

12-8-2014

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ENG 502.001

4 December 2014

The Submissive, the Angel, and the Mad Woman in District 12: Feminine Identity in Suzanne
Collins's *The Hunger Games*

The social roles assigned to women in literature are often debated by critics. Women are typically forced into a small number of different stereotypical gender roles. These roles have become so prominent that it is easy to question whether or not women are able to fully exist outside of these roles in literature. Suzanne Collins's protagonist in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Katniss Everdeen, is no exception to the conventional female character. While she does commit acts of true bravery throughout the trilogy, she still is forced into a classic role for women in Western society. After the film adaptation of the first novel became popular in 2012, many adolescents and adults began idolizing Katniss. She has even been labeled as "the most important female character in recent pop culture history" (Lewit). It is often argued that Katniss represents a strong, independent, and brave female lead character—a rarity in young adult literature. Katniss finds herself in several situations where she must be brave and demonstrate her ability to cope with the violent world she lives in, but she is more often than not following the lead of a male character. Katniss is not the only female character in the trilogy that is forced into a stereotypical gender role; her mother and sister suffer the same fate. Throughout the trilogy, the male characters shape the identities of the female characters by manipulating language and enforcing Western gender roles. Katniss, Prim, and their mother each fill different roles commonly assigned to women. Katniss is a submissive female; Prim is the innocent angel

in the household; and their mother portrays a mad woman that cannot cope with reality.

Katniss's role is often misconstrued by audiences, while Prim and Mrs. Everdeen are generally ignored altogether. The placement of the female characters in this trilogy must be re-examined in order to address the issue of women's roles in literature.

In their chapter "Tipping the Odds Ever in Her Favor: An Exploration of Narrative Control and Agency in the Novel and Film," Anne M. Canavan and Sarah N. Petrovic argue that "Katniss's ability to control her own identity and thus her own destiny" is one of the reasons why adolescents connect with her character (46). They contend that Katniss is aware of each role she must play throughout the trilogy. In her chapter "Katniss and Her Boys: Male Readers, the Love Triangle and Identity Formation," Whitney Elaine Jones examines gender roles in the novels. She argues that Katniss's ability to embody both gender roles makes her "the perfect female character to benefit a young male audience" because young men struggle with being hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine (72). Likewise, Ellyn Lem and Holly Hassel, in their article "'Killer' Katniss and 'Lover Boy' Peeta: Suzanne Collins's Defiance of Gender-Genred Reading," argue that *The Hunger Games* is "a publishing phenomenon that has challenged [...] gender stratification" because it engages both male and female audiences without submitting to stereotypical gender roles (118). Jennifer Mitchell, Katie Arosteguy, Amanda Firestone, and many other critics analyze Katniss's ability to transcend stereotypical gender roles throughout the texts. Currently, these are the main scholarly conversations being held over *The Hunger Games*. While many of these critics have strong arguments, they all fail to address two alarming issues in the novels: the roles of the female characters and the influence the male characters have on them. A close analysis of Mrs. Everdeen, Prim, and Katniss throughout the trilogy, brings these issues to light.

Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy follows the story of Katniss Everdeen in a seemingly utopian, futuristic North America. The society is split into twelve Districts that are controlled by an oppressive government—the Capitol. Each District is responsible for providing the Capitol with certain goods. Every year, the Capitol holds the Hunger Games: a televised event where a young female and male from each District are placed in an arena and fight to the death. The winner is given wealth and is exempt from the Hunger Games for the rest of their childhood. Every member of the society is required to watch the Hunger Games because it serves as a reminder that the Capitol is in control and the Districts cannot rise up and challenge their authority. When Katniss's sister, Prim, is chosen to compete in the Hunger Games in the first novel, Katniss volunteers as tribute in her place. In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss enters the games with Peeta Mellark—the son of the town baker. With the help of Effie Trinket, Haymitch Abernathy, Cinna, and a stylist team, Peeta and Katniss manipulate audiences into believing they are in love. This becomes a problem for Katniss's best friend, Gale, because he—along with Peeta—is in love with Katniss. Katniss and Peeta eventually win the first game together, but are forced into a second game by President Snow in *Catching Fire*. This leads many of Katniss's and Peeta's fans into a rebellion along with the secret District 13. Because of her ability to sway audiences, Katniss is forced to become a symbol of hope and freedom for the Districts in *Mockingjay*. In the last novel of the trilogy, Katniss leads the rebellion and defeats the Capitol; however, this war comes with many losses.

The first impression the reader gets of Katniss in *The Hunger Games*, is that she is the head of her family; her mother and younger sister both depend on her. This image is first created through Katniss's description of her younger sister's cat and the burden it places on her. She thinks to herself that "the last thing I needed was another mouth to feed" (3). Katniss is the

bread-winner for her family even though she is only sixteen. She hunts for the meat the family eats; trades her kills and skins for household necessities; and takes care of her mother and sister. However, it is not explained until several pages later why Katniss is the one taking care of her family instead of her mother. Katniss's father died when she was eleven-years-old. Instead of taking care of her children, Katniss's mother "didn't do anything but sit propped up in a chair or, more often, huddled under the blankets [...] No amount of pleading from Prim seemed to affect her" (27). Katniss recalls that her mother "was locked in some dark world of sadness" causing her to take "over as head of the family" (27). This is the first instance in the text where it is clear a female character is dependent on a male character. After her husband dies, Katniss's mother does not grieve and then begin to take care of her children. Instead, she completely shuts down and is described as a woman on the edge of, if not completely immersed in, insanity. Her mother does not completely come out of her catatonic stage, or Katniss would not still be taking care of her family in the place of her mother.

Mrs. Everdeen's lack of control over her children is also clear when Katniss volunteers in Prim's stead for the Hunger Games. As Katniss walks up to the stage, she "turn[s] and see[s] Gale has lifted Prim off the ground and she's thrashing in his arms. 'Up you go, Catnip,' he says, in a voice he's fighting to keep steady, and then carries Prim off toward my mother" (23). Gale is an eighteen-year-old boy; it is difficult to not question why an eighteen-year-old friend of the family assists Prim instead of her mother that is in the crowd watching. Her oldest daughter, the daughter that feeds her, has just rescued her youngest daughter from certain death, yet she does not reach out to comfort either one of her daughters. In this instance, a male character takes the place of Katniss's mother.

After the reaping ceremony, Katniss is taken to the Justice Building where she is allowed to say goodbye to her family and friends. The first visitors she receives are her mother and little sister. When they walk into the room, Katniss immediately begins "telling them all the things they must remember to do, now that I will not be there to do it for them" (34). After she gives these instructions, she turns to her mother and says "[l]isten to me. Are you listening to me?" She nods, alarmed by my intensity [...] 'You can't leave again'" (35). Her mother's response is: "I was ill. I could have treated myself if I'd had the medicine I have now" (36). Katniss's first worries are about her mother not being able to take care of her sister instead of the possibility she will soon die. Her mother's admission that she has the medication to treat her illness damages her image further because she is admitting to not being able to handle the pressure of reality. Furthermore, the community seems to know and accept this about Katniss's mother. Katniss's next visitor is the baker; the only words he says to Katniss are "I'll keep an eye on the little girl. Make sure she's eating" (38). Katniss also feels comforted by the thought that Gale will still be there to take care of her family. Once again, Mrs. Everdeen's duties as a mother are expected to be handled by male characters. It is arguable that Katniss's mother, who is never given a name in the novel, is a modern day equivalent to Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's mad woman in the attic.

In "Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship," Gilbert and Gubar discuss the angelic and monstrous roles of women in literature. They argue that women authors project their frustrations and "rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into their mad or monstrous women (who are suitably punished in the course of the novel or poem)" (1536). Clearly, Mrs. Everdeen is not mentally stable; she is more mad than monstrous, and she is punished several times throughout the trilogy. In *The Hunger Games*, her mental

instability is a result of the loss of her husband. When her family regains stability through Katniss's ability to feed them, Katniss must leave to fight for her life; Mrs. Everdeen loses not only her daughter, but also her source for survival. In *Catching Fire*, she reaps the benefits of Katniss's victory by being removed from poverty and placed in Victor's Village. She remains there until Katniss manipulates the games again, and President Snow burns District 12, and consequently her home, to the ground. In *Mockingjay*, her daughter, Prim, dies in the war against the Capitol. When Katniss learns her mother will not be returning to District 12 after the war, she realizes it is "[b]ecause between my father and Prim and the ashes, the place is too painful to bear" (380). Mrs. Everdeen is repeatedly punished throughout the trilogy until she cannot return home. Her madness is punished, just as Gilbert and Gubar claim. If Mrs. Everdeen was not flattened into the madwoman trope, she would have been more capable of protecting her children.

While Katniss's mother is portrayed as the quiet woman that cannot seem to grasp reality, her little sister, Prim, is portrayed as the sweet, innocent, little girl in town that most of the community loves. Before Katniss leaves her family for her first Hunger Games, she thinks about all of the things she must tell her mother and Prim to do while she is gone; she thinks to herself that there is no use in "suggesting Prim learn to hunt. I tried to teach her a couple of times and it was disastrous. The woods terrified her, and whenever I shot something, she'd get teary and talk about how we might be able to heal it if we got it home soon enough" (35). Prim's fear of the woods and Katniss's volunteering in her place for the Hunger Games gives the reader a better understanding of Prim's age and innocence. In most fairy tales and children's literature, the young and innocent must go on a journey—which typically takes place in a forest—to gain maturity. Prim cannot go on this journey because Katniss takes her place; she clearly is not

ready for the journey because she is afraid of the woods. The woods is a common trope in children's literature. Often times, one sees young characters traveling into the woods and coming out with a new level of maturity. Prim retains her innocence, thus she does not go on a journey. She also puts the lives of animals above her own; she wants to heal the animals she is meant to eat. This also highlights her innocence. Furthermore, it is clear that the community has a certain fondness for Prim when the baker comes to visit Katniss in the Justice Building. After he tells Katniss he will watch over Prim, she thinks "[p]eople deal with me, but they are genuinely fond of Prim. Maybe there will be enough fondness to keep her alive" (38). Her innocence and immaturity are the reasons that the community shows such a great love and fondness for her and not Katniss.

It is typical for adults to show fondness to innocent children; it is also common for angelic, female characters to be placed on a pedestal and treated with great love and respect. Prim has an affinity for healing and is very nurturing throughout the trilogy. In *The Hunger Games*, Prim heals animals; in *Catching Fire*, she helps her mother heal many different community members; and in *Mockingjay*, Prim is a medic in District 13. Throughout the trilogy, Prim enters into adolescence and becomes more of a young woman than an innocent child. She comforts Katniss when she cannot sleep; Katniss claims that Prim is now "a young woman who stitches bleeding wounds and knows our mother can hear only so much" as Prim promises to keep Katniss's worries a secret from their mother (*Mockingjay* 33). Instead of allowing Katniss to take care of her, Prim now takes on the role of nurturer.

Prim's innocence and then eventual role as care-taker allow her to occupy two tropes for young girls and women: the Romantic child and the Victorian "Angel in the House." In *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts*, Nina Auerbach argues that

"Victorians [...] saw little girls as the purest members of a species of questionable origin, combining as they did the inherent spirituality of child and woman" (131). Prim's role as a pure, innocent child in her community is reinforced by her sex; because she is a little girl, she is one of the purest members of the community. This character type—also evoked in Victorian literature—stems from the Romantic notion of childhood.

Auerbach also argues that "[i]f one contemporary paradigm in women's literature is defined by immolation, paralysis, and madness, her Victorian counterpart was endowed with an often monstrously outsize nobility that led to her extinction" (85). While Mrs. Everdeen serves as an example of the former role, Prim eventually represents the latter model. As Prim develops into a young adult, she begins to take on the role of virtuous care-taker. She puts her life in danger to heal and rescue others during the attack on the Capitol. After an explosion kills and wounds many children, Rebel medics rush out to save the lives they can; Prim, being a medic, is one of the aids. As Katniss scans the scene, she notices "the blond braid down [Prim's] back" attempt to comfort a crying child (347). Just before Katniss can reach Prim, another explosion goes off in the area. When Katniss awakens from her injuries, she learns that Prim was killed in the bombing. True to the role of nurturing mother, Prim is willing to put herself in danger to help a child. However, Prim never fulfills the role of mother because she is killed before she reaches adulthood; she is only in training to be a care-taker in *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*. Prim's inability to take her journey into the woods and out of innocence, as well as her hyper-virtuous nature, lead to her eventual death, or what Auerbach terms extinction.

While Mrs. Everdeen's and Prim's roles are often overlooked in the novel, there is a significant amount of criticism over Katniss's role in the novels and the movies. Typically, Katniss is described as independent and brave. In her article "Burn with Us: Sacrificing

Childhood in *The Hunger Games*," Susan Shau Ming Tan claims that Katniss's "sense of self is characterized by inherent rebellion, by independence and self-sufficiency" (57). However, a closer examination of her relationship with the male characters in each text reveals that Katniss's sense of self is characterized by submissiveness more than independence and self-sufficiency. Katniss's character is shaped by the male characters in *The Hunger Games*, and she continues to submit to their wishes and falls prey to their manipulation throughout *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay*. While Katniss does show acts of bravery, but she is more submissive to community norms and the male characters in the novel than she is independent. One of the first qualities Katniss reveals about herself is that she does not voice her opinion. When she was young, she "scared [her] mother to death, the things [she] would blurt out about District 12, about the people who rule [their] country" (*Hunger* 6). After she describes this, she thinks to herself that "eventually I understood this would only lead us to more trouble. So I learned to hold my tongue and to turn my features into an indifferent mask so that no one could ever read my thoughts" (6). At a young age, Katniss learns to be submissive and she does not hesitate to admit this to the reader. She does not always follow the rules as an adolescent, but she is careful not to get caught and she would never do anything that would put her family in danger. She is often described as an independent character, but she admits in the first chapter of the book that she submits to the rules of the community without a fight.

This idea of Katniss as an independent female is also challenged by the relationships she has with the male characters in the novel. Their opinions often shape the way Katniss is perceived by the other characters and by the reader. When Katniss describes her ability to follow the rules of the community, she admits that "[i]n the woods waits the only person with whom I can be myself. Gale." (6). As mentioned earlier, Gale is Katniss's male best friend. Katniss does

not feel comfortable being herself around anyone but this male character. He is also the person she chooses to leave in charge of her family if she is chosen at the reaping. After she volunteers, she thinks Gale "will bring [my family] game—he and I made a pact about this a year or so ago" (35). It is not odd to ask a friend to look over one's family if they no longer could, but the fact that Gale is a male cannot be ignored. He is also the only character that makes Katniss think she may survive the Hunger Games. When he visits her in the Justice Building, he begins listing the things Katniss should do as soon as the game begins. He tells Katniss that "'it's just hunting. You're the best hunter I know'" and Katniss thinks "that if I can forget they're people, it will be no different [from hunting] at all" (48). Gale is the character that spurs the idea that she may be able to win.

Katniss also owes a part of her image to Peeta. When his name is called at the reaping, Katniss thinks about the first time Peeta helped her. She remembers "on the afternoon of my encounter with Peeta Mellark, the rain was falling in relentless icy sheets. I had been in town, trying to trade some threadbare old baby clothes of Prim's in the public market, but there were no takers" (28). Just as Katniss is about to give up and accept that her family may starve, she hears Peeta's mother yelling at him from outside of the baker's shop. Peeta saw Katniss looking in the trash bin for food, so he burns the bread he is cooking and throws it to her while his mother is not looking. This bread sparks hope in Katniss; she goes home, feeds her family, and finds her father's bow. Katniss thinks that "to this day, I can never shake the connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope [...] I feel like I owe him something" (32). Peeta's kindness is what made Katniss realize that she could take care of herself and her family. This hope does not come from within, it is spurred by a male character.

Gale and Peeta are not the only men that shape Katniss's image. Her trainer, Haymitch Abernathy, also creates the image of a strong woman. When Katniss volunteers, Haymitch yells "Look at her. Look at this one!" [...]. 'I like her!' [...] 'Lot's of...' He can't think of the word for a while. 'Spunk!' he says triumphantly [...] 'More than you!' he shouts, pointing directly into a camera" (24). Haymitch directly addresses the crowd and the viewers at home, arguing that Katniss is braver than those watching. Haymitch's opinions shape Katniss's identity in the Capitol before she even leaves District 12. He is telling all of the people watching that Katniss has spunk, making the viewers at home automatically assume that Katniss is brave and willing to fight for what she loves. He is creating an image for Katniss that she continues to fill throughout the rest of the novel.

It is a requirement to watch the reaping for all citizens, so Katniss's stylist, Cinna, would have been a part of that audience. By creating this image, Haymitch encourages Cinna to convey that bravery and spunk through her clothing. Cinna creates Katniss's costume made of flames when she first enters the arena to introduce the tributes. He tells Katniss "'I want the audience to recognize you when you're in the arena [...] Katniss, the girl who was on fire'" (67). As soon as Katniss and Peeta are introduced to the crowd, Katniss gains the nickname "Girl on Fire." Much like Haymitch's comment, this label forces Katniss to fill that persona. Throughout the remainder of the novel and the trilogy, Katniss is referred to as the brave, "Girl on Fire." This is not because of Katniss's initially brave act to save her sister; it is because Haymitch and Cinna created her to be that character.

Gale, Peeta, Haymitch, and Cinna are the four main male characters that shape Katniss's identity and image in the beginning of *The Hunger Games*. In *Catching Fire*, Katniss's decisions are continually manipulated and shaped by these male characters. After President Snow visits

Katniss in Victor's Village and threatens to kill her and Gale if she does not convince the Capitol and him of her love for Peeta, she tries to decide who she can safely discuss this with. She thinks that "[t]here are still three people I might confide in, starting with Cinna [...] Then there's Peeta" both whom she decides will not be safe, and "[t]hat leaves Haymitch" (33). She still relies heavily on three male character's opinions to make important decisions about her life. Furthermore, when she takes this information to Haymitch, he causes Katniss to realize she must marry Peeta and disregard any feelings she may have for Gale. He tells Katniss that she will "never, ever be able to do anything but live happily ever after with [Peeta]" because she will always be a mentor for future tributes (44). This leads Katniss to understand that she will have to marry Peeta in order to convince President Snow and the rest of society that her love for Peeta is genuine. It is not until Katniss talks to Haymitch that she fully realizes President Snow's threat. Once again, Haymitch has led Katniss to fulfill a role she does not want: loving wife of Peeta Mellark. Haymitch continues to be the character Katniss goes to for advice throughout *Catching Fire* and she repeatedly does what he tells her.

By the time Katniss and Peeta reach the Capitol for their second Hunger Games in *Catching Fire*, it is evident that Katniss no longer has the ability to shape her own identity. Once again, Cinna gives Katniss a new persona to fill through clothing. Cinna tells Katniss to twirl onstage after she completes her televised interview with Caesar Flickerman. He asks her to "save it for [her] big finale" (248). Katniss, as usual, does just as Cinna instructs her to do; she twirls at the end of her interview, causing her dress to ignite in flames and transform into a mockingjay costume. As she stands onstage, Katniss realizes that "Cinna has turned me into a mockingjay," which shapes her image throughout the rest of the trilogy (252). As she admits this, she is not aware of the implications of the dress. Cinna has used her to create a symbol of

hope for the rebels that are planning an attack on the Capitol. Katniss is not merely *a* mockingjay; she becomes *the* Mockingjay.

Cinna is not the only male character that forces Katniss into this role. Haymitch, Plutarch Heavensbee—the male Head Gamekeeper—along with the other alliances Katniss makes during the games, have all manipulated Katniss in the arena in order for her to spark a rebellion. Their plan was to save Katniss because, as Plutarch states, she is "the mockingjay [...] While [Katniss] live[s], the revolution lives" (385). Her survival during the second Hunger Games she participates in is not a result of her own actions; there are several characters working together to make sure Katniss lives and fulfills her duty as mockingjay. Although Katniss is angry that Peeta was not rescued from the arena, she eventually agrees to become the Mockingjay for the rebellion in order to save Peeta and defeat President Snow.

Katniss does not agree to become this symbol of hope until she is in District 13 in *Mockingjay*. While her decision seems to be spurred by the want to rescue Peeta and protect her family, Katniss does not commit to being the Mockingjay until Gale manipulates her into agreeing. After watching Peeta call for a cease-fire during an interview with Caesar, Katniss wonders why Peeta would take the Capitol's side. Gale tells her that "[Peeta] might have been tortured. Or persuaded. My guess is he made some deal to protect you" (30). Gale slowly tells Katniss that Peeta is "still trying to keep you alive" (30). This causes Katniss to realize that the games are not really over; Peeta is attempting to keep her safe, so she must fight for him and rescue him from the Capitol. After Gale tells Katniss this, she "recall[s] the black-and-white wings Cinna gave [her]" and tells Gale, "I am going to be the Mockingjay" (31). Katniss recalls the symbol Cinna made her and falls for Gale's manipulation. Gale uses Katniss's feelings for Peeta to persuade her into being the Mockingjay. When Katniss goes to Plutarch and President

Coin—the president of District 13—to agree to be the Mockingjay, she thinks that "[l]ike Cinna, [Gale has] wanted me to make this decision all along" (43). However, she fails to realize that she did not really make this choice; she was forced into it.

Katniss continues to be influenced by male characters until the very end of the trilogy. Before the final attack on the Capitol begins, Gale tells Peeta that "Katniss will pick whoever she thinks she can't survive without," and Katniss wonders if she is "really that cold and calculating" (329-30). She is irritated because Gale's statement seems as if she will "just conduct an unfeeling assessment of what [her] potential mates can offer [her]" without the "least indication that love, or desire, or even compatibility will sway [her]" (330). Her reaction to Gale's statement leads the reader to believe Katniss's choice will involve a great deal of thought and will not be based off of who will help her survive. However, when Katniss chooses Peeta in the end, she admits to choosing him for survival. She thinks:

Peeta and I grow back together. There are still moments when he clutches the back of a chair and hangs on until the flashbacks are over. I wake screaming from nightmares of mutts and lost children. But his arms are there to comfort me. And eventually his lips. On the night I feel that thing again, the hunger that overtook me on the beach, I know this would have happened anyway. That what I need to survive is not Gale's fire, kindled with rage and hatred. What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That is can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that (388).

She chooses Peeta over Gale because his goodness is what she needs to survive; she bases her decision off of this, just as Gale predicts. Even after objecting to Gale's observation, Katniss allows it to shape her final choice in the story. Furthermore, this passage indicates that Katniss

would not be able to survive without Peeta. Katniss has suffered great loss throughout the trilogy: her father is killed in the mines; Rue is killed during the first games; her friend, Madge, is murdered during the raid on District 12; Prim—the sister she claims to live for—is killed during the attack; she will no longer see her mother; and she cannot forget the role Gale—the only person she feels she can be herself with in the beginning—played in the death of her sister. Even after all of this loss, Katniss indicates that her relationship with Peeta is the only thing she could not survive without. Before the games, Katniss is a brave and independent female protagonist that provides for her family. However, by the end of the story, Katniss depends on her husband to just survive each day.

In his article “Katniss Everdeen, Role Model? Morality and Ethics in the *Hunger Games* Trilogy,” Brent Gibson argues that Katniss's character has many different flaws that are ignored by critics and fans of *The Hunger Games*. He makes the claim Katniss's relationships are ones that rely on owing, debt, and repayment; she does not understand love nor generosity that is not motivated by gain. This is what he contends to be “a darker portrayal of Katniss” that is typically overlooked (84). However, by the end of his article he fails to fully address the importance of Katniss's inability to understand love. He merely “hope[s] that his daughters recognize and “understand what is truly admirable in this character and what is not” (89).

In her chapter “‘The Dandelion in the Spring’: Utopia as Romance in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* Trilogy” in *Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers*, Katherine R. Broad argues that “the men make the choice[s] for [Katniss]” throughout the trilogy (124). She claims that “[i]t is vital that we push back against popular interpretations of characters like Katniss as feminist agents and icons for young women” (127). While Gibson's concerns are a step in the right direction, Broad's bold assertion is correct. If

characters such as Katniss continue to serve as feminist icons for young women, the manipulation of female characters will continue to happen and be ignored. Feminist critic Annette Kolodny argues in "Dancing through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Critic," that "what we are taught to read well and with pleasure, when we are young, predisposes us to certain specific kinds of adult reading tastes" (1555). It is for this reason that it is imperative for young women to read literature that includes strong and independent lead female characters. It is particularly important for the young adult genre; these characters are designed to be role models for young men and women. This is not to argue that these women should not have flaws or love interests; it is an argument for women that can still stand their ground without the influence and persuasion of men. Katniss Everdeen's character does come close to this, but her eventual role of fragile mother and wife, and the manipulation she allows the male characters to have on her decisions retracts from any bravery she has at the beginning of the story.

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