



Høgskolen i **Hedmark**

Faculty of Education and Natural Science

**Ida Skogen**

## **Master thesis**

**A postfeminist analysis of Katniss Everdeen as an action heroine in *The Hunger Games* trilogy**

En postfeministisk analyse av Katniss Everdeen som en action heltinne i *The Hunger Games* trilogien

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## Preface

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Ida.

Gjøvik, 12.05.2015

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# 1. Introduction

This master thesis consists of an analysis of the main character, Katniss Everdeen, in *The Hunger Games* books and movies, which are very popular, especially among young adults. There exist three books; *Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010), and, at the time of writing, three movies; *Hunger Games* (2012), *Catching Fire* (2013) and *Mockingjay - Part 1* (2014). The last movie, *Mockingjay – Part 2*, is still in the making. Because of this, I have not been able to include it in my analysis. Still, I have tried to do a full analysis of how Katniss Everdeen is portrayed in the books and films that have been released, but I do take caution that she might be portrayed or visualized differently in the last movie.

As a teacher, my experience is that *The Hunger Games* are read by pupils in both lower secondary school and upper secondary school, and that they are especially read by girls. They are also listed under the category “Popular Young Adult Books” on Goodreads` web page (2014). *The Hunger Games* has received many awards in the US, among others the Cybils Award for Young Adults Fantasy and Science Fiction and the School Library Journal Best Book (Gyldendal, 2010). In *The Hunger Games* one meets Katniss Everdeen, who is sixteen years old. She lives in a world where twelve boys and twelve girls are forced to fight in a live TV – Show, which is called The Hunger Games. In these games, the main rule is to kill the other contestants until there is only oneself left. Katniss takes her little sister`s place in the games, and one follows her through new experiences and her fight in the Hunger Games (Collins, 2008). In book and film number two, *Catching Fire* (Collins, 2009), and in book and film number three, *Mockingjay* (Collins, 2010), one learns about how life is for Katniss after she has won the games, and how she has to face the Capitol.

## 1.1 Didactic approach and thesis statement

*The Hunger Games* may be used in different teaching scenarios. In 2011, an extract from the first book in *The Hunger Games* trilogy was used in the English Exam for the 10th grade in Norway (Udir, 2011). There are also teachers who use the books and the movies as teaching material in the classroom.

It states in the English subject curriculum in *LK06* that written communication

...includes reading a variety of different texts in English to stimulate the joy of reading, to experience greater understanding and to acquire knowledge. This involves reading a large quantity of literature to promote language understanding and competence in the use of text. Reading different types of texts can lay the foundation for personal growth, maturation and creativity and provide the inspiration necessary to create texts. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, English subject curriculum, Main subject areas, fifth paragraph)

The Core Curriculum in *LK06* states that “Education should foster equality between the sexes and solidarity among groups and across borders. It should portray and prove knowledge as a creative and versatile force” (Core Curriculum, n.d., p. 10). Because education should foster equality among boys and girls, it can be important for young people to read and evaluate literature that shows how the different sexes behave. According to Roland Barthes, a reader can connect and identify with characters in texts (Claudi, 2013), which, in this thesis, are books and film adaptations of *The Hunger Games*. Since young girls may identify with the main character Katniss Everdeen, it is important to investigate how this character is portrayed.

Because *LK06* states that literature can lay the foundation for pupils` personal growth and maturation, and because *The Hunger Games* are read and watched by young girls, this master thesis explores and investigates how the main character, Katniss Everdeen, is portrayed in *The Hunger Games* in relation to feminist theory. Since *The Hunger Games* is a twenty-first century phenomenon, I have chosen postfeminist theory. The ideas of postfeminism are especially found in popular media, and young girls are thereby a target of postfeminist perspectives. In this thesis, postfeminism is seen in relation to the phenomenon of the action heroine, and the female hero of the twentieth and twenty first century can be said to be a product of popular culture, popular media and postfeminism. Based on this, the statement of this master thesis is:

A postfeminist analysis of how the character Katniss Everdeen is portrayed as an action heroine in *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

I discuss how Katniss Everdeen is portrayed in relation to the binary opposition of masculinity and femininity, and how she is presented as an action heroine, based on the theory of how action heroines are portrayed through postfeminist perspectives in popular culture. Since Katniss Everdeen serves as a character that may influence the readers and the



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viewers of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, I also discuss what effects she can have on teenage girls.

## 1.2 Method

In this master thesis, my method is character analysis of Katniss Everdeen in relation to postfeminist theory and theory concerning the action heroine. In order to get a complete picture of Katniss, I have chosen to include all the books and the three movies that have been released in my analysis. This is because I believe that the books and the films complement each other in giving a full presentation of Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. I especially use the books when I need to give concrete examples of Katniss` and other characters` thoughts and lines, while the movies help me describe exactly how Katniss is dressed and how she looks in different passages of the trilogy.

When analyzing the books, I use the tool of *close reading*. Despite the fact that the method of *close reading* is often seen in relation to new criticism, I do not follow the ideas about how a text`s historical, sociological, biographical, political, cultural and biological factors do not count when interpreting a text. In this thesis, the theoretical framework of postfeminism and the perspectives regarding the female hero are critical factors in order to analyze Katniss Everdeen as an action heroine. I therefore combine the method of close reading with theoretical and contextual concerns that place the object of study firmly within a socio-cultural framework.

Since I am also analyzing three movie adaptations of *The Hunger Games* books, I use adaptation theory as a method for interpreting and studying these films. Adaptation is the reshaping or the transforming of a content into a new composition or form (Adaptation, 2011). Some critics are concerned that adaptation is secondary and inferior to the subject it is an adaptation of (Hutcheon & O`Flynn, 2013). This perspective of adaptation is a contrast to Jaques Derrida and his theory about deconstruction. According to him "...to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative" (Hutcheon & O`Flynn, 2013, p. xv). Instead, the original and the adaptation can complement each other. Hutcheon and O`Flynn (2013) write:

...an adaption is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works. This "transcoding" can involve a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a

novel), or a change of frame and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view, for instance, can create a manifestly different interpretation. (p. 8)

Adaptation makes room for retelling stories in different ways. According to Hutcheon and O'Flynn, adaptations are "...haunted at all times by their adapted texts" (p. 6). This means that adaptations and the adapted texts are always seen in relation to each other. "This is why adaptation studies are so often comparative studies" (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013, p. 6). However, this master thesis is not a comparative study of *The Hunger Games* books and films, but it is a study that requires that both the adaptations, the movies, and the adapted narratives, the books, are seen as complementary and that they are unified representations of the same story.

Most theories of adaptation assume...that the story is the common denominator, the core of what is transposed across different media and genres, each of which deals with that story in formally different ways and...through different modes of engagement-narrating, performing or interacting. (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013, p. 10)

When it comes to *The Hunger Games*, the movies can deal differently than the books with elements like time, irony, symbols, metaphors, silences, absences and point of view (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2013). In addition, the movies visualize the characters, and the visualization of Katniss is an important element in the postfeminist presentation of her character. Because of this, it is important to view the books and films of *The Hunger Games* trilogy as corresponding narratives in an analysis of the main character, Katniss Everdeen.

### 1.3 The waves of feminism

Feminism has often been split up into three waves. The first wave of feminism stretched from the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth century, and was concerned with the fact that women should have the same opportunities as men, and the wave has "...continued to inspire later feminist movements" (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 3). In New York in 1848, "The Seneca Falls Declaration was outlined by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, claiming the natural equity of women and outlining the political strategy of equal access and opportunity. This declaration gave rise to the suffrage movement" (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 3). The suffragists challenged stereotypes that were concerned with proper talk and behavior for women. Back then, women were "...required to be modest and to wield only indirect

influence, and certainly not engage in public activities” (Krolooke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 5). Based on this, the concept “difference first-wave feminism” emerged and was part of a discourse that concentrated on equality. This discourse “...led to the claim that women and men should be treated as equals and that women should not only be given access to the same resources and positions as men but also be acknowledged for their contributions and competencies” (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 5-6). In 1920, women won the right to vote, but there were still cases that were oppressive and subjugating to women, which needed attention. By this, the second feminist wave arose in the 1960s (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006).

According to Martha Rampton (2014), the second wave of feminism was dominated by issues like reproductive rights and sexuality. This wave focused, among other issues, on the way women were supposed to look. Feminists protested against pageant competitions, which they believed oppressed women. The pageant competitions highlighted the following: “...the underlying assumption that the way women look is more important than what they do, what they think, or even whether they think at all” (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 8). High heels, makeup and bras were seen as oppressive materials, which contributed to make women “...victims of a patriarchal, commercialized, oppressive beauty culture” (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 8).

The second wave was also the time for the differentiation between the terms sex and gender. Sex was seen as a biological term, while gender was a social construction that would vary based on the time and the culture. This gender perspective is still current in today`s society (Rampton, 2014).

The third feminist wave differs from the other two waves, and it is connected to many different terms such as “girlie feminism”, “grrrl feminism” and “postfeminism”. The third wave of feminism began in the middle of the 1990s (Rampton, 2014), and is by many called a new kind of feminism, which appeals to younger girls, because it is a more self assertive, aggressive and playful feminism (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). The third wave sees looks and beauty as empowering, and bras, lipstick, makeup and high heels are used as empowering tools, and are no longer seen as oppressive accessories. The third wave of feminism is thus a contrast to the second wave. Second wavers criticize third wave feminists for not being concerned with politics and forgetting the struggles and fights that the first and second wave went through to achieve gender equality in political areas (Coleman, 2009;

Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006; Genz and Brabon 2009). Because of this, third wave feminism is said to be a backlash against the earlier feminist waves.

The third wave is seen in relation to poststructuralism and postmodernism, and thereby makes use of the poststructuralist term deconstruction. Third wave feminism aims to deconstruct binary oppositions and "...categorical thinking" (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 16). Thus, it creates room for ambiguity and diversity. Third wave feminists challenge heteronormativity and "...call for recognition of queers: not only gays and lesbians but also drag queens, drag kings, transsexuals, masculine women, and feminine men" (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 19). Instead of focusing on political issues, third wave feminism is concerned with individuality and identity, making room for people to cross gender boundaries when identifying themselves.

Postfeminism has been said to be another name for the third feminist wave, a part of the third feminist wave and a variant of the third feminist wave. It does not seem like the relationship between postfeminism and the third wave has been properly defined. Based on this, in my master thesis, postfeminism is seen as a feminism of its own.

## 1.4 Postfeminism

Postfeminism is a concept with many different layers and perspectives. The term is often seen as divergent, and is a source of countless interpretations. According to Genz and Brabon (2009), postfeminism "...has confounded and split contemporary critics with its contradictory meanings and pluralistic outlook" (p. 1). The term contains the word "post" which signals the end of something, so many critics claim that postfeminism indicates the end of feminism: "...postfeminism signals "the pastness" of feminism – or, at any rate the end of a particular stage in feminist histories – and a generational shift in understanding the relationship between men and women, and for that matter, between women themselves" (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 3). Hence, the first and the second wave of feminism are left behind, and a new horizon of gender perspectives appears. These new approaches to feminism suggest that gender equality is achieved, and that feminism should now focus on individuality and social change (Coleman, 2009). Critics have claimed that this is a more self-obsessed kind of feminism, which forgets to examine and discuss political subjects, which the first and the second wave were concerned with.

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The new perspectives of postfeminism are closely related to poststructuralism and like postmodernism, postfeminism is also associated with the media and popular culture. As Genz (2006) notes, "...postfeminism has emerged as a bifurcated term (with a number of different branches) that seemingly leads two separate lives as, on the one hand, a descriptive category in popular culture and, on the other hand, an academic stance associated with postmodern/poststructuralist theorizing" (p. 336). Although postfeminism is argued to be situated in two different stances, there are also critics who think postfeminism is "...bridging the gap between...popular culture and academia" (Genz, 2006, p. 340). Based on this, postfeminism is a source of discussion and contradictory definitions.

Through the popular media, postfeminism has become a discourse which opens the possibility of ambiguity, difference, multiplicity and individualization. Postfeminism gives people the opportunity to explore and change cultural standards and norms. Among other subjects, postfeminism concentrates on individual and personal choices for women of a new feminist generation. This is a feminism which embraces playfulness, femininity and different approaches to sexuality. By feeling confident and good about oneself, one is empowered (Coleman, 2009). It seems like postfeminism is a "...rewriting of feminism, a sign that the women's movement is continuously in process, transforming and changing itself" (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 11). Postfeminism suggests a focus on individuality and difference, a feminism which proposes that a woman can be empowered and embrace femininity and sexuality at the same time. According to Krolokke and Sorensen (2006) younger feminists "...reclaim the term 'girl' in a bid to attract another generation, while engaging in a new, more self-assertive – even aggressive – but also more playful and less pompous kind of feminism" (p. 15). This means that women can play with makeup and dress in a way that shows their curves and skin, and by that be seen as empowered instead of superficial. The "...idea that contemporary young women are sexually liberated and free from traditional gender imbalances is encapsulated by postfeminist discourses in which popular cultural texts typically present young women as unproblematically active, desiring, independent, and empowered sexual subjects" (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012, p. 15). This is a clear contrast to the bra-burners of the second wave. Theorists argue that the politics and subjects in the second wave of feminism are seen as no longer valid for the younger feminists. This conflict is often referred to as a mother-daughter conflict, where the mothers of the second wave accuse their daughters of overlooking and forgetting the aims and political cases of the second wavers. The daughters, on the other hand, see the feminism of the second wave as

old-fashioned, angry, humorless and irrelevant (Coleman, 2009). “Empowerment and agency – goals that both second wave feminists and postfeminists claim – are envisaged differently, and thereby second wave notions of collective, activist struggle are replaced with more individualistic assertions of (consumer) choice and self-rule” (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 24). Younger women are conflicted about the term “feminism”, because it seems too rigid, and they want their mothers to understand that the world has changed since they were young (Genz & Brabon, 2009).

Popular culture and the media now suggest that when it comes to identity, anything is allowed in today`s society, and a mindset like this seems to fit better with younger women than the perspectives of the second wave. Although postfeminism seems to be empowering to younger feminists, “...anti-postfeminist critics define postfeminism as a sexist, politically conservative and media – inspired ploy that guts the underlying principles of the feminist movement” (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 15). In this context, the popular media is blamed “...for co-opting feminism`s language of choice and empowerment and selling women as an illusion of progress that ends up subjugating and oppressing them even further and on more unconscious levels” (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 15). Because of this, postfeminism is criticized for being a backlash against feminism and the beliefs and concepts of the second wave.

According to Genz and Brabon (2009) the postfeminist generation “...has different experiences and outlooks from those of “longtime feminists”...” (p. 11). The generation of postfeminists may not be as concerned with politics and social movements as the second wavers, but as the time changes, so does our society. Postfeminism offers a new set of identity positions and self-determinations that were not available to the first and second wave feminists. “In these circumstances, postfeminism comes to be seen as ‘the new and improved mind of feminism’, a feminism fit for the new millennium” (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 12).

...postfeminism can be considered as a movement of feminist pluralisation and diversification, making room in its rank for a more diverse ‘we’. It engages with the postmodern notion of the dispersed, unstable subject and opens up the feminist realm for the articulation of ‘other’ voices and identities. (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 28)

Whether a backlash or not, postfeminism reflects today`s society and popular culture, and younger feminists join postfeminist viewpoints and attitudes. Postfeminism seems to roll

with the changes of society and culture, and might therefore be a feminism fitted for young adults in today`s classroom.

## 1.5 Deconstruction

Postfeminism makes use of anti-essentialism and deconstruction, and makes room for pluralistic and ambiguous identities. This means that one breaks down binary oppositions, thereby a person does not have to be one or the other, one can be both: "...‘post - theory’ implies ‘exploiting the in-between spaces...a transitory space, a space other, a third space that is not here/there but both’" (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 31). A woman can both possess masculine and feminine traits, and become a more complex person.

In poststructuralist theory there is no final or eternal truth to reality, only multiple truths. These truths represent different views and opinions about our world and the reality (Claudi, 2013). This corresponds to the celebration of ambiguity, multiplicity and diversity within postfeminism. The term "deconstruction" is connected to Jacques Derrida. He operated with a principle of contrast pairs, like good and bad, man and female. If you are a man, you cannot be a woman at the same time. With the use of deconstruction, he wanted to break down the binary pairs, and put them side by side. This means that one of the pair does not exclude the other, but that the pairs are related and that each of them carries traits of the other. Basically, this means that if you are feminine you can still carry traits of masculinity and vice versa (Claudi, 2013). This corresponds to the thinking of what is called "new feminism" by Genz and Brabon (2009): "...the new feminists are ‘combining traditionally feminine and traditionally masculine work and clothes and attitudes’" (Genz & Brabon, 2009, p. 66). The action heroine is an example of a person who holds both masculine and feminine features, and the deconstruction of the binary opposition of feminine and masculine can be seen in many of the action heroines of the twenty first century, like Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider* (2001) and Buffy in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*. Buffy Summers in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* (1997 – 2003) is mostly dressed in a feminine way even in her most action filled scenes and thereby she is "...challenging the interlinked, hierarchical binary oppositions of masculine/feminine, active/passive, and strong/weak" (Hains, 2007, p. 198)

Action heroines can carry both masculine and feminine traits, and they therefore challenge the assumption that gender is biologically determined. The action heroine

...does muddy the waters of what we consider masculine and feminine, of desirable beauty and threatening sexuality, of subjectivity and objectivity, of powerful and powerless. Rather than replicating the simplistic binary logic that our society all too often resorts to for interpreting the world around us, the contestability of the action heroine challenges our basic assumptions and may force a new understanding of cultural norms. (Brown, 2011, p. 10)

Brown (2011) argues that "...the type of hyper-sexualized action heroine...does not alternate between masculine and feminine characterizations but rather combines traits associated with both gender categories" (p.13).

Rikke Schubart (2007) relates the action heroine to the concept of in-betweenness. This is a space between two oppositions or poles, for instance one can find a space in between the opposition of good and bad, female and male and black and white. The female hero is often found between the poles of male and female, and her nature is between the opposites of masculinity and femininity. Her feminine traits are often characterized by her beauty, her sexual appeal and her empathy, while her masculine traits are seen through her aggression and abilities to fight (Schubart, 2007). The action heroine is "...in-between, a position...which creates fascination and unease, ambivalent responses and conflicted interpretations" (Schubart, 2007, p. 2).

## 1.6 Gender perspectives

Since deconstruction is a central aspect of postfeminist theory, I have included a discussion of gender perspectives and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity in this thesis.

Gender has been and still is a great subject of discussion all over the world, and there are many different perspectives on gender, gender roles and gender stereotypes. One differentiates between the term sex and the term gender. Sex refers to the body and is a biological phenomenon, while gender is a social and cultural concept. Simone de Beauvoir, one of the great feminist writers of the twentieth century, claims in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) that one is not born a woman, one becomes one. She thereby believes that gender is a social construction which is acquired gradually (Claudi, 2013; Moi, 2005). Since gender is socially and culturally constructed, it is also a concept that will keep on developing in accordance to discourses and social and cultural norms (Moi, 2005). In her book *Sex, Gender and the Body* (2005), Toril Moi gives a nuanced description on how gender is socially



constructed. She writes about gender performance, a doing of gender. “To say that one performs one’s gender is to say that gender is an act, and not a thing...For the French existentialists, our acts do indeed define us, we are what we do” (Moi, 2005, p. 55). These performances carry masculine or feminine characteristics, and when an individual performs in such ways, one is placed into either the category of men or the category of women (Nyegaard-Larsen, 2010). “Gender refers to society’s expectations about how we should think and act as girls and boys, and women and men” (Planned Parenthood, 2014). Moi (2005) writes that “...when a man behaves in ways that are socially acceptable for men, then he feels more convinced than ever that he is a ‘real’ man” (p. 55). If people behave according to the gender norms, the norms will not be challenged, but maintained in the society (Moi, 2005).

In Toril Moi’s *Sex, Gender and the Body* (2005), one finds lists that show adjectives which are seen as typically feminine and typically masculine. Some of the masculine traits that are listed are athletic, dominant, aggressive, competitive, independent, self-reliant, strong and self-sufficient. Affectionate, childlike, gentle, loyal, tender, sympathetic, sensitive, soft-spoken, emotional and helpful to others are some of the adjectives listed as feminine (Moi, 2005). Other words that are used when describing masculinity are rebellious and tough – skinned, while other adjectives that are seen as feminine are dependent, passive and nurturing (Planned Parenthood, 2014). When looking at these adjectives, one can argue that they follow the patriarchal standards which claim that the man is independent and dominant, while the woman is passive and submissive. Even though these are commonly used adjectives to describe masculinity and femininity, gender is viewed as a social product, and social and cultural norms change in accordance to time and discourses. Thereby, one can claim that these adjectives are stereotypical, and not definite.

While individuals draw upon the shared cultural conceptions of what it means to be male or female in society...they may come to see themselves as departing from the masculine or feminine cultural model...The point is that people have views of themselves along a feminine-masculine dimension of meaning, some being more feminine, some more masculine, and some perhaps a mixture of the two. (Stets and Burke, n.d.)

## 1.7 The structure of the thesis chapters

Chapter 2 in this master thesis contains theory concerning the action heroine. This is the main theory that I use when I analyze the character Katniss Everdeen, but I also use general postfeminist theory and perspectives regarding deconstruction. I have chosen to include the paragraphs of postfeminism and deconstruction in the introduction, because they form the background for my choice of theory in this thesis. Chapter 3, 4 and 5 consist of analysis of Katniss in the three books and movies. In order to present a thorough analysis of Katniss as an action heroine, I discuss her characteristics in accordance to typical traits regarding the action heroine and I also investigate how she is portrayed in relation to the male characters Peeta and Gale. In chapter 6, I am concerned with the didactic approach to this master thesis. Here, I examine what effects and influence Katniss can have on teenage girls. At the end of this master thesis, in chapter 7, I present my conclusion and remarks regarding my postfeminist analysis of Katniss Everdeen.

## 2. The Action Heroine

### 2.1 Tough women

Tough women can be seen everywhere in today`s popular media. One finds images of strong action heroines who fight the world with heavy machinery and who know how to fight evil forces. In the popular media there exist tough female detectives, witches, warriors and agents. These women can be found in movies, TV-series, comic books, computer games and literature. “Even children`s animated programming has joined the action heroine trend with *The Powerpuff Girls*, *Kim Possible*, *My Life as a Teenage Robot*, and *Atomic Betty*” (Brown 2011, p. 5).

The image of tough, smart and strong females is not new. Wonder Woman is a known phenomenon throughout the world, and “In the 1930s, a number of female detectives appeared in pulp novels, including Carrie Cashin, Violet McDade and Aevada Alvarado. All three showed that they were tough enough to survive in this male-dominated universe” (Inness, 2004, p. 2). In the 1960s, *The Avengers* appeared on many TVs in the United States, and in the 1970s *Charlie`s Angels* was a popular television show which showed strong and tough women.

In contemporary Western society the action heroine is everywhere. Recent big-budget Hollywood movies have seen the likes of Uma Thurman, Milla Jovovich, Kate Beckinsale, and Angelina Jolie shooting, slicing, and kicking their way through the *Kill Bill* (2003 and 2004), and *Tomb Raider* (2003 and 2005) series respectively. (Brown, 2011, p. 5)

According to Inness (2004) “Tough women are appearing not only in the popular media but in real life too. In the gymnasium, women are taking up boxing and other sports typically considered in previous years to be just for men” (p. 3). Women in today`s society are now striving for visible muscles and they participate in different fitness competitions where they compete against each other. Sherrie Inness (2004) refers to Gerard Jones who believes that the images of tough, strong and smart women “...reflect the fact that women are challenging the male monopoly on power and aggression, a shift that has broad ramifications for how gender is constructed” (Inness, 2004, p. 5).

## 2.2 The action heroine`s characteristics

The popular media have created certain predictable images of toughness. The tough woman in action-adventure narratives is likely to be muscular but not too muscular, and she is also apt to be independent, not requiring any support. The tough woman is typically not as tough as the males around her. (Inness, 2004, p. 12)

The action heroine is a complex figure. Because of her different traits, she is seen as progressive and as empowering, but also as regressive and as a backlash against feminism (Schubart, 2007). As Schubart writes, the action heroine is "...a figure of oppression as well as liberation" (p. 7). One of the many general definitions of the action heroine is that she is typically muscular, but not so much that she seems threatening to males. The action heroine can also be feminine and sexualized. "Ultimately, her image, which is too transgressive, too dangerous, and too masculine, is toned down and given a more feminine appearance" (Inness, 2004, p. 12). In this thesis, the term "sexualized" is associated with an erotic appeal, which goal is to satisfy the sexual desires of the male gaze. Here, if a woman is portrayed in a sexualized way, she is presented as an erotic subject.

Another typical characteristic of the tough action heroine is that she acts independently. She does not require any support. This image of the action heroine can be questioned by TV-series like *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*. Even though Buffy can kill vampires alone, she does get help from her friends. In many TV-series, we can also find powerful females acting together, like in the *Powerpuff Girls* (Inness, 2004).

Rikke Schubart (2007) identifies five archetypes of the action heroine: the dominatrix, the amazon, the rape-avenger, the mother and the daughter. The dominatrix can be found in many action movies. She often has a sexual appeal, mostly shown through her attitude, behavior and clothing. The dominatrix is often related to pornography.

In male masochistic fantasy she is the woman punishing the masochist and fulfilling his perverse pleasures. She is not really cruel, since she serves her victim, and he [the male victim] is not really a victim, since he is a customer buying a service. (Schubart, 2007, p. 24)

She is often dressed in exposing leather costumes, high –heeled boots and corsets while she is handling phallic materials. She also wears layers of makeup and chains to be more appealing to the male masochistic fantasy. "The dominatrix is an erotic act rather than a

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person, and her actions are services rather than punishments. She is not perceived as a 'person', but as a male fantasy" (Schubart, 2007, p. 26).

The amazon is often viewed as a warrior woman, who is erotic and independent. According to Schubart (2007), amazons are "... aggressive and erotic creatures who kill, castrate and even rape men to fulfill their own desires" (p. 35). Thus, one can claim that the amazon is a woman who has a troubled relationship towards men. She has this in common with the rape-avenger. The rape-avenger often takes revenge on the man who has raped her by killing him. "She can even ... kill men who haven't touched her yet, merely because they belong to the 'predatory' sex" (Schubart, 2007, p. 27). The rape-avenger transforms from a victim to a woman who takes control into her own hands.

According to Inness (2004) the female hero is often childless, but Schubart (2007) acknowledges the action heroine mother as one of her five archetypes.

The psychology of the mother as an archetype is simple: The good mother is nurturing and reproductive, and constitutes the mental space of the family....She is the womb where the family grows. In contrast to the good mother, the bad mother has expunged her womb. She has cut the umbilical cord and left her family. (Schubart, 2007, p. 30)

Inness (2004) complements Schubart (2007) by writing that "If she [the action heroine] does have a child...her aggression is shown as only a manifestation of her desire to save him or her" (Inness, 2004, p. 12). This image presents an action heroine that can be both maternal and tough at the same time. The action heroine as a mother can thus unite different features. She can be nurturing, but also violent when her children are threatened. She thereby unites the feminine trait of nurture, but also the masculine trait of violence.

When the action heroine is portrayed as a daughter, she is often referred to as her father's daughter, and it is her father that has raised her into being tough. The father "... raised his little girl, educated her, trained her, gave her weapons, and handed her a job. The heroine is *his* little girl. His creation" (Schubart, 2007, p. 32). The education consists of learning to act like an attractive woman and fight like a man. Because of this, many critics have claimed that even though the action heroine is seen as tough and independent, she is also under male control, because it is her father who has created her. She is his product.

From a gender perspective, the daughter archetype is the fantasy of a man teaching a woman how to be a "real" woman. The daughter's femininity is thematized as a role she performs to

please her teacher....from a psychological perspective, the daughter is an incestuous archetype. Her teacher is an older man who molds a young woman into his desired shape. (Schubart, 2007, p. 196)

Although the action heroine daughter is her father`s product, she might have other reasons for becoming a heroine. These reasons are often "...related to family: a missing mother, a dominant father, or an entirely dysfunctional family" (Schubart, 2007, p. 198).

According to Schubart (2007) the daughter archetype differs from the other archetypes because she is often portrayed as a sweet girl. Schubart (2007) writes that the daughter archetype "... does not *look* like the type you would expect to tripwire bombs, handle oversized guns and assassinate people in cold blood" (p. 196). The other archetypes, especially the dominatrix, are often portrayed as more sexualized and they often carry a promise of "... a certain (sexual) type of violence" (Schubart, 2007, p. 196). "The daughter is often slight, flat-chested, and with an air of adolescence [while]...the mother archetype doesn't 'fool' anybody and never hides her capacity for action" (Schubart, 2007, p. 196). The daughter archetype often uses her sweetness and her innocent look to fool her enemies. Just like in a masquerade, the daughter uses her looks as a mask to cover and hide her abilities to fight (Schubart, 2007). In the comic book, *HIT – GIRL* (2013) by Mark Millar and John Romita Jr., the daughter archetype is portrayed. Mindy McCready seems to be a normal school girl who struggles with fitting in with the other girls at her school, but she also has another identity, namely Hit – Girl. At school, Mindy looks like any other girl, but when she is fighting her enemies, she wears a dark mask and a cape, and she controls huge machine guns which are the same length as her own legs (Millar & Romita Jr, 2013).

Many action heroines are portrayed as soldiers, agents or warriors in movies, literature and other forms of media. Although she does not include the female warrior among her five action heroine archetypes, Rikke Schubart (2007) writes about characteristics with the female warrior in her book *Super Bitches and Action Babes*. According to her, "The female soldier must prove she is *not* sensitive, *not* soft. Sensitivity is for women. Not for soldiers" (Schubart, 2007, p. 257). As the female warrior becomes a soldier, she enters a universe dominated by masculinity and men. As she gets more involved in this universe, the female soldier gains more masculinity, but she also loses her femininity. "Every breaking of gender boundaries is shot through with confusion and ambiguity. Every move up the scale of masculinity also means a move *down* the scale of femininity" (Schubart, 2007, p.261). This

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means that a woman cannot be a part of and participate in a world dominated by masculinity without gaining masculine traits and losing feminine traits. This move up the scale of masculinity is criticized by Mary Ann Case (Moi, 2005). By moving closer to masculine standards, masculinity becomes favored. Thereby, the hierarchy of masculinity and femininity, male and female is maintained (Moi, 2005).

## 2.3 Girl Power: the “girlie” heroine

The phenomenon of the action heroine is also often related to the term Girl Power. This term proposes that girls are empowered, strong and that they can do anything (Hains, 2007). According to Munford and Waters (2014), the term Girl Power marks a generational shift in feminist thinking. Girl Power gives room for more individualistic positions and perspectives. Girl Power emerged in the 1990s as “...a ‘new’ discourse to the arena of girlhood” (Griffin, 2004, p. 33). According to Griffin (2004), “Girl Power appeared to promise an all-female world of fun, sassiness, and dressing up to please your (girl) self” (p. 33).

Genz and Brabon (2009) claim that Girl Power is a “...re-appraisal of femininity – including the stereotypical symbols of feminine enculturation such as Barbie dolls, make-up and fashion magazines – as a means of female empowerment and agency” (p.76). Girl Power is often seen in relation to the term “chick lit” which is “a female – oriented fiction that celebrates the pleasures of feminine adornment and heterosexual romance” (Brabon & Genz, 2009, p. 76)

The media-promoted brand of girl power does not merely suggest that girls can do anything, however. It also strongly suggests that playing with femininity-that being ‘girly’ for one’s own pleasure, rather than to please a male gaze-can be positive and empowering. (Hains, 2007, p. 197)

This suggestion is however criticized, because it may drive girls to be a more narcissistic version of their selves (Genz & Brabon, 2009). Makeup, clothes, looks and beauty may become too captivating, and material goods that one may not really need might take too much place. Instead of being seen as empowering, the term Girl Power becomes a subject of consumerism.

At once tough and independent, sexy and stylish, the physical prowess of the late twentieth – century super girl is mobilized rather than hindered by the trappings of traditional femininity.

From Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar) kicking ass in her 'stylish, yet affordable boots' ('One more time, with Feeling' 6.7) to *Alias*'s Sidney Bristow (Jennifer Garner) employing multiple, high glamour disguises as a double agent for the CIA, these young women are dressed to kill. (Munford and Waters, 2014, p. 112)

Youth-oriented networks in the United States, like The Cartoon Network, The Disney Channel and Nickelodeon, have provided the world with many serial animations. These networks are in an effort to reach many young viewers, and as a result of this, young girls are being presented with many girl action heroines. Through the popular media, popular young action heroines like Kim Possible and The Powerpuff Girls have emerged (Brown, 2011). According to Brown (2011) these girl heroines have their fighting abilities, beautiful looks, humor and intelligence in common. Brown (2011) claims that even in the scenes where these tough girls are fighting and beating up bad people, they still "...manage to have some fun" (Brown, 2011, p. 142) and they "...also manage to balance saving the world with typically girlish pleasures such as shopping at the mall and pining after hunky boys" (Brown, 2011, p. 142). The young girl action heroine still makes time to go to the mall even though she has to fight evil forces regularly. "As a post-feminist figure the action girl combines her heroic adventures with the more clearly feminine-defined joy of shopping, particularly for cute clothes" (Brown, 2011, p. 162-163). The image of this girly action heroine that combines girly pleasures with fighting seems to embrace a rhetoric which claims that girls are empowered and have the ability to do anything they want, and be anything they want (Brown, 2011).

The success of these heroines where so many previous ones failed to catch on illustrates the appeal of post-feminist sensibilities that embrace such girl culture pleasures as fashion, beauty, consumerism, and crushes. But their popularity also demonstrates the cultural machinations that reduce female empowerment to a superficial level that ignores larger concerns about politics, race, community, and misogyny. (Brown, 2011, p. 143)

Feminist critics are concerned that the politics and subjects that connected women of the previous feminist waves are forgotten, and that girls and women today are more concerned with looks and beauty (Genz & Brabon, 2009).

The mass-marketed concept of Girl Power is premised on the assumption that young women live in a post-feminist age - an era where gender inequalities have been overcome and feminism is no longer needed because girls are free to do whatever they please. Thus, under



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the guise of Girl Power, young women are encouraged to believe that anything they choose to do, from going shopping to dressing sexy..., is a source of empowerment and a means for exercising their individual rights. (Brown, 2011, p. 148)

By doing this, it can be said that girls are dressing themselves up like sexualized objects for the male gaze without meaning to do so.

Even though some girls are dressed up in such a manner, they are still portrayed as girls, not women. Thus, their violent performances and how they treat and fight enemies do not come across as threatening to the male audience. They are thereby not challenging patriarchal standards which can claim that it is the male's place to protect society and women against threats, not the other way around. "As girls, the heroines can play out the most extreme fantasies of heroism in a liminal realm, and yet they may put aside such behavior as simply youthful rebellion" (Brown, 2011, p. 166).

This implies that these action girls "...may grow up and settle down into proper females" (Brown, 2011, p. 167), who may act like feminine and traditional woman, not action heroines who fight battles in men's place.

## 2.4 The action heroine as progressive

"When women are portrayed as tough in contemporary film, are they being allowed access to a position of empowerment, or are they merely further fetishized as dangerous sex objects?" (Brown, 2011, p. 43). Jeffrey Brown asks this question in his book *Dangerous Curves* (2011) and this has been asked by many other authors and critics in different forms. Brown (2011) further writes:

On the one hand, she [the action heroine] represents a potentially transgressive figure capable of expanding the popular perception of women's roles and abilities; on the other, she runs the risk of reinscribing strict gender binaries and of being nothing more than sexist window-dressing for the predominantly male audience. (p. 43)

According to Mao Chengting (2010), there co-exist two contradictory qualities in the action heroines. They are both physically strong and intelligent, but they also maintain their femininity by being represented with sexualized bodies. Many action heroines use leather

boots and other types of clothing that might seem like sexualizing for some. Some of these tough females also have visible cleavage and are dressed in clothes showing curves and skin.

The image of the action heroine as physically strong with visible muscles, but at the same time sexualized and feminine is by some looked upon as a progress within gender construction and feminism. According to Inness (2004) "...researching how the media portray tough, aggressive women offers insight into potential new role models for real women" (p. 7). Schubart (2007) claims that the action heroine promotes empowerment and development, and that the identification with a woman portrayed as an action babe is what women actually need. This complements the postfeminist perspective which favors femininity and various approaches to sexuality. However, since the image of the provocative and sexualized action heroine may serve as an element that objectifies women as a fetish for the male gaze, it can also be argued that this presentation of the action heroine is not progressive, but regressive instead.

Sherrie A. Inness (2004) claims that action heroines are in no need of men's help, and that they do not need anyone rescuing them from evil. Inness (2004) further believes that these women "...offer insight into how women are fighting to escape conventional gender role expectations that, in the past, have kept them from being aggressive, whether in real life or the media" (p. 7). Because of this, Inness (2004) thinks these action heroines can be used as tools in the liberation of gender constraints. Sherrie A. Inness (2004) refers to Elizabeth Hills's essay called *From "Figurative Males" to Action Heroines: Further Thoughts on Active Women in Cinema* (1999) when she writes that the action heroine demonstrates that she can do the same tasks as a man in the same genre, and by doing this the action heroine also "...challenges the entire gender system based on the binary male-female relationship" (p. 8).

...the modern action heroine is a far cry from the traditionally passive roles offered to women. She commands the narrative and controls her destiny, makes her own decisions, and fights her own battles. She is inquisitive and intelligent, physically and emotionally strong, and is clearly portrayed as a heroic ideal with which audience members identify. (Brown, 2011, p. 7)

In summary, the progressive action heroine can be argued to be a female who is not objectified as a fetish. She challenges gender norms by being presented with both masculine and feminine features, and she is able to perform the same work and assignments as any

male. The action heroine is further empowered by controlling her own life and by her fighting skills. This female is strong, tough and independent and a prime example for women to identify with.

Since the action heroine can be seen as a heroic role model, women and young girls may also look up to her and be inspired by her. For them, the action heroine can be a new ideal presented to them via literature, computer games, movies, television series and comic books. Instead of being presented with passive women in action movies with male protagonists, they can now enjoy the presence of a woman who is in control.

## 2.5 The action heroine as regressive

Although the image of the woman as a sexualized and strong heroine has been argued to be progressive, many feminist critics have been critical to this representation of the action heroine. One of the main concerns is that the action heroine is often dressed in sexualized costumes, which can appeal to the male gaze. Sonia Charlotta Reini (2014) asks this question: “If we are all equal now, then why do we have to be near-naked or clad in a PVC catsuit in order to kick some ass?” (Reini, 2014, p. 1). In her article, Reini (2014) wonders why the action heroines on screen are mostly only women who are sexualized and dressed like a dominatrix and she writes that the film industry seems to think that “...physical representations of female power and sexuality go hand-in hand, implying that the more erotic the woman looks, the more dangerous she can be” (Reini, 2014, p. 2). The critics find this representation of the action heroine as regressive instead of progressive because the representation is “...subjecting women to the male gaze [and]...thus degrading them to the status of a purely sexual object.” (Chengting, 2010, p. 2).

The claiming of her power cannot legitimize the sexual display of her body, and this representation only wastes the long-term effort by the second wave-ers to reject male objectification of the female body. So, despite the powerful agency of the female leads...these women are still subject to the erotic gaze from the male spectators who look at them in a fetishistic way. (Chengting, 2010, p. 2)

According to Schubart (2007) male heroes do not have to look as good as female heroes to actually be heroes. First and foremost, an action heroine needs to be beautiful and young. “If not young, then she must be Botoxed to look young. If not beautiful, then she must have

silicone breasts, be aided by plastic surgery, wigs, makeup and never ever a wrinkle on her pretty face” (Schubart, 2007, p. 5). One can thus claim that this is not a step forward, but a step back in relation to gender equality.

With action movies, campaign photos and posters usually follow, and some of the promotional campaigns for action heroine movies may be seen as material used to sexualize the image of the action heroine (Coon, 2005). Many promotions of movies concerning an action heroine focus on sex appeal and they might therefore be seen as objectifying (Coon, 2005). An example of this can be seen on the official movie poster of the film *Charlie's Angels*. The poster presents three women who are wearing outfits that are form-fitting. The women are all wearing high heels and each of them stands in a position that gives them “...a distinct sex appeal” (Coon, 2005, p. 4). In his book *Dangerous Curves* (2011), Jeffrey A. Brown writes about the Bond Girls and the tough character Jinx played by Halle Berry in *Die Another Day*. Brown (2011) refers to the DVD foldout cover in which the characters James Bond and Jinx are depicted: “Here Bond is...marked as powerful and in control, his body is concealed and contained, he is ready for action....In contrast, Jinx is presented as an object to be looked at; her body is open to the viewers` pleasure” (p. 8)

Even though these movies portray strong and intelligent women, the women are also dressed in a way that can make them desirable for the male audience. It can therefore be claimed that to be strong and empowered are not enough for the action heroine, as long as she is still a sexualized object for the male gaze. Many action heroines wear clothes and outfits that may seem impractical for warriors. Halle Berry as Jinx the “Bond Girl” wears only her bikini, Buffy in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* wears make-up and short skirts and Xena in *Xena, the Warrior Princess* is portrayed with her hair shiny, long and loose (Magoulick, 2006). As has been argued, the way women are dressed may have a lot to say for how they are perceived.

There exist limits concerning how strong these action heroines can be, because of men`s fear of castration. Because of men`s fear of being de-masculinized, the action heroine is made into a fetish. “According to psychoanalysis, fetishism attempts to disavow the threat that the female lack poses to men....fetishism is an individual male`s response to castration fears” (Brown, 2011, p. 68). Sherrie A. Inness (2004) writes:

“...women are still only allowed to be violent within certain parameters largely proscribed by what men are willing to tolerate” Most men do not want women who are too violent, too tough, or too masculine in films...“the new action babes have to celebrate women`s power

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without being so threatening that men would be afraid to sleep with the leading lady". (Inness, 2004, p. 8)

Since men are not willing to endure a female heroine who is too masculine, they control how women are portrayed in movies.

...the persistent cultural fetishism of women creates a conflicting fantasy of women as both desirable and threatening. In order to symbolically exercise control over women and the threat of castration/disempowerment they represent, the female body is phallicized.... forms of phallicization are indicative of male attempts to control and contain threatening female sexuality as a means to reinforce or validate their own masculinity. (Brown, 2011, p. 69 – 70)

Phallicization can be seen in *Xena, the Warrior Princess*. Xena may be called princess because the word *princess* can be seen as less threatening and less powerful word in contrast to the word *queen* (Magoulick, 2006). If Xena were to be called a queen, it could in other words threaten the male viewers, and the television show would not be so appealing to them. The action heroine may also possess different phallic symbols, like weapons, that may function as symbols of power and independence, but which can also contribute to the fetishization of the female hero.

To sum up, the action heroine can be claimed to be regressive when she is portrayed in a provocative and sexualized way. This image can subjugate, degrade and present the female hero as merely a fetish for the male audience. Thus, by being characterized in such a manner the action heroine is symbolically controlled by men because of their fear of disempowerment.

## 2.6 The element of male control

Magoulick (2006) argues that there exists a pattern of male control in many of the action heroine narratives. Action heroines are often formed and controlled by men.

Men give them their strength, help them to channel whatever power they have, and are always lurking. Either as potential lovers, as controlling father figures or bosses, as potential threats, or sometimes all three at once....This powerful male progenitor, who often doubles as lover, retains some power and control over the woman. He is typically the only man who can win or draw in a fight with her. (Magoulick, 2006, p. 735)

In the television show *Nikita*, the female protagonist Nikita is a strong heroine, but she is also controlled by her trainer, Michales. According to Mary Magoulick (2006) “Michales dominates, controls, and seduces Nikita into performing as an agent of the covert, antiterrorist organization Section One that controls them” (p. 740). Magoulick (2006) claims that each action heroine’s success is “...never entirely her own, because she is so dominated by the men who make and train her or control her destiny, that she owes success, to some extent, to these men” (p. 742).

The element of male control is often related to psychoanalysis and the law of the father. The law of the father is argued to be a returning element of male control in many of the stories about the action heroine. Brown (2011) argues that the action heroine is remade in her father’s image and that she is “...indoctrinated into the masculine realm of the Law” (p. 78). Being masculinized like this “...the action heroine demonstrates for viewers the desirability of mastering the law of the father” (Brown, 2011, p.79). This corresponds to the daughter as an action heroine archetype described by Schubart (2007). The father teaches his daughter how to be a heroine, and she thereby becomes a male product, her father’s product. The father is the reason for his daughter’s success, he is the reason why she wins battles against her enemies, why she can fight for other people and basically why she survives. Although the action heroine herself performs the actions, she has often been taught how to perform them, and she has often been taught these skills by her father, or another male. Without her father’s teaching and guidance, she would not be an action heroine. Since the action heroine is made in her father’s image, one can claim that her identity is socially constructed. One may claim that because of her training with her father, she holds both masculine and feminine traits. This corresponds to the assumption that someone is not born a woman or a man, but one becomes one when interacting socially with others (Brown, 2011). In this context, the action heroine becomes a complex human being, with a blend of both feminine and masculine traits. The assumption that gender is biologically determined is thus being challenged in this context.

Many critics claim that the action heroine only operates in a male’s role, and is only a man dressed as a woman. The only difference is that a woman is put in a place which usually belongs to a man and she is offered as “... a sexual spectacle for male audience” (Schubart, 2007, p. 18). Schubart (2007) calls this phenomenon cross dressing. The woman is really a male in disguise in the way that she acts in the place of a male action hero. The main difference is that she is dressed to be sexually appealing for the male gaze.

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It is the masculinization of the female body that is especially criticized for being symbolically male. “The muscular woman is seen as a gender cross-dresser...as a man-in-drag” (Brown, 2011, p.32). Jeffrey A. Brown (2011) refers to Susan Bordo and her model of the binary opposition between the oppressor and the oppressed. In this model, the men are the oppressors and they perform power over women, and the women are thereby powerless and oppressed. “This binary structure situates men as active, women as passive – men as violent, women as having violence done to them” (Brown, 2011 p. 21). Since the action heroine fights and performs violence, she “... confuses the boundaries and is seen by some critics as a gender transvestite” (Brown, 2011, p. 21). Because of the model that views men as active and women as passive, action heroines that are aggressive and active are viewed as unnatural and must therefore be a male in disguise (Brown, 2011).

In this context, the action heroine has also been related to the term masquerade. The masculine behavior of the action heroine is only seen as an act to make herself noticed, and the female hero uses her femininity “... to compensate for her transgression into male territory” (Schubart, 2007, p. 19). The female hero thereby uses her womanliness as a mask “... to hide the possession of masculinity” (Schubart, 2007, p. 19). “The female hero is ‘taught’ appropriate gender behavior so she can ‘choose’ gendered action like women choose clothes” (Schubart, 2007, p. 19). For some feminists, a masquerade like this is a signal of oppression, but to others it is seen as a sign of freedom, a freedom which one can use to “... navigate society’s gendered signs and discourses” (Schubart, 2007, p. 19).

## 2.7 The action heroine’s influence on teenage girls

Imsen (2008) writes that people are social beings and that every individual understands oneself through being a part of a social context. According to George Herbert Mead, a person’s identity or self is a social product. The construction of the self happens through what Mead calls symbolic interactionism, where an individual’s identity is constructed through interacting with other people and the environment that surrounds him or her (Imsen, 2008). A person will thereby construct an image of oneself based on others’ and the culture’s assumption of him or her, but also the general expectation in which the civilization has about people living in the society. Since media is a huge part of today’s popular culture, it also has great influence on the way people live and view themselves. In her master thesis, Sissel Nyegaard - Larsen (2010) writes about how the media can affect young women, and that

people have a cultural identity, through which their social and psychological identity is expressed (Nyegaard-Larsen, 2010) A human`s cultural identity is formed by signs in the society. The media offers a number of ways to express oneself, but it is also a source for imitation and inspiration (Nyegaard-Larsen, 2010).

Synne Lykkebø Hafsaas (2014) states that the self-image of young girls is affected by the media. The images of half-naked women in the media can be a reason to why girls struggle with their self - esteem. They find that they cannot match the images of the women they see on film, cinema, in magazines, on posters and on television. Based on this, one can ask oneself how the images of the action heroine can affect young women. These heroines are often portrayed as muscular and well trained, half-naked and sexualized, with leather costumes, makeup and outfits that show visible cleavage and skin (Brown, 2011; Schubart, 2007). The term Girl Power can be seen as empowering to young women, but the concept also promotes fashion, beauty and makeup. Because of the action heroine`s looks and appearance, she might send mixed signals to the society. By looking up to the action heroine, girls might get the idea that you can be empowered, but you also have to look a certain way. According to professor Willy – Thore Mørch, a person`s self-image evolves as a consequence of how one views oneself in relation to the ideals presented through the media (Hafsaas, 2014) If young girls find that they do not look like an action heroine, they might feel a loss of confidence when it comes to their body and how they look (Nyegaard-Larsen, 2010).

In order for teenage girls to grow up to be independent women who feel self-assure about themselves and their identity, it can be argued that they need strong female role models who they can look up to and identify with. Thus, it is important that the action heroines provided by the media are analyzed in relation to whether they fit this mentoring image.



### **3. *The Hunger Games***

#### **3.1 Katniss Everdeen as an action heroine**

In *The Hunger Games* the reader of the book and the viewer of the film get to know Katniss as a sixteen year old girl, a hunter and a head of a family of three. She provides for her mother and sister, Prim, and when her sister is called to be a tribute in the Hunger Games, Katniss volunteers to take her place. One gets the impression that Katniss is a complex character. She is a hunter, capable with using a bow, nurturing, strong, affectionate, intelligent and loyal. She is also portrayed as beautiful and desirable. In this chapter, I look at different characteristics of Katniss Everdeen, and analyze and discuss her in relation to theoretical perspectives concerning the action heroine.

##### **3.1.1 Katniss and femininity**

When watching *The Hunger Games* movie, the viewer's first meeting with Katniss is when she comforts her sister after a bad dream about being picked as a tribute to the Games. Katniss sings to her sister to get her to sleep while chucking her sister's hair (Bissell, Collins, Rosner, Jacobson, Kilik, 2012). After this, Katniss goes out to the woods to hunt with her bow to provide food for her family. She also trades some of this food at the market, in exchange for other necessary materials (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). In the beginning of the novel, one reads that her sister has climbed into bed with her mother, not Katniss, after a bad dream, but one gets the impression that Katniss is the head of the family when she talks about Prim's cat, Buttercup, and that the last thing she needed "...was another mouth to feed" (Collins, 2008, p. 4). This image of Katniss portrays her as nurturing and affectionate. She is tender and loving towards her sister and provides her family with food. She also shows affection to her little sister by calling her "little duck" (Collins, 2008, p. 18). In the movie, before the reaping, Katniss seems to constantly look after Prim, making sure she will be fine (Bissell et al., 2012), and when Prim's name is called as a tribute, Katniss volunteers to take her place. Katniss does not show any typical affection towards her mother, but by hunting and providing food at the family's table, Katniss is nurturing towards her, and she hugs her goodbye before leaving for the Capitol (Bissell et al., 2012).

Prim is not the only one who gets to know Katniss' feminine traits of affection and nurturing. Rue, the twelve year old girl tribute from district 11, reminds Katniss of Prim, and

in the arena, Katniss finds herself worrying about whether Prim is dead (Collins, 2008). Katniss gives Rue food, lets her share her sleeping bag and shows her affection; “I poke Rue in the belly, just like I would Prim” (Collins, 2008, p. 247). She seems to feel responsible for Rue, just as she does with Prim, and this is confirmed in the novel:

I turn and head back to the stream, feeling somehow worried. About Rue being killed, about Rue not being killed and the two of us being left for last, about leaving Rue alone, about leaving Prim alone back home. No, Prim has my mother and Gale and a baker who has promised me she won't go hungry. Rue has only me. (Collins, 2008, p. 249)

When Rue is dying, Katniss pulls her head on to her lap and sings for her. After Rue is dead, Katniss decorates her body with wild flowers (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Here, it is Katniss' way of being tender and caring that gives her a feminine approach. According to Chengting (2010), many aggressive action heroines preserve their femininity by being portrayed in erotic ways. Thus, in this passage, Katniss differs from these sexualized heroines.

Katniss is also nurturing and affectionate towards Peeta when they are together in the Hunger Games arena. After it has been revealed that there can be two winners from the same district, Katniss finds Peeta and hugs him and tells him that everything will be fine. She gives him water and treats his wounds (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). She refuses to leave him behind and she takes care of him. She also shows him affection by kissing and hugging him, but this might be an act in order to get sponsors. Her acting is stated by her comment, “Since I've never been in love, this is going to be a real trick” (Collins, 2008, p. 306). However, she wants sponsors to get Peeta medicine, so she is making him a priority instead of herself. She is thereby loyal to him.

Katniss also shows another stereotypical feminine trait, namely dependency. She is dependent on Gale and her mother to take care of Prim while she is gone, and she is dependent on Haymitch to get her and Peeta sponsors in the arena (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). However, she only seems to be dependent on Haymitch to get sponsors for herself after she is hit by a lightning ball and needs to treat her leg. In order to save Peeta's life, she is dependent on herself to play the part as a star-crossed lover, and also dependent on Haymitch to sell her story (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Here, Katniss is portrayed as both independent and dependent at the same time. She thereby challenges and defies the typical action heroine's characteristics which state that the female hero works alone and does

not need any help or support (Inness, 2004). Rue is another person who Katniss is dependent on. Under their sabotage against some of the other tributes, Katniss relies on Rue to light fires to distract the tributes. In addition, Katniss is dependent on Cinna to dress her and make her special and memorable to the audience in order to get sponsors (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012).

Even though Katniss does not seem to be presented as especially vulnerable, she has her moments of vulnerability when she is in the cave with Peeta. Here, she seems to be comforted by him.

His hand brushes the loose strands of my hair off my forehead. Unlike the staged kisses and caresses so far, this gesture seems natural and comforting. I don't want him to stop and he doesn't. He's still stroking my hair when I fall asleep. (Collins, 2008, p. 310)

It seems like Peeta makes her feel safe, even though she is the one who has to save him in the arena:

As we settle in, he pulls my head down to use his arm as a pillow; the other rests protectively over me even when he goes to sleep. No one has held me like this in such a long time. Since my father died and I stopped trusting my mother, no one else's arms have made me feel this safe. (Collins, 2008, p. 351)

Here, one gets the impression that even though Katniss is tough and brave, she also needs a comforting arm and to feel protected. She thus differs from other action heroines who do not require a man's support or protection (Inness, 2004). Because of this, Katniss proves that she is a complex female character who possesses a mixture of masculine and feminine traits. After she has fired a bow at the Gamemaker's table, Katniss also seems vulnerable and scared of what they are going to do to her, but more scared of what they will do to Prim and her mother (Collins, 2008). Here, Katniss shows that she is still in a protective role when it comes to Prim and her mother, and she also shows that she can cry and be scared; "...I fly down the hall into my room, bolt the door, and fling myself on to my bed. Then I really begin to sob" (Collins, 2008, p. 119). Although she is frightened, it does not seem like she wants anyone to find her or see her in a vulnerable state of mind, since she bolts the door to her room. Because of this, one can argue that even though she has a vulnerable side, she does not want anyone to know about it, and this might be because she is afraid that she might look weak.

One can argue that Katniss Everdeen is a difficult character to interpret, because she is portrayed with many different layers and contrasting features. However, the fact that she is presented as an action heroine that defies and moves beyond gender roles makes her dynamical, and one can argue that she, as an action heroine, seems to carry a promise of development and expansion when it comes to gender perspectives. She proves that as a woman, one can have a personality that consists of both masculine and feminine features. The typical action heroine is also presented in this way, but her mixture of masculinity and femininity seems to serve more as a fetish to the male gaze because the way she looks. It is her beauty that states her femininity (Brown, 2011). The action heroine holds feminine traits because she is presented as attractive, while Katniss` femininity is also manifested in her personality.

### **3.1.2 Katniss as a “girlie” heroine**

Katniss cannot be said to be dressed in a typical feminine or sexualized way in parts of the book and film. When she hunts, she does not wear stereotypical provocative clothes; “I swing my legs off the bed and slide into my hunting boots. Supple leather that has moulded to my feet. I pull on trousers, [and] a shirt” (Collins, 2008, p. 4). In the film, one also sees that she is wearing a brown leather jacket, which is not a jacket that fits firmly around her body, and it seems rather loose around her waist and chest. As one sees in the movie, this outfit does not show any cleavage and she is fully dressed, not half-naked as many of the other action heroines of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Her hair is braided and her face does not show any traits of makeup (Bissell et al., 2012). Katniss is thus clearly different from other action heroines who are portrayed as sexualized and who are given a clear feminine look. In contrast to the dominatrix action heroine archetype, Katniss does not use provocative language, and her hunting boots in leather are not high-heeled (Bissell et al., 2012). In the movie, she is not portrayed with layers of makeup when she hunts or when she is in the Hunger Games arena (Bissell et al., 2012). Here, she is dressed in “simple, tawny trousers, [a] light green blouse, [a] sturdy brown belt, and [a] thin, hooded black jacket that falls to my thighs” (Collins, 2008, p. 169). Katniss also wears boots like the ones she uses when she hunts in District 12.

At the beginning of the book, the reader gets the impression that Katniss does not seem to be very concerned with her looks; “A tub of warm water waits for me. I scrub off the dirt and sweat from the woods and even wash my hair” (Collins, 2008, p. 17). Because of this, one is

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led to think that Katniss does not mind if her hair or the rest of her body is filthy from time to time. When she puts on a blue dress with matching shoes, and she lets her mother fix her hair, she feels like she does not look like herself; “I let her towel-dry it [her hair] and braid it up on my head. I can hardly recognize myself in the cracked mirror that leans against the wall” (Collins, 2008, p. 17). Prim tells her sister that she is beautiful, and Katniss says “And nothing like myself” (Collins, 2008, p. 17). When she comes to the Capitol, her body is stripped of body hair, and one of the stylists comments that she is “...just so hairy” (Collins, 2008, p. 70). This bareness of hair is not something that Katniss likes; “My skin feels sore and tingly and intensely vulnerable” (Collins, 2008, p. 71). The stylists say that she almost looks “...like a human being” (Collins, 2008, p. 72) when they are done with her preparations.

Even though Katniss` appearance is not presented as especially feminine in the meeting with her stylists and in the Hunger Games arena, Cinna, her main stylist, complements her on her hair and says it is in “...almost perfect balance with your[her] profile” (Collins, 2008, p. 73). In the novel, when Cinna styles Katniss for the opening ceremonies in the Capitol, he dresses her “...in a simple black unitard that covers me [her] from ankle to neck [and] Shiny leather boots lace up to my [her] knees” (Collins, 2008, p. 77). It is also written that Katniss` face is “...relatively clear of makeup, just a bit of highlighting here and there” and her hair is braided down her back (Collins, 2008, p. 77). However, in the movie it is quite visible that she uses makeup, especially her eyes and her lips stand out, and it looks like she is wearing false eyelashes (Bissell et. al., 2012). Her hair is not braided in her usual style, but is put up in a fancy hairstyle. Her black unitard seems to be of leather and fits well on her body and highlights her curves (Bissell et al., 2012). Here, Katniss` femininity is maintained by her image and appearance, and this fits with Sherrie A. Innes` (2004) notes about how the action heroine`s masculine behavior and image are toned down by a feminine look in order for her to not seem threatening for the male audience. Katniss is also affected by the way she looks and the crowd around her in the arena at the opening ceremony. Katniss embraces the way she looks and enjoys the audience`s response to her new image:

The pounding music, the cheers, the admiration work their way into my blood, and I can` t suppress my excitement. Cinna has given me a great advantage. No one will forget me. Not my look, not my name. Katniss. The girl who was on fire. (Collins, 2008, p. 81)

Even though Katniss has not seemed to be concerned with her looks before she came to the Capitol, she seems to be delighted about her styling under the opening ceremony and the feedback she gets from the audience:

Someone throws me a red rose. I catch it, give it a delicate sniff, and blow a kiss back in the general direction of the giver. A hundred hands reach up to catch my kiss, as if it were a real tangible thing. (Collins, 2008, p. 81)

Gilmore (2013) claims that “Katniss is intoxicated by the attention she is getting” (p. 4). Here, “She desires the desiring gaze of others” (Gilmore, 2013, p. 4). In this sense, femininity and the way she looks mean a great deal to Katniss, and one can therefore claim that she can be compared to the term Girl Power that praises femininity, and that she likes the desiring gaze of others and sees it as empowering. At this opening ceremony in the book, it seems that the way Katniss looks makes her captivating and empowered. However, later in the book she is given a new outfit:

Tight black trousers, a long-sleeved burgundy tunic and leather shoes. I put my hair in the single braid down my back. This is the first time since the morning of the reaping that I resemble myself. No fancy hair and clothes, no flaming capes. Just me. Looking like I could be headed for the woods. It calms me. (Collins, 2008, p. 100)

Despite that Katniss is mesmerized by her appearance and the atmosphere at the opening ceremony, she still knows who she is, and it soothes her that she is dressed as herself again. Though the Capitol's and the Hunger Games' consumerism affects her, she is still intact with her own identity, and she is fine with looking the way she did before she came there. Also, Katniss does not seem to care about beauty articles like high-heeled shoes and dresses. This is confirmed when Effie tries to teach her how to walk in high-heels and how to treat her dress:

The shoes are the worst part. I've never worn high heels and can't get used to essentially wobbling around on the balls of my feet...The dress poses another problem. It keeps tangling around my shoes so, of course, I hitch it up, and then Effie swoops down on me like a hawk, smacking my hands and yelling. (Collins, 2008, p. 133)

Despite her feelings towards wearing heels and dresses, she admires the dress Cinna makes for her interview with Caesar Flickerman:

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The creature standing before me in the full-length mirror has come from another world. Where skin shimmers and eyes flash and apparently they make their clothes from jewels. Because my dress, oh, my dress is entirely covered in reflective precious gems, red and yellow and white with bits of blue that accent the tips of the flame design...I am not pretty. I am not beautiful. I am as radiant as the sun. (Collins, 2008, p. 139-140)

With this dress, Katniss also wears shimmering makeup, "...full red lips, [and] lashes that throw off bits of light when I [she] blink[s]" (Collins, 2008, p. 139). Here, Katniss becomes a part of a concept that promotes makeup, fashion and beauty. She is no longer dressed as the girl she was when hunting in the woods back in District 12. Instead, she is dressed up in a feminine way which seems to please herself and the Capitol (Bissell et al., 2012). When being interviewed by Caesar, she comments on her costume at the opening ceremony and on her dress at the interview. She says the following to Caesar: "I can't believe I'm wearing this [her dress], either...I mean, look at it!" (Collins, 2008, p. 148). She then twirls for him and the audience, showing the flames in her dress, giggling in a girlie manner (Bissell et al., 2012). It seems like this setting is affecting Katniss to be a more "girlie" version of herself when she admits that she does not think she has ever giggled before in her life. Her nametag, "girl on fire", makes her believe in her own femininity, and she thereby becomes a girl dazzled by her looks and the response from the Capitol. After the interview, she keeps the flames on her nails as a reminder that she is "the girl on fire" and says "Perhaps it will give me something to hold on to in the days to come" (Collins, 2008, p. 162). Here, it is not Katniss' experience in the woods that makes her believe in herself, it is her nickname and the way she is dressed and portrayed in front of the Capitol that give her hope. Thus, it can be claimed that Katniss' empowerment in this setting is staged by consumerist items that may be seen as superficial materials. By being empowered by these sorts of beauty enhancements, it can be argued that Katniss promotes the importance of such trivial materials. Her experience, competence and skills as a hunter are placed in the shadow.

Katniss is also portrayed as desirable, especially by Peeta. After he has declared that he is in love with her at the interview with Caesar, Haymitch says to her that Peeta has made her desirable, and she needs this in order to get sponsors (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). When they watch the replay of the tributes' interview with Flickerman, the reader gets to know Katniss' thoughts: "Peeta is actually charming and then utterly winning as the boy in love. And there I am, blushing and confused, made beautiful by Cinna's hands, desirable by

Peeta's confession, tragic by circumstance, and by all accounts, unforgettable" (Collins, 2008, p. 160).

Katniss is presented as a girl in the meeting with Flickerman and the audience after she and Peeta have won the games:

My hair's loose, held back by a simple hairband. The make-up rounds and fills out the sharp angles of my face. A clear polish coats my nails. The sleeveless dress is gathered at my ribs, not my waist, largely eliminating any help the padding would have given my figure. The hem falls just to my knees....I look, very simply, like a girl. A young one. Fourteen at the most. Innocent. Harmless. (Collins, 2008, p. 414 – 415)

This is a contrast to the Katniss who won the games by being smart and tough. In the arena, she killed by using weapons. There, she was not portrayed as innocent and harmless. Even though Katniss seemed to like her last costumes, this dress makes her feel vulnerable (Collins, 2008). In summary, one can argue that Katniss Everdeen is a complex character when it comes to femininity. She is mesmerized by herself and empowered as "the girl on fire", dressed in flammable costumes, but when she is presented and dressed as an innocent girl, she feels vulnerable.

### **3.1.3 Katniss and masculinity**

In addition to her feminine features, Katniss is also characterized as a possessor of masculine traits. According to Chakoshi (2012), men are usually the protectors, while women are the protected. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is the head of the family, and she tells the reader that she became the protector of her family after her father died; "At eleven years old, with Prim just seven, I took over as head of the family. There was no choice" (Collins, 2008, p. 31). When her mother and Prim come to say good bye to her, before she leaves for the Capitol, Katniss tells them everything they have to do in order to survive when she is not there. She also grips her mother's arm, telling her in a strict manner to never put herself in a position where she cannot take care of Prim again; "You can't clock out and leave Prim on her own. There's no me now to keep you both alive" (Collins, 2008, p. 41). Because of this, one can argue that Katniss functions as a father figure in the family.

In contrast to many other action heroines, Katniss is not portrayed with visible muscles in the movie (Bissell et al., 2012). However, she is excellent with her bow, and she is capable of climbing high trees, so one can claim that she is presented as someone who possesses



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strength. She also attacks Peeta and holds him against the wall after he has declared his love for her during the interview with Caesar (Bissell et al., 2012). In the book, one gets the impression that she has an athletic body when Haymitch says that she is fit. She is also a fast runner; “I’m fast. I can sprint faster than any of the girls in our school, although a couple can beat me in distance races” (Collins, 2008, p. 173). Even though many of the other tributes are bigger than her, Katniss considers herself as strong:

I may be smaller naturally, but overall my family’s resourcefulness has given me an edge in that arena. I stand straight, and while I’m thin, I’m strong. The meat and plants from the woods combined with the exertion it took to get them have given me a healthier body than most of those I see around me. (Collins, 2008, p. 108)

Despite this, she does not win the fight with Clove in the arena, and would probably have been killed by her, if Thresh had not saved her (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). She is also no fighting match for Cato in the arena either, and, in the movie, Peeta is the one who saves her from being suffocated by Cato when there are just the three of them left in the Games (Bissell et al., 2012).

Further, Katniss is presented as tough and tough-skinned in *The Hunger Games*. When Prim is screaming at her after she has volunteered as a tribute, she does not want to cry or be portrayed as weak; “When they televise the replay of the reappings tonight, everyone will make note of my tears, and I’ll be marked as an easy target. A weakling. I will give no one that satisfaction” (Collins, 2008, p. 26). She also tells the reader of the book that it is not her “...nature to go down without a fight” (Collins, 2008, p. 42). After Peeta declares his love for her in front of Caesar and the Capitol, Katniss is mad at him and accuses him of making her look weak (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Thus, Katniss does not want to be seen as desirable. When Katniss hurts her leg in the arena, she says that she cannot show weakness; “Pity does not get you aid. Admiration at your refusal to give in does” (Collins, 2008, p. 209). Everdeen shows her bravery and toughness in the arena when she takes out the other tributes’ supplies in cooperation with Rue. She knows that it is dangerous, but she takes the chance. She also gets the medicine for Peeta, knowing that the feast where the medicine exists is an attempt to make the tributes face each other and fight (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). The fact that she volunteered to take her sister’s place in the Games is also something that contributes to Katniss’ portrait as tough. In this passage, Katniss does not

give in to passiveness and she acts like a typical action heroine by fighting for her own and other peoples` lives.

As many other tough action heroines, Katniss also possesses phallic weapons. The bow seems to be a part of her image, and it is with a bow that Katniss is dangerous and capable to kill. She is also handy with a knife, and one gets this impression when she is on the train with Haymitch and drives a knife "...into the table between his hand and the bottle, barely missing his fingers" (Collins, 2008, p. 65). However, she says in the book that "The bow and arrow is my [her] weapon" (Collins, 2008, p. 66), and it is the bow that she is presented with the most in the book and the film.

According to Inness (2004), the action heroine acts independently, and she does not need a man to rescue her. Katniss Everdeen is to a large extent highly independent in *The Hunger Games*. Even though she often hunts with Gale, she does not seem to need his help with hunting. She also shows her independency in the Hunger Games arena. Here, she finds water and places to camp. Since she has a lot of knowledge about hunting, she puts up snares and thereby provides herself with food (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Katniss seems to be confident in her own abilities, and she trusts herself and her knowledge about the woods. This is also emphasized at the beginning of the Games in the arena, when she wants to run over to the Cornucopia to get a hold of the bow; "...this forty-metre length, this is what I am built for. I know I can reach it first" (Collins, 2008, p. 173). Hence, Katniss is portrayed as self-reliant, and also self-sufficient because of her abilities to take care of herself. However, she is dependent on Haymitch`s assistance when she is hit by a fireball, and is in need of medicine (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Thus, Katniss is also dependent on sponsors. Because of this, Katniss does not entirely match the image of the self-reliant action heroine described by Inness (2004)

Because of her way of acting and her behavior, Katniss is presented as a rebel in the *Hunger Games*, and according to Toril Moi (2005), to be rebellious is a masculine feature. This rebelliousness is especially shown when Katniss shoots an arrow at the Gamemaker`s table in the Training Centre:

Suddenly I am furious, that with my life on the line, they don`t even have the decency to pay attention to me....My heart starts to pound, I can feel my face burning. Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemaker`s table...."Thank you

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for your consideration”, I say. Then I give a slight bow and walk straight towards the exit without being dismissed. (Collins, 2008, p. 117-118)

Here, Katniss` behavior can be seen as rebellious because she shoots an arrow at the Gamemakers on purpose, to get their attention, and she also exits the room without being dismissed. Thereby, she does not follow the rules and the norms of the Hunger Games.

After the opening ceremony, Haymitch claims that Katniss and Peeta performed “...the perfect touch of rebellion” (Collins, 2008, p. 91). This is because of their flammable costumes and the fact that they hold hands under the ceremony, showing the Capitol that they are in the Games together, and also showing a solidarity front in contrast to the other tributes (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012).

Katniss can also be seen as a rebel when she covers Rue`s body with flowers. She then makes a gesture towards the cameras where she kisses three fingers and lifts them up into the air. In the movie, one gets the impression that she is doing it as a gesture towards District 11, as a way to honor Rue (Bissell et al., 2012). This gesture seems to give rise to an uprising in District 11.

At the end of the Games, Katniss outsmarts the Gamemaker with tricking him to think that she and Peeta eat deadly berries. When doing this, Katniss knows that the Hunger Games needs a winner, and if both she and Peeta die, the concept falls apart;

...they have to have a victor. Without 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. If Peeta and I were both to die, or they thought we were... (Collins, 2008, p. 402)

This stunt makes the Capitol and President Snow furious, because Katniss has fooled their system (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Here, Katniss takes control of the situation in the Games and refuses to play the way the Gamemakers want her to. She is thus the commander of her own life when she fools the Capitol with the berries. Hence, she proves that even though she has been controlled in the Hunger Games, she can do as the typical action heroine does, and govern her own destiny. It can therefore be argued that Katniss is presented as a progressive action heroine in this passage.

### 3.1.4 Katniss as a mother and daughter archetype

Katniss sacrifices herself for her sister Prim when she volunteers as a tribute in her sister's place. Prim seems to be the most important person in Katniss' life, and she is very affectionate, protective and nurturing towards her little sister, just like a mother is towards her child. In the book, Katniss states that Prim is the only one who she is convinced that she loves, and she says to Caesar that she loves Prim "...more than anything" (Collins, 2008, p. 149). Katniss also looks at Prim like she was her child because Katniss is the one who provides for her:

They're not our kids, of course. But they might as well be. Gale's two little brothers and a sister. Prim. And you may as well throw in our mothers, too, because how would they live without us? Who would fill those mouths that are always asking for more? (Collins, 2008, p. 10-11)

Here, Katniss sees herself as the provider of her family, and as a mother to both Prim and their mother. Katniss tells the reader that she "...protect[s] Prim in every way I[*she*] can" (Collins, 2008, p. 18), and after their father died and their mother became numb and could not take care of them, Katniss took over as the head of the family to protect Prim from being placed in a community home (Collins, 2008). Prim is also the reason why Katniss feels like she has to try and win the games, and when she is in the Capitol, she thinks and worries about Prim; "Is my mother holding up, being strong for Prim? Or has she already started to slip away, leaving the weight of the world on my sister's fragile shoulders?" (Collins, 2008, p. 61). When she is in the arena, Katniss' thoughts also turn to Prim and she wonders if her sister watches her, and she tries not to be portrayed as weak and desperate for her sister's sake (Collins, 2008). Based on this, Katniss fits the image of the mother archetype described by Rikke Schubart (2007). As the mother archetype, Katniss also shows her capacity for action, especially in the arena. The other tributes look at her as a threat and use Peeta to get to her (Collins, 2008).

Despite the fact that she is suitable as a mother archetype, Katniss does not want kids of her own;

I know I'll never marry, never risk bringing a child into the world. Because if there's one thing being a victor doesn't guarantee, it's your children's safety. My kids' names would go

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right into the reaping balls with everyone else`s. And I swear I`ll never let that happen.  
(Collins, 2008, p. 365)

So, because of the Games, Katniss does not want any children. This is also a protective thought, since she does not want to risk her kids being tributes.

Katniss can also be said to be portrayed as a daughter archetype. Her father is the one who has taught Katniss how to hunt. Her father has thereby trained and educated her, and he has also given her a weapon, namely her bow. She also uses her father`s hunting jacket. Her mockingjay pin reminds her of her father; “It`s like having a piece of my father with me, protecting me” (Collins, 2008, p. 50). Hence, Katniss` father has the credit for her hunting skills. She can thereby be said to be his creation.

Even though Katniss can be argued to be her father`s product, her father has not trained her into being an attractive woman. He has taught her how to be a good hunter. Katniss cannot be said to be portrayed as the type who looks like she is dressed to kill. She fights for her and Peeta`s life in the arena, but she is not, like the dominatrix, dressed in a sexualized way that promises violence. Her bow and arrow, her phallic weapons, forecast hurting and killing, but Katniss herself does not use provocative language or clothes (Collins, 2008; Bissel et al., 2012). She also has doubts about killing when Gale says to her that killing people and animals is not that different; “The awful thing is that if I can forget they`re people, it will be no different at all” (Collins, 2008, p. 46). Thus, despite the fact that Katniss knows how to kill, she seems to have conflicting emotions towards killing people.

Many daughter archetypes are often presented as very young and with a mind that carries traits of adolescence. Katniss is young, but on the other hand, she is also an adult when it comes to how she handles her family. Since she provides for her mother and sister, she takes the role of an adult. Because Katniss shows that she is capable of fighting and killing, one cannot say that she lures her enemies with being sweet and innocent, as other daughter-archetypes do. However, she is portrayed as a sweet girl in love with Peeta in order to fool the Capitol into believing that she was not rebellious when tricking the Gamemakers at eating the deadly berries, but a girl hopelessly in love with a boy (Collins, 2008; Bissel et al., 2012). Here, one can say that she uses the way she looks as a mask, a “girlie” mask, in order to make President Snow think that she did not mean to hurt the Hunger Games` concept.

## 3.2 Katniss` relationship to Peeta and Gale

According to Linda Holmes (2013), Peeta functions as Katniss` girlfriend, despite the fact that he is a boy. Holmes (2013) justifies this statement by arguing that Peeta seems to always be in the need of being saved by Katniss. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss treats Peeta`s wounds and she risks her life in order to get him medicine. Here, Katniss takes charge and protects Peeta. She thereby positions herself in the masculine role in their relationship. Since Peeta is the one who is protected, he inhabits a role of femininity. “Katniss possesses agency as a hero at this point, risking her own life to save Peeta`s; Peeta becomes the vulnerable ‘female’ or damsel in distress” (Moreaux, 2013, p. 6). Peeta confirms this statement when he says “I`ve got you [Katniss] to protect me now” (Collins, 2008, p. 367). Because of this, Katniss and Peeta challenge gender roles and traditions. Here, their roles are reversed since Katniss is the masculine part and the protector, and Peeta is the protected and thereby the feminine of the two. However, Peeta is protective of Katniss, and he saves her life too. Among other things, he fights Cato so Katniss can escape the other Career tributes (Collins, 2008). However, when they are just three left in the arena, Cato gets a hold of Peeta and threatens to take Peeta down with him if Katniss shoots an arrow at him (Collins, 2008; Bissel et al., 2012). Peeta is thereby again in need of Katniss to save him. Peeta is dependent on Katniss to save him in all of these cases, because he cannot save himself.

There are also other features that make Katniss stand out as masculine and Peeta stand out as feminine. For instance, Katniss is a hunter and Peeta is a baker, Katniss kills while Peeta cooks and gathers plants and berries (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Katniss also seems to be more dominant than Peeta; “I order him into the sleeping bag and set aside the rest of his food for when he wakes. He drops off immediately. I pull the sleeping bag up to his chin and kiss his forehead” (Collins, 2008, p. 379). Here, Katniss orders Peeta to do what she says, but she also shows that she is tender towards him. Katniss also proves how protective of him she is in the book. She needs him to whistle when they are apart so that she knows he is safe, because she is afraid that Cato will kill him (Collins, 2008). Because of this, it is implied that Katniss thinks Peeta will be killed if she is not by his side to protect him.

Peeta is strong, and he can throw heavy items far, but when it comes to his own protection, he needs Katniss. In contrast to Peeta, Gale seems to be another type who does not need Katniss` help to defend himself. Katniss describes Gale this way: “He`s good looking, he`s strong enough to handle the work in the mines, and he can hunt. You can tell by the way the

girls whisper about him when he walks by in school that they want him” (Collins, 2008, p. 11). Katniss admits that Gale is the only person who she can be herself with. Like Katniss, Gale also hunts to provide his family with food, which means that they have a lot in common. Even though Peeta is Katniss` partner in the Hunger Games arena, Gale seems to be the one she counts on to protect her. Before she goes to the Cornucopia, she thinks about Gale and wishes he was there to protect her; “*Oh, Gale, I [she] think[s]. If only you had my back now*” (Collins, 2008, p. 330). She also seems to feel at ease when she is with Gale:

...maybe there is nothing romantic between us, but when he opens his arms I don` t hesitate to go into them. His body is familiar to me – the way it moves, the smell of wood smoke, even the sound of his heart beating I know from quiet moments on a hunt – but this is the first time I really feel it, lean and hard-muscled against my own. (Collins, 2008, p. 44)

Even though she feels good about being held by Gale, she states that she has never felt as safe as when Peeta holds her in the cave (Collins, 2008).

Although Katniss admits that there might not be anything romantic between her and Gale (Collins, 2008), Mimi Schippers (2013) argues that Gale functions as Katniss` boyfriend, because Katniss takes on a more feminine role when she is with Gale. When she is with Gale, he seems to be her equal. They both protect and help each other when they are in the woods, and Katniss trusts Gale to take care of her family when she is gone. Gale also gives Katniss advice on how to survive in the arena before she leaves for the Capitol (Collins, 2008; Bissel et al., 2012). According to Schippers (2013), Katniss is a performer of two different gender roles, depending on who she is with. When she is with Peeta, she is the boyfriend in the relationship based on the fact that she is his protector, while with Gale, Katniss is the girlfriend because they both act as equal, protective partners.

### 3.3 The element of male control

“Through her father, or father figures, the action heroine is made over in his image” (Brown, 2011, p. 78). The action heroine becomes masculinized “...and a dutiful subject and agent of patriarchal authority” (Brown, 2011, p. 78). All of Katniss` “...mentors and patterns from the beginning of her life are males. Her father, Cinna, and Haymitch are men. The champion of Katniss in life is her father” (Chakoshi, 2012, p. 37). Katniss is her father`s daughter. He is the reason for her hunting and survival skills, because he has trained her.

Thus, it can be argued that Katniss' success in the arena is not entirely her own, and that she owes some of this success to her father. If her father had not taught Katniss how to hunt and use a bow, her chances in the arena could have been minimal. Based on this, parts of Katniss' identity are constructed by her father, because she has to some extent copied her father's behavior.

Haymitch, Katniss' mentor, also plays a part in her life. He tries to make Katniss practice on being more likeable, impressive and exciting to the audience of the Capitol, but Katniss seems to fail; "We try me playing cocky, but I just don't have the arrogance. Apparently, I'm too 'vulnerable' for ferocity. I'm not witty. Funny. Sexy. Or mysterious" (Collins, 2008, p. 137). However, with the help of Peeta's confession about being in love with Katniss, Katniss is made desirable. Hence, Katniss and Peeta are made into the star-crossed lovers of the Hunger Games. With playing the star-crossed lovers card to the people of the Capitol, Haymitch is able to give them sponsors (Collins, 2008; Bissel et al., 2012). Because of this, one can claim that Katniss is under the control of Haymitch and Peeta's plot about making her attractive, since this is not something she is capable of doing herself. Based on this, Katniss needs their help when it comes to getting the audience's support. In the arena, Katniss is also under the control of playing the role as Peeta's lover in order to survive and get sponsors; "If I want to keep Peeta alive, I've got to give the audience something more to care about. Star-crossed lovers desperate to get home together. Two hearts beating as one. Romance" (Collins, 2008, p. 305). Thus, the Capitol and its audience also execute a certain amount of control over Katniss.

It is impossible and unacceptable for Katniss to remain as she is, outside of female gender performance in the Capitol. Her self-preservation and constant struggle for survival has indicated to her that if she is to endure, she must role play....In the arena...it is appropriate to do what you need to in order to survive. However, this is still not all that the audience wishes from her. She is on more familiar grounds in terms of what she has to do to survive, yet that survival still depends on audience participation. (Gilmore, 2013, p. 4)

Since Katniss is forced to play a role in order to survive, she is not portrayed as a progressive and empowered action heroine who controls her own life.

Cinna is also a male who has some control of Katniss, because he is her stylist. He is the one who decides how Katniss looks in front of the audience and the Capitol, thereby he affects the way Katniss is portrayed. In the movie, Cinna says to Katniss that because of her



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braveness, she should not be dressed like a clown (Bissell et al., 2012). He wants her to make an impression, and he is the mastermind behind her nickname, “the girl on fire”, because he dresses Katniss in flames, both at the opening ceremony and at the interview with Caesar (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). He is thereby in control of how Katniss is presented in the Games. After the Games are finished, Cinna is also in control how of Katniss is presented in the meeting with the Capitol and Caesar. She is then dressed like a girl to look innocent and harmless, not like a rebel. In the book, Katniss admits to herself that it is “...a very calculated look. Nothing Cinna designs is arbitrary....It’s about the Capitol and the Gamemakers and the audience” (Collins, 2008, p. 415). According to Brown (2011), the tough action heroine is the ruler of her own life and destiny. Katniss, on the other hand, is forced to act as Peeta’s girlfriend in order to survive the Games. Thus, she does not command her own narrative when being in the Capitol.

### 3.4 Katniss as a progressive and regressive action heroine

Katniss Everdeen can be said to be a progressive heroine in *The Hunger Games* in a number of ways. First and foremost, she is a heroine based on the fact that she saves her sister from being a tribute and saves Peeta from dying in the arena. She also saves herself and she tries to save Rue. Katniss hunts and trades supplies at the market in the district to keep her family alive (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012), thereby she saves her mother and sister too.

Katniss is physically and emotionally strong. She climbs trees, hunts and does not show weakness in the form of crying or showing that she is scared. Katniss is also a progressive character because she is self-sufficient, self-reliant and independent. She does not need help to provide herself and her family with food and other necessities (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Katniss relies on herself when it comes to being the head of the family, yet, she has to trust Gale to take care of her family when she is sent away to the Capitol. In the arena, Katniss takes care of herself, except from the fact that she is dependent on sponsors in order to get medicine (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012).

Since Katniss possesses many masculine traits, she shows that she can be a heroine in the same way that a man can be a hero. Because Katniss can perform the same tasks as a man, she challenges stereotypical gender perspectives. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is portrayed with both feminine and masculine traits, showing that a woman can be a feminine and masculine heroine at the same time. Her femininity is not the same as many other action

heroines. She is not dressed in a sexualized way, and she does not use provocative language, like the dominatrix (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). However, Nelson (2012) claims that “From the very moment that Peeta declares his unrequited love for Katniss during his pre-Hunger Games interview, Katniss becomes a sex symbol” (p. 20). Even though some critics find that sexualized action heroines are progressive and empowering, one can also argue that those types of action heroines are regressive, and that being portrayed in a sexualized way can subjugate instead of empower them. When it comes to Katniss, one can argue that since she does the same tasks as a man, and is not dressed in a sexualized way when performing them, she is a progressive heroine. However, she does get excited about being presented as “the girl on fire” and she also adores her different costumes which complement her nickname (Collins, 2008). Although Katniss does not seem to care that much about her looks in parts of *The Hunger Games*, she feels empowered by looking “...as radiant as the sun” (Collins, 2008, p. 140), and being “the girl on fire” seems to give her confidence; “No one will forget me. Not my look, not my name. Katniss. The girl who was on fire. For the first time, I feel a flicker of hope rising up in me” (Collins, 2008, p. 81).

Despite that Katniss can be seen as a progressive character, one can also argue that her feeling of empowerment that comes from her nickname, which is again based on her costumes, is a step in the regressive direction. Here, clothes and makeup make her feel empowered, not the skills of a survivor and a hunter. Katniss also enjoys the gaze of the audience in the Capitol, which seems to have an empowering effect on her. Thereby, one can argue that Katniss praises the type of femininity enhanced by makeup and clothing. Based on this, Katniss is portrayed as a consumer of “girlie” pleasures. This can be seen as regressive because it is not Katniss` personality traits and competences that make her empowered, it is a nickname, fancy costumes and makeup that give her confidence. This presentation of Katniss signals that it is important to look fantastic in order to feel good. However, Katniss may feel empowered by her looks because she knows that it can give her advantages, and she knows that she is dependent on sponsors in order to survive in the arena.

The sponsor system of the Hunger Games poses another problem when it comes to Katniss being presented as a progressive heroine. Many action heroines are seen as progressive based on the fact that they do not need a man to rescue them, they can take care of themselves (Inness, 2004). Katniss can also take care of herself, and in the arena, she is the one who saves and helps Peeta. However, when she is attacked by Clove, she is saved by Thresh

because of her relationship with Rue (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Here, it is Katniss' nurturing skills that save her.

Although Katniss can provide and protect herself in many ways, she is dependent on Haymitch and sponsors. Because of the sponsor system, Katniss is not in control of her own destiny, like other action heroines. She needs people to like her in order to get medicine. Katniss' life and destiny are thus to some extent dependent on the help from the audience and Haymitch. Thereby, she is in need of help by others, which can be said to be a regressive trait. However, Katniss takes control when she and Peeta are the only ones left in the arena. She tricks the Capitol into believing that they will both kill themselves if not both of them are crowned victors of the Hunger Games (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Here, she is in control of her own future.

A lot of action heroines are seen as progressive because they are not passive. In contrast to her mother, Katniss takes charge of the family and tries to fill the role her father had. When it comes to saving someone, like her family and Peeta, Katniss is not passive. She hunts in the woods, even though she knows she is not allowed to be outside the district line. She also goes to the feast at the Cornucopia to get Peeta medicine, although she knows she might get killed. When cooperating with Rue, Katniss shows that she is active in form of sabotaging some of the other tributes' supplies (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012). Despite this, one can argue that Katniss also shows some degree of being passive in the arena at the beginning of the Games. At the start, instead of killing tributes, she runs from them and climbs the top of a tree in order to protect herself. It is first when she is found by the careers that she, with the help of Rue, tries to hurt someone. Here, she does not face them in a frontal attack, but she drops a nest of tracker jackers on them (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012).

A regressive aspect of the presentation of Katniss as an action heroine is the repeated element of male or patriarchal control. Since Katniss' skills of survival are a product of her father training with her, he is the reason for her success as a heroine. She is also controlled by the Capitol and the audience, because she needs to make an impression on them in order to get them to sponsor her. Here, Haymitch and Peeta also play a huge part, since Peeta makes Katniss desirable to the audience by declaring that he is in love with her, and since Haymitch uses this to get Peeta and Katniss sponsors (Collins, 2008; Bissell et al., 2012).

In order to make men feel less threatened by the action heroine's masculinity, it has been argued that action heroines are portrayed as tough and feminine at the same time. This mixture of femininity and masculinity is argued to function as a fetish to the male gaze. When it comes to Katniss, she is only dressed in a feminine way when she is in the Capitol, yet Katniss' femininity can be criticized for being appealing to the male gaze, and thereby making her less threatening to the male audience. She cannot fight men that are bigger than her, for instance Cato and Tresh, and this can also make her seem less tough and aggressive. Based on this, Katniss can be objectified as a fetish of the male gaze. However, despite the fact that Nelson (2012) argues that Katniss becomes a sex symbol when Peeta makes her "...an object of love" (Collins, 2008, p. 159), she is not portrayed in the same sexualized way as many other heroines, like the dominatrix, which can be argued to be more fetishizing than Katniss.

## 4. *Catching Fire*

### 4.1 Katniss Everdeen as an action heroine

In *Catching Fire*, Katniss has become a victor and lives in a village with her family. She has money, and her family is no longer poor, so she does not need to provide for them in the same way she does in *The Hunger Games*. In *Catching Fire*, Katniss is portrayed with many of the same features as she has in *The Hunger Games*, but some of the elements concerning her presentation as an action heroine can be seen as more or less emphasized in *Catching Fire*.

#### 4.1.1 Katniss and femininity

Like in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss continues to possess different feminine traits. She is still portrayed as provider of her family, since she is the reason why her family lives in a village and has money to care for food and other supplies. Even though Katniss does not need to hunt in the woods, she still hunts in order to bring food and necessities to Gale's family; "...now that Gale has gone to work in the coal mines – and I have nothing to do all day – I've taken over the job [as a hunter]" (Collins, 2009, p. 5). Since Gale does not want to take Katniss' money, she hunts to feed his family. Here, Katniss shows that she is caring and helpful towards Gale and his family. Hence, she is also presented with the feminine trait of loyalty (Moi, 2005). She knows that Gale would have done the same if he was in her place; "It's even hard for him to let me bring in the meat, although he'd surely have kept my mother and Prim supplied if I'd been killed in the Games" (Collins, 2009, p. 6). In addition to Gale, Katniss is also loyal to her family and the ones she loves. When Snow threatens to kill her loved ones, if Katniss does not do as he says, Katniss says: "...just tell me what you want me to do. I'll do it" (Collins, 2009, p. 26). Here, Katniss cites that she is willing to do whatever it takes to keep her family and other people she cares about alive.

Affectionate, gentle, nurturing and tender are traits which are seen as stereotypical adjectives of femininity (Moi, 2005; Planned Parenthood, 2014). As in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss continues to show her affection towards her little sister, Prim, but she is also affectionate with her mother; "Since I've been home I've been trying hard to mend my relationship with my mother.... [like] Returning her hugs instead of tolerating them" (Collins, 2009, p. 36). One of Katniss' allies in the Hunger Games arena, Wiress, also gets to know Katniss'

tenderness. In the movie, after Wiress has been in the blood rain, Katniss takes her down to the lake to clean her up. She helps Wiress with washing her hair while talking calmly to her when she says “Tick-Tock”, even though Katniss, at first, thinks Wiress does not make any sense (Collins et al., 2013).

Affection is something that Katniss also shows towards Gale and Peeta. When Gale is hurting after being whipped by Thread, the main Peacekeeper, Katniss is gentle and tender when approaching his skin:

Alone in the kitchen with Gale, I sit on Hazelle`s stool, holding his hand. After a while, my fingers find his face. I touch parts of him I have never had cause to touch before.... I trace the outline of stubble on his jaw and finally work my way to his lips. (Collins, 2009, p. 132 – 133)

Here, Katniss is presented as a girl who shows tenderness and warmth towards a boy, because she cares for him. Hence, this image of Katniss maintains her femininity as an action heroine.

Katniss is loving when it comes to Peeta as well, but the reader of the book and the viewer of the film question whether some of her gestures of tenderness are acting, because President Snow wants her to play madly in love. However, on the train on their Victory Tour, Katniss lets Peeta sleep next to her, because he comforts her. When being in the Capitol, ready to get back in the arena, Katniss wants Peeta`s embrace and seems to enjoy their equal affection towards each other:

I wrap my arms tightly around his neck...he pulls me in close and buries his face in my hair. Warmth radiates from the spot where his lips just touch my neck, slowly spreading through the rest of me. It feels so good, so impossibly good, that I know I will not be the first to let go. (Collins, 2009, p. 218)

Katniss is devoted to Peeta when they are in the arena as well. This is especially seen when Katniss gives Peeta a couple of genuine kisses:

The sensation inside me grows warmer and spreads out from my chest, down through my body, out along my arms and legs, to the tips of my being. Instead of satisfying me, the kisses have the opposite effect, of making my need greater. (Collins, 2009, p. 395)

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In addition to having the feminine traits of affection, gentleness and tenderness, In *Catching Fire*, Katniss is, as in *The Hunger Games*, presented as a nurturer. Although Katniss does not consider herself as a typical healer, she helps Beetee with his cut by making a thick pad of moss and placing it on his wound. Peeta says Katniss is good with "...this healing stuff" (Collins, 2009, p. 361) and that it is in Katniss' blood (Collins, 2009). Katniss, on the other hand, says: "I got my father's blood. The kind that quickens during a hunt, not an epidemic" (Collins, 2009, p. 361).

Sympathetic and emotional are two adjectives that are also listed as feminine by Toril Moi (2005). In *Catching Fire*, Katniss is presented as sympathetic with compassion for others. She struggles with the Victory Tour, with facing the families of the children she killed in the Games. When she gives her speech about Tresh and Rue to District 11, one gets the impression that this is an emotional act for Katniss; "My voice is undependable....I stand there, feeling broken and small, thousands of eyes trained on me" (Collins, 2009, p. 69). Here, it can be argued that Katniss' emotional state is a symbol or a sign of her sympathy and compassion for the two tributes' families. She also seems to feel sorrow for the other families of the dead tributes on her tour:

The back-to-back appearances in 2 and 1 are their own special kind of awful. Cato and Clove, the tributes from District 2, might have both made it home if Peeta and I hadn't. I personally killed the girl, Glimmer, and the boy from District 1. As I try to avoid looking at his family, I learn that his name was Marvel. How did I never know that? (Collins, 2009, p. 83)

When going into the arena of the Hunger Games for the second time, Katniss seems to have problems with killing the other tributes. She does not want to make pacts with the other participants in the Quell, since she might have to kill them later:

...the more I come to know these people, the worse it is. Because, on the whole, I don't hate them. And some I like. And a lot of them are so damaged that my natural instinct would be to protect them. (Collins, 2009, p. 265 – 266)

Here, Katniss is portrayed as a caring person, a sympathetic person who would instinctively try to protect people she does not even properly know. She also asks Peeta how they are going to kill the others in the arena, and by this she means how are they going to kill them when they care for them.

In addition to her sympathetic side, Katniss is also seen as emotional and vulnerable in *Catching Fire*. She has nightmares, and she needs Peeta to stay with her in order to calm her and comfort her; "...every night I let him [Peeta] into my bed. We manage the darkness as we did in the arena, wrapped in each other's arms, guarding against dangers that can descend at any moment" (Collins, 2009, p. 83). Here, Katniss is vulnerable and she wants Peeta to make her safe, just as she does in *The Hunger Games*. After she gets to know that she has to go back into the arena, Katniss is also presented as vulnerable and emotional when she faces her mother and Prim:

I open my mouth, planning to start off with some kind of joke, and burst into tears....My mother sits on the side of the bed and Prim crawls right up next to me and they hold me, making quiet soothing sounds, until I am mostly cried out. Then Prim gets a towel and dries my hair, combing out the knots, while my mother coaxes tea and toast into me. They dress me in a warm pyjamas and layer more blankets on me and I drift off again. (Collins, 2009, p. 204 – 205)

Katniss seems to show a more sentimental side in *Catching Fire*, than she does in *The Hunger Games*. In *The Hunger Games* she shows that she is vulnerable when being with Peeta, but it is mostly him who gets to see her that way. In *Catching Fire*, she also lets her mother and Prim know that she can be emotional and sensitive, not only Peeta. Finnick and Mags are also witnesses to Katniss' vulnerability in the arena. When Finnick saves Peeta, after he has had an electrocuted shock from the force field, Katniss starts to cry (Collins, 2009; Collins et al., 2013). Thus, it seems like there are more characters that observe Katniss' emotional state in *Catching Fire*, than in *The Hunger Games*.

According to Planned Parenthood (2014), dependency and passiveness are seen as feminine features, and Brown (2011) states that the action heroine of modern times does not give in to the traditional stereotypical performance that other women are engaged in. He argues that she is not static and passive, but someone who acts independently and takes charge and control over different situations that influence her life. Just as in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss needs the help of many people in *Catching Fire* as well. First, Katniss is dependent on Peeta to not expose her act as a star-crossed lover. If she is to make people believe she is not a rebel, just a girl hopelessly in love, she relies on Peeta's help;

...we have our first kiss in months. It's full of fur and snowflakes and lipstick, but underneath all that, I can feel the steadiness that Peeta brings to everything. And I know I'm



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not alone. As badly as I have hurt him, he won't expose me in front of the cameras. Won't condemn me with a half-hearted kiss. He's still looking out for me. (Collins, 2009, p. 48)

When Katniss and Peeta are in the arena, Katniss is, as she is in *The Hunger Games*, dependent on Haymitch to keep his promise to her about helping her keep Peeta alive during the Quarter Quell. Here, she needs Haymitch to support her with getting sponsors. When it comes to getting allies and how to act in front of the cameras, Katniss relies on Haymitch to give her advice on how to behave. In the arena, Finnick is also a person who Katniss is dependent on. He saves her from the man from District 5, he saves Peeta when Katniss cannot and he helps her by playing the pregnancy card for her in order to get sponsors. Katniss seems to be glad that she has Finnick as an ally; "...I'm so thankful I didn't kill Finnick, because how would I have got Peeta out of here alive? So thankful to have someone else on my side" (Collins, 2009, p. 336). As a contrast to many other action heroines who like to operate independently and on their own, Katniss seems to be happy about getting help from others. For some critics, this might make Katniss seem regressive and that she is portrayed as an action heroine who takes a step back instead of moving forward when it comes to being portrayed as a modern, tough and independent female hero. On the other hand, she proves that a woman can possess traditional feminine features and still save the day, and this might make her seem more dynamical than the typical, aggressive action heroine described by Brown (2011).

At the beginning of the Quarter Quell, Katniss is active. She heads straight to the Cornucopia in order to get weapons and other materials; "I'm thinking like a Career now, and the first thing I want is to get my hands on a weapon" (Collins, 2009, p. 301). Despite this, she is also portrayed as passive in several parts of the book and film. For instance, after she has got the message about having to go back in the arena for the Quarter Quell, she runs outside, in contrast to Peeta who visits Haymitch right after the message in order to make Haymitch help him with protecting Katniss during the Quell. Peeta is also the one who takes action when it comes to preparing Katniss, Haymitch and himself for the Quarter Quell. He is the one who tosses the alcohol, so none of them can drink, and he is also the one who takes the initiative to start training and finding out the other tributes' fighting skills (Collins, 2009). Here, Katniss and Haymitch are both more passive than Peeta. In the arena of the Quell, Finnick is the one who saves Peeta after he runs into the force field. As Katniss stands passive, others take action. Here, Katniss is clearly presented as a woman who is different from the aggressive action heroine who turns to violence as soon as she sees someone as

threatening, like the amazon archetype (Schubart, 2007). Katniss takes the traditional feminine role of passiveness, and one can thereby argue that she, in this passage of *Catching Fire*, is portrayed as an inactive and thereby regressive female hero.

Although Katniss possesses different traits of femininity, she does not engage in feminine activities. As a victor, Katniss needs a specific and suitable talent, but she comes up short; “My mother tried to interest me in a variety of suitable alternatives from a list Effie Trinket sent her. Cooking, flower arranging, playing the flute. None of them took” (Collins, 2009, p. 44). These activities can be seen as traditionally feminine, but Katniss finds none of them interesting. She likes to hunt, which can be argued to be a more masculine activity. Thus, despite Katniss` feminine traits, she is still a complex character with different and contrasting features and layers.

#### **4.1.2 Katniss as a “girlie” heroine**

In contrast to how she is portrayed in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss seems to be presented with a more adult look in *Catching Fire*. This is seen when she is in the Capitol, in interviews with Caesar and when she is in front of cameras. Before the Victory Tour, Katniss and Peeta meet each other in front of the cameras in District 12. Here, Katniss is dressed in a long and elegant coat with a collar of fur. She does not wear much makeup, but some that highlights her facial traits (Collins, et al., 2013). Here, as a viewer, one can get the impression that she is dressed in lady-like way. However, in the book, Katniss tells the reader that with this look they are “...going for girlish, not sexy” (Collins, 2009, p. 43). Before this meeting, Katniss had to change from her usual hunting clothes into a “...fine wool coat [and]...a pair of expensive machine-made shoes that my mother thinks are more appropriate for someone of my status” (Collins, 2009, p. 7). The way Katniss is normally dressed is not good enough for the meeting with viewers of the Capitol.

At the Victory Tour`s last night in the Capitol, Katniss is dressed in a long dress which fits well around her body shapes, showing off her curves. It has feathers with the colors of orange, silver and black which are covering her shoulders, and her hair is both loose and braided, hanging down along her back. She wears rouge and foundation that highlight her chin, dark and orange eye shadow which glitters and eyeliner that marks the shapes of her eyes (Collins, et al., 2013). One can almost get the impression that she is dressed as a colorful bird. At the same time, Katniss is portrayed as a woman dressed to impress the

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audience of the Capitol. Her mockingjay pin is also a fashion hit in the Capitol, which makes Katniss a trendsetter. In addition, Katniss' wedding gown is a subject of admiration and discussion in the Capitol. In the last interview with Caesar, before she is sent to the arena of the Quarter Quell, Katniss wears her wedding dress, to the Capitol's and Caesar's great excitement (Collins, 2009, Collins et al; 2013). The gown looks like a dress which a princess would wear with lots of jewelry. As eye makeup, Katniss wears diamonds and eye shadows with the colors of blue and silver. She uses false eyelashes and has diamonds in her ears. Her hair is put up in an elegant style, suitable for a wedding (Collins et al., 2013). Here, Katniss becomes an object of the Capitol's beauty consumerism and fashion. This can be seen in relation to other action heroines who embrace such "girlie" cultures. Hence, in this setting, Katniss promotes these superficial items, and it is her costume and appearance that makes people of the Capitol excited and delighted by her, not her personality. Thus, the way Katniss is dressed has a lot to say for how she is perceived by others, and this might send signals to the readers and the viewers of *Catching Fire*, that it is important to look good in order to get people to like you. This can be seen as problematic because typical "girlie" pleasures like makeup and clothes become more important than what a person says or does.

At the opening ceremony for the Quarter Quell, Katniss is covered in a dark dress, which brings attention to her curves. The dress has also a shimmer of gold in it, and is short at the front and long at the back. Katniss' hair is curled and given volume. She also wears a black kind of tiara, but her makeup is what stands out: "...now my face is almost obscured by the dramatic highlights and dark shadows. High arching eyebrows, sharp cheekbones, smouldering eyes, deep purple lips" (Collins, 2009, p. 232). This dramatic look is also confirmed in the movie, where Katniss, because of her outfit and makeup, can be argued to resemble other sexualized action heroines, like Xena, in *Xena, The Warrior Princess*. Hence, it can be argued that Katniss is portrayed in a sexualized way at the opening ceremony for the Quarter Quell. Finnick Odair claims that Katniss looks terrifying in her outfit, especially compared to her girlie dresses she wore the last time she was a tribute in the Games. Katniss herself says that she outgrew the dresses. She seems to be mesmerized and empowered by this look:

I look down, fascinated, as my ensemble slowly comes to life, first with a soft golden light but gradually transforming to the orange-red of burning coal....I *am* a glowing ember straight from our fireplace....I do not see a girl, or even a woman, but some unearthly being....The black crown, which now appears red-hot, casts strange shadows on my dramatically made-up

face. Katniss, the girl on fire, has left behind her flickering flames and bejewelled gowns and soft candlelight frocks. She is as deadly as fire itself. (Collins, 2009, p. 233)

Here, Katniss` look makes her feel as powerful as fire, deadly even, and this gives her the confidence to meet the other tributes at the opening ceremony (Collins, 2009). Thus, it is not her personality that gives her courage, it is the way she looks. Thereby, in this passage, Katniss` appearance becomes more important than what she does and her qualities as a hunter. Despite this relation to beauty and consumerism, Katniss claims that she does not have "... a weakness for beautiful things" (Collins, 2009, p. 238). Yet, when Katniss sees herself and Peeta on the screens at the ceremony she thinks that they look good and that they are presented as powerful and dark. Here, she also claims that she loves this image of herself and that she feels like this is who she is (Collins, 2009). Based on this, one can argue that when Katniss is dressed in this dramatic look, she feels like the outfit and makeup complement her identity. In this part of *Catching Fire*, parts of Katniss` identity are thereby complemented by fashion and beauty artifacts, which are seen as typical girlie pleasures.

Although people in the Capitol are concerned with looks and beauty, Katniss does not seem to be that occupied with fashion, looks, makeup and clothes. For instance, she cannot stop biting her fingernails, and since she came back from the Games, she has worn her hair in her usual style with a braid down her back (Collins, 2009). She also claims that she has no interest in designing clothes, which is supposedly her talent as a victor. Katniss likes the clothes Cinna makes for her. This seems to be because she thinks they are comfortable:

...I do love the ones [the clothes] Cinna makes for me. Like these. Flowing black pants made of a thick, warm material. A comfortable white shirt. A sweater woven from green and blue and grey strands of kitten-soft wool. Laced leather boots that don` t pinch my toes. (Collins, 2009, p. 45)

Hence, in comparison to other girlie heroines, Katniss seems to prefer clothes that are more pleasant for her to wear instead of clothes that are seen as typical beauty artifacts. On the train for the Victory Tour, Effie Trinket claims that Katniss needs more prepping than Peeta. This is because her body hair needs to be waxed off, and, as in *The Hunger Games*, this is not an action which Katniss seems to be comfortable with:

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...I like my leg hair. I was so happy when it grew back in too. As if it were a sign that things might be returning to normal. I run my fingers along the soft, curly down on my legs and give myself over to the team. (Collins, 2009, p. 55)

Katniss also seems to have no interest in fixing her body and looks. This is confirmed by Katniss when her preparation team talks about doing alterations on her;

Do what? Blow my lips up like President Snow's? Tattoo my breasts? Dye my skin magenta and implant gems in it? Cut decorative patterns in my face? Give me curved talons? Or cat's whiskers? I saw all these things and more on the people in the Capitol. Do they really have no idea how freakish they look to the rest of us? (Collins, 2009, p. 55 – 56)

Thus, even though Katniss is surrounded by people who treasure beauty attachments, fashion and appearance, she does not seem to be particularly influenced or affected by them. Her lack of interest in fashion and other “girlie” artifacts is also proved when she tells the reader about her and Madge's relationship:

It was a little awkward at first because we didn't know what to do. Other girls our age, I've heard them talking about boys, or other girls, or clothes. Madge and I aren't gossipy and clothes bore me to tears. But after a few false starts, I realized she was dying to go into the woods, so I've taken her a couple of times and showed her how to shoot. (Collins, 2009, p. 100)

Here, Katniss is more concerned with typical masculine activities, like shooting. She is not interested in trying on her wedding dresses. The people of the Capitol are eager about her dresses, while Katniss does not seem to be as excited:

People screaming and cheering for their favourites, booing the ones they don't like. Having votes, 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. (Collins, 2009, p. 193)

Despite the fact that she is dressed in different feminine ways throughout *Catching Fire*, Katniss does not seem to see herself as engaged in typical feminine activities or feminine ways of dressing herself up. Since Katniss both seems to feel empowered by her looks, but also seems not to be very concerned with typical “girlie” materials, she is portrayed as complex with contrasting layers. The reader of the book and the viewer of the film might get confused when it comes to interpreting Katniss' character. The fact that Katniss is presented

in such a complicated way, makes her mysterious and it is difficult to say if Katniss as a girlie action heroine is progressive or not. On the one hand, she creates room for individuality and a discourse that makes it possible to have different perspectives on complicated matters. She signals that it is fine to feel empowered by dresses and makeup when being in certain settings, but it is also acceptable to not be that concerned with beauty materials and looks when one is in other environments. However, some critics claim that being empowered by artifacts like makeup and clothes can cause a girl to be perceived as superficial. Thus, one becomes a consumerist object which makes one suppressed instead of empowered.

### **4.1.3 Katniss and masculinity**

In *Catching Fire*, Katniss still has the masculine feature of being a protector. Even though Katniss and her mother and sister now live in a nice house, and have no problems with hunger or lack of materials, Katniss still sees herself as a protector of her mother and Prim; "... I think about how there was no going back after I took over caring for the family when I was eleven. How I will always have to protect her [Katniss' mother]" (Collins, 2009, p. 35). She claims it is her job to protect Prim, and in order to keep her mother and sister safe from President Snow, she continues to play the part as a girl in love with Peeta (Collins, 2009).

Katniss is not only a protector of her own family, she is also a provider of Gale's family. Since Gale works in the mines, Katniss is the one who hunts and brings them food. She also teaches one of Gale's siblings to hunt. Katniss' hunting skills are still intact in *Catching Fire*, and she would rather hunt than do any typical feminine activities.

To be dominant and independent are two stereotypical features of masculinity (Moi, 2005). Before they participate in the Quarter Quell, Peeta takes charge and makes both Katniss and Haymitch train and learn about the other tributes in order to be well prepared. Here, Peeta seems to be the dominant one, while Haymitch and Katniss follow his lead. In the Quarter Quell, Katniss seems to be less dominant than she was in the Hunger Games. Here, it seems to be Finnick Odair who takes the role as the commanding in the group of allies; "'Duck!' Finnick commands in such powerful voice, so different from his usual seductive purr, that I do" (Collins, 2009, p. 303). Finnick tells Katniss who she cannot trust in the arena, but Katniss also takes the lead when she looks for Peeta; "...it's Peeta I'm thinking about. I spot him now, still stranded on his metal plate. I take off and Finnick follows without question, as

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if knowing this will be my next move” (Collins, 2009, p. 305). Here, it seems as Katniss and Finnick are the dominant ones. They take turns helping Peeta and Mags with running from the poisonous fog, and they seem to be the strong ones in their group since they are each helping another ally move faster (Collins, 2009; Collins et al., 2013). Hence, Katniss is not entirely independent in the arena. She gets help from Finnick who saves her from other tributes and who rescues Peeta when Katniss cannot. Based on this, one can argue that Katniss needs a male’s help, namely Finnick’s, and is dependent on him to help her in the Quell. Thus, Katniss shows that she possesses a mixture of both feminine and masculine traits when she is in the arena. She is both dependent and independent at the same time, and she is dominant while she also follows the commands of another.

Because of her alliance with Haymitch, Finnick, Johanna, Peeta, Wiress, Mags and Beetee, one cannot argue that Katniss is solely self-sufficient and self-reliant. Haymitch sends her a spile so she and the others can get water, Finnick provides them with shellfish and Wiress is the one who leads Katniss to the fact that the arena of the Quell is a clock. When it comes to Peeta, Katniss relies on herself to get him out of the arena alive:

... I have a mission. No, it’s more than a mission. It’s my dying wish. *Keep Peeta alive*. And as unlikely as it seems that I can achieve it in the face of the Capitol’s anger, it’s important that I be at the top of my game. (Collins, 2009, p. 213)

Although Katniss knows that she has to trust herself to get Peeta out of the arena alive, she is dependent on Haymitch and his support. After she has seen how much trouble Haymitch caused for the Capitol as young, she becomes hopeful that the two of them can keep Peeta alive (Collins, 2009; Collins et al., 2013). In the arena, it is also proved that Katniss cannot save Peeta alone, she needs Finnick to help her. Thus, Katniss’ aim about saving Peeta is not something she can manage on her own.

As in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is also portrayed with the masculine trait of rebelliousness in *Catching Fire*. She challenges the Peacekeepers’ patience when she comments on their message at her house; “I’m pushing things, I know it, but the comment gives me a sense of satisfaction” (Collins, 2009, p. 178). The firing of an arrow at the force field in the Quell arena also helps to portray Katniss as a rebel. She also claims that with keeping Peeta alive in the arena, she defies the Capitol (Collins, 2009). In addition, when she is to show her talent to the Gamemakers, she makes a figure that hangs by the neck, and this effigy represents the last Gamemaker, Seneca Crane. Here, Katniss tries deliberately to provoke the

Gamemakers, but she is not the only one who acts like a rebel in front of them; Peeta does too. He draws a picture of Rue as dead with wild flowers surrounding her body. He says that he "...wanted to hold them [President Snow and the Gamemakers] accountable" (Collins, 2009, p. 271) for killing Rue. Peeta also upsets the audience in the Capitol by falsely claiming that Katniss is pregnant. He seems to do this in one last attempt to make President Snow and the Gamemakers cancel the Quarter Quell:

As the bomb [of the news of the pregnancy] explodes, it sends accusations of injustice and barbarism and cruelty flying out in every direction. Even the most Capitol-loving, Games-hungry, bloodthirsty person out there can't ignore, at least for a moment, how horrific the whole thing is.... [the audience in the Capitol] begin to sound like a herd of wounded animals, moaning, shrieking, calling for help. (Collins, 2009, p. 289)

Here, Peeta tries to turn the people of the Capitol against the Gamemakers and Snow, which can be seen as an act of rebellion. Earlier, at the Victory Tour, Peeta also says to Katniss that maybe they were wrong to try "... to subdue things in the districts" (Collins, 2009, p. 93), and this confirms his thoughts about standing up to the Capitol.

In addition to Katniss and Peeta, Gale is also presented as a rebel in *Catching Fire*. He likes the thought of an uprising, and while he wants to fight the Capitol, Katniss makes escape plans. It seems as if the whipping of Gale is the action that makes Katniss change her mind about escaping; "Life in District 12 isn't really so different from life in the arena. At some point, you have to stop running and turn around and face whoever wants you dead" (Collins, 2009, p. 135). Hence, one can argue that Gale is a part of making Katniss a rebel. Thereby, her masculine trait of rebelliousness is partly created by a male.

For other people and districts in Panem, Katniss is a symbol of uprising and revolution. Her mockingjay pin is both a sign of rebellion and a fashion trend. Plutarch claims that Katniss is the mockingjay and that in order to keep the revolution alive, she has to live. This is also confirmed by Katniss herself; "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 the rebellion" (Collins, 2009, p. 434). Katniss is presented as passive in parts of *Catching Fire*, but her acts of rebellion signal that she is an aggressive action heroine who takes action. Here, she acts like the action heroine described by Brown (2011) who fights her battles, takes command and makes her own decisions. Since women have often been offered the roles as passive and non active in literature and films, the fact



that Katniss is portrayed as active and a rebel can be said to be a liberation from these earlier, traditional performances.

#### 4.1.4 Katniss as a mother and daughter archetype

According to Inness (2004), an action heroine's aggression can be illustrated by her desire to rescue her child. This description of a female hero fits well with the mother archetype, described by Schubert (2007). In *The Hunger Games*, it could be argued that Katniss functioned like a mother archetype because of her devotion to her sister, Prim. In *Catching Fire*, Katniss still does everything she can to keep her sister safe. This is confirmed when she tries to act like she is madly in love with Peeta, and that she is not a rebel but a girl in love. One can thereby argue that Katniss continues to fit the image of a mother archetype in *Catching Fire*, but Prim is not the only person who Katniss wants to risk her life to save. When she finds out that she and Peeta will be tributes in the Quarter Quell, her "...dying wish" (Collins, 2009) is to save him. This is her motivation for staying strong in the arena. Katniss wants the Gamemakers' anger to be directed at her, in order for them to pay less attention to Peeta:

They [the Gamemakers] whisper among themselves, looking somewhat annoyed. What did Peeta do? Something to upset them? I feel a pang of worry. That isn't good. I don't want Peeta singling himself out as a target for the Gamemakers' anger. That's part of my job. To draw fire away from Peeta. (Collins, 2009, p. 266)

When she first gets to the arena, before the Quell officially starts, she looks for Peeta, trying to figure out where he is instead of thinking about herself. Peeta is her priority. One can thus claim that Katniss also functions as a mother archetype here, when all she wants is to save Peeta. Her actions are not manifested in her wish to save her child, but to save her friend. Even though Katniss has no motherly relationship to Peeta, she acts in the same way the mother archetype does.

As a daughter archetype, Katniss Everdeen is still her father's daughter in *Catching Fire*, just like she is in *The Hunger Games*. This is shown by Katniss when she tells Peeta that she has her "...father's blood. The kind that quickens during a hunt" (Collins, 2009, p. 361). She claims that the ability to hunt is "...a natural gift" (Collins, 2009, p. 6) and that she can "...shoot at an animal in almost complete darkness and still take it down with one arrow" (Collins, 2009, p. 6). Since her father taught Katniss how to shoot and hunt, he has created

that part of her identity. However, even though Katniss is partly her father's product, she also has her mother's blood. In the arena, she uses her knowledge about healing when she treats Beetee; "I sit back on my heels, trying to think. What do I have to work with? Seawater? I feel like my mother when her first line of defence for treating everything was snow" (Collins, 2009, p. 360). Here, Katniss follows her mother's footsteps, but yet she claims that she does not have the blood to help out in "...an epidemic" (Collins, 2009, p. 361). Hence, one can argue that Katniss is not just her father's daughter, but a blend of both her mother's and her father's characteristics.

## 4.2 Katniss' relationship to Peeta and Gale

In *Catching Fire*, Katniss teaches one of Gale's siblings how to shoot when Gale cannot; "...I [Katniss] was thinking I might take Rory out with me sometimes. After school. Teach him to shoot" (Collins, 2009, p. 9). Here, Katniss takes a male's place, namely Gale's, and she thereby takes a masculine role when she teaches Rory what her father taught her. In this setting, she plays the part as a father figure. However, Gale does not seem to be fond of Katniss hunting to provide his family. It seems like this is something he would have liked to do himself:

He stands it because it's the way to feed his mother and two younger brothers and sister. And here I am with buckets of money, far more than enough to feed both our families now, and he won't take a single coin. It's even hard for him to let me bring in meat, although he'd surely have kept my mother and Prim supplied if I'd been killed in the Games. (Collins, 2009, p. 6)

Here, Katniss replaces Gale's masculine role as a provider of a family, even though he also works. Although it is hard for him, he lets her take this part. This can also be seen as Gale's recognition of Katniss as an equivalent partner with the same capabilities as himself. Hence, in this passage, since Katniss and Gale are quite similar types, one cannot argue that Katniss functions as a typical girlfriend for Gale which Linda Holmes (2013) claims in her article.

Even though Gale is often portrayed as a typical masculine boy, he also has his moments of vulnerability where Katniss stands out as the least loving of the two. When Gale declares his love for Katniss this is how she responds:

I never see these things coming. They happen too fast. One second you're proposing an escape plan and the next . . . you're expected to deal with something like this. I come up with

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what must be the worst possible response. "I know." It sounds terrible. Like I assume he couldn't help loving me but that I don't feel anything in return. (Collins, 2009, p. 110 – 111)

Gale places himself in a vulnerable state when he says to Katniss that he loves her, while Katniss does not seem to be as sure about her feelings. Her emotions do not seem to be a priority to her. She says to Gale that she cannot "... think about anyone that way now. All I can think about, every day, every waking minute since they drew Prim's name at the reaping, is how afraid I am. And there doesn't seem to be room for anything else" (Collins, 2009, p. 111). To be emotional is by Toril Moi (2005) listed as a feminine feature, and in this context, Katniss seems to shut down her feelings in order to concentrate on keeping herself and her loved ones alive. Thus, this image of Katniss suggests that she thinks the feminine feature of emotionality will unhinge her when it comes to finding out how she and the people she loves will be safe from the Capitol. Here, Katniss resembles the warrior woman who Rikke Schubart (2007) writes about in her book *Super Bitches and Action Babes*. When the action heroine is presented as a soldier and a warrior, she cannot show sensitivity. She thereby enters a dimension dominated by masculine features, and Katniss can be argued to do the same when she chooses not to feel emotional when making plans about survival. Thereby, in this setting, Katniss promotes masculinity, and signals that feminine traits distract her from making wise decisions. For Mary Ann Case, this priority of masculinity poses a problem, because it suggests that masculinity is favored (Moi, 2005). In this passage, instead of being presented as a possessor of both traits, and thereby portrayed as a progressive action heroine, Katniss is seen as a female hero who acknowledges that masculinity is to be prioritized of the two gender binaries, and this is a contrast to the discourses that postfeminism and deconstruction create.

Despite his vulnerability when it comes to his love for Katniss, Gale is portrayed as a clear rebel in *Catching Fire*, and it seems as if it is he who triggers Katniss' rebellious side. Before Katniss starts to think that an uprising is a good idea, she wants to run away. Here, she thinks about herself, her family and friends, while Gale thinks about the other innocent people of Panem. He says the following to Katniss: "What about the other families, Katniss? The ones who can't run away? Don't you see? It can't be about just saving *us* any more" (Collins, 2009, p. 115). Thus, in this situation, Gale stands out as a greater hero or savior than Katniss. After Gale has been whipped by a peacekeeper, Katniss decides that she wants to choose "... Gale and the rebellion" (Collins, 2009, p. 137). Hence, Gale is by Katniss seen in relation to the rebellion.

In contrast to her relationship with Gale, Katniss sees Peeta in a different way. She claims that "... a future with Peeta is the Capitol's design, not mine" (Collins, 2009, p. 137). Thus, she seems to mean that being with Peeta is not something she has chosen herself, it is something she has to do because the Capitol makes her. Despite this, Katniss seems to have feelings for Peeta. He makes her safe when he holds her at night when she has nightmares, and after she has chosen Gale she finds herself missing Peeta and wishing that he was there to hold her. One of the kisses they share in the arena also seems to be more intense and real than the others (Collins, 2009; Collins et al., 2013). With the use of Linda Holmes` (2013) perspective, one can argue that in this setting, Katniss appears as a girlfriend for Peeta. However, Holmes (2013) argues that there is the other way around, that Peeta is Katniss` girlfriend because of his feminine behavior. This can be supported with the fact that Katniss hunts and Peeta bakes. When she tries to wake Haymitch up before the Victory Tour she says to him: "...if you wanted to be babied, you should have asked Peeta" (Collins, 2009, p. 16). Thus, Katniss claims that Peeta is the gentle one of the two, and gentleness is seen as a feminine feature by Toril Moi (2005). Peeta is also presented with another feminine trait in *Catching Fire*, namely the trait of being nurturing. After Katniss has suffered a whip on her chin, Peeta "...holds a cloth filled with fresh snow to my [her] cheek" (Collins, 2009, p. 128). He is also tender and gentle with the morphling from District 6:

Peeta crouches down on the other side of her and strokes her hair. When he begins to speak in a soft voice, it seems almost nonsensical, but the words aren't for me [Katniss].... The morphling seems mesmerized by Peeta`s words. Entranced. She lifts up a trembling hand and paints what I think might be a flower on Peeta`s cheek. "Thank you," he whispers. "That looks beautiful." (Collins, 2009, p. 349 – 350)

Here, Peeta also shows that he possesses the feminine trait of being soft-spoken. In addition to his feminine features, he needs to be saved and taken care of by Katniss and the others a number of times during the Quell. These seem to be some of the arguments that Linda Holmes (2013) uses to claim that Peeta functions as Katniss` girlfriend. However, Peeta is presented with masculine traits as well. He goes between Katniss and the peacekeeper at the whipping of Gale in order to protect her, he takes charge and pushes Haymitch and Katniss to train for the Quarter Quell and he proves that he is rebellious when he paints a picture of Rue in front of the Gamemakers and announces falsely that Katniss is pregnant at the interview with Caesar in a last attempt to stop the Quell (Collins, 2009; Collins et al., 2013). Katniss also thinks of Peeta as a leader for an uprising because of his way with words:

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We need someone to direct us and reassure us this is possible. And I don't think I'm that person. I may have been a catalyst for rebellion, but a leader should be someone with conviction, and I'm barely a convert myself....Words. I think of words and I think of Peeta. How people embrace everything he says. He could move a crowd to action, I bet, if he chose to. Would find the things to say. (Collins, 2009, p. 140 – 141)

Like Gale, Peeta is also vulnerable when it comes to his feelings towards Katniss. She is the one who suggests an official proposal in front of the cameras, and even though Peeta agrees to do it, it upsets him because he wanted their engagement to be genuine and real. He seems to be willing to do anything for Katniss, despite the fact that he knows Katniss does not feel the same for him. This is confirmed by Katniss as well; “I think of his [Peeta's] agreeing to go with me yesterday, his stepping up beside me to protect Gale, his willingness to throw his lot in with mine entirely when I give him so little in return” (Collins, 2009, p. 136 – 137). Thus, both Gale and Peeta seem to have no problems with declaring their affection and love for Katniss, while she does not seem to know how to love either of them.

Katniss' relationships to Gale and Peeta help portray her as a complex action heroine. She is both a protector and the protected when she is with Peeta. With Gale, she is an equal partner, but he seems to be the more vulnerable when it comes to love in their relationship. Both Peeta and Gale are in touch with their emotions, which makes them both presented with the feminine trait of emotionality. Katniss, on the other hand, is confused about how to love and what love means to her. Because of this, Katniss differs from other female characters in books and movies who spend most of their time longing for a man. Here, Katniss is portrayed in a more nuanced way because she proves that for her, there exist other issues that are more important than boys and love affairs.

### 4.3 The element of male control

According to Magoulick (2006), action heroines are often under male control in many narratives. As argued in the section on *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is partly her father's product, and this is seen as a form of being controlled by him. She continues to express that she has her father's blood in *Catching Fire*, but President Snow and Plutarch Heavensbee seem to be the ones who execute the most control of Katniss in the second book and film.

With the use of manipulation and threats, Snow makes Katniss play the role as a star-crossed lover in front of the districts in order to prevent rebellion and uprisings. He talks to Katniss in a manipulating way when he meets her at her home in Victor`s Village:

“My advisors were concerned you would be difficult, but you`re not planning on being difficult, are you?” he asks. “No,” I answer. “That`s what I told them. I said any girl who goes to such lengths to preserve her life isn`t going to be interested in throwing it away with both hands. And then there`s her family to think of. Her mother, her sister, and all those . . . cousins.” By the way he lingers on the word “cousin”, I can tell he knows that Gale and I don`t share a family tree. (Collins, 2009, p. 22)

Here, by the controlling way Snow speaks, he implies that Katniss should do whatever he tells her to in order to save herself and her family. The Capitol created the lie about Gale being Katniss` cousin, because she could not have a friend that was “... too handsome, too male, and not the least bit willing to smile and play nice for the cameras” (Collins, 2009, p. 13). Snow threatens to kill Gale if Katniss does not cooperate, and he functions as a commander in front of her; ““Speak, Miss Everdeen. Him [Gale] I can easily kill off if we don`t come to a happy resolution,’ he says. ‘You aren`t doing him a favour by disappearing into the woods with him each Sunday’” (Collins, 2009, p. 27). Katniss obeys him and says that she will convince everyone. This is not just a form of control that will last through the Victory Tour, it will last throughout Katniss` life. Haymitch says to Katniss that ““...every year they`ll [the Capitol and President Snow] revisit the romance and broadcast the details of your private life, and you`ll never, ever be able to do anything but live happily ever after with that boy [Peeta]”” (Collins, 2009, p. 50). Thus, Snow threatens to control Katniss` love life for the rest of her days; “One of the few freedoms we have in District 12 is the right to marry who we want or not marry at all. And now even that has been taken away from me” (Collins, 2009, p. 51).

Katniss tries to fulfill Snow`s wish about her being a girl madly in love, and she seeks his confirmation about whether she has succeeded after her and Peeta`s engagement:

President Snow himself makes a surprise visit to congratulate us....I dare to raise my eyebrows. They ask what lips can`t. *Did I do it? Was it enough? Was giving everything over to you, keeping up the game, promising to marry Peeta enough?* In answer, he gives an almost imperceptible shake of his head. (Collins, 2009, p. 84 – 85)

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This seems to be a turning point for Katniss when it comes to being under Snow's control. When she finds that she has not succeeded, she plans to run away with her family, Gale and his family, Peeta and Haymitch and stop the performance as a girl in love with Peeta. However, she changes her mind and decides to stay and be a part of the rebellion. Even though this is something Katniss decides, President Snow continues to control Katniss' life by making her a tribute in the Quarter Quell, and demanding that she wears her wedding dress to the interview with Caesar Flickerman.

In the Quell, Katniss' main goal is to get Peeta out of the arena alive, she does not know that she is a part of a greater plan, which is controlled by Plutarch Heavensbee.

There was a plan to break us out of the arena from the moment the Quell was announced. The victor tributes from 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 11 had varying degrees of knowledge about it. Plutarch Heavensbee had been, for several years, part of an undercover group aiming to overthrow the Capitol. He made sure the wire was among the weapons. Beetee was in charge of blowing a hole in the force field. The bread we received in the arena was code for the time of the rescue. (Collins, 2009, p. 432)

Thus, Katniss was tricked in the arena by several of her allies, and she was thereby under their and Heavensbee's control by following Beetee's plan in the arena.

It's an awful lot to take in, this elaborate plan in which I was a piece, just as I was meant to be a piece in the Hunger Games. Used without consent, without knowledge. At least in the Hunger Games, I knew I was being played with. (Collins, 2009, p. 432)

They claim that they had to save Katniss, because she is the symbol of the rebellion. She is the mockingjay. Katniss' stylist, Cinna, also helps with making Katniss the mockingjay. He fixes Katniss' wedding dress, which she wears at the interview in front of the Capitol's audience, and makes it into a costume that looks like a bird, a mockingbird. This is also done without Katniss' knowledge. Because of these men, Katniss is made into an object, a symbol, without her approval. She is thereby controlled.

In *Catching Fire*, one can also find other forms of male control. Peeta claims in front of the Capitol that Katniss is pregnant, and this happens without Katniss knowing about it. According to Gilmore (2013), Katniss is made vulnerable by this statement:

By making the statement that Katniss is having a baby before the second Hunger Games, Peeta takes control of provider, and relegates Katniss to the role of soon-to-be mother, by modern American perceptions the most vulnerable role of a female. A mother is typically viewed as one who cares for children and in turn needs to be cared for by her man. (Gilmore, 2013, p. 9)

Katniss` vulnerability as a pregnant woman is also underlined by Finnick Odair in the arena of the Quell; “‘Better not exert yourself. Not in your condition,’ he says, and reaches down and pats my [Katniss`] abdomen” (Collins, 2009, p. 305). Here, both Finnick and Peeta take charge and control of Katniss` state, and through the Capitol`s and the sponsor`s eyes, she is made more vulnerable.

In *Catching Fire*, one can thus argue that Katniss is made into different objects by different males. She is made into a star-crossed lover by the Capitol and President Snow, a pregnant woman by Peeta and a mockingjay by Heavensbee and Cinna. Hence, these men manipulate Katniss to channel her power in different ways and directions. As a girl in love, she has to focus on being portrayed as Peeta`s bride, as pregnant, she has to let other tributes help her and do some of the work in the arena for her and as the mockingjay she is lead to blow up the force field, seeing it as a rebellious act, not as a deed that is a part of a greater revolution. Her actions are thereby controlled by men.

#### 4.4 Katniss as a progressive and regressive action heroine

In *Catching Fire*, Katniss continues to be portrayed as an action heroine and a savior. She protects the ones she loves in any way she can, and she also tries to protect Peeta in the arena. Thus, one can argue that she is a progressive heroine in *Catching Fire* as well as in *The Hunger Games*. Katniss takes care of herself, her family and Gale`s family as well. Here, she acts independently, which is seen as a progressive feature. However, she also shows that she is dependent on different men in her life, like Peeta, Haymitch and Finnick. In addition, Katniss is passive in parts of the book and movie, and to be passive is seen as a regressive feature. When it comes to her hunting skills and her knowledge about the woods, Katniss is self-reliant and self-sufficient, but she also needs Finnick`s and Haymitch`s help in the arena.



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When it comes to deconstruction of gender in *Catching Fire*, Katniss continues to prove that she possesses both feminine and masculine traits, and she thereby continues to challenge gender aspects which are seen as stereotypical, just like other progressive action heroines before her time. Despite this, she is dressed in a more provocative way in *Catching Fire* than she is in *The Hunger Games*, especially at the opening ceremony for the Quarter Quell, where it can be argued that her look resembles the sexualized appearance of other action heroines. This is by some critics seen as empowering, while by other more skeptical critics a sexualized and provocative look is identified as something regressive that subdues the heroines. According to Brown (2011), this creates an image of the action heroine as both desirable and threatening at the same time, which is by the male gaze seen as a fetish they create in order to avoid the feeling of castration. Katniss is only dressed in a more provocative or girlie manner when she is in front of the cameras. As in *The Hunger Games*, she is not dressed like that when she performs her different masculine activities, and one can thereby argue that she does not fit this fetish. However, both Gale and Peeta see Katniss as desirable when she is her normal self in district 12, without fancy dresses or makeup. Here, it is clear that Katniss is portrayed as a progressive and regressive heroine at the same time.

Katniss becomes an object of the consumerism in the Capitol, and when she is in the Capitol, she is styled in nice dresses, wears layers of makeup and uses jewelry. Hence, one can argue that in the Capitol, Katniss is presented as a “girlie” heroine. The way she normally looks is not good enough for the people of the Capitol, and it seems as if it is her costume at the opening ceremony for the Quarter Quell that gives her confidence, just as her outfit under the opening ceremony in *The Hunger Games* does. Here, Katniss also feels as herself, and this is because she looks dark and powerful. The way she looks is thereby in balance with who she feels she is, her identity. This can be seen as a step in the regressive direction, because Katniss seems to need these “girlie” materials in order to feel powerful. Despite this, she likes to wear more comfortable clothes, which suggests that she is not that concerned with fashion and beauty articles. Based on this, it can be argued that Katniss signals that one needs to look good to feel empowered, but it is also fine to not be that engaged with “girlie” objects. Again, Katniss sends the viewers of the film and the readers of the book mixed messages. She is progressive in the way that fashion and consumerism do not seem to be that important to her in her daily life, but she is also regressive in the way that she feels empowered by wearing costumes and makeup that give her a dramatic look.

One of the most regressive perspectives in *Catching Fire* is how Katniss is controlled by the men around her. Brown (2011) writes that the action heroine "... commands the narrative and controls her destiny, makes her own decisions, and fights her own battles" (p. 7). In *Catching Fire*, it is President Snow who orders Katniss to play a role and thereby he directs her actions and decisions. However, when Katniss finds out that her acting does not convince Snow, she makes her own decisions, yet influenced by especially Gale, to stay and contribute to an uprising. When it comes to how she is dressed in front of the Capitol, it is Cinna and Snow who control what she wears, not herself. President Snow also commands the narrative by making Katniss a tribute in the Quarter Quell. In the Quell, Katniss thinks she is in control of her own choices and actions, but she is actually a piece in a greater game, a revolution controlled by Plutarch Heavensbee. Katniss does not directly choose her allies in the arena either. Haymitch is the one who makes deals with Finnick, Johanna, Beetee, Mags and Wiress because they have been let in on some of the revolution's plans. Because of this, one can argue that Katniss is not in control of the narrative, or her own destiny, which a progressive heroine often is. Hence, Katniss is presented as a regressive female hero through being under the control of men in *Catching Fire*. However, her rebellious side shows that she is not comfortable with being pushed around by President Snow, and some of her actions that portray her as a rebel, beside the one where she shoots down the force field, which may be seen as something she was lead too, are solely Katniss' movements alone.

In *Catching Fire*, one can argue that Katniss is portrayed as a complicated character to define. She proves that she is a progressive heroine that combines both feminine and masculine traits, and thus challenges stereotypical gender perspectives. She also gives the reader of the book and the viewer of the film mixed signals about fashion and beauty accessories when she feels empowered by some of her costumes in the Capitol, which can be seen as a regressive feature, but she does not seem to be that interested in clothes and looks when she is at home in District 12, and this can be argued to be a progressive trait. However, when it comes to the dominance of male control in *Catching Fire*, Katniss is manipulated and controlled by men, and she does not have much to say or do, despite her rebellious side, about her own destiny.

## 5. *Mockingjay*

### 5.1 Katniss Everdeen as an action heroine

As opposed to how Katniss is portrayed in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, she is presented as a soldier in *Mockingjay* (2010). Hence, she has gone from being a tribute in the Capitol's Games to being a recruit in President Coin's warrior troop. As a contrast to *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, Katniss is presented in a more one-dimensional setting in *Mockingjay*. Here, she is mostly portrayed in an environment of war where she is a soldier fighting against the Capitol, and she continues to be shown with many of the same features as in the first two books and movies. This chapter about *Mockingjay* is therefore shorter than the chapters of *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*.

#### 5.1.1 Katniss and femininity

In *Mockingjay*, Katniss continues to show her feminine features. She is affectionate towards her mother, Prim, Gale, Haymitch and Effie and she proves this when she hugs them regularly and lets them comfort her. At the hospital, Katniss welcomes her sister's caring and lets her brush her hair (Collins et al., 2014). She also grants herself the possibility to feel vulnerable with her mother, who she has felt that she had to protect from all harm; "My mother wraps her arms around us. I allow myself to feel young for a moment and rest my head on her shoulder" (Collins, 2010, p. 164). In *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, I argue that Katniss holds the feminine trait of tenderness. In *Mockingjay*, however, she does not seem to be as gentle when she treats Gale's wounded nose; "I use my sleeve to wipe his nose. 'Watch it!' [Gale says] I try to be gentler. Patting, not wiping....He pushes my hand away. 'Quit! You'll bleed me to death'....I give up on the first-aid attempts" (Collins, 2010, p. 31). Thus, despite the fact that Katniss is portrayed with healing skills and gentleness in *Catching Fire*, one cannot argue that she proves to have these skills in this part of *Mockingjay*.

Katniss shows her vulnerability to more people in the third book and film, than she does in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*. After the bombing of District 13, Katniss is to shoot a video, but she breaks down in front of the crew who are filming her, Finnick, Plutarch and Haymitch;

I feel my anxiety building. I'm so tired, so wired, and so unable to keep my mind on anything but Peeta since I've seen the roses....My body visibly shakes and I can't seem to catch my breath....I swallow hard and open my lips so I can get the stupid line out and go hide in the woods and – that's when I start crying....I am broken. (Collins, 2010, p. 180 – 182)

Here, when she feels sad and wants to cry, Katniss' first thought is to hide in the woods so that no one sees her, but nevertheless she allows herself to be seen as vulnerable by several people. It seems as if her feminine trait of sensitivity has had a development through the three books and films. She started out with letting a minimum of people see her as emotional and vulnerable in *The Hunger Games*, to let more and more people see her in an emotional state. Hence, it seems like Katniss is fine with showing her feminine and sensitive side to others. Here, Katniss differs from the characteristics of the female soldier described by Schubart (2007). Schubart (2007) claims that the female warrior cannot show her feminine trait of vulnerability and sensitivity, and that the female soldier starts to possess more masculine traits as she spends more time in the environment of war. Thereby, the female warrior also loses more of her feminine features. When it comes to Katniss, she proves that one can be a complex female soldier with both feminine and masculine features. Since she confirms this blend of traits, the hierarchy of masculinity, which Mary Ann Case claims appears when a female moves up the scale of masculine features and loses her femininity (Moi, 2005), is not maintained.

When President Coin decides to send soldiers to the Capitol to rescue Peeta and the other tributes, Katniss wants to go, but Haymitch says she is "...too valuable and too vulnerable" (Collins, 2010, p. 187) and that no one felt that she could handle being in a battle. Here, Katniss' feminine traits prevent her from doing her tasks as an action heroine. According to Brown (2011) the tough action heroine fights wars and battles, and especially if they are her own. The fact that her femininity prevents her from fighting weakens Katniss' role as an action heroine. After Katniss is discharged from the hospital, she is not presented as physically strong, which reduces her position as a soldier. This is confirmed by Boggs in the book: "We all know you're smart and brave and a good shot. But we need soldiers in the field. You don't know the first thing about executing orders, and you're not exactly at your physical peak" (Collins, 2010, p. 261). Because of this, Katniss describes herself as "Not a soldier, but someone who needs to be looked after" (Collins, 2010, p. 261). Thus, Katniss is here presented as someone who is dependent on others, and she shows her dependency in different places in *Mockingjay*. In order to fulfill her task as the mockingjay, she needs Gale

by her side, and she is not a commander in District 13 . This is seen when she wants to free her preparation team and she needs Plutarch`s authority to do it (Collins, 2010).

When Katniss goes to District 8, she cannot go alone; “I’m left with a bodyguard made up of Gale, Boggs and two other soldiers” (Collins, 2010, p. 95), and when being in this district, Katniss is protected by Boggs when they are fired at by the Capitol; “Boggs pushes me back down, shielding my body with his own” (Collins, 2010, p. 103). Boggs also saves Katniss from Peeta when he tries to strangle her. In addition, Katniss is dependent on Gale when she cannot find her sister after the bombing of District 13 starts. When Katniss struggles with motivating herself for training, Johanna is the one who encourages her, and in the Capitol, several other people protect and help Katniss (Collins, 2010). She also admits that she does not want to find President Snow alone, and that she wants Gale and Finnick by her side when it comes to tracking him down (Collins, 2010). After her trial because of the killing of President Coin, Katniss also gets help from Dr. Aurelius who presents her as mentally sick, and she thereby walks free (Collins, 2010).

Because of the help she gets from people and her dependency on different persons, Katniss does not operate like the traditional action heroine who is normally portrayed as quite independent and in no need of support. According to Inness (2004), the action heroine does not need to be rescued by others, and she can manage her own obstacles. Based on this, it can be argued that Katniss is not presented as an action heroine that is as tough as the one described by Sherrie A. Inness (2004), and that this can make her less progressive when it comes to being a heroine.

In addition to the feminine features of being affectionate, dependent and sensitive, Katniss also maintains the feminist feature of sympathy in *Mockingjay*. She proves that she is sympathetic when she cares about what happens to Peeta in the Capitol, and she also feels sorry for her preparation team when they are held as prisoners in District 13. Katniss makes Johanna a gift so that she can have something of her own in her drawer, and this gesture proves she cares about Johanna (Collins, 2010).

Katniss also shows the feminine trait of passiveness in *Mockingjay*. This is confirmed when she is caught in battles in the Capitol:

The gunfire's really picking up outside. Gale hurries by with a group of rebels, eagerly headed for the battle. I don't petition to join the fighters, not that they would let me. I have no stomach for it anyway, no heat in my blood. (Collins, 2010, p. 236)

Here, Katniss is a contrast to the progressive action heroine described by Brown (2011). According to Brown (2011), the action heroine is not passive, but someone who fights battles and is in command. In this part of *Mockingjay*, Katniss is neither. Boggs is her commander, and she does not seem interested in fighting. Thus, Katniss holds a passive role, and is thereby not seen as an action heroine that is progressive in this section.

### 5.1.2 Katniss as a “girlie” heroine

Since Katniss is mostly portrayed as a soldier in *Mockingjay*, she is not dressed in a typical “girlie” way. Most of the time she wears a grey suit that is a bit baggy and functions as a uniform since most of the people in District 13 use this clothing. She is usually presented with her hair hanging loose down her back and with no makeup (Collins et al., 2014). When she is in front of the cameras or in battle, Katniss uses an armor that is made especially for her by Cinna. This armor is intended to make her resemble a mockingjay, and it fits her well, showing the shape of her body. Yet, it covers her from neck to toe and the outfit cannot be said to be provocative in an erotic way, like the costumes the dominatrix archetype wears (Collins et al., 2014). However, when they are shooting the propaganda videos of her, they want her to be “...the best dressed rebel in history” (Collins, 2010, p. 49). Because of this, Katniss uses makeup that highlights her eyes, and her hair is braided in her usual style. Katniss is not just suppose to look good, she also needs to look “...scarred and bloody” (Collins, 2010, p. 50). Here, one can argue that Katniss becomes an object that promotes fetishism of women. In order to avoid men's fear of castration or disempowerment, an action heroine cannot look too scary and strong, she has to look attractive as well. This is because she needs to compensate for her toughness (Brown, 2011). In the book, Katniss tells the reader the following:

I run my fingers through the thick layers of bubbles in my tub. Cleaning me up is just a preliminary step to determining my new look. With my acid-damaged hair, sunburned skin and ugly scars, the prep team has to make me pretty and *then* damage, burn and scar me in a more attractive way. (Collins, 2010, p. 67)

After the preparation team is finished with her styling, this is how she looks:

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...I [Katniss] watch the woman on the screen. Her body seems larger in stature, more imposing than mine. Her face smudged but sexy. Her brows black and drawn in an angle of defiance. Wisps of smoke – suggesting she has either just been extinguished or is about to burst into flames – rise from her clothes. (Collins, 2010, p. 79)

Finnick says to Katniss that ““They`ll either want to kill you, kiss you, or be you”” (Collins, 2010, p. 79). Based on this, Katniss presents an image of a warrior woman who is attractive, yet polluted with smoke which indicates that she has fought in a battle. Hence, it can be said that this portrait of Katniss as bloody, yet stunning, serves as pleasure for the male gaze. Despite this, Katniss does not seem to feel like this image of her presents who she really is. After she has seen herself at screen she says “I do not know who this person is” (Collins, 2010, p. 79). It does not seem that being styled and made into an attractive symbol are complementing to what Katniss feels is her identity:

I return to the Remake Room and watch the streaks of make-up disappear down the drain as I scrub my face clean. The person in the mirror looks ragged, with her uneven skin and tired eyes, but she looks like me. I rip the armband off, revealing the ugly scar from the tracker. There. That looks like me, too. (Collins, 2010, p. 87)

Here, Katniss seems to feel like she is scarred, and not attractive, but that it is fine, because it is who she is. Hence, she seems to be content with her own character. The people responsible for the propaganda movies tell Katniss` preparation team to wash her face of the makeup, because it makes her look too old for her age. Thus, the people who rule in District 13 see that Katniss does not fit the image of being desirable and scarred at the same time, and Katniss gets to tape the propaganda films the way she actually looks, with only a minimum of makeup (Collins, 2010; Collins et al., 2014). It is thus only in the first propaganda movie that Katniss is presented as a fetish to the male audience.

### **5.1.3 Katniss and masculinity**

In *Mockingjay*, Katniss does not present a very dominant side of herself. She lives in District 13, where she, because of the Quarter Quell, is marked as “...mentally disoriented” (Collins, 2010, p. 21). She is under President Coin`s control who seems to decide when Katniss is needed. However, after Boggs dies under Katniss` squad`s mission in the Capitol, he appoints Katniss to be the leader in his stead. Despite the fact that she is the commander of her team of soldiers, Katniss is not totally independent. She admits that she especially needs

Gale and Finnick by her side (Collins, 2010). Thereby, Katniss is not portrayed as an independent and self-reliant action heroine, who works alone, which, according to Inness (2004), are typical characteristics of the tough action heroine.

Katniss is still portrayed as the protector of her family, which is typically seen as a man's job. However, when the Capitol bombs District 12, Gale is the one who gets her family to District 13, and Katniss cannot save her sister from her death in the Capitol (Collins, 2010). Katniss is also still protective when it comes to Peeta, despite the fact that he, after being brainwashed by the Capitol, does not know if she is a threat or not:

Unresisting, he lies back down, but just stares at the needle on one of the dials as it twitches from side to side. Slowly, as I would with a wounded animal, my hand stretches out and brushes a wave of hair from his forehead. He freezes at my touch, but doesn't recoil. So I continue to gently smooth back his hair. It's the first time I have voluntarily touched him since the last arena. "You're still trying to protect me. Real or not real," he whispers. "Real," I answer. (Collins, 2010, p. 340 – 341)

Here, Katniss also shows that she can be gentle and tender in some settings. Katniss shows her feminine trait of vulnerability to more people in *Mockingjay*, than she, especially, does in *The Hunger Games*. Because of this, her masculine feature of being tough-skinned seems to be quite weakened in the third book and film. Before she leaves to fight in the Capitol, Katniss also seems to have lost her strength, and being strong is seen as a masculine characteristic (Moi, 2005), and as a typical trait of the tough action heroine. Thus, at this part in *Mockingjay*, Katniss differs from the characteristics of the typical action heroine of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, she gains her strength with training and is again fit for battle before she leaves for the Capitol.

Even though Katniss gives the impression that she does not hold that many masculine features in *Mockingjay*, she continues to employ the trait of being rebellious. In District 8, she disobeys Boggs' orders and she has her own plans to carry out in the Capitol; "...Katniss isn't complaining because she has no intention of staying with the 'Star Squad', but she recognizes the necessity of getting to the Capitol before carrying out any plan" (Collins, 2010, p. 288). Here, Katniss' plan is to kill President Snow, and to not follow Coin's orders. At this stage in *Mockingjay*, although Katniss is under President Coin's control, she does as the typical action heroine and commands her own destiny and makes her own decisions.



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#### 5.1.4 Katniss as an avenger, and as a mother and daughter archetype

In *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, Katniss Everdeen fits the characteristics of the mother and daughter archetype. In the *Mockingjay*, however, Katniss is presented as another of Rikke Schubart's (2007) action heroine archetypes, namely the avenger. Schubart (2007) calls her avenger the rape-avenger, but Katniss has not been raped. Yet, she is an avenger because she goes from being a victim in the Capitol's Games into becoming the symbol of the revolution against President Snow. According to Schubart (2007), the rape-avenger is at first in a vulnerable position, but then manages to take charge of her own life. In the third book and movie, Katniss is saved from the Quarter Quell and brought to District 13. Although Katniss is under President Coin's command, to be the mockingjay is her own decision. When Peeta calls for a ceasefire, Katniss disagrees because of all the Capitol has done; "...a ceasefire could only result in a return to our previous status. Or worse" (Collins, 2010, p. 30). She wants to take revenge on President Snow, and she herself wants to be the one who kills him. This is one of her demands for being the mockingjay, and she sees this as a privilege (Collins, 2010). In this part in *Mockingjay*, Katniss also shows that she maintains some of the characteristics of the mother archetype. The aggression of the mother archetype is stated in her desire to save her child (Inness, 2004). In order for Katniss to be the mockingjay, Peeta needs to be pardoned, or else Coin and Plutarch have to find another mockingjay (Collins, 2010). Here, Katniss continues to protect and save Peeta and this seems to be the most important demand on her list. Even though Peeta is not her child, he is someone she cares for, and she cannot be the mockingjay until she knows that if the revolution wins the war, Peeta will be safe in District 13.

Katniss gets frustrated when she is not allowed to participate in combat, because she wants to track down Snow and kill him, and this seems to be her motivation for training and getting in the right shape before she goes to the Capitol; "I throw myself into training with a vengeance" (Collins, 2010, p. 275). She has a mission that is motivated by revenge, just as the avenger archetype; "All that's left is my promise to kill Snow. I tell myself this ten times a day" (Collins, 2010, p. 219).

Even though Katniss is mainly portrayed as an avenger archetype in *Mockingjay*, she is still presented with her father's blood and she thereby continues to be characterized as a daughter archetype as well. She feels comforted by using his jacket, as this is a reminder of everything

she holds dear; “The soft leather feels soothing and for a moment I’m calmed by the memories of the hours spent in it” (Collins, 2010, p. 16). Thus, in *Mockingjay*, Katniss continues to be portrayed as a complex character who fits into different action heroine characteristics. She functions as both a mother and a daughter archetype, but she also fits the image of an avenger.

## 5.2 Katniss` relationship to Peeta and Gale

In *Mockingjay*, Gale has Katniss` back when she performs her actions as the mockingjay. She claims that she needs him by her side, and this is one of her demands for being the mockingjay. In the third book and movie, Gale is portrayed as a protector of the people. He saved as many people as he could when the Capitol`s bombs hit District 12 and kept them provided with food until District 13 came for them. Gale is also presented as a tough and smart soldier who fights for the revolution, in contrast to Peeta who asks for a ceasefire (Collins, 2010). However, Peeta`s statement is probably controlled by the Capitol, and they use him against Katniss. It seems as Peeta agrees to say the words the Capitol wants him to in order to save Katniss. While Peeta tries to calm down the uprisings in the Districts, Katniss and Gale want them to fight against the Capitol (Collins, 2010). Gale is portrayed as a military warrior who knows how to use weapons and who is willing to die for a greater cause. According to Woloshyn, Taber and Lane (2013), the features that Gale is presented with in *Mockingjay*, reflect typical masculinity and that by engaging “...in violent activities he increasingly becomes disconnected from any traits relating to caring and nurturing” (Woloshyn, Taber & Lane, 2013, p. 152). However, when it comes to his love for Katniss, Gale can be seen as vulnerable. When he and Katniss are in Katniss` village in District 12, Gale remembers how Katniss kissed him. He seems to be wounded that Katniss has still not declared her love for him;

[Gale says:] “Maybe I’ll be like that man in ‘The Hanging Tree’. Still waiting for an answer.” Gale, who I [Katniss] have never seen cry, has tears in his eyes. To keep them from spilling over, I reach forward and press my lips against his....He pulls away first and gives me a wry smile. “I knew you`d kiss me.” (Collins, 2010, p. 145)

Here, Gale tells Katniss that it is only when he is in pain that he gets her attention, and he claims that his agony is the reason to why she kisses him. Thus, Gale is portrayed with the feminine feature of vulnerability, and he is thereby not only presented with masculine traits.

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Katniss, on the other hand, still seems to feel conflicted about love. This is confirmed when the reader of the book gets to know that Katniss envies Finnick and Annie and their certainty for loving each other (Collins, 2010).

As an opposite of Gale, Peeta is presented with more feminine than masculine features in *Mockingjay*. Peeta "...is presented as an individual who is committed to peace and is loyal to those he loves. He also is represented as a victim and someone who is physically weaker than others, a key aspect of marginalized masculinity" (Woloshyn, Taber & Lane, 2013, p. 153). In a contrast to Gale, who is willing to fight, Peeta warns people about the cruelty of war, and he wants the fighting to stop. Because of this, "...Peeta's masculinity is marginalized in relation to those who have joined with and fight for the rebels" (Woloshyn, Taber & Lane, 2013, p. 153). Thus, since Katniss is the leader of the rebellion, she can be seen as more masculine than Peeta. Here, Gale and Katniss are thereby more similar than Peeta and Katniss are.

Despite the fact that Gale and Peeta are different people, they have one thing in common which is their love for Katniss. Gale says to Peeta that "Katniss will pick whoever she thinks she can't survive without" (Collins, 2010, p. 371). This statement reflects Katniss' dependent side and argues that she needs certain qualities in her life. Katniss becomes angry with this comment and claims that she "...can survive just fine without either of them" (Collins, 2010, p. 372). However, at the end of *Mockingjay*, Peeta is the one she ends up with:

...what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with raged and hatred. I have plenty of fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that. (Collins, 2010, p. 436)

Here, it seems like Katniss needs someone in her life that is different from her, that does not share her masculine traits of aggression and revenge, but someone who wants to live life peacefully and who contains the feminine feature of being more passive to aggressive actions. Thereby, one can argue that because Katniss possesses many masculine and combative traits herself, she needs a man who can weigh their relationship up with feminine features, who is marginalized when it comes to masculinity, and this person is Peeta. Based on this, one can argue that the gender roles at the end of *The Hunger Games* trilogy are switched, with Katniss as the masculine part in the relationship, and Peeta as the feminine

one. This switch is challenging gender stereotypes which claim that the woman holds the feminine features, while the man carries the masculine traits. Hence, it can be argued that the gender roles performed by Peeta Mellark and Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* make the trilogy progressive.

### 5.3 The element of male control

Despite the fact that Katniss is not a tribute in the Capitol's Hunger Games in *Mockingjay*, she is still affected and influenced by President Snow. However, it is President Alma Coin of District 13 that executes the most control of Katniss. Coin is a woman, so she is not another male who controls Katniss' life. However, because she is the ruler of District 13 and Katniss has to follow her regulations and norms (Collins, 2010), Katniss cannot make her own decisions about her time in the District, and she is thus under President Coin's control. Alma Coin needs someone to unify the districts of Panem for the revolution, and because of that she needs Katniss to become the mockingjay:

What they want is for me [Katniss] to truly take on the role they designed for me. The symbol of the revolution. The Mockingjay....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. (Collins, 2010, p. 11 – 12)

This is the reason to why Katniss was saved in the arena of the Quell, and Coin and Plutarch have made their own plans for Katniss. Plutarch and his team try to shoot a propaganda movie of Katniss, which is staged and where she has a line that someone else has written. This film does not function the way that Plutarch wants it too, because the setting is scripted and people tell her what to do and say (Collins, 2010). It is first when Katniss gets to be herself and decide her own statements and actions that the videos become a success. Thus, the control of Katniss performed at this stage does not function, because it seems like Katniss needs to be in touch with her own identity in order to fulfill the task wholeheartedly. Hence, as the propaganda movies become a huge advantage for District 13, Katniss affects and influences the rest of the districts by being who she is, and this makes her powerful.

Coin uses different strategies to make Katniss understand who is in charge in District 13. According to Katniss, Coin punishes her preparation team as a warning to her about

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“...who’s really in control and what happens if she’s not obeyed” (Collins, 2010, p. 57). President Coin also threatens Katniss about what will follow if she does not hold her part of the mockingjay arrangement:

“... [Coin says:] 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.”...In other words, I [Katniss] step out of line and we’re all dead. (Collins, 2010, p. 65)

Thus, Katniss has to fulfill her duty as the mockingjay, or else she and the other tributes trapped in the Capitol will pay a terrible price. Even though Katniss tries to make the deal about being the mockingjay to turn out in her favor, by demanding Peeta’s and the other tributes’ freedom, President Coin takes control of the situation and changes the deal so that Katniss will face severe consequences with breaking it. Katniss describes Coin as “Another force to contend with. Another power player who has decided to use me as a piece in her games” (Collins, 2010, p. 66). After realizing the effect that Katniss has on other people, Coin seems to feel threatened by Katniss’ influence, and when Katniss and her squad is in the Capitol, President Coin sends Peeta to kill her. The bombing of the children, including Katniss’ sister Prim, is also staged by Coin, in order to make Katniss believe it is President Snow’s work (Collins, 2010). Hence, although Katniss escaped the horror of the Hunger Games, she is still robbed from making her own decisions about her life and destiny. This is a contrast to the action heroine described by Brown (2011) who is the commander and the decision maker in her own life, and who is in control of her destiny.

In *Mockingjay*, President Snow continues to try and manipulate Katniss, so that she will fail in her mockingjay mission. In her house in District 12, Snow has left Katniss a rose which functions as a symbol; “Positioned on my dresser, that white-as-snow rose is a personal message to me. It speaks of unfinished business. It whispers, *I can find you. I can reach you. Perhaps I am watching you now*” (Collins, 2010, p. 17). This is to threaten and make Katniss scared, and he also uses Peeta against Katniss by making her see how he looks after they have terrorized him; “...thinking that he’s [Peeta] being tortured specifically to incapacitate me [Katniss] is unendurable. And it’s under the weight of this revelation that I truly begin to break” (Collins, 2010, p. 172). After the Capitol’s bombing of District 13, President Snow has dropped several white roses on the ground, and they are a threatening notice to Katniss;

“Snow knows exactly what he’s doing to me. It’s like having Cinna beaten to a pulp while I watch from my tribute tube. Designed to unhinge me” (Collins, 2010, p. 180). Snow also brainwashes Peeta, so that he is a threat to Katniss when he arrives in District 13. Although Katniss is emotionally and physically affected by Snow’s messages to her, she does not cave in, and she continues to be the mockingjay and to stand up to Snow and the Capitol. However, at the end of *Mockingjay*, it is President Snow’s influence that makes Katniss shoot Alma Coin instead of him. This is because he tells her the truth about Coin’s plans, but it is Katniss’ own decision to kill Coin, and the action is not forced (Collins, 2010). Thereby, Katniss who has been under President Coin’s control throughout *Mockingjay*, makes her own decisions and thus controls her own destiny, which the typical action heroine in Brown’s theory (2011) does.

## 5.4 Katniss as a progressive and regressive action heroine

Since it can be argued that Katniss functions as the masculine part in the relationship with Peeta, she is a progressive heroine in how she defies the stereotypical gender perspectives that view the female in a relationship as the feminine part. When it comes to being certain of love and what love is, she also falls short and Gale and Peeta seem to be more in contact with their emotions. Often, in many books and movies, one expects the female protagonist to choose or fall in love with a boy. Katniss, on the other hand, seems to be more nuanced since she does not really know if she is in love with either of the two boys. Because of this, one can claim that Katniss liberates herself from the stereotypical plot about how a girl wants and loves a boyfriend, which many films and books hold. She does not fit the stereotypical girlfriend, and is thereby not controlled by the “typical” expectations that viewers and readers have. However, at the end of *Mockingjay*, Katniss chooses to live with Peeta, but it does not seem to be a passionate love when she says that they “...grow back together” (Collins, 2010, p. 436). Here, Katniss can also be said to be presented as regressive. According to Nancy Taber, Laura Lane and Vera Woloshyn (2013) “Many female characters, who initially may appear to be strong role models, often remain constrained by patriarchal norms of emphasized femininity in that they eventually are returned to traditional roles” (p. 151). When Katniss chooses to live with Peeta and have his children (Collins, 2010), she returns to the feminine traditional roles as a mother and wife, instead of embracing a life of independence. In *Catching Fire*, Katniss also claims that her relationship with Peeta is the Capitol’s design (Collins, 2010), and when she decides to live with him one

can argue that the people in the Capitol got it the way they wanted. Thereby, Katniss fulfilled their wish, which they tried to force upon her during the Games. It can thus be said that people of the Capitol maintain some of the control they have executed on her throughout the trilogy.

In *Mockingjay*, Katniss also challenges gender stereotypes in how she is portrayed as an action heroine. She proves that she can be a soldier and a leader of a squad which are often viewed as masculine features, but she also shows that she is vulnerable and dependent at the same time. Despite the fact that her feminine traits of dependency and vulnerability can make her less tough and less progressive, Katniss' mixture of feminine and masculine features shows that an action heroine does not have to be one or the other. Thus a female hero does not only have to be tough, she can be both tough and vulnerable at the same time. Hence, an action heroine can be more dynamical, which Katniss proves. Based on this, the way Katniss is presented can be a step in the progressive direction. However, Katniss is passive when it comes to being at war. When she is caught in a battle in the Capitol, she claims she does not have "...the stomach" (Collins, 2010, p. 236) for fighting in a war scene, and according to Brown (2011), the action heroine is not passive but someone who takes action and fights battles. Hence, Katniss can be seen as regressive in the parts of *Mockingjay* where she does not want to fight. Yet, she does want to kill President Snow, and killing him is her motivation for being at war.

It can be argued that Katniss is portrayed in a regressive way in other parts of *Mockingjay* as well. This is especially seen when she is presented as a fetish and thereby promotes a subjugation of women. Because of this, Katniss becomes an object that serves as a pleasure for the male gaze since she is both attractive and scarred at the same time. She is therefore not a threat to the disempowerment that men might feel in the meeting with her character. However, the way Katniss is presented at this stage does not complement her identity, and because of this, she is allowed to be portrayed as the way she looks, without all the layers of makeup. In *Mockingjay*, it is also proved that she affects people with just being herself (Collins, 2010; Collins et al., 2014) and this shows that the action heroine does not have to be presented like a fetish in order to have an influence. Thus, when the propaganda team lets Katniss be filmed as who she really is, Katniss holds a more progressive than regressive feature.

One of the most regressive traits about Katniss Everdeen is the way she is controlled throughout the *Mockingjay*. She does not have the freedom to make her own decisions when living in District 13, but her choice about being the mockingjay is something she decides for herself. However, with this decision, there follows certain demands and Katniss has to follow what President Coin and Plutarch tell her to do. Despite this, Katniss continues to be rebellious in the third book and movie, and she defies Boggs and Coin. This makes her progressive in the way that she still manages to follow her instincts despite the fact she is told not to. Even though Katniss is under Coin`s control in *Mockingjay*, she commands her own destiny and narrative when she decides to shoot Coin instead of Snow at the end. Although she has been controlled and manipulated by both President Snow and President Coin throughout *The Hunger Games* trilogy, she makes an own decision that changes her and everyone else`s life at the end. Thus, Katniss still proves that she can be a progressive action heroine.



## 6. Katniss Everdeen`s influence on teenage girls

A person`s self-image is partly seen in relation to the different ideals presented and promoted by the media. Through different media, young girls are exposed to images of women portrayed in different ways that may serve as role models they look up to or identify with. Although Katniss promotes diversity and uniqueness, she also shows to young girls society`s expectations of following certain social norms. As George Herbert Mead claims, people view themselves in a cultural mirror. This means that the environment that surrounds a person has influence on his or her identity (Imsen, 2008). Contemporary society promotes different gender and behavioral expectations through the media, which is a crucial part of how the culture presents images of different characters which young women identify with. It is therefore important to consider what types of influence the *Hunger Games* franchise—consisting of three books and currently three blockbuster films—might have on today`s teenage girls.

### 6.1 Generation Katniss

According to Noreena Hertz (2015), teenage girls in today`s society are not only concerned with typical teenage anxieties like body image and appearance. In her study about what young girls care about, Hertz found that a huge amount of these girls worried about topics like terrorism, climate change, how to get a job and how to avoid debt. Many of these teenage girls were unsure if they would follow traditional and social norms in the future, like getting married and having children. Through this study, it became clear to Hertz that the girls she interviewed were “...career-minded” (Hertz, 2015, p. 3). She calls this generation of teenagers “Generation K” where the “K” stands for Katniss Everdeen. These girls are young women who are born between 1995 and 2002, and Hertz argues that this is a generation “...for whom there are disturbing echoes of the dystopian landscape Katniss encounters in *The Hunger Games` District 12*. Unequal, violent, hard” (2015, p. 2). Since Katniss Everdeen and *The Hunger Games* have become so popular that today`s teenage girls are synonymous with “Generation K” it is important to analyze what type of gender images and didactic issues arise from *The Hunger Games* phenomenon.

## 6.2 Gender perspectives

Since Katniss proves that one can possess both feminine and masculine traits as a woman, she shows to other girls that one can explore and defy gender norms and expectations. By getting to know the character Katniss Everdeen, young women may find that it is possible and empowering to move beyond gender roles and stereotypical attitudes. Here, Katniss promotes the fact that it is acceptable to have mixed features and still be powerful. This can give teenage girls the courage to seek and test their own identity without being pressured into the traditional feminine ways of behaving and being (Taylor & Francis, 2013). “Generation K” embraces diversity and when Hertz asked these girls to describe themselves in one word, many of them used the word unique (Hertz, 2015). For these girls, being different from others is celebrated, and one of them said she wanted to be her own person, someone who did not have to resemble others in looks and personality. Since Katniss is a character who is portrayed as a complex heroine, she promotes individuality and difference. Hence, she possesses the features that many of the teenagers in “Generation K” favor and yearn for.

One can thus argue that Katniss Everdeen may be an appropriate role model for these young girls to identify with and look up to. However, Gilmore (2013) asks the following question: “If Collins wanted to create a non-conformist character that defies expectations, why does Katniss give in so easily to what others want to see her as?” (p. 10). To some extent, Katniss accepts the way she is dressed and portrayed in front of the audience in the Capitol and the cameras in both District 13 and the Capitol, but she also confirms that even though she sometimes feels empowered by the way she looks, it is not something she considers complements her identity, and she does not dress the same way in her daily life. Thus, Katniss sends mixed messages about image and appearance throughout the three books and movies. Since Katniss acknowledges that she has to look attractive in order to get sponsors, she signals that it is fine to play the role as an object for other people to look at and admire:

While the twelve districts view the Hunger Games as a warning and a message of the Capitol’s ultimate power, the Capitol views the Hunger Games for pleasure. The Capitol has an anxiety that its people will rebel and Katniss is the fetish object that reassures their power. Katniss does not fight the male gaze, she plays into it, knowing exactly how she is being seen. (Palazzo, 2013)

However, this is also a role she plays to save her life and that of others, so one can argue that this is an image that is forced upon her.

Alyssa Palazzo (2013) has also asked what sort of role model and example Katniss Everdeen is for girls who read *The Hunger Games* trilogy, and if the "...readers feel as if they need to meet the feminine ideal as well?" (Palazzo, 2013, p. 2). It is not enough for the people in the Capitol that Katniss is presented the way she is, she needs to be more attractive and beautiful. Here, the Capitol confirms that women and girls need to be made into the feminine ideal, and it is urgent for females to use layers of makeup and pretty clothes. This can cause a problem for the girls who read and view the trilogy. They might find that they too have to give in to girlie pleasures like makeup, fancy clothes and hairstyles and because of this they might also feel that it is not enough to look the way they do. Teenage girls may think that in order to be empowered, they also need to look attractive. This can also cause them to feel insecure about their appearance or lose confidence since they might get the idea that they do not match the images that Katniss presents.

Likewise, Jennifer Gilmore (2013) writes that what a young girl "...learns from Katniss is how important it is to be considered gender intelligible" (p. 13) and that to be able to survive "...one must conform to cultural, primarily defined as heteronormative, gender identities" (Gilmore, 2013, p. 13). What Palazzo and Gilmore have in common is a concern with what influence the gender pressures Katniss undergoes will have on today's teenagers and whether *The Hunger Games* franchise promotes regressive attitudes.

### 6.3 Didactic reflections

These worries about the possible negative consequences of the character of Katniss do not fit with the concerns revealed by "Generation K" as research by Hertz (2015). She has found in her study that today's girls honor their own self-determination and are proud to be seen as different from others. Yet, even though Katniss proves to teenage girls that one can explore one's identity by moving beyond gender expectations, she also signals that it is important to play a role in the society in order to handle and empower life. It is therefore important when using the books and films in classroom situations to be aware of the complex issues discussed above and that gender norms and role models are included as specific topics of discussion when assigning these works.

One of the messages *The Hunger Games* sends to girls is they might need to be actresses in everyday life, and that they cannot be themselves, because that may not be enough. Thus, Katniss indicates that they, as well as herself, sometimes need to live up to the ideal cultural gender norms that are promoted by the society and the culture. Teachers can incorporate study materials on these norms alongside the reading and viewing and offer pupils ample opportunities to present their own reactions and feelings about the issues raised by the books and films. Current research by Noreena Hertz (2015) suggests that today's teenagers are mature enough to handle precisely such complex topics. Even though Katniss can have different effects on teenage girls in today's classroom and society, Hertz (2015) feels hopeful about the perspectives uttered by the teenage girls of "Generation K". As it seems, these are young women who are culturally aware and ambitious about their future, and because of this, I have difficulties believing that the regressive ways in which Katniss is presented will negatively affect their attitudes concerning their own identity and future.

## 7. Conclusion

The aim with this master thesis has been to give a thorough analysis of how Katniss Everdeen is portrayed in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, and in order to do this, I made use of postfeminist theory. This has been my research theme, and since Katniss can be argued to be presented as a female hero, I analyzed Katniss` different characteristics in relation to postfeminist perspectives concerning the action heroine. Because this master thesis is a part of a master program that is concerned with the didactics of culture and language, the didactic approach to this thesis is a discussion of what effects Katniss Everdeen can have on teenage girls.

Postfeminism is a discourse that gives room for individuality, difference, multiplicity and ambiguity (Genz & Brabon, 2009; Coleman, 2009). Through my analysis of Katniss, it is clear that she is a complex character with multiple and sometimes contrastive features. She proves her ambiguity by being portrayed with both feminine and masculine traits at the same time. Thereby, she also explores and challenges cultural norms, which fits well with what postfeminism and deconstruction seek to do. According to postfeminist perspectives, it is possible for a subject to be unstable and have plural features (Genz & Brabon, 2009), and since it can be argued that Katniss is both a progressive and regressive action heroine, she complements such theoretical views. Postfeminism is argued to be a feminism for the twenty first century (Genz & Brabon, 2009), and it can be seen as a movement that reflects today`s popular culture. Because of the different ways Katniss Everdeen is portrayed throughout the trilogy, one can argue that she is a character who fits postfeminist standards and that she is an action heroine suited for this century. She breaks down binary oppositions, explores different ways of acting and behaving and has contrastive layers, especially when it comes to “girlie” activities and pleasures. Katniss proves to the readers of the books and the viewers of the films that one does not have to fit into a stereotypical tradition and standard, and that it is possible to have different sides.

According to Schubart (2007), the action heroine promotes both liberation and oppression, because she is seen as empowered, but sexualized at the same time. When it comes to Katniss, she proves to be empowered and progressive in a number of ways. She differs from many other action heroines because she is not dressed in an erotic way when she fights for her survival. It can thereby be argued that she is not as oppressed as the typical and

sexualized action heroine. Thus, she avoids being presented as an erotic subject that is created to pleasure the male gaze. However, in *Mockingjay*, there is a passage where it can be claimed that Katniss is portrayed as a fetish, because she needs to be attractive, yet bloody and scarred at the same time. Nonetheless, this presentation of her does not function, and Katniss` attractive appearance is toned down. Based on this, one can argue that in relation to other action heroines, Katniss is a new and progressive kind of heroine, because she is not given an erotic appeal.

A concern regarding the action heroine`s effect on girls, can be the fact that she is often portrayed as attractive in the way that she wears provocative clothes and heavy makeup. It can be argued that such images of female heroes do not serve as good role models for young women, because they might get the idea that in order to feel empowered, one needs to have an erotic and sexualized look. Since Katniss is not consistently presented like this, she can function like a fresh breath, a new and improved character that girls can identify with and look up to. On the other hand, Katniss promotes consumerist beauty items in the passages where she feels empowered by her makeup and her clothes. Because of this, she signals that looks and appearance can be empowering. Despite the fact that some critics find this subjugating, postfeminism favors the ideas of Girl Power, and postfeminist perspectives promote a feminism that is playful and that encourages use of “girlie” materials like dresses and makeup (Coleman, 2009). Hence, Katniss can be argued to be a postfeminist character, but she also shows that she is not interested in typical, feminine activities, like “girl-talk”. One can thereby argue that Katniss is an action heroine who moves beyond and challenges postfeminist ideas, and creates a new kind of feminist discourse. However, postfeminism is also argued to be a movement that supports such contradictory features, so maybe it can be claimed that Katniss is as divergent and contradictory as postfeminism itself.

Although Katniss Everdeen is a complex character who may be difficult to understand and interpret, she does serve as a character who teenage girls read about and watch. Their interest in her can provide them with different perspectives, and maybe she can function as a role model to them. Since they might identify and look up to her, it is important to continue to analyze and discuss the character Katniss Everdeen, and I hope that the analysis in this thesis can help others on their way to explore and examine the phenomenon of *The Hunger Games*.

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## Abstract

In this master thesis, I have discussed and analyzed the female protagonist in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss Everdeen, in relation to postfeminist theory and perspectives concerning the phenomenon of the action heroine in popular culture. *The Hunger Games* trilogy is popular among young adults, and teenage girls may identify with Katniss as a character. Hence, it has also been an objective to examine what influence Katniss Everdeen can have on teenage girls.

When it comes to my analysis of Katniss as an action heroine, I have mainly used theory concerning the action heroine's characteristics, postfeminist perspectives and theory regarding deconstruction. Postfeminism favors individuality, difference and multiplicity, and uses deconstruction to break down binary oppositions in order to give room for pluralistic and divergent perspectives. My discussion of Katniss Everdeen as an action heroine proves that she is a character with many layers and contrastive features. Thus, I argue that she is portrayed in a complex way and can thereby be seen in relation to the terms that postfeminism is concerned with.

In my discussion of what effects Katniss can have on young girls, it has been important to analyze her from different perspectives. In one way, Katniss presents an empowered character who teenage girls can look up to, but on the other hand, she sends the readers and the viewers of *The Hunger Games* phenomenon mixed signals when it comes to how one becomes empowered.

## Norsk sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven består av en diskusjon og analyse av den kvinnelige hovedpersonen i *The Hunger Games*, Katniss Everdeen, i forhold til postfeministisk teori og perspektiver som omhandler fenomenet ”action heltinnen” i populær kultur. *The Hunger Games* er populære bøker og filmer blant ungdom, og tenåringsjenter kan kanskje identifisere seg med karakteren Katniss. Det har derfor også vært et mål å undersøke hva slags innflytelse Katniss Everdeen kan ha på unge jenter.

Jeg har i hovedsak brukt teori som angår egenskaper ved ”action heltinnen”, postfeministiske perspektiver og teori vedrørende dekonstruksjon i min analyse av Katniss Everdeen. Postfeminismen fremmer begrep som individualitet, forskjell og mangfoldighet. Den bruker dekonstruksjon for å bryte ned binære opposisjoner for å gi rom for pluralisme og divergerende synspunkt. Min analyse av Katniss Everdeen som en ”action heltinne” viser at hun er en karakter med mange kontrastive egenskaper og lag. Jeg hevder dermed at hun er presentert på en kompleks måte, og at hun kan derfor sees i forhold til de begrepene som postfeminismen favoriserer.

I min diskusjon av hva slags effekt Katniss kan ha på unge jenter, har det vært viktig å analysere henne ut ifra ulike perspektiver. På en side representerer Katniss en mektig og sterk karakter, men hun gir også leserne og seerne av *The Hunger Games* fenomenet blandede signaler når det kommer til hvordan og i hvilke situasjoner man finner mot, styrke og makt.