

HAVOC-MAKING HEROINES IN YOUNG ADULT DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the latent operation of Western gender norms in popular female-centred Young Adult (YA) dystopian texts. By examining adolescent female protagonists and the nature of their social havoc-making, this study investigates how reconstructed and recalibrated definitions of femininity ultimately re-inscribe a patriarchal status quo. The five havoc-making heroines under consideration are: Katniss Everdeen of Suzanne Collins' "Hunger Games" trilogy, Saba in Moira Young's "Dustlands" trilogy, Deuce in Ann Aguirre's "Razorland" trilogy, Tris Prior in Veronica Roth's "Divergent" series, and finally, Cassie Sullivan in Rick Yancey's *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave*. Although these YA havoc-making heroines rebel against oppressive governmental regimes, I recognize the implicit and explicit construction of their bodies and their behaviours through male-influence. Their male counterparts play a large role in shaping how these heroines *look* and *behave*—they perform and appear as masculinized warriors and as feminized delicate beauties in accordance with the political and personal desires of male characters. Through such constructions, these contemporary havoc-makers demonstrate a collision of heroisms: they look and act as conventional action heroines and romance heroines. Including theoretical texts from the 1990s and onward that feature feminist scholarly writing on the textual and filmic representations of women—such as Dawn Heinecken's *The Warrior Women of Television* and Sherrie A. Inness' *Tough Girls*—I investigate how these young heroines are shaped as per the genres of Action/Adventure and Romance fiction.

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<sup>1</sup> *Enclave*, p.25

**Part I**  
**Historical Heroism: Children’s Literature and the Gendered Genres of  
 Action/Adventure and Romance Fiction**

Literature reflects the experiential world of its readers, and female protagonists mirror the expectations of women during the time in which their stories were written.

—Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Claire, *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult Literature 1999-2001*; p. 2

“Popular culture can’t seem to get enough of tough females,” Sherrie A. Inness propounds in her 2004 critical collection *Action Chicks* (2). Writing at the turn of the new millennium, Inness identifies the beginnings of a Western trend that features an increasing amount of “tough-women characters” in films such as ‘*Charlie’s Angels*, *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* and *Tomb Raider* alongside television series such as *La Femme Nikita*, *Xena: Warrior princess*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and even children’s shows such as *The Power Puff Girls*’ (2). She asserts, “strong women characters have always existed in American mythology. What has changed are the sheer numbers” (3). Indeed, with a recent explosion of television series that showcase the intellectual, physical, and emotional bravado of females such as *Lost Girl* (2010-present), *Marvel’s Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013-present), and *How to Get Away with Murder* (2014-present) the numbers are certainly increasing.

What I find particularly interesting, however, is the correlative literary and cinematic upsurge of tough-female teens and young women in Young Adult (YA) dystopian fictions. For instance, adolescent heroines such as archer Katniss Everdeen (starring 24-year-old Jennifer Lawrence) in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* (2008; film release 2012), *Catching Fire* (2009; 2013), *Mockingjay* (2010; Part 1 2014; Part 2

2015), and simulation-mastering Tris Prior (portrayed by 23-year-old Shailene Woodley) in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (2011; 2014), *Insurgent* (2012, 2015) and *Allegiant* (2013; Part 1 2016; Part 2 2017)<sup>2</sup> have achieved ubiquity among today's young adult female readership and viewership.

In their 2011 critical collection *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers*, Balaka Basu, Katherine R. Broad and Carrie Hintz echo YA author John Green in "Scary New World" (2008)<sup>3</sup> by recognizing Collins' trilogy as "neatly outstripp[ing] all of its competitors and ensur[ing] that its genre would be the latest publishing phenomenon in a post-Potter, post-*Twilight* market" (1). In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss competes as a tribute in a televised death-match between adolescent representatives from each of Panem's districts. She creates social havoc by playing a key role in inciting the district rebel-movement against the Capitol. The success of Collins' trilogy has further spawned other best-selling tales of salacious adolescent violence that figure female havoc-making protagonists: Saba in Moira Young's *Blood Red Road* (2011) becomes enslaved as a teen female fighter and must battle other female adolescents to the death in Hopetown's Cage Matches. Tris Prior in Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (2011) must compete in hand-to-hand combat matches with other young initiates in order to officially become a member of the Dauntless faction. In Ann Aguirre's *Enclave* (2011), Deuce becomes a fierce Huntress who fights to protect her enclave from mysterious carnivorous creatures known as Freaks. Likewise, Cassie Sullivan in Rick Yancey's *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave*

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<sup>2</sup> On April 11<sup>th</sup> 2014, Motion Picture Group Co-chairmen Rob Friedman and Patrick Wachsberber announced Lionsgate/Summit's release of Roth's *Allegiant Part 1* and *Allegiant Part 2*. See: Yamato, Jen. "Lionsgate To Split Final 'Divergent' Sequel 'Allegiant' Into Two Films To Cap Sci-Fi Franchise." *Deadline*. Deadline Hollywood News, 11 Apr. 2014. Web. 26 Feb. 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See: Green, John. "Scary New World." *The New York Times*. 7 Nov. 2008. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.



(2013) infiltrates an alien military base and battles against the Others in an attempt to rescue her younger brother.

Alongside the prevalence of violence, these best-selling dystopian fictions feature similar narrative components. The fierce havoc-making protagonists encounter harsh post-apocalyptic environments, expose political corruption, become the leaders of rebellion movements, and retrieve (or gesture toward the retrieval of) the adult world from (re)destruction.<sup>4</sup> Their adventures capture “dystopian warnings” via “narrative techniques [that] often place us close to the action, with first-person narration, engaging dialogue, or even diary entries imparting accessible messages that may have the potential to motivate a generation on the cusp of adulthood” (Basu, Broad, Hintz 1). Such devices enable the reader to participate intellectually and emotionally in the action narrative via proximity to the protagonist. The imperfect, fantastic worlds of these havoc-making heroines can appeal to young readers because such domains are the sites of adventurous enterprises. However, with the growing advent of literary YA heroines navigating dystopian landscapes, I am compelled to interrogate a contemporary definition of female heroism and the degree to which these heroines mould, negotiate, or adopt this definition: What does it mean to be a female hero in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Are these heroines reflective of an empowered social reality inhabited by their young adult female readership?<sup>5</sup> Or do these literary works capture and encode traditional modes of “masculinity” and “femininity” for didactic purposes?

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Katniss becomes the Mockingjay symbol of the rebellion, Saba leads a group against the Pathfinder of New Eden, Deuce learns of her elders’ brutality, Tris uncovers the Erudite plot to overthrow the factions, and Cassie assists in compromising the Others’ base.

<sup>5</sup> Melissa Dahl’s “The Dudes who Read Young-Adult Fiction” in *Science of Us* specifies that 60.5% of readers who read YA fiction are female.

Echoing the epigraph by Brown and St. Claire and its contention that female literary protagonists reflect a given time period's social codes, Inness posits in *Action Chicks* that “the rise of the female action heroine was a sign of the different roles available to women in real life” (6). From this view, literary—and by extension, pop culture—YA female heroines are discursive indicators of shifting real-world social roles.<sup>6</sup> In her earlier work *Tough Girls* (1999), Inness explains that “The tough girl plays numerous roles. Her tougher and more masculine image suggests that a greater variety of gender roles are open to women; at the same time, however, her toughness is often mitigated by her femininity, which American culture commonly associates with weakness” (5). Undeniably, figures such as Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie enact nonconventional gender behaviours in their worlds and confound notions of traditional femininity. However, I dispute the definitiveness to which these havoc-making heroines are self-autonomous subjects. This study explores the latent operation of Western gender norms in female-centred YA dystopias—how reconstructed and recalibrated definitions of femininity ultimately re-inscribe a patriarchal status quo. By examining these havoc-making heroines' relationships to male characters, I recognize the implicit and explicit construction of their bodies and their behaviours through male-influence. Their male counterparts play a large role in shaping how these heroines *look* and *behave*—they perform and appear as masculinized warriors and as feminized delicate beauties in

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<sup>6</sup> In *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction* (2014), Sara K. Day, Amy L. Montz and Miranda A. Green-Barteet identify the Girl Power movement as a contributing factor to the presence of the tempestuous YA dystopian heroine. They explain that the “Girl Power movement—which began as a subculture associated with Riot Grrls and zines but became a part of the mainstream vernacular due to the Spice Girls and other popular music groups of the mid-to-late-1990s—insists upon girls strength and confidence” (5).

accordance with the political and personal desires of male characters. Through such constructions, these contemporary havoc-makers demonstrate a collision of heroisms: they look and act as conventional action heroines and romance heroines.

To contextualize the incongruous gendered image of the havoc-making heroine, I address the presence of dualistic layers of messaging enveloped within YA dystopian fictions, beginning with critical understandings of Children's literature and its relationship to YA literature. YA scholars Joanne Brown and Nancy St. Claire's critical study *Declarations of Independence: Empowered Girls in Young Adult Literature, 1990–2001* (2002), situates the contemporary female protagonist in a history of conflicting ideological expectancies propagated in eighteenth-century British Sentimental Romance novels. As socializing instruments for young girls, these novels inscribe young women as proprietors of the domestic sphere and as upstanding models of sensibility. Analyzing Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), Brown and St. Claire observe that the novel ultimately,

reveals Burney's own ambivalence about the values she seems to endorse. The text illustrates conflicting cultural values about 'being a girl,' the tension between the necessity for young women to be both assertive and submissive, a mixture of ideologies that continue to mark many coming-of-age novels about girls. (4)

They trace Evelina's growing confidence, or "assertiveness," in her ability to use her wit to defend herself from unsavory male characters. Nonetheless, they identify her reciprocated love for Lord Orville as a retreat to passivity and the "submissive" conventions of femininity. Evelina thus becomes a representative apotheosis of femininity in her time-period: pure, nurturing, sensible, and obedient. The trend continues in novels that present the female tomboy figures, such as Jo March in Louisa May Alcott's *Little*

*Women* (1868). Jo's rebellious, conventionally masculine nature is rendered permissible by her status as a child, confirming the conventional gendered duties of adulthood by her eventual marriage to Professor Bhaer. Brown and St. Claire assert that works such as *Evelina* and *Little Women* include contradictory messaging. Although these stories ultimately endorse the submissive "place" of the female in society, they "includ[e] a complicating (sub)text about 'being a girl' that undermines the more conventional lesson: young women can derive enormous satisfaction in achieving some measure of independence" (10). In a similar fashion, the forthright and independent havoc-making heroine achieves a degree of "satisfaction" by playing a role in changing her social world. Subtextually, her adventure reveals the power of patriarchal machinations in constructing and fashioning her rebellious appearance and behaviours. Her ultimate happiness, as I will explore in Part IV of this study, depends upon her romantic partnership.

Perry Nodleman's *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (2008) makes a similar argument when he differentiates between the "unconscious" and "conscious" operations of works intended for children. He explains:

What texts of children's literature might be understood to sublimate or keep present but leave unsaid is a variety of forms of knowledge—sexual, cultural, historical—theoretically only available to and only understandable by adults ... The unconscious of a text of children's literature is the adult consciousness that makes its childlikeness meaningful and comprehensible, so children's literature can be understood as simple literature that communicates by means of reference to a complex repertoire of unspoken but implied knowledge. (206)

Children's literature contains a double audience of child-subject and adult-subject. The adult-audience does not, as Nodleman holds, exclusively access the latent complexities of the adult knowledge. Arguing that the "unconscious" of a children's text is the "hidden

adult” (Nodleman 206), he postulates further that the child-subject has a degree of access to the “hidden adult” in order to understand the sublimated messaging of the story. The “unconscious,” or subtext, of a work of Children’s literature is an adult construction of how children should perceive their gender, class and sexual roles (the underlying “real-world” adult knowledge). A children’s text, as Nodleman holds, is paratextually constructed by adults, written by adults and is often narrated by the adult-subject to the child-subject, and therefore, is an adult instrument for instructing children on how to perform an adult conception of childhood.<sup>7</sup>

Nodleman identifies the mechanical intricacies that work to “hide” an adult episteme within a text. He affirms that the adult is increasingly infused within a text of children’s literature through the device of “first-person child narrators telling their own stories, so that the fact of an adult storyteller is hidden, masked within what claims to be not only a child’s thoughts but also the child’s words” (212). I recognize YA texts as operating in a similar fashion. YA literature is written, visually designed, and marketed by adults to target teens. The use of first-person narration is, as aforementioned by Basu, Broad, and Hintz, one of the appealing elements of YA texts. Like the first-person child narrator, the first-person female adolescent narrator establishes an authenticity that “hides” the adult-narrator. Recognizing a shift in narrative structure from Children’s literature to the literature of an older youth-reader, critic Peter Hunt writes:

For younger children, the journey is generally a metaphor for exploration and education; readers go ... in a circle that enables them to gain knowledge—to be stabbed by experience—and to return to home and security, and to a satisfying psychological ‘closure.’ As the readers grow,

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<sup>7</sup> See Nodleman’s subsection “The Hidden Adult” (206-210).

so the journeys become longer, and the circles are broken: the text becomes a *Bildungsroman*, accounts of rites of passage are metaphorized as quests. (179)

For the havoc-making heroines of YA dystopian texts, their journeys of political resistance simultaneously illustrate their physical and intellectual transformations. They shift from a position of political naivety and inactivity to adopting active roles in shaping their social worlds. As Children's literature scholar M.O. Grenby notes in *Children's Literature* (2008), "The children's adventure story typically takes for its protagonists figures who are unimportant in their normal lives. They are usually on the margins of the community" (173). Indeed, the havoc-making heroines of best-selling YA dystopian texts do not begin their stories in positions of socio-political power: Katniss is a member of an impoverished and oppressed district,<sup>8</sup> Saba lives in isolation with her family in the desert, Deuce's training as a fierce-bodied Huntress simultaneously engrains political obedience, Tris learns in Abnegation to serve others and not to question the faction system, and Cassie independently struggles to survive in the woods.

On the surface, their action-filled adventures are simultaneously quests for empowerment. These havoc-making heroines become "central and crucial"—learning that they *can* make a difference in their communities (199). Nevertheless, such empowerment is, to a degree, illusory. Although Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie play critical roles in bringing change to their own lives and to the lives of others, it is significant that their male counterparts craft such roles. Subtextually, these narratives propound a traditional, male-privileging paradigm through the sublimated construction of

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<sup>8</sup> Katniss resides in a community called "The Seam," situated along the barrier that encloses District Twelve. Thus, she physically lives "on the margins" of her society (Grenby 173).

the YA female protagonist's rebellion. In the manner of Action/Adventure fiction, male counterparts construct these heroines' projection of authority by endowing them with the bodily and attitudinal "hardness" that are characteristic of the male action hero. In her 2003 work *The Warrior Women of Television*, Dawn Heinecken distinguishes bodily "hardness" as masculinized somatic "impenetrability and self-contain[ment] ... The 'hardness' of the hero's body reflects his mastery over himself and others" (35). In the same manner, Inness describes the "tough" woman as "associate[d] with masculinity" in her "adopt[ion] [of] a persona that is strongly coded as masculine" (*Tough Girls* 21). She "has the tight emotional and physical control that has been traditionally associated with men," alongside a "fit body" with "masculine clothing" (13, 25). As major players in changing their social orders, these havoc-making heroines perform tough attributes according to the influences of male characters: Katniss dons military armour that has been created by her male-designer, Cinna. Saba enacts her role as the mythical Angel of Death—a role that has been assigned to her by her love-interest, Jack. Deuce develops muscles as a part of her training to become a formidable Huntress in the social system created by her male leader, Whitewall. Tris increasingly tattoos her body as she becomes a stronger fighter under the instruction of her love-interest, Four. Cassie becomes skilled with an M16 semiautomatic assault rifle through the influence of her love-interest, Evan.

At the same time, these heroines' enactments of toughness are compounded by their demonstrations of physical and behavioural "softness." Characteristic of the female action heroine, Heinecken aligns "softness" with the "feminine": the "soft" female body and its behaviours are "vulnerable" and "change in response to the demands of the

external world” (33, 50). Likewise, feminine softness, beauty and delicacy resonate with conceptions of traditional femininity perpetuated in works of Romance fiction. In the same manner as conventional romance heroines, these adolescent havoc-makers display strong romantic feelings for their comparably more powerful love-interests, become damsels in distress, and demonstrate fierce desires to protect these romantic partners. They illustrate physical and intellectual softness by passively imbibing the political ideologies of their love-interests. They adopt constructed appearances and roles that accentuate their sexual allure and/or position them in traditional feminine roles as per the personal and political desires of their romantic partners and other male characters. For example, Peeta uses story-telling to present Katniss as his delicate, pregnant wife to gain political sympathies. DeMalo, the leader of New Eden, adorns Saba in elegant dresses to suit his sexual tastes. Deuce’s male hunting partner, Fade, sanctions her displays of female compassion by distinguishing them as attractive. Four endorses Tris’ conformity to Dauntless’ political ideal of fearlessness, as she becomes more sexually appealing to him when she demonstrates courageousness. Evan garbs Cassie in elegant nightwear as he nurtures her back to health in his farmhouse. As examined in this study, the subtextual unconscious of a YA dystopian text reinforces female passivity as intrinsic and instructs female adolescents on how to perform “femininity” according to a traditionally normative archetype. As I contend, the “hidden adult,” can be understood as “hidden patriarch:” a sublimated ideology of patriarchy that operates in these best-selling YA dystopian texts to contain the adolescent female’s rebellious independent power and to reaffirm, to a degree, traditional female stereotypes. In particular, the havoc-making heroine’s narrative ending



reinforces motherhood as form of proper feminine conduct. As further explored in Part IV of this study, these heroines' metaphorical homecomings function to affirm the normative subtexts of their primary adventure-quests.<sup>9</sup>

In her article “Young Adult”, Dr. Lee A. Talley paraphrases Karin Lesnik-Oberstein in “Childhood and Textuality: Culture, History, Literature” (1998), to differentiate Children’s literature from YA fiction: “[C]hildren’s literature finds its roots in a cheerful, Wordsworthian Romanticism, YA literature is heir to the more revolutionary strain of Blakean Romanticism with characters who incisively expose society’s ills” (228). Using these distinctions, the contemporary YA heroine, I argue, embodies a clash of both Romanticisms. In the first place, she displays a Blakean Romanticism that is characteristic of the Action/Adventure genre and is found within the primary text, or “consciousness,” of her first-person narration. The paradigm of her masculinized, rebellious quest can be grounded in the utopian model of eighteenth and nineteenth-century children’s adventure tales intended for young boys.

Works such as Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1873) and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883) are examples of canonical Victorian stories of quests that are followed by other renowned adventure-fantasy tales such as

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<sup>9</sup> Similar to works of Children’s literature, the havoc-making heroines’ narrative endings present hopeful utopias. Children’s literature as an instrument of socialization is predicated on what Peter Hunt identifies in *An Introduction to Children’s Literature* (1994) as the common Romanticized perception that “childhood is the period of life which the immediate culture thinks of as being free of responsibility and susceptible to education” (5). Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry’s *Utopian and Dystopian: Writing for Children and Young Adults* (2003) explain that the Romantics constructed children as “emblems of hope and the future, capable of converting adults to a better way of life ... The Romantic child fits a utopian frame” (6). Interestingly, although young adults today have a diverse range of responsibilities, 21<sup>st</sup> century Western culture continues to perceive this stage of development as receptive to instruction. Adolescents likewise have the Romanticized potential to be “sensitiz[ed] or predispose[ed]” toward forms of “political action” that can, potentially, “convert” the current adult world to a utopia (7).

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), C.S. Lewis' "Narnia" series (1950-1956) and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000).<sup>10</sup> In his critical study *Children's Literature* (2008), M.O. Grenby asserts that "the adventure story is a fantasy of empowerment ... The reader vicariously shares this thrill of aggrandizement. Subordinate and dependent in their real lives, children reading these books are invited to imagine themselves as influential and important" (174). Likewise, YA fictions featuring a female heroine portray women in empowered, traditionally non-feminized roles that enable their readers to experience exhilarating, violent action-sequences throughout their journey. As agents of controversy, these havoc-makers follow in the tradition of their Victorian male predecessors who experience a moralizing coming-of-age through dissident and redemptive action. Occupying the position of the traditional solitary male savior, the YA female heroine is the valiant, honorable, and tough-girl instigator of utopia in her imperfect adult world.

Nonetheless, I contend that the YA heroine demonstrates a Wordsworthian Romanticism that is distinctive of the Romantic fiction genre. The subtextual, or "unconscious" narrative of the text reveals the heroine's limited agency in formulating and self-negotiating her individuality. She tacitly consents to a construction of heroism that is infringed upon, and largely defined, by her male counterparts. The prevalence of romance plots, as Basu, Broad, and Hintz recognize, is "especially pronounced in YA dystopias, which may capitalize on teenagers' preoccupations with courtship to compel their interest in the dystopian world" (8). The havoc-making heroine's sentimentalism,

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<sup>10</sup> For a brief introduction to canonical works of Adventure-Fantasy fiction, see Grenby 170-193.

nurturance and, at times, bodily and intellectual weakness resonate with Janice A.

Radway's description of romance novels in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (1984). For Radway, a romance novel is,

[A]n exploration of the meaning of patriarchy for women. As a result, it is concerned with the fact that men possess and regularly exercise power over them in all sorts of circumstances. By picturing the heroine in relative positions of weakness, romances are not necessarily endorsing her situation, but examining an all-too-common state of affairs in order to display possible strategies for coping with it. (75)

Although a YA havoc-making heroine occupies a position of independence, she is simultaneously postured in positions of inferiority. Her holistic sense of selfhood is predicated on the establishment of a heterosexual relationship—a romanticized connection that buttresses her motivation for the rebellious dismantling of her dystopian world. As a result, a YA havoc-making heroine's adventures within her dystopian realm include a subtextual journey of traditional heterosexual sexual awakening (to various degrees) that functions to reinforce conventional gender stipulations for “male” and “female” sexual behaviours.

However, I recognize adolescent female sexual questioning within YA dystopias as a movement with foundational ties to a subgenre of Romance fiction: YA Chick Lit. In her essay, “Chick Lit Jr.: More Than Glitz and Glamour for Teens and Tweens” (2006), Joanna Webb Johnson articulates that YA Chick Lit, or “Chick Lit Jr.,” focuses on the social realism of the young adult female experience. Although works such as the *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* (2001), *The Devil Wears Prada* (2003), and *Prada and Prejudice* (2009) may be “just as obsessed with makeup, shopping, and an interest in boys” as adult Chick Lit, or other romance narratives, Johnson recognizes that “most

heroines in YA novels are new to their sexuality ... they lack physical and emotional experience with the opposite sex” (150), enabling the “added function” of the genre to “help the young female reader make the transition into adulthood” (156). However, like the tempestuous tomboy Jo March, the ‘emotional and physical innocence’ of YA Chick lit heroines—a similar characteristic of the havoc-making heroines—permits their displays of unconventional femininity in conjunction with their feminine preoccupations, such as heterosexual relationships and domestic, or commercialized, pursuits. For instance, Anna Kiernan observes a similar incongruity in the Chick lit “tomboyish” heroine of the popular Bridget Jones series: she “represents a version of the independent, upwardly mobile, postfeminist woman” who “is also singularly obsessed with men and marriage” (207). The traditional tomboy figure can be understood as a paradoxical site of transgression that embodies the breaking of the conventional boundaries of the “feminine” while simultaneously grappling with, what Jane Sunderland refers to in her work *Language, Gender and Children’s Fiction* (2011) as, a “‘taming of the tomboy’” (47) process. Continuing in this historical trend, the modern tomboy is tamed, or “softened,” when she affirms marriage as the aspired romantic condition.

Canonical tenacious female characters, such as Elizabeth Bennet and Mina Harker, are examples of forerunning historical heroines who exhibit the dichotomous gendered qualities found in contemporary, tumultuous havoc-making heroines. For example, in Jane Austen’s socially satirical romance *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) a witty, intelligent, and “headstrong” Elizabeth Bennet finds holistic happiness in marriage to the dashing Darcy (141, 356). She demonstrates a collision of traditionally male and female

traits. In her banter with Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth demonstrates a sharp, witty and assertive intellect that is conventionally characterized as masculine. For instance, she tells him at one point, “I do not want to dance a reel at all—and now despise me if you dare” (87-88). In a similar manner, when Four taunts Tris during dagger practice, Tris demonstrates assertiveness by telling him to “Shut *up!*” (Roth 164; emphasis in original). Deuce in *Enclave* also challenges Fade to a sparring match. She conveys, “If you wanted people to take you seriously, you couldn’t let them think you were soft” (Aguirre 277). Likewise, when Evan attempts to shampoo Cassie’s hair during her convalescence, Cassie “push[es] his hands away” and declares, “This part I can do myself” (Yancey 163). Just as Elizabeth destabilizes Darcy’s prejudice with an indurate challenge, Tris, Deuce and Cassie vocally and physically attempt to assert their independent power.

Nevertheless, as a cultural product created in the epoch of Victorian sentimentality, the self-authorship of Austen’s Elizabeth is limited. As the novel progresses, her masculine qualities are softened by her courtship with Darcy and she agreeably conforms to the exigencies of female sensibility. For instance, after her engagement with Darcy, she recognizes how her wittiness carries the appendage of an unfeminine abrasiveness. In a conversation regarding the timidity of Mr. Bingley, she withholds a “longing” to make an astute “observation” and instead, “checked herself” by “remember[ing] that he [Mr. Darcy] had yet to learn to be laught at, and it was rather too early to begin [*sic*]” (Austen 371). She corrects, or “checks,” her intuitive dexterity of wit for the purpose of maintaining her display of traditional feminine sensibility. Likewise, in the epilogue for *Mockingjay*, Katniss quells her reluctance to have children, explaining,

“It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly” (Collins 389). Similarly, at the conclusion of Young’s “Dustlands” trilogy, Saba disavows herself of her fighting armour before beginning a new life with her love-interest, Jack. She ‘checks herself’ of her masculine propensities by symbolically “bury[ing] the Angel of Death” before assuming her proper ‘place’ by Jack’s side (*Raging Star* 422). Elizabeth’s, Katniss’ and Saba’s self-regulated behaviours indicate a softening that is latently shaped by a patriarchal paradigm.

Moving beyond Austen, I recognize a similar containment of the tomboy figure in Victorian adventure tales. Such narratives—as common in most contemporary YA dystopias—center on a group of comrades who confront the technologically baffling, the fantastic or the supernatural. For instance, in Bram Stoker’s epistemological adventure-esque narrative, *Dracula* (1897), Mina Harker represents the sociocultural “New Woman” movement of Stoker’s time. According to Glennis Byron in his 1998 critical introduction to *Dracula*, the Victorian New Woman “was characterized by her demands for sexual and social autonomy, and the anxiety caused by her desire to reject traditional roles is one of the most pervasive anxieties in *Dracula*” (17). Similar to the tough, seemingly autonomous YA havoc-making heroines of contemporary dystopian texts, Mina transgresses the ideological delineations of a patriarchal separate spheres ideology. She possesses, what Professor Van Helsing extols as, ““a man’s brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted—and a woman’s heart”” (Stoker 274). She is lauded for her enviable faculties of reason and her idealistic feminine compassion. In a similar manner, Fade extols Deuce’s compassionate heart as attractive. In a social system that

values emotional stoicism, Deuce's sympathy resists the ideals of her elders. Fade, a member of the covert resistance, tells her, "I never belonged anywhere until I met you ... [F]rom the beginning you didn't have the same hardness as the rest of the Hunters. It's not *easy* for you" (Aguirre 172; emphasis in original). Fade recognizes her feminized sentimentality as justly subversive and romantically appealing. Likewise, Four praises Tris' feminine selflessness. He conveys to her, "I have a theory that selflessness and bravery aren't all that different," and explains "Fear doesn't shut you down; it wakes you up. I've seen it. It's fascinating ... Sometimes I just ... want to see it again" (Roth 336, 314). In the Dauntless social system, courageousness and individualism are key values. Thus, Tris' feminine compassion is an act of insubordination. By expressing his longing to see her act bravely through selfless gestures, Four codes Tris' rebellious femininity as desirable. Both Fade and Four contain Deuce's and Tris' power by distinguishing their acts of political rebellion as sexually appealing.

However, Mina is denied physical participation in the mission to kill Dracula on account of her being woman. After praising Mina's intelligence, Van Helsing contiguously instructs her husband: "Friend John, up to now fortune has made that woman [Mina] of help to us; after tonight she must not have to do with this so terrible affair. It is not good that she run a risk so great ... it is no part for a woman" (Stoker 274). Jonathan Harker concedes to Van Helsing's directive and Mina is relegated to the conventional role of a female sidekick who works behind-the-scenes to support her heroic male companions and her valiant love-interest. Similarly, when Katniss first assumes her position as the Mockingjay, she must remain in District Thirteen and cannot participate in

physical combat to “guarantee her safety” (*Mockingjay* 76). In District Thirteen, she must perform in filmic “propaganda spots,” or “propos,” to uplift the rebel forces (44). However, Haymitch convinces other rebel leaders that they must do away with the constructed aesthetics of the studio to acquire a more authentic performance from Katniss. Although Katniss *does* enter the battlefield, Haymitch directly influences the exterior circumstances that propel her desired bodily behaviour. He uses the aesthetics of particular battlefields to serve as real-life stages. In doing so, Haymitch controls the spaces in which she enters.

Likewise, Fade in *Enclave* and Evan in *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave* restrict heroines Deuce and Cassie to domestic spaces for their protection. Sensitive to the sun Topside, Deuce observes Fade as he performs the “real work” outside of their dwelling space (Aguirre 140). By scavenging their dwelling space for useful supplies, Deuce becomes a female sidekick that supports the survival efforts of her love-interest. Recovering from a bullet wound to her leg, Cassie must daily await Evan’s return from hunting. He confines her to his farmhouse by ‘escorting her back inside’ when she attempts to follow him (Yancey 171). When Cassie recovers, Evan disregards her demand to infiltrate the Others’ base independently. Cassie’s mission to save her brother Sammy ultimately aids in Evan’s plan to destroy the base. Mina’s sidekick role contains her masculinized skills and affirms her male comrades as the heroes of the text. Similarly, Katniss,’ Deuce’s, and Cassie’s male counterparts control the spaces in which their bodies can enter and make efforts to undercut their power by fashioning them as female sidekicks. Thus, the YA dystopian trope of a tempestuous adolescent heroine whose power is eventually tamed by male



characters finds its roots in historical romances and adventure tales.

The YA dystopian heroine's gendered characteristics reveal a tension, or what feminist critic Susan Bordo identifies in her book *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993) as, a “battle between the male and female sides of the self” (174). Bordo holds that “The body—what we eat, how we dress, the daily rituals through which we attend to the body—is a medium of culture ... a *text* of culture. It is ... a direct locus of social control ... what Foucault calls the ‘docile body,’ regulated by the norms of cultural life” (165; emphasis in original). As I will demonstrate, male companions of the havoc-making heroine “read” her body through the lens of patriarchy and genre, mold her body and its activities according to such reading, and ultimately, unbeknownst to the heroine, psychologically impact her own “reading” of her body with the context of her dystopian culture. The notion of docility, or the docile body, was developed by French theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault in *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975). He explains that “[d]ocility, ... joins the analysable body to the manipulable body. A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (136). I inspect how, through the genre of a dystopian Young Adult fantasy, the bodily identities of the havoc-making heroines are “used” to convey political or personal male agendas, “transformed” into different “beings” through labelling, and “improved” aesthetically in accordance with the standards of gender in, what can be conceived as, the patriarchal genres of Action/Adventure and Romance Fiction (136).

Building on Foucault's principles of docility and power, feminist scholars since the 1970's have developed definitions to identify systems of male power. In this broader

feminist discussion of the female body and its behaviours, I am particularly interested in discussions of its patriarchal constructions from the 1990's and onward. Works such as Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) and Myra Macdonald's *Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media* (1995) explore the ways in which the body and its behaviours perpetuate gender norms through practice and performance. More recent critical works from the early millennial period, such as, Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross' *Women and Media: A Critical Introduction* (2006), likewise explore how the social and aesthetic expectations of gender in advertisements, film and television constrain the female body.

Other works such as Sherrie A. Inness' *Tough Girls* (1999) and Dawn Heneicken's *The Warrior Women of Television: A Feminist Cultural Analysis of the New Female Body in Popular Media* (2003) offer critical views on the representations of women in film and television. Inness and Heinecken also investigate the ways in which female heroes adhere to, and subvert, traditional forms of masculinity and femininity. They refer to the male hero in action texts as exhibiting power through the "toughness," or "hardness," of his body and his attitude. According to Inness and Heinecken, the female action hero—regardless of her displays of bodily and attitudinal strength—demonstrates weakness through her exhibition of traditional feminine "softness." This model of the female action heroine contains characteristics that are, what I recognize to be, conventional of romance heroines: she focuses on cultivating heterosexual relationships, she displays sexual attractiveness, and demonstrates inferior physical or intellectual power in comparison to her love-interest. Nonetheless, Jennifer K. Stuller's

critical work on several 21<sup>st</sup>-century “superwomen” in pop culture, *Ink Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors* (2010), recalibrates female stereotypes as potentially empowering.<sup>11</sup> Examining heroines such as Wonder Woman and Buffy Summers in the television series *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), Stuller contends that “Compassion is an act of selfless love often born out of empathy and an essential component of the love ethic that drives heroes to action” (99). Although the havoc-making heroines *do* derive a sense of empowerment from their compassionate attitudes, they do not recognize their heroic potential for themselves. As I will explore in this study, the havoc-making heroines’ love-interests and/or male-superiors validate their compassionate natures as heroic before they can autonomously perceive themselves as powerful—as Peeta tells Katniss: “[Y]ou still have no idea. The effect you can have” (*Mockingjay* 325). Male characters encourage, facilitate, and sustain the adolescent heroines’ sense of self-assurance. Male authority figures sanction these young women’s displays of love as heroic, thereby re-inscribing female compassion as normative and male power as superior.

I will be considering five havoc-making heroines in this study: Katniss Everdeen of Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), and *Mockingjay* (2010); Saba in Moira Young’s “Dustlands” trilogy—comprised of *Blood Red Road* (2011), *Rebel Heart* (2012), and *Raging Star* (2014); Deuce in the first instalment of Ann Aguirre’s “Razorland” trilogy entitled *Enclave* (2011); Tris Prior in the first instalment of Veronica Roth’s *Divergent* (2011) series; and finally, Cassie Sullivan in the first

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<sup>11</sup> I further discuss Stuller and her conception of female heroic empowerment in Part IV of this study.

instalment of Rick Yancey's *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave* (2013) series.

In *The Hunger Games*, Collins presents the dystopian country of Panem in which the tyrannical Capitol government sustains its political power over the twelve once-rebellious districts by withholding food. The luxurious Capitol's ultimate form of entertainment is the annual Hunger Games: a televised battle to the death between teenaged tributes from each of the twelve districts—the victor ultimately receiving freedom from hunger. Representing District Twelve, huntress Katniss Everdeen (taking the place of her sister Prim) and fellow tribute Peeta Mellark must carry out a performed romance to satisfy their Capitol audience. She subverts Capitol power at the end of her first Hunger Games by suggesting a suicide pact, rather than having only one of the two win the Games. *Catching Fire* follows the repercussions of this politically subversive suggestion, centring on Katniss' continued romantic performance with Peeta for the purposes of diffusing the incitement of rebellion within the districts. In the final novel, *Mockingjay*, Katniss becomes the figure of Mockingjay: the embodiment of the district-wide rebellion against the Capitol's oppression. Once again, Katniss must politically perform on television for her district audience in order to survive the rebel-movement.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, Saba in *Blood Red Road* must fight to preserve her life in the arena of the ruthless Cage Matches—the entertainment milieu of the politically corrupt, dystopian city of Hopetown—in which young girls are forced to fight one another to the death. Her compulsory participation derails her from her mission: to rescue her twin brother, Lugh, from being sacrificed by King Vicar Pinch and his totalitarian army, the Tonton, in a

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<sup>12</sup> My initial thinking about Katniss' construction comes from my unpublished undergraduate Independent Study Project entitled "Satisfying an Audience's Hunger for a Heroine: *The Hunger Games Trilogy* and the Consumption of a Constructed Female Identity" completed at the University of Toronto in April 2013.

ritual that is believed to rejuvenate the King's strength. Liberated by the female vigilante warrior troupe, The Free Hawks, Saba, alongside her younger sister Emmi and the charismatic criminal Jack, unseats Pinch and restores Lugh to her company. With Pinch dethroned, his delegate DeMalo assumes sovereignty in *Rebel Heart* and strives to create New Eden: a utopian society for only those he deems worthy of residence. Becoming an undercover Tonton in the renewed Tonton regime, Jack entreats Saba to lead a guerrilla rebellion against DeMalo. However, in the midst of executing her instructions, she is sexually seduced by him. In Young's final instalment, *Raging Star*, Saba's allegiances are emotionally and politically divided between the appeals of New Eden and her performance as an unwavering rebel-leader; she must choose either DeMalo or Jack as her romantic partner.

A newly named "Huntress," Deuce of Aguirre's *Enclave* strives to defend her underground settlement, College, from being overthrown by uncanny creatures known as Freaks. Alongside her male Freak-hunting mentor and partner, Fade, Deuce is exiled from her enclave in order to save her brotherly comrade, Stone, from the indiscriminate and underhanded enforcement of the enclave elders' political power. Deuce and Fade are forced Topside and encounter a rogue band known as The Wolves—their leader, a vicious tactician known as Stalker, joins their enterprise to ascertain the cause of the sudden growth in Freak population. Living Topside, Deuce confronts male expectations for femininity that differ from the ideological compositions of gendered duties in College.

Comparably, *Divergent* presents a post-apocalyptic, technologically advanced, and seemingly utopian society in which humanity has settled into five political factions

that systematically delineate certain common attributes and values.<sup>13</sup> Tris Prior is “Divergent,” and, therefore, is able psychologically to dissolve the disembodied government-designed virtual simulations utilized to complete her initiation into the Dauntless faction. Alongside her initiation instructor, Four, Tris discovers that her Divergence is an incendiary condition that threatens Erudite’s collusions to overthrow the factions by means of a technological simulation designed to control Dauntless soldiers.

Equally, *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave* highlights Cassie Sullivan’s emotional struggle with the overthrow of humanity at the hands of the multifaceted, contiguous colonizing exploits—called “Waves”—of the Others: an extra-terrestrial civilization whose operative forces masquerade as a benevolent human military group stationed at Camp Haven. Cassie is on a mission to liberate her younger brother, Sammy, from the indoctrinating clutches of the Others’ military programming. While pursuing her brother, she meets Evan Walker—a specialized Other known as a “Silencer” who is trained to kill humans—and becomes enamoured with him. He rescues her from injury, mentors her in weaponized combat and joins her mission—a mission that ultimately assists him in achieving his rebellious goal: to eliminate Camp Haven.

My discussion will address two complete trilogies (“Hunger Games” and “Dustlands” trilogies) with the remainder of the works under consideration being first instalments to completed trilogies.<sup>14</sup> Due to limitations in space, the two trilogies referenced in full have been selected for their strong resemblances in plot and paratextual

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<sup>13</sup> “Abnegation” for selflessness, “Amity” for peace, “Erudite” for intellect and reason, “Candor” for truth and “Dauntless” for fearlessness and physical strength. *Divergent* takes place in post-apocalyptic Chicago.

<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding Yancey’s *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave*. It is, at the time of writing, an ongoing trilogy with the release of the second installment, *Infinite Sea*, in 2014.

marketing. Indicative of the ubiquitous popularity of contemporary YA havoc-making heroines, all works referenced in my thesis have cinematic releases (*The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, *Mockingjay: Part 1*, *Divergent*), impending cinematic releases (*Mockingjay: Part 2*), or have been confirmed to begin filmic production.<sup>15</sup> My thesis offers a fresh and engaging discussion on contemporary YA dystopian texts that explores how the expectations of patriarchy and genre shape the body and conduct of the adolescent female heroine.

My investigation of the gendered and genred forces that craft the bodies and behaviours of YA dystopian havoc-making heroines falls into two sections. The first section entitled “Part II: Weapons, Scars, Tattoos and... Dresses? Female Aestheticism in a Dystopian World” will explore how dystopian societies impinge physically upon the bodies of Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie. Moulded, to a degree, as romantic damsels, I examine how these heroines are adorned—by their male companions or as a personal choice to uphold the perceived aesthetic standard of feminine beauty—with the aesthetics of traditional femininity: dresses, high fashion, and jewellery. Composed as masculinized action heroines by their male comrades, these female protagonists further don the aesthetics of the “tough girl” image: body suits, weapons, scars, and tattoos. These male characters further shape the havoc-making heroines’ performances of traditional masculinity and femininity through the act of labelling. I will survey how these

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<sup>15</sup> With the exception of *Enclave*. According to Jojo Marshall’s 2014 *Entertainment Weekly* online article “Chloe Grace Moretz will be killing aliens in ‘The 5th Wave,’” Chloe Grace Moretz has been confirmed to play Cassie Sullivan in the filmic release of *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave*. The film will be released in January 2016 (see Rebecka Schumann’s “‘The 5th Wave’ Movie Trailer Shows Chloe Grace Moretz Fighting Back Against The End Of The World”). Young has also confirmed a movie release of *Blood Red Road* on her official “Dustlands Trilogy” webpage. At the time of writing this study, no official film release date has been announced for *Blood Red Road*.

heroines negotiate and consent to these competing gender formulations for her heroic body image.

The second section, “Part III: ‘It mattered more that we performed well in our allotted roles’: Constructed Behaviours and a Prescriptive Heroic Duty,” concentrates on how the exterior conduct and internal self-reflexivity of these havoc-making heroines are manipulated, both covertly and latently, by male protagonists as per the expectations of gender in the Romance and Action/Adventure Fiction genres. It will explore how the love-interests of Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie both sharpen their combat skills and soften their conduct, causing these heroines’ characters to shift fundamentally from the “‘Lone Wolf’ model of heroism which is rooted in traditional uber-masculinity and isolationism” (Stuller 85) to being collaborative, empathetic female heroes. Their male counterparts further fashion their incongruous gendered behaviours for their personal and political purposes.

In “Part IV: Epilogue: Homecoming Heroines,” I explore the relegation of the havoc-making heroines to domestic physical spaces at the end of their stories. Just as the entirety of these popular YA dystopias illustrate an intertwining of gender and genre, the conclusions to these texts continue to interlace the patriarchal expectations of Action/Adventure and Romance fiction with Western cultural norms for gender roles. As I will demonstrate through an analysis of the cultural contexts of these works, these once-rebellious havoc-making heroines subscribe to traditional codes of femininity within their utopian societies. I will inspect how the presentation of these heroines as the matriarchal figures of these home-like spaces reinforces traditional expectations for femininity. This



section will address these heroines' happy romantic endings and their ensuing depoliticization as a means of reaffirming a patriarchal ideology—a social paradigm that also undergirds the very utopian society that they had helped to establish. Drawing on texts such as Dawn H. Currie's chapter "From Girlhood, Girls, to Girls' Studies—*The Power of the Text*" (2015) and Valerie Wee's *Teen Media* (2010), I further speculate as to why the post-apocalyptic dystopian genre is a popular platform for adolescent female subjects to negotiate and explore gender codes—how YA dystopias reflect a "mutual exclusivity" of "identities for girls: the 'little innocent girl' who needs male protection versus the girl who can 'defend herself' and who can control any situation" (Currie 25-26). The conflicting gendered image of the adolescent female heroine reveals a continued social ambivalence toward young women's display of non-traditional gender roles.

## Part II

### Weapons, Scars, Tattoos and... Dresses? Female Aestheticism in a Dystopian World

In many ways, the tough woman embodies women's fantasies of empowerment—the dream that the lone woman can take on the massed powers of our collective society. It is clear that toughness in women has a highly ambiguous place in our society. We are fascinated by it, yet we are horrified by it. We admire it, yet we fear it.

—Sherrie A. Inness, *Tough Girls*; p. 23

Like the body of the “tough woman,” the adolescent body of the female havoc-maker continues to occupy a “highly ambiguous place” in a Western perception of progressive girlhood (*Tough Girls* 23). Her body outwardly signifies a gendered contradiction of aesthetics traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity: she engages with dresses, jewelry and makeup, while also donning battle scars, tattoos and armor; she is famous in her social realm not only for her acts of courage, but also for her beauty. As I will investigate in this section of this study, such paradoxical aesthetic conventions correlate with the intermingling of the Action/Adventure and Romance genres and work to subvert and re-entrench gender norms. I argue that the havoc-making heroine looks like, and performs as, a characteristically male and female hero to the degree that she is implicitly allowed. She may appear hard, but only to the degree that she still maintains her softness. She is constructed for the purposes of male-inspired and male-directed ends. As a result, her sexuality represents both a source of manipulative power and an inherent weakness that disqualifies her from fully assuming an unmediated leadership role.

In Part I of this study, I introduced Dawn Heinecken's use of the terms “hardness” and “softness” as a way of distinguishing aspects of the action hero's body as

“masculine” and/or “feminine” (33). In *The Warrior Women of Television*, Heinecken uses these distinctions to differentiate the body of the male action hero from the body of the female action hero. In her analysis of the television series *La Femme Nikita* (1997 – 2001), Heinecken provides a clearer description of the hardness of the male action hero and the softness of the female action hero. She explains that the male hero’s,

Heroic identity tends to be founded on the isolation of the self from others, in which the body struggles to become impenetrable and self-contained. The hero is both defined by and controls his physical environment. The ‘hardness’ of the hero’s body reflects his mastery of himself and others ... offering a rejection of the realm of the flesh[.] (35)

Conversely, the female hero, as represented by Nikita:

[U]ndergoes a process of transformation in which the signs of the body—her behavior and appearance—change in response to the demands of the external world. The plasticity of her body is both a sign of her lack of dominance over others and her environment, but it is also the means by which she achieves power ... [T]he female hero of *Nikita* is like Silly Putty, soft, permeable and picking up the images impressed upon her. (50)

The adolescent havoc-making heroine paradoxically embodies the hardness and softness of both male and female heroisms. However, the havoc-making heroine uniquely demonstrates how hardness and softness are controlled and negotiated within a contemporary context. She may be clad in armour, but her beauty must still shine through. Through clothing, she is *made* to be a female leader whose femininity is negotiated and rebranded as tough only to the extent that is necessary for achieving the political and personal agendas of other male figures. Femininity and toughness become aesthetic apparatuses that impact the body of the havoc-making heroine for the purposes of either sustaining social order or promoting social *disorder*.

Discussing conventional media presentations of action heroines, Inness

distinguishes the “tough woman” as having “physical fitness [that] serves as a physical sign of her heroic nature” (24).<sup>16</sup> Buttressing her perceived physical vigor is her clothing. For Inness, “Clothing is an important element in the performance of toughness because it serves as a visual reminder that a woman has distanced herself from femininity. Masculine clothing also suggests a woman’s capacity for action and leadership” (24). However, the narrative provision of details pertaining to weaponry and other trappings usually encoded as male models the meticulous concentration on clothing and accessories conventionally found in romances. In *Reading the Romance*, Radway discusses the perpetuation of the “feminine universe” through the powerful stylistic appeal to realism in descriptions of clothing:

The effect is so overpowering that the technique may well persuade the reader that the tale need not be considered a fantasy at all ... The details, however, are not really superfluous at all. They are a part of an essential shorthand that establishes that, like ordinary readers, fictional heroines are ‘naturally’ preoccupied with fashion. Romantic authors draw unconsciously on cultural conventions and stereotypes that stipulate that women can always be characterized by their universal interest in clothes. (193)

The havoc-maker’s observation of male and traditional female accouterments works to reinforce an innate female attention to fashion. These details inscribe male clothing as suffused with a power to lead others through its suggestion of violence and female clothing as infused with a distinctly sexual power. Although these havoc-makers subvert traditional gender norms by destabilizing political regimes, clothing in these dystopias signify an entrenchment of gender stereotypes. In her article “Rebels in Dresses:

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<sup>16</sup> Although Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie frequently describe themselves as small in stature, all perceive themselves as having a healthy level of physical strength.

Distractions of Competitive Girlhood in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction” (2014), Amy L. Montz addresses the use of fashion in YA dystopias as a form of governmental control in the maintenance of female competition:

The role of fashion in competition as well as in the shaping of young female lives is important because fashion itself is important ... It is no accident that so many dystopias would control fashion and people’s access to it as a way of constructing their identities ... [T]hey often are limited choices, once again reinforcing the argument that limited choice is the power of no choice offered by the dystopia. (114-115)

As conveyed by Montz and Radway, adolescent girls’ preoccupation with clothing is an important feature in the formulation of their identities. For Montz, clothing, such as uniforms, represents a limitation of choice as informed by the political strictures of their dystopian realms, thus prefiguring the use of clothing as a form of rebellion against systems that perpetuate female competition.<sup>17</sup> The havoc-maker’s encounters with clothing, even when used as a means of rebellion, signify her instrumentation and manipulation. Her male counterparts construct her incongruous heroic body—fashioning both its soft and hard characteristics.

Nonetheless, the havoc-making heroine’s use of language sometimes perpetuates the notion that “toughness and femininity are antithetical” (*Tough Girls* 20). There are moments in her narrative whereby she repeatedly asserts girlishness as being synonymous with weakness—revealing an understanding of maleness as synonymous with strength, fearlessness, emotional stoicism, and power. The use of the term “girl” by the havoc-making heroine and her male counterparts reflects her body’s oscillation between both

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<sup>17</sup> For a further discussion on female competition in YA dystopia, please see Chapter 11 of *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction* (2014) entitled “The Incompatibility of Female Friendships and Rebellion,” by Ann M. M. Childs.

realms of seeming female powerlessness and masculine power. Judith Butler addresses the authority of language to shape and define the “girled” body in her seminal work

*Bodies That Matter:*

[I]n that naming, the girl is ‘girled,’ brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But that ‘girling’ of the girl does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect. The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm. (8)

The inscription of labels upon the female hero’s body by her male counterparts plays a role in shaping her performance of gender. In the social realms of the havoc-making heroines, girlhood itself can be understood as a controlled practicing of both traditional forms of male and female conduct and appearance.

Language and clothing are tools in the construction and facilitation of the havoc-making heroines’ gendered practices. Clothing itself can also be considered a visual language. According to Myra Macdonald in *Representing Women*, clothing can be read as text for meaning, functioning as “visible and readable cultural practices and as semiotic systems, rais[ing] particularly interesting issues in relation to redefinitions of femininity” (210). Male characters’ authority over verbal language and the havoc-maker’s wardrobe not only defines, but *qualifies*, her body’s girlishness in accordance with their own purposes: she becomes an unthreatening female, a female with semblances of strength, or a sexualized, womanly force to be acknowledged. For instance, in *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is known as “the girl who was on fire”—a title her male-stylist, Cinna, gives her

(Collins 67).<sup>18</sup> His authority in costuming her body shapes how Katniss' Capitol audience interprets her girlhood. As the “girl on fire,” she embodies a collision of feminine softness with semblances of toughness as represented by the symbols of fire in her costumes. After Cinna and her prep team ornament her in make-up and her dress for her first interview with Caesar Flickerman, she describes herself as having “Huge dark eyes, full red lips, lashes that throw off bits of light when I blink. Finally they cover my entire body in a powder that makes me shimmer in gold dust” (120). She continues to describe that her “dress is entirely covered in reflective precious gems, red and yellow and white with bits of blue that accent the tips of the flame design. The slightest movement gives the impression I am engulfed in tongues of fire” (120). Using Butler's terms, Katniss is first “girled” by being named “the girl on fire.” Her femininity is thus emphasized and retained through her traditionally feminine clothing: she wears an elegant dress that accentuates her beauty. Katniss continues to describe her eyes, lips and body as ethereal. Her self-expressed *blazon du corps* captures Macdonald's corporeal models of femininity<sup>19</sup>:

The body's traditional centrality to feminine identity can be subdivided into a variety of codes of appearance: ideal bodily shape and size; appropriate forms of make-up and cosmetic care of skin and hair; and the adornment of the body ... that culturally shapes and moulds what it means to be 'feminine.' (193-194)

Cinna asserts Katniss' identity as corresponding with the Capitol's aesthetic ideal of female attractiveness and the traditional codes of female identity as outlined by

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<sup>18</sup> See pages 109, 139, 147, 176-77 and 354 in *The Hunger Games*.

<sup>19</sup> Conventional to 16<sup>th</sup> century French poetry, and commonly used in the English Renaissance, the *blazons anatomiques du corps feminine*, or the *blazon du corps*, is a description technique that lists female body parts.

Madonald: Katniss' skin is glowing, her make-up is striking, her dress elegantly accentuates her female form—all of which collectively emblemize her celebrity identity as the “girl on fire.” Cinna's control of her celebrity body's appearance is one form of external control that renders illusory her seeming authority as a Capitol icon. Her performance as “the girl on fire” is meticulously orchestrated for the purposes of gaining Capitol sympathies in preparation for an anticipated district-wide rebellion against the Capitol—a plot unknown to her in *The Hunger Games*.

By presenting Katniss as a girl “on fire,” Cinna undercuts her inherent softness as a conventional girl and imbues her with the hardness and “impenetrability” of a traditional male hero (Heneicken 35). At the same time, Cinna feminizes the aesthetic intensity of her qualifying, masculine “fire” for the purposes of presenting her as politically nonthreatening. For example, upon returning from the Games, Katniss' body is once again prepared for the post-Games interview:

I am still ‘the girl on fire.’ The sheer fabric softly glows ... By comparison, the chariot costume seems garish, the interview dress too contrived. In this dress, I give the illusion of wearing candlelight ... My hair's loose, held back by a simple hairband. The makeup rounds and dills out the sharp angles of my face. A clear polish coats my nails ... I look, very simply, like a girl. A young one. Fourteen at most. Innocent. Harmless. (*The Hunger Games* 355)

Katniss' immediate association of girlishness with a simplistic and softened appearance indicates—and reaffirms—the inherent, non-threatening qualities of femininity. She comments that Cinna's dress for her that evening makes her “look as girlish and innocent as possible” (360). By visually displaying the physical qualities of female sensibility, Cinna presents Katniss as a pure, innocent young girl whose seemingly defiant actions



toward the Capitol come from her overwhelming love for Peeta.<sup>20</sup> Her costume distinguishes her as a frivolous, love-struck female instead of a dangerous rebel: “This is a very calculated look. Nothing Cinna designs is arbitrary” (355). Her clothing adheres to the constructed “star-crossed lovers” romance narrative surrounding her and Peeta (135). Cinna’s design for her body reduces a potential political threat to her life, and thus, enables her to receive the identity of the Mockingjay rebel-leader that will be imposed upon her by Cinna’s, Haymitch’s, the Victors’ and District Thirteen’s dissenting plot.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, Cinna’s aesthetic manipulation of Katniss’ body as the Mockingjay illustrates his authority over her status as a human. Addressing the performativity of “sex” as beginning with the “naming” of a gender, Butler explains that “[w]ithin speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names. According to the biblical rendition of the performative, i.e., ‘Let there be light!’ it appears that it is by virtue of *the power of a subject or its will* that a phenomenon is named into being” (13; emphasis in original). Cinna constructs Katniss’ gendered performances and her humanity itself: by naming her the Mockingjay rebel-leader she is transformed into the mockingjay bird itself. For instance, Katniss is first seen as the subversive figure of the Mockingjay within the parameters of the performed feminine in her pre-Quarter Quell interview with Caesar Flickerman. Prior to being seated with

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<sup>20</sup> Recall her suggestion to use poisoned berries in a suicide pact with Peeta at the end of the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Hunger Games (344 *The Hunger Games*). Cinna’s portrayal of Katniss’ innocence also corresponds with, and reinforces, Haymitch’s following instructions for Katniss to say that her actions were due to her “being so madly in love” (356 – 357).

<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy to indicate that Katniss is the last person to be informed of the rebel-plot. The concealment of the plan is “for her own good”—a decision made to encourage her competition in the Quarter Quell as a fighter unfettered by the responsibility of the Mockingjay identity (attributed to her without her knowledge).

Caesar, Cinna helps her into the wedding gown he had altered for her. After “twirl[ing]” in it for her “big finale,” Katniss describes, “Cinna has arranged to burn away my wedding dress ... I’m in a dress of the exact design of my wedding dress, only it’s the color of coal and made of tiny feathers ... Cinna has turned me into a mockingjay” (*Catching Fire* 248, 252). Her twirl adheres to Cinna’s calculated strategy to incite rebellious ideas within the district audience and to commence Katniss’ new constructed identity as the symbolic figure of the rebellion. The twirl transforms her into the Mockingjay. Her power as a social havoc-maker can be attributed to her now inhuman status.

Building on Katniss’ bodily malleability in *The Hunger Games* and *Catching Fire*, Cinna continues to construct Katniss’ transformations by presenting her as a seeming masculinized rebel soldier in *Mockingjay*. Cinna’s design of her Mockingjay uniform conveys the hardness of her soldier-body. Upon receiving Cinna’s sketchbook, Katniss explains:

I open the cover to find a picture of myself, standing straight and strong, in a black uniform ... [A]t first glance utterly utilitarian, at second a work of art. The swoop of the helmet, the curve to the breastplate, the slight fullness of the sleeve that allows the white folds under the arms to show. In his hands, I am again a mockingjay ... I turn the pages slowly, seeing each detail of the uniform. The carefully tailored layers of body armor, the hidden weapons in the boots and belt, the special reinforcements over my heart. (*Mockingjay* 43)

Katniss recognizes that she is in Cinna’s power. She becomes aware that “the hands of Cinna” have created for her a new identity (43). His aesthetic construction of her body portrays her as a figure of strength: her assertive bodily language, in conjunction with the utilitarian motif of her outfit, is characteristic of the action male hero. Nevertheless, the

“curve to the breastplate” suggests Cinna’s attempt to display Katniss with a more womanly figure (43). Katniss’ armour provides her with the semblance of a male heroism while accentuating her female sexuality. The hardness of her rebel exterior—required to convey the strength needed “to blaze a path to victory” (43)—is simultaneously a soft construction that produces an aesthetic consciousness. She is “dough, being kneaded and reshaped again and again” as per the devising of male authority (*Catching Fire* 166).

As the Mockingjay, Katniss’ constructed rebel-leader body presents her with a sexualized power. For instance, when she watches the replay of the recording of her first rebel “propaganda spot,” or “propo” (*Mockingjay* 44), she notes that her body is unrecognizable, particularly the maturity of her face. She articulates how the “woman” on the screen has a “body [that] seems larger in stature, more imposing than mine. Her face smudged but sexy. Her brows black and drawn in an angle of defiance. Wisps of smoke—suggesting she has either just been extinguished or is about to burst into flames—rise from her clothes. I do not know who this person is” (70-71). Katniss’ body conveys a masculine ferocity while retaining an appealing femininity. Her appearance, designed to uplift the spirits of the rebel forces, becomes a possession of the males that look upon her body. An object of male-fantasy, Katniss is fashioned to appear tough and “sexy” (70). Collins’ representation of Katniss as a masculine figure of toughness and a feminine icon of male desire resonates with Carolyn M. Byerly and Karen Ross’ hesitation of perceiving women’s strength within the filmic action genre as progressive in *Women & Media*:

So women’s strength and their performance as tough women in the contemporary action genre cannot be read off simply as progress, art reflecting life. Rather, such performances may connote a deep ambivalence about the limitations of women’s flight to equality. The tough

woman is testament to a still male-dominant society's own contradictory responses to women's demands for equal treatment ... [T]he tough girl is nearly always stripped down (often literally) to what lies at her core, her essential, biological womanliness, her essential subordinate position to man. (26)

Although presented as strong, Katniss' body displays makeup for the purposes of appearing older.<sup>22</sup> Her body is commodified as both a figure of inspiration and an object of male voyeurism so that the male audience (represented by the men around her) consumes her feminine sexuality. For instance, after watching the playback of the initial propo, Finnick Odair expresses, ““They'll either want to kill you, kiss you, or be you”” (*Mockingjay* 71). Gale also mentions to Katniss, ““You're going to be the best-dressed rebel in history”” (43). Similar to her experience with her stylists in the Capitol prior to her first Games, Katniss is once again aesthetically “stripped down” (Byerly and Ross 26) to “Beauty Base Zero” (*Mockingjay* 59). Katniss describes:

With my acid-damaged hair, sunburned skin, and ugly scars, the prep team has to make me pretty and *then* damage, burn, and scar me in a more attractive way ... Beauty Base Zero turns out to be what a person would look like if they stepped out of bed looking flawless but natural ... I suppose Cinna gave the same instructions on the first day I arrived as a tribute in the Capitol ... As a rebel, I thought I'd get to look more like myself. But it seems a televised rebel has her own standards to live up to. (59; emphasis in original)

Katniss' appearance remains visually appealing. Unlike the hard body of the male action hero—on which the repugnance of bloody wounds and scars are permissible and indicative of strength and durability—the hard body of the female action hero retains a degree of delicateness. The elements of hardness that appear on Katniss' body in reality

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<sup>22</sup> Recall Dalton's request to ““Wash her [Katniss'] face ... She's still a girl and you made her look thirty-five”” (*Mockingjay* 77).

are too hard to sustain an appearance of femininity that is visually pleasing. The construction of the hardness of her body creates an aesthetic appeal that is conducive to a male standard of physical attractiveness.

In a similar manner to the representations in the “Hunger Games” series, Saba of the “Dustlands” trilogy<sup>23</sup> is fashioned to satisfy others’ political and personal purposes. Just as Katniss is reduced to “Beauty Base Zero,” Saba is forcefully divested of her weaponry in order to uncover her adolescent femininity for the purposes of enslaving her as a combatant in Hopetown’s female Cage-fighting Matches. After being lured on to, and imprisoned within, the Desert Swan landboat, Rooster and Miz Pinch construct Saba and her younger sister Emmi as incarcerated romantic damsels—physically exploiting them against their wills.<sup>24</sup> Miz Pinch, a masculinized authoritarian figure who is mother to the dictatorial King of the Dustlands, Vicar Pinch, prepares Saba’s body for unarmed combat by taking possession of her armaments as well as the extensions of her body that are considered feminine and beautiful, such as her hair and her heartstone necklace.<sup>25</sup> Saba describes, “[Miz Pinch] grabs hold of my long braid and gives it a sharp twist bringing my head down ... That’s a fine tail of hair, she says. Should fetch a good price”

<sup>23</sup> A note on the “Dustlands” trilogy: creating an atmosphere conventional to traditional Western action films, Young writes using elided diction.

<sup>24</sup> While Saba is extorted in the Cage, Emmi is forced into domestic slavery to serve the Pinches.

<sup>25</sup> Miz Pinch can also be considered a male figure as she is removed from normative codes of femininity and is portrayed as a brutish male in her physicality and demeanor. For instance, Saba describes “how big Miz Pinch is. Over six foot, with broad shoulders, rough man-sized hands and strong looking arms covered with dark hair” (*Blood Red Road* 117). Saba physically compares her with her husband Rooster and notes the scars on his body as suggestive of the various abuses he undergoes: “His face is shiny with sweat and the spoon trembles in his hand ... I notice his hands and wrists are covered all over with ugly purple burn scars. Like somebody’s gone at ‘em with a hot poker” (125). Compared to both Rooster and Saba, Miz Pinch’s towering and hard physique imbues her with a monstrous stature that is in direct contrast to the female physical norm. Using Heineken’s distinction of the “Unruly Woman,” Miz Pinch can be considered a male-like authority figure that constructs Saba’s body. Heineken explains that the “Unruly Woman is a figure who turns traditional images of femininity upside down, most notably through ‘unfeminine’ behavior ... [she] takes up space through her large size ... [she] is reviled and disparaged” (22-23).

(*Blood Red Road* 126). In a perversion of the courtly love *blazon* technique, Pinch literally fragments Saba's body by reducing her to lucrative, and therefore, desirable pieces. The deprivation of Saba's attire<sup>26</sup> and hair denotes an explicit dismantlement of her agency and illustrates the "power of no choice offered by the dystopia" to adolescent women as represented by their policed interactions with clothing (Montz 115). Miz Pinch "strips" Saba's body of both its masculinized hardness and, to a degree, its feminized softness and, thus, diminishes it to only its basic sex—a rudimentary posture that warrants her body as a profitable commodity in a patriarchal system that objectifies young women and capitalizes on their bodies for entertainment.

Echoing Judith Butler's articulation of gender as a series of repetitive, practiced performances, Saba is unable aesthetically to exercise a gendered presentation of either masculinity or femininity in the Cage because of Miz Pinch's confiscation of her clothing and hair. In the Cage, Saba's continuous, singular focus on survival produces an infamous instinctive disposition that disavows gendered behaviours and casts her as a creature with inhuman strength. A paradoxical "prized fighting animal"<sup>27</sup> and a treasured female damsel, Saba has her "own cell an a cot with a blanket" with water provided in "troughs that run along the edge of the cells" (*Blood Red Road* 155, 150). Deemed "The Angel of Death" by her "chaal-crazy crowd,"<sup>28</sup> she asserts that she "ain't never lost a fight. Every time they take me to the Cage, I let the red hot take me over an it fights till it wins" (153).

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<sup>26</sup> Saba is garbed in rags. Describing her dream in the Cage, she expresses: "*I'm in the Cage, my feet bare, my clothes in rags*" (156; emphasis in original).

<sup>27</sup> Saba recounts her animalized behaviour when spectators attempt to "reach in through the bars [of the Cage] an try to touch me so's they can brag to their friends later. I snap my teeth at 'em an they shrink away" (174).

<sup>28</sup> A drug produced by King Vicar Pich to render his subjects subservient.

Emulating the incomparable strength of a male hero presents Saba's celebritized fighting body as innately powerful. Nonetheless, reasserting the normative perception that young women are not intrinsically physically powerful, Saba's role as the Angel of Death destabilizes and contains the model of the action heroine. The dictating class—represented by her captors and the audience—profits from the visual pleasure of violently competing female bodies and thus asserts its dominance over those bodies. Further undercutting the innateness of her proclivity for physical action and re-inscribing her docility as a romance heroine, Saba reifies her survival drive as “the red hot” whose dominating force ensures her victory in each Cage Match: “it” is doing the fighting until “it” wins, not Saba. Throughout the “Dustlands” trilogy, she often refers to the “red hot” in the third person, as a consuming energy that “takes over” to “save me” (*Rebel Heart* 39). As per the conventions of Romance fiction, “the red hot” is, to a degree, understood as a male romantic hero that rescues her from public execution.<sup>29</sup> By attributing her triumphs to “the red hot,” Saba subtly removes her agency in commanding her own body and thus retains her feminine delicacy by maintaining a posture of passivity.

A distinguishing feature of Saba's somatic identity as the Angel of Death is the “birthmoon tattoo” her father etched on her skin at birth (*Blood Red Road* 18). At the outset of *Rebel Heart*, Saba reasserts that her father gave her and Lugh matching birthmoon tattoos “on our right cheekbones” to “mark us out as special. Twins born at the midwinter moon. A rare thing” (47) with “twins born unner a full moon at the turnin of the year, that's even rarer” (*Blood Red Road* 18). Using the film *China O'Brien* as an

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<sup>29</sup> As per the rules of Cage Fighting, three losses results in “run[n]ing the gauntlet”—an opportunity for the audience to capture and kill a defeated fighter (*Blood Red Road* 153).

example, Heineken distinguishes the female hero as being “align[ed] with her dead father and brother ... [T]hese clues signify the female hero’s identification with the male, her separation from regular women, as well as creating the sense that she is an unformed adolescent in search of identity” (24). Denoting her physical malleability, Saba’s body is a composite of markers inscribed by male characters that exercise power over her. In particular, her birthmoon tattoo emblemizes her father’s reading of her “destiny” in the stars. Prior to his death during an attempt to protect Lugh from being abducted by the Tonton, Saba’s father tells her, “I could only see glimpses. They’re gonna need you, Saba. Lugh an Emmi. An there’ll be others too. Many others” (*Blood Red Road* 29). Born under a full moon and on the eve of a new year, Saba’s father interprets the twins’ birth as exceptional and thus demarcates their bodies as interconnected with the domain of the supernatural; they are inimitably distinct from others. He builds on this physical distinction by inscribing Saba’s identity in their (super)natural environment. Her father’s understanding shapes her body and her purpose.

Saba’s birthmoon tattoo further represents her physiological attachment to Lugh. For instance, when sitting back-to-back with him at Silverlake, Saba relates, “I like it when we sit like this. I can feel his voice rumble inside my body when he talks. It must of bin like this when the two of us was inside Ma’s belly together” (14-15). She recognizes her body as inextricably intertwined with his physicality: he is “inside” her core and she regards him as an essential component to her existence and a necessary constituent to her self-actualization. Once the Tonton abduct Lugh, Saba construes his absence as a displacement of her own identity: “My missin him makes my whole body ache ...



Emptiness that's beside me, inside me an around me, all the places where Lugh used to be. I ain't never been without him. Not fer a single moment from the day we was born" (53). Her alignment with Lugh denotes an "identification with," and a dependency on, the male in her capacity for self-understanding (Heinecken 24). By locating her identity in Lugh, Saba's search for him becomes a metaphorical search for a completeness of identity—portraying her as an "unformed adolescent" who subordinates her power to the authority of her brother (24).

After liberating Lugh from the Tonton and killing King Vicar Pinch in *Blood Red Road*, *Rebel Heart* explicitly reveals Saba's physical subjugation to Lugh's power. Lugh demarcates her body as under his ownership and subject to his control. His body is a corporeal influence that regulates the physical spaces which Saba transverses. For example, to prevent Saba from sleepwalking, Saba communicates how Lugh "tethers" a "piece of nettlecord rope" around both of their ankles "to stop me from wanderin off an gittin into trouble. Fer my own good, he said. To keep me safe" (*Rebel Heart* 45). Although in possession of adroit fighting skills, being anchored to Lugh's hard body contains Saba's unpredictable bodily movements. She submits to his direction, surveillance and ultimately, his male protection as she is unable to master her own body when encountering haunting hallucinations and nightmares.<sup>30</sup> The constancy of Lugh's bodily self-control facilitates his dominance as a governing patriarchal power. For example, when Saba suggests that she should socialize with a band of travellers to inquire for directions to the Big Water, he responds: "I bin takin care of this family since I was

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<sup>30</sup> Saba is haunted by the ghosts of the girls she had defeated while fighting in the Cage, along with the memory of reluctantly killing her friend—the Free Hawk, Epona—while escaping from Vicar Pinch's Palace at the end of *Blood Red Road*. See Chapter 1 of *Rebel Heart*.

eight ... I think I know what's best" (54). Lugh's rejection of Saba's request and her ensuing obedience demonstrates his authority to alienate her body from engaging in social spaces. His power is a representative conglomeration of all familial authority figures, as Saba concedes: "Lugh was me an Em's brother, ma an pa all rolled up in one ... Holdin us together" (64). Lugh's physical impassability and self-mastery is not only a mainstay for Saba's anxious uncertainties and arbitrary bodily movements, he is the nucleus of their family—constructing both Saba and Emmi's physical navigation throughout the Dustlands as per his "plans" for their "good life" ahead (204).

Nonetheless, Saba is constructed as a formidable warrior. Similar to Cinna's crafting of Katniss' Mockingjay outfit as a means of reinforcing her identity as the symbol of the rebel-movement, Auriel Tai's deceased grandfather, Namid, sanctions the bequeathal of his powerful bow and arrow to Saba. She must use these weapons to liberate the citizens of New Eden from the tyrannical control of a new King: DeMalo. Namid is "The warrior who became a shaman" (128)—a traditional male hero who has reached the ultimate state of "heroic transcendence" by possessing a mastery over the "physical landscape" of his warrior body and by having authority over the spiritual realm (Heinecken 35). When given the bow in a hallucination, Saba describes:

*I feel its smoothness. Heft its weight. It's sweet. It's true. I swing the bow up. Fit a arrow to the string. It cleaves to me. Like it's part of me. My hands stay steady an sure. No shakes. No trembles. (Rebel Heart 129; emphasis in original)*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Namid's bequeathal permits Auriel to adorn Saba with the physical bow in preparation for her "destined" heroic duty (158). Like her father, Auriel "reads" Saba's destiny as a preordained text composed by the stars. She tells Saba that "There are some people ... who have within them the power to change things" and that "Many people—not jest now but still to come—many people need you" (110, 11).

Namid's transference of his weapon endows Saba with the hard characteristics of the male heroic body: the bow becomes an extension of her physicality and enables her to access an untapped degree of physical control that divests her of the "shakes" and "trembles" that had been plaguing her since the outset of *Rebel Heart*. By adorning her body with a bow, Namid eliminates her vulnerabilities and reinforces the irrevocability of her heroic duty. Like the Mockingjay outfit, Namid's bow signifies Saba's "limited choice" in assuming the responsibilities available to her in the service of the greater good (115 Montz). Her passive reception of her weaponized construction undercuts her imbued strength as an action heroine. She must perform as a warrior figure to empower the New Eden resistance.

Nevertheless, like Katniss, Saba undergoes a beautification process that reasserts her femininity to satisfy male desire. Distinguishing Saba's newfound physical self-mastery as indicative of a "power that changes the world," DeMalo strives to manipulate her body and mind to conform to his ideological commitment to "heal the earth" and return it to its pre-apocalyptic state (*Rebel Heart* 339, 335). Saba's donning of masculine weaponry threatens DeMalo's exploitive authority: he is unable to influence her intellect while her bow and arrow buttress the impassability of her hard action body. As a result, he weakens her physical boundaries by encouraging her to disavow her weapons and adorn herself in the feminine garments that he designs for her. For instance, after rescuing her from Weepin Water, he instructs Saba to "look in the trunk" (327) of his tent for warm clothes. Saba indicates that "There's only three things in the trunk—a green dress, womanly skivvies an a good pair of pigskin boots ... I ain't never wore a dress in my life"

(327). Saba's dress and her "womanly" undergarments soften her hard warrior-body and emphasize her newfound sexual desirability. He fashions her body in accordance to his sensual tastes in an effort to subdue her power and, therefore, render her a docile political tool that can be wielded to his will. Similarly, when Saba infiltrates DeMalo's base of operations, Resurrection, to retrieve Emmi, DeMalo once again confronts Saba and requires her to dine with him in another dress of his design:

I pull on the red dress an lace it up. I check myself in the glass, turnin this way an that. The dress dips low at the neck, nips tight at the waist ... I hardly recognize myself. I look womanly. That must be what he wants ... [I] take his hand an lead him to the bedroom. Jest like that, he comes with me. I cain't believe how easy it is. The power of a red dress. (391-392)

Just as Katniss' body is fashioned to appear older in her first propo, Saba's body is constructed to reflect a mature sensuality that is visually consumed by DeMalo. He constructs her body to coincide with a traditional conception of female physical beauty and, in doing so, destabilizes her power as a truculent havoc-maker. Saba demonstrates a consciousness of her accoutered body as sexually alluring and uses this power to distract DeMalo as she infuses his wine with a sedative (393).<sup>32</sup> Saba's actions resonate with Sarah K. Day's discussion of Tareh Mafi's YA dystopian novel *Shatter Me* in her article "Docile bodies, Dangerous Bodies: Sexual Awakening and Social Resistance in Young Adult Dystopian Novels." She observes how the protagonist, Juliette:

exploits his [the villain of the text] obvious attraction to her in order to disarm him ... In this way she rejects her previous docility and, more

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<sup>32</sup> Katniss similarly demonstrates a consciousness of her Capitol audience when appearing in her wedding dress for the pre-Quarter Quell interview in *Catching Fire*. She asserts, "However much President Snow may hate me, this Capitol audience is mine ... I realize everyone's staring daggers at my wedding dress ... The power it might have to manipulate a crowd?" (249). Katniss becomes aware of Cinna's adornment of her body and the power her clothes have in swaying her audience.

importantly, chooses a form of resistance that capitalizes on her sexual attraction as a means of gaining power in a dangerous situation. (84)

Although Saba employs her sexual power as a means of resistance, her actions paradoxically reinforce her body's docility as an object of male consumption. Saba's "capitalization" on her sexuality reinforces the patriarchal conception that a woman's power is located in her ability to assume her innate role as a provider of male sexual pleasure. It further entrenches young women's position as embodied creatures and their association with, and reliance on, clothing as a means of empowerment—underpinning a prevalence of the "limited choices" offered to adolescent females when rebelling (Montz 115). Impulsively deciding not to kill DeMalo by administering a lethal dosage of sedative, Saba correspondingly demonstrates feminine compassion as an intrinsic virtue and compromises her resistance.

By feminizing the maleness of her heroic body, DeMalo asserts his strength as superior and renders Saba's body as submissive. Heinecken addresses the "danger and untrustworthiness" (72) of the action heroine's body as vulnerable to "contamination" in her discussion of *Aeon Flux*:

Contamination may occur through both natural or technological means. Things associated with the body such as eating, sex, and death are depicted in a way that reveals a horrified fascination with the permeability of the body. Bodies are under constant threat of contamination, and to resist contamination is to maintain one's control and individuality. (73)

As the villain of the text, DeMalo's physical construction of Saba's femininity denotes her body's "permeability" and susceptibility to his "contamination" (73). For instance, while Saba wears her green dress after being rescued from Weeping Water, DeMalo continues to fill Saba's cup with wine (*Rebel Heart* 340). Her consumption of wine

causes the loss of her bodily control and provides her with a heightened awareness of her own sexual arousal. Correlatively, she likewise imbibes his flattery alongside his discriminatory ideological vision for restoring the Earth. Her bodily “untrustworthiness” is illuminated by her sexual awakening upon recognizing a reflection of herself in the eyes of DeMalo:

Suddenly I move, in a rush, an I’m kissing him. His lips, his mouth, the words he spoke. Smooth an warm an rich. His arms bind me. Pull me tight ... I fergit everythin an everybody ... I lose myself ... I feel the moment when the edges of me start to blur. I let go ... The tent’s dim an gray. In the dark of his eyes, I see a tiny reflection. It’s me ... I lead him to the bed. We lie down together. (*Rebel Heart* 341-342)

Overcome by her unrestrained sexual urge, Saba becomes submissive to DeMalo: his physical grip constrains her just as his words bind her mind. She reflexively registers a reflection of her aroused body that recalls French philosopher and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s notion of sexual awakening as induced by a visual response. Discussing animal species, Lacan articulates in his essay, “The Mirror State as Formative”:

[I]t is a necessary condition for the maturation of the gonad of the female pigeon that it should see another member of its species, of either sex ... Such facts are inscribed in an order of the homeomorphic identification that would itself fall within the larger question of the meaning of beauty as both formative and ergogenic. (3-4)

Like the female pigeon, Saba locates her sexual desire through a self-identification that is made possible by the male figure who is able to manipulate her body. DeMalo is the literal “mirror” that enables her to achieve an awakened sexual state. He exercises his superior power by demarcating Saba’s body as his sexual property. She recalls how, afterwards, DeMalo “Touches his lips to the back of my neck. Your first-time mark, he whispers. You chose me to put it there ... We’re going to be so beautiful together, he

whispers, so perfectly beautiful. In our perfectly beautiful, perfect new world” (*Rebel Heart* 343). To make a symbol of physical conquest, DeMalo “marks” her body as an object of sexual possession and, like Lugh, figures her in his vision of a “perfect” future. By not keeping “in control” of her body, Saba becomes ‘permeable’ and cannot ‘maintain her individuality’ (Heinecken 73). She conveys the “contamination” of her identity by relating her subsequent preoccupation with “His smell on my skin. His voice in my head. His mark on my body” (*Rebel Heart* 359). Saba interpolates DeMalo’s influence into her self-understanding.<sup>33</sup>

In *Raging Star*, the process of rendering Saba’s body a docile object externally controlled through traditionally feminine clothing continues. In an act of political surrender to DeMalo, Saba relinquishes her position as leader of the Free Hawk resistance and agrees to marry him. Her role as his bride explicitly fashions her as representing a physical standard for female beauty in New Eden—a standard that adheres to DeMalo’s preferences. He scrutinizes Saba’s natural body and indicates the aspects of her figure that require beautification for their public marriage ceremony:

You’re too thin, he says. Too pale. Our wedding day will be the first great event in history of New Eden. I need you to look in full bloom. I’ll speak to the woman, to Mercy. She’s bound to know a trick or two ... You’ll grow your hair long, he says. I want to see it against your skin. Now eat ... We marry in two nights ... Cry until then if you must, but no more. He empties his glass. I’ll have no red-eyed bride, he says. We’re not made of

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<sup>33</sup> Day’s piece “Docile Bodies, Dangerous Bodies: Sexual Awakening and Social resistance in Young Adult Dystopian Novels” discusses how YA dystopian novels continue to perpetuate the question of sexual activeness as a “girl problem” that “highlight[s] the importance of women maintaining their chastity ... As a result, adolescent sexual awakening must be understood within larger social discourses about reproductive control ... that render young women responsible for sexual decision-making while ignoring their experiences of desire” (84-85). Indeed, DeMalo directs ownership of their intimacy onto Saba. As Saba rushes to leave his tent the next morning he asks, “Have I lied to you? Have I forced you to do anything you didn’t want to do?” (*Rebel Heart* 344). Saba then chastises herself for “[t]he shameless way I was with him,” indicating her guilt and reinforcing adolescent female sexuality as taboo (345).

common dust like the rest. We have a destiny, you and I. Together.  
(*Raging Star* 392-395)

Saba conveys how DeMalo further seals his directives with “a hard kiss, like he owns me” (396). His assessment of her body explicitly constructs Saba’s performance of femininity and reinforces his power as superior. Similar to the intense elegance of Katniss’ feathered wedding dress in *Catching Fire*, Saba describes her wedding gown as “Queenly ... The colour of rich wine. Made of heavy soft cloth. It’s old ... garlanded with fresh flowers, with real leaves. With feathers an polished stones” (401). When inspecting her reflection, she identifies herself as a “stranger” that seems to be the complimentary “earth mother” to DeMalo as the “powerful, wise father of New Eden” (402).<sup>34</sup> By endowing Saba with feminine clothing made from the natural environment, DeMalo intercalates Saba into a patriarchal prototype in which her feminine beauty depends on, and intertwines with, her physical alignment with nature. He poses as a powerful conqueror of nature and, therefore, as Saba’s subjugator.

Echoing Katniss’ perception of herself as a “stranger” in her first propo recording, Saba’s self-reflexive de-familiarization instead compels her to take action and become recognizable. As a result, Saba adorns herself in her warrior garments that signify her identity as the famous Angel of Death. She explains, “I ditch the gold circle. Haul on my boots. I strap on my armour over the dress. The metal plate jerkin an armbands ... I reach down and grab the hem. The old cloth tears easy. I rip it to my thighs” (402-403). In an act of resistance, Saba creates a visual collision of heroic hardness and softness to become

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<sup>34</sup> In *Representing Women*, Macdonald articulates the stereotype that “women [are] cast as the fountains of life and givers of energy to the planet” (154).



a “warrior bride” (406). Saba employs a previous constructed bodily image in order to subvert the current appearance imposed on her body. Her jerkin and armbands, in fact, “never saw a fight” and, as Peg the Flight notes were “meant fer,” “kept fer,” and created especially for Saba to wear in her position as the leader of the rebel Free Hawks (422, 132). Just as DeMalo shapes her bodily image as his bride, other members of the resistance inscribe her bodily identity as the Angel of Death—devising for her the particulars of her armour-clad appearance. Saba internalizes the controlled images impressed upon her.

As I have explored in the “Hunger Games” and “Dustlands” trilogies, male authority figures label and garb Katniss’ and Saba’s bodies as a means of regulating their somatic identities. As the leaders of rebel movements, Katniss and Saba perform as masculinized warriors while simultaneously upholding presentations of traditional femininity by donning dresses and make-up. They undergo beautification processes that instigate the visual consumption of their bodies by men. Similarly, the bodies of Deuce, Tris and Cassie in *Enclave*, *Divergent*, and *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave* exhibit degrees of hardness and softness in accordance with male-desired ends. However, male counterparts distinguish these havoc-making heroines’ hard, fighting bodies to be sexually alluring. As I will examine in these singular narrative installments, the athletic body reigns as the ideal standard for feminine beauty. The expectation for these heroines’ bodies to display an attractive firmness implicitly contains their heroic power.

Like Katniss and Saba, Deuce in Aguirre’s *Enclave* embodies a collision of hardness and softness that is impressed upon her body by external male forces. On her

“naming day,” Deuce participates in a right-of-passage ritual in which the male leader of her enclave,<sup>35</sup> Whitewall, etches upon her body the insignia of a Huntress and authorizes her name as “Deuce.” Raised to protect her community, College, from the carnivorous Freaks with violence, she demonstrates self-discipline and exhibits a high threshold for pain. Illustrating an ingrained performance of toughness, she describes how Whitewall “made three jagged cuts on my left arm, and I held my pain until it coiled into a silent cry within me. I would not shame the enclave by weeping” (Aguirre 5). Whitewall constructs Deuce’s body by physically demarcating her as a Huntress and by branding her as a committed servant to his autocratic authority. The ritual further designates entry into female sexual maturity, as Deuce explains, “It was time for me to become a woman” (1). Portraying the adolescent female body as a composite of incongruous gender traits, the Huntress mark denotes a masculinized capacity for physical strength while also serving as an indicator of womanhood. Comparatively, when Whitewall exiles her from her enclave and removes her Huntress title, she refers to herself as “just a girl with six scars” (118).<sup>36</sup> Girlhood thus becomes synonymous with weakness, as both her status as a woman and her empowerment as a Huntress become sanctioned by Whitewall’s bequeathal.<sup>37</sup> His control of her body resonates with Day’s discussion of the adolescent body as threatening. To explain her position, Day refers to Foucault’s description of the soldier’s docile body:

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<sup>35</sup> A post-apocalyptic community that resides in the tunnels beneath a former New York City.

<sup>36</sup> Deuce acquires three additional scars during her first battle with Freaks.

<sup>37</sup> Unlike Katniss and Saba, Deuce’s fame is attributed to her physical association with her hunting partner, Fade. Deuce explains that “he bore so many scars, as if he’d lived through battles the rest of us couldn’t imagine ... [H]e hadn’t been born in the enclave. He came through the tunnels, half grown, half feral” and had been permitted by Whitewall to remain in College because of his strength (14). Distinguished as an enigmatic, yet powerful, “outsider” (18), Deuce’s partnership with Fade likewise makes her an object of scrutiny and separates her from other Huntresses.

Foucault takes as his primary example [of docility] the body of the soldier, which achieves an almost mechanical precision based on exhaustive practice which reflects both its purpose and position in society ... [S]oldiers' bodies simultaneously conform to the standards set forth by their society and possess the potential for danger and destruction through warfare. The adolescent woman's body, I would argue, represents a more implicit pairing of docility and danger, both in contemporary Western culture and in dystopian novels, in that the adolescent woman is expected to conform to specific physical requirements that ultimately position her as a threat that may be monitored, controlled, or exploited by the social system in which she lives. (77)

The elite elders of College—representing the social system that monitors and controls the young female body—oversee Deuce's physical and social conditioning as she becomes an adolescent soldier fashioned to protect her society. Deuce's construction as a hard-bodied Huntress within Whitewall's cultural system reflects a contemporary Western veneration of the slim female body. As per Inness' stipulation of the constituents of feminine toughness, the “tough body is typically an athletic, fit body” (*Tough Girls* 25). The athletic body intersects slenderness and female muscularity while upholding thinness as the ideal body type for an effective—and beautiful—action heroine.<sup>38</sup> She recounts, “[H]ow sore my muscles had been when I started training. Now I took pleasure in the hardness of my arms and legs” and expresses that she is “so proud to wear the Hunter marks” (Aguirre 15, 27). Deuce further identifies her body as “a machine, plain and simple. I worked it to stay strong; I fed it to keep it running” (39). She is empowered by her ability to shape her body to conform to the ideological standards of a strong Huntress.

Viewing her body as a “machine,” Deuce explicitly participates in the management of her body as a weapon that is to be used at Whitewall's command.

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<sup>38</sup> In *Unbearable Weight*, Bordo associates women's pursuit of the “fit” body as a form of “conventional feminine behaviour—in this case, the discipline of perfecting the body as an object” (179).

Resonating with Day's discussion on the danger of the adolescent female body, the ingrained importance of physical self-regimentation through various training exercises renders Deuce politically docile. She claims that she "learned not to question his [Whitewall's] treatments. Here in the enclave, one didn't prosper by demonstrating too much independent thought" (5). Furthermore, when invited by Banner to join the clandestine resistance against Whitewall, Deuce asserts, "I still didn't want to hear any of their plans. I was still a Huntress, not a traitor or a revolutionary ... Obedience was ingrained too deeply in me" (95). By consistently conforming to the performative standards of a Huntress, Deuce's body complies with Whitewall's system.<sup>39</sup> Reaffirming the athletic body as the contemporary beauty-ideal, Deuce recognizes herself as attractive when she engages her lean physicality in combat. She asserts, "I never felt beautiful unless I was fighting" (147). Thus, her seemingly empowering display of masculine self-discipline becomes reduced to a stereotypically feminine pursuit of beauty. In her study *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, Susan Bordo distinguishes the pursuit of a female body-ideal as a form of disempowerment. She asserts, "To *feel* autonomous and free while harnessing body and soul to an obsessive body-practice is to serve, not transform, a social order that limits female possibilities" (Bordo 179; emphasis in original). Whitewall's cultural conditioning moulds Deuce's body in accordance with the Western standards of female attractiveness and affirms the "limited choices" of self-expression and individuality available to adolescent females within both the social realms of the dystopian fiction as well as in Western culture (Montz

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<sup>39</sup> Deuce exists in a social system that denies its citizens of free choice of profession, assigning them as Builders, Breeders or Hunters.

115).

Similar to Katniss and Saba, Deuce's body becomes "stripped down" to reveal its 'basic biological femininity' (Byerly and Ross 26). Exiled Topside with her assigned male hunting partner, Fade, Deuce learns that aboveground gangers perceive "breeding" as the "one thing girls are good for" (Aguirre 134).<sup>40</sup> Fade instills in her the understanding that "Up here being female meant something else entirely" (134). In the vein of Romance fiction, Fade assumes the role of the stronger, superior male hero who must protect the bodily virtue of his subordinate, physically weaker mate in an environment that threatens to compromise her bodily purity. Stalker and his gang of Wolves capture Deuce, divest her of her Huntress clothing, and render her a vulnerable damsel in need of rescue. Stalker instructs his "bruised" servant-girl, Tegan, to "Take her [Deuce] and clean her up" informing her that he will "break her [Deuce] in personally later" (153). Similar to Saba's outfit in the Cage, Deuce wears clothing that delineates her as an object of servitude:

[S]he dressed me in a long, ragged shirt like she wore. It showed way more of my legs than I liked, and she didn't give me anything to wear underneath. I supposed that was the point ... Instinctively, I understood the

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<sup>40</sup> Although her skills are deemed the "best in her group" (Aguirre 15), Fade is consistently represented as the stronger, more adroit fighter in comparison. For instance, compelled to assert her strength, Deuce challenges Fade to a sparring match. She describes, "Our sparring gathered an audience. I tried to ignore them, as I wanted to make a good showing ... I glared up at him, but held me until I tapped" (17). Deuce understands that "If you wanted people to take you seriously, you couldn't let them think you were soft" (227). Thus, she reinforces a convention of the Action/Adventure genre in which the body of the male hero is recognized, valued and, therefore, capable of bringing political change. Deuce believes that she must "presen[t] a convincing performance of toughness as [her] male counterpart[t]" in order to assert her body as powerful and worthy of public acknowledgement (*Tough Girls* 24). Fade participates in an implicit construction of her body as a tough action heroine by demonstrating superior combat techniques while in the field. Deuce "watch[es]" him and "assess his style" for the purposes of emulating his skills—seeking "recognition" from him for her "accomplishments" as an effectual Huntress (34). Just as Saba aligns her body with Lugh, Deuce perceives Fade's body as one with her own: "We stood back-to-back, blocking and striking in harmony; sometimes it felt like his arms and legs were an extension of me" (194). As extensions of one another, Deuce's body is constructed to display masculine power for the benefit of her government.

purpose of this ritual. They took away my things; they reduced me in rank to one of their cowering, subservient females. But they could never take away the marks on my arms. I'd *earned* them. (153-154; emphasis in original)

Stalker claims Deuce as his sexual property. He disempowers her hard Huntress body by confiscating her weaponry and forcing her to don sexually accessible clothing. By controlling Deuce's wardrobe, Stalker constructs Deuce as a vulnerable romantic heroine and makes her susceptible to his unwarranted sexual advances. In her work *Tough Girls*, Inness addresses the male deprivation of the female action hero's power through the reaffirmation of her femininity. She recognizes, "The repeated sexualization of tough women [that] affirms the woman's role as sexual object; no matter how tough she might appear on the surface, she still can be subjected to the ultimate indignity of rape" (Inness 71). Threats of sexual violence thus operate to reinforce a patriarchal normative that regards female power as inferior to that of the male counterparts—the female action hero cannot fully attain the characteristic physical impenetrability of the male hero due to her essentialized sexual vulnerability. Dispossessed of her Huntress garments, Deuce nonetheless asserts an unwavering bravery that she locates in the permanency of her Huntress marks on her body. It is notable that Whitewall's implicit and explicit physical construction of her body emboldens her, as she perceives herself possessing the enduring, indomitable resolution of a Huntress.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Considered an ally after joining Deuce, Fade and Tegan's travelling party, Stalker further fashions Deuce as a contradictory paradigm of masculinity and femininity by nicknaming her "dove." Deuce amicably responds to the label: "I got the comparison. Though I *looked* weak, I had unexpected defenses. I couldn't mind being likened to a creature that soared so beautifully on the wind" (Aguirre 223; emphasis in original). Like Katniss, Deuce's body is also inscribed with bird imagery. Both heroines retain a beauty that makes them seem weak due to their biological status as female. The YA havoc-making female, then, cannot be completely divorced from the stereotypes of femininity that undercut her strength. The image of a bird as a

Living Topside, Fade also increasingly romanticizes Deuce's body through subtle, endearing embraces and through interactions with food. For instance, Deuce explains that:

Fade dipped his finger into the tin and offered it to me. I couldn't resist, though I knew better than to let him feed me like a brat. Sweetness exploded on my tongue, contrasting with the warmth of his skin ... I ate it without hesitation, two three more scoops until I was sure I had red all around my mouth, and I didn't care. He watched me in amusement ... We were eating *cherries*, something I'd never had before. (Aguirre 169; emphasis in original)

Fade positions himself as the more knowledgeable, superior male due to his prior awareness of the taste of cherries. His desire to expose Deuce to the sensation of sampling a new taste by 'feeding her' infantilizes her body and intellect while also serving as a sexually charged scene that illustrates her body's permeability. Unable to sustain bodily self-control, Deuce acts against her better judgment and allows her body to taste the cherries and Fade's body simultaneously. He is able to physically enter her by pleasuring her taste buds. Her appetite (and by extension, her body) becomes stimulated as she indulges herself without restraint. Bordo's analysis of food advertisements in *Unbearable Weight* similarly parallels women's relationships to food with their "sexual appetites":

When women are positively depicted as sensuously voracious about food (almost never in commercials, and only very rarely in movies as novels), their hunger for food is employed solely as a metaphor for their sexual appetite ... [T]he heroines' unrestrained delight in eating operates as sexual foreplay, a way of prefiguring the abandon that will shortly be expressed in bed. (110)

Although Fade and Deuce do not engage in sexual intimacy, this scene can be read as an instance of metaphorical sexual conquest. Fade, a romanticized male hero, plays the role of a cavalier who subdues the virginal heroine. He offers to her a new bodily experience in which an abandonment of her self-control is amusing; he constructs her implicitly to satisfy his personal delight.

Just as Deuce's Huntress marks are emblematic of her social position in *Enclave*, clothing in Roth's *Divergent* denotes faction allegiances.<sup>42</sup> Dauntless' political ideal of "fearlessness" (Roth 77) is represented by a bodily appearance that suggests toughness: facial piercings, tattoos, or short hair that has been "dyed strange colours" (85). Living within the Dauntless compound as an initiate, Tris permits her appearance to be crafted "in response to the demands of the external world" (Heinecken 50), passively receiving the various impressions made upon her body in accordance with Dauntless' ideological standards for female physical strength and beauty. For instance, during a social outing with fellow initiates, Tris explains:

Christina persuaded me to join her in getting a tattoo of the Dauntless seal ... to purchase a shirt that exposes my shoulders and collarbone, and to line my eyes with black pencil again. I don't bother objecting to her makeover attempts anymore. Especially since I find myself enjoying them. (Roth 246)<sup>43</sup>

In Dauntless, the physical signifiers for physical strength and a boldness of character simultaneously suggest female sexual allure: it is "sexy" to wear black eyeliner, tight

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<sup>42</sup> Before her transition into Dauntless, Tris (known as "Beatrice" in *Abnegation*) explains that "Everything—our houses, our clothes, our hairstyles—is meant to help us forget ourselves and to protect us from vanity, greed, and envy, which are just forms of selfishness" (28). Her outward bodily appearance is fashioned to represent the ideals of her original faction, *Abnegation*.

<sup>43</sup> Her tattoo of the Dauntless seal is in addition to three raven tattoos along her collarbone. Once again, bird imagery surrounds the female havoc-maker as a signifier of her body as a site of contradiction.



clothes and have exposed tattoos. Resonating with Deuce's proud reception of her Huntress marks as a symbol of her indomitability and fidelity to her enclave, Tris colludes in her bodily identity as a member of the Dauntless faction by inking her body with the Dauntless emblem and by conforming to the faction's beauty-ideals. Noticing<sup>44</sup> her body's "striking" (87) appearance from afar, Tris' instructor, Four, subsequently approaches her.<sup>45</sup> Tris conveys, "He puts his lips next to my ear and says, 'You look good, Tris'" (249). His captivated attention and his verbal compliment validate her fearless appearance as sexually appealing and render her body as socially acceptable. As a male authority figure and the romantic hero of the text, Four's admiration undergirds the construction of Tris' physicality in adherence to the expectations for Dauntless femininity. His commendation thus positions her as a romantic heroine whose love interest rewards her for her obedience with his reciprocated affections. In *Tough Girls*, Inness addresses the interconnectivity of female desirability and toughness as a technique to neutralize the action heroine's infringement on male power:

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<sup>44</sup> Montz' piece "Rebels in Dresses: Distractions of Competitive Girlhood in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction" further discusses the importance of the adolescent heroine's physical appearance in gaining the 'notice' of others in order to achieve self-realization. She postulates that "standing out 'just a little' is enough to get them [the heroines] noticed by boys, their government, other girls ... [I]t is that notice that makes them notice *themselves*. That self-realization ... gives these young women the strength ... to fight back" (119-120; emphasis in original). However, I perceive this "notice" as reasserting femininity as a patriarchal dependency on males for strength. Her self-love is located in her ability to be loved by others (as explored in Part IV of this study).

<sup>45</sup> Recall Tris' reaction to seeing her face in the mirror after her first makeover. She articulates, "My face is noticeable ... Beatrice was a girl I saw in stolen moments at the mirror, who kept quiet at the dinner table. This is someone whose eyes claim mine and don't release me; this is Tris" (Roth 87). Tris correlates her former identity as "Beatrice" with girlhood and the associative qualities of fragility and modesty. As "Tris," she is womanly, sexually appealing, bold and therefore, able to emanate a strength that is derived from her physical attractiveness. Importantly, "Tris" is also a name that she gives herself when prompted, and permitted, by Four. After leaping into the compound as "Beatrice," Four asks: "'What's your name? ... Think about it ... You don't get to pick again'" (60). Four sanctions a rebranding of her identity and further imbues her new name with a degree of fame by subsequently announcing her as "'First jumper—Tris!'" (60). Before becoming a member of Dauntless, Four was known as Tobias (329).

The relationship between toughness and sexuality diminishes the threat that tough women pose to the dominant social order by suggesting that a woman's sexual availability and physical attractiveness will be in no way diminished by her tough actions and appearance. (51)

The social expectation for Dauntless women to emulate their faction's political ideals by donning a tough appearance that is sexually attractive implicitly imposes an ideological paradigm that consistently contains female power. In a faction that defines itself by its ideals of bravery and physical strength, the ascription of sexual attractiveness to the obedient Dauntless woman operates as a mechanism for ensuring that her power does not supersede male authority; her pursuit of fearlessness and physical vigor serves to satisfy male desire. A Dauntless female's political conformity thus illustrates her sexual docility.

Four directly facilitates Tris' development as a fearless Dauntless female. His instruction forges Tris' physical composition as an attractively brave and robust action heroine. For instance, during the introductory rounds of initiate training, Four demonstrates how to fire a gun effectively when eliminating a target and exhibits proper hand-to-hand combat techniques. After hitting her first target, Tris experiences a sense of empowerment in her ability to display a male heroic self-mastery in controlling her firearm. She expresses, "There is power in controlling something that can do so much damage—in controlling something, period" (Roth 79). However, her ability to control an object of her external environment is a learned practice derived from emulating Four's movements. Similarly, in her combat lesson, she explains her deliberate imitation of his physical skills: "Like with the gun, I need a few tries to figure out how to hold myself and how to move my body to make it look like his" (84). Tris' position as a female initiate with lesser power in comparison to her male instructor parallels Four's fashioning of her

body as a reflection of his. When observing Tris' body as she practices her fighting skills, Four physically maneuvers Tris' body to display correct combat movements. Tris describes, "he presses a hand to my stomach. His fingers are so long that, though the heel of his hand touches one end of my rib cage, his fingertips still touch the other ... 'Never forget to keep tension here,' he says" (84). Four's tender touch moulds Tris' body to conform to the Dauntless ideal of physical dexterity and reaffirms the female exhibition of bodily strength as sexually appealing. Moreover, Tris internalizes how to control her body—to regulate her masculine bravado and feminine obedience. Her mimetic behavior entrenches female self-control as necessary in the maintenance of male power. As a female adolescent, her possession of a developing, uncontrolled and uncontained body can threaten the stability of male social authority. Therefore, Tris's role as an action heroine is presented as "not on par with the male" (Heinecken 25). As a Dauntless authority figure and a representative model for fearlessness, Four is asserted as a dominant "romantic interest [that] usually fights better than she does" (24). He possesses the authority to implicitly regulate Tris' havoc-making body.

Furthermore, Four explicitly monitors and controls her physical tenacity. For example, in a hand-to-hand combat match with Molly, Tris gains an advantage by reproducing Four's fighting style. She conveys, "I hear Four's voice in my head, telling me that the most powerful weapon at my disposal is my elbow. I just have to find a way to use it" (Roth 172). Obediently employing her elbow as a bodily weapon, Tris causes Molly to fall to the ground. She begins to kick her repeatedly until Four physically restrains and removes her from the platform (174). Although the ruthless premise of these

initiate combat matches is to proceed until “one of you is unable to continue” (95), Tris is the only participant contained for her excessive violence—a standard of hostility that has, prior to this point, been overlooked and permitted for the other (particularly male) combatants. Thus, Four regulates the extent to which Tris can demonstrate the effective force of her masculinized strength in public. A Dauntless female’s extreme exhibition of bellicosity threatens to destabilize the dominance of Dauntless male power. Four represses Tris’ hostile body and reasserts their society’s gendered stratification of power.

Re-inscribing the adolescent havoc-maker’s body as an unsettling object that is in need of constant regulation by her male counterparts, Tris’ confidence is punished. Her victory over Molly and her success in overcoming the simulated obstacles of her fear landscape enable Tris to supplant her male cohorts in the initiate rankings. As a result, Drew, Peter and Al sexually attack her. She recounts being blindfolded while “A heavy hand gropes along my chest. ‘You sure you’re sixteen, Stiff? Doesn’t feel like you’re more than twelve.’ The other boy laughs” (279). As a reprimand for her transgressive assertion of fearless power, these demoted male figures strive to reaffirm the female physical form as inherently vulnerable to the threat of sexual violence. In the manner of Romance fiction, Four exerts his unrivaled masculine strength and rescues Tris from physical defilement. Occupying the role of a gallant romance hero, Four attempts to protect her from other potential attacks by constructing her body to correspond with a traditionally Western composite of feminine propriety. He informs Tris that Drew, Peter and, specifically, Al, “wanted you to be the small, quiet girl from Abnegation” (285). Four further explains that her “strength made” them “feel weak” and that “The others

won't be as jealous if you show some vulnerability. Even if it isn't real" (285). Similar to Cinna's construction of Katniss' bodily innocence, Four fashions Tris' body as unthreatening by directing her appearance as "girlish," and therefore, vulnerable. He instructs her to "let that bruise on your cheek show, and keep your head down" (286). In doing so, Four orchestrates her appearance and body language to convey a fear of male power. As a result, Four "strips" her of her fearless demeanor and self-autonomous power to reaffirm her feminine delicacy.<sup>46</sup> Upon further instruction Four tells her, "But please, when you see an opportunity ... Ruin them" (287). He coordinates her bodily oscillation between the polar postures of tenuous "girlhood" and valiant "manhood"—sanctioning when she divulges her physical bravado and when she maintains a performance of female vulnerability. By instructing Tris to select "opportunities" to affirm her power over her attackers, Four instills the virtues of male heroism enshrined within the Action/Adventure genre: to "not act without carefully thinking through the results ... paus[ing] for reflection before acting" (*Tough Girls* 26). Thus, he perpetuates an encoding of human intellectual prowess as distinctly male.

Further entrenching the "bipolar systems of femininity/masculinity and male/female" (*Tough Girls* 27), Silencer Evan Walker of *The 5<sup>TH</sup> Wave* conveys Cassie Sullivan as a representation of young female contradiction. In the sole chapter written from his perspective, Evan describes Cassie as the human prey that he cannot bring himself to eliminate. While silently observing her in the woods, he expresses:

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<sup>46</sup> Four's instrumentation of Tris' deception also reasserts a dichotomous "appearance/behavior" tension that, as Heineken argues, "ties into a cultural belief that women are natural actresses and liars who regularly play roles" (41), thus unsettling Tris' agency.

Cassie for Cassiopeia, the girl in the woods who slept with a teddy bear in one hand and a rifle in the other. The girl with the strawberry blond curls who stood a little over five feet four in her bare feet, so young looking he was surprised to learn she was sixteen. The girl who sobbed in the pitch black of the deep woods, terrified one moment, defiant the next, wondering if she was the last person on earth. (Yancey 136)

Evan's portrait of Cassie captures girlhood as a series of bodily and behavioral inconsistencies: she is fearful and boldly insolent; tender and dangerous; youthful and mature in stature; and like Katniss, Saba, Deuce and Tris, her body is soft and hard. At the same time, just as the other male heroes find themselves attracted to this contradiction, Evan undercuts her courageous power by casting her as a romantic love-interest and as an object of female visual spectacle. By living on her own in the woods, Cassie presents herself as physically durable and capable of independent survival. However, when readying himself to strike her, Evan envisions that "the rifle and the bullet were a part of him, and when the round wed bone, he would be there, too inside her, the instant she died" (142). Posturing her as a romanticized heroine, Evan constructs Cassie's body as hunted territory that he desires to conquer by, metaphorically, merging it with an extension of his own. He traditionally fashions Cassie as the weaker female counterpart who becomes "wedded" to the superior male.

In the manner of Romance fiction, Evan rescues her from the wound she incurs in his attempt to kill her and adorns her body in traditional female accouterments while nurturing her back to health. Waking up disoriented in Evan's home, Cassie notices that she is "wearing a floral-print cotton nightie" covering her 'completely naked body' (151). She observes that her "*skin smells a little like lilacs*" and discerns that her body has been bathed by her rescuer (152; emphasis in original). Evan postures Cassie as a romantic

damsel who must be nurtured by her male hero. By adorning her with a floral-print, easily accessible nightgown, Evan explicitly beautifies her. He also softens Cassie's abrasive personality by regaling her body with gentility and tenderness. For example, when asked if she would like a drink of water, she replies. "'I'm not thirsty,' I lie. Now, why did I lie about something like that? To show how tough I am?" (155). Cassie questions if her tough attitude is an appropriate response to his chivalrous courtesy. His heroic placidness unsettles her deviant, unfeminine attributes. Affirming his power as superior, Evan impacts Cassie's truculent attitude and self-perception.

Evan additionally asserts his male power by shaping Cassie's stout body through a physical rehabilitation regimen that he designs. Cassie recounts:

The next morning he showed up at my bedside with a crutch carved from a single piece of wood. Sanded to a glossy finish, lightweight the perfect height ... My rehab sucked. Every time I put weight on my leg, pain shot up the left side of my body ... the only things that kept me from falling flat on my ass were Evan's strong arms. (168)

She explains that her rehabilitation schedule consists of "Three hours of rehab in the morning, thirty-minute break for lunch, then three more hours of rehab in the afternoon" (169). Evan represents the quintessential male hero who is kinesthetically adept and resourceful. He is able to "control his physical environment" by using his natural surroundings to construct for Cassie a temporary extension of her body—her crutch (Heinecken 35). His rigid rehabilitation schedule explicitly molds her bodily re-development to the level of hardness that he desires for her body. When she attempts to remove herself from her crutch—the extension of her body that he fashioned for her—pain overwhelms her female body and she collapses into Evan's arms. Evan becomes

Cassie's physical and emotional crutch, as she depends upon his presence and skills in order to achieve bodily and psychological stability. Like the other havoc-making heroines in this study, Cassie's capacity for executing heroic action hinges on Evan's male authority as a love-interest to shape and define her strength. Cassie's enfolding into the steadiness and constancy of his body presents an image of the dominant male as supporting the physically inferior female and thus re-entrenches a conventional portrait of masculinity as superior and femininity as docile.

Nonetheless, Evan continues to develop Cassie's skills as a strong action heroine. Just as Four instructs Tris in how to use a firearm effectively, Evan likewise instructs Cassie in how to use her M16 properly. Despite her prior experience with weaponry, Cassie admits, "I had to get over my fear of guns. And my accuracy sucked. He showed me the proper grip, how to use the sight. He set up empty gallon-sized paint cans on the fence posts for targets, replacing those with smaller cans as my aim improved" (Yancey 169). He shapes her action heroine body by augmenting her knowledge and skillset in weaponized combat. In doing so, Evan physically prepares Cassie for her eventual infiltration of the Others' military base, Camp Haven, to retrieve Sammy and—unbeknownst to her at this time—to assist in compromising and, ultimately, destroying this base.<sup>47</sup> However, his refusal to allow her to join him hunting because she is "still pretty weak" reaffirms Cassie's abilities as substandard to his own (169). The heroine's tough skills as enhanced by her love-interest, or a male mentor, resonates with Inness' observations regarding "lady killer" Action/Adventure films. Using Matilda from the film

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<sup>47</sup> Camp Haven is in proximity to what was formerly known as Cincinnati. In Part III of this study, I explore Evan and Cassie's infiltration of Camp Haven in greater detail.



*The Professional* (1992) as a case study, she writes that the heroine “learns how to shoot a rifle, how to load a gun, and other tricks of the assassin’s trade, but Matilda is still completely overshadowed by Leon ... she’s just a normal everyday girl underneath that tough veneer and poses little threat to Leon’s male power” (*Tough Girls* 74-75). With Inness’ observation, youthful femininity aligns with ordinariness and biological weakness. Bravery for an action heroine is a performance that masks her fundamental, biological encodings. Armed with inferior combat skills, Cassie does not threaten Evan’s position as the principal male.

Evan further exhibits his ability to control and inscribe Cassie’s body by nicknaming her “mayfly.” In a moment of questioning her existence as a human in the wake of the Others’ Arrival, Evan instills her confidence by inscribing her with a hopeful identity. He tells her, ““You want to compare yourself to an insect, Cassie? If you’re an insect then you’re the mayfly. Here for a day and then gone. That doesn’t have anything to do with the Others ... We’re here, and then we’re gone, and it’s not about the time we’re here but what we do with the time”” (Yancey 178). He empowers her to be valiant and to keep confident in her mission to retrieve Sammy. Perpetuating Evan’s inscription of her “mayfly” identity as formidable, Cassie reiterates to herself, “brave Cassie, trusting Cassie, mayfly Cassie” (274). Like Katniss’ Mockingjay identity, Cassie’s “mayfly” identity likewise imbues her with a paradoxical masculinized courageousness and a feminized beauty. When independently infiltrating the Others’ chief military base, she expresses, “It’s too much for me to handle. I can’t defeat the Others. I’m a cockroach. Okay, I’ll go with Evan’s mayfly metaphor; mayflies are prettier, and at least they can fly.

But I can take out a few of the bastards before my single day on Earth is over” (332). Although she has acquired the skills to successfully eliminate an Other, her choice to perceive herself as a mayfly due to its beauty connotes a deeper desire to also appear physically attractive. The symbol of the “mayfly” for female heroism re-inscribes femaleness as inherently correlated with a loveliness that renders her strength as nonthreatening to a patriarchal social order. She can eliminate a few Others while on her mission, but it is Evan, the dominant male, that ultimately destroys the Others’ military base on Earth (450).

Inness contends that the “tough woman who adopts a persona that is strongly coded as masculine is disturbing to many” because “she reveals the artificiality of femininity as the ‘normal’ state of women. The masculine tough woman reveals that femininity is a carefully crafted social construct” (*Tough Girls* 21). The female adolescent havoc-maker’s encounters with clothing illustrate the performativity of femininity and masculinity. Although the youthful bodies of Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie *do* challenge delineations of gendered aesthetic conventions, they achieve their beautiful delicacy and courageousness through a mode of construction that reveals an underpinning, conventional patriarchal system—a structure that is consistent with the gendered strictures of Action/Adventure and Romance fiction. Male characters regulate the heroisms that the havoc-making heroines exude by controlling their physical hardness and softness: they strengthen their bodies with combative skillset, armor and weapons while also beautifying them by encouraging them to wear traditionally female accouterments, or by distinguishing their fit, fighting bodies as sexually attractive.

Thus, the incongruous body of the YA havoc-making heroine reveals a contemporary social ambivalence toward emerging young women's defiance of traditional gender roles. As I will explore in the next section of this study, the implicit and explicit influences of male counterparts shape the havoc-making heroines' conduct—like their bodies—in accordance with the heroisms conventional to Action/Adventure and Romance fiction. Although they perform as indomitable rebels, their dissenting behaviour suits the political and personal designs of their male counterparts. Congruent with their hard bodies, the havoc-making heroines perform as violent advocates of their love-interests' political causes while also intensely displaying their willingness to sacrifice themselves in order to protect these romantic partners. Accentuating the delicacy and softness of their bodies, these heroines become beautiful damsels in need of both physical and psychological rescue. The havoc-making heroines may act strong, but only to the degree that their passivity is not completely eradicated. The controlled behaviours of Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie reveal the continued influence of patriarchal conceptions on the adolescent female's construction of identity.

### Part III

#### **“It mattered more that we performed well in our allotted roles”: Constructed Behaviours and a Prescriptive Heroic Duty**

Often with women, *love* is stressed again and again—making it necessary to wonder about this particular emotion, or ethic, consistently being linked to the source of a female hero’s strength. Does love constitute a reimagining of heroism? ... Or does it reinforce stereotypes about how women should behave as self-sacrificing nurtures?

—Jennifer Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors*; p.87-88 (emphasis in original)

The last section examined the contradictions in the gendered bodily construction of the havoc-making heroine’s image. As I explored, male counterparts regulate the somatic hardness and softness of the havoc-making heroine through clothing for the purposes of forwarding their political and personal desires. She is made to *look* like a courageous leader only to the degree that she remains physically attractive. Just as her body illustrates a collision of traditional male and female adornments, the havoc-making heroine’s conduct reveals what Bordo calls a “double bind”: a social requisite for a woman to be “tough and cool, but warm and alluring” (173). The havoc-maker’s paradoxical performance of toughness, sexual desirability, and compassion reveal the “male and female sides of the self”—sides that her male counterparts encourage and find appealing (Bordo 174). The archetypes of Action/Adventure and Romance fiction craft not only her body but also, as I will illuminate in this section, her behaviours: she is both a pugnacious action heroine that fights for justice and an empathetic damsel in need of protection. Addressing the correlation between embodiment and the development of identity in her work *Bodies of Tomorrow* (2007), Science Fiction critic Sherryl Vint asserts that “subjectivity is as much material as it is abstract, about the body as well as

about the mind, and subjectivity is shaped by cultural forces that produce the sense of an interior” (6). This section will demonstrate how the traditional patriarchal paradigm of femininity controls the heroine’s behaviour, as she attempts to acquiesce to the personal and political machinations of male authority.

I argue that the physical performance of this male-constructed model of heroism affects not only her appearance but also influences her self-perception. The havoc-making heroine’s behaviours reflect her internalization of her male counterparts’ personal and political ideologies. These male characters play a large role in shaping *how* she resists her government and performs femininity. They are representatives of a subtextual patriarchal social order who uphold the gendered expectations of the Action/Adventure and Romance genres. On the surface of her narrative, the rebellious havoc-making adolescent “appear[s] competent and in control” and “project[s] authority” in order to, seemingly, “be heeded” by others (*Tough Girls* 25). In the vein of Action/Adventure fiction, she is the leader of a revolution intent on disclosing the political corruption of her dystopian realm. She exhibits a “lone wolf” model of heroism, which is rooted in traditional uber-masculinity and isolationism” (Stuller 87). Subtextually, male comrades, mentors and love-interests impart and cultivate her heroic ethics and their correlative behaviours. Her exterior male heroic equanimity is first nurtured by her identification with a predominant male figure—namely her father or love-interest-as-mentor.<sup>48</sup> With an ensuing proclivity

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<sup>48</sup> Stuller recognizes in *Ink Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors* that, “From biological fathers to adoptive dads, father figures to institutionalized patriarchy, even dead fathers and ancient prophets guiding from the ether, the favoring of the father-daughter over the mother-daughter bond begs questions” (107). Stuller characterizes the mothers of superwomen as “physically absent, and at least emotionally unavailable” (105). For superwomen—and similarly, for the havoc-making heroines—the absenteeism of the “passive” mother figure and her “womanly influence” allows them to cultivate toughness (107). Indeed,

for violence that provides her with a semblance of power and authority, she carries out the ideals of her love-interest. Thus, she becomes the leader, or hero, that he requires to support and dispense his political schema, as well as to complete his personal vision for romantic unity.<sup>49</sup>

Just as the heroine's adornment in sexualizing attire obfuscates and contains her body's performance of masculinity, so her feminization as a romantic damsel governs the adolescent heroine's subversive behaviours. She often finds herself in imperilling scenarios in which she cannot save herself and must be rescued by her love-interest. Her love-interest simultaneously becomes a romantic hero whose gentleness and care emulate the nurturing skills that she must replicate if she is to be the mate of a rebel visionary and a mother to a redeemed society (emblemized by their potential children).<sup>50</sup> She is softened by his tenderness and develops a reciprocal romantic passion alongside an emotional and physical dependency on him.<sup>51</sup> Re-entrenching the moralizing qualities of feminine delicacy, the male hero reasserts his superiority to her in combative, social and

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the mothers of the havoc-making heroines are either deceased or are physically displaced from their daughters with minimal contact.

<sup>49</sup> In her chapter "The Incompatibility of Female Friendships and Rebellion," Ann M. M. Childs likewise observes that "The passive romantic heroine is at odds with the type of girl who can challenge an oppressive government, as required by a dystopian novel. These traits are reconciled when the protagonist's male lead provides romantic companionship as well as pushing her into her own rebellion. Stereotypically, girls are portrayed as so invested in romance above all else" (197).

<sup>50</sup> In her work *Representing Women*, Myra Macdonlad articulates the stereotype that "Femininity ... has long been cherished for its caring qualities. Women supposedly have a 'natural' talent for looking after others" (132). In Part IV of this study I discuss the maternal positioning of the adolescent havoc-maker at the conclusion of her narrative.

<sup>51</sup> In *Reading the Romance*, Radway indicates that the Smithton women of her study "want to see a woman attended to sexually in a tender, nurturant, and emotionally open way ... [T]hey willingly acknowledge that what they enjoy most about romance reading is the opportunity to project themselves into the story, to become the heroine, and thus, to share her surprise and slowly awakening pleasure at being so closely watched by someone who finds her valuable and worthy of love" (66-68). Like the Smithton women, a female adolescent reader can "become" (67) the havoc-making heroine and experience the attentiveness of her love-interest—a rebel visionary who also embodies the traits of the model male romance hero.

intellectual skills. His physical and psychological self-mastery prefigures his ability to dominate and contain her masculinized individualism by provoking in her a feminized, compassionate sociability. She learns to love. Her love-interest, alongside other male mentor figures, thus recommit her rebellious heroism to a maternal and relational impetus. For instance, the consistent influential male presence throughout the “Hunger Games” trilogy is Katniss’ deceased father. Her primary identification with him relies on her subordinate and dysfunctional relationship with her mother. Katniss identifies her mother as “the woman who sat by, blank and unreachable, while her children turned to skin and bones. I try to forgive her for my father’s sake. But to be honest, I’m not the forgiving type” (*The Hunger Games* 8). Katniss presents her mother’s parental negligence as monstrous.<sup>52</sup> As a result, Katniss assumes both the patriarchal and maternal role of “hunting daily” to “fill the mouths of” Prim and her mother ‘as if they were her own children’ (9). Her independence as a dual-parent figure characterizes her solitary behaviour at the outset of the trilogy. Her father remains a ghostly presence that takes part in constructing her identity.

Indicative of his implicit construction of her behaviours, her identity as a rebel weapon is one that her father instils in her from childhood. At the outset of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss explains that the forest outside of the Seam contains “food if you know how to find it. My father knew and he taught me some before he was blown to bits in a mine explosion” (Collins 5). In accordance with the qualities of a male action hero,

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<sup>52</sup> Her mother’s emotional absence remains consistent throughout the trilogy. After President Snow’s death and President Coin’s assassination, Katniss returns to District Twelve with Haymitch. Katniss confronts him, ““You have to look after me don’t you? As my mentor? . . . My mother’s not coming back”” (*Mockingjay* 379). The tension between Katniss and her mother is left unresolved.

Katniss' father demonstrates a physical strength and an intellectual prowess that enables him to gather food for his family, despite the fact that "trespassing in the woods is illegal and poaching carries the severest penalties" (*The Hunger Games* 5). Her father's willingness to rebel against the Capitol's power through the act of hunting for his family's survival echoes the desire for justice that the Mockingjay embodies. Katniss establishes an association between her father's identity and the mockingjay bird when observing her token mockingjay pin:

They're [mockingjays] are funny birds and something of a slap in the face to the Capitol. During the rebellion, the Capitol bred a series of genetically altered animals as weapons. The common term for them was *muttations*, or sometimes *mutts* for short. One was a special bird called a jabberjay that had the ability to memorize and repeat whole human conversations ... [O]f course, the rebels fed the Capitol endless lies, and the joke was on it. So the centres were shut down and the birds were abandoned to die off in the wild. Only they didn't die off. Instead, the jabberjays mated with female mockingbirds creating a whole new species ... My father was particularly fond of mockingjays. When we went hunting, he would whistle or sing complicated songs to them, and, after a polite pause, they'd always sing back. (42-43)

Considering that the Capitol underestimated the durability of the jabberjay creatures, the figure of the Mockingjay represents strength and perseverance. The bird is a symbol of triumph—the Capitol's tyrannical power can be surmounted. Like the mockingjay bird, her father's instinctive survival skills—demonstrated through his ability to hunt—enables him and his family to persevere through the starvation that permeates the districts. The Capitol does not anticipate his resilience under its oppression and, therefore, her father's strength can be considered a rebellious quality. In *Catching Fire*, Katniss expands on the symbolic meaning of the mockingjay bird by describing it as "a creature the Capitol never intended to exist. They hadn't counted on the highly controlled jabberjay having the



brains to adapt to the wild, to pass on its genetic code, to thrive in a new form. They hadn't anticipated its will to live" (Collins 92). By extension, Katniss' father is a weapon that rebels against the Capitol's power by hunting for more food than allotted to his district. In order to hunt he "adapt[s] to the wild" outside of the Seam (*Catching Fire* 92). His "will to live" can be demonstrated by the recalcitrant act of hunting and by imposing his survival skills onto Katniss (93). By "pass[ing] on [his] genetic code" of perseverance through hunting to Katniss, he ensures that the figure of the Mockingjay—and the ideology of rebellion that it represents—continues to "live on" through her. Like the jabberjay, her father's life perseveres beyond death by transforming into the "new form" that is Katniss as the Mockingjay (92). As a result, the qualities of justice and strength that form the foundation of the identity of the Mockingjay build upon her father's childhood lessons and remain a key part of her identity.

In Part II, I illustrated how Cinna's role was key to the manipulation of Katniss' exterior appearance as an action heroine. For the purposes of this section it is her mentor Haymitch who, in *Mockingjay*, directs Katniss' body language in order to convey an assertiveness that corresponds with her role as the heroine of the rebellion. Like Cinna, Haymitch desires political revolution. His interactions with Katniss reveal his instrumentalization of her televised body and its conduct as a catalyst for the ignition of public rebellion. He functions as the director of an action film (along with his media team that consists of Plutarch Heavensbee, Fulvia and Cressida) that prompts Katniss' bodily action in accordance with the rebels' vision of the Mockingjay. By controlling the exterior forces that influence Katniss' bodily behaviour, Haymitch renders her body as

docile and without agency. He places her in real circumstances that prompt her realistic performance. For instance, Haymitch monitors all of Katniss' activity in-field, in the same way that a director supervises an actress on the set of a film. After informing Katniss that he will provide her commands via an earpiece, he reminds her before she enters the combat area of District Eight that “‘I’m airborne. I’ll have the better view, so do what I tell you’” (*Mockingjay* 78). Haymitch’s omniscient perspective provides him with the authority of a director to coordinate Katniss’ movements. That Haymitch controls these male-dominated battle spaces in order to incite Katniss’ appropriate bodily behaviour captures Heinecken’s explanation of the female hero as being defined by her bodily experiences:

[M]ost of the narratives focus less on the physical prowess of the hero—or even her intelligence—but the lived *experiences* of her body. While the classic hero works to control the body—in effect, to leave the body behind—female heroes ground their struggles within the body. Self-transcendence for them is inextricably linked to a sense of both spiritual and bodily continuance. (138; emphasis in original)

The experiences that Katniss’ body undergoes dictate her emotions. Placing her body within the circumstances of battle allows Haymitch to achieve the physical experiences he needs to evoke Katniss’ appropriate emotional responses. Living through the circumstances of actual battle enables Katniss to provide a more authentic performance as a rebel hero. She accepts her physical role of the Mockingjay when she comes to understand how much her bodily identity can inspire others. For instance, when exploring the hospital in District Eight after the Capitol’s air raid, she finds spiritual fulfilment in her bodily identity through the touch of the wounded:

Hungry fingers devour me, wanting to feel my flesh ... The damage, the fatigue, the imperfections. That's how they recognize me, why I belong to them ... I begin to fully understand the lengths to which people have gone to protect me. What I mean to the rebels. My ongoing struggle against the Capitol, which has so often felt like a solitary journey, has not been undertaken alone. I have had thoughts upon thousands of people from the districts at my side. I was their Mockingjay long before I accepted the role. (*Mockingjay* 90)

She recognizes her district audience's hunger for justice as a source of inspiration. The experience of her body being touched and embraced by the wounded citizens of District Eight causes Katniss to achieve a sense of "self-transcendence" that is orchestrated by Haymitch (Heineken 138). Such a "self-transcendence" is produced for the purposes of generating a more convincing performance, and subsequently, a more unified, inspired armed force. She recognizes that her individual body is a member of the larger district body that is fighting to resist the domination of the Capitol. In becoming aware that the identity imposed on her body fulfils the needs of the districts, Katniss discovers self-worth. She changes from a masculinized, lone wolf hero to a female hero whose environment defines her identity and who must identify with, or demonstrate love for, her community.<sup>53</sup>

For the purposes of coordinating a convincing performance, Haymitch capitalizes on Katniss' self-identification as the Mockingjay. For example, after the rebels have overtaken the last of the Capitol's military hubs in District Two, the Nut, Haymitch instructs Katniss to make a speech to encourage the other districts to desist fighting: "I'll

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<sup>53</sup> Her behaviour begins to convey a sense of power that is, in actuality, a product of her celebrity status as the symbol of the rebel-movement. She begins to adopt the rebels' ideals of justice into her own ideology—a code of political disobedience also imbedded into her early consciousness by Peeta before the first Hunger Games. He tells her, "I want to die as myself ... [T]o show that Capitol that they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their Games" (*The Hunger Games* 142).

feed it [the speech] to you, line by line ... You'll just have to repeat what I say” (*Mockingjay* 212). In an act of ventriloquism, Haymitch controls both Katniss’ body and speech for the desired purpose of motivating the district audience to end the war. When a survivor from the Nut interrupts and threatens Katniss during her speech, Haymitch provides her with the appropriate amount of control over her own speech to achieve convincing footage for the live video feed that is being broadcasted to all of the districts. He allows her to improvise to a certain degree. Facing the armed survivor, Haymitch demands in her earpiece that she “Freeze” (215). Katniss continues to describe, “I follow his order, realizing that this is what all of District 2, all of Panem maybe, must be seeing at the moment. The Mockingjay at the mercy of a man with nothing to lose” (215). Following Haymitch’s direction for her physical body, Katniss begins a conversation with the survivor. Haymitch directs her words through prompts. He encourages Katniss to “Keep talking. Tell them about watching the mountain go down” and provokes her vocalization of rebellious sentiments by asking her “Who is the enemy?” (215).<sup>54</sup> Haymitch’s words compel Katniss to realize her own hunger for justice, and therefore, incite her to act rebelliously. Her rebellious action serves the overall purpose of provoking the desired rebellion itself. Haymitch understands how to direct Katniss’ emotional state to influence her bodily behaviour. He allows Katniss to recognize her own

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<sup>54</sup> In *Catching Fire*, Haymitch similarly incites Katniss’ rebellious bodily behaviour in preparation for her role as the Mockingjay. Prior to departing for the Quarter Quell he instructs Katniss, “[W]hen you’re in the arena ... [y]ou just remember who the enemy is” (*Catching Fire* 260). Haymitch’s words prompt Katniss’ decision to collapse the force field of the arena with Beetee’s knife. While in the arena, Katniss ponders, “*Enemy. Enemy. The word is tugging at a recent memory ... ‘Katniss, when you’re in the arena ... You just remember who the enemy is,’ Haymitch says. ‘That’s all.’ Haymitch’s last words of advice to me. Why would I need reminding? I have always known who the enemy is. Who starves and tortures and kills us in the arena. Who will soon kill everyone I love ... I rise, turning to the force field*” (378; emphasis in original). The collapse of the force field ignites the full-scale district rebellion.

power to control her body to a degree, but contains this power by acting as a ventriloquist, by prompting her emotions, and by propelling her body in the different spaces of real-life combat. Her illusory agency is a tool used to render her a convincing performer.<sup>55</sup>

Her ability to perform as the Mockingjay also hinges on the safety of Peeta's body. After learning of Peeta's custody, torture and weaponization as an object of propaganda in the Capitol—resulting in several failed attempts at performing in propos in addition to an episode of “hysteria” that requires her sedation (163)—Haymitch informs Katniss that District Thirteen has dispatched a platoon to retrieve Peeta. He explains, “We can't lose the Mockingjay now. And you can't perform unless you know Snow can't take it out on Peeta” (164). Instead of inflaming Katniss' desire to rescue Peeta as the Mockingjay hero, Peeta's vulnerability inhibits her assertive behaviour. Her emotional disquiet dissolves her heroic resolve and suspends her physical mobility. Her dependency on Peeta's presence recalls their sleeping arrangements on the Victory Tour in *Catching Fire*. For example, Katniss recounts that after being “roused by nightmares that have increased in number and intensity” Peeta regularly “manages to wake me and calm me down. Then he climbs into bed to hold me until I fall back to sleep” (*Catching Fire* 72). She reflects in *Mockingjay* that “those nights I only kept my sanity because his arms were around me” (243). Peeta further acts as Katniss' moral compass. She expresses during the rebel-assault on the Nut: “I wish Peeta was here—the old Peeta—because he would be able to articulate why it is so wrong to be exchanging fire when people, any people, are trying to claw their way out of the mountain” (*Mockingjay* 211-212). Katniss' physical

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<sup>55</sup> Once Katniss acknowledges the importance of both psychologically and physically embracing the identity imposed on her, she becomes a more cooperative in-field actress.

and psychological stability, or heroic hardness, depends upon Peeta's power and his projection of a balanced collision of male and female heroic traits: he is nurturing and physically strong,<sup>56</sup> compassionate and intellectual, and illustrates the ideal image of a young male hero. Her reliance on his masculinized constancy of character indicates her emotional and psychological subordination to him.<sup>57</sup>

In the context of the “star-crossed lovers” plot line, Peeta's language also publically constructs Katniss as a female heroine coming into consciousness of her own body. With the knowledge that President Snow has ordered Katniss to “convince everyone in the districts that [she] wasn't defying the Capitol,” Peeta fashions Katniss' body within the expected conventions of the Romance genre for her protection (*Catching Fire* 29).<sup>58</sup> For instance, during his second interview with Caesar Flickerman in *Catching Fire*, Peeta tells the story of their covert marriage: “But we have this marriage ritual in District Twelve ... [W]e didn't tell anyone ... But you see, we knew if we were married in the Capitol, there wouldn't be a toasting. And neither of us really wanted to wait any longer. So one day, we just did it” (255). Katniss' body becomes a meta-site of romantic

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<sup>56</sup> Recall Katniss' assertion that Peeta “can lift hundred-pound bags of flour” and that “He can wrestle” (*The Hunger Games* 89-90).

<sup>57</sup> Like the heroes of romance novels, Peeta is portrayed as her perfect match—as the “dandelion in the spring” to her “fire” (*Mockingjay* 388). During the Star Squad's clandestine mission to assassinate President Snow, Katniss further appeals to romantic gestures to sustain his companionship and fuel her confidence. For instance, after Peeta's declaration, “I can't hang on” Katniss explains, “I do the only thing I can think of. I lean in and kiss Peeta full on the mouth ... ‘Stay with me’” (314). Posturing herself as a romance heroine, Katniss' kiss reclaims Peeta's lucidity and illustrates that her “power” depends strongly on her ability to affect him” (Heinecken 54). She employs her sexuality to influence Peeta's constitution—encouraging him to remain with her. Peeta's presence maintains Katniss' psychological and physical stability. Katherine R. Broad's piece “‘The Dandelion in the Spring’ Utopia as Romance in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* Trilogy” provides a fuller discussion on the harmoniousness of Katniss' and Peeta's love match and how it reinforces “that proper heterosexual relationships cannot be between people who are too similar” (124).

<sup>58</sup> For the purposes of diffusing district-wide rebellion, President Snow instructs Katniss to “affect the mood in the districts” by “convinc[ing] everyone” that she “wasn't defying the Capitol, that [she] was crazy with love” (*Catching Fire* 29).

performance: she is presented as an example of proper feminine comportment within the context of the “star-crossed lovers” story, as well as the romantic damsel of the Hunger Games love story who must be safeguarded by Peeta from the threat of President Snow. Peeta’s use of language to construct Katniss’ body recalls Foucault’s suggestion in *The History of Sexuality* that the parameters of sex are dictated by the power of words:

Power is essentially what dictates its law to sex. Which means first of all that sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden ... [P]ower acts by laying down the rule: power’s hold on sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law. It speaks, and that is the rule. (83)

Peeta’s words produce a discourse within the Capitol that surrounds her with allure and incites her development from a tomboy character to an appealing female. Peeta further escalates the romantic narrative when he continues to tell Caesar, and the audience of Panem, that Katniss is pregnant (*Catching Fire* 256). After hearing the story of her seeming marriage and pregnancy, she asserts:

I am pregnant. The audience can’t absorb the news right away. It has to strike them and sink in and be confirmed by other voices before they begin to sound like a herd of wounded animals, moaning, shrieking, and calling for help. And me? I know my face is projected in a tight close-up on the screen, but I don’t make any effort to hide it. (257)

Katniss loses autonomy over her own sexuality, as she identifies with the body that Peeta has designed for Panem. Echoing Foucault’s description of “sex [as] placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden” (83), Peeta uses language to present Katniss as a respectable romantic heroine who abides by the social expectations of feminine purity in a patriarchal social order. Within the narrative of their feigned romance, Katniss is first presented as a love-interest, is courted by Peeta, married to him,

and finally will bear his child. Her romantic character develops from a tomboy to a desirable female, and to a wife and mother-to-be.<sup>59</sup>

Similar to Katniss' alignment with her father in the "Hunger Games" trilogy, Saba's father is a strong influence at the outset of the "Dustlands" trilogy. She attributes her dexterous handling of her crossbow to the mentorship of her father, Willem. For instance, when observing the masked Tonton as they surround Lugh, Saba immediately retrieves the crossbows that belong to her and Willem in preparation for combat. Handing her father his weapon, she relates, "We start runnin ... Load! yells Pa. We each snatch a arrow. Load ... Aim! Yells Pa ... Fire! yells Pa. We let fly" (*Blood Red Road* 29). As an Action/Adventure heroine, Saba instinctively enters the conflict alongside her practiced father and adheres to his commands—battling as a synchronized defence unit to eliminate the threatening trespassers. Positioned as his sidekick, Saba "takes a decidedly inferior position in the hierarchy of knowledge and skill" compared to her experienced father (Heinecken 29). Before his death, which results from trying to protect Saba and Lugh, Willem institutes her portended destiny: "I could only see glimpses. But they're gonna need you, Saba. Lugh an Emmi. An there'll be others too. Many others. Don't give in to

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<sup>59</sup> Katniss also follows the development of the tomboy figure in action films. Heinecken explains: "The figure of the tomboy, seen in such films as *China O'Brien* or *Twister*, is apparent in films in which the female hero is identified with her father ... [T]hese tomboy figures are often asexual at the film's beginning. Thus, the tomboy's desire to act aggressively is read as a stage of adolescence on route to accepting 'true' womanhood. As in romance novels, the narrative is a journey of discovery in which feminine sexuality is ultimately recuperated into the patriarchal order" (28). Suggesting the beginnings of Katniss' interpolation into a patriarchal paradigm, Johanna orders Katniss to kill President Snow. She petitions Katniss to "'Swear it. On something you care about'" (*Mockingjay* 255). When Katniss "swears it" on her own life, Johanna rejects her oath and orders her to swear it "'On your family's life.'" Katniss expresses, "I guess my concern for my own survival isn't compelling enough" (255). Johanna's request enforces Katniss' heroism as being motivated by the need to safeguard her family at the expense of her own life. Katniss is perpetuated as a self-sacrificing, maternal heroine whose strength is derived from a fierce, implicitly intrinsic need to protect the child-figures of Prim, her mother and her unborn child. In Part IV of this study, I further discuss the re-trenchment of gender norms in the conclusions to the havoc-making heroines' narratives.



fear. Be strong, like I know you are. An never give up” (*Blood Red Road* 29). Willem endows her with male heroic strength to lead, or master, others (Heinecken 50). Like Katniss’ father “pass[ing] on [his] genetic code” of political dissent to her through the transference of hunting skills, Willem imparts his resolve of character and his archery skills onto his daughter (*Catching Fire* 92).<sup>60</sup>

Saba’s resolute undertaking to retrieve her brother Lugh further reveals a masculinized, lone wolf disposition that rejects cooperative action and maternal tenderness. For instance, when she intends to charge their family friend, Merci, with Emmi’s care, Saba criticizes, “We couldn’t be goin much slower an it’s all her fault. I wanna leave her [Emmi] by the side of the track an ferget she ever got born. I wish she’d disappear offa the face of th’earth. But I cain’t wish that. I mustn’t wish that. It’s too wicked” (*Blood Red Road* 48). Saba’s singular absorption with retrieving Lugh exposes her rejection of conventional feminine behaviours. Saba recognizes that her deep-seated disregard for her younger sister is “wicked,” as it transgresses a patriarchal understanding of women as natural caregivers. However, it is her remembrance of Lugh’s exemplary paternalistic gentility toward Emmi—alongside his past objections to her negligent temperament—that prompts her maternal behaviour.<sup>61</sup> For instance, upon observing that

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<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Saba displays skills imparted by Lugh. For instance, she attempts to simulate his intellectual resourcefulness when incarcerated by Mis Pinch: “I bin tryin to think of a plan. Tryin to think what Lugh would do if he was me. If he was here” (*Blood Red Road* 123). She further succeeds in manipulating others by imitating his techniques for deceit. When she agrees to assist the Free Hawks in burning Hopetown in exchange for their help in absconding from the Cage, she “look[s] [Epona] straight in the eye. Lugh always says it’s the best thing to do when yer tellin a lie” (182). Her handling of her external conditions is implicitly constructed by, and attributed to, the example of a male counterpart.

<sup>61</sup> Saba’s rejection of Emmi at the outset of the trilogy indicates her resentment towards their mother for her early death. Saba asserts, “if it warn’t fer Emmi, Ma’ud stil be alive” (*Blood Red Road* 14). Compounding her antipathy, she holds Emmi culpable for their mother’s death.

Emmi's feet are "cut to a bloody pulp" from walking, Saba recalls, "I hear Lugh's voice in my head. *She's only nine, Saba. You might try being nice to her fer a change*" (50; emphasis in original). Dutifully, Saba proceeds to "wash her cuts an wrap her feet in clean strips of cloth" (50). Saba directs her external actions according to an internalized obedience to Lugh's directives. His reproach of her conduct encodes female nurturance as intrinsic and morally proper.

Comparable to Lugh's softening of Saba's behaviour, Saba's love-interest, Jack, likewise erodes her social brusqueness and her determination to exact her mission independently. Frustrated with the size of her company journeying to King Vicar Pinch's castle in Freedom Fields, Saba utters, "It's this ... crowd of people trailin along behind me, slowin me down, an I'm sick of it, that's what's wrong! I don't care about makin the world a better place. All I wanna do is git Lugh back" (282). Emulating male heroism, Saba struggles to isolate herself from her travelling party and refuses to deviate from her singular objective. Jack combats her propensity for self-alienation by underscoring the importance of a collaborative endeavour. He articulates, "You need all of us ... If yer gonna save Lugh, yer gonna need all the help you can git" (283) and prompts her to "Apologize" to their comrades "Fer bein so damn ungrateful" (284). His instructions induce pangs of guilt as she "mull[s] over what Jack said" while simultaneously considering her romantic feelings—contemplating the physical "heat" that permeates her body when in proximity to him (286). She subsequently apologizes to her company for "bein ungrateful an cantankersome" and ponders, "Maybe it ain't such a bad idea to have some help" (288, 289). Thus, Jack's authoritative influence as a romantic love-interest

provokes Saba's sentimental conduct, revealing her compliant attitude toward her male hero.<sup>62</sup> She further internalizes his moralizing commands by echoing his words when delivering her apology: conceding to his labelling of her as "ungrateful" and to his assertion that "help" would not be detrimental to her cause. He disrupts her lone wolf temperament by prompting her willingness to act collaboratively, thus revealing her docility of character.

As Saba's emotional inaccessibility erodes through Jack's softening influence as a romantic love-interest, she begins to exhibit instances of physical and intellectual weakness that imperil her wellbeing and situate her as a damsel in need of rescue.<sup>63</sup> For example, in an attempt to recover her heartstone necklace Saba falls into a rapid river and immediately calls for an absent Jack (297). Upon his unexpected arrival, she "throws [her] arms around him" and expresses, "I never been so glad to see anybody in my life!" (300). Saba's zealous relief accentuates her growing psychological and physical dependency on Jack's steadfastness and indicates her diminishing self-determinism. While trussing Saba to his body before embarking upstream, Jack explains, "The rule of three ... You save somebody's life three times, their life belongs to you" (301). Jack's

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<sup>62</sup> Notably, Saba travels with two members of the Free Hawks, a group of "girl revolutionaries" described by Sonya Saywer Fritz in her piece "Girl Power and Girl Activism in the Fiction of Suzanne Collins, Scott Westerfield, and Moira Young" as "crucial to Saba's success" (25). Fritz views the Free Hawks as "a compelling embodiment of girl power as a rhetoric that promotes the agency and empowerment of girls ... echo[ing] girl power's emphasis on girls' strength as a collective body of socio-political agents" (25). However, illustrating what Childs notes as the stereotypical portrayal of girls "as so invested in romance above all else" (197), Saba does not feel guilt for her behaviour toward her platonic friends until her conduct is distinguished as improper by her love-interest. It is Jack who corrects her behaviour. Jack is further situated as the leader of the company by being the only character that knows the location of Freedom Fields—positioning him as more knowledgeable than the very leader of the Free Hawks, Maev, who had built the Free Hawk's base, Darktrees, in a similar hidden location.

<sup>63</sup> Displaying the archetypal qualities of romantic male heroes, Jack rides a "big white stallion—he calls him Ajax" (*Blood Red Road* 250). Jack is aligned with the tropes of male virility, courage and chivalry.

evocation of the Rule of Three—a model of reciprocal rescue and ownership—metaphorically fetters Saba’s life to his own, initiating a proprietary claim over her body and its behavioural service to his own romantic interests.<sup>64</sup> Saba becomes a prize for his successful heroic efforts.

After being rescued by Jack, Saba’s psychological and physical dependency on him becomes heightened. In *Rebel Heart*, her toughness diminishes when she becomes physically separated from Jack. Troubled by the spirits of her expended female adversaries in the Cage, Saba reveals, “I long fer, mostly I ache fer, his [Jack’s] stillness. The stillness at the heart of him ... He’ll banish the shadows. He’ll silence the whispers. An the wounds of my soul will heal. I just need Jack” (*Rebel Heart* 53). Her fixation on, and singular confidence in, Jack’s power—and not her own—to “heal” her psychological torment echoes feminist thinker bell hooks’ postulation in her work *Communion: The Female Search for Love* (2002). Hooks argues that Western society encourages women to cultivate a belief in an “all-powerful redemptive love” at an early age (22). Offering her personal experience, she explains, “True love and perfect union came into my world through fairy tales, and later, romances. From these imaginative tales I learned it was possible to find a soul mate and with that partner heal the wounds of childhood ... Finding love would heal my wounds” (22). Similar to Katniss’ psychological and physical dependency on Peeta’s presence, Saba’s need for Jack’s “stillness” reveals an emotional reliance on his self-assuredness and his affection to eradicate the wounds of her conscience. Her actualization can therefore be understood as contingent on Jack’s

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<sup>64</sup> Throughout the trilogy, the “Rule of Three” model is familiar only to male characters such as Jack, Ike Twelvetees and DeMalo, and is used as leverage in achieving individualistic pursuits.

aptitude to rescue her from her psychological trauma. As per the conventions of fairy tales and romances, Saba's unwavering dependency on Jack enshrines heterosexual relationships as the primary sources of redemptive power for women.

In the same way that District Thirteen creates Katniss as a rebel, Jack capitalizes on Saba's heroic strength to carry out his politically resistive intentions. He understands that Saba's romantic affection would be the motivating force for her steadfastness in ascertaining his location as an undercover Tonton in New Eden. At the conclusion of *Rebel Heart*, Jack informs Saba, "I sent the message with Maev becuz I wanted you to work with me. I'd be on the inside, feedin you information, you'd be on the outside, actin on it ... We'd work to stop this thing before it goes any further" (401). She tacitly agrees to assume this prescribed heroic duty out of her romantic affection for him. In the final scene of the novel, Saba acquiesces to Jack's instruction that she 'stand on his feet' as they privately dance in the moonlight (*Rebel Heart* 423). This amorous moment symbolizes a politically charged transaction: Saba concedes to "walk in Jack's footsteps"—to follow his directives—by assuming the role he crafts for her as the exactor of his rebel-plot. The outset of *Raging Star* subsequently captures Saba leading her comrades in a guerrilla assault on DeMalo's transport bridge. With her guerrilla soldiers under the impression that Jack is dead, Saba deceptively leads them with the commands imparted to her by Jack. She explains that her comrades,

all know I git regular intel about DeMalo an the Tonton an what's goin on in New Eden. They know I cain't say who or where they are. They think I meet with Bram's old network. The little gang of contacts, informants an insiders ... Jack runs them now. He's information. I'm action. (*Raging Star* 74)

Indicative of Jack's construction of Saba's self-perception, she echoes Jack's language in *Rebel Heart* to denote her assigned position in the rebellion: he is the "information"—the source of her knowledge—that constructs her "active" political behaviours. Just as Haymitch directs Katniss' performance as the Mockingjay rebel-leader, Jack dictates Saba's actions as the leader of the New Eden resistance. Saba, like Katniss, is a leader under the control of a male-superior.

Jack's vision for justice also uses Saba's infamous physical ferocity as the Angel of Death. Similar to Peeta's use of story-telling to present Katniss as a character in a romance narrative, Jack constructs and propagates a myth of "the Angel of Death [who] haunts New Eden" for his own political purposes (*Raging Star* 133). When scouting DeMalo's hidden bunker with Jack, Saba inquires as to why the Tonton guards are frightened by the sound of cawing from her crow, Nero. Jack responds:

Maybe they heard the stories goin round about you. The fearsome Angel of Death an her miraculous escape from Resurrection. She killed ten men, twenny—no—thirty. It's all bin hushed up an she's still in New Eden. No, I heard she died in a blaze of fire ... Ridin the night with her wolfdog an her crow, seekin vengeance on them that took her life. (168)

Jack's use of language portrays Saba as a hard Action/Adventure heroine who easily defeats her opponents against overwhelming odds. Jack's command of the conventions of heroic myth and legend fashions her as a traditional epic hero endowed with legendary, supernatural strength. He explains, "I only fed what was already there ... the Angel of Death has a strong hold on people's minds. The unbeaten fighter who killed a king an destroyed his kingdom. Powerful stuff. We gotta use every advantage we have" (169). Jack's use of myth resonates with Jennifer Stuller's contention in her study *Ink-Stained*

*Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* that contemporary “myth serves a function similar to that of ancient myth, namely, telling and hearing stories helps us make sense of our lives ... used as a way of teaching values ... giv[ing] us ideas about who we are” (3). Jack endows Saba with a mythic degree of heroism that reinforces Willem’s reading of her density. Jack’s myth ratifies her as a figure of justice. He imbues her with his political values by conceiving her as a heroic avenger. Both Jack and her father construct ‘who Saba is’ by impressing upon her consciousness a prescribed heroic duty (Stuller 3). They shape her external image and impact how others receive her. For example, after hearing the legend of the Angel of Death, Saba adopts her crafted heroic image by conveying, “I feel a haunt comin on me” (*Raging Star* 169). She proceeds to frighten away the Tonton guards with feigned “wolf howls” alongside Nero’s “screams as he wheels above” her while she rides a horse toward the bunker (170). Saba’s performance of her mythic heroic identity brings to mind Heinecken’s discussion of deception in *La Femme Nikita*:

Nikita’s trickster ability is very much contained. First, the conventions of TV action series require that the protagonist cannot be a villain; therefore, we find that Nikita’s ability to lie and fight is contained by the dialogue of the show, which works to code Nikita as unambiguously ‘good.’ Still, although the dialogue positions her as the ‘good’ heroine and ultimate victor, it also works to undercut the viewer’s sense of Nikita’s power ... Nikita’s ability to a *take control* (i.e. her ‘masculine’ fighting power and her identity as a ‘spy’ and killer) is her actual *lack of control* over her own life. [*sic*] (41; emphasis in original)

Like Katniss’ performance as the Mockingjay, Saba’s performance as the legendary Angel of Death helps the resistance: it enables her and Jack to infiltrate the enemy’s

bunker in order to retrieve information that will assist them in unseating DeMalo.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, this performance likewise undermines her autonomous power as she enacts Jack's fictionalization of her identity. Her exhibition of assertiveness and self-control when "haunting" the Tonton guards, ultimately, illustrates her "lack of control" over her own identity (Heinecken 41).

Saba further demonstrates an implicit "lack of control" over her own political views. Reflecting her internalization of DeMalo's and Jack's ideas, Saba's self-designed strategy for diffusing DeMalo's power relies upon both DeMalo's approach to leadership and Jack's ethics. When Jack proposes that "kill[ing] DeMalo" is the solution to disbanding New Eden's exclusionary precepts, Saba opposes and advocates for the restoration of familial bonds (*Raging Star* 102). Demonstrating the "feminine" virtues that have been instilled in her by her male counterparts throughout *Blood Red Road* and *Rebel Heart*, Saba recognizes that "DeMalo ain't built New Eden on strong foundations" with "No families. No fathers an mothers with their children. He's split them all apart. It ain't natural" (102). She urges, "[T]he smartest an best way to beat him [DeMalo] is

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<sup>65</sup> Notably, DeMalo also constructs Saba as a revolutionary partner. He ingrains within her a resolution to revolt against the dereliction of their environmental conditions. His acts of romantic seduction further impress his ideals onto her consciousness. For example, upon returning to his tent after the exposition of his vision, DeMalo offers to read poetry to her about Mother Earth and "takes" a book with his "gentle hands" (*Rebel Heart* 340). Illiterate and having never heard poetic verse before, Saba describes listening to "each word" as "it was precious. My heart ain't big enough to hold the beauty ... Suddenly I move, in a rush, an I'm kissin him" (341). His performance illustrates a charismatic, romantic tenderness that courts Saba's will and arouses her sexuality. DeMalo becomes the dominant male hero that is able to shape her understanding of her environment and her responsive behaviours to his physical allurements. Moreover, his language throughout the trilogy is highly developed. As one of three literate characters (recall Rooster Pinch and his books of King Louis XIV in *Blood Red Road* and Tommo's revealed literacy in *Raging Star*), he speaks in full, grammatically correct sentences compared to the elided language of Saba and her male and female illiterate comrades. Jack's ability to read the maps found in DeMalo's bunker also indicates that he possesses a degree of literacy in comparison to Saba's bewilderment at the sight of them (*Raging Star* 179). Thus, only male characters demonstrate literacy, as such proficiency corresponds with their degree of privilege. As the leader of New Eden, DeMalo exhibits the highest level of oral and literacy skills.



without a shot being fired” and proposes that communities be rebuilt by covertly returning expatriated citizens to their homes and by restoring infants born in New Eden’s “babyhouses” to their removed mothers (202, 199).<sup>66</sup> At the same time, her methodology for furtively re-inserting the displaced populace into New Eden resonates with DeMalo’s approach to “healing” the earth. Explaining her plan to her comrades, Saba instructs, “Manuel, Creed, Ash an Slim will work together. They’ll go with sixty of these folk, the strongest men an women, into the heart of New Eden” (344). Saba’s mobilization of the “strongest men an women” echoes DeMalo’s previously expressed beliefs: “The healthiest and largest grow and thrive. The weak fall back and perish. If we have any change of healing Mother Earth, we need the strongest and the best” (344, 33). Saba’s strategy to dissolve DeMalo’s power reflects his approach to enforcing his ideology: both situate the physically strongest of their supporters as instrumental to the proliferation of their visions for an improved society.

As well as using DeMalo’s political ideas, Saba employs Jack’s words when striving to amass collective support for her rebellious strategy. She declares to her audience at Nass Camp:

The people of New Eden are slaves ... They may not wear iron collars an iron chains, though many in New Eden bear that injustice. But they all wear the slave bonds of fear. So long as we live in fear of this tyrant, we’ll

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<sup>66</sup> Saba’s plan reasserts an essentialized conception of female passivity and nurturance while upholding the nuclear family as an equally natural paradigm. By advocating for the restoration of familial communities—specifically addressing the distinctly female concern of motherhood—she is perceived by her comrades as soft and unfit to lead. Creed dismisses Saba’s proposition with an insistence on weaponized combat. He retorts, “We got a whole weapons dump ready an waitin ... We’re fighters ... I tell you, that’s hard to swallow, comin from you. They didn’t call you the Angel of Death fer nuthin” (*Raging Star* 200-201). Saba’s infamous reputation as a hard, violent warrior upholds her authority. Only through Lugh’s willingness to give her approach “one chance” are her principles vindicated, her authority as a leader restored, and her party made amenable to fielding her plan (203). Her power is thus sanctioned by his endorsement.

always be his slave. Right now, at this moment, the people of New Eden are ... comin back together ... they're mending what he broke apart. What did he break? Family. Friendship. True community. (342)

Her words echo Jack's previous assertion that DeMalo subjugates his citizens by inciting fear. While investigating DeMalo's bunker, Jack illuminates, "He's [DeMalo] planned this real careful. With this seedstore an his book knowledge an fear an guns to power the project ... he'll make everywhere ... [a] green paradise of slave labour, all controlled by him ... If people fear you, you control them" (182-183). Thus, Saba ventriloquizes Jack's observation that DeMalo unethically employs fear as a tool for sustaining his totalitarian rule. Just as Katniss ventriloquizes Haymitch's speech, Saba's illumination of Jack's political position sanctions her authority and enables her to acquire followers. Jack's intellectual and charismatic power thus undergird her leadership. It is notable that DeMalo accuses Saba of ventriloquizing the principles of other people at the outset of *Raging Star*. After destroying the transport bridge, Saba declares to him, "Clean water an decent land is everybody's birthright. You cain't take it. You cain't own it" (34). DeMalo retorts, "Well rehearsed, Saba ... Who put those words in your mouth?" (34). He reveals Saba as politically docile—propagating the virtues impressed upon her by an individual whose power is superior to her own. He portrays her as an impressionable, subordinate mouthpiece of the veridical leader of the resistance.

The eventual termination of DeMalo's reign also results from Saba's implementation of Jack's initial proposition to "kill him" (102). After Lugh and Emmi are killed by the Tonton, Saba forgoes her own proclaimed strategy of restoring community and "smash[es] DeMalo in the head" with a stone during their publicized wedding

ceremony (411). Observing his lifeless body, Saba further employs Jack's language when she closes DeMalo's eyes: "An behold, this day I go the way of all the earth" (411).<sup>67</sup> Her evocation of Jack's phrasing in her final words over DeMalo's body ascribes her actions to Jack's influence and portrays him as the ultimate victor of the resistance. It is also significant that the resurgence of Saba's violent behaviour as an action heroine occurs as a result of the recent deaths of her siblings. Reinforcing what Stuller recognizes as a potentially "sexist and tired way of justifying women's acts of violence" (119), Saba's assassination of DeMalo enacts her constructed role as the legendary Angel of Death who 'kills men' out of vengeance (168).<sup>68</sup>

As I have illustrated thus far in the "Hunger Games" and "Dustlands" trilogies, Katniss' and Saba's male counterparts orchestrate the ways in which they resist their political regimes. Katniss and Saba display hard skills imparted by their fathers, they ventriloquize the political ideals of their male superiors, and demonstrate an inability to take action without the presence of their love-interests. Likewise, the havoc-making heroines in the first instalments to Aguirre's "Razorland" series, Roth's "Divergent" trilogy, and Yancey's *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave* exhibit a behavioural malleability that reflects an internalization of male political ideals. However, the male counterparts of these narratives code the havoc-making heroines' rebellious conduct as sexually desirable. As I will examine, Deuce, Tris and Cassie become politically docile action sidekicks and suitable romantic partners that support the ideals of their love-interests. Their behaviours are

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<sup>67</sup> Telling Saba about his upbringing, he recalls the use of this phrase by the woman who raised him (311).

<sup>68</sup> Further reinforcing Stuller's consideration, Saba's actions can also be attributed to her desire to save Tommo from an attack by his father, DeMalo. Saba reveals Tommo's paternity and his deafness, causing DeMalo to "lung[e] at Tommo" with a knife (410). Saba "dive[s] at Tommo" to remove him from DeMalo's line of attack before suddenly deciding to "smash DeMalo in the head" with a rock (410, 411).

implicitly and explicitly constructed to emulate degrees of male and female heroisms.

Unlike Katniss' and Saba's alignment with their fathers, Deuce's masculinized behaviours in *Enclave* are a product of her direct conditioning as a Huntress. Her training endows her with qualities that are characteristic of the male action hero as per the conventions of Action/Adventure fiction: she is emotionally impenetrable, physically self-disciplined and forsakes conventionally innate feminine sentiments such as sympathies toward children.<sup>69</sup> For instance, after comprehending that her elders would soon kill the blind and injured messenger boy she had discovered in the underground network, Deuce reiterates to herself, "As a Huntress ... I should care about the greater welfare of the enclave. My job existed to keep our citizens safe. Protection didn't extend to brats we found in the tunnels, unless they were like Fade, strong enough to survive on their own" (Aguirre 37). Her admission reflects her psychological indoctrination and her embodied construction as per the ideological strictures of her society's male leader, Whitewall. Deuce's conditioning deprives her of an individualistic identity: she must safeguard her community at all costs and view physical and emotional strength as the sole signifiers of an individual's worth.

Fade's authority also implicitly constructs her behaviour as a physically and mentally dexterous Huntress. As her assigned hunting partner and professional superior, Deuce must adhere to Fade's directives in the tunnels. She asserts, "Because it was my job, I followed" and permits herself to be pulled into regular combat with Freaks as his sidekick (20). Fade and Deuce's dynamic as professional partners resonates with Inness'

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<sup>69</sup> Heineken asserts that "In almost every contemporary male action film, one can trace a similar path in which the transcendence of the hero ultimately depends upon the rejection and punishment of the body and all things associated with it, such as the feminine" (32). Deuce is conditioned to exhibit male heroism.

observations of Mulder and Scully in her discussion of *The X-Files*. She writes, “When the two characters are walking, he takes the lead, with Scully following a few steps behind ... He is the first to come up with theories and explanations ... and he is usually right while she is generally wrong” (*Tough Girls* 95). Similarly, Deuce describes her physical positioning in relation to Fade with phrasing such as “I followed” or by relating that Fade is “Ahead of me” (Aguirre 20, 28, 29). Fade is also the first to conduct himself with emotional composure to provoke Deuce’s equanimity. For example, after defeating her first Freak-horde alongside Fade, Deuce expresses, “I wanted to sit down and shake in reaction. Fade shoved me around the carnage and got me moving. I wasn’t sure I could’ve done it on my own” (64). Equally, after witnessing the devastation of a neighbouring enclave destroyed by Freaks, Deuce recalls, “Fade stilled me with a hand on my arm. I read from his gestures that he wanted us to stay close to the wall ... He got no argument from me” (64). Just as Jack and Peeta “still” the physically inhibiting anxieties of Saba and Katniss, Fade likewise steadies Deuce’s emotions and guides her body back to College. He prompts her lucidity of mind to ensure her effectiveness in combat in the case of an unexpected attack by Freaks.<sup>70</sup> Fade’s superior tact and knowledge undercut Deuce’s presentation as tough, subordinating her skills as a Huntress to his own experience and skills as a Hunter.

Paradoxically, Fade’s authority as a love-interest shapes Deuce’s behaviours in accordance with the conventional characteristics of the female romance heroine.

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<sup>70</sup> Originating from Topside, Fade also proves Deuce “generally wrong” by debunking her ingrained preconceptions about the dangers of aboveground (Inness 95). For instance, upon seeing a bird for the first time, Deuce “duck[s] down, curling [her]self into a ball” for fear of being eaten by an unknown creature (Aguirre 129). Fade clarifies, “It’s a bird. They can’t eat you. You’re too big” (130).

Softening Deuce's display of her entrenched masculine traits, Fade tacitly endorses her presentation of subversive, feminine qualities to suit his political and personal tastes. For example, upon finding the blind messenger boy in the tunnels on a hunting mission, Deuce faces Fade's silence when implored by the boy to take him to College. She articulates, "I wasn't sure they'd [the elders] like us disobeying orders, leaving the back ways, and bringing in a stray, especially one like him. But I couldn't leave him here to die either. Fade watched me in silence, as if testing me somehow. I made my decision" (31). Fade encourages her display of seditious maternal compassion by implicitly ratifying her decision to bring the boy to the elders. By abetting Deuce's insubordination, Fade reveals his own resistive ideological values, as he later tells her, "You've just been taught to think wrong" (47).<sup>71</sup> He illustrates his fondness for her rebellious qualities by confessing, once exiled with her, "I never belonged anywhere until I met you ... [F]rom the beginning you didn't have the same hardness as the rest of the Hunters. It's not *easy* for you" (172; emphasis in original). Her performance of dissenting femininity makes her attractive to Fade. By identifying Deuce's demonstration of empathy as an aspect of her character "from the beginning," Fade reinforces female compassion as intrinsic and desirable (172). The coding of her rebelliousness as heterosexually alluring reasserts traditional female characteristics as normal. College's repression of conventional modes of femininity evokes Ann M.M. Childs' discussion of female passivity as rebellious in her work "The Incompatibility of Female Friendships and Rebellion":

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<sup>71</sup> Recall Banner's introduction of the resistance movement to Deuce on Fade's orders: "Fade said I could trust you. He said you're one of us ... Our leadership is flawed. It doesn't serve the people anymore" (94). Fade also confronts Deuce with his observation, "You didn't even sleep when we got back from Nassau because you were so scared of exile. Is that the way you want to live? Do you think it's *right*?" (96; emphasis in original).

When the protagonists try to counter an oppressive society, especially in the examples where oppression comes via control methods strongly associated with girls ... the texts explicitly create heroines who rebel against stereotypically female values, but they do so in a passive, stereotypically feminine way. (191)

Fade's attraction to Deuce's compassionate personality validates, and therefore, implicitly constructs, her dissenting behaviour. Deuce's sentimentality represents a "passive" and "stereotypically female" form of havoc-making (191). In her ultimate exhibition of compassion, Deuce admits to false crimes in order to prevent the exile of her brotherly confidant, Stone, which leads to her exile Topside. Fade supports this exhibition of female self-sacrifice by sharing in her expulsion—falsely implicating himself in her supposedly criminal ventures. Nevertheless, having lived Topside as a child, Fade's self-expulsion is also a romantic gesture that prefigures Deuce as a damsel who must be protected from the threatening, unknown environment above. Childs explains that "The social narrative and gender roles demand a passive romantic heroine for the hero to protect, regardless of the heroine's desires" (95). Deuce and Fade's romantic relationship operates as a mechanism to undercut her physical strength and to reassert Fade as both the male action and romance hero of the text. His power remains superior. His influence in the construction of Deuce's feminized havoc-making subtextually reaffirms the heteronormative notion of female autonomy as comparably inferior to male agency.

Dependent on Fade's knowledge of Topside, Deuce becomes a traditionally passive female sidekick. In *Ink-Stained Amazons*, Stuller explains that "the sidekick ... is traditionally of lesser power than the hero, generally in need of rescue, and often serves the narrative purpose of comic relief" (92). Inness further distinguishes the "traditional

female sidekick” role as one that “perpetuate[s] the ideology that only men are truly tough” (*Tough Girls* 96). Reflecting Stuller and Inness’ distinctions, Deuce continues to perform as a sidekick to Fade while Topside; however, this occurs more frequently in feminine ways. For example, in an effort to protect her from her environment, Fade “shooe[s]” her “back indoors” to facilitate the slow acclimatization of her skin to the sun (Aguirre 139). Her ensuing confinement to their temporary dwelling space emulates a patriarchal separate spheres paradigm for gender roles. Deuce describes:

I sat in the storeroom while Fade handled the actual work, and I kept busy examining the items piled in dusty, papery boxes ... Through the open door, I watched Fade work ...  
He turned and saw me staring. ‘Find anything good?’  
‘Maybe.’  
I prowled some more, frustrated by his refusal to let me help outside. I wondered if I’d always be so useless Topside. (140)

Relegated to the domestic space, Deuce watches as Fade performs the “real work” outside of their home (140). His refusal to accept her assistance is an act of romantic protection which simultaneously affirms that her knowledge, skills and power make a secondary contribution to their collaborative survival. She supports his endeavours to secure their survival by providing the more passive tasks of scavenging for supplies. As a result of her restricted mobility, Deuce becomes enthralled with reading a fantasy tale she had discovered entitled *The Day Boy and The Night Girl*. Upon perusing the book, Deuce conveys, “I forgot my worries. I forgot the danger ... I flipped to the next page, lightheaded with wonder” (141). Analogous to gendered activities within a separate spheres paradigm, Deuce’s confinement to their home provokes her demonstration of conventionally female behaviours—such as escapist reading—while Fade exudes



physical mobility in his labouring outdoors. Deuce also admits, “I can read, some. Not as well as Fade” (203), prefiguring a romanticized moment in which Fade “without asking ... opened it [Deuce’s book] and began to read” to her until she had fallen asleep (174). Ostensibly an instance of intimacy that softens Deuce’s affections for Fade, Deuce takes on the role of a subordinate romance heroine. She tacitly concedes to his superior literacy skills by immediately listening to his oration.

As his sidekick, Deuce yields to Fade’s objective to find “the green land promised in his father’s stories” from his childhood (143). Although not directly aligned with her biological father, Deuce’s compliance to follow Fade in his search indirectly affiliates her behaviours as directed by a deceased father-figure.<sup>72</sup> Fade’s father thus constructs her knowledge of Topside through Fade. Demonstrating her psychological and physical dependency on Fade and his father, Deuce admits to Tegan, “I don’t know anything about this world. Well, nothing but what Fade tells me” (179) and asserts, “I’d put my faith in Fade’s sire, and the fact that his stories must be true” (205). Fade’s pursuit of his Father’s ‘promised land’ resonates with Stuller’s mention of Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope’s observation in *The Female Hero in American and British Literature*. Stuller indicates that, for Pearson and Pope, the traditional male hero’s ‘quest is for the father’ who has exclusive knowledge about the hero’s identity (108). Occupying a supporting role, Deuce aids Fade in his journey to discover more knowledge about his origins.<sup>73</sup> She becomes an ancillary hero that accompanies him in his traditional male-heroic quest. As a

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<sup>72</sup> In the enclave, children, or “brats,” are removed from their biological parents when they are “old enough to take basic brat schooling” (58).

<sup>73</sup> Before Stalker’s arrival as an ally in their group, Deuce and Tegan journey with Fade (upon his directive) to find a library in hopes of discovering more about the apocalyptic disaster that befell Topside. Fade’s father also informs Fade’s knowledge about the existence of a library (Aguirre 149).

committed sidekick, Deuce also explicitly confirms his dominance as the leader of their group. For instance, when Stalker displays an attitude of resistance Deuce declares, ““You realize you’re not in charge. You never will be. Fade thinks your blades will come in handy on the trip and he’s probably right. But if you try to hurt any one of us, *especially* Tegan, it’ll be the last thing you ever do”” (Aguirre 204; emphasis in original). Deuce confirms her lesser power and agreeably accepts a model of heroism that positions her as subordinate to Fade.

Similar to Deuce, Tris’ romantic interest, Four, neutralizes her emotional self-containment. At the outset of *Divergent*, Tris displays the behaviour of “The typical [male] hero” in her display of ‘enigmatic silence’ (Heinecken 31). For instance, adopting Dauntless’ socio-political mandate for a constant projection of fearlessness, Tris remains silent and dismisses an opportunity to console her colleague, Al, during the initiates’ first night in the dormitories (Roth 77). She grapples with contradictory ethics: “I should comfort him—I should *want* to comfort him, because I was raised that way. Instead, I feel disgust. Someone who looks so strong shouldn’t act so weak ... He is just inches away from me—I should touch him. No. I put my hand down” (74; emphasis in original). Tris performs emotional toughness by establishing a physical boundary. She isolates her body and adopts a silence that, as Heinecken notes, is a convention of “male-centred texts,” as they “typically reflect [the male hero’s] concern with maintaining boundaries between self and other, repressing the body, and dominating others” (36). Tris refuses to appear weak by showing compassion through touch and speech. Paradoxically, she demonstrates an essentialized paradigm of femininity in her willingness to protect Al by taking his

place in front of a target during dagger practice. Tris describes the impetus for her voluntary substitution as being derived from instinct:

I look from Al's wide, dark eyes to his shaking hands to the determined set of Four's jaw. Anger bubbles in my chest and bursts from my mouth ... I am stupid for speaking up at all ... The last thing I want to do is stand in front of that target, but I can't back down now ... I will not flinch. (Roth 162)

She demonstrates a masculinized resolution when she displays a deep-seated, characteristically female desire to safeguard the life of a comrade in distress. However, by perceiving her conduct as insubordinate and “stupid,” Tris demonstrates an awareness of how her behaviour contradicts the individualistic virtues of the Dauntless faction. Like Deuce, the dissidence of Tris' compassionate personality reaffirms female self-sacrifice as intrinsically normative.

As her instructor and love-interest, Four fashions Tris' displays of bravery while simultaneously distinguishing her sympathetic character as desirable. For instance, he sustains Tris' performance of fearlessness when she stands in Al's place in front of the target. Similar to Peeta and Jack's use of language to craft the heroic images of Katniss and Saba, Four uses language to provoke Tris' projection of courage as he throws each dagger:

‘You about done, Stiff?’ asks Four.  
I remember Al's wide eyes and his quiet sobs at night and shake my head.  
‘No.’  
‘Eyes open, then.’ He taps the spot between his eyebrows.  
I stare at him, pressing my hands to my sides so no one can see them shake ...  
‘Come on, Stiff,’ he says. ‘Let someone else stand there and take it.’  
Why is he trying to goad me into giving up? Does he want me to fail?  
‘Shut up, Four!’ (163-164; emphasis in original)

Similar to Haymitch's control over Katniss' bodily behaviours, Four's instruction to keep her "eyes open" likewise directs Tris' body language to signify fortitude. Her rejection of Four's allusion to her weakness—compounded with her memory of Al's sorrow—induces a hard resolve to assert an unwavering boldness. Four, thus, directly shapes her behaviour in adherence to a model of male heroism. However, like Fade, he simultaneously endorses her compassionate, female instincts as justly subversive. He reveals to her, "I have a theory that selflessness and bravery aren't all that different. All your life you've been training to forget yourself, so when you're in danger, it becomes your first instinct" (336) and justifies his previous 'taunting' by explaining, "I was reminding you that if you failed, someone else would have to take your place" (311). In response, Tris asserts, "He's figured out more about me than I have" (336). Four validates her intrinsic magnanimity and self-denial. In doing so, he empowers her courage to preserve the lives of others and vindicates it as rightfully resistant to Dauntless' ideals. Four's words construct Tris' identity for her—containing the danger of her masculine traits by re-scripting her boldness as an acceptable stimulus for traditional feminine self-sacrifice. Tris' inability to perceive autonomously her selflessness as an aspect of her identity portrays her as a traditional female action heroine. She embodies what Heinecken observes to be a common trait of such a heroine: Tris is an "unformed adolescent in search of identity" (24). She is able to experience a self-actualizing moment through Four's superior wisdom. His commendation of her self-denial can also be understood as a simultaneous induction of his politically dissenting ideals.

However, Tris' adoption of Four's disclosed political beliefs correlates with her

simultaneous construction as a romance heroine. For instance, revealing a tattoo of each faction's insignia on his body in an intimate moment with Tris, Four asserts, "I think we've made a mistake ... We've all started to put down the virtues of the other factions in the process of bolstering our own. I don't want to do that. I want to be brave, and selfless, *and smart, and kind, and honest*" (Roth 405; emphasis in original). He postulates a model of heroism that embodies the political virtues of each faction; he advocates for a hero that embodies traditionally masculine and feminine traits and that is able to exert self-mastery over these colliding qualities. Just as the factions' emblems are inscribed upon his body, Four impresses this model of heroism on Tris' consciousness, as she tacitly concedes to his vision by sensually "brush[ing] over Abnegation's symbol with [her] fingertips" (405). Thus, sexuality, passivity and rebelliousness operate in conjunction to undercut Tris' autonomous power: she becomes a politically docile action heroine who, in the fashion of a conventional romance heroine, assumes Four's rebellious ideology in order to support the views of the man for whom she has romantic feelings. Tris' political impressionability evokes Childs' discussion on the function of female passivity in achieving a happy ending:

Passivity and the prince are connected—because the heroine does not take rebellious action on her own accord, but needs to be pulled into it, her passivity makes her eligible for the prince and a happy ending. (191)

Although Childs is referring to the heroine being 'pulled into her rebellion' by a female friend, the imposition of Four's dissenting ideals can also be understood as 'pulling' Tris into ideological rebellion. In turn, Four's endorsement of her recalcitrant feminine characteristics reasserts her desirability and her worthiness of the reward of heterosexual

romance.<sup>74</sup> She thus becomes the political sidekick and the suitable romantic partner.

Similar to the coding of Deuce's rebelliousness as desirable, Four later reveals an additional, sexual motivation for provoking her hard male heroic disposition during dagger practice. In a conversation about his taunting, Tris recalls Four telling her:

‘My *first* instinct is to push you until you break, just see how hard I have to press,’ he says ...

‘Fear doesn't shut you down; it wakes you up. I've seen it. It's fascinating.’ He releases me but doesn't pull away, his hand grazing my neck. ‘Sometimes I just ... want to see it again. Want to see you awake.’ (Roth 313-314; emphasis in original)

Four depicts Tris' boldness as sexually alluring. He cites his attraction to her resolute composure and his longing to witness more of her fearless behavior as his personal incentive for inciting her masculine hardness during dagger practice. Reciprocating his amorous touch as he speaks to her, Tris dissolves her previously established physical boundaries and describes, “I set my hands on his waist. I can't remember deciding to do that ... I pull myself against his chest, wrapping my arms around him” (314). In this moment of physical intimacy, Tris' brashness intertwines with her erotic appeal—she becomes a “permeable” female heroine by responding to Four's sexual desire and by making her body available to his (Heinecken 73). Demonstrating a trope of romance fiction, Tris' awareness of her own sexual longings rests on the presence and sexual desire of the dominant male hero.

Tris' heroism—alongside the other havoc-making heroines in this study—further embodies an intersection of sexuality, femininity and fierceness. As adolescents who are on an exploratory journey toward a decisive identity, the havoc-making heroines of this

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<sup>74</sup> I further discuss the normative implications of heterosexual happy endings in Part IV of this study.

study represent the danger young females pose to a real-world patriarchal social order. Their undefined identities, alongside the constant implicit and explicit construction of their bodies and behaviours by male authority figures, illuminate a social need to control adolescent females' masculine and feminine heroic traits. To contain their masculinity, male figures in these texts emphasize the havoc-making heroines' sexual attractiveness—preventing them from destabilizing the patriarchal power constructs that subtextually undergird their adventures through the gendered expectations of the Action/Adventure and Romance genres. Elaborating on the intertwinement of sexuality, femininity and fierceness in the context of the female action heroine's disempowerment in film, Inness asserts in *Tough Girls*:

Paradoxically, tough attributes are used by the mainstream media in a variety of ways to heighten the sexual allure of women. This emphasis on the sexual desirability of tough women ... is yet another way that the media diffuse the danger inherent in tough, independent women ... [A]lthough tough women are aloof and unavailable on the surface, their toughness undergoes a melt-down when, inevitably, they fall for a man. (82)

Tris' exterior, unfeeling sentimentality melts down when faced with Four's affections and her developing romantic desire for his body and his ideals. Four empowers Tris by validating her feminized selflessness as a justified provocation for her explicit hardness. He simultaneously diffuses her power by rendering such defiance sexually appealing. Four possesses the authority to lessen and magnify her power according to his will.

An additional illustration of Four's construction of Tris' power in the interchanging postures of an action sidekick and a romance heroine occurs when they

both enter his fear landscape.<sup>75</sup> Obedient to her love-interest's movements, Tris "follows" Four "into the dark" of his fear landscape when she takes hold of his 'offered' hand (Roth 321). In the landscape, Tris demonstrates intellectual lucidity and physical strength to assist him in his navigation of each simulated fear-obstacle—helping him overcome his fears and, ultimately, facilitating his sense of completeness as a male action hero. For example, when suspended on a metal platform high above the city Tris relates, "He removes his hand from mine and wraps his arm around my shoulders instead. At first I think it's to protect me—but no, he's having trouble breathing and he needs me to steady him" (322). In this instance, Tris takes on the opposing role to Katniss, Saba and Deuce—whose love-interests emotionally and physically steady them—because she acts as the male hero that stabilizes the disquiet of his heroine. Four allows Tris to usurp his male dominance, permitting her to take control of his body for his survival in the landscape. Faced with increasingly confining surroundings, Tris appeals to reason to regenerate Four's intellectual coherency. She explains to a petrified Four, "It's easier to face the fear head on, right? ... So what you need to do is make the space smaller. Make it worse so it gets better" and orders, "Arms around me" (324). Tris displays a male authority in her construction of Four's body. Her control of her circumstances calls on Heineken's differentiation between male and female heroes and their relationship to their environment:

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<sup>75</sup> The "fear landscape" is an embodied simulation in which an initiate's physical surroundings are presented as "a series of virtual obstacles" that reflect his/her fears (Roth 296). Four explains that the fear landscape is the final stage of initiation that "requires you to control both your emotions and your body—to combine the physical abilities you learned in stage one with the emotional mastery you learned in stage two. To keep a level head" (297). Tris follows Four into his landscape as he practices controlling his fears.



Female heroes have a very different relationship to the external world, to others, and, consequently, to their own bodies than male heroes. While male heroes frequently function as boundary-crossing figures existing in a borderland, the body of the female hero *is* the borderland, positioned as both vulnerable to penetration by and reactive to her external environment. (134; emphasis in original)

Tris—and by extension, Four, through her commands—alters her body and her emotional behaviour in conformity to the changing circumstances of her environment. She is psychologically and physically malleable; however, it is notable that her malleability relies upon the influence of Four’s subconscious—he implicitly constructs the environment Tris must adapt to for his sake. Thus, Four possesses the undergirding power to shape how Tris exhibits her heroic power.

Although Tris plays the role of the characteristically female action heroine, she also acts as a romance heroine while in Four’s fear landscape. Heinecken notes that “within the romance tradition, the heroine is actually quite proactive in the sense that she manages to substantially alter her environment ... [I]t is made softer, friendlier, and happier through the efforts of the heroine” (Heinecken 61). Tris demonstrates a romance heroine’s power to soften the inhibiting impact of the environment on Four. Her ability to pacify his emotions enables him to “calm [his] heartbeat down” and, thus, induces the program to move onto the next fear-obstacle (Roth 325). Paradoxically, she alters her environment by conforming to it—revealing her adherence to Four’s model of heroism that negotiates and controls her masculine and feminine strengths.<sup>76</sup> She further exhibits

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<sup>76</sup> However, Tris destabilizes her self-mastery of both masculine and feminine powers and emphasizes her sexuality. After ordering that Four wrap his arms around her, she expresses, “Obediently, he slips both arms around my waist. I smile at the wall. I am not enjoying this. I am not, not even a little bit, no” (Roth 324). She expresses, “You know, most boys would enjoy being trapped in close quarters with a girl” (325). Displacing her steadfast desire to assist Four in overcoming his fears, she momentarily demonstrates a

Four's model of heroism when encountering a simulation of his abusive father in his fear landscape. With his simulated father posed and ready to strike, Tris relates, "He [Four] looks years older; he looks years younger ... I dart in front of him and the belt cracks against my wrist, wrapping around it. A hot pain races up my arm to my elbow" (Roth 330). Tris' instinctual, feminine desire to protect him provokes her masculine courage. Her self-sacrifice prefigures her willingness die by Four's hands in an effort to help him breach the simulation that controls his body at the conclusion of the novel. Physically battling Four, Tris conveys, "I am begging. I am pathetic. Tears make my face hot. 'Please. See me' ... 'Please see me, Tobias, please!' ... I turn the gun in my hands and press it into Tobias' palm" (475-476). Her emotional pleas help Four overcome the simulation that controls him and, thus, enables him to operate a computer to stop the simulation that is manipulating the Dauntless soldiers. Four rewards her acts of self-sacrifice with kisses and gentle embraces that reaffirm his love for her (331, 478). By enacting Four's conception of heroic compassion and courage, Tris indirectly prevents the Erudite uprising.

Lastly, Cassie's havoc-making behaviours in *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave* reflect her internalization of her male counterparts' skills and ideological values. Returning to the influence of the father figure, Cassie's biological father—much like the fathers of Katniss and Deuce—plays a key role in forming her identity at the outset of her narrative. He imparts to her basic skills in firearms and bequeaths to her a gun that she personifies and

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heightened sexual interest in him. In her discussion of "killer-women," Inness explains how "women who display a keen interest in sexual relations with men, demonstrat[e] that their tough attitudes and actions fail to interfere with their primary role sex objects" (*Tough Girls* 70). Tris cannot exude complete physical impenetrability and an emotional aloofness to ensure the well-being of her partner; her self-mastery is incomplete. Her power is undercut by her sexual desire.

regards as her closest companion. Residing at the refugee camp, Camp Ashpit, Cassie describes:

He [her father] pulled aside an old tarp lying in a corner. Underneath it was an M16 semiautomatic assault rifle. The same rifle that would become my bestie after everyone else was gone ... He showed me how it worked. How to hold it. How to aim. How to switch out a clip ... I think he was pleasantly surprised by what a quick study I was. (Yancey 74)

Cassie's proficiency with her weaponry, alongside her sentimental attachment to her M16, signifies her constructed distancing from traditional femininity. Her father bestows upon her the responsibility of safeguarding her younger brother, concluding their firearms lesson with the instruction, "From now on, never let Sam out of your sight ... If someone tries to take that rifle from you ... shoot them" (75). It is the authority of Cassie's father that sanctions her masculinized courageousness. After her father's death and Sammy's abduction, Cassie demonstrates emotional reservation and chooses a lone wolf lifestyle. She explains, "The first rule of surviving the 4<sup>th</sup> Wave is don't trust anyone ... The only way to stay alive is to stay alone" and recounts how she "yanked back on the trigger" as she "emptied the clip" into a dying soldier out of mistrust (9, 14). Her father's instruction, therefore, encodes her psyche and demeanor with the role of the male Action/Adventure hero.

Her unwavering resolve to deploy all necessary tactics to ensure her survival stems from her desire to rescue Sammy at all costs. Risking her life by infiltrating Camp Haven,<sup>77</sup> Cassie harnesses her advanced firearm training to kill Sammy's guard. She describes, "I have one chance, one shot though the hole I had made earlier. If I miss,

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<sup>77</sup> The Other's main military base, indoctrination camp for their child-soldier army and preparation ground for the 5<sup>th</sup> Wave.

Sammy is dead ... But I had an excellent instructor. One of the best marksmen in the world—even when there were seven billion people on it” (439). She ascribes her success in retrieving Sammy from his guard to Evan’s training and his above-average marksmanship, as he augments the target skills first introduced to her by her father. However, her ability to eliminate Sammy’s guard becomes possible only through Evan’s elimination of *her* guard first. He furtively positions himself in the execution-room grate above her guard. Cassie describes how “Evan’s bullet tears into his [Cassie’s guard] fully human brain, killing him instantly” (439). It is Evan’s adroitness that physically liberates Cassie and allows her to recover her sibling. She can also be read as a romantic heroine in this scene, as it is Evan’s efforts that rescue her from her imperiled state. His autonomous action produces her power.

Evan’s implicit guidance and physical assistance further facilitate Cassie’s infiltration of Camp Haven. For instance, while under the evaluation of Dr. Pam, an Other, Cassie subdues the doctor into an unconscious state and subsequently recollects the instructions previously delineated by Evan:

She goes limp. I immediately let go of the strap, and she falls face first onto the floor. I check her pulse.  
*I know it’ll be tempting, but you can’t kill her. She and everyone else running the base is linked to a monitoring system located in the command center. If she goes down, all hell breaks loose.* (381; emphasis in original)

Evan’s directives reveal his superior knowledge, tact, and authority over a subordinate Cassie; his divulgence of Camp Haven’s inner workings safeguards her welfare and permits her to continue on her mission. However, by buttressing Cassie’s cause, Evan

simultaneously furthers his own political agenda: to shut down the Others' base.<sup>78</sup> Evan asserts his authority by eventually disregarding Cassie's demand to retrieve Sammy independently. He, thus, secretly infiltrates Camp Haven (391). In the fashion of Romance fiction, Evan's actions can simultaneously be read as a depiction of the romantic hero valiantly aiding of his love-interest in distress.

Indeed, throughout her clandestine intrusion, Cassie demonstrates psychological distress by doubting her power to complete the mission. Before her awareness of Evan's infiltration, she admits to herself, "Evan was right: This solo act was doomed, no matter how many backup plans we concocted. If only Evan were here..." (386). Like Katniss, Saba, Deuce and Tris, Cassie's heroic hardness relies upon the substantially greater power of her male love-interest. The hero's presence emboldens her actions. Discovering that Evan has infiltrated the base restores her hope for success and provokes her to relinquish her exterior vulnerability as a disguised, weaponless child. She thus locates the base's armory and dons military fatigues and new weapons to disguise herself as one of the human child-soldiers guarding the base. As she disguises herself, she recognizes her increasing empowerment: "I'm all jacked up. Not only have I evened the odds a little, I know Evan is here, and Evan will not give up until I am safe or he is dead" (408). Cassie dissolves her fear by externally encoding herself with signifiers of toughness—characteristic of the female action hero in Action/Adventure fiction—and by psychologically entrusting her life to Evan's competency—resonating with the emotional dependency that is characteristic of damsels in Romance fiction.

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<sup>78</sup> Recall Evan's conversation with Cassie in which he tells her that he was opposed to the Others' approach to living on Earth. He proposed: "Coexistence ... Not many of my people agreed with me. They saw pretending to be human as beneath them" (372).

Evan further softens Cassie by shaping her traditionally feminine behaviors during her rehabilitation at his farmhouse. Like Deuce, Cassie must remain in the domestic space of the home as she recovers from her bullet wound. She relates that after an attempt to follow Evan at night, “He [Evan] didn’t get mad. Didn’t accuse me of not trusting him. He just said, ‘You shouldn’t be out here, Cassie,’ and escorted me inside” (171). Evan’s desire to protect Cassie from the threatening environment outdoors leads him to restrict her bodily movements. Just as Deuce had occupied her time with reading fantasy literature while confined to her dwelling quarters, Cassie likewise engages in reading when Evan leaves his farmhouse to hunt at night. Recounting their domestic dynamic, Cassie describes:

I waited there until he returned from his forays in the dark, sleeping on the big leather sofa or reading one of his mom’s battered paperback romance novels with the buffed-out half-naked guys on the covers and the ladies dressed in full-length ball gowns caught in midswoon. Then around three in the morning he would come home, and we’d throw some more wood on the fire and talk. (171)

Evan, like Fade, exercises his male authority through his mobility—undertaking traditionally male tasks such as hunting and protecting his territory. As a result, Evan relegates Cassie to the domestic sphere where she engages in a conventionally “feminine” activity of reading romance novels. This scene is meta-textually aware of the romance tropes it employs—Cassie, like her young female readers, engages with a romanticized portrait of traditional gender roles through the fiction she reads. Cassie escapes into the fictive space of literature as she awaits the return of her guardian male hero.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Recall Cassie’s assertion: “He’s [Evan] all I’ve got now. He’s my itty-bitty bush growing out of the cliff that I cling to. *Help me, Evan. Don’t let me fall. Don’t let me lose the part that makes me human*” (280);

Reflecting a continued social ambivalence toward young women's display of hyper-masculine strength and assertiveness, the behaviours of Katniss, Saba, Tris, Deuce and Cassie present an incongruous, gendered composite of contemporary female heroism. Although these young women exert a degree of autonomy in their desire to protect others, their agency is implicitly and explicitly limited by the control of their considerably more powerful male counterparts. Their love-interests position them as action sidekicks while simultaneously relegating them to performing the passive virtues of a female romance heroine. Male heroes subtextually fashion these havoc-making heroines into the political leaders that they require to support and enact their dissenting ideals. At the same time, re-entrenching what Childs recognizes as the "unconscious ideals of passivity defining femininity," these havoc-makers desire to become romantic partners who are willing to sacrifice themselves for their love-interests (191). These heroines develop psychological and physical dependencies on their male love-interests: they are stilled, steadied and, therefore, empowered by their heterosexual romantic partners. Their male counterparts inspire them to be collaborative heroines and to abandon their solitary livelihoods. The power of romance in influencing the ways in which these havoc-makers rebel against their governments re-entrenches a stereotypical female focus on heterosexual love.<sup>80</sup> Part IV follows through to the happily-ever-afters posited in the YA dystopian literature of this study, demonstrating that—as with the depictions of female appearance and behaviour—the contradictory social positions of the havoc-making heroine temporarily

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emphasis in original). Evan affirms her humanity. Her thoughts illustrate an emotional dependency on Evan's steadying presence.

<sup>80</sup>In "The Incompatibility of Female Friendships and Rebellion," Childs further discusses the reinforcement of this stereotype in YA dystopias that use female competition as a form of social control.

allow for dissenting actions and beliefs. In the end, these women must grow up and assume conventional feminine roles in their redeemed societies



#### **Part IV**

#### **Epilogue: Homecoming Heroines**

Writers of young adult novels have always carried this identical burden, educating their readers through the pains of social and physical metamorphosis while entertaining them ... [A]lthough perhaps, in the end, there are no limits to suffering when one is a young adult, patterns in utopian fiction show us that there are uses for this suffering. Out of it, one may, slowly, with hope and action, emerge into a less painful adulthood.

—Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro, “Suffering in Utopia: Testing the Limits in Young Adult Novels.” *Utopian and Dystopian: Writing for Children and Young Adults*; p.135

Parts II and III have shown that, on the surface, the havoc-making heroine supports an ideology that values the subversion of conventional feminine virtues. She is an action heroine who rebels against the dominating social order of her dystopian world with a physical potency, the accouterments of a warrior, and with an individualistic attitude. However, as I have explored, her male counterparts construct her subversive behaviours and bodily adornment in order to support their masculine desires and the broader, patriarchal, social structures. Her ostensible empowerment competes with her presentation as a romance heroine. Demonstrating a capacity for romantic love, underpinned by sexual desire, the havoc-maker’s body and her behaviours exhibit her alignment with the conventional passivity of the feminine realm. Male authority figures and love interests control the clothes she wears, presenting her as a vulnerable site of sexual awakening through her feminine or eroticized attire. In addition, the male hero’s attention remains a key focal point for the heroine and he often rewards her—implicitly and explicitly—for displaying feminine characteristics; these rewards encourage her to continue demonstrating the soft and hard characteristics whose combination initially drew the hero to our female protagonist. By extension, the male hero’s efforts to foster the

heroine's maternal instincts—to demonstrate consideration for others and to collaborate with the community—play a significant role in the heroine's identity. Finally, the role of the heroine's family also feminizes her behavior, for she begins her rebellious actions in order to protect or rescue a family member and/or a love interest: it is not the betterment of her community that propels her into action, rather it is a threat to her family by the tyrannical government or despot that inculcates her into the realm of sociopolitical resistance.

Although the “surface ideology” of a contemporary YA havoc-making heroine's narrative seemingly reflects the growing autonomy of today's young women, it is the text's “complicating (sub)text” that is of significance in this study (Brown and St. Claire 10). As Brown and St. Claire note in *Declarations of Independence*:

The preoccupation with self that is characteristic of adolescents makes them particularly receptive to fiction. They tend to identify strongly with a story's characters, share their dilemmas, and participate in choices that the characters make, keenly aware of the values that their actions imply. (9)

The subtext of the havoc-making heroine's narrative denotes a social ambivalence toward the propriety of young women's increasing self-assertion and agency: both her masculine and feminine traits must be carefully controlled. If uncontained, a young woman can imperil the utopian hetero-normative paradigm of the nuclear family—she may grow to be too independent and too self-sufficient to desire motherhood. At the same time, the heroine must display a degree of independence and autonomy or risk appearing too feminine—too weak in body and mind—to buttress the machinations of male-designed personal, social, political or economic schema.

This section considers the functions of the narrative endings of Katniss, Saba,

Deuce, Tris and Cassie, to determine if they reveal the same ambivalent attitudes to female heroism. Do these conclusions uphold a surface ideology of individualism and independence, or do they sustain a subtextual conformity to traditional strictures for female propriety? I contend that the havoc-makers' endings are a culmination of their gendered construction as heroines from the intersecting genres of Action/Adventure fiction and Romance fiction. This collision of genres operates simultaneously throughout the entirety of these texts to produce a latent re-scripting of conventional, patriarchal feminine expectations. Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie successfully establish—or begin to establish a movement toward—a utopian social realm that significantly improves upon the original post-apocalyptic dystopia that suppressed them. They return to a domestic, home-like space at the conclusion of their narratives. The narrative recuperates them into the portrait of a formed, or relational, nuclear family in which they become committed partners and mothers. They represent the life-giving source of the redeemed society that is, or will be, embodied by their children. For instance, at the conclusion of *Mockingjay*, Katniss returns to a desolate District Twelve and lives with Peeta in the preserved Victor's Village. With the fall of President Snow's reign and the death of the emerging despot, President Coin, Katniss remarks upon the regeneration of her homeland into a state of vitality and exuberance:

We're not alone. A few hundred others return because, whatever has happened, this is our home. With the mines closed, they plow the ashes into the earth and plant food. Machines from the Capitol break ground for a new factory where we will make medicines. Although no one seeds it, the Meadow turns green again. (*Mockingjay* 388)

Unlike District Twelve from the *The Hunger Games*, Katniss' homeland becomes liberated from starvation, sickness, and despondency under a new political dictum that favours “‘collective thinking’” and community development (*Mockingjay* 379). In tandem, the sense of self-fulfillment she feels from her relationship with Peeta buttresses her social circumstances. She asserts, “his arms are there to comfort me ... What I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. I have plenty fire myself. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction ... And only Peeta can give me that” (388). Her survival depends upon Peeta's presence and his ability to tame her “fire.” It is ultimately his love that empowers her to exist in this utopian world, as he provides her with the hope and “promise that life can go on” (388). Addressing Katniss' marriage as a form of utopia, Katherine R. Broad's piece “‘The Dandelion in the Spring' Utopia as Romance in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* Trilogy” asserts that Katniss' “character also imparts a very different message, one that tells girls the importance of growing up to find satisfaction in heterosexual love and the nuclear family” (117-118). Indeed, Katniss becomes a devoted wife and mother, as she conveys that “They play in the Meadow. The dancing girl ... the boy ... It took five, ten, fifteen years for me to agree. But Peeta wanted them so badly” (*Mockingjay* 389). Peeta once again moulds Katniss' body by convincing her to adhere to his desire to establish a family. Despite her fear and reluctance to have children earlier in the series,<sup>81</sup> Katniss eventually submits to Peeta and assumes her feminine duties within a patriarchal system that is, simultaneously, the utopian world in which they live. In

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<sup>81</sup> Recall Katniss' reaction in *Catching Fire* to Peeta's announcement of Katniss' pregnancy. She asserts “Isn't this the thing I dreaded most about the wedding, about the future—the loss of my children to the Games? ... I recoil at even the suggestion of marriage or a family” (257).

accordance with the Romance genre, Katniss moves from a “tomboyish” state of aggression and adolescence to a mature woman who is “ultimately recuperated into patriarchal order” (Heinecken 53, 28). Her children’s idyllic existence embodies her redeemed world and affirms her stereotyped gender role in the regulation of a seemingly new social order.

Saba likewise discovers her identity by committing her life to Jack at the end of *Raging Star*. After DeMalo’s assassination, Jack, disguised as a Tonton commander, disbands the Tonton regime and declares New Eden a free place for all to live—mysteriously departing afterwards (*Raging Star* 413). Saba describes, “New Eden will remain in name. But in spirit an body, it’s already startin to be somethin else. Somethin good an right an hopeful” (419). Now that they can benefit from the “secrets of the seedstore” Saba is increasingly “hopeful fer New Eden ... fer myself” (419, 420). Saba’s repetition of “hope” connotes a utopian world in which—much like Katniss’ reinvigorated District Twelve that remains only in name—there is freedom from starvation, slavery, and, presumably, governmental deception. However, the resurgence of a utopian realm does not provide Saba with a sense of self-fulfillment, as she leaves her community in New Eden to find the Big Water and locate Jack’s sailboat. In her journey to find him, she repeats, “I jest wanna see where he’s gone” (427). Her repetitive words reveal her desperation to achieve fulfillment via Jack’s love, presence, and provision of a home.

Saba’s journey throughout the Dustlands relies upon her search for males—Lugh and Jack—in order to attain psychological tranquility and self-completion. Congruently,

after spotting Jack's sailboat she follows him. Treading water at the side of his boat, Jack responds by evoking the Rule of Three: "If I pull you in, that'll make it three to me ... How did you find me? The heartstone?" (430). Convincing him to "haul [her] aboard," she echoes his words to her in his declaration of love at the end of *Blood Red Road*: "I don't need no stone to find you. I'd find you anywhere" (*Raging Star* 431, *Blood Red Road* 457). Once again, Saba ventriloquizes Jack's words in order to articulate her desires, revealing his sustained authority in the construction of her language and her behavior. Joined by Nero, Jack designates his sailboat a home-like space. He tells Saba, "I didn't figure on it bein so social out here. Not to mention domestic" (*Raging Star* 431). The sailboat exemplifies the home in which Saba, Jack and their pet, Nero, reside. As the patriarch of the household, Jack "steers [the] boat on with steady hands" (431). His male authority affirms his ability to direct their home throughout their idyllic natural surroundings. Saba perceives her idealized domestic environment as a utopia that is in Jack's control—just as he is able to "steady" her psychological, emotional and physical inconstancies, he imbues their home with harmonious equilibrium and comforting direction. She assumes her duty as a lover and a potential caregiver to future progeny in her alliance with her life-giving natural environment. She "settle[s] back" and 'lifts her face to the sun' while "stripp[ed] to [her] skivvies" (431). Her stripping down to her "essential, biological womanliness" while imbibing the rejuvenating comfort of her natural environment, affirms her femininity and her implied innate duty as a nurturer (26 Byerley and Ross). Her power becomes neutralized and subordinated. Like Katniss, she takes on the role of producing citizens of the utopian order.

The conclusion to *Enclave* also establishes a prefiguring framework that suggests the beginnings of Deuce's inculcation into a normative gender paradigm. After Tegan is almost fatally wounded by an encounter with a Topside Freak-horde, Deuce demonstrates her newfound inclination to cultivate and demonstrate explicitly softer qualities. She conveys, "The Huntress in me suggested we should leave her behind, too much dead weight. I silenced that voice ... maybe I did have part of a Breeder's heart, and that possibility didn't shame me anymore" (Aguirre 223). She later affirms Stalker's classification of Tegan as a Breeder and concludes that being a Breeder was not "a bad thing. If not for them, our world would not go on, even in its limping way" (237). Under the impression that Fade romantically cares for Tegan, Deuce expresses, "Tegan was my friend, even if she'd come between Fade and me. It wasn't her fault he found her softness more appealing" (239). Deuce's shifting ideological perceptions interlace compassion, delicacy and the duty of child bearing within a definition of femaleness that is, as Deuce perceives, "appealing" to men (239). Her predilection for the virtues of traditional feminine sensibility, and her understanding of motherhood as vital to the maintenance of any social order, affirms patriarchal norms.

In the vein of Romance fiction, Fade dispels Deuce's false assumptions and declares his love for her. Rescued by Longshot—the first aged adult male that Deuce has ever encountered—Deuce and her comrades board his trade caravan and travel to Salvation: the northern utopian village that they had been seeking. Riding in the supply wagon, Fade declares his love for Deuce as she sleeps (252). Upon waking, he abides by her request and finishes reading *The Day Boy and the Night Girl*, relaying the marriage

between the two protagonists. The romantic union of the fictional characters provides Deuce with new hope: “Though some of the words were strange, hope sprang up in me. It felt like the right ending, the day boy marrying the night girl. In their triumph I found faith” (253).<sup>82</sup> She regards romantic union, and not independent agency, as the force that enables one to “triumph” over obstacles and that inspires self-efficacy (253). The tranquil family portrait of Fade reading to Deuce while Tegan lays across both of their laps in the morning light postures Deuce as the tender, silent mother-figure and Fade as the speaking, knowledgeable patriarch.<sup>83</sup> The impact of the romantic ending on Deuce’s emotions resonates with Radway’s discussion of the Smithton women’s identification with romance heroines in *Reading the Romance*:

In reading about a woman who manages to find her identity through the care of a nurturant protector and sexual partner, the Smithton readers might well be teaching themselves to believe in the worth of such a route to fulfillment and encouraging the hope that such a route might yet open up for them as it once did for the heroine. (187)

Deuce’s reading of a romance in which the heroine discovers fulfillment through her union with the male hero likewise teaches her to value romantic partnership as a conduit for achieving self-actualization. Reflexively, Deuce models how young female readers plausibly receive similar lessons by encountering romantic endings in YA dystopias that feature a female protagonist. Deuce’s feminization facilitates her restoration into

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<sup>82</sup> Recall Deuce’s identification with the heroine, the night girl. During one of the evenings in which Fade reads to Deuce, Tegan and Stalker in their winter-shelter by the river, Deuce admits, “I felt their story had some connection to mine ... In my heart I felt if she came to a good end, then I might also” (217).

<sup>83</sup> Deuce describes her maternal nurturance over Tegan while in the wagon. She conveys, “Tegan lay across my lap and Fade’s. Every now and then, I gave her a little water. She had gotten too weak to swallow it unless I rubbed her throat” (251). Similarly, before Deuce and her comrades are rescued by Longshot, Tegan, with feverish eyes, stresses to Deuce, “I don’t like it when you leave, Mama” (244). Tegan’s conflation of Deuce and the memory of her mother postures Deuce in the normative role of caregiver.



patriarchal thinking. Her reception of the euphoric ending to her beloved fantasy-romance fuses with the hope represented by the utopian vitality of Salvation. Just after receiving the ending to her book, Deuce sees Salvation for the first time: “The place was *wondrous*. The buildings were all new, built of wood and clay ... *People* walked the streets openly and none of them appeared to be armed. They were clean and well fed” (Aguirre 253; emphasis in original). Like New Eden and post-rebellion District Twelve, Salvation is a place of safety, sanitation, and plenty. With ‘Fade leading the way,’ Deuce and Stalker meet Momma Oaks who takes them in (259). By following Fade through the settlement, Deuce affirms his authority and her comfort in his direction as they navigate their new home. Her confidence relies upon her return to a home-like environment that offers security, Fade’s presence, the promise of romantic fulfillment, and the ostensible self-understanding that ensues.

Unlike Katniss, Saba and Deuce, Tris and Cassie retreat from their oppressive political regimes to spaces of temporary refuge that appear utopian in comparison. At the conclusions to the first installments of *Divergent* and *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave*, war and tyrannical government powers still remain and still threaten to dominate Tris and Cassie. However, these young women attain their self-fulfillment and confidence through the reassuring constancy of their partners’ love and the security they offer. In the final pages of *Divergent*, Peter, Four, Tris, her brother Caleb, and Four’s father, Marcus, flee from Abnegation and board a train to Amity. Tris explains, “The kindness of Amity will comfort us for a while, though we can’t stay there forever. Soon the Erudite and the corrupt Dauntless leaders will look for us, and we will have to move on” (Roth 485). Tris

portrays Amity as utopian through her belief that the faction will be harmonious, hospitable and that it will offer provisional security and protection from the violent political forces that persecute them. Nonetheless, like Saba's reliance on Jack, Tris' conception of a veritable utopia depends on Four's presence, his pronouncement of love for her, and the psychological euphoria and physical comfort they stimulate. She describes:

I lean my head into his shoulder, taking deep breaths of his skin. Since he saved me from the attack, I have associated his smell with safety, so as long as I focus on it, I feel safe now ... Tobias pulls me against him. We bend our knees and our heads so that we are enclosed together in a room of our own making, unable to see those who trouble us, our breath mixing on the way in and on the way out. (484-485)

Four's body constructs a space of security from "those who trouble" them (484); he consoles and protects her in a home-like space that he creates. It is in this space where she commits her own body as an extension of his: his breath sustains her breath, and therefore, her life—he is the utopian landscape that promises to sustain her. Their bodily enfolding gestures toward a conceivable romantic unification in which Tris becomes a dedicated spouse. Their romantic union amongst familial relations, such as Caleb and Marcus, composes an image of an extended family portrait on the train. As the "train slides into unlit, uncertain land" Tris "kiss[es] him" at length (486). The constancy of Four's power and his affections for her are the 'certain lands' that offer her a peaceful, domesticated residence. Tris' earlier exhibition of a willingness to sacrifice her life to breach the simulation that had controlled Four bespeaks her identification as a subject "in relation" (Heinecken 36). She confesses to Four on the train that she could not kill him in the Abnegation control tower because "It would have been like shooting myself" (Roth

486). Her identification of Four's body as her own illustrates her ascertainment of self-worth as relational to, and irrevocably intertwined with, the value she ascribes to Four's existence—her existence depends on his actuality and the idyll he provides. This conception recommits her to a system of patriarchal thinking that dismantles her individual power to locate the idyll of within herself—to achieve complete agency and autonomy. Four's immediate rewarding of her confession with his declaration of love vindicates her proclivity for valiant self-sacrifice to protect her romantic partner (486). In a similar gesture to Deuce's inspired spirit after learning of the day boy and night girl's marriage, it is only after Four's avowal that Tris locates within herself an empowering confidence in her developing identity: "I am no longer Tris, the selfless, or Tris, the brave. I suppose that now, I must become more than either" (487). Four's influence continues to implicitly construct her self-actualization.

Differing from Tris' insertion into a portrait of an extended family, the conclusion to the *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave* interpolates Cassie into a more overt composite of a nuclear family. Cassie, Sammy and Ben Parish escape from an encroaching vacuum of debris produced by Evan's detonation of Camp Haven's armory. With the unexpected help of Ben's platoon and their Humvee, the group takes shelter underneath a highway overpass. Cassie and Sammy have reached a state of safety and tranquility that Evan has desired for them. Her recollection of his words fosters a new hope within her:

What did Evan say?  
*We're here, and then we're gone, and it's not about the time we're here,  
 but what we do with the time.*  
 And I whisper, 'Mayfly.' His name for me.  
 He had been in me. He had been in me and I had been in him together in  
 an infinite space, and there had been no spot where he ended and I began.

Sammy stirs in my lap. (Yancey 456; emphasis in original)

Cassie acknowledges her own individuality by identifying herself in Evan's terms. As a Mayfly, she is able to see herself as capable of making her transient time on earth meaningful. Her immediate observation of Sammy on her lap suggests that she can ascribe worth to her life by fulfilling her role as a surrogate maternal figure and by embracing her duty as his caregiver. Similar to Four and Tris' physical envelopment, Cassie describes her spiritual enfolding with Evan as producing a disembodied space of security and peace.<sup>84</sup> She is able to locate in herself an empowering confidence because Evan has claimed her body and emotions.<sup>85</sup> Like Tris, Cassie recognizes her romantic unification with Evan as a place of belonging, a utopian-like landscape that inspires her will to exist and that imbues her life with purpose. By sharing in Cassie's desire to save Sammy, Evan becomes a proxy father figure to Sammy.<sup>86</sup> Thus, Cassie's assumption of a maternal duty to safeguard Sammy is further a fulfillment of Evan's parental will.

Similar to Four's declaration of love as a reward for Tris' compliance to a patriarchal thought-system, Ben expresses his gratitude to Cassie for saving him through a tender, "light peck, half cheek, half mouth" (456). Also demonstrating a fatherly

<sup>84</sup> To show Cassie his inhuman form, Evan enters her mind. She describes: "The warmth is everywhere and everything. My body and everything outside my body belongs to it. Then I feel him; he is in the warmth, too, and there's no separation between us, no spot where I end and he begins ... And I open to him, like a flower to the rain" (370). She further explains, "I let him inside my soul. I shared something with him more precious and intimate than my body" (372). Evan's permeation of her soul can be understood as a sanitized instance of intimacy—this scene is a depiction of an intercourse of subjectivities—preserving the virginal body of the young heroine while reinforcing the power of the hero as active and dominant.

<sup>85</sup> Evan's bodily gestures demonstrate a claiming of Cassie's body. After infiltrating Camp Haven and providing Cassie with a clear opportunity to eliminate Sammy's guard, Evan physically leads her, Sammy and Ben Parish to a safe exit from the Camp. Before departing from them to detonate the armory, Cassie conveys, "I grab Evan's hand in both of mine and press it against my chest. 'Don't leave me again' ... He spreads his fingers over my heart, like he's holding it, like it belongs to him, the hard-fought-for territory he's won fair and square" (443).

<sup>86</sup> Before infiltrating Camp Haven, Evan asserts, "'I want to help you ... Why can't saving Sammy be my purpose too?'" (173).

inclination to protect Sammy, Ben risks his life to infiltrate Camp Haven and rescue him from completing the Others' 5<sup>th</sup> Wave program. Ben sees Cassie, and not Evan, as freeing him from the guards that had confined them in the Camp.<sup>87</sup> As Cassie's high-school infatuation, Ben's romantic affection fulfills her fantasies of their "dream kiss" and can likewise be understood as recompense for proper, feminine sacrificial behaviors (457). The last paragraph of *The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave* depicts Cassie, Ben and Sammy as a picturesque composite of a nuclear family:

I'm shaking. He must notice, because he puts his arm around me and we sit like that for a while, my arms around Sammy, Ben's arm around me, and together the three of us watch the sun break over the horizon, obliterating the dark in a burst of golden light. (457)

Resonating with Cassie's definition of Evan as "*Evan, the noticer who noticed you,*" Ben notices Cassie's body language (272; emphasis in original). He supplants Evan as the proper (fully human) paternal-figure and romantic partner—steadyding Cassie's anxiety and safeguarding her body with his own. Reflecting the ethereality of the impending dawn, the intimacy of this formed family projects a togetherness that exemplifies the "golden light" of hope—familial communion becomes necessary for one to overcome any "dark" obstacles (457). Cassie takes her place within a patriarchal portrait of an idealized domestic paradigm.

In line with the entirety of their respective narratives, these endings illustrate Brown and St. Claire's suggestion of a "complicating (sub)text" in YA literature. As I explored in Part I, this proposition resonates with Perry Nodelman's conception of the

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<sup>87</sup> After successfully infiltrating Camp Haven, Evan makes possible Cassie's retrieval of Sammy and protects Cassie, Sammy and Ben Parish from execution by overriding the Others' computer system. By shooting Cassie's and Ben's guard from the grate above, Evan provides her with an opportunity to kill the remaining guard that threatens Sammy (438-439).

“hidden adult” in fiction written by adults for children (10). Nodelman explains, “What texts of children’s literature might be understood to sublimate or keep present but leave unsaid is a variety of knowledge—sexual, cultural, historical—theoretically only available to and only understandable by adults” (206). The YA dystopian texts of this study sublimate the patriarchal underpinnings of their conclusions and integrate the havoc-making heroine into a nuclear family model disguised as utopian contentment. Similarly, for Nodelman, the ending of texts written for children involve a returning to the utopian environment of the home in which they had originally left behind:

The children in these texts achieve happiness by finally getting home—arriving at the happy ending of a safe childhood that adults hope they will then accept as the right and proper one, as, in fact, a happy one ... [T]his happens because the childhood of children’s literature is so clearly an adult fantasy, an attempted imposition of adult views of childhood on children ... In accepting that these are happy endings and thus agreeing to this interpretation of their own childlikeness, child protagonists and their implied readers come to share adult thinking. (225-226)

He asserts that Children’s literature “is a form of pastoral—that is literature in which an idyllic utopia is eventually achieved” (222). The return home is, subtextually, a recuperation of the adventuring child into an adult construction of childhood that not only presents childhood itself as an idealized state of innocence, but the home as a place in which childhood can continue in safety. A maturity thus stems from the child-protagonist’s and child-reader’s realization that the ‘adult world is dangerous’—the home offers protection from the threatening environment outdoors (226). In the same manner, Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie reach a place of safety and peace. The dangerous politicized dominion that threatens them has been dissolved or has begun to crumble. The image of a nuclear family permeates their newfound utopias—a family environment that

characterizes the return to the space of the home described by Nodelman. Safety, family and the home are interwoven constituents of the havoc-makers' utopian-like conclusions.

These endings reflect and re-inscribe the binary codes of gender that are deeply rooted in Western culture. The heroines' self-understanding requires the declarations of love from their male-heroic partners and their inculcation into a familial entity as eventual wives and mothers. They do not return to their original families; they return to a domestic state of being—the apogee of their latent and explicit construction by male counterparts throughout their narratives. Unlike the culmination of an action male hero's journey, whose “transcendence” is “based on mastery of the self and others” and that “ultimately depends upon the rejection and punishment of the body,” the havoc-making heroine's identity is found through her union with her romantic partner (Heinecken 32). She acquires self-actualizing fulfillment by understanding herself as a subject “in relation” to others—a relativity that reaffirms her status as a female hero who responds in accordance with her changing environment (36). Such relativity, according to Heinecken, discounts a traditional “heroic transcendence” characteristic of male action heroes in

Action/Adventure fiction:

Heroism is dependent on overcoming obstacles. In this way, social pressures are naturalized and normalized within action texts. Yet it must also be said that traditional heroic action/adventure are *about* the discovery of identity; notions of individualism are somewhat inseparable from the genre. When traditional modes of representing action narratives are broken with ... there is a corresponding relativism to her [the female hero's] character that denies transcendence. (152; emphasis in original)

Like the precursory model of the tomboy figure, patriarchal forces tame the havoc-making heroine. Her self-actualizing happiness depends upon her romantic relationship

and its permission to exist in a perceivably utopian social environment. However, the prevalence of, what I would call, narrative endings of “romantic utopia”—where a heroine’s holistic peace, comfort and happiness are predicated on the presence of her partner—evokes Radway’s discussion on the repetitive narrative structure of Romance fiction and its perpetuation of gender codes. She explains that romances “*retell* a single tale whose final outcome their readers always already know ... Therefore, the act of retelling that same myth function[s] as the ritual reaffirmation of fundamental cultural beliefs and cultural aspirations” (Radway 198; emphasis in original). She goes on to assert that the formulaic narrative form of romances,

demonstrate that despite idiosyncratic histories, all women inevitably end up associating their female identity with social roles of lover, wife, and mother ... the romance denies women the possibility of refusing that purely relational destiny and thus rejects their right to a single self contained existence. (207)

Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie do not lead “single self contained existence[s]” at the end of their stories and therefore, do not reach traditional male heroic transcendence (207). The repetitive conclusions to their stories perpetuate a cultural ethic that operates to “persuade women to view femininity solely in terms of a social and institutional role that is essential to the maintenance of the current organization of life” (208). Indeed, the havoc-making heroine’s domesticity affirms a natural paradigm of females as mothering, nurturing and the moral keystone for her family and community.<sup>88</sup> If the utopian state is to thrive, a resurgence of patriarchal norms that place the responsibility of its maintenance

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<sup>88</sup> In her analysis of female fairy tale figures in the chapter “Happily Ever After?,” Jane Sunderland postulates that “One reason for all these unpalatable gender issues may be the [fairy tale] genre itself and its original: the traditional ‘tale’ (folktale/folklore), which is told and retold orally, in different ways, but preserving key elements” (96). Her chapter further explores “marriage arrangements” and ‘explicit and implicit’ marriage proposals in traditional fairy tales (99, 106).



on women must occur. The political utopia that she strives to achieve throughout her story—not coincidentally, a resistance that is impelled and encouraged by her love-interest and other male counterparts—is one that inconspicuously recapitulates and re-inscribes a traditional hetero-normative paradigm.

However, critics such as Stuller argue that female heroic transcendence can result from her connections with others. Examining superwomen such as Xena and Buffy, Stuller contends that the female hero's community is a “support system” that elevates her “spirit ... ultimately mak[ing] her a better warrior” (92). She identifies the female hero's capacity to love as a progressive conceptualization of heroic power:

Love is redemptive; it heals and inspires—but so does the ability to forgive and be forgiven, which is made possible by compassion ... Compassion is an act of selfless love often born out of empathy and an essential component of the love ethic that drives heroes to action without expectation of reward ... [superwomen] take heroic themes to a higher level. Their compassionate actions not only save others, but also *inspire* them to find and perfect the heroic in themselves. (99; emphasis in original)

Her reclamation of conventionally feminine virtues results in the transcendence of the female hero—she distances herself from a traditionally male heroic transcendence that relies upon an elevation of the self *over* others; instead, she is elevated *with* others. Like Deuce, who recognizes that “There were different kinds of strength ... Sometimes it came from compassion and forgiveness” (Aguirre 244), the transcendent female hero's power is soluble and intermingles with the strength of a collective body. While this is a positive reading of female heroism that provides a place for female heroic transcendence, the singularity with which the YA havoc-making heroine projects her intense passion undermines this interpretation—she defines herself through the constructions of,

predominantly, her male partner. She initially rebels against oppressive powers in order to, primarily, protect her sibling and her lover. The “support system” community incorporates her not of her own free will (Stuller 92), but often through serendipitous encounters in which her community chooses to collaborate with her for their own survival: for example Katniss, while unconscious, is literally removed from the Quarter Quell arena and inserted into District Thirteen’s war effort to fulfill the Mockingjay role and buttress the rebel-movement. Regardless of Saba’s attempts to rescue Lugh or find Jack independently, her family and friends inexorably follow her to increase their collective chances for survival. After witnessing Fade and Deuce vanquish Topside Freaks, both Stalker and Tegan decide to accompany them on their journey northward for their own protection. Four instructs Tris to appear weak and rely on her friends for protection in order to prevent any further attack from other male initiates. Finally, despite Cassie’s protests against Evan’s joining her to rescue Sammy, Evan infiltrates Camp Haven to ensure her survival, and therefore, to safeguard his own personal survival by protecting Cassie as his “reason for going on” (Yancey 281).

If we follow Stuller’s distinction of female heroism that female heroes empower others and are elevated alongside their communities, I am compelled to question why, at the conclusion of the havoc-making heroines’ narratives, do they not possess the political power to affect change in the very community that, supposedly, elevates them? In other words, why do they represent the driving forces of political rebellions when they, ultimately, cannot hold positions of political power in the liberated societies they fought for? Looking specifically at the conclusions to the “Hunger Games” series and

“Dustlands” trilogy, I recognize an interconnection between Katniss’ and Saba’s criminalization and their suffering that culminates in their prevention from occupying positions of political power in their newfound utopias.

In her article, “Suffering in Utopia: Testing the Limits of Young Adult Novels,” Rebecca Carol Noël Totaro contends that “Utopia always includes some threat of suffering, in part also because the hope that founds utopia almost always grows out of such a lack or suffering” (129). Indeed, Katniss and Saba begin their journeys toward revolutionizing their communities in order to safeguard their siblings from suffering at the hands of the tyrannical Capitol and the Tonton regime. The governments render their efforts futile: Prim is killed by President Coin’s bombing of the Capitol hospital and both Lugh and Emmi are murdered by Tonton gunfire at the end of their narratives. Katniss’ and Saba’s psychological suffering impels them to employ their fame as celebrity figures in order to exact vengeance on the political powers responsible for their siblings’ death—achieving singular, autonomous last acts of violence that ultimately ignite their utopias. As the Mockingjay, Katniss must “fir[e] the last shot of the war” and publically execute President Snow (*Mockingjay* 366). Her position as a famed figure enables her to exercise autonomy, as she suddenly decides to kill President Coin instead. Likewise, Saba enters her public wedding ceremony by asserting her image as the Angel of Death: with a “crow on my shoulder, wolfdog at my side, people ain’t certain if I’m real or not. The Angel of Death. Slayer of Kings” (*Raging Star* 405). Her audience’s reaction empowers her, as she conveys, “The drums. The spectacle. The crowd ... I feel the hot clench of red start to burn in my belly” (405). Her fame spurs her masculinized hardness and provides her with

an inimitable opportunity to demonstrate unmediated agency by deciding to slay DeMalo instead of marrying him. Only through their suffering do Katniss and Saba recognize their fame as a source of power to achieve self-efficacy, to exert autonomy, and to induct political utopia. Problematically, Katniss' and Saba's cultivation of agency through their celebrity images conveys to a female readership that the independent female hero's ability to accomplish utopia—or rather, to make a notable difference in her society—requires a degree of renown; these are not ordinary girls.

Paradoxically, Katniss' and Saba's revolutionary, autonomous acts of violence cause their political marginalization within their newfound social orders. As previously observed, the emergence of utopia signals a resurgence of patriarchy: Katniss and Saba are simply too dangerous to be granted a position of political authority. After assassinating Coin, Katniss goes into solitary confinement where she attempts to commit suicide by morphling drugs and starvation. Dr. Aurelius eventually exonerates her, presenting her “as a hopeless, shell-shocked lunatic”—supporting her “confine[ment]” to District Twelve “until further notice” (*Mockingjay* 378). As the first publicized event in a re-structured Panem, Katniss' trial shapes the public's perception of her as psychologically unstable and, therefore, unfit to assume political authority. Ironically, her anguish instigates her life-long relegation to District Twelve. She conveys, “The truth is, no one quite knows what to do with me now that the war's over, although if another one should spring up, Plutarch's sure they could find a role for me” (378-379). Thus, she is still a constructed instrument of war; only by assuming such a role can she access power to impact her community and only specifically during times of strife. Through the hope

that Peeta provides, Katniss “emerge[s] into a less painful adulthood” characterized by her adoption of traditional female roles (Torato 135).

Contrary to Katniss, Saba’s psychological suffering in New Eden affirms her guilt as a female hero. She asserts:

If I’m hopeful for myself, I hope fer no more than this. That beyond the horizon, somewhere, someday, I can live with myself and what I’ve done. I cain’t ask forgiveness fer the highest of my sins. Them I’d beg it of are dead. So I ain’t fer this land no more. I’m done here. I hafta move on.  
(*Raging Star* 420)

As a result of her desire to marginalize herself from New Eden in penitence, Saba rejects a position in the “council of nine wise women” that will be governing the new society (419). She conveys, “They try to choose me, but I won’t be chosen. My warrior’s part is played out” (419). Like Katniss, Saba’s ability to influence her community relies upon her adoption of a singular role: she perceives herself as a defending warrior, an instrument of destruction used in times of revolution. Without the social conditions that necessitate this role, Saba’s heroic power dissipates. She considers herself unfit, and not “wise” enough, to lead her community. To further placate her remorse, she vanquishes the monstrous-feminine<sup>89</sup> within herself by symbolically killing the Angel of Death: “I scrape a narrow pit between them [Lugh’s and Emmi’s graves]. In it, I bury the Angel of Death. I lay my armour that never saw a fight. My metal-plate jerkin an armbands” (422). Saba repudiates all the signifiers of her tough, masculinized identity. Her concentration on the moral indignity of her heroic action entrenches a patriarchal perspective on the impropriety of female pugnaciousness. She is punished for her unnatural violence and

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<sup>89</sup> In *Representing Women*, Myra Macdonald refers to Barbara Creed’s notion of the “monstrous-feminine.” Macdonald explains that, for Creed, the monstrous-feminine captures “the Freudian notion of the terror invoked by the castrated woman ... rewritten in terms of her castrating threat” (123; emphasis in original).

sexual transgressions with the deaths of her siblings and a miscarriage.<sup>90</sup> Only by disavowing herself of the Angel of Death can Saba retreat to the security of Jack's domestic space, assume her feminine duty as a devoted spouse, and attain peace.

By recommitting Katniss and Saba to a domestic role within a patriarchal framework, their conclusions emphasize the primacy of a nuclear family in preventing more motherless tomboys like them from threatening the system. As such, Katniss and Saba choose to locate their ultimate happiness in their union with their lovers; they equate domesticity with self-fulfillment. Katniss' and Saba's recuperation into a familial paradigm evokes Sara Crosby's observations of female heroes and their deaths in media representations. In her article, "The Cruellest Season': Female Heroes Snapped into Sacrificial Heroines," Crosby identifies the sacrificial endings of masculinized female heroes as a mechanism for preventing the destabilization of a patriarchal social order:

Republicanism enacts a compromise through the bodies of tough female heroes. It is muscular, self-actualizing ethic creates them, and then patriarchy reclaims them by transforming them into sacrificial heroines ... denying them the male hero's ultimate goal: political authority wielded to reform and empower his own community ... [Female heroes can] deconstruct [a] gendered hierarchy, the bedrock upon which patriarchy rests, and [can] open the way for a democratic feminist community. (154)

Although Crosby addresses the physical deaths of strong, independent female heroes at the conclusions of their stories, I also read a havoc-making heroine's inculcation into a hetero-normative familial paradigm as sacrificial. Like Saba, the havoc-making heroine must metaphorically put to death her toughness. In order to attain the utopian happiness

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<sup>90</sup> Saba becomes sexually active with both DeMalo and Jack, leaving the paternity of her unborn child unknown. Notably, the sexual activity of males throughout the "Dustlands" trilogy is met with celebration. Discovering that Lugh (now deceased) had fathered Molly's unborn child, Saba expresses, "A tiny spark of hope lights within me" (*Raging Star* 421). Contrastingly, Saba—still in shock regarding Lugh and Emmi's deaths—remains unmoved when told she had miscarried: "Miscarried. Pregnant. Jest words" (390).

of a “less painful adulthood” that characterizes the domestic space (Totaro 135), she must sacrifice the aspects of herself that threaten the patriarchal social order.

Crosby contends that it is the “patriarchal community’s need to criminalize the apocalyptic threat of female power” through female heroes’ self-eradication. Even before their domestication, the havoc-making heroines’ male counterparts contain the threat of their apocalyptic power by explicitly and covertly constructing their bodies and behaviours. It is because of this construction that these heroines do not pass on their dangerous power to other female comrades during their journeys. Indeed, as Stuller observes in the tales of superwomen, “the example of *women* mentoring women is all too rare, and when present, it generally isn’t allowed to thrive” (123; emphasis in original). Katniss, Saba, Deuce, Tris and Cassie do not mentor their younger, weaker female companions. As a result, there are multiple missed opportunities for showing females empowering other females with their bodies and their intellect.<sup>91</sup> Since these havoc-making heroines singularly entrench their self-esteem in their romantic partners, a powerful female support system in which women mentor and empower one another cannot form. Without such a structure, the havoc-makers’ recuperation into the domestic realm becomes the natural choice, thus neutralizing their potential to become political figures in their renewed social orders. If they were able to assume political power, their

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<sup>91</sup> For example, Katniss does not transfer her hunting skills to Prim. It is Salmo Slim, and not Saba, who teaches Emmi how to shoot an arrow. Deuce merely bequeaths her club to Tegan and does not train her in its use—leaving Fade to equip her with the skills to be effectual with it in battle. Only Evan sharpens Cassie’s dexterity with a firearm. When Dauntless soldiers are under the influence of a simulation that forces them to murder Abnegation’s political leaders, Tris’ mother reveals that she is originally from Dauntless, is Divergent herself, and demonstrates her skills with a gun. However, in the most unfortunate missed opportunity for showcasing a mother mentoring her daughter, Tris’ mother sacrifices herself to allow time for Tris to escape to her father’s hideout—with only enough time to reiterate to Tris what being Divergent means in their social realm. Tris’ physical and intellectual tutor remains solely Four.

power would continue to be seen as apocalyptic—endangering the utopian gender binaries ingrained within a patriarchal system. Inness explains, “In the often barbaric and excessive world of the post-apocalyptic narrative, women are freer to act tough and be independent because it is evident that the world has been turned topsy-turvy. In such a universe, girls are sometimes free to act like boys” (*Tough Girls* 123). Only in a post-apocalyptic dystopia can an adolescent female hero wreak havoc and lead a rebellion. Once order has been restored, the utopian society reaffirms her power as naturally subordinate, veiled by her happy union with her romantic partner.

But why has the post-apocalyptic female heroine reached such heightened popularity in both text and film? I postulate that a combination of young women’s ingrained understanding of the conflicting expectations for femininity in addition to marketing forces perpetuate this collision. In the chapter “From Girlhood, Girls, to Girls’ Studies—*The Power of the Text*” in *Girls, Texts, Cultures* (2015), Dawn H. Currie articulates that by 1999, “the notion of girls as casualties of commercialized girlhood was being displaced by the popular celebration of girl power” explaining that “girls’ studies emerged as a distinct field of inquiry at the turn of the millennium” (24, 25). She addresses her and Deirde Kelly’s study in which 69 girls aged twelve to sixteen from diverse class and ethnic backgrounds were interviewed “to describe their social life at school” (Currie 25).<sup>92</sup> Currie reports that “While the girls we recruited enacted a range of girlhoods, it was common to encounter ... contradictory meaning-making” (25). She

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<sup>92</sup> Currie notes that this study was first published in “*Girl Power*”: *Girls Re-inventing Girlhood*. She explains that she and Kelly perceive their study as “an exploration of how *girls* re-invent girlhood through their everyday gender practices. How much control do individual girls exercise over who they are and who they might become? ...” (25; emphasis in original).



observes how participants supported positions of “girl power” in which they saw themselves as “girls who can defend themselves” (25) but also ignored these positions in favor of a “discourse of romantic love” which desired “a boy to defend ‘his’ girl” (26).

Currie observes:

[T]he discourse of romantic love helps reconstitute the world of male entitlement to girls’ and women’s’ sexuality, an issue that, although not named by most girls in our study, accounted for stories about difficulties they experienced at school ... Because the discourse of romantic love trumps their discourse of girl power, we refer to heterosexual romance as an example of ‘trump discourse.’ (27)

The participants of Currie and Kelly’s study emulate the conflicting meanings for girlhood found in popular YA dystopias: the havoc-making heroine is tough, but carries with her a love for her romantic partner that supersedes her own independent strength. Her heterosexual union at the end of her story likewise obscures her toughness. She finds a sense of security in her relationships with her partner and not in her relationships with other women, nor through the fostering of a spiritual connection with a higher power. She locates her sense of security outside of her own power. Bell hooks asserts that female self-love is key for young women to breach a male-designed configuration for their social existence. She expresses:

It should give young women hope to know that so many of their female elders who had given up on love when we were younger now return to love to reclaim ... We have learned how to distinguish real love from the fantasy of being rescued ... As women truly love ourselves ... we see how easy it is to save ourselves—to choose our own salvation. (234)

To negate the “trump discourse” (Currie 27) of heterosexual romantic love as a primary conception of girlhood, I believe that popular YA dystopias would need to recalibrate the ways in which the female heroine loves—focusing primarily on a love for herself as a

perceivably incomplete subjectivity, illustrating the cultivation of her empowerment through healthy, interdependent interactions with both strong female and male characters. Heroines that articulate the value and worth of their own power can demonstrate a *self*-construction that emanates from a self-love and respect for their own bodies, its behaviors, and their independent, intellectual energies.

Showcasing the YA female heroine onscreen additionally conforms to a market trend that acknowledges the capital power of the millennial teen demographic. In *Teen Media: Hollywood and the Youth Market in the Digital Age* (2010), Valerie Wee observes, “The studio’s growing recognition of the resurgent power of the teen audience in general was accompanied by a growing perception that the teen girl audience was cultivating a unique set of interests and behaviours that marked them as an even more important market for Hollywood” (32). Perhaps what Inness calls the social “fascination” with the “tough woman” and how she “embodies women’s fantasies of empowerment” (*Tough Girls* 23), draws young women to the theatre to observe a visual representation of a tough girl navigating her post-apocalyptic realm. Congruent with the apocalyptic world she inhabits, the YA heroine embodies unsettling gender inconsistencies while simultaneously fulfilling young women’s “fantasies.” Inness conveys that “Perhaps one of the reasons for the boom in post-apocalyptic texts is that they offer a fleeting escape from a world that seems to grow only more complex and out of control” (*Tough Girls* 122). Viewing and reading post-apocalyptic dystopias that feature a strong havoc-making heroine can be a general way for a young female audience member to grapple with finding her place in an increasingly multifarious world. The inclusion of romance in these

texts ensures a degree of repetitive structure that is comforting amidst real-world uncertainties while also working to affirm the norms of girlhood. Just as identical romance endings reconfirmed “fundamental cultural beliefs and collective aspirations” for the Smithton women of Radway’s study, the repetitious structure of the havoc-making heroine’s journey likewise perpetuates “mythic account[s] of how women *must* achieve fulfillment in a patriarchal society”—a society that requires the careful control of the masculine and feminine constituents of the self (Radway 198, 17; emphasis in original). Such a structure sends a distinct message: if the YA heroine can restore order and find love by balancing her hardness and softness, a young female reader/viewer can likewise overcome the disorder of her personal world by following suit.

Thus, Katniss, Saba, Deuce and Cassie represent a continued social ambivalence toward young women that display non-traditional feminine characteristics. While it is permissible for the havoc-making heroine to exhibit a contradictory performance of gender, this performance is short-lived and must be controlled through the implicit and explicit construction of her body and its behaviours by her male counterparts. The balance of her hardness and softness accord with the gendered expectations of Action/Adventure and Romance fiction to exact, ultimately, the personal and political agendas of men. Her empowerment to wreak political havoc results from her confidence in her romantic partner, thereby rendering her an effectual instrument to his desires, but also to the desires of other male authority figures. Once these figures achieve a semblance of utopia, they incorporate her into a system of patriarchy that veils her subordination as true happiness. Although the figure of the YA havoc-maker imports a discourse of girl power that

suggests that young women can be heroes, this definition of heroism relies upon constrained gender stereotypes entrenched in a collision of genres. Only by breaching these strictures can the YA female hero recode her heroism as powered by an essential conviction in her own innate power.

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