

An ideological analysis of the construction of the young female action hero as feminist hero
in *The Hunger Games* film franchise.

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For the female heroes in my life. Without you, this would not have been possible. Special thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Lynette Steenveld, for her unwavering support in helping me see this thesis through to its completion. Jude, for your faith in me that I could do this, and your unfailing support in giving me the time I needed. Thank you.

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Abstract

Young female action heroes have recently stepped into the limelight as commercial celebrations of Girl Power in Hollywood action-adventure films. Feminist film studies however have shown that these independent, tough female heroes claimed as feminist, are still constrained in various ways through stereotypical gender roles within the action-adventure genre. This thesis examines these claims through the ideological analysis of the young female action hero Katniss in *The Hunger Games* film franchise. Building on existing research on female action heroes, the research asks: ‘to what degree can the claim of Katniss as boundary-breaking, feminist hero be validated’?

This question is addressed through a textual analysis of the four films of *The Hunger Games* film franchise, employing conventions of action-adventure genre, narrative analysis, *mise-en-scène* and cinematography to unmask the characterisation of the female hero. The discussion of the findings, utilising the themes of Love, Violence and Power, reveal both progressive and regressive elements present in the characterisation of Katniss. The findings indicate that while female action heroes can be celebrated for displaying progressive moments of liberated action, they remain constrained within dominant heteronormative gender roles in commercial Hollywood films, undergoing various acts of transformation and recuperation as a means of containing the threat of their transgressive behaviour.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Katniss Everdeen, female action hero of the billion-dollar film franchise *The Hunger Games*¹, has been framed by US news media as one of the most popular, ground-breaking heroes of our time. She is described as a “lethally tough linchpin”, “the boundary-smashing butch goddess of dystopian cinema”, and a “classic charismatic revolutionary hero” by the *New York Times* (Dargis 2012, 2014). *TIME* names her “the most popular activist-heroine” (Corliss 2014). The *Washington Post* declares her the “ideal heroine for her age” (Hornaday 2012).

The films² are set in the futuristic dystopian world of Panem. The Capitol extorts resources from the districts by means of its superior military technology, surveillance and propaganda orchestrated through its media monopoly. The Hunger Games is an annual event broadcast as a reality-TV game show to all in Panem in which tributes, two children randomly selected from each district outside the Capitol, are forced to fight to the death. Like Roman gladiatorial games, these televised Games offer a spectacle of the Capitol’s power over its subject districts. Katniss’ trials as a tribute in the Games, and as a victor beyond, catapult her to the centre of a media-fuelled rebellion against the Capitol³.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the construction of this female action hero in the popular action-adventure genre. It does this by drawing on the concepts of mediation/mediatisation, ideology, feminism and feminist film theory to probe whether Katniss is indeed a ‘boundary-smashing’ ‘activist-heroine’, and what the implications of this construction of a female adolescent hero are for our mediatised gender order. This research validates feminism as a relevant framework for analysing a new generation of ‘liberated’ female heroes. It does so by

¹ The total earnings for all four films are estimated at 2.97 billion US dollars. Box office sales figures drawn from The Hunger Games Wiki. Available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunger_Games_\(film_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunger_Games_(film_series)). Accessed on 27 November 2019.

² The *Hunger Games* film franchise is based on the bestselling novels by Suzanne Collins and consists of four films: *The Hunger Games* (2012), *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (2013), *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1* (2014), and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2* (November 2015). For purposes of brevity and clarity in this thesis, the following stylistic naming practices are adopted: The *Hunger Games* film franchise is identified as THG, while the four films respectively are referred to as *Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, *Mockingjay Part 1* and *Mockingjay Part 2*.

³ For the complete film synopses, see Appendix A.

exposing the ideological structures present in contemporary popular culture where ‘legacies’ of sexism still prevail (Stabile 2009).

The Hunger Games film franchise is part of a new generation of action-adventure films featuring young female protagonists, drawing the spotlight away from more mature women warriors (Lupold 2014: 6). In the 1980s, women heroes were ‘musculine’, exhibiting muscular appearance and masculine strength (Brown 1996; Tasker 1993). The 1990s and early 2000s saw these ‘musculine’ heroes become ‘action babes’: hard bodies became softer and leaner, exhibiting greater sexual appeal while maintaining masculine attributes of agility and aggression (Lupold 2014). ‘Musculine’ heroes and ‘action babes’ are two of the major tropes identified in the action genre (Lupold 2014). Film theorists have debated the merits of these ‘warriors’: whether they are new definitions of female heroism, or merely heroic men performed by women through ‘cinematic cross-dressing’ (Hills 1999; Tasker 2004; Brown 1996).

Young female action heroes are presently enjoying the limelight as the latest embodiment of the female action hero. These young protagonists have their own trajectory in film history. Female adolescence in film from the 1930s onwards focused on the sexualisation and eroticization of young girls (Lupold 2014). The trend reached a turning point in the 1970s when the delinquency became violent (Lupold 2014). These ‘Lolitas’ (vixen-like prepubescent girls) continued to appear in 1980s and 1990s films with many of these gun-toting, killer heroes equating sexuality with violence (Ricapito 2010). In the 1990s, young female protagonists were introduced into the action-adventure genre in the form of ‘action babe’ (Stuller 2010, Early 2001).

Post 9/11 these heroes became more dependent on their male counterparts (Stabile 2009). In a society portrayed as post-gender and militaristic, themes of patriarchal protectionism prevailed (Faludi 2007, Stabile 2009, Godfrey & Hamad 2012). While today’s female heroes may be physically ‘liberated’ and less sexualised than their predecessors, they are still recuperated into patriarchal social structures. A classic example is the female hero as ‘daughter’ archetype (Schubart 1998) who is mentored by a ‘father’ figure and encouraged to fight oppression by taking up arms (Lupold 2014). These heroes, however, are usually forced to adopt more traditional forms of femininity by the end of the film. They give up their killer professions or violent lifestyle in favour of domestic concerns, which often include going back to school, marriage, or starting a family (Lupold 2014).

It is against this history that the female hero of THG is viewed. A significant feature of Panem is its structure as a mediatised society (Hjarvard 2008). The centrality of media to the functioning of Panem saturates the films' plots: the reality-TV 'Hunger Games' game show, surveillance from the panopticon-like Capitol, and the use of other broadcast media products to mould and disseminate public opinion in the districts. The Capitol uses its media monopoly to construct the political and social narrative in Panem. The media logic of the Capitol creates and sustains a world-view favourable to maintaining its power, while later on the rebels use their intermittent control of the media monopoly to foment rebellion. Katniss is constructed as tribute and victor of the 'Hunger Games' by the Capitol's media logic, whereas the rebels use her media prominence to construct her as the symbol of their rebellion, the Mockingjay.

Three frameworks are used to probe the construction of the female hero: ideology, mediation/mediatisation, and feminism. Ideology reveals the ways in which media constructs meaning in the service of power, and the strategies it employs to do so. In the construction of this hero, ideology exposes the ways in which these strategies potentially sustain relations of gender domination. Mediation/Mediatisation draws attention to the influence and participation of the media in constructing the social, political and cultural context of Panem, and within that, of Katniss as tribute, victor, and Mockingjay. Feminism exposes the legacies and perpetuation of sexism embedded in the mediatised world of the films, utilising feminist film theory to further understand the mediation of gender performance.

Thompson's (1995) concept of ideology is used to make sense of the gendered construction of the female hero. Thompson identifies a "strong connection between mediatization and its cultural consequences" (Thompson 1995 in Hjarvard 2008: 109), which stems from his critical conception of ideology. He conceptualises ideology as "the ways in which meaning, mobilised by symbolic forms, serves to establish and sustain relations of domination" (Thompson 1990: 58). Domination is not limited to class and extends to other relations: between men and women, ethnic groups and nation states operating in a global system (Thompson 1990). He identifies legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation and reification as discursive modes of the operation of ideology, noting typical strategies of symbolic construction for each (Thompson 1990: 60). The strategies are 'symbolic devices' which mobilise the construction of meaning (Thompson 1990).

Mediation is the act of communication by means of a medium within a specific setting (Hjarvard 2008). Mediatisation, by contrast, signals that media are no longer seen as outside of society exerting influence (Hepp *et al* 2010), but have become part of the fabric of society itself (Hjarvard 2008). Media now produce culture: it pervades all spheres of human activity, becoming “the cultural air we breathe” (Hoggart 1976 quoted in Hepp *et al* 2010: 224, Hjarvard 2008). The institutionalist tradition (Hjarvard 2008) focuses on media as an independent institution within society possessing its own logic, while simultaneously being integrated into other institutions. ‘Media logic’ describes the institutional ‘rules’ governing the media’s functioning and its allocation of material and symbolic resources (Hjarvard 2008; Hepp 2009). This ‘media logic’, refers to “institutionalized formats and forms of staging” (Hepp & Krotz 2014: 3). Non-media actors are thus represented in the media through their incorporation into this ‘media logic’. ‘Media logic’ absorbs previously non-mediatised forms of representation and dictates the new mediatised forms (Hepp and Krotz 2014; Hjarvard 2008).

Feminism is the final framework used in this research. While the mainstream US press have labelled Katniss a female hero for a new age, Stabile identifies “continued legacies of sexism in a culture that understands itself as post-feminist, if not post-gender” (2009: 86).

Third wave feminism is built on the achievements of the previous waves of feminism, of more opportunities, more equality and less sexism (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006). Gender as ‘performance’ (Butler 1988, 1999) is derived from second wave feminism’s significant differentiation of sex as biological and gender as social construction (Rampton 2015) and is a defining feature of third wave feminism. The third wave attempts to articulate the ways in which changing global relations have shaped how gender is performed (Budgeon 2011). The deconstruction of categorical thinking about concepts such as ‘universal womanhood’, body, gender, sexuality and heteronormativity are central to this feminism (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006). ‘Grrl-feminism’ is part of the third wave, and focuses on identity, gender and sexuality (Rampton 2015), expressed through ‘Girl Power’.

Girl Power is one of the discourses presently organising the construction of the ‘neoliberal girl subject’ (Gonick 2006, Gonick *et al* 2009), raising critical questions about “changing constructions of girlhood, shifting subjectivities for girls, and their relationship to modernity” (Gonick 2006: 1). ‘Girl Power’ represents a ‘new girl’: an empowered and dynamic social

agent, free from the restraints of passive femininity (Gonick 2006; Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006).

While third wave feminists assert that feminism remains “an active and important force in contemporary society” (Budgeon 2011: 279), postfeminism declares it irrelevant and unnecessary now that gender equality has been achieved (Budgeon 2011; Tasker and Negra 2005). Co-opted by commercial culture, postfeminism speaks with a quasi-feminist vocabulary, celebrating ‘female freedom’ and ‘gender equality’ (McRobbie 2008: 532). The commercial (or popular) feminism of ‘Girl Power’, through its use as a branding tool for ‘girlhood’, permits “more subtle modalities of gender re-inscription and re-subordination to be pursued” (McRobbie 2008: 533). Drawing our attention to female heroes in popular culture, feminist writers (Butler 1999; Inness 2004; McRobbie 2009) suggest the need to expose these “reifications that tacitly serve as substantial gender cores or identities, and [to] elucidate both the act and the strategy of disavowal which at once constitute and conceal gender as we live it” (Butler 1988: 530). The action-adventure genre in particular, with its emphasis on the parody and exaggeration of the body, enables the performance of gender to become a “site of transgression and play, the focus of an attention that can make strange as well as reinforce norms of gender and sexual identity” (Tasker 1993 quoted in Neale 2000: 48). Feminist film theory is primarily concerned with the representation of women in films, and how these representations support, conceal or challenge existing heteronormative constructions of gender roles. *The Hunger Games* is an important space for reinforcing ideas about youth and gender, and particularly ‘Girl Power’.

In this thesis I aim to analyse the construction of the young female action hero as feminist hero using the frameworks of ideology, mediation/mediatisation, and feminism. Key themes of power, love and violence that relate to the construction of this hero are the focus of the discussion of the filmic analysis. I will undertake this research first by locating THG within the structure of Classical Hollywood Narrative (CHN). This structure is defined by a series of events linked by cause and effect that occur within a specific time and place (Bordwell & Thompson 2013:73). The narrative structure consists of the Setup, the Complicating Action, the Development, the Climax and the Epilogue (Thompson 1999) which follows Todorov’s structure of equilibrium, disruption of the equilibrium, a recognition of the disruption and a quest to restore the equilibrium, the narrative continues to climax, and resolution is achieved

through restoration of a new equilibrium (Prinsloo 2018: 217). The Epilogue confirms the stability of the situation, settles subplots and ties up smaller motifs (Thompson 1999). It is here where the ideological recuperation of the female hero is often found. The focus is on individual characters' agency as well as on personal psychological causes affecting their decisions and character traits (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 98). The plot follows a process of change where characters realise their goals by changing their situation and/or values and attitudes (Bordwell & Thompson 2013). In THG, the central narrative arc extends over the four films, and it is in the final film that the full development of the hero's character arc is realised. This film franchise is also located within the action-adventure genre, and carries through various conventions typical of the genre. Methods of analysis are a textual analysis conducted through consideration of genre conventions, narrative analysis, *mise-en-scène* and cinematography.

The scenes selected for ideological analysis are those focusing on Katniss' development, agency, and decisions regarding three areas: love, violence and power, as these are some of the main contested areas in the development of the female hero in the action-adventure genre (Tasker 2004, Lupold 2014). These are significant themes as they speak to contemporary constructions of gender for young women: the heterosexual love interest, the relationship to authority institutions, and engagements with violence.

Chapter Outline

This chapter, Chapter 1, presents an outline of the thesis situating the research within its social context, and outlines the theoretical frameworks, goals of the research and methodology selected.

Chapter 2 deals with the theoretical frameworks selected. Chapter 2 outlines the theory of ideology, links ideology to film in Narboni and Comolli's typology (2015) and discusses aspects of progressive film. It further outlines the theory frameworks of mediation/mediatisation, feminism and feminist film theory.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology utilised in the analysis of the films. It situates the research within a qualitative research methodology, outlines the population and sampling, and offers an overview of the methods selected: narrative and genre conventions specific to

action-adventure films as method of analysis, as well as narrative analysis, *mise-en-scène* and cinematography.

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the findings of the analysis conducted. In Chapter 4, an overview of the themes is given, and the findings within the first theme Love is discussed. In Chapter 5, the remaining themes of Violence and Power are discussed in relation to the findings. Drawing from the discussion of the themes, the chapter then focuses on questions of archetype and the ideological categorisation of the films.

The Conclusion, Chapter 6, offers an overview of the approach and summary of the findings of the discussion. It offers suggestions on the limits of the research, areas for future research and thoughts on the continued relevance some of the frameworks applied.

The thesis contains two appendices. Appendix A contains the films synopses of all four films. Appendix B contains select screenshots from the films focusing on Katniss' costumes and instances of cinematography relevant to the analysis and discussion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Mainstream U.S. media reviews of THG read as a collection of Hashtag(#)*Feminist* activism posts, praising the progressiveness of the female action hero of the series, Katniss Everdeen (Dargis 2012, 2014; Corliss 2014; Hornaday 2012). The empowering tone of these reviews suggests that this female action hero embodies a long-awaited young feminist hero in action-adventure cinema since Ripley first appeared in the *Aliens* franchise in the 1990s. Instead of simply accepting this female hero as empowering, however, it is useful to take a critical perspective from which to understand these heroes as ultimately market-driven commodities (Gilpatric 2010). Mainstream movies, of which action movies claim the largest revenue share, aim to capture the largest audience possible (Gilpatric 2010). It should come as no surprise then that “the most successful films adhere to gender stereotypes and strive to be non-offensive in order to appeal to a mainstream audience.” (Gilpatric 2010: 743).

Film genre studies outline a legacy of female heroes that have conformed to, or been identified as, various stereotypes or archetypes over the decades within the action-adventure genre. The question of the success of their performance as female hero stems in large part from the debate concerning the degree to which these women represent female heroes in their own right, or are merely men dressed up as women in an act of “cinematic cross-dressing” within the action-adventure genre (Brown 1996: 53, see also Hills 1999; Tasker 2004). Another important consideration is how these representations of female heroes, if they are discounted as women performing as men performing as women (the “musculine” heroes, see Tasker 1993: 149), navigate their heroism within the patriarchal, heteronormative society within which they are typically situated.

At its core, this discussion on performance references Judith Butler’s (1999) theory on gender performance that focuses on the idea that gender is not natural/biological, but rather a learnt performance. This is in line with the development of feminism seen in the second and third wave of feminism and raises questions too on the debate of “post-feminism”: are female heroes in films today considered post-feminist in that their gender (is made to appear that it) no longer matters in their social context? This thesis attempts to answer these questions by looking at how the female hero is constructed by considering the theoretical frameworks of ideology, mediatisation, and feminism.

Ideology as a framework for analysis reveals the ways in which media constructs meaning in the service of power (Thompson 1987, 1990), and the strategies it employs to this end. 'Power' is the ability agents hold, at an institutional level, to "make decisions, pursue ends or realize interests" (Thompson 1987). Domination speaks to an instance of institutional power whereby "relations of power are systematically asymmetrical" (Thompson 1987: 519). These instances occur when "particular agents or groups are institutionally endowed with power in a way which excludes, and to some significant degree remains inaccessible to, other agents or groups" (Thompson 1987: 519). These asymmetrical power relations include relations between "classes, sexes, races and nation-state" (Thompson 1987: 519). In analysing the construction of the gendered hero in these films, ideology exposes the ways in which strategies potentially sustain relations of gender domination. While the notion of mediatization itself is non-normative, by identifying a particular investigative perspective, namely that of gender, power becomes a relevant consideration and so links into both ideology and feminism. Mediatization draws attention then to the influence and participation of the media in exercising power in constructing the social, political and cultural context of Panem, and within that, of Katniss as tribute, victor and Mockingjay. The mediatization of gender in these films directs focus to social power which in its turn must answer questions about the ideological underpinnings of the framework within which the hero is crafted and presented to the audience and the citizenry of Panem. Feminism utilised through feminist film theory exposes the legacies and perpetuation of sexism embedded in the mediated world of the films.

Ideology

The critical paradigm in media studies was refined by Stuart Hall (1982) nearly a decade before Thompson's seminal work *Ideology and modern culture* (1990). Hall identifies a shift from earlier pluralism with its largely one-dimensional power model grounded in "behaviouristic positivism" (Hall 1982: 55), to a critical model of media research with a focus on "two- and three-dimensional models of power" (Hall 1982: 61). At issue in media was the "shaping of the whole ideological environment" and the degree to which specific viewpoints, ideas and perspectives could be modelled in order to appear "natural or divine", to appear "universal, natural and coterminous with 'reality' itself (Hall 1982: 62). The movement towards "winning universal validity and legitimacy for accounts of the world

which are partial and particular” and making these appear ‘real’ is the defining characteristic of ideology (Hall 1982: 62).

One of the key questions in the “rediscovery of the ideological dimension” within the critical paradigm is, “How is the ‘ideological’ to be conceived in relation to other practices within a social formation” (Hall 1982: 62)? This is the question that still occupies the debate on the relevance of ideology in media studies today. The other key element identified in the ‘rediscovery of ideology’ concerns the production and transformation of ideological discourses. In formulating his theory of ideology, Hall draws from various sources, but looks primarily to the linguistic tradition, drawing on Lévi-Strauss’ (1967) work. Lévi-Strauss worked on developing a “universal transformational cultural grammar” as a set of universal “laws of signification” that could be applicable structurally across most cultures. An extension of this “science of signs” was seen in Barthes’ *Mythologies* (Hall 1982: 62), considered “a *locus classicus* for the study of the intersection of myth, language and ideology” (Hall 1982: 62). Extrapolating this system of signs to work on whole societies and social practices apart from language, was taken up and developed further in Marxist structuralism (Hall 1982: 62).

The structuralist strand came to be considered among the most significant developments in the theory of ideology, with signification as a key element (Hall 1982: 62). From this perspective, events and objects in the real world could not *mean* without having meaning assigned. Identifying meaning as a social production, different meanings could be ascribed to the same event (Hall 1982: 63). In other words, the same event could be signified in different ways (Hall 1982: 73). Importantly, for a single meaning to be “regularly produced, it had to win a kind of credibility, legitimacy or taken-for-grantedness for itself” (Hall 1982: 63). Meaning therefore, was contingent on “the work of signification being successfully conducted through a social practice (Hall 1982: 73). This process of ‘winning’ a particular meaning, meant a process of “marginalizing, downgrading, or de-legitimizing alternative constructions” (Hall 1982: 63). Once established that meaning was not fixed, the “polysemic nature of language” became an important marker in that the sign “becomes an arena of class struggle” (Vološinov 1973: 23 quoted in Hall 1982: 73). This “social multi-accentuality of the ideological sign” (Vološinov 1973: 23 quoted in Hall 1982: 73) results in meaning becoming the site of social struggle for “mastery in discourse” (Hall 1982: 73).

A theoretical attempt to distinguish between discourse and ideology is found in Purvis and Hunt (1993). They argue that while each term is specific in its own tradition, combined they can be supplementary approaches to analysing power in society. A key concept is Althusser's "interpellation", and how the "interpellation of the subject positions operates systematically to reinforce and reproduce dominant social relations (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 473). This "directionality" of ideology can be exposed and analysed by employing "ideological analysis to focus upon the effects of discursive practices" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 473). Directionality confirms that ideology "always works to favour some and disadvantage others" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 478). Building on Larrain's (1983) work on positive and negative concepts of ideology, Purvis and Hunt (1993) propose a less 'value-laden' terminology in distinguishing between a critical and sociological concept of ideology. The critical concept identifies "ideological effects" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 478), and does not amount to the same "negation or reversal that figure so strongly in Marx's metaphor of the *camera obscura*" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 478). Instead, it identifies an area in which social knowledge and experience are constructed in such a way as to obscure or "mystify" the situation (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 478).

The sociological concept of ideology is based on a "plural conception of ideology as the outcome or result of the specific social position of classes, groups or agents" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 478). Here, ideology is considered as "the result of [an] objective social position and, most significantly, as a sphere or arena of struggle" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 478). This definition allows for multiple or competing ideologies (distinct from Thompson's concept), and this plurality is linked to a "conception of social position and objective interests" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 479). This second conception however loses some of the critical aspect found in the first and tends to blur ideology and discourse (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 479).

The authors attempt to repair this in their theory based on "the third way" proposed by Richard Bernstein (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 476). They achieve this by separating ideology and discourse as distinct theoretical traditions, and by returning to Marx's critical conception of ideology as it does not allow for a blurring of ideology and discourse. Ultimately, Purvis and Hunt attempt to establish "a distinction between discourse as *process* and ideology and *effect*" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 496). This resolves the tension between ideology and discourse, so that rather than an opposition between them, there "can exist a connection of supplementation and expansion" (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 498).

Interestingly, Purvis and Hunt (1993) do not consider the work by Thompson (1987, 1990). Thompson's approach, also modified from its original Marxist roots, is absent when the authors consider their theory of ideology and in their discussion of the potential spaces for collaboration between the two distinct traditions of ideology and discourse. A reflection on Thompson would have potentially allowed them to build on some of his analytical work which references both discourse (in terms of linguistics) and ideology.

Thompson's work is primarily based on a modified Marxist approach, concerned with analysing the relations of domination within society. Domination is not coterminous with power; rather, relations of domination are a form of power relations (Thompson 1987). Domination occurs when relations of power are "systematically asymmetrical" (Thompson 1987: 519). An analysis of power therefore requires "a detailed account of the relations between action, institution and social structure" (Thompson 1987: 519). Thompson (1990) develops his theory further identifying symbolic forms as way to study the workings of ideology in society. Thompson outlines modes of operation of ideology and the associated strategies (1990) as a practical analytical approach to uncovering the action of dominant ideologies in creating meaning in/through symbolic forms. Remaining cognisant of the linguistic aspect of meaning creation (1987), Thompson's work is not grounded in linguistic theory; he focuses instead on the structural aspects. He does however incorporate linguistic elements through some of the modes of operation which deal with language. Thompson also identifies discourse analysis as part of his earlier work on a "depth hermeneutical approach" which involves three principal phases: social-historical analysis, formal or discursive analysis, and interpretation (Thompson 1988: 367).

Thompson's critical conception of ideology (1990) forms the groundwork for the analysis of the female hero in this study. By acknowledging films in popular culture as legitimate symbolic forms in society, these films have the potential to act as vehicles for the dissemination of ideology. Not every film, every scene or line of script produced is an ideological vehicle – or can be claimed to be ideological in its underpinnings *per se*, according to Thompson's definition of symbolic forms or phenomena. For Thompson, "ideological phenomena are meaningful symbolic phenomena *in so far as* they serve, in particular social-historical circumstances, to establish and sustain relations of domination" (Thompson 1990: 56, emphasis in the original). It is through the study of the "interplay of meaning and power in particular circumstances" that it can be determined whether a symbolic

form is being used in order to establish and/or maintain relations of domination and subordination.

The analysis of ideology is “primarily concerned with the ways in which symbolic forms intersect with relations of power” (Thompson 1990: 56). In other words, his theory is concerned with how meaning is used within society “to establish and sustain relations of domination” (Thompson 1990: 56). Power in Thompson’s critical conception takes on a negative aspect in that it is concerned with relations of domination. In this sense, he adopts only one of the outlined criteria of negativity associated with Marx’s latent concept of ideology, namely relations of domination. Departing from Marx’s concept, Thompson identifies multiple types of domination in addition to class domination. Possible forms of domination and subordination for Thompson include “the structured social relations between men and women, between one ethnic group and another, or between hegemonic nation-states and those nation-states located on the margins of a global system” (Thompson 1990: 58). It is the structured social relations between men and women that form the basis of inquiry for this ideological analysis.

Another important distinction that Thompson draws between his theory of ideology and that of Marx’s, concerns the nature of the symbolic form and its operation in relation to its social context. Marx advances the view that symbolic forms are there to sustain already existing class relations and that these classes use symbolic forms to represent their dominant interests and aims. Thompson finds this explanation incomplete; he notes that symbolic forms are not only there to represent interests, but “are *constitutive of social reality* and are actively involved in creating as well as sustaining the relations between individuals and groups” (Thompson 1990: 58, emphasis in the original). This is an important distinction on the active and continuous creative component of these symbolic forms, and it ties in strongly to the second area in this literature review, namely that of the impact of the mediation of gender in the films. This mediation functions as commentary on the mediatised world of gender/gender performance. In other words, the meaning in these symbolic forms not only serve to sustain existing relations of dominations but are also active in the creation of these relations of domination as well.

Thompson identifies three key components of his theory of ideology (1990): meaning, the concept of domination, and the way in which meaning serves to establish and sustain the relations of domination.

Meaning exists in symbolic forms that are situated within social contexts. These symbolic forms include a broad range of actions, texts, images and utterances “produced by subjects and recognised by them and others as meaningful constructs” (Thompson 1990: 59). The contextual aspect situates these symbolic forms as always “embedded in socially structured contexts and processes” (Thompson 1990: 59), drawing attention to the systematic differences in the access to, and distribution of, various available resources. Domination aligns with Marx’s concept, as it deals with “systematically asymmetrical” relations of power between individuals (Thompson 1990: 59).

Thompson offers a framework for understanding how domination works through a close study of the way meaning interacts with power in social life. He defines modes of operation of ideology and identifies how these operate through certain strategies of symbolic construction within social contexts. Thompson identifies five modes of operation: Legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation and reification (Thompson 1990: 60). The modes and their associated strategies are discussed below in brief.

Legitimation occurs when domination is represented as legitimate, or “just and worthy of support” (Thompson 1990: 61). These claims may be based on rational, traditional or charismatic grounds. Strategies of legitimation include *rationalisation* (to justify or defend a set of social relations or institutions as worthy of support) and *universalisation* (when a set of institutions or social relations that serve the interests of a few, are represented as serving the interests of all). *Narrativisation*, involves claims about events embedded in stories which present these occurrences as a natural, timeless continuum into the present (Thompson 1990: 62).

Dissimulation establishes and sustains relations of domination by concealing, denying or obscuring them (Thompson 1990). *Displacement* and *Euphemisation* are associated strategies. *Trope* relates to “the figurative use of language, or more generally of symbolic forms” (Thompson 1990: 63), and includes metonymy, metaphor and synecdoche.

Unification sustains domination at a symbolic level through the creation of unity by embracing “individuals in a collective identity, irrespective of the difference and divisions that may separate them” (Thompson 1990: 64). *Standardisation* and *symbolisation of unity* are examples of strategies employed here.

Fragmentation seeks to eliminate threats to dominant interests by fragmenting the individuals and groups capable of mounting an effective challenge (Thompson 1990: 65). Strategies associated with fragmentation include *differentiation* and *expurgation of the other*.

Reification occurs when social realities or historical states are presented as if they are “permanent, natural, outside of time” (Thompson 1990: 65), sustaining domination by hiding the historical and social nature of certain events. *Naturalisation* and *Eternalisation* are associated strategies, where events are presented as “quasi-natural” in the former, and historical origins are obscured in the latter (Thompson 1990: 66). Grammatical and syntactic strategies within reification are *nominalisation* and *passivisation*.

The potential of symbolic forms (such as film) to reproduce, create, and sustain relations of domination lies in examining the specific context of the production of these forms, their content, as well as “examining the sense which these symbolic forms have for the subjects who produce and receive them” (Thompson 1990: 67). This tri-partite model of media analysis is elaborated on by Devereaux *et al* (2004) as an approach to interpreting the ideological workings of symbolic forms more fully.

Thompson addresses several possible objections to his theory, defending his own deliberate limitations placed on the concept within its Marxist base, and the necessarily open-endedness of ideological interpretation (Thompson 1990). While Thompson does separate his approach from the economic class basis of Marxism, for some he fails to do enough to separate himself wholly from an ‘unfashionable’ Marxist approach (Corner 2001, Downey 2008). Ideology as a working concept for analytical purposes in media studies remains problematic, given its multiple revisions and the ongoing disagreement on a defined set of meanings (Corner 2001, Downey 2008, Downey *et al* 2014, Couldry 2015, Corner 2016, Phelan 2016, Dawes 2016, and Downey & Toynbee 2016). Despite various critiques of Thompson’s theory of ideology in the debate cited above, there is consensus that his analytical tools remain valid in any cultural analyst’s arsenal (Corner 2001, Downey 2008). One of the most important critiques of Thompson’s work is that he relied too much on Marx’s critical concept of ideology based on domination, which several theorists attempt to ‘repair’ in the ongoing debate (Downey 2008, Phelan 2016, Downey & Toynbee 2016). What Thompson apparently lacks in explaining *why* ideology occurs is made up by Hall’s insights on a critical concept of ideology which finds its base in a similar structure as that of discourse, namely in the politics of language and by extension signification. The significance of ideological analysis in media

studies is part of a necessary attempt (referring to Hall's earlier work) to "deconstruct the 'lived wholeness' in order to be able to think its determinate conditions" (Hall 1989 [1980]: 62 quoted in Couldry 2015: 638). This "*will to deconstruct*" is an essential aspect of Hall's early writings on media when faced with a "new and intensely mythicised way of life in, and through, media" (Couldry 2015: 638). Hall's call to action to "deconstruct today's configurations of power and ways of living through media" remains valid (Couldry 2015: 640).

Following from the above discussion, the literature review now turns to the relation between ideology and film through a discussion of Narboni and Comolli's (2015) typology. This classification of films studies the intersection of ideology and film as a symbolic product, classifying films according to their ideological content/resistance to ideology. Feminism as lens through which to expose and discuss ideological representations of women is then discussed, highlighting the progressive and regressive elements of representation of women within broader social, historical and commercial contexts. Linking to this feminist perspective, feminist film theory is the final section considered as it pertains to the analysis and critique of representations of women in film.

Ideology and Film

Ideology finds its place in film studies particularly in 1970s film theory, through a collection of editorials published in the Marxist-leaning *Cahiers du Cinéma*, in the work of its editors Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni (Klinger 2012: 93, Fairfax 2015). The focus of their work on understanding the economic and ideological determinations of films rather than positioning film as art independent of broader social considerations, distanced the publication from the auteurist considerations that *Cahiers* had been associated with at the time (Fairfax 2015: 247). Comolli and Narboni also emphasised film's ability to "provoke formal discrepancies or ruptures with the cinema's overarching ideological function" (Fairfax 2015: 247).

The extent to which films achieve these ruptures or discrepancies are developed in Comolli and Narboni's seven categories of film, along with four critical functions which arise from the categorisation of the films⁴.

⁴ The first translation of the 1969 *Cahiers du Cinéma* editorial, translated into English by Susan Bennett appeared in *Screen* in 1971. This translation became *the* English-language version of the text defining 1970s

With most films produced and distributed in a “capitalist economic system and within the dominant ideology” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 252), it is important to analyse the way in which these films function within the dominant ideology. Do they mediate, reproduce, and translate ideology, or attempt to “reflect on it, to intervene *into* it, to render it visible and in doing so render its mechanisms visible – by blocking them” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 252). Film is a product manufactured within a “precise economic system” and is consequently a product “determined by the ideology of the economic system which produces and sells films” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 253). This economic determination of the insertion of film into dominant ideology does not preclude these films from playing different roles or reacting differently towards the dominant ideology (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 253). Criticism becomes one way of making “these *differences* manifest, to study the particular situations within the vast field of ideology...and to aid in its transformation” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 253, emphasis in the original). Film is political in the way that it is “determined” by the given ideology which produces it or in which it is produced (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 253). This determination is even more potent at the level of cinema compared to other arts or ideological systems, given the substantial economic forces deployed, particularly at the level of production (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254). With continuous attention to advances in the technological and technical aspects of production, cinema, in the way Hall discusses ideological effect, “reproduces reality totally naturally” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254). This ‘reality’, however faithfully reproduced, is nonetheless “entirely ideological” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254):

The languages through which the world communicates to itself (including the cinema) constitute its ideology, in the sense that, speaking to itself, the world presents itself: how it is, in fact, lived and apprehended through the mode of ideological illusion. (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254)

This places an inevitability on cinema that from the first moment of production, a film reproduces things “not as they are in their concrete reality, but as they are when refracted through ideology” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254). This echoes Vološinov: “Any ideological

film theory. However, more recently Fairfax (in Comolli 2015:247-250), has argued for a necessary revised translation, citing several critical errors in the original translation by Bennett: “the article in its English-language form, as translated by Susan Bennett, is *not* the text as originally written by Comolli and Narboni. Bennett’s translation is so freely adapted from the original that at a number of points it departs markedly from Comolli and Narboni’s own statements” (Fairfax 2015:248, emphasis in the original). For this reason, the discussion concerning Comolli and Narboni’s insights on film and ideology, their distinction of categories and critical functions, is taken from the more recent Fairfax (Comolli 2015) translation of the original editorial and not from *Screen*.

product is not only itself a part of a reality... it also... reflects and refracts another reality outside of itself. Everything ideological possesses meaning, it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a sign” (1973: 9 quoted in Mumby 1989: 296). This system of representation occurs at all stages of film production: “subjects, styles, forms, meanings and narrative traditions reinforce the general ideological discourse” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254). Awareness of the positioning of cinema’s role in the system as an “instrument of ideology” allows one to question the system of representation itself “in order to provoke a discrepancy or a rupture with its ideological function” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254). Drawing from this, Narboni and Comolli developed their film categorisation (A) to (G).

In (A), the largest category, are films which devotedly follow ideological tenets, carrying it forward “without any gaps or distortions, being blindly faithful to it, and above all being blind to this very fidelity” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254). These films’ conformity can be seen in their alignment or “repetition of conformity – of public ‘demand’ with the economic ‘response’” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254). The dominant ideology, in order to “justify itself and perpetuate itself, creates the notion of the “public” and its ‘tastes’ to satisfy a “demand” which is the demands of the dominant ideology in society (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254).

Films in (B) operate at two levels on their ideological insertion. First, at the level of ‘signifieds,’ films operate a directly political action through the exposition of an “explicitly political subject” constituting “a critical return to ideology, presupposing a theoretical work” which is the exact opposite of the ideological (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 256). These films offer a questioning of the cinematic representations and mark a break with the traditions constituting these representations. It is only through this double action at the level of signified and signifiers that films in this category can be considered as operating against the dominant ideology.

Films in category (C) build on the double action found in category (B) films, but “against the grain” where the signified, while not “explicitly political, but in some way, ‘becomes’ so; that is, finds itself re-produced as such by the ‘formal’ critical work on it” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 256).

Category (D) films are those with an explicit political ‘content’ but which in fact “do not operate any veritable critique of the ideological system in which they are captured” (Narboni

& Comolli 2015: 257). Despite their content, these films operate within the modes of figuration and language of the ideological system without question. These films, which ultimately duplicate and reinforce that which they think to denounce or expose, are in this way similar to those films of (A).

Category (E) films, while seemingly representative of “the ideological chains to which they appear subjected”, possess “a discrepancy, a distortion, a rupture between the conditions of its appearance...and the end product” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 257). The ideology is not “directly transposed”, instead encountering obstacles, seeing itself “exhibited, shown up, denounced by the filmic framework in which it is captured and which *acts against it*” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 257). These films possess discrepancies and fault lines where ideology becomes an *effect* of the text, and only through the allowances of the film is its presentation and exposition made visible (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 257). While not overthrowing the ideology within which the film is produced, these effects shatter ideology’s “reflection in the film, and the image which it gives of itself” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 257).

Category (F) and (G) films divide “direct cinema” into two groups. In the first group (F), “direct cinema” are films “constituted by political (social) events or reflections, but which do not truly differentiate themselves from non-political cinema” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 257). In other words, they do not question cinema as the site of a system of ideological representation. Reality asserts its ‘truth’ in the departure from the ideological filter of classical narrative traditions. Films in this category will claim a “sense of the lived experience”, or “moments of intense truth”, resorting to the “magical notion of the gaze, through which ideology shows itself in order not to be denounced, in which it contemplates itself and does not criticize itself” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 258).

Finally (G) films form the second group of “direct cinema”: those films which are “not satisfied with the gaze that pierces through appearances” and instead focus on “the problem of representation in making the filmic material function” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 258). These films become active producers of meaning rather than passive transmitters of significations created outside of themselves (in ideology).

In outlining the above categories, the focus of the critical activity is on films “captured within ideology”, the relation of films to ideology, and the differences to be found in these relations (Narboni and Comolli 2015: 258). Four critical functions arise from these designations. In the

first instance, a study of (A) films uncovers the unseen ideology at work in these films and in which they are formed, as well as their “molding by ideology” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 258). In the second instance, films in (B), (C) and (G) highlight the reflexive double operation that these films enact on signifiers and signified. Third, for films from (D) and (F), analysis reveals how the political signifieds find themselves “*always* weakened, made innocent by the absence of technical/theoretical work on the signifiers” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 258, emphasis in the original). The fourth considers those films from (E) to “pinpoint the ideological gap produced by the work of the film, and this work itself” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 258).

Following Narboni and Comolli’s categorisations, there has been a strong theoretical and critical focus on the “elaboration of the particular relation between cinematic text and ideology” (Klinger 2012: 93). The terms of this elaboration have been diverse, drawing from a Marxist/feminist perspective employing a diverse range of textual theories including formalism, structuralism, semiotics and psychoanalysis (Klinger 2012: 92). The texts studied have ranged from classic Hollywood cinema to the avant-garde. Essential to this “primarily textual focus of the cinema/ideology inquiry are the twin interrogatives of what constitutes dominant cinematic practices and then what deconstitutes them” (Klinger 2012: 92). Klinger (2012) adapts Narboni and Comolli’s categorisation in her framework defining progressive films /film genre. She focuses on the ‘moments’ of disruption and discrepancy, developing a way of identifying and analysing those films with progressive elements. These progressive texts, while deeply entrenched in the system, display “certain features that are critically deemed as combative to the conventions governing the ‘typical’ classic text” (Klinger 2012: 92). Genre studies becomes the site for the study of these rebel texts identified as “progressive” or “subversive” of the dominant conventions (Klinger 2012: 92)⁵. The significance of Narboni and Comolli’s typology is the provision of a “different typology of textual politics within dominant cinema, and, crucially, in the essential systemic relationship through which that difference is established” (Klinger 2012: 96).

Within the context of this ideological analysis of the female hero as feminist hero, it is necessary to consider briefly what constitutes progressive elements within film genre, as these pertain to the questioning, exposing and undermining of dominant ideology in action-

⁵ While Narboni and Comolli’s categorizations has influenced both auteur and genre studies, the focus of this study is situated in genre. Recognition is given to the significant influence of auteur in film genre, but similar to Klinger’s study (2012), it is not within the scope of this study to explore the intersection further.

adventure cinema. This ultimately establishes the degree to which the films studied can be classified, based on the findings of the analysis, according to Narboni and Comolli's categorisation. Klinger's insights into constituent progressive elements in film genre is discussed below.

The classic form of cinema subscribes to an ideology of representation through the achievement of an "impression of reality" which "unproblematically broadcasts dominant cultural ideas" (Klinger 2012: 96). A defining attribute of a progressive film is its "operational refusal" to realism with its key aspects of concealment and transparency (Klinger 2012: 97). Exploitation films for example, through their obvious stereotyping of women, can be regarded as a superior site of such progressive practices (Klinger 2012). It is through the obvious stereotyping that representations in these films lay bare the 'rules' through exaggeration, resisting the naturalisation process that "films of good taste excel in" (Klinger 2012: 97). In classic Hollywood cinema, the more layered, well-constructed, 'real' characters, "do nothing more than camouflage the normative function and actual stereotyped status of the female character in question" (Klinger 2012: 97).

Generic progressivity is first identified by a "quality of difference" from the environment of conventions within which genre films exist. This difference provides the rationale by which they are ascribed a "radical valence" (Klinger 2012: 92).

Klinger proposes a framework of traits through which the 'progressive' can be critically constructed in genre films (2012: 99). These traits include a pessimistic worldview, themes, narrative form, visual style and character.

A pessimistic worldview disrupts the typical idealised American way of life (Klinger 2012: 99). The tone of these films is "bleak, cynical, apocalyptic and/or highly ironic" in order to disrupt or disable an "unproblematic transmission or affirmative ideology" (Klinger 2012: 100). Themes in progressive films anchor the pessimistic world view by dismantling the values "positively propounded in dominant cinema's characterization of the role and nature of social institutions" such as the law and the family (Klinger 2012: 100).

At the level of the narrative form and stylistic elements is situated the dual critique of "classic form/classic ideology" (Klinger 2012: 100). The progressive narrative structure is refined to expose, rather than suppress ideological tensions and contradictions. Conflation of oppositions within the dramatic conflict, typically between good and evil, intentionally create ambiguities which prevents the ready identification and separation of these opposing systems

(Klinger 2012: 101). The narrative form may also deviate from typical expectations of legibility and transparency supported through a clear chain of cause and effects resulting in a satisfying closure. Through distortions of the ‘rules’ of classic narrative, the system is both “reflexively exposed and countered” (Klinger 2012: 101). Closure typically signals the “containment of matters brought out in the narrative” where the chain of cause and effect is resolved and everything is returned to a state of equilibrium (Klinger 2012: 101, see also Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 99).

The visual style of progressive films, through a combination of “stylistic self-consciousness and visual formal excess” form a vital contribution to the subversive commentary of these films. Visual style is foregrounded in progressive films as another way of imparting meaning (Klinger 2012: 102).

Characterisation is a final trait for exploring progressivity. Stereotypes have the potential to expose rather than naturalise “the representational basis through which the codes of “masculinity” and “femininity” are constructed in cinema” (Klinger 2012: 103). When a film contains no ‘obvious’ stereotypes, it becomes the challenge of the analysis to uncover the ideological systems at work in the more subtle representations of characters.

A primary focus in the progressive argument is on the “valuation of inventional signifiers, wherein ‘difference’ is conferred with deconstructive capabilities and a subversive effectivity” (Klinger 2012: 104). Texts can be labelled “reactionary” or “progressive” based on their internal subscription to, or rejection of, the classic paradigm and its associated ideology. However, the valuation of invention in progressive texts, while potentially enabling a disruption in the system, does not sufficiently consider how these elements of difference are situated with the overall system of “representational history” or within the system of narrative itself (Klinger 2012: 105). The overvaluation of invention overwhelms any consideration of the systemic context of these works that could qualify their progressive assertions (Klinger 2012). From a Russian formalist perspective situating film genre within its systemic history, individual films can both intrinsically reflect and modify the diachronic characteristics of the system it inhabits (Klinger 2012: 106). Innovations in the system do not offer complete and sudden renovations, but rather are “mutations that genetically engineer the modifications necessary to the maintenance and perseverance of the system” (Klinger 2012: 106).

The “rupture” thesis in ideological criticism relies on a narrow formulation of what constitutes classical narrative, which enables deviations from the principles identified to be

“readily gauged as challenging the entire foundation of the system” (Klinger 2012: 107). Working within classical Hollywood narrative, Stephen Heath (1976) has stressed a less rigid formulation of the classic text by considering its “principles of structuration and process” (Klinger 2012: 107). Building on Heath’s work, Steve Neale (1980) has noted that genres are “modes of the narrative system, regulated orders of its potentiality” (quoted in Klinger 2012: 107). This approach replaces the rigidity of the ‘classic text’ with the notion of a “classical textual system, which is produced from a volatile combination of disequilibrium (excess, difference) and equilibrium (containment, repetition)” (Klinger 2012: 107). This combination produces a system of “regularized variety...providing an economy of variation rather than rupture” (Neale 1980, quoted in Klinger 2012: 107).

These moments of textual difference, of ‘difference/innovation’ are then not system subversive, but rather system descriptive (Klinger 2012: 107). This approach focusing on systemic evolution does not erode the results gained from textually orientated ideological analyses, but “qualifies contentions about the ideological effectivity of texts that are presumed ‘rupturous’” (Klinger 2012: 107).

For the study at hand, an analysis needs to take cognisance of the situation of the text within the larger systemic landscape of the particular dominant genre(s) that it occupies. The analysis needs to question the true nature of the “rupture”: as truly ‘boundary-breaking’, or simply a next stage in the ever-evolving nature of the genre film system within which the film exists.

Mediation/Mediatisation

Emerging in use in the early 20th century, the term mediatization is descriptive of the influence of media on society and media as “modifiers of communication” (Krotz & Hepp 2011: 144, Hepp 2013). Mediatization considers change in the inter-relation between society, culture and media, moving beyond effects research (Hepp et al 2010, Hjarvard 2008) and medium theory (Hepp et al 2010: 223). The term captures “the long-term inter-relation processes of media change on the one hand and social and cultural change on the other” (Hepp et al 2010:223). Today media no longer exist outside of society “exerting an influence or effect on culture” (Hepp et al 2010: 223). Rather, media are “inside society, part of the very fabric of culture” (Hepp et al 2010: 223) and have become “the cultural air we breathe” (Hoggart 1976 quoted in Hepp et al 2010: 223). No longer are media considered merely the

means of communication, they have become “a cultural force” (Adolf 2011: 154, see also Hjarvard 2008).

Mediatisation speaks to the move in media studies beyond the previous dualism of interpersonal and mass forms of communication to “encompass new, interactive and networked forms of communication” under one of the main assumptions of modern life that “everything is mediated” (Livingstone 2009:1). In a media saturated world, media resources become part of the structure of many activities, media norms become “internalised and embodied” and media actors “use that power to alter the action space around them” (Couldry 2009: 41). Mediatisation research illuminates the ways in which “social institutions and cultural processes have changed character, function and structure in response to the omnipresence of media” (Hjarvard 2008:106). ‘Mediation’ by comparison refers to the process of communication in general, how “communication has to be understood as involving the ongoing mediation of meaning construction” (Couldry & Hepp 2013: 197). The term mediation continues today to describe a significant moment in communication as “symbolic interaction: its passing through technologically-based infrastructures of transmission and distribution” (Couldry & Hepp 2013: 197).

Mediatisation thus describes the broad consequences of the media for “everyday life and practical organization” (Couldry & Hepp 2013:191) and in particular the “pervasive spread of media contents and platforms through all types of context and practice” (Couldry & Hepp 2013:191). Approaching mediatisation research necessitates a cross-disciplinary approach given the “reciprocal influence between media and other social fields” (Hepp et al 2010:225), such as media and politics, media and religion, and more specifically for this study, media and gender. The world of Panem within the films offer a multi-perspectival experience of the mediatisation of politics and of gender particularly within the films’ world, both for the citizens of Panem as audience, and for the viewers of the films who are often positioned with the citizenry of Panem but also at times as omniscient observer. This positioning influences the gaze of the audience/citizens and how they/we observe the main female protagonist, Katniss Everdeen.

One way of concretizing mediatisation for it to be analysed empirically, is through considering the mediatisation of certain ‘life-worlds’ through the concept of “mediatized worlds” (Hepp 2013, Krotz & Hepp 2011:146). These mediatized worlds are effectively the “everyday concretization of media societies and media cultures” (Krotz & Hepp 2011:146)

and it is at this level that mediatisation becomes concrete and can be analysed empirically (Krotz & Hepp 2011). Mediatized worlds as a concept is more than defining a life-world as marked by media communication. Rather the everyday life-world is “that province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted” and accepted without question, marked by not only the “nature but also the social and cultural world in which a person exists” in a shared reality (Krotz & Hepp 2011:146). The fragmentation of life-worlds into small life-worlds means that in postmodern societies “we are confronted with a variety of ‘socially constructed part-time-realities’ which mark more and more the experience of men and women” (Krotz & Hepp 2011:146). Therefore, mediatized worlds as “structured fragments of life-worlds” become the moment for analysing mediatisation at the empirical level.

Mediatized worlds can be further characterised in three ways (Krotz & Hepp 2011:147, Hepp 2013:621). First these mediatised worlds have a communication network that extend beyond territorial boundaries, facilitating cultural overlap (Hepp 2013:621). Second, these worlds exist on various scales. This scalability offers an approach to investigating mediatisation research at all levels, by defining an “investigative perspective, that is the perspective of the thematic core of a mediatized world” (Krotz & Hepp 2011:147). Finally these mediatized worlds are ‘nested/interlaced’ with each other (Krotz & Hepp 2011:147). Social worlds intersect as well as segment at different levels. In this way the ongoing articulation of mediatized worlds is a process of segmentation and reinvention of those worlds. Researching mediatized worlds is to investigate “the transgression from one mediatized world to another as well as the processes of demarcation” (Krotz & Hepp 2011:147).

Drawing from Hepp’s concept above, the mediatized world under investigation is that of the mediatized gender performance of female heroes, at the level of action adventure film products in popular culture which in this instance purport to represent aspirational feminist female heroes who are more empowered, independent female protagonists than their predecessors.

Mediatisation is a “non-normative concept” (Hjarvard 2008:113) in that it cannot be determined to be positive or negative in its effects in general terms – it is a concrete analytical question that must be addressed in terms of a specific context, of a defined media’s influence, over a specific social institution. Analysis within mediatisation research should be able to demonstrate the impact of media “on various institutions and spheres of human

activity” (Hjarvard 2008:113). By selecting a mediatized world for investigation and establishing an investigative perspective, power becomes a relevant consideration. Returning to a recent discussion by Altheide (2013) on media logic and the social construction of reality: “power is the ability to define a situation, and the interaction and communication which helps accomplish and enact definitions are crucial to social order, social reality, and social change” (Altheide 2013.224). In the discussion chapters, various types of power are used to analyse the construction of the female hero. This study employs feminism to analyse the ideology at work within this identified mediatized world of gender performance portrayed by female action heroes in classical Hollywood narratives.

Gender performance today is significantly influenced by and through the media within a mediatized world. Popular culture films as format adhere to a certain media logic which align with specific messages and structures which audience expect to see. In other words, gender performance can be considered an institution that is increasingly mediatized through its mediation in films. For a film character to be ground-breaking in this particular instance, would require the filmmaker to step outside the conventions of the format.

While recognising that in a ‘mediated world’ all gendered performances are mediatized, this thesis is concerned with the ideological construction of such performances, or their ‘mediation’— particularly, the female Hollywood action hero, Katniss.

Feminism

Understanding media’s influence as creators of culture is a recurring theme highlighted in mediatization theory. Feminism as a theoretical framework focuses further on this theme to understand how media, more specifically commercial Hollywood films, shape not only gendered behaviour, but also how such behaviour is constructed in films.

Feminism is the third framework applied in this analysis: it is the lens through which the analysis of the ideological construction of the female hero is conducted, within the mediatized world of gender performance in the action-adventure film genre. Feminism’s contributions over three ‘waves’ is identified briefly, and its tension with post-feminism discussed. Judith Butler’s work on gender as performance is highlighted as a defining feature of third wave feminism, which is the focus of the feminism discussed here, as well as Girl Power.

Feminism is then refined to a focus on feminist film studies, looking specifically at female heroes in the action-adventure film genre. This framework provides a background against

which to locate the character of Katniss Everdeen, in the long line of studies on female action heroes. Given that film is one of the institutions through which gender performance has been mediated, the focus is on the ideological construction of the female hero, Katniss, in *The Hunger Games* film series.

While the mainstream US press have labelled Katniss a female hero for a new age, Stabile (2009) identifies “continued legacies of sexism in a culture that understands itself as post-feminist, if not post-gender” (2009: 86). Feminism’s development since the 1920s is described in successive ‘waves’ (Rampton 2015): First wave feminism emerged at the turn of the 19th /20th centuries focusing on women’s equality (Rampton 2015). Second wave feminism (1960s to early 1990s) focussed on empowerment and differential rights, particularly on sexuality and reproductive rights (Rampton 2015; Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006). Second wave feminism in America challenged the concept that men hold a monopoly on power and aggression: feminism questioned the notion “that women are not naturally aggressive” and proved on many levels that women could be as tough as men: as police officers, fire fighters, soldiers etc. (Inness 2004: 5). The rise of the female action hero in popular culture mimicked the new realities of roles afforded to women in society (Tasker 1993).

Second wave also associated women’s struggle with class struggle and drew in support from women of colour and developing nations (Rampton 2015). The second wave differentiated between sex and gender: the former as biological, the latter as social construction (a performance) (Rampton 2015; Butler 1988; Butler 1999). Feminists in this period coined the terms ‘the personal is political’ and ‘identity politics’ to demonstrate the relation between race, class and gender oppression (Rampton 2015).

Third wave feminism builds on the achievements of previous waves (more opportunities and less sexism) (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006), attempting to articulate the ways in which changing global relations shaped how gender is performed (Budgeon 2011). Butler’s gender as ‘performance’ (Butler 1988, 1999; Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006) is a defining feature of third wave feminism. The performativity of gender is a relevant conceptual tool for film studies, in unpacking gendered representations of women in film that are made to appear ‘natural’.

The deconstruction of categorical thinking about concepts such as ‘universal womanhood’, body, gender, sexuality and heteronormativity are central to third wave feminism (Kroløkke

& Sørensen 2006; Rampton 2015). In other words, what we take as an internal essence of gender is really manufactured in a pattern of “sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body” (Butler 1999: xv). It embraces contradictory experiences of femininity, questioning its meaning within a diverse and fragmented feminism (Budgeon 2011). ‘Grrl-feminism’ is an instance of third wave feminism, emphasizing identity, gender and sexuality (Rampton 2015). The violent femmes (Lupold 2014), tomboys, and feisty heroines (Tasker 1998) of film are popular culture examples of third wave feminism’s ‘Girl Power’.

Postfeminism builds on the achievements of the waves of feminism and declares that since gender equality has been achieved, feminism has become irrelevant and unnecessary (Budgeon 2011; Tasker & Negra 2005). A specific instance of postfeminism adopted by mainstream commercial culture about ideas of girlhood draws on a quasi-feminist vocabulary celebrating “female freedom and gender equality” (McRobbie 2008: 532). This action has the effect of undoing feminism and actively discouraging its revival through the voice of commercial culture which now speaks on behalf of girls and women (McRobbie 2008: 533). ‘Feminism’ defined here as ‘Girl Power’ has been co-opted by mainstream media as a marketing and branding tool for girlhood (Gonick *et al* 2009, McRobbie 2008).

Girl Power is one of the discourses presently organising the construction of the ‘neoliberal girl subject’ (Gonick 2006, Gonick *et al* 2009), raising critical questions about “changing constructions of girlhood, shifting subjectivities for girls, and their relationship to modernity” (Gonick 2006: 1). ‘Girl Power’ represents a ‘new girl’: an empowered and dynamic social agent, free from the restraints of passive femininity (Gonick 2006; Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006).

While third wave feminists assert that feminism remains “an active and important force in contemporary society” (Budgeon 2011: 279), commercial postfeminism (defined as ‘popular’ or ‘commodity’ feminism in McRobbie 2008) declares it unnecessary and irrelevant. This is a dangerous situation in our socio-cultural context since this “popular feminist appropriation permits more subtle modalities of gender re-inscription and re-subordination to be pursued” (McRobbie 2008: 533). Feminist writers (Butler 1999, Inness 2004, McRobbie 2009) draw our attention to women heroes in popular culture and suggest that we continue our attempts to “expose the reifications that tacitly serve as substantial gender cores or identities, and [to] elucidate both the act and the strategy of disavowal which at once constitute and conceal

gender as we live it” (Butler 1988: 530). In other words, what are the acts or performances of gender of the female hero that have been constructed and presented as ‘natural’ in these films; and what are the patriarchal strategies exposed here that contribute to this construction?

The action-adventure genre in particular, with its emphasis on the parody and exaggeration of the body, enables the performance of gender to become a “site of transgression and play, the focus of an attention that can make strange as well as reinforce norms of gender and sexual identity” (Tasker 1993 quoted in Neale 2000: 48). *The Hunger Games* film franchise, with its hybrid classification as teen genre (based on popular young adult dystopian fiction), science fiction, and action-adventure genre, is an important space for reinforcing ideas about youth, gender, and particularly ‘Girl Power’.

Feminist Film Theory

The aim of feminist film theory is to understand “cinema as a cultural practice that represents and reproduces myths about women and femininity” (Smelik 2016: 1). A primary concern of feminist film theory in the 1970s and 1980s was the “sexual hierarchy of the look” in cinema, as distinguished by Mulvey (1975) in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative cinema: The man as “bearer of the look, woman as its object”* (Mulvey 1975 quoted in Mayne 1985: 82). In combining narrative and spectacle, cinema perpetuates this notion through “female-centred narrative and male-centred spectacle” (Mayne 1985: 82). This binary of active/male and passive/female structured much of the feminist discussion on the roles of women in cinema. However, with the advent in 1990s contemporary action cinema of more female action heroes, Tasker argues for a redefinition of Mulvey’s model, “in order to take account of both changes in the formal operations of Hollywood cinema, and developments in the theorization of sexuality and spectatorship” (Tasker 1993: 115). Female spectatorship and the female look address issues related to subjectivity more broadly (Smelik 2016: 2). Subjectivity is understood as “a constant process of self-production rather than as a fixed entity” (Smelik 2016: 2). Cinema, and visual culture more broadly, is an important site for “constructing certain positions for female subjectivity by inscribing desire into the codes and conventions of the imagery and the narrative” (Smelik 2016: 2).

Smelik (2016) identifies the 1980s as the heyday of feminist film theory, while noting that more recently semiotic and psychoanalytic frameworks are unable fully to interrogate the “complexity and paradoxes of contemporary visual culture, which has changed rapidly” (Smelik 2016: 4). Like Tasker, Smelik argues that “new forms of cinematic aesthetics are breaking through the classic (“Oedipal”) structure of representation and narration” (Smelik 2016: 4). This evolution in cinema is prompting new sources for reviving feminist film theory through “performance studies, new media studies, phenomenology, and a Deluzian body of thought” (Smelik 2016: 4). Adopting newer forms of analysis addresses some of the critiques levelled against feminist film theory by black and lesbian feminism who raise objections to the white, heterosexual bias of psychoanalytic feminist film theory, “which seemed initially unable to conceive of representation outside of heterosexuality”, and its failure to deal with racial difference (Smelik 2016: 3). Ideological analysis, as developed by Thompson, addresses these issues through its expansion from class domination to include other forms of domination such as gender and race as well. Film violence, romantic love, the nuclear family and questions of power in film are significant themes when considering ideological representations of women in film, particularly in the commercially popular mainstream media of classical Hollywood cinema.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Popular culture matters ... precisely because its meanings, effects, consequences, and ideologies can't be nailed down. As consumers and as critics, we struggle with this proliferation of meanings as we make sense of our own social lives and cultural identities. (Jenkins *et al.*, 2002: 11, quoted in Winter 2014: 257-258)

Films as products of popular culture are a site of meaning-making. As constituents of this popular culture, “films have meaning because we attribute meaning to them” (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 60). The comprehension and interpretation of films involves the construction of meaning from the textual cues available (Bordwell 1991). Bordwell identifies four types of meaning in film: referential meaning, explicit meaning, implicit meaning and symptomatic meaning. The explicit and implicit meaning of a film can carry “traces of a particular set of social values” which can be considered the symptomatic meaning (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 60). It is this set of revealed values in symptomatic meaning that can be considered a “social ideology” (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 60). Symptomatic meaning is indicative of how meanings are largely a social phenomenon (Bordwell & Thompson 2013). Many of the meanings in film are ideological: “they spring from systems of culturally specific beliefs about the world” (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 60). Films enact ideological meanings through their form (Bordwell & Thompson 2013). And films, through their characteristic of seamlessness, can be considered ideological apparatuses in that “We do not see how it produces meaning – it renders it invisible, naturalizes it” (Hayward 2001: 194). It is important, therefore, to consider aspects of both the stylistic and narrative systems of a film (the *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, the narrative, etc.) – when attempting to analyse its ideological implications.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative research approach social investigations in different ways. Quantitative research considers “the collection of numerical data, as exhibiting a view of the relationship between theory and research as deductive” (Bryman 2012: 160). Based in

positivism, it has an “objectivist conception of social reality” (Bryman 2012: 160, Deacon *et al* 2010).

Qualitative research, originating in the interpretive tradition, focuses on the relationship between the subject and their social world (Deacon *et al* 2010: 7, Bryman 2012). In other words, the “contextual understandings of a subject’s environment needs to be understood in the context of meaning systems employed by a particular group or society” (Bryman 1984: 78). Qualitative research notes an inductive relation between theory and research: theory is further developed from research (Bryman 2012: 380). For interpretivists, the social world is *continuously* constructed through our interactions with it, while similarly for constructivists, “social realities are continually constructed and reconstructed through routine social practices and conceptual categories that underpin them” (Deacon *et al* 2010: 6). Qualitative research takes an ontological position described as constructivist in that it considers social properties as the “outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena ‘out there’ and separate from those involved in its construction” (Bryman 2012: 380).

Films, as one of many types of cultural texts, are seen as “frozen moments in a continuous stream of social interactions, which embody the values and meanings in play within public culture in a particularly clear and compact way” (Deacon *et al* 2010: 7). Put another way, filmic texts are part of a larger structure of media in which media representation is understood as “a subjective construction, which is selected from a myriad of possible representations and which is also determined by particular interests” (Mikos 2014: 409). Analysing film holds a cognitive purpose and cannot be said to be done independently of context. In analysing a film, particular theoretical aspects are chosen and specific social practices or frames are chosen which reflect a particular research tendency. *The Hunger Games* film franchise for instance, can be analysed for its commentary on class, gender, race, or on its use of camera action in linking its sequences together. My research narrows the focus to the ideological construction of the character of Katniss as female hero, interrogating the framing of her as feminist hero against the larger context of the positioning of female heroes in action-adventure genre.

This study takes a qualitative research approach by means of a textual analysis of the films, focusing on genre and narrative, narrative analysis, *mise-en-scène* and cinematography. This approach is undertaken in order to extrapolate elements necessary to the discussion of the ideological analysis of the construction of the female hero. Ideally, a full filmic analysis

would take cognisance not only of the structure of a film text, but also “their conditions of production and reception, and the societal contexts” (Mikos 2014: 409) in the style of a tripartite model of media analysis mentioned earlier (Devereaux *et al* 2004). Given the necessarily limited scope of this research, the focus is on the content of the film text, and how elements of narrative, *mise-en-scène* and cinematography relate to questions of representation in the construction of the female hero as feminist hero.

Methods of Analysis

Methods of analysis for this study include narrative analysis, *mise-en-scène*, cinematography and genre. The narrative analysis gives insight into the character by focusing on the themes of love, violence and power, and how these relate to her construction in the narrative across all four films. *Mise-en-scène* deals with select elements in the film, particularly costuming and setting in order to analyse the character more fully along with cinematography, which considers her framing through specific camera work. Genre, which can be both a theory framework and a method of analysis, is in this context a method of analysis for the consideration of thematic and character conventions typical of a) action-adventure genre films, and b) of female action heroes in this genre. In analysing the genre construction of these films as action-adventure, the discussion focuses on how the hero fulfils particular archetypes typical to action-adventure films (Tasker 1993, Schubart 1998, Lupold 2014).

Population and Sampling

A population is a collection of anything that can be investigated: peoples, texts, or institutions. It can vary in size, depending on who/what is being investigated (Deacon *et al* 2010). Research populations are “defined by specific research objectives and alter in direct relation to them” (Deacon *et al* 2010: 43). Sampling within the population in this research is non-random sampling, that is, purposive sampling of select sample units within the identified population (Deacon *et al* 2010). With non-random sampling, there is no guarantee “that every unit of a population has an equal chance of being selected” (Deacon *et al* 2010: 44).

The population under investigation is mainstream Hollywood action-adventure genre films, featuring a young female protagonist, which has achieved notable box office success and wide distribution. Hollywood has in recent times capitalised on the shock value of scripts

containing young girls taking up arms (Lupold 2014), and Katniss is among the most successful (in terms of revenue⁶) of these. In a distinct departure from the action babes of the late 1990s and early 2000s (*Barbwire*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Lara Croft Tomb Raider*), these younger female heroes adopt violence without the accompanying hyper-sexualisation seen previously. Part of this is a response to a critique of the sexualisation of young girls, as well as an increased acceptance of girlhood aggression (Lupold 2014). All four films of THG are placed in the top 10 highest grossing action-adventure genre films featuring a female protagonist (Scott 2018). These films are also incidentally part of a film cycle of adaptations of Young Adult (YA) sci-fi dystopian fiction based on bestselling books that made their way to the big screen, including the *Divergent Series* and *The Maze Runner*. Of these, the *Divergent series* also features a female protagonist, but the final film's production was canned in 2018 due to poor performance at the box office.

The sampling of these four films is based on the widespread popularity of the films via the bestselling novels, the success at the box office, and the public attention from film critics for Katniss (as highlighted in the opening paragraphs of Chapter 1). These film critics' readings of the female hero (Dargis 2012, 2014, Hornaday 2012, Scott & Dargis 2012, Corliss 2014, Macnab 2015) suggest several hypotheses of what Katniss should *mean* to audiences in terms of her positioning as an independent, boundary-breaking female action hero. Adolescent heroes are considered empowered in the way they take up arms, possessing both masculine and feminine characteristics "exhibiting strength, caring, assertiveness and intelligence" (Lupold 2014).

I purposively selected all four films in THG as a sample so that I could conduct an ideological analysis of the construction of the fully-realised character arc of the female protagonist Katniss Everdeen. I selected scenes and sequences for analysis that directly relate to her ideological construction as hero, as expressed through the themes of love, power and violence. This is done in order to assess the validity of the critics' claims above of her being 'boundary breaking' and one of the 'most radical' female characters in American films to

⁶ Since the completion of the *Hunger Games* series in 2015 and its box office-breaking records in that year, the new female-led chapters in the *Star Wars* film franchise in 2015 onwards has eclipsed *Hunger Games* in earnings, claiming the top 3 box office spots for highest earnings in female led action films. Only one standalone film, a DC origins film, *Wonder Woman* (2017) placed at 5th (Scott 2018). However, in 2019, the March release of the much-anticipated female superhero Captain Marvel from the Disney and Marvel Comics universe, has exceeded all previous records, becoming "the largest-ever global box office debut for a female-fronted film" (Singh-Kurtz 2019: n.p.).

date, and to situate her within the legacy of female action heroes, ultimately to answer the question “is she a feminist hero?”

The films in order of release are *The Hunger Games* (2012), *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (2013), *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1* (2014) and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay: Part 2* (2015).

The film synopses are presented in Appendix A.

Narrative and Genre

Our culture, drawing on Barthes, is “saturated in narrative: myths, legends, fables, tales, drama” (Lapsley & Westlake 2006: 129). It takes on a variety of forms in culture and is a “cultural universal, present from the beginning... in all cultures at all times” (Lapsley & Westlake 2006: 129). As such, narratives appear “as natural as ‘life’ itself” (Lapsley & Westlake 2006: 129), and are a fundamental way of making sense of the world in which we live (Bordwell & Thompson 2013). A narrative is a “chain of events linked by cause and effect and occurring in space and time” (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 73). A narrative typically begins with one situation and, through a series of changes brought on by causes and effects, ends with a new situation (Bordwell & Thompson 2013), which is a typical structure of classic Hollywood narrative. Narratives employ storytelling strategies in order to draw audiences into stories. These strategies are linked to the knowledge of viewers, who have already acquired narrative knowledge in the course of their “media socialization” (Mikos 2014: 415).

Films begin to *mean* when they are viewed by an audience. Films texts cannot determine meanings, they can only “function as agents in the social circulation of meanings and pleasures, and they can only deploy their potential for meaning where they are integrated in social and cultural relations” (Mikos 2014: 411). Film texts “can only make offers, and stage possible ways of reading themselves, to pre-structure what viewers do then” (Mikos 2014:411). These spectators are positioned in time and space by “gender, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, object choice and many other variables” (O’Day 2004: 204).

Genre films go beyond the cataloguing of films according to certain characteristics: genres refer not only to film type, but also to “systems of expectation and hypothesis which spectators bring with them to the cinema, and which interact with films themselves during the

course of the viewing process” (Neale 1990: 46). These systems provide spectators with a “means of recognition and understanding” (Neale 1990: 46). They allow spectators to understand why characters are dressed a certain way, why they speak and behave the way they do, and why certain events and actions take place (Neale 1990). Neale identifies these systems as “regimes of verisimilitude” (Neale 1990: 46), meaning probable or likely. These regimes entail notions of “propriety, of what is appropriate and *therefore* probable” (Neale 1990: 46). In any genre, there is a balance between generic regimes of verisimilitude and cultural regimes of verisimilitude, through which the ‘authenticity’ of the reality in the film can be established (Neale 1990: 46). Put another way, genre films are bound by “a strict set of conventions, tacitly agreed upon by filmmaker and audience” (Sobchack 2012: 121). Films following these conventions provide the experience of an “ordered world” in the way of the classic structure: “the plot is fixed, the characters defined and the ending is satisfyingly predictable” (Sobchack 2012: 121). Genres are more than “individual, isolated formulae” (Schatz 2012: 111). Genres represent, similar to Sobchack’s agreed-upon conventions and Neale’s regimes, a “contract” which represents “a distinct cluster of narrative, thematic, and iconographic patterns that have been refined through exposure and familiarity into systems of reasonably well-defined expectations” (Schatz 2012: 113). It is this high degree of audience familiarity with the Hollywood generic product, and thus the audience’s active but indirect participation in the product’s creation “that provides the basis for whatever claims might be made for the genre film as a form of cultural ritual and for its status as contemporary myth” (Schatz 2012: 112). Major genres include film noir, westerns, science fiction, action-adventure, romantic comedies, and screwball comedies. Ideological production within film genre finds “representation through a series of binary oppositions which, among other hegemonic ‘realities’ reinforce gender distinctions” (Hayward 2001: 167).

Action-adventure genre describes and incorporates a range of films and genres, from “swashbucklers to science fiction films, from thrillers, to westerns to war films” (Neale 2004: 71), indicating Hollywood’s tendency for generic hybridity and overlap. The term action-adventure identifies a number of obvious characteristics: “a propensity for spectacular physical action, a narrative structure involving fights, chases and explosions, and in addition to...special effects, an emphasis in performance on athletic feats and stunts” (Neale 2004: 71). Both Tasker (2004) and Jeffords (1989) focus on the frequent transference of this hyperbolic action onto the bodies of the actors (Neale 2004). For Tasker, analysis of action cinema is premised on two important ideas of the action-figured body: first, that rather than

“signalling a radical break with the past, [the body] inflects and redefines already existing cinematic and cultural discourses of race, class and sexuality” (Tasker 1993: 5). Second that it is worth analysing these films to illustrate the “complex ways in which popular cinema affirms gendered identities at the same time as it mobilises identifications and desires which undermine the stability of such categories” (Tasker 1993: 5). These conventions of the action-adventure genre are used to discuss the construction of the female character as feminist hero.

The action spectacle is a defining feature of the action genre and in many ways help carry the narrative forward (Bordwell 2006). Narrative and spectacle are not mutually exclusive: following Aristotle, “spectacle (*opsis*) is a manner of showing forth plot (*muthos*). Every action scene, however spectacular is a narrative event” (Bordwell 2006: 104). Spectacle does not override narrative as is often the claim by critics of the genre (Bordwell 2006: 104). Popular cinema is as concerned with spectacle as it is with narrative, and in the action cinema “visual display is elevated to a defining feature of the genre” (Tasker 1993: 6).

The resurgence of action-adventure in the 1990s brought renewed interest in the figure of the woman warrior as central protagonist (particularly in the form of Ripley in the *Aliens* franchise and Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2*) compared to the popularity of traditional male-led action such as *Rocky*, *Rambo*, and *Indiana Jones*. As Neale points out, the female-led adventure films have a long history dating back to the early 1910s and 1920s as a response to early feminism’s New Womanhood (Neale 2004: 76). The revival of female heroes in action films in the 1990s focused on the ‘musculine’ female heroes (Tasker 2004), considered a response to the second-rate role of women in 1980s action films who typified the passive female described by Laura Mulvey (1975, in Brown 1996). A new style of violent femmes emerged in the 2000s, which saw a younger group of female action heroes take centre stage. These heroes differed from their predecessors in that they were “girl heroines who engage in violent behaviour without being excessively sexualised” (Lupold 2014: 11). These younger heroines in films such as *Hanna*, *The Hunger Games*, *Kick-Ass*, and *True Grit* “demonstrate a maturity beyond their years, taking up arms against societal forces instead of simply using their sexuality to charm men” (Lupold 2014: 11). It is against this historic account of female action heroes that the female character of Katniss is analysed. The claim made by Lupold (2014) is that while these films may be celebrated as progressive in that they “promote female empowerment”, they contain regressive elements since they “locate such empowerment within conservative narratives” (2014: 13). A narrative analysis is therefore essential to understand the construction of the female hero in light of Lupold’s claim above

(2014), and to determine the degree to which Katniss can be said to occupy the Daughter archetype identified by Schubart (1998) within the conventions of action-adventure cinema. The degree to which these films conform to, or diverge from, expected conventions is discussed in the following chapter with regards to the overall ideological framing as per Comolli and Narboni's (2015) ideological categorisation of films.

Classical Hollywood Narrative

Classical Hollywood cinema can be seen as a form, a style, a set of themes, or a mesh of ideological and psychic processes, and each version of the schema will produce different prototypes, privilege diverse semantic fields, and make various cues salient within a film. (Bordwell 1991: 150)

Classical Hollywood Narrative (CHN) is a tradition and style of filmmaking associated with films originally coming from Hollywood (though not particular only to American-made films) emerging around the 1920s (Bordwell & Thompson 2013). As indicated above, films following this tradition contain a narrative form reliant on individual characters making things happen. In other words, the story's progression is dependent on "personal psychological causes: decisions, choices, and traits of character" (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 98). The "glory of the Hollywood system" lies in its ability to allow various creators in film (writers, directors etc.) to "weave an intricate web of character, event, time, and space that can seem transparently obvious" (Thompson 1999: 11).

Traditionally, following Syd Field's formulation, film structures are identified as comprising three acts (Bordwell 2006: 28): Act 1 introduces the problem, Act 2 consists of an extended struggle between the protagonist and his problem, and Act 3 shows the protagonist solving the problem. Kirstin Thompson (1999) identifies a more accurate divide of four large-scale sections for films in this tradition: setup, complicating action, development and climax, often with a short epilogue after the climax. Each of these sections, following the initial setup, are marked by a major turning point (Thompson 2008). The most frequent shift in narrative direction is usually a shift in the protagonist's goals (Thompson 1999: 27). Shorter films (around 90 minutes in length) are likely to have three large sections, while films of 120 minutes or more, tend to follow a four section divide of roughly 25 to 35 minutes each in length (Thompson 2008).

The setup establishes an initial setup, in which the protagonist may conceive of one or more goals, or where the circumstances are introduced which will later lead to the formulation of

goals (Thompson 1999). The complicating action takes the action in a new direction, often creating a “counter-setup” of a whole new set of circumstances which the protagonist must deal with (Thompson 1999: 28). Or it may be that the hero must adopt totally new tactics in pursuing the goal(s) established in the setup. The Development is where the protagonist’s struggle towards her goals occurs, “often involving many incidents that create action, suspense and delay” (Thompson 1999: 28). The development ends at the point where all the “premises regarding the goals and lines of action have been introduced” (Thompson 1999: 29). From this point the climax begins and the action shifts usually in a straightforward fashion towards the “final resolution, typically building steadily toward a concentrated sequence of high action” (Thompson 1999: 28).

Structural elements such as the use of the ‘dangling cause’ (Thompson 1999) provides forward impetus in these films, where the cause “leads to no effect or resolution until later in the film” (Thompson 1999: 12). Turning points are moments at the start of, or just before the start of a new section and mostly relate to the main character’s / protagonist(s) goals (Thompson 1999: 29).

The *Hunger Games* film series is firmly rooted in the Classical Hollywood Narrative style, with its female protagonist driving the story forward through her decisions and actions. All the films in the series run just over 2 hours. All four films (the DVD release versions) were watched several times in order to break down the films into the four main sections following Thompson’s film structure. Several important turning points, dangling causes and motifs were identified, and whole scenes were scripted from the film audio. The selection of scenes, turning points and dangling causes were based on three thematic framings of the character – Love, Violence and Power. These three themes are common to narratives in the action-adventure genre, with the second plot (of a double-plot structure) often featuring a heterosexual love story. These themes assist in investigating the alignment of Katniss with archetypes of female action heroes present in the action-adventure genre, to determine whether or not she has the progressive traits suggested by some of the film critics quoted above. Additionally, elements of *mise-en-scène* and cinematography were considered where they pertained to particular constructions of the female hero.

Narrative Analysis

The narrative analysis focuses on the construction of the female hero utilising three themes found in action-adventure genre: love, power and violence. These themes are not distinct from each other and tend to overlap at various points in the films. The analysis of these themes provides evidence in order to discuss the validity of the claim by Lupold (2014) above regarding progressive and regressive elements of the film situated within a conservative narrative that constructs the female hero. The areas for focus are discussed below in brief.

The love theme focuses on two types of love: family love, and romantic love. This analysis of love exposes the strong typical heterosexual love story built into the films between Katniss, Gale and Peeta, suggesting a typical love triangle. Scenes selected for discussion show the positioning of Katniss in this love triangle, and the way she is 'directed' in her love for Peeta (by Haymitch and Snow). Ultimately, the culmination of the love story can be examined as a potential regressive element if one considers it within the 'Daughter archetype' proposed by Schubart (1998).

The family love element focuses on one of the typical motivations for a hero's actions: the protection of loved ones. Here it informs the narrative progression surrounding Katniss' actions in protecting Prim (her sister, in the Reaping) and Rue (a tribute who reminds her of Prim, in the Games) as two key moments of her agency as independent action (free from coercion or manipulation). The tenderness and strength of a mother figure creates tension in the film in situating Katniss within a typical nuclear family, but also as an independent hero willing to do whatever it takes for her loved ones. The family love at moments in the series eclipses the romantic love, which offers a refreshing approach to situating a young female hero outside of a purely heterosexual romantic relationship.

What makes Katniss interesting as a female hero is her conflicted/confused response to violence: either committed by her, or experienced around her. While portrayed as a calm hunter at the opening of the first film, she is deeply traumatised by the killing and violence in the first Hunger Games (relived in flashbacks in *Catching Fire*). Being affected emotionally by violent acts is not a trait commonly seen in action heroes (Sarkeesian 2012, n.p.). Violence towards Katniss by Peeta, in his attempt to kill her, is of particular significance in the way it affects the love theme. Neroni (2005) discusses these conflicts of situating the violent women within popular cinema.

Power is narrowly defined here, framed through a feminist application of Allen's (1998) triadic intersectional model of power – power-over, power-to and power-with. Sequences selected for analysis are those illustrating the exercise of power as directly influencing her agency, decisions and actions in the games, after, and during the rebellion/war. Important influences include Haymitch her mentor; Peeta and Gale (with regards to their romantic love); Effie and Cinna in their transformation/molding of Katniss through styling and makeup, enabling her to express her femininity in pre-game interviews, as well as in her Mockingjay role); President Snow in his direct manipulation of her actions (the love act to save her loved ones); and Heavensbee and Coin (District 13).

Mise-en-scène

Costumes can play both causal roles in film plots, and less obviously, become motifs “enhancing characterizations and tracing changes in attitude” (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 119).

This set of four costumes runs the gamut of the major male and female roles in the Western, but in this case the shifting of costumes seems to symbolize an anxiety of restless shape shifting resulting from the inverted gender roles (Cawelti 1994: 128).

Cawelti's comments reflect on the role of female leads in Westerns as expressed through costume changes. Similarly, Katniss undergoes several significant costume changes over the four films highlighting aspects of femininity and masculinity. Costuming is a significant aspect of *mise-en-scène* in the construction of Katniss's character: from hunter in the first film, through tribute on-stage and in the arena, victor, love interest, rebel icon, and happily settled with children and husband in the closing scene. The following instances of her costuming is discussed in order to understand her visual positioning to the spectator, inhabiting costumes considered both masculine and feminine (see Appendix B):

- **In District 12:** Her father's leather jacket while hunting (Fig. 1, Appendix B), and the blue dress for the Reaping (Fig. 3, Appendix B) Her return to the jacket repeats several times throughout the films (Figs. 21 & 27, Appendix B)
- **In the Capitol:** Her two gowns for Tribute Parades (the dresses, on fire, Figs. 5, 6, 15, & 16, Appendix B) and Gowns for Capitol HG interviews (pre and post games) plus makeup (Figs. 7, 8, 9, & 12, Appendix B). The Wedding Gown (Figs. 17 & 18, Appendix B) which goes up in flames to reveal a Mockingjay gown with wings.

- **In the Arena and District 13:** “battle gear” in the Games (fatigues, and bulky jacket in *Hunger Games*, skin-tight suits in *Catching Fire*) (Fig. 10, Appendix B) and the population uniform of District 13 (Fig. 20, Appendix B)
- **In District 13 propos, on the streets of the Capitol and at the final execution of Snow/Coin:** Her Mockingjay ‘official’ outfit designed by her stylist Cinna (bulletproof, black skin-fitting, with black moulded breastplate) (Figs. 22 – 24, 26, Appendix B)
- **After the War:** Back home, at first sight in hunting gear, then later with Peeta (epilogue of final film) in soft yellow dress (Figs. 27-28, Appendix B).

Another significant element in the *mise-en-scène* is the setting of the forest outside of District 12. It is the opening scene of the first film, with Katniss dressed as hunter, and where we last see her at the conclusion of the fourth film, in the epilogue, but with different props: together with Peeta and their children, wearing a dress, which, together with costuming strongly ties into the Daughter archetype identified by Schubart (1998). Settings in between these two vary between the Capitol, the Arena, and several districts. It is significant to note how costume is linked to setting, comparing Katniss in the Capitol, with Katniss in the rebel District 13 and her home District 12. An actor’s makeup today “usually tries to pass unnoticed, but it also accentuates expressive qualities of the actor’s face” (Bordwell & Thompson 2013: 122). Similar to Katniss’ transformation through costuming, she undergoes a makeup transformation at the hands of the Capitol stylists. The focus on makeup and styling reappears when she is also on-screen for the rebels, noting the importance at those moments too of creating an appealing impact. Her makeup is commented on in the film by stylists marvelling her beauty, but also negatively later on by Boggs in District 13, suggesting that they made her look too old/mature. Given the reliance on non-verbal cues to express emotions, Katniss’ eye makeup is important in enhancing her performance of these emotions (Figs. 6, 11, 15, 26, Appendix B).

Cinematography

The films’ formats do not follow a first person subjectivity or allow access to Katniss’ interior thoughts in a narrator styled interior monologue. While this was the structure of the novels, the films frame Katniss’s experience utilising various techniques such as expressing

the hero's non-verbal emotional cues through close up camera work on Katniss' face, lingering on it to allow emotions to be understood from her performance rather than scripted dialogue (Figs. 2, 6, 19, 25, 28, Appendix B).

A second quality of camera work that adds additional depth to the characterisation of Katniss as Hero, is the use of cutaways, switching between multiple locations, allowing the impact of her actions by the audience and others to be noted in time across space. This is relevant to creating the tension of the love triangle for the spectator (Gale watching when she kisses Peeta, etc.). It is also important in building an understanding of her significance as instigator of the rebellion, when she shows empathy at Rue's death, signalling to the cameras for District 11 (Rue's district). The cutaway shows the impact of her demonstration of empathy for District 11, which rebels. Later when travelling through the districts, the 'failure' of the presented love story to quell dissent is shown through shot-reverse-shot, where the anger of the demonstrators is contrasted with her and Peeta's rehearsed speeches after the death of the protester in District 11.

Camera work itself becomes a function of narrative in the films. Through the highly mediated world of Panem the Capitol has surveillance cameras throughout the districts, as well as throughout the Hunger Games arenas. This knowledge of continual surveillance prompts Katniss to act in certain ways knowing the affects her actions (particularly the love act with Peeta in *Hunger Games*) will have on their chances of succeeding. It is also used by Snow to manipulate her into allying with him to quell the uprisings "for the sake of her loved ones" (showing her Capitol surveillance footage of her and Gale kissing only moments earlier, at the start of *Catching Fire*). The Capitol and District 13 both utilise broadcast media to frame Katniss in specific ways to the Districts for their own purposes.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Introduction

The following two chapters discuss the findings of the analysis conducted on the four films, applying the approach outlined in the methodology chapter. Utilising the three themes of love, power and violence from a feminist perspective, the findings of the narrative analysis are discussed as they pertain to the characterisation of the female hero, supported through selected elements of *mise-en-scène* and cinematography. Following this discussion of the themes, the focus is narrowed to questioning the applicability of identified archetypes found in the action-adventure genre to the characterisation identified through the themes. Finally, considering the discussion of the findings against the historical context of female action heroes, *The Hunger Games* film series is categorised according Narboni and Comolli's typology of ideology in films. This discussion concludes with attempting to answer the question of whether or not the character of Katniss can be classified as progressive, feminist, or something decidedly more stereotypical of female heroes in film to date. This chapter deals with an outline of the themes, as well as the discussion of the first theme, Love. The following chapter deals with the remaining themes of Violence and Power, as well as the discussion of the archetypes and ideological categorisation of the films.

The action heroine is not what she pretends to be. Or rather, that she is much more than she pretends to be. Like the sphinx she is a figure of ambiguity: She is beautiful and feminine, yet active and lethal. And like the sphinx she presents us with a riddle: 'Who am I?' she asks, caressing her gun. 'Am I a woman or am I a man?' Feminist film theory has not yet solved the riddle of the sphinx who claws her way into the debate about active women in traditional male genres. (Schubart 1998: 205)

Schubart's description of the enigma of the female hero is reflective of the challenge in understanding the construction of Katniss as female action hero. Katniss is identified as exhibiting both masculine and feminine traits. Contrary to media critics however identifying her as boundary breaking and a feminist hero, her independence is challenged at various stages in the films, through seemingly continual actions to recuperate her back into a patriarchal system as a way of containing her perceived 'threat' to hegemonic masculinity. This 'containment' of the female hero forms part of larger ongoing discussions of female heroes since they first appeared on the scene (Rapping 1986, Hills 1999, Inness 2004, Lupold 2014), and questions the degree to which Katniss can be claimed to be a "feminist hero". This

chapter discusses the findings of the textual analysis which was premised on the narrative analysis, *mise-en-scène*, and cinematography highlighted in the previous chapter, and how these relate to the ideological underpinnings in the construction of the female hero throughout the four films.

The mediatized world of gender within the films offers a comparative space for discussion around the format of the staging and presentation of characteristics of the female hero, both within the world of Panem and to the audience at large in the cinema. Oftentimes there occurs an overlap – the audience is staged as if they are part of the citizen audience within Panem, being entertained by the reality TV-styled war between children. In some ways this multi-viewpoint exposes certain ideological underpinnings made evident to the outside audience of how Katniss and her violent, often rebellious, character is styled for the Panem audience. But it is inconsistent too in ways which align her portrayal as often stereotypically fulfilling her role as that presented to the audience of Panem. In many ways Katniss fulfils too the objectification of the female character through a predominantly male gaze both for the audience of Panem and the audience at large.

The degree to which Katniss' decisions, and by extension her agency as protagonist is truly her own, is informed by the discussion of the narrative analysis through the themes of love, violence and power. These are typical themes in the action-adventure genre (Tasker 2004, Neale 2000) and integral to the archetypes of female characters identified by Schubart (1998) and Tasker (1998): the Daughter and the Tomboy. The discussion of these themes in the narrative informs the construction of traits of masculinity and femininity present in the hero, which for Woloshyn, Taber and Lane (2013) can make her a successful female protagonist, but also constrain her in heteronormative ways⁷. The sequences analysed were those that shape her character and influence her decisions, and in turn drive the story of THG forward.

The Themes: Love, Violence and Power

Love is a pervasive element of Hollywood films (Todd 2014, Thompson 1999). While it is typically analysed within the romantic comedy and drama genres (Todd 2014), the

⁷ Heteronormativity is understood as the “institutions, structures of understanding, practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged” (Berlant & Warner 1998: 548).

heterosexual love story or romance as a subplot or parallel plot line is integral to many mainstream action films in classical Hollywood cinema (Thompson 1999, MacKinnon 2003). It is also an important site in which gender performance is constructed through heteronormativity and the associated privileged concept of heterosexual love, and by extension desire. In THG, love forms a significant element in the narrative, and is integral to the discussion on how the female hero is constructed. It is equally important to understand the construction of the hero through her relationship to others, not only in terms of romantic love, but also family love, and how these relationships frame her decisions and influence her agency. C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves* (1960) is one approach, based in part on the more-varied Greek definitions of love, used in categorising Love for the basis of love tropes in television and film (TV Tropes: n.d). Sternberg's *Triangular Theory of Love* (1986) looks at determining the structure of these love relationships based on passion, decision/commitment and intimacy. These in combination illuminate the construction and functioning of the love narrative enacted by Katniss and Peeta, and of the love triangle between Katniss, Peeta and Gale. Desirability is linked to the discussion of love here, as it pertains to the classic feminist critique of the objectification of women through the male gaze (Mayne 1985, Rapping 1986), in part encouraged by the onscreen heterosexual romance. Family love as a strong motivator for the actions and decisions on the part of Katniss is also discussed. Family love links to both the progressive qualities of a brave and fearless sister caring and providing for her family, as well as to the more regressive elements of a patriarchal privileging of the typical nuclear family in assigning gender roles.

Violence is a central theme of the action-adventure genre, involving “a propensity for spectacular physical action, a narrative structure involving fights, chases and explosions” (Neale 2004: 71, Bordwell 2006). The focus on violence here is specific to how the female heroine is constructed in relation to it: both as offender and victim of violence (Gilpatrick 2010). Tasker (1993, 1998, 2004), Neroni (2005), Stuller (2010) and Inness (2004) all catalogue and focus on how female heroes are constructed in comparison to their male counterparts in similar roles. An important aspect of the action-adventure genre in relation to this is the ‘hyperbolic body’ (Neale 2000:46), or the body as site of the spectacle of the action, and the accompanying physical skills/attributes of the hero. Katniss is identified as part of a younger generation of female heroes⁸ doing battle on the big screen, meting out violence in similar ways to their male counterparts (Lupold 2014), free from the hyper-

⁸ Contrasting against the older ‘musculine’ heroes such as Ripley of *Aliens* and Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2*.

sexualisation of action babes. The tension inherent in the violent woman is her apparent threat to hegemonic masculinity, and often films featuring violent women find a way of neutralising this perceived threat (Crosby 2004) either through death, or recuperation into a patriarchal system (Lupold 2014). As a result, many of these young heroines can be classified as Daughter archetypes (Lupold 2014, Schubart 1998) based on their actions and attributes, often taking instruction from a male mentor, and usually being repatriated into a heteronormatively feminine situation by the end of the film. Neroni (2005) offers interesting insights into potential recuperation strategies evident in filmic violence in narratives featuring violent women as it pertains to violent women in love, and violent women situated within military movies. Katniss' relationship with Peeta in maintaining traditional gender norms speaks to the trope of violent women in love, while her military-style training in the Capitol for the Games and later her role in the war against the Capitol contain examples of how military-based narratives neutralise the threat of female violence to gender roles.

Power refers to both individual and institutional relations of power and how these contribute to the construction and continuing development of the hero's character and her agency. A feminist interactional model of power (Sutherland & Feltey 2017), focusing on women and power in the narrative context of film, is applied in the discussion of the findings. This model is based on the interconnected triadic definition of power (Allen 1998) as domination (power-over), resistance/emancipation (power-to) and solidarity (power-with). Examples of these power models at work in the films: on a national scale, Katniss struggles against/resists the oppressive laws of Panem as a law-breaking citizen (to hunt in the woods), as resistant to the rules of the Hunger Games when she attempts joint suicide with Peeta after refusing to kill him. Later she becomes a formalised symbol of resistance as the Mockingjay. In more subtle, individual ways, she is dominated by her male mentor, Haymitch, and later Heavensbee, who both direct her in certain ways to achieve goals outside of her own. President Snow in his role as leader of the oppressive regime exercises domination through his position, and military threat to her family and friends in order to get her to comply with his wishes. Instances of solidarity (power-with) are coalesced around common goals such as surviving the games (first with Rue, then Peeta), and later around Katniss' goal of killing Snow with Squadron 451 in *Mockingjay 2*. Solidarity with Peeta as survivors/victors of the games and later with the other victors as tributes in the 75th hunger games also reflect the power-with model. Resistance is a key concept in the feminist notion of Girl Power (Gonick *et al* 2009).

Love: Romantic and Family Love

C.S. Lewis (1960) identifies four types of love, based on the original Greek: Affection or *Storge* describes family love, *Philia* denotes friendship, *Eros* describes Romantic love and *Agape* references self-sacrificing love (Lewis 1960). Definitions and boundaries of types of love are not clear-cut, but overlap while all or some may be present at the same time (Lewis 1960): friendships can contain both *Storge* and *Philia*, while *Philia* may progress to Romance/*Eros* for instance.

Sternberg's triangular theory of love (1986) determines the degree of authenticity of romantic and companionate love relationships, by considering three components he identifies as the vertices of love: intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. *Intimacy* entails the "feelings of closeness, connectedness and bondedness in loving relationships" (Sternberg 1986: 119). *Passion* encompasses the drives that "lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation" and other phenomena in loving relationships (1986: 119). It includes "motivational and other forms of arousal" (1986: 119) that lead to the experience of passion within loving relationships. *Decision/commitment* is the decision that one makes to love another, and "in the long term, the commitment to maintain that love" (1986: 119). This component derives largely from the "cognitive decision in and commitment to the relationship" (1986: 119). Through a combination of these elements, Romantic love (passion and intimacy) and Companionate love (intimacy and commitment) are two key love relationships significant to Hollywood romance plots.

A narrative analysis of the films reveals an emphasis on romantic and family love both as motivations for, and central elements of, the narrative progression. With regards to romantic love, a love triangle can be identified which at first figures marginally (as typical heterosexual romantic love story subplot common to Hollywood cinema) but is soon joined to the main narrative and continues as a focus for the main narrative, at times overwhelming the action. The relevance of the love triangle is the constructed on-screen love story between Katniss and Peeta, watched by Gale and the rest of Panem, and how it influences Katniss' decisions and ultimately figures in the closure of her character arc. The onscreen love story between Katniss and Peeta becomes a televised narrative strategy by which to survive the games and head home in *The Hunger Games*. The love triangle tension is made visible to the actual cinema audience, through cutaways showing the visual non-verbal cues of

disappointment from Gale watching the Games in District 12 when Katniss first kisses Peeta in the arena to elicit support from sponsors. Gale questions Katniss' true affections at various moments during the films, and ultimately discusses with Peeta that Katniss must choose between them. Significantly, what is never questioned, is Katniss' romantic inclinations in terms of heterosexual love, nor are any other 'suitors' considered as possibilities outside of Peeta and Gale. Her 'on-screen' love for Peeta is mostly grounded in a commitment to surviving the games, while the companionate love or mixed friendship/family love she shows Gale is initially absent of obvious romantic intent. The love triangle can be viewed as a strategy of narrativisation, legitimating and privileging the heterosexual Hollywood love story. Initially, the love story is an act reluctantly employed by Katniss after Peeta declares love for her at the pre-Games interviews. Following from Sternberg (1986), Katniss engages in a partial 'fake' love, relying on commitment to survival to portray an onscreen passion and intimacy with Peeta. The intimacy in part stems from friendship/*storge*. Katniss as independent and until then unattached, non-sexualised female hero, reacts angrily at the romantic representation of her as typical love interest:

HAYMITCH: He did you a favour.

KATNISS: He made me look weak.

HAYMITCH: He made you look desirable, which in your case can't hurt sweetheart.

CINNA: He's right, Katniss.

HAYMITCH: Of course I'm right. Now I can sell the star-crossed lovers from District 12.

KATNISS: We're not star-crossed lovers.

HAYMITCH: It's a television show. And being in love with that boy might just get you sponsors which could save your damn life.

This interaction highlights the constructed nature of the televised romance in *The Hunger Games* with Katniss as one half of the 'star-crossed lovers' from District 12. The attractiveness of a made-for-TV romance to woo the sponsors in Panem, is also meant to woo the audience of the films, and figure Katniss as the 'to-be-looked-at' (Mulvey 1975) traditional female object of the male gaze. The dialogue above exposes and critiques an aspect of heteronormative ideology as it pertains to traditional binaristic gender relations: a women's desirability in relation to being an object in love with a man, is useful in making her more attractive to the audience figured here (both in the Capitol and the cinema audience) as the classic male spectator. Heteronormativity privileges the expectation of a heterosexual romantic subplot in mainstream action films. The heteronormative structure of the society of

Panem, presents parallels with present day society's privileging of heterosexual relationships. In Katniss' initial objection to being a 'star-crossed lover', she tries to resist becoming the feminised/objectified women in love, considering this position as 'weak'. Countering this however with an apparent need for Katniss to be more desirable, Haymitch reminds her again of her apparent lack of being desirable/likeable as an individual. This first turning point for Katniss' esteem of her wholeness as an independent, capable woman, occurs at the start of the complicating action in the first film, in the train car *en route* to the Capitol:

HAYMITCH: You really want to know how to stay alive? You get people to like you... and right now, sweetheart, you're not off to a real good start.

Despite having proven herself brave and fearless by volunteering in place of her sister as tribute, being highly skilled with a bow and arrow, and described as attractive by the show presenter Flickerman and her stylist, Cinna (Fig. 7, Appendix B), Katniss is portrayed as lacking in appeal for the sponsors/audience. There is a lot more apparent demand placed on Katniss in this instance to improve her likeability/desirability, by means of a typical heterosexual romance, in order to achieve the success in the Games. None of the other tributes (male or female) are required to entertain onscreen love stories in order to increase their appeal to sponsors. The only other love story between tributes/victors occurs between Finnick and Annie both from District 4, and takes place after these two win the Games in different years. Their romance is formalised at a traditional wedding ceremony in District 13, watched by Katniss and televised to Snow and the Districts. It is again a suggestion of the expected ending of heterosexual romance, despite the atrocities of war that surround them at the time.

While there is relatively little on-screen passion between Katniss, Peeta and Gale aside from a few kisses, the final film concludes with a "happily ever after" epilogue. The consummation of the heterosexual romance between Peeta and Katniss is suggested in the space between the final two scenes, showing Katniss climbing into bed with Peeta, and a time lapse of a few years on showing Katniss and Peeta with two young children in the wilderness having a picnic. It is not explicitly clear why Katniss 'chooses' Peeta, other than the oft-quoted "we keep each other alive" and "stay with me" lines that occur throughout the films. But it is significant that Gale is excluded as a potential love interest— not by Katniss' preference for either—but through his possible involvement with a bombing strategy that ultimately resulted in Prim's death.

Katniss' attempted suicide by Nightlock pill after killing President Coin in the final Capitol sequence in the film (*Mockingjay Part 2*), is an interesting commentary on where her true love lies at that point in the narrative. Faced with the finality of Prim's death, she appears unable to contemplate a future without her and attempts suicide immediately after avenging her sister's death. Peeta restrains her from taking the Nightlock.

Katniss' familial love is a strong theme running through the first two films: caring for her sister and ineffectual mother motivates her first in volunteering, and then in surviving the games and obeying Snow's directives. This maternal motivation frequently ascribed to tough action women, reinforces traditional gender roles rather than subverting them (Yaquinto 2004: 207, Tasker 1998). In addressing the tension created by strong women in action-adventure genre, the narratives attempt to offer "some explanation for her actions, to define her as exceptional" (Tasker 1993: 69). This maternal instinct accounts for her bond with the tribute Rue and her disdain for the system that caused her death (and through her disdain the uprising in District 11 begins). The maternal instinct to protect in large part forms her motivation for the love narrative onscreen between her and Peeta in *Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire* which is confirmed in discussion with both Gale and President Snow at the start of *Catching Fire*. In District 12 with Gale at the start of *Catching Fire* Katniss denies the authenticity of the love narrative with Peeta:

KATNISS: Are we going to do this again? Gale, it was an act.

GALE: It was a good one.

KATNISS: I did what I had to do to survive. If I didn't, I would be dead.

In a tense meeting at Katniss' Victor's home in District 12 after this, President Snow plays on her strong family love, also identifying Katniss' true feelings for Peeta and Gale:

SNOW: Ah he [Peeta] is a lovely boy. At what point did he realise the depth of your indifference towards him?

KATNISS: I'm not indifferent.

SNOW: Don't Lie! You promised.

KATNISS: Why don't you just kill me now?

SNOW: I don't want to kill you. I want us to be friends. But if not friends, then allies.

KATNISS: What do I need to do?

SNOW: When you and Peeta are on tour... You need to smile; you need to be grateful. But above all, you need to be madly-prepared-to-end-it-all in love. Do you think you can manage that? Convince me.

KATNISS: Yes, I'll convince them.

SNOW: No. Convince me... Do convince me, Ms Everdeen, for the sake of your loved ones.

Snow plays surveillance footage of the kiss between her and Gale witnessed moments earlier. This manipulation by Snow also plays into the other theme, Power, as a form of domination/power-over Katniss. Katniss however declares her true motivation and love later to Prim in *Catching Fire*:

KATNISS: You understand that whatever I do, comes back to you and mom. I don't want you to get hurt.

PRIM: You don't have to protect me or mom. We're with you.

KATNISS: I love you.

PRIM: I love you too.

This is the only time in all four films when Katniss declares her love for someone with the words "I love you". She hints in roundabout ways at her potential feelings for Peeta and Gale, but never comes out and says it plainly or commits to it until the end of *Mockingjay Part 2*. Even in the epilogue of this final film, she declares her love for Peeta only as "Real" in answer to his question: "You love me, real or not real". This confirms family love as Katniss' strongest motivation in the films, and in a way aligns her with the popular animated Disney film *Frozen* which resolves in the reveal of true love between the princess sisters, Ana and Elsa, as an alternative focus for heterosexual love typical of fairy tales. Despite this focus on family love however, Katniss is still transformed somewhat reluctantly into a typical heterosexual love interest by the end of the films. This is one way of containing her independence, violence and bravery as perceived threat to hegemonic masculinity within a patriarchal system.

Her 'worthiness' of being a couple with Peeta is questioned by both Snow above, and Haymitch: "you could live a hundred lifetimes and never deserve that boy [Peeta]." During this scene in *Catching Fire* with Haymitch, Katniss confusingly shifts motivation. Despite the elaboration above reflecting on the importance of family love as motivating factor for her, she offers up her life in place of Peeta's. She implores Haymitch to promise her that one of them must survive the games, but not her: "Do whatever you can. Peeta lives, not me. Promise me". It is not clear in the narrative why she changes approach, Peeta is not the extended family father figure of Gale who in *Hunger Games* looked after her family in her absence. This new motivation, not strictly maternal, but not obviously a romantic love, recurs frequently throughout *Catching Fire* and haunts her as a failure once Peeta is taken captive

by the Capitol at the disrupting end of the 75th Hunger Games (*Catching Fire*). During the games in *Catching Fire*, the romantic interest in Peeta is emphasised in her reaction to his near death in the arena, and in a shared kiss on the beach. Her loss of Peeta notably diminishes her character's toughness and perceived independence as she is racked by guilt over his capture and subsequent torture with little regard given to her own family during this time, or the larger picture of the impending revolution against the Capitol in which she is regarded as pivotal. This changes much of her characterisation in *Mockingjay Part 1*, which sees her as anxious, moody, and guilt-ridden over Peeta's imminent demise, almost a love-sick woman mourning the potential loss of her man, and simultaneously conflicted by her feelings for Gale. In the war room in District 13 in *Mockingjay Part 1*, her change in character as she vents her frustration over Peeta's loss, is noted by President Coin:

COIN: When you fired your arrow at the force-field, you electrified the nation...we believe that if we can keep this energy going, we can unify the districts against the Capitol.

KATNISS: What about Peeta, is he alive?

HEAVENSBEE: I don't know...

KATNISS: You left him there. You left Peeta in that Arena to die. [*slaps the desk angrily silencing Heavensbee*] Peeta was the one who was supposed to live.

COIN: Ms Everdeen, this revolution is about all of us. And we need a voice.

KATNISS: Then you should have saved Peeta. *Katniss exits*

COIN: Maybe you should have rescued the boy instead.

HEAVENSBEE: Ugh, no. No. No, listen to me, no one else can do this but her.

COIN: This is not the girl you described.

HEAVENSBEE: Obviously we need to make it personal, remind her who the real enemy is...

This mirrors her earlier hysterical reaction aboard the hovercraft at the end of *Catching Fire* when she finds out that Peeta has been captured by the Capitol:

[*Katniss listens through the door*]

HAYMITCH: She's going to lose it when she finds out about the boy.

HEAVENSBEE: She'll still cooperate though?

HAYMITCH: Without Peeta, there's no guarantee. [*Katniss enters*]

...

HEAVENSBEE: ... You have always been our mission. This is the revolution, and you're the Mockingjay.

KATNISS: Where's Peeta...Where is he?

HAYMITCH: ... He's in the Capitol. They got him and Johanna. [*Katniss attacks Haymitch.*]

KATNISS: You son of a bitch. You promised me that you would save him over me. You promised me. You promised me. You're a liar, you're a liar. *Katniss is sedated by Heavensbee.*

Katniss has a different response to Prim's death in the final film. On figuring out the cause of Prim's death, she doesn't exhibit raging outward emotion towards Gale, Snow or members of District 13. Her cold, steely reaction to Prim's death belies the depth of her grief, though as evidenced (we're led to believe) in her attempted suicide (she cannot contemplate life without her sister), and later in a single scene, brilliantly performed, of her breaking down when she discovers Prim's cat Buttercup back in District 12. This however only lasts a few moments on screen, compared with the long emotional agonies over Peeta in *Mockingjay Part 1*.

These inconsistent motivations above are questionable when attempting to define a progressive character development typical of Gonick's 'Girl Power' (2006). It may even be considered an instance of contradictory consciousness borrowing from Gramsci (Cheal 1975: 110) in the way it reflects the anxiety and uncertainty of 'Reviving Ophelia' (Gonick 2006). Girl power as discussed in Chapter 2 relates to an independent, assertive 'new girl', free from the constraints of "passive femininity" (Gonick 2006: 2). Her contrast is Reviving Ophelia as "vulnerable, voiceless, and fragile", and who is anxious about producing herself in a way to embody Girl Power (Gonick 2006: 2). Katniss may be deemed fickle in this sense because she goes from risking everything for her family (active protector), to pining over Peeta (lovesick, anxious girlfriend), willing to offer up her life for his, without consideration for what happens to her family until later in the final film. The motivation moves her from primary independent carer of her family, to co-dependent love interest almost to the exclusion of her family. Her revenge narrative, a typical device in action films, solidifies in the third film only after Peeta's attempt to strangle her: "Snow must pay for what he has done". The graphic nature of her near death at the hands of Peeta, and her 'loss' of Peeta through his torture and fear conditioning to hate her by the Capitol, and less obviously the destruction of District 12, motivates Katniss to exact revenge upon Snow. Ultimately however, this revenge narrative is supplanted by a new goal, with the reappearing motivation of family love, when Katniss kills Coin instead of Snow at the final moment, believing Snow's story that Coin was behind the bombings which claimed Prim's life, and so placing vengeance for Prim's death above vengeance for Peeta's torture as goal. These shifting motivations between family and romantic love, tend to portray an uncertain character navigating largely on impulse rather

than sound reasoning. As will be seen in the discussion on Power, much of Katniss' agency, beyond her initial motivation to protect her family and Rue in *Hunger Games*, rests on a combination of mentoring/direction through male characters (such as Haymitch, Cinna, Gale, Peeta, Plutarch Heavensbee and Snow) in the ensemble and manipulation of her love interests. President Coin is the only female character who seeks to manipulate Katniss for her own interests in furthering the cause of the rebellion, but her character is represented more as an "Other" through her ambition, masculine attire, and lack of family (lost in a previous epidemic). She functions as a parallel to Snow's character in District 13. Coin is mostly supported by Heavensbee in her manipulation of Katniss, speaking once again to the hegemonic masculinity at work.

Looking beyond the narrative analysis, the heterosexual romance also aligns with early feminist film theory's critical examination of the male gaze, with women as object of the gaze in classical Hollywood cinema (Mulvey 1975). The feminist critique of the male gaze is further supported by *mise-en-scène* and cinematography in these films. Katniss' desirability and "to-be-looked-at-ness" is strongly tied to the heterosexual romance, and is emphasized by costuming throughout the films. This relatively 'diluted' sexualisation aligns her in some ways with the objectification of the action babe (Brown 1996), but can be read more in the tomboy's transformation to traditional femininity (Tasker 1998: 83). Her gender is significant in the films in the way it aligns her to perform as 'woman', both as object to be admired (in the parades and interviews), and in a heterosexual romance which forms a part of the main narrative at specific points across the four films. Katniss' screen age of 16 in *Hunger Games* places her on the edge of womanhood, though the actor who plays her, Jennifer Lawrence, was 21 at the start of filming, displaying a more womanly figure for admiration than the skinny 16-year-old girl from the poverty-stricken District 12 in the novels. Onscreen, Katniss is nonchalant about her desirability until it is exposed as a potential strategy for survival. This viewpoint contrasts with another study that found her gender to be "irrelevant" in the narrative development of the films and simultaneously lauded her as a progressive female hero (Kirby 2015). The naturalisation of gender roles at work in Panem obscures the heteronormative gender roles as is evidenced in the theme of love through the main love interest and in the styling of female tributes in the makeovers for the Capitol interviews.

Being at first sight an independent tomboyish hunter, comfortable in pants and an old leather jacket at the start of the films, Katniss undergoes a major ‘makeover’ transformation process as tribute, marked by a sterile, hospital-style preparation area in which she is plucked, waxed, trimmed and washed before being presented as a beautiful canvas to her stylist (Fig. 4, Appendix B). The camera work in this transition lingers on her body momentarily, with close-up on legs, face and her apparent discomfort, but nonetheless quiet submission to the process. She assumes the costumes to “make me look pretty” easily from her stylist, Cinna, who attempts to frame the work of styling as something deeper, a way of making an impression (to get sponsors). That this aligns with traditional notions of feminine beauty is not disputed, and that she is ‘naturally beautiful’ is confirmed by the Games host Caesar Flickerman, “When you got out of that carriage, my heart stopped”, and when her stylist Cinna remarks, “Don’t you know how beautiful you look?” (Fig. 7-8, Appendix B). Camera work during her appearance in the tribute parades and game show interviews tends to focus closely on her face as well as the gowns, emphasizing both her natural and stylised beauty as classically celebrated feminine beauty. Her costumes for the tribute parade and pre- and post-games interviews are strikingly beautiful: some delicately feminine, others reminiscent of dominatrix style black with revealing cuts (Figs. 5, 9, 12, 15, & 17, Appendix B). The Girl on Fire moniker is one adopted by the Capitol for Katniss after her first tribute gown is literally on fire in the first Hunger Games tribute parade. The “girl” reminds one that she is a 16-year-old girl still, despite dresses and makeup that present her as woman rather than girl (emphasized by Boggs again in *Mockingjay Part 1* after her failed acting stint in a District 13 propaganda video). Another significant costume moment is when her wedding gown goes up in flames, revealing her Mockingjay gown in the 75th Hunger Games in *Catching Fire* (Figs. 17-18, Appendix B). Katniss is unaware of the end transformation of her dress, anticipating the reveal of Cinna’s creation along with the audience. Cinna’s Mockingjay battle gear (designed before his death in *Catching Fire*) creates his vision of Katniss as freedom fighter, later revealed in *Mockingjay Part 1* for the purposes of presenting her as a symbol of unity for the rebellion.

Despite her rough background and apparent dislike of dresses evidenced in her gaze of despair at the plain blue dress in preparation for the Reaping ceremony in the first film, Katniss assumes the femininity demanded of her in the Capitol as tribute easily, by donning beautiful, figure-hugging gowns complete with pageant-style makeup to show off ‘her best’ to the audience. The staged beauty is a naturalisation of gender: of feminine beauty on

display for the purpose of winning admiration (and by extension sponsors). It also presents the stylistic preference of displaying women as beautiful through dresses as a reified ideological construct through a strategy of eternalisation: there is no questioning by Katniss about why she must wear a dress (when she is clearly more comfortable in her hunting gear) as a means to acquire approval. Her character's desirability as woman is displayed on two levels for the cameras: one, through the love interest, and two, through the *mise-en-scène* of the costuming and makeup: the glamorous gowns worn during the pre and post-game interviews by her and most of the other female tributes. This pageant style beauty on show during the pre- and post- Games interviews, and during the tribute parade, exposes ideological notions of conventional beauty. Everything related to the Capitol is super-saturated: from the colours of the costumes and over-the-top makeup worn by the regular citizens, to the dress style adopted by the tributes (aided by their Capitol stylists and ambassadors). Katniss' 'natural' feminine beauty is highlighted and naturalised as appealing here in the initial (and continued) stark contrast with the ambassador for District 12 Effie Trinket's costume and makeup (Fig. 3, Appendix B). Her wardrobe throughout the four films moves between the highly stylised fashion of the game interviews, the *Mockingjay* costume, and neutral war fatigues. In a more subtle way, the style changes in Katniss' wardrobe outside of the Capitol and Games also reflect this preference for traditional femininity. While she returns to the comfort of the old leather jacket on her return to District 12 in *Mockingjay Part 1*, this jacket is abandoned in the final image of her in the wilderness of District 12 with Peeta and the children. No longer is she equipped or dressed to hunt: she wears a pale-yellow dress, and the tomboyish pants and jacket with which one associates her initial persona in the wilderness (whether in District 12 or later in 13) is gone. There is a strong suggestion in this costuming that Katniss gives up her strong persona as hunter to embrace a softer feminine side of 'expected' motherhood (as contrasted to the harsher reality of stepping into her absent father's role at the start of *Hunger Games*). This echoes the typical transformation process of the tomboy and daughter archetypes discussed in the following chapter. Gender performance reinforced here through symbolic forms such as these, ascribe to predetermined, socially constructed stereotypes of what genders "are" and "should" look like: an instance of ideological unification at work through standardisation ('real' women wear dresses) as defined by a largely patriarchal, heteronormative society as being representative of 'women' (Butler 1999).

Katniss exhibits feminist qualities in that she occupies the role of independent provider/protector (in place of the absent father, and incapable biological mother) for both her mother and sister, while simultaneously being constrained at various points in traditional ways of performing stereotypical feminine beauty and roles. These two competing notions of femininity align with Gonick's (2006) two discourses offering opposing significations of femininity: Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia. The continued emphasis on what Katniss lacks, either stylistically or romantically, feeds this second discourse, belittling the strength with which she first appears in the wilderness outside district 12. Her Ophelia is created through the perceived 'lack' in her development as an empowered woman through elements highlighted in the discussion above, such as her 'romance' with Peeta, and her accepting the more passive femininity prescribed to improve her likeability.

Ultimately, Katniss is returned to the 'mother' figure, pre-figured through her portrayals of caring for Prim and Rue, and in the briefly staged pregnancy in *Catching Fire*. Her return as the mother figure, seen in the final sequence of *Mockingjay Part 2* caring for her new family with Peeta and their children, confirms the centrality of the nuclear family in resolving the potential threat of her character to a patriarchal system. Providing a satisfying heteronormative closure is typical of the resolution of the Daughter archetype (discussed in the following chapter). The films start with a broken family: Katniss taking the role of father and mother to her sister Prim following the death of her father a few years previously and her mother's breakdown as a result thereof, rendering her an ineffectual parent. While Katniss fails to save her own sister from death, she avenges her death and returns to a state of equilibrium in the same wilderness outside District 12 of the opening scene, but this time as part of a complete, whole nuclear family. Katniss holding a baby and gazing towards her young son playing with Peeta, frames the off-screen event preceding this scene, of her giving birth to these two children, ultimately fulfilling the "quintessential 'feminine' act" (Neroni 2005: 83). This moment is foreshadowed in *Catching Fire*, when trying to stop the games and in order to elicit empathy and support from the audiences Peeta claims that Katniss is pregnant in the pre-games interview. From a feminist perspective, this epilogue in *Mockingjay 2* is concerning, as it places the resolution of the feminist hero squarely within the "conservative political rhetoric [which] has long employed the family as a rallying cry associated with an attempt to reposition women both economically and culturally" (Tasker 2004: 253). One critic notes this final family scene as inconsistent with the rest of the films:

[T]here's a tacked-on, extra ending that's needless and tonally inconsistent with everything that came before it. It's a sun-dappled coda in a meadow...when there's a moment right before it that would have ended the movie, and the series, on a perfectly poignant and satisfying note. (Lemire 2015: n.p.)

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

Continuing the discussion of the findings, this chapter focuses on the themes of Violence and Power as defined in the previous chapter. Building on the discussion of all the themes, Katniss' agency is considered through the lens of available archetypes of female heroes in the action-adventure genre. Finally, the films' ideological categorisation following Narboni and Comolli's typology is considered.

Violence in Action

Within the context of the action-adventure genre, violent spectacle is a defining feature of the genre, forming part of the narrative progression of the film (Neroni 2005, Bordwell 2006), rather than simply representing a moment which 'pauses' the story to allow for the enjoyment of action sequences. While violent spectacle may "arrest the movement of the narrative" (Neroni 2005: 5) it cannot function on its own: it must be situated within a narrative framework for it to be understood. Violence and its relation to narrative is essential for understanding "contemporary subjectivity" (Neroni 2005: 6).

Film violence "both produces and resists ideology... [It] often appears to erupt when ideology fails" (Neroni 2005: 7). Violence can either support ideology, challenge it, or pose a threat to the functioning of ideology (Neroni 2005: 7). These moments of vulnerability in ideology can be defined as moments of "ideological failure" that can either be concealed or exacerbated through violence (Neroni 2005: 8). For Neroni (2005), all cultural texts must struggle with ideological failure. Ultimately these ideological failures indicate the "existence of a fundamental antagonism underlying society" and society's "impossibility of fully constituting itself" (Neroni 2005: 8).

In the society of Panem, violence and the threat of violence is used by the Capitol to keep the districts under submission. Panem's government reifies its oppressive society through the eternalisation of the Hunger Games as reminder of the failed rebellion almost 75 years earlier and as the means for preserving the law and order of the society. A striking feature of this

society is the failure on the part of families as bystanders at the Reaping to protest the mindless slaughter of randomly selected children every year. Katniss' reaction to the violent deaths of children can be considered as a moment of disruption, exposing the failed ideology in Panem society meant to keep the districts submissive. It is through her honouring of Rue's death, that the districts begin to rebel with violence against the oppressive Capitol, a call to arms that is picked up by the rebels of District 13 to foment war against the Capitol.

The *Hunger Games* film series positions violence as integral to the narrative in the first two films: The Games are styled on gladiatorial competition where contenders fight to the death until one remains as sole Victor. In the first Games (*Hunger Games*), the violence is more marked because it is children killing children. With the rule change in the second Games (*Catching Fire*), most of the contenders are adult men and women that in some ways lessens the horror of their violent deaths. In the final two films, the gladiator games are replaced by a war genre approach (highlighting again the tendency to generic hybridity in Hollywood films): the rebellion by the Districts that is fomented and violently unleashed against the Capitol sees a more military-styled spectacle of violence as tool of war.

Against this setting, our first impression of Katniss is as hunter, portrayed in the traditionally masculine role of hunting animals in order to provide for the family. Killing animals is justified by family love (discussed earlier) in that her adoption of the role of hunter is necessitated by the absence of functioning parents to provide for the children: the circumstances of her absent father and catatonic mother (traumatised by the death of her father). Katniss is reluctant to employ her skill as hunter in the games, however, but Gale challenges her to do so from a typical hegemonic masculine view (disaffected by violence):

GALE: You can hunt.

KATNISS: Animals, yes.

GALE: It's [people] no different.

Katniss' skill in killing and defending herself is mixed: while her archery skills are highly valued, and scenes depicting her shooting are beautifully framed through close ups on her face showing her concentration (Fig. 2, Appendix B), she is not skilled in defending herself in hand-to-hand combat and tends to avoid combat rather than engage in it. Even when praising Katniss' archery skills, there is an undercurrent in the narrative that seems to mock her seriousness as a hunter. Throughout displays of her hunting skill in the wilderness, Katniss never kills anything larger than rabbits and pheasants. Peeta describes her skill to Haymitch:

HAYMITCH: I hear you can shoot.

KATNISS: I'm alright.

PEETA: She's more than alright. My father buys her squirrels. He says she hits them right in the eye, every time.

She only comes close to killing large game twice (in District 12, and later in 13), but is never successful. She later dispatches the Capitol's mutations or mutts sent to kill them in the Games and later the Capitol however with ease – these mutations are neither true animal nor true human. In this way, her skill as an effective hunter is confirmed, but not in a way that confirms her as typical masculine large game hunter. She progresses from killing rabbits and squirrels to defending herself against monstrous mutts, and people. Uniquely, she experiences trauma (revealed in *Catching Fire*) after killing people. Being affected by the violent acts of dispatching the enemy is not a trait common to the typical male action hero, and here it signals her empathy and caring nature. This is identified as one of the progressive qualities of Katniss as a violent yet empathetic character. These qualities do not undermine her characterisation as a proficient killer: they provide a space for a more personal reaction to violence which is not usually encountered in male action heroes. A killer with a conscience is a progression from the usual trend in action genres where acts of violence do not intrude on the lead character's conscience. This quality however is not consistent in Katniss, as she exhibits no emotion at several deaths that she causes or witnesses at close hand.

In terms of hand-to-hand combat, Katniss engages in very few instances of close quarter attacks of her own choosing. Mostly, she is the victim in scenes of close combat violence. Examples of her situation include when: Clove overpowers her and attempts to slash her throat and she is rescued by Thresh who kills Clove “This one time 12 [Katniss], for Rue” (*Hunger Games*); Cato attempts to strangle her on top of the cornucopia (*Hunger Games*) and she is rescued by Peeta; and when Peeta attempts to strangle her to death (*Mockingjay Part 1*) and she is rescued by Boggs. It appears that while she is allowed to excel in certain forms of violence, others are closed off to her to and reverse her heroism, where she is made to assume the role of damsel in distress needing rescuing. This distancing of the character from successfully enacting certain forms of violence prevents her from transgressing too far into masculine norms of violence, and excludes her from the highly capable, masculinised, gun-toting heroes of either the cross-dressing variety of female heroes (Brown 1996), or the action-babes whose violence (often with a gun) is hyper-sexualised (O'Day 2004).

In the rare instances when Katniss does attempt to engage someone physically in close quarters (usually her mentor), her efforts are derided. She threatens Haymitch with a butter knife at breakfast on the train to the Capitol (in *Hunger Games*) at which point that he indicates that it is her likeability (or lack thereof), rather than her killing skill that matter in the games. In the second instance, waking up on board the hovercraft after being rescued from the arena in *Catching Fire*, Katniss attempts to attack Haymitch, believing that he betrayed her and deserted Peeta in the arena. She attacks him with a syringe she finds in the medical bag. He overpowers her while Heavensbee sedates her:

HAYMITCH: You and a syringe against the Capitol. See, this is why no one lets you make the plans.

Violence does not come naturally to Katniss despite her possessing traditionally masculine qualities such as toughness, physicality and the ability to hunt. By contrast, Katniss attempts to avoid violent acts in the first Games when she chooses to flee the scene (unable to get to the bow and arrows at the weapons stash), preferring to avoid engaging the Career tributes slaughtering the less experienced tributes in the arena. It is only through manipulation of the arena by the game makers that she is driven back towards the Career alliance and is inserted once again into the violent action. She kills three tributes during the first games. The first death is collateral as a result of the lethal wasp-like trackerjacks Katniss unknowingly releases when she drops an ordinary-looking hive onto the careers in order to escape, killing Glimmer in a grotesque way (Katniss does not mourn her death). Katniss in her hallucination (caused by the insect stings) pries the bow and arrows from the dead girl's hand. She refrains from easy kills, evidenced in her friendship and alliance with the young Rue. The other two deaths are deliberate kills in *Hunger Games* and reflect two primary recurring motivations for Katniss' violence. In the first instance, Katniss seeks immediate vengeance/retribution for the death of Rue whom she cannot save when Marvel kills her with a spear. Unflinching, she fires an arrow killing Marvel instantly. It is only Marvel's death that she relives traumatically in *Catching Fire* after showing no emotion initially at the time of killing him. The second death is Cato's, where he has fallen off the cornucopia after a struggle with Katniss and Peeta, and is being mauled to death by the Capitol mutts: Katniss kills him out of mercy to spare him an agonising death. Katniss again unflinchingly kills a career tribute in *Catching Fire* after Wiress, an ally, is killed. She kills Coin without any emotion after her discussion with Snow reveals Coin to be behind the bombings that killed her sister Prim in *Mockingjay Part 2*. Katniss' use of violence is not excessive, and it is not without apparent just cause for

her. Despite the narrative structure accommodating the staging of Katniss' capability of participating in mass violence (evidenced in her skill when killing multiple mutts), her participation in individual acts of violence is limited, precise, and either premised on vengeance or mercy as illustrated above. Significantly, her violent acts can always be rationalised within existing gender roles in order to contain her potential threat to masculinity when she does embrace violence. She is violent, but she is so because she is either a Mother figure protecting/providing for her family, or she is avenging the death of a loved one, or she is acting out of mercy and ending someone's suffering. Her honouring of Rue's death (*Hunger Games*) incites the violence in District 11 against the Capitol peacekeepers (soldiers). Later, her posed suicide with Peeta whom she refuses to kill herself at the end of the Games (*Hunger Games*, after the rules reversal again now requiring only one victor), is read as an act of defiance of the Capitol's violent methods, and in turn incites rebellion. Her status as Mockingjay is grounded in these acts of defiance (discussed further in the following section on Power) that fuel the rebellion in Panem. She attempts to distance herself from the violence she incites in *Catching Fire*, where she witnesses the execution of a rebel: "I never meant for anyone to get killed. He [Snow] has to know that."

A further rationalisation of Katniss' use of violence is through the military-based war genre approach in *Mockingjay Part 1* and *Mockingjay Part 2*. The purpose of positioning the violent women within a military setting is to separate violence, articulated as her 'job', from the personal, i.e. her femininity (Neroni 2005). The effect of this split is to make the woman's violence "more palatable and less traumatic" (Neroni 2005: 140). In *Mockingjay Part 1* and *Mockingjay Part 2* Katniss 'signs up': she joins the rebellion, dons the uniform that distinguishes her as the Mockingjay and follows orders (mostly). Her superiors in the Squadron 451 in the Capitol streets also address her as "soldier". The violence enacted progressing through the Capitol is framed within the logic of military action. Even in this setting she is uncomfortable with perpetrating violence against others. In an argument with Gale in District 2, as they watch bombers blow up a mountain housing the Capitol's security forces (a strategy suggested by Gale and disapproved of by Katniss), Katniss reveals this position:

GALE: What's the difference Katniss: crushing the enemy in a mine, or blowing them out of the sky with one of Beetee's arrows? It's the same thing.

KATNISS: We were under attack in District 8. And that hovercraft wasn't filled with civilians.

GALE: It doesn't matter. Even if those civilians are just mopping floors, they're helping the enemy. If they have to die, I can live with that. No one who supports the Capitol is innocent.

KATNISS: With that kind of thinking, you can kill whoever you want. You can send kids off to the hunger games to keep the districts in line.

[Katniss flinches at the sound of the bombs]

GALE: It's war Katniss. Sometimes killing isn't personal. I figured that if any knew that, it was you.

KATNISS: I of all people know that it's always personal.

This conversation situates Gale squarely within a hegemonic masculine view of war and violence, contrasting with Katniss' position as one reluctant to engage in violence. Her statement that "killing is always personal" however is not consistently reflected in her reactions to deaths witnessed or perpetrated by her.

This approach to violence in the service of combat/war can also be applied to the Games in *Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, if one considers the military-style combat and survival training that the tributes undergo, preparing them for a Hobbesian war of all against all within the arena, and their uniforms identifying them all as tributes in the arena. Thus Katniss and the other tributes' use of violence within the Games can be rationalised within a 'war' context.

In contrast to 'action babes' (O'Day 2004), Katniss is not hyper-sexualised. This however does *not* indicate that the character is not objectified. Katniss' sexuality is not aligned with her enactment of violence: she is not embodied as the male fantasy of the fetishized violent woman (some of the costuming however may offer subtle sexualisation, particularly the black Mockingjay outfit). Some critics have noted that women are more empowered through hyper-sexualisation as action babes, because their "sex appeal is overt and does not reflect conventional feminine sexual passivity" (Heldman *et al* 2016: 3), as is the case with Katniss in THG.

Her objectification in the films is strongly grounded in her performance of the passive femininity of stylised beauty, and as a heterosexual love interest discussed in the previous chapter. In the discussion on archetypes, Katniss' positioning regarding violence is discussed in the way it aligns her with the Daughter archetype (Schubart 1998).

Suicide as self-inflicted harm is a final consideration of violence in the films. While Katniss never succeeds in committing suicide in *Mockingjay Part 2*, her attempt to do so suggests a trajectory similar to those of female leads in action TV series in the early 2000s (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Dark Angel* and *Xena Warrior Princess*, Crosby 2004). One line of reasoning for this trajectory is that suicide is a form of neutralising tough heroines as political threat to patriarchy: “the ultimate punishment to women who have become just too tough or too strong” (Crosby 2004: 153). Throughout the narrative, the female hero engages in tough heroism until she reaches a “snapping point” (Crosby 2004: 155). This snapping point comes at the end of the female hero’s story, or at an important point in her character arc, when the narrative asks “For whom? For which community?” (Crosby 2004: 155). When consideration of their “final purpose logically comes to the fore, the narrative snaps them into sacrificial heroine” (Crosby 2004: 155). In this way, feminist narratives are “transformed into patriarchal affirmations” (Crosby 2004: 156). Katniss’ attempted suicide in the film, bereft of the interior monologue in the novels, does not allow for much insight into her actions: even Peeta looks at her questioningly when he stops her from taking the lethal Nightlock pill. It can be assumed that Katniss feels bereft of her true love (her sister) and mourns Prim’s death. Her guilt at failing to protect her sister can be assumed to play a role here, and that she cannot contemplate life without her (affirmed by her only declaration of love highlighted earlier). An additional complication is her community: where does she belong at the end of her story, with Prim gone, District 12 destroyed, and her final seemingly treacherous act of killing the new president of Panem, Coin? Her attempted suicide is confusing. Being prevented from this type of death, Katniss’ failure to commit suicide implies that she remains a threat to a patriarchal ideological system that seeks to contain her. However, this challenge to ideology is more perfectly resolved in her exile to District 12, and the staging of the nuclear family in the final scenes. Rather than allowing Katniss her agency in an independent act of choosing death, her agency is restrained, and she is held up as the standard of a reformed violent woman, recuperated happily ever after into society, neutralising her threat of violence.

The recuperation of the violent women into a happy heterosexual romance is another way of containing her violence. Violent women in films have the potential to disrupt classical forms by disrupting expected gender roles. Gender roles are often reversed in action-adventure films with strong female leads when the violent woman occupies the role of protector to a feminised male lead. This according to Neroni (2005), while celebrating a tough woman, does not necessarily disrupt the status quo in heterosexual gender relations:

The violent woman with male characteristics protecting a nonviolent man with female characteristics creates a sense of complementarity and can thus be seen as a defense mechanism that ensures that the woman's violence does not disrupt the complementarity of the love relationship. (Neroni 2005: 124)

Peeta is the counter to Katniss: he is the male lead with female characteristics. He is a baker, he is artistic, he paints and decorates cakes, he relies on his charm to win over the audiences and people of the Capitol, and he expresses the most insight into the moral anchoring in the films which influences Katniss' outlook. Gale, by contrast, occupies the more hegemonic masculine role, and is aligned with typical male leads as his outlook on violence – 'it's just war, Katniss' – highlights. Peeta, like Katniss, appears to avoid violence, however when they are together in the arena she tends to be proactive in the violence, protecting him from harm. It is ultimately Peeta that Katniss ends up with in the heterosexual romance, maintaining the complementarity of the relationship. Their monikers of Lover Boy /The Baker's Boy and Killer Katniss/Girl on Fire as a lethal duo follow them through the first two films and are reflective of the reversed gender roles. Peeta's intimate violence towards Katniss when he attempts to strangle her can be viewed as a correcting of the role reversal indicated above. After his brainwashing by the Capitol, he returns as a shell of his former self, violent and aggressive, replacing Katniss momentarily as aggressor. She continues to protect him until Prim is killed, despite his uncertain hold on reality and his tortured view of Katniss. After Prim's death, Peeta steps up as protector, preventing Katniss from killing herself and eventually building a family with her in the typical tradition of gender roles.

Power: Domination, Resistance/Emancipation, Solidarity

Throughout the films, Katniss' character is continually directed by different powers (Capitol, Haymitch and Prep team, Peeta Love Interest, District 13 etc.), challenging her own ability as an independent female capable of exercising power in the narrative. Questions of her own agency in shaping her character are presented continually as a tension with the outside sources (mentioned above) attempting to control her. The exercise of power in the films as it relates to Katniss occurs at both an individual and societal level. Power, exercised by Snow through the Capitol's use of violence and media strives to direct/control the persona of Katniss individually and collectively in favour of maintaining order: as willing Subject, Tribute, Love Interest, Victor, Rebel/Radical/Other. District 13, under President Coin and assisted by Heavensbee, becomes a second player seeking, at the level of society, to shape

Katniss' agency. They attempt this through characterising her as the Mockingjay in order to coalesce the districts in rebellion against the Capitol, as a symbol uniting symbol of the rebellion.

In attempting to unpack the various power relations in the films, it is necessary to consider a feminist approach to delineating relations of power. Allen (1998) proposes a triadic theory of power: power-over (domination), power-to (resistance/emancipation) and power-with (solidarity). Power relations are not distinct from each other, and “more than one set of actions/reactions can be found in any situation” (Sutherland & Feltey 2017: 618). In investigating the relationship between women and power in film, Sutherland and Feltey (2017) adapt Allen's model to provide a lens through which to understand this relationship against a backdrop of films classified as feminist. Allen's model addresses what she terms the relatively one-sided approach of feminist theories of power that propose a woman can either be dominated, or emancipated (Allen 1998: 22). Allen argues that these approaches simplify the highly complex way a woman can be “both dominated and empowered at the same time and in the context of one and the same practice, institution, or norm” (1998: 22). She also addresses a third mode of power, that of power-with or solidarity. This is significant in understanding the characterisation of Katniss, and relates to Schubart's riddle (1998) presented at the start of Chapter 4. In acknowledging the complexity of a female hero as site for varied relations of power, one can begin to unpack her characterisation as a complex array of qualities identified as masculine and feminine. These qualities occur simultaneously within the character, and in this way the character can be both dominated and emancipated in the same situation.

Much of the earlier discussion above pertaining to the themes of love and violence overlap the theme of power. In the first instance, Katniss along with the rest of the citizenry, is figured as under the power of Snow and the Capitol through the perpetration and threat of state violence. Power-over refers to the ability of “an actor or set of actors to constrain the choices available to another actor or set of actors in a nontrivial way” (Allen 1998: 33). Strategic intent for Allen (1998) is not necessary to this definition – an actor may hold power over another without realising it through ritualised practices. Within THG, Katniss, despite being identified as an independent tomboy and caretaker early on, submits to the power-over of the stylist Cinna and mentor Haymitch within the Games. These roles are reified, obscuring the historical conditions that have led to these men having power over the tributes

assigned to them. Haymitch as mentor directs her actions in order to gain sponsors, and in so doing restricts her agency in certain ways. He is pivotal in compelling her to act the “star-crossed lovers” narrative as the only way he claims she can improve her likeability and appeal to audiences. Significantly, he does not make the same claim for Peeta, suggesting that Peeta suffers no ‘lack’ despite Katniss’ superior skills with weaponry. Haymitch’s role as mentor evidences qualities of the relationship between the father and daughter: he scolds her for misbehaving (when she attacks Peeta after his declaration of love), for defying the Capitol, and for saying the wrong things (*Catching Fire* Victors parade which prompts the execution of a man in District 11). At the conclusion of the first Games, Haymitch talks to Katniss:

HAYMITCH: They’re not happy with you.

KATNISS: Why, because I didn’t die?

HAYMITCH: Because you showed them up.

KATNISS: Well I’m sorry it didn’t go the way they planned. I’m not very happy with them either.

HAYMITCH: Katniss, this is serious, not just for you. They don’t take these things lightly.

The scene cuts to Seneca’s violent demise through a bowl of poison berries, visualising for the audience Haymitch’s warning to Katniss that there are consequences for her actions, and that “they don’t take these things lightly”. Haymitch assumes the role of telling Katniss exactly what to say through the first two films, particularly regarding her “love” for Peeta as evidenced in his pep talk prior to the post-Games interview in *Hunger Games*:

HAYMITCH: When they ask, you say that you were so in love with this boy that you couldn’t help yourself. That the thought of not being with him was unthinkable. That you’d rather die, than not be in love with him, do you understand?

Katniss’ features and expression are brought into focus at this moment through close-up camera work (Fig. 11, Appendix B): her head is down, chin tucked in, and looking up at the camera/Haymitch. This child-like positioning removes the agency witnessed moments earlier in which she takes a stand defying the game makers in order to save both her and Peeta’s lives in the Games. Katniss dutifully repeats part of Haymitch’s lines in her answers to Flickerman, as Haymitch has taught her now to fear the Capitol.

As demonstrated by Allen's model of power, however, this instance of domination can equally be read as power-to on the part of Katniss: she is willing to do and be whatever it takes in order to survive the games and return home to Prim. Resistance as power-to, is defined as "the capacity of an agent to act in spite of or in response to the power wielded over her by others" (Allen 1998: 34). Peeta first suggests resistance to the Capitol as a possible strategy prior to the Games (*Hunger Games*):

PEETA: I just don't want them to change me... Turn me into something I'm not. I just don't want to be another piece in their game, you know?

KATNISS: You mean you won't kill anyone?

PEETA: No, I'm sure I would just like anybody else when the time came.

I keep wishing... of a way to show them that they don't own me. If I'm gonna die, I want to still be me.

KATNISS: I can't afford to think like that. I have my sister.

Peeta's statements bring into sharp focus those moments when Katniss has become "another piece in their game". She allows herself to be transformed into a feminine beauty for the enjoyment of the audiences on the eve of killing games; she commits to a love narrative to increase her chances of survival, and she is prepared to follow the Capitol's rule book and kill tributes in the Games in an attempt to save herself and return to Prim. This dialogue also informs her change in attitude later: when she chooses to resist the Capitol's naturalisation of violent deaths of children and grieves openly for Rue, honouring her with burial flowers. The exposure of the ideological failure of Panem society to offer a reasonable account for its perpetuation of the senseless deaths of children in the games, is a major turning point in her characterisation. In other words, Katniss exposes the ideological flaws in the narrativisation of the Games, exposing its weakness through her mourning. In this way, Katniss takes the first steps to becoming the symbol for rebellion, the 'spark' to fire the districts into action. This action introduces the motif of the Mockingjay.

Highlighting a specific motif in the narrative, the Mockingjay is a significant symbol of power assigned to Katniss. It first appears as motif in the pin Katniss gives to Prim before the reaping "for protection" which Prim returns to her after she volunteers. It makes an appearance again when Katniss and Rue are figuring out a way to communicate across a large distance. It appears as protest graffiti when Katniss and Peeta visit District 11 (Rue's district) during the Victors Parade, and finally Cinna and the rebels baptise her the Mockingjay as

symbol of the rebellion. Naturally occurring in Panem, Mockingjays are birds that repeat what they hear, and are used in Rue's district to send messages and signal the time. Basing the hero's symbol on a bird known for repeating what they hear carries a strong suggestion of the molding of the Mockingjay and Katniss through external forces. Particularly in the final two films, she is involved in numerous propaganda videos to help fuel the rebellion, and she is told what to say, where to stand, etc. This is not dissimilar to the instructions she is issued by Haymitch in her presentation during the games, or in Snow's direction to her on how to act to avoid violence, or by Effie and the stylists in making her appearance satisfactory before the Capitol and district audiences. It is Cinna who confirms her status as suited hero in his designs of first the Mockingjay gown revealed beneath the wedding gown (for which he is killed) and later revealed his design of the Mockingjay battle suit which Katniss dons in *Mockingjay Part 1* and *Mockingjay Part 2*. In this way, other characters exercise power over Katniss in the way she performs her identity.

Katniss as the Mockingjay achieves various ideological ends: for the Capitol, she becomes a strategy for fragmentation, banning all symbols of the Mockingjay and outlawing any association with Katniss or the rebels, the Capitol attempts to break the rebellion fomenting behind Katniss as symbol of unity. For the rebels, Katniss as the Mockingjay represents unification, a symbol of unity under which they can pursue their rebellion against the Capitol. Heavensbee tells her that she is the Mockingjay in the intense encounter at the end of *Catching Fire*: "You have always been our mission. This is the revolution, and you're the Mockingjay."

Ideologically, from the above, Katniss is presented as the body which both the rebels and the Capitol attempt to use and direct for their own narratives, by naming and thus inscribing different values. For Snow she is a tribute, The Girl on Fire, a victor, a star-crossed lover, a 'spark' of Hope, a symbol of impending unrest and a radical. The changing Capitol attitude and structuring of Katniss is reflected in Flickerman's announcement when they believe she has died in an attack in the Capitol:

FLICKERMAN: Whatever arrogance brought this treacherous girl back to us; you are about to witness a great victory. Not only for the Capitol, but for Panem.
[cut to bomb blowing up apartment. Cut back to Flickerman]
So there you have it. Katniss Everdeen. The girl on Fire. A girl who inspired so much violence seems to have met a violent end herself.

For the Rebels, she is the Mockingjay, a symbol of the rebellion. The rebels, shortly after Flickerman's announcement above, break through with their broadcast and declare her a martyr of the cause. Katniss never attempts to express herself as Mockingjay outside the narrative provided by the rebels; she is presented as Mockingjay by both Heavensbee and Cinna (through his styling and Mockingjay suit). She agrees to become the Mockingjay in order to secure a guarantee to rescue and pardon Peeta and the other victors held hostage in the Capitol. She agrees to most things either to save Prim, or later, to save Peeta. This creates a narrow view of the motivations of the character, who seems until *Mockingjay Part 2* to be mostly focused on her own personal struggles, rather than the larger rebellion. Katniss is interested in the rebellion only in the ways it helps her achieve her goals of protecting Prim and Peeta, and later avenging Peeta's torture: "Snow must pay for what he's done". She does at however at key moments move beyond her own goals to display knowledge of the greater good, but confines her employment of power to her personal goals. That these personal efforts also align with the greater good in many ways, works to the benefit of the rebels and the districts.

There is no strong narrative moment showing Katniss dominating others or exercising power over others. Her actions in the games are mostly reactive, and usually driven by vengeance in singular acts of violence. While not exercising power-over/domination of others, she does inspire and enact resistance (power-to). Her ability to inspire resistance leads to the rebellion and to her characterisation as Mockingjay. Her own resistance to the laws of the oppressive state sees her resist particular forms of domination: she is seen as law-breaking in the opening scene by hunting beyond the Capitol-defined boundaries of her District. She defies the Capitol in honouring Rue's death, and defies the game-makers by attempting to commit suicide and destabilise their system, rather than kill Peeta to become sole Victor of the Games (*Hunger Games*).

Her power to act can also be considered a form of emancipation founded on the ideological failure of the nuclear family at the start of *Hunger Games*. She becomes a hunter and breaks the law in order to provide for her family because her parents are unable to (dead father, absent mother). Freed from the constraints of a parent-run family, Katniss is empowered to act outside the traditional gender role of a 16-year-old girl in a stereotypical family. The threat to the nuclear family is contained by the end of the films when Katniss submits again to the nuclear family structure, this her own family with Peeta and their children.

Solidarity or power-with is a third form identified by Allen (1998): “the ability of a collectivity to act together for the attainment of a common or shared end or series of ends” (1998: 35). Katniss inspires solidarity among the rebels through her actions first in the arena with Rue, and later as Mockingjay in District 2, 8 and 13. It is often her personal experience of pain and sense of injustice that creates opportunities for solidarity such as this speech in District 2, when she is held at gunpoint by one of the surrendering soldiers:

INJURED SOLDIER: Give me one reason why I shouldn't shoot you.

KATNISS: I can't. That's the problem isn't it? We blew up your mine, you burned my district to the ground. I'm tired of killing his slaves for him.

INJURED SOLDIER: I'm not his slave.

KATNISS: I am. That's why I killed Cato. And he killed Thresh. And Thresh killed Clove. It just goes around and around and who wins? Always Snow. I'm done being a piece in his game. District 2 and District 12, we have no fight, except the one that Snow gave us. Why are you fighting the rebels? You're neighbours and family. *[He lets her go and she stands up, addressing everyone and the cameras]*

These people are not your enemy. We all have one enemy, and that's Snow. He corrupts everyone and everything. He turns the best of us against each other. Stop killing for him. Tonight, turn your weapons to the Capitol, turn your weapons to Snow.

This speech by Katniss is unscripted (she rejects Heavensbee's written speech), reflecting her true feelings and vendetta against Snow. Shortly after making this speech she is shot by a Capitol sympathiser (and survives). This final broadcast event successfully unites the districts behind District 13 to advance against the Capitol. While Katniss does not engage in typical masculine domination, she successfully enacts power-to and power-with, situating her distinct from typically masculine notions of power as domination over other agents. Simultaneously however, she is subject to many instances of domination in the films as indicated through the manipulation of her character by various agents.

The power-over/domination of Katniss can be read in another way, as protective paternalism (mentioned previously in Chapter 1). While Katniss is bereft of a biological father figure at the start of *Hunger Games*, various male figures step up in the paternal protection model (Godfrey & Hamad 2012, Stabile 2009). Paternal protection is on display in moments of interaction with Haymitch, Peeta, and Boggs, who at various turns take a father role, and to a lesser degree Finnick and Heavensbee. Snow is potentially a controversial inclusion here, but his character is modelled on an elderly, (evil) father-like statesmen figure with a fatherly

relationship to Katniss. The narrative of protection features in many moments of the action in the films and supports a discourse of white masculinist protectionism seen frequently in popular culture following the 2001 terror attacks in America (Stabile 2009). Katniss herself engages in paternal protectionism with Rue, Prim and Peeta. Peeta's characterisation allows for this through his performance of feminine qualities in marginalised masculinity.

Questions of agency: The Daughter and the Tomboy

This section considers the character of Katniss against some of the available archetypes of female action heroes, testing the claims of her character as 'boundary-breaking' and a feminist hero as posed by media critics mentioned in previous chapters. Gender performance (Butler 1999) as fluid and free from binaristic constraints, allows one to consider representations beyond typical categorisations of gender roles. A performance of gender is capable of transgressing and occupying both definable masculine and feminine qualities and qualities that define progressive traits outside of these limits. Gender performance is an important grounding for understanding the functioning of archetypes within action-adventure films: female heroes are placed in positions typically occupied by men, where they inhabit, to varying degrees, different qualities as it pertains to the unfolding spectacle of violence and fast-paced action, which defy the easy categorisation of these female heroes.

There are several film archetypes that help frame the construction of the female hero in action films (Schubart 1998, 2007). In particular, the construction of Katniss resonates with the Daughter archetype (Schubart 1998) through the nature of the power relations she engages in, as well as in her characterisation through love and violence. The daughter archetype also speaks to aspects of paternal protectionism highlighted above. Katniss as Daughter archetype is a product "fathered by a line of men" and must first be "educated and transformed" (Schubart 1998: 208) before engaging in her heroic role. Her biological father educates her in hunting before his death prior to the story in the first film (revealed in later dialogue), while Haymitch mentors her in people skills and in how to be a romantic interest for the onscreen love story. Snow presents the rigid patriarchal regime of rules against which she rebels at first for personal self-serving motivations (of surviving to return to Prim, of saving Prim and Peeta). She is 'educated' in the Capitol by Haymitch, Cinna and Effie in performing accepted femininity as a way of masking and correcting her lack of appeal as defined by Haymitch.

Notably absent from Katniss' education is her mother, seen as the catatonic figure at the start of *Hunger Games*. Strong women are absent in Katniss' education. Effie, the only woman character (aside from Katniss' sister) who makes a regular appearance, appears as stark contrast in Capitol fashion and makeup, to Katniss' natural beauty, and serves to support the narrative of the male leads in directing Katniss. President Coin as strong female leader of District 13 is figured mostly in masculine ways as similar to Snow, and does not contribute to Katniss' education. Significantly, Katniss is responsible for killing Coin, the only other dominant female posing a potential threat to patriarchy through her leadership role and ruthlessness in achieving her ends. Katniss serves to neutralise the perceived threat of another strong female character to hegemonic masculinity by killing Coin. Coin can be perceived as a threat to the nuclear family and traditional gender roles, insofar as she is a widow who lost her children and so exists outside the construct of family. Katniss under the tutelage of male mentors, ultimately kills Coin. What is perceived as her own independent action, is suggested as 'expected' in a letter from Heavensbee and in Haymitch's dialogue highlighted below. Both Haymitch and Heavensbee approve of Coin's death, as it is revealed to achieve the purposes of the rebellion for them, i.e. of eliminating another potential dictator. Haymitch meets Katniss after she has been detained by soldiers for killing Coin:

HAYMITCH: I'll say this for you Katniss, you don't disappoint. Plutarch gave me a letter for you.

KATNISS: I don't want it.

HAYMITCH: You never make it easy, do you?

[Haymitch reads from Heavensbee's letter]

HAYMITCH: "The country was shocked tonight by your arrow, but once again, I was not. You were exactly who I believed you were... I'm sorry so much burden fell on you and I know you'll never escape it. But if I had to put you through it all again for this outcome, I would."

KATNISS: What now?

HAYMITCH: Home. We go home.

This final piece in the dialogue illustrates Katniss' uncertainty of her identity. She has been constructed throughout the narrative by the dictates of various paternal figures and other influencers into being someone other than the hunter in the woods. She is uncertain now, bereft of her true love (her sister) and having avenged her death. She does not consider Peeta at this stage, nor any other options. As Schubart indicates of the Daughter archetype, "she quickly discovers, as daughters do, that when she no longer fulfils her role as obedient and

cold-blooded killer there is no place for her” (Schubart 1998: 209). This links to the earlier discussion of the rationale behind the suicides of female heroes: when the ultimate logic of their narrative is questioned, they find themselves quickly snapped into the sacrificial heroine to neutralise the threat to gender roles embodied in their toughness. Continuing the dialogue in the sequence above, Haymitch explains his answer. He reads from Heavensbee’s letter indicating that he has secured transport for Katniss out of the Capitol to the destroyed District 12, in order to live in exile as punishment for her deeds, and that at a later date her killing of Coin would be pardoned. Katniss’ heroism in killing Coin as vengeance for her sister’s death and in fulfilling the greater good of freeing Panem of another dictator is suppressed here, and not contextualised to the larger society of Panem.

Katniss’ act of killing Coin fulfils the daughter archetype, in that her engagement with violence supports a hegemonic masculine approach of solving problems through violence, after which she is incorporated into society by her adoption of the roles of mother and wife, with Peeta as husband in the concluding family scene. Significantly, Katniss’ bow is missing from the final scene of the film. She has discarded her bow and hunter’s gear (including the favourite leather jacket) in this scene as these do not allow her to fulfil the typical role of mother. Without her bow, she is unable to protect herself in this scene and would need to rely on Peeta should anything threaten their existence at that moment, reaffirming and returning expected patterns of gender roles that were transgressed during the narrative.

Katniss undergoes various transformations in the films. In the first instance she undergoes transformation from typical tomboy through the machinations of the Capitol, to feminine beauty, to mask her physical threat and present her as ‘more likeable’ to the audiences. Outside the confines of the Capitol, her natural feminine beauty is always on display through close up camera work focusing on her features, particularly her lips and eyes. These moments are typically when attempting to express Katniss’ non-verbal emotions (Figs. 6, 11, 19 & 25, Appendix B), and during scenes when she is using her archery skills (Figs. 2 & 26, Appendix B). Deadly but beautiful aptly describes Katniss in the scenes of archery. She undergoes the transformation from a hunter killing animals, to violent female action hero killing people, to a symbol of rebellion as the Mockingjay. Ultimately the Daughter, she is recuperated into society through her positioning as romantic interest to Peeta once again at the conclusion, which is consummated in typical fashion in the closing scene with her family and Peeta. Her final transformation from Mockingjay after killing Coin (Fig. 26, Appendix B) to mother is

visualised through the discarding of the Mockingjay outfit and weapons, to natural hunter again in the wilderness (Fig. 27, Appendix B), to the final scene in which she wears a yellow dress and carries her baby in her arms (Fig. 28, Appendix B).

In this way, Katniss is transformed from single, unattached, tomboy to family woman by the end of the narrative. While she avoids the hyper-sexualisation of action babes, and the “masculine” attributes of earlier tough heroes, she is nonetheless figured as a typical feminine woman by the close of the film. At the start of the films she is on the precipice of womanhood as 16-year-old. Although she is not explicitly sexualised in the films as is common with violent female action heroes (Neroni 2005, Tasker 1998), Katniss is still identifiable as idealised feminine beauty.

The Daughter archetype similar to the tomboy, presents a relatively non-sexualised image of a female hero engaging in violence who does not use their sexuality to charm men (Lupold 2014). This is mostly true of Katniss, however her portrayal of desirable woman in the Capitol interviews is a strategy to be desired and by extension to be likeable. This mutes the sexualisation but continues to reinforce desirability as a quality to achieve. The ‘Tomboy’ heroine (Tasker 1998) shares traits with Schubart’s daughter archetype: “a peculiar gender status and an ambivalent relationship to sexuality” (Tasker 1998: 81). The tomboy contains both masculine and feminine qualities, a complex arrangement of “experience and innocence – of capabilities and energies together with sexual *naïveté*” (Tasker 1998: 84). The transgressive qualities of an active masculinised tomboy are contained through the narrative of transformation that “charts the acquisition of an appropriate heterosexual attachment and identity” (Tasker 1998: 81). Both of these archetypes, while allowing for a final recuperation into patriarchal society still offer opportunities for resistance:

The narrative of the tomboy functions as a liminal journey of discovery in which feminine sexuality is put into crisis and finally recuperated into the dominant patriarchal order – although not without first offering the female spectator a series of contradictory messages which may well work against their overtly ideological purpose of guiding the young girl into taking up her proper destiny. (Creed 1995: 88 quoted in Tasker 1998: 84).

Katniss’ characterisation at various stages in the films may be read as progressive when considering her moments of power-to/resistance, her approach to violence and in her independence, toughness and ambivalence towards her own sexuality. These moments however are firmly contextualised within a heteronormative conception of society and the

naturalisation of gender roles that ultimately preserve the patriarchal order. These progressive moments within the larger heteronormative narrative provides consideration for the ideological categorisation of these films.

Ideological categorisation of the Hunger Games film franchise

Narboni and Comolli's typology outlined in Chapter 2, attempts to categorise how films operate within dominant ideologies: do they mediate, translate and reproduce ideology, or do they seek to reflect on, disrupt or expose ideologies at work?

It is a complex, fraught process to identify films as feminist, as concerns with feminism are often conflated with sexism: "whether a film itself is feminist is often confused with the question of whether it is sexist, whereas in reality the absence of the one does not imply the presence of the other" (Derr 2013, quoted in Sutherland & Feltey 2017: 619). Press and Liebes-Plesner (2004, quoted in Sutherland & Feltey 2017) identify characteristics of a feminist film: women are present in central roles; they occupy roles with power and status; there is a variety of representations of women across age, size, race and sexuality appearing beyond the usual norms; and there are "variations from the heteronormative depictions of family" (in Sutherland & Feltey 2017: 619). *The Hunger Games* film franchise displays some of these characteristics, but most notably absent are any other depictions of women outside the narrow confines of idealised feminine beauty and any variations on the heteronormative depiction of family. Women (excluding the younger prepubescent girls) are depicted as heterosexual in their narratives, and the female lead is strongly associated with heteronormative traditions of family. Hollywood "pays lip service to feminism by inserting stronger women" (Press & Liebes-Plesner 2004: 16, quoted in Sutherland & Feltey 2017), but obscures the underlying ideological antagonism by employing a relatively non-sexist narrative in the broader context of the films. Women in Panem exist in a non-sexist society – they are treated equally as tributes in the Games where gender is not used as a category to discriminate between boys and girls for the Reaping. It also upholds the binary gender relations in the reaping of one boy and one girl, and supports the traditional idealisation of women to 'be looked at' in the extensive styling and preparation of female tributes in the hunger games, which is noticeable on the older tributes such as Katniss, Glimmer, and Clove in the first Games. In government organisation within Panem, the suggestion is that women

and men equally can occupy high positions, but ultimately Katniss kills Coin who attempts to replace Snow. She is replaced by democratic election by one of the few black women in the films, Commander Paylor, who has a relatively small speaking role.

While statements from critics suggesting the feminist qualities of the hero Katniss overwhelm mainstream media, the films overall do not classify as feminist. Critics would have us believe that in being boundary-breaking, the hero is situated within a category (E) film, which, while seemingly representative of “the ideological chains to which they appear subjected”, possess “a discrepancy, a distortion, a rupture between the conditions of its appearance...and the end product” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 257). More realistically, THG can be classified as (D) films, containing an explicit political ‘content’ but which “do not operate any veritable critique of the ideological system in which they are captured” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 257). This aligns these films with (A) films which devotedly follow ideological tenets, carrying it forward “without any gaps or distortions, being blindly faithful to it, and above all being blind to this very fidelity” (Narboni & Comolli 2015: 254).

A reading of the characterisation of Katniss as feminist hero and boundary-breaking, cannot be based on the films overall, which, as indicated above, do not qualify as feminist or progressive. A progressive reading of the character requires a focus on singular moments of her heroism where it defines her as resistant to domination, emancipated and able to act at her own direction. Reading Katniss as progressive is possible (Tasker 1998) only through these moments of disruption which offer contradictory messages throughout the narrative, “which may well work against their overtly ideological purpose of guiding the young girl into taking up her proper destiny” (Creed 1995: 88, quoted in Tasker 1998). Ultimately, she is recuperated into the patriarchal system in a way typical of the Daughter archetype.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

Popular filmic texts such as THG offers valuable spaces for “feminist rhetorical criticism because they represent a point of entry into societal gender discourses” (Durham 2003, quoted in Keller & Gibson 2014: 21). Popular texts, along with their inherent “tensions and contradictions, are rich sites of inquiry... as they draw upon and heavily influence our cultural understandings of gender, sexuality, and agency” (Keller & Gibson 2014: 22).

The motivation for studying Katniss was threefold: the books were a global phenomenon; the movies were record-breaking at the box office in terms of overall revenue sales at the time; and mainstream media claimed Katniss as boundary-breaking and feminist, as a new, long-awaited embodiment of the female hero. This prompted the ideological analysis given the convergence of several factors: the tension between feminism and post-feminism; the persistence of heteronormative ideological structures, with its emphasis on binaristic gender; and the co-option of third wave Girl Power as marketing tool in contemporary Hollywood cinema directed to the neoliberal girl subject.

Approach to the research

This thesis investigated the ideological analysis of the construction of the young female action hero as feminist hero in THG. To this end, the theoretical frameworks of ideology, mediation/mediatisation, feminism and feminist film theory were selected to establish a context in which to expose and understand the ideological structures at work in the construction of the female hero, and to question whether or not she is a feminist hero.

Ideological critique remains relevant for media studies as a way of analysing and understanding the persistence of dominant ideologies and how these are operationalised through various modes and strategies developed by Thompson (1990), although the debate persists on how to deal with the negative implications of domination in the theory. Narboni and Comolli's (2015) framing of films according to their ideological content proved useful in attempting to define the films as progressive, ultimately exposing the ideological content as complicit in supporting dominant ideologies rather than disrupting these.

Mediatisation seeks to understand media's influence on social institutions and the structure of society and in the way that the media have become 'the cultural air we breathe'. Mediation focuses on how our gender roles are made to mean within a mediatised society, through the deployment of symbolic forms that seek to obscure existing asymmetrical relations of power through various ideological modes of operation.

Gender performance is contested. Only in recent decades are theorists questioning and exposing the limitations of binaristic conventions of gender. Film offers a space for analysing the mediation of meaning that shapes our understanding of mainstream concepts of masculinity and femininity, and what constitutes the gender role of a female action hero. A feminist lens focusing on the representation of woman was applied in the discussions of the themes of love, violence and power, ultimately suggesting that progressive heroes can exist within dominant ideological structures through moments of 'mixed messages' in the narrative, despite being recuperated into, or contained by patriarchal society at the conclusion of the films.

The approach to unpacking the ideological content of the films was through a textual analysis based on considerations of genre conventions, narrative analysis, *mise-en-scène* and cinematography. The analysis offered a very particular reading of the films, through a narrowly defined feminist lens. A shortcoming of the research is that it does not consider elements such as race and class, both of which are important considerations in feminist studies, but were outside the scope of this limited research.

Limits of the research

This research focused on a feminist concern of gendered representation. Absent however from the research are important questions concerning the predominantly white heterosexual structuring of heroes in action films. Queer and black feminism marks this inadequacy particularly in the traditional psychoanalytic approach, which does not consider class, race or gender definitions outside the binaristic masculine/feminine. The analysis presented in this study of THG is not the only interpretation available for considering the gender performance contained in the films. This interpretation of the text has been negotiated in the way of a "meaning triangle" as discussed by Stacy Wolf (2002):

Meanings emerge through a negotiation or a "struggle over meaning" among text, context and spectator. Any reading, analysis or interpretation of a performance, then,

already incorporates all three terms. In other words, when we say that a play *means* something, we have *already* interpreted that play; already considered some aspects of the context and not others; already used particular interpretive skills, of which we may or may not be conscious, to make meaning. (Wolf 2002:4).

The analysis was conducted in order to assess and situate Katniss within the larger context of feminist genre studies focusing on the current popularity of female action heroes, and their navigation of both masculine and feminine attributes. It attempted to establish the degree to which the character of Katniss could be deemed progressive in light of the aspects of typical traits associated with masculine action heroes recently co-opted by the new wave of female heroes coming after masculine female heroes and action babes of previous decades. Another limitation of this research is that it does not consider all elements of a tri-partite model of media analysis: the production and the audience reception of symbolic forms (Devereaux *et al* 2004) are excluded from the research at hand. These limitations also offer potential scope for future research.

Summary of findings

It has not been the purpose of this thesis to declare the characterisation of Katniss as ‘wrong’ or lacking, as this would be to frame the investigation with the same limiting prejudices and restrictions that it aims to expose. Rather, it has been about investigating and questioning, about asking whether the construction of the hero is truly boundary-breaking and feminist, defying traditional gender roles. If boundary-breaking means that the construction of Katniss as hero defies dominant heterosexual structuring of the relation of men and women, then the characterisation is lacking. If “butch goddess” means she embodies that grey area obscuring her sexuality in order to live a differently gendered performance, it is unsuccessful. Katniss’s character development is “directed” through much of the film by her mentor, the government and the rebels to achieve ends ultimately not her own, even though she pursues her own self-serving goals of staying alive to save her sister. She fails in saving her sister, but manages to help liberate a country, and settles down with children at the conclusion of her character’s narrative, ultimately modelled on the recuperation of the Daughter archetype into patriarchal society.

Katniss’ character is not indifferent to typical heterosexual romance. While her character is not overtly sexualised, the body as spectacle, following Tasker (1993), does have its place:

the soft dress of the final scene settles Katniss into an expected passive feminine role. Gone are the bow, the jacket, pants and hunting boots we first encounter her in, embodying her tomboy toughness. The transformation of the tomboy, and the containment of the threat of the violent woman is complete: she is denied agency in committing suicide and is married off with children.

Katniss Everdeen however remains a plucky female hero, and the progenitor of a new film cycle that saw Disney and other production houses sit up and take notice of the commercial power of young non-sexualised women:

Instead of accepting female action characters as empowering role models, it is useful to take a critical view and understand that VFACs [violent female action characters] are a market-driven commodity. Mainstream movies are created to capture the largest audience possible (Sklar 1994). It is no accident that the most successful films adhere to gender stereotypes and strive to be non-offensive in order to appeal to a mainstream audience. (Gilpatric 2010: 743)

The neoliberal girl subject is an independent, self-driven subject (Gonick 2006) not bound by the conventions of patriarchy, who explores the bounds beyond sexism and gender discrimination. This crisis of women breaking free from traditional gender roles is celebrated by these strong on-screen heroes, who also allow female subjects to begin to question their “symbolic identities” (Neroni 2005: 19). Popular culture produces “cultural images that work through, contain, or expose this destabilization” of gender roles (Neroni 2005: 19). When violence is separated from masculinity, whenever violent women appear in film, great effort is normally expended within the film to explain the reasons for her violence, as an attempt to contain the threat to traditional associations of violence and gender (Neroni 2005). Whether through the description of Schubart’s Daughter archetype (1998), or Gonick’s (2006) consideration of ‘Reviving Ophelia’ discourse, there remains evidence of attempts to contain women breaking the boundaries of gender inscription. Films are the site for both the effort to “ameliorate the social antagonism at the same time as they are explorations of it” (Neroni 2005: 19). As mentioned previously, Girl Power as adopted through popular/commercial feminism allows for “more subtle modalities of gender re-inscription and re-subordination to be pursued” (McRobbie 2008: 533).

Future research

While the present study is limited in scope to the texts in considering the construction of female heroes, future research projects focusing on both the production and the consumption by audiences would enrich the study. There are various approaches to audience reception studies, but a particularly interesting site of investigation would be around the expression of ideas on these female heroes in social media fan pages, grrlzines and other fan-created platforms which disseminate, discuss and popularise ideas around grrrlhood.

Since the release of THG, a new cast of female heroes occupies top box office earnings, namely those in the latest films of the *Star Wars* franchise which feature young female leads. Some of these heroes are lead female protagonists in stand-alone films in the *Star Wars* universe, while others are the leads in trilogies. While comparing dystopian and sci-fi fantasy worlds might be challenging, both of these franchises situate their young female leads in war, offering spaces for interesting comparisons and studies of their respective character arcs.

On viability of feminism and ideology

Feminism remains an important lens for questioning the mediation of gender in a mediatised world. It asks questions in particular of the ideology underlying gender performance in society, and in particular the naturalisation and reification enacted through the symbolic form of films. Feminism's revival as a fourth wave in recent studies (Rampton 2015) shows this concept is not yet "outdated" or unnecessary. Butler's work on gender performance highlights the continued relevance of identifying/exposing the hegemonic heterosexual norms that still dominate our ideas and framing of gender. Gender remains a significant site of progressive and critical inquiry, especially at a time when we are made to believe that gender equality has been achieved (post-feminism).

Theories of ideology could do well to take a leaf from the pages of mediatisation:

Mediatisation at the outset demands a non-normative approach – determining the positive and negative is reserved for empirical research on a defined case study. Studying ideology, like studying mediatisation, should focus on questioning ways in which influence is exercised, rather than determining that influence (ideology) is negative from the outset. Removed from its Marxist roots of capital and production, ideology has the potential to become instrumental in analyses concerning the structure and effects of these meta-processes. With the spread of

globalisation, mediatisation and individualisation, ideology can become the language for better understanding these meta-processes.

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Filmography:

The Hunger Game Film Series:

The Hunger Games, 2012. Directed by Gary Ross. USA: Color Force & Lionsgate.

The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, 2013. Directed by Francis Lawrence. USA: Color Force & Lionsgate.

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1, 2014. Directed by Francis Lawrence. USA: Color Force & Lionsgate.

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2, 2015. Directed by Francis Lawrence. USA: Color Force, Lionsgate & Studio Babelsberg (co-production).

Appendix A: Film Synopses

These films are set in the futuristic dystopian world of Panem, a post-apocalyptic America. The fascist-styled oppressive Capitol, led by President Snow, extorts resources from the surrounding districts by means of its military presence, superior technology, surveillance and propaganda orchestrated through its tightly-controlled media monopoly. The Hunger Games is an annual event broadcast as a reality-TV gameshow to all in Panem in which tributes, children from each of the twelve districts outside the Capitol, are forced to fight to the death until only a single victor remains, as a ‘reminder’ of the quelled rebellion decades earlier. Victors become Mentors in their own districts to train future tributes for the Games.

In *The Hunger Games* (film 1), Katniss Everdeen from District 12 volunteers in place of her sister Prim selected at the District 12 Reaping as Tribute for the 74th annual Hunger Games. She makes her way to the Capitol with fellow District 12 tribute Peeta Mellark. They participate in training and televised interviews before entering the games. Based on a strategy of “star-crossed-lovers”, they ultimately emerge as the unconventional joint victors of the Games, after Katniss threatens double suicide with Peeta by eating lethal Nightlock berries, rather than killing him.

Catching Fire (film 2) picks up almost a year after the Games where Katniss and Peeta are living as Victors in District 12. There’s a slow-brewing rebellion in some of the Districts spurred on by Katniss’ act of defiance in the arena with the poison berries, visible to the victors while on their mandatory Victory Parade through the Districts to the Capitol. After failing to assist President Snow in quelling the rebellion with their highly televised ‘madly-in-love’ act, the Capitol reaps Tributes for the special 75th Quarter Quell Hunger Games from the surviving victors in all the districts. Katniss and Peeta both enter the Arena again. The games are destroyed when a handful of rebel supporters among the victor-tributes plot to free Katniss and Peeta, and Katniss unknowingly follows plan by blowing up the arena’s dome with an electrified arrow. She is rescued by the rebels and taken to District 13, while Peeta and the other victor-tribute Johanna are captured by the Capitol. The Capitol destroys District 12 as punishment.

Mockingjay Part 1 (film 3) picks up immediately after the action in *Catching Fire*, with Katniss trying to deal with the loss of District 12 and Peeta’s capture. She agrees to join President Coin’s rebellion as the Mockingjay, on condition of a rescue mission to free Peeta

and the other imprisoned victors from the Capitol. A series of propaganda videos featuring Katniss as Mockingjay are filmed, while the Capitol uses Peeta to discourage the rebellion through their own broadcasts attempting to discredit the rebellion and Katniss. District 13 survives a bomb attack from The Capitol after a live televised warning from Peeta. The rescue mission happens shortly thereafter and Katniss is reunited with Peeta. He attacks her and attempts to strangle her to death. They discover that Peeta has been tortured and brainwashed by the Capitol to perceive Katniss as a threat to be eliminated.

Mockingjay Part 2 (film 4) follows a few days after the events in *Mockingjay 1*, with Katniss recovering from the attack by Peeta. Distressed and unable to help Peeta's mental recovery, Katniss decides to help the rebels win over District 2. Katniss is shot while trying to calm tensions and survives. Back in District 13, she recovers, and witnesses the wedding of Finnick and Annie. After the wedding, Katniss sneaks off against President Coin's instructions to the outskirts of the Capitol in order to find and kill President Snow in his mansion. She's joined by the film crew and specialist soldiers, including Boggs and Gale, to form Squadron 451 on Coin's orders. A recovering Peeta joins them later. They advance behind the frontline to shoot propaganda footage of the rebel advance a few blocks behind the front line with the Mockingjay to boost morale. They discover several active 'pods' (booby-traps) and members of the squadron are killed while fleeing. They are pursued by peacekeepers (Capitol soldiers) and eventually by mutts (mutated monster-like creatures) through the sewer system of the Capitol. They finally escape and find refuge close to the mansion. While Gale and Katniss attempt to enter the mansion disguised as Capitol citizens seeking refuge, bombs explode at the gates of the mansion, killing and injuring mostly Capitol children. Medics from the rebels rush in and Katniss sees her sister Prim, trained as a medic in District 13, assisting the injured. A second series of bomb blasts goes off, killing her sister and knocking Katniss to the ground. The Capitol is overthrown and the rebels led by District 13 claim victory. Katniss visits President Snow held captive in his rose garden where they discuss the events that have transpired, with Snow suggesting that Coin ordered the bombs that killed her sister. Coin installs herself as indefinite interim president of the Capitol and votes with the remaining tributes to hold another Hunger Games with Capitol children as punishment. Outside, Katniss is given the promised opportunity to kill President Snow in front of all the citizens. She aims, but shoots President Coin dead at the last moment instead. The mob overwhelms a laughing Snow and kills him. Katniss tries to kill herself with a Nightlock pill (a fatal poison) but is stopped by Peeta. She's detained, and banished to

District 12 with the promise of a pardon in a letter drafted by Heavensbee privately praising her actions. A few weeks later, Peeta returns to District 12 and they embrace. A new president is democratically elected. The closing scene is of Katniss and Peeta together in the wilderness of District 12 with a baby and a young son.

Appendix B: Katniss' Costumes and select Cinematography

These screenshots highlight important costuming and camera angles pertaining to the characterisation of Katniss. The screenshots are taken from the DVD release version of the films. All images are copyrighted to Lionsgate. Figure number is followed by film title and caption.



Figure 1. *The Hunger Games*. Katniss hunting in the wilderness outside District 12. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 2. *The Hunger Games*. Close up camera angles such as this, focusing on Katniss' facial features, often in moments of concentration when hunting. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 3. *The Hunger Games*. The Reaping. Effie Trinket (left), Capitol stylist/Games ambassador for District 12, and Katniss Everdeen (right). Contrast of exaggerated Capitol fashion vs. Katniss' natural beauty. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 4. *The Hunger Games*. In the Capitol, tribute preparations pre-tribute parade. Katniss waiting for the arrival of her stylist Cinna. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 5. *The Hunger Games*. The Tribute Parade. Katniss dubbed “Girl on Fire” as a result of flaming costumes. Katniss (left) and Peeta Mellark (right), District 12 tributes. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 6. *The Hunger Games*. Tribute parade. Close up on Katniss’ face emphasizes her striking beauty and fierce gaze. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 7. *The Hunger Games*. Pre-Games Interviews with Tributes, backstage. Cinna (stylist) to Katniss: “Don’t you know how beautiful you look?” Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 8. *The Hunger Games*. Pre-Games Interview with Caesar Flickerman. Katniss twirls in her red dress, and the dress bursts into flames along the hemline. *Girl on Fire*. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 9. *The Hunger Games*. Pre-Games Interview with Caesar Flickerman. Katniss dressed in red evening gown with sequined bare-back look. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 10. *The Hunger Games*. In the Arena. Katniss (left) and Peeta (right) in the standard Games uniforms for tributes in the 74th Hunger Games. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 11. *The Hunger Games*. Victors Interview, backstage. Haymitch instructing Katniss on what to say and how to act. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 12. *The Hunger Games*. Victors' interviews with Caesar Flickerman. Caesar (left), Katniss (middle), and Peeta (right). Katniss and Peeta sharing their 'love' story. Lionsgate © 2012.



Figure 13. *Catching Fire*. Victors' interview with Caesar Flickerman at the start of the Victors' Tour through the Districts (prior to next annual Hunger Games). Caesar (left), Katniss (middle), and Peeta (right). Katniss and Peeta sharing their 'love' story. Lionsgate © 2013.



Figure 14. *Catching Fire*. Meeting with Haymitch at their apartment in the Tribute centre, studying other victor-tributes in preparation for 75th Hunger Games. Note Katniss' outfit and styling outside of the Games in the Capitol. Lionsgate © 2013.



Figure 15. *Catching Fire*. Katniss in costume for 75th Hunger Games Tribute Parade. Lionsgate © 2013.

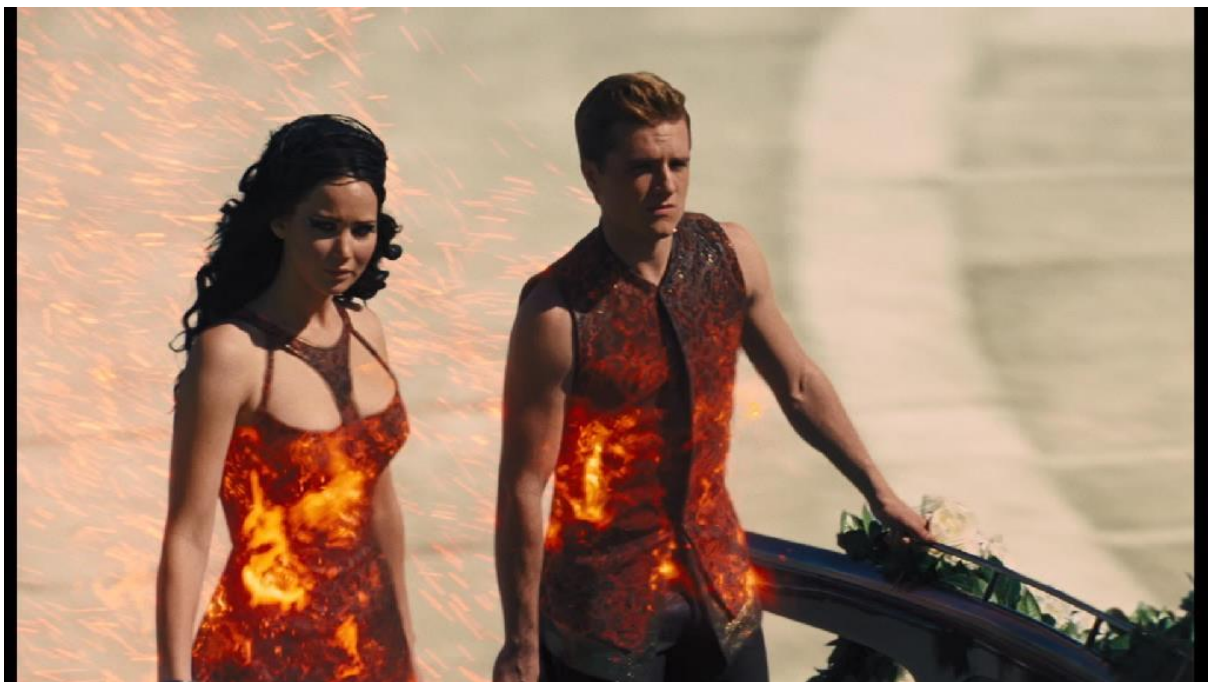


Figure 16. *Catching Fire*. Katniss and Peeta in costumes on fire for 75th Hunger Games Tribute Parade. Lionsgate © 2013.



Figure 17. *Catching Fire*. Katniss in wedding gown. She is publicly engaged to Peeta (in attempt to quell uprising) but is selected as Tribute for 75th Hunger Games before they are officially married. Snow orders that she wears the wedding dress to the Pre-Games interview. Lionsgate © 2013.



Figure 18. *Catching Fire*. Katniss' wedding dress goes up in flames revealing Cinna's final gown styled as a Mockingjay. Lionsgate © 2013.



Figure 19. *Catching Fire*. Concluding scene in the film, District 13. Shot from above, Katniss experiences a range of emotions from grief to anger on learning of the destruction of District 12. Lionsgate © 2013.



Figure 20. *Mockingjay Part I*. Katniss in population uniform of District 13 visiting the ruins of District 12. Lionsgate © 2014.



Figure 21. *Mockingjay Part 1*. Katniss returns to see the destroyed District 12 and collects her jacket (seen in opening hunting scene of *The Hunger Games*). Lionsgate © 2014.



Figure 22. *Mockingjay Part 1*. Cinna's Mockingjay suit design revealed to Katniss after she agrees to be the Mockingjay. District 13 has the suit. Lionsgate © 2014.



Figure 23. *Mockingjay Part 1*. District 8. Katniss visits a makeshift hospital to shoot propaganda video for District 13. Partial Mockingjay suit, without the wings. From left to right: Commander Paylor, Katniss, Lieut. Boggs, and the film crew for the propaganda video. Lionsgate © 2014.



Figure 24. *Mockingjay Part 1*. District 8. Katniss shoots down a Capitol hovercraft after the hospital is blown up. The film crew direct a propaganda video with Katniss standing in front of the burning hovercraft. Lionsgate © 2014.



Figure 25. *Mockingjay Part 1*. District 8. Katniss mourns the loss of lives in the hospital. Close up camera work focus on facial features for emotive content. Lionsgate © 2014.

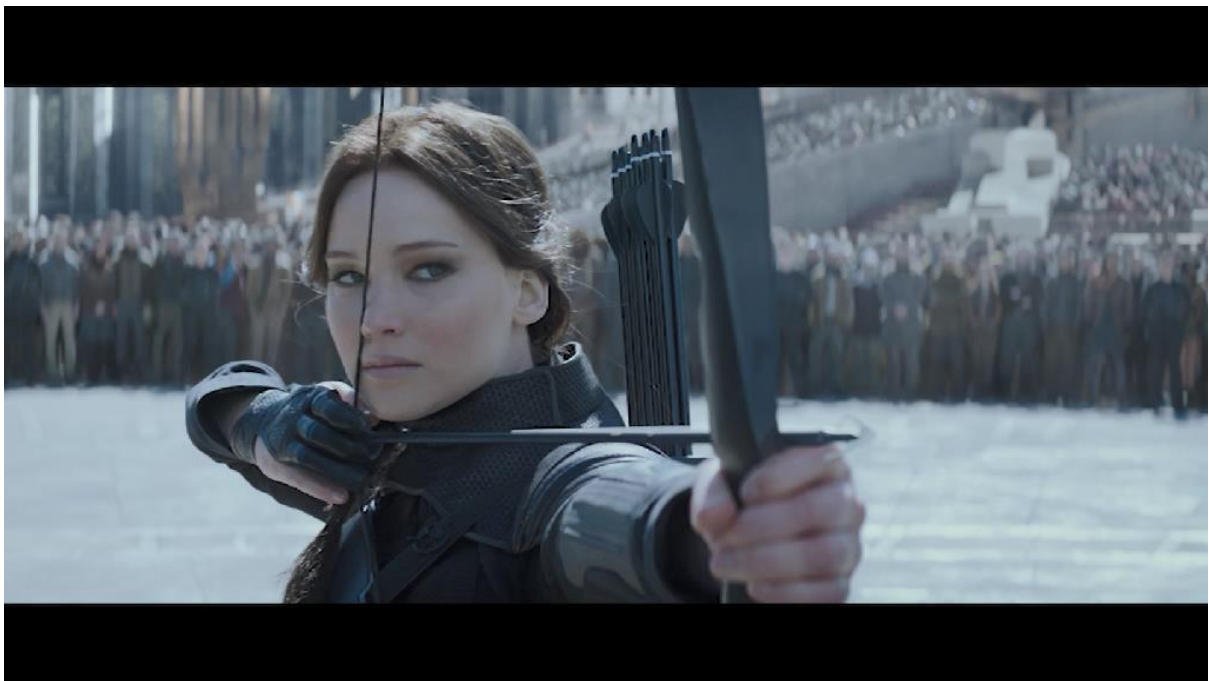


Figure 26. *Mockingjay Part 2*. Capitol, Tributes Parade Corridor. Katniss readies her bow to kill Snow, dressed in full Mockingjay suit. She shoots Coin instead. Lionsgate © 2015.



Figure 27. *Mockingjay Part 2*. District 12. Katniss in exile in District 12 for killing Coin, wearing her familiar leather jacket. She sees Peeta who has returned to District 12. Lionsgate © 2015.



Figure 28. *Mockingjay Part 2*. Wilderness outside District 12. The concluding scene of the film. Katniss, dressed in a yellow summer dress, holds a young baby, watching Peeta and their young son play. Lionsgate © 2015.