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THE DECONSTRUCTED HERO

A Study of Heroism in Suzanne Collins' Novel Trilogy *The Hunger Games*

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Title: *The Deconstructed Hero: A Study of Heroism in Suzanne Collins' Novel Trilogy The Hunger Games*

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Abstract:

The thesis aims to study how contemporary literature challenges the traditional role of the hero, by exploring the character functions of Peeta, Katniss and Gale in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Their functions present a variety of perspectives on heroism, both in terms of traditional ideas of heroism and female heroes, but also suggest that main characters can function heroically, and change between different functions, in turn affecting the reader's mind-set regarding the protagonist. By applying the theoretical model duomyth onto the characters Gale, Katniss and Peeta from Suzanne Collins' trilogy *The Hunger Games*, one can both include two vital characters into the analysis of Katniss, as well as analyse the female hero in a way which does not limit her as a result of narrow models. Using this method, several aspects of heroes and roles for characters from numerous theoretical models can be incorporated into the analysis. Feminine and masculine traits of the characters do not interfere with their interaction, and neither do the restrictions of conventional "roles" within fiction. By developing the duomyth further, to a triomyth, the ambiguity of characters' individual function disappears, as they appear as a whole unit, a collective hero.

Keywords: Hunger Games, Collins, heroism, quest, Peeta, Gale, Katniss, monomyth, duomyth, triomyth, polomyth.

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Introduction

“I don’t know why I stopped reading during the second book. I think it was the protagonist, Katniss. She falls apart. Heroes aren’t supposed to fall apart.” The comment was uttered to the writer of this thesis one cold afternoon in Sweden. The woman from whence it came falls well within the target audience of Suzanne Collins’ trilogy *The Hunger Games*, and it is an observation that awakens one’s interest in two very different ways. First of all, what constitutes a hero, and secondly, is an individual who deviates from the standard still a hero?

The Hunger Games phenomenon engages audiences worldwide much like *Harry Potter* and the *Twilight* series before it. Out of the books, and later the movies, grew an industry making money on jewellery, clothes, braiding tutorials, etcetera, all influenced by the characters in the popular novels. Popularity and publicity leads to analysing and social commentary, and *The Hunger Games* deals with themes traditionally veiled from young people, such as brutal death, economic differences, reality TV-shows featuring frequent deaths and cruelty, and exploitation of media and warfare techniques. In addition, the protagonist is a young woman.

The recent wave of young adult novels in the adventure genre with strong female protagonists has led to an interest spike in movies based on these works, creating a domino effect where the popularity of both books and movies has increased. Series such as Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* and Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* series share a lot of common features in terms of exploring the female perspective and interpretations of a protagonist’s position. The literary tradition has naturally focused on men, and serious concerns have therefore been raised about what tools we have available to analyse the strong female protagonist. Is the male tradition so set that we need an entirely new method of looking at literature written by women and with a female protagonist?

Another important aspect of young women as protagonists is that of heroism. When analysing young adult literature one usually uses traits from archetypes, for example anti-heroes or epic hero, but there are so many different aspects to heroism which need investigating. Typically, there is a preconceived notion that the protagonist is the hero, a reasonable assumption, seeing as the author is normally dependent on whether the reader identifies with the protagonist in some way or another, requiring redeeming features such as honesty or humour. There is no rule, though, stating that the protagonist has to be a hero.

Similarly, there is no rule saying that secondary characters or even a brief walk-on character cannot have heroic traits or act heroically in vital scenes in literature. Yet, we rarely refer to them as “the heroes of the book”. The lines between heroism and hierarchy of characters are somewhat blurry, leaving room for plenty of research within the field. *The Hunger Games*, in particular, makes a good starting point for such studies, considering its current relevance, its complicated heroine, and also, an interesting trio of characters who each carry different functions.

This thesis aims to study how contemporary literature challenges the traditional role of the hero, by exploring the character functions of Peeta, Katniss and Gale in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Their functions present a variety of perspectives on heroism, both in terms of traditional ideas of heroism and female heroes, but also suggest that main characters can function heroically, and exchange different functions, in turn affecting the reader’s mind-set regarding the protagonist.

In order to explore these issues, the following questions will serve as guidelines: How does Katniss role as a female hero correspond with traditional ideas of heroism? What are Peeta’s, Gale’s and Katniss’ respective functions in the trilogy, and how does the dynamic between them affect the reader’s understanding of heroism? How can roles of action be divided between the main characters, and how does this affect the reader’s perception of their heroism?

As previously mentioned, *The Hunger Games* have emerged in a flourishing culture of young adult fiction, and is now at its peak, being one of the more recognized works of fiction available for younger audiences. The trilogy *The Hunger Games* was written by American author Suzanne Collins and published in 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. Being the child of a military father, Collins was introduced early through her father to the moral issues of war, such as its role in protecting society, and the impact it has on soldiers’ lives. All of these elements she brought to her books when she started writing after finishing a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing.

Having previously written episodes for children’s television shows, Collins experienced her career skyrocketing as the first novel of her five-part series *The Underland Chronicles* became a *New York Times* bestseller. This initial success was then continued when her *The Hunger Games* series, targeted at a slightly older audience, became an international bestseller. (Collins). Although commonly referred to as young adult novels, *The Hunger Games* has

reached a wide audience and sold almost 28 million copies in 2012 alone. This was the same year as the first movie came out, which further accelerated the success of the book series.

The Hunger Games trilogy contains the three novels *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, and *Mockingjay* covering the events unfolding in a dystopian environment, set in what was once North-America, now called Panem. The first novel (HG) gives a historical account of the background of the districts and the Capitol, including the premise for the “Hunger Games”:

In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. The twenty-four tributes will then be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins. (HG 21)

The narrative proceeds with Katniss volunteering to partake in the competition instead of her little sister Prim, who was originally chosen. Katniss and the male tribute from district 12, Peeta, go on to fight in the Games, after being mentored by the alcoholic Haymitch. Although only one tribute is supposed to win, Katniss manages to outsmart the game makers (partly by pretending to be in love with Peeta) and both she and Peeta win the games, her having openly defied the government. When they return home, her feelings for Peeta confuse her, especially as she also has feelings for her trusted hunting-friend, Gale. However, she is now an enemy of the government and will not have much time to think about feelings at all.

Catching Fire (CF) picks up the action after the victors return home. Katniss and Peeta are thrown back into the game where they meet other victors from previous Hunger Games. They try to plan so that at least one of them will make it back home, but they are both unknowing participants in a plan devised by the rebels (including Haymitch and several other victors) to rescue as many as possible of the most valuable victors from the arena. While the electric boundaries of the arena are being blown up, Katniss is saved and brought to District 13, previously thought incinerated. Peeta, however, is left behind and captured by the government. When hovercrafts come to bomb district 12 for the actions of their victors, Gale manages to rescue a few hundred of them and move them to District 13.

Mockingjay (M) is the last novel of the trilogy and describes a damaged Katniss being used by the rebels as a symbol in their attempt to overthrow the government. Her fragile mental state makes it difficult to stick to the original plan, especially as President Snow uses Peeta to punish Katniss. Eventually, Gale, who proves to be a brilliant military strategic, together with a rescue team manages to get Peeta out, only to realize he has been tortured and programmed into hating and fearing Katniss, whom he tries to kill. Experts do make him

better, but he never fully recovers, although his kindness returns. After much use of propaganda and training, Katniss and Gale play vital parts in winning the war in the Capitol. Several victors and Katniss little sister Prim are killed before the final battle, leaving Katniss on the brink of insanity. The new government suggests making a different version of the Hunger Games as retaliation against the Capitol, after which Katniss shoots the new leader in public. She is now officially insane and is eventually sent back to live in the ruins of district 12, as no one knows what else to do with her. Peeta meets her there and helps her back to life, and considering it might be one of Gale's traps that killed Prim, Katniss is relieved he is not coming back. The country gets a new, trustworthy leader, and Peeta and Katniss go on to have children.

Tom Henthorne addresses the issue of difficulty in determining which genre *The Hunger Games* adheres to in his book *Approaching the Hunger Games Trilogy: A Literary and Cultural Analysis*:

... it is young adult fiction that addresses themes usually reserved for adults; a science fiction novel that is largely unconcerned with science and technology; a dystopian fiction that ends hopefully, at least on a societal level; a survivor story in which the survivor never fully recovers; and a *Bildungsroman* in which the protagonist regresses as much as she progresses. (30)

The trilogy does, in other words, touch on many different topics and themes, which might explain why it attracts people from so many different age groups. This tendency to be ambiguous renders an elaborate genre discussion of *The Hunger Games* unnecessary, and the novels will henceforth be referred to merely as adventure novels or quest novels.

Theory and Method

In the following chapters, I will show how the previous theoretical models of heroism, although useful in their own time, have become out-dated, and that there is need for new interpretations of heroism to bring literary analysis into the 21. century. Furthermore, I will provide my own theoretical model, the triomyth, expanding on earlier versions of the monomyth and duomyth. The triomyth is created in an effort to broaden the possibilities of interpreting heroism, as well as adapt such interpretations to the modern literary canon.

Joseph Campbell analyses myths and religion in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as he attempts to explore what makes a hero and how one can recognize patterns in the hero's journey. He examined hundreds of myths and religious stories in order to find common components on a structural level, allowing him to discern recognizable patterns. Although Campbell's theory was originally concerned with religion and myths, it has been used in

literary criticism as a tool to aid scholars in determining traits in, as well as common aspects of, a hero's journey. According to Campbell, the hero's journey, referred to as the monomyth, follows a pattern consisting of three main categories, namely departure, initiation and return. These are further subcategorized into seventeen stages. However, not all stages need be completed for it to be a monomyth, nor is the chronology of great importance. When the hero departs from home, he goes through the stages The Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, The Crossing of the First Threshold, and The Belly of the Whale. These stages are concerned with what happens while the hero is still at home in familiar surroundings, and focuses on how the heroes eventually accept their mission. Often, the hero is helped by a mentor, who helps prepare and advice the hero. The Belly of the Whale is the final stage of Departure, and it incorporates an inner acceptance of the changes the experience of the quest will have on the hero. Campbell describes it as rebirth, a stage which "The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died." (90). The journey inward is thus just as important as the journey in the outside world.

After having accepted his mission and gone on his quest, the hero must face a series of trials in the category Initiation (sometimes Descent), where he goes through the stages of The Road of Trials, The Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as Temptress, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis, and The Ultimate Boom. The tasks met by the hero while he is on The Road of Trials can be many and varying in nature, from slaying dragons to helping those in need. As in Departure, he usually receives help and guidance from several helpers, one of which is the Wise Old Man, who functions as a mentor. After surviving and completing the trials, the hero meets the goddess, which "is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love... which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity" (Campbell 118). In the next stage, the hero faces his own ego through someone with great power: "Atonement (or at-one-ment) consists of no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster – the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id)." (Campbell 130). Although the stage is named Atonement with the father, the figure need neither be the father, nor male. Rather, it signifies a great power.

In the final stages of the hero's journey there is a Return, in which the stages are Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of the Two Worlds, and Freedom to Live.

Although Campbell claims the monomyth can be applied to female heroes if the roles are simply reversed, his model is tailored specifically for male heroes, and the few female examples he uses are not enough to counteract this effect. Any attempt to use Campbell's theory without modifications on a female hero, would fail as one would be ignoring one of the biggest problems traditionally associated with them: the fact that they live in a patriarchal world. The female hero stages can be very similar, but they would also need to incorporate the element of their gender into their quest. She can encounter many of the same obstacles and helpers as the male hero, but the issue remains: the female hero will face different or additional obstacles when she breaks out of her role, as the society will expect her to comply with its structure and roles.

The absence of female perspective in Campbell's monomyth has led many academics to call for a wider understanding of the female hero. In addition, several new novels experiment with heroism and there are many heroes who might not conform to the pattern in a traditional way, yet still adhere to the hero genre. Several different ideas on how to incorporate female characters into the male-based model have thus emerged, several of which will be discussed presently. Few people would debate that the old myths and religious stories often revolve around men, and thus it is quite natural that Campbell's theory lacks elements of a female perspective. One of the critics who attempts to rectify this loss is Margery Hourihan. In her book *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*, Hourihan explores the structure of adventure novels. She focuses much of her attention on how the portrayal of certain issues affects children, although much of what she argues could also be true for young adult readers. The white, male perspective dominates literature and Hourihan discusses the effect this has on young, female readers, and she discovers that women are often marginalized and inferiorized (156). In terms of heroism, Hourihan stresses the importance of point of view: "Narrative point of view is the most powerful means by which the reader's perceptions and sympathies are being manipulated" (38).

Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, two noted feminist critics, conducted a study similar to Campbell's, where they examined hundred of texts attempting to uncover whether or not female heroes could be explored at entities different from male ones. One of their discoveries was that "even when male and female characters love each other with the same commitment and intensity, there is an inherent imbalance of power in the relationship" (34). However, the critics admit that such limitations may not apply to female heroes of fantastic fiction, which does not include *The Hunger Games*.

Pope and Pearson's model is very interesting with regard to its inversion of gender roles. Similar to Campbell's Atonement with the Father, Pope and Pearson argue that the female hero will eventually, after completing several other stages of her quest, go on "...a search for her true, powerful parent" (177). Not only do they alter Atonement with the Father, to "A Woman is her Mother", but they also incorporate the patriarchal society's reaction to the female hero into their separate structural model. Whether or not this model should be referred to as an inversion of Campbell's model, or if it should stand separately, is difficult to decipher, but due to the structural pattern still being present in the "new" model, the similarities are often considered too many to separate the two completely (Mains 9).

According to Pearson and Pope, the first stage of a female hero's journey is complicated because she is not expected, nor necessarily wanted, to accept the mission and leave. She must break free from these gender-roles, and realize that not only will the mission change her; it will also change her entire femaleness as she can never be the same person in the eyes of other people. Naturally, all heroes come back from their quests changed in some way or another, but here, the change will also be perceived in others, as they will treat the hero differently. When the female hero accepts her quest, she encounters male figures such as the seducer and the suitor, both showing the importance of her sexuality. However, neither can ultimately help the hero in her quest for love, as they will both disappoint her. It is in this stage that she must "slay the dragon of romantic love and demythologize the seducer", effectively freeing herself from her previous role by removing the one who awoke her to realize her own potential, but it will not be sufficient to ensure her happiness (68).

In Pearson and Pope's opinion, the return of the female hero will depend on the society from whence she came. Either she is forced back into the role assigned to her by the patriarchy, or if lucky, she can exist separate from society, in a subculture earned by her victory as a hero. As previously mentioned, Pearson and Pope's model leaves little room for a scenario where the female hero can achieve both her quest as a woman, and also enter a romantic relationship with a man without losing her role. Although Pearson and Pope acknowledge that interpretations of a female hero require modifications due to the patriarchal society, their model is still founded in a patriarchal structure, and thus, their hero must always be viewed in a certain light.

Annis Pratt's approach to analysing female heroes is quite different from that of Pearson and Pope; instead of remodelling Campbell's theory to suit women, Pratt analyses archetypal patterns from within, trying to create a model free from the limitations of the monomyth and

Pope and Pearson's inversion. Pratt focuses on fiction either containing female character or fiction written by women, sometimes both. Her five stages do not appear as connected to obstacles and steps, as the previous models, but are more based on transitory states, and fluent situations necessary for moving forward at all. However, her model divides the world into two: the green world where young girls are free and undisturbed by men, and the patriarchal enclosure, where they have little freedom. The most important aspect of Pratt's model is that of the green world, where the female hero can even have a relationship with a green-world lover, a figure strengthening her relationship with nature (Pratt 140). However, this green-world lover is "not capable of fulfilling the role of husband and life partner." Only if the girl is lucky, she can re-enter the green world, after she has fulfilled her task within the patriarchal system, and live free and alone (Pratt via Mains 12).

A recent response to the call for a different angle on heroes is the emerging of the theoretical concept "duomyth". The term was coined by Dr. Thomas Wymer, and repeated by Rita Haunert, who interprets the structure of the term to entail that: the male *and the female*, in their separate journeys, become adults and attain equal status" (76). This definition of the term entails that there could be two entirely different heroes of the opposite sex, not just on the surface level, but also at the structural level. In other words, the two characters are united in their equality as heroes.

Christine Mains¹ judges Haunert's definition to be too broad, and concerned with the surface level, and so Mains thoroughly describes the structure of the duomyth and uses it as a critical tool. (30). Although she has continued her academic career and written an article still using the duomyth, her Master of Arts Thesis *The Quest of the Female Hero in the Works of Patricia A. McKillip* is where she originally created her own definition and applied it to literature. As both her approach to analysis and the topic resemble elements of my thesis, Mains' thesis can be productively used for comparison and ideas. She understands the duomyth as referring to a situation where the role of hero is divided between a male and female character and explains it as follows:

A duomyth is more than the telling of two separate quests in which the heroes interact. It is the single quest of one hero, one actant at the structural level, split into two characters at the surface level, a quest marked by each character taking on multiple roles, shifting between character functions rather than remaining locked into only one role. (Mains 30)

While the monomyth has served as a relevant tool for literary analysis for quite some time, Mains finds it too simplistic (18). One of the advantages of using the duomyth, as

¹Christine Mains is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada.

opposed to the monomyth, Mains argues, is that the functions of the characters are not as locked into only one role (33). In the duomyth, characters are not bound to one function, and thus they can interact on another level: The two characters who jointly fill the role of hero shift between many functions, playing different roles within each other's separate quests (ibid). She uses this method to show the similarities between several characters in McKillip's works of fantasy, both on a structural level, as well as on the surface level.

Mains claims that the two most common themes found in fiction are "the hero's quest for identity and the search for love" (1). She further argues that much of the controversy surrounding women boils down to the problematic situation of having a female hero trying to achieve both. Entering a romantic relationship will leave the woman submissive and disturbs the balance of equality (ibid). Furthermore, Mains advocates the advantages of using the duomyth rather than the monomyth as it opens for a "...different exploration and outcome for the female hero's quest..." (31). However, it is quite possible that this opening is not only simplifying the process of analysing the female hero's quest, but also her companions and their roles. If one accepts the possibility of interchanging roles within characters in a novel, one does not have to exclude so many traits of a character in order to categorize them. On the contrary, a critic can analyse more traits of both a female hero and her male "helpers", as certain traits would not necessarily contradict the critic's analysis. Another convenient feature of this model is that it can draw elements from several of the other theoretical models, without having to limit itself to only one of them. Its structure allows for the critic to use Campbell's *Atonement with the Father*, Pratt's *green-world lover*, and Pope and Pearson's *A Woman is her Mother*, without deviating from the model itself. Simply put, the duomyth can be used as a critical tool to collect the most relevant parts of already firmly established theoretical models, and allows for a collective examination within another model.

Although Mains' exploration of the duomyth is thoroughly developed and useful, her conclusions are not based as much on her analysis as they are on her personal preferences of outcomes for female heroes. Thus, her final conclusions are not coherent with the analysis. However, this does not invalidate the value of her theoretical model, as it is already completed in her extensive analytical chapters. In her article "Having it All: The Female Hero's Quest for Love and Power in Patricia McKillip's *Riddle-Master Trilogy*", Mains summarizes her some of the points from her thesis, but the article is more focused on narratology than her original thesis.

In order to answer my research questions I will be using the theoretical concept duomyth. Due to its origin derived from the monomyth, some overlapping between the two will occur, and it will also be relevant to discuss the differences between the two when discussing *The Hunger Games*. Seeing as studying heroism in three different characters is the goal, not all aspects of the monomyth will be examined, partly because Katniss has already been analysed several times as a female hero, but also because the theories themselves are so complex that it would be quite problematic to cover all of it in this study. Therefore, this study will be based on the basic ideas of the duomyth, as well as the relevant terms from the monomyth.

Although Collins' *The Hunger Games* was always intended to be a trilogy, one can argue that the first novel can be read as an individual storyline. Both in terms of President Snow's rule and Katniss' choice between her two love possibilities, there are still unresolved issues. However, as the title indicates, the Games themselves are the main challenge, and the protagonist not only wins, she also achieves saving her friend, making it plausible to deduce that she has completed her main purpose. Due to this duality in ways of approaching the novels, as well as the notable change in Katniss' behaviour from the first book and the others, this thesis will attempt to examine not only her role as a female hero, but also how it changes and develops throughout the series. Due to the fact that Katniss is a woman, it would be difficult to avoid the issue of differences between male heroes and female heroes. However, that is not the main objective of this thesis, partly because it has already been discussed and researched in various forms quite extensively, and also because the scope laid out for this essay is rather vast. No doubt the intended area of study will be sufficient for a thesis, seeing as several theoretical models will be involved, one of which surfaced quite recently. Nonetheless, where it is of importance, Katniss' gender will be taken into consideration.

Due to the many complex descriptions of what Katniss feels for her two love interests, and vice versa, the general feeling they have will henceforth be described as love, as it would prove impractical to go into a lengthy exploration of this aspect of her emotional self, when heroism is what should be studied. Naturally, several parts of the thesis may lead to further investigation into the specific category of love experienced at a fixedpoint in time, and there is no debating the finer differences will be crucial in some aspects. However, much of the three novels are concerned with these feelings, and they are only portrayed through Katniss' thoughts and from her viewpoint. Certainty in this matter is thus very difficult to obtain, especially considering the fact that she both doubts herself and her ability to love in a romantic way. Nonetheless, her reaction to the episodes in which she risks losing either, or

both men, makes it reasonable to claim she loves them both deeply, and on some level, romantically. Peeta's love for Katniss cannot be misinterpreted, and Gale does kiss her, and constantly puts her wellbeing before his own. Taking into account the history he and Katniss have, it would be harsh to interpret this simply as acts to secure her position as a rebellion leader.

Within the area of exploring Peeta and Gale, both in terms of their own heroic features, and the effect they have on the heroism we perceive in Katniss, there is much uncovered ground. The guys' influence on Katniss and the reader has been almost completely overlooked, and as academics are currently occupied with uncovering the importance and interpretations of female protagonists, it is also important to explore the men's significance, and what their "new" purpose is. To claim that they are simply the new princesses in the stories(which would be the simplest form of gender inversion) would be quite narrow-minded and easy. One has to assume their new purpose is more refined than that. By exploring these issues, one can find additional ways of opening up the traditional roles for characters in literature, thus creating a wider arena for interpreting characters. In addition to contributing to the discussion of heroism in academic circles, the analysis can be of use in a pedagogical setting by giving pupils of English (particularly advanced ESL learners) an engaging way to approach popular literature.

Previous Research

In her Master of Arts Thesis "*Katniss and the Monomyth: Constructing Gender Identity in The Hunger Games*", Hilary Montgomery uses Campbell's theory incorporated with ideas from Pearson and Pope to examine the female hero's journey in *The Hunger Games*. She claims that the role gender plays in the female hero's journey, as well as how it differs from the traditional male journey should be incorporated in the study of the monomyth as the differences are quite extensive. (42). Although her perspective is a feminist one, Montgomery spends most of her thesis discussing where and when the different aspects of the respective theoretical methods can be applicable to Collins' trilogy, and touches quite often on Katniss' role as a hero, her sexuality, and occasionally, on the boys' role in her life. She points out the importance of many of the male characters in the novel and posits their roles as for example additional fathers, making them very important in terms of Katniss' journey. (19). However, she does encounter many of the problematic elements of using the monomyth, and thus

excludes many aspects that are interesting when one sees Katniss as a whole. For example, Peeta's and Gale's roles in the plot are merely recognized, but not explored, nor acknowledged as relevant for her growth. Montgomery concludes with an ambiguous view on Katniss' role as a hero, where she never asserts where Katniss can be accurately placed within the hero categories.

Comparing the two Masters Theses recently discussed would prove interesting judging by the different results the two critics found. Hilary Montgomery and Christine Mains both wrote Masters of Arts Theses focusing on female heroes and their functions as heroes. However, their approaches differ extensively as Montgomery attempted simply to incorporate female aspects into the monomyth, and then apply this onto her material, whereas Mains created a new platform from which she could explore the female hero without disrupting elements of theoretical models not complying with one another.

Another critic who has tried applying different hero theories onto Katniss is Wayne Stauffer². Contrary to the blend that Mains and Montgomery attempt, however, Stauffer applies the different group by group in order to see if any of them contain a hero role which would fit Katniss. He problematizes the issue of where Katniss would fit into one of the traditional heroic archetypes, and discusses several different hero systems and attempts to systematically apply them onto Katniss in order to determine if she can be categorized as a hero. First of all, he argues that one immediately interprets Katniss as a hero due to her status as both a strong character and the protagonist, but that "Collins has written her as [a] different kind of action/adventure story Hero than we have seen previously." After determining that conventional literal hero analysis proves insufficient in categorizing Katniss, he remarks that the model is not created to include female heroes, and will therefore be incomplete to categorize women. The second model Stauffer uses is Carl Jung's 12 archetypes: Innocent, Orphan, Hero, Caregiver, Explorer, Rebel, Lover, Creator, Jester, Sage, Magician, and Ruler. Although this model allows for the hero to possess traits of several type characters instead of just one, it also relies on the male archetypes for comparison, and Stauffer interprets this as its weakness when characterising female heroes.

With no adequate model to classify Katniss, Stauffer turns to an old version he learned of ca. 25 years ago, and calls it simply a 'Female Hero Archetype' consisting of 6 specified criteria, including isolation, unifying the community, personal relationships, power of

² Stauffer teaches writing and literature at Houston Community College in Houston, Texas.

goodness and honesty with very limited violence, reforming the villain, and avoiding competitions and fights. Proving that Katniss has recognizable traits correlating to all of these heroic aspects, he claims to show her heroism. Although Stauffer is not wrong in his examples, many of them are very untypical for Katniss. Claiming she "...has power over others because of her overwhelming love, wisdom, goodness and honesty", and that she uses very limited violence, can be viewed as twisting the truth slightly. Katniss is through most of the first and second book unaware of what is actually happening and is basically trying her best to stay alive. Any calibrated actions she takes are based on guesses or plain misunderstandings, which effectively rules out her position as someone with wisdom. Neither does she possess any substantial amount of honesty, as she constantly lies as well as deceives those around her, albeit with mostly good intentions. Any attempt to advocate Katniss as a peaceful person who would hesitate before using violence would be futile. She longs for peace and no more suffering, but she does kill more people than appropriate if one is to describe her as reluctant to use violence.

Stauffer also explains how Collins uses some distinct story elements unique to the Female Hero Archetype, including Conflict, The Secret, Popularity, Community Unity, A Nurturing Nature, Expression of Emotion, The Obnoxious Person, and Social Disapproval. However, many of the story elements Stauffer has selected cannot be said to represent Katniss as a person. For example, the claim that she has a nurturing nature is quite a bold one considering Katniss is scared of sickness and is one of the least helpful characters in the room when Gale suffers severe damage after being whipped at the pole, which is one of the examples Stauffer has chosen to prove her nurturing nature. In addition, one could strongly disagree with his statement that "The only man she has derived any strength or power from is her dead father...". This completely ignores the fact that Peeta saves her life with the bread, Gale helps her confidence when hunting in the woods, and both Cinna and Haymitch contribute greatly to her belief in herself when she is in the arena. All of these characters have clearly contributed to strengthening and/or empowering her, and overlooking it minimizes the importance of the characters. Stauffer is correct in his assessment that any type of conventional literary hero analysis will not be sufficient to categorize Katniss. However, his attempt at using a unified female hero archetype appears strained at times, and not the ideal fit for an optimal analysis of Katniss' heroic traits.

Due to the popularity of the series' novels and films, many have used the protagonist Katniss in comparisons, typically with other (sometimes female) protagonists of young adult

novels. Sarah Outterson Murphy examines how the function of child soldier and identity combine in her article “The Child Soldier and the Self in *Ender’s Game* and *The Hunger Games*.” She finds that “The profound psychic distress they experience is not simply posttraumatic stress disorder or anger at the adult world but a realization of their own participation in the violence they fear.” (Murphy 207). Like Murphy, Mary F. Pharr sets out to compare Katniss with a popular character from young adult literature, namely Harry Potter. In her article “From the Boy Who Lived to the Girl who Learned: Harry Potter and Katniss Everdeen”, Pharr deduces that Katniss’ learning curve is one of the defining features of her character. In that regard, as well as in terms of being liked only on occasion, she carries much resemblance to Severus Snape, which perhaps is even more important for young adolescents to understand, she argues (227).

Seeing how strong women equipped with qualities usually assigned to men behave and are perceived is without a doubt interesting, and Amanda Firestone’s article “Apples to Oranges: The Heroines in *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*” manages to unearth some quite interesting aspects in this regard. She suggests that the heroines are both struggling as agents and that “Katniss is an agent who seems to refuse her agency, instead allowing her reactions to be dictated by her reactions to what is happening around her” (Firestone 217). Although Firestone accepts that Katniss has some traits typical for a modern female hero, this reaction to being an actant greatly affects Katniss’ status as hero.

Notably, much has been written about Katniss and her role as a female hero. However, surprisingly little has been written about Katniss’ two counterparts Gale and Peeta, as well as the dynamic between the three. Perhaps one does not usually believe secondary characters to be of much importance, considering how ground-breaking many find Katniss, but one should never underestimate the impact of secondary male characters, and especially not when they play roles in a love triangle. Mains states that “In the duomyth, the male character is equal to the female hero even when she is the viewpoint character and the main focus of the narrative” (77). In other words, focusing on Katniss is expected, as she is the protagonist, but that does not exclude the importance of her male counterparts.

One of the few critics who recognises the value in examining Gale and Peeta closer is Whitney Elaine Jones, who in her article “Katniss and Her Boys: Male Readers, the Love Triangle and Identity Formation”, seeks to prove that the balance between masculinity and femininity is of great importance in the triangle. By deconstructing the entire idea of the triangle, with Katniss on top and the boys on either side below her, Jones sheds new light on

how one can interpret Katniss' situation in the novels. Instead of a triangle, Jones suggests a horizontal line with two opposite outer points representing masculinity (Gale) and femininity (Peeta). Katniss is constantly oscillating in between the two and thus her argument seems to focus on a structure where Gale and Peeta function as absolutely essential components in defining Katniss. Her first hesitations and doubts about her own abilities to kill humans, and to show compassion, is displayed in contrast to her two companions who both encompass the extremes of either feminine or masculine.

Judging by the title of Ellyn Lem and Holly Hassel's article "'Killer' Katniss and 'Lover Boy' Peeta: Suzanne Collins's Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading", one might expect that the significance of Peeta's function in the novels would be examined. The authors' focus lies, however, more on Katniss' female and masculine qualities. In essence, Lem and Hassel argue the point whether Katniss has an element of hybridity/androgyny, or whether she is simply a female character with qualities valued in a patriarchal setting. They emphasize Collins' use of foils when it comes to other female characters in the series "...which almost always highlights her male-identified strength against their feminine weaknesses..." (123). Lem and Hassel are correct in their assessment that Katniss has more masculine traits than what is perhaps "normal" for a female heroine. However, by comparing Katniss to the other women of the novels, they are claiming that gender needs to be compared to the same gender, not function of actant to function of another actant, for example helper to helper. Katniss has very little in common with many of the women in the novels, and thus appears rather extreme, yet the walk-on characters she could be compared to more accurately, are the other female victors, for example Mags, Enobaria or the female morphling (CF). Their status as victors shows that they have gone through the same trials as Katniss has, and her traits and features are not too different from theirs.

Furthermore, Lem and Hassel's focus on the women as foils ignores the obvious occasional use of men as foils, which helps normalizing Katniss' behaviour. Gale, for example, is displayed as a great hunter and strong provider in order to make Katniss' role as sole provider for her family less extraordinary. His eventual transformation into a soldier while Katniss becomes fragile allows for her to keep her feminine role in their relationship.

In order to properly place Katniss' function in terms of heroism, the first chapter will problematize her actions and position as a possible heroic character in the trilogy. Focusing on her development, as well as the problematic issues in her status as a female hero, the chapter will also contain a discussion of her feminine and masculine nature, her fear of anything

relating to traditional feminine values, in addition to how the ending of the third novel affects her role as a hero. The second chapter will then focus on Peeta and his function in the novel. It will touch upon many of the same elements as chapter one, including function, both heroic and in other roles related to the hero role, but will also cover some additional discussion about what makes one weak. Gale's function will follow in the third chapter, where his role as actant will be explored. His active disposition compared to Peeta's passive part makes him very central to the movement of the plot, which will also play a role in the chapter, before he is seen as part of a collective hero in chapter four. The fourth and final chapter will serve as a connecting point, tying all of the three main characters together in an analysis of how their interaction or lack of action affects their functions in the trilogy. The dynamic between them will be discussed with the aim of uncovering whether or not focusing on the three of them as a unit, or two of them at a time, removes some of the problematic elements previously encountered when trying to categorize Katniss as a female hero.

Chapter One: Katniss and the Ambiguity of the Female Heroism

Katniss is the protagonist of *The Hunger Games* and has been recognized by readers and critics as a strong woman who does not conform to traditional female gender roles. She hunts and kills, refuses to dwell on love, and feelings overall seem to confuse her. These qualities are typically associated with male characters, especially survival instinct and emotional control, as far as one can call a refusal to acknowledge feelings controlling them. Although she starts off volunteering for the Hunger Games instead of her sister, Katniss is throughout large parts of the book the reluctant hero, believing that if she can just get through the next step then she can go home and go on with her life. According to the monomyth, a hero needs to accept the inner journey they will go on, but Katniss uses her stubbornness to refute her own heroism, and stumbles through much of her quest thinking it will all be over soon.

Occasionally, she does have breakdowns where she realizes that she can never get out of the wheel of violence she has entered, but these episodes are short, and her conviction that she will eventually be left alone is a safety-measure in her brain. She does not feel like she is entering the hero role herself until the third novel, when she accepts that there is no returning to her old life, and she has to move forward, and vows to overturn the government no matter what the consequences. This chapter will primarily focus on her role as a female hero by examining the ambiguous aspects of her heroism.

Through most of the first novel, Katniss performs typical heroic tasks and acts very much in accordance with what one might expect from a hero. Montgomery's explanation of how Katniss follows the traditional pattern of a hero's journey, as well as how it differs due to her position as a woman, is quite satisfactory when one isolates the first novel, as she manages to capture relevant trait of Katniss' behaviour. Her study shows that especially from the point of view of the first novel, one can easily advocate Katniss' status as female hero by using both Campbell's monomyth and elements of Pope & Pearson's inverted model. However, Montgomery also notes that "Not every story about women or girls can be considered heroic – nor should be" (4), a point which needs to be emphasized due to our problematic starting point when examining Katniss. Her lack of self-understanding and knowing what she wants results in Katniss often letting other people make decisions for her. This raises the question of whether or not the hero always has to be the driving force. Naturally, the action in novels is

not always lead by the protagonist, but an alarmingly large amount of *The Hunger Games* is lead by other people than Katniss.

Hourihan stresses that “In first-person narratives the character telling the story filters the event through his or her own consciousness” (38). As it is Katniss’ narrative, we already assume Katniss is the hero and thus any heroic act she performs, or any heroic traits she shows, is already expected as a “given” from the point of view of the reader. Mains discusses this distinction between the monomyth and the duomyth in this regard: “In the monomyth, one character, the protagonist or viewpoint character with whom the reader identifies, is the hero, ... On the other hand, in the duomyth, there is a sense of disjunction between characters and function” (33). When one has a preconceived idea about how characters function in a novel, it is important to pay attention not only to when the character in question deviates from the standard we have set, but also when they conform to it.

Throughout the second novel, Katniss’ function becomes more ambiguous. The reader now expects a certain level of bravery and heroism from the protagonist, yet the actions of the novel are very rarely led by Katniss herself. Being chosen to go back into the arena, she starts to unravel slowly. The nightmares get worse, as her small hopes of surviving the next games practically vanish after she decides to save Peeta. Because the reader gets to follow her thoughts, he or she gets the *impression* that she is strong due to her thoughts about getting through what she is currently experiencing: “I just sit there watching Peeta rip out the pages of the victors who were not picked” (CF 217). Judging by Firestone’s ideas, Katniss is simply reacting, not acting (217). This gives the reader a false perception of Katniss being active, as it is constantly her point of view. However, close reading shows that it is Peeta who decides their plan for training and eating, whereas Haymitch leads the scheming with other victors (207). In reality, Katniss’ contributions are limited to angry comments and mean thoughts about President Snow: “...he could never back down now. The only option left to him is to strike back, and strike back hard”(CF 292).

Back in the arena, Katniss can quickly resume her role as the strong hunting woman after Peeta is wounded, but this only lasts for roughly 100 pages, until it becomes clear that they had been pieces in a game for a long time. (299) In essence, the actions of Katniss and Peeta inside the game have not affected their situation much, except that they managed not to kill everyone, including each other. Any progress either of them have made on a hero’s journey must therefore be considered as spiritual development. The power they gain is quickly lost, or turns out to have been an illusion to begin with. All the benefits they believe they gain from

winning the first Hunger Games, turn out to backfire: their victory tour lets them see for themselves the misery in other districts, the food packages eventually contain rotten food, President Snow runs their love story like a PR campaign, and ultimately, the one thing they are promised, exemption from fighting in future Hunger Games, is taken away as they are selected again. Collins uses these episodes to show how President Snow's power is overwhelming Katniss, and how her role as a hero is affected by how she uses her power, or lack thereof.

Heroes usually derive some sort of power from their experiences, whether it is by choice or involuntarily. It can be as simple as having the opportunity to make an important decision, or setting up the plot so that someone else can help them out. Montgomery argues that Collins' repeated theme of Katniss needing help and becoming rather helpless or apathetic after every episode of empowerment makes her seem weak. (33). This constant removal of power is indubitably problematic for Katniss' image as the hero of the group, not because it is impossible for heroes to show weakness, but rather because important events for the plot's progress happen while she is inactive.

As we have seen in previous research, having a female hero protagonist usually leads to disadvantages due to the character existing in a patriarchal society. However, we rarely see women exploiting the fact that they are women in a non-sexual way, which makes Katniss' fabricated pregnancy such an interesting ordeal. Considering the fact that it is not initially her idea, it is actually Peeta who is manipulating her into using her femininity as an asset. Katniss, however, accepts the situation and gains sympathy from the people of the Capitol because she is in a typical "woman's situation", and they feel that she (and her false, unborn child) needs to be protected. Montgomery also suggests that Katniss hides behind her gender when she faces a difficult situation, but when she is empowered she rejects these same gender roles. (21). This is very relevant in terms of the second time she and Peeta are in the Hunger Games, where she feigns pregnancy (CF 289). Although it makes her seem weak to the audience, she embraces the role of playing the pregnant woman, first in an attempt to cancel the games, and after the initial plan fails, as a booster for empathy from the viewers: she even rubs her belly in the hopes of getting gifts sent into the arena, which is nothing more than her exploiting a lie (CF 323). Outside of the arena, as previously mentioned, she would not dream of having children of her own, and she rejects both the idea that she should bear children just because she is a woman, and that anyone who knows her should expect her to change her mind, after all she has been through.

In accordance with Pratt's belief that love and a conventional role as homemaker is restricting to a woman's development, Katniss refuses to consider having any children, or truly reciprocate Peeta's and Gale's comments about love. Montgomery claims that this concession to traditional stereotypes for women completely disregards Katniss' hero status. (39). In my opinion, this is definitely a valid concern. If part of Katniss' hero journey was to find herself, can we really claim that she did that? She spends so much of the trilogy free to use her skills which are traditionally considered masculine, but when she returns home after completing her mission and everything that she has focused on throughout the novels, she accepts her new conditions and changes rapidly with them. She quickly goes from fierce violence and chaos, via someone who is apathetic and starts singing in the shower, to someone comfortable with sharing her life and everything with a man. Due to the last chapter being an epilogue, we cannot see the changes happening between the state of the peace and Katniss' new life, but she is so transformed in the epilogue, simply by being with Peeta and having children (M 438). Some might argue that Katniss longed for a "normal" life and safety, and that being safe, she is now free to pursue her inner dreams of living a quiet, simple life. Yet the reader does not see the transformation in her nature; she quickly changes without any explanation, and with regard to issues which are of great importance to her, and she feels strongly about. She reasons with herself that she is so damaged they cannot let her go anywhere, and no one quite knows what to do with her (M 425). Basically, the ending suggests all women are wives and mothers at their core, and when they are left completely free to choose for themselves, provided they have both a safe environment and a true love in their life, that is what they will want. This is a typical case of Hourihan's ideas of how women are marginalized.

The fact that Katniss eventually succumbs to Peeta and accepts having children, although it is made clear she was still reluctant, further complicates Katniss' role as a strong leading woman. Katniss' reluctance towards having children is founded in her belief that the world she lives in is a horribly oppressive one, and that not being able to guarantee a potential child a minimum level of protection is unbearable (HG 11). One might interpret this as an attempt to adapt to her world order as well as her own strengths judging by her very limited feminine traits and the fact that she lacks mother instincts. However, the way she cares for her little sister Prim, as well as others she loves, proves that she is more than capable of risking everything to protect her loved ones. Her disinclination on this matter is thus not based on doubts about her own abilities, but rather a genuine fear of bringing someone into a world she

herself does not deem safe. Showing empathy for Rue and Prim, as well as feeling responsibility for the safety and protection of her friends and family, is simply not the same as the essence of being a mother.

However, Katniss' possible identity loss as a result of her having children is not as problematic for her status as a female hero as her mental decline. If one is to believe the statement at the beginning of this thesis, that heroes are not supposed to become weak and fall apart, Katniss surely does not comply completely with the requirement for heroism (or loses it, one might argue). After shooting an arrow at and thereby killing President Coin, Katniss has finally reached the limits of what her mind can take, and she surrenders herself to insanity (M 422). She wants to commit suicide, and contemplates different ways of achieving this, as well as if it is even necessary, expecting "they" are going to kill her for what she did: "'Let me die. Let me follow the others,'" I beg whatever holds me there. There's no response. Trapped for days, years, centuries maybe. Dead, but not allowed to die" (M 393). It is not uncommon that traditional heroes are close to the breaking point and almost give up or sacrifice themselves; the problem with Katniss is that her mental deterioration and wish for death happens so late in the novel, yet she does not die. If she had committed suicide in order to save someone, as for example Lord Asriel in *His Dark Materials*, she would still fit the criteria, as Campbell's theory clearly states that death can occur. However, no one will gain from her death; she would not be sacrificing herself for another or for a greater cause, she would simply be committing suicide because she cannot live with what has happened, and also because she is so mentally disoriented that she still believes the new leaders are going to either kill her or use her for some new propaganda. Likewise, if she had been contemplating capitulation earlier in the novel, and then fought her way back to life in a heroic manner, the return to joy of life itself would be part of her "quest", but her attempted suicide happens too late in the trilogy. Drawing from Pharr's ideas, Katniss' psychic distress must be seen as a part of her identity process, as it is now Katniss has the chance to relax a little and must come to terms with the violent role she has played in the events leading up to President Snow and Coin's death. Katniss' failure to return to "normal" life by herself could also be indicative of the stage in Campbell's monomyth called "Rescue from Without". She receives assistance from Peeta in returning back to a life in District 12 when he helps her with the therapeutic exercise of making a scrapbook (M 435).

The slow decline of Katniss' mental state which we have followed through the last two novels has thus reached its climax, and it would have been an easy way out for Collins to let

her protagonist succumb to her thoughts and die as a martyr for justice and drift away peacefully in a drug-induced fog. By the end of her solitary confinement, Katniss is even afraid of living – she believes the only thing worse than dying is to be kept alive, convinced there is nothing left for her on earth but cruelty. A hero who fulfils his or her task, and then dies at the end is still a hero, but how does one recover a hero who is so broken it is questionable they will ever be sane again? At this stage, Katniss is clearly struggling with returning to a version of her previous life, which complies with Campbell’s stage of “The Crossing of the Return Threshold”. Accepting a place in the old world when the hero has been through a humongous ordeal might prove difficult as the hero has had adventures and ordinary life appears mundane.

Collins chooses to remedy the matter of Katniss’ fragile mental state quickly, relying on song as Katniss’ personal meditation technique, in addition to moving her back home. Katniss has previously shown occasional episodes of feeling comfortable when singing, and when she is almost succeeding in committing suicide, she suddenly starts to sing: “At the window, in the shower, in my sleep. Hour after hour of ballads, love songs, mountain airs. All the songs my father had taught me before he died...Days pass, weeks...And in all that time, mine is the only voice I hear” (M 423). Her singing shows two things: firstly, that she finds solace and comfort in being alone. Although this could be indicative of her coming into her own as a strong independent woman who does not need the men in her life, this is later refuted by her immediate connection to Peeta, whom she then spends all her time with when they move back home (436). Secondly, the singing, she says, is a legacy from her father, a man from whom she has drawn strength and peace. One might interpret this as a sign that she feels safe and protected when she is connected to things reminding her of her father, such as hunting and singing. If so, she has managed to transcend and use the aspects of him she needs to define herself, as well as be comfortable with who she currently is. In other words, she has reached atonement with the father, according to Campbell, accepting his death and taking on the aspects of his role that she loved.

Mirroring this parent relationship is Pearson and Pope’s stage of reconciliation with the mother (177). Katniss’ strained relationship with her mother has been an obstacle in her emotional development for years, and the main reason is her lack of faith in her mother’s abilities to protect and feed the family. The fact that her mother became apathetic after Katniss’ father died in the mines convinces Katniss that her mother is weak and cannot be trusted with responsibility: “Perhaps it is a sickness, but it’s one we can’t afford” (HG 41) Her

conviction of this is so strong that she begs Gale to feed her family when she goes away to the games (HG 46). Her trust in Gale exceeding that of trust in her mother is not surprising; nevertheless, her relationship with her mother clearly affects her strongly. Resolving this conflict is a slow process, moving over almost two novels, and Pearson and Pope claim that this stage in the hero quest, “A Woman is her Mother”, is essential to a female hero’s journey as: “The reconciliation with the mother allows the hero to develop within herself human qualities such as nurturance, intuition, and compassion, which the culture denigrates as female” (177). Although Katniss possesses these qualities, I would argue that her reconciliation with her mother is not as much coloured by a gender journey, as by an identity journey. Katniss learns to forgive her mother, in spite of nothing changing in her mother’s behaviour. Her apathetic state and passivity almost let Katniss and Prim die, and so Katniss is not only accepting her own feminine traits, but also accepting that other people are not as strong as she is, and do not have her survival instincts. She is, in other words, forgiving her mother instead of seeking forgiveness from her.

Katniss’ steps through the hero’s journey can, as explained above, be explored through many different models, but she inherits traits and experience episodes from different ones. Yet, her individual journey is not the only relevant aspect of an analysis. According to the duomyth, a hero can take on many different roles and functions, and it is necessary to interpret Katniss’ various roles in order to determine whether her function as an individual character, or her interaction with other characters provide the most complete picture of her.

As a contrast to Katniss’ heroic role in her own quest, she has an interesting function as opponent to both Peeta and Gale, respectively. Mains argues that such a conflict can easily occur within the duomyth as: “...both male and female heroes in the duomyth function as questers, as objects to be won, as guides and helpers to others, and even as the opponent placing obstacles in the hero’s path” (34). Katniss’ role as opponent to Peeta is only an illusion to him, as he is hijacked by the Capitol at this stage and cannot think clearly, but the threat to and attempt on Katniss’ life is very real. His inability to always tell truth from falsified memories stays with Peeta for the rest of his life, greatly affecting their relationship as he needs to be constantly reassured that their feelings for each other are real, even years after his hijacked state. Katniss’ failure to rescue Peeta resulted in him being captured by President Snow, and after Peeta is recalibrated into believing Katniss is dangerous, he has tremendous troubles trusting her again. She appears to him as a villain and obstacle, and he

cannot relax or be himself around her for a long time. In essence, she becomes his second worst opponent, after President Snow.

Katniss' role as opponent to Gale is more emotionally oriented. Gale has admitted to having feelings for Katniss, and although he is an excellent strategic asset to the rebels, his feeling for Katniss are what occasionally cloud his judgement, for example when he risks his life to rescue Peeta (185). By refusing to acknowledge their relationship's potential to evolve, she is denying Gale what he wants most and what only she can give him - love. The fact that Katniss ends up with Peeta (whether it is by choice or not), is also problematic, as we will never know what her and Gale's relationship could have been. She claims that:

...what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty of that 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. (436)

With Peeta, she eventually becomes a mother, and in a very different situation from where she has been her in the previous parts of the trilogy. Gale was her hunting buddy, they were very much alike and thought similar thoughts. It is possible that Gale would not have the same need for children, and perhaps it would have been easier for Katniss to remain the character she was, with her strength and power, if she had spent her life with someone who could have adapted to her, or even with her.

Overall, Katniss' loss of power in the third novel proves harmful to her role as a hero, at least in any familiar form. Montgomery claims that her one redeeming quality is enough to defend her heroic function: "Katniss' lack of power through much of her story is only saved by her action of killing Coin ...this ability to see further in the future than any of those around her...is what makes Katniss the hero [of] the novels." (42). Still, is this ability really enough to secure her position as hero? Pharr emphasizes the importance of a learning curve for Katniss' development, yet it appears that she completes an inverted curve of heroism, where she is originally very heroic, but eventually makes some serious mistakes, some that turn out well, for example, shooting Coin, and some that don't, for example visiting the hospital in district eight, where the entire hospital is bombed as a result of Katniss' presence. Finally, she gives up on everything before being reborn as a new person, which according to Campbell's monomyth should be a stage in her departure. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that what has previously been stated: Katniss is a hero. The problem is not that she does not have certain heroic traits, but that she is partly "damaged", and she even sees herself thusly. When Katniss doubts her accomplishments in *Mockingjay*, commander Boggs states that "Well,

you're not perfect by a long shot. But times being what they are, you'll have to do" (102). He implies that she is the best hope they have got, but again, neglects the importance of Peeta and Gale, as well as the strength displayed in their joint efforts.

After examining the ambiguous elements of Katniss' heroism, it appears she has several functions in the trilogy and thus functions as a complicated heroine. Although gender is difficult to exclude from the analysis as Katniss lives in a patriarchal world, several of the traits which complicate her roles could just as easily be found in a male hero, for example mental illness and occasionally taking a passive role. However, what is expected of her as a woman does ultimately affect how the reader perceives her function. Katniss' role as hero is very strong through parts of the novels, as she shows surviving skills and kindness to others, in addition to going through several steps of the hero's journey. However, one can also argue that she possesses many traits that do not cohere with the traditional archetypes of heroism due to her complexity, which further complicates any analysis of her. It is important to note, though, that the fault might not lie with Katniss as a character, but simply be due to her actions and thoughts being too modern for the older models. Authors are constantly seeking to challenge the reader's perceptions and preconceived ideas, and when they succeed, and Collins does, in my opinion, new models are needed to compensate. The duomyth allows for something which previous theoretical models do not: it allows for Katniss to be complicated and cross the boundaries of gender stereotypes, as she can move through different functions and display many different traits, as well as behave passively, without necessarily losing her status as hero.

Chapter Two: The Baker's Boy Used as a Foil

Although Katniss is the protagonist of the *The Hunger Games*, her male companions play vital parts in the plot, and in order to truly decipher Katniss' function, one needs also to take into consideration the functions of both Peeta and Gale. In this chapter, Peeta's functions in the trilogy will be examined in relation to the duomyth, and his assigned role as lover will be problematized, in addition to Collins' use of Peeta as a foil for Katniss' femininity. I will thus be examining these different perspectives of Peeta's part in the hero's journey: he will be viewed both as an individual actant, but also as part of a "dynamic duo" with Katniss.

Peeta is the "Baker Boy", also called "Lover Boy" by the tributes in the Hunger Games. He is undoubtedly a soft and caring character, creating an opposite to Katniss' strength. In order to be able to discuss his heroic traits, a good place to start is to see how he fits into the monomyth. Much in the same way Katniss does, Peeta departs involuntarily, and goes through many of the steps on the hero's journey, as he briefly deviates from Katniss in order to complete his own quest – save her from the Careers (HG 227). His passive parts in his own quest are not common for a hero, although they can be seen as a sacrifice. Peeta accepts the risk of dying weak and alone in the hopes that he has strengthened Katniss' position in the games (HG 296). Similar to Katniss' journey, he also returns home, and although he is unaware of many of the dangers he has recently faced and is still facing, the fact that he has faced many stages of the hero's journey would ascertain his right to be considered a hero in his own right. He appears to complete the last step of Campbell's monomyth "Freedom to Live" as he no longer has any rational fears: "Peeta says it will be OK. We have each other" (M 438). However, the fact that he still struggles with differentiating between real memories and false one makes this an uncertain notion (M 436).

Peeta is initially one of the "weak" men in the trilogy, which is not just due to his love for art and baking, but more the fact that he is in a setting (the games) where the skills one needs to survive are for example hunting, kindling fire, have knowledge of roots and berries etc. – skills which Peeta does not possess. Peeta seen as an individual character is thus vulnerable and weak, whereas his connection to Katniss makes him strong. Interpreting Peeta as part of a duomyth with Katniss would make him the feminine power to a masculine one. And even though the power in the relationship at this stage (the beginning of the novel) lies with Katniss, it eventually becomes more level as Katniss becomes more passive and Peeta learns how to be a soldier. Comparison is an effective tool when ascribing specific traits to a certain

character. It is quite plausible that the weakness reoccurring in Peeta's character is used simply to enhance the reader's perception of Katniss as a strong character: "I stop and look back at Mag's limping form, the sheen of sweat on Peeta's face. "Let's take a break," I say" (CF 320). In the first novel he is used as a foil for weakness in order for Collins to display Katniss' strength, courage, and exceptional hunting abilities, as well as her need to protect people weaker than herself. Peeta is strong in terms of physical strength, but he has many feminine attributes, such as a love for baking, artistic features, deep compassion, and perhaps most important of all – he loves Katniss.

Although it is usually said that love makes one strong, Peeta's love for Katniss makes him vulnerable inside the Hunger Games. His attempts to protect her puts him in harm's way, and Katniss has to continually save him, which reaffirms her position as the strong one in their relationship. Lem and Hassel write about Collin's use of female foils, but they neglect to discuss the way Peeta is used as a male foil in contrast to both Katniss and Gale, especially during the first novel. Although Peeta briefly schemes in order to save the girl he loves, he needs to be physically and mentally rescued by her repeatedly before the 74th Hunger Games are over. Peeta's position as a passive party continues after he recovers from his illness as he still follows Katniss' lead, and picks berries while she hunts (HG 370).

When Lee Edwards analyses fiction by using the Psyche tale, he aims to reclaim heroism for female characters, and finds that an inversion often occurs when someone needs to be rescued, "...a female hero must rescue a passive male who can do little to help himself." (Edwards via Mains 15). In scenarios including hunting and fighting, Peeta fills this role as an opposite to Katniss' strength. His role is to emphasize her strength by offering comparison to a weaker figure. Furthermore, Edwards claims that "...if the female character is strong and adventurous, the male character is weak and helpless" (ibid). This use of Peeta as a foil to Katniss is quite apparent, and no doubt accentuates Katniss' strength and heroic features in the first two novels of the trilogy.

Peeta's function is quite static also throughout the second novel, as he remains the feminine counterpart to Katniss' strong lead. His love for her has not faded, even though she pretended to love him and clearly deceived him. In *Catching Fire*, it is clear from the beginning that Peeta is prepared to follow Katniss' lead. His only solo actions are talking to Haymitch in an attempt to convince him Katniss should be saved, and networking during training to create a pact with other tributes. Similar to the first novel, Peeta is continually weak throughout the second novel. He cannot swim and has to be fetched by the dashing

Finnick Odair, after which he comes in close contact with a high voltage fence and has to be carried for a while. His feeble attempt to persuade Katniss she has to save herself is not successful and he spends the remainder of the novel following the rest of the group. One exception, however, has to be made, as Peeta is not always the weakest link in the novel. According to Montgomery, Peeta gains control over Katniss' sexuality when he reveals his feelings for her on TV, and later again when he purports she is pregnant: "He is, in effect, performing her gender for her, thus disempowering her" (28).

Peeta's function is very ambiguous as it, similar to Katniss' role, changes drastically in the third novel. With regards to Peeta, there are several circumstances in which one can identify a clear divide in his actions. Montgomery assigns Peeta the role of the lover (38). She argues that although he starts out a character with many feminine traits, he does eventually take on a more masculine role, specifically after being tortured, and towards the end of the trilogy when he expects Katniss to take on the role of mother (ibid). There are many episodes in the book supporting Montgomery's claim, but especially her interpretation of the ending seems accurate. As previously discussed, Katniss strongly rejects the idea of having children, but Peeta manages to talk her into it, and after many years, she agrees. There is never any mention of him persuading her, but she reasons with herself: "But Peeta wanted them so badly" (437).

So far, Montgomery's analysis seems correct. However, the fact that Peeta is explained by her only as a lover becomes slightly problematic. Besides being Katniss' helper in the games, helping her get her hands on a bow, he also, for quite some time in the third novel, functions as a dangerous element to Katniss. Peeta was "hijacked" in the Capitol, where they turned him into a weapon aiming for Katniss by using fear conditioning³. Even though she is now genuinely concerned for his well being, and perhaps even in love with him, he does not function as the lover. A better word for his function in this part of the novel is perhaps a temptress, using Campbell's ideas (120). Peeta is used by President Snow as a tool and the aim is to tempt Katniss either into resigning completely from all involvement in the rebellion in order to save Peeta from his hijacked state, or to succumb to her need to protect him, and accidentally get killed by him when trying to help cure him. In other words, Peeta functions as a temptress with the aim of persuading Katniss to abandon her quest, especially when he addresses her through the television broadcast: "Ask yourself, do you really trust the people

³Quite similar to the treatment Alex receives in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*. They use venom from a tracker jacker instead of drugs.

you're working with? Do you really know what's going on?" (M 130). He could also be described as a temporary villain, as he is in fact close to killing Katniss. Solving the puzzle of how to "fix" Peeta becomes an obsession with Katniss, and so one could see him as part of her quest, as he is when she has to protect him in the games. However, saving him is only part of what needs to be achieved in the games, and she has very little to do with Peeta's "reprogramming", indicating his role as her quest would be incomplete, at best.

On the other hand, interpreting Peeta and Katniss as a unified hero at the structural level, as the duomyth allows for, suggests they can still be functioning as a hero. The two powers of feminine and masculine within a single hero are thus competing wills within the one hero. For example, Peeta is the feminine power in the hero tempting the other part of the hero (Katniss) to succumb to the traditional feminine traits of caring too much and thus abandoning an important mission.

One of the central questions concerning Peeta is: why do we still feel such compassion for him despite his weakness compared to Katniss? One could argue that his tendency to be an obstacle to Katniss in the games would make him an obstacle. When Haymitch and Katniss agree Peeta is by far a better person than both of them "No question, he's the superior one in this trio", the reader does not disagree (CF 201). One possibility is that the passive part he plays becomes a foil for purity, honesty, and compassion, compared to Katniss' masculine appearance. If one were to examine the inversion of gender roles, one could surely discover a pattern illustrating how women's purity and "passive" minds are considered "better" or more innocent, and thus deserving of happiness, than the vile ways of men. This might also apply to men. In J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy *Lord of the Rings*, it is important for the old war heroes Gandalf and Aragorn that the simple ways of the hobbit remain undisturbed. Passive nature is portrayed as more valuable than aggressive. Perhaps in *The Hunger Games*, Collins hopes to hint at the problematic issue of men being discriminated for acting in too feminine a manner, and showing that fighting without using violence is not reserved only for women. Peeta's aptitude for avoiding violence not only makes him heroic, but even more heroic than Katniss and Gale, who do not hesitate before taking the lives of others. If so, Collins is not only criticizing the fact that female traits such as love and compassion have been portrayed as weaknesses in the patriarchal society, but she is also using a male character to depict it. Although one could interpret the situation as empowering the male even further and simultaneously disempowering the female, in my opinion, Collins is playing with gender roles in the aforementioned way, and uses the reader's preconceived ideas against him.

One has to consider whether the fact that Peeta has a developed romantic interest in Katniss, while she has no idea how she feels, but often pretends to love him, affects their power situation. Interpreting Peeta's position can be difficult seeing as he is in love with Katniss, but in the beginning of the first novel, she does not love him back. When she eventually does love him, and they become parents, she has obviously changed. Two respected feminist critics reach the conclusion that: "even when male and female characters love each other with the same commitment and intensity, there is an inherent imbalance of power in the relationship." (Pearson and Pope 34). Due to the epilogue being quite short, the reader cannot know how the power is divided between the two, but as previously mentioned, the children indicate a setback for Katniss as a separate identity according to traditional gender roles. Similarly, Mains claims that men and women in a romantic relationship are unequal (70). If this is correct, then Katniss and Peeta have both accepted an unequal position, which for Katniss appears very unnatural. He could thus keep the function of lover, but would in addition be considered an obstacle to Katniss, and become her opponent.

Peeta's function as opponent to Katniss' quest is twofold. Firstly, due to his injuries and inability to care for himself in the forest, he is a liability throughout most of the games themselves. He seeks to protect Katniss at all cost, but does not comprehend that he is a liability as Katniss chooses to help him before herself, and she is perfectly capable of caring for herself, so he is not helping anyone. In addition, his inclination to return to conventional gender roles after they return from the quest indicates he is preventing Katniss from further exploring her newfound identity. Pope and Pearson's, as well as Pratt's claim that romance will always be an obstacle for the female hero, is thus true, if one also accepts their interpretation that a return to the traditional gender roles should be considered as a subordinate position, and thus, in turn, defeat.

On the other hand, if one places Katniss and Peeta as a dual power into the structure of the duomyth, they both have the same quest on the structural level – save Katniss and overrun the Capitol – both of which permeates into the surface level. Initially, the quest is to ensure Katniss' survival in the Hunger Games. Katniss wants to live so she can go back to her family, and Peeta wants Katniss to live because he loves her. Even Peeta's separate quest, when he joins the Career pack for a brief period of time, is aimed at giving Katniss the best possible start. For a long period of time after that, Katniss refuses the quest of challenging the power of the Capitol. This leaves her in a small vacuum, which is shared with Peeta as no one discloses to him what is really going on and how much danger they are all in from the Capitol.

When Katniss eventually does change her mission to breaking the power of the Capitol, Peeta has been tortured and hijacked by them, and so their quest is to revolt against it, which they do as they are both trained as soldiers. Unifying Katniss and Peeta can thus seem to remove some of the individual ambiguity in Peeta.

The structure of the duomyth allows for “extreme” opposites, as the hero is divided into feminine and masculine. Although previous use of the model has been limited to male characters representing the masculine and female characters representing the feminine, there is no reason why one cannot reverse it. In *The Hunger Games*, Peeta and Katniss enter this structure as representatives of the opposite gender. Judging by the numerous feminine qualities Peeta has, and the many masculine traits Katniss has, one can see how they could be seen as one hero, with an ultimate goal, split into two characters who each embody opposite parts of the gender-scale. As Jones advocates, Peeta is the very feminine, while Katniss oscillates back and forth on the gender scale. She is, however, unquestionably masculine enough to serve as the masculine to Peeta’s feminine. If the two can be seen as one, the problematic issues of power in their relationship becomes less damaging to their assigned roles. They can also have interchanging and intertwined functions, which makes Peeta’s female attributes more an expression of feminine qualities connected to the hero, than a simple need for a present weak force to Katniss’ strength. Peeta’s heroism is, much like Katniss’, very ambiguous as it is the dynamic between them that leads to heroism.

Chapter Three: The Handsome Hunter and the Equally Strong

Gale is the most solid one out of the three main characters, as his motifs are revealed at the very beginning of the trilogy, and he does not alter them. He wishes to escape the oppression he is under by the Capitol, he is a calm and loyal friend to Katniss, and he has romantic feelings for her, which he does not express very often due to her awkward inability to deal with emotions. This chapter will focus on Gale's intermittent episodes as the heroic archetype and epitomized fairy tale prince, as well as his heroic attributes. Assigning Gale the role of a helper is an easy way to keep him from interfering with the traditional love story of two young people (Peeta and Katniss) falling in love and living happily ever after. However, Gale plays a many important roles in the novels. In addition to being a rival to Peeta, he is a love interest of Katniss', and although he is absent through much of the first two novels, his presence is constantly disturbing Katniss when she is pretending to love Peeta for the cameras, as she is aware of Gale's feelings for her. Also, Gale plays the most active role through much of the third novel, at times splitting his role as helper with a role as hero. In essence, Gale's functions are much more widespread and ambiguous than what has usually been accredited to him. He, like the other two, does not fit into stereotypical archetypes, and a new method of interpreting heroism is needed to include his ambiguity into an analysis.

In contrast to Peeta, Gale is the strong, masculine man and has been so through most of Katniss' life. He advocates rebellion, or at least resisting the government by running away into the woods just the two of them, from the very beginning of the first novel (HG 10). Gale is the one Katniss entrusts with the care of her family, showing he is the one person she relies on to be strong, like herself. His skills cohere with patriarchal masculine attributes, such as hunting, protecting the family, being the breadwinner, behaving in a gentlemanly manner, and being an excellent fighter. In the duomyth, Gale represents the masculine; he has a good balance of power in his relationships, yet he displays typical masculine traits. Before exploring how interpreting him within the duomyth with another character affects his heroism, it is important to see how he functions as an individual character.

Gale, like Peeta, goes through many of the steps of the monomyth, although he starts much later, seeing as he is left out of much of the first book, and thus limited to an emotional journey at the start. In terms of Campbell's monomyth, Gale's hero's journey does not

properly commence until the end of the second novel, right before he eventually leaves home. Although he has considered leaving many times, he has been reluctant, and he leaves only when he is forced to flee in order to survive. This stage of Gale's journey can be described with Campbell's step "Refusal of the Call". Gale wants to rebel against the Capitol, or at least leave District 12 and live his life in the woods far away from the oppression of the Capitol. However, his sense of duty towards his family, the rest of his district, as well as Katniss keeps him from going: "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" (M 115). After his departure, Gale experiences many of the hardships of a hero, although the reader cannot ascertain his exact path through the stages of the hero's journey, as we are limited only to Katniss' version of the narrative. In *Mockingjay*, however, he completes several separate quests while Katniss is incapable of contributing to the rebel activities. This coheres with Campbell's stage "The Road of Trials". His trials include solving the puzzle of how to blow up "the nut", a military camp, as well as rescuing Peeta from the Capitol. Afterwards he needs to protect Katniss from Peeta, when they are all sent into battle despite the fact that Peeta has not been restored from his hijacking. Gale could have also had a return home, which is a big step in all the different hero's journey theories, had he been the one waiting for Katniss in district twelve by the end of the trilogy. However, he continues on a new quest, bringing peace and stability by rebuilding the peace trooper's headquarters in district two. In this regard, he might be interpreted as a hero in his own quest, now separate from Peeta and Gale, although his actions and decisions will continue to have an impact on their lives, as he is one of the rebuilders of Panem. If one chooses instead to see his life in two as the end of his hero's journey, Gale is going through the step of "Refusal of the Return" according to the monomyth. He struggles to adapt and sees no possible outcome where his return home would benefit himself or the people he loves. Whether Gale finally finds the "Freedom to live" is difficult to say, so we cannot know if he completes this last step of the hero's journey according to Campbell.

As an individual actant, Gale is, as mentioned above, a very strong character who can be seen as heroic on many different occasions. However, he also has clear functions when interacting with Peeta and Katniss. Gale's conviction that rebellion is the right way for the districts to defy the government worries Katniss, as she fears the Capitol and their military strength. This side of Gale coheres with a "guide" function in hero's tales as he continually acts as Katniss' guide, showing her the path she needs to take; only she does not accept the idea of rebellion until much later. He thus functions as the "Wise Old Man" for a while,

although unlike in the traditional scenario of a hero's journey, Katniss does not take his advice and cannot understand his reasoning until much later, when she herself experiences and understands how much power lies with the common people. Gale knows all along, and even though he is impatient with Katniss to reach the same conclusion as he did, he waits for her and does not force her to choose the path until district 2 is bombed and there is no other choice left.

The role of guide and helper intertwine for Gale, as he is both simultaneously instead of switching back and forth. His role as lover, for example, is much more periodic, whereas his functions of guide and helper are constant. Gale is definitely one of the best helpers Katniss has, but does that limit him to only that role? Helpers can take on different forms and the help can come in various shapes, but Gale is so important that Katniss trusts him with everything, even her life. In turn, Gale trusts Katniss to shoot him if he is captured by the Capitol and risks torture: ““And I’ll have Katniss”, says Gale with a smile. “She won’t give them the satisfaction of taking me alive.”” (379). Katniss, in turn, proves to *not* function as a helper to Gale in this event, as she fails to comply with his wishes, even though he begs her to shoot him: “Shoot me. That’s what he was mouthing. I was supposed to shoot him! That was my job. That was our unspoken promise, all of us, to one another. And I didn’t do it...” (388). By failing to kill Gale, Katniss strangely enough managed to fail her most important mission as helper to Gale.

Although Montgomery identifies Gale as the “main helper” to Katniss in her quest, I believe this to be neglect of the importance of his function in terms of bringing the plot forward. A helper's role is to help the hero come through difficult situations, whereas Gale is a strong independent force, sometimes carrying the action of the plot just as much as Katniss. It is Gale who rescues Peeta from the Capitol, and he is also the one who comes up with ideas about how to gain control of the Capitol's military headquarters. In addition, Gale saves many people from District 12 after it is bombed, and if Katniss had been injured in any way, and not able to continue the mission to overthrow the Capitol and President Snow, Gale would no doubt have continued on the mission as a military leader and outstanding strategic soldier. If one were to call him only a helper, it would also trivialize his situation as the potential lover, for example in the role of a “temptress” if one is to follow parts of the monomyth. In Campbell's monomyth, someone or something arrives in the stage “Woman as the Temptress” to lure the hero to stray from his path. When Katniss believes she can go back to her old life, and just accepts the fate that she has to live with Peeta forever, Gale's presence (especially

after he kisses her) reminds her that she is unsure of her feelings for Peeta: "...but all I really remembered was the pressure of Gale's lips and the scent of the oranges that still lingered on his skin. It was pointless comparing it with the many kisses I'd exchanged with Peeta. I still hadn't figured out if any of those counted" (CF 31). Gale also urges her to see the importance of rebelling against the Capitol, or that they should at least run away, for she will never be free under the eyes of the government: ""The lives of district people – they mean nothing to them!" I say. "That's why we have to join the fight!" he answers harshly."(CF 114).

In addition, Gale assigned function as helper would also be an insult to the impact Peeta makes. He might not be a helper in the same way Gale is, but he is certainly a central helper to Katniss, and perhaps more importantly – Katniss and Peeta form a connection where they will be helping each other for the rest of their lives.

Gale is not simply some "helper" who helps Katniss achieve an endgame, but actually acts very much like a hero would, selflessly and with a strong conviction. If the roles were reversed, and Gale was chosen for the Games, the end-result would probably be close to the actual ending.

Gale's function as a helper is interchanging throughout the novels. It is not until the very end that his function in this regard changes instantly and completely to the very opposite. Gale's ability to make traps for game and the enemy has been an asset to Katniss for a long time, and it proves useful for her when she is part of the rebel alliance, when it is discovered how they can be weaponized. However, at the end of the attack on the Capitol, a trap carrying an uncanny resemblance to one of Gale's traps is used to kill numerous children and nurses, among them Prim, Katniss' sister (M 391). The fact that her sister's death might ultimately be traced back to Gale, although he acted with the best intentions, is devastating to Katniss, and it effectively ruins their relationship forever. He admits that he does not know whether or not it was his bomb that killed Prim, but points out that it is not really important, as "You'll always be thinking about it" (413). A very small aspect of his character, his ability to think strategically, as well as devastating circumstances, eventually divide them, but nonetheless, Gale has suddenly become a clear opponent in Katniss' quest: "Even now I see the flash that ignites her, feel the heat of the flames. And I will never be able to separate that moment from Gale" (413). He has both removed one of her best helpers (himself), and also one of the few people Katniss was relying on to bring her back to reality, Prim. She was the object of Katniss' quest as she wanted to keep her safe from harm, but when she dies, Katniss is free to face her inner monster and fall into a state of mental madness. Gale is therefore very

ambiguous in his function at this moment, as he is both part in rescuing the people of the Capitol, which was also Katniss' quest, but simultaneously, he serves as a villain, destroying Katniss' last hopes of an old life. Seen as a duomyth, this means that Gale and Katniss are one hero, who achieves his/her goal, yet has to pay an unimaginable price for it, and can never forgive himself/herself for the choices he/she made. This interpretation complies with the later events in the novel, where the hero then struggles with how to move on, as well as how to feel about what was done and who did it.

As previously stated, Gale represents the masculine part of the duomyth, but he also functions as a masculine character overall. However, Gale's strong exterior does not entail that he is completely devoid of sentiment and emotions associated with femininity. Occasionally, he shows how hurt he is by Katniss' actions as well as her tendency to keep him waiting for her to make a decision. He reveals this side for example when they are standing in the ruins of district twelve and Katniss kisses him before tears start running down his cheek. When Gale states that he knew she was going to kiss him, and she questions how, because she did not even know it herself, he responds: "'Because I'm in pain... That's the only way I can get your attention... Don't worry Katniss. It'll pass'", referring to her constant need to protect and save people, but inability to act on love (145-146).

Gale's role is often the one who acts. Whether he is helper, lover, hero, opponent, or absent from the events, he is rarely passive. The passage above describes one of the occurrences in the book where he appears as the lover. He kisses Katniss passionately because he has loved her for so long and had not had any outlet for it. Neither is it plausible that Katniss, with her at this stage quite passive and reactive disposition, would ever approach Gale in a romantic way. "I had to do that. At least once", he says, both showing her that she should never forget who he could be, but also that he acknowledges her difficult position and fear of action (CF 30). Although the episode could be interpreted as an intrusion into Katniss' love life, her reciprocation of the kiss indicates that she also still acknowledges him as a potential lover, despite her strengthened connection to Peeta.

Whether she regards Gale as a helper, lover, villain, or equal, Katniss and Gale share an understanding of nature and love of the forest. In *The Hunger Games*, there is much textual evidence to support the idea that a male and female are sharing the hero role, thus having several functions as well as sharing functions. Numerous surface details reveal this possible interpretation. Collins spends much of the novels describing how Katniss and Gale think alike, which could indicate a link corresponding with the duomyth. The two are not just

people who often have the same ideas, but are able to communicate without talking to each other. Hunting is just one s factor, but their inner centre seems to inhabit warrior souls. They are both next to unbreakable, they see weapons and traps wherever they go, and they believe that the way to achieve their goal is through violence. Gale has even more of the angry power within him, but Katniss catches up with him in this regard quite quickly. The reason for why he is so eager to attack the Capitol or arrange a riot, while she is hesitant, is simply because she has seen with her own eyes how easily the government can access her and her loved ones in the districts, and she honestly believes that they have no chance of winning, as well as that there is a way back to the old life. As soon as she lets go of this idea, she is just as vicious and calculating moving through the Capitol as he is. Collins also shows that Katniss and Gale agree on fundamental ideas relevant to their position in society, such as whether to starve or be shot: ...Gale and I agree that if we have to choose between dying of hunger and a bullet in the head, the bullet would be much quicker (HG 19).

This interpretation concurs with Mains interpretation of the duomyth as consisting of one male and one female questing as equals (34). Katniss represents the feminine power to Gale's masculine power; although these roles are largely expressed through activity and passivity. Gale's individual function is very ambiguous as it is constantly changing, but when interpreted in connection to Katniss, he becomes part of a strong hero. The two of them complement each other's activity levels, where one remains passive helper or villain in the background while the other is actively pursuing the quest.

Chapter Four: Collective Heroism in the Dynamic Duo – or Triad?

Having previously discussed the characters as individuals, their functions within heroism in *The Hunger Games*, as well as their possible adaption to the duomyth, this chapter aims to discover the dynamic between the three characters, and how one can interpret the three characters as a collective unit. Is Katniss a stronger hero when she interacts with either, or both of, the boys? Is all of the characters' interaction linked to their strength as heroes, or as one hero? The duomyth allows for an interpretation where several characters can be seen as one, and throughout the previous chapters, I have discussed the advantages of exploring Katniss, Gale and Peeta within this new model. They are all three ambiguous characters, whose functions evolve and change drastically throughout the novels. Katniss' role as the only hero of the quest is problematic as there are several episodes in the novels where she does not act in a heroic manner, for example when she tries to commit suicide, and avoids making an important decision of whom she wants to spend her life with. Her being a woman complicates the analysis of her as a hero, yet it is not her femininity that prohibits her from performing the aforementioned heroic steps. Peeta's role changes immensely when he evolves from a weak lover to a strong soldier, still, he moves through different stages of a monomyth quest and one has to question whether he should be defined as only Katniss' lover. With Peeta as the originally weak character, Gale is strong from the very beginning, but his strength is not present through the parts of the novels where Peeta and Katniss are inside the games. However, Gale takes on a surprisingly active role through much of the third novel and his relationship with the two others complicates his position as simply "helper". Seeing the three characters as one in different combinations, or even as a collective unit, resolves some of the problematic issues regarding the three characters.

As discussed in the previous chapters, Peeta, Gale and Katniss all cope in different ways with the fact that their quest succeeded and they are now to return to their old world. Campbell's monomyth includes a stage of the return category named "Master of Two Worlds", in which the hero manages to find balance in his spiritual and actual life. In *The Hunger Games*, the three characters manage to keep on living, but whether or not they completely master their two worlds is doubtful, as both Katniss and Peeta have frequent episodes of nightmares and difficulty separating reality from perception, respectively (M

438). Mains' duomyth, however, allows for an ending where: "...the hero does not master the two worlds; instead, the dual hero mediates or bridges the two worlds, recognizing the ambiguity, appreciating both the differences between opposites and the variety, the complexity of the world" (37). This description of handling the return appears more correct in terms of Peeta and Katniss, as they struggle still with balancing these two worlds, yet they adapt to them.

Generally, popular fiction is what one would associate with heroes, including a clear division between the different characters. Traditional fairy tales have, perhaps the most stereotypical scenario where the prince rescues the princess (or another passive female character) from the dragon and thus he is the hero. If one applies these roles onto the rescue mission in *Catching Fire*, one possible prince (Gale) saves another possible prince (Peeta), for the heroine (Katniss). Another way of looking at this peculiar alternation between heroic characters would be to interpret Gale as a temporary hero. He saves Katniss by giving her "what" she needs in order to move forward on her own hero's journey. What makes this scenario special, however, is that it is a very vital piece of the story, in which Katniss does not participate at all. If one were to see the episode in light of the duomyth, however, the scenario supports the idea of collective heroism, as it justifies Gale taking on the hero role temporarily. His strategic planning and masculine sturdiness is what is necessary in that specific situation, while the feminine power (Katniss) rests, shows compassion for Finnick Odair, while also desperately searching for solutions to upcoming problems.

When Peeta is being held captive in the Capitol and Gale rescues him, many of the structures created around the characters previously in the trilogy, disintegrate. Katniss becomes surprisingly passive, suffering due to her trauma, and her actions are limited to observe the "new world" she has arrived in, district thirteen, as well as quarrelling with Plutarch, Haymitch, Coin and Gale, sometimes simultaneously (85-86). Peeta is tortured in the Capitol, and is manipulated into using his eloquent speech to urge the rebels to lay down arms. This, in turn, upsets Gale, who previously respected Peeta, making it easier for Gale to dislike him, as he is in fact committing treason. Gale claims that he would never have betrayed the people of Panem like that, and that he would have rather died (of course, he is unaware of Peeta's hijacked state at this point) (30-35). This split between the characters is not only limited to values and rebel ideas, but extends to action as well. Peeta is naturally immobilized from doing anything physically, but he affects the plot greatly by using his words, although this must be seen as involuntary action, as he is being pressured and

manipulated. Katniss, on the other hand, can barely perform the simplest of tasks, and repeatedly fails when the leaders of district thirteen attempt to use her as a propaganda tool. Her active role is limited to her own discovery of what is currently happening, as well as following instructions when she feels inclined to, and show compassion in a passionate way when they make the “proppos” (M 100). She chooses to shoot down the hovercrafts targeting the hospital she just visited together with Gale, but that only intensifies the situation, as President Snow immediately retaliates, and she quickly returns to her apathetic state.

With both of the other characters rendered more or less motionless, Gale proceeds to take on a more central role in the plot. He attends strategy meetings, works with the military to develop weapons, trains as a soldier, and even helps Katniss with the propaganda clips. Seen as a unit, the characters suffer greatly during this part of the novel, as they all act as a hindrance to each other. Peeta is tempting Katniss to give up his mission, as the people in the Capitol are punishing him whenever she aids the rebels. Katniss is demotivating Gale as she refuses repeatedly to fight the oppression he has been fighting for a long time, and he knows that he and the rest of the rebels desperately need her to be the Mockingjay – the symbol of the rebellion. Gale is an obstacle to Katniss’ peace of mind, as he puts himself in danger in order to save Peeta from the Capitol: “*Today I might lose both of them. I try to imagine a world where both Gale’s and Peeta’s voices have ceased. Hands still. Eyes unblinking... A pale grey nothingness that is all my future holds*” (M 186). Although he does this with the best intentions, he not only worries Katniss, but also retrieves into their midst Peeta, who at that point fiercely feels the urge to kill Katniss. When united, however, the three characters are stronger than when they are apart. With everyone “safe”, their heroic acts affect one another, and every heroic act leads to a chain reaction, for example Gale’s work with the military helps Katniss understand the importance of her participation in the rebellion, which again leads to her training to become a soldier and helping others. Having Peeta safe, yet unapproachable, lets Katniss focus her attention on Johanna, who is also in desperate need of escaping her own hellish nightmares, and manages to do so while training with Katniss (M 267).

Gale’s active role in Peeta’s rescue mission is not the only situation in which one or both of the boys take over an important act we would expect the hero to perform. Perhaps one of the most ambiguous topics considering Katniss is the protagonist, is which boy (or young man by then) she will choose as lover. After reading about Katniss’ constantly confused thoughts on the matter, we are allowed a glimpse into how the boys interpret the situation when they are trapped together in a cellar in *Mockingjay*. After thinking over their story, Gale states:

“No, you won her over. Gave up everything for her. Maybe that’s the only way to convince her you love her.” (M 370-371) Gale and Peeta discuss the dilemma further, when Gale declares that “Katniss will pick whoever she thinks she can’t survive without” (M 371). Even Katniss herself reacts to that sentence and what it says about her as a person. But it is made perfectly clear that both boys love her, and that the choice is hers; everyone is simply waiting for her to be able to make it.

The trilogy is permeated with the feeling that the love issue is one of the most important choices for Katniss, especially considering her fragile mental state by the end of the third novel. According to the traditional actions one might expect from a hero, Katniss should by the end of the trilogy either be informed enough consciously to make the right choice, or she should just follow her feelings, and it would automatically turn out to be the right decision.

Judging by the significance of Katniss’ choice between the boys, one would expect this to be one of the climaxes of the story, or at least a dramatic scene in which the reader follows her thoughts and understands why she chooses as she does. Therefore, a quite curious situation occurs when Katniss does *not* choose. As a matter of fact, she does not even know who is going to stay with her until she arrives home to discover Peeta is there while Gale is helping out with rebuilding the society in District 2 (M 430). Neither Montgomery, Henthorne, nor Lem & Hassel question the situation of where, or even if, Katniss chooses Peeta, but there is no explicit explanation as to when this takes place; it would seem people simply assume it seeing as she is the hero. However, when Katniss and Haymitch are on the hovercraft heading back to District 12, he asks her “Do you know who else won’t be there?” after which she replies “No...I want to be surprised”. (M 427). Why would she be interested in who is or is not there? She has just learned that her mother will not be, and as Prim is recently deceased, neither will she. Judging by the interaction in District 13, Katniss already knows who survived the Capitol’s attack on District 12, and there has been very little interest from her side in who lives where and how everyone is doing. Haymitch, Peeta and Gale are the only people Katniss can stand, and of the three, Haymitch is with her on the hovercraft. Using the elimination method, it is safe to say that Haymitch is probably referring to Peeta and Gale, meaning Katniss does not know which one is waiting for her. Although Katniss accepts the situation and believes this to be “right” afterwards, she is never part of the process and does not choose between her two suitors. One has to consider how the fact that the boys choose for her affects her standing as the strong heroine.

Of course, there is no guaranteeing that she has not chosen already, and is waiting to see if the boys agreed with her decision, but the novel follows Katniss thoughts very closely through the last chapter of the novel, and no such decision is indicated. In addition, the reader is left with this unanswered question about who she will choose, and the scene on the hovercraft with Haymitch would have lost its role as creating suspense if she had already made a choice, rendering it superfluous: ““Do you want to know who else won’t be there?” “No”, I say. “I want to be surprised”” (M 427). Furthermore, even after Katniss has heard that Gale is now in another District, she is still trying to figure out her feelings for him in the same fragmented, short way she was before: “I have to remind myself that Gale’s in 2 with a fancy job, probably kissing another pair of lips” (433). This is not to say that Katniss does not accept the situation eventually, but it does express the possibility of her not really having made a choice yet, and perhaps relief that she does not have to anymore: “I dig around inside myself, trying to register anger, hatred, longing. I find only relief” (431).

Assuming that this interpretation of events is plausible, and Katniss does in fact not choose between her two potential partners, what does that entail for her as the heroine? Mieke Bal acknowledges “that one actant at the structural level be split into two or more characters at the surface.” (Bal quoted in Mains 23). If one accepts Bal’s statement, the question of who exactly made the choice is rendered superfluous. If Katniss is functioning in a duomyth as one with either Peeta or Gale, the choice is regardless being made by the actant. When they function as one, they are all part of the actant at the structural level. Bal also notes that “one actantial position can be occupied by more than one surface character, the role of the helper can be filled by several helpful characters.” (Bal quoted in Mains 23), which highlight the possibility of Gale and Peeta sharing roles throughout the novels. If one expands this concept to reach outside of just helper, it could mean that they can both be lovers, opponents, and heroes within their own quests. According to Mains, this could in turn be beneficial for both Katniss and the boys, as they will not face the restrictions of their genders: “In the duomyth, the focus is on both a male and female hero, who shift between actantial roles rather than being confined to a single role, thus allowing for a resolution free from gender inequality” (iii)

I have already established that how one character affects or interacts with another can have a great impact on said character’s function and changing of function, especially as it is perceived by the reader. The idea that a female hero protagonist may be affecting the function of secondary male characters simply by being female thus seems rather plausible.

Montgomery suggests that: “It may be possible that characters in the female hero’s story are all impacted by her femaleness, so that they are required to act either more in line with their gender or allowed more freedom because of her role in the story” (43). This statement appears rather inconclusive, as it implies only change, not the direction of change. Mains’ version of the duomyth removes femaleness as an issue completely: “The female is not locked into the stereotypical role of the passive object of value, the princess-bride, but can be hero, helper, even villain; similarly, the male hero is not only the hero of his quest or the object of hers, but is also helper and villain “(33).

Applying Mains’ ideas of the duomyth unto the *The Hunger Games* characters leaves room for an array of different functions and roles for the three main characters. First of all, they are all of them on the same quest. There are small differences between them on a detailed level, but the overarching goal is ultimately the same for all of them; they want to bring down the government, and they want to keep their loved ones safe at any cost, even their own lives. When they are helping each other, they are ultimately helping themselves, indicating that at the structural level, they have the same quest.

I will attempt to incorporate Peeta and Gale as the two components constituting a hero in the duomyth. After all, Jones points out that they represent the two opposite powers of the novel, Peeta the feminine and Gale the masculine. The duomyth is based on a female and male as the two parts, yet in the modern world, it is becoming common to assume that not everyone adhere to their gender. Perhaps the two male characters can represent feminine and masculine in relation to each other? Peeta and Gale, like the other possible constellations discussed earlier, also share the same goals, helping Katniss and keeping her safe. On the surface level, however, it appears as if they are both fighting to earn her love, each in their own way. Due to their limited interaction, it might be difficult to achieve a full analysis, but they cooperate when Peeta and Katniss are selected for the games for the second time. Gale helps Peeta by teaching him basic hunting knowledge, even though it means he has to spend his days with people he finds questionable: “Even Gale steps into the picture on Sundays, although he’s got no love for Peeta or Haymitch, and teaches us all he knows about snares” (CF 209). In addition, they meet as equals in the Capitol when they discuss which one of them they believe Katniss will eventually choose: ““She loves you, you know,” says Peeta. “She as good as told me after they whipped you.” “Don’t believe it”, Gale answers. “The way she kissed you in the Quarter Quell... well, she never kissed me like that.” “It was just part of the show”, Peeta tells him...” (M 370). Thus, their quest might seem quite different on the surface

level, while there are many similarities on the structural level. Mains argues that in the duomyth the male and female characters "...fulfill similar functions on an equal basis, rather than dominating the other" (34). Peeta and Gale may overshadow each other in Katniss' eyes at certain times, and Gale does feel responsible for keeping Katniss safe from Peeta, yet before the final battle the two men trust each other with the responsibility of protecting Katniss, as they realize they share this quest: "“No problem”, Gale replies. “I wake up ten times a night anyway.” “To make sure Katniss is still here?” asks Peeta. “Something like that”, Gale admits””(M 370).

Stepping back, one can observe that the three main characters can be interpreted in countless different ways, each of them serving several functions, both within their own quests, but also in a common one. Using traditional theoretical models of a hero's journey will always leave the critic with the problematic issue of one character being primary while the others are secondary. The advantage of the duomyth becomes clear as it opens up for a structure where the characters can be different, heroic, yet equal:

With a focus on the single hero, the one character with whom the reader is encouraged to identify, journeying alone with the help and advice of other minor, obviously secondary and supporting characters along the way, ... the monomyth, whether it is told about a male or a female hero, maintains and reinforces the sociocultural community built upon hierarchies of difference rather than equality of difference" (Mains 31).

Viewed individually, each of them are flawed in their separate hero role, but they possess a collective power, which is potent enough to break down a mighty regime of injustice. The value of their collective heroism is thus apparent to the reader, and calls for further interpretations of heroes as constructions of several characters. The lone hero can make an interesting story, yet his or her traits and functions are usually set, relying on others to change or influence them if the plot is to move forward. The collective hero structure removes this obstacle of literary function, and the heroes can thus act more true to themselves in terms of identity. They can still learn and develop, but the plotline will no longer depend on the character changing fundamentally.

Now that the advantages of the duomyth have been determined, and we have explored its effectiveness when applied to Katniss and either of the male companions, this opens up for another question. Can the duomyth only contain two units at the surface level? Mains has noted that there can be several quests within one piece of fiction "in which each companion of a larger fellowship is also the hero of his or her own quest." (29), but she is consistent in assuring her reader that the structure of the duomyth is founded in a duality between the

female and male: “Their quest may seem on the surface level to be different quests, but on the structural level their quest can be seen to be singular, one quest shared between the two.” (Mains 33). This would entail that there is no opportunity of binding all three characters together permanently, without the use of seeing them as a unit.

A theoretical model such as the duomyth should not be limited, otherwise entire novels would be impossible to analyse due to the need to scrutinize every character. The purpose of isolating one character for literary analysis would be lost. However, the dynamic between the three characters of *The Hunger Games*, as well as their displays of various aspects of heroism, demands that the question be asked: Is it possible that the triad combined can be seen as a unit displaying typical traits of heroism? If so, the triad Gale, Peeta and Katniss are all contributing with heroic traits, forming a collective hero at the structural level. Jones interprets the gender in the novels as a line, with Peeta on one side as the typical feminine, Gale on the other as the typical masculine, and Katniss in the middle, moving back and forth between the two. Directly drawn from this, one could interpret a situation where a possible triomyth could occur: Gale representing the male traits of the hero, Peeta representing the female ones, and Katniss as the ambiguous, trapped one. She keeps going back and forth as she is the one in-between. Katniss loses her position as the one performing the action when she is not in the games, and “In order to read a text at the structural level rather than at the surface level, the critic must be careful to make a distinction between the character who is described and the actor who performs the actions.” (Mains 21). The two boys take over so much of the action and run so much of the plot that they can easily be considered actants in the novels, yet Katniss is the protagonist and has shouldered the hero role through much of the games. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to include all three in an analysis of the hero’s journey.

Instead of a solo mission where one hero must conquer all and complete the hero steps while residing at the top of a narrative hierarchy, the triomyth acknowledges the ambiguous nature of characters in modern literature and how they function, as well as how they *could* function, in a hero’s quest. With the three characters Peeta, Gale, and Katniss represented together on a structural level in the triomyth, the three characters’ respective strengths and weaknesses are highlighted by contrast with the other two characters. Katniss’ weaknesses bring out the boys’ strengths, and vice versa. The important thing is therefore not only how they function as a team, but that their collective abilities and traits are sufficient to complete the journey they are on. Thus, a triomyth allows for an interpretation where the central

characters contribute to achieving a common quest, without being confined to separate functions.

Conclusion and Final Comments

The aim of the thesis was to study how contemporary literature challenges the traditional role of the hero, by exploring the character functions of Peeta, Katniss and Gale in *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Their functions present a variety of perspectives on heroism, both in terms of traditional ideas of heroism and female heroes, but also suggest that minor characters can function heroically, and change between different functions, in turn affecting the reader's mind-set regarding the protagonist.

Katniss, Gale, and Peeta all have ambiguous functions and assigning them traditional roles connected to a hero's quest without taking into account their constantly changing functions, limits the opportunity to explore them fully in terms of heroism. Katniss is often a strong heroine, but several episodes in the plot prove problematic to her as an individual hero. Within the duomyth, however, she can be explored fully as her passive episodes serve only as temporary levelling her intensity and power with that of Peeta and Gale. Peeta's and Gale's ambiguous roles change throughout the plot, and their active roles can be explained best if they are part of a united hero.

By applying the theoretical model duomyth onto the characters Gale, Katniss and Peeta from Suzanne Collins' trilogy *The Hunger Games*, one can both include two vital characters into the analysis of Katniss, as well as analyse the female hero in a way which does not limit her as a result of narrow models. In addition, by using the triomyth, the ambiguity of characters' individual function disappear, as they are displayed not as individuals, but as a whole unit, a collective hero. The triomyth model is thus currently the most efficient theoretical model for interpreting heroism in *The Hunger Games*. Possibly, future novels of heroism might require a further expansion of the term, in which case I suggest "polymyth" can be used when one needs to analyse more than three characters on a common hero's quest simultaneously.

There are many opportunities for further research within young adult fiction, and although female heroes have repeatedly been studied as individuals and in comparison to other female heroes, much is unexplored in the realm of mother-daughter relationships in young adult novels. "Atonement with the father" is one of Campbell's stages of a hero's journey, which can be discussed in terms of its relevance to female protagonists. Young women usually have a special relationship to their mother, and a study of these bonds would make for an interesting contribution. From the constrained relationship between Katniss and her mother in

The Hunger Games, via the impact Triss' mother's death has on her in *Divergent*, to the immensely complicated feelings young Lyra holds for her mother in Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*, a study of mother-daughter relationship's significance for the protagonists seems long overdue.

Although Collins needs an ending to her book which fits the overall heroic type, it would have been interesting to see a version where Katniss fights her way back. Many young men and women struggle with mental illnesses, and it is a topic that is sometimes dealt with by making the protagonist show strength on behalf of a friend or relative with such a disorder. In addition, Posttraumatic stress disorder(PTSD) has gotten its fair share of focus in terms of war veterans, victims of catastrophes, and even women losing their children. This trilogy features a young, strong, female protagonist, who herself loses everything in her life and must choose between fighting on and giving up. It would have been a golden opportunity for creating an inspirational ending for youth struggling with various types of depression and suicidal thoughts.

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