simultaneously navigating her romantic feelings towards him. Additionally, her feelings towards her long-time friend Gale create a romantic triangle among the star-crossed lovers, resulting in Katniss' confused emotions.

.Adding to the conflict, Katniss is forced to survive the arena once more, as the seventy-fifth annual Hunger Games is actually the Quarter Quell. The Quarter Quell requires existing victors to return to the arena to battle for their lives. Katniss now draws on her previous experience and audience of fans as advantageous factors to help her in the games. This book features increasing political tension as districts begin to rebel, and the games turn out to be a façade to overturn the government.

Mockingjay (2010), the third and final title in Collins' trilogy, shows the growth of Katniss' character. In this book, Katniss has become a symbol of rebellion through the symbol of the Mockingjay; she is a spokeswoman for change. Under the care of District 13, Katniss experiences post-traumatic stress disorder, as she tries to recover from her experiences in the arena. Separation from Peeta, who is being held by the Capitol, adds to her stress. Katniss trains to be a soldier to overthrow the Capitol and assassinate President Snow. During the war against the Capitol, Katniss' younger sister Prim is killed. Realizing that she has been manipulated by both sides, the government and the rebels, Katniss does not know whom she can trust. In the end, she kills President Coin of District 13 and returns home. She realizes that she will never fully recover from her losses, although she tries to move forward in her life with Peeta and their two children.

I am choosing to focus on Katniss' character because of the way in which she evolves throughout the novel. Through her experiences, she demonstrates how fluid identity can be and how she must adapt her performance to different audiences and situations. The use of media for communication and viewing also affects Katniss' performance.

1.5 Significant Terms

Gender: Gender is a socially constructed concept. It refers to behaviours and actions that society associates with masculinity and femininity. Butler looks at gender identity as a "result of personal/cultural history" (188) and as something that is fabricated through imitation.

Performativity: In the study, I use Judith Butler's definition of performativity, which examines how gender is performed by the subject. Butler explains that "acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body" (185).

This means that gender is not something we are born with, but a product of the behaviour we exhibit. Butler also uses the performance of drag as an example of something that “plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed” (187). Though looking at the performance of drag plays a significant role in Butler’s theory, I focus on the acting, performing, and repetition of behaviours to construct a gendered identity.

Reality Television: Originally, reality television referred to documentaries that reported on factual subjects. Contemporary reality television has evolved to a genre of television that features real people in fabricated scenarios. The shows are often rooted in competition, featuring contestants who are not celebrities, vying for a prize. Competition-based reality television shows are also referred to as gamedocs (Couldry 82), meaning game documentaries.

Dystopia: The opposite of utopia, dystopia refers to a society that experiences an extreme crisis. This crisis may be in the form of environmental disaster, extreme governmental control, or post-apocalyptic conflicts. The dystopian setting is often bleak and desolate, with limited societal resources. The dystopian literary genre showcases exaggerated crises that often reflect sincere concerns of contemporary society (Basu, Broad and Hintz). Dystopian literature often practices “genre blurring” (Baccolini and Moylan 7), as it stems from the science fiction genre. However, Baccolini and Moylan state that “it is the very notion of an *impure* genre, with permeable borders which allow contamination from other genres that represents resistance to a hegemonic ideology that reduces everything to a global monoculture” (8). As a result, it is the influence of other genres that may distinguish dystopian literature as a genre in itself.

Utopia: A term coined by Thomas Moore in 1516 in his book of the same name, today ‘utopia’ is used to describe a perfect society. With a focus on examining societal improvements and

governance, utopias present the ideal (Hintz and Ostry 1). Utopian literature allows readers to relate personal experiences through “an imagined encounter with another culture” (7).

Liminality: A theory developed by Victor Turner, liminality refers to the in-between space created by social transition. The limits created by social structures create an in-between space that is uncertain and chaotic.

Star-crossed Lovers: “Star-cross’d” is a term first coined by Shakespeare that refers two lovers who are destined to be apart because of misaligned fate. Lovers are often said to be star-crossed because their love is either forbidden by family, society, or social institutions. Tragedy is often associated with star-crossed lovers, as being together often results in death.

1.6 Chapter Overview

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two outlines existing literature in three categories: dystopian literature; young adult dystopian literature; and criticism addressing *the Hunger Games*. The first section provides context with an examination of the roots of dystopian literature, considering significant titles that have shaped the dystopian landscape. The second section provides the distinguishing characteristics surrounding young adult dystopian literature. It considers the differences between adult and young adult dystopian literature. Moreover, this section looks at important titles that make up the young adult dystopian genre. The final section of my literature review assesses existing scholarship on *The Hunger Games* itself. This section shows what other scholars have said about *The Hunger Games* as dystopian literature. The purpose of my Literature Review is to provide a solid context of dystopian literature and how it relates to *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

My third chapter outlines my methodology and sets up my critical framework. In this chapter I provide critical context to the theory of performativity as well as reality television theory. Additionally, I consider research on the trilogy and performativity and reality television. Constructing my critical lens, I show how the theories can be further applied to *The Hunger Games*.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six comprise the body of my thesis. Each chapter is a close reading of a different novel in the trilogy and examines a different aspect of Katniss' identity. Chapter Four looks at how Katniss adjusts to the cameras and takes on the role as the "star-crossed lover" in the first novel. I focus on *Catching Fire* in the fifth chapter and explore how Katniss negotiates her way through her newfound role as a symbol of hope. Chapter Six looks at the final novel of the trilogy, *Mockingjay*, focusing on Katniss' role as the Mockingjay and examining how gender and identity are influenced by the role of the rebel.

In Chapter Seven, Conclusions and Discussion, I conclude my study and provide suggestions for further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Hunger Games trilogy is rooted in the dystopian literature genre. Because Collins' use of dystopian elements strongly influences her depiction of the landscape of Panem and the development of Katniss' character, this literature review begins with an examination of the dystopian genre. In my examination of critical writings in this literature review, I first look at the origins of dystopian literature, major titles that have played a role in shaping the genre, as well as the characteristics of dystopian adult literature. Next, I consider the differences between dystopia in adult and young adult literature. Finally, I document the existing scholarship that has examined *The Hunger Games* trilogy as dystopian young adult literature.

2.1 Dystopian Literature

Booker notes that dystopian characteristics are apparent in literature from as early as ancient Greece. He observes the “strong dystopian element in Aristophanes’s satirical response to the utopianism of Plato” (*Dystopian Literature* 5), pointing out that the relationship between the ideas of utopia and dystopia played a role in ancient societies. Booker further traces the history of dystopia to Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, which he believes was “centrally informed by dystopian energies” (5). Booker adds that during the Enlightenment of the nineteenth century, the new emphasis put on the importance of science “directly inspired both an explosion in utopian thought and a corresponding wave of dystopian reactions” (5). The relationship between utopian and dystopian ideas is still relevant, and continues to shape the landscapes of both genres.

Despite the early examples of dystopian literature, it is significant that this genre emerged as a response to the utopian genre. “Utopia,” a term coined by Thomas Moore in 1516 in his book of the same name, is used today to describe a perfect society (Newman 167). Other utopian works, such as novels by H. G. Wells, helped trigger the birth of dystopian literature. For example, E. M. Forster’s story “The Machine Stops” (1928) was perceived as “a counterblast to the heavens of H. G. Wells” (Shusterman qtd. in Newman 168). Moylan explains that despite the fact that Forster’s story “portrays a totalizing administration that ‘mechanizes’ every dimension of daily life” (111), the story features a utopian sensibility that is still prevalent amongst the dystopia as a potential for hope. Elliot comments that other examples of significant dystopian literature, such as Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We* (1921) and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1931), function as “negative utopias” (qtd. in *Dystopian Literature* 5), which Booker explains as “societies in which utopian dreams of the ‘old reformers’ have been realized, only to turn out to be nightmares” (*Dystopian Literature* 5). In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), another icon in the dystopian canon, George Orwell presents a society that is the opposite of a utopia, with stringent surveillance and mind control. These notable titles present societies that counter utopian societies, demonstrating that utopia and dystopia require one another to create an opposition.

Despite the strong relationship between the two, dystopian literature has certain elements that distinguish it from its utopian counterpart. Dystopian literature roots itself in the science fiction genre, using the “presentation of *otherness*” (Williams and Milner 93) to create unique landscapes. As Booker explains, “[t]he principal technique of dystopian fiction is defamiliarization,” by which writers “[focus] their critiques of society on spatially or temporally distant settings” (*Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* 19) in order to create the unknown. This illustrates the major reason that the majority of dystopian literature is featured in the future

or in societies reminiscent of the ones we know and live in today. Archer-Lean emphasizes that “[t]he source of the dystopian world ... lies in the relationship between the present and the future” (5). Through the examination of societal flaws, the function of the societies in dystopian literature is to show the possible ramifications of history.

Dystopian literature contains a sense of *otherness*, which is a separation from what we consider to be normal. Despite this *otherness* that creates uniqueness, dystopian literature “has an ‘implied connection’ with the real” (Williams and Milner 93). It is through this connection that readers are able to recognize similarities between their own lives and dystopian societies. As Booker explains, dystopian literature “constitutes a critique of existing social conditions or political systems, either through the crucial examination of the utopian premises upon which those conditions and systems are based or through the imaginative extension of those conditions and systems into different contexts that more clearly reveal their flaws and contradictions” (*Dystopian Literature* 3). According to Booker, it is through social critique of flawed societal and governmental systems that readers can make connections with their own circumstances. While exposing societal failings is characteristic of dystopian literature, Booker proposes that “dystopian literature is not so much a specific genre as a particular kind of oppositional and critical energy or spirit” (*Dystopian Literature* 3). Consequently, this dystopian spirit is apparent in many bodies of work that strive to critique social institutions.

2.2 Young Adult Dystopian Literature

Contemporary dystopian young adult literature has become increasingly popular. From Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993) which has been prominently used in classrooms for decades, to newer dystopian fiction such as Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* (2011) and Scott Westerfield’s

Uglies (2005) series, which appeal to young adult readers, dystopian young adult literature continues to capture the attention of its target audience. With a focus on a fatal crisis, be it environmental, political, or social, dystopian fiction often functions to frighten and warn young readers. Basu, Broad and Hintz point out that “dystopian writing engages with pressing global concerns: liberty and self-determination, environmental destruction and looming catastrophe, questions of identity, and the increasingly fragile boundaries between technology and the self” (1). These are common themes that emerge in the despair-filled worlds and desolate landscapes characteristic of dystopian fiction. While these factors are common to both dystopian adult and young adult literature, there are certain aspects that distinguish dystopian young adult literature as a genre.

Due to the reading demographic for dystopian young adult literature, Basu, Broad and Hintz consider that writers of this genre must take certain aspects into consideration in order to capture the attention of this readership. They propose that young adult readers are still trying to negotiate their own place in the world, and dystopian young adult literature allows young adult readers to connect with fast-moving, adventurous plots (1). Moreover, dystopian young adult literature features “narrative techniques [that] place us close with action, first person narrative, engaging dialogue, or even diary entries imparting accessible messages that may have the potential to motivate a generation on the cusp of adulthood” (1). Not only are strategic literary techniques used to capture young readers’ attention, but also an underlying message of change and inspiration is also characteristic of this genre. There is an appeal to the teen reader’s mentality as Basu, Broad and Hintz state, “[t]he YA dystopia presumes that adolescents should be idealists, offering a gratifying view of adolescent readers as budding political activists—a portrayal that flatters adolescents and reassures adults that they are more than apathetic youth”

(5). The idea that youth can be agents of change is an aspect dystopian writers insert into their work in order to appeal to their readership. Furthermore, the idea that youth can be a catalyst of change sends a message of youth empowerment for social justice, providing inspiration to young readers. Dystopian young adult fiction functions to both please the thrill-seeking readers, but also to instruct and caution.

Through specific themes and techniques, dystopian young adult authors are able to distinguish their work from other genres. Spisak presents four elements that frequent Young Adult dystopian novels: “a setting so vividly and clearly described that it becomes almost a character in itself; individuals or forces in charge who have a legitimate reason for being as they are; protagonists who are shaped by their environment and situations; and a conclusion that reflects the almost always dire circumstances” (56). Moreover, Basu, Broad and Hintz reveal other themes that are common to a dystopian environment. For example, they emphasize the fact that dystopian young adult literature features problems in the contemporary world that are exaggerated or projected onto the dystopian landscape of the future. Environmental dystopia highlights the potential ramifications in the event of environmental destruction. Post-apocalyptic fiction “can turn existing communities into dystopias marked by secrecy, fear, and control— [where] those in power use violence and repression to maintain what little structure remains” (3). Lastly, the issue of conformity is common to dystopian young adult literature as books can feature oppressive governments that restrain citizens through harsh rules and abhorrent living conditions, resulting in adolescent protagonists often challenging the authoritarian government, attempting to achieve a “balance between personal freedom and social harmony” (4). Although the bleak atmosphere plays an important role in dystopian young adult literature, the common

themes that Basu, Broad and Hintz emphasize also provide escape, education, and entertainment for young adult readers.

In presenting the common themes found in dystopian young adult literature, Basu, Broad and Hintz also put forward titles that have played significant roles in developing the genre. Lowry's *The Giver* features a shift from an initially utopian genre, to explore individuality. The strict government of the "Pretty committee" in Westerfeld's *Uglies* series brings light to themes of change and identity in a contemporary setting. The *Uglies* series also physically manipulates characters' appearances, showcasing a contemporary concern with beauty and vanity. Moreover, Roth's *Divergent* also features the theme of individuality and personal autonomy. Basu, Broad and Hintz note that a major increase in young adult dystopian literature emerged in the 2000s. As setting plays a critical role in dystopian literature, Spisak highlights several titles that showcase this important aspect of the genre. *Incarceron* (2007) by Catherine Fisher features the Incarceron, a prison experiment which becomes a "self-aware and tyrannical entity" (Spisak 56). Additionally, Spisak shows that contemporary dystopian young adult literature has changed as evidenced by M. T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002) and Patrick Ness' *Chaos Walking* series (2008, 2009, 2010). Both *Feed* and the *Chaos Walking* trilogy reflect how our societies have been influenced through the influx of technology, as each novel has its protagonists "permanently trapped into constantly flowing information" (57).

2.3 Criticism of *The Hunger Games* Trilogy as Dystopian Literature

Suzanne Collins' trilogy is categorized as dystopian young adult fiction due to several defining characteristics. Sambell and McDonald note that dystopias often predict societal collapse due to current societal trends. It is important to note that often dystopias "imagine a

future or an alternative world in which that trend dominates every aspect of life” (McDonald 9). For example, in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Collins satirizes and links to the present day the control of the government over the population of Panem, a futuristic North America, through the medium of reality television. Spisak further defines the dystopia as “a society that is a counter-utopia, a repressed, controlled, restricted system with multiple social controls put into place via government, military, or a powerful authority figure” (55). This is evident in Collins’ trilogy as the Capitol uses the Hunger Games as a means to punish the districts for their earlier rebellion and to prevent recurrence of revolt. Each district is segregated to work on specific industries in order to serve the Capitol.

Broad’s reading of *The Hunger Games* trilogy points out that the “dystopian landscape allows Katniss to envision utopian possibilities” (121). In her interpretation, Broad examines how the bleakness of Panem allows Katniss to be open to a utopian transformation. Peeta represents a utopian future as he remains uncorrupted throughout the trilogy, never killing anyone. On the other hand, Broad sees Katniss as a symbol of dystopian violence and uprising. Growing up in dystopian Panem has allowed Katniss to see Peeta as a beacon of hope for the future. According to Broad, the fact that she is intent on saving him demonstrates that Katniss sees a possible utopian future in the form “of a stable, loving home and nuclear family, insular and protected from the outside world” (125). Broad’s close reading of the trilogy interprets Katniss’ triumph not as a political agenda, but as a means to move past the dystopia and into a utopian future.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Most of the critical writing on the series is in essay or article form, and not necessarily peer reviewed. Moreover, the majority of the essays that I have read based their observations on the first book of the series, and do not explore Katniss' development over the course of the series. This chapter defines and presents the theories pertaining to performativity and reality television, as well as presenting research conducted on these theories in relation to *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Additionally, I explain which elements of each theory I use to construct my critical framework.

3.1 Judith Butler's Theory of Performativity

Judith Butler, a feminist post-structural theorist, has examined sex and gender from a unique perspective. As Jackson states, Butler's theories "work to unsettle the stabilizing gender categories that attempt to normalize and regulate people" (675). From a post-structural perspective, Butler is intent on questioning what is known about gender and how society plays a role in gender identity. I use Butler's concept of repetition as a means to construct gender and identity as a component of my theoretical framework.

Butler argues that gender is not something one *is* but something one *does*. This means that gender is not a product of genetics, but is comprised of a set of repeated behaviours, or performances. As Butler states, "gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced, and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence" (34). This concept posits that gender is the outcome of acting and repetition; it is constantly changing based on our actions. Additionally, Butler states that "[g]ender is a 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” (45). This means that gender is not completely free-flowing, as the “rigid regulatory frame” sets limits and restrictions for the performance. Further, Butler attests that “gender proves to be performative—that is constituting the identity it is purported to be” (34). Therefore, the ongoing performative acts contribute to the construction of gender and identity.

The act of performance is what is unique in Butler’s theory. Butler looks at gender “as a *corporeal style*, and ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (190). Therefore, meaning and identity is fabricated from performance and understanding. Moreover, Butler notes that it is through certain behaviours that performativity is achieved, stating:

[A]cts, gestures and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (185)

This means that identity can be manufactured through performances that are sustained by the body, such as through gestures or actions. Therefore, it is important to note that gender is not a stable identity, but is constantly reinvented through the repetition of actions. The concept of gender as performance is an interesting one, because it means that one’s behaviour and actions are an interpretation of what the individual believes gender to be. As Hough interprets, “[g]ender performances then act to reify and perpetuate the dominant discourse of femininity and masculinity as acting feminine reifies the masculine subject position as well” (40). It is through an individual’s performance that gender categories are supported and perpetuated.

Butler's theory of performativity also has close ties to the construction of identity. In his chapter entitled "Being Performative: Butler," Loxley points out that "[o]ur identities are not given by nature or simply represented or expressed in culture: instead, culture is the process of identity formation.... So culture is a process, a kind of making, and we are what is made and remade through that process" (118). This suggests that culture is an ongoing influence that continuously reconstructs our identities. Because identity construction is a constant process, it is through the "*stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler 179) that we become gendered, and take on recognizable gender traits.

3.2 *The Hunger Games* trilogy and Gender Performativity

The research interrogating Katniss and gender stems mainly from articles, that consider different aspects of definitions of gender and identity. Critics have examined: how Katniss' identity spans two genders; how her identity rejects both masculinity and femininity and as a result, is othered; and how she uses gender as a performance.

Mitchell analyzes gender construction within the trilogy. She suggests that for Katniss, gender is a result of biology and environment. Mitchell notes that Katniss possesses "innate femaleness" (128) such as being nurturing and motherly towards her younger sister Prim. On the other hand, she also has traits that are typically masculine, as she draws her hunting skills from her father's influence, which Mitchell describes as "Katniss channeling her father's masculine lineage" (128). Mitchell also notes that gender is influenced by extraneous factors pointing out the Capitol's fluid approach to gender. She states, "Katniss's personal affinity for switching gender roles is distinctly parallel to the Capitol's prioritization of gender malleability" (134). It is

the Capitol's environment that allows for fluid gender identity both in and out of the arena.

Mitchell asserts that while biology plays a role in gender construction, external factors also help to build a gender identity.

J. Miller's ideas regarding Katniss' gender identity are similar to those of Mitchell. Miller references Simone de Beauvoir's idea that "sex refers to the unchangeable biological or physiological characteristics that distinguish men and women" (qtd. in Miller 151) in order to highlight the difference between the ideas of biological sex and socially constructed gender. Regarding gender, Miller asserts that "[g]ender... refers to the changeable roles, behaviors, activities, and personality traits that a society views as appropriate or 'normal' for men and women" (150). Hence, gender is separate from sex as it is socially constructed and ever changing.

Both Mitchell and Miller have looked at Katniss' gender as a means of performance in their respective articles. Miller draws from Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and points out that "Butler questions the idea that sex is a purely biological category and gender is a cultural one" (156). Hence, with regards to Katniss, her gender identity is not solely a result of biology, but also the environment that surrounds her. For Butler, gender can be a performance based on experience and imitation. Miller shows the relevance of Butler's theory in her analysis of how Katniss "adopts femininity as a performance" (156) in certain circumstances. Miller touches on the idea of Butler's gender performativity. My research differs from that of Mitchell and Miller in that I explore Butler's theory in more depth through close reading of the trilogy and examine how it intersects with the influence of reality television.

3.3 Reality Television Theory

The theoretical lens through which I examine the influence of reality television is comprised of concepts from several scholars. I draw primarily upon the research of John Corner, Nicholas Couldry, and Beverly Skeggs and Helen Wood to construct my critical framework of the relationship between reality television and performance. The connection between these two sets of theories shapes a critical lens I use in a close reading of my primary texts.

While documentary may be recognized as the original form of reality television, researchers deem contemporary reality television to be part of a post-documentary television culture. The post-documentary culture involves competition-based shows such as *Survivor*, observational challenge-based shows such as *Big Brother*, romantic game shows such as *The Bachelor*, or makeover shows such as *Beauty and the Geek*. Couldry refers to competition-based reality shows as gamedocs, meaning game documentaries (82). Even though these shows fall under the genre of reality television, what makes them part of the post-documentary culture is that all of these types of shows construct a reality within the parameters of the show. As Corner points out, these shows allow participants “to be real within fully managed artificiality” (qtd. in Couldry 83). Additionally, Corner describes post-documentary culture as a process in which the “entertainment drive towards diversion and a performative playfulness upset the categories of the ‘real,’ the ‘social’ or even the ‘public’ which were once hard-fastened to the documentary form” (qtd. in Skeggs and Wood 23). Gamedocs, therefore, have blurred the line between truth and fiction as they create an alternate space for performance under the façade of being real.

In order to observe everyday people in a fabricated reality, Corner states that reality television often follows the “observational documentary model” (44) in which participants model “real” behavior. The reason that this genre is so popular is due to “interest and pleasure, in the

real characteristics of real people, even if the material and temporal conditions for that behavior have been entirely constructed by television itself” (Corner 44). Thus, viewers may understand the conditions of these shows to be fictitious, but invest in the artifice of reality and empathize with the realistic participants. Corner further asserts that these gamedocs are not subjects of observation but provide a “living space [which] is also performance space” (46). To sum up, Corner attests that a post-documentary context provides a space “where viewers, participants, and producers are less invested in absolute truth and representational ethics and more interested in the space that exists between reality and fiction, in which new levels of representational play and reflexivity are visualized” (qtd.in Skeggs and Wood 24). As an element of my critical lens, I utilize the concept of this in-between space and examine how it provides a platform for performance in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. To further explore the concept of the in-between space, I will use parts of anthropological theorist Victor Turner’s theory of liminality. In Turner’s essay “Liminal to Liminoid in Play, Flow, Ritual,” he examines the transition space when “the ritual subject pass[es] through a period of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo” (Turner 24). Liminality examines the “condition of being ‘in-between’ at the limits of existing social structure where new structures are emerging” (Tempest 822). Because liminality looks at the transition space, it is “an unstructured, chaotic state” (Klapecsik 113), meaning those in the state of liminality must negotiate their behaviours based on their understandings of the two existing structures.

Skeggs and Wood’s research expands on the idea that reality television shows provide a space for performance. They state that “reality television enters into *established* forms of sociality through a *recognized* set of principles around the performance of the mediated ethical self” (22). Therefore, participants who engage in such shows exhibit repeated behavior that they

understand as acceptable. Furthermore, they point out that there are pitfalls to this genre of television. Elements such as “its emphasis upon narrative editing, the selection of participants, the prominence of personality and plot, suggest that the ‘fakeness’ of reality which it purports to represent is a problem” (23). This suggests that reality television is not concerned with reporting on any form of the “truth,” but rather with piecing together specific elements in order to gain the most viewership.

Skeggs and Wood’s research draws upon previous research to support their concept of performance in reality television. The idea that one’s identity is separate from the performed identity on reality television is considered. In the presence of the cameras, participants have a sense of self-awareness of their behavior and this consciousness can influence certain aspects of the way participants choose to portray themselves. For example, Skeggs and Wood state that “politics of gender and class do not disappear as self-governance comes into effect, rather they are re-enacted *through* modes of personalization and individualization” (31). In other words, concepts such as gender and class are performed in order to suit the situation and facilitate certain outcomes.

Skeggs and Wood also relate the idea of reality television facilitating performance by examining Judith Butler’s idea of the ‘inner self.’ The concept that identity can be a consequence of performance is evident as reality shows allow “seemingly incompatible narratives [to] make sense” (29), i.e., the participants’ performances are flexible enough to fit within the storyline of the given show. Consequently, participants are remodeled to “conform to normative class, gender and racial expectations” (29). It is important to note that external societal expectations as well as the limitations dictated by the reality show play a role in the performance of the participants.

Corner's ideas relate to Butler's theory of the 'inner self.' He explains the process of 'selving,' when "'true selves' are seen to emerge (and develop) from underneath and indeed, though, 'performed selves' projected for us as a consequence of the applied pressures of objective circumstance and group dynamics" (51). Similar to that of Skeggs and Wood, Corner's theory suggests that performance is a result of the physical, social and emotional environment in which participants are situated. Moreover, Corner suggests that reality television operates under the façade that it is presenting the real through manufactured artificiality. Therefore, the "circumstances are not so much those of observation as those of display; living space is also performance space" (46).

Performance due to marketing is another aspect of reality television shows. Skeggs and Wood point out that the major reason performance plays such a big role in post-documentary culture is because of the lingering fame that exists after the show's conclusion. They reference Hearn, who states that "'branding' the self is a new form of labour and self-performance is now an ultimately commodified endeavor" (qtd. in Skeggs and Wood 38-39). The need to establish an identity that allows participants to stand out from others is pertinent and involves acting and marketing the self. Couldry also raises points that are parallel to those of Hearn. He states that "[t]o be able to perform well at mediated selfhood is applauded in contemporary culture, making sense of the way celebrity—being someone through media—has become so central to contemporary popular culture" (qtd. in Skeggs and Wood 39). Couldry further observes that an individual who is successful at performance behind the cameras is celebrated by society and that this has become the norm. While I utilize the theories of Skeggs, Woods, and Couldry in the construction of my critical framework, I also include the idea of branding the self through performance as part of my analysis of Katniss' experiences.

3.4 *The Hunger Games* and Reality Television

While the presentation of killing and violence as spectacle dates back at least to the gladiators of Ancient Rome, Collins introduces a new dimension to this form of entertainment. Constructing a world in which the tribute killings of the Hunger Games are televised as spectacle, Collins shows the effects of reality television on an audience. With reality television playing a significant role in contemporary society and culture, Collins's satire of it in her fictional world demonstrates the relationship between producers and audience as well as contestant and audience. In the spirit of her observation that "there's just too much of our lives we're putting on television" (Collins qtd. in Hudson 160), Collins uses the televised aspect of the games to comment on the flaws in human nature. Furthermore, Montz points out that our "postmodern obsession with reality television of the dystopian future rooted in mythological sources" (138) adds to the idea of performance through media.

Both Wright and Montz make observations on the performative aspect of reality television. The idea that "television is now a 'social event-medium'" (Massumi qtd. in Wright 33) is reflected in *The Hunger Games* trilogy as the citizens of Panem are enthralled and horrified by the contestants' behaviour on the reality television games. For Wright, "Collins explores the way technology and popular culture shape the meaning of contemporary aesthetics" (98), suggesting that reality television functions as a contemporary artistic artifact through its visual appeal. Wright further notes that Katniss' performance in the arena is experienced as a sort of performance art: "Katniss's growing awareness of herself as an artist marks her evolution as a character in the trilogy" (104). This suggests that the cameras and what they film and communicate function not only as a means to entertain the audience, but also as medium for

Katniss' through which she can perform. Montz's essay supports Wright's idea of aesthetics through her argument that the Hunger Games is a spectacle in which "[Katniss] becomes... a rebellious demonstration of the power of costuming, fashion, and femininity" (139). That is, she is not solely a symbol of the rebellion, but a product of the make-up and fashion team and the behavioral coaches who help her build an identity that is suitable for this particular performance. For example, Montz explains that "Cinna's costumes for Katniss and Peeta, as well as Haymitch's coaching, manipulate the expectations of the audience of the political agenda and burgeoning Resistance movement is trying to put forth" (143). Both Montz and Wright argue that Collins' use of reality television provides the opportunity for performance.

Mortimore-Smith and Shaffer's essays consider the issues of cultural reception – the viewing experience of the audience in Panem. Shaffer emphasizes the presence in *The Hunger Games* of Schadenfreude, the concept that "there is no more infallible sign of thoroughly bad heart and profound moral worthlessness than an inclination to a sheer and undisguised malignant joy (at another's misfortune)" (Schopenhauer qtd. in Shaffer 77). Shaffer further points out that "[t]hough part of human nature, schadenfreude has become something of a cultural obsession in our society" (86), which relates to the profound investment by the citizens of Panem in the Hunger Games. Collins herself states that there is a "voyeuristic thrill, watching people being humiliated or brought to tears or suffering physically" (qtd. in Mortimore-Smith 160). Furthermore, reality television features a reciprocal relationship between the viewers, the participants and the creators, as all parties are invested for different reasons.

3.5 Critical Framework

My critical framework is constructed through exploration of the relationship between Judith Butler's theory of performativity and the theories of reality television. I utilize Butler's idea of gender as a means of repetition and performance and look at how this is interpreted in the primary texts due to the influence of reality television. Collins shows how media can play an influential role through the use of cameras. Applying the ideas regarding the "fictitious space" of reality television and the liminality constructed from Katniss' television persona and her true self, I examine how Katniss interprets and performs gender based on this unique circumstance. Lastly, I use the idea of branding or marketing oneself as a form of performance to further explore Katniss' character and behaviour.

Using Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity as foundational to my research, I examine how Katniss negotiates gender and identity. Employing the critical lens of gender performativity as developed by Butler, I examine Katniss' exploration of gender, exploring how Katniss' gendered performance changes based on her given situation. Butler's theories also inform my analysis of Katniss' construction of her gendered identity based on her environment, the influence of other characters upon her, and her own will.

Chapter 4: Katniss' Performance as the Star-Crossed Lover in *The Hunger Games*

From the first novel of the trilogy, Katniss demonstrates performance in terms of gender and public persona. As her true self, without the presence of cameras, Katniss exhibits behaviour that is both stereotypically masculine and feminine. As Mitchell suggests, Katniss presents “innate femaleness” (128) as evidenced in her interactions with her younger sister Prim. Katniss explains: “I protect Prim in every way I can” (*The Hunger Games* 15), showing a soft, feminine side towards her sister. Katniss displays a nurturing, motherly side towards Prim as she helps her younger sister get dressed and comforts her when she has bad dreams. By contrast, Katniss shows a masculine side as she determinedly assumes her deceased father’s role. Adept with bow and arrow, Katniss is the primary provider for her mother and Prim, as she is the one who hunts and provides food for the family. After her father’s death, Katniss’ mother enters a state of catatonic depression. This forces Katniss to assume the role as the nucleus of the family by taking on the roles of both parents. Prior to being in the spotlight, Katniss transitions between gender roles as the situation requires, yet it is when she is forced in front of the cameras that Katniss takes on a more deliberate performative stance.

4.1 Creating Fan Culture

Hearn points out that marketing oneself, or “branding” through self-performance, is a factor in reality television (Skeggs and Woods 38-39). Before the Hunger Games start, Katniss is branded, though not by choice. In a pre-game interview, Peeta, her fellow tribute from District 12, declares his love for Katniss to the public. This romantic proclamation immediately throws

Katniss off-guard as she was not looking for an alliance, let alone a manufactured romantic relationship. After Katniss unleashes her initial frustration on Peeta, Haymitch points out, “That boy just gave you something you could never achieve on your own... He made you look desirable!” (*The Hunger Games* 135). Peeta’s announcement assists in creating an identity for Katniss to perform in the arena. To the audience, Katniss and Peeta are District Twelve’s star-crossed lovers. This title distinguishes the pair from the rest of the tributes, as they now have a manufactured narrative to accompany their new identities.

With regards to Butler’s idea that identity is constructed through “*stylized repetition of acts*” (Butler 179), Loxley asserts that, in addition to identity constantly being reinvented, culture is as well. He states that “culture is a process, a kind of making, and we are what is made and remade through that process (118). Katniss, in her role as the star-crossed lover, demonstrates that both her identity and, as a result, culture, actively engage in the process of reinvention. It is the audience that craves the narrative of unrequited love, with a resulting creation of a culture of fanatical fans. The audience would not have desired a romantic storyline until Peeta presents it to them. As Haymitch states to Katniss, “You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he wanted you. Now they all do. You’re all they’re talking about” (*The Hunger Games* 135). This quote is analogous to Loxley’s concept of the process of culture-building; the audience’s desire for romance in the games fuels Katniss’ new identity.

In his research on reality television, Corner suggests that this medium allows “viewers, participants and producers [to be] less invested in absolute truth and representational ethics and more interested in the space that exists between reality and fiction” (qtd. in Skeggs and Wood 24). This idea of fabricating a reality poses a conflict for Katniss as she needs to negotiate her new identity as the star-crossed lover based on the relationship between herself, Peeta, the

audience and the Gamemakers. In order to create tension and excitement for the audience, as well as fuel their interest in the District Twelve romance, the Gamemakers create a scenario in which Katniss must further explore her new identity. Until midway through the games, Katniss manages to survive on her own. This does not align with the romantic identity that Peeta has created for her, so the Gamemakers revise the rules. By announcing that two tributes from the same district may be crowned as victors, Claudius Templesmith toys with the reality being presented in the arena. Katniss comes to realize that this alteration of the rules was made to suit her fictitious identity as she ponders, “The star-crossed lovers... Peeta must have been playing that angle all along. Why else would the Gamemakers have made this unprecedented change in the rules? For two tributes to have a shot at winning, our ‘romance’ must be so popular with the audience that condemning it would jeopardize the success of the Games” (*The Hunger Games* 247). With the expectations of the Gamemakers and the need for audience approval prompting her, Katniss realizes that as the Game is reconstructing the rules to comply with her storyline, she must also play her dictated role.

Katniss’ performance increasingly manifests itself through alignment with the expectations of the audience and the producers. Because the Games function as a means to control the population of Panem, the producers, or Gamemakers, must create a spectacle that is engaging yet believable. According to Corner, a successful reality television program provides an environment where participants “[can] be real within fully managed artificiality” (qtd. in Couldry 83). The obstacles facing the tributes in the arena are decisions of the Gamemakers, designed and manipulated by them to provoke interest in the audience and keep them enthralled. The purpose of these obstacles is to elicit genuine reactions from artificial circumstances. Through their struggles to survive, the tributes are humanized to the audience. This is an

important factor as reality television is participatory in nature. Not only is it important for the audience to be engaged for the Gamemakers' benefit, but viewer interest also is critical for Katniss' own survival. Viewers may sponsor tributes with which they feel a connection, and as such sponsorships can aid in survival in the arena, it is important that tributes appeal to the audience as well. This is reflected in the televised nature of the Hunger Games, where a space is created in which a reciprocal relationship exists between participant tributes, the Gamemakers, and the audience. Katniss is aware that her on-screen identity must appeal to the audience as well as the Gamemakers, hence she must perform in a way that not only keeps the two parties interested but also in her favour. Katniss' awareness of the presence of cameras is evident from the reaping. She states: "When they televise the replay of the reapings tonight, everyone will make note of my tears, and I'll be marked as an easy target. A weakling. I will give no one that satisfaction" (*The Hunger Games* 23). From the outset, she wants to present a strong identity. However, upon being given the role as the star-crossed lover, Katniss realizes that it is important to carry out this role in order to satisfy the audience. Her role as the ill-fated romantic allows for Katniss to demonstrate a performance of gender.

4.2 The Gendered Lover

The combination of the assigned role as the star-crossed lover along with the space created by the Gamemakers puts Katniss in the position in which she engages in Judith Butler's theory of performativity. Butler's theory looks at how gender can be malleable; it is not a fixed concept, but something that can change through actions. Described as "a 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” (Butler 45), gender involves constructing a recognized set of acts through performance and reinvention.

During training and in the arena, Katniss’ skills and abilities reflect her father’s influence. Excelling at typically masculine skills, she demonstrates her aptitude with a bow and arrow during her private training session, earning the highest score of all the tributes. Her resourcefulness and her capability to hunt allow her to thrive individually in the arena. Conscious of her aptitude, Katniss flaunts her hunting to the audiences as she states: “I’m glad for the cameras now. I want the sponsors to see I can hunt, that I’m a good bet because I won’t be lured into traps as easily as others will be by hunger” (*The Hunger Games* 164). On her own, Katniss relies on her prior knowledge of the games and survival in order to face the elements. While the behaviour Katniss exhibits individually is stereotypically masculine, when necessary, she adapts her behaviour to suit the situation.

The gender identity that Katniss feels she must perform for the audience is outside her comfort zone. After an interview with Caesar, she reflects on her behaviour in disgust: “A silly girl spinning in a sparkling dress. Giggling” (*The Hunger Games* 136). It is clear that this behaviour is not reflective of how she normally conducts herself as she reflects inwardly during the interview, “I’m also giggling, which I think I’ve done maybe never in my lifetime” (*The Hunger Games* 128). The twirling for the audience and glittery attire are so disparate from Katniss’ true self that she conceives of them as products and behaviours of the prototypical “silly girl.” In this case, her performance is comprised of what she believes to be overtly feminine both in her costume and her behaviour. Katniss recognizes that this behaviour is designed for the audience, yet is concerned with how she has portrayed herself. It is evident in these scenes that the theories of performativity and reality television are working together to create an on-camera

identity. It is clear that Katniss does not identify with the character she portrays during the interview as, upon viewing a replay of the interview, she notes that her television persona “seem[s] frilly and shallow, twirling and giggling in my dress, although the others assure me I am charming” (*The Hunger Games* 137). To Katniss, the words “frilly,” “shallow,” “twirling,” and “giggling” have negative connotations as they are not part of the way she normally conducts herself. The fact that she has convinced others that her behaviour is in fact “charming” shows the performative nature of her conduct in the interview. A product of effective costuming and behaviour coaching, Katniss is able to mimic a likeable female.

Katniss understands that her survival is dependent on audience support, and in turn, how she portrays herself as the star-crossed lover. She is fully aware of her actions and performance in carrying out this deceit. In order to successfully convince the audience, she must present her persona and behaviour as credibly those of someone who is madly in love. Butler states that “acts, gestures and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause” (185). Katniss demonstrates that she is able to construct a new identity based on her actions and will to stay alive. Her portrayal as the star-crossed lover is based on what she understands a love-stricken female to be.

Upon being reunited with Peeta in the arena, Katniss is reminded that she must play her appropriate role. In reference to their first on-screen kiss she ponders, “[t]his is probably overdue anyway since he’s right, we are supposed to be madly in love. It’s the first time I’ve ever kissed a boy which should make some sort of impression I guess but all I can register is how unnaturally hot his lips are from the fever” (*The Hunger Games* 260-261). This quote demonstrates how Katniss attempts to satisfy the audience’s expectations through her romantic

gesture. The superficiality behind this gesture is evident as she notes that she is indifferent to the kiss, instead, observing Peeta's health concerns.

Katniss further demonstrates her performance of gender when she alters her behaviour towards Peeta in order to comply with Haymitch's expectations. Imagining Haymitch's frustration with her inconsistent behaviour towards Peeta, Katniss "can almost hear his snarl. 'You're supposed to be in love sweetheart. The boy's dying. Give me something I can work with!'" (*The Hunger Games* 261) as she opens the package Haymitch sends her. Haymitch includes a clear unwritten implied message accompanying his package: although it is a team effort to get the tributes out of the arena, Katniss must develop her behaviour to suit the narrative they have constructed.

Aware that her behaviour must be credible, Katniss recalls the intimacy between her parents. In an attempt to act as the star-crossed lover, Katniss calls Peeta, "trying for the special tone that [her] mother used only with [her] father" (*The Hunger Games* 261). This clearly supports Butler's statement that "gender proves to be performative—that is constituting the identity it is purported to be" (34). Katniss bases her romantic tone of voice on memories of her mother's behaviour towards her father. Modeling her behaviour on previous observations, Katniss is able to portray what she believes to be a feminized lover. Her actions further reflect this as she plays the role of the caretaker, nursing the injured Peeta by spoon-feeding him broth. Conscious of her every action, Katniss notes that "Peeta and I have given the audience a fairly interesting day. Hopefully, the Gamemakers will allow us a peaceful night" (*The Hunger Games* 262). This illustrates the fact that the performance as romantics functions as a bargaining chip with the Gamemakers for a conflict-free evening.

According to Butler, gender is constructed through the repetition of actions based on the individual's understanding of what gender is. Regarding Butler's theory, Hough attests that "[g]ender performances then act to reify and perpetuate the dominant discourse of femininity and masculinity as acting feminine reifies the masculine subject position as well" (40). This is evident in the case of the star-crossed lovers' storyline because Katniss' performance as female is only successful in conjunction with Peeta's masculine counterpoint. Peeta's masculinity reinforces and supports Katniss' performance through contrast. While in hiding, Katniss notes: "I reach out to touch his cheek and he catches my hand and presses it against his lips. I remember my father doing this very thing to my mother and I wonder where Peeta picked it up" (*The Hunger Games* 264). This romantic gesture requires two people to make it believable, and it is through Katniss' memory that she is able to identify the masculine and feminine roles.

This idea of the feminine reinforcing the masculine is further evident in a discussion between Katniss and Peeta. Realizing that the physical gesture of the kiss is not enough for the audience, Katniss attempts to find something more relatable to prolong her star-crossed lover role for the audience. Engaging in a personal conversation, Katniss probes Peeta to reveal when he had first become interested in her. By prompting Peeta to reveal his childhood crush on her, Katniss manages to feed the audience what they have been craving: personal details about the lovers' history. Not only does this conversation support the star-crossed lover fairy tale, it also provides Katniss an opportunity to continue her performance. In an endeavor to solidify their romance, Katniss tells Peeta, "You don't have much competition anywhere" (*The Hunger Games* 302), followed by a kiss. This statement confirms the mutual love between the two for the audience and this is recognized by Haymitch. By sending them a feast promptly after their kiss, Haymitch positively reinforces Katniss' successful performance.

Although the Hunger Games is a source of entertainment for the population of Panem, primarily those who reside in the Capitol, the purpose of using reality television as the broadcasting medium allows for manipulation. Katniss interprets the Capitol's true message of the Hunger Games to be: "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen" (*The Hunger Games* 19). The Games, disguised as entertainment, operate as the Capitol's means of controlling its citizens. The power dynamic is clear as the government feels it needs to use the Hunger Games as propaganda to show and annually remind the population that the Capitol exercises total control. It is ironic that the audience, from the comfort and safety of their own districts, can revel in the murders of their fellow citizens. Their fears and anxiety from the reappings are no longer heightened as they assume the roles of spectators. Consequently, the Hunger Games functions as both amusement, as citizens cheer on their favourite tributes, as well as population management, as it is a constant reminder that the citizens are not to step out of line.

Beyond government manipulation, the artificial space designed by reality television for the Hunger Games allows producers to create narratives that are suspenseful and engaging for the audience. This is evident in the Hunger Games as the Gamemakers re-revise the rules so that there may only be one victor when Peeta and Katniss are the only remaining tributes. This revision changes the District Twelve alliance, as the Gamemakers have put the two star-crossed lovers of District Twelve in a unique position where one must kill the other. This goes against the concept that narratives in the Hunger Games are constructed to suit the audience, as it is clear the audience is enraptured with the two lovers. Nevertheless, this alteration of the rules sets the stage for extreme tension between the two tributes. In an act of authenticity, Katniss proposes

that they both commit suicide by eating the poison berries. She realizes that “[w]ithout a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers’ faces. They’d have failed the Capitol. Might possibly even be executed, slowly and painfully while the cameras broadcast it to every screen in the country” (*The Hunger Games* 344). This calculated act of revenge would have supported and subverted the reciprocal relationship between the participants, audience, and producers.

However, in this case, Katniss has found a way to make the platform of reality television work in her favour.

Katniss finds herself in a unique position as her rebellious action allows her to manipulate the relationship established by the reality television medium. By threatening to commit suicide alongside Peeta, Katniss finds herself in a position of power. She is able to overthrow the power dynamic and the relationship between participants, audience, and producers. In terms of participants, Katniss convinces Peeta to ally with her in her subversive actions. This shows that the competitive aspect, established by the structures of reality television is overthrown in this alliance. Moreover, threatening to ingest the poisonous berries is a sign of rebellion signals to the Capitol that she will not comply by their rules. This act of revolt is also a message to the audience. Because Katniss has garnered quite a following, the audience can interpret this action in two ways. The first is that the cruel rules of the Gamemakers are keeping the two lovers apart. This message would be devastating to the people who have been following the romantic storyline. The second interpretation is that Katniss is unwilling to follow the rules dictated by the government. This is a dangerous interpretation because, as a public figure, Katniss has the ability to manipulate the audience to align with her opinion. Because the Capitol recognizes how significant Katniss’ actions are, they realize they must force a shift so they regain control.

Katniss' disgust for the Capitol is evident throughout the novel, but this single authentic act functions as a catalyst for further performance. Haymitch warns Katniss: "Word is the Capitol's furious about you showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can't stand is being laughed at and they're the joke of Panem" (*The Hunger Games* 356-357). The Capitol interprets the threat of suicide as an act of defiance and as Haymitch advises Katniss, "Your only defense can be you were so madly in love you weren't responsible for your actions" (*The Hunger Games* 357). Here, Katniss must rely on the romantic and gendered back story she has built during the Games as a means to defend her politically provocative actions. Furthermore, it is important to observe that Haymitch emphasizes that Katniss' performance requires her to behave as a desperate romantic. The idea that Katniss has become irrational due to her intense love for Peeta shows that the audience understands that there are certain excuses and rationale for her extreme behaviour. The fact that her love for Peeta apparently provokes Katniss to perform in senseless and life-threatening manners shows that gender expectations in terms of behaviour justify her actions.

Costuming and specific staged actions are once again employed to make Katniss' role believable. Looking at the dress Cinna has created for her final interview, Katniss notes that "[w]ithout heels, you can see my true stature. I look, very simply, like a girl. A young one. Fourteen at the most. Innocent. Harmless. Yet, it is shocking that Cinna has pulled this off when you remember I've just won the Games" (*The Hunger Games* 355). Cinna's costume is purposive; he strives to make Katniss look young and innocent, incapable of defiance. This is a new form of identity construction, or branding; the image Katniss must portray is feminine and sweet.

Katniss' actions in her reunion with Peeta are crucial as she must convince the audience and the Capitol that the threat of a double suicide was based on love. During the crowning ceremony, Katniss notes, "I sit so close to Peeta that I'm practically on his lap... Kicking off my sandals, I tuck my feet to the side and lean my head against Peeta's shoulder. His arm goes around me automatically..." (*The Hunger Games* 361). This supports Hough's argument that the feminine is needed to reinforce the masculine as both Peeta and Katniss' actions construct a believable relationship. Their gestures model recognizable romantic ones in order to support their roles.

The post-game interview with Caesar requires Katniss to justify her actions through her speech. Playing a girl madly in love, she carefully crafts her answers to not only convince the Capitol, but also to sustain the fantasy for the audience. When asked why she displayed a change of heart towards Peeta during the games, she answers, "Maybe... because for the first time... there was a chance I could keep him" (*The Hunger Games* 368). This response elicits approval from Haymitch and emotion from Caesar. Furthermore, when asked about her attempt to eat the poison berries she replies, "...I just... couldn't bear the thought of... being without him" (*The Hunger Games* 369). Although her threat with the berries was rebellious, Katniss' response to her own action when questioned about it purposively reflects vulnerability. She demonstrates her reliance and devotion to Peeta through her choice of words.

4.3 Performance and Reality

Though Katniss portrays her role as the star-crossed lover successfully to the audience, she often finds herself in a confusing in-between space. The blurred lines of fiction and reality at times complicate Katniss' understanding. After Peeta explains how he first fell in love with

Katniss, she ponders, "...I'm almost foolishly happy and then confusion sweeps over me. Because we're supposed to be making up this stuff, playing at being in love, not actually being in love. But Peeta's story has a ring of truth to it" (*The Hunger Games* 301). Peeta allows Katniss to think that his declaration of his love for her is a strategic move, which is ironic, because his feelings are actually genuine. Conflict for Katniss arises between the liminal space comprised of Peeta's genuine feelings and Katniss' desire to fabricate her feelings. Katniss does not understand her own feelings and cannot clearly see the differences between reality and illusion. Her feelings are contradictory. She not only recognizes the truth of Peeta's story, but also believes that they are both intentionally acting out their romance.

Peeta's sincere feelings at the end of the novel also create a liminal space for Katniss. Upon learning that Katniss has been acting for the duration of the Games, Peeta is hurt and confused. He says, "So, what you're saying is, these last few days and then I guess... back in the arena... that was just some strategy you two worked out" (*The Hunger Games* 372), which demonstrates his ignorance of the fact. Additionally, this quote shows that unlike Katniss, his stories, actions, and emotions were intentional and sincere. Understanding that Peeta was not acting, Katniss finds herself in an uncertain space which Turner describes as "a period of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo" (24). Though she is initially sure that her reactions are a performance for survival, she admits that "[t]he closer [she] gets to District Twelve, the more confused [she gets]" (*The Hunger Games* 372). She is uncertain in her emotion as because she cannot distinguish whether the relationship between her and Peeta is real or fabricated. The following shows Katniss' frustrations with her situation:

I want to tell him that he's not being fair. That we were strangers. That I did what it took to stay alive, to keep us both alive in the arena. That I can't explain how things are with Gale because I don't know myself. That it's no good loving me because I'm never going to get married anyways and he'd just end up hating

me later instead of sooner. That if I do have feelings for him, it doesn't matter because I'll never be able to afford the kind of love that leads to a family, to children. And how can he? How can he after what we've just been through?

I also want to tell him how much I already miss him. But that wouldn't be fair on my part. (*The Hunger Games* 373)

This quote shows the conflict Katniss is feeling. Although her interactions with Peeta in the arena were intentional, she recognizes the fact that she has developed certain feelings toward Peeta. The on-screen identity she has had to create for herself has generated an uncertain space for Katniss, as her performance has forced her to face the conflicts of the real world. Reality television creates in-between, uncertain spaces for Katniss which she is unsure of how to navigate. Katniss' confusion stems from the mixture of performance and reality. Initially Katniss assumes that Peeta is a co-conspirator in their fabricated story, but realizes that his feelings come from a place of sincerity. This is confusing as Katniss also brings forward moments of authenticity in her performance. For example, she divulges a story about Prim which comes from a place of genuineness. When she returns home to District Twelve, Peeta will be the only one who can completely empathize with Katniss. Despite Katniss' insistence that she is performing in the arena, the blurred lines between moments of truth and performance create an ambiguous state of liminality for Katniss.

Chapter 5: Katniss' Performance as the Symbol of Hope in *Catching*

Fire

In the second novel, *Catching Fire*, Katniss demonstrates that she has become adept with her performance, but the challenge lies in sustaining it. Even though she has survived the obstacles in the arena, her safety, as well as that of her family, is dependent on her ability to convince the audience that her subversive actions in the previous Hunger Games were due to her inability to think rationally, due to her passionate love for Peeta. To the audience, her threat with the poisonous berries signals rebellion, and Katniss must negotiate between playing her newly elected role as a symbol of hope as well as her government-imposed role as the victor who must placate possible rebels. Katniss' performance in *Catching Fire* has two components -- continuing her feminized role as Peeta's love interest, as well as learning to play a convincing role as political peacekeeper. Katniss' depiction in *Catching Fire* adds layers to her performance as she negotiates how these two separate performances must blend in order to be convincing.

5.1 The Romantic Narrative

Prior to beginning the victory tour, President Snow visits with a warning that forces Katniss to continue her feminized performance. President Snow recognizes how her behaviour has compromised his ruling position as he states: "After that, there was nothing to do but let you play out your little scenario. And you were pretty good, too, with the love-crazed schoolgirl bit. The people in the Capitol were quite convinced. Unfortunately, not everyone in the districts fell for your act" (*Catching Fire* 21). This quote demonstrates that it was only through her "love-crazed schoolgirl bit" that Katniss was able to be convincing, i.e., the irrational actions that Snow

identifies with a girl in love are what has save and continues to save Katniss and her family from a Capitol-sanctioned death. Snow challenges Katniss to continue the charade in order to pacify the Districts who are threatening to revolt. His warning is clear: “In several of [the districts], however, people viewed your little trick with the berries as an act of defiance, not an act of love. And if a girl from District Twelve of all places can defy the Capitol and walk away unharmed, what is to stop them from doing the same? ... What is to prevent, say, an uprising?” (*Catching Fire* 21). The power of performance is what saved Katniss in the Games, but here, outside the Games, her life continues to be dependent on it. Because President Snow threatens the safety of her mother, sister, and Gale, Katniss must maintain the charade in order to keep her family alive.

Katniss’ Victory Tour performance must appease both President Snow and Panem; she and Peeta, therefore, continue to play the role of lovers. In order to sustain their love story, they must build and add to the relationship narrative they have created. In a public proposal by Peeta, formulated by Katniss, Katniss allows herself to assume a feminized role. What is staged to be a romantic climax to the two victors’ storyline translates as mechanical to Katniss as she notes, “...Peeta gets down on one knee, pours out his heart, and begs me to marry him. I, of course, accept. Caesar is beside himself, the Capitol audience is hysterical, shots of crowds around Panem show a country besotted with happiness” (*Catching Fire* 73). The mechanical, emotionless manner in which she recalls this event is significant as it clearly shows how detached her inner self is from her performing self. Katniss and Peeta are playing their individual gender roles in order for this act to become believable. Hough’s idea that “[g]ender performances then act to reify and perpetuate the dominant discourse of femininity and masculinity as acting feminine reifies the masculine subject position as well” (40) is evident here. Katniss’ romantic performance is not credible without Peeta to reinforce it.

Unfortunately the mere gesture of a proposal is not enough to appease President Snow, meaning Katniss must continue her performance. Conscious of how she must present herself, Katniss ensures that her feminized performance is always publicized for both Panem and President Snow. When the president asks if she would like to hold her wedding in the Capitol, Katniss “pull[s] off girl-almost catatonic-with-joy without a hitch” (*Catching Fire* 76). It is as if this is Katniss’ default reaction when she wants to be convincing as Peeta’s lover; she frequently turns to an irrational, excitable character when she wants to portray herself as his lover. This supports Butler’s idea of the repetition of acts as Katniss reaffirms the character the public has come to recognize. In her essay, “Critically Queer,” Butler explains that “[g]ender is performative insofar as it is the *effect* of a regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized *under constraint*” (21). In this case, the social constraint of the Capitol is forcing Katniss to perform a certain way. She must be consistent with her previous performance due to the pressure from the Capitol.

Katniss’ performance is further confirmed by the fan culture created by her upcoming wedding. The Capitol uses the wedding as a means to convince Panem that the love between the two District Twelve tributes is real. Their wedding plans create excitement as preparations are an interactive spectacle. Even though Katniss wants to disengage from the hype the Capitol insists on creating, the excitement is forced upon her. As Couldry points out “making sense of the way celebrity—being someone through the media—has become so central to contemporary popular culture” (qtd. in Skeggs and Wood 39). This is evident as the audience is invested in Katniss and Peeta’s wedding. Using the upcoming wedding as a way to garner excitement, the Capitol forces Katniss into the spotlight. Capitalizing on audience engagement, the Capitol allows the audience to vote for their favourite wedding dress for Katniss. Katniss is taken aback by the crowd’s

reactions as she notes: “People screaming and cheering for their favorites, booing the ones they don’t like. Having voted, and probably bet on the winner, people are very invested in my wedding gown. It’s bizarre to watch when I think how I never even bothered to try one on before the cameras arrived” (*Catching Fire* 170). Katniss’ celebrity status is connected to her role as the bride. It is ironic that the audience is so captivated by the feminine task of choosing a wedding gown, when Katniss does not want to engage in the task at all. In order to carry out the charade of the wedding, she must be a part of the planning process. However, this performance does not mirror her true feelings of indifference and fear.

Peeta adds another layer to the romantic narrative during the pre-game interview. By lying to the audience and revealing that he and Katniss had married in secret and that Katniss is now pregnant, Peeta manages to spark an outrage amongst the audience. Peeta triggers in the audience an awareness of the horror of a pregnant young woman in battle to the point that “[e]ven the most Capitol-loving, Games-hungry, bloodthirsty person out there can’t ignore... how horrific the whole thing is” (*Catching Fire* 256). Because Peeta had not previously discussed this lie with Katniss, she is forced without preparation to perform convincingly. She notes: “my face is projected in a tight close-up on the screen, but I don’t make any effort to hide it” (*Catching Fire* 257). In this moment, Katniss realizes that the way she portrays herself is vital to garnering audience support. She draws on her own beliefs to fuel her performance: “Isn’t it the thing I dreaded most about the wedding, about the future—the loss of my children to the Games? And it could be true now, couldn’t it? If I hadn’t spent my life building up layers of defenses until I recoil at even the suggestion of marriage or a family” (*Catching Fire* 257). Repulsed at the idea that her own future children would have to participate in the Games, Katniss has detached herself from the possibility of being a mother. Peeta has strategically created a new

dimension to their star-crossed lovers' storyline, as he is not only continuing and extending the tragic love story, but also giving the team a strategic advantage.

5.2 The Mockingjay: A Dual Meaning and Identity

In the Hunger Games, Katniss' friend Madge gives her a mockingjay pin as a token to wear in the arena. A token which is supposed to remind her of home becomes much more meaningful after Katniss wins the Games. The mockingjay only becomes a symbol of triumph for Katniss for those in the Capitol, for her fans who watched her succeed in the arena. However, the mockingjay is interpreted differently by those who have been oppressed in other districts; they see the mockingjay as a symbol of defiance, as someone who is willing to take a stand against the government.

Echoing Couldry's idea of celebrity, Katniss notes that the mockingjay has become a fashion statement in the Capitol. At President Snow's party, Katniss observes that "[m]y bird has been replicated on belt buckles, embroidered into silk lapels, even tattooed in intimate places. Everyone wants to wear the winner's token" (*Catching Fire* 78). Branding is a significant factor in reality television, according to Hearn, who argues that "'branding' the self is a new form of labour and self-performance is now an ultimately commodified endeavor" (qtd. in Skeggs and Wood 38-39). Unintentionally, Katniss has branded herself with the symbol of the mockingjay, as it now stands for her victory in the arena. Nevertheless, the historical context behind the mockingjay adds another layer of symbolism to Katniss' identity.

The Capitol had initially created the jabberjay through genetic modification as a means to spy on the rebels. Because rebels were able to manipulate the jabberjays' messages, this plan backfired on the Capitol and the jabberjays were left to die in the hopes they would become extinct. Their resilience was clear when they mated with female mockingbirds to form the new

species of the mockingjay. Katniss notes the meaningful connotation behind the mockingjay as she states: “A mockingjay is a creature the Capitol never intended to exist. They hadn’t counted on the highly controlled jabberjay having the brains to adapt to the wild, to pass on its genetic code, to thrive in new form. They hadn’t anticipated its will to live” (*Catching Fire* 92). The connection between Katniss and the mockingjay is clear, as Katniss is also someone the Capitol did not anticipate. Underestimating her powers, the Capitol did not expect Katniss to not only survive the arena’s dangers but also outwit the Capitol.

This unintended subtext of the mockingjay applies to Katniss’ image and identity as she learns that the mockingjay is not only a fashion statement but also a statement of rebellion. Upon meeting Bonnie and Twill, two runaways from District Eight, Katniss learns that her mockingjay pin has become iconic. Holding a loaf of bread stamped with the mockingjay, Bonnie tells Katniss, “It means we’re on your side” (*Catching Fire* 139). This prompts Katniss to question: “I have people on my side? What side? Am I unwittingly the face of the hoped-for rebellion? Has the mockingjay on my pin become a symbol of resistance?” (*Catching Fire* 150). Once again, without her knowledge or acceptance, a role has been forced upon Katniss.

Due to this new symbol, Katniss finds herself in a performance of both roles associated with the mockingjay. Having been coerced into the arena for the Quarter Quell, Katniss attempts to play off her fans’ sympathies before the Games start. Katniss is outfitted in her wedding dress during her pre-game interview. Being the final tribute to address the public, Katniss is in a strategic position. She remarks that “[t]he sight of me in my white silk bridal gown practically causes a riot. No more me, no more star-crossed lovers living happily ever after, no more wedding” (*Catching Fire* 251). Katniss is in a position in which she can manipulate the audience’s emotions, based on their understanding of the circumstances and their emotional

attachment to her. She repeats her performance from her first interview; she twirls to show off her dress. This action aligns with Butler's idea that "[g]ender is a 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" (45). Consequently, Katniss is reasserting her identity as the girl on fire, as she mimics the same actions from her previous Hunger Games interview.

Not only does twirling for the audience allow Katniss to reengage in a feminized action, it also allows her to perform, although unknowingly, her new identity as the mockingjay. As she twirls, her wedding dress begins to disappear and what is left is an identical black dress with wings, revealing Cinna's intention behind the dress design to present her as the mockingjay. Katniss notes that "[a] shadow of recognition flickers across Caesar's face, and [she] can tell he knows the mockingjay isn't just [her] token" (*Catching Fire* 253). As the star-crossed lover identity was imposed upon Katniss in the first Games, a similar situation has occurred in the second. Instead of choosing to adopt the position as the mockingjay, Katniss is forced to accept it by the rebels. This divides Katniss' real intentions and her obligations. Desperate to protect her family, Katniss wants to appease President Snow and continue her charade, but she finds herself in a position through which she can take action and make a political statement.

As the mockingjay, Katniss' performance is not a completely gendered one. Unlike the previous Hunger Games, in which Katniss needed Peeta to reinforce the star-crossed lover's storyline, Katniss' performance relies now more on symbolism and political activism than on gender. She understands that this Quarter Quell is a strong political message from President Snow: the President is showing that anyone, even a Victor, is dispensable. Katniss realizes that her position as the mockingjay is important to the rebels of Panem. Even though she must

perform to President Snow's satisfaction, she realizes, "If I can make it clear that I'm still defying the Capitol right up to the end, the Capitol will have killed me... but not my spirit. What better way to give hope to the rebels" (*Catching Fire* 243).

Liminality, or the in-between state, is prominent in this situation. Klapscik interprets liminality as "*constant oscillation, crossing back and forth between social and cultural positions*" (14). In this instance, Katniss must negotiate between her personal position as the mockingjay as well as her public obligation as the Victor. She muses:

[I]f I really could save Peeta... in terms of a revolution, this would be ideal. Because I will be more valuable dead. They can turn me into some kind of martyr for the cause and paint my face on banners, and it will do more to rally people than anything I could do if I was living. But Peeta would be more valuable alive, and tragic, because he will be able to turn his pain into words that will transform people. (*Catching Fire* 244)

The idea of liminality is evident as she is trying to manifest an outcome that stems from a space of fiction and a space of intention. She wants to sustain the idea that protecting Peeta in the arena is from a place of love. While her true romantic feelings for Peeta are still unclear, her goal for this Quarter Quell is to save Peeta. To Katniss, Peeta represents goodness, something she wants to preserve in the face of corruption. Moreover, she realizes that protecting Peeta, and in turn, sacrificing her own life, can work to her favour. Though tentative in carrying it out, her political agenda is to spark a revolt against the corrupt Capitol. Consequently, Katniss realizes that her role as the mockingjay does not necessarily have to be an active symbol of rebellion, but she can communicate that same message through self-sacrifice.

The symbol of the mockingjay is critical to the rebels of Panem as Katniss embodies the idea of hope. Prior to entering the arena, Haymitch reminds Katniss to "remember who the enemy is" (*Catching Fire* 260), which Katniss comes to realize is actually the Capitol. By

shooting her arrow through a force field, Katniss is able to destroy the arena. She soon realizes that certain of the victors were part of an alliance to rebel against the Capitol and to save her. Plutarch explains, “While you live, the revolution lives” (*Catching Fire* 386). Katniss comes to realize: “The bird, the pin, the song, the berries, the watch, the cracker, the dress that burst into flames. I am the mockingjay. The one that survived despite the Capitol’s plans. The symbol of rebellion” (*Catching Fire* 386-387). Katniss finally understands the irony behind her performance as the mockingjay. While she believed that she was adopting this role as the mockingjay through her own interpretation, she did not realize that this role she thought she had undertaken through her own agency and the outcome of the Quarter Quell were both premeditated, originally orchestrated by the rebel alliance. She is horrified as she remarks: “Used without consent, without knowledge. At least in the Hunger Games, I knew I was being played with” (*Catching Fire* 385). To learn that her allies and mentor have been lying to her further creates an uncertain space for Katniss. She initially believed that her performance in the Quarter Quell was to save Peeta. Once again, Katniss has to negotiate between the liminal spaces of real and fictitious. However, this time, she is taken aback because it is her own allies who have been lying to her.

5.3 A Shift in Performance

Unlike in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss’ performance in *Catching Fire* is not entirely reliant on her portrayal of gender. The Hunger Games forced Katniss to take on a feminized role in order to support her love story with Peeta. While she still needs to rely on that narrative to survive and convince the audience of the authenticity of her feelings, the social and political tensions within *Catching Fire* provide a new identity for Katniss. Without realizing it, she adopts

the identity of the mockingjay which requires her to perform as a symbol of hope for the districts who want to rebel.

This new identity is a transformative for Katniss. She no longer relies on portraying a convincing performance as a romantic lover in order to convince her audience. Instead, her performance is subtle and often unintentional. She is unaware that her actions and very existence ignite hope and promise in the rebels. As a result, Katniss' performance has a dual purpose. She must appease the Capitol and fulfill her agreement with President Snow. However, her performance, at first without her understanding, must also speak to the rebels, showing her alliance with their rebellion. The two opposing audiences pose an internal conflict for Katniss as her performance must address them both.

Chapter 6: Katniss' Performance as the Mockingjay in *Mockingjay*

In the trilogy finale *Mockingjay*, Katniss takes on a new role. Unlike the first two novels in which she was required to play the female counterpart to Peeta in order to convince the audience and President Snow, Katniss' new role is not entirely dependent on someone else. *Mockingjay*, however, brings about a new challenge for Katniss; she is the face of the revolution. In this new iteration, Katniss' performance relies less on gender, but on taking on the role of spokesperson for the rebels. *Mockingjay* shows the grooming and manufacturing that occurs behind a performance. Her role as the Mockingjay is symbolic and she must perform this role within the restrictions of a socially imposed framework.

At the end of *Catching Fire*, Katniss is the intended rescue target of District Thirteen. Katniss realizes that it not just herself that President Coin, head of District Thirteen, wants, but also what Katniss represents. She ponders:

What they want is for me to truly take on the role they designed for me. The symbol of the revolution. The Mockingjay. It isn't enough, what I've done in the past, defying the Capitol in the Games, providing a rallying point. I must now become the actual leader, the face the voice, the embodiment of the revolution. The person who the districts—most of which are now openly at war with the Capitol—can count on to blaze the path to victory. I won't have to do it alone. They have a whole team of people to make me over, dress me, write my speeches, orchestrate my appearances—as if *that* doesn't sound horribly familiar—and all I have to do is play my part. (*Mockingjay* 10-11)

This quote demonstrates a change in purpose. In the first two books, Katniss' performance was based on her own instincts for survival; she knew she had to provide a convincing performance in order to survive the arena and government scrutiny. Now, her performance's purpose is to garner political support amongst the districts. President Coin intends to use Katniss as “the embodiment of the revolution” in order to spark unity and revolt against the Capitol.

Her role as the Mockingjay is a continuation of her position in *Catching Fire*. However, instead of downplaying her rebellious side, this time Katniss must embody the rebel and provide a voice for change. It is important to note that her personal actions in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, such as attempting to eat the poisoned berries and reaching out to Rue's family, helped lay the groundwork for her position as the Mockingjay.

6.1 The Mockingjay: A Politically Driven Role.

President Coin's request for Katniss to be the Mockingjay is not due to Katniss' accomplishments or personality. Instead, President Coin is interested in what Katniss represents and how she can be used to gain political support. Katniss understands, "I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution" (*Mockingjay* 10) which demonstrates her understanding and acceptance that her performance is no longer just for her, but for the communal goal of the fractured districts.

Unlike her situation in *Catching Fire*, Katniss' performance is for political activism. Additionally, she has a choice as to whether or not she will take on this role. Because President Coin needs a symbol for her rebellion, Katniss uses this to her advantage. She tells Coin: "[The captured tributes will] be granted immunity! ... You will personally pledge this in front of the entire population of District Thirteen and the remainder of Twelve. Soon. Today. It will be recorded for future generations. You will hold yourself and your government responsible for their safety, or you'll find yourself another Mockingjay!" (*Mockingjay* 41). This shows a maturity in Katniss' understanding of performance as she realizes that she is in the unique position to negotiate with President Coin. Coin recognizes the value of having Katniss as the Mockingjay and agrees with the warning, "But you better perform" (*Mockingjay* 41).

Negotiations with Coin are further complicated when the President makes the agreement public. President Coin announces, “Soldier Everdeen has promised to devote herself to our cause. It follows that any deviance from her mission, in either motive or deed, will be viewed as a break in this agreement. The immunity would be terminated and the fate of the four victors determined by the law of District Thirteen. As would her own” (*Mockingjay* 58). This alliance is comprised of politically-driven conditions by both parties, and Katniss once again finds herself in a position in which she must perform for her life.

The alliance between Katniss and President Coin shows the in-between state that is characteristic of liminality. As Klapcsik explains, one distinct characteristic of liminality is the “*constant oscillation, crossing back and forth between social and cultural positions*” (14). Katniss’ challenge is navigating between her personal interior agenda and the public demands of President Coin. Katniss understands “[President Coin] has been the quickest to determine that I have an agenda of my own and am therefore not to be trusted. She has been the first to publicly brand me as a threat” (*Mockingjay* 59). Consequently, Katniss’ performance must be a balance between her own will and her appointed position as a public figure. Her well-being will be threatened if she is not able to uphold her social obligations as a political activist. Although the circumstance is different from her earlier interactions with President Snow, Katniss’ performance balances precariously in the in-between space of personal and political agency.

6.2 Manufacturing the Mockingjay

Similar to her experience playing the star-crossed lover, Katniss’ performance is comprised of a team effort. The Mockingjay is not Katniss’ interpretation of the role, but a role manufactured by a team of experts. The fact that she has “a whole team of people to make [her]

over, dress [her], write [her] speeches, orchestrate [her] appearances” (*Mockingjay* 10) shows the production that goes into who she is

Costuming is an important factor that contributes to becoming the Mockingjay. Before his death, Cinna designed her Mockingjay costume. As Gale states, “You’re going to be the best-dressed rebel in history” (*Mockingjay* 43), and the significance of effective costuming is clear. Moreover, Beetee designs a high tech bow for Katniss that is both fashionable and functional. He explains, “they wanted me to design a bow based purely on looks. As part of your costume, you know? But I kept thinking, What a waste. I mean, what if you need it sometime? As more than a fashion accessory?” (*Mockingjay* 69). Beetee is attempting to remind the Districts of who Katniss is by using her signature weapon as an accessory. Montz’ observations of Katniss’ performance in *The Hunger Games* has relevance here as she states, “[Katniss] becomes a rebellious demonstration of the power of costuming, fashion, and femininity” (139). Cinna’s costuming plays a vital role as it redefines Katniss as the Mockingjay and also reminds the audience, through Cinna’s distinct styling, of his death. However, Montz’s idea that femininity contributes to Katniss’ performance appears no longer relevant in the third title of the trilogy. This shift in performance demonstrates an evolution in Katniss’ character. Without Peeta as her romantic counterpart, she does not have to manipulate her performance to reinforce his masculinity. Instead, the Mockingjay’s role is not determined by gender but by the symbolism it holds.

Corner’s idea that reality television strives “to be real within a fully managed artificiality” (qtd. in Couldry 83) is clear when Katniss’ production team discusses filming propos, or propaganda spots. With the aim to infiltrate the televisions of Panem, these propos strive to create unity amongst the viewers with regards to the rebellion. Katniss’ portrayal on

screen is heavily debated by her production team. Fulvia states, “We think that it might be best to build you, our rebel leader, from the outside... in. That is to say, let’s find the most stunning Mockingjay look possible and then work your personality up to deserving it!” while later musing, “Yes, but is she scarred and bloody? Is she glowing with the fire of the rebellion? Just how grimy can we make her without disgusting people?” (*Mockingjay* 44). Because screen time is so precious, Katniss’ prep team recognizes the importance of strategic performance.

Katniss’ initial propo involves her running through smoke generated by a machine, armed with her bow, and shouting, “People of Panem, we fight, we dare, we end our hunger for justice!” (*Mockingjay* 71). Haymitch points out how unconvincing her performance is and Katniss concedes: “I can’t stand in a television studio wearing a costume and makeup in a cloud of fake smoke and rally the districts to victory. It’s amazing, really, how long I have survived the cameras. The credit for that, of course, goes to Peeta. Alone, I can’t be the Mockingjay” (*Mockingjay* 73). Katniss doubts her abilities to take on this role as her previous performances were built as a counterpoint to Peeta’s roles. Upon reviewing her performance, Katniss observes: “Both my voice and body have a jerky, disjointed quality, like a puppet being manipulated by unseen forces” (*Mockingjay* 73). For someone who is supposed to gain public support, Katniss’ performance must be convincing.

Haymitch attempts to refocus the filming direction by discussing moments of authenticity. He challenges the production team to think: “I want everyone to think of one incident where Katniss Everdeen genuinely moved you. Not where you were jealous of her hairstyle, or her dress went up in flames or she made a halfway decent shot with an arrow. Not where Peeta was making you like her. I want to hear one moment where *she* made you feel

something real” (*Mockingjay* 74). The group brainstorms instances such as Katniss volunteering for her sister, paying respect to Rue, and drugging Peeta to save his life. Gale points out a common point that all of these memories share: “They were Katniss’s... No one told her what to do or say” (*Mockingjay* 75). This relates to Corner’s idea of “[being] real within fully managed artificiality” (qtd. in Couldry 83) as Katniss had, in fact, managed to emotionally connect with viewers through authentic moments in the artificial setting of the arena. Consequently, the production team chooses to follow the same strategy in taping her propo.

Haymitch raises an important point: “Every time we coach her to give her lines, the best we can hope for is okay. It has to come from her. That’s what people are responding to” (*Mockingjay* 76). Although Katniss’ fans were attracted to the star-crossed lover’s storyline that was imposed upon her, they feel real connection to her during moments when she is her true self. This also relates to the idea of liminality, as Katniss manages to create authenticity as she moves between her manufactured identities. Moreover, the fact that she can produce genuine human emotions in places where she is fully aware of the cameras suggests how easily she can transition between spaces.

In order to create a convincing propo, the production team chooses to put Katniss in a situation in which she goes beyond her Mockingjay symbol and is humanized. In District Eight, Katniss visits a make-shift hospital. The camera crew films her as the patients reach out to her in relief. The crew captures her making personal connections and reassuring the patients. Katniss realizes that her presence is vital as “I was their Mockingjay long before I accepted the role” (*Mockingjay* 90). Enthralled with her visit, Katniss forgets about the cameras, which results in

genuine emotion captured on the footage. Although the power of the Mockingjay is a strong identity, it is Katniss' humanity that appeals to the audience.

After her visit to the hospital, Katniss and her team witness an attack by the Capitol in which the hospital is bombed. Without direction, Katniss demonstrates her ability to take on the daunting role of the Mockingjay. Katniss speaks directly into the camera and addresses the audience: "President Snow says he's sending us a message? Well I have one for him. You can torture us and bomb us and burn our districts to the ground, but do you see that? ... Fire is catching! ... And if we burn, you burn with us!" (*Mockingjay* 99-100). Her speech, interspersed with footage of the burning hospital, provides an effective image. As her production team notes, Katniss is most relatable and likeable when she is unscripted, and this moment provides just such an opportunity. Corner's idea of "selving" in which "'true selves' are seen to emerge (and develop) from underneath, and indeed through, 'performed selves' projected for us as a consequence of the applied pressures of objective circumstance and group dynamics" (51) is applicable here. Despite the fact that she is aware of the cameras, Katniss allows her true self, and in turn, the true feelings she has been harboring towards the Capitol, emerge. Her performance is genuine because her voice and actions are prompted and triggered by her surroundings. The devastation surrounding Katniss spurs her to make a frank and totally sincere proclamation to Panem.

Katniss' performance for the propos is different from her experience in the arenas. In her experience with the Hunger Games and the Quarter Quell, Katniss was under constant surveillance. Her goal was to capture the audience's attention so that they would give her advantages through support. While she still desires Panem's attention, her strategy is now

strikingly different. Her production team has the ability to edit and create messages tailored to their intentions. For example, during her first propo, the production team injects Claudius Templesmith's, the official Hunger Games announcer, voice into the footage. Though Claudius has sided with the Capitol, the rebels are using his voice to add to Katniss' message.

As a literary device, the propos take the form of advertisements and not that of reality television; nonetheless, the performance and creation of the propos resemble Corner's observations of a post-documentary context. He explains that it is a space "where viewers, participants, and producers are less invested in absolute truth and representational ethics and more interested in the space that exists between reality and fiction..." (qtd. in Skeggs and Wood 24). The idea that viewers, participants, and producers are looking to fabricate their own interpretation of the truth is relevant to the process of producing propos. Fulvia suggests creating a series of propos entitled *We Remember*: "In each one, we would feature one of the dead tributes. Little Rue from Eleven or old Mags from Four. The idea being that we could target each district with a very personal piece" (*Mockingjay* 109). The purpose of the *We Remember* propos is to build a personal connection between the rebels and the fractured districts in order to create a sense of unity towards the rebellion. Viewers are looking for something they can connect to and the producers want to get their message across.

6.3 The Space between Fact and Fiction

As she navigates her performances and the new situation in which she finds herself, Katniss experiences the uncertainty of her position. The presence of cameras blurs the lines of

reality and fiction through their ability to document moments of authenticity but also create the producers' own storylines out of these moments.

In what she believes to be a private moment, Katniss sings to Pollux, an avox. She sings "The Hanging Tree," a song from her childhood about a dead man calling for his lover to join him in death. During this song, the birds fall silent, creating an intimate moment between Katniss and Pollux. This song recalls childhood memories for Katniss and allows her to reflect on the people who were executed in District Twelve. As she finishes the song, the mockingjays echo her song as Pollux cries silently. What is supposed to be a private moment between the two is actually not, as the production team has been taping the whole time. Plutarch, impressed, states, "Where do you come up with this stuff? No one would believe it if we made it up! ... You're golden!" (*Mockingjay* 126-127). Even though Katniss replies that she was not performing for the cameras, an ambivalent sense of uncertainty is nonetheless palpable, pertaining to Klapscik's idea that liminality is a "space of continuous transference, of a never-ending narrative, forming an infinite process towards an unreachable end" (14). Although Katniss believes her song is solely for Pollux, her experience transfers, or fluctuates, towards both a private and public audience. The transition between authentic and manufactured shows the liminal space Katniss in which Katniss finds herself. What is intended as a moment for Pollux is exploited into a public moment. This shows that there is no clearly defined line as to where Katniss' true self and performative self are divided.

During a lockdown, Katniss experiences blurred lines separating her on-screen and off-screen self. Plutarch warns her, "The other people in the bunker, they'll be taking their cue on how to react from you. If you're calm and brave, others will try to be well. If you panic, it could

spread like wildfire” (*Mockingjay* 140). Plutarch asks that Katniss extend her performance to her everyday life and act natural for her fellow citizens. When Katniss sarcastically asks, “Why don’t I just pretend I’m on camera, Plutarch?” he responds with, “Yes! Perfect. One is always much braver with an audience” (*Mockingjay* 141). Once again, Katniss is unable to separate her performative self from her true self. Her role as the Mockingjay has created an in-between space in which she is constantly performing. Moreover, her sarcastic response to Plutarch shows her awareness as to how she is being manipulated. She implies here that her on-screen life has intersected with her real life and that her performance must be ongoing in both realms.

When a brainwashed Peeta is rescued from President Snow’s captivity, the rebels must remind Peeta of his earlier and real identity. He plays a game with the rebels in which he mentions a memory and asks if it is real or not real. This uncertainty is reflective of Katniss’ state as well. When Panem believes Katniss is dead, she watches a broadcast of President Coin giving her eulogy. President Coin proclaims, “Dead or alive, Katniss Everdeen will remain the face of this rebellion. If ever you waver in your resolve, think of the Mockingjay, and in her you will find the strength you need to rid Panem of its oppressors” (*Mockingjay* 294). Katniss realizes that to Coin, her role is merely symbolic. As the Mockingjay, she must garner unity amongst the districts. For Coin, Katniss’ existence is insignificant, as the idea that the Mockingjay sacrificed her life for the cause works in Coin’s favour as well. This creates a sense of uncertainty as Katniss is unsure as to whom she should trust. Initially, she believes that her alliance with Coin is to fight the oppressive Capitol, but she soon questions her position. She believes her role, constructed to suit Coin’s mission, is originally her own. This raises questions of Katniss’ performance. On camera, was she acting on her own accord or was she being subconsciously manipulated by President Coin? This ambiguous state speaks to Turner’s theory

of liminality in which “the ritual subjects pass through a period of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo” (24). In her final act as the Mockingjay, she is able to distinguish her true self from her socially-constructed performance self. Upon the realization that it was Coin’s army that launched an attack that killed her younger sister Prim, Katniss realizes that Coin is not different from Snow. In a public execution in which Katniss is supposed to personally kill President Snow, she follows her own purpose, instinct, and direction. She surprises everyone and kills President Coin. Even though Katniss had trouble distinguishing between reality and fiction, she is able to make a decision that is entirely her own.

Up until killing President Coin, Katniss found herself trapped in a liminal space. As Klapcsik defines one aspect of liminality to be ambiguity “created by transgressions, or traversals, across evanescent porous, indefinite, ambiguous, evasive borderlines” (14) which effectively describes Katniss’ state throughout the trilogy. Katniss was constantly trying to navigate her true feelings through her ongoing state of performance. The act of killing President Coin shows that she finally steps away from the performance. She acts through her own sense of agency and makes a decision that is not based on her obligations as a performer. The execution itself is staged to appear as a performance, with an audience present and a ceremonious atmosphere, which makes it ironic that Katniss finally ends her performance. Choosing to kill President Coin demonstrates that she has separated her performative self from her true self and has finally been able to distinguish what is real and what is not real. An act of revenge, this surprise execution shows that when Katniss was in a liminal space, her doubts echoed her uncertainty, but because Katniss manages to break free of this space, she is able to see the truth in her situation.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Discussion

My close reading of the trilogy has cast light on my research questions. Over the course of the trilogy, Katniss' character changes and adapts to the ongoing challenges she experiences

7.1 Discussion of Research Questions

1. How can Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity be used to explore the development of Katniss' character over the *Hunger Games* trilogy?

I used Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to help inform my understanding of Katniss' behaviour. Butler's idea that performativity is "a 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" (45) is relevant to the way Katniss chooses to construct and perform femininity. From the moment of the reaping, Katniss shows an awareness of the cameras and how to behave in relation to them. Her role as the star-crossed lover is prominent in both *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*. She plays a feminized role in order to sustain the narrative that she is in love with Peeta. Moreover, her performance is most successful when she can use Peeta as a counterpoint to determine her feminized role.

In the first two novels, Katniss demonstrates that part of her successful performance is due to her artful stylist, Cinna. Because of his memorable costumes, she is able to display a wide spectrum of identities, ranging from the innocent girl to the strong victor. As Katniss progresses through the Games, it is clear that her identity is a product of reinvention. Not only does Katniss model her performance of gender on her costuming, but her previous experiences also help shape her role. She models her behaviour with Peeta on other romantic couples she has witnessed.

Butler's theory proved to be less applicable to Katniss in *Mockingjay*. No longer cast as the star-crossed lover, Katniss took on the role as the Mockingjay, a symbol of rebellion.

Without Peeta present to play her lover, Katniss' role was less feminized as the purpose was for her to play the role as the face of the rebellion. While performance was a major factor in the role as the Mockingjay, gender was not.

2. How can communication theories addressing media and reality television be used to cast light on Katniss' performance of specific roles?

The presence of cameras helps to dictate the way Katniss presents herself throughout the trilogy. Reality television theory looks at the relationship between producers, viewers, and participants. Katniss is given different roles to play throughout the three books and adjusts her performance based on the situation in front of an audience.

Constantly acknowledging that she must perform to meet the audience's expectations, Katniss' motivation for her performance is often survival but sometimes her own will. In the first two novels, Katniss strives to create a fan base so that they support her in the Games. This demonstrates how significant viewers are with regards to reality television. Further growth in Katniss' character is evident as her performance in front of the cameras changes to political interest in *Catching Fire*. Forced to be the Capitol's puppet, Katniss is at President Snow's mercy. This changes in *Mockingjay* as Katniss' performance benefits President Coin.

During the trilogy, Katniss learns how to use the medium of reality television to her advantage. She understands that the arena creates a space where contestants are forced to perform and she learns how to manipulate this to her benefit. However, she learns that she is in a symbiotic relationship with the producers and audience as well, the production team can choose to portray her in any way they wish.

Thanks to the presence of the audience and the assistance of her prep and production team, she is able to transition into her new roles with ease. Branding the self, or creating a unique identity, is key to success in the Games and Katniss shows her ability to adapt to the changing situations. With different motivations, Katniss demonstrates that she is able to reinvent herself to overcome the conflicts.

3. How does Katniss perform femininity for the media throughout the trilogy?

Katniss' performance of femininity is based on her own experiences and interpretation. Outside of the arena, Katniss shows qualities that are both masculine and feminine. She displays an adeptness for hunting but she also exhibits a softer, nurturing side towards her sister. When she enters the arena, however, she finds that she must perform a feminized role in order to suit Peeta's love story.

Katniss interprets femininity based on her previous observations of relationships. She models her interactions with Peeta on the behaviour of her mother towards her father. Moreover, she adjusts her behaviour to the clothing she is wearing. When required to appear innocent, she does so. This forced feminized role is present in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*. Katniss fluctuates between the more submissive role of Peeta's lover and her own self-motivation as a potential victor.

Growth for Katniss is clearly evident in *Mockingjay*. In the third book, Peeta is absent for the majority of the story because he is being held hostage by the Capitol. Katniss no longer has to play the role of his lover, and instead, becomes the face of the rebellion. Moving from star-crossed lover to *Mockingjay* indicates a shift in feminized performance. Because being feminine

is no longer a prerequisite to her role, Katniss does not revert back to the behaviour of the first two novels. As the Mockingjay, her symbolic presence is more significant than her interpretation of gender.

7.2 Further Discussion

The concept of liminality surfaced throughout my close reading of the trilogy. Because the presence of cameras blurred the lines of reality and fiction, Katniss constantly found herself in the uncertain, transitional, or liminal state. Her performances force her to question things that she may have never considered. For example, her performance as the star-crossed lover forces Katniss to question her true feelings for Peeta. What she assumes to be an act seems to develop into something authentic. Moreover, her ambivalent feelings for Peeta force her to confront her feelings for her friend Gale. These are emotions that she may not have addressed, had she not been forced into a liminal state.

Liminality is further evident in the fact that Katniss' performance does not end when the cameras are off. She must uphold her performance for the benefit of her peers to reassure them that everything is safe. Furthermore, the constant presence of cameras causes uncertainty for Katniss, as she cannot distinguish her true intentions from the actions that may be manipulated by a production team.

After President Coin's assassination, which is Katniss' first break from performance, Katniss must find meaning and identity beyond the camera. A victim of trauma, Katniss has to reconstruct her life after her performance ends. With Prim dead, her mother moved away, and her friendship with Gale severed, Katniss returns to District Twelve after her trial. She struggles to pick up her life, neglecting to take care of herself or socialize. Returning to District Twelve

resurfaces memories of the performative Katniss. For example, she notes: “I sit on the rock where Cressida filmed us, but it’s too wide without his body beside me. Several times I close my eyes and count to ten, thinking that when I open them, he will have materialized without a sound” (*Mockingjay* 385). For the first time in three years, Katniss is constructing a life without an audience. She struggles to understand her own identity, because much of her young adult life was based on her role for the cameras. The identities of the star-crossed lover, the symbol of hope and the Mockingjay have disappeared, and Katniss no longer has to live her life as the reluctant hero. The absence of these former identities not only shows the fluidity of identities, but also how performing these identities gave meaning to her life. The idea that the cameras provide meaning to her life is evident, as Katniss observes the act of relearning how to live. Small tasks provide meaning as Katniss tries to piece her life back together. As she states, “We learn to keep busy again. Peeta bakes. I hunt. Haymitch drinks until the liquor runs out, and then raises geese until the next train arrives” (*Mockingjay* 387). It is evident that Katniss is struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as finding meaning in an unscripted life is challenging for her. Moreover, Katniss demonstrates that the trauma of the games continues as she reflects on her own children growing up in a world without the Hunger Games. The fact that her onscreen performance will always be a significant part of her is evident as she states, “I’ll tell them how I survive it. I’ll tell them that on bad mornings, it feels impossible to take pleasure in anything because I’m afraid it could be taken away” (*Mockingjay* 390). It is clear that Katniss has been able to move beyond her experience in the Games, but it will continuously play a role in her life, as well as her children’s.

Conducting this study has allowed me to better understand the appeal behind this trilogy. Katniss has characteristics that are both stereotypically masculine and feminine and these traits

appeal to a diverse readership. I believe Katniss' reluctance to play the role of the hero is often appealing, as young readers may identify with her insecurity and uncertainty. Furthermore, the ability to relate to the themes and the characters speak to young readers. Social justice issues and concerns about technology are relevant to young adults, and Collins' trilogy presents these concepts in relatable ways.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study due to the lack of scholarly resources on the primary texts. Because Suzanne Collins' trilogy is relatively new, the existing research on the texts is limited. For example, a lot of the scholarship I was able to find touched on aspects of performativity, but did not explore the theory in depth.

Another limitation of this study is the theoretical perspective on which I chose to focus. Judith Butler's book *Gender Trouble* explores the vast idea of gender performativity. I understand that gender performativity can take on different interpretations, as Butler examines how scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir and Jacques Lacan inspired the foundations her study. However, I chose to focus on only one aspect of her theory. The idea that gender is constructed through "*stylized repetition of acts*" is the foundation of my critical framework. Other aspects of Butler's work would also be applicable, but this is the aspect I used as a critical framework in conjunction with the media theory.

A third limitation of this study is my focus on Katniss as a character. Although, as a protagonist, her performance is the primary focal point of the trilogy, other characters undergo performance as well. Because I chose to look at the specific roles Katniss takes on as the

storyline progresses, my study is limited to her development. The development of the secondary characters, however, also influences Katniss' performance.

7.4 Recommendations for Further Research

I believe my research serves as a starting point for further study. Although my work serves as a close reading of the trilogy, there are many other directions that this research could follow.

As mentioned, my research examines one small aspect of Judith Butler's theory. Further exploration into gender performativity and how that shapes the characters of the trilogy, not simply Katniss, would provide a greater understanding of character development and the effects of media in a dystopian setting.

Because my selection of the primary texts was purposive, further exploration of dystopian young adult fiction with similar themes could examine different aspects of both gender and media theory. For example, Roth's *Divergent* series as well as Westerfeld's *Uglies* series feature female protagonists in dystopian worlds. I think these texts would serve as tools to further explore the effects of performativity on female protagonists.

To extend the study of media and communications, other examples of dystopian young adult fiction could be examined. For example, Anderson's *Feed* depicts the consequences of mass media and consumerism. How characters are affected by the constant advertisements in *Feed* could be considered through the lens of media and communication theory.

At the conclusion of this study, two movie adaptations of the first two books in the trilogy have been released in theatres. They were well received by the public, and I think this would be an interesting source of study. There is a clear demarcation between the written texts

and film adaptations, and the adaptations of *The Hunger Games* raise points worth discussing. There are many layers to performativity that are apparent in the production of these films. For example, the media plays a critical role in the storyline, and it would be interesting to look at the media's interpretation of media itself. Moreover, prior to the release of these two films, the anticipation was amplified by the fans. This mirrors the Capitol's excitement for the beginning of the Hunger Games. The fact that we, as an audience, were excited to see children get killed on screen is intriguing and problematic. The Capitol is portrayed as a despicable institution, yet we were mimicking their behaviour. I believe looking at the fan culture created by the films would serve as an interesting study.

As a teacher, I am particularly interested in how aspects of this study can be applied to young adults. Firstly, the popularity of *The Hunger Games* is evident as my students make allusions to the trilogy regularly. When I ask for volunteers, someone will often reply with, "I volunteer as tribute!" While this statement is usually met with laughter, I wonder if the somber tone behind the trilogy is often lost in its popularity. Moreover, our student council held an event entitled "The Hunger Games," which served as an obstacle course to raise school spirit. The irony was not lost on me, as the Hunger Games is intended to be an event that no one wants to participate in, yet the student council used the name in order to attract attention and participants. The role *The Hunger Games* trilogy plays in popular culture is significant, and I think it would be interesting to study how the meaning and interpretation of the Games has changed through the readership.

Another extension of my research could be the examination of performativity in young adults. I find that my students have several platforms in which they engage in performance. For example, social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr showcase aspects of online

performance. These outlets allow users to edit and specify the aspects of their lives that they would like to make public, and I think it is interesting that online users can engage in performativity without self-awareness.

A further aspect of online performativity is the creation of fan fiction. A genre that has increased in popularity, fan fiction allows readers to take control of and extend the storyline of a text. Many of my students enjoy exploring their favourite aspects of popular fiction through this medium. Fan fiction is performative, in a way, because it requires fans to perform the role of the writer, while extending the story through their own interpretation. An exploration of the facets of the trilogy that fan fiction writers choose to interpret in their writings online would also be an interesting study.

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